

MA Defence: “To Fight the Battles We Never Could”: The Militarization of Marvel’s Cinematic Superheroes”

by Brett Pardy

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Our dear colleague, Brett Pardy, will defend his MA Thesis on Thursday, June 16, 2016 at Harbour Centre, Room 1415 (1pm - 3 pm). Here is the abstract of his thesis “To Fight the Battles We Never Could”:

Abstract:

The Marvel comics film adaptations have been some of the most successful Hollywood products of the post 9/11 period, bringing formerly obscure cultural texts into the mainstream. Through an analysis of the adaptation process of Marvel Entertainment’s superhero franchise from comics to film, I argue that a hegemonic American model of militarization has been used by Hollywood as a discursive formation with which to transform niche properties into mass market products. I consider the locations of narrative ambiguities in two key comics texts, *The Ultimates* (2002-2007) and *The New Avengers* (2005-2012), as well as in the film *The Avengers* (2011), and demonstrate the significant reorientation towards the military’s “War on Terror” of the film franchise. While Marvel had attempted to produce film adaptations for decades, only under the new “militainment” discursive formation was it finally successful. Using a framework of genre, myth, and intertextuality I argue that superheroes are malleable icons, known largely by the public by their image and perhaps general character traits rather than their narratives. Militainment is introduced through a discourse of realism provided by Marvel Studios as an indicator that the property is not just for children. Ultimately, this results in shifting superhero ethics towards the goals of the American military and a concomitant militarization of mainstream popular culture.

Keywords: hegemony; Marvel; militainment; superheroes; Hollywood