

Made to Suffer: The Redemptive Power of Disability in *Angel*

Catherine Pugh

While the representation of disability appears in *Buffy* (1997-2003), the way in which it is used in *Angel* (1999-2004) is far more progressive in nature. Disability is a transformative and destructive experience, transgressing boundaries along with bodies while disrupting identity. However, in *Angel* disability is, conversely, also creative, forcing characters to rebuild themselves, usually for the better despite—or because of—the suffering it entails. *Angel* is the first Whedon project to feature disabled primary and secondary characters with comprehensive, long-term story arcs where the consequences of impairment are explored in detail. Although these portrayals are problematic at times, they nevertheless acknowledge people with disabilities in a nuanced way that moves far beyond the trope of the deformed or disabled villain commonly featured in popular culture. One of the key ways in which it does so is to build distinct parallels between disability and one of *Angel's* primary themes: atonement. Both involve a long process of pain, self-examination, and self-sacrifice. But whereas atonement requires choice, disability forces change. The aim of this essay will be to examine how powerlessness and pain are presented in *Angel* as being equal to suffering, and subsequently how this suffering and sacrifice can lead to redemptive transformation through empathy via a quest narrative. In *Angel*, disability, therefore, becomes simultaneously destructive and creative, encouraging a process of introspection.

This introspection leads to the devastation of a character while also cultivating innate characteristics. Disability in *Angel* thus does not so much change people as expose and/or magnify aspects of their personality. By examining the disability stereotypes of significant

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characters in the series, namely Doyle, Cordelia, and Lindsey, this essay highlights parallels between impairment and atonement, both involving a painful and highly transformative series of identity disruptions that transgress the boundaries of what is “acceptable” in order to permanently alter the subject’s personality and narrative role. By utilizing Arthur W. Frank’s *Narratives of Illness*, specifically the quest narrative, whereby disability and impairment are seen as an opportunity for learning and growth, this essay argues that *Angel* follows the quest narrative, “breaking down” a character in order to reform identity; revealing who they truly are and pushing them towards a redemptive path. The essay will examine how disability narratives in *Angel* destabilize boundaries and promote suffering as a redemptive force before moving on to detailed analysis of the disability arcs of Cordelia (and to a lesser extent, Doyle) and Lindsey. While the portrayal of characters with disabilities is still troubling at times, *Angel* both conforms to and challenges stereotypes, offering a wider perspective on disability.

Disability and Identity

As Brent Walter Cline explains, “Impairment is a physical reality; a lost arm, non-functioning eyes. A disability is an impairment made disadvantageous due to an environment” (2015). Thus disability becomes a socially constructed experience, one that promotes ableism and the exclusion of people with disabilities. Critics such as Martin F. Norden, Katie Ellis, Colin Barnes, and Mary Ellen Iatropoulos offer detailed discussions of the difference between physical impairment and socially constructed disability. However, for the purpose of this essay, there is less focus on social constructions (which have been covered in detail elsewhere) and more on narrative and genre conventions alongside literary concepts of disability and impairment. Media portrayals of people with disabilities have an inevitable impact on social constructs and expectations, and this impact is just as important with texts that include fantasy elements, such as *Angel*. Although these texts do not necessarily feature accurate portrayals of disability, they allow “a ‘safe,’ fictional engagement with a transgressive body, and it reassures by contrast, its fantastical plot throwing into relief the mundanity of biologist’s chimera” (Smith 34). Utilizing a genre/literary

framework rather than a social one enables the essay to further explore the excellent work already established by disability studies by examining how disability functions in fantastical worlds with their own rules. Disability in these worlds, while just as transformative (if not more so) as in the real world, appears to go hand in hand with purpose and power. These characters become tasked with finding some kind of new purpose through a quest narrative (discussed in more detail below); therefore, disability interacts with the formation of identity. Whether or not the characters identify as disabled, they live with impairments that have a fundamental effect on how they experience the world.

Disability works to disrupt boundaries and identity. Rosemarie Garland Thomson explains that “Disability is sometimes experienced as a transformation, or a violation, of self. This in turn creates classification dilemmas, ambiguous states and questions assumptions about wholeness” (114). Furthermore, “All persons with physical disabilities thus embody the ‘illegitimate fusion’ of the cultural categories ‘normal,’ which qualifies people for human status, and ‘abnormal,’ which disqualifies them” (Garland Thomson 114). Not only are there clear boundaries between the healthy, intact, or whole person and the fragmented, diseased, unhealthy patient, but the transgressive and transformative properties of disability interfere with the subject’s sense of identity and self. It is the disruption of identity that is key to the redemptive potential of disability in *Angel*.

In her writing about disability and popular culture, Ellis notes that “Both disability studies and science fiction are concerned with physical difference, body modification, environmental adaptation, medical research and notions of technological transcendence” (64). Supernatural texts such as *Angel* are similarly more open to exploring the potential of non-normative bodies, including disabled bodies. At the same time, despite the body horror conventions at work throughout the show (a notable early example is the burrowing Talamour demon in “Lonely Hearts” [1.2]), *Angel* focuses less on the physical aspect of disability and more on how it interacts with the theme of power. Paradoxically on the show, disability often codes subjects as weaker than those around them while in fact making them stronger, or even granting powerful gifts. Characters with disabilities are usually impaired but not dysfunctional (no more than their able-bodied counterparts at any rate). For instance, the Wolfram & Hart lawyer Lindsey McDonald’s amputation impairs him, yet he is still able

to effectively perform his job. However, as Mary Ellen Iatropoulos observes, Lindsey is “impaired on the job and is then disabled by his social environment (the hierarchical corporate law firm Wolfram & Hart).” In terms of job contributions, social conventions hamper Lindsey far more than his amputation. Yet the world these characters inhabit frequently exists far beyond these conventions. This allows the non-normative body access to potential powers, whether that body is monstrous, magical, or disabled.

