

## Zápis

Z obhajoby disertační práce Mgr. **Radvana Markuse**

konané dne **11. 9.2012**

téma práce: *Ironic Myths and Broken Images: Reflections of the 1798 Rebellion in Twentieth-Century Irish Fiction and Drama / Ironické mýty a rozbité obrazy: Reflexe povstání roku 1798 v irském románu a dramatu dvacátého století*

přítomní: dle prezenční listiny

Předseda komise prof. PhD. **Martin Procházka**, CSc. zahájil obhajobu a představil přítomným kandidáta.

Školitel doc. **Ondřej Pilný**, PhD. seznámil komisi s uchazečem a jeho disertační prací.

Kandidát seznámil přítomné se svou disertační prací. Sdělil zejména:

The two principal aims of the thesis are to map literary reflections of the 1798 Irish rebellion written in the twentieth century as well as to explore, in general terms, the borderlands between history and fiction. The study analyses novels and plays written in both Ireland's principal languages, English and Irish written after the year 1916. From the theoretical point of view, the thesis draws from the work of Hayden White, whose focus on structural similarities between historiography and fiction has prepared a useful basis on which the interpretation of history in historical novels and plays can be analysed. Hayden White's relativism is complemented by selected features of the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, outlined in his seminal book *Temps et récit* [Time and Narrative]. Apart from theoretical matters, a further important background to the discussion of historical novels and plays about 1798 is provided by the various interpretations of the event in the field of historiography.

The first of them concentrates on a limited selection of works written in the period 1900-1916, the next section gives a chronological overview of the majority of novels and plays written in the period 1916-2000, illustrating the wide range of literary approaches to the rebellion. The remaining three sections deal with individual literary works, which, because of their originality, come as the most rewarding in terms of the interpretation of history. The first of them is Eoghan Ó Tuairisc's Irish-language novel *L'Attaque* (1962), a remarkable text which has not yet received enough critical attention, especially in the English language. The second of the selected works, Thomas Flanagan's *The Year of the French* (1979) concentrates, as *L'Attaque* does, on the events of the rebellion that took place in the West of Ireland, but as the novel was already written in the shadow of the 'Troubles,' there is a powerful underlying connection to the later conflict in Northern Ireland, despite the geographical distance of the setting. The last of the selected works, the play *Northern Star* by Stewart Parker (1984), is set in Ulster, and apart from interpreting the rebellion on a very deep level, it uses the historical theme in order to comment on the situation in Northern Ireland of the 1980s.

The most important results of the study, as regards the relationship between the historiographical and literary interpretations of the rebellion is that the novels and plays, helped by their dialogical structure, often appear more balanced in their discussion of the rebellion than the often one-sided interpretations of the historians. In this, the best of the literary works arguably succeed in grasping better the ambivalent character of the rebellion in relation to the present, for which it can function both as an inspiration and a warning. From the theoretical point of view, it can be demonstrated that some of these works combine the epistemological relativism of Hayden White (in the sense that one is entitled to create a historical narrative which would be inspiring for the present) with Paul Ricoeur's emphasis on the responsibility towards the people of the past, especially the victims. Equally important is the range of formal possibilities literature can apply in interpreting history,

which, in the given sample, include the use of symbolic motifs, creating a level of metahistorical commentary, or the structural use of literary or mythological allusion. These features often have the effect of broadening the range of meanings as well as giving the historical events a more general significance. As a way of a very general conclusion, it can be argued that while it probably would not be wise to study historical fiction and drama for verifying historical fact, to look into literary works for valuable interpretations of history is more than legitimate. It may be hoped that the study has brought some more evidence concerning the particular ways in which literature can help us understand the past.

Poté oponent prof. **Martin Procházka** přednesl závěry svého posudku i posudku prof. **Micheála Mac Craitha**.

Kandidát **Radvan Markus** odpovídá na posudky oponentů:

Martin Procházka's questions:

