

Of *Moonlight* and *Miracles*:
The Influence of *Angel* on David Greenwalt's Immediate
Post-Whedon Series

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In her analysis of what she terms the “collective vision” of Joss Whedon’s Mutant Enemy production company, Stacey Abbott argues that a television series is “an ever-changing entity” (as compared with film) and “as such the vision evolves with the writing team” (Abbott 12). Indeed, *Buffy* (1997-2003) and *Angel* (1999-2004) writer Steven DeKnight indicates that even lower level writers (that is, those who are new or without a “producer” credit), are encouraged to engage with all levels of Mutant Enemy’s series’ productions (Kaveney 120), making it not only a learning experience for said writers, but also underscoring the collaborative nature of Whedon’s series. Despite this collaborative environment, however, there is still a hierarchy, with the showrunner (executive producer) as the final word, and frequently the “author” of the overarching arc for the season (see Pateman 43-78). One fairly reliable authorship indicator is examining who writes each season’s premiere and finale episodes. For *Buffy*, Whedon wrote the season premieres and finales for Seasons One, Two, Three, Four, and Seven, and the season finale for Season Five; for *Dollhouse* (2009-2010), both season premieres and (as co-writer) the Season One finale; and for *Firefly* (2002), the pilot and finale. Based on this, it is clear that the narrative ownership of the latest Mutant Enemy series *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013-present) belongs to showrunners Jed Whedon and

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Maurissa Tancharoen rather than the initial promotion of the series suggested (i.e., a Joss Whedon series); they wrote or co-wrote the premieres and finales of Seasons One to Three, and the premieres of Seasons Four and Five. As these episodes in particular either set the tone for a season or resolve narrative arcs, they operate as a good shorthand indicating who is in charge.

When the character of *Angel* (David Boreanaz) was spun off into his own series, it was David Greenwalt who was moved to the position of showrunner for the fledgling program. Greenwalt had been paired with Whedon at the suggestion of the WB network (Bushman); Whedon was new to running a television series, while Greenwalt had extensive experience in both comedies (*The Wonder Years* [1988-1993], *Doogie Howser, MD* [1989-1993]) and dramas (*Profit* [1996], *The X-Files* [1993-2002, 2016-2018]).¹ Based on the aforementioned authoring of *Angel's* premieres and finales, as well as, as Matthew Pateman points out, his presence (and Whedon's absence) from paratexts such as DVD commentaries (54-55), Greenwalt has a greater claim to authorship of the series than Whedon; for the first three seasons, Greenwalt had a day-to-day role in shaping *Angel* in a way that Whedon did not. (Whedon wrote or co-wrote only the pilot, the Season Two premiere, and the premiere and finale of Season Five.) It was Greenwalt who had suggested transitioning the character of Cordelia to *Angel*, in order to balance the darker character with a more upbeat one (Nazzaro 155), and Greenwalt who wrote or co-wrote the premieres and finales of all three of the seasons for which he served as showrunner. Further, *Angel's* darker themes and morally ambiguous protagonist suggest Greenwalt's "before its time" series *Profit*, with its amoral lead a precursor to the late 20th/early-21st century spike in anti-hero melodrama such as *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) or *Mad Men* (2007-2015). The casting of Keith Szarabajka as the narratively pivotal Daniel Holtz was seemingly also based on his work on *Profit* (Nazzaro 160).² Not only do these elements point to Greenwalt's influence on *Angel*, particularly the way in which the darker thematics reappear in Greenwalt's subsequent work, but they also suggest the narrative/thematic debt owed to *Angel* by contemporary CW series, and owed to Greenwalt as one of the inspirations.

As David Lavery points out, the addition of a third series in Whedon's oeuvre, the ill-fated *Firefly*, not only split Whedon's attention, but also created a split between the collaborators, when Whedon, as Lavery puts it, stole Tim Minear from *Angel* to work on his troubled new creation (Lavery 113, n.17). With Greenwalt's departure at the end of *Angel*'s third season, Whedon and company struggled to find a permanent replacement; David Simkins, who had worked on other WB series such as *Roswell* (1999-2002) and *Charmed* (1998-2006), lasted only four episodes.³ Tim Minear eventually stepped up as Season Four showrunner; Jeffrey Bell managed Season Five. These issues behind the scenes, as well as, as Abbott points out, the series' "abandonment of the episodic" (25) in favor of an arc-heavy culminating narrative and the Cordelia/Jasmine storyline that saw the character turn evil before being essentially written out ("Inside Out" 4.17), were significant shifts in character and narrative seen as problematic to by some. As Matthew Pateman suggests, there is significant tension inherent in "an industrial system where power in the writers' room shifts, actors' circumstances change, and show runners disagree" (77). In this instance, the loss of Greenwalt not only shifted the narrative direction, but deprived actress Charisma Carpenter of a show runner who championed her character (Pascale 229).

