



POSUDEK OPONENTKY DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglická a americká literatura**

Název práce: **Political Tendencies in Selected Romantic Poetry**

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Oponentka diplomové práce: **Einat Adar, M.A., Ph.D.**

Short characteristics of the thesis

This thesis tackles the political engagements in the writings of five main romantic poets of two generations – the lake poets Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, and the younger poets Byron and Shelley. Since the topic of politics in romantic poetry has been broached before, this thesis focuses on topics and works that have not received much critical attention. Subjects covered include the reactions to the American and especially the French revolution and its aftermath, radicalism and resistance, and political aspects of religion. The author combines studies of the poetry with secondary materials such as letters and essay to provide as comprehensive a picture about the writers' position on chosen issues as possible.

Overall assessment

It was a pleasure to read this thesis for its breadth of scholarship, nuanced discussions, and precise formulations. Tackling a vast field like romanticism and its major writers, the author managed to find a subject that shows originality and advanced critical abilities while acknowledging the wealth of scholarly work in the area. The methodological discussion in the introduction clearly shows an awareness of the critical state of art and academic procedures. In addition, the author made a judicious and profitable use of a wide array of secondary sources.

While no study of such a broad topic can be said to be exhaustive, let alone an M.A. thesis, the author was successful in covering important aspects of the political questions of the time, including radicalism and conservatism, political action and religious freedom. The final chapter on Shelley's concept of "titanism" and the summary trace the interconnections among these topics and positions them within the broader concerns of the romantic movement.

I particularly enjoyed the comparisons between Godwin and Lentz, and between Shelley and Bakunin, which showed a good grasp of the underlying concepts in their writing, and broadened the research beyond the confines of English literature which is too often studied in isolation. The discussion of political positions in chapter 3 was also excellent.

While the thesis meets and even surpasses the standard required of an M.A. thesis, there are a few points for improvement and further development which may be relevant if the author decides to pursue the project at a Ph.D. level. These include the development of an explicit research question and an explanation of the logic behind the structure of the



thesis in the introduction which will justify the selection of the particular topics and present an overall argument.

It would also be advisable to address the "elephant in the room" which is the co-optation of romantic works and philosophy by Nazi Germany, which may be one of the reasons scholars are wary of the topic in general. There are valid reasons to focus on the British political discourse in dealing with British romanticism, but the question should at least be addressed.

In terms of academic writing, the overall standard is quite high but there is an issue of inconsistency in the in-line citations - sometimes using a shortened title and sometimes the name of the author as recommended by the MLA style guide. Also, some of the poems are cited from unreliable internet websites instead of scholarly editions.

Some questions and comments about specific issues:

- The thesis suggests that the generational gap in the attitude towards politics stems from the difference in experiencing the French revolution at first-hand vs. as a historical event. It seems to me that Byron's attack on the author of *Wat Tyler* may also reflect a disappointment with someone who influenced him. In general, the entanglement of politics and aesthetics in the parody is quite interesting.
- It would be useful in subsequent research to look at more political views of other intellectuals of the period as a way to understand better the generational gap, as well as the tension between the patriotism and belief in democracy in Shelley and Byron, and their attitude towards the "ignorant public".
- On p. 46 the author discusses Shelley's call for the abolition of the standing army which seems to be an extreme measure, leaving the country open to hostile armies. I would suggest that the seeming paradox may be solved by reading this statement as referring not to any army in general but specifically to the British *standing* army, established in mid-17th century as a royal version of the revolutionary New Model Army, which has been primarily intended to fight within Britain. The standing army replaced the previous method of raising an army ad-hoc to respond to particular enemy threats.

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **výborně**

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Datum

Podpis