

## **Patrik Krejčí, “A Ball of String Full of Knots”: Narrative Strategies in Jeanette Winterson’s Early Novels and Their Later Development**

BA Thesis  
Opponent’s Report

The submitted BA thesis shows all marks of an advanced method of literary analysis and as such it can, both by its quality and length, stand for a successful MA thesis. This fact is the more pleasing that the student decided to analyse, from the perspective of narrative strategies, seven novels by one of the most interesting and innovative contemporary British writers. Which is to say that the thesis makes an important contribution to the critical debates of the current literary scene and that, perhaps, it deserves broader resonance (at least in the form of a conference paper or as an article for a critical periodical which accepts students’ work, such as the *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*).

First of all, the author provides a clear, convincing conception, which allows him to divide the examined texts into three groups and also to justify exclusion of other, later, texts. This of course means that he very well knows the whole bulk of Winterson’s fiction and is able to see in what way her work develops. His attention then focuses on such formal aspects as embedded narratives, multiple narrators, fictionalizing history or an intrusion of the fantastic into the real, including gender aspects. Detailed analyses enable him to see Winterson’s novels as gradually evolving the principles of writing postulated in her first novel and thus to claim that later novels are in fact conditioned by the previous ones.

I have only two points to be raised: First, when discussing the presence of the fantastic in the narrative structure of Winterson’s novels, would it not be helpful to work with critical texts dealing with the fantastic? I am afraid the issue is not just a matter of magical realism, which is hardly more than a sub-generic label, but of a broader question of literary representation. Here not only the notorious study by Todorov could provide a perspective, but some later texts, such as Christine Brooke-Rose’s discussion of the real and unreal or Nancy Traill’s alethic typology of the fantastic, may be found useful.

Second: A part of chapter 1.1.4 consists of a detour devoted to the discussion of gender matters, which presumably also condition the character of narration. How does this apply to *Oranges*? In what way is its narrative gendered? Or, more specifically (and partly also out of sheer curiosity), how does the student understand the title of this novel?

These points, however, should not be taken as principal objections to the submitted thesis but rather as suggestions for discussion or further elaboration. In any case, I am happy to recommend the BA thesis for defence with a preliminary mark of “excellent” („výborně“).

PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, PhD

Prague,  
30 August, 2015