Doyle and Cordelia’s visions are framed as impairment and are increasingly medicalized throughout the series; however, they do grant precognitive abilities. Of course, throughout *Angel*, non-superpowered humans can still be exceptional: Lindsey and Lilah are accomplished lawyers, Fred has genius-level intellect and “likes to build things” (“Billy” 3.6 00:37:06-07), while Gunn is a proficient fighter despite having no formal training or enhanced capabilities. Although it is worth noting that almost all of the primary human characters eventually gain supernatural abilities, it is clear that—whether super-powered or not—there are very few “average humans” in *Angel*’s L.A., and those that do exist are almost always victims. If, as Katherine E. Whaley suggests, being “average” is in itself impairment, then very few characters in *Angel* are “impaired.” Perhaps this is one reason why disability and sickness are more prevalent in the series: they are required in order to make characters feel powerless, not only by restricting physical capabilities but by cultivating feelings of helplessness, inadequacy, anger, and fear. This position of vulnerability challenges characters’ perspectives, paving the way for changes in behavior and, ultimately, changes in their fundamental self, whether this is in how they identify themselves, how they are viewed in a literary context (Cordelia evolving from self-obsessed Scooby to hero or Lindsey from villain to a far more ambiguous character) or physically becoming a different kind of being altogether (Cordelia changing from human to superpowered human to part-demon).

Narratives of Illness

Arthur W. Frank’s book *The Wounded Storyteller* proposes three Narratives of Illness: Restitution, Chaos, and Quest. Frank notes that all of these narrative types are used at different stages throughout the

telling of illness stories. The vast majority of illness and impairment throughout *Angel* falls into the restitution narrative, where emphasis is put on recovery: “It’s nothing. I’m fine.” The monster-of-the-week format means that when characters become sick or injured, these problems are temporary, usually resolving by the end of the episode with little in the way of lasting consequences (physically at least). Cordelia’s third eye, courtesy of the Skilosh demons, is cured and she quickly returns to “normal” (“Epiphany” 2.16). Wesley is shot in Season Two (“The Thin Dead Line” 2.14) and has his neck slashed in Season Three (“Sleep Tight” 3.16), yet in both cases—after the initial panic about his survival—there is an expectation in both the audience and the characters that he will recover and return to a normative state.

In comparison, the chaos narrative promotes feelings of powerlessness and lack of control. Completely unpredictable, it disrupts temporality, leading to dissociated gaps or jumps in time, hurtling towards volatile instability. The fundamental lack of control at the center of the chaos narrative is reflected in the utter inability of anyone to save Fred, or even to ease her suffering once she is infected by the Demon-God Illyria (“A Hole in the World” 5.15). As the infection progresses, she is increasingly affected neurologically, forgetting words and disrupting her sense of time. Writing about illness, Frank stresses that the immediacy of the chaos renders storytelling impossible: “The body is imprisoned in the frustrated needs of the moment” (98). Fred’s world is instantly reduced to pain. Although she attempts to research a cure she is quickly unmade, overwhelmed by chaotic illness that eventually burns up her soul.

Most disability arcs in *Angel* are, however, part of the quest narrative of illness, framing impairment as an instrument of transformation, perseverance, and learning. As Frank explains, “Quest stories meet suffering head on; they accept illness and seek to *use* it. Illness is the occasion of a journey that becomes a quest. What is quested for may never be wholly clear, but the quest is defined by the ill person’s belief that something is to be gained through the experience” (115). Frank compares the narrative structure of quest stories to Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s journey detailed in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1968), dividing the journey into three stages. The first, *departure*, features a call which Frank reframes as a symptom, “the lump, dizziness, cough, or other sign that the body is not as it should be” (117), which is often refused or denied at first. The second stage,

initiation, is identified by the physical, emotional, and social suffering that the illness involves as the subject undergoes trials, pain, temptation, and redemption (118), bringing about a “boon,” a gain of experience of some kind. The third stage is the *return*, where the subject returns no longer ill but bearing the marks of their experience. (118).

Campbell and Frank agree that heroes are forged through suffering, with Frank extolling the virtue and integrity of agony in order to reach the “boon” (119). *Angel* offers a similar premise: not only dangling the prospect of atonement through suffering and perseverance, but also the double-edged sword of potential power at the price of intense physical, mental, and emotional trauma. Cordelia (along with Doyle, although much of the pertinent aspects of his story take place before the beginning of the series) and Lindsey undergo massive changes to their identity directly related to their physical disabilities. The vision and amputation narratives that surround these characters are presented to the audience in a medical context, treated by doctors in hospital environments (“To Shansu in L.A.” [1.22]; “Dead End” [2.18]; “Birthday” [3.11]), marked by pain and impairment (both physically and sociologically). However, Cordelia and Lindsey’s disabilities allow them a connection with other people that they had been lacking, opening up the potential for them to become the heroes (or not) of the quest narrative.

Redemptive Disability

Angel supports the potentially damaging notion of value in suffering—but in all suffering, be it physical, mental, emotional or moral. This premise is symptomatic of the noir genre and darker tone of the series—pain and suffering filter through the shadows, pushing their subjects onwards. There is, however, a fine line between introspection catalysed by pain and simple brooding. Genuine grievances can therefore become coded within the series as sulking and undue resentment. Jack A. Nelson adds that “In the standard formula, a friend or family member sets the pitiable character straight in a confrontational scene, informing him or her to ‘buck up’ and take control” (8). Apparently, the able-bodied are needed, since people with disabilities “are almost incapable of achieving independence on their own” (Sutherland 19). Such a scene occurs in “Dead End” (2.18),

where Angel hypocritically (considering his reputation for brooding) chastises Lindsey: “It’s ironic. I mean, here you are, young and healthy, good job, new hand. It seems like the more you get, the less you have. Am I getting through here? You just keep on moping, you’re good at that” (00:31:06-21).

This is not to suggest that characters must be disabled in order to atone or that atonement makes disability somehow worthwhile. Frank’s quest narrative of illness insists that there is value in sickness, rising above such sufferings, stepping through unharmed and transformed. However, Frank argues that “The risk of quest stories is like the risk of the Phoenix metaphor: they can present the burning process as too clean and the transformation as too complete, and they can implicitly deprecate those who fail to rise out of their own ashes” (135). In *Angel*, impairment does not necessarily mean disability, and disability does not necessarily mean redemption—it does not even mean that every impaired character wants or needs redemption. For instance, it is revealed that the blind assassin Vanessa, who Angel must fight in “Blind Date” (1.21), blinded herself (00:34:24-28) in order to enhance her other senses and develop her skills as an assassin while the psychic blind children he must protect from her are happy, healthy innocents.

In the disability narratives established from early film (see Norden for a complete history), disability and impairment are either seen as a punishment, a mark of evil, or as something for the subject to overcome in a quintessentially inspiring manner. These texts suggest that there should be value in disability and impairment, either as punishment or as an opportunity to alter some kind of moral failing. Therefore, along with the phoenixes who do not rise or still bear the scars of the fire, those who cannot overcome their impairment are perceived as failures: bitter, marked, and lacking in moral fiber.

