

Baudrillard and the Prophetic: Reimagining the Twin Towers in *Avengers: Infinity War*

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Abstract

After 9/11, Jean Baudrillard proclaimed that the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (the Twin Towers) in New York City, would enter the imaginary space, that: “Even in their pulverized state... No one who knew them can cease imagining them ... Their end in material space has borne them off into a definite imaginary space...” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 36-37). This can now be considered a prophetic statement, not just in the realm of the human memory, a geographical imagination, but in the imaginary spaces of film. The Twin Towers are reimagined and revealed in presence and absence (maps and territories of the Real). They are present and have an origin story in Robert Zemeckis’ resurrection narrative *The Walk*, where the high-wire walk by Philippe Petite was credited with “giving them a soul.” They are present in their absence in the New York City skyline in Joseph Kosinski’s *Oblivion*. However, it is in Marvel’s *Avengers: Infinity War* that the ruined and ghostly remains of the Twin Towers are reimagined, returning to haunt audiences on the screen, associated with one of the key plot elements, the Soul Stone, and its need for sacrifice. *Avengers: Infinity War* reimagines the Twin Towers as an architectural marker for the Soul Stone. To receive the stone, a sacrifice must be made of the beloved other, consistent with the history of the Twin Towers. What is the metaphoric transmission that their inclusion serves? This paper seeks to demonstrate the transmission of real-world trauma through Baudrillard’s works and his prophetic utterance on the destruction of the World Trade Center Twin Towers that is fulfilled in the psychoanalytic geography of New York City through the filmic medium. In the film, *Avengers: Infinity War*, the

events of 9/11 are reconstructed. The Twin Towers are re-represented to perform as architectural markers conveying the hypnotic aspects of terrorism that form the narrative support to the scene on the planet Vormir.

Keywords

Baudrillard, Avengers, Twin Towers, New York, 9/11, terrorism, Lacan, Žižek, anamorphosis

In *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Jean Baudrillard prophesied and foreshadowed that the real-world trauma of the events of 9/11, symbolized by the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (Twin Towers), would enter imaginary spaces: “Even in their pulverized state... No one who knew them can cease imagining them ... Their end in material space has borne them off into a definite imaginary space...” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 36-37). This can now be considered a prophetic statement, not just in the realm of human memory, a geographical imagination, or in the New York skyline, but in the imaginary spaces of film. The Twin Towers are reimagined and revealed in presence and absence (maps and territories of the Real). It is in the filmic medium that the inclusion of the Twin Towers and the events of 9/11 are appropriated in themes and images (present or absent), and/or as narrative support.

In *Avengers: Infinity War*,¹ the Twin Towers have left their original material space and place and have been borne off into the imaginary space of the planet Vormir. The towers are reimagined and exhumed as ruins that preside over a terrorist exchange of “a soul for a soul.” The event’s narrative is reimagined on an apocalyptic planet in a manifestation of Baudrillard’s prophetic imaginary, which becomes a space for the towers. Adding to this imaginary space is the psychoanalytic framing that occurs in the shot that is staging an anamorphic stain: a dark blot (the shadow of death), similar to the approaching planes on 9/11 that appeared against a backdrop of the looming towers.

Since 9/11, the apocalyptic image of the destruction of the Twin Towers has evoked “the spirit of terrorism” (Baudrillard *Spirit of Terrorism*). The absence of the Twin Towers on the New York City skyline is a constant reminder that places them in an imagined presence. This “absolute event” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 17), as Baudrillard describes it, was both outside and inside the imagination, as represented by New York City’s changing landscape and its place in “disaster” films.

On 9/11, the filmic dream that contained imagined disasters and alien worlds (a map) folded under the real destruction of the Twin Towers (the territory). This shock of a real disaster underpins New York City being featured prominently, due to its skyscrapers, in cinematic imaginary disaster history (Feldman 26). Since 9/11, these two realities have merged in Baudrillard’s “desert of the real,” now that the map can be discerned from the real territory (of trauma) (*Simulacra and Simulation* 1). Baudrillard considered that the Twin Towers in “their pulverized state... have left behind an intense awareness of their presence” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 48). However, this is more than a claim that they survive in memory, he also affirmed that their destruction had “borne them off into a definite imaginary space” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 48). Film finds new ways to engage with the Twin Towers.

