

Hugh H. Davis

**“The Drama Is In Us”:
Pirandellian Echoes in *Dollhouse***

“Humankind cannot bear very much reality.”

T. S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton,” *The Four Quartets*

“Their brains are melting and that reality crap is the reason why.”

Gabriel Crestejo (Kurt Caceres),

“Ghost,” *Dollhouse*, Episode One

[1] The representation of reality through literary means is the core of fiction, with some works directly addressing themes which revolve around the nature of identity, the intersections between reality and fiction, levels of consciousness and awareness, and the uncertainty of the human condition. At the core of these fictions is a discussion of the very nature of reality and the confrontation of characters with their existence and purpose. One of the most significant authors to tackle these concerns, particularly to address the artificiality of art as it attempts to frame and create a realistic simulation, is Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello, a “dramatist of consciousness” (Nienhuis). Pirandello’s works, especially *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), focus on the fractured nature of reality and the overlaps between theatre and the truth which theatre purports to (re)present. In early 2009, television viewers were introduced to a drama which unfolds with Pirandellian echoes, opening its own discussion in how characters deal with their own understanding of existence, as explored through the science-fiction series *Dollhouse*.

Slayage
The Journal
of the Whedon Studies Association

[2] Viewers and critics alike were both curious and anxious to see and judge Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse* when it premiered in February 2009 amid tremendous buzz and hype, marking the writer's return to series television after his short sojourn into the cinematic world and since the commercial failure of *Firefly*, his last series turned would-be movie franchise. While the program's ratings were low, *Dollhouse* was renewed for a second season (although Fox changed its airing schedule and combined some episodes to "burn" the run of episodes more quickly after the network cancelled the program);¹ *Dollhouse* has found a strong cult following, with the show seeming to gain momentum (along with critical acclaim) as it progressed through its initial episodes, revealing an intricacy and depth to its mythos. With each installment, the show proves to be increasingly complex; just as the characters reveal an increasing awareness, so too does the program reveal an increasing reliance on allusions and intricate story arcs to produce its drama. The series follows a number of "Actives," humans whose minds are repeatedly wiped and imprinted with new personalities and characteristics, as they are hired by clients (of the titular structure/agency) to complete a variety of assignments. However, over the course of the program, the show's protagonist Echo (Eliza Dushku) grows increasingly self-aware, despite her "Active" status (and the fact her programming should not allow memories of prior assignments or from before she became a doll), with ongoing story arcs dealing with Echo and other dolls coming to realize their ever-reinvented roles. It is through this motif of self-realization that Whedon's show actually reveals its most complex post-modern connections, for *Dollhouse* reverberates here with echoes of Pirandello as it asks viewers to consider just who does control a character's narrative and fate. Just as Pirandello's characters question their true nature(s), debating the role of the masks they wear, so too do the dolls begin to challenge their own nature.

[3] In Pirandello's most celebrated play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the six titular characters invade a theatre, interrupting rehearsal of another play, demanding their story be completed and presented. These characters, who forever exist in the "Eternal Moment" of literature and thus are defined as those characters created for the unfinished play, are figures constantly shaped by the roles for which they were designed and written by an absent author. So, too, are the "Actives" forever being defined by the

authorities who run the Dollhouse. Pirandello, who is one of the chief figures of modernism, repeatedly asks the readers to contemplate "What is Truth?," and his plays, particularly *Six Characters*, consider the ramifications for characters who ask that question and who come to self-realization about their own roles (in the drama and in society). Like the titular six Characters, the *Dollhouse* "Actives" find themselves questioning reality and debating their very place and role, as they grow in self-awareness; Echo develops, revealing Pirandellian traits within the series. Echo's evolution, where she starts to think outside her parameters, causes her to wonder continually about the truth behind her existence. But as Echo and the viewers repeatedly discover, the truth is inconstant, supporting the statement made by Adele DeWitt (Olivia Williams) in the first episode: "Nothing is what it appears to be" ("Ghost" 1.1).

