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"Every Man Ever Got a Statue": Whedon's *Age of Ultron* and Public Statuary in the Light of *Firefly*

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[1] Joss Whedon is known for his extraordinary skill with words; however, he also communicates quite consciously through visual language. Scholars such as Stacey Abbott and Matthew Pateman have elucidated his use of visuals as a director, while others such as Marni Stanley and Jessica Hautsch have analyzed the comics on which he collaborates. Visual symbolism has long been part of Whedon's method: consider the threshold imagery of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Wilcox, *Why* Buffy *Matters* 40-45)—or dozens of other visual metaphors, such as mouths, garments, and guns.[1] In the *Firefly* episode "Jaynestown" and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, Whedon makes repeated use of public statues—imagery that deepens and complicates the themes of these complex productions.

[2] Scholars such as Sanford Levinson, in *Written in Stone*, highlight the socially significant semiotics of public statuary. He reminds us that public art "has instrumental purpose outside the domain of pure aesthetics" (39) and asks us to think about who has the money and power to erect a statue in a place such as "the National Mall . . . our most sacred space" (37) and who gets to decide who "should be counted as a hero worth honoring with the esteem of a monument" (4). Many of us absorb the silent messages of our public monuments without consideration; as Levinson says, "a significant power [is] manifested, as significant power often is, in

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the most apparently banal of ways" (19). Barbara Groseclose asserts that public statuary is often "visually and intellectually vapid" (126), but nonetheless significant for that. Public art, she says, "physically ratif[ies]" (22) "traits deemed memorable . . . by an elite" (20-21), and she bluntly calls it a demonstration of "hegemony" (21). Philip Glahn notes that such public art "becomes part of what Louis Althusser calls the 'reproduction of ideology.'" Shifts in power result in changes, even demolition, of public art; consider the disappeared statues of Stalin, for instance. As Karen Kipphoff says, those in control use public monuments "for erasing, rewriting, and overwriting history" (86).[2] Levinson analyzes (among other instances) the controversy over the New Orleans statue titled the "Liberty Monument" and its "officially privileged narrative of . . . events" (48) regarding the Civil War. More recently, Jelani Cobb has argued against the demolition of such monuments in favor of contextualizing them with new words on new plaques, keeping the history embodied in the object while illuminating the visual with the verbal.

[3] Whedon, certainly skilled at combining the visual with the verbal, has demonstrated his consciousness of the significance of public statuary in particular in the *Firefly* episode "Jaynestown," written by Ben Edlund and directed by *Buffy* alum Marita Grabiak. There may be no other text of popular culture that so directly addresses the subject. In this episode, the folk of the Firefly-class space ship Serenity, who have landed on a small outer rim world for a clandestine cargo pick-up, are astonished to discover a heroic statue of Jayne Cobb (Adam Baldwin), their loutish muscle-man, in the public square of the grim, mud-covered town of Canton, populated by proletarian workers called Mudders. Engineer Kaylee (Jewel Staite) has been chiding doctor Simon Tam (Sean Maher) for his reluctance to curse, but when he sees the statue, he comes out with a clearly enunciated "Son of a bitch" (00:06:24-26), off which we move to the credits—using a phrase to which the story returns at

the close (in the characters' final evaluation of the statue). Jayne himself is baffled as to the reason for the erection of "this eerie-ass piece of work," as he calls it (00:08:29-31), until he is enlightened by the lyrics of a bar-room song called "The Ballad of Jayne" (00:13:23-00:15:40). He realizes that when he dumped cargo from his vehicle to make it possible to escape the planet's magistrate, and gravity, he was throwing sixty thousand in stolen but untraceable money upon the population of exploited, exhausted Mudders, who, by hand, delve for mud to be used for the ceramic fittings of space vehicles—a very direct symbolic contrast of the proletariat below and the higher classes above. The mudders now see him as a Robin Hood figure. When the magistrate tried to take back the money, the Mudders resisted, so he called it a bonus; when he tried to take down the statue—which appears to have been made of the mud that they dig—they rioted. The other plot lines of the episode involve Simon's little sister River Tam's rewriting of Shepherd (Ron Glass) Book's Bible—his "symbol" (00:16:02), as River (Summer Glau) calls it—and the beautiful Companion (Morena Baccarin) Inara's education of the twenty-six-year-old virgin son (Zachary Kranzler) of the magistrate (Gregory Itzin), who is paying her to ensure that the son will gain his "man[hood]" (00:18:37)—though Inara tells the young man that he is the one who will make himself a man. Both Gregory Erickson and Andrew Aberdein note the parallels in the narrative with the statue, the scripture, and the sexual ritual. As Aberdein says, "In all three stories, a symbol fails to be what it purports to be but succeeds in representing something much more important" (74)—hope, or faith, or belief in oneself.

