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Posudek oponenta na bakalářskou práci Hany Radové

“A Critical Analysis of the Male Protagonists in the Brontë Sisters’ Novels”

The novels of the Brontë sisters have provided invaluable material for critical literary attention and have drawn the attention of generations of critics. Especially since the 1980s mainly feminist critics have focused on the growth of the independently minded heroines. As gender studies have also moved into the realm of studying the construct of masculinity, even here the characters provided by any of the three Brontës prove fruitful. This has not remained a secret to Ms Radová, who has in her BA thesis decided to focus precisely on the three most famous male figures found in *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfeld Hall*, i.e. Heathcliff, Rochester and Huntingdon. The thesis subtly teases out the similarities and differences between them as Ms Radová proceeds in her meticulous comparative study.

Indeed, I appreciate very much the attention and care that went into the preparation of this thesis. The reading list could of course include a few more by now classical texts (e.g. *The Madwoman in the Attic* and *A Literature of Their Own*, which provide influential, even if perhaps one-sided readings). However, as it is, the thesis is well-informed and works with many relevant texts. On the other hand, it is sometimes not very clear how far the text of the thesis is a paraphrase of the secondary source and what is Ms Radová’s own contribution. A case in point is the original reading of Lockwood and Heathcliff as doubles, which is influenced by the unpublished paper of Zdeněk Beran. In this context, I would like mention that indeed I also see Lockwood as the man who courts danger and plays with forces that are out of his control and then runs away from them, while engaging in the vicarious pleasure of observing a tale of passion. “Locked” into the gaze of the peeping tom, his response to passion is not only fear, but violent rejection (note the brutal rubbing of the wrist of Catherine). However, we should also note the language of Lockwood, which is trapped in affectation and self-delusion. Just as he cannot make sense of and chart his way home in the snow storm, his language is false.

Another case in point is the first part of the introductory chapter. Though it reads well, it is not particularly informative and brings little novelty into a discussion of the Brontës' art. The story of their life and juvenilia is well-known and actually the section itself seems over-reliant on Baker. The saved space could have been devoted to, for example, an exploration of Victorian constructs of masculinity.

The chapter on Heathcliff is by far the most sustained example of close reading in the thesis. The other chapters seem to lose some of the drive and energy, but this is only relative. Overall, I must say that Ms Radová's thesis more than fully meets all requirements for a work on such level. It is written in correct academic style and nearly absolutely flawless English. (More to be lamented are therefore the imprecise and unclear formulations in the Czech abstract – e.g. transgress is not the same as “prostoupit”, together with incorrect use of upper case – Byronský hrdina, Viktorianská éra.)

In light of the comments made above I recommend the thesis for defence with the preliminary evaluation of excellent (VÝBORNĚ).

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