Whaley suggests that Whedonverse characters without supernatural skills are coded as disabled in a world of superheroes. If “normal” people are considered disabled, then surely Angel (and later Darla and Spike) as a vampire with a soul, can equally be counted as disabled? As demonstrated in various flashbacks throughout the series, Angel cannot function in the world of vampires, echoing the exclusion of people with disabilities. He is outcast, seen as inferior, and cannot take part in fundamental vampire activities. Although Angel chooses not to partake in killing for food and the drinking of blood, there are

moments when it is argued that this is not completely an act of free will and is in fact at least partly due to the impairment of having a soul. For example, in “Darla” (2.7), in a flashback at the turn of the 20th Century, the newly ensouled Angel begs Darla to take him back—to return to his normal life—because she is the only world he knows, but he is physically unable to bring himself to kill the baby she offers as proof of his bloodlust. Torn between the demands of his body and the demands of his soul, Angel is firmly rejected by Darla and thus ejected from the normal/able-bodied (from Angel’s point of view) vampire world. Yet it is Angel’s soul that impairs his ability to live as a vampire and thus initially sets him on a course of redemption while allowing him to experience a different world, different friends, family, and loves. If a vampire with a soul can be considered disabled, then much of Angel’s narrative involves his coming to terms with impairment. Angel, Spike, and Darla’s struggles with adapting to a world in which they cannot kill interact with their inner conflicts between good and evil as well as their self-sacrificing redemption arcs, a perspective that has the potential to be explored elsewhere.

Angel suggests that disability alters the balance of power; characters seen as strong are put into a position of vulnerability, while those considered weaker are forced to fight. While Angelus/Angel’s disability curtails his power (primarily because Angelus is entirely evil and the introduction of a soul stops him from doing whatever he wants), it is more predominant in the series for the disabled “powerless” to strive for autonomy. Disability in *Angel* challenges the concept of power, offering characters a new perspective that may eventually result in a change of behavior, such as “disabled” Angel going on to help the helpless. As discussed in more detail below, Cordelia’s visions catalyze her die-hard commitment to others, while the loss and reattachment of Lindsey’s hand—particularly the discovery of where Wolfram & Hart acquired the donor hand—are a significant part of his decision to turn against the company. The convention of the vulnerable disabled subject is also undermined in the series, with a police officer awkwardly dismissing the antagonist of “I Fall to Pieces” because of his (self-) amputated hands. In the courtroom, Lindsey attempts to exploit Vanessa’s blindness, suggesting that “To think that my client, with her particular disability, could physically commit such a murder, is beyond the realm of believability”

just as she deftly catches the glasses thrown at her by Angel (00:04:34-43).

This is not to say that there are no consequences for those who do physically recover. *Angel's* characters are repeatedly traumatized physically and psychologically, sometimes to the point of violence (towards themselves or others), through extreme dissociation, neurological dissonance, "insanity," or the manifestation of supernatural abilities. In particular, Alyson Buckman and Renee St. Louis have examined the consequences of trauma in the Whedonverses, arguing that post-traumatic behavior has significant effects on the narratives as well as the characters themselves in parallel with disability. As previously discussed, the identity and behavior of disabled or impaired characters, even those who do recover, is transformed by the illness narrative. Frank speaks of the danger of the phoenix metaphor used in illness narratives, which offers complete cleansing transformation through suffering, noting that while the phoenix does not remember its life before the fire, other victims are left with both physical and psychological remembrances (135). Physically traumatised characters in *Angel* are sometimes able to (or forced to) forget (such as Wesley after the events of "The Thin Dead Line" and "Sleep Tight"), but the memories—and the trauma—inevitably return and must be dealt with. Suffering, in all its forms, must be acknowledged and endured. However, *Angel* argues that suffering—and the acceptance of suffering—is a vital part of redemption. From the beginning of Angel's time on *Buffy* it is established that if he experiences even a moment of pure happiness where his soul is not in anguish, he will return to being Angelus. In Season One of *Angel*, the Shanshu Prophecy is introduced, suggesting that if Angel is good enough, he will be rewarded by becoming human. In order to receive this reward, Angel must be "good"; in order to be "good," he must retain his soul; therefore, he must suffer ("To Shanshu in L.A." 1.22).

Francis Doyle and Cordelia Chase

Although Doyle and Cordelia's visions from the Powers That Be are essential to Angel's mission, there can be no doubt that they are disabling. Not only do the visions cause "bone-crushing, head-wrenching, mind-numbing" pain (Doyle, "I Will Remember You" 1.8,

00:26:37-40), but they cause both Doyle and Cordelia to lose control of their bodies in convulsions and seizure, and Cordelia ultimately enters a catatonic, coma-like state in “Birthday” (3.11). During this episode, it is explained to Cordelia that only demons are physically able to handle the visions, and she is confronted with the spirit of a human girl who died when the visions blew out the back of her head. Offered a chance at an alternate timeline where she became a television star and was never reunited with Angel and therefore never received the visions, Cordelia later discovers that Angel inherited the visions from Doyle instead¹. Despite being part demon and therefore equipped to handle the visions, Angel has been driven insane by the experience. Different characters over the series extol the virtue of the vision “gift,” but those who receive them pay a very high price indeed.

The visions are physicalized as being similar to epilepsy or, more accurately, a migraine seizure, including the pain, the way the body moves and the aura the sufferer can often sense before a vision or seizure hits. For example, in “I Fall to Pieces” (1.4), just before the vision strikes, Doyle looks pained, glances down to the ground and flinches, accompanied by a discordant musical cue as Cordelia announces, “Uh oh. Vision fit approaching” (00:02:05-10.) The visions are identified in terms of sickness, described at various times as “migraines,” “strokes,” “seizures,” and “fits.” Through Cordelia, the visions become medicalized, first by showing her taking painkillers (“To Shanshu in L.A.” 00:07:44-55; “Heartthrob” 3.1, 00:14:19-35); then by Season Three’s “Birthday” it is revealed that she has severe neurological deterioration and has been having tests including CAT scans and MRIs for over a year (00:02:25-37; 00:17:01-30). Sherry Ginn explicitly links the visions to disability and illness, writing that “Physical disorders, such as Alzheimer’s disease and epilepsy, and mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, can result in significant neurological damage over the course of time” (95). It is made clear in several episodes that Cordelia endures the pain of the victims she sees, something that is manifested physically in “That Vision Thing” (3.2) when Wolfram & Hart hire a man with mystical powers to manipulate her visions. Thus Cordelia begins to bear the wounds received by the subjects of her visions, forced to witness with her body as well as her brain.

