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POSUDEK DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

The Critique of Cultural Imperialism in Herman Melville's "Typee" and "Omoo"

(téma)

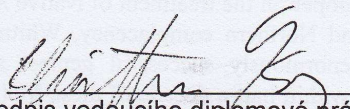
The stated purpose of this work is to show Melville's criticism of Western (English, French and even American) cultural imperialism as expressed in two novels, *Typee* and *Omoo*, in the South Pacific Polynesian Islands. Melville is one of the most challenging 19th century American novelists, if not *the* most difficult, particularly for foreigners to address, so one must commend this author's "bravery" to take up this challenge. The work opens up with a general and rather quick overview of romanticism in American literature and world literature. It briefly shows the author's other major interest, German literature, citing Goethe and Schiller as salient figures of "Sturm and Stress" period though this period was not the central area but a mere precursor to the prominent wave of influential German romanticists, proceeding it by nearly half a century. The attempt is to place Melville within a context, and this preliminary chapter offers biographical information focusing on Melville's minor literary successes and major literary failures in his lifetime. Additionally the literary history that to an extent informed and molded Melville's early creative strain, as well as those of his contemporaries whose popularity vastly overshadowed his own. It would have been pertinent to underscore in this section the polemics of this time as well, specifically those of a similar vein that Melville's first two novels impugned: Washington Irving and J.F.Cooper on the treatment of Native Americans, Emerson and Thoreau protesting Southern slavery and Northern complacency, Whitman's underground railroad poetry, or even Beecher Stowe's enormously successful genteel and Christian-centered *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which appeared within half a decade of these Melville works. Neither genteel nor Christian, Melville's lack of success might have been discussed in these terms as well, and Melville both followed and dissented from the major literary conventions of his time, and here it would ameliorate this chapter to make reference to these similarities and differences to better fulfill the introduction's purpose of placing Melville in a context. I do like the separation of the general literary Romanticism from "travel fiction" (section 1.3) in which Ms. Spilauerova includes sundry authors both proceeding and following Melville's short period of production. The final subchapter concerning Melville's works with sailors and sea settings omits *Billy Budd*, a significant novella every American has to read in high school.

In chapter 2 covering *Typee* the history of colonizing the “new world,” enslavement of Africans and native peoples generally (2.1) and then the Marquesas specifically (2.1.1) are pointed out in connection with Melville’s promulgation that his work was nonfiction. The point by Iveson that travel writers partook in the imperial project might have been commented upon as it related to Melville’s *Typee* since he directly criticizes this project in his travel novel, and so it constitutes my first question: Was Melville in your opinion partaking in the cultural “destruction” in this book by representing the natives as he did or did he subvert the genre by criticizing cultural colonization so overtly? In the subchapters that follow, missionaries sailors’ rape and seduction of native girls, clothing and social relationships detail the particular areas of native culture that Melville shows was destroyed by the white colonists, and it is in these sections that Ms. Spilauerova superbly achieves the purpose of her diploma work in an orderly fashion. Melville writes with prowess of Tommo, of a sympathetic perspicacious white man, as one trying to comprehend and sympathize with the natives as human beings rather than as “savages” which was more the norm not only in the 19th but well into the 20th centuries. A second question might be how Ms. Spilauerova reconciles the sympathy for the natives of Nukuhiva with Tommo’s aggressive and even violent escape from his “paradise,” a clear syncretism which begs strong explication.

The third chapter concerns Melville’s second novel *Omoo* which is less frequently read nowadays but is a sequel to the renowned *Typee*. In this work more history and especially missionary work is – sardonically – criticized rather than in *Typee* where the autobiographical and very extensive details of direct personal encounters with natives is appositively recounted. Tommo here is more an observer than participant in the plot. This distinction should have been better commented upon by Ms. Spilauerova. In fact, this lacuna about perspective is one of the major criticisms of *Omoo*. It renders the novel less successful. The reference to Edward Said in the conclusion and his absence of American literary representations of the exploited Other is appropriate. Given the complexity of the author treated, the well-structured analysis and finally the success in accomplishing the goals of the thesis generally, I assess this work as

- výborně -

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V Českých Budějovicích dne 2010.....

Stupeň kvalifikace	výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	nevyhověl
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