Since his departure from *Angel*, Greenwalt has worked as either executive producer or consulting producer on several series, including *Jake 2.0* (2003-2004), *Surface* (2005-2006), *Eureka* (2006-2012), *Kidnapped* (2006-2007), *In Plain Sight* (2008-2012),⁴ and *Grimm* (2011-2017). With the influence of Greenwalt and *Angel* in mind, two of these post-*Angel* series are of varying degrees of interest: Richard Hatem's short-lived ABC series *Miracles* (2003), for which Greenwalt served as producer and head writer; and CBS's *Moonlight* (2007-2008).⁵ *Moonlight*, about a vampire detective in Los Angeles, borrows so heavily from *Angel* in conception and narrative that Greenwalt himself joked he considered suing the network before being asked to serve as a showrunner (White 2007). *Moonlight* was co-produced by CBS Studios and Warner Brothers, whose treatment of *Angel* following *Buffy*'s departure for UPN was problematic and is worth a deeper examination, which will be addressed below. Yet, in *mise-en-scène*, characterization, and narrative, *Miracles* actually serves as a closer analogue to *Angel*, despite the lack of a vampire protagonist. Elements such as the

serialized thread that runs through a “monster-of-the-week”-type story and a focus on an individual whose moral place within major cosmic events is hazy suggest *Angel*'s series arc. Sodalitas Quaerito, the organization that investigates strange and paranormal phenomena, is staffed similarly to Angel Investigations: Paul Callan (Skeet Ulrich) as point person (Angel), co-worker Alva Keel (Angus MacFayden) as repository of occult knowledge (Wesley), and Evelyn Santos (Marisa Ramirez), a former cop who joins the organization after a paranormal experience, who frequently serves as the face of and offers insight (vision) into both her coworkers and the supernatural events they face (Cordelia). Further, *Miracles* itself is referenced at least twice in the fourth season of *Angel* (“The House Always Wins” 4.3 and “Peace Out” 4.21), both as a tribute to Greenwalt’s contributions to the Whedonverse and a suggestive link between the two series.

Thus, along the lines of other Whedon studies scholars’ work around auteur- and authorship, including Stacey Abbott’s analysis of *Mutant Enemy* (9-26), Matthew Pateman’s work around Whedon’s oeuvre (Pateman 2018), and Mary Ellen Iatropoulos’ take on the Whedon/Marvel relationship (“Of Whedonverse Canon”), in this article I will be examining how Greenwalt’s influence on *Angel* is suggested and maintained through Greenwalt’s immediate post-*Angel* oeuvre, with a particular focus on the narrative of *Miracles*, while first touching on both the production and suggestive arcs of the short-lived *Moonlight*.

“Two totally different people...who look exactly alike”: Narrative and Production Correspondences Between *Angel* and *Moonlight*

In the *Angel* episode “Couplet” (3.14), Angel finds himself inordinately disturbed by the presence of Cordelia’s (Charisma Carpenter) erstwhile lover Groo (Mark Lutz), particularly as Cordelia has given Groo a new look that is nearly identical to that of Angel. On a character level, Angel’s issue stems from the fact that Groo has Angel’s strength and commitment to being a champion minus the significant deficits that Angel labors under: an aversion to sunlight, a curse that prevents physical intimacy, and 250+ years of psychic baggage; it also fairly directly suggests

Cordelia's mutual attraction to Angel to the viewer, if not immediately to Cordelia herself. Wes intends to offer Angel perspective on Groo's presence, insisting they are two "totally different people" (00:24:38-43) until he sees Groo's new look himself.

In the case of CBS's *Moonlight*, there is an argument to be made that its lead vampire, along with the narrative itself, is the "Groo" to *Angel's* Angel. Debuting three years after *Angel's* cancellation, *Moonlight* appears to be part of television's long history of attempting similar narrative forms based on the success of either shared source material (*Ferris Bueller the Series* [1990]/*Parker Lewis Can't Lose* [1990-1993]) or similar style and tone (*The Munsters* [1964-1966]/*The Addams Family* [1964-1966] or *ER* [1994-2009]/*Chicago Hope* [1994-2000]). This is often a response to either the success of the source material (as with the adaptations of the film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* [1986]) or the success of one particular series spawning imitators (e.g., NBC's repeated attempts to recreate the ratings of their series *Friends* [1994-2004] with similarly-themed sitcoms). In most instances, there are clear winners and losers; *Parker Lewis* ran for three seasons on Fox compared to *Ferris'* one on NBC, and *Chicago Hope*, which debuted the day before *ER* in 1994, was moved around CBS' schedule more than once during its six-year run, while *ER* remained in the same time slot for 15 seasons on NBC. While many of these ran simultaneously and thus do not fit into the aforementioned categories, others could be considered remakes (*Parker Lewis* as a remake of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*), adaptations (as with NBC's *Ferris Bueller* series or ABC/UPN's *Clueless* [1996-1999] TV series), or even ripoffs (e.g., CBS's *Elementary* [2012-present], for which they had initially approached Steven Moffat to develop due to *Sherlock's* success [2010-present] on the BBC) (Jeffrey). While Jeffrey Bussolini lists *Moonlight* as an example of "constitutive intertextuality," in which "major structural elements or images of one show...are built into the dramatic world or discourse of another show" (Bussolini, "Television" para 6), TV Tropes has suggested another term: "spiritual successors"; that is, series that are not necessarily sequels, but share similar narrative DNA (TV Tropes, "Spiritual Successor").

But is *Moonlight* a "spiritual successor" to *Angel*? Developed from a novel turned script by Trevor Munson (one of the series producers), it was rewritten as a series and picked up by Warner Brothers Television with

