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**Supervisor's report on "Eighteenth century representation of collective *identity* in Tuscany: content analysis of traveller testimonies about England" by Oldřiška Prokopová**

In her thesis, Oldřiška Prokopová deals with the problem how the observation of (or the admiration for) English society contributed to the construction of Tuscan identity in the Enlightenment period. The methodological ground of the work required a thorough examination of recent scholarship on the problem of identity. The introductory chapters prepare the analytical ones applying them; the beginning of the thesis testifies to a quest for a correct and even critical usage of the terms. Knowing the relevant academic debates, the author highlights "the most notable methodological difficulties" concerning how identity is created. It is noteworthy that, following Rogers Brubaker's proposals, Oldřiška Prokopová distinguishes *identity* from *identification*. The content analysis of the sources relies upon a well accepted tool, the Self/Other dichotomy, an opposition that relates the Self to the Other and shapes it accordingly to the consequences of this encounter.

Besides the scholarly literature on identity, an overview of the Italian historical and literary scholarship necessary for the topic is also included. The main sources analysed were publications written by Tuscan intellectuals who had lived in England: Oldřiška Prokopová proves that she achieved the skills of reading and interpreting complex eighteenth-century Italian narrative sources. The principal source—which has been chosen as a case study—is an old print, Luigi Angiolini's seven-hundred page long, two-volume travelogue, entitled *Lettere sopra l'Inghilterra, Scozia e Olanda*, based on the notes the author had taken during his stay in England (1787–88) and published in Florence in 1790. The already impressive source material is further widened when the student undertakes a comparison of the main results of Angiolini's analysis with those of the works written by five more travellers, so as to determine the common features they share in their perception of the English Other and the Tuscan Self.

The logic of how the Self/Other dichotomy is applied is perfect and crystal clear. So is the line of reasoning and the structure of the elegantly written, subtle thesis. I agree with the findings, the

principal conclusions of the work. It is indicative of Oldřiška Prokopová's analytical skills that she had to find and to interpret the informative tiny bits in the mass of the chosen narrative sources. From her results, I underscore the surprising one that in Angiolini's work, besides his identification with Tuscany, there is a concern for a unified Italy.

Oldřiška Prokopová's work meets and in many respects even surpasses the requirements of an MA thesis, therefore I evaluate it with 5 which is the highest grade in the Hungarian grading system.

Since I know about her intention to continue these studies on the PhD level, I would like to recommend her some ideas for consideration; what follows are some advices, not questions to be answered at the defence. First, I suggest her to go on thinking about the problem of the Tuscan "home environment". It is obvious that the often mentioned home environment (for example, described as "normative", p. 94) was in part responsible for shaping the travellers' ideas of England. It is very good that Oldřiška prepares the ground for the case study by drawing up the phenomenon known as Anglomania and that "information regarding the English and England obtainable in Italy was not very detailed" (pp. 34-35), besides the impact the Enlightenment movement made on Tuscany. But it is a challenge for the historian, willing to draw a more detailed picture of this environment, to find out in what ways it really influenced the ideas concerning England. It may be interesting to observe the reception of these travelogues too: what impact did they have on their readers in Tuscany/Italy?

The second proposal is to consider whether the phenomena described as outcomes of the Self/Other connection can alternatively be interpreted as parts of some wide ranging discourses of the epoch, to which the authors joined themselves. For example, the emphasis Martinelli put on the Tuscan dialect did not necessarily need a confrontation with the English Other; it had had a long tradition, cited by Martinelli himself (Dante, Accademia della Crusca...). The discourse on the decadence of Italy is also a wider phenomenon, so our authors could be predisposed to refer to it even before they encountered the English in England. As to the "sense of belonging to Tuscany and the identification with it", it is not much of a surprise that Tuscans identified with their homeland, especially abroad, and used words characteristic for their dialect – this is not necessarily a consequence of how they "othered" the English.

It seemed to me that the references made to the Self are rather implicit in the sources. It is Oldřiška's merit that she found and interpreted them. During her further research, other sources may come which allow her to find more explicit, more concrete presentations of identity related issues: how the Italians publicly displayed—negotiated, defended, modified—their identity in the foreign

environment in their interactions with the English. Since identity is only indirectly thematised in the sources analysed in the MA thesis, it seems advisable to rethink the results of the present research, when it will be continued, under the concepts of *representation*, *image*, and *discourse*, while the term *identity* can be perhaps preserved for cases when the given source is more direct about it.

The term “collective identity” brings up some problems for reconsideration. I think using it is good until “collective” refers to a common set of topics, stereotypes etc. shared by a well defined set of people, but it can become problematic when it points to a vast unit, such as the society of the Tuscan region. I found it very good that Oldřiška kept in mind that seemingly common features are made by individuals which means variety within unity; but I found embarrassing the claim (however well explained it was) that “collective identity is overlapping with individual identification” (p. 104): this assumption is rather simplifying because it is really a very complicated theoretical question how we get from a number of individual identities to the “collective” one. I should advice her to be even more careful in using this adjective.

To conclude this set of remarks: these proposals are meant to contribute to Oldřiška Prokopová’s further studies, and do not in any way diminish the value of the thesis, which, in my opinion, merits the best grade.

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