

Review of the Master's Thesis

Karolina Joanna Malinowska:

Hibakusha cinema as means of rediscovering identity

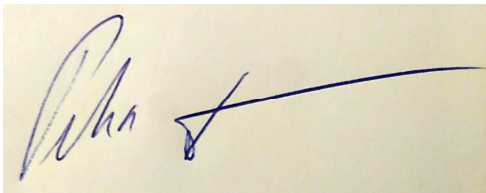
Karolina Joanna Malinowska has decided to focus in her thesis on the Japanese cinema, namely on the films that (in)directly address Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and were directed by the directors from the generation that was personally affected by this event. Most of the paper consists of Karolina's observation and analysis, while occasionally she refers to the external sources, that provides helpful background to her findings. At some points, the text goes beyond pure cinematic analysis, crossing the boundaries with the philosophy. For instance, Karolina compares the "shadow" in cinema (the one that is generated by the projecting image) to "shadow", that often remained as the only proof of the existence of many victims. Karolina claims that cinema enables to show "what's visible and what's hidden in the radioactive play between light and darkness" (p. 15) drawing an interesting link between the projection and radiation. At other point, she sees the similarity between skin of a human body and cinema screen, saying "Cinema screen becomes a skin/tissue, a place, where two impossible to visual concepts meet," (p. 14). As seen, Karolina understands the importance of cinema in delivering the testimony that, perhaps, nobody wants to hear, and is aware of its unique position in doing so.

Three chapters, in which Karolina points out different attitudes to showing – or not showing – the effects of the bombing and discusses how film language, besides the story of the film, enriches the "testimony", creates the core of the thesis. She defines two different venues how to handle unspeakable – either, what she names "graphic physicality" (p. 19) that focuses on distortion, and transformation (*The Weeping Demon*) or "absence of visibility" (p. 28) focusing on invisibility, and transparency (*Crow Trap*). While in those two chapters Karolina rather focuses on the story, in the following chapter, *Filmic Autopsy*, she discusses various aspects of film style that contributes to the appeal of the films she has chosen. In this chapter – and that would be my only criticism

of Karolina's thesis – she neglects a soundtrack, that, however, may significantly alter spectator's experience and would indeed deserve some space in this, otherwise very enlightening, study.

It should be emphasized, though, that it is a minor criticism only. The thesis is very well written, and Karolina demonstrates that her analytical skills are on a high level. All sources are properly quoted, the style is consistent, the structure crystal clear. All in all, I believe that Karolina's thesis fulfills all requirements for MFA thesis and recommend it for the defense.

I suggest the thesis is assessed by grade A.

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored background. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Petra Dominková'.

Mgr. Petra Dominková, Ph.D.

Austin, 9th September 2019