



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

**OPPONENT'S REPORT
BA THESIS**

**Sophie's Choice – Trauma of the Holocaust Survivor
Lucia Dombrovská**

Although the objective of “Sophie's Choice – Trauma of the Holocaust Survivor” is clear, the thesis could have accomplished more. The first problem is its rather poor English and recurrent basic errors such as “committed a suicide” (10), “many further researches [...] has led” (18) or “a problem which aroused with using this term” (23). The formatting of block quotes is incorrect and several entries in the bibliography include incomplete information (for example the very first entry). While these errors do not obscure the meaning, the candidate should have taken greater care preparing the manuscript for submission.

The theoretical underpinning of the project is interesting; however, it could have been treated more attentively. Ms. Dombrovská claims at the outset that “Styron admitted that there was a real Sophie underneath the character in the novel, who inspired him to write the story. Several questions arise here: How much of real Sophie did Styron describe in the novel? And how accurately did he portray her and her trauma?” (10) The first question is never dealt with. The answer to the second is that “chosen approaches confirmed that Sophie suffered from PTSD and CCSS as well” (54). Given the “diagnostic criteria” presented on p. 19 and pp. 30-33, this is a convincing conclusion. At the same time, it is not very ambitious. Moreover, although it is asserted that the thesis relies on Jungian theories of trauma (13), the link between the aforementioned two lists of symptoms and Jungian theories is not clear. It appears that the second chapter confuses various psychological approaches to trauma. Donald Winnicott, for example, was not a “Jungian psychoanalyst” (16) and if his theories overlap with those of Jung, the thesis should have clarified how. (In this context, I wonder why the thesis did not refer to the work of literary critics who wrote about trauma, such as Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra.)

The middle section on the Holocaust raises good questions (e.g. regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust or the terminology) and they could have been addressed in more depth. Finally, the discussion of *Sophie's Choice* is focused on the character of Sophie, which is understandable, but Ms. Dombrovská could have addressed other aspects of Styron's novel and drawn on further secondary sources. *Sophie's Choice*, as she observes, has received much criticism (although it is not true that “[n]one of Styron's previous novels caused such a controversial reaction” [52]: *The Confessions of Nat Turner* did.) Why, in fact, did she choose this particular novel? Could she discuss it in the context of other works that feature Holocaust survivors?

In conclusion, even for a BA thesis, the text has serious shortcomings. Depending on the defense, it could be graded either as “good” (3) or as “unsatisfactory” (4).

Pavla Veselá, PhD.
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