

Opponent's report of M.A. thesis:

Priscilla Hidalgo Solís: *Les transmigrants hispano-américains en Europe d'aujourd'hui et l'instrumentalisation de la nostalgie: les réseaux sociaux, les pratiques transnationales et les biens symboliques de ceux qui partent et retournent* (Ústav světových dějin FF UK, 2013, 92 pp.)

Priscilla Hidalgo decided to focus her research on one of the pressing problems of contemporary, globalized world, problem that has in the last decade attracted the attention of social scientists – the theme of migrations. And, concretely, she focused on the problem of mixed and overlapping identities of people on the move, of transmigrants uprooted from their home societies, yet not sufficiently anchored in the host countries; on the networks and strategies developed by them in order to cope with the challenges of everyday life.

All of these themes have been amply reviewed in scientific monographs and articles. Still, the thesis of Priscilla Hidalgo approaches her subject in an innovative way. First of all, she has chosen as her group of reference the transmigrants from Latin America in the Czech Republic, while most of the so far presented analyses centered their attention either to Spain or to the West European countries. Therefore, the material assembled during her research can be used in the future for comparisons and more general re-evaluations of the phenomenon of non-European migration within the whole of the continent.

And second, she chose as her point of departure the concept of “nostalgia”, grounding her interpretation in the ground-breaking works of leading anthropologists (Deciu Ritivoi, Bonnet) that understood the concept in close relation to the problem of the exchange of symbolic goods and the problem of (self)identity, closely related to “modernity”, and supplemented it by other themes well-known to social scientists (for example, *lieux de mémoire* de Pierre Nora). The application of these concepts to the concrete, limited and clearly delineated study-group of transmigrants in the Czech Republic (or, better to say, Prague) could again render important instigations and pose new questions for further research.

The thesis is well arranged. After the introductory explication of theoretical and methodological background and the overview of the Hispanic-American migration to Central Europe, based on the statistical data and previous researches, the main corpus presents the social practices of integration and separation of transmigrants, on the basis of qualitative research of selected group (interviews, participant observation, unusual sources such as “expat” radio programs or Facebook and blogs). Through this analysis she was able to identify the list of the most important “symbolic goods” upon which the transmigrants base their group identity.

Even though the analysis is more anthropological than historical, it is clear that Priscilla Hidalgo during her two years of M.A. study interiorized the notion of the change through time, the most important base for historiographical research. Therefore, the text could be characterized as interdisciplinary and innovatory not only because of the choice of topic, but due to the combination of methodological approaches. However, given the content of the M.A. course (“Civilisation, Nation, Region, City“), there should have been more attention dedicated to the specific “urban” character of transmigrant identity and the role of the city of Prague – in itself a historical actor – in the processes of identity formation and preservation of the transmigrant groups. Also, the specific characteristics of the historical period in which the studied processes are taking place (the beginning of the 21st century, with its new economic and social pressures, rapidly changing social values and hastily developing modes of communication) should have been paid more attention.

The thesis is written in good French, with precise bibliographical references and the identification of respondents, clarification of the choice of reference group and of the

conducting of interviews, selected personal histories and the structure of the interview being presented as annexes in the thesis. The author did not hide her own personal involvement in the theme of (trans)migration (p. 8. the very first sentences of the thesis: “La présente recherche prend racine au coeur même d’une expérience personnelle et aussi professionnelle. Quant à l’aspect personnel, la migration et moi, nous avons eu une longue relation”; and again, the equally personal remarks at the end of the text, p. 72). It can be said that in this “personalist” approach to the research theme, Priscilla Hidalgo followed up with the long tradition of Latin American essay, genre omnipresent also in the “serious” scientific production. Still, the personal involvement does not at all belittle the academic achievements of the author.

Priscilla Hidalgo thus produced a thesis based on the original research and meeting all the formal standards. In spite of my partial criticisms listed above, I propose the evaluation by **grade A**.

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