

“This Is Where I Am... Ain’t a Place of Wishes”: Kyriarchy and the Preservation of power in the *Firefly* comic, *Better Days*

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The *Firefly/Serenity* ‘verse (which includes 14 episodes, a film, and currently 10 comics) reflects current socio-economic trends within a distanced (yet easily relatable) futuristic confine. Based on this understanding, critics have examined the ‘verse’s racial politics (Jencson 2008; Curry 2008; Brown 2008; Amy-Chinn 2006; Fong 2010), its linguistic elements (Sullivan 2005; Fong 2010), its commentary on post/colonialism, neo/imperialism and globalisation (Bussolini 2008; Jencson 2008); the sub/versioning of authority that focuses on Malcolm Reynolds’s relationship with the crew and/or with the Alliance (Lackey 2005; Ginn 2012), and its problematic feminism (Amy-Chinn 2006; Greco 2010; Ginn 2012). These aspects are not disparate and often influence each other (as is evident from the critical overlap evidenced in this selection of writing on the franchise); the ‘verse displays an intersectionality that takes into account existing and potentially persisting structures of oppression and discrimination and their overlap, what Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza terms ‘kyriarchy.’ Within these structures, the crew of *Serenity* both challenge and reiterate the structures of power in play.

It is this assumption of challenge and the power gained from the refusal to homogenise that makes the plot of the three part *Serenity* comic *Better Days* of interest. The storyline explores a drastic financial change for the crew after a successful heist, suggesting that unless they deliberately choose to, they no longer have to conform to a number of the expectations previously dictated to them by circumstance. Indeed, their fantasies reveal a longing for the sort of luxury traditionally associated with core planets, suggesting that the change in their financial circumstances would evidence a much larger cultural shift. However, before this shift becomes a possibility, Mal creates a situation wherein the money is stolen and the crew once again returns to their role as rebellious outliers within the same discriminatory structures.

This paper thus aims to briefly outline elements of kyriarchy in the *Firefly/Serenity* verse, before focusing on a close analysis of the events of *Better Days* in order to suggest that Mal, far from his perceived role as rebellious outlier, is instead actively complicit in the persistence of a number of these systems, relying on them to retain both his identity and authority.