1. The rather descriptive character of some of the analyses performed in the "chronological" chapters 2 and 3 is due to one of the two principal aims of the thesis - apart from exploring the borderlands between history and fiction in general terms it also attempts to provide a relatively detailed map of literary reflections of 1798 written in the chosen period. However, I tried to gradually shift focus from this descriptive element towards analyses which take into account the literary strategies and the wide possibilities of literature in interpreting history. I take this objection as a valid point and feel tempted, in the possible publication, to get away from the chronological principle as well as slightly reduce the material itself in order to pay more attention to what I, as well as my opponent, consider as more important in the thesis.
2. I have not drawn 19<sup>th</sup> century novels too much into comparison, because this has been the principal method of other critics, most importantly James Cahalan for the Irish historical novel. The most important texts treated in my thesis are late 20<sup>th</sup> century novels and plays with experimental features which in many ways differ from the classic historical novel.
3. I agree that this wider perspective could be more present in the thesis, but rather in the form of individual comparisons than as a consistent framework. An influence of Walter Scott, has been proposed for a few other works treated in the thesis, apart from *The Nabob*, most significantly *L'Attaque* or *Ceol an Phiobaire*. With *L'Attaque*, the author himself stated that he was influenced by Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but the comparison cannot be drawn too far - according to the author, it is mainly in the treatment of the soldiers not as heroes, but as ordinary people with their humorous side. The comparison to La Vendée and 93 - very interesting as it has been proposed by some historians to treat especially the Wexford rebellion as a *Jacquerie* (revisionist). However, this has been rightly criticised for neglecting the revolutionary side of the rebellion and failing to grasp the contradictions inherent in the event.
4. I have found no proof of a direct influence of White, although given where they taught, it seems impossible that the two authors haven't met. However, there is evidence of Flanagan being on friendly terms with Stephen Greenblatt, and quoting his famous words from *Shakespearean Negotiations* about speaking with the dead as adequately describing his own personal approach to history.
5. I certainly believe that if used with care, Derrida's concept of the spectre could be used with advantage not only to analyse Stewart Parker's play, but also the whole situation of 1798 and its various legacies.
6. I agree that allusion to King Lear in *Men With* should have been taken into account in my analysis, but on the other hand, it would not alter, but rather support my conclusion - that the use of allusion in *Men With* is less productive and inspiring than the use of the same technique by the modernists and Stewart Parker/Ó Tuairisc.

Micheál Mac Craith's questions:

1. Beverly Southgate's monograph would enrich the work, but would not significantly alter its conclusions. The German monographs, particularly Berninger, seemed to draw an overly strict line between classic, realistic novels and plays and their more innovative 20th-century counterparts. Southgate's work shows that this is not possible and that indeed, even 19th-century works could be quite a challenging to contemporaneous historiography (good analysis of war and peace). On the other hand, I do not entirely agree with Southgate's argument that historical novels straightforwardly anticipate, or make more accessible, arguments made by theorists of history. In my own experience, the novels and plays rather complicate them, neither Hayden White's or Ricoeur's framework can be deemed as completely appropriate for the treatment of such a complex topic as the 1798 rebellion.
2. My main objective was to give an account of the principal interpretations of 1798 in historiography, not to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the history books written about 1798 in the 20th century. This would be too demanding for space and better accounts of this kind have been written elsewhere (Shanahan, Foster). Oral history (Beiner, Hayes) was eventually omitted as the thesis would be too heterogeneous.
3. This is an interesting suggestion in keeping with Irene's rather peaceful and compassionate character, however, there is no further textual support for this interpretation.
4. I am aware of the problem connected to the word revisionist and I have consistently used it in quotation marks throughout the thesis. I agree, to an extent, with the opponent's statement that in the case of some proponents of revisionism, the urge to deconstruct the nationalist version might have been excessive. Moreover, I recognize a theoretical contradiction in the effort of some of these historians - the belief in objective historical research is hardly irreconcilable with the clear (although often understandable) political motivation of some of the revisionist works, yet the revisionist focus on the darker sides of the rebellion can be regarded as a legitimate position and a certain warning to those who see the rebellion only as an inspiration.
5. The word sectarian, though long established in critical discourse, is not the ideal one, as it implies religion as principal motivation, yet a term is necessary to distinguish between various motivations of the rebels during the rebellion - there was a definite contrast between the inclusive and forward-looking ideals of the United Irishmen and the desire of a certain section of the rebels to return to the times before colonial dispossession, which is understandable and may be justified, but could hardly as a basis of any agreement between the various groups of Ireland's inhabitants.

Oponent, vedoucí práce i členové komise se vyjadřují k vystoupení kandidáta a doporučují kandidátovi, co doplnit do případné knižní verze jeho disertační práce.

#### Diskuse:

Vystoupil prof. Martin Procházka, dr. Clare Wallace a doc. Ondřej Pilný a diskutovali s kandidátem o podobě knižní verze disertační práce.

Vyhlášení výsledku tajného hlasování: Komise navrhla udělit titul doktor (Ph.D.)

Zapsala: Hana Pavelková

Podpis předsedy komise: