

Kryštof Beták's B.A. thesis – review written by the supervisor

Mr. Beták's B.A. thesis, *Absurdity and Identity in Heller's Catch-22*, is a neat interdisciplinary study, relying mainly on philosophy, psychology, and literary theory. In light of relevant findings from those fields of interest, Mr. Beták then proceeds to analyze the following literary "heroes": Yossarian, Doc Daneeka, and Chaplain Tappan. His thesis is appropriately structured, and with a suggested aim in his mind, Mr. Beták is able to lead his argument towards the obvious conclusion.

There is one question I feel obliged to ask, though. While Mr. Beták's focus on just one primary text is certainly legitimate, I believe he could have, for the sake of comparison, at least mentioned some other novels written either in the 1960s or even later that would bear similar "absurd" features and deal with the crisis of identity, too. There is a brief reference to Ken Kesey on p.56; is there truly no other author/work to be commented on?

This may also have some connection to the fact that while Mr. Beták's bibliography is certainly relevant to his project, there are not many contemporary sources listed. Is it because nowadays, Joseph Heller is not considered a major canonical writer in the American literary history – as opposed to the tremendous popularity and critical success he still enjoys in the Czech cultural context? Or are there other reasons as well?

As to Mr. Beták's language, it is always clear and concise, with just a few misprints (see e.g. p. 48: "tem" instead of "term"). I just wonder whether he could expand on the precise meaning of the following words, as they seem to be crucial for his thesis. On p. 42, he says "absurd and illogical bureaucracy" – is there, in his opinion, any noticeable difference between these two adjectives? On p. 47, he uses the phrase "more illogical", and on p. 49, "the absurd logic" – is that philosophically correct? And how would he define the words "rational" (see e.g. p. 53: "no rational position in the world") and "irrational" (for example "so many irrational situations" on the very same page)?

This being the case, I believe I can suggest the following grade: "excellent"/"výborně". The final result, though, depends also on the review written by the opponent, and on Mr. Beták's performance during the oral defense.

Dr. Hana Ulmanová

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