Munson, Ron Koslow, and Joel Silver as executive producers. David Greenwalt was hired by CBS following the series' pick-up to revise Munson and Koslow's concept. Not only did Greenwalt restructure the episode's original pilot, he replaced the entire cast—except O'Loughlin—on network orders to make it “younger and hipper” (Folden, “Interview With...”). Given its short run (made shorter by the 2007 Writer's Strike), *Moonlight* was not able to delve into its particular Angel-clone vampire Mick St. John's⁶ (Alex O'Loughlin) psychic baggage to the extent that was possible across three seasons of *Buffy* and five seasons of *Angel*. Yet the surface narrative correspondences between the two are numerous. These include overarching narrative elements, such as Mick's chosen profession as private investigator, a morally ambiguous vampire frenemy (Josef [Jason Dohring]/Spike [James Marsters]), and a human love interest, Beth (Sophia Myles), whom he knew before she knew he existed (“No Such Thing as Vampires” 1.1/”Becoming Part 1” 2.21). The parallels also exist on an episodic level: a weakened Mick must feed off Beth to save himself, as Angel did with Buffy (Sarah Michelle Gellar) (“Fever” 1.4/”Graduation Day, Part 2” 3.22); an actress is seemingly stalked by paparazzi (“Click” 1.14/”Eternity” 1.17); and episodes address the consequences of a vampire becoming mortal (“Fated to Pretend” 1.13/”I Will Remember You” 1.8). The appearance at mid-season of Mick's sire, Coraline (Shannyn Sossamon), who turned him on their wedding night and with whom he shared a troubled and occasionally violent relationship recalls the reappearance of Darla (Julie Benz) at the end of *Angel's* first season (“To Shanshu in LA” 1.22). Indeed, Beth's jealousy mirrors Buffy's in *Buffy's* “Angel” (1.7), and both Coraline and Darla are initially mortal when they reappear in the vampire protagonists' lives (“Dear Boy” 2.5/”The Ringer” 1.7). The series also employed an (occasional) flashback structure that recalls *Angel's* first few seasons, in which Angel's past either mirror the episode's plot (e.g., Angel's immediate actions post-re-ensoulment parallel rogue Slayer Faith's [Eliza Dushku] redemption [“Five by Five” 1.18]) or introduce characters who would play a larger role later (Daniel Holtz's introduction in “Heaththrob” 3.1).

The closest analogue, however, is between *Angel's* “I Will Remember You” and *Moonlight's* “Fated to Pretend.” Not unlike the recycling of scripts on imported/remade UK series such as *Coupling* (2000-

2004) and *Life on Mars* (2006-2007), “Fated to Pretend” hits almost all the same narrative beats as *Angel*’s Greenwalt-penned “I Will Remember You,” including both vampires’ excitement about being able to eat human food, the contemplation of a “normal” relationship with Buffy/Beth, and both Mick and Angel’s decisions to turn back into a vampire, as they cannot protect the women they love in mortal form. While Greenwalt did not write “Fated to Pretend”—he left the series prior to its debut due to health issues—the producers claimed his influence remained (Langton, “It’s Nothing Like...”). The significant amount of narrative borrowing from the Greenwalt-penned “I Will Remember You” underscores their claims, as does the fact that Greenwalt wrote the majority of the *Angel* episodes from which *Moonlight*’s narrative borrows, including “Dear Boy,” “To Shanshu in LA,” and *Buffy*’s “Angel.”

In terms of characterization and development, however, there are notable differences. Not only was Mick tricked into becoming a vampire, but the series suggests he was a decent man as a human, and he does not hunt, particularly those whom he perceives as innocent; he survives on bagged blood and the occasional “freshie” (humans who allow vampires to feed on them without killing them [“Out of the Past” 1.2; “Sonata” 1.16]). Narratively and visually, this suggests the consensual vampire/human feeding dens in both *Buffy*’s “Into the Woods” 5.10 and *Angel*’s “Release” 4.14). While Mick claims to have “done bad things” when he was a vampire (“Love Lasts Forever” 1.11), the series either lacked the time or the interest in showing this questionable behavior, whether in flashback or the present day. In contrast, a central factor of Angel’s characterization is his violent past before he was cursed with a soul as atonement (“Innocence” 2.14; “Darla” 2.7; “Five by Five” 1.18). That past is looked on with both shame and pleasure (both Season One’s “Somnambulist” [1.11] and Season Two’s Darla storyline addresses that element directly) and takes *Angel*’s narrative to darker places—sexual jealousy, torture, kidnapping, and death—than *Moonlight*’s *Writer’s Strike*-shortened single season appeared to convey. What is seen of Mick’s contentious relationship with Coraline before the fire that supposedly killed her is limited to longing looks and a broken window (“The Ringer”), as well as other vampires commenting on the “craziness” of Mick and Coraline’s dynamic (“Fleur de Lis” 1.9). In an element that recalls *Veronica*

Mars (2004-2007, 2019) (also co-produced by Silver Productions) rather than *Angel*, each episode employs the main character's voiceover either providing commentary on the narrative or filling plot or characterization gaps, linking both series to the detective genre that dominates their narratives. This occurs only twice in *Angel*: "City Of" (1.1) opens with Angel providing introductory commentary on his environment and past, and in "Redefinition" (2.11), as Angel prepares to destroy a newly turned Darla; his only dialogue throughout the episode is in voiceover. In both instances, the voiceover is used specifically (and in a limited amount) to either set the scene ("City Of") or indicate a significant shift in character ("Redefinition"). *Moonlight* also lacks much of the humor, dark or otherwise, of its predecessor, most of it generated by the snark and sarcasm of the vampire Josef.⁷

