

Ms. Simonová's M.A thesis – review written by the supervisor

Ms. Simonová's thesis, Bernard Malamud's Selected Fiction in the Context of Black-Jewish Literary Relations, examines – in the given light – two relevant short stories („Angel Levine“, „Black Is My Favorite Color“) and one novel (The Tenants). Since Ms. Simonová is mainly interested in the socially constructed nature of identities, she analyzes the role of language and literature in constructing both individual and collective identities, as well as their performative aspect. Thus, she wisely relies on the research and subsequent findings of Butler, Searle, and Omi with Winant, and cleverly applies their theories.

Ms. Simonová's focus is clear, her thesis is neatly structured and her argument extremely persuasive, leaving no space for critical comments or reservations. The only thing she could have done more explicitly, in my opinion, is a passage in her conclusion that would openly state what she feels her own contribution to the current scholarship is like: namely, who are the authorities she fully supports, and whose lines of thought she believed she challenged. And one truly minor detail: once Ms. Simonová discusses the literary relations and representations, next to fiction, she deals with non-fiction, namely essays, too. While those are certainly texts as well, it seems to me that they by definition contain only a limited amount of irony, and thus end up being definitely less ambiguous than Malamud's selected works. Could Ms. Simonová address this issue at least briefly?

Having said all that, I also feel obliged to point out that Ms. Simonová's English is flawless; she writes with both precision and deep theoretical insight, and thus managed to produce an academic study that is way above the average expected at M.A. level. Therefore, should Ms. Simonová desire to pursue a PhD in the area of English and American literature, I believe she is a perfect potential applicant either at our university, or elsewhere in the world.

This being the case, I am proposing the following grade: výborně/excellent. Moreover, I firmly believe that Ms. Simonová's thesis should be considered for the Mathesius award. The final result, though, depends on Ms. Simonová's performance during the oral defense and on the review written by the opponent, as well as on the other theses submitted this academic year.

Prague, Aug 21, 2016

Dr. Hana Ulmanová