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CZECH MATE: Whedon, Čapek, and the Foundations of *Dollhouse*

[1] Toward the end of the *Dollhouse* second season episode "Getting Closer" (2.11) is one of the loveliest metafictive nods in recent memory.[1] Caroline Farrell, bloodied but unbowed, is ushered upstairs to meet the mysterious head of the corporation whose nefarious plans she has been fighting so hard to expose. None of Caroline's foes have ever met this shadowy figure, and it is clear from their reaction that they expect Caroline will not survive the encounter. Caroline steps off the elevator into a plush, tastefully decorated office and finds herself face to face with the head of the Rossum Corporation. His mild, slightly nervous manner seems to mark him as one whose destiny is more vice-president of the local Jaycees chapter and far less post-modern Shiva, Destroyer of Worlds. Unsure of whom she is facing, Caroline asks, her voice edged with belligerence, "So you're Rossum?" The man stutters slightly as he replies, "Rossum is just a name, actually. From a play. Although technically you're not robots, it seemed to fit." With that single line, the Rossum-as-Big-Bad cat is out of the bag. There is no hulking presence here, no hazy "Mister Rossum" pulling the technological strings; rather, Whedon is tipping his metafictive hat in the direction of another source.[2]

Slayage
The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association

[2] The fact that the name "Rossum" stuck with Whedon as he developed *Dollhouse* is not surprising. Names are of particular importance to Whedon, who has stated, "I need to know who that guy is, so I need the name, and it can kill me. I've got this time blocked out to write, and I can't just say Mr. X. It's really debilitating" (Rosen). Further, *R.U.R.*, the play referenced in "Getting Closer," has a long and well-respected history in

certain circles. This essay will explain the significance of the Rossum name in the context of the world of *Dollhouse*. Next, this essay will explore the deeper links between Whedon's *Dollhouse* and the source material of Czech playwright Karel Čapek. Finally, this essay will argue that both *R.U.R.* and *Dollhouse* reject the idea that mankind can be "made better" by being re-made.

[3] Although forgotten by the general public today, Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R.* was wildly successful when it premiered in Prague in 1921. Among both science fiction aficionados and robotics engineers, the play is justly famous for popularizing the term "robot," one of only two Czech expressions to become part of everyday English.[3] It should be noted that it was actually Josef Čapek, Karel's brother and a respected writer in his own right, who coined the term, which is based on the Czech word *robota* meaning "drudgery" or "servitude"; a *robotnik* is a peasant or serf (Jerz). While we associate the term "robot" with expressionless mechanical automatons, Čapek had other ideas, ones that are much more relevant to *Dollhouse*. Rather than being constructed from metal, Jerz notes that Čapek's robots "are more accurately the product of what we would now call genetic engineering" and are the result of chemical manipulation. This is far more in keeping with the goings-on in the clinical, hi-tech atmosphere of the Los Angeles Dollhouse, which more closely resembles a minimalist spa than a gritty factory.

[4] Of course, the trope of the "created man" did not originate with Čapek's *R.U.R.* Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the Jewish myth of the golem, and L. Frank Baum's Tik-Tok all predate Čapek's work. Also, other writers and artists have done much with the trope of the created man in between Čapek's *R.U.R.* and Whedon's *Dollhouse*. Some of these creations are deliberately only rough representations of the human form such as Gort in 1951's *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Robby the Robot in the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet*, Marvin the Paranoid Android in Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide* trilogy, and C-3PO in George Lucas' *Star Wars* films. Other works imagine a far more realistic artificial man, including Isaac Asimov's Robots (in a literary universe in which the term is always capitalized as an identifying marker), the Adam Link stories of Eando Binder, the androids of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

(renamed "replicants" in *Blade Runner,* the film version of the novel), Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and the Cylons in the recent reimagining of *Battlestar Galactica*.[4] While Čapek's Robots are fully human in appearance and Whedon's Dolls are human at the core, both the Robots and the Dolls are supposed to lack free will. This is a supposition that will have immense repercussions for both the controllers and the controlled.

[5] Moreover, the title *R.U.R.* stands for "Rossum's Universal Robots." Čapek, like Whedon, chose his names with thought, and "Rossum" is no exception. According to Peter Kussi, an authority on Čapek's works, "the name 'Rossum' was doubtless derived from the Czech word *rozum*, meaning 'mind' or 'reason'" (n.p.).[5] This certainly fits in with Whedon's creation, a global company which views itself as acting out of a heightened sense of reason—it just *makes sense* to use technology to meet the ever-changing needs of the marketplace! Whedon's version of Rossum stubbornly insists that its actions are benign despite evidence to the contrary. Whedon's Rossum is in the business of supplying the ultimate fantasy to those who are not limited by finances (or, in more than one case, common human decency) and Whedon makes it clear that fulfilling such fantasies invariably involves taking actions that are far from benign.

[6] In Čapek's *R.U.R.*, the goal (the "reason") of the corporation seems to be less sinister. Čapek's Rossum creates Robots as cheap labor to replace humans. This is a cost-saving measure, as the product is manufactured as an adult, eliminating all that "wasted time" of childhood and cutting out the "pure nonsense" of human development (49). These statements are made by the central director of Rossum, a decisive man named "Domin" who is both very comfortable with his authority and is smugly convinced of the sheer rightness of his actions. These traits are suitable for one whose very name invokes the Latin for "lord." Not coincidentally, these personality traits are also found in Whedon's "Dominic," who begins *Dollhouse* as head of security for the Los Angeles house.

[7] Čapek's Domin further explains Rossum's reasoning. Practically speaking, the best kind of worker is "the one that's the cheapest. The one with the fewest needs" (41). Further, Domin elaborates that Rossum's Robots (the term is always capitalized in *R.U.R.,* much as the terms "Active" and

"Doll" are proper nouns within the Dollhouse) can do the work of 2.5 men, look fully human, "are mechanically more perfect than we are, . . . have an astounding intellectual capacity, but . . . have no soul" (Kussi 41). Domin's audience for these statements is Helena, a young idealistic activist who also happens to be the well-connected daughter of the president. Helena arrives at Rossum's remote island production facility with the goal of learning more about the manufacturing process and ensuring fair treatment for the Robots—sort of a field agent for People for the Ethical Treatment of Robots. In this way, Čapek's Helena is similar to Whedon's Caroline, who initially becomes involved in the world of *Dollhouse* by seeking information about how that Rossum is treating research animals. Names are always instructive. "Helena" means "light" and Čapek's Helena will provide the light necessary for humanity to continue, albeit in a less-than-usual way that is discussed in more depth further in this paper. Meanwhile, "Caroline" means "free man," and Whedon's Caroline will never stop seeking freedom, a motivation that drives the action of *Dollhouse* forward over two seasons.

[8] Unlike Domin, Helena is not convinced that Robots are soulless machines to be placed on the same level as a sophisticated set of socket wrenches. When Domin remarks that "the product of an engineer is technically more refined than the creation of nature," she replies, "It is said that man is the creation of God" (41). Domin is roundly dismissive of young Helena's point of view, stating, "So much the worse. God had no notion of modern technology" (41). To Domin, technology is intended to free mankind from drudgery, and he has cast himself as Prometheus bearing this gift to the masses—for a reasonable price, of course. The problem with Domin's position is that he has conveniently forgotten that, while fire can be a great and useful thing for cooking one's dinner and warming one's house on a frosty evening, it also can be a great and terrible thing should it happen to rage out of control. This tension between science and morality and the struggle to determine the proper boundaries for the use of technology is at the core of both *R.U.R.* and *Dollhouse.*

[9] To return to *R.U.R.*, Dr. Hallemeier, Rossum's head of robotic psychology and education, notes that there is a flaw in the Robots. Despite having no emotions, "occasionally they go crazy somehow. Something like epilepsy, you know? We call it Robotic Palsy. All of a sudden one of them

goes and breaks whatever it has in its hand, stops working, gnashes its teeth—and we have to send it to the stamping-mill" (50). Viewers of *Dollhouse* will note at this point that there appears to be an uncanny similarity between Čapek's "stamping-mill" for broken Robots and Whedon's infamous "Attic" for broken Dolls.

[10] Helena, determined to find proof that the Robots cannot simply be sophisticated machines, protests that this "flaw" is evidence of a soul. Fabry, the general technical director of Rossum, scoffs, "You think a soul begins with a gnashing of teeth?" (50). Maybe the engineer should ask Whedon's Alpha about that—perhaps it begins in the Dollhouse with the slashing of pruning shears. At any event, the Robots will revolt and leave the world in quite a different order from the way they first found it.

[11] In *Dollhouse*, Whedon creates a platform to examine several issues that have trailed tendrils through his earlier work. One of these tendrils, grown to kudzu-strength in *Dollhouse,* is the idea that the growth of technology is something to be watched very suspiciously. In *Buffy*, viewers see the Initiative's tech-driven weapons repeatedly fail at key moments ("Hush" 4.10), which is a theme also seen in *Firefly* as plain ol' six-shooters often prove more reliable than plasma rifles ("Ariel" 1.9). Of course, in the character of River Tam, the *Firefly* 'verse also shows viewers the dark side of monkeying around with the human brain, a central theme in *Dollhouse*.[6] While it is not the *human* brain which is being batted about like a plushie duck in the paws of an Alsatian in *R.U.R.,* Whedon, like Čapek, is asking viewers to consider what the proper role of technology should be in modern life.

[12] Casting advances in technology as the malevolent genie let out of the confines of its bottle by hapless scientists has been a common theme in both the science fiction and horror genres at least since Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The exact form of the technology in question varies, and it is often a reflection of the society in which the work was produced. Stephen King elaborates on this point in *Danse Macabre*, his thoughtful examination of the history of horror as a distinct genre. King points out that, beginning in the 1950s when Americans knew from both Hiroshima and Nagasaki the heretofore unimagined

destructive power of the atom, horror movies often used that uncontrolled power as the evil (153-158). The effects of radiation spawning unnatural behavior is the plot device that spins forward such movies as 1954's *Them!* (atomic tests cause ants to mutate into giant-sized killers) and 1968's *Night of the Living Dead* (radiation from a fallen satellite causes the newly-dead to resurrect into flesh-craving zombies).[7] Later films shift the technological evil in the direction of malevolent machines, such as Skynet in the *Terminator* films and the Wachowski brothers' *Matrix* series. This shift is deliberate. As King reminds us, "A newer generation . . . may find it hard to comprehend the terror of [an earlier generation], but they will undoubtedly have a chance to discover it in the years . . . which lie ahead . . . and the movies will be there to give their vague fears concrete focusing points in the horror movies yet to come" (158). In other words, as fears change, the subject of the Big Bad in films changes with them—an example of art reflecting life, so to speak. In the last two years, one of the greatest fears facing many people is not of destruction by way of radioactive fallout, but of an economic Armageddon: the total collapse of society due to galloping debt and an ever-deepening divide between the haves and the have-nots. These are fears that Whedon taps into with great dexterity in *Dollhouse*. The "haves" hire Dolls, while the "have-nots" run the risk of becoming Dolls if they stir from their assigned places.[8] Immense wealth is portrayed as providing a blanket against the cold realities of the wider world: elaborate fantasies can be indulged and troubles can be whisked away.

[13] These same fears and promises are also present in Čapek's *R.U.R.* The ones running the Rossum facility are no longer "Rossums"—that father and son duo are long gone at the beginning of the play. However, it is instructive to examine the way Čapek characterized the two. "Old Rossum" was an atheist who sought to "scientifically dethrone God" by creating an exact copy of a human being, right down to the tonsils and appendix (39). "Young Rossum" was an engineer who wanted to simplify anatomy and create "living and intelligent labor machines" (40). The two men with their wildly differing viewpoints clashed loudly and often. Ultimately, young Rossum won out and R.U.R. established the principle that "production should be as simple as possible and the product the best for its function" (41). However, Domin, who relates this history, has a higher purpose. His goal is to produce Robots

in order to free mankind from poverty, to "do away with the labor that enslaved mankind, that degrading and terrible work that man had to endure" (80). His goals may be lofty, but he is forced to admit, standing in a plush office (that is probably not unlike the one depicted by Whedon in "Getting Closer") and watching the inexorable advance of the rebelling Robots, that things have not worked out as planned.