The closest parallel, therefore, remains the episode "Fated to Pretend." Perhaps due to the fact that Angel's character, and his relationship with Buffy, had more than 50 episodes with which to establish their connection and Angel's backstory, Mick's transformation into human and back to vampire lacks the emotional stakes of its predecessor. Even without viewing Angel's story on *Buffy*, however, the trajectories of Mick and Angel's pasts means that their rediscovered humanity holds different resonances, as do their mutual decisions to return to a vampire state. For Angel, his decision to reverse his new-found mortality is rooted not only in his desire to continue to fight the forces of evil—he tells Doyle (Glenn Quinn) that both he and Buffy "belong in the world, fighting" (00:6:46-50) and must put personal concerns aside ("Hero" 1.9)—and not put Buffy at risk trying to protect him, but also his questionable past both as a vampire and a man. In the *Buffy* episode "Amends," a suicidal Angel tells Buffy, "It's not the demon in me that needs killing, Buffy. It's the man" (3.10, 00:38:51-55). As with other Whedonverse vampires such as Spike and Darla, their human pasts are eschewed or discarded by either renaming themselves (Liam to Angelus, William to Spike) or being renamed by others (Darla was named by the Master [Mark Metcalf] when she was turned; she can no longer recall her given name when she becomes human again ["Darla" 2.7]), suggesting that their human pasts are best forgotten. While his newfound purpose and mission from the higher powers drive Angel's decision to become a vampire again, his knowledge

of his weaknesses as a man that led to his fate are a subtextual thread, one visually and narratively suggested by the episode's parallels to Buffy's "Surprise" (2.13) (including Buffy waking up alone in Angel's bed in both episodes) and the episode's constant narrative and visual references to food, eating, and appetite.

Mick, on the other hand, neither blurs his original identity nor is seemingly ashamed of his actions as a human—including fighting in World War 2 ("What's Left Behind" 1.15)—so his decision to become a vampire again is consequently not as emotionally fraught; he wants the power and invulnerability to save the woman he loves, in contrast to Angel's desires to take his place in the war against evil alongside Buffy, as well as be neither a burden nor the man he was before, suggesting a self-loathing that would be out of place with Mick's characterization across the previous 15 episodes.

While the single Greenwalt-written episode—"Out of the Past" (1.2)—both visually and metatextually references an example of the LA film noir that inspired *Angel*, *Moonlight*'s setting and subject matter meant that its visual aesthetic would more naturally suggest the earlier series, including night shooting and the vampire stunt work and fighting styles.⁸ *Moonlight* also used a similar shot to those seen frequently on *Angel*: the vampire in question standing on a high building over Los Angeles, overlooking the city he has sworn to protect. It also borrows the panning over a nighttime Los Angeles for scene transitions, and offers an "underworld" of vampires across numerous professions. *Moonlight*, however, leans more heavily on the procedural aspects of its private detective genre than did *Angel*, and is frequently lighter in both narrative and visual tones, including employing more daytime scenes due to *Moonlight*'s vampires' limited tolerance of sunlight. Further, while *Angel*'s first 16 episodes suggested an entire society of demons, vampires, and power players who knew of or facilitated its existence, the only supernatural creatures in *Moonlight* are vampires.

Given *Moonlight*'s status as a Warner Brothers production—*Angel* was aired on the WB but co-produced by Fox, Greenwolf (Greenwalt's production company), Kuzui Enterprises, and Mutant Enemy—there is an argument to be made that it was more the type of series the WB wanted *Angel* to be: more procedural, less serialized, and less dark. It is in this way

it can be read as the Groo to *Angel's* Angel; Mick was a “champion” without the emotional baggage and inherent darkness that characterized both Angel and *Angel*. Further, following the licensing dispute between Warner Brothers and Fox over *Buffy* (Adalain), *Angel* was not only moved around the WB’s schedule (airing on four different nights during its final three seasons), but frequently paired with inappropriate lead-ins (for example, Spelling Television’s *Seventh Heaven* [1996-2007], about a preacher and his large family, served as lead-in for *Angel's* third season), and was unceremoniously cancelled when Whedon asked for an early decision on its sixth season renewal (KJB, “Breaking news...”). *Moonlight* debuted on CBS (a Viacom subsidiary) a year after the WB/UPN merger (also owned by Viacom) in 2006, suggesting that CBS wanted to “remake” the series.⁹ Indeed, despite the surface similarities, *Moonlight* does in fact operate more as a remake than spiritual successor.

God Is Somewhere, Maybe: *Miracles* as *Angel's* Spiritual Successor

Greenwalt’s *Miracles*, which debuted (and was cancelled) during *Angel's* fourth season, is a better candidate for the “spiritual successor” trope. In the penultimate episode of *Angel's* fourth season, Angel’s son Connor (Vincent Kartheiser), in the midst of a spiritual and psychological crisis, seeks out a comatose Cordelia in a newly abandoned Catholic church. As he storms in, the sign outside the church reads, “God is Nowhere. Jasmine is the way” (“Peace Out” 4.21). This sentiment connects to the Jasmine (Gina Torres) story arc, in which a former Power/deity enraptures the citizens of Los Angeles into being her followers at the expense of their free will. The previous episode has the Catholic church giving up “false idols” and replacing them with images of “She Who Walks Among Us” (“Sacrifice” 4.20). It also serves as a call-out to Greenwalt’s contemporaneous *Miracles*: the phrase “God is Nowhere” (or “God is Now Here”) is the ongoing arc of the 13-episode series. An earlier episode in the same season also made reference to *Miracles* before it debuted. In “The House Always Wins,” a casino owner uses magic to steal individuals’ futures and sell them on the black market, and one future for sale appears to be Greenwalt’s, in the form of a “Deal with Disney to

run new ABC series.” While both of these moments can be read as both narratively appropriate to *Angel* and metatextual winks to the former showrunner, I argue that these moments also underscore the narrative and visual correspondences between two series that ran concurrently to one another.

Miracles focuses primarily on Paul Callan, a young man raised in a Catholic orphanage, whose job at the start of the series is to investigate reports of miracles. The opening scene, shot in desaturated color that makes the daytime setting look darker and grainier, has Paul at the scene of the excavation of a church cemetery in which the unearthed corpse of a nun is perfectly preserved more than 150 years after her death (“The Ferguson Syndrome” 1.1). Paul quickly disabuses the local priest of any supernatural reason for this preservation. It was the abundance of apricot trees in the graveyard that acted as a natural preservative; every corpse displays the same lack of decomposition. In a discussion with his mentor, Poppi (Hector Elizando), Paul expresses his existential dilemma in “disappointing” those looking for divine intervention and decides to take a sabbatical. It is during this time off that Paul witnesses a real miracle, in the form of a young boy able to heal others. When the boy, Tommy (Jacob Smith), dies saving Paul following a traffic accident, both see the words “God Is Now Here” written in Paul’s blood. Paul reports this to his diocesan boss, who dismisses it. Paul quits and is approached by a man named Alva Keel, the head of Sodalitas Quaerito (SQ), a small organization that investigates paranormal phenomena; Keel offers Paul both a job and possible answers to the phenomena Paul witnessed. In the final scene of the episode, Paul knocks on the door to SQ. The remaining episodes blend single-episode arcs with the suggestion of what would have likely become a dominant narrative had the show continued: a battle between good and evil.

In the commentary track for the pilot episode, series creator Richard Hatem¹⁰ describes *Miracles* as a kind of “spiritual *X-Files*” (Hatem and Reeves) in which Paul, Alva, and Evelyn investigate various paranormal events. Frequently, these events feature those overwhelmed by the otherworldly forces in play. In “The Patient” (1.3), a physician, Dr. Bauer (Clarence Williams III), who is overworking himself investigating a cure for a terminal illness that took the life of his only daughter, finds

himself prey to an evil spirit possessing one of his patients. It is only through SQ's intervention, with the help of the doctor's deceased daughter, Raina (Gina Ravera), that he is prevented from murdering his patients or harming himself under the demon's instructions. In that respect, part of the remit of their organization becomes "helping the helpless," as did Angel Investigations in *Angel's* earlier seasons.

In fact, much like *Angel's* first season, *Miracles* generally stuck to a "monster-of-the-week" format, with the group investigating phenomena associated with a plane that disappeared and reappeared ("The Friendly Skies" 1.2), an office seemingly invaded by a poltergeist ("The Ghost" 1.11), and time slip between the contemporary era and a Civil War battle ("The Battle at Shadow Ridge" 1.8). As Abbott writes, the true interests of both Greenwalt and Whedon were the characters (13), and developing *Angel's* story over multiple episodes and seasons (5). *Miracles* indicates a similar trajectory. The first episode of the series suggested a longer arc, ostensibly around the aforementioned concept of hemography (blood writing) but more significantly around Paul himself. The importance of the hemographic message and the ultimate fate of Tommy in the after life are the main plot drivers of three of the 13 episodes of the series: "The Ferguson Syndrome," "Hand of God" (1.6)—the last episode to air in the US—and the final episode, "Paul is Dead" (1.13). References and incidents in several of the other episodes indicate that the series would likely have gotten more arc-heavy had it run longer, as *Angel* did. As an example, "Little Miss Lost" (1.4), which concerns a spirit that appears before disasters occur, is ostensibly about finding the origin of the ghost. The episode reveals that the ghost is tied to this plane of existence because she had died unclaimed by her mother following a fire at a circus. The mother blamed herself for losing her grip on her daughter's hand in the melee and spent decades denying it had happened. This, however, is tied into a broader arc, never resolved in the extant episodes, of Paul's search for his missing father, who also has not acknowledged his son. Paul's request in the episode to have his birth records unsealed is denied by his father, and his work on the case means he misses an opportunity to meet the man face to face.

What connects the series more closely with *Angel*, however, is the composition of the group—whose Latin name translates to

“Brotherhood in Search of Truth”—and the questions around Paul’s ultimate destiny. Indeed, it is arguable that the composition of SQ intentionally mirrors the early composition of *Angel Investigations*, on the surface and in deeper ways. As Stacey Abbott, Bronwen Calvert, and Lorna Jowett point out in their discussion of the series *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, nearly every Mutant Enemy production—the exception being *Firefly*¹¹—has at least one main cast member identified as either British or from the United Kingdom more generally. Similar to *Angel* (and *Buffy*), Keel is not only British, but also serves as the repository of occult knowledge and point person for research, fulfilling Wesley’s function throughout *Angel*’s five seasons. Evelyn, a former cop who also works at SQ, is not overtly reminiscent of Cordelia, and yet in less obvious ways she serves a similar role. Aside from being the only female member of the organization, Evelyn frequently serves as the reasonable middle between Alva’s laser focus on supernatural knowledge and events and Paul’s more contemplative and human-focused viewpoint. Further, while Evelyn does not have “visions” of individuals in need as Cordelia did,¹² she does have flashes of insight that Keel does not. For example, she takes Keel to task for hiding vital information from Paul, understanding why such action might have the consequences Keel was attempting to avoid, namely Paul being on the side of evil in the coming battle (“Hand of God”). This moment succinctly echoes the rift between *Angel* and Wesley over the latter’s hiding of the prophecy “The Father Will Kill the Son” (“Sleep Tight” 3.16), as Wesley sought to protect *Angel* from the (potential) consequences of his (potential) actions, only to bring about the loss of *Angel*’s son himself.