Furthermore, when the audience is privy to the visions themselves, they are fast-moving, blurry, discordant flashes,

accompanied by loud and jarring sounds, uncannily similar to the quick bursts of images between scene transitions. Tammy A. Kinsey observes that these striking scene transitions induce “a physiological response in the human body” (48), which can cause either a positive, trance-like reaction or negative consequences such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, and seizures (notably, all of these occur during visions). This method positions the viewer within a similar alternate reality and dissociative experience as the visions, including visual images of the past, present, and future. The scene transitions are therefore designed not only to echo the visual flashes of the visions, hinting at what will happen in the future, but also work to induce a physical effect within the spectator. The transitions therefore link an important part of the show’s iconography (visions) with the viewing experience, particularly one that is designed to physically affect the spectator and cause discomfort, creating a less intense version of the brain-hijacking experienced by Doyle and Cordelia.

Doyle² understands atonement and the power of heroes in both a symbolic and a practical way, mediating different ideals of Angel as a hero (such as in “I Fall to Pieces” 00:01:00-17 and 00:07:00-14). Part-demon Doyle received the visions from the Powers That Be as part of his atonement for refusing to “see” the pain and dangers his fellow Brachen demons were facing, and consequently he is forced to experience all the pain of the world. When Doyle subsequently dies in “Hero” (1.9), his journey of atonement is complete, moving from a refusal to help to a willingness to sacrifice himself in order to save others. He is not happy about having the visions, but he accepts them and what they mean. Therefore, even when he knows he is about to die, Doyle ensures that the visions are transferred to Cordelia so that Angel will continue the “good fight” (“Hero” 00:37:07-08) by passing on “the most valuable thing he had” (“Parting Gifts” 1.10, 00:22:23-26). Doyle is one of the catalysts that set Cordelia on her quest narrative; he understands the transformative power of the visions and while he does not want to give Cordelia pain, he believes she can handle the responsibility, the trauma, and the teachings that they can give.

In addition to being the conduit to the Powers that Be, Doyle is a particularly humanizing character, and one of his lasting influences on both Angel and Cordelia is empathy. Just as his tentative relationship with Cordelia encourages her to see beyond people’s material appearance, he persuades Angel to begin connecting with the

individuals they are helping. Doyle is sent to Angel not only as a messenger but also to show him “the extent to which Angel is in moral peril, distancing himself from humanity to the extent that he will, ultimately, stop seeing people as people and start seeing them as food” (Halfyard 153). He encourages Angel to become grounded in reality, interested in the lives of the people he saves: “It’s about reaching out to people. Showing them that there’s love and hope still left in this world” because “It’s not just saving lives, it’s saving souls” (“City Of” 1.1, 00:08:40-50).

Doyle’s inherent humanity is symbolically transferred to Cordelia through the visions, helping her to become more empathetic and less selfish. It is an important early step on her road to becoming a champion, particularly after she is forced to endure endless visions from the demon Vocah’s spell in the Season One finale “To Shanshu in L.A.” (1.22, beginning at 00:17:50). The constant slew of vision-seizures is reminiscent of the condition status epilepticus, where the patient has prolonged and/or repetitive seizures without recovery between them, possibly resulting in brain damage or death. Even after Cordelia is restrained and sedated in the neuro-psychiatric unit, she still experiences the pain and suffering of the visions. Once Angel breaks the spell and releases Cordelia from the onslaught, “Cordelia cannot turn away from what she now knows—that she *can* make a difference [. . .] There is sacrifice and pain, yes, but joy in knowing that she is doing the right thing” (Gilman 183).

Cordelia eventually comes to a point where the visions become part of her identity. She is given opportunities to give them up: in Pylea (an alternate dimension and Lorne’s homeworld) where they will be absorbed by the undefeated, human-looking Pylean champion the Groosalugg as part of a mating ritual (and potentially again when Groo arrives in L.A.) (“Through the Looking Glass” [2.21]; “Couplet” [3.14]) as well as in the alternate timeline in “Birthday.” However, despite the pain and agonizing death that she is promised if she continues to endure the visions—as well as asking to be released in “Parting Gifts” and later “Billy”—Cordelia does not relinquish them. Gilman notes that during the Pylea story arc:

[Cordelia] finds that the role of pampered princess no longer suits her: she is unable to not see the cost other people pay for her comfort. And with that realization, she knows that she must

return home, her visions intact, to continue fighting. This is perhaps the pivotal moment for her: Given the opportunity for everything she ever dreamed of, at the simple cost of giving up her visions (and the attendant migraines), she cannot. (183)

Similarly, Jennifer Crusie argues that Cordelia's decision to take the visions back from Angel in "Birthday" occurs because "it's Angel, and she loves him, and because, at a deeper level, she can't bear the guilt that failing to save another man who loves her will bring" (193). Additionally, in "That Vision Thing," Cordelia admits her fear that, without the visions, Angel would not need her (00:19:25-33). This suggests that in each case her motivations are not purely altruistic; her emotional needs are also sated by the bargain.

The visions ultimately leave Cordelia vulnerable to abuse and possession by Jasmine—one of the Powers that Be seeking physical existence on earth—in Season Four. Unable to control her own body, Cordelia's actions become increasingly uncharacteristic, particularly her seduction of Angel's son Connor. Like other disabilities and illnesses, the visions open up Cordelia's body to further infection and invasion. In order to re-establish her identity in Season Five, Cordelia feels she must atone for behavior she could not control while possessed. As Samira Nadkarni writes, "[Cordelia's] own persona is tampered with [. . .] to allow for the potentiality of her monstrous motherhood, and freedom from this abuse arrives in the form of a final out-of-body experience wherein she might make reparations and reclaim her own identity as a guiding force within Angel Investigations" (90). Nadkarni underlines Cordelia's feelings of guilt, noting that "Cordelia herself suggests that her presence within her own body, despite her inability to intervene in the events that unfolded, leaves her feeling culpable and with a wish to atone" (90). There are parallels here with other neurological disorders,³ where the subject may feel responsible for behavior they are not in control of, along with deterioration associated with these kinds of illnesses. The idea of Cordelia's being hijacked and unable to function (as well as the coma she is in after Jasmine manages to possess her and use Cordelia's body to "birth" herself into physical form) also links back to the extreme physical reactions she has when Wolfram & Hart send her violent visions ("That Vision Thing"), the endless visions in "To Shanshu in L.A.," as well as the "normal" visions that take over her body and mind. It is not just the disability itself that

changes Cordelia's identity—she must also fight for autonomy against her own body and those who would abuse it, including the Powers That Be. While Cordelia's impairment leaves her open to harm, she is, as Bronwen Calvert notes, a character frequently abused, invaded, or manipulated (“Expecting” [1.12]; “Over the Rainbow” [2.20]; and “Epiphany” [3.16], to name but a few), suggesting that disability is another experience (along with her gender) that invites trauma. Cordelia is a powerful character throughout the series: she is an outspoken, determined, proudly self-appointed “bitch” (“Rm w/a Vu” [1.5, 00:35:00-47]); a capable fighter (“Billy”); a formidable psychic; briefly a higher power; and cunning villain. Disability is used to make her vulnerable, allowing times of growth and compassion as well as stopping her from becoming an all-powerful (and therefore unrelatable) character. As with Whedon's other heroes, power must be balanced with trauma and limitations in order to create engaging drama and complex characters.