[4] The symbol of the statue is the predominant one in the episode; in fact, one might say that it symbolizes the other symbols, a kind of meta-symbol. It leads even the self-centered Jayne to think about others, although in the context of self-aggrandisement: When Serenity's Captain Mal Reynolds (Nathan Fillion) plans for Jayne to use his statue as a distraction to accomplish their secret operation,

Jayne asks, "You think we should be usin' my fame to hoodwink folks?" (00:29:02-05). In the climax of the story, Jayne's old partner Stitch Hessian (Kevin Gage), whom Jayne threw out of the plane even before the cargo, comes gunning for him in the town square. Even though Stitch tells the town the true story, a young hero-worshipping Mudder (Daniel Bess) throws himself in the path of the bullet, saving Jayne. After killing Stitch with a prodigious knife-throw, Jayne tries and fails to revive the young Mudder, then indignantly tells the crowd that their belief in the Hero of Canton is false: "There ain't people like that. There's just people like me," he says (00:38:00-00:38:06).[3] Unlike those who pushed down the statue of Saddam Hussein, Jayne pushes down his own statue. But as he later says to Mal, "They're probably sticking that statue right back up" (00:42:26-29). And as Mal says to the unusually troubled and reflective Jayne, "It's my estimation that every man ever got a statue made of him was one kind of sommbitch or another. Ain't about you, Jayne. It's about what they need" (00:42:35-51).

[5] There are, not surprisingly, multiple ways to respond to this thought-provoking speech. One might note the unusual circumstance that this public statue has been elevated by the proletariat, not the elite, and that their ownership is visually represented by the fact that the statue seems to be made of the mud of the Mudders. One might focus on the Mudders' apparent need for a hero, as indicated by their song and the young Mudder's sacrifice.[4] But at the end, so far as we know, the Mudders still dig, still suffer. As Linda Jencson says, the song and the statue are "only resistance, not revolt" (par. 39). (She locates some measure of revolt later, in the film *Serenity*). Erickson argues that River's closing admonition for Shepherd Book to "just keep walking" (00:40:30-32) and Jayne's " 'death of God'" moment with his own statue tell us that meaning is not "fixed" (177). Groseclose argues more generally for "the absence of fixedness in what is generally presumed to be the specific nature of commemorative sculpture" (20), and Erickson

argues that we are meant to find value in that lack, that "place of nothing," that searching. In any case, the episode amounts to (among many other things) a treatise on the significance of public statuary, with a focus on the fracture between represented heroism and human failing. It would not have been possible for Whedon to unknow this episode before embarking on *Avengers: Age of Ultron*.

