

## **Posudek na bakalářskou práci Terezy Brožové *Idealized Portrayal of Indians in James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans and René François de Chateaubriand's Les Natchez***

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The thesis attempts to compare two important historical romances with Indian protagonists: the former made Cooper famous in Europe and had some influence on the latter work, which allegedly existed in a manuscript draft already since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Although I have welcomed the author's intention to compare the contemporary U.S. and French writing on Native Americans, I was aware of the difficulty of the topic caused especially by the number and extension of the analysed works (especially *Les Natchez*) and the diversity of their cultural, political, historical and religious contexts. On the one hand, I have to praise Tereza for her tenacious effort to make the comparison with her limited knowledge of both primary and secondary literature, on the other hand it must be admitted that the thesis falls short of accomplishing its ambitious task. There are several reasons for it:

1. The incommensurability of both oeuvres: it was impossible for the author to come to terms with the width and depth of the context of Chateaubriand's Romanticism, its complicated relationship to Rousseauism and even Byronism, his Christian philosophy and political conservatism. Similarly, the political aspects and concerns beyond the earlier volumes of Cooper's Leatherstocking Series were not sufficiently discussed. As a result, no comprehensive comparative perspective could be developed which would contrast the pragmatic political orientation of Cooper's writing influenced by Walter Scott's concept of historical novel, as a project of overcoming the past conflicts and forging a new national identity based on the imperative of modernization. This tendency sharply contrasts with the conservative and inward orientation of Chateaubriand's writing.
2. The inadequate research and reflection of the contexts of both novels. In both cases, the works should have been discussed in relation to the earlier novels: in Cooper's case it should be mainly *The Pioneers* and its satire of the life of the American colonists (discussed by Michal Peprník in his *Topos lesa*) as well as *The Prairie* as the immediate sequel of *The Last of the Mohicans*. In the case of Chateaubriand, earlier versions of the portrayal of the Natchez tribe and individual Indian characters should have been considered in greater detail, and the attention should also focus on the transformation of the Natchez theme caused by the change of the central subjective perspective existing in *Atala* and *René*. Moreover, one would expect wider contextualization of Chateaubriand's writing considering his key role in the politics of the Bourbon Restoration.
3. Finally, the influence of especially Cooper's novel on in the U.S. (W.G. Simms) and Europe is not adequately traced. This would also help to situate Chateaubriand's romance as an immediate response to the success of Cooper's novel.

In spite of these shortcomings, caused to a considerable extent by the breadth of historical and literary contexts, I must say that Tereza made some effort to respond to my criticism and to develop her thesis to a level consistent with her abilities and compatible with the format of and expectations from a BA thesis.

Therefore I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it "very good." Doporučuji k obhajobě a navrhuji hodnotit známkou "velmi dobře".

V Praze, 12.6.2012

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vedoucí práce / supervisor