However, it is Paul as the main protagonist who most closely mirrors *Angel*’s eponymous hero. One aspect is the way in which both are initially introduced as either playacting or appearing as something they are not. Paul is intelligent and soft-spoken, orphaned at a young age, and mentored as an adult by a priest he refers to as Poppi, suggesting the created family trope so prevalent within the Whedonverse (see Battis). While Paul is not a member of the clergy himself, his mode of unobtrusively dressing in high-collared white or grey shirts suggests a Roman collar, particularly in the pilot episode. Given the high concentration of Catholics in Boston (which is where *Miracles* is set), such

a seeming, as well as his gentle, non-threatening demeanor, allows him access to individuals and situations that might otherwise be more difficult to attain. In the pilot episode of *Angel*, our first glimpse of the hero is at a bar, drunkenly telling his tale of lovelorn woe to a bald, tattooed gentlemen on the stool next to him. This, of course, is an act, designed to trick the vampires at the bar into revealing themselves; they dismiss him at their peril (“City Of”). While minor, it does suggest to the viewer there is more to these characters than is apparent at first glance.

Even without having seen the character develop on *Buffy*, the first season of *Angel* quickly establishes that Angel is a vampire with a soul hoping to atone for centuries of murder and mayhem. Indeed, by the end of the first season, the series reveals that Angel will play a pivotal role in an apocalyptic battle, but whether on the side of good or evil remains unclear. While Paul Callan is neither a supernatural creature nor a murderer, his role in a future battle, as well as his character, is also established as ambiguous. Both are suggested early in *Miracles*. Paul’s potential dark side is explored in the mid-season back-to-back episodes “Hand of God” and “You Are My Sunshine” (1.7). In “Hand of God,” a young man is systematically murdering individuals who experienced the aforementioned hemography and saw the phrase as “God Is Nowhere.” The young man, like Paul, saw it as “God Is Now Here.” At the end of the episode, the young man tells Paul that he must carry on the work of killing these individuals before they could “get their act together” and that he was doing God’s work against the forces of darkness. The young man is never named, cementing his identity only as a killer (and possibly manipulated by cosmic forces). This anonymity, and the episode’s narrative ambiguity with regard to the young man’s actions, suggests Paul could be manipulated and used as well. This is underscored in “You Are My Sunshine,” which hints that Paul may have a violent streak he works to suppress, allowing the spirits in the house in which he is residing to bring forth his darkest impulses, particularly violence against his former lover, Rebecca (Anna Gunn). It is suggested, although not explicitly stated, that they had originally broken up because Paul did not like what the relationship brought out in him. As Keel tells Evelyn, “The worst thing that could possibly happen is for Paul to somehow believe his path is

predestined for evil. Once that idea's been planted, it's almost impossible to uproot" ("Hand of God" 1.6, 00:18:16-28).

There are two significant differences between the characterizations of Angel and Paul, one of which suggests Greenwalt's hand. First, while Angel is very much aware of the opposing forces that want him on their side—the Powers-That-Be vs. the Senior Partners—*Miracles* continually questions whether higher forces even exist, mostly through the character of Evelyn, whose "paranormal experience" led her to conclude that there is no afterlife. Second, in an interview with David Bushman, Greenwalt eschews the existentialism that was such a feature of *Angel* ("If nothing we do matters, then all that matters is what we do" ["Epiphany" 2.16, 00:38:51-55]) as primarily Whedon's influence. Greenwalt's view was "you have a good wolf and a bad wolf, and whichever wolf you feed will be supreme"; that is, there is evil in humans and in the world that should be fought against (Bushman, "Angel: Vampire Noir.."). This philosophy is more evident in *Miracles* than *Angel*, in which the protagonists and the cosmic forces that seek to guide them are, at best, morally and ethically grey. That being said, both series emphasize choice over destiny; it is the idea of predestination Keel is speaking against. In that respect, the suggestion that Paul's unknown father might be some kind of demon (or perhaps the devil) implied in "The Ferguson Syndrome," "Hand of God," and "Little Miss Lost" (1.4) is perhaps best left unresolved. Both ambiguities—that of morality and that of destiny—do tie the characterization of Paul more closely to that of Angel.

Finally, both *Angel* and *Miracles* also served as anomalous drama series on their respective networks. While during its 10-year history the WB featured several supernaturally themed or otherworldly teen dramas—*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Roswell*, and *Charmed*, to name a few—*Angel's* cast and themes skewed significantly older, encompassing issues of (at times) violent sexual escapades and jealousy, the difficulties of parenthood (including parenting a teen raised by a revenge-obsessed foster parent and prone to acts of rage, revenge, and murder) and antagonists with significant resources and power that mirror similar corporate behavior in real-world settings (Giannini, *Joss Whedon Versus the Corporation* 24-37). *Miracles* also held an anomalous position on ABC's schedule, amid more popular (and frequently more quotidian) series such as *The Practice*

(1997-2004) (with which it was paired on the schedule), *8 Simple Rules* (2002-2005), and *The Bachelor* (2002-present). The only two other series close to it in terms of subject matter and genre were the short-lived *Veritas: The Quest* (2003) and the more successful *Alias* (2001-2006) which at times featured both Whedonverse writers (Drew Goddard and Jeffrey Bell) and cast members (Amy Acker), another indicator of the influence of *Angel* and other Whedonverse properties on subsequent series. *Miracles* also tackled similarly difficult issues around physical abuse; “The Bone Scatterer” (1.5), featuring a vengeful twin killed in utero due to his father’s abuse of his pregnant mother, suggests Connor’s upbringing in a hell dimension; “You Are My Sunshine,” with Paul’s turn to misogynistic violence, echoes *Angel*’s “Billy” (3.6). The numerous episodes regarding the loss of a child through sickness (“The Patient”; “The Ghost”), suicide (“Mother’s Daughter” 1.9), and circumstance (“Little Miss Lost”), also call to mind Connor’s arc within the series.

