

All the World's a Spaceship

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With his recent film interpretation of *Much Ado about Nothing* Joss Whedon reveals an affinity for the relationships portrayed in Shakespearean comedy. A consistent feature of Shakespeare's comedies is a group of dispossessed people who find themselves isolated from the court or city. The band of travelers aboard *Serenity* in Whedon's *Firefly* may call to mind such exiles and runaways. When Duke Senior in *As You Like It* first appears before his "comates and brothers in exile," he asks, "Are not these woods / More free from peril than the envious court?" (2.1.3-4). The Duke's sentiment is echoed in the *Firefly* theme that opens each episode: "Take my love. Take my land, / Take me where I cannot stand. / I don't care. I'm still free." Some episodes open with Shepherd Book's voiceover description of defeated independents' "drift[ing] to the edges of the system far from alliance control." In Shakespeare, these places removed from the so-called civilized world become the sites where enemies are reconciled, conflicts are resolved, and lovers are united. In *Firefly*, under the veneer of Western/Science-Fiction action, the stories that unfold out in "the black" seem to emphasize similar themes. Considering this Shakespearean dimension may shed light not only on the tangle of relationships aboard the ship—potential and reluctant lovers, brother and sister, and captain and crew—but also on Mal Reynolds and his lost faith.