

## **Transfigurations of the image of the Other in Czech travelogues of the long 19th Century**

*Abstract of the dissertation thesis*

Mgr. et Mgr. Jan Heller

The thesis focuses on constructions of the image of the Other in Czech travelogues of the 19th century. The travelogue is a peripheral literary genre, both an artistic text and a historical source, and thus enables the viewer to combine perspectives of literary criticism and historical anthropology. Special attention is paid to religious motifs owing mainly to the fact that this theme has been left out of focus in the present research thanks to the emphasis on the linguistic and historic character of the Czech national emancipation movement. The **intention** of the thesis is to describe literary techniques in the individual travelogues (direct representations, narrative strategies, topics, attributes of characters) and the function they serve in the building of the image of the Other and thus of the image of oneself at the same time. The **goal** of the thesis is to describe certain communication space in which hybridization of various kinds of identities takes place in a specific way and to contribute to the current interdisciplinary discussion on the character of the self-understanding of the Czech elite in the time which was crucial for the making of the modern Czech society's identity.

The **theoretical starting point** is the assumption that the vocabulary related to religion and myth can operate through its metaphorical meanings and cultural and metaphysical connotations within a literary text. The significance of the traveller's experience for their image of the Other can consequently be judged from these metaphorical meanings. The **focus** of the thesis are four case studies in which source texts are subjected to a detailed content analysis and, using the above mentioned interpretation key, the most possible complex image of the Other, i.e. the ethnical and religious groups met by the authors of the individual travelogues, is reconstructed.

On the basis of the extracted and analysed material we draw a **conclusion** that the selection and distribution of religious motifs in travelogues do not justify even a partial revision of the presently accepted thesis about the central position of language in the Czech national emancipation movement. The travellers describe religion not as an isolated phenomenon or a substantially given fact, but as a cultural phenomenon entering into relationships and acting of individual persons. The emphasis is being placed on national (and supranational, namely Slavic) regards and, to a way smaller degree, to social, class and generally ethical ones. Religion as an identity-making factor plays a minor role at the Czech travellers, namely way smaller than expected, the authors for instance don't identify themselves with their Slavic Christian fellow believers to assume themselves different from Islamic Turks. The authors' strategies follow, to a different degree, both temporary literary conventions and stereotypes (e.g. in the relation to Jews) and traditional literary commonplaces (in the case of composing the traveller's experience of initiation).