

## Zápis

z obhajoby disertační práce paní **Mgr. Daniely Theinové**

konané dne **18. 10. 2013**

téma práce: *Limits and Languages in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry*

přítomní: dle prezenční listiny

Předseda komise **prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.** zahájil obhajobu a představil přítomným kandidátku.

Školitel **doc. Justin Quinn, PhD** představil doktorandku a seznámil komisi s uchazečkou a její diz. prací.

Kandidátka seznámila přítomné se svou disertační prací. Sdělila zejména:

The dissertation focuses on Irish women's poetry of the last forty years. Based on a fluid sense of what constitutes cultural and linguistic "Irishness," "Irish poetry" is an essentially equivocal, unsettled concept. Starting from this premise, the thesis explores how the indeterminate sense of identity figures in the writings of contemporary women poets.

The thesis is concerned with writings by poets who are categorized, for the sake of better orientation, as feminist and post-feminist. Along with the change in tone and perspective that accompanies this shift, the dissertation traces the metamorphosing concept of the lyric subject, as it is addressed in these author's poetry, essays, and interviews.

There are three areas in which the thesis can be perceived as innovative. These are very much interconnected and they are largely coextensive with the theses' main topics. First of all, it is the attention paid throughout to the problematic, but mostly productive borderline between the two main languages of Irish poetry. The second respect in which the dissertation can be a contribution to the current critical debate is the inclusion of poets whose outlooks and rhetoric are described as feminist, alongside poets whose work shows an equal share of "emancipation" from the feminist agenda and indebtedness to feminist poetry. The third possible area of contribution is the use of the motif of the liminal. Given the aforementioned problematic concept of identity, liminality has for long been part of Irish literary studies and criticism. In view of the marginal position of women in Irish literary tradition, liminality bears special relevance to feminist poetry and criticism.

The dissertation falls into two parts. The first deals with the various strategies used by women to come to terms with the stereotypes of the feminized land found in the inherited tradition. This is achieved mainly through their ironic subversion. The second part explores how women have adapted the conventional figures of poetic inspiration. Special attention is paid to the issue of poetic translation. In most of the cited examples, images of the liminal coincide with a specific mode, a figurative zone "Beyond the 'I'" which is the site of inspiration.

Poté oponenti, **prof. Matthew Campbell** a **doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD** přednesli závěry svých posudků.

Kandidátka **Daniela Theinová** odpovídá na posudky oponentů:

The candidate starts by thanking the opponents not only for their favourable reading of the thesis, but mainly for their critical comments which will be of much importance when she attempts revising the thesis for publication. She then proceeds to answering the comments by doc. Pilný:

The report points to imperfections in argumentation and to cases of redundancy towards the close of the thesis. Indeed, redundancy has been one of my great concerns, given the span of the researched material, and the continuous application of some of the outlooks and motifs throughout the text. Some of these have been detected as I reread the thesis for this occasion. I will be grateful for further specific examples of such repetitiveness.

Doc. Pilný also suggests some of the material included in the notes should be moved into the main body of the text. As for the mention of W. B. Yeats's complex stance to the Irish language in the Introduction which, according to the report, is too terse to give a satisfactory picture of the problematic, it will be best to remove that point altogether. The second such instance is the material on the critical response to poetic translation from Irish to English. It is true that it was added in the latest stages of the work. This, however, was not the main reason it ended up in a note. While I do think this account of the cultural circumstances is important for the topic, I felt it would disrupt the discussion of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poetics and drown it in too much context. This dilemma relates to one of the remarks by professor Campbell who comments on the same passages suggesting the text might profit from a reduction rather than development of context-giving material. If there is an imbalance between the account of practical conditions and the actual poetics, it can be helped, I suppose, if more primary texts were taken on and commented upon.

