

Remixing Homer on the Postcolonial Frontier of *Serenity*

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With his space-western series Firefly and feature film Serenity, Joss Whedon is a 21st century master of the remix, the rhetorical process that adapts older material for contemporary uses. Employing this process further, looking back to ancient Greek notions concerning honor and remembrance found in the works of Homer's and remixing them with postcolonial thought from theorists such as Franz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak, I argue we can better understand the motivations of the characters Whedon created. If remix theory represents a new way of looking to the language and cultural artifacts of the past to respond to the problems of the present, remixing Whedon with Homer reinforces the reasons behind postcolonial theory's need to give voice to the marginalized and subjugated, powerfully illustrated in Serenity by the planet Miranda.

Keywords: *Firefly*, *Kleos*, Native Intellectual, Postcolonial Theory, Remix Theory, SciFi, *Serenity*, Space-Western, Subaltern

A remix, as David Gunkel states in his introduction to *Of Remixology*, “is neither an original, insofar as every element in a remix has been derived and copied from something else, nor is it a copy, insofar as the result is not just a faithful reproduction but somewhat different and original in its own right.”¹ Regardless of the medium, stories are a bricolage of past material mashed up in some new way, allowing the artist to express themselves. With his space-western *Firefly* and its motion picture continuation *Serenity*, Joss Whedon is a 21st century master of the remix. Inspired by *The Killer Angels*,² a 1975 Pulitzer Prize winning novel depicting Civil War soldiers from the Battle of Gettysburg, Whedon's creation is set in a postbellum distant future, following a group of people from the losing side of their civil war.

Set in the 26th century, Whedon remixes history to create his envisioned universe, mashing the USA and China together (the only remaining superpowers) to form a hybrid culture where the population seamlessly switches between English and Mandarin mid-sentence, yet still draws on their diverse ethnic heritage and customs for everyday life. Unlike other quasi-utopian depictions of the future, Whedon keeps intact socioeconomic disparities and limits the advanced technology mostly to space travel, allowing—with a little willing suspension of disbelief from the audience—for the presence and use of horses, cattle, and the like. Where the core planets appear the epitome of technological advancement and civilization, those on the outer rim resemble frontier towns from the Old West, complete with gunslingers. In an interview Whedon stated, “His cowboys carry old fashioned guns not because phasers don't exist in the future, but because this rag-tag crew can't

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¹ David Gunkel, *Of Remixology: Ethic and Aesthetics After Remix* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), xxviii.

² Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975).

afford them.”³ Though set in a distant future, Whedon’s creation at its core is “just about life when it’s hard,” following “...nine people looking into the blackness of space and seeing nine different things,”⁴ and in doing so resonates with the spirit of remix on a fundamental level.

Stepping back from the direct inspiration of the *Firefly/Serenity*, Whedon joins a long tradition of Western storytellers who have looked to the past for inspiration, and through their gaze, peered back centuries, all the way to the original “series” of Western culture--Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*--repurposing aspects of these stories to create something new and original for their own time. Virgil’s *Aeneid* successfully linked the creation of the Roman empire to fallen city of Troy, just as Geoffrey of Monmouth gave Britain its own link through Brutus in his *History of the Kings of Britain*. With Whedon, we see residual Homeric elements within the story-arc of the *Firefly/Serenity* universe: a war hero aboard a ship surrounded by a vast emptiness, moving aimlessly between myriad ports, finding peril at every turn. Monsters, cannibals, an occasional seductrice; a malevolent force always looming somewhere in the background; even a trip to the land of the dead. It isn’t too much of a stretch to see Whedon’s creation as a futuristic remix of the *Odyssey*.

By allowing ourselves to entertain this remix, we can explore themes at the heart of the Western storytelling tradition, specifically by focusing on the ancient Greek notion of *kleos* or “glory.”⁵ In doing so, we can better understand the motivations of the characters of *Firefly/Serenity*; however, this is only a part of this project. *Firefly & Serenity* are also vehicles, examples through which we can move the conversation out of merely an appreciation for an artist’s creativity and into a place that gets to the very heart of why creative expression is *so* important.

