

# OPPONENT'S ASSESSMENT OF A WRITTEN THESIS

<b>Thesis title:</b>	High: Two or Three Chapters About Ecstatic Masculinity
<b>Thesis author:</b>	Daniel Victoria
<b>Programme of study:</b>	Directing of Devised and Object Theatre
<b>Programme type:</b>	continuing Master's

## **Definition of objectives and their fulfilment:**

High: Two or Three Chapters About Ecstatic Masculinity focuses on Daniel Victoria's final performance in the MA DOT programme through the key interrelated terms of masculinity and ecstasy, and theatre as a territory of self-production which introduces the notion of the sensorial body as the site of that formation, and possible transformation of the self.

The thesis fulfils the stated aim in as much as it is proposed as a radically subjective record of the process of creation and its relevant context.

## **Topicality of the thesis topic (and relevance of the selected methodology in the case of a Master's thesis):**

The topic of Daniel's final MA DOT performance and the thesis is relevant and discussed across both feminist studies and masculinity studies, the latter being more substantially reflected and studied in the thesis, whereas the former remains present as a challenge and a stated commitment at the start of the thesis (and the start of the process of working on the performance) to answer the feminist demand "that men work on themselves", and reset the chain of abuse and violence in a patriarchal society. The resulting performance process offered a genuine and committed investigation of what that work may mean in theatre and through a highly physical approach to investigating intimacy in a small group of heterosexual male performers. The link to ecstasy as the sphere of heightened sensitivity and dissolving of identity was also well chosen and the thesis does follow this process well and gives a detailed account of the complex negotiation of how men relate to each other, or rather how male bodies respond to each other in an extended exploration that inevitably opens the questions of violence, sexuality, ecstasy, but also intimacy, and friendship. The choice of a 'radically subjective' approach does mean that a lot of interesting propositions and problems encountered along the way are only stated in the thesis and remain anecdotal, whereas a more thorough methodological approach would have been very interesting and is somewhat missing in the thesis.

## **Scholarly contribution, originality of the thesis, and its utilisation in practice:**

The topic, the approach and the research context are all original and constitute a relevant contribution to the field. I have especially appreciated the honesty with which masculinity has been interrogated in its multiple manifestations and allowed to express itself in the performance and this is well reflected in the thesis. What limits the thesis in this somewhat is the insistence on an anecdotal approach to analysing the performance process.

**Logical construction and structuring of the thesis:**

The chapters are clearly defined, and the argument follows through well. The experience of making the performance was clearly very strong and has been reflected in rich detail, and the contextualising part of the thesis is well framed and sufficiently elaborate to provide balance and expand on the topics proposed.

**Formal requirements and requisite contents of the thesis, including its length:**

The text has an adequate format although there is substantial disparity between the first chapter and the rest of the thesis, and the conclusion is rather short. The focus on giving a detailed description of all the nuances of the process of working on the performance has left quite a few theoretical concepts and practical contexts as footnotes only (i.e. 'post-spectacular', 'sense', 'or even 'the tools obtained at MA DOT' that could have been elaborated more as that would give an uninitiated reader a clearer point of contact with the description of the working process).

**Work with information sources:**

Whereas there was clearly a decision to focus the work with references to the second and third chapters, the references are well chosen and sufficiently well reflected, particularly the work of Deleuze and Guattari has been studied in detail and brought together with the work on the performance very well in the thesis. There could have been more work with the other sources, especially performances stated as influences, which mostly remained in footnotes.

**Level of language, style and terminology:**

The text should have been read and corrected by a native speaker before it was submitted, as it is sometimes difficult to follow. Many of the footnotes in the first chapter should have been integrated in the main body of the text.

**Evaluator's overall summary:**

The thesis is well contextualised and there is a clear commitment to remain as close as possible to the process of making the work but the ways of integrating the writing and doing have not really been explored and as a result, anecdotal and analytical approaches remain separate in the thesis. This is most visible in the conclusion which would have been an ideal way to integrate the two.

**Questions and topics for discussion at the oral defence:**

Considering the topic, I have missed some reference to body art and performance, especially since this is where feminist voice has been the strongest since the 1960s. How would you relate your exploration of masculinity now to this tradition of exploring desire, transgression and self-enactment, engagement and relation in body art and performance?

<b>Recommendation of the thesis for the oral defence:</b>	yes
<b>Recommended grade:</b>	B
<b>Date of elaboration of this assessment:</b>	18.06.2023

Branislava Kuburović  
name of the thesis opponent

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18.06.2023      signature