UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE – USTAV ANGLOFONNICH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Report on Bakalářské Práce (Oponentsky posudek): Colin Steele Clark MA

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: Mgr. Miroslava Horova PhD
Oponent: Colin S. Clark MA
Zpracoval: Helena Rousova

Heroin/Heroine: Addiction as Narrative and Trangression in Junky and Trainspotting

General Remarks:

This thesis is generally very well presented with few significant failings in the application of MLA protocols. The expectations of academic writing are generally respected throughout and the methodological approach is convincing.

Specific comments: a more thorough proofing is required as this text has a number of grammatical and simple transcription errors (page 12 -Cities of the Red Night/Light and 1981 not 1980) which could detract from the overall effect.

Detailed Report:

The Bibliography is interesting although the omission of many major texts on Psychedelic and Narcotic literature is odd. Consideration might be given to PhD theses such as ALTERED STATES: THE AMERICAN PSYCHEDELIC AESTHETIC by Lana Cook (Northeastern, Ma.) or indeed Drugs and the 'Beats': The Role of Drugs in the Lives and Writings of Kerouac, Burroughs and Ginsberg by John Long (Virtualbookworm.com, 2005)

This is actually symptomatic of the limited scope of the thesis, while a narrow focus is to be encouraged in thesis work, I find it rather hamstrings the possibilities of a work on
transgressive literature to yoke two essentially different texts together under a rather confected conceptual framework. There is something of a logical fallacy in the argument concerning heroin being ‘ in the position of heroine’. It may be argued that it ‘supplants’ ‘traditional relationships’(14) but without a useful analysis of the sexualization of the drug and its paraphernalia? This seems remiss in any analysis of Burroughs and Welsh. The foregoing notwithstanding said the material such as it is, is well analyzed and useful points are extrapolated.

There seems to be no reference to Trocchi and the seminal Cain’s Book, odd as he was instrumental in Burroughs getting published and highly influential on the Beats in general. Additionally, Trocchi influenced Welsh’s generation and remains a major transgressive voice -essentially the thesis fails to research and draw out the existing, albeit occult linkages between the two selected texts.

To claim (page 13) that public attitudes have been more ‘benevolent’ towards drugs is, in the Scottish context a little off as the Thatcherite milieu and HIV made intravenous drug use a public menace and it was widely vilified. The same may be said, in a fashion of Reaganite America, indeed, an intolerant and punitive attitude towards alternate lifestyles and drugs was persistent from Nixon onwards(see Thompson’s Fear and Loathing and indeed, passim). That both texts serve as testimonies to recalcitrant and unrepentant trangressive lifestyles is self-evident with reading them but the potential is squandered to enjoin a host of other similar voices from Ron Butlin,Bissett,Warner( even the psychological theories of R.D.Laing?) to Hunter Thompson, De Quincey et al., thereby reducing the significance of the work somewhat.

**Recommendation:**

I find this thesis to have substantial merit, carefully argued in parts and moderately well-presented and one which prosecutes its thesis, if not assiduously, then competently.

I recommend a pass at a grade of Velme Dobre(Very Good)