[4] Joss Whedon's tongue-in-cheek pitch for the show, "*Alias* meets *Quantum Leap*,"² suggests its ever-changing (and perhaps difficult-to-define) format, which he further states is "a thriller with the leeway to tell family stories" (Levin). Depending on the engagement being depicted, the genre (and style) can change each week, as particularly demonstrated in the first season with installments offering murder mystery ("Haunted" 1.10), high-tech heist ("Gray Hour" 1.4), outdoor adventure/manhunt ("The Target" 1.2), and spy caper ("A Spy in the House of Love" 1.9), and with Echo's assignments changing from hostage negotiator ("Ghost") to pop backup singer ("Stage Fright" 1.3) to social worker ("Briar Rose" 1.11) to lost wife ("Man on the Street" 1.6). These ever-altering factors, built around what Whedon labels as Echo's "weird super power of becoming a different person all the time" (Bierly), demonstrate the show's flexibility, linking a series of realistic worlds within a science-fiction framework. This genre-blending is typical of Whedon,³ but traditionally his shows tend to merge two distinct genres and develop stories and characters from that particular and fruitful blend. *Dollhouse* offers a kaleidoscopic view of genres, with the Dollhouse the constant as the prism shifts for differing views. *Six Characters* is able to introduce its metadrama and start to challenge the conventions of the play by initially seeming traditional, for it is written in "an essentially realistic style" (O'Malley) appearing even "in a spirit of ultra-realism" (Nienhuis), and its departure from realism allows its opening discussion of the representation

of reality and how that is most authentically achieved. Using this departure point, the theatre becomes Pirandello's forum for commentary on the reality of human existence. *Dollhouse* similarly uses its shifts in genre to open discussion of what is real and what reality should be presented. When asked if the show might be used in future episodes for social commentary, Whedon explained, "More and more we're interested in dealing with the abuse of power and the various ways people can do that and what it will do with our characters when they're pushed to the edge" (Comic Con Panel).⁴ That abuse of power hinges on controlling perception of the truth.

[5] By its nature, the show is partially and artfully deceptive, or at least designed around the uncertainty of truth. At moments in the show, reality is revealed through installments and not always shown directly or completely. With its primary characters taking part in engagements in which the "Actives" adopt new identities, the representation of reality is in constant flux. Narratively, an episode might contain multiple redirections, starting with one plot or subplot and then shifting, as players in that storyline prove to be "Actives" on assignment, with a change in focus for the story. Characters are introduced in one role, only to prove they exist in another or have multiple parts to play, with the initial part appearing as the teaser of an episode, only to be redirected once "hooking" viewers. More significantly, characters who initially appear in one role might prove to have a further (and more varied) purpose in later episodes. In the first season of *Dollhouse*, this revelation about characters occurs on three noteworthy occasions. The first is perhaps the most benign, as viewers discover that Lubov, the Russian informant for FBI Agent Paul Ballard (Tahmoh Penikett) is actually the Doll Victor (Enver Gjokaj). This revelation creates dramatic irony as Ballard continually tries to use Lubov to get closer to the Dollhouse but misses the fact he is talking to one of its "Active" models already. Further characters are revealed to be Dolls in even more dramatic fashion twice later in the series. Mellie, Ballard's neighbor and romantic interest, is first revealed to the audience to be the sleeper agent November (Miracle Laurie), shown in the climax of "Man on the Street", when DeWitt has her kill a rogue handler, and then revealed to Ballard two episodes later, when "Mellie" is used to deliver a message. Even more significantly, however, is the revelation in "Omega" (1.12) that Dr. Saunders, the Dollhouse physician,

is actually the Doll Whiskey (Amy Acker), now permanently assigned to this engagement, as the rogue Doll Alpha (Alan Tudyk) killed the original Dr. Saunders and mutilated Whiskey's face, rendering her useless as an "Active" outside of the house.