Professor Campbell puts his finger on some more general points pertaining again to the structure of the thesis. The first area, professor Campbell comments on is the structure of the thesis, saying that "there is an issue with the direction that the thesis takes." The intended direction was, roughly said, from the revisionist material to the issues of poetics and language that I would have hoped was apparent in each chapter, and generally as well. Given the general direction, the structure of the thesis is intentionally non-linear. As already mentioned, the two main objectives (the joint examination of the feminist and post-feminist writing and the joint examination of poetry in both languages) are seen as very much interconnected. The structure can thus be seen as based on an accumulating or a domino pattern. Each of the four chapters explores the changes and continuities in the formation of the poetic Self alongside the shift from the feminist to the post-feminist and in view of the poets' stance to their creative medium. Each chapter, however, approaches these main themes through the focus on a different motif or set of motifs – such as the various applications of the liminal, irony, self-satire, cryptic expression and fragmentation.

Another area on which professor Campbell comments is the actual "reading practice." The key point is that more of the arguments could be demonstrated from and by the reading of texts rather than implied by them. This remark is especially welcome as it prompts me to pursue what I like doing best. The main motivation behind the dissertation has been the time spent with the poem and the challenge of trying to formulate one's way of being with it. The detected references to established critical positions were intended, in part, to "make up" for that time and space dedicated to poems. It is good to have it confirmed officially, as it were, that such excuses were not necessary.

The last aspect of the thesis on which the report comments, is the approach to the issue of translation, along with the transactions between the languages. According to professor Campbell, the association of gender with language can mean proneness to "gender-essentialist as well as

language-essentialist mysticism.” As an example of the thesis succumbing to this and to the danger of “treating an author with undue reverence,” he refers to the discussion of Ní Dhomhnaill around p.172.

What I attempted was not so much a comparison between the liberal vs. verbatim translations, judging their literary qualities, but a proposition that, due to her “Celtic haughtiness,” Ní Dhomhnaill feels her work in Irish is above translation into English altogether. My point is that one of the reasons Ní Dhomhnaill was nonchalant about the liberties her translators took was that she felt her poetry was anyway beyond their means. Rather than undue reverence, therefore, I think I can be blamed of rushed wording and an insufficient conclusion in the passage.

Oponenti se vyjadřují k vystoupení kandidátky. Přijímají její odpovědi bez výhrad a doporučují kandidátce, co změnit v případné knižní verzi její disertační práce.

### Diskuse:

#### **Prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.**

Do works of poets like Ní Dhomhnaill reveal a modern construction of orality?

**Candidate's answer:** Ní Dhomhnaill, who dedicates herself to the research of manuscripts and accounts of the oral tradition, can be described as “exploring” concept in her work in her choice of themes, as well as in her feminist politics – in her intention to promote Irish as “the lost language of the mothers.” Her style, however, shows much stronger inspiration by the American beat poets, for example, than by the actual oral tradition (or whatever written relics of have been preserved to us).

#### **PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc.**

The focus on the liminal seems to suggest a connection with certain streams in recent feminist theory, namely the adoption of the Deleuzian concept of subversive nomadism by Rosi Braidotti. You only seem to mention this connection once, saying it is not useful to your outlook. It might be good to expand on this and give your reasons for disregarding this aspect.

**Candidate's answer:** I agree that the profusion of the motif of the liminal seems to suggest a discussion of nomadism which is still a “fashionable” concept today. It is equally true that it is not sufficient to just acknowledge its currency and popularity, without explaining why I am suspicious of it. It will certainly be my task in revising the thesis to deal with this passage in more detail.

#### **doc. Clare Wallace, PhD**

Given your argument that the current output by women poets in Ireland is past the concerns of feminism it might appear that the latter was completely over now and has lost all relevance apart from as an important phase in the development. But there is still a viable and loud group of Irish critics who refuse to give up their feminist outlooks. Would you say there is a polemic going on between the feminists and post-feminists, and would it not be useful to bring that into the picture as well?

**Candidate's answer:** My argument is that feminism in Irish poetry was over around the time it became common for women to get published and receive critical attention. The battle on the page has been fought and has gone back into the inner tensions of language. But it is true that there are critics in Ireland who (with some justification) claim there are pressing issues related to women's rights that need voicing and who take (a less justifiable) issue with post-feminism. While I refer to some of these tensions in the Conclusion, I might expand on the issue or allude to it earlier in the text. My focus, however, is on what's happening inside the poem, rather than on the critical scene as such,

which tends to be subject to swings of “fashion” in thought, much more than poetry, and certainly the poetry I chose for discussion.

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

Zapsal: Radvan Markus

Podpis předsedy komise: