

OPPONENT'S ASSESSMENT OF A WRITTEN THESIS

Thesis title: Mythical Films of Theo Angelopoulos: Retelling with Greek
Romance
Thesis author: Xueni Yang
Programme of study: Cinema and Digital Media Directing
Programme type: continuing Master's

Definition of objectives and their fulfilment: 9

**Topicality of the thesis topic (and relevance of the selected methodology in the case of a
Master's thesis): 8**

Scholarly contribution, originality of the thesis, and its utilisation in practice: 4

Logical construction and structuring of the thesis: 10

Formal requirements and requisite contents of the thesis, including its length: 19

Work with information sources: 4

Level of language, style and terminology: 15

Evaluator's overall summary: 31

Questions and topics for discussion at the oral defence:

András Bálint Kovács in his book *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950 – 1980* (University of Chicago Press, 2008) puts the style of the Angelopoulos's films into the context of stylistic innovations cultivated by Michelangelo Antonioni and Miklós Jancsó. The Antonioni style – “radical alienated minimalism” (Kovács, 292) was developed and radicalized in two ways. The first one was called by Kovács as “ornamental continuity”, initiated by Miklós Jancsó and followed by

Theo Angelopoulos (cf. Kovács, 156, 181): “[...] the young Angelopoulos in Greece found Jancsó’s ornamental version of the Antonioni form more appropriate to follow rather than other basic modernist films” (Kovács, 190). “Jancsó and Angelopoulos followed a symbolized and radicalized variant of the Antonioni long-take style” (Kovács, 372).

The question is: why Xueni Yang tries to compare the films of Theo Angelopoulos with so called mainstream production, instead of their natural background – auteur „festival“ films of directors as Antonioni, Jancsó, or, for example, Béla Tarr, which could be more productive? In addition, she took – as examples of mainstream – films as *Joker* (2019), *Parasite* (2019), and tv series *Sherlock* (2010). No one of them was a typical “mainstream” movie, I am afraid: *Joker* won the Golden Lion award at Venice Film Festival, *Parasite* won Palme d’or at Cannes in the same year. Both of them were excellent festival films, offered transformations of stylistic, narrative and genre patterns. What is more important – no one of them could serve as appropriate comparative background for the selected films of The Angelopoulos, whose work was closed in 2012. Difference between Angelopoulos’s narratives and style and typical mainstream is evident for the first look, I think. What is interesting – the Greek romance, as is defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, is a formula visible in many commercial films, for example the five-part French adventure cinema series about Angélique (dir. Bernard Borderie, 1964 – 1968). But the sphere of adventure movies is, of course, beyond the horizon of discussion about the style of Theo Angelopoulos.

What is important in Mikhail Bakhtin concept of Greek romance, is absence of concrete local, historical, or political circumstances in the plots. In opposite, in the films of Theo Angelopoulos, especially in *Ulysses' Gaze*, we can evidence many allusions to crucial facts of history and territory when the story is going on. For example the moment, which was discussed in this thesis: the murder of the family in Sarajevo. In this drastic sequence shot, the Slavic language of conversation and the name of the river (Miljacka) are important.

Another question is connected with the essay of Mikhail Bakhtin itself. The Bakhtin’s term “греческий роман” is translated into Czech by Daniela Hodrová (Michail Michajlovič Bachtin, *Román jako dialog*, Odeon, Praha 1980) as “řecký román” (= Greek novel), into English (by Caryl Emerson) not as “Greek roman” or “Greek novel”, but “Greek romance. How can you explain terminological nuances between “roman”, “novel” and “romance”? Can you find some analogy in Chinese literature?

Typing mistakes: „[...] he joins the rank of Tarkovsky and Kalatozoc (p. 1), correctly: Kalatozov. „Jen Eder“ (pp. 6, 7), correctly: Jens Eder.

In conclusion, the presented thesis is excellent. Xueni Yang demonstrated discovery notes on the work of Theo Angelopoulos, perfect analytic skills, especially in the field of cinematography, persuasive arguments, outstanding orientation in European cultural heritage, and admirable ability as theorist, as well as thoughtful filmmaker.

Recommendation of the thesis

for the oral defence:

I recommend the diploma thesis
for the oral defense.

Recommended grade: A

**Date of elaboration of this
assessment:**

PhDr. Jaromír Blažejovský, Ph.D.

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Name of the thesis opponent

26 May 2023. 

(date and signature)