



Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

OPPONENT'S REPORT

B.A. THESIS

Decline of Southern Aristocracy in the Selected Novels of William Faulkner Jan Mackal

Having provided the “Southern myth” with a concise history of its emergence, the thesis systematically and eloquently discusses the role of “aristocratic” Southern beliefs and morals in two novels of William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury*. A significant portion of the thesis is devoted to character analysis and to the reconstruction of major events of the two novels, but in Faulkner’s case, this is inevitable, and the candidate does ultimately illustrate how in Faulkner’s fiction the adherence to the past values of “Southern aristocrats” leads to the destruction of the protagonists.

Since I do not have any issues with the candidate’s exceptionally thorough and straightforward reading of the two novels, we could perhaps return to his introduction, where the origin of the “Southern myth” is addressed. The alleged contrast between the North and the South, for example, could be argued with. Does the candidate himself see any limitations of the division he sets up on p. 17? Moreover, his definition of the South is dependent on the very beliefs and morals that he criticizes; could he suggest a less “mythical” definition of the Southern region, one that would not center on the ideals of the “Southern aristocracy”? Is it true that even in the twenty-first century, the “Southern myth” still “constitutes the bases of the distinct Southern worldview” (3)?

The defense could also possibly discuss Faulkner’s persistent engagement with (Southern) history, perhaps in the context of Modernism. To that end, maybe, the candidate could first sketch Faulkner’s attitude towards the past in general, as exemplified for example by the choice of his characters or his narrative method. What motivated his incessant explorations of Yoknapatawpha’s history? Nostalgia? Trauma? His cultural milieu? The market?

Proposed grade: **Excellent** (výborně)

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