This paper considers how the Twin Towers have entered the imaginary in the filmic space of cinema, making Baudrillard’s utterance prophetic. Lacanian psychoanalytic theory assists in an explanation of how the film, *Avengers: Infinity War*, traps us in its filmic representation as the anamorphic stain is reimagined. The metaphoric transmission concerns the “architecture” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 37) of the Twin Towers because they are objects, that since 9/11, are “stuck to us” (Morton 36).²

Baudrillard's Prophetic Shadow of the Twin Towers - Imaginary Space

For Jean Baudrillard, New York City has mapped its history through its architecture. But in the case of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, something unique in the history of buildings took place. They were architectural doubles imprinting on the New York skyline and dominating it. Baudrillard explains: "The fact that there were two of them signifies the end of original reference... only the doubling of the sign truly puts an end to what it designates [and] a particular fascination in this duplication" (*Spirit of Terrorism* 39).

On 9/11 the Twin Towers were transformed into an ethereal dust that has manifested as a psychological ghost haunting both the geo-space of New York City and the imagination. Baudrillard insists that the Twin Towers have left an indelible presence on the New York skyline that terrorism cannot erase. Because they have entered the imaginary space, the Twin Towers cast a shadow that aligns with the trauma of their passing. On 9/11, the Twin Towers were no longer the setting of an imaginary New York disaster film, the uncanny images were broadcast live, and by some viewers seen as something unbelievable and therefore filmic. The Twin Towers became the manifestation of every disaster film ever played out in New York City. In these images of the collapsing World Trade Center Towers Baudrillard insists, is the "Spirit of Terrorism... the violence of the real, in an allegedly virtual universe" (*Spirit of Terrorism* 13, 21). The disturbance of this 'absolute event', has left traces on the virtual world, an irruption of the Real, that is captured in images, and transferred in the filmic medium.

Vormir: The Geospatial (Space for) the Setting for the Towers in *Avengers: Infinity War*

In his search for the Soul Stone, the key antagonist, Thanos discovers that his daughter Gamora knows its location. In the film's timeline, years ago, Gamora had discovered a map that she destroyed to prevent Thanos from discovering the stone. As Thanos tortures Gamora's sister,

Nebula, he finds in her memory the truth of Gamora's concealment. To save Nebula from further torture, Gamora must lead Thanos to the location of the stone on planet Vormir.

Thanos and Gamora arrive on Vormir to an eclipse that casts a shadow over everything. As they ascend the mountain, they see the summit through a crevice. Glimpsed through this cavern, two towers can be seen. From the darkness emerges a figure, floating mid-air and calling them by name. As this shadowy apparition fully reveals itself, it is Red Skull.

The last time Red Skull was onscreen, he was a terrorist who disappeared while attempting to drop a bomb on New York City in *Captain America: The First Avenger*. He disappeared through an opening created by the Space Stone. The return of this character is not a causal adoption in the film. He is a terrorist and that he should now live on Vormir, cast into the role of caretaker/guide for the Soul Stone, and dwelling in the shadow of the Twin Towers, is an interesting twist.

When Thanos demands the Soul Stone, Red Skull replies that taking the stone will exact a terrible price. They walk between the towers, and from the opposite angle the audience can see that snow has landed on the ruins, the white sections giving the appearance of lit windows in skyscrapers.

Looking out over a precipice between these Twin Towers, Red Skull explains the price for the Soul Stone is sacrificing that which you love. Gamora derides Thanos in what she assumes is his failure, as she judges him as loving no one, but he loves her. In tears, Thanos pays the price for the stone, throwing Gamora to her death from between the towers. Gamora's body can be seen laid out on the etched ground / 'pavement' after the fall from the towers. This sacrifice of the beloved other releases two beams of light that travel straight in the air with an

explosion. Thanos awakens in the water where he and Gamora had arrived on the planet, he lifts his hand and sees the Soul Stone. The terrorist exchange is complete, “a soul” for the Stone.

Baudrillard and the Shadows of Lacan

Baudrillard’s prophetic imaginary space, and his “spectre of terrorism” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 62) are made visible in the scene on Vormir. This reimagines the Twin Towers with the inclusion of Red Skull; this is where the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan offers some insight. Jacques Lacan, in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, notes the shadowy object in Hans Holbein’s painting of the Ambassadors, as “a trap for the gaze” (89). The symbolic identification of the two young men undermined by the death’s head, the anamorphic shadow. In the following, Lacan describes the appearance of the young men, and the effect of the anamorphosis:

What, then, before this display of the domain of appearance in all its most fascinating forms, is this object... which appears to be flying through the air- you apprehend in this form... What? A skull. (88)

This representation in the painting is the anamorphosis,³ the dark blot that draws in the viewer. On the planet Vormir, Red Skull manifests as an anamorphosis, an ethereal ghost, the dark blot, as the phantasm of death. A literal spirit of terrorism haunting the towers as the custodian of the traumatic imagination. His appearance creates a pairing with the towers (like Holbein’s painting) and is a reimagining of 9/11 through a psychoanalytic lens. In the 9/11 event, following Lacan’s explanation of the anamorphosis, Slavoj Žižek’s *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* considered the planes hitting the towers as “the Hitchcockian blot, the anamorphic stain which denaturalized the idyllic well-known New York landscape” (15). This psychoanalytic reading of the events in New York City on 9/11, that denaturalised the landscape, reappears on Vormir to re-stage in the filmic image the terrorist exchange.

In *Avengers: Infinity War*, the pairing of the towers with the floating figure of Red Skull is an allegory. Baudrillard claimed that on 9/11 the images engaged audiences in fascination and that “the real is superadded to the image like a bonus of terror... not only is it terrifying... it is real” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 22). The scene on Vormir, superadds the real to the image by hijacking the viewer’s memory in the images of 9/11 and the collapse of the Twin Towers. The representation has a similar purpose for a 21st-century audience as Holbein’s painting *The Ambassadors*. The audience is drawn into the film by the representation of the towers as symbolic objects, with the black blotch as the anamorphosis, floating toward us on the screen.

In Oliver Stone’s film *World Trade Center*, the planes hitting the Twin Towers were left out, in favor of the shadow of the plane on the side of New York City’s buildings. In *Avengers: Infinity War*, Red Skull’s spectral form is the manifestation of the shadow of the planes on 9/11, and literally the spirit of terrorism. Baudrillard explains that the spirit of terrorism consists in the death exchange (*Spirit of Terrorism* 14) and in the film Red Skull states the requirement of “a soul for the stone.” This symbolic act of death was performed on 9/11, collapsing the symbolic exceptionalism of America. In this instance, this exceptionalism is represented by the Avengers, and Thanos is the terrorist who humiliates these American heroes.

After Gamora’s death, twin beams of light emanate from the towers that are reminiscent of the ‘Tribute in Light’ in New York. These lights substituted the missing towers as well as performing as a marker for the lost souls of 9/11. On the planet Vormir, the Twin Towers sit as ruined monoliths, not destroyed but not quite whole either. In *Avengers: Infinity War*, the characters walking between these reimagined Twin Towers are like the promotional poster for Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center*. There is also an overhead shot looking down from the top of the towers in a Phillipe-Petite-type view of a reimagined World Trade Center Plaza. These are

not causal associations. The appearance of the Twin Towers in *Avengers: Infinity War* is reminiscent of familiar imagery of their dominance and place in New York City as architectural markers in the skyline. Just as the Marvel Cinematic Universe requires prior knowledge to make sense of this film, the Twin Towers function phenomenologically for a viewing audience.

Baudrillard, Mapping the Metaphoric Shadow and Film

The location of the Soul Stone on the planet Vormir is mapped in memory. Traumatic memory is the subtext of the film, because the Twin Towers and 9/11 are thematic signifiers, a device that casts a metaphoric shadow over the film. This is reinforced by using the geography of New York City throughout the rest of the film. The location of infinity stones is an interplay of “hidden geography” (Feldman 35). Thus, the film engages Baudrillard’s claims in *The Spirit of Terrorism* and in *Simulacra and Simulation*. The Soul Stone is found on Vormir because of the map that exists in Gamora’s memory which is like the Twin Towers that only exist in the imagination and/or memory. They are no longer visible. The film becomes a map of the territory of 9/11, the reappearance of the architectural markers that suggests to the audience the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

When dealing with subtexts of 9/11, the audience engages with Baudrillard’s prophetic exemplified in film’s psychoanalytic geography. Film and other art forms respond to 9/11 as representations that are mediated by revision, restaging, and retelling, through tropes, subtexts, and allegories that are casting a metaphorical shadow, a presence in absence. Some further examples of this occur outside the specific representation on the planet Vormir in the film. The Hulk traverses the space above Ground Zero when he is transported to Earth (New York City) through dark magic in the form of a light beam. As he streams across Ground Zero, the change in New York City’s spatial universe, its geography, is tangible and mediating the absence of the

Twin Towers. The appropriation of 9/11 imagery, in the absence of the Twin Towers, continues after the arrival of The Hulk to warn the Avengers that the terrorist “Thanos is coming,” followed by the arrival of a spaceship. This craft belongs to Ebony Maw, Thanos’ emissary of prophetic doom. Hovering above the streets of New York City, it causes flying debris with bystanders screaming and running. This scene serves as the particularity of “the spirit of terrorism...the absolute, irrevocable event” (Baudrillard, *Spirit of Terrorism* 13) that is retold. New York City in a repetition of the trauma of 9/11 is under terrorist attack. According to Baudrillard, these filmic experiences are a type of exorcism by “images and special effects” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 34). The backstory of Maw’s coming to New York City to acquire the Time Stone affirms that terrorism can steal time. This is the key feature of Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*, that the trauma of 9/11 makes time stand still (3); other Avengers characters, elsewhere in the world, see a TV screen with the headline ‘Breaking News: New York Attacked,’ reinforcing and replaying the global nature of the disaster and its traumatic transmission.

The Metaphoric Transmission: Revisions in Representation, Falling Woman

Synonymous with the events of 9/11, and the Twin Towers, is another image that ‘sticks’ and is a representational taboo—that of people falling, tumbling, or jumping from the Towers. Richard Drew’s image, famously known as “Falling Man,” and the sculpture *Tumbling Woman* are embodiments of what was considered “inappropriate” for public viewing (Engle 16). Terence McSweeney’s claim on the taboo of cinematic representations of the planes hitting the Towers is relevant in these images of falling (2-3). Karen Engle uses the notion of exposure and concealment, presence, and absence as “unsettling the borderlines between life and death” (16). In its revision of the 9/11 event, *Avengers: Infinity War* uses the character of Gamora as a

metaphor in a composite representation, a “Falling Woman.” Again, there is that sense of absence: the audience sees the start of the fall, and the aftermath, but the moment of “collision” is lost to editing / darkness.

As Baudrillard proclaimed, the Twin Towers can never be removed from the New York skyline; they and we are trapped in never ceasing to imagine them. The appearance of the Twin Towers in the film evokes, steals, or borrows the apprehension of disaster because they are already in the viewer’s psyche. This is strengthened by using the ruins of the Twin Towers in a filmic representation on the planet Vormir, that reimagines their original dominant place in New York. They are shot looking up, and slightly off-center. The aspect of them looming above is achieved in a type of staging of the originals, pre-destruction. It is a ghastly apparition because of its sudden and unexpected appearance on Vormir with the knowledge of their disappearance from the New York City skyline. This captures the essence of Baudrillard’s prophetic statement. The iconic buildings, because of their disappearance on 9/11, cause “a rupture in the perceptual field” (Lentricchia and McAuliffe 5) as they are caught in the cinematic mirror.

New York City dwells in the cinematic mirror, along with its iconic buildings. As such it has become a performance stage, a void that can be filled with imagined fantasies played out as well as in representational violence (Haywood 32). Even before Phillippe Petit made his high wire walk in the void between the Twin Towers, it had been the backdrop for countless films. As Feldman notes, there is an “imaginary disaster history of the New York skyline” (33), but this imaginary is intersected by the changing nature of the city itself. *Avengers: Infinity War* takes the Twin Towers as imaginary props that ensure a connection with terrorism, hostages, apocalypse, trauma, falling and death. Baudrillard claimed that New York City’s architecture “throughout its history, tracked the form of the system” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 31). Christoph Lindner considers

that “since the rise of the modern skyscraper, Manhattan has always been caught somewhere between the sublime and the uncanny” (25). It is a territory that has been mapped by cinema.

Have the imaginary spaces of cinema been literally eclipsed by the real thing in the 9/11 event? *Avengers: Infinity War* relies on our own memory and the maps of our own souls confronted by the Real of death on 9/11. What better way to describe the apparition of Red Skull on Vormir, as the haunting death figure of asymmetrical terrorism. This imaginary space of cinema uses the towers as a symbolic referent to something that has borne off our souls through the 9/11 event that was “as real as death” (Redfield 56).

Various films have found new ways and methods to engage with the 9/11 event, and more specifically the Twin Towers. Watching post-9/11 films like *The Walk* and *Oblivion*, for example, the viewer’s memory is part of the film, drawing us in through the gaze of the object. McGowan (*The Real Gaze* 5) claims that the object of the film itself looks back at us. Some post 9/11 films that use the Twin Towers exemplify what can be considered as Baudrillard’s Prophetic, the persistence of their presence or present through their absence, in the imaginary spaces of film.

Resurrection Narrative: *The Walk*

Zemeckis’ film, *The Walk* goes back in time, returning to the last stages of the completion of the building of the Twin Towers. This nostalgic turn restores the place and space where the Twin Towers stood as a type of resurrection. He reproduces the Twin Towers in their imaginary wholeness, to fill the void left by their destruction. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard claims “When the real is no longer what it was nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origins and of signs of reality...” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 6). *The Walk*

imagines for the viewer the Twin Towers in their original and perfect state, at the beginning of their creation narrative when they were given a soul by Phillippe Petite.

Phillippe Petite (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) is placed in the narrative as a type of Christ figure in a miracle story. The followers in his “coup” exemplify a naïve purity, in assuring the performance of a walk on a wire between the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. In their planning and executing of the “coup,” they subverted the law and created a singular never-to-be repeated event. Phillippe refers to this performance space as “the void.” This film is more than a memorial, it subtly invites a comparison with the terrorist attack and engages with the fascination of looking up at the looming towers, a situation repeated on 9/11.

The film situates itself simultaneously as a “second coming” and birth narrative of the Twin Towers. *The Walk* is nostalgic fantasy, an attempt to breathe life back into the souls of New Yorkers like Art Spiegelman who are living in the shadow of no towers.

Absence and Ashes: *Oblivion*

Baudrillard’s prophetic is exemplified in Kosinski’s science fiction fantasy film *Oblivion*. The film uses the iconic and recognisable architecture of the Empire State Building to amplify the absence of the Twin Towers to the viewer. It accentuates looking and seeing absence. A set of binoculars on the observation deck of the Empire State building invite the audience to see the void in the New York skyline where the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center once stood (Haywood 32). This is Baudrillard’s claim that “[n]o one who knew them can cease imagining them and the imprint they made on the skyline from all parts of the city” (*Spirit of Terrorism* 36). These reflections by Baudrillard and the accent on the void in the skyline, aligns with E. Ann Kaplan’s personal account of the architecture of the Twin Towers. She states that “for those nearby, the towers functioned phenomenologically as part of people’s spatial universe” (100).

Kosinski uses iconic architecture from New York City, in the dream and flashback sequences, in a phenomenological manner to convey a sense of the object, memory, nostalgia, and direct experience. The iconic geography of the New York skyline is reinforced by Kosinski's use in the film of "the ruins of the Empire State Building to intensify their functioning as a type of embodiment of personal loss ... and the subtext of the loss of the Twin Towers" (Haywood 38).

Oblivion insists on absence as an overarching metaphor for 9/11. The geospatial attempt at mapping the Towers cannot find a reference in the New York skyline because it is a reflected absence (Haywood), in memory, shadow and imagination. The individual confronted by the Real of death on 9/11 finds that confrontation impossible. Baudrillard claimed that the destruction of the Twin Towers was "a situation science fiction dreamed of from the beginning ... some obscure force would wipe them out" (*Spirit of Terrorism* 48). *Oblivion* as a science fiction film fulfils this brief in the alien known as "Sally." In the flashes of a devastated earth, after her attack, recognisable buildings such as the Pentagon heighten the associations with 9/11. *Oblivion* uses the ruined skyscrapers of New York City in images of ruins of the territory, then overlays Jack's (Tom Cruise) memory flashbacks, to the earth before the war. This type of metaphor is for before 9/11. Jack's memories serve as a psychoanalytical geographical map for New York City. The view from the Empire State Building maps for the audience the missing Twin Towers in their place and space in the New York skyline. Aligning with Baudrillard's claims in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, that the Twin Towers were clones, the character of Jack Harper serves as metaphorical transmission. Jack Harper has been cloned, only the image of his pulverized state remains as he is reduced to dust and DNA. At the end of the film, only Jack's image remains, as a clone, not the authentic subject (Haywood 40).

