

English Summary

The present thesis deals with the various ways in which Anglophone literatures form their canon(s) in the Czech context. In doing so, it treats literature as one inseparable whole, consisting of poetry, prose and literary criticism. The latter is not understood as auxiliary literature, but rather as a self-sufficient form that deserves equal attention to so-called “creative writing”; after all, all the three major literary forms inevitably participate in canon formation, albeit in their own respective ways.

The process of canon formation takes different turns and yields different results in the original, i.e. Anglophone, milieu and in the Czech context – and the canons that thus arise differ as well. Moreover, the debate on canons is always being complicated by their essentially unstable, variable nature; by definition, the process of canon formation is unfinished and interminable.

Canons are not to be viewed as the be-all and end-all of literary analysis but rather as guideposts, useful tools that stimulate further study and permanently invite questioning and revisions of themselves. In spite of this fundamental – and quite simple – purpose, the literary canon is an extremely complex and intricate concept. The complexity of its meanings and its implications is dealt with in the thesis’ introduction.

The very existence of canons is based on the existence of literary values (any canon is a set of values, no matter how those values are understood), and, therefore, value judgments. Value judgments are systemized and communicated through the medium of literary criticism, one of whose chief concerns is, in turn, to take care of the canon, to participate in its formation. To fulfill that function, criticism needs to be scholarly sound and methodologically coherent, as well as open to self-reflection and self-revision, much like the canon itself. It is precisely that sort of reflection and analysis of criticism’s founding principles that I attempt in the second part of the thesis.

Moving from metacriticism to practical criticism (and using a number of critical approaches and tools I have discussed in the previous part), I take a closer look at the present day canon of American prose in the third part and at the canon of American poetry in the Czech context in the fourth part, concentrating on the features of the analyzed works that could be seen as canonical, while showing how said works enter the canon and how they influence it. As a corrective, I repeatedly refer to my own practice as a translator; I had a chance to translate into Czech most of the authors I write about, which provided me with precious insights into the

texture of their work and structure of their narrative/verse. I seek to integrate those insights into my argument wherever possible, combining them with theoretical assumptions of my interpretations, in accord with the practical orientation of the thesis – as well as the practical orientation of the literary canon itself.