Martina Mikulová, **Gothic Elements in the Novels of the Brontë Sisters**
BA thesis

Opponent’s review

The thesis attempts to identify elements of Gothic fiction in three major novels by the Brontë sisters: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and *Jane Eyre* and *Vilette* by Charlotte Brontë. The chapters are divided according to these features: Setting and Isolation dealing with natural and architectural scenes; Characters discussing heroines, villains and servants; and, finally, the Supernatural, which is treated in a rather broad sense of inexplicable or mysterious.

The student argues that the discussed novels, though written in the period of realism (how does she define it?), can be taken as Gothic novels of their own kind. I see several limitations to her argument. First of all, her account seems to be prevailingly descriptive and sometimes even vague; she describes what she considers to be accepted as Gothic features in these novels. In my view, a more productive treatment should focus on how these traditional motifs are modified in the Brontës’ novels, and this should be done in a more profound way than the student presents. It is not even sure if she knows the canonical Gothic novels; she mentions *Otranto* and *Udolpho*, occasionally also *The Monk*, but it is not certain how much familiar she is with these texts. In characterisation of the Gothic elements she depends on secondary sources and she seems to be satisfied with generalizing statements. Yet I think that it would be more useful to analyse these elements in two or three Gothic novels (with regard to some more) and then do the same with the Brontës’ novels, to show how these elements differ in their function.

There are some partial problems which I would like to point out:

- the idea of the city as a substitute for the Gothic castle should definitely be developed as it seems to be productive especially in more recent use of the Gothic;
- how does Jane’s imagination differ from the imagination of other Gothic heroines (including Catherine Morland of *Northanger Abbey*)? Also the fact that Jane is invited to make decisions (between emotionality and rationality, between personal love and extrapersonal love), which distances her from stock Gothic heroines, should be accentuated and developed;
- the portrayal of Heathcliff (pp. 34-35) disregards psychological motivation and presents him as a more villainous (in the sense of Gothic villains) character than Rochester; by the way the social and economic position of villains deserves greater attention;
- the chapter on servants as it is presented is almost useless.

I recommend the submitted thesis for defence and suggest the preliminary mark to be “velmi dobře”.

PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, Ph.D.

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