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ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Posudek Bakalářské Práce (Vedoucky Report): „After the Future Went Away”-The Dystopian and Current Trends in Modern Speculative British Fiction

Report on Bachelor's Thesis (Supervisor's Report): „After the Future Went Away”-The Dystopian and Current Trends in Modern Speculative British Fiction

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„After the Future Went Away”-The Dystopian and Current Trends in Modern Speculative British Fiction

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## General Remarks:

Sediva's thesis entitled "After the Future Went Away"-The Dystopian and Current Trends in Modern Speculative British Fiction draws upon a useful quotation from Ken MacLeod, one of the preeminent voices of British Science Fiction and a writer who has also written extensive commentaries upon the state of this genre category. The central contention is that the understanding of what Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction should address has changed markedly over the last few years (both in terms of the market and the metatext) and that we are encountering a new set of priorities and thematic freight brought about by changes in technology, and a commensurate change in our mode of interaction, consumption of news and societal communication. The status of the individual in society as both agent and subject is being altered by the processes of transhumanism and it is clear that the texts selected by Sediva represent good examples of the phenomena she wishes to highlight : MacLeod's science fiction is a distinct form of leftist British Trotskyite humanism with a heavy didactic political content and, in the text selected, *Intrusion*, he outlines the key aspects of state intrusion in the lives of its subjects. Sediva conducts an interesting and incisive analysis.

Section V of the thesis deals with a plethora of texts from 5 contemporary authors which manage to deal with a number of themes. With less constraint on space, it would be valid to consider more in fact although this would risk converting the thesis into a survey rather than an analytic work. In particular there is a lack of clarity in asserting why (although it is quite valid to focus upon this) the student has focused upon issues of individualism and manipulation at the expense of some of the other major discourses of speculative literature. In regard to this it might be useful to substitute Stross and Beckett for emergent talent like Emma Newman(*Planetfall*) or Justina Robson's *Natural history* series or Jeanette Winterston(*Stone Gods*). Issues of great import like minority voices, LGBT and feminist fiction are simply not very well represented by British Women's SF and the majority of the major voices ,while Anglosphere, are not British, thus placing them rather out with the scope of this thesis. What should perhaps be addressed is the lack of acknowledgement of the growth of literary SF, minority speculative writing such as Zen Cho's *Sorcerer to the Crown* etc. and the erosion of the genre boundaries between literary fiction/SF and adult/YA fiction, the inclusion of unusual genre literature within texts such as

sections of self-penned sci fi verse, series authors writing standalone experimental novels/novellas -all of which seem promising areas of growth and research and are not really addressed here, despite the major voices identified all utilizing some degree of awareness of this and indeed attempting to write highly transgressive fiction predicated upon these new parishes.

With regard to Banks, the analysis here is of a reasonable standard and correctly identifies various ludic devices deployed by this insightful and remarkable author- the text selected (*The Player of Games*) being one of his most pertinent novels. The rest of the analysis is compendious but unremarkable.

The work of Charles Stross has little in the way of a critical oeuvre and this analysis by Sediva of *Halting state* represents a useful contribution to a critical approach to a highly entertaining writer who deals with issues of the singularity, post and transhumanism and the very real criminal and ethical problems emergent in this area of human development. As such, this is to be commended and the quality of evaluation here is high.

Adam Roberts is that rare creature- an academic who also writes in the genre he teaches and analyses. As a prolific contributor to the genre, his novel *New Model Army* is an excellent analysis of the effects of the internet on the body politic, a Nozickean model of the state as private protection agency and a critique of the social contract notion of state power. This is good work at this level.

Chris Beckett's *Dark Eden* is one of the most remarkable texts to emerge in the genre of dystopia/anti-utopian writing in recent times and bears comparison with Orwell and Golding in its stylistic flair, clear narrative focus and evocation of genuine *otherness*. Sediva's appraisal brings this out neatly and further dwells on the relationship of the individual to society.

While the conclusion is well written, its invocation of Gurgeh in *The Player of Games* leaves one or two unexplored aspects of the complex interrelationship of the personal and the public, especially in the specific case of Banks whose individual agents are highly symbiotic and representing a civilizational model which is deliberately nodal and horizontal rather than vertical- as such, the politics of the text is rather insufficient. That said, the observations are self-referentially coherent and valid.

Secondary Literature has been well chosen for this thesis and the literature by Moylan and Claeys is particularly good, representing the gold-standard of critical material in this field. Additionally the cited material from these sources is well selected and augments her arguments. Some additional work on the limits of definitions offered would be merited.

This thesis conforms to the MLA expectations and despite minor grammar errors is exceedingly well written and fluid.

Accordingly, I commend this thesis for consideration and would suggest a grading of Vyborne(1) or Velme Dobre(2) pending successful defence.

#### Recommendation

Bearing in mind the foregoing comments, I would recommend that this work should be passed at a grade of 1(Vyborne) or 2 (Velme Dobre) and I commend it for consideration at that level.

Colin S Clark MA