

Pálenská, Věra

In memory of Docent PhDr. Lidmila Pantůčková, CSc.

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IN MEMORY OF DOCENT PhDr. LIDMILA PANTŮČKOVÁ, CSc.

Docent (Senior Lecturer) Lidmila Pantůčková, a former member of the Department of English and American Studies of Masaryk University in Brno, died after a long and serious illness on 28 July 2003, at the age of 80. She was born in the southern Moravian town of Kyjov on 6 May 1923 and grew up in a harmonious family of a clerk, a teacher and two siblings. One year after finishing secondary school, her mother died. She began running her father's household, took charge of her brother and sister and later, to contribute to the improvement of the family's financial situation, found a job as a bookkeeper in the Society of Theatres in Prague. Her great desire for further education was fulfilled in 1946 when she was admitted to Masaryk University and began attending English and philosophical courses. Thanks to her excellent results and expressive scholarly interests she became a research student, and after graduation in 1950, a teacher at the Department of English and American Studies. She worked here until her retirement in 1991; forty years as a lecturer and only the final year of her pedagogical and scholarly work as a docent, since pre-1990 authorities did not allow her to habilitate for political reasons.

Throughout her life Docent Pantůčková devoted much of her time and energy to literary theory and literary history. At the beginning of her academic career she concentrated on examining the creative method of George Eliot, one of the most distinguished nineteenth-century women writers, and published the conclusions of her research in her doctoral thesis (defended in 1952). Towards the end of the 1950s, she studied the Newgate School of romance and its place in the English literature of the 1830s, focusing her attention on the views of its opponents – primarily on William Makepeace Thackeray, whose personality and production became the major object of her long-standing scholarly effort. At first Docent Pantůčková was interested in the development of W. M. Thackeray's aesthetic attitudes and in 1966 presented the results of her research in her Candidate of Science dissertation. In the following years she concentrated on examining this writer as an extraordinarily many-sided and remarkably well-informed and prolific critic and published her monograph entitled *W. M. Thackeray as a Critic of Literature* (1972). In this extensive, comprehensive and critically acclaimed book she deals with Thackeray's qualifications as a literary critic, the main sources of his aesthetic creed, his conception of criticism and his critical opinions of fiction, poetry, nonfiction and drama. One of the most sig-

nificant contributions of Docent Pantůčková's scholarship in these years is undoubtedly the first published and exhaustive survey of W. M. Thackeray's critical articles covering different French literary works from older periods to his own time. This survey, arranged chronologically and according to individual genres, contains excellent critical analyses and evaluative commentaries.

In the 1980s and 90s Docent Pantůčková's scholarly work centred on examining the influence of English and American literature on Czech writing. The first achievements of her research in this field were presented in her paper "Jan Neruda's Use of Shakespeare in his Journalism" (*Brno Studies in English* 17, 1985), in which she analyzes references to and quotations and paraphrases from William Shakespeare's plays in Jan Neruda's journalistic texts. In this paper Docent Pantůčková comes to the conclusions that Jan Neruda took his quotations from the Czech translations of Shakespeare's plays and not, as Albert Pražák, a great Nerudian scholar, maintains, from anthologies of aphorisms he had in his library. Later Docent Pantůčková turned her attention to Czech translations, critical articles and reviews of English and American works that appeared in *Pictures of Life* (*Obrazy života*) and *Family Chronicle* (*Rodinná kronika*), two magazines edited by Jan Neruda.

Docent Pantůčková's scholarly studies in the 1980s and 90s can be rightly regarded as an important and pioneering contribution to our knowledge of the impact English and American literature had on Czech nineteenth-century cultural and literary life, and could become a good source of inspiration for those who would like to follow in her footsteps. (A bibliography of Docent Pantůčková's work prepared by Milada Franková and Iva Gilbertová is published in *Brno Studies in English* 20, 1993).

Docent Pantůčková's scholarly output cannot be in any case separated from her pedagogical activities. During her teaching career she instructed and guided generations of students, introducing them to the world of English and American poets, fiction and nonfiction writers and dramatists. Her encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject and good teaching methods were demonstrated in her lectures and seminars, as well as personal qualities such as patience, impartiality, friendliness and kindness; she always enjoyed respect and a natural authority over her students.

Docent Pantůčková was also an excellent colleague, a modest and hard-working woman, who was always ready to give advice, encouragement and help. Even after her retirement she continued to be interested in events associated with her former workplace, and as long as she was in good health she also took part in the conferences and other activities organized by the Brno Department of English and American Studies.

The death of Docent Lidmila Pantůčková is a great loss for all who knew her and loved her. The academic community loses a distinguished expert in English and American literatures, her students lose a well-informed and encouraging teacher and her colleagues a good, kind and tolerant person.

Věra Pálenská