

Opponent's Report on BA Thesis
SUPERMAN: THE AMERICAN NATION AND THE NEVER-ENDING STRUGGLE
by Ondřej Chvosta

This is an excellent work that is well written, intelligent and insightful. I appreciated the historical introduction and discussion of American heroes in general. The student is sensitive to the gradations of difference between European and American heroes, to the dynamics of modern mythology, and indeed to the differences between Superman and Batman. I thought his adduction of the transformations of twentieth-century US history for the contextualization of the cultural icon was well handled. (I am also incidentally grateful for his bringing the following immortal lines the Superman musical to my attention: "He brings the orphans Christmas turkey. / He flew my asthmatic son to Albuquerque.")

The student is perhaps a little too dismissive of the musical, stating that it "contained no serious message" (52). Surely it was being given a kind of camp treatment (viz., the lines quoted above about turkeys and Albuquerques) as a part of a wider reevaluation of the preceding decades, and constitutes an interesting chapter in the cultural history that is the subject of thesis. I have neither seen the musical nor read the libretto, but from the passages quoted, there seems to be an affectionate mockery present in the lines. That Superman was considered a fitting target for such deflation is also a testament to his importance. The student seems both hurt and amused by the demotion which the 1960s visited on the hero ("Superman has never *and should never* sing and dance!" [51]).

On a general point, the student invokes Roland Barthes at the beginning of the thesis and occasionally refers to him. It is inarguable that Barthes helped bring intellectual attention to the trivia of modern life, but the manner in which the Anglo-American academy has approached this subject is perhaps due as much to George Orwell's "Boys' Weeklies" (1940), in which he analysed boys' comics about life in English boarding schools, placing them in the context of imperial and business interests.

Although written very well, the thesis has a surprising number of typos, and the odd solecism ("main protagonist", "chief protagonist").

I have no hesitation in recommending the grade of **excellent (výborně)** and neither do I have any substantive points that need to be rebutted in the defence.



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