



FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
Univerzita Karlova

Ústav východoevropských studií

**The thesis of Anna Cavazzoni Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki's Ukraine: Self-creative processes (Sapienza – Università di Roma; Charles University, 2024, supervisors: Tereza Chlaňová, Luigi Marinelli)**

Anna Cavazzoni's thesis *Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki's Ukraine: Self-creative processes* represents a well-constructed and structured doctoral thesis that deals with an extremely complex and multi-layered topic. The complexity results from the fact that it focusses on the issue of national identification and the way it manifested itself in the 19th century in the situation when the Ukrainian territories were divided between two state entities – the Russian Empire and the Austrian Empire. Anna Cavazzoni chose as an object of her study two well-known writers – Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki and the manifestations of their relationship to Ukraine in their correspondence.

The work is very well structured, and it is obvious that the author thought her concept through very carefully in order to "process" the complicated material and provide appropriate crucial points of view. It is evident already from the first chapter "The literary and historical context" that she was very well aware of the complexity of the political and cultural situation in which both writers began their careers, and she managed well to explain the Russian-Ukrainian-Polish triangle and the unique position Ukrainian territories had at those times – wedged between two different entities. Anna Cavazzoni demonstrated deep knowledge of the time period, when there existed multiple cultural loyalties and identities, and all the ambiguity resulting from this complicated situation. It should be appreciated that the student was able to describe the process of merging national identity with all the dynamics, partly using the postcolonial reading of this period. In the second chapter "Conceptualizing identity" the author of the thesis examined the concept of identity (identities) and its ambiguity in order to prepare a field for further analysis of Gogol's and Słowacki's representations of it. Both above mentioned chapters prepare a field for deeper study of Gogol's and Słowacki's lives and works, concentrating on the significance of Ukraine for both of them in wider context (the third chapter "Gogol and Słowacki's Ukraine"). It is necessary to say that it well echoes and develops crucial concepts previously presented – it enables us to step to following levels of Anna Cavazzoni's analysis but at the same time verify and confirm former prerequisites. The concluding fourth chapter "Analysis of the correspondence" focuses exclusively on the analysis of the correspondence. The student performed the similar diligence towards the studied problem as in the previous chapters and introduced at least generally the culture of letter writing and anchored the analysis also methodologically focusing of the concept of self-creation – in such a way creating the necessary framework for close reading of the letters.

From the above formulated characteristics of the singular chapters we can summarize that Anna Cavazzoni was able to encompass quite a vast span of themes and sub-themes, often from different fields of study. The crucial point of her work – the attempt to make a comparative study on the corpus of private correspondence of Gogol and Słowacki showed certain limits, which she is well aware of and is able to formulate and define them. But nevertheless the analysis itself represents a significant contribution to the study of their correspondence (even separately), because the student was able to



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encompass wide spectrum of perspectives (personal-private, geographical, language, social, national, regional, fashion, literary, family etc.). It is also worth mentioning that she pays attention to the differentiation of individual traces on one hand and the fashionable contemporary trends on the other. Although her systematization of the sub-topics "distilled" from the correspondence may be questioned and may be subjected to criticism and although it might be objected that it is not analyzed in the context of the whole complex of themes, it must be appreciated that Anna Cavazzoni applied here her original approach and original way of structuring the material. It should be taken into account that this theme is not vastly studied and that her contribution has an innovative potential and may function as a solid basis for further study.

I recommend the thesis to be passed to the opponents and evaluated.

In Zadáni Třebaň, 30. 10. 2024

Mgr. Tereza Chlaňová, Ph.D.