

Ms. Rydlová's B.A. thesis – review written by the supervisor

Ms. Rydlová's B.A. thesis, „A Serious Writer: Various Literary Techniques and Devices in the Selected Short Stories of Joyce Carol Oates from the 1960s and Early 1970s“, started as a very ambitious and broad project. From the very beginning, my role was to narrow down the intended scope, but at the same time, preserve the original intention. The result is, in my opinion, an inventive and fine piece of writing, reasonably structured and persuasive, too. Still, I feel I have to express my reservation concerning some of the issues and points we have been struggling with, and some that have occurred to me later.

While Ms. Rydlová's admiration for Oates's work is clear and her choice of the short stories for a detailed analysis wise, perhaps she could have taken a more critical position as well. Given the fact that Oates is an extremely prolific writer, there has to be weaker prose, too – see e.g. her novel *Zombie* from 1995, exploring the mind of a serial killer, that was not seen as serious by some critics at all. Also, I feel I have to warn Ms. Rydlová in one particular aspect: while Oates is an academic herself, it does not necessarily mean that the numerous interviews she has given – and also the reviews of her works – are serious enough for a thesis. In our case, they have served well, but I would be hesitant to proceed in that direction any further than that, and certainly not in the future (that is, on M.A. level).

Going through the body of Ms. Rydlová's text, I have the following remarks. As to her discussion of the 1960s, she seems to be putting emphasis on the „de-civilizing process“; does she think that by doing so, she is demythologizing the whole decade? I liked her use of the term „mimetic transcriptions“; could she perhaps develop on that? On p. 30, she is alluding to the narratives of the Beat Generation – could she support her argument? And a truly marginal note: in her Czech *Abstrakt*, the expression „z pohledu mysli“ strikes me as clumsy: how about replacing that with „z perspektivy mysli“?

My final questions revolve around Ms. Rydlová's conclusion. Does she believe that her statements, given the broader context of Oates's works, are universally valid? Could she perhaps at least hint at some of the other stories she has read, and what would have been achieved by e.g. brief references to them in the form of footnotes? And was Johana Lajdová's B.A. thesis, mentioned on p. 41, relevant to her own work? If so, how, and if not, why not?

If I am to compare, Ms. Lajdová's recent thesis was more focused and more grounded in theory than the present one. As a consequence, here, I am suggesting either the grade „výborně/excellent“, or „very good/velmi dobře“. As always, the final result will depend on the review written by the opponent, as well as on Ms. Rydlová's performance during the oral examination.

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Dr. Hana Ulmanová