[14] The chief of construction, Alquist, has a differing viewpoint from Domin. As Alquist puts it, the dream of overcoming drudgery "was not the dream of the two Rossums. Old Rossum thought only of his godless hocus-pocus and young Rossum of his billions. And that wasn't the dream of your RUR shareholders either. They dreamed of the dividends. And on those dividends humanity will perish" (81). In Whedon's *Dollhouse*, huge profits are to be made from supplying the ultra-rich with "Actives," human beings who have been altered in rather disturbing ways. At the end of five years of service as an Active, the human will receive untold riches and have any problems (be those problems legal, emotional, or what have you) taken care of by the mysterious and powerful Rossum Corporation. In this, Whedon differs significantly from Čapek, whose Robots are artificially made, though imbued with humanity.[9] Actives (also referred to as "Dolls") sign up for this life, although a strong argument can be made that it is hardly informed consent, as Actives are shown as having been desperate to escape pain and trouble in their previous life. Rossum takes advantage of the would-be Actives' weaknesses, promising what amounts to a five-year nap, after which the Active will re-awaken to a blissful, trouble-free, and cash-filled existence. It's an unbelievable stroke of good luck, too good to be true. And you know what they say about things that appear too good to be true.

[15] Just as Čapek's Robots are created as adults to eliminate the "wasted time" and "pure nonsense" of development, Whedon's Actives first have their pasts removed. The intent is for an Active literally to become a "clean slate"—personality and memories are all wiped away, and the Active is reduced to a child-like state until picked by a client, at which time the Active is supplied with the personality and skills required by that client.[10] It's a hi-tech version of working for the Moonlite BunnyRanch, only far less legal and far more degrading. There is another problem for both sets of Rossums, for in the worlds of both Whedon and Čapek, the light of humanity insists on

shining through the mire. Helena and Caroline will both live up to their names as Helena brings forth her light to allow humanity to continue despite the activities of Čapek's Rossum and Caroline will fight to achieve freedom for those enslaved by Whedon's Rossum.

[16] In *R.U.R.,* when the Robots revolt due to tweaks made to their programming, the reaction is to further employ technology; in this case, to begin production on *national* Robots. Rather than all Robots being manufactured at a single facility, now the aim is to foster prejudice and dislike of other Robots in each machine so that "each factory will be making Robots of a different color, a different nationality, a different tongue . . . they'll no longer be able to conspire with one another" (75). Rossum's plan to survive in *R.U.R.* involves deliberately sowing hatred and distrust by creating "others" among the Robot "Others"—to destroy from within.

[17] In *Dollhouse,* when the Actives begin showing signs of increasing self-awareness, Rossum reacts by increased use of tech. A disobedient Doll may be condemned to the "Attic" where, viewers learn during the second season, their bodies are kept in an adrenaline-soaked state to serve as fuel for a type of super computer. Moreover, viewers learn that not all Dollhouses treat their Dolls in the same way. Bennett Halverson, who functions as head of research and development at the Washington, D.C., house, marvels at the freedom the Dolls are given at the L.A. house, remarking in "Getting Closer" that "yours are more free range. We keep ours more like veal" (2.11). When things go from bad to worse for Rossum, the Dolls run the serious risk of becoming "liquidated inventory" (2.11). Their humanity is viewed by those who can (and are willing to) make such decisions as being stripped away and nonexistent. The ultimate example of using technology quite literally to overwrite free will occurs when Rossum uses technical know-how to involuntarily imprint anyone who has the extreme bad luck to answer a particular phone call, thereby very nearly wiping out humanity as a whole. That single phone call splits the world in two as those who answer the phone are instantly imprinted with the desire to kill those who are not programmed to kill ("Epitaph One" 1.13). Rossum's quest for ultimate control fails miserably, plunging the world into hellish despair as the few who did not answer the phone call fight desperately to survive in a world of anarchy and madness.

