Supervisor's Report on B.A. Thesis by

Julie Žáčková

STEREOTYPICAL DEPICTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS ON AMERICAN FILM

Ms. Žáčková sets out in her thesis to portray the facets of the politics of stereotypical delineations in a select band of films from American cinematic history, including such directors as D.W. Griffith, Spike Lee and Steven Spielberg.

The thesis contains 53 pp. across an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and a filmography. As for the prose style, it reads very cleanly and has been well and carefully written.

This reader appreciated the rigorous use of close reading of the target cinematic works, and the very solid research that stands as good scaffolding for the edifice of the candidate’s compositional work.

As far as the remarkable phenomenon of the use of stereotypes that cut into and constitute the chief object of focus of the present thesis investigations, I wonder if the candidate would have a response to the idea that even her hermeneutic interpretations are an index of a kind of property of the stereotypical, and so by extension of the reductive agency of authority, force and use of power and as such should be itself subject to a critique as part and parcel of a stereotypicist mentality? This would open up questions of a more methodological or theoretical nature, which may not be the candidate’s supervening concern I recognize and yet I ask all the same. The idea that interpretation itself, à la René Girard’s *Scapegoat* constitutes a kind of “witch hunting” activity (and I would add, beyond a certain threshold in a sort of self-problematization of one’s project at that, would be intriguing to learn about in some theoretical discussion).

Further than this, I would be interested to know the candidate’s position on the status of the artwork in general in the cultural system and the question of whether the artwork in spite of its oft-use of stereotypes may be seen as a system-subverter or a system-conformer overall in the power dynamic of culture and of society? I ask the candidate if she could restate her views on this matter with a textual support or two so that the remark contains some empirical substance?

In light of the foregoing mentions, I hereby recommend the pre thesis defense mark of 1 (výborně) for the thesis work.

Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)
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