

Svetlana Seibel: “There’ll Be Another Song For Me”: The Significance of the Orpheus Myth in *Angel*’s “Orpheus”

In their introduction to the volume *The Literary Angel: Essays on Influences and Traditions Reflected in the Joss Whedon Series*, AmiJo Comeford and Tamy Burnett assert that “part of *Angel*’s appeal is that it draws on literary allusions and engages significant cultural narratives just as regularly as it depicts visually-stimulating fight scenes” (1). Indeed, both *Buffy* and *Angel* display notable intertextuality, which frequently serves to deepen the meaning of a scene or a storyline. Whether evoking Shakespeare, Robert Frost, or classical Greek motifs in what Janet K. Halfyard calls “mythic gestures” (51), these textual layers complicate the narrative and widen the scope of its possible interpretation. *Angel* especially is ripe with allusions to classical tragic narratives, from Othello to Oedipus to Orpheus, reflecting *Angel*’s own status as a tragic hero: it is hardly a coincidence that many of these references are activated by or with relation to *Angel*’s worst nemesis—Angelus. In this paper, I will take a closer look at the way this “cultural layering” (James 238) manifests itself in *Angel*’s episode “Orpheus” (4:15) and how it contributes to the storyline’s narrative and semantic complexity. This effect, I believe, is achieved through an open, two-way flow of meanings between the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and his descent into the Underworld and the narrative universe of *Angel*. By virtue of interaction and dialogic interpretative stance vis-à-vis each other, both these storyworlds combine in a unique way, which contributes to the episode’s “richness of the text” (Halfyard 51) and makes “Orpheus” the outstanding piece of storytelling that it is.