

Samira Nadkarni: 'In a World This Vulnerable': Tony Stark's In/Visible Corporate Militarism and Drone Warfare

The Whedonverses have traditionally been posited as sites of resistance to corporate or military culture, with examples ranging from the ill-fated military-led Initiative in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *Dollhouse*'s Rossum Corporation, which sees in its finale the combat zone produced by capitalism taken to its zenith.

However, Whedon's more recent work within the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with the franchise films *The Avengers* (2012) and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), suggests a more complicated stance that appears to posit a surface resistance to corporate or military ideology that fails to be borne out upon a closer examination of the media itself. Given the manner in which these films appropriate and re-imagine real world events, such as the war in Afghanistan and 9/11, and the manner in which pop culture is often used to re-enforce militarism (Martin & Steuter, 2010; Martin & Petro, 2006), the films' presentations of corporate entities, semi-nationalised militarism, and use of drone warfare is particularly worthy of discussion. This paper will examine these themes with a particular focus on the character of Tony Stark, whose disavowal of militarism and war-mongering on the one hand is complicated and overshadowed by the reality of his participation within the Avengers Initiative.