[6] This disclosure is a watershed moment in the series.⁵ It reveals that the history of two characters has become entwined into one figure after a single horrible incident, and it shows both that characters inside of the Dollhouse (presumably not on assignment) cannot be trusted to be whom they purport to be and that the Dollhouse can extend life for those people whom they so wish. Re-viewing episodes does show that Dr. Saunders is perhaps more than a sympathetic doctor, but the idea that any character in the show might, in truth, be an "Active" changes all perceptions of the world depicted as the reality further distorts, and characters and viewers alike have to question what they have been and are being shown. As Ballard says after he enters the Dollhouse, "My whole life isn't real" ("Briar Rose").

[7] The perception of who might be trusted is obviously also distorted. Echo is clearly the show's protagonist; thus she is the focus of audience sympathy and concern from the start. As such, viewers are positioned against certain characters, such as Laurence Dominic (Reed Diamond), the over-zealous head of security for the Dollhouse, yet his insistence that he actually wants to protect Echo and to protect the world from the potential abuse of Dollhouse technology actually leaves him on the side of good (particularly considering the future glimpsed in the two "Epitaph" episodes [1.13 and 2.13] and given the increasing abuses of power witnessed through the show's final season). Those characters who are most protective of Echo, and thus seemingly garnering traditional audience support, are also at the least complicit in the ongoing operations of the Dollhouse, thus raising the question of whether they truly have her (or any of the "Actives") best interests at heart. Most significantly, the second season disclosure that Boyd (Harry Lennix), seemingly Echo's main protector and confidant throughout the entire program, is in fact one of the heads of Rossum Corporation and thus one of the chief antagonists, shows how little viewers can depend on traditional expectations. And Alpha, the first season's ongoing villain, is clearly positioned to be feared, yet his broadest goals, to stop the Dollhouse and get revenge on Rossum Corporation for what their technology has done

to people, have a noble origin (even if his tactics may be extreme). Clearly, when the composite Echo faces him in the first season finale, the viewer is to see he remains the villain, yet Echo's statement in "Epitaph One" that Alpha is protecting those "Actuals" at Safe-Haven from having their minds wiped suggests that he, an evolved Doll, has a conscience for good.⁶ If Alpha becomes protector, and DeWitt, who initially declares she does believe the work Rossum is doing is for a greater good, shows an evolution of her own to show compassion for the souls of the "Actives," then the oscillation of reality blurs expected moral lines, particularly through the manipulation of audience expectations for dramatic form.

[8] Such confused moral expectations are emblematic of Pirandello. In *Six Characters*, the audience is deliberately drawn to the titular characters, particularly the Father, who dominates the drama. As such, the audience offers sympathy to the plight of all the characters, as they desire to complete and perform their drama. Pirandello plays with audience expectations that the protagonist deserves audience support, and the play hinges on the Father's ardent drive to have his story told. As the play unfolds, the audience realizes that the Father is shaping the narrative so that he appears more sympathetic and even, with the help of the Manager, controlling the narrative in the name of artistic convention, so that his perspective remains. The Father attempts to recast his morally questionable behavior so that the unfinished drama will conclude with him seeming to have acted in a more responsible manner, insisting the truth has to be seen in the way he perceives it. The playgoers' desire to support and even connect with the main character(s) allows a manipulation of convention and expectation. Throughout Pirandello, questions of morality are obscured through his multi-faceted view of the truth (Nienhuis), for in "the collision between art and actuality," the interactions of characters are defined not by traditional moral guidelines but instead through the "plural aspects of identity" (Sypher 67). The idea that one character might be right or wrong is moot in the face of the uncertainty of human experience.

[9] While the Pirandellian echoes permeate the series, becoming increasingly evident throughout the first season, many works are evoked and directly referenced over the course of the show. The familiar man-hunts-man plot of "The Most Dangerous Game,"⁷ long a staple of adventure series, is

