

**KATEDRA ANGLISTIKY A AMERIKANISTIKY FF UