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Faculty of Humanities

Doctoral Dissertation

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Interpretation of National Identity in the Novel of Jozef Ignác Bajza

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PREVIEW  
ISTVÁN ANNA:  
INTERPRETATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE NOVEL OF JOZEF IGNÁC  
BAJZA

The subject of this dissertation is the novel of Jozef Ignác Bajza, the *'Az ifjú René kalandjai és tapasztalatai'*<sup>1</sup>, and analysis of the presentation and readability of national identity in the novel.

Jozef Ignác Bajza (1755-1836) was a catholic priest, a firm believer of jozefinist modernisation, writer, poet, language reformer. He wrote the first novel in Slovak language, which was published in 1783 and again in 1785.

The purpose of the this presentation is to prove that national identity, as a social phenomenon, can be identified and read in the book by the different methods of contextual-cultural narratology. The goal of this reconsideration is to open new horizons understanding the interpretation of literature which is considered canon and classic.

Our methodology is based on the reading method of post-cultural criticism, *rereading*. Its theoretical framework is provided by contextual narratology, includes postcoloniality, feminist criticism of literature and new historicism.

Contextual-cultural narratology and post-cultural criticism are groups of related schools of history of literature, developed from similar traditions of history of philosophy. The sources of these schools and trends of thought are classical and modern philosophical hermeneutics.

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I present and reflect on the works of history of literature about the novel in chronological order, from the first to present day works, and also from the shorter ones to the more extensive thematic or scholarly works. The main part of the first chapter will be spent on works of history of literature in the Slovak language, however others will be presented, such as short articles of German encyclopaedias.

The second chapter will present the main questions and theories of the dissertation, as well as the theoretical framework upon which the direction of our research was based. These questions have a secondary methodological function, as they carry a determinal effect into the decision processes which separate the relevant topics from what is irrelevant for the subject. The most important question asked in this chapter is how the text of a 18. century

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1 The adventures and experiences of young René

novel canbe approached from the standpoint of the postmodern understanding of literature, what kind of new of understanding may arise during this process and which contextual elements would become relevant to postmodern rereading.

The third chapter presents the answers for the questions raised in the previous one and the analysis itself. In this chapter I wish to prove that with the usage of the different approaches and methods of post-cultural criticism, a new and innovative sphere of understanding can be created, despite the fact that the novel itself and the method with which it is analysed is so far apart in time. A further goal of this third chapter is to prove that it is possible to analyse the characteristics of national identity appearing in the novel through the methods of postmodern philosophical discourse and that new angles of approach, new questions and new answers may be found which able to present new understanding of questions of the postmodern age.

The main concept of the dissertation is national identity and in connection to that its readability in the work of Bajza. Therefore this dissertation integrates any contextual-narratological elements as well as elements of effect-aesthetics into its framework of understanding, which might be relevant in the analysis and understanding of its subject. I regard statements about the novel and other works of the author as being part of its context, as they can undoubtedly carry meanings and selection by others can initiate taking peripheral-central roles. As such the selection of biographical data of the author is arbitrary and only contains the facts relating to the development of national identity and its representation in the novel. The dissertation does not give a more detailed biography than that.

I intend to give a greater part to the intertextualisation of the novel. The comparison, however is not a basic research but the research of historically effected consciousness. The research of the novel in the context of historical effect tries to show the orientation of identity and so it is not a basic research therefore does not collect data. Its goal is to give a new context of reading into the previous aspects of the novel. Nevertheless, further research is to be conducted on the novel, for example its comparison to the works of Faludy Ferenc.

I chose the different postmodern schools of literary theory based upon the readability of different forms of identity. Because of that the focus of the analysis was on postcoloniality, feminist criticism of literature, Foucault's concept of power as a method and new historicism. From among these, however, only the feminist criticism of literature is given a full chapter because there was no existing works of scholarly significance with Bajza's female characters in focus. This chapter reflects upon the importance of discourse on female characters.

The whole of postmodern literary theory will not be incorporated into the theoretical

framework of the dissertation, only those theories and principles are adopted into the process of understanding which are capable to make identity and the forms of expression of national identity more readable and easier to highlight. Such forms of expression are for example religion, reflections upon geographical and ethnical differences, references to different social groups, the forms and processes of naming and lack of expressing some topics.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation is its conclusion, the summary of how a 18. century novel can be interpreted within the framework of postmodern philosophy and how it can provide a new understanding compared to previous interpretations.

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