given a *Dollhouse* spin in "The Target," with the Dollhouse having missed the reality about the killer, who took the alias Richard Connell, the author of the original short story. The title of the program's penultimate episode, "The Hollow Man" (2.12), evokes T.S. Eliot, with a seminal modernist poem suggesting the end of the world will not meet expectations.⁸ In "Belle Chose" (2.3), Echo is a student in a medieval literature class, allowing allusions to Chaucer and potential feminist readings of "The Wife of Bath's Tale."⁹ In the first season finale, the schizophrenic Alpha, after first declaring himself a god, declares he is *übermensch*, offering Nietzsche's philosophical concept as an explanation of his superiority.¹⁰ The Bible, particularly the New Testament story of the Apostle Paul,¹¹ is directly referenced in "True Believer" (1.5), when Echo is programmed to infiltrate a religious cult, and Biblical and religious allusions are offered throughout Season One: the afterlife and the nature of the soul is discussed (among other times) in "Haunted"; viewers find an evocation of the concept of the Alpha and the Omega; and the Dollhouse itself is compared generically to Paradise (in "Epitaph One," as it is seen as a refuge for those on the run) and specifically to the Garden of Eden (in "Briar Rose" as Kepler/Alpha tells Ballard, "The apples were monitored").¹²

[10] The majority of allusions through the initial episodes are to myth and fantasy, further suggesting an unreal quality pervading the series. While her name comes from the NATO Phonetic Alphabet, Echo also recalls the myth of the nymph Echo, cursed by Hera to have no voice except as a mimic, and unable to speak to Narcissus, with whom she falls in love. Like the mythic character, *Dollhouse's* Echo is expected to lack a personal voice, yet she disrupts this expectation with her evolving nature. As Léa Dickinson intelligently points out in "By George! I Think She's Got It," the entire imprinting process and *Dollhouse* premise have origins in the enduring myth of Pygmalion, in which a man attempts to design the perfect mate (7-8). In the most famous updating of the myth, George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and its musical adaptation *My Fair Lady*, Prof. Higgins is striving to wipe old, supposedly undesirable habits and reprogram Eliza Doolittle to act and behave as he deems necessary. Like an odd combination of a Dollhouse client and Topher Brink (Fran Kranz), master of "Active" imprimatur, Higgins seeks

to control the fate of Eliza through design and by creating an illusion of the new Eliza as a proper young woman.

[11] Throughout Season One, repeated allusions are made to fairy tales. While these vary in their source, they tend to involve Paul Ballard's seemingly Quixotic quest to find the Dollhouse, including fellow agents mocking the fact he appears to be chasing an urban legend.¹³ However, one fairy tale does get directly addressed, with the episode "Briar Rose" setting up a parallel for Echo with Sleeping Beauty.¹⁴ In this episode, Echo is working with a troubled young girl at a youth center and reads the children there the "Sleeping Beauty" story. The young girl, Susan (Hannah Leigh Dworkin), challenges the story for not making sense and criticizes the need for the heroine to be rescued. Echo suggests thinking of the prince as the fulfillment of Briar Rose's dream, with the clear setup for the viewers to see Echo as the sleeping princess looking for the dream fulfillment of a rescue. Through a voiceover of Echo reading the fairy tale as Paul Ballard gets into the Dollhouse, the implication is that he is the prince coming to save her (although his exclamation of "It's real" suggests his dream is the one coming true), and the sequence with Ballard opening the sleeping pods for the Dolls seems to reinforce this metaphor.¹⁵ However, as with many expectations in this series, the reality is different. Instead, once Alpha gains control, he declares to the newly-imprinted Echo, who kisses him and calls him her prince, "I told you I'd come rescue you."¹⁶ While Ballard does get to rescue November temporarily from her work as a Doll and finally save Echo by catching her original personality wedge in "Omega" (Wax), this would-be Prince Charming then joins the Dollhouse. What resembles a clear metaphor is easily twisted in the series, with even the fairy tale archetypes shifting from expectations.¹⁷

