

Faculty of Arts
Charles University
Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

- Ms. Roksolana Fedorenko
- “Lost in Time: The Concept of Temporality in Works of the US Lost Generation”
- MA thesis
- Supervisor’s Report

Brief summary of subject: The thesis “attempts to portray the versatility and complexity of the concept of time as was understood in the late 19th and the early 20th century, both in philosophy and modernist literature, with the focus being on the US Lost Generation” (1). Not only this but: “The feeling of anxiety, disillusionment, and powerlessness towards the inability to resolve the conflict between subjective and objective time is a fundamental part of the discussed works. Those are *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, and *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner” (2). The candidate also discusses time in the philosophies of Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Walter Benjamin. There is also a chapter discussing modernism as a whole, and then three chapters on her target authors. Last not least,

The final chapter will summarize the main point of this thesis that aims at portraying the problematic and diverse essence of temporality as represented in the works of the US Lost Generation, making parallels between the philosophy of time as discussed in the second chapter, and the representation of the concept of time in the literary works of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner to claim that their depiction of time reflects the shift towards subjectivity as their works abandon historicity and represent time as an inevitable part of human experience rather than a phenomenon that belongs exclusively to the outward reality (5).

Methodology and structure: The 91 pp. thesis contains an Introduction, five principal chapters, a Conclusion, a Bibliography, and an Abstract/Abstrakt with Keywords. The work combines philosophical-theoretical engagement with rigorous close reading of her target narrative texts.

Achievements: We read notably that “Ernest Hemingway’s novels *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* explore the importance of loss and the way it reshapes one’s understanding of temporality. The trauma alternates the characters’ perception of time, making them incarcerated in their reminiscences about the inescapable nature of time” (45). In addition: “The enigmatic style of writing that William Faulkner crafted works as a labyrinth for the reader when they first encounter his works. One of the reasons why his novels are so puzzling is their use of a multi-layered narrative structure that represents the world through the lens of individual consciousnesses. Such narrative technique presupposes the abandonment of chronology” (59). More exactly with Faulkner: “Instead of conventional chronological order, his [Faulkner’s] narratives provide the reader with time as a mental quality. The characters of his novels struggle to comprehend the meaning of their past, present, and future which has been greatly affected by their psychological trauma” (60). These all constitute some crucial contributions of the thesis.

Shortcomings: Within the confines of this document as a diploma thesis the coverage of the topic area is thorough and capacious. Had the candidate more space and time she might have dived even a bit deeper into her topic but the economy of the text remains praiseworthy. She might have explored the writings of Gertrude Stein, for example.

Formal features (e.g., language & style, referencing, bibliography, formatting, abstracts): The formal aspects are very good save for on page 86 the offset quote from Paul Ricoeur should be indented.

Questions: Consider this passage:

Erik S. Roraback points out that “one function of the artwork is to provide a tabula rasa for rethinking and reconfiguring possible alternative worlds in the light of the construction of encounters between fiction and critical thinking.” [fn. 189] To achieve this effect, a work of art has to propose alternative ways of thinking about reality. The more it deviates from the mimetic representation of reality, the more interactive and productive the process of engagement with a piece of art becomes. The literary works of the US Lost Generation provide their readers with the possibility to rethink and revalue their own understanding of what it means to exist in time. The novels subvert conventional ideas about time by emphasizing the importance of subjective interpretation in the human experience of reality and thereby temporality as such. Time ceases to be a means of measure and becomes an integral part of human experience. The strong connection between those two phenomena leads to the creation of a new order of time, one that is based on the principle of intensity rather than historicity. Time becomes deeply psychological and existential in its essence (77–78).

Does the candidate find this “new order of time” with some kind of important extra-textual import for the climate of an era and for its projects? If so how and if not why not?

Conclusion: I recommend the thesis for defense and propose a preliminary grade of 1.

Seattle, 18 i 24
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