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Advisor Report for Alicja Hansen's Master's Thesis in Gender Studies at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic.

Alicja Hansen has submitted a thesis entitled "Queer Coding of Barbie Movies: Mattel's Attempt at Saving Barbie's Image," as part of her requirements for a Master's Degree at Charles University. In the thesis, she states that her goal is to capture academically what is a contemporary (mostly online) discussion since the start of the pandemic surrounding the animated Barbie movies and their potential for queerness. She walks the reader through seven of the animated Barbie movies.

As Alicja's advisor, I must comment on the progress she has made with the thesis. There were many discussions about its content and its approach and while it is still not, in my opinion, what it could be, there has been considerable improvement. I think she can be proud of the progress she has made.

Let me begin with her discussion of queer theory. While Alicja, in the end, demonstrates a basic grasp on queerness and some understanding of queer theory, I still have some concerns about the section. First, I do not think that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Queer and Now," to be the best source for a number of reasons. It is mostly the author's reflection on her life's journey (including having breast cancer) containing some commentary on her academic works and how she sees queerness, an "open mesh of possibilities," (18). It is not a work of queer theory in and of itself nor is that its primary goal. I challenged Alicja time and again to include other queer theorists and gave her a bibliographic list of possible theorists she could use, and still my advice was never heeded.

Regarding the use of the label queerness through the work, I have some concerns. I assume from this quoting of Sedgwick, "queerness is a form of rebellion from the heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality, as well as the binary standard," (19), that Alicja often finds acts of rebellion to be queer. In fact, Alicja often uses the term queerness for any act of rebellion on the part of any character. For example, when discussing Annicka, Alicja writes, "As Sedgwick explains in her essay, queerness is linked to an act of rebellion. While queer people rebel against the heteronormative rules of the patriarchal, Annika rebels against the rules her parents created to protect her from the situations created by the patriarchal society, which nurtures objectification of women," (45). Somehow from there on out, Annicka is queer because she is a rebel. Is there not another way to see this rebellious act? I have the same question for Anneliese on page 39 when Alicja writes, "At the same time, I think that this song can be seen as the basis of queer interpretation of the two characters, as the girls sing about not fitting into the roles assigned to them (which could be an analogy for gender roles and sexuality) and due to

this, they are outcasts who somehow have the same secret struggles.” How is this queer and not feminist or perhaps just rebellious?

In a similar vein, by reducing everything to being queer, as I find Alicja regularly does, it takes the meaning away from the word as well as the specificity of what queerness truly means. (Another example is the reading of the *Barbie and the Three Musketeers*, which does this as well on page 91-92.) Are there queer aspects of Barbie? Certainly. But not everything needs to be for Barbie to still be queer. In addition, I wonder, by seeing (almost) every relationship between two female characters within the movies as queer, if there is an erasure of other feminist (and not post-feminist) aims that might be in the movie, like the power of female friendship, sisterly bonds, and so on. To repeat the point, are we not again robbing queerness of its specificity which is crucial for the term? I would appreciate it, if Alicja could comment on what she understands to be the difference between queer, rebellious, and feminist actions.

In general, within the thesis, I find there to be a lack of academic sources. Out of the entire bibliography, only 25 are in some respect academic. Furthermore, Alicja relies too heavily on two articles for queer theory (Segdewick and occasionally Jagose), one article for queer-coding (Kim), one for post-feminism (Zaskow), one for lesbian erasure (Rich), and two for queer readings of Barbie (Jane, Lynch and Silva). The other academic articles are for the most part methodology. The inclusion of de Beauvoir under queer theory is rather odd. I do not think De Beauvoir’s discussion of otherness is enough to warrant a reading of her as queer. In addition, her bibliography is not complete.

Overall, I find there to be minimal grammar errors as well as some awkward transitions but they do not affect its readability.

The thesis does, in some ways, what it has set out to accomplish. It discusses Barbie from a more academic standpoint, and I appreciate the ways in which Alicja has included the commentary from members of the LGBTQ+ community within her thesis.

I find the thesis defensible and would recommend a grade of good (3) dependent on the defense of course.

In Prague, 13 September 2023.

Ivy Helman, Ph.D.