

Trombik, Vojtěch

German university novel since 1968 : transformation of the underrated genre : summary

In: Trombik, Vojtěch. *Der deutschsprachige Universitätsroman seit 1968 : die Verwandlung eines wenig geachteten Genres*. Erste Ausgabe Brno: Filozofická fakulta, Masarykova univerzita, 2017, pp. 224-225

ISBN 978-80-210-8740-8; ISBN 978-80-210-8741-5 (online : pdf)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/137508>

Access Date: 30. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

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SUMMARY

German University Novel since 1968. Transformation of the Underrated Genre

The book *Der deutschsprachige Universitätsroman seit 1968: Die Verwandlung eines wenig geachteten Genres* deals with the transformation of university novel written in German after 1968. Meanwhile in English speaking countries university novel is a widely known and respected genre, the exact opposite happens in literature written in German – there are considerably fewer university novels and this genre has been mostly ignored by German theory of literature. However, the number of university novels published in both literatures has equaled since 1968.

Apart from being limited to novels written in German since 1968 (except for novels originated in GDR), the corpus of novels in this work has been defined based on a minimalistic definition of the genre university novel, according to which a university novel is each novel dealing with university. The author divides this corpus of 33 novels according to the method they were written in into 4 types – 1. university criminal novel, 2. university novel narrated from subjective perspective, 3. amusing and satirical university novels, and 4. experimental university novels.

This work is based on the assumption that the genre of university novel in literature written in German after 1968 has developed according to the change of the way in which it is written. Moreover, the author reckons that through different writing methods various elements of the wide university subject penetrate into the novel. The aim of this work is to define the elements in university novels and the methods of writing that are supporting each other. The author is using mainly narrative tools to distinguish among individual writing methods. From the terminological point of view he is following the narrative theory by Gérard Genette. If needed, further theoretical complexes are used for depicting of writing methods, e.g. theory of criminal novel.

In each of the four chapters the author starts with defining the writing method common for the novels in the chapter. As the next step the author describes the actual implementation

of the writing method in every novel. Furthermore he deals with the topic of individual university elements in the novels trying to interpret them based on the way they depict the university.

The limited research carried out till now has reduced the university novel written in German to few works to which low literary quality was attributed due to its limited focus onto the description of the relationship between university and society. Opposed to this view, the author considers the mutual gradation of selected writing method and university subject as the main criteria to evaluate literary quality of a university novel. He considers the complexity of depiction of topics such as research, tuition and studies as decisive for the quality of the novels, for these are genuine to the university, i. e. they do not appear in novels from different environments. Research as a subtopic of university is depicted in all four types of university novel, albeit with different intensity. It is highly reduced in amusing and satirical university novels, because they describe how research is destroyed by thriving bureaucracy and eternal intrigues. In criminal university novels research often appears as motive for murder, circumstantial evidence or misleading sign. Usually it is reduced to this function. An exception to this rule is the novel *Der Schatten Mishimas*, in which the research led by the late professor Fichte is described in a complex way and it is important for police investigation. Crime novel thus gains a new potential thanks to the topic of university. In university novels narrated from subjective perspective, the topic of research is often used as a parallel plot to existential issues of the main character. Here, the research reflects subjective personal perception of the main character. The complexity of the subject of university is very high in these novels, thanks to which the reader is able to understand theoretical and historical facts. The topic of research is mostly developed in experimental university novels. Topics of literary science open a metafictional level and act as a key to the interpretation of the novel. By means of example, the novel *Der gestohlene Abend* depicts two opposed theoretical approaches to literary interpretation, which at the same time provides the reader with two keys of interpretation of this novel. Analogically, the author in his work evaluates other subtopics of university and their gradation with individual writing methods.

This work demonstrates that the novels that have been ignored, eventually not sufficiently interpreted (experimental, subjective university novels, but also those approaching these types) show a higher quality. A more differentiated view on university novel, presented by this work, is to contribute to the perception of this genre as valuable.