

Martina Vuksan, *Through the eyes of ex-Yugoslav FAMU student and film director: Experience of film culture in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia during the period of socialist dictatorship*, FHS 2021.

The Opponent's Report

Martina Vuksan's diploma thesis is acceptable (good text structure, good working with secondary literature, etc.) but I, as an external examiner, will point out some weaknesses or problematic parts of the text. I believe that there are some mistakes (also structural) or misunderstandings. First, there is a contradiction between the topic how is defined in the abstract and in the text and the actual topic the thesis is about. In the abstract, Martine Vuksan writes that her thesis is a contribution to the study of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslavia film culture during the socialist dictatorship of the 1960s and 1970s. In the text, she writes that her project is dedicated to the years between 1967 and 1987. In the principle, however, her work focuses on the life-story of the famous Yugoslavian filmmaker (Lordan Zafranović) who was born in the former Yugoslavia (Croatia), and studied at the FAMU in Prague between 1967 and 1971. I have nothing against this topic variability. I just believe that there is a vast difference among those three types of subjects and the researcher working on the subject should be aware of that.

Secondly, there is a great qualitative difference between the description of the Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian contexts (Martina Vuksan compares film culture in these two states). The comments on the Czechoslovakian history and culture are often a little bit superficial, and sometimes rather strange. I believe the low familiarity with the Czech milieu is already apparent by incorrect usage of peoples' names (for example, see the pages 42 and 43 and names as „Bohumil Hrabar“, „Edvald Schrom“). However, there are worst mistakes than bad spelling of names. I will give one example. Martina Vuksan writes (at great length) about Otakar Vávra (sometimes she writes „Otokar“). She describes him – also in 1960s – as one of the purest examples (and defenders) of socialist realism. I am not in a position of Vávra's defender (I think he was a great artist and a great opportunist as well). But such a claim is too strange because, in 1960s, Vávra made films such as *Romance pro křídlovku* or *Kladivo na čarodějnice* (by the way with the contribution of such people as Ester Krumbachová or Drahomíra Vihanová) and these films have nothing to do with socialist realism at all. In other words, I think that the diploma thesis would be better if it focuses on the Yugoslavian environment.

Thirdly, as I have already mentioned socialist realism, there are many further strange uses of this term in Martina Vuksan's thesis. For example, I was really surprised that she claims (p. 36) that there was a link between Italian neorealist filmmakers (Visconti, Rossellini etc.) and socialist realism. That is untrue (see for example – among many others – some essays of Gilles Deleuze about Italian neorealist filmmakers). The influences of neorealism go back to Zola, Pascoli, Verga etc. These men has nothing to do with socialist realism at all.

Fourthly, I think that Martina Vuksan concentrates – in interpretative way – only on one point and that point we can describe as an endlessly repeated claim that the Czechoslovak and Yugoslavian film industries were state-owned industries, and, therefore, thoroughly ideological industries. Yes, it is true, but I think that this true is so obvious that is it not necessary to build on this true the whole interpretation. It would be much more interesting to show in what relationship the films of Zafranović (if he is the only storyteller in the diploma thesis) were to that ideology. For example, if Martina Vuksan writes, the first films of Zafranović were in conformity with the socialist worldview I would expect that she shows the concrete links between these films and the socialist worldview. However, there is no such a thing. There is only an authoritative claim that there must be the link. Yes, there might be a link, but I would expect some nuanced analysis of the problem because otherwise the claim is only a claim based on authoritative statement. It is only an example. The lack of the nuanced analysis and interpretation is characteristic for the whole diploma thesis. Despite of my criticism, as I have already mentioned at the beginning. Martina Vuksan's diploma thesis has a good text structure, works well with secondary literature (and was written with a great

enthusiasm), and, therefore, I recommend it and I propose the mark “good” (3).

In Prague, August 29th 2021

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