

## **Posudek oponenta**

### **na bakalářskou práci Blanky Synkové „A Comparison of Short Stories by Katherine Mansfield and Elizabeth Bowen“**

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The reasons for the comparison of the two authors and the selection of works are clearly defined and are sensible. The BA thesis itself is very efficiently organised and incredibly systematic. It is highly descriptive and manages to function as a basic guide surveying the various elements of the analysed stories.

Nevertheless, it remains a pity that the extensive number of quoted passages rarely leads to major enlightening interpretation. The quotations are most frequently used merely as illustrations of a point made as part of some assertions and statements. Especially the first chapter is rather weak in this sense— what precisely is the influence of Colette and Dickens? The quotations are supposed to speak for themselves (pp.21/22). Every writer uses some visual imagery, some go for more sensual appreciation of colour etc., but what is so specific about the nature of the “verbal painting” (p.22) of Bowen and the post-impressionist influence on Mansfield? All these questions arise from the major flaw of this thesis which becomes obvious already from the first chapters – the writers are characterised by a series of observations that arise from secondary sources, these characterisations are declared and then merely illustrated by a quotation (or a mere string of quotations, as on page 33 etc.). Such analysis seems barely sufficient to explain away all the problematics of artistic and/or biographical influence on a work of literature.

Despite the systematic organization, the constant movement from one author to another and from one story to another without much inner consistently logical development, transitions become confusing.

Themes, character types, endless lists of functions of objects ultimately also end up being merely enumerated. Thus, the thesis reads as a survey rather than an enlightening act of interpretation dealing with the similar creative strategies both of Mansfield and Bowen.

Another point comes to mind pertaining to the outsider/insider perspective as mentioned in the thesis: This duality is a useful insight, but it mostly remains on the level of the observation that some stories are set in exotic locations. It must be said that it is not only a matter of where the stories are set, but should be more a case of “dual national identity” (page 14): how is this duality reflected in the fiction? For example, is there a duality in perspective? Does the fact that both writers come from colonies (though of a different status) colour their approach to standard English forms of writing? In what way do the writers deal with a possible split of identity in relation to form or writing?

To conclude, the thesis is a very useful comprehensive survey but unfortunately not much beyond that. There is only basic analysis and the study remains primarily descriptive. Despite these flaws, it certainly does meet the requirements for a BA thesis and thus I recommend it

for defence. The preliminary grade is between very good and good (**velmi dobře až dobře**).  
The final result will depend on the student's defence.

V Praze dne 31.8.2011

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oponent práce