Although the disability narrative changes Cordelia, it does not alter who she really is. Gilman notes that Cordelia is a survivor, and while the traumas she suffered “might have made someone else bitter, Cordelia went the other direction. Yes, the sharp wit and biting sarcasm remained. But the innate honesty and power of observation which had made her observations so effective on *Buffy* were honed as well, to positive result” (181). The disabling nature of the visions forces Cordelia to change physically and mentally. Wesley informs Angel in “Epiphany” that, “our Cordelia has become a very solitary girl. She's not the vain, carefree creature she once was. Well, certainly not carefree” (00:24:50-00:25:59). However, the visions also help to give Cordelia insight and compassion, setting her on the path to becoming an Angelverse champion.

Ultimately, Cordelia chooses disability and the fight it brings, following the formula of the quest narrative and cementing disability's role as a transformative learning experience within the series. Cordelia could choose to reject disability by refusing her visions, select an easy fix and regain her health and normative body (not options usually available to the impaired, ill, or disabled), but as a protagonist and hero, she cannot. Notably, it is only after Cordelia chooses not to sacrifice herself, to instead go for the “quick fix” rather than suffering, sacrificing, and dying, that she begins to become an antagonist. However, despite disability being framed as a painful challenge that can

only be “won” by the hero’s quest, Cordelia does not defeat it, but accepts and reclaims her transformation. As already discussed, the horror and science fiction genres are more open to the idea of a powerful non-normative body; therefore, the disabled body has the potential for extraordinary capabilities (and thus danger) as well as difficulties. With *Angel*, this depends on whether the person with a disability has supernatural abilities. For example, in “Epiphany,” Wesley, in a wheelchair and sorely lacking in supernatural powers, struggles to defend himself because he cannot reach his gun, spins out of control, becomes stuck in the mud, and topples over twice. However, Bethany from “Untouched” (2.4) frames her telekinesis as a disabling illness; she calls it a “disease” and describes it in terms of a seizure or dissociative episode: “It’s like there’s a flash. Like something pops in my brain. And then it’s like there’s an undertow, like there’s no gravity and my body’s being pulled in different directions” (00:22:35-48). However, once she acknowledges and accepts her “disease” (00:23:17-18), she is able to control and utilize it to her advantage; the disabled body becomes the extraordinary body that, like Cordelia or Vanessa, can simultaneously be a weakness, an asset, and a threat.⁴ As with the quest narrative, one of the dangers of this outlook is the implication of what happens if the subject “fails” the challenge, suggesting that the person has a weakness of character, or that they have missed the learning potential of disability. However, if the subject “passes” the challenge, it creates formidable non-normative bodies that challenge not only the concept of what can be endured, but what is powerful.⁵ Whedon’s characters consistently encounter trauma which often leads to incredibly powerful characters, whether they are ultimately good or evil. Disability also physicalizes this process: trauma of the body transformed and projected through the extraordinary body.

In *Angel*, the hard path is for heroes, the easy path is for the immoral and unscrupulous. Easy fixes to the body belong to corporate institutions like Wolfram & Hart, who seamlessly dispense body parts to their employees with little thought toward the implications of their actions. Unlike Cordelia, Lindsey wallows in bitterness, becoming obsessed with revenge; only when he chooses to reclaim the agency he lost when his hand was amputated does he get a shot at redemption. This positions disability as a challenge that must be overcome; not necessarily a part of identity but as an obstacle on the journey to becoming a hero—a monster to be defeated. Cordelia takes the hard

path of the quest narrative while Lindsey is put onto the easy path by Wolfram & Hart. Some of the difference in Cordelia and Lindsey's attitudes stems from their roles within the series. Cordelia, as a primary character, protagonist, hero, and potential love interest for the title character, is narratively primed to be able to learn; to overcome difficulties, mature and transform. Lindsey, as a secondary character and antagonist (with anti-hero rising), is afforded more flexibility. He is able to indulge in the natural liminality of his character, to experiment with being a villain, a potential hero, anti-hero, avenger, lover, guide, betrayer, sacrifice, fighter, trickster, and so on.

Lindsey McDonald

Lindsey's right hand is cut off by Angel in "To Shanshu in L.A." and he uses a prosthetic until the Season Two episode "Dead End," when he is given a semi-surgical/semi-mystical transplant by Wolfram & Hart. Roz Kaveney argues that the loss of Lindsey's hand "re-invents him as a liminal being, since part of him is alive and part dead, and this does not cease to be the case when he is given new hands, first plastic and then real" (66). However, Lindsey is established as a liminal character long before this, particularly during the events of "Blind Date," when his conscience causes him to betray Wolfram & Hart before ultimately being tempted to return. Quickly established as more complex than an evil company drone, Lindsey's duality is a theme that continues visually throughout the series (such as the use of a double reflection in broken glass in "Darla" 00:02:16). Lindsey leads a double life, not only playing both sides of the Angel/Wolfram & Hart conflict, but constantly performing a role at work (evidenced by his comment to Darla that he is "always dirty" when he returns ("Reprise" 2.15, 00:11:37-38). Throughout his appearances on the series, Lindsey is coded as a character perennially on a threshold, able to cross either way, conveyed through his love for the human/vampire Darla and his self-destructive streak. Furthermore, his working-class roots, accent, and musical talent juxtaposed against the formal, corporate, affluent environment of Wolfram & Hart suggests that he is able to navigate between social worlds and expectations. In Season Five, the tattoos that hide Lindsey from Wolfram & Hart allow him to be simultaneously distinctive and invisible, while his portrayal of "Doyle"

