

“All Mirth and No Matter”: The Comic Legacy of *Angel* from *Supernatural* to *Much Ado about Nothing*

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The Whedonverse is a funny place, replete with clever witticisms, puns, double-entendres, intertextual references, sight-gags, and spectacular pratfalls. While *Buffy* is best known for its witty dialogue and comic use of language as a form of female empowerment – the legacy of which is best exemplified by Rob Thomas’ *Veronica Mars* – *Angel* utilised comedy as a form of genre and gender deconstruction, undermining expectations of heroes and heroic narratives through the strategic use of physical comedy. *Angel*’s dancing and Wesley’s pratfalls are memorable because they are expertly executed but also because they challenge traditional notions of masculinity and TV horror. Significantly, the intrusion of comedy into earlier cult shows such as *The X-Files* was largely contained within standalone bubble episodes, while *Angel* integrated this comedy within its narrative arcs, allowing the comedy to serve a broader narrative and thematic purpose. Ten years on from *Angel*’s demise, this paper will question the comedic impact that *Angel* has had on other television series within the Whedonverse and beyond, as well as Whedon’s cinematic adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a film that notably reunites *Angel* alumni Alexis Denisof and Amy Acker and inflects Shakespeare’s battle of the sexes with an *Angel*-esque strand of slapstick comedy. In particular I will focus upon the potential for such physical comedy to serve in the construction and deconstruction of gender through close examination of *Much Ado*, alongside television series to include *Dollhouse*, *Doctor Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog*, *Supernatural*, and *Doctor Who*.

‘I Am My Power’: Illyria and the Development of the Cult Action Heroine

Bronwen Calvert

Illyria: Your body warms. This one is lusting after me.

Connor: Oh, no. I - It's - It's just, uh - it's the outfit.

(‘Origin’ 5.18)

The character of Illyria, introduced into *Angel*’s narrative near to its conclusion, has proved an inspiring one for fan attention and critical evaluation. This complex character offered some interesting possibilities for the representation of the action heroine in ‘cult’ television narratives. Indeed, the way that Illyria’s character developed over those few television episodes may have given fans and scholars hope that the series might influence the future development of similar characters, and that the television action heroine might continue to be reimagined in new and challenging ways.

In this paper I shall examine developments in the representation of the ‘cult’ action heroine, with reference to narratives in the Whedonverse (e.g. *Dollhouse*, *The Avengers*, *Marvel’s Agents of*

SHIELD) and to other recent television narratives such as *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Bionic Woman* and *Torchwood*. I will question whether *Angel* and the character of Illyria have had any lasting effect on the way such characters are presented on screen – and indeed, on whether they appear at all. I plan to look at physical representations of such characters (including costuming), the place of the action heroine in an ensemble cast and, of course, specific action sequences.

Costume, Character and Connotation: The Legacy of Leather Pants

Lorna Jowett

‘We’d rather have you evil. Then, at least, leather pants.’
(Lorne to Angel, ‘Epiphany’ *Angel* 2.16)

The Whedonverses have consistently offered complex views of morality, and the character of Angel in particular can be viewed as part of a broader trend in TV and cinema for dark heroes with dubious histories. Angel’s dual nature as Angel/us has been studied in some detail but this paper will focus on costume as part of character. Certain iconic items of clothing such as Spike’s leather coat have been the object of scholarly analysis and, developing this idea, this paper focuses on the use of leather as a signifier of particular character traits. Changes in costuming are a neat visual shorthand to register or suggest a shifting personality or moral direction, and this can be traced in *Buffy*, *Angel*, and *Dollhouse*, as well as in subsequent telefantasy and TV horror.

Examining particular examples of characters wearing leather, this paper will primarily focus on constructions of masculinity and femininity in relation to moral positioning. The connotations of different items of leather clothing (coats and jackets v. leather pants) will be analyzed as will the interactions of leather with different periods and styles (fetish wear, the Gothic and the more contested Goth, dandyism, historical attire, fantasized period style in fairytale drama). Whedonverse characters such as Angel, Darla, Drusilla, Faith and Wesley will be compared with more recent and ongoing TV characters like Dean Winchester (*Supernatural*) and Regina (*Once Upon a Time*) and series including *Sleepy Hollow* and *Dracula*.