Further, while a series like *Charmed* is set in a major metropolitan area, the city itself does not play a central role in the show’s narrative arc in the same way that Los Angeles does in *Angel* (Jacobs 75-87). Other contemporaneous science-fiction/fantasy series from the network stuck to smaller town settings, such as Roswell, New Mexico, or the fictional town of Sunnydale, California. Both narratively and visually, *Angel* emphasizes the loneliness and coldness of living in a major city, and as Benjamin Jacobs points out, serves as a metonym for Angel himself: a place divided by race and class since its founding, and “where the glittering skyscrapers of late twentieth century wealth meet darkness, alienation, and threat” (Jacobs 76); a handy metaphor for the split between Angel and his evil alter ego Angelus. While Greenwalt did not make use of Whedonverse writers within *Miracles*, directors such as Michael Grossman (*Buffy*, *Angel*, *Firefly*), Thomas J. Wright (*Firefly*), and Terence O’Hara (*Angel*, *Dollhouse*) each directed an episode, which may have contributed to the similar visual styles of *Miracles* and *Angel*, particularly the use of night shooting and lighting styles. Like *Angel*’s (Abbott 30), Paul’s face is often shot particularly in shadow, suggesting his duality. As the previous section discussed, *Moonlight* copied the sweeping LA cityscape shot for scene transitions so closely it could have been cut and pasted from the earlier series. How much of these similar visual styles can be attributed to

Greenwalt, however, is unclear, although that nearly half of the series' episodes are directed by former coworkers of Greenwalt's is suggestive.¹³

Miracles did not have time to establish its Boston setting as integral in the same way *Angel* does with Los Angeles, but Paul's initial introduction as an investigator of miracles for the Catholic church would be more difficult to pull off in other American settings; not only does Massachusetts have the highest concentration of Catholics in the United States, but it is also the fulcrum of the Church's (continuing) pedophilia scandal. While Hatem and Greenwalt were pressured to be careful in their portrayal of the Church,¹⁴ Paul's final scene with his boss at the church ("The Ferguson Syndrome") was deliberately written and shot to emphasize the physical over the metaphysical, both by having the monsignor reject Paul's assertion of a genuine miracle and by having the monsignor eating during the entire conversation ("The Ferguson Syndrome" commentary). Much like *Angel's* Season Two assertion of an existential existence rather than one directed by a higher power ("Epiphany" 2.16), this scene emphasizes that the real answers lie outside of organized religion, even in a Catholic-heavy city such as Boston. Furthermore, Boston's status as one of the oldest cities in the United States offers an appropriate backdrop to *Miracles'* focus on ancient and (at times) unexplained phenomena, set amidst old stone buildings and dark alleys, much as Los Angeles' split personality, as per Jacobs, mirrors that of *Angel*.

Conclusion

K. Dale Koontz refers to Whedon's work with Marvel (both writing comic books and writing and directing films) as playing in "someone else's sandbox" (Koontz 3), a concept Mary Ellen Iatropoulos builds in her analysis of authorship in the *Avengers* films. As argued above, however, the *Mutant Enemy* series are collaborative enterprises, meaning that in certain ways, showrunners, writers, and producers are sharing the sandbox. What has frequently set the *Mutant Enemy* series apart, however, is its writers and directors. Jane Espenson, David Fury, Marti Noxon, Ben Edlund, Elizabeth Craft, Sarah Fain, Terrence O'Hara, and James Contner have

written or directed numerous episodes across multiple seasons on at least two, if not all four, of Mutant Enemy's early (pre-Marvel) series, suggesting an unusual stability in narrative and visual continuity allowed to develop over years. That these individuals have gone on to serve as writers and showrunners across both broadcast and streaming networks—even, in the instance of Jane Espenson, across borders, as witnessed by serving as showrunner for the fourth season of the BBC/Starz coproduction *Torchwood* (2006-2011)—means that Mutant Enemy's influence is still vital within television.¹⁵ As indicated above, while *Angel* was an anomalous series within the WB's line-up when it aired, its strong narrative arcs, post-high school/professional age cast, and dark narrative and visual style can be seen across several recent CW series, from *Arrow* (2012-present) to *iZombie* (2015-2019).¹⁶

What has been less addressed within Whedon studies, however, are these individuals' influence on Whedonverse narratives. While Espenson herself has averred that the vision for, as per example, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, was primarily Whedon's (Q 138; Pateman 156), the contributions of Mutant Enemy's fairly stable collection of writers and directors has largely gone unexamined.¹⁷ The clear influences of *Angel* on Greenwalt's subsequent series *Moonlight* and *Miracles*, however, suggest that Greenwalt's vision shaped more of *Angel* than has previously been addressed. Indeed, given the stability of the Mutant Enemy writers' rooms across multiple series,¹⁸ examining said writers' subsequent work offers the opportunity to examine not only its influence on contemporary television, but also offers a potential avenue of analysis of the "collective vision" of series (Abbott 9-26) over that of a single auteur.

Notes

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- ¹ This is not uncommon; the WB also paired fledgling showrunner Eric Kripke with Robert Singer for *Supernatural* (2005-present); Singer had served as executive producer on series such as *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (1993-1997), a fact that served as an in-joke in the meta episode "The French Mistake" (6.16) (Knight 12).
 - ² In 2001, Greenwalt indicated he had planned to resurrect the character of Jim Profit as an attorney at Wolfram and Hart; however, Adrian Pasdar's schedule did not permit it (Kurtz 2001). Pasdar later appeared on the Mutant Enemy co-production *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*

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- ³ Simkins did go on to work with Greenwalt on *Grimm* (2011-2017), as well as Jane Espenson on *Warehouse 13* (2009-2014).
 - ⁴ See Bussolini (“New”) for an analysis of constitutive intertextuality between the procedural-based *In Plain Sight* and *Buffy*.
 - ⁵ While the series *Jake 2.0* debuted in 2004, I have elected not to examine that series; featuring a young man invested with power he struggles to control, it is likely a closer analogue to *Buffy* than *Angel*. On that series, however, Greenwalt also made use of directors he had worked with on Whedonverse series: David Straiton, Michael Grossman, and Allan Kroeker; the visual similarities would be well worth examining.
 - ⁶ During pre-production, Mick’s original last name was “Angel” rather than “St. John.”
 - ⁷ *Moonlight* was the first project Dohring was involved in following his turn as bad boy/tragic love interest Logan Echolls in the neo-noir *Veronica Mars*; one can see said portrayal as an influence on Dohring’s performance in *Moonlight*. (He replaced the significantly older Rade Serbedzija as part of Greenwalt’s restructuring of the original pilot.) Both *Mars* and *Moonlight* were produced by the same production company—Silver Pictures—and aired on sister networks UPN and CBS, respectively, which likely was also a factor in Dohring’s casting.
 - ⁸ Two Whedonverse alums did direct a single episode each of *Moonlight*. James Whitmore Jr., who directed five episodes of *Buffy* during its second and third seasons and the *Angel* episode “Reprise” (2.15), in which Angel sleeps with his newly turned sire Darla, directed “Fleur de Lis,” the episode in which Mick realizes his dead sire Coraline has returned. John T. Kretchmer directed two episodes of *Buffy*: “The Harvest” (1.2) and “School Hard” (2.3). This, however, seems less about Greenwalt and more tied to Warner Studios; both Whitmore and Kretchmer have numerous directing credits for both the WB and the later CW, from *Charmed* to *iZombie*.
 - ⁹ CBS also originally aired *Forever Knight* (1992-1996), a series about a vampire police detective; another series to which both *Angel* and *Moonlight* owe a narrative and visual debt. See Giannini (“*Forever Knight* . . .” 181-198) for an analysis of the horror/procedural genre in both *Angel* and *Forever Knight*.
 - ¹⁰ Hatem worked with Greenwalt again on the series *Grimm*, writing four episodes; he also served as an executive producer during the first season of *Supernatural*, which shares some narrative and casting correspondences to both *Angel* and the larger Whedonverse (see Giannini, “*Forever Knight* . . .” 185-194).
 - ¹¹ Mark Sheppard, who plays Badger in *Firefly*, is both British and identified as such in the series; however, he only appears in two episodes and thus would be a guest star rather than part of the main cast.
 - ¹² That being said, Evelyn has a kind of connection with Cordelia, in that their brains are similarly “invaded”; Cordelia’s by headache- and brain tissue death-inducing (“Birthday” 3.11) visions; Evelyn’s by a bullet from being shot in the line of duty (“The Friendly Skies” 1.2).

- 13 Other *Miracles* directors, such as Bill D’Elia, worked on *Doogie Howser, MD*, at the same time as Greenwalt; while Michael Katleman worked with Whedonverse alum Marti Noxon on the series *Point Pleasant* (2005).
- 14 ABC, the network that aired *Miracles*, was similarly risk-averse in 1998, when it pulled episodes of the short-lived series *Nothing Sacred* (1997-1998), set in a Chicago-area Catholic church (including one featuring a priest with HIV [“HIV Priest: Film at 11” 1.18]) under threat of boycott by the Catholic League. This may have been magnified by the backlash and boycotts against the network following Ellen DeGeneres’ coming out on her eponymous sitcom (Dyess-Nugent et al. 2013). *Nothing Sacred* was cancelled with four episodes unaired, despite winning a Peabody Award and garnering Emmy nominations.
- 15 Cf. the idea of the School of Whedon, Wilcox, *Why* 6.
- 16 Of the current series on the CW, only two are classified as “teen” drama: the post-apocalyptic series *The 100* (2014-present), and *Riverdale* (2017-present), a darker re-imagining of the Archie comics. Even series classified as “comedy,” such as *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015-present) and *Jane the Virgin* (2014-present), feature dark storylines, from sudden death (“Chapter Fifty-Four” 3.10) to attempted suicide (“I Never Want to See Josh Again” 3.5). This stands in significant contrast to the WB, whose programming in the late 90s/early 2000s, when *Angel* aired, leaned heavily on teen drama, including *Buffy*, *Smallville* (2011-2011), *Dawson’s Creek* (1998-2003), *One Tree Hill* (2003-2012), *Roswell*, *Felicity* (1998-2002), and *Seventh Heaven*, all of which featured high school or college settings.
- 17 See, however, Stacey Abbott’s *Angel: TV Milestones*, for an analysis of Mutant Enemy’s “collective vision” (9-26); Laura Kessenich’s examination of Jane Espenson (2007); Cori Mathis’ “Bringing the Pain: An Examination of Marti Noxon’s Contributions to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*” (2014); and Rhonda V. Wilcox’s presentation on the character and narrative correspondences between *Angel* and the Greenwalt-produced *Grimm* (2018).
- 18 In a noteworthy instance, a recent casting announcement for Whedon’s upcoming HBO series *The Nevers* also indicates that Espenson and Doug Petrie are serving as co-writers within the series (Andreeva 2019).

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