

Posudek vedoucí

na bakalářskou práci Michaely Kotalíkové „Playing Tricks: An Analysis of Janice Galloway“

Janice Galloway is one of the most prominent contemporary writers coming from Scotland. She has been critically acclaimed for giving a voice to the hitherto under-represented woman's urban condition in Scotland. Her texts (novels and short stories) deal frequently with women's place in society, pressures resulting from cultural and national stereotyping (through media, expectations etc.). Michaela Kotalíková has chosen precisely this valuable aspect of Janice Galloway's contribution to Scottish literature as the focus of her thesis. It seems that this is the reason why she chose to analyse Galloway's first novel, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*. Nevertheless, the title does suggest that the reader can expect an analysis of all texts by this author. What precisely were the reasons for selecting this one novel the reader is left only to speculate. Therefore, I lack a contextualization of the author within Scottish (and British) literature, of the novel within the entire body of Galloway's work. The token mentioning of *Foreign Parts* stands out as rather awkward, arbitrary and not thoroughly integrated.

Most of the thesis deals with the effects of trauma and mourning on the protagonist of the novel. Trauma is a zone of much contemporary interest and it has enormous significance in Anglophone culture. Trauma is frequently applied as a metaphor for the working of gender norms and standards (e.g. the obedient and submissive, unselfish, housewife etc.). This is also the route that Kotalíková takes in her reading of the novel, when Joy in her ordeal modifies and ultimately rejects gender expectations. In the scarcity of available theoretical sources, Michaela Kotalíková has interestingly applied Butler's text on mourning. Here, there is much potential for more theoretical development.

The introductory comments on the relation between postmodernism and feminism, on the other hand, seem theoretically uninformed. Liberal feminism was actually one of the grand narratives questioned by postmodernism because of its reliance on straightforward categorisations of female identity, experience and its political commitment. Somewhat helplessly reaching out for a more generally valid underpinning, the thesis ends up as a commented reading of several episodes mostly related to Joy's struggles with patriarchy.

The most problematic aspects of the thesis are related to the passages on issues of national identity and the lack of systematic attention to narrative technique (bricolage, parody, etc., are covered, but not this). How does Janice Galloway actually challenge the deeply rooted Scottish identity (cp. page 3)? How does Scottishness operate in the novel as both "masculine" and "feminine" (page 16/17)? Several of the quotations on national identity seem to lead nowhere (e.g. bottom page 17) and shed little light on the issues under discussion.

It may be debatable to what degree the 1st person narrator's voice watching herself from the outside (suggesting a split identity) creates a more "objective" perspective for the reader. Can

it not be rather a sense of unreliability of both the inner/private and outer/public selves? Also, the drama-like dialogues may not simply imply “objectivity” or even emotional uninvolved (page 26). Can’t the split identity, duality, be related to a bi-vocal form of narration? How can all this be related to feminist poststructuralist notions of language?

Finally, some more careful proofreading may have eliminated frequent stylistic and grammatical errors, especially word order in indirect questions and missing words. Also, the abstract presented in the thesis is technically not a summarizing of main points and conclusions but a presentation of the work’s future aims.

In spite of my many critical remarks, I find the thesis immensely readable and relatively well organized. I have found no serious illogicalities. It certainly fulfills requirements for a thesis in this discipline on the B.A. level of study. Consequently, I recommend the thesis for defence. The preliminary mark is good (dobře).

V Praze dne 31.8.2011

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vedoucí práce