

A Review of Polina Polyakova's Bachelor Thesis

Name of the thesis: **The analysis of gender representations reproduced in popular full length animated films based on Russian folklore tales.**

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This Bachelor thesis has a clearly delimited topic, suitable for the purpose. The choice is original, as it has not been analysed in academic literature in this form.

The structure of the text meets the requirements of this type of thesis. There can be seen a conceptual framework, elaborated with an obvious consideration.

In the theoretical part, the text specifies the approach to the topic from the perspective of socialization. That is legitimate but it is not much deeper applied later on in the analysis (see below). The theoretical part puts relevant attention to gender socialization (sufficient for the bachelor study grade), the role of the media and fairy tales in the socialization process. Then it focuses on the Russian context and places the topic within this specific historical, political and social development. That should be appreciated, I would just expect more emphasis given to the cultural and literary context (where the *byliny* belong by genre). Perhaps the student might tell more about that during her defence?

The methodological part is well elaborated, the author characterizes her research questions (pp. 24-25), tries to explain the concept of gender (in a relatively sufficient way for the need of the bachelor thesis) and chooses a special paradigm with reference to Marcus Banks which is described as the methodological outlet. This choice is very suitable, as Banks's work combines analysis of visuality with that of social impact. Still, I have a comment to the further part of the methodology: the thesis works with so called typical masculine and feminine qualities (we can say gender stereotypes) with reference to a relevant book (as quoted, England et al.) but does not at all take into account the cultural conditioning of the described gender stereotypes. In some cultures (esp. in Asia), e.g. emotionality with expressive exposure (like crying) is not regarded to be solely a feminine quality. So, we cannot take a list of genderly stereotyped qualities as *universal* and apply them on another cultural context without a discussion and argument. To add a positive comment to the methodological part, the author's reflection of her own location and positionality is worth appreciating.

The analysis remains, however, rather simplified, as compared to the above given methodological paradigm. I can see its main problem perhaps not in its obvious descriptivity but even more in the fact that the text does not *argue* for what it claims. It simply maintains what qualities are ascribed to a particular character in respective films but these findings are not possible to be verified, as there is not written *how* the author came to them. I mean the characteristics of the setting, the scene, interactions of the characters, the particular situations, etc. Some of these are given in the subchapter called Discussion – this is how the argument should have been carried on throughout the text. Perhaps the student might give an example of a deeper argument of a selected situation during the defence?

In the Conclusion, an interesting finding seems to be a mentioned certain development in the stereotypization of the female characters during the studied decade; a quotation shows that they are not always submissive but they protest: “Then Lyubava shouts out: “Then I will marry someone else! And I will have five, no, not five, but ten children!” (p. 51) Still, such an exclamation could be analysed deeper. What is the subject Lyubava is threatening the male hero with? To marry someone else and give birth to many children who will not be *the hero's*, i.e. not bearing his genes. So yes, the fact she is not just silent is not stereotypical, but she does not say, e.g., I will not get married, I will be independent, or so. She will marry, she only strikes at a stereotypically patriarchal masculine value – to disseminate his seeds all around.

Polina Polyakova's thesis reflects her motivation for and interest in the researched topic, presents a respectful list of academic texts studied and represents a refined style and language. In spite of a weaker analytical part, if the student satisfactorily answers the questions given in the review, I would support the evaluation **very good (2)**.