[12] The apparent conventionality of the fairy tale selection is not as straightforward as it might initially seem. As a genre, fairy tales obviously are fantasy and often built upon a notion of wish fulfillment overcoming impossibilities,¹⁸ and the story of "Sleeping Beauty" might seem surprising given other elements of the series, but Echo's understanding that it is okay to be rescued by someone else if you are weak or unable to help yourself reveals the depth, power, and extent of the Dollhouse, suggesting that while the series revolves around Echo's evolving consciousness, it does not hinge

on her saving herself, despite her growing heroic status with each episode. Further, the story "Sleeping Beauty" contains in its original form some commentary on the very nature of fairy tales and stories, making it an exceptionally appropriate parallel for *Dollhouse*. As Clement notes, Charles Perrault's original written version offers a moral or message which, instead of reinforcing (now) conventional thinking about children's stories, questions the tale itself and the love story running through it, even reminding readers how unrealistic the suggestions about love might in fact be (3). "Sleeping Beauty" in its initial incarnation contains questions about reality and has origins in which it questions its own form, making it the prime fairy tale for *Dollhouse* with its Pirandellian views of reality.

[13] Pirandello's takes on reality center around a belief that his characters, as people, embody roles that outside forces make them play, a concept he defined through the concept of the wearing of masks. For Pirandello, "the adoption of the mask is the inevitable consequence of being human" (Brustein 109). The characters in Pirandello's works present themselves through their masks, a representation of who they are and how they wish to be perceived. The masks promote illusion and hide truth, clearly, as they suggest through deception the means through which a character is defined, but these masks "do not just hide reality; they are reality" (Fairchild). Like an "Active" in the *Dollhouse*, the character's mask predetermines his or her traits and actions in such a way that it encompasses that character's reality. The masks embody states of mind, so that personae become real through interaction, just as Dolls are defined by their engagements. The mask, then, becomes the defining point for the character, as illustrated in *Six Characters* when the Father explains about the Mother that "She isn't a woman, she is a mother" (8), for her maternal mask defines her, and, as the Father goes on to explain, limits her role—her past history, including an affair with the Father's former assistant, is inconsequential to the mask of motherhood through which she is defined. Like a newly-imprinted Doll, the Mother's reality is defined by her mask, just as the Doll is defined by its engagement. In "Instinct," Echo's assignment is to take the role of a mother to an infant child. When Topher attempts to wipe her mind and return her to her Doll state, her maternal instincts prove too strong to be overridden. Just as Pirandello's Mother is defined by her

maternal relationship, so too is Echo here fully encompassing her assigned role as a mother.¹⁹

[14] When completing an assignment, the “Active” normally knows only the memory and consciousness provided in an imprint, and these memories then are ever present, just as the characters are forever living within the present. This “Eternal Moment” for Pirandello is key—the characters are in “an immutable reality,” while those they encounter in the theatre exist in a reality which “is a mere transitory and fleeting illusion” (44). As DeWitt explains in “Needs,” “The world of our Actives must be one of constant certainty.” The imprinted Dolls face a scripted world, shaped by Rossum Corporation, their handlers, and the clients who pay for their services. They are expected to wear their masks and embrace this expected reality.

[15] The Dollhouse is a Pirandellian theatre, with reality and the stage overlapping (and perhaps colliding). If, as the Manager in *Six Characters* explains, “Your soul or whatever you like to call it takes shape” in the theatre (26), then the Dollhouse is the space within this series that souls, or whatever they might be called, are shaped. As the “Actives” glitch from their expected roles and continue to evolve, as Echo demonstrates she is exceedingly capable, they begin to question their identities and the reality surrounding them in the Dollhouse. If “the Pirandellian hero is an actor, a character in disguise” (Brustein 111), then the twenty-first century manifestations of his heroes are found within the “Actives.” The Dolls who begin to question their reality are the titular six Characters, aware of a purpose for which they are expected to act, but anxious also to move beyond those constricting bounds. While the Father seems to be most concerned with completing their drama (and certainly offers the most encompassing statements about the expected roles for each character), he also is determined to shape the narrative individually, a power not afforded a singular character from a drama.²⁰ The Father, growing aware of his assigned mask and expected role, begins to question how his story might be completed, and his actions, leading the other characters, disrupt the expectations of those in the theatre. Echo, similarly, is continually growing aware of her assigned mask and expected roles as a Doll, and when she begins to question the reality she faces, her actions disrupt the expectations of those seemingly in charge of the Dollhouse. The absent author abandoned

his Characters once he “saw them as they were—i.e., alive” (Mazzaro 510), and his abrupt departure leaves the Characters searching for further meaning and understanding. Those responsible for the Dolls recall and realize just what the “Actives” truly are, and they, like the author of the play within Pirandello’s drama, see the Dolls begin to question their reality as they start to find their own existence and understanding.