If remix represents a new way to look to language and cultural artifacts of the past to respond to the problems of the present, my goal through this treatment of a Whedon/Homer remix is to allow ourselves to look within the text to identify concerns prevalent in contemporary conversations of both literary and rhetorical theory. In reading Whedon as a remix of Homer, we are also creating a sort of mashup that reinforces the postcolonial need to give voice to the subjugated. My reading of Whedon’s text explores the opportunity for individuals to emerge as agents of change for an oppressed or underrepresented people through acts of creative expression -- a passion that both versions of Remix theory and Postcolonialism share.

***Kleos* is More than Personal Renown; The Native Intellectual Manifests *Kleos* into the Remixed Future**

The classical notion of *kleos* may seem like an odd avenue by which to approach a modern film/text, especially a postcolonial reading, what with its focus on glory and renown. Within *Firefly* and *Serenity* we see the ways that this concept, or perhaps aspects of it, still held cultural significance in the 26th century. Beyond the captain, Malcolm Reynolds, and his crew being known for reliability and discretion within the criminal underground (i.e. “what others hear about you”),⁶

³ Bill Brioux, “Firefly Series Ready for Liftoff,” *Canoe.com*, November 26, 2004, accessed Sept.14, 2017, http://jam.canoe.com/Television/TV_Shows/F/Firefly/2002/07/22/734323.html.

⁴ Brioux, “Firefly Series Ready for Liftoff.”

⁵ *Kleos* (Greek: κλέος) is the Greek word often translated to “renown,” or “glory.” It is related to the word “to hear” and carries the implied meaning of “what others hear about you.”

⁶ Niska: “You have reputation! Malcolm Reynolds gets it done, is the talk.”

Mal: “Well, I’m glad to hear that.”

Firefly: The Complete First Season, episode: “The Train Job,” written by Joss Whedon and Tim Minear, featuring Nathan Fillion, Alan Tudyk, Adam Baldwin, Summer Glau, & Gina Torres. Fox Entertainment Group. 2002. DVD. First aired Sept. 20, 2002.

throughout the series we are given tiny snippets of dialogue referencing back to the war and how such ideals, ones that align themselves a little more with the traditional Greek meaning, were fundamental to the complex character that is Mal.⁷ For the Greeks, *kleos* was something each warrior strived for, both in word and deed. This glory transcended generations, living on long after the death of the particular individual seeking such valor. Death itself was unimportant, what mattered was being remembered. For such fame to carry on, someone had to survive to carry on the memory.

More importantly, the fallen warrior needed a proper burial in accordance with the customs of the society. Left unburied on the battlefield, scavenging animals would pick at the corpse, which explains the ancient Greek insult of “go to the crows.” For an individual, this sounds like a most unwelcome fate, but the implications go even further—this insult not only implies the warrior has died, it implies the death of everyone who might have cared enough to bury them in the first place. Taken to its furthest extreme, this insult literally means the total annihilation of a people; this annihilation is *mora*, or “what is feared.” *Mora* then motivates the search for *kleos* and the reason that striving remained so important; *kleos* meant survival.⁸ The driving force behind the quest for glory was this base fear of obliteration, a fear that I feel has never left humanity.

Death is wrestled with throughout the works of both Homer and Whedon; specifically, how the dead are treated/remembered and what that means to a given society. In either case, death itself is not what is feared, but rather the nothingness of what *could* come after. *Kleos* then becomes important not so much for the seeking of glory, but rather in why this need for glory is so necessary. If a story of one’s deeds lives on, the society lives on; if no one survives, all there can be is nothingness (i.e. the complete erasure of a culture). Societies have feared such obliteration from well before Homer’s time, and will fear it well into the future, a future perhaps not unlike the one imagined in Whedon’s *Serenity*. This nothingness—the loss or erasure of culture—represents the ultimate marginalization of a people, a topic all too familiar in postcolonial thought whether it be through the literal, violent, systematic eradication of a population or through a more figurative, gradual, insidious erosion of heritage and traditions by means of hegemonic indoctrination.

This notion of *kleos* was beyond important to Greek culture, extending far beyond the exploits of the battlefield, weaving itself into the very fabric their history and daily lives. In a postcolonial reading of the *Serenity* universe, the “native intellectual” (to use Fanon’s term) “who decides to give battle to colonial lies”⁹ and fight to reclaim the *kleos* taken from the colonized people of Miranda... is Captain Mal Reynolds. This essay demonstrates that remixing the classical concepts of *kleos* in concert with that of *mora* in this postcolonial science-fiction space-western refines our notions of the “native intellectual” in postcolonial thought.

