Opponent's review on the Master's Thesis of Oldřiška Prokopová *Eighteenth Century Representation of Collective Identity in Tuscany: Content Analysis of Traveller Testimonies about England*

The aim of the thesis is to explore the collective identity in Tuscany in the eighteenth century by analysing the representation of the 'Other' in the Tuscan travel literature about England. In doing so the thesis draws on already existing substantial research that uses the travel testimonies as a source for examining the cultural representation, perception of the 'Other' and subsequently the perception of the 'Self'.

The specific focus has been chosen very well and it allows the author to explore several new aspects. First, rather than adding to a vast research on the Grand Tour, the thesis explores the reverse type of journey: those of Tuscan travellers to England. Second, the process of 'othering' (constructing an image or representation of certain objects, places, individuals or societies that is based on mirror image of one's self) is often accompanied by the production of negative stereotypes of the 'Other' that points out to a positive perception of the 'Self'. Yet, in case of the Tuscan travel writers, the perception of the 'Other' (i.e. the English environment and society) is so positive that it urges us to explore the aspects and reasons for the negative self-perception of the Tuscan authors. The study's terminal dates (1723 and 1813) permit a sufficiently deep analysis of the transformation of the travelogues and the representation the travelogues convey.

The thesis is well and clearly structured and there is a good balance of secondary and primary research. The methodological and theoretical framework combines several interdisciplinary concepts: the study of identities (especially in the view of Rogers Brubaker), cultural representation (as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and Kevin Lynch on spatial images) and the semiotic approach. The first part provides the reader also with relevant background information – especially on the phenomenon of *Anglomania* that was characteristic of Tuscan society in the eighteenth century. The analytical part focuses first on the travelogue by Luigi Angiolini and second on the travel writings of another five Tuscan authors. The extensive analyses of Angiolini's book serves as a projection screen for more succinct comparative examination of the following texts.

The argumentative line of the analysis is clear and it shows the fields of interest and the ways of representation shared by the Tuscan writers. There are several interesting findings. First, there is a significant lack of patriotism that is apparent especially in the travelogue by Luigi Angiolini. He perceives not only the Tuscan but also the general Italian society as incapable of implementing the English innovations in industry, politics, education etc. It seems that as opposed to 'ideal' enlightened traveller who travels in order to enrich his fatherland with the fruits of his travels (see Leopold Berchtold, *An Essay to Direct and Extend the Inquiries of Patriotic Travellers, etc.*, London, 1789), the Tuscan authors used their travels and the media of travel literature only to point out the insufficiencies in Tuscan society. The chapter on self-identification (*Meaning of the Self*) that uses the semiotic approach to examine the collective consciousness of the authors is convincing. With the exception of Luigi Angiolini who referred his observations to the Italian public in general and was in favour of the political unification of the Apennine peninsula, the authors perceived themselves as Tuscans and identified themselves with Tuscany.

There are few minor points that would deserve more elaboration or clarification:
1) There is a slight ambiguity between the categories of Tuscan and Enlightened traveller.

E.g. p. 90: "From the fact that the travellers shared some topics and tendencies, it might be deduced that it was the common environment of Tuscany that influenced them."
In my opinion, we would find congruence in topics and tendencies also in the writings of non-Tuscan travellers (e.g. interest in English industry is shared by all travellers who come to England in the eighteenth century). Thus, I would advocate more precise distinction between specifically Tuscan and more general enlightened phenomena.

2) As pointed out at the beginning, the time span of the research is quite wide (almost a century). Nevertheless, there is not much attention paid to the time-based transformation. I would be interested to know whether we can identify certain changes and developments in both the representation of England and the self-perception of the authors.

3) I find very striking the lack of interest the Tuscan travellers displayed in English visual arts. I would disagree that art, literature and architecture were not at the centre of interest of the Enlightenment society (p. 89). The neoclassicist style was very prominent in the Age of Enlightenment. However, I would not have explanation myself and it is thus open to discussion.

To sum up, Oldřiška Prokopová has submitted a profoundly elaborated and thought-provoking dissertation that I have no hesitation in recommending for the successful defence. I propose to grade the thesis "výborně" (excellent) in Czech scale, which means A in ECTS, 30+ in Italian grading scale. I am convinced that the thesis meets the requirements and can apply for a rigorosum (PhDr.).

Prague, 30 August 2014

PhDr. Martina Power, PhD.