(where he borrows the real Doyle's life to manipulate Spike) allows him to switch between identities. He does not simply lie and deceive by pretending to be someone he isn't; he co-opts Doyle's entire narrative, going as far as to wear similar clothes to Doyle even though Spike would have no way of knowing that. This allows him to not only attempt to alter the story by recasting the roles (Spike as Angel and Lindsey as Doyle), but essentially his "wearing" Doyle's identity takes the spectator back to the first season, blurring time as well as identity. Intentionally or not, Lindsey continues to take on Doyle's role later in the season. In "Underneath" (5.17, 00:37:50-00:38:58) he lectures Angel on what a hero does, echoing Doyle's advice throughout Season One. Lindsey's manipulative nature and ability to transgress social boundaries, environments, and identities (whether this is through his role as both a villain and potential hero or by playing "Doyle") mark him as liminal—as well as something of a trickster. Lindsey is not only the ultimate outsider, he is torn between desperately wanting to be on the inside, whether that be as a member of staff at Wolfram & Hart or as part of Team Angel, while asserting his autonomy, a need that often leads to betrayal (of both W&H and Angel). Therefore, Lindsey's disability underlines his liminal status as well as reflecting his dual nature.

Lindsey's amputation appears to utilize several disability stereotypes, not least the trope of the disabled villain whose non-normative body reflects evil within. However, Lindsey's multifaceted character complicates this reductive trope. Niall Richardson explains the reasoning behind the disabled villain stereotype, stating "if Hollywood's main narrative drive is normative heterosexuality, and a disabled body is an 'unattractive' body—in many ways a desexualised body—the disabled body would, of course, be embittered because it does not conform to compulsory heterosexuality" (177). Not only does disability in popular media often suggest antagonistic intent, but the disabled person is repeatedly driven "mad" or "evil" purely because of his or her impairment. Therefore, "Impairment is equally often used as motive" (Sutherland 17-18) as "In innumerable movies, disabled villains rail against their 'fate' and vow to destroy a world inhabited by 'normals'" (Nelson 6).

From this construct emerges what Norden terms the "Obsessive Avenger": an offshoot of the disabled-person-as-evil trope that primarily developed through the horror genre. The Obsessive Avenger

is “an egomaniacal sort, almost always an adult male, who does not rest until he has had his revenge on those he holds responsible for his disablement and/or violating his moral code in some other way” (Nelson 52). Obsessive bitterness is already a part of Lindsey’s character, as demonstrated in his speech to Angel about growing up in poverty (“Blind Date” 00:13:00-48). Michelle Sagara West’s analysis, which paraphrases much of the speech, states that:

Lindsey, coming up from a background of poverty and despair, has learned that the game is all about money and power—and this is probably the first time he’s ever looked at the underside of that power and seen that the price paid *isn’t* just monetary. But he knows hunger; he’s lived it. He’s seen his family house signed out from under him. He’s seen self-righteous people like Angel who’ve had it all, who’ve come from money and who’ve had the *luxury* of morals. (95)

However, after his amputation, this anger and resentment becomes focused into both the loss of Lindsey’s hand and his masochistic relationship with Darla. As with Cordelia, becoming impaired does not transform who Lindsey is, but it does exacerbate key traits of his personality.

Amputation, particularly of the hands, is symbolically associated with emasculation and castration (see Norden). More importantly, however, amputation of the hands denotes a loss of agency as the subject loses the power to enact their will upon the world. Identity is destroyed through the loss of the hand or arm and recreated by whatever it is replaced with; identity becomes focused and remolded in the prosthetic. Bogdan et al. note that “The artificial lower arm of Peter Pan’s Captain Hook comes to stand for the evil of the villain, who derives his name from his prosthetic devise” (128).⁶ Nelson agrees, explaining that the physically disabled villain (such as Hook) becomes “identified by this trait, which dominates other aspects of his or her being, robbing him or her of social identity” (7). However, it can be argued that for those who begin as villains before flirting with the other side—such as Lindsey—the loss of the hand and its replacement is a key part of their character development.⁷

In accordance with *Angel*’s L.A. setting, Lindsey’s plastic hand suggests artificiality and aesthetic perfection, yet he no longer fits into

the smooth and shiny world of Wolfram & Hart; his Wolfram & Hart-given hand may fit the ethos of the company and may even give the impression of making Lindsey “whole,” but it is in fact a constant reminder of his differences and a mark of how artificial his life has become. In contrast to his previous characterization as a composed, (predominantly) villainous company man, he struggles to restrain his frustrations, indulging in his rivalry with Angel and obsession with Darla. Lindsey’s growing disillusion with life—and Wolfram & Hart in particular—finds a parallel in the cold plastic hand. Despite his growing emotional recklessness, Lindsey becomes increasingly numb, barely reacting—even smiling—when it looks like his death is inevitable, not only because it is Darla that will probably kill him, but because “I guess I just don’t mind” (“Reunion” [2.10, 00:35:22-24]).

Yet Lindsey’s plastic hand is destroyed—again—by Angel (“Epiphany”), after Lindsey confronts him after he finds out that Angel slept with Darla, a double castration for Lindsey. Notably, this is a scene where Lindsey drops his slick lawyer persona for the social uniform of his working-class roots: cowboy boots, jeans, and a flannel shirt. Instead of threatening Angel with legal tactics or using a monstrous proxy, Lindsey repeatedly runs him over with a beat-up truck before attacking him with a sledgehammer. As West notes, “This is primal Lindsey; this is the man beneath the suit, the man beneath the ambition, the person that Wolfram & Hart can’t—quite—obliterate” (99). Eventually Angel gains the advantage, and as Lindsey reaches for a stake with his prosthetic hand, Angel smashes it to pieces with the sledgehammer, leaving Lindsey staring at the debris with a look of shock and utter defeat (00:34:39-49). Angel points out that Lindsey is fortunate that Angel had an epiphany, otherwise he would have destroyed Lindsey’s good hand. However, smashing the plastic hand arguably has the greater effect, reminding Lindsey of his disability and all it symbolizes. Not only does it underline Lindsey’s powerlessness (and—where Darla is concerned at least—impotence), but the symbol of his depersonalisation and artificial life is destroyed; as West puts it, “Lindsey, beaten, has had an epiphany of his own” (99), another step in his journey towards leaving Wolfram & Hart.

