

Graduate School of International  
Culture and Communication Studies  
Examination Report on the Doctoral Dissertation

Applicant	
Name	KATO, Kenta
	( Last Name / (Middle Name) / First Name )

Dissertation Title · Subtitle :	The Discourse of Feminization:
(English)	Effeminate Characters in Japanese Cinema (1945–1969)
Dissertation Title · Subtitle :	女性化の言説:
(Japanese)	1945年から1969年の日本映画における女々しいキャラクター

\*Even if the dissertation is written in English, a Japanese language translation of the title and subtitle must also be submitted.

2023/06/29  
YYYY/MM/DD

To Dean of Graduate School of International  
Culture and Communication Studies,

Examination Committee

Chief Examiner MORITA, Norimasa 印 Signature

(Affiliation・Title: FIRE/Professor )

Sub-Examiner DVORAK, Greg 印 Signature

(Affiliation・Title: FIRE/Professor )

Sub-Examiner SUGANUMA, Katsuhiko 印 Signature

(Affiliation・Title: University of Tasmania / Lecturer )

The Examination Committee members report the results of the dissertation examination and the oral defense below.

1. Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (in International Culture and Communication Studies)

2. Curriculum Doctorate (*Katei Hakase*) ・ Dissertation Doctorate (*Ronbun Hakase*)

\*Please delete either one.

3. Examination period

Dissertation examination: From 2023/05/11 To 2023/06/21  
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Oral defense: 2023/06/21  
YYYY/MM/DD

4. The results of the dissertation examination and the oral defense

\*Please write down Pass or Fail in both categories.

Dissertation examination: **PASS**

Oral defense: **PASS**

5. Summary of the Dissertation

As per attached sheet

6. Table of Contents

As per attached sheet

7. The results of the dissertation examination and the oral defense

(About 3,000 characters in Japanese or 1,000 words in English)

(1) Evaluation and summary of the dissertation examination

(Including Summary of the Dissertation)

Kenta Kato's dissertation is an excellent piece of work in investigating the representations of effeminate characters in Japanese popular films. In his laborious research, he tracks down every possible effeminate character in every type of popular movies and makes both textual and contextual analyses of such characters. According to him, there is a gap in academic discourse on Japanese cinema and the aim of his research is to fill it. His dissertation is original not only because in it he examines many types of effeminate characters that no other film scholars or historians have ever done, but also because it reevaluates the queer representation in Japanese popular films in general. Effeminate characters such as male prostitutes, modern boys, sister boys, and gay boys, who appear on screen mainly as minor, side characters, are generally considered as objects of laughter or repulsion, or both, because of the over-exaggerated femininity in their language and manners. However, Kenta Kato tries to highlight their more positive political and sexual function which is hidden from heterosexual audiences who are not free from stereotypical perceptions about effeminate, queer people. His underlying argument is that those effeminate characters could transgress the traditional gender perceptions or even subvert them, on the one hand, and could provide non-heterosexual male spectators with some visual pleasure on the other. He claims that these effeminate characters could potentially represent the possibility of new gender subjectivity. It is only pity that these central arguments do not clearly come through in the main chapters, though both points are emphatically stated in the abstract and the conclusion of his

dissertation. Even in the dissertation's conclusion, a more neutral word, 'negotiate' is used instead of stronger word such as subvert or transgress in describing how effeminate character challenge traditional moral principles, gender identities and male/female binary.

In his original research Kenta Kato seems to have carried out substantial contextual investigation and made extensive theoretical enquiries and, in his dissertation, he combines them to the reading of film texts. His contextual investigation includes the cultural policies of the GHQ of the Allied Forces, the history of *Eirin*, the self-censorship body of film industry, and various subcultural fashions, vogues and booms. Some of the investigation was done by looking up the primary sources as well as secondary literature. This empirical research amply demonstrates that effeminate characters are not simply cinematic creation but rather products of social and industrial circumstance. His reference to seminal and little-known theories about the subjects of effeminacy and queerness are comprehensive and his grasp of esoteric concepts is accurate. He does not fail to cover such major theoretical works on gender and sexuality as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Slavoj Zizek, and Alan Sinfield, but among them his dissertation relies more on Sedgwick's theory on queerness than anybody else's, though he somewhat mysteriously has stops short of making full use of her theory. Kato's argument is that though some effeminate or queer characters are not demonstratively gay, they could be as subversive or transgressive as straightforward gay characters. His dissertation is well structured, and all his arguments are lucidly and logically presented but by no means simplistic. Though English is an acquired language for him, his style is elegant and fluent.

## (2) Summary of the oral defense (including Comments and Questions)

Kenta Kato understood all the questions that the three examiners asked and clearly and precisely answered them. In other words, he defended his dissertation very well. Most comments made by the examiners are complimentary. His English is not only accurate but also even elegant. His argument is complicated but clear. His dissertation, particularly the parts dealing with film texts, is very original. It is agreed among the examiners that this thesis is an excellent piece which contributes significantly to our understanding of the notion of 'effeminacy' in relation to masculinity.

However, the main questions which the examiners raised during the oral examinations were as follows. (1) What would be the Japanese translation of 'effeminate' character or 'effeminacy' in the context of Japanese cinema? Kenta Kato's answered that the word he had in his mind was '*memeshii*' when he was

writing his dissertation, but an examiner pointed out that being 'effeminate' implies more than what '*memeshii*' does and vice versa. (2) It was also pointed out that there are a few occasions in which Kenta Kato's word choice or phrasing risks inviting the misunderstanding of his own intention on the part of readers. For example, in the sentence such as 'Despite their obscenity, *dansho* become popular due to their increased visibility', the word 'obscenity' gives readers impression that he shares the perception of effeminate characters upheld in heteronormative society. Or when Kato describes Akihiro Maruyama as 'dangerously' gender-fluid', he seems as if he himself conceives him as dangerous. (3) There is a self-discrepancy between Kato's deconstructive argument in the first chapter that post-war gender constructions cannot be understood in a dualistic way and the acceptance of binary gender division in the ensuing chapters. (4) Kato's project is to draw on Robyn R. Warhol's approach of 'rehabilitating effeminacy'. On this line, Sedgwick's reinterpretation of shame as 'reparative', which is an attempt to reconstitute the relationship between the majority and minority in a non-binary way, could be useful to further tease out the complexity of Kato's argument. (5) There is a question of the proportional imbalance between contextual and theoretical discussion and textual analysis in each chapter. A lot of space is spent on the former to which the latter relates and Chapter 2 is a typical case. This is a pity as the strength of this dissertation lies in the detailed analyses of cinematic texts. Some of these points are to be reflected in the final version of his dissertation. (6) Finally, Kato's analysis of effeminacy or '*memeshii*' seems as if it were still couched on male/female binary. One way to work around the logical contradiction is to argue that those effeminate characters expose a vulnerable reliance of heteronormative masculine subject on the former to sustain the very constitution of the latter instead of claiming to go beyond gender constraints as this dissertation does.

There are only small number of factual and typological errors and these are supposed to be corrected in the final version which he must submit after the oral exam. The best and strongest part of his dissertation is his analysis of Japanese popular film texts. Therefore, it is a pity that no image is included in the dissertation and the inclusion of still photography is strongly recommended, if it is published as a book.