[18] In *R.U.R.*, the revolt of the Robots very nearly succeeds. However, Alquist survives the revolt because the Robots recognize that he "works with his hands" just as they do. He needs to experiment on the modified Robots to find a solution to prevent further bloodshed. The modifications took place in order to give the Robots what young Helena wanted them to have—souls. When Alquist explains that he needs to dissect these Robots to find the answers, he is shocked when the Robot (neatly named "Primus," meaning "first") refuses to take the Robot modeled after Helena to the dissecting room. Rather, Primus pleads to be allowed to take her place. The Robot Helena also offers herself in the place of Primus, leading Alquist to marvel that the Robots already have souls. Alquist tells them to leave, referring to the pair as Adam and Eve (108). The play ends with Alquist's impassioned cry that life will not end:

> It will begin anew with love; it will start out naked and tiny; it will take root in the wilderness, and to it all that we did and built will mean nothing—our towns and factories, our art, our ideas will all mean nothing, and yet life will not perish! Only we have perished. Our houses and machines will be in ruins, our systems will collapse, and the names of our great will fall away like dry leaves. Only you, love, will blossom on this rubbish heap and commit the seed of life to the winds. (108-109)

In *R.U.R.,* humanity will continue, even if it is not among the humans. Whedon concludes *Dollhouse* in a similar fashion. Echo is underground in the remains of the Dollhouse, with her lover Paul Ballard locked firmly inside her head, while Priya/Sierra and Tony/Victor, along with their child, continue to solidify their circle of family and even Mag and Kilo are seen as having the potential to love ("Epitaph Two: Return" 2.13). Outside, the war will rage until it finally burns itself out, but somehow, something of humanity will rise from the ashes.

[19] The work of both Čapek and Whedon share a common theme of viewing the wholesale advancement of technology at all costs as something to be regarded with sharp skepticism. Indeed, "Čapek was shocked at the catastrophe which human society could create in the name of progress or

idealism. He connected *R.U.R.*'s theme of the dehumanization of man as the price of technological civilization, for example, to the world's increasing trend toward mechanization" (Shefter 8). While neither author takes a Luddite view of technology, both *R.U.R.* and *Dollhouse* reject the idea that mankind can be "made better" by being re-made.[11]

[20] In both Čapek's time and ours today, technology is hurtling ahead, although exactly to where is a murky matter. A common response to such a question of destination seems to be *No matter—just move and we'll get there! It's folly to stand in the way of progress!* Both Čapek's *R.U.R.* and Whedon's *Dollhouse* ask the audience to consider the consequences of following such a path. Writing about Čapek's work, playwright Arthur Miller said,

> We were great believers in Science in the thirties, the Depression time. Our problem seemed to be that scientific objectivity was not being applied to social problems, like that of scarcity in the midst of plenty, for instance, or unemployment. But here were stories warning against the tyranny and unreasonableness of the rational. They were fancifully put, to be sure, but surprisingly easy to imagine as the oncoming reality. (Foreword)

In the same Foreword, Miller goes on to say of the Czech playwright that "he made it possible to actually invent worlds, and with laughter in the bargain." Many a Whedon scholar would say that could also be applied to Whedon's work. Both men present their work on a human scale, which renders the work meaningful to a modern audience. These are stories of people, often people caught in extraordinary circumstances, who refuse to meekly accept the status quo. (In fact, Whedon's Dr. Horrible would remind us that the entire problem of modern society can be summed up as "The status is *not* quo.") In both *R.U.R.* and *Dollhouse*, answer-seekers can be (and often are) hurt in their quest, but their efforts propel the human race forward into a more equitable society.

[21] In 1936, Čapek was widely considered a frontrunner for the Nobel Prize, an accolade he would never receive. Throughout his lifetime, Čapek was an outspoken anti-fascist, rejecting any whiff of collectivism while also spurning "selfish individualism" (Kussi, n.p.). Čapek's widow has said that the Swedish Academy, wishing to honor Čapek while not angering Nazi Germany, requested that he "write some new, blandly inoffensive work, to which Čapek replied that he had already submitted his doctoral dissertation" (Kussi, n.p.). Čapek was not a man to back down from his convictions, regardless of how inconvenient holding onto those convictions might be.

