

MILADA FRANKOVÁ IS SIXTY

Believe it or not: one of our distinguished members in the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University Brno, the docent of English literature, Milada Franková, born in January 1946 and thus celebrated her significant birthday at the beginning of this year. At the same time approximately, she also completed her fifteenth year at the Faculty of Arts, and one can hardly grasp everything she accomplished in relatively quite a short period of demanding academic research in combination with her personal family life and work. She is married and has two adult sons.

Milada Franková is regarded as a specialist in English literature, and has taught in the literature and culture tracks in the department, in particular in the areas of the Old English Literature, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, English Literature since 1945 and Contemporary British Women Novelists, and the British Cultural Studies (e.g. Britain Multicultural, British Culture and Society since 1945), or literary and cultural theory. She has supervised over fifty major dissertations, another fifty minor and Bachelor theses, has co-chaired the final state examination committee in the department since 1995, and supervises the doctoral study programme in comparative literary studies at the faculty. During the fifteen years at the faculty she successfully managed to defend her CSc. dissertation in 1994 (*Human Relationships in the Novels of Iris Murdoch*, Brno: Masaryk University Brno, published in 1996), to complete the M.A. in British Cultural Studies at University of Warwick, Britain (Class Division and the Decay of a Class in Molly Keane's 1980s Novels, 1997), and finally to habilitate as docent in 1998 (*Britské spisovatelky na konci tisíciletí*, British Women Writers at the End of the Millennium, Brno: Masaryk University Brno, published in 1999). In addition to her academic research and teaching load, she worked as vice-dean for International Studies, FF MU Brno, from 2000 to 2006. Since 1996 she has been a member of the editorial board of the *Brno Studies in English* (Studia minora facultatis philosophicae universitatis Brunensis, series Anglica). Among others, she is a member of the doctoral studies board in English and American Literature, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague. From her research project work one should not omit e.g. her participation in two ACTION joint projects of the Czech Republic and Austria (The Human Figure in Postmodern Fantastic Literature and Art 2003–2004; Literature as Communication 2006).

Docent Franková has lectured at many European universities, e.g. at Wiener Universität, Vienna 1997, Otto von Guericke Universität, Magdeburg 1997, Jozsef Attila University of Szeged 2000, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki 2001, Wrocław University 2002, or Bologna University 2005. She has also delivered lectures or papers at a number of international literary and cultural studies conferences, e.g. at Zagreb University 1998, Oxford 1999, 2003, University of Warwick 1999, Prešov University 2000, and at Universität Salzburg 2002, 2003, 2005. At home she has been a regular participant at the Brno Conferences of English, American and Canadian Studies, FF MU, and she has participated in a number of other international conferences held e.g. in Prague, Pardubice, Olomouc, etc.

Some of the latest of Milada Franková's numerous studies were also published abroad, e.g. The (Booker) Prize for Fiction and the Tenor of the Times, in *Fiction and Literary Prizes in Great Britain* (Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2006), Fiction as Cultural Translation: the Czech Experience, in *The Linguist* (London: The Institute of Linguists, 2005), Authorial Doubts: Metafictional Revision, in *The Author as Reader* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), or The Serious Comedy of Barbara Trapido's Novels, in *Widening Horizons* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2005), etc. Apart from other frequently appearing essays, articles and reviews, and the two major publications mentioned above, she finished another longer work, *Britské spisovatelky na přelomu tisíciletí* (British Women Writers at the Turn of the Millennium, Brno: Masaryk University Brno, 2003).

In her research, Milada Franková's focus is undoubtedly on contemporary British women novelists, such as A. S. Byatt, Angela Carter, Margaret Drabble, Margaret Foster, Molly Keane, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, Rose Tremain, Fay Weldon, or Jeannette Winterson, to name just a few. She is interested in the overall contemporary development in fiction, in particular the British novel, as her analysis of Ian Mc Ewan's novels testifies (Ian Mc Ewan's Double Atonement, in *Cultural Studies at the Turn of the Millennium*, Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005). Docent Franková also explores Malory, Shakespeare, Milton, or Stoppard. As a literary and cultural studies scholar, she does not elaborate the genre and usage of formalist aspects only, but vividly illustrates many cultural and social issues stemming from the plot and character analyses. She examines myths and stereotypes, class and gender, or sexuality and love, double identities and relations between historical background and contemporary mind. The situation of ordinary and extraordinary women, daughters, wives, mothers and grandmothers, with frequent comments on classic and contemporary feminist trends, lies in the core of her depiction of human relationships in the narratives explored. In no way, however, does scholar Franková diminish the area of the writers' philosophies, fantasies, or inventive virtuositities, be it in the motif, genre, or proportion.

In the last paragraph I would like to humanize our outstanding postmodernist scholar a little. Her concentration on the cultural background and identity may be related to her own experience. Her birthplace was deleted from the map of the Czech Republic, and she was forbidden to use it in various documents, even

though the name of Velká Střelná appears in black and white in her birth certificate, of course. Actually, she was born in a secluded house, next to the small village of Velká Střelná (Gross Waltersdorf, in the region of Moravský Beroun, *Dopravní místopisný lexikon Československé republiky*, Praha: ministerstvo pošt a telegrafů, 1928, p. 793). In 1960 there is no such place to be found in a similar geographical lexicon (*Seznam obcí Československé socialistické republiky*, Praha: ministerstvo vnitra, 1960), and so her birthplace is now the town of Město Libavá, as recommended by the authorities. As seen from her biographical notes, Milada Franková graduated from Masaryk University (then University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně, combination English and German) in 1968, and almost immediately started to work as an office clerk in London for the whole year, which was then possible to obtain during the Prague Spring climate, though not without a certain struggle and effort. Hence she displays excellent knowledge of the English idiomatic background. Her second job as an English language teacher at the State Language School in Brno, lasting around twenty years, contributed to her experienced work with students. Soon after another political ‘sea change’ in the Czech lands, the Velvet Revolution of 1989, she could not resist an offer of Dr. Don Sparling, then the head of the Department, to join them and help cultivate large crowds of future anglicists, who were suddenly allowed to study the English language and literature. Almost immediately she felt at home, among her admired mentors, Professors Jan Firbas and Josef Hladký, and Docent Lidmila Pantůčková, under whose tutelage she once studied. It was a great challenge for her to meet the new demands and become a literary scholar, urged and supported by Prague renowned scholars of Charles University, e.g. Professor Zdeněk Stříbrný and Professor Martin Hilský. As seen above, she managed to do so and has won a considerable acclaim in the university literary world.

Dear Milada, many happy returns! This is also meant to cover both the happy returns to your faculty office and your excellent research, and the happy returns to the colleagues and students who feel high esteem for your real interest in their problems, most elegant and polite manners, original thought, hard work, unique discipline and modesty, decent support and genuine relation to them all and to the Department of English and American Studies at Masaryk University, Brno.

Lidia Kyzlinková