

Diploma thesis oponent review:

Lidya Arinna Emir -

RELIGION IN BEAT GENERATION AND MADNESS AS IDENTITY BASED ON ALLEN GINSBERG'S HOWL

This diploma thesis deals with the phenomenon of the Beat generation in the context of social and cultural life in the United States in the 1950s. Especially Allan Ginsberg and his poem Howl. In the next parts, the author looks for the best way to stage this poem. At the end of the work, a performance project is described.

Ginsberg's Howl and the American Beatniks are the ever-recurring refrain of the revolt of new generations. Because not only technocracy is eternal but also the revolution against it. Good for us, the author is not satisfied with just marking this work as still socially and artistically relevant, but also tries to describe the roots of the Beat generation in the context of the American 1950s. To clarify the social situation of this period, she largely uses citations from Theodore Roszak's book "The Making of Counter Culture". This is certainly a good choice of information source. But the reader will get the impression that it might be better to read this book instead. Citations are very common indeed.

Much more interesting to me is the part of the diploma thesis that concerns the personality of Alain Ginsberg, who was a very original artist and defied inclusion in any socio-political or artistic trend. There is certainly an interesting parallel here with another unclassifiable personality - with William Blake. The border of prophecy and madness, the border of life and artistic creation. Although this parallel is not original and is again supported mainly by citations from existing publications, it is well and comprehensibly processed and for me it is the best part of the diploma thesis. Undoubtedly, the overall image of Allen Ginsberg's personality also includes his specific fascination with people who find themselves on the margins of society, people who break the law or are considered mentally ill. The author finds in the literature many documents of these Ginsberg inspirations in his own life.

In the following chapters, the author gradually clarifies the form she chooses for staging this particular text. She deals with the phenomena of street and immersive theater, installation and scenography. The fact that she does not want to use the form of a classical theater space with a separate stage and auditorium for the staging of this text is quite understandable and not surprising.

The problem for me arises when I assume that I will finally learn specific information about the project. It is clear that it is difficult to process poetry (especially such a specific one) theatrically and that it is difficult to imagine such a thing in a classical theater space for drama.

I really miss a concrete description of the project with sufficient visual material. What will the costumes look like? Will the actions of the characters be mute? In the description of the project there are situations that act as certain associations to the motifs of the poem Howl. In the first (immersive) part, the audience is scattered among the performers. An interaction on the topic of insanity is anticipated. About four specific actions are listed. In the second part, the audience receives a medical certificate after being manipulated in some way. In the third part, Ginsberg himself reads the poem and we are surrounded by Self Help books. Will the text of the poem be heard only in the final part? I did not get more information from the text. Is this concept understandable to me and based on the author's analysis of the poem I read? I hope the thesis defense will convince me of this and I hope to learn more details about the project.

I recommend the work for the defense. I propose a "C" rating.

Prague 1.9.2022, MgA. Martin Černý