



POSUDEK OPONENTKY BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: **A Comparison between John Steinbeck's Characters – George Milton from 'Of Mice and Men' and Mordeen Saul from 'Burning Bright'**

Autorka práce: **Aneta Dibďáková**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Einat Adar, M.A. Ph.D.**

Oponentka bakalářské práce: **doc. PhDr. Mariana Machová, Ph.D**

Short characteristics of the thesis

The BA thesis compares (through the comparison of two characters) of one of John Steinbeck's critically most appreciated works, the first one of his play-novelettes, *Of Mice and Men* (1937), with his last play-novelette *Burning Bright* (1950), which figures among his least successful and rarely remembered works. The comparison of the two characters – George Milton and Mordeen Saul –, which forms the core of the thesis, is introduced by chapters providing the broader context of Steinbeck's life and works; the discussion of the characters moves from particular aspects of their physical, mental, moral and other characteristics to more general comparisons between the two works.

Overall assessment

Aneta Dibďáková's thesis is clearly a result of hard and diligent work. It is long and detailed, clearly focused on its topic, which is discussed thoroughly, and is based on an impressive range of reading of critical sources. The idea to compare these two particular works is good and interesting – while *Of Mice and Men* is a staple among students' essay topics, *Burning Bright* seems almost forgotten, and the student's decision to put these two works next to each other seems to shed interesting light on both of them. The chosen method – comparison of two major characters – seems also fortunate as it provides a clear focus and structure. The secondary sources used to support the reading of the texts are relevant, up-to-date and the student is able to use them efficiently to back her arguments.

The thesis is clearly and logically structured, although I think the structure would benefit from changes in the proportion and balance (and perhaps also from some cutting down). The chapter on Steinbeck's life seems unnecessarily long and detailed, all the more so because many of the details bear no clear relevance to the topic of the thesis and are hardly ever mentioned in the discussion of the two works. The chapter about the outer appearance of the two characters chosen for comparison was a bit of a let-down – it seems that the author feels obliged to include this chapter ("we cannot compare two characters without commenting on their appearances, because how they look is often related to who they are," p. 34, N.B. we should use "what they look like" here, not "how they look"), but the comparison does not yield much interesting insight (does the topic really deserve a separate chapter?). The crucial chapter on the comparison of the "inner characteristics" is the richest and offers the most interesting insights, but due to its length and lack of further inner structure seems somewhat difficult to navigate. It could



be well divided into two (or perhaps even more) parts – the latter part, which moves away from the immediate discussion of the characteristics to the comparison of the more general (and perhaps also more interesting) issues (moral, ethical, etc.) of the two works, could form a separate chapter, which would be both logical and helpful.

Overall, the thesis is written in good English, however, there are some recurrent issues of style that range from mere awkwardness ("Contrary to the happiness from previous success, in 1943 Carol and Steinbeck divorced", p. 12, "the ability to perform the feelings of a pregnant woman and her womb", p. 24) to straightforward error ("In this chapter will be compared both works", p. 24). The formulations are sometimes vague, unclear, and the reader has a difficulty to imagine what is meant and gets lost, especially when more abstract or theoretical issues are discussed (e.g. "The setting is inherently linked with American characters; therefore American mental image and ideas are linked, too. These are connected because people of various regions have different thinking about what they perceive as normal to do or possess according to how they idealize the place", p. 18). This is sometimes related to the uncertain use of terms (the quote above appears in a passage which discusses "regionalistic color" in Steinbeck – usually we speak either of "regionalism" or "local-color" in literature), which leads to vagueness that is out of place in academic style ("Steinbeck was a prolific author of American literature and the genre of prose fiction in general", p. 9). Sometimes, terms come as a surprise, without clearer contextual framing or further explanation (e.g. when Freudian terminology is suddenly used two-thirds into the thesis, on p. 38, "Secondly, George is the ego and Lennie is his id", without any reference to Freud or psychoanalysis or any hint of such approach elsewhere in the thesis. Of course, each of these issues would be negligible on its own, but there seem to be too many here for an excellent thesis.

There is an overuse of expressions stressing the subjectivity of the author's views ("in my opinion", "I am sure", but most conspicuously "I believe", which appears thirty times in the thesis) – such expressions should be used sparsely in academic style: you should have enough arguments to support your opinion to be able to present it as objective and, in fact, as truth.

There are also some formal issues, which might seem minor, but should be mentioned in the "opponent's" report: the thesis does not seem to use the MLA style which is recommended by the department, the typographical sign used for apostrophe does not seem to be apostrophe, italics are not used for the titles *Of Mice and Men* and *Burning Bright* which is the most common way to cite them.

Despite the issues mentioned above, the thesis certainly fulfils all the requirements for a BA thesis and I recommend it for defence with grade "very good", which I am open to revise on the basis of the author's performance at the defence.

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

4. 6. 2022

Datum

Podpis