

David Simmons: “The Future’s so Bright and I Owe it All To You”: Considering Negative Capability in Relation to Joss Whedon’s Unfinished Oeuvre

This paper explores the ways in which selected, unfinished projects have functioned as a tool to preserve the perceived subcultural status of Joss Whedon amongst a particular sector of his fan-base. Significantly, this process intensified at a time when Whedon’s commercial profile increased exponentially; as the co-organisers of the fifth Slayage conference claimed: “Whedon’s audience has expanded beyond what most writers, producers, and directors dare to dream of” (Comeford et al 2012: online). I read this process of fan interaction with Whedon’s unmade projects in terms of ‘negative capability’. Henry Jenkins, amongst others, has popularised this concept as a “gap or hole viewers want to fill in” (2011, Online); as one of the prime motivating factors behind generative fan activity. In contrast with this reading of ‘negative space’ as primarily textually orientated, this paper will apply such ideas extra-textually. By looking at fan posts concerning the still unmade *Wonder-Woman* and *Dr Horrible’s Sing Along Blog sequel* I will argue that the continuing immateriality of these ventures has consciously allowed for the creation of a kind of epistemological gap in which potential viewers are ‘freed’ from the constraints of existent TV shows and films to invent their own ‘best case scenarios’ that tell us more about their cultural and subcultural orientations towards Whedon, and his persona, than they do about their desires for a new *Wonder Woman* film or *Dr Horrible* series.