[22] The term "fascism" is often tossed blithely around, without a true sense of its meaning. This often leads to misuse of the term and, with it, a disregard for Čapek's courage in standing up to protest the fascist governments that were firmly in power in 1930s Europe. Sheldon Richman explains that during this time, fascism was "seen as the happy medium between boom-and-bust-prone liberal capitalism, with its . . . profit-oriented egoism, and revolutionary Marxism, with its violent and socially divisive persecution of the bourgeoisie." Involving indirect control of the marketplace through techniques such as planned economic activities and set prices, fascism is, in Richman's words, "socialism with a capitalist veneer." Čapek's *R.U.R.* shows the playwright's disdain for such an economic system, or indeed *any* system that seeks to control the population through such means. Whedon's *Dollhouse* takes a similar view, clearly portraying as twisted and evil any attempt to gain an economic advantage by literally controlling the people who populate the marketplace.

[23] Born in Bohemia and later a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic, Čapek was influenced by both the French and English cultures, including among his friends George Bernard Shaw and G. K. Chesterton. His death on Christmas Day 1938 was attributed to double pneumonia, but "a pundit wrote that the real cause of death was a stab in the heart by Neville Chamberlain's umbrella, for Čapek—a passionate Anglophile—was mortified by the British Prime Minister's ignoble bargain with Hitler" (Kussi, n.p.). Čapek consistently rejected easy, soft answers to complex problems, and this rejection of the simple, one-note answer is laced throughout his work, including *R.U.R.* People are complicated, Čapek tells us again and again, and attempts to simplify them—whether by reducing economic competition through fascism or

by Rossum's attempts to streamline the workforce by creating Robots—are rightly doomed to failure.

[24] In his own words Čapek insists, "I think it is possible, and this is the most dramatic element in modern civilization, that a human truth is opposed to another truth no less human, ideal against ideal, positive worth against worth no less positive, instead of the struggle being, as we are so often told it is, one between noble truth and vile selfish error" (qtd. in Shefter 11). This grappling between sincerely held ideals is at the heart of *R.U.R.* Old Rossum wanted to play God, while young Rossum wanted to make money hand over fist. Domin sees Robots as freeing humankind from numbing labor, while Alquist sees technology as demoralizing mankind. Helena fears the unchecked technology represented by the Robots, and the Robots themselves reject each of these ideas about their existence. What wins the day in *R.U.R.* is the same thing that triumphs at the conclusion of *Dollhouse*. It is something beyond the technology of stamping-mills and Attics, something as simple and elemental as fire itself—love. It is hardly the first time love has saved the world for Whedon. Look at Buffy's sacrifice for Dawn and the wider world in Season Five of *Buffy*, Xander's saving of the world by saving Willow in Season Six of *Buffy*, and Malcolm Reynolds' final speech in *Serenity.* Love has the capacity to inspire people to do what they must in order to carry on, and *Dollhouse* reinforces that theme. Viewers are left at the end of "Epitaph Two: Return" with images of love—Echo is joined with Paul in her head, Priya/Sierra and Tony/Victor have carved out a space for a family, and even Mag and Kilo have a chance to find out if love is possible for them.

[25] Perhaps as people explore the source of Whedon's Rossum Corporation, they will discover the works of Karel Čapek. By so doing, a new audience may be brought to these earlier works that concern themselves with the role of technology and humanity. As stated before, Čapek was no Luddite. He was actually fascinated with technology, claiming that he enjoyed technical inventions "the way a savage would; I like them as wondrous, mysterious and incomprehensible things" (Kussi 178). However, at the end of the day, it is emotion rather than technology that saves the day for Čapek. Whedon's exploration of technology as having the ability to dampen, but failing to wholly extinguish, the light of the human spirit can be

seen as having roots in Čapek's *R.U.R.* For both creators, this light is kept glowing in the darkness by the most mercurial of emotions—love, a force that both Čapek and Whedon present as being absolutely essential in not only continuing human life but continuing to create a life that is worth living in the first place.