Like *Avengers: Infinity War*, *Oblivion* superadds the Real (Baudrillard *Spirit of Terrorism* 22) to the filmic image. It is engaging with Baudrillard's theory of "the desert of the real... the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map..." (*Simulacra and Simulation* 1). In the New York skyline the filmic map of the Twin Towers subsists in the "desert of the real," and makes the representation of absence now discernible.

Psychoanalytic Geography in Baudrillard's Prophetic: The Shredding of the Map, the Territory of Space and Time, the Desert of the Real and Reproduction

Horror and the disaster film have mapped the soul of America and in cinema, have extended to Western society as a whole. But post 9/11, with its geospatial universe in ruins and the map incinerated (similarly to the plot of *Avengers: Infinity War*), "the deserts [that] are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the Real itself*" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 1). Žižek considers that in New York on September 11, "citizens were introduced to 'the desert of the Real'—for us corrupted by Hollywood, the landscape and the shots of the collapsing towers could not but be reminiscent of the most breathtaking scenes in big catastrophe productions" (15). Feldman considered that on September 11, "[r]eality shattered referential time and space, and yet an image sequence was created, deeply anchored in a residual cinematics of history" (28).

Baudrillard's prophetic vision in the repetition of the image of the Twin Towers both alerts and disrupts the audience through cinema's imaginary space. This doubling of the image (the map and the territory), in cinema and memory makes a map of the territory of 9/11 where the Real Twin Towers have been destroyed. The geography of the absence of the destroyed Twin Towers and the image of their reappearance is like the dual layer of "the mind and the city" (Freud 8). The psychoanalytic geography of New York City has been conquered by the

imaginary space of a virtual consciousness. The territory of the geographical and absent space of the Twin Towers has entered the imaginary space because terrorism created a map that exactly overlaid the territory in the Real of terrorist violence. Representations are trapped in a continual mapping of the trauma of 9/11 in film. In *Avengers: Infinity War*, this irruption is seen in the return of Lacan's anamorphosis.

Conclusion

Yet again, Baudrillard has proven his relevance and worth in revealing and speaking prophetically to present-day theories of human reality. Reimagining the Twin Towers in *Avengers: Infinity War* is a displacement of time and space, but not of subject. The film re-enacts 9/11 adopted as a "a cultural prosthesis" (Feldman 34). Re-imagining the Twin Towers in Baudrillard's prophetic sense in *Avengers: Infinity War* exceeds the image while using 9/11 as a narrative text. The scene on Vormir (re)introduces the ruined towers; it traps the viewer in asymmetrical terrorism (Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* 12), and we are caught in a representation of a shadow—an anamorphosis. Red Skull is the blot or stain that turns into a figure set against the backdrop of the Twin Towers. Like the shadows of the planes on New York City's buildings in the film *World Trade Center*, there is a foreshadowing of death and destruction through manifesting the "spirit of terrorism."

Avengers: Infinity War is not just Baudrillard's imaginary space, in a limited sense of the imagination, it is a revision of that space as a revisited psychoanalytic geography, echoing in cosmic spaces. The manifestation of "hidden geographies"⁴ (Feldman 35) on Vormir is contrasted with the representation of psychoanalytic geographies in New York City—the extension of Baudrillard's imaginary space for the Twin Towers.

Avengers: Infinity War demonstrates through iconography and metaphor that in the West, we are trapped in “the spirit of terrorism” and its legacy, which is attached to human vulnerability and mortality. Our symbolic identification aligns with the Twin Towers, as Western markers of commerce, dominance, globalization, and world trade, that became a disturbing witness of death. And yet the Twin Towers, as Baudrillard prophesized, never cease being imagined.

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Notes

¹ Marvel Cinematic Universe films, in various ways, repeat the trauma of 9/11, but this inclusion is not exclusive to this franchise.

² Morton describes environmental destruction that is viscose and sticks to everything. This is like the reimagining of the 9/11 event that is functioning the same in film, culture, society, and memory.

³ For more on the anamorphosis, 9/11 and film, see my paper, “Reflecting Absence, Mediating the Real: Oblivion as a Requiem for 9/11.”

⁴ Perhaps inter-planetary geography would be a more accurate term.

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