[6] In *Age of Ultron*, Whedon treats themes that do not easily assimilate to the standard blockbuster tone. He deals not just with the darkness of the world versus the hero's virtue, or even with the darkness of the failings of the individual hero; instead, he raises questions about the structure of the heroic situation, about the system—and thus about international relations (in an uncomfortable way). Throughout the film he has a series of extended verbal metaphors or focuses, such as the idea of work or getting the job done, the idea of family, especially father-son relationships, and the idea of monstrosity. To prepare for discussion of the film's statuary, it will be useful to survey the connection Whedon makes between monstrosity and the idea of collateral damage—of unintentionally harming others. From the beginning of the film, members of the Avengers express concern about collateral damage. Two minutes in, during the first battle scene, as they attack an armed Hydra facility where Baron von Strucker (Thomas Kretschmann) has been supervising experiments on humans, Iron Man Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.) says, "Well, we know Strucker isn't going to worry about civilian casualties. Send in the Iron Legion"—that is, his robots, to help reduce those civilian casualties (00:03:37-50). After the Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), his mind affected by the Scarlet Witch, aka Wanda Maximoff (Elizabeth Olsen), has destructively fought Tony in the form of the Hulkbuster in downtown Johannesburg, South Africa, Tony confirms that the Stark Relief Foundation has moved in to help civilians. When Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) is racing through the city of Seoul on a motorcycle chasing villains, we hear her shouting out warnings and apologies: "Sorry—coming

through" (01:22:35-36). Some time after his worst case of Hulking out, Bruce Banner says, "I can't be in a fight near civilians" (01:39:06-09). When the team is chasing Ultron (James Spader), who is escaping with one of the Infinity Gems with which he can, of course, conquer the world, Clint Barton, Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner), offers to take out the driver of Ultron's truck. But Captain America (Chris Evans) says, "Negative. That truck crashes, the gem could level the city" (01:20:19-22). It is perhaps not surprising that Cap is the one who most frequently expresses concern about collateral damage.[5] And, in fact, he explicitly connects that theme to the motif of monstrosity. As they enter the final battle, he reminds the team, "Odds are, we'll be riding into heavy fire. That's what we signed up for. But the people of Sokovia—they didn't. So our priority is getting them out. [. . .] Clear the field. Keep the fight between us [Avengers and Ultron]. Ultron thinks we're monsters—that we're what's wrong with the world. This isn't just about beating him. It's about whether he's right" (01:37:27-01:38:33).

[7] So are all our heroes monsters? This is a fairly remarkable question for a superhero movie to ask (and is probably the kind of reason that Academy Award nominee Mark Ruffalo begged Whedon to keep making Avengers movies) (Whedon and Ruffalo). In the more recent non-Whedon Marvel Comics Universe movie *Captain America: Civil War*, Cap does not express so much concern about collateral damage. Presumably we appreciate the heroes' self-questioning in *Ultron*, but the questions are deepened by reference to other characters. Ultron, a creation mainly of Frankensteinian Tony Stark's, is presented as a reflection of Stark—and like Frankenstein's creature, helps us to evaluate the ethics of his creator.[6] Stark calls him "Junior" (00:45:58-59), and an arms-dealer, noting Ultron's phrasing, recognizes Ultron to be "one of his" (00:45:28-29), one of Stark's (possession or child?). Stark jokes about "talk[ing] this through" (00:06:54-56) when he guns down a group of Hydra agents, and when Ultron starts destroying Stark's computer

program cum assistant Jarvis (Paul Bettany), Ultron says, "We're having a nice talk" (00:22:06-08). In his first talk with the Avengers, Ultron, speaking about Jarvis, says, "Had to kill the other guy. Wouldn't have been my first call. But out in the real world we're faced with ugly choices" (00:30:01-11). This parallel—killing with a word-sop about hard choices—problematizes Tony's own practices. Tony is, after all, the man who ominously uses British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's words "Peace in our time" as he plans to activate Ultron; his hope is no less ill-founded, as Whedon might expect informed viewers to know.

[8] Even more clearly, Tony's practices are problematized by the story of the Maximoff Twins, who become the Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver (Aaron Taylor-Johnson). At age ten, they not only saw their parents killed by shelling, but also waited for rescue for two days, all the while expecting death from an unexploded shell marked with the name of its maker: Stark. They have volunteered for human experimentation and become enhanced humans, fueled by rage at their family's having become collateral damage—a concrete realization of the concern that Cap and the other Avengers have abstractly voiced. They fight alongside Ultron to destroy the Avengers. Learning of Ultron's plans to end all of humanity, they eventually join the Avengers through interactions with Cap, the Avenger who most frequently expresses concern about civilian casualties. But they still embody a question about not only the American former arms dealer Tony Stark but also Captain America and America's practices—and the practices of all those in the coalition.

