

Supervisor's Report on M.A. Thesis by Klára Nekvasilová

“Body, Mind, and the Lost Generation in Works of Hemingway and Fitzgerald”

Ms. Klára Nekvasilová explores in her thesis work the problem of the body and mind in three of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922), and *The Great Gatsby* (1925), as well as in three novels by Ernest Hemingway, to wit, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *To Have and Have Not* (1937). The critical social theory of Jean Baudrillard in, for example, *System of Objects* (1968 French original), *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (1970 French original), *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), and *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981 French original), among others, are also deployed to illuminating effect. The thesis contains 100 pp. across some preliminary matter, an Introduction and Summary, a Theoretical Introduction, a chapter three entitled “The Rise of the Capitalist Human: Body in Hemingway's and Fitzgerald's Novels”, and a Conclusion. There is also a wide-ranging 4.5 pp. bibliography.

Stylistically, the thesis is well written, and the manuscript is overall a clean one. Content wise, we read early in her account that

the thesis proposes that the theory of Jean Baudrillard can be fittingly applied to the literary works of the Lost Generation authors in order to investigate the earlier stages of the consumerist era and explore the connections between the contemporary state of consumerism and its modernist origins. (9)

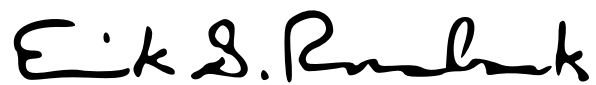
Such topic areas as Hemingway and Fitzgerald as fashion persona, the problem of sports, consumerism, women, children, the elderly, the ill, the role of alcohol, and the racialized other are all broached and interpreted with aplomb by the candidate. The use of the literary criticism and theory is apposite and works. As one textual instance, *Gatsby's* body is subject to an interesting critical and cultural analysis by the candidate. The disenfranchisement of women from the world of sports can be seen in the Hemingway texts the candidate analyzes; however, this is not the case for the target Fitzgerald texts. All the same, as the candidate notes, “both portray sport as a spectacle” (56). Also, these novel texts “offer examples of the modernist centralization of youth” (61). The commodification and sexualization of the female in Baudrillard and in the novel texts alike is also demonstrated, as well as how, “All of the novels are also infused with stereotypical portrayals of the non-white characters” (84).

In sum, the band of target works in the thesis coupled with the theory, as the candidate notes in her Conclusion,

begins to show signs of [fictional worlds] becoming a consumer society dominated by the system of objects. Since Baudrillard centralizes the human body as a mirror of the consumerist society as well as its dominant vehicle, the aim of the thesis was to explore physicality in the selected novels and actualize the modernist literary works by applying Baudrillard's postmodern theories, uncovering numerous similarities between the contemporary reader and the fictional characters, while also recognizing specific moments in which Baudrillard's theory is not yet fully applicable. (89)

All in all, this is a stimulating and cogent thesis. Last not least, I would ask the candidate which aspect of her research would on her view be most productive to amplify on in an enlarged version of the present thesis project?

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erik S. Roraback". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent dot over the 'i' in Erik.

doc. Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)  
31 August 2021