SUPERVISORS’S REPORT
B.A. THESIS

Ádám Hushegyi
A Rite of Passage: The Maturation and Transformation of Anglo-American Comic Books in the Post-World War II Era

This is an ambitious and accomplished thesis. Its broad historical scope is both its strength and weakness; a strength because the text maps major shifts in the genre and a weakness because it does not offer conclusions beyond observing that comics may both fuel and subvert dominant ideology. As Mr. Hushegyi himself mentions, the thesis can only hint at the variety of comics and it cannot interpret individual texts closely. The latter would have been interesting especially in the case of Christopher Nolan’s movies, which may be “one of the most compelling examples of what [comic book] adaptations can achieve” (Abstract), but only if we refer to the public debates the trilogy stirred - less so if we regard its ethical and aesthetic qualities. As the opponent also points out, interpreting these movies for example in the light of Slavoj Žižek’s article about The Dark Knight Rises would have been interesting as it would have delved further into the question of their being fundamentally reactionary.

Having said that, I think that comic books and their movie adaptations are worth to study, and the reason why criticism began to appear only in the past three decades is not because they would be “a generational experience” or “simply not very good” (p. 9) (what genre is not a “generational experience”? whose aesthetic values are we talking about?), but because popular culture has not been researched systematically until relatively recently. Nevertheless comic books and movies should be studied, even if many works may not be appealing to our “mature,” “educated” and middle-class tastes.

Further questions the defense could touch upon: 1) How does the graphic side of these comics underscore or contradict their textual side? 2) Comics such as “In Gratitude” were critical of racism but what is the racial politics of Miller’s The Dark Knight Returns, Moore’s Watchmen and Nolan’s trilogy? 3) Finally, what about superheroines? They appear in a number of these works - are they as heroic or antiheroic as their male counterparts?

Pavla Veselá, PhD.
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Proposed Grade: výborně (excellent)