

## Stacey Abbott: “Another one for the Fire, Boys”: The Zombie in the Work of Whedon

During the 2012 Presidential campaign Joss Whedon filmed a satirical commentary on Republican candidate Mitt Romney, declaring that Romney was ‘a different candidate; one with the vision and determination to cut through business as usual politics and finally put this country back on the path to the zombie apocalypse’[1]. In this video, Whedon drew upon the popular iconography of the zombie apocalypse genre for political purposes, adopting the George Romero-approach in which it is used ‘as a character for satire or a political criticism’. Romero has commented that this more allegorical approach is lacking in the recent and popular zombie productions, most notably *The Walking Dead* [2]. When reflecting upon Whedon’s supernatural television series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, it is interesting to note that the zombie does not appear to be a major player, appearing on occasion as a monster-of-the-week threat to our heroes while the vampire and other demons often take centre stage. As Gerry Canavan has shown with regard to *Firefly/Serenity* and *Dollhouse*, the Whedonverse does include elements of the zombie genre although perhaps not presented in the manner to which we have become accustomed [3]. The aim of this paper will be to offer a closer examination of the Whedonverse, revealing that the zombie is not only present on an episodic basis but plays a significant role, repeatedly emerging as a recognisable trope from *Buffy* and *Angel* to *The Avengers* and *Marvel’s Agents of Shield*. In these texts, the zombie not only evokes horror conventions and the seeming ephemerality of the monster-of-the-week but is often re-inscribed with the allegorical-potential of the genre that Romero argues is lacking in the mainstream, particularly televisual, appeal of the genre. Furthermore, rather than focusing upon a post-apocalyptic landscape in which all is lost and decline is inevitable, the zombie as metaphor in the Whedonverse is often used to reflect upon a world that is teetering upon the brink of apocalypse and where individual/political choice, as in a Presidential campaign, can make the difference between apocalypse and salvation.

[1] Whedon, Joss (2012), ‘Whedon on Romney,’ available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TiXUF9xbTo>. Accessed 18 December 2015.

[2] Han, Angie (2013), ‘George A. Romero explains why he won’t do *The Walking Dead*,’ *Slashfilm.com*, 14 November 2013, available at: <http://www.slashfilm.com/george-a-romero-explains-why-he-wont-do-the-walking-dead/>. Accessed 12 October 2015.

[3] Canavan, Gerry (2011), ‘Fighting a War You’ve Already Lost: Zombies and *Zombis* in *Firefly/Serenity* and *Dollhouse*,’ *Science Fiction Film and Television* 4:2, 173-203.