

Michael Starr: “It’s the End of the World. It’s Rather Important Really”: Accelerationist Aesthetics of the Whedonverses

Amongst science fiction’s most enduring tropes is the apocalyptic portrayal of the end of civilization; in keeping with this teleology, since the inaugural episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the Whedonverses have consistently positioned depictions of the end of the world as a backdrop for their speculative drama. For example, *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, *Dollhouse*, *The Cabin in the Woods* and *The Avengers* have all utilised the threat of (technological, ecological, Malthusian or demonic) armageddons as metaphors with which to reflect upon and critique Western culture (Vinci 225.) Indeed, various Whedon scholars (such as King and Wilcox) have explicitly identified Whedonverse representations of the end of the world as explosive negations of capitalism, in which the apocalypse carries with it all manner of fundamentally utopian fantasies of bringing about a radically different world (King 5.) The proposed paper draws upon, expands and problematizes such prior readings via the contemporary notion of philosophical Accelerationism. As defined by philosopher Benjamin Noys (who first coined the term), Accelerationism is the bastard offspring of a furtive liaison between Marxism and science fiction, occurring at the intersection of Marxist, postmodernism and techno-capitalist ideologies (Shaviro 2). Its basic premise is that the only way out is the way through: to get beyond capitalism, we need to push its technologies to the point where they explode. In other words, rather than abandoning technological modernity for illusory homeostatic Eden (a position identified by the aforementioned readings of Whedonverse apocalypses), we should instead exploit and ramp up its incendiary potential. Noys points out that this may be dubious as a political strategy, but claims that it works as a powerful artistic program. Drawing from the aforementioned Whedonverse texts, with primary emphasis upon *Dollhouse* and *The Avengers* and *Avengers; Age of Ultron*, this paper will therefore argue that, in their position on the cutting edge of speculative popular culture, Whedonverse texts can be viewed as cyphers as to the transhumanist or posthumanist transformations espoused by the Accelerationist telos, wherein “the future must be cracked open once again, unfastening our horizons towards the universal possibilities of the Outside” (Williams & Srnicek 23-34).

Indicative Bibliography

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