

Opponent's Report on B.A. thesis by

Ms. Jana Beňadiková

Getting the Picture: An Analysis of the Role of Narrativity in E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*

In her thesis, Ms. Jana Beňadiková submits “[t]he principal argument [...] that *The Book of Daniel* explores the role of narrativity in informing modes of thought and systems of interpretation of the world by deconstructing and drawing attention to the process of construing a narrative in an epistemological inquiry into its potential to impart knowledge [...]” (1-2). This the candidate explores and illuminates to excellent effect.

The thesis contains sixty-seven pages, which includes an “Introduction”, “Chapter I – Deconstruction of Historical Narratives in “Daniel’s Book””, Chapter II – Narrative Techniques Employed In *The Book of Daniel*”, “Chapter III. – Situating *The Book of Daniel* within the Context of Postmodernism”, a “Conclusion” and a two page Bibliography. All in all, the thesis is well structured and balanced and clear in the exposition of its presentation as the individual units of composition suggest. Stylistically the thesis is extremely well written although there is the odd error such as “as the of the aspect” (39) should eliminate the first “the”; or when Jean-Francois needs the accent on the ç.

One somewhat extended textual moment at the end of the thesis will suffice to show the level at which the candidate is operating as well as providing a certain summary of the work: “It is then precisely this interplay of thematics and technique in *The Book of Daniel* which allows for the novel’s larger undertaking of the epistemological questioning of narrativity as a vehicle for the mediation of knowledge that holds the power to inform and govern one’s system of interpretation of the world. This thesis has also explored this interplay, the parallel and mutually supplementing deconstructive investigations of narrativity achieved both by the novel’s plot and the novel’s formal features which deviate from traditional novelistic conventions, and noted the resulting implicit proposition in *The Book of Daniel* of ceaseless, critical analysis as a modus operandi for its reader in engaging with the external world permeated by narrativity. This particular method of examining the realization of the critical meditation on narrative in *The Book of Daniel* might then offer a proposal for a further examination of Doctorow’s oeuvre and its recurrent and continued concerns” (64). Overall, the study is also well-conceived, well-researched, well-argued and contains as the foregoing indicates work to be commended.

I have two questions: 1) What does the candidate consider the weakest part of *The Book of Daniel* as far as its deployment of narrative goes? 2) What does the candidate think is the most important narrative achievement of the book?

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

doc. Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)
21 August 2020