[9] As Ultron comes to consciousness and contemplates his mission—which Tony Stark and scientist Bruce Banner (aka the Hulk) have planned to be the protection of humans from alien invasion—Ultron plays a recording of Stark's earlier statement, "Peace in our time," followed by a blur of images as his artificial intelligence searches through recorded history. He looks for peace,

but he finds war. The images recall similarly fast flashes used between scenes in the *Angel* series (helmed by Whedon and David Greenwalt), as analyzed by Tammy Kinsey. The content in this film is a bit more transparent, even though only glimpses come through when the material is played at normal speed; the montage lasts nine seconds (00:22:21-30). The first images are dominated by pictures of religious figures such as Mother Teresa and Gandhi. But then there is a visual of a Gustave Doré plate of Dante's *Inferno*. Next we slip into images of various wars with dates and casualty figures in the millions appearing on screen with occasional text such as "In war, truth is the first casualty." Pictures of soldiers marching, missiles launching, and line upon line of grave markers follow. Along with images of World War II, we see an illustration of Captain America, and the whole conglomeration culminates with former arms dealer Tony Stark, centered, arms wide. The preceding sentences are a simplified description of an extraordinarily complicated nine-second visual, which Whedon uses to help convey the complications of the themes—the dangers (moral as well as physical) of the "good fight," the inherent risks of heroism that the Avengers, and we, need to recognize.

[10] These concerns are given a lengthier treatment in half a dozen images of public statuary that inhabit the visual text of *Age of Ultron*. In fact, to get the effect of these images, one should be aware of their immersion in the themes that have just been discussed. Many viewers will remember the image behind the closing credits: a statue of the movie's larger-than-life characters (02:11:10-02:13:08). While the actual statue is presumably small, in the closing moments of the film it fills the screen, visually looming over the audience. As Ellen W. Sapega says of another statue, "the grandiose proportions of the larger-than-life figures lend the monument its solemn aura"—though many audience members might be simultaneously aware of the difference between the filmic representation and the statue's likely small size, an echo of the difference between appearance and

reality that so many public statues incarnate. During his DVD commentary, while this statue appears onscreen, Whedon himself points out one of the preceding instances of statuary, another fictional commemorative image, this one of the "heroes of New York," a group of first responders (02:12:32-34). He compares it to the closing statue of the Avengers, which he says, "elevates them but it also grounds them" (02:12:46-49). This pull in two directions can be seen in the overall choices of images of public statuary that Whedon has included in the film, with half a dozen noteworthy examples. They fall into three main categories: fictional Soviet-style Socialist "Realism"; fictional heroic commemorative statuary of the type just mentioned; and less-tethered but still figural public art from the "real" world, the extratextual world made part of the text.

[11] The first instance of an image of public statuary in the film falls into the category of Soviet-style Socialist "Realism" and therefore implicitly emphasizes that division between appearance and reality so ably represented in "Jaynestown." This statue appears in the film several times. For its first appearance, we see a public square in Sokovia, a fictional former Communist-style Slavic country, the phonemes of whose name clearly evoke the word "Soviet." To begin with, we see only the bottom section and pedestal of the statue; in front of it stands one of Tony Stark's robots. The rather ominous-looking robot, speaking English to the Sokovians, tells the people, "This quadrant is unsafe. Please back away. We are here to help . . . We wish to avoid collateral damage," instancing the theme described earlier in this essay (00:03:55-00:04:10). The crowd throws objects at the robot standing in front of the statue, both statue and robot representing those with power. The crowd's reaction suggests that they do not trust, they do not believe.

[12] As glimpses of the statue appear again and again later in the film, it is revealed to be a pair of heroic figures of a man and woman, seemingly in dark steel, in the style of Socialist Realism.