In looking at a science-fiction/postcolonial remix, we see that remix, the very act of reaching back into the past in order to create something new, could be taken as a way a culture responds to anything seen as an existential threat; a salve to comfort the fear that accompanies anything challenging one’s right to be.

⁷ Tracy: “I still remember the old Sarge with his stories and his homilies. And glory and honor.”

Firefly: The Complete First Season, episode: “The Message,” written by Joss Whedon and Tim Minear, featuring Nathan Fillion, Alan Tudyk, Adam Baldwin, Summer Glau, & Gina Torres. Fox Entertainment Group. 2002. DVD. First aired Jul. 28, 2003.

⁸ As opposed to *aischros* (Greek *αἰσχρός* (*aiskhrós*, “shameful, ugly”). For a modern reader, one might assume shame to be antithetical to honor/renown; this was not the case in Greek antiquity.

⁹ Frantz Fanon, “On National Culture,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 36-52.

The *Firefly/Serenity* ‘Verse as Remix

Serenity is a continuation of the television series *Firefly*. The film’s opening scene sets up the audience in this post-civil war 26th century universe, explaining the show’s original premise for those not entirely familiar:

Earth-that-was could no longer sustain our numbers, we were so many. We found a new solar system, dozens of planets and hundreds of moons. Each one terraformed, a process taking decades, to support human life, to be new Earths. The Central Planets formed the Alliance. Ruled by an interplanetary parliament, the Alliance was a beacon of civilization. The savage outer planets were not so enlightened and refused Alliance control. The war was devastating, but the Alliance’s victory over the Independents ensured a safer universe. And now everyone can enjoy the comfort and enlightenment of our civilization.¹⁰

Visually, the opening scene sets up a dichotomy between the central planets versus those on the outer rim. As the voiceover describes the central planets, we are shown images of a futuristic civilization; shimmering buildings surrounded by vast bodies of water and lush vegetation, complete with hovering spaceships. These central planets are not unlike the utopian Earth many of us are familiar with from *Star Trek*’s depiction of the future. The outer planets, however, are shown as something more akin to Tatooine from *Star Wars* or Arrakis from *Dune*; the settlements depicted here are nothing more than a grouping of tents surrounding a rusted transport ship half-buried in the desert. In this future, we have not escaped the reality of “have’s and have-not’s”.

The film’s plot deals with the characters of Simon and River Tam as they try to elude the Alliance. The Alliance wants the genius, but mentally troubled young girl because River is a psychic; created, conditioned, and trained in a secret Alliance facility to be a “living weapon.” We are led to believe that River has “gleaned” some sort of damning information about the Alliance from “Key members of Parliament” during an observation session. This becomes the driving force behind the action of the film as The Operative, the chief antagonist, states very near the start of the film, “Secrets are not my concern. Keeping them is.”¹¹ And Miranda, or what took place on the planet, happens to be that damning secret.

Despite some hazy recollection about Miranda being a “black rock” where “terraforming didn’t hold” and “a few settlers died,” once the crew reaches the planet everything about it appears to be normal—gravity, atmosphere—everything except all the inhabitants the crew finds are long dead, their corpses littering the settlement, though for no discernable reason. The full explanation finally comes from a holographic distress signal found in a crashed “research & rescue” shuttle:

These are just a few of the images we’ve recorded. And you can see, it wasn’t what we thought. There’s been no war here and no terraforming event. The environment is stable. It’s the Pax. The G-23 Paxilon Hydrochlorate that we added to the air processors. It was supposed to calm the population, weed out aggression. Well, it works. The people here stopped fighting. And then they stopped everything else. They stopped going to work, they stopped breeding, talking, eating. There’s 30 million people here, and they all just let themselves die.¹²

¹⁰ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon, featuring Nathan Fillion, Alan Tudyk, Adam Baldwin, Summer Glau, Gina Torres, & Chiwetel Ejiofor. Universal Pictures, 2005. DVD.

