

“We Are Not What We Are”: Hyperdiegesis in the Whedonverse

Alyson Buckman

Continuing on from the premises established at Slayage 5 in “‘Didn’t Get the Memo? Hero of the People Now’: Joss Whedon, Hat Tricks, and the Complication of Viewer Responses,” this essay will discuss the hyperdiegesis of the Whedonverse in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Agents of SHIELD*, and *The Avengers*. Watching *The Cabin in the Woods* again in preparation for writing this abstract, I was struck by the many homages to Whedon’s previous work and the connections to many of his current fictions. From the shock—or chuckle—of recognition to the deeper, layered construction of meaning and expectation found in some of the hyperdiegetic casting, Whedon’s use and reuse of particular actors, themes, motifs, and language creates particularized meaning in the Whedonverse. Sometimes the connection is a simple game of “degrees of separation,” aka the Kevin Bacon game. At other times, the connections and repeat appearances create richer textualities, as in Fran Kranz’s depiction of Marty the Stoner so soon after his depiction of Topher, the “sociopath in a sweater vest.” Both Marty and Topher are gifted visionaries who initially seem clueless but are revealed to have much greater depth at the end of the world. In contrast, Kranz’s role in *Much Ado* seems that much more dull in comparison to Marty and Topher. However, this contrast is enabled by the knowledge of the Whedon fan, clearly bringing more to his/her viewing experience than the non-fan. At a minimum, I will be discussing the results of the hyperdiegetic casting of these more recent texts, although, if time allows, I may also discuss hyperdiegesis in general in these texts.