[16] In the first act of Pirandello’s play, the Father insists, “The drama is in us, and we are the drama...Our inner passion drives us on to this” (6). The drama is within them, and it is Pirandello’s characters who embody it, just as Whedon’s Dolls encompass their drama. Both the Dolls and the characters have unfinished stories, as they seek resolution to their questions of just what is real. That which seems to be illusion for those observing the characters—the very artifice of theatre²¹—is their reality, and thus those in the theatre with them are part of that same reality. Art illuminates and also imprisons these characters (Mazzaro 504). In the climax of *Six Characters*, the actors, confused by all they have just witnessed, declare that which they have seen is “only pretence,” only to be rebuffed by the Father’s correction: “Reality, sir, reality!” (52). These characters’ reality may seem to be pretense, but it encompasses all those in the theatre, and all within Pirandello’s pages are part of this “dramaturgical hall of mirrors” (O’Malley), just as, in the end, all in Whedon’s vision are part of the Dollhouse. In “Echo” (1.0), the unaired pilot for the series, Topher explains to Boyd, “We live in the Dollhouse, which makes us dolls. And the people playing with us are little children.” As the drama of *Dollhouse* unfolds, its Pirandellian echoes define it as a series tackling complex considerations about reality and the truth, particularly as the audience sorts which characters represent different possibilities for truth and determine whether mankind can truly bear this brand of reality.

Works Cited

“Belle Chose.” Writ. Tim Minear. Dir. David Solomon. *Dollhouse*. Fox Broadcasting Company. Season Two, Episode Three. 9 Oct. 2009. Television.

Bierly, Mandi. "Exclusive: Joss Whedon on 'Dollhouse'—'Back With Such A Vengeance.'" *EW.com*. Entertainment Weekly, 11 June 2009. Web. 15 June 2009.

"Briar Rose." Writ. Jane Espenson. Dir. Dwight Little. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Eleven. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

Brustein, Robert. "Pirandello's Drama of Revolt." *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Glauco Cambon. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967. 103-133. Print.

Cairns, Christopher. "Six Characters in Search of an Author: Overview." *Reference Guide to World Literature*. Ed. Lesley Henderson. 2nd Ed. New York: St. James Press, 1995. *Literature Resource Center*. Gale Resource Group. Web. 28 May 2009.

Clement, Louise Mann. "Finally a Daughter was Born, a Princess." Popular Cultural Association in the South/American Culture Association in the South Annual Meeting. Wilmington, NC. 1 Oct. 2009. Conference Presentation.

"Comic-Con 2009 Entire *Dollhouse* Panel." *Watching Dollhouse: Fansite & Forum for Joss Whedon's Dollhouse FOX TV Series*. Posted by Roco, 26 July 2009. Web. 4 August 2009. <<http://watchingdollhouse.com/comic-con-2009-entire-dollhouse-panel/#more-2026>>.

Dickinson, Léa. "'By George! I Think She's Got It': Perfection, As a Continuous Theme." Popular Cultural Association in the South/American Culture Association in the South Annual Meeting. Wilmington, NC. 1 Oct. 2009. Conference Presentation.

"Echo." Writ. and dir. Joss Whedon. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Unaired Episode. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

Eliot, T.S. "Burnt Norton." *Four Quartets*. June 2000. Web. 31 July 2009. <<http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/norton.html>>.