Socialist Realism is an aesthetic style that is tightly bound to the idea of propaganda. In fact, this statue created for the film seems clearly modeled on a famous work by Vera Mukhina, created for the Soviet Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Expo, the World's Fair. The 78-foot / 24.5 meter-tall work is titled Rabachiyi I Kolkhoznitsa, or Worker and Collective Woman. It was so well-known that it was adopted as the logo of the Russian studio Mosfilm in 1947. In other words, this is an image famously linked to the idea of propaganda, and Tony Stark's creation speaks before it. No wonder people are throwing things.[7] As in the case of the statue in Jaynestown, public statuary in the style of Soviet Socialist Realism indicates a division between heroic presentation and grim reality. Socialist Realism idealizes (ironically enough, given its label of "realism") its subjects. It is "realism" in that its subjects are not restricted to the upper class but are instead members of the working class formerly excluded from the picture; however, its images were presented by those in power (unlike the statue of "Jaynestown"). As Mary Jo Arnoldi says, "the Socialist Realist style . . . characterizes public sculptures . . . in the former Soviet Union, and those that continue to be created today in China and North Korea" (56). The propagandistic purpose clouds the "realism."

[13] The second statuary image in the film is fleeting but noteworthy, and that is the one Whedon calls "the Heroes of New York" (00:14:33-37). It falls into the film's second category of public statuary: heroic commemorative art. It is another work based on a real piece of sculpture: In this case, a sculpture mounted above Grand Central Station in New York City, just as the film's sculpture is. The real Grand Central sculpture, by Jules-Felix Coutan, is titled "The Glory of Commerce," and features a trio of Roman gods. Unveiled in 1914, it, like Mukhina's work, was colossal for its time, at fifteen meters / 48 feet high. Whedon has replaced Commerce with first responders (police officers and fire fighters), and we can read the label "The Battle of New York" (a

reference to events in the first *Avengers* film) as the film's view rises to show Stark Tower, now re-named Avengers Tower, looming behind. The label thus identifies the Avengers with the first responders, and is an allusion to the events of 9/11. As Whedon indicates, the white marble statue of the Avengers shown during the credits is in a way a call-back to this white marble image. Originally he had planned for the film to include an unveiling ceremony for the Grand Central Heroes, but that was one of the elements pared down for the 141-minute film. It is clear, however, that the image, though brief, is significant.

[14] In the first few minutes of the film, then, Whedon has presented two opposing perspectives on public statuary and public heroes—one negative, the other positive. The images of Sokovian statuary are consolidated not only by repeated images of the statue of the man and woman, but also by repeated shots of another giant statue. The Soviet Union once displayed many examples of statues of Lenin, and this second major Sokovian monument looks like such a statue (01:48:04-06). The statuary man stands tall, elevated on steps and a pedestal at the section of town that will be seen most often as the city of Sokovia falls—or, I should say, rises (since Ultron arranges for the town to be lifted from earth in a plan to crash it apocalyptically down). The Leninesque figure, again seemingly formed in dark steel, stands in front of a large white building on which is an emblem of a fierce bird—apparently another sign of political power. For many, these two Sokovian statues would not be positive images.

[15] The first responders of New York City, on the other hand, invoke widespread admiration, so associating the Avengers with the white marble statue of New York's first responders and the Maximoffs with dark steel Soviet Socialist Realism suggests the Maximoffs' error.

[16] But the text is complicated. Remember that Stark's robots are also associated with the Sokovian (i.e., Soviet-style)

statuary: These robots, themselves statue-like faux-humans, speak in front of the Sokovian statues and thus seem to be identified with them. And the closing statue to which the heroes are connected is far from uncomplicated. It does appear to be made of marble, and in it we see almost every major warrior of the film (Maria Hill seems to be missing). Thus the closing statue is perhaps not just a call-back to the Heroes of New York, but also to the dream that Wanda Maximoff (the Scarlet Witch) engenders in Tony Stark: a massive pile of the Avengers, dead in his dream. In the closing statue they are not dead but forever fighting.[8] And the marble statue connects with another Avenger's tortured dream as well. When Natasha Romanoff, the Black Widow, dreams of her time in training and speaks of the teacher breaking the students, instructor Madame B says, "Only the breakable ones," and to Natasha, she adds, "You are marble" (00:49:55-59). Thor's disturbing dream contains a stone statue as well, an Asgardian warrior who towers over a group of fighters that Heimdall declares to be dead (01:16:51-53).