¹¹ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

¹² *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

The population, the entire planet, was used as an experiment in eugenics, an experiment they were completely unaware of. Once the experiment failed, any record of the planet's existence had been erased, which we are told as the pilot, Wash, explains, "there's nothing about it on the core-tex; history, astronomy, it's not in there"; to which the captain, Mal, responds, "Half of writing history is hiding the truth."¹³ Here we truly see how entirely marginalized the population of Miranda actually was, opening this text to analysis through postcolonial theory.

A (Post) Colonial Future in *Serenity*

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that the West only attempts to "give the subaltern a voice in history,"¹⁴ which still remains nothing more than a poor translation of the needs of the population and always stems from a place of either moral or cultural superiority to the subject of which they speak, all altruistic intentions aside. It is this colonial mentality that Whedon remixes into the representatives of the Alliance throughout *Serenity*. The film's opening shows the Alliance as the quintessential imperial power—note the terms "ruled," "savage," and "control"—a sentiment rather reminiscent of Western Orientalist ideals of cultural superiority. The entirety of the outer planets' populations are the descendants of a massive diaspora. Each planet and moon, as we are told, was terraformed to sustain human life. This paternal mentality is also seen in comments like the doctor on the holographic message saying, "people have to know we meant it for the best; to make people safer," or in The Operative stating, "we're making a better world; all of them, better worlds."¹⁵

We learn through bits and pieces of dialogue that Miranda's terraforming was completed *before* the war, and that those 30 million people were the planet's first inhabitants looking for a better life. Kaylee, the ship's mechanic, suddenly remembers, "wait a tick, yeah, some years back there was call for workers to settle on Miranda."¹⁶ Moreover, the location of the planet literally and metaphorically represents its marginalization, found "right at the edge of the Burnham Quadrant...furthest planet out."¹⁷ Conceivably, this planet was chosen for the experiment in population control due to its remote location, and the advanced technology of the planet was used to entice people to settle in the first place.¹⁸ The inhabitants of Miranda were part of the subaltern, as much as any other planet of the outer rim, and perhaps even more so.¹⁹ As the subaltern, the inhabitants of Miranda cannot speak, for the dead have no voice of their own. Who *should* try to speak for the population of this fallen planet?

¹³ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

¹⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66-111.

¹⁵ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

¹⁶ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

¹⁷ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

¹⁸ On a surface level, the planet Miranda appears to mirror the images of the core planets seen in the opening exposition of the film, with their gleaming structures and advanced technology, yet by no means does this make the inhabitants any less part of the subaltern within the *Serenity* universe. It would be quite easy to lump Miranda in as an Alliance planet and misconstrue the fate of those who died as being victims of their own success, but in doing so we would find ourselves guilty of the homogenizing mentality Spivak specifically warns us against.

¹⁹ This sounds quite different from most of the other outer rim worlds terraformed for colonization, where most settlers (to loosely quote the captain from the pilot episode of *Firefly*), were dropped off with nothing more than "some blankets, some hatchets, and maybe a herd of cattle."

Reluctant Hero/Native Intellectual

As the captain of *Serenity*, Mal is the protagonist, though I am hesitant to use the word “hero” for several reasons.²⁰ If anything, Mal would better fall into the modern trope of the anti-hero—the loner, living on the fringe of society, not entirely virtuous, reluctant to join the fight; this sounds more like the character Whedon intended—the fallen soldier turned criminal. In a postcolonial reading, however, I feel the label of “native intellectual” to be much more appropriate for the character of Mal as it speaks to the stark reality of the situation.

Frantz Fanon explores the concept of the “native intellectual” in his essay “On National Culture,” but begins the essay by describing the mentality of the colonizer as thus:

[Not] a gentle, loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free reign to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology and its own unhappiness which is its very existence.²¹

Without the strong hand and guidance of the colonial power, the natives are led to believe that they would, by virtue of their inferiority, simply “fall back into barbarism.”²² The battlefield for the “native intellectual” is not necessarily a literal one, and in fact is usually not. The arena of battle in this sense is a cultural one—the legitimation of the native culture(s)—and often times this battle spills over borders, for although populations are subject to national boundaries, hegemony rarely ever is. Although Fanon refers to Africa when he states, “the native intellectual who decides to give battle to colonial lies fights on the field of the whole continent... [so]...the past is given back its value,”²³ by no means do we need to see this as static or strictly applying to Africa. This same concept could apply to any marginalized and subjugated population regardless of the place they inhabit; it could apply to space.