- . "The Hollow Men." *The American Tradition in Literature*. Vol. II. Eds. George Perkins and Barbara Perkins. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994. 1052-1054. Print.
- "Epitaph One." Teleplay Maurissa Tancharoen and Jed Whedon; story Joss Whedon. Dir. David Solomon. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Unaired Episode. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- "Epitaph Two: Return." Writ. Maurissa Tancharoen, Jed Whedon, and Andrew Chambliss. Dir. David Solomon. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode Thirteen. Fox Broadcasting Company. 29 Jan. 2010. Television.
- Fairchild, Terry. "Varieties of consciousness in Pirandello's Henry IV." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 34.2 (Fall 2001): 29+. *ProQuest Learning: Literature*. Web. 28 May 2009.
- "Ghost." Writ. and dir. Joss Whedon. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode One. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- "Gray Hour." Writ. Sarah Fain and Elizabeth Craft. Dir. Rod Hardy. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Four. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- "Haunted." Writ. Jane Espenson, Maurissa Tancharoen, and Jed Whedon. Dir. Elodie Keene. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Ten. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- "The Hollow Man." Writ. Michelle Fazekas, Tara Butters, and Tracy Bellomo. Dir. Terrence O'Hara. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode Twelve. Fox Broadcasting Company. 15 Jan. 2010. Television.
- "Instinct." Writ. Michele Fazekas and Tara Butters. Dir. Marita Grabiak. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode Two. Fox Broadcasting Company. 2 Oct. 2009. Television.
- "Left Hand." Writ. Tracy Bellomo. Dir. Wendy Stanzler. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode Six. Fox Broadcasting Company. 4 Dec. 2009. Television.
- Levin, Gary. "'Dollhouse' unlocks different identities each week." *USAToday.com*. USA Today, 11 Feb. 2009. Web. 11 June 2009.

- "Man on the Street." Writ. Joss Whedon. Dir. David Straiton. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Six. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- Mazzaro, Jerome. "Pirandello's *Sei Personaggi* and Expressive Form." *Comparative Drama* 30.4 (Winter 1996/1997): 503-524. Print.
- "Meet Jane Doe." Writ. Maurissa Tancharoen. Dir. Dwight H. Little. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode Seven. Fox Broadcasting Company. 11 Dec. 2009. Television.
- "Needs." Writ. Tracy Bellomo. Dir. Felix Alcalá. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Eight. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- Nienhuis, Terry R. "A discussion of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*." *Drama for Students*. Detroit: Gale. *Literature Resource Center*. Gale Resource Group. Web. 28 May 2009.
- O'Malley, Lurana Donnels. "Plays-Within-Realistic-Plays: Metadrama as Critique of Drama in Pirandello and Chekhov." *Theatre Studies* 35 (1990): 40-49. Rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, Vol. 172. Detroit: Gale, 2006. *Literature Resource Center*. Gale Resource Group. Web. 28 May 2009.
- "Omega." Writ. and dir. Tim Minear. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Twelve. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- "Public Eye." Writ. Andrew Chambliss. Dir. David Solomon. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode Five. Fox Broadcasting Company. 4 Dec. 2009. Television.
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Trans. Edward Storer. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998. Print.
- "A Spy in the House of Love." Writ. Andrew Chambliss. Dir. David Solomon. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Nine. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.
- "Stage Fright." Writ. Maurissa Tancharoen and Jed Whedon. Dir. David Solomon. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Three. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment. 2009. DVD.

Sypher, Wylie. "Cubist Drama." *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Glauco Cambon. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967. 67-71. Print.

"The Target." Writ. and dir. Steven S. DeKnight. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Two. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

"True Believer." Writ. Tim Minear. Dir. Allan Kroeker. *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Season One*. Episode Five. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD.

"Vows." Writ. and dir. Joss Whedon. *Dollhouse*. Season Two, Episode One. Fox Broadcasting Company. 25 Sep. 2009. Television.

Wax, Alyse. "Dollhouse Episode 12 'Omega.'" *Television Tourniquet: We Play in the 'Dollhouse.'* FEARNet, 9 May 2009. Web. 11 June 2009.

¹ For example, "The Public Eye" (2.5) and "The Left Hand" (2.6) aired back to back on 4 December 2009.

