

POSUDEK BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Jméno a příjmení studenta: Tereza Mašková
Název bakalářské práce: Short Stories of the American Civil War
Vedoucí bakalářské práce: PhDr. Christopher E. Koy, M.A., Ph.D.
Oponent: Mgr. Renata Janktová, M.A., Ph.D.

- I. Cíl práce a jeho naplnění: 3. Cíl práce byl adekvátní, ale jen částečně naplněný
- II. Struktura práce: 2. Přiměřená
- III. Práce s literaturou: 2. Velmi dobrá práce s adekvátními prameny v patřičném rozsahu
- IV. Formální stránka: 3. Nesplňuje některé zásadní požadavky
- VI. Jazyková úroveň práce: 3. Dobrá
- VII. Náročnost zpracování tématu: 3. Střední

Vyjádření vedoucího bakalářské práce:

The topic of Civil War short stories is certainly interesting, but there is more to be done than what this thesis accomplished, I am sorry to say. Additionally, the grammar and English writing, while I attempted my best, proved to be too rough a task. That all notwithstanding, an effort to contend with the issues was made and Ms Mašková dedicated time and labor to the task at hand.

I will first take issue with Ms. Mašková concerning her sentence near the bottom of page 8: „Moreover, southern soldiers were fighting for their tradition.“ This point has been emphasized by Southern romantic authors after the war. Few men realistically (but only in romantic fiction) fight for a tradition. Ms. Mašková should know that Abraham Lincoln was born and mostly grew up in Kentucky (a southern slave state) and had never endangered „southern tradition“ unless by „tradition“ Ms. Mašková means slavery. In studies such as a bachelor thesis, one must scrupulously avoid using euphemisms like „tradition“ (a positive word) replacing slavery (a negative word) instead of directly stating „slavery“ which was white Southerners' economic interest. (Southerners regularly deny that the Civil War was fought over slavery, but rather insist on anything else: tradition, independence, state's rights, or amazingly, freedom.) In the historical background chapter it should have been directly mentioned how slavery contrasted starkly with ideals expressed in the „Declaration of Independence“ („We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal“) as

well as the equal justice clause of the United States Constitution. Lincoln's presidency was a matter of making these ideal words of supposed law into a *de facto* reality in the United States; otherwise they are empty of any true meaning. Lincoln said, „If slavery isn't wrong, nothing is wrong.“ This contrast of the ideal and the real caused the Civil War in the United States.

The fact that Matthew Brady's photographic exhibits of post battle dead influenced writers to be realistic (rather than romantic) might have been better confirmed with some of the analyzed writers in mind. I suspect Bierce, Faulkner, Frederic or Chesnutt did not see these exhibits and then transformed themselves from romantic to realist writers of fiction, but I am prepared to stand corrected. In any case, if it is true, then by all means it should be indicated in the bachelor thesis.

The story „An Occurrence at the Owl Creek Bridge“ is essentially a story of attempted and failed sabotage, an act carried out by a civilian much like Poles, Czechs and French in the resistance did during the Nazi occupation during WWII in the first half of the 1940s. Sabotage occurs in nearly every war. Bierce's story might be universalized or applied (with obvious changed details) to virtually every war. Ms. Mašková resourcefully deploys a lot of secondary literature in this chapter, but fails to mention that fact that the main theme is a condemned man to give up hope. Bierce's thesis is that hope is just an illusion. Neither point gets the attention they both deserve.

The „deaf-mute“ boy in „Chickamauga“ might have been interpreted using the rather new theories falling under the rubric of „Disability Studies“ which are commonly applied to war fiction. In these theories, somewhat akin to Bierce's definition of realism Ms Mašková's cited, articulate how radically different perspectives are made available, much like the world famous musicological studies on blind musicians like pianist Art Tatum and Stevie Wonder to perceive and thereby create music differently than hearing musicians because of their disability. Bierce's perspective is accentuated further because the narrator's perspective is also just 6 years old. Though few would wish to classify „Chickamauga“ as children's literature even though the narrator is so young, we can assume that Bierce regards him as just a toad.

Like Bierce, Faulkner's short story is essentially from a civilian's perspective, though the civilian is neither a witness nor committing such direct sabotage as Ms. Mašková seems to suggest. Rosa Millard, who is also featured in Faulkner's other important short story „Grandmother Millard,“ becomes a Confederate Robin Hood, as Ms. Mašková somewhat correctly puts it, by selling, stealing and reselling mules to the Union Army, though without so much of Hood's sincere threat of violence. It has humor in it to which Ms. Mašková seems oblivious, as nothing of Faulkner's humor is presented in her analysis at all.

„The War Widow“ again lacks the narrative of direct war combat, but focuses on family left behind. It might have been more poignant for Ms. Mašková to emphasize the difference between an officer and a private (or „grunt“ in the vernacular) not merely regarding social class and respect; though this is not directly described in the story by Frederic, it is so strongly implied to be unavoidable. In this chapter particularly, what Ms. Mašková does is merely superficial plot summary.

It is important to stress that the story „Cecily's Dream“ is more of a civil war story than Ms. Mašková presents it to be. It is most closely describing what a combat soldier perceives and feels than any previous story she has analyzed. That there is an intertextual aspect to it is less significant than that a soldier nearly dies, is returned to health by a slave hiding him from her white masters, and that they fall in love is of even less significance. Ms. Mašková should be underscoring the fact that this is the first with slaves in the plot of a short story, and make much more out of it than she does. It is evident that on too many occasions, Ms.

Mašková depends on plot summaries and what others have written than her own direct encounter with the stories herself.

Práce splňuje základní požadavky kladené na tento typ prací, a proto ji doporučuji k ústní obhajobě.

Navrhovaná známka: dobře

Otázky k obhajobě:

1. Could you detect any humor in Faulkner's story? Can you cite a couple of examples?
2. If you write that southerners defended their „Southern traditions“, could you please specify what you meant?

Podpis vedoucího bakalářské práce: 

Datum: 12. 8. 2022

*nehodící se škrtněte