Mal easily fills the role of the “native intellectual,” though only after he witnesses the atrocities of Miranda. Just as he volunteered to join the fight for independence, the “native intellectual” is someone who, “takes up arms to defend his nation’s legitimacy and who wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy.”²⁴ Each member of the crew of *Serenity* had a similar reaction to the truths seen on that holographic message found on Miranda (viscerally horrified), everyone except Mal. The reaction seen in him, though at first shock, soon galvanizes into outrage and inevitably a call to action. We see this as he addresses the crew:

²⁰ First, the connection I am making between social concepts pulled from ancient Greek literature and this 21st century film could make this a bit tricky, (no one is saying that Mal is half god, let that be clear). Secondly, other treatments of this text, like that of Hillary Jones’s “‘Them as Feel the Need to Be Free’: Reworking the Frontier Myth,” seem to suggest Mal as a version of some “frontier mythic hero.” Within this type of myth, the hero is a character who, to quote Lynn Hartner, “ventured forth into uncharted territory, supposedly independent of others’ symbolic and material resources, to win a decisive victory against all odds.” See Hillary A. Jones, “‘Them as Feel the Need to Be Free’: Reworking the Frontier Myth,” *Southern Communication Journal* 76, no. 3 (2011): 230-247. Though the description does seem to suit the character in a general sense, the idea of Frontier Myth seems to come from a position perhaps only a few degrees away from those critiqued in postcolonial theory, and for me that is problematic.

²¹ Fanon, “On National Culture,” 37.

²² Fanon, “On National Culture,” 37.

²³ Fanon, “On National Culture,” 38.

²⁴ Fanon, “On National Culture,” 38.

This record here's about twelve years old. Parliament buried it and it stayed buried until River here dug it up. This is what they were afraid she knew. And they were right to fear. There's a universe of folk who're gonna know it, too. Someone *has to* speak for these people. Y'all got on this boat for different reasons, but y'all come to the same place. So now I'm asking more of you than I have before. Maybe all. Sure as I know anything, I know this - *they will try again*. Maybe on another world, maybe on this very ground swept clean. A year from now, ten? They'll swing back to the belief that they can make people... better. And I do not hold to that. So no more runnin'. I aim to misbehave.²⁵

An argument such as this, seeing Mal as a “native intellectual”, could work to explain his actions, and in fact, I would argue that from the very beginning the film invites such an interpretation and character arc. As the crew is first introduced we see them on their way to pull off a robbery, the first “job” that River is to take part in to “earn her keep” (i.e. using her psychic ability to warn of trouble). When Mal asks River if she, “understands her part in all this” (referring of course to robbery), she responds existentially, “do you?” In a later scene (unfortunately deleted in the editing process), before the secret of Miranda is revealed, River is adamant that Mal know the truth, telling her brother—pleading almost, “He has to see; more than anyone he has to see what he doesn't want to.”²⁶ River realizes that somewhere deep inside Mal lies a person, “willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, [and] is obliged to dissect the heart of his people.”²⁷ Though his spirit may have been crushed when the Independents lost the war, the fire which first made him take up arms against oppression has not been totally extinguished. At this point, Mal fully realizes information is the greatest weapon against the Alliance, and by broadcasting that lost recording showing the truth about Miranda to as many worlds as possible he can deal a far greater blow to the regime than the Independents ever could during the war. It is here Mal fully becomes something akin to Fanon's “native intellectual.”

Remix in both Theory and Practice

Remixing the classical concepts of *kleos* in concert with that of *mora* in this postcolonial science-fiction refines our notions of the “native intellectual.” *Kleos* was important to the Greeks because it meant your side most likely won, and in doing so, survived. *Mora*, or “what is feared” is that no one has survived; in essence, you are nothing. This is a fear that can be found at the center of every human being.

To be human is to insist on ontological existence—we are the opposite of nothing—and it is our own awareness of nothing that allows us to create and imagine ourselves as a unified body. In such a system, nothing then becomes a threat, a non-existence by its very existence threatens being.²⁸

This explanation speaks to why empathy exists, why the “native intellectual” can speak for a population, and why we are concerned whether or not the subjugated have a voice; the interconnectivity of the human exists on a level that transcends race, class, economics, or culture.