Until “Dead End” takes Lindsey’s feelings of depersonalization and numbness to an extreme, there are very few moments that actually present Lindsey’s disability as disabling. In “Judgement” (2.1), Lindsey tries in vain to open a CD case, causing Lilah to snidely remark, “You’re

not handicapped, you're handi-capable" (00:06:42-48). Later, in "Epiphany," Lindsey is so incensed by the news that Darla and Angel have been together that when attempting to take off his tie, he struggles and resorts to using his teeth (00:19:52-55). However, the beginning of "Dead End" shows the realities of Lindsey's daily morning routine, including a close-up of his stump as he turns off the alarm clock, attaches his prosthetic, and uses pre-tied ties (00:00:42-00:01:49). The focus of the sequence, however, is on the abandoned guitar in the corner of the wardrobe. Iatropoulos observes, "The camera zooms in to Lindsey's somber face as mournfully contemplative music swells, implying hints of regret, frustration, and anger as he looks at the guitar he can no longer play." She goes on to note that, "This scene imbues Lindsey with the personal tragedy narrative of disability, for the longing gaze at the guitar indicates Lindsey's use of his former 'able-bodied normality' as a standard against which he judges his currently impaired situation, a standard bound to make Lindsey feel broken."

As the episode continues, Lindsey is informed by his boss Nathan Reed that an appointment has been made for him with a doctor. Naturally wary, Lindsey is astonished when the appointment leads to the transplant of a new, flesh and blood hand that heals instantaneously. The next day, Lindsey's morning routine is repeated and Iatropoulos notes his lack of enthusiasm despite becoming able-bodied overnight, arguing that it is only when Lindsey actually plays the guitar that the spectator can see any happiness about the surgery. However, Lindsey's dubious contentment is short-lived, as he soon finds himself repeatedly doodling "Kill" during a meeting with a client (00:15:34-38). Notably, Lindsey is seen writing with both hands throughout the episode, another nod to his skills at adaptation and dual nature. Alone in his apartment, he attempts to provoke the new hand into repeating the action, eventually resorting to pricking it with a letter opener until drops of blood appear. Withdrawing in pain, he scrutinizes the hand closely; "Who are you?" he wonders aloud (00:16:17-00:17:10). Even at this early stage, Lindsey does not accept the hand as his, viewing it as alien, independent, and potentially dangerous.

The idea of an alien or evil hand has roots in cinema in films as early as *The Hands of Orlac* in 1924 (remade in 1960 and as *Mad Love* in 1935), and in both medical and literary discourse. Clint Hallam, the first person to undergo a successful hand transplant in 1998, came to dislike the new hand, ultimately refusing to take immunosuppressant drugs in

order to force another amputation in 2001. The transplant was carried out by Dr Jean-Michel Dubernard, and he and members of his team developed the term “Frankenstein Syndrome.” Jenny Slatman and Guy Widdershoven explain: “As a transplantation patient, you have to live with the thought that a piece of a dead person’s matter is now part of you—and imagine that this strange part may take over control” (397).

Eventually, Lindsey, working with Angel, discovers a Wolfram & Hart facility, housing unwilling body-part donors, including the original owner of his new hand, a former acquaintance called Brad, who begs Lindsey to kill him. Horrified, Lindsey agrees, shutting off Brad’s life support system and rescuing whom he can before burning the body donor chop shop to the ground. As with Lindsey’s other major act of defiance against his employers (his refusal to allow the children to be killed in “Blind Date”), he is offered a promotion. While in “Blind Date,” he is tempted back to Wolfram & Hart, this time he not only defies the company but threatens them.

Lindsey leaves because of a culmination of events, but the transplanted hand is the final push he needs. His rebelliousness and pride, the events of “Blind Date,” Wolfram & Hart’s games, and his relationship with both Angel and Darla become entangled and complicated with the consequences of his amputation. This reaches a crux during the events of “Dead End”; therefore, Lindsey’s tentative steps towards redemption become symbolized and wrapped up in the hand itself rather than the will to change.

Even though the hand itself is not evil (writing “Kill” presumably because Brad wanted Lindsey to euthanize him), Lindsey utilizes the trope of the “evil hand.” During his final speech to his superiors in the Wolfram & Hart boardroom (00:36:52-00:38:55), Lindsey claims that the hand is alien and antagonistic: exactly what Wolfram & Hart needs in its staff. He tells Lilah that “You could have had [the promotion]. But you didn’t have what it takes: An evil hand” (00:37:06-17). Lindsey uses the evil hand as a scapegoat for his behavior: “You do know you gave me an evil hand, right? I’ve been writing ‘kill, kill, kill’ on everything. It’s crazy. It’s crazy! Anything could happen” (00:37:24-33). He taunts the board-members, attacks and shoots the security guard before waving the gun towards them and shooting the glasses behind his boss’s (Nathan Reed) head. He half-apologizes, deadpanning “Stop, evil hand. Stop it [. . .] I just can’t control my evil hand” (00:37:42-49) and holds up his hands in apology

to Lilah when he pinches her on his way out. Finally, he uses his “evil hand issues” as a threat, reminding Reed that if Wolfram & Hart come after him he will fight back: “if you wanna chase me, be my guest. But remember: Evil” (00:38:41-45). Wolfram & Hart’s attempts to repair Lindsey, to make him functional again in their world, backfire spectacularly. The amputation and prosthetic are a significant part of Lindsey’s journey towards some kind of redemption; trying to pretend it never happened by obliterating the wound and attempting to replace what was lost does not “fix” who Lindsey is becoming.

However, when Lindsey returns in Season Five, although the amputation is referenced (“You’re Welcome” [5.12, 00:11:44-56]), the dubious nature of the transplant and the “evil hand” are not mentioned. Slatman and Widdershoven note that, “Regaining one’s bodily integrity after a drastic physical change such as a hand transplant basically means being able to identify with the changed body” (407). While by no means suggesting that Lindsey’s “evil hand” leads to his returning to L.A. far more antagonistic than when he left, he certainly offers a twist on Slatman and Widdershoven’s observation that “one should be able to actually fit the new limb into one’s life, which implies not only that one can purposefully cope with the strange limb, but also that one is able to endow it with a positive meaning” (407). When leaving L.A. in “Dead End,” Lindsey is able to utilize the “evil hand”; it gives him emotional and psychological power by acting as a symbol or proxy. He might not be happy about the situation—and certainly does not condone it—but he accepts and incorporates it. He does not chop off the new hand like Hallam; he learns martial arts instead. Lindsey may never achieve redemption, but he consistently flirts with it; like Doyle, he eventually accepts the role his disability played in his life as well as understanding what a hero should be—while accepting that he will never be one (“Underneath” [5.17]). Ultimately, it is Lindsey’s amputation that gives away his identity when he poses as “Doyle”; once Spike tells Angel the imposter had had his hand cut off, there is only one person it could be (“You’re Welcome” 00:27.43-50). After amputation, if identity is symbolically reformed by the replacement, then Lindsey’s assimilation of his “evil hand” further reflects his ambiguous nature and morality, cementing his role not as a hero or villain, but as a trickster.

