



Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

## OPPONENT'S REPORT

B.A. THESIS  
AMERICAN LITERATURE SPECIALISATION  
**Kurt Vonnegut's Humor in Three Cinematic Adaptations**  
Jana Samková

In this sharp and clearly structured thesis, Ms. Samková compares the cinematic adaptations of Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night* (Keith Gordon 1996), *Slaughterhouse-Five* (George Roy Hill 1972) and *Breakfast of Champions* (Alan Rudolph 1999) with their originals. Her aim is to comment on the different approaches of Rudolph, Gordon and Hill; to discuss their problematic translations of Vonnegut's humor into film; and to "objectively evaluate their final cinematographic products" (7). Besides discussing these concrete works, the student also introduces several adaptation theories and the concept of humor.

The strengths of the thesis, in my view, are the detailed readings of *Mother Night*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions* as these sections demonstrate Ms. Samková's good knowledge of the works as well as her ability to compare and contrast them. Based on these parts of the thesis, the text may be graded **excellent – (výborně –)**. The theoretical sections are rather brief and at times they present simplified statements such as "[...] in order to decode Vonnegut's humor, reality has to be faced. Thus it might be said that facing reality directly is the best way of staying sane" (16). How is this achieved in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, for instance? Does not David Ketterer's remark reproduced on page 33 complicate this point? Or, we read:

The relief offered by Vonnegut is based on the salutary feeling of not being alone. Vonnegut lets you know that he sees the world the way you do; that the very same things fill him with joy or sadness. He assures you that you are not completely abandoned. He does this by making you laugh; thus accepting you as a member of a very big international artificial family. (17)

This sounds overly simplified. Why is not (Vonnegut's) humor alienating, isolating, critical?

At places, the prose of the thesis is rather choppy. At the same time, the text is clear and formally clean, leaving aside the erroneously indicated block quotes and quotes within quotes, and the frequently missing hyphen in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (actually, why is the hyphen there?)

One last, obvious remark: in the fifth chapter (pages 49 and 50) and in the concluding paragraph (60), when Vonnegut is praised for his authorial presence in his literary works, it may have been worthwhile to note how fictitious this author is, how he consciously mixes reality and fiction even in the accounts of himself.



FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
UNIVERZITY KARLOVY  
V PRAZE

---



## Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

Nevertheless, on the whole, this is an agreeable BA thesis, and I congratulate the author on her accomplishment.

Pavla Veselá, PhD.  
25<sup>th</sup> January 2012