

Malgorzata Drewniok: We Need to Get It Done': Steve Rogers, Phil Coulson, and the Language of Leadership

Language is one of the most distinctive features of Joss Whedon's work. It has been particularly noticed in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) – the language used in this series has been extensively explored by scholars from many disciplines, including Karen Eileen Overbey and Lahney Preston-Matto (2002), Michael Adams (2003), Jesse Saba Kirchner (2006) and others in the whole special issue of *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association* devoted to Buffy language (Slayage 20), as well as Susan Mandala (2007) and Malgorzata Drewniok (2012; 2013). Mandala (2010) also examined *Firefly* (2002).

This paper stems from my previous research into vampire transformations in Buffy and how they are signalled in language. However, here I would like to discuss Whedon's recent contribution to the Marvel Telecinematic Universe. I will focus on two characters that undergo an important transformation: Steve Rogers/Captain America in *Marvel's The Avengers* (2012) and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), and Phil Coulson in *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013-present). Both Rogers and Coulson journey to a position of leadership. The former grows from a reluctant member of the Avengers to a confident leader; the latter goes from an agent following orders to the Director of S.H.I.E.L.D. I will explore how these transformations are expressed in the language both men use: their lexical choices, politeness strategies, and conversation behaviour. I will also show how they assert their leadership via language.