

## Bachelor Thesis Evaluation

Thesis title: *Canadian Literary Regionalism: Rural Ontario and Manitoba Prairies in the Works of Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence*

Author: Zuzana Ondová

Thesis Supervisor: Mgr. Klára Kolinská, M.A., PhD.

### Supervisor's Evaluation:

Zuzana Ondová's Bachelor thesis addresses a topic which is highly pertinent in Canadian cultural and literary studies: the notion of regionalism and its manifestations in selected examples of Canadian literature, with the focus on prose fiction. And it can be stated that, especially considering the fact that this is a Bachelor-level thesis, it is an accomplished, competent study which fulfills all the requirements for a successful defence.

The thesis is purposively divided into four chapters, proceeding logically from general considerations towards specific literary analysis. The first chapter discusses the notion of regionalism in the Canadian historical and cultural context, and its relation to the development of national identity formation in the country. The chapter is sufficiently researched for theoretical sources, and generally presents a convincing argumentation; the only potential objection that could be raised here is that the author creates an impression of relying on the sources a little too passively, and avoids engaging in considering the historical causes of the strength and dominance of regionalist discourse in Canada – which would add usefully to the understanding of the particular literary texts as well. Perhaps this could be addressed briefly during the defence?

The second chapter is dedicated to the discussion of regionalism in Canadian literature; the author explains the difference between the so-called formal regionalism and a more complex approach to literary regionalism which rests upon the application of imagination and artistic creativity, and occasionally results in formulating fictional landscapes and regions, as contrasted to “merely” geographical ones, while being inevitably inspired by those. The author does not attempt to address this second type of regionalism conceptually – can a “name,” a term, be proposed for this type?

The third chapter then proceeds to concrete analytical part: it provides a detailed analysis of Margaret Laurence's central novel *The Diviners*, published in 1974, which represents a

culmination of the author's Manawaka cycle of prairie realism fiction. The asset of this chapter is that the author does not proceed mechanically, but focuses on selected topics within Laurence's regionalism which are well justified and well documented. It is mainly the analysis of how regional history and topography influence the construction of the system of moral values and social hierarchies – a part that the author aptly names Laurence's "moralized landscape." The ethical implications thereof are symbolized in the novel by the presence of the Metis Tonnerre family, to which the author rightly dedicates an important part of her analysis. This chapter, in my view, represents the strongest part of the thesis. Here, I would only ask what the author thinks critic Clara Thomas means by claiming that Laurence's dedication to social problems is her "most readily identifiable western Canadian quality"?

The fourth chapter continues the analytical part by analysis Alice Munro's collection of short stories *Dance of the Happy Shades*, published in 1968, and representing one of the most famous examples of the genre known as Southern Ontario Gothic. The chapter and the choice of text for analysis and comparison are well justified by several factors: Laurence's and Munro's interest in specific regions and regionalist writing, their generational affinity, and also the fact that they both are female authors, which gives a peculiar character to their fiction. In comparison to the third chapter though, this part, if correct in argument and likewise well documented, seems to be a little flatter, not engaging in the depth into which it could have gone – I wonder whether this is given by the difference between the two genres Laurence and Munro use, that is, between a novel and a short story? Could this, also, be addressed in the defence?

All things considered, however, Zuzana Ondová's Bachelor thesis is, indeed, a successful undertaking; one other asset of it is the fact that it is, apart from a couple of oversights and minor blemishes, written in a cultivated, well-developed academic English with very few mistakes.

For all the above reasons, I recommend Zuzana Ondová's Bachelor thesis for defence with suggested evaluation of EXCELLENT.

Mgr. Klára Kolinská, M.A., PhD.

thesis supervisor