

Opponent's review

The thesis explores the role of constructions of the past for the formation of collective (national) identity, starting with general delimitation of the field but focusing on the Romantic period and more specifically literary texts in the section that aims to illustrate the theoretical conclusions. Its most substantial part is the comprehensive and well-informed survey of existing theoretical approaches and concepts relevant to the central issue, which clearly aims at integration and synthesis of individual theories and their application outside the limited original context (Barthes – myth). As regards the section devoted to the primary texts (esp. as regards *Poems of Ossian* and *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*), its greatest asset appears to be the awareness and documenting of the multiplicity and variety of nationalistic projects.

Although the theoretical scope of the thesis is undoubtedly impressive (as documented by the extensive bibliography), the attempt at inclusiveness and synthesis leaves some contradictions and unreflected issues. The use of the primary sources, successful though regrettably limited in depth in the case of *Poems of Ossian* and *Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora*, produces problematic results in the case of *Waverley*, where the thesis offers two disparate readings of the relation of the novel to the project of romantic nationalism. Finally, the thesis would definitely benefit from a more careful editing which would eliminate occasional (but significant) terminological confusion (“texts that claim authority and *subjectivity*” (?), p. 24; similarly in several following instances; “*modernism*” (for *modernity*?), p.32), as well as some nonsensical formulations (resulting from anacolutha?), e.g. “*rigid and alterable*”, p.11.

Some of the comments raised below should be addressed in the defence.

1. The general introduction operates with the demise of *grand récit* in the condition of post-modernity, resulting in the plurality of positions and allegiances available to the individual. Likewise, it is claimed that the notion of community becomes increasingly vague. Yet, the author insists on the importance of communal, collective identity and of demasking the myths used to construct it. The tension and seeming contradiction between the two approaches (individual vs. community; recognized relativism vs. authority of historical narratives) remains unreflected and would require a comment.
2. Connected to this appears the problem of modernity and post-modernity and periodization in general. While initially the post-modernity is presented as a specific condition, increasingly the author appears to operate with a continuum initiated by (depending on the applied theoretical model) the disruption of local rural communities (“living memory” - Nora), the advent of print culture and the democratization of writing (Anderson), or even the demise of absolutist monarchy (Vincent), while using Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* to illustrate the point about historical discourse. While the combination of different theoretical models is certainly valid, its results need clarification and more systematic delimitation of the author's position.
3. The dichotomy memory-history appears problematic in leaving unaddressed the issues raised by the fact that both are dependent on narrative, both are produced in and for a specific community (White: *Content of the Form*) and both are subject to processes of selection and suppression. How would the author posit the basic difference between the two?
4. The author uses the theoretical concepts of tradition (Hobsbawm) and myth (Barthes). What does he see as the special benefit of combining the two? What is their relation in his argument?
5. What is the author's position with regard to the two interpretations of *Waverley* presented in the thesis? How does the maturing of *Waverley* and the correction of his romantic illusions

combine with Craig's notion of Scott's replacing “real Scotland” with “romantic illusion”?

Conclusion: Despite the reservations listed above the thesis represents a thorough and well-organized study of a difficult and complex subject with a potential for further research. I recommend it for defence with a preliminary mark VERY GOOD, which might be raised to EXCELLENT depending on the result of the defence.

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