

Opponent's Report on the MA thesis of Barbora Kubalová "The Role of Violence in *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy"

This thesis deals with the rather frequently discussed topic of violence in McCarthy's novel. The analysis of the genre structure, the concept of history, the characters, especially Judge Holden, and the role of nature in *Blood Meridian*, is quite well executed, yielding relevant results presented in a clear and persuasive way. Sometimes the style tends to be opaque ("Might a state of things deprived of violence imaginable." p. 13)

Rather than using the term "anthropological constant", the problem of violence could be more effectively discussed as the failure of the pragmatic, communicative and dialogical capacities of culture (Eric Gans, Wolfgang Iser), witnessed very frequently in modernity, especially in encounters of cultures.

The key character of Judge Holden would definitely deserve more attention mainly because he represents modern relationship of violence and law. Since the end of the 18th century law ceases to demonstrate its authority by the violence of punishments and its authority is demonstrated by its self-sufficiency and self-perfection, as well as by surveillance and segmentation of society. The monstrous consequences of this new power of law were already portrayed in Kafka's works (most eloquently in his story "In the Penal Colony"). In subjective and superhuman dimensions of his character, Judge Holden connects this concept of modern law with Nietzsche's "will to power" (favouring *physis* instead of *nomos*) and merges it with the notion of play as war. In addition, he may be said to connect the radicalized Nietzschean philosophy and with the working of technology, which seems a specifically American feature.

The section of the thesis dedicated to *The Road* suffers from certain modern misconceptions about Apocalypse and apocalypticism. In general, "dystopian", cannot be conflated with "post-apocalyptic" because "apocalypse" means "revelation" which is often missing in dystopias. Discussing cannibalism would benefit from the fact that there are cannibalistic motifs already in old biblical prophecies as well as in The Book of Revelation. Similarly the topos of the desert connects the modern post-catastrophic stories with the biblical tradition. The ironic use of the biblical motif is evident from the scene with the burning bush in *The Blood Meridian*. The desert is no longer a place of revelation, hope or contact with superhuman powers.

In terms of the character analysis, the thesis should contain a more extensive and deep-ranging comparison between the boy and the kid, based, for instance, on the fact that *The Blood Meridian* is an inverted *Bildungsroman*, while *The Road* is an allegory of the survival of romantic notion of childhood (as the candidate correctly points out). Does this imply that the two novels represent a destructive clash of the two major movements of modern culture: Enlightenment and Romanticism? This is one of the possibilities of deepening the analysis of the thematic structure of both works.

The text contains a few mistakes and typos: "fortis" means "strong" in Latin, while power or strength is "fors". Instead of "polyhistor", "polymath" is used. And "Eaclods" should be spelled "Eclogues".

In spite of these shortcomings the thesis represents a contribution to the study of violence in McCarthy's novels. Despite a great number of publications, this topic still lacks a deeper and more general philosophical, anthropological and cultural theoretical approach. I recommend the thesis for defence and suggest to grade it either "excellent" ("výborně") or "very good" ("velmi dobře"), depending on the result of the examination.

Prague, 18 May 2015

prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.