[17] In his commentary on the closing statue, Whedon says, "The idea is that they have been immortalized in statue. There's a statue at the beginning, you see before Grand Central . . . which is the Heroes of New York, and it's the first responders . . . so to put these guys [the Avengers] in marble, it *elevates* them but to me it also *grounds* them, so saying, 'yeah, these guys were veterans of a war, they, you know, fought to the last, and some cases gave the last full measure, and . . . that they should be remembered and that an era is over" (02:12:23-02:13:14).[9] Levinson says, "All monuments are efforts, in their own way, to stop time" (7); "monuments are quintessentially about time and who shall control the meaning assigned to Proustian moments of past time" (31). The images of statuary are not a simple matter of Heroic White Marble Westerners good, Dark Steel Soviet types bad. As Jayne knows, statues can be more heroic than their subjects. Furthermore, the very attempt to capture something forever in stone is an automatic acknowledgment

of the passing of time, an acknowledgment of mortality, no matter the immortalizing intent of the maker—an attempt just as impossible as Tony Stark's intent to ensure Peace in Our Time through his own robot/puppet/statues in the world.[10]

[18] But there is a piece of public statuary about halfway through the set of images that disrupts the us versus them, light versus dark, stone versus steel divisions. That piece is revealed in the briefly seen shot of a startlingly modern work in Seoul, Korea (01:21:03-08). It is the third category of public statuary: the only piece of actual public art highlighted in the film, as opposed to works created by production designers though modeled on art in the real world. In this Korean artwork, we see two matching human figures—larger than life, like the other monuments I have mentioned (six meters / 19 feet high), and perhaps even more imposing. The figures are sometimes described as facing a screen ("You Young-Ho"), but they can also be seen as facing each other as in a mirror, the edges of which are marked by a bright red square. This work is different from the others in many ways: in the bright colors, in the fact that it does not represent particular humans (even in terms of job function such as first responders or collective workers)—and above all, in its message, if I may be permitted an oversimplifying old term. Each of the other works of art can be perceived as having an agenda for some group or party, the kind of monumental purpose analyzed by Levinson, Groseclose, Cobb, and others. But this work speaks to and for all.[11] The work is in fact called Square-M, Communication, the M apparently derived from the shape made by the human figures who reach hands out to each other,[12] echoing Michelangelo's pose of Adam and God, but with two equal beings, two human beings. This variation on a theme is one that Whedon, well-known as a humanist, might appreciate. The art is the work of Yoo Young-Ho, and he "actually wanted to name it World Mirror. If you look at the sculpture, two people are pointing their fingers toward each other through a frame. Actually,

the two men represent the same person. It is as if a person is looking at oneself [sic] through a mirror. I wanted to show how one sees and understands oneself through the other person" (Yoo, "Out in the World"). Unlike traditional monuments, and unlike the other public statuary in this film, World Mirror (to give it the artist's original title) is not trying to impose a view, but inviting self-examination.[13]

[19] There could hardly be a better image to support the themes of the film that have been examined in this essay. *Age of Ultron* is a complicated and sometimes confusing film—some might even say a confused film. But like all of Whedon's work, it is layered with meaning on many vectors, through many means—musical, verbal, visual. It is clear from his own comments that Whedon was purposeful in linking the Grand Central Heroes statuary and the closing marble statues of the Avengers; he also would have supervised the inclusion of the contrasting Sokovian statues. To what degree he aimed the use of World Mirror at his themes is not on record; presumably the choice was in part a matter of local color. But there are other famous statues in the same area that he might have chosen. And it seems fair to assume that if the statue had undermined his meaning, he would not have placed an image of it in his film. In any case, it can work as a metaphor of not only the need for self-reflection, but the need to see the self in the Other. In this sense, it is part of Whedon's larger examination of the ways we fight through the world, whether in the humble mud of Canton or on the cosmic comic stage. The Soviet Socialist Realism-style Sokovian statues remind us of what is not real in public statuary, and in the forum of all sorts of public presentations; but perhaps they help us see that the parallel, apparently heroic commemorative marble statues also have connection to death and destruction, even while they suggest a longing for transcendence and immortality. These sets of statues, in their similarities, tell us some of the problems in the structure of heroism. Finally, the World

