

Posudek vedoucí na diplomovou práci Anny Krýsové

“Historical Romance” or a “Tale of Virtue and of Pity”? *Thaddeus of Warsaw* as a “New Species of Writing“

The submitted MA thesis is a valuable analysis of the categorial instability of genre, so characteristic of the literature of the 1790s and early years of the eighteenth century, which influenced Jane Porter’s fictional tale entitled *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803). Starting from an analysis of the two diverse prefaces that accompanied the novel on its first edition in 1803 and then subsequently in 1831 as important paratextual devices of an authorial attempt to generically locate, define and thus influence the novel’s meaning, Anna Krýsová moves to an interpretation of the novel as a conservative anti-Jacobin novel, a national tale, historical novel and novel of sensibility. In this process she compares *Thaddeus of Warsaw* with other literary works that bear similar features: Mary Brunton’s *Self-Control* in the case of the national tale, Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* for a comparison in the treatment of history and the plot of succession, Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl* for the novel of sentiment. As Jane Porter in her second preface claims that Sir Walter Scott in fact followed her precedent, interspaced throughout the thesis are comparisons with his novels, especially *Waverley*.

I believe that Anna Krýsová has managed to articulate her position and particular hypothesis in a relatively logical and clear manner. The definitions of the individual literary forms are properly articulated and her selection of novels is substantiated. Her method is based on drawing together a range of available readings, yet she manages to find an original place for her own interpretations.

I appreciate the scrupulous research and good work with secondary sources. The erudition of the author and her orientation especially in the field of women’s writing is definitely above average. I also want to thank her for bringing this novel to my attention. Moreover, the manner in which *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and its prefaces describe the numbers of political refugees in Britain in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the demise of Poland, creates so many parallels with the current situation.

While Anna Krýsová deals with a range of secondary material and numerous alternative interpretations, she never silences her primary source texts. She always bears in mind the complexity of her individual characters and never submits them to the straitjacket of any theoretical readings. The list of bibliography shows her reliance on numerous internet sources – this may be a cause for concern in some, however, the Chadwyck-Healey database Literature Online is reliable and should have only a 0.1% margin of error.

Despite these positive remarks, there are some problems:

1. The bibliography list is not consistent in the manner of citing the above mentioned internet source.
2. I would certainly disagree with any claim that identifies Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* as dealing with a historical topic (see page 6).
3. Definitely much more careful proofreading would have been desirable. Errors are indeed very frequent. Also, the final structure is rather confusing, especially when switching between

novels. More attention to page formatting: e.g. the heading of Chapter 3 appears at the bottom of page 3. And on page 93: it should be Jacobite, not Jacobean.

4. Is not the conservative message of the novel a political stance as well? The first (old) preface certainly locates it within the discourse of a reaction to “French philosophers” and their combination of “deified reason” and “utter subjection to the wildest desires of their passions”, a combination of contradictions, but a formulation very typical at the time. This is seen by the anti-Jacobins as the root of the excesses of the Revolution itself! Moreover, this could also explain Jane Porter’s much more reserved and cautious treatment of sensibility as not that of the championing of the individual’s impulses against the rules of society (as formulated by e.g. Rousseau), but of taking care to give the heroines and in this case also the hero a sensibility inclined towards strict Christian morality – and an adherence to English ideas of liberty, which may be absent from the English society at large but which are still upheld as an ideal. Therefore, I am rather at odd with one of the conclusions that the message of the novel is not a political one. Can it not be universal and at the same time political?

Overall, I find the submitted thesis to fulfil the usual requirements for an MA thesis in its scope of reading, formulation and argumentation, level of academic English idiom (with some problems). I recommend the text for defence with the preliminary mark between excellent and very good.

Doporučuji diplomovou práci k obhajobě s předběžným hodnocením výborně až velmi dobře.

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