As shown with Cordelia and Lindsey, Frank argues that the tellers of their own illness stories do not discover someone new, but in

fact find out who they “really” are (129). Furthermore, he posits that the story of illness is one of a journey, one which radically alters the expected destination. It is perhaps no surprise that the characters who suffer the most through disability in *Angel* are those who believe they had their future mapped out: Doyle had a stable job and a wife; Cordelia had plans to become an actress and marry a wealthy husband; and Lindsey was marked as one of Wolfram & Hart’s high-flyers. In each case, their narratives are violently interrupted, but core identity traits are brought into focus, allowing the character to redevelop their narrative. For Doyle, Cordelia, and Lindsey, disability allows the cultivation of empathy; despite the selfishness, anger, and bitterness of all three characters, in the end, they all demonstrate compassion, bravery, and kindness, acknowledging their connection to those around them, especially to those who suffer. As Lindsey demonstrates, the transformation is not necessarily permanent, nor does it automatically redeem any previous behavior, but it is an important part of the atonement narrative for these three disabled characters. Forcing them into the sick role, then using disability to violently confront them with the suffering of others not only opens each character up to empathy, but irrevocably changes the path they are on. Frank explains that in quest narratives the interruption (becoming ill, or disabled, in this case) becomes a challenge “requiring the person to be more than she has been, and the purpose is becoming one who has risen to that occasion. This occasion at first appears as an interruption but later comes to be understood as an opening” (128). The challenge allows the person to regain agency, become an active force rather than passive victim, and redefine their story and what it means in a process of “perseverance through suffering” (128).

The quest narrative suggests that stories of illness are a journey, returning agency to the subject, reframing the patient/sufferer/victim as protagonist/agent/hero. Journey stories require change; the hero is marked physically and emotionally by the landscapes they travel, the people they meet, the challenges they face, and the traumas they overcome. Similarly, Frank suggests that the moral purpose of illness narratives is to “*witness a change of character through suffering*” (128, emphasis original) in order to witness and affirm the metamorphosis while discovering a model for self-change. Although disability is by no means the only avenue of agony in *Angel*, the physical, mental, and emotional suffering catalyzed through disability, impairment, and

illness has an intense transformative power. It magnifies underdeveloped aspects of the character (such as Cordelia's compassion and Lindsey's anger), fosters empathetic connection, and forces the subject to confront both temptation and weakness in order to attempt a path to redemption. However, one of the dangers of this is the implication in the wider world: that if a subject supposedly "misses" the learning potential of disability or impairment then they have failed in some way. It also, more distressingly, suggests that there is a point to disability, whereas it is a phenomenon that can happen to anyone at anytime for any number of reasons. It does not have to be a challenge, or have a purpose, and though for some there may be comfort in believing in the integrity of suffering or the undeniable physical and mental transformations it creates, disability and illness are painful, ugly, and often degrading experiences.

While *Angel* is fertile ground for further analysis of disability, it is also a precursor to a wider spectrum of characters with physical disabilities in Whedon's work, such as Xander's losing an eye (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), Bennett's dead arm (*Dollhouse* 2009-2010) and Coulson's amputation (*Marvel: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D* 2013-). It is also important that it is frequently main characters who are disabled, as well as a mix of both heroes and villains, something that has been slowly gaining traction in other fantasy texts such as *American Horror Story* (2011-) (Season Four features a character with syndactyly, while Jaime Brewer—an actress with Down's Syndrome—is a recurring player); *The Walking Dead* (2010-) (characters have lost eyes, arms, and legs while Season Nine includes both characters and actors with hearing loss); and *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) (particularly primary characters Jaime and Bran). Characters with disabilities in fantasy television are becoming more complex and more visible, something which *Angel* (despite its often socially problematic portrayals of disability and impairment) helped to support.

There are parallels between atonement and disability in *Angel*. Both require a long process of change, pain, insight, and self-sacrifice. Whereas redemption is "about taking responsibility for past actions and accepting the guilt that comes with them" (Colvin 21), impairment and disability involve accepting a non-normative body and moving forward. Grief is allowed, in some cases encouraged, but cannot be dwelt on. In *Angel*, redemption does not come from forgiveness, grand gestures, or successful missions. Part of the process of atonement

appears to be a transformation of the body, a physical scarring in some way. From Wesley having his throat cut, to Angel and Spike's souls, to terminal illness, neurological damage and amputations, it appears that the body must be made non-normative, disabled, damaged or helpless in some way, not so much as punishment, but to promote empathy. *Angel* argues time and time again that suffering is the key to redemption, opening up the way for change. Disability in *Angel* causes pain, powerlessness, and introspection, advocating that there is purpose in this suffering. The simultaneously destructive and creative nature of disability and of suffering encourages characters to complete the quest narrative towards redemption—not simply transforming identity through physical changes and self-examination but revealing who they really are.

Notes

¹ With intriguing homoerotic implications of how Angel inherited the visions from Doyle in the first place.

² Along with Lindsey (see West).

³ As well as mental illnesses.

⁴ Another example is Season Four's Gwen Raiden, who is disabled by her powers of electricity; she is ostracized, unable to touch people without killing them, and regularly attracts lightning, requiring a prosthetic device to give her a normative body. Yet she is also able to use these powers to become an exceptional thief.

⁵ See Pugh "Beautiful Monsters" 60-61.

⁶ Other examples of this trope include Darth Vader/Anakin Skywalker and Luke Skywalker from the *Star Wars* franchise (1977-), Jimmy Darling (*American Horror Story: Freakshow* (2014)), and Jaime Lannister from *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019). Female amputation is more problematic, with disability arguably playing as important a role as gender (see Cline) as warrior characters move from autonomy to interdependency (Furiosa from *Mad Max: Fury Road*, 2015; Yo Yo from *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013-)).

⁷ After having both hands cut off by Dana in "Damage" (5.11), former villain Spike tells Angel he deserves the pain, accepting the punishment meant for Dana's abuser because of Spike's own past actions. It is only after his hands (notably his own hands) have been reattached, that Spike muses on his own evil-doings, noting that Dana—just like Spike and Angel—was once an "innocent victim" but is now a "monster" (00:42:24-26, 00:42:21-22).

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