² *Alias* (2001-2006) is a series in which Sydney Bristow (Jennifer Garner), a young female spy, appropriates a variety of aliases and disguises to complete her missions. *Quantum Leap* (1989-1993) is a science-fiction series in which Sam Beckett (Scott Bakula) leaps from body to body through his own time stream to right wrongs.

³ Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* blends teen-aged drama with horror; *Buffy's* spinoff *Angel* blends horror/fantasy with the detective genre; *Firefly* blends science-fiction with the western. Even Whedon's web-based mini-series, *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, blends the musical with superhero action. While elements of other genres may be found within these productions, *Dollhouse* is unique in its constant shifting.

⁴ It should be noted that the show has offered significant commentary, both explicitly and implicitly, on the use of humans as slaves, both wittingly and unwittingly.

⁵ Such revelations continue throughout the show's final season, with viewers discovering that a variety of characters are working under false pretenses and serving as Actives, often without knowing their own role as a Doll.

⁶ Significantly, in the future of "Epitaph One," Alpha is still referred to by his code-name, so his identity is still defined by his connection to the Dollhouse as he helps in the fight against Rossum, while Echo now has reverted to being Caroline. This works in contrary to Echo's statement in "Meet Jane Doe" (2.7) when she refuses to be called Caroline, "I'm not her.

My name is Echo." In "Epitaph Two," Alpha expects to finally revert to his original personality.

⁷ In Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game," Rainsford, a world-renowned hunter, shipwrecks on an island controlled by Count Zaroff, who, it turns out, hunts men for sport, leaving Rainsford to try and survive and escape on the island as Zaroff hunts his prey.

⁸ Eliot's "The Hollow Men" states the world ends "not with a bang but a whimper" (Eliot 1054). One may argue that *Dollhouse* does end with a bang, but it definitely defies Hollywood story-telling convention.

⁹ See Masson, this issue.

¹⁰ From a literary standpoint, the *übermensch* concept is most clearly explored in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Like Raskolnikov, Alpha justifies his crimes with the idea he, as a more highly evolved being, has a right to enact his own brand and definition of justice on those he sees as beneath him.

¹¹ The story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who is struck blind on the Road to Damascus and confronted by Christ, is told in *Acts of the Apostles* and established as a parallel for Echo, who is temporarily blinded through an operation which allows the Dollhouse to use her eyes as cameras. Her religious conversion, then, is real to her for only the time she is imprinted.

¹² In "Epitaph Two: Return," the Dollhouse is compared to Hell.

¹³ In "Man on the Street," a reporter suggests, "Like every good fairy tale, the story [of the Dollhouse] grows more intricate and more divisive every day." Besides references to Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, and the idea that Ballard is a "white knight," multiple allusions are made to "Little Red Riding Hood," a fairy tale previously linked to *Buffy*, such as in "Fear, Itself" (4.4).

¹⁴ See also St. Louis and Riggs, this issue.

¹⁵ In "Vows" (2.1), Boyd expresses concerns that Ballard is using Echo to fulfill a fantasy of being a hero.

¹⁶ Alpha continues the metaphor in the next episode, "Omega," telling Echo when they reach his lair, "Welcome to your castle, my princess."

¹⁷ The fairy tale allusions continue in season two with Sen. Perrin (Alexis Denisof) telling his wife Cindy (Stacey Scowley) "I'm your white knight," with her replying "And I'm your damsel." Their refrain of "Ever after" suggests a familiarity with fairy tale associations, though this proves to be yet another misdirection.

¹⁸ In "Instinct" (2.2), Topher announces, "The possibilities are pretty much endless," while Boyd asks Dr. Saunders in "The Target," "Isn't that what we do here? The Impossible?"

¹⁹ Similarly, in the first season episode "Needs," November/Madeline Costley reveals her most intrinsic needs are tied to her time as a mother.

²⁰ The Father revels in the immortality his role as a Character grants him yet also wants the power of the theatre to allow him to craft a story in which he is hero.

²¹ According to Cairns, Pirandello's view is that the theatre "relates the reality of life to the artifice of form."