

history and sexual psychology. The volume of meticulous research and the abundance of carefully-chosen visual material are equally impressive. *Secreted Desires* is unquestionably a major contribution to the long list of academic works published by Masaryk University.

Martina Vránová

Michal Peprník: *Topos lesa v americké literatuře* [The Topos of the Forest in American Literature]. Brno: Host, 2005. 252 pp., ISBN 80–7294–153–4.

The title of Michal Peprník's study suggests a comprehensive overview of the ways in which American authors have portrayed the theme of the forest. However, even a preliminary scan of the table of contents indicates a much narrower focus. The historical period covered is mostly early American literature and the only author discussed in any depth is James Fenimore Cooper. This limitation in scope is not a problem in itself, of course, but it may cause some disappointment to readers hoping for what the title promises. The brief introduction may also be somewhat misleading. Its witty style, unencumbered by jargon and multiple explanatory footnotes, will appeal to a broad range of readers. While occasional echoes of this style do recur in the following chapters, the text quickly becomes a scholarly analysis.

Peprník's book clearly targets Czech college students and may be quite helpful as a supplementary text in introductory courses on American literature. The frequent references linking certain elements in American and Czech cultures are Peprník's most valuable contributions. They draw the Czech reader into the discussion and they allow Peprník to make interesting observations on both cultures. For instance, in a chapter on the dark Puritan forest, Peprník contextualizes the contemporary violence between the Puritans and the indigenous population by reminding the reader that "zhruba v téže době na Prašné bráně viselo daleko více hlav a nebyly to hlavy 'krvežíznivých divochů'" [at about the same time many more bodies hung from the scaffolds in front of the Powder Tower in Prague and these were not bodies of 'blood-thirsty savages'] (53). Peprník's unorthodox references to Czech fairy-tales, often integrated into a rigorous academic definition of some abstract concept, are also refreshing and fitting. Perhaps most significantly, Peprník offers several unexpected, highly illuminating parallels between particular works of American and Czech literature. His comparison of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Karel Jaromír Erben's "Polednice" is especially revealing (199). Therefore, even if in some passages Peprník's unique commentary is overshadowed by concise summaries of established interpretations of canonical texts, his specific version of a Czech perspective on American literature offers numerous bright moments of surprising and delightful cross-cultural insight.

Kateřina Prajznerová

Zdeněk Stříbrný: *Proud času. Stati o Shakespeareovi* [The Flow of Time. Essays on Shakespeare], Praha: Karolinum 2005, 407 pp., ISBN 80–246–1018–3.

Conceived as a cross-section of the author's scholarly interests and achievement, the volume was planned to mark Professor Zdeněk Stříbrný's eightieth birthday and the almost sixty years of his academic career in English studies. When he embarked on it in the postwar 1940s, he had two generations of Czech specialists on English philology to lean on – the founding fathers of English studies in Czech universities, Vilém Mathesius, Bohumil Trnka, Otakar Vočadlo and Zdeněk Vančura – whose guidance he acknowledged and in whose tradition he continued. The reader learns about all this from the first, memoir-like chapter of *The Flow of Time*, which comprises almost a quarter of the book and affords intimate insights into the momentous events and landmarks of Professor Stříbrný's life and work. He describes his numerous opportunities to travel and undertake research in England and the US, which proved to be of crucial importance for him, particularly in his Shakespearean studies. On his visits to English and American universities and trips to conferences he encountered, and established friendships with scholars of resounding reputation, who influenced him