



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Posudek vedoucí na bakalářskou práci Zuzany Burešové

“The Didactic Tradition: Reformed Heroines in Fanny Burney’s Novels”

In spite of the author’s sincere work at editing and proof-reading of her text problems persist in the final version, e.g. on stylistic and syntactic levels (omitted or superfluous words, word order etc.), which spoil the argument, especially in the abstracts and in the latter parts of the thesis. The text could certainly benefit from a more careful formal revision. The Czech abstract includes some comic forms such as “poddobnost”, rozdili, scgvaleno etc. All this implies a very rushed and last-minute editing.

Nevertheless, the choice of topic and the stamina to read three lengthy novels by a writer who despite her fame and importance is not typically seen on reading lists, testifies to a keen interest in fiction written by women. This enthusiasm has carried over into the thesis and I appreciate it. Below are some more detailed questions which I would like to have clarified during the defence:

Rousseau’s system of education for women is indeed rather conservative. If Fanny Burney disagreed with it, in what way was she conservative and precisely in what way were young mothers led astray by such reading (page 27/28)?

Can you define clearly the conservative aspects and the possible subversions in Burney’s writing? Your conclusions in the subchapters fluctuate from conservative to radical.

On page 38 I am left quite clueless as to the meaning of the last sentence and Burney’s precise relationship to the ideas of Rousseau.

More attention should have been paid to the overall structure of the plots and the role of narrative technique in characterisation. For example, the perfectly structured plot of *Evelina* working alongside the seemingly random epistolary (something that obviously follows from the form of satire in *Tom Jones*), and more attention should have been paid to the change of form coinciding with the emphasized stress on the didactic message. Also, the role of the comic could have been noticed as it indeed decreases as Burneys's work progresses through time, but it is always a matter of balance and reversal.

Also, the publication dates range from 1778 (*Evelina*), 1782 (*Cecilia*) to 1796 (*Camilla*), i.e. they enter markedly different periods with very different cultural and political agendas. Is this reflected in the respective novels?

I would also imagine a more nuanced discussion of the place Burney's work has in the tradition of eighteenth-century fiction – especially since the title of the thesis invites such a comparison. She definitely makes a bridge from the earlier novelists, such as Fielding and Richardson, to Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. I would have appreciated a more nuanced placement of Burney in the so-called “didactic tradition” of eighteenth-century women's writing and also a perhaps a look ahead to those who followed her closely in time such as Maria Edgeworth, for example with her Lord Colambre and Grace Nugent in *The Absentee*.

Overall, the submitted BA thesis, even if showing some formal problems, complies with the requirements. I recommend it for defence with the preliminary grade of GOOD **(DOBŘE)**

V Praze dne 28. 8. 2019

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