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Posudek Bakalářské Práce (Vedoucky Report): AN ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN
CONTEMPORARY FANTASY

Report on Bachelor's Thesis(Supervisor's Report): AN ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN
CONTEMPORARY FANTASY

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AN ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASY

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General Remarks:

In this thesis, the author, Čabartová, has attempted to consider the relative agency of Female Characters in some representative Fantasy Novels of the last half-century or so with the intention of determining whether these characters have attained any sense of equality or importance relative to their male counterparts, and in so doing to evaluate whether Fantasy as a genre remains mired in a patriarchal value system or whether steps have been made to progress towards gender parity. The methodology employed is a study of characters within exemplary texts in the genre such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* and George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*, and a questionnaire directed at "active Fantasy readers" from High school to University Level. The results of this project are somewhat nuanced and return no clear assertion, except to note a general slow improvement but within the constraints of a still stereotypical range. Comments such as "**Forty seven responded that the characters were original and sixteen that they were not. However, they mostly agreed that the female characters started out as 'typical stock characters' which later became more 'complex' and 'realistic', but that their originality came from the 'development' of the 'original roles' they filled**" indicate the difficulty here in that the readership polled see changes but not sufficient to justify crying *Revolution!* just yet. This is in line with the general tenor of current fantasy criticism which points to female representation within Megatexts such as Martin's as being problematic and perhaps subordinate to cinematic concerns: Jackson's LOTR has been laughably bad at presenting its few female characters, and the 16 male versus 1 female directors who have worked on *Game of Thrones* have resorted to rape as character development for most female leads additionally, Le Guin's highly complex *Earthsea* series has attracted renewed attention after the TV miniseries in 2004 under Lieberman distorted the work to such an extent that Le Guin publically disowned it and declared it an anodyne perversion of the original work. Čabartová, has also discussed various theoretical texts such as Propp's which while not always specifically designed for fantasy, have nonetheless be productively applied to it as a genre and which produce a sense of the modularity of many components of the genre(a source of much criticism of course) within which she seeks to position characterization as one area ripe for much revision. In so doing she establishes the concept of "stock" characterization and explains the key terminology clearly and selectively.

The conclusion asserts the continuing progression of female emancipation from cliché in high fantasy texts and makes the comment that: "**female characters are becoming increasingly more complex, thereby becoming more difficult to characterize using a single pre-determined category**". It then mentions some modern texts which may well be road signs to a more justifiable gender dispensation in the genre. I found this section to have most potential for positive contribution to the study and to be also, frustratingly perfunctory and short. It is to be hoped that, should the student progress to Masters Studies, that she will therein consider this issue in more depth, and with reference to some of the more salutary examples of genuinely original modern fantasy texts.

A great deal of assiduous consideration has gone into the analysis of the various female characters selected by Čabartová, and it is clear that she has read the source material intensively, the result being a

confident essay into the topoi and a useful comparison of the texts in question. Of particular note is the concluding section which serves as an interesting primer for future research into the topic.

This thesis has focus and demonstrates the clear ability on the part of the student to pursue a theme and, moreover, to accept the sometimes complex results of questionnaires for what they are- indicative but not conclusive, without attempting to disguise or warp results to serve the ends of her thesis. This form of sangfroid is to be commended.

Structurally, the thesis largely conforms to academic standards and while there are formatting and grammar issues here, they are largely minor and do not obscure Čabartová's points.

Recommendation

Bearing in mind the foregoing comments, I would recommend that this work should be passed at a grade of 2 (Velme Dobre) or 3 (Dobre) and I commend it for consideration at that level.

Colin S Clark MA