

## Law as Power, Law as Meaning: Jurisgenesis and Jurispathy in the Angelverse

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Lilah: People don't need an unyielding champion. They need a man who knows the value of compromise and how to beat the system from inside the belly of the beast.

Angel: The beast's belly? Doesn't that usually mean you've been eaten? ('Home', 4:22)

The role of law is a central theme throughout the entire series of *Angel*—whether it's from Angel's early interactions with LAPD agent Kate Lockley all the way to Angel Inc.'s eventual takeover of a global inter-dimensional law firm. Drawing from a rich body of literature on law and *Angel*, this paper proposes to use a constructivist approach in order to look at law as both power and meaning within the Angelverse. In order to do this it draws upon Robert Cover's concepts of *jurispathy* and *jurisgenesis*, to examine Angel Inc.'s tumultuous relationship with prophecy, which is the prevailing constitutional legal text in the series. The paper argues that Wolfram & Hart have a strong yet "imperfect monopoly on violence" that empowers them to ward off challenges or contestations to their hegemonic legal interpretation of prophecy. By policing the boundaries of prophecy they engage in a *jurispathic* process, literally killing off competing legal interpretations and their interpreters. Conversely, Angel Inc.'s practice of moral choice within the rule of prophecy represents a process of *jurisgenesis* wherein Angel Inc. generates alternative norms and narratives of law and justice. Angel Inc.'s ability to exercise moral choice within the framework of prophecy and the unstable character of legal meaning and narrative have a destabilizing effect on the hegemonic power of Wolfram & Hart. However, Angel Inc.'s role as jurigenerator is complicated by their acquisition of Wolfram & Hart and their subsequent move from vigilantes outside the legal system to the actual "belly of the beast."

### Bibliography

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