

## **Supervisor's report on the BA thesis of Martin Sedláček, "Interpretation of Narrative Techniques in *Moby-Dick*"**

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The submitted thesis contains an advanced discussion of narrative strategies in Melville's *Moby-Dick*, focusing first on the narrator's "reliability," then on the "narrator – reflector" relationship and finally on the heterogeneity and fragmentation of the narrative and the novel's relationship to encyclopaedia as a system of knowledge. I find this structure very efficient, bringing the reader from rather problematic speculations about the narrator's "reliability," based on the ethical notion of the responsibility for the reader (Wayne Booth), and on the rather technical, Formalist distinction between "the narrator" and "the reflector" (Franz Stanzel, et. al.), to the understanding of *Moby Dick* as a "patchwork," a heterogeneous open system, subverting not only the Enlightenment epistemology and classification, but also Emerson's notions of "self-reliance" and "Man-thinking." Although I am not convinced of the usefulness of Genette's Structuralist approach, invoked occasionally throughout the thesis, I am very happy with the fact that the author seeks the answers to the problems of structural heterogeneity of the novel in the most advanced Romantic theory of fragment (Friedrich Schlegel), which may be said to anticipate Post-structuralist notions of the work of art. In brief, from the Structuralist notions of narrative as the effect of certain "techniques" the author boldly proceeds to discussing the narrator as the function of structural openness and dynamism of the novel.

It is very difficult to make any critical comments on this thesis, which by far exceeds our expectations for the standard of BA, and in some respect (regarding especially its tendency to move from Formalist and Structuralist "technicalities" to genuine reflection of epistemology and aesthetic of the novel's form), even MA dissertations. My only critical remark is that the author could also try to reflect on and develop Deleuzian implications of Melville's approach, comparing Schlegel's notion of fragment with Melville's "patchwork" and Deleuze's discussion of this metaphor in "Bartleby, or The Formula." This might lead to creating a new interpretive framework, no longer epistemological, but performative, related to the utopia of freedom in America as "a community of anarchic individuals" and the ways in which this utopia encounters cultural and natural otherness.

As stated before, the thesis significantly exceeds the requirements for performance at the BA level. I recommend it to the defence and suggest the grade "výborně".

Prague, 15 June 2015

prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.