

Department of Cinematography

Final Thesis Evaluation

Author: Murat Emkuzhev

Title: The Visual Aesthetics of Soviet War Films (1940s – 1960s)

Evaluation by the Thesis Mentor ☐

~~Evaluation by the Opponent~~ ☐

Author of Evaluation (name, surname, department):

Mgr. Petra Dominková, PhD; FAMU International

Evaluation of the content and resulting form of a theoretical Thesis:

Appropriate choice of Thesis objective and approach..... A

Relative completeness of the literature search in relation to the topic A

Ability to adopt a critical approach and use specialised literature sources A

Logical structure of the Thesis, continuity and proportionality of chapters A

Linguistic level and style A

Compliance with the bibliography standards (no thesis may be recommended for defence if there are multiple quote sections indicating no source in the text)..... A

Sufficient extent of images, justification for and appropriateness of such images, graphic representation..... A

Originality of the Thesis, contribution to the field of interest A

Overall Evaluation of the Thesis (A-F) A

Murat Emkuzhev has chosen for his thesis the topic of the visual style of the Soviet war films in the three post-war decades. While on the first sight the topic may not appear that appealing, Murat has proven the opposite: even in the most schematic Soviet war films (content-wise), we can find stunning imagery, that deserves the detailed analysis, that in some cases was missing so far in the scholarship about the Soviet war films. Murat, as a cinematographer, focuses mainly on camerawork, even when he always points out the important facts about the political situation and omnipresent propaganda, that sometimes significantly shaped the visual style of the films as well. For instance, on page 4, he mentions that in the 1940s “Socialist Realism [was] the one and only acceptable art style”, elsewhere he describes how the political decision to severely limit the production influenced the films of the 1950s (see p. 17). As mentioned, though, the core of Murat’s thesis is in a detailed analysis of visual style, namely lighting, camera movement and blocking, and practical effects and battle scenes, and here we can find the main asset of the Murat’s thesis. Accompanied by numerous frame enlargements that the author himself chose, the analysis of visual style shows very interesting

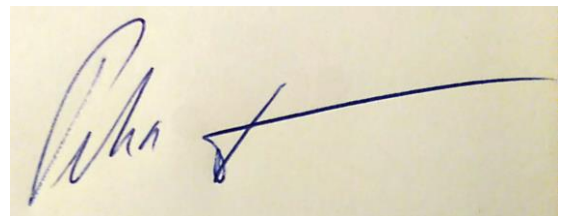
facets of the decades discussed, influenced not just by the personalities of director and director of photography, but also by the propaganda, politics, and, of course, the equipment available.

The thesis has a clear and logical structure – the author always picks two instances of wars films of the era, one mainstream one, another rather “experimental”, that he compares and puts into the context at the end of each chapter. While in the introductory part of each chapter he finds support in the relevant secondary sources, some older, some recent, written in both languages Murat is proficient in – Russian and English –, in the analysis itself he relies mainly on his viewing, occasionally he supports his findings by the relevant source, if available (as, for instance, the paragraph about lighting in Mashenka as seen by the DP himself at page 9). Those discussions are particularly enlightening and prove that Murat is able of very sophisticated analysis of the visual imagery.

In the conclusion Murat claims that “the Soviet war films had formed and developed as a separate genre with its own unique visual style “(see p. 85). I believe that this is one of the themes Murat may address during his defense – “What was unique on Soviet war films in that era? “; “When compared with war films from other post-communist countries, may we find some similarities? Differences?” In passing, Murat mentioned two recent films while also claiming that the War film is “dead genre” (see p. 88) – would he be able to explain at the defense why is it so? Those are the questions that should be addressed during the defense, but also those, that may be a part of the further Murat’s research.

I am positive that Murat has demonstrated in the thesis the ability to work creatively and independently, and proved the deep knowledge of the subject, as well as stunning attention to the details. I am sure that thesis “The Visual Aesthetics of Soviet War Films (1940s – 1960s)” does meet the standard requirements for MFA thesis, therefore, I recommend it for defense and proposed it to be assess by the grade A.

18th of September, 2019, Austin (TX)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. H. S.', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.