²⁵ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

²⁶ *Serenity*, directed by Joss Whedon.

²⁷ Fanon, “On National Culture,” 38.

²⁸ Gregory Erickson, “Humanity in a ‘Place of Nothin’: Morality, Religion, Atheism, and Possibility in *Firefly*,” in *Investigating Firefly and Serenity: Science Fiction on the Frontier*, ed. Rhonda V. Wilcox and Tanya R. Cochran, 167-179 (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008).

In *Serenity*, we see the eventuality of a future that was confronted with many of the issues and fears we currently face: global warming, population growth, as well as a myriad of other social concerns. In Gregory Erickson's essay "Humanity in a 'Place of Nothin': Morality, Religion, Atheism, and Possibility in *Firefly*," he states, "The show's depiction of the abuse of power and the subjugation and alienation of the marginalized populations are only slightly more extreme examples of current human and social conditions."²⁹ Although the issue of race seems to have been left behind on the "earth-that-was," the debate over whether the subaltern do or should have a voice seems to have been carried on, finding its new home in technology, never fully escaping the realm of socioeconomics. Despite all the technological advancements, human nature still seems to have remained the same. Disheartening as that may be, the themes we can pull from Homer's work could allow us to find connections at the base level of human interaction, strengthening schools of thought like Postcolonialism that strive for social equality and justice or Remix Theory as it works to legitimize creativity through the re-appropriation and recombination of past works. As Virginia Kuhn states:

Today's mediascape both reflects and reinforces our socioeconomically uneven world; by reading remix as a digital speech act rather than consigning it to a preexisting genre, we can help prevent digital discursive space from fostering the type of binaries that inhere in current generic conventions.³⁰

Clinging to traditional views surrounding genre is what limits many of us from seeing remixed works as speech acts on their own, leading ultimately to a questioning of their overall value.

Conclusion

When a work of art comes along--be it story, film, song, etc.--and is presented from a point of view outside what is considered the norm it creates a dissonance within the audience. Those who recognize that dissonance and examine it are the ones who usually become fans, which may help explain the cult following Whedon's creation has gathered. Those who criticize such works as being unoriginal might find their aversion actually stems from a place of traditional hegemonic thinking unconsciously making its way to the surface. Just as it did with Homer, remixing allowed Whedon to express concerns of the day from an objective distance, hoping that his audience would see the allegory. If that was the hope, we can assume that the initial television and film critics missed it, unable to get beyond the genre mashup of the space-western. Remix challenges the assumption that creative genius must come from a blank slate of originality, and that it must abide by the rules and stay within the boundaries of traditional tropes and genres. When an artist attempts to bend or break traditionally accepted aesthetic tastes through remix, the critical response quite often is negative, despite whatever the public response may be. If the role of the remix artist is to bend the world around them using existing material and/or genres/themes in order to tell a new story, we can see how such a goal is especially important to postcolonial theory for it puts control into the hands of those who previously did not have a voice, let alone an outlet through which to

²⁹ Erickson, "Humanity in a 'Place of Nothin,'" 168.

³⁰ Virginia Kuhn, "The Rhetoric of Remix," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 9 (2012): <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/358/279>.

even attempt to speak. The conversation around the validity of remix as a creative speech act becomes very tricky then, having consequences that reach much further than most opponents perhaps realize. Virginia Kuhn addresses this issue when she states:

The practice of remix can be transformative, yet the theory and history of remix is still the stuff of written texts. Thus, careful attention to the way we name and theorize it is crucial, for these acts also shape the digital discursive field and dictate whose stories get told and who is authorized to speak.³¹

In the ever-evolving digital universe, those who never had a public outlet for creative expression now have the ability to make their voice heard, and their message cannot be limited or dismissed. Where the *kleos* of old was gained on the battlefield, in the new digital frontier it is gained through hits and likes, retweets and views, or the ultimate achievement of going viral. The digital *rhapsods* of today have found the new summit from which to tell their tales, and despite any negative critical response to remix in its present digital inception it has become abundantly clear, just as *Serenity's* Mr. Universe uttered with his final words: "they can't stop the signal...they can never stop the signal."

³¹ Kuhn, "The Rhetoric of Remix," 5.3.