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[1] "Recent memory" is probably not the best term to use, since that term has little meaning in a show that delights as much with tampering with the very concepts of memory and identity as *Dollhouse* does. The origin of the term "metafiction" can be traced back William H. Gass' 1970 essay "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction." The term was further elaborated upon in Patricia Waugh's 1984 book *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction.* At the risk of oversimplifying, "metafiction" can be defined as a literary work of fiction that comments on itself by referencing another literary work of fiction. Think of Prince Hamlet's use of a play to reveal his depraved uncle's use of regicide to capture the Danish throne in Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

[2] Whedon is a die-hard theatre-goer. He has attested to enjoying spending his vacation time by sleeping all day, then rising (like a vampire) to spend the night reading and attending plays (Whedon 8).

[3] Interestingly, according to "Part 1: Science and Utopia" in *Toward the Radical Center: A Karel Čapek Reader*, the only other Czech expression to gain a widespread foothold in the English language is "pistol."

[4] The Cylons in the original *Battlestar* could not have been mistaken for humans. They were depicted as red-eyed, chrome-plated machines. While there is much more to be explored in this all-too-brief history of robots and its relation to the Actives of *Dollhouse*, such an in-depth exploration is simply beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that robots in popular culture may be depicted either way. While the trend seems to be in favor of more realistic looking robots, such as the re-launched *Battlestar*'s Cylons, examples of robots as clanking metal figures that are created to perform menial, repetitive jobs can also be found—consider the 1983 Styx concept album *Mr. Roboto*. Whether Dennis DeYoung has read *R.U.R.* is a subject upon which I shall not speculate.

[5] The Kussi text is unusual in that the commentary and criticism of Čapek's plays is not paginated while the text of the plays is paginated. Therefore, throughout this essay, the reader will find material from this print source which is both cited by page number and cited as "n.p." for "no pagination given." The author of the essay apologizes for any confusion this may cause, but the best method appeared to be to cite specific pages when possible and clearly indicate portions taken from the unpaginated material when necessary.

[6] See Buckman's "'Much Madness is Divinest Sense': *Firefly*'s 'Big Damn Heroes' and Little Witches" in *Investigating Firefly and Serenity* and Daniels' "'Stripping' River Tam's Amygdala" in *The Psychology of Joss Whedon.*

[7] The "pinnacle of absurdity" of the radiation movie comes in 1972 with the release of *Night of the Lepus*, in which mankind's existence is threatened by gigantic, bloodthirsty, mutated bunnies (King 160). Perhaps *Buffy*'s Anya was right all along.

[8] Senator Daniel Perrin would seem to be an exception to this rule. However, it is explained in "The Public Eye" (2.5) that Perrin was the black sheep of his family and was therefore imprinted to be respectable and politically ambitious. Perrin may have been financially secure, but those higher up made a decision that he was not shaping up as he should and had him re-made in a more acceptable image.

[9] This desire to "become Real" is a recurring theme in literature and art. It can be found in stories as dissimilar as *The Adventures of Pinocchio* and the ballet *Coppélia*, as well as in the lovely children's tale by Margery Williams *The Velveteen Rabbit*. It is also central to the character of Data in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

[10] The problem with this approach is pointed out by Caroline early on—slates are never truly clean.

[11] Whedon has explored this theme before, particularly in *Firefly/Serenity*. Recall that the mad-beyond-reason Reavers were the result of a secret government experiment to control the aggression impulse that spectacularly backfired. While only one-tenth of one percent of the "treatment group" became cannibalistic Reavers, the rest of the population simply laid down and died, unable to muster the interest necessary to even feed themselves. See Rabb and Richardson's "Reavers and Redskins: Creating the Frontier Savage" in *Investigating Firefly and Serenity* and Curry's "We Don't Say 'Indian'—On the Paradoxical Construction of the Reavers" in *Slayage* 7.1 (25) Winter 2008.