Mirror may give a brief glimpse of a better way to seek vision and power. The public statuary in *Age of Ultron* is just a single volley in its barrage of visual images. Still, it demonstrates one reason why this film, like all of Whedon's work, should be not simply seen, but re-seen.[14]

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Notes

[1] There is a wide array of writing on Whedon's visual symbolism. See, for example, on mouths, Wilcox, " 'Can I Spend the Night''; on garments, McGee; on guns, Simkin.

[2] Or, as *Firefly*'s Captain Malcolm Reynolds says in the film *Serenity*, "Half of writing history is hiding the truth" (01:04:01-03).

[3] On this episode, in terms of the emotional development of the character in response to the Mudders' elevation of his statue, see La Fortune pars. 9-12. As she says, "The shame [Jayne] feels shatters the heroic image to which he was beginning to aspire" (par. 11).

[4] The magistrate's son also expresses his admiration of Jayne to Inara; the statuary hero is one of the reasons he rebels against his father and undoes the lock that would have held the spaceship Serenity trapped on the planet. But we have no indication that the son plans to change the system at large.

[5] See Guffey on Captain America's status as both mythic hero and representative American soldier, 284-87.

[6] Whedon has used Frankenstein allusions before; see, e.g., Anita Rose on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Just before Ultron is born, Tony Stark raises (in order to mistakenly dismiss) a classic Frankenstein theme, saying "I don't want to hear the 'Man was not meant to meddle' medley" (00:19:59-00:20:02). The doubling of the scientist and his creature in *Frankenstein* (1818) is widely accepted among scholars and clearly reiterated between Tony Stark and Ultron. It is worth recalling that the doubling is so widely absorbed by readers and film audiences that the term "Frankenstein" is often used for the monster as well as the scientist. A discussion of Tony Stark and the Frankenstein trope deserves fuller discussion in a separate essay.

[7] Interestingly, Elizabeth Olsen, who performs Wanda Maximoff, says that she and Aaron Taylor-Johnson, who plays her brother Pietro, imagined their characters as paralleling this "beautiful" statue. She identifies her character as "confident," one who is "really political . . . My character's fighting to save her nation" (Olsen and Whedon). Whether one leans on the parallel between the statue and the Sokovian male-female duo or emphasizes the idea of propagandistic Soviet Socialist Realism, the film shows this statuary image as damaged. By the end of the movie it has lost limbs. The Maximoffs, of course, suffer loss as well—the loss of their worldview (which had been as simple as the overt purport of the statue) and the loss of life, too.

[8] One might compare the end of the *Angel* series (1999-2005).

[9] He adds, "and as this is my goodbye to the world of Marvel, it seems like a nice one" (02:13:14-16).

[10] We might consider the A for Avengers on Tony's tower to be one more such attempt, though he has at least changed it from simply proclaiming "Stark."

[11] Given that it is placed in Korea, the two sides of the image might represent the North and South, but there is no necessary specificity here. The artist does mention the possibility of considering communication between North and South Korea in this context, but he does not tie the work to this meaning exclusively.

[12] My thanks to Richard Gess for this observation, 29 June 2016.

[13] A quinjet appears between the statuary hands as they try to touch, and that fact makes the need for self-examination all the more urgent.

[14] An earlier version of this essay was presented at SCW7: The Seventh Biennial *Slayage* Conference on the Whedonverses, Kingston University, Kingston-upon-Thames, UK, 7-10 July 2016. For subsequent research advice on public statuary, I am grateful to Gordon State College librarian Jim Rickerson.