



Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

OPPONENT'S REPORT

B.A. THESIS

**Analysis of Political Dystopia in George Orwell and His Successors
Martin Šinal'**

All in all, the thesis contains enough substantial material to grade it either as **excellent (výborně)** or as **very good (velmi dobře)**. There are many accomplished parts, but a number of issues could have been addressed with more precision. To start with, the outline of the historical development of literary utopia and dystopia is sketchy; even within the scope of a BA thesis one could ask, for example, for a more complex discussion of More's *Utopia* (and of the term 'utopia' itself) as well as for a clearer presentation of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (i.e. is it argued that the fourth book is an anti-utopia or a utopia?).

The chapter on Orwell provides a balanced account of various interpretations of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but I'm puzzled by the apparent difference between Orwell's novel and *Brave New World*: "While Huxley criticizes the danger of misuse of technical development and devaluating naturalness of life, showing that 'when the object of desire is achieved easily, it loses its value,' *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is rather a result of the two decades before it was written—the rise and disastrous effects of totalitarian political regimes in Europe" (20). Could *Brave New World* be related to similar historical contexts?

Drawing on Tom Moylan's research, Mr. Šinal' subsequently introduces the distinction between dystopia and anti-utopia, which he utilizes throughout the entire thesis. What is achieved by this distinction? And is it difficult to divide texts into these two categories? Could *This Perfect Day*, for example, be classified as anti-utopian? In other words, where is the utopian horizon in the novel, given the conditions in the "free" world; where is the "happy ending" that the thesis insists on (p. 37)? Levin's novel, in fact, would have perhaps benefited from further analysis, particularly along the axis of gender, bearing in mind that Chip's journey to "freedom" is also a journey to conventional masculinity, one that involves the female character Lilac, whose own journey begins with rape and ends with her complete dependence on Chip.

On the other hand, as I have already pointed out, the thesis includes many convincing sections; for example the ambiguities of Atwood's novel are dealt with successfully and the work is discussed in its historical context (something that is missing in the chapter on Levin). Also, the concluding chapter, which approaches the aforementioned dystopias thematically, is a promising beginning of further reflections.

Pavla Veselá, PhD.
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