



## POSUDEK OPONENTA DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

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Studijní obor: **Anglická a americká literatura (dvouoborové navazující studium)**

Název práce: **Self-Destruction in the Works of Chuck Palahniuk**

Autorka práce: Bc. Tereza Lieders

Vedoucí diplomové práce: doc. PhDr. Ladislav Nagy, Ph.D.

Oponentka diplomové práce: Einat Adar, M.A., Ph.D.

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### Short characteristics of the thesis

The thesis examines the theme of self-destruction in Chuck Palahniuk's early novels and selected later novels, and positions it within the history of American literature. Self-destruction is a recurrent preoccupation of the author's work and the thesis seeks to understand its complex relation with personal freedom and resistance to contemporary society, as well as its development over time. The author reviews Palahniuk's oeuvre as a whole, then delves into the novels that foreground this theme – the early works *Fight Club*, *Survivor*, and *Invisible Monsters* and the later novels *Diary*, *Rant*, and *Snuff*. Drawing on interviews, non-fiction writing, and research of Palahniuk's work, Bc. Lieders argues that self-destruction is never complete in the novels, but rather a way to arrive at self-discovery and encourage creativity.

### Overall assessment

The author's knowledge and interest in transgressive novels and Palahniuk's work in particular is apparent in this thesis. The thesis is well written with minor mistakes, well-organized, and leads the reader confidently through the various discussions and arguments.

The thesis is based on extensive research and guides the reader through the development of the genre and Palahniuk's writing career. The first two chapters aim to offer a literary history context for the development of the genre, a project that seems to be ambitious for the scope of the work and remains at the level of broad generalization while omitting crucial historical developments. For example, the chapter on civil disobedience fails to mention the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr. – the American leader most identified with the concept. The chapter on violence is equally problematic and its only contribution to the thesis overall seems to be the introduction of the American Gothic genre which would benefit from a more focused discussion given its importance to Palahniuk's writing.

It is in the third chapter that deals with blank writing and the transgressive novel that the strengths of Bc. Lieders' research begins to shine through. The description of transgressive fiction and Palahniuk's biography are comprehensive and detailed, drawing on multiple sources to explain the emergence of transgressive fiction and the writer's position within it, as well as his artistic development. The author's capacity for nuanced interpretation and handling of thorny questions such as personal freedom and ethical responsibility is evident throughout her interpretations of the novels. She demonstrates that despite the obvious difference between the early and later work, the theme of self-



destruction not only remains central, but is also treated in a similar manner. The chapters make judicious use of scholarly work in combination with readings of specific passages to arrive at the conclusion that in Palahniuk's fiction, „No matter how bleak things might seem, violence and self-destruction is in the end always something that is paradoxically life-affirming.“ (p. 69)

If Bc. Lieders chooses to pursue her research further, as I would encourage her to do, she may want to consider the following suggestions: in the area of literary history focus on American Gothic specifically rather than violence in general since it seems the most relevant tradition for transgressive fiction; a more detailed comparison of *Fight Club* with Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* since both novels seem to make a similar use of the first person narrative to raise ethical issues; consider whether the term self-harm might be better than self-destruction, given the argument that such behaviours do not lead to total annihilation in Palahniuk's texts; add a queer perspective to your discussion of *Fight Club* and *Invisible Monsters* in particular, and Palahniuk's construction of genre in particular, since it seems that men and women seek to destroy themselves in different ways in his novels.

Last but not least, the thesis should follow more closely the conventions of academic writing in avoiding contractions such as he's or they're, and taking greater care in specifying the full name of authors when they first appear in the text, and subsequently family name only. In addition, the page numbers in the Table of Contents do not correspond to the page numbers of the text itself. The bibliography on the other hand, should be commended for its accuracy.

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

30.05.2019

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Datum

*Einet A.*

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Podpis