

UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Faculty of Political Sciences

Belgrade, March 2018

At the meeting of the Department of Journalism and Communication, held on 07 September 2017, the Master Thesis Defense Commission (hereby the Commission) for the candidate Anlan Cheney was formed with the following members: prof. dr Radmila Nakarada, prof. dr Jelena Djordjević and prof. dr Siniša Atlagić. The Council for the Second and Third Cycle of Studies has accepted the proposal made by the Department.

Having read the master thesis, the Commission is submitting the following

REPORT

Anlan Cheney's thesis „Identity politics in Western film: between cultural narrative and cinematic hegemony“ as part of the Regional Master's Program in Peace Studies taught at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, is completed under mentorship of prof. Siniša Atlagić. The thesis 69 pages long consists of Introduction, three chapters (Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Research Design and Constructive Analysis), Conclusion and Bibliography.

Introduction (p. 4) contextualizes the presence of identity politics in Western films about sectarian conflicts in other parts of the world by overviewing the representation of these conflicts on screen as testament to imperialist attitudes and values about culture and power through what Cheney calls *cinematic hegemony*. By identifying key problems in the roles of film as entertainment, as education, and as advocacy, the introduction ultimately aims to demonstrate that films can produce harmful narratives regarding the complex nature of conflict representation in film while remaining, above all, useful indicators of such necessary conversations in peace studies as identity, peace and conflict, power and hegemony, and more.

Theoretical Framework (p. 8) articulates the ideological basis of identity politics through a literature review which situates the paper's main arguments between the fields of peace studies, film studies, and international relations. The chapter considers the formal aesthetics of film as a visual language, the heritage of film ideas through the social and political environments within which it interacts, and the socio-political foundations of identity in International Relations through a survey of perspectives in the field (including realist and liberal views while emphasizing the identity and critical theory perspectives in tandem). The theoretical framework ultimately prefaces the ensuing analysis by defining and discussing conflict typologies and sectarian cleavages in the context of contemporary social realities and relevant social arrangements according to modern and post-modern ideology.

Methodology and Research Design (p. 19) relies primarily on film aesthetics and semiotics to outline film's visual language by determining constructed narratives through identification of their visual codes and analysis of their socio-cultural context on screen. The chapter demonstrates how the subtle yet compelling power of visual semiotics utilized in cinematography, artistic direction, and montage technique and convention can aid the transmission of agendas — narratives and counter-narratives — upon film audiences generally uneducated about and un-conscious of both the thematic realities and technical/artistic possibilities of a given conflict situation on screen.

Constructive Analysis (p. 32) makes a comparative analysis of eleven internationally received feature films on sectarian conflicts in two case studies — cinematic representations of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa — produced by industries centralized in the West and those by Hollywood in particular. By analyzing the identified visual indicators of narrative messages in films about these sectarian conflicts, the paper analyzes how films participate in public discourse, engage real debates, and sometimes shape the views of its audiences around three key themes: Memory, Innocence, and Otherness.

Conclusion (p. 65) outlines how, in an international political landscape dominated by the primacy of Western-style human rights and identity, the representation of violent identity conflicts are subjects especially vulnerable to narrative manipulation. For both the study and

practice of peace in particular, this specific exercises of hegemony discussed demonstrate chasms in cinematic representation which are both ideological and economic, political and social, and may ultimately influence how protracted conflict situations and peace processes are impacted and offers three ways to improve representation and interpretation of identity conflict and transcend imperial discourse regarding narrative convention, political agendas, and story subtext.

The Commission is convinced that the candidate has approached the development of the thesis very studiously. This is reflected not only in the methodological approach in the narrow sense of the word, but also in the comprehensiveness reflected in an extensive knowledge in the fields of film studies, international relations and peace studies. The thesis is methodologically grounded, with clearly defined basic concepts, precise hypotheses and concrete conclusions deriving from the theoretical part of the paper and the results of empirical research. The general conclusion of the candidate unambiguously indicates the role of the media in the process of producing social discrimination but also points to the guidelines for overcoming it. Cinematic presentation of ideological and identity cleavages might strengthen the production of social inequalities in society, and that is why the candidate's efforts are of great social significance. Based on this, the Commission positively assesses the thesis „Identity politics in Western film: between cultural narrative and cinematic hegemony“ and finds that master's candidate Anlan Cheney has fulfilled all formal as well as professional and scientific requests for its defense.

In Belgrade,
17th of March 2018

The Commission:

prof. dr Radmila Nakarada

prof. dr Jelena Djordjević

prof. dr Siniša Atlagić