

**Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague
FAMU International Department**

Assessment of the Master's Thesis

Author of thesis: **Dora Šustić**

Title of thesis: **DESIRE IN DURAS: The Poetics of Desire in the Films by Marguerite Duras**

Assessment of the primary advisor X

Assessment of the opponent

Author of the assessment (first name, last name, workplace): Bára Kopecká

Evaluation of the content and final form of the thesis (A/excellent – B/very good – C/good – D/good with objections – E/satisfactory – F/unsatisfactory – not recommended for defence)

Suitability of the selected objective and work approach.....A

Marguerite Duras' work has been not only radical and innovative like many films of her modernist contemporaries - it has a specific emotional quality, since it evokes an existential feeling of being trapped in the unresolved past and suffering with impossible desires, a state of mind, when we are not being able to move forward or connect with other human beings, that all being presented in a form of hauntingly and intensely beautiful imagery. Therefore Dora's decision to depict the theme of desire in films of Marguerite Duras, and write a text, which analyses the very specific film language that captures the lack, the void, and therefore resonates with the most fragile nuances of human psyche, seems like highly appropriate choice of approach.

Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic.....A

Dora studied carefully relevant literature - that of Duras but also of her contemporaries - writers (roman nouveaux), philosophers and thinkers like De Beauvoir or Lacan, who wrote a lot about the subject.

Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature.....A

Dora acknowledged the fact that Duras is very original author that (even though she was a part of certain milieu) refused strongly to be "explained" by theory or to belong to any movement in terms of politics or gender. Therefore Dora is stressing her respect for the Duras' desire to stay above movements, nevertheless in her thesis Dora provides an overview of related philosophy and critical writing to give the reader a better insight and to provide context.

Logicity of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters.....A

Since the themes and images of Duras' artistic work are clearly rooted in her personal life, especially her early traumatic (and sexual) experiences, the thesis logically starts

with biographical information that had remained the source of artistic drive throughout the entire Duras' career. Duras was influenced by intellectuals and filmmakers of her generation, therefore the thesis continues analysing her cooperation with them. Then Dora chooses films by Duras that are dealing with the impossibility of love or any kind of fulfilment and expressions of insatiable desire juxtaposed with acknowledgement of inner emptiness, which are also the peaks of Duras' filmmaking career.

Language and stylistic level of the thesis.....A

Dora's ability to use written language to express highly complicated themes and emotions is excellent, especially given the fact that English is her second language the result is truly remarkable.

Compliance with citation norms (should the text repeatedly contain adopted passages without citing the source, the work cannot be recommended for defence).....A

Every source is precisely written down, it is a serious work.

Sufficient extent of image attachments, justifiability and suitability of attachments, graphic layout.....A

Graphic layout is clear, a few images are attached at the end - Dora's main focus was on the text itself.

Originality of the thesis, contribution to the development of the field of study.....A

Dora took upon herself a very difficult task. Duras was trying to show the absence of something abstract through images that given the medium are always very particular. Dora then tried to decipher the film language that allowed Duras to express the lack and link it with the personal philosophy of the author - which was a big challenge. Nevertheless she managed to connect the thinking, literature, the sources of imagination and the specific film language of Marguerite Duras - quite an achievement.

Overall evaluation of the thesis.....A

Verbal evaluation of the thesis including questions that the diplomate must address in his/her thesis defence:

I was amazed by the quality of writing and intelligence of the thoughts. At the beginning I expressed certain reservation in regards to Dora's tendency to explain Duras as a female author expressing uniquely feminine perception of the world. Even though I see the point, I also do believe that Duras' work is universal - and the fact that it has been highly valued by men and women alike suggests that Duras is touching something deeper - the existential doubts and a strange haunting beauty that walk hand in hand in her films and novels affect any human being and are referring to the inner life of a an individual of any gender. I also pointed out that Duras has never limited herself to feminist approach. Dora then smartly and responsibly worked on the

text in a way that provides the context of contemporary thinking including feminist philosophy but with the respect of the uniqueness of the author.

Given Dora's talent for writing I feel that if I were an editor that wants to publish this work, I would have pushed her to be more particular and less abstract when it comes to analysis of film language: theme, plot, camera movements, architecture, music...

Not that Dora does not mention these things - but sometimes I feel less is more, and the analysis of particular directorial decisions could have been more exciting if it was more factual.

Possible questions:

What did you learn from Duras that you could use in your own filmmaking? How one expresses trauma as a universal message - when everyone understands the pain - without falling into traps of psychoanalysis of the character and without following the rules of a dramatic arc (what are the tools)? What is the difference between Duras, Robe-Grillet, and Resnais? How the fact that "Hiroshima, mon amour" was supposed to be a documentary at first influenced the result, which differs from Duras' auteur films?



Signature:

Date: 16. 8. 2019