

Hard to Forget: Trauma, Memory, and Illyria as the Reluctant Archive

Victoria Miceli

Illyria, the once great and terrible God, enters *Angel* through the destruction of the beloved Winifred Burkle. Violently, Illyria takes over her hosts' body until Fred is but a shell within which Illyria resides. While the powerful and destructive God has come with plans to resurrect her army and wreak terror reminiscent of the ages prior to her entrapment within a sarcophagus, these plans fade away as her army has fallen, and she is trapped within a world she would have been able to previously exchange for another dimension.

Continually fascinating throughout the episodes in which she is featured is Illyria's resemblance to Fred and the possession of Fred's memory. The two abilities culminate in the episode "The Girl in Question" wherein it is revealed that Illyria is actually able to morph her body back into the identical form of Fred, which she does when parents Roger and Trish Burkle visit Wolfram and Hart unaware of their daughter's passing. After this and other instances where Fred's essence bubbles painfully to the surface, it becomes apparent that one of Illyria's most dangerous powers is her ability to remind those closest to her of the woman she murdered.

These abilities considered, Illyria presents an interesting opportunity to situate the character within theories of trauma, memory, and archive. While Illyria embodies fragments of Fred, this does not allow for reminiscing and commemorating by those left behind. Rather these memories often re-traumatize those closest to Fred. Illyria represents the unwilling and violent archive. She is a barrier to a grieving process that characters such as Wesley were unable to overcome. As Illyria was only featured briefly in the series, this paper seeks to discuss what has largely been unexamined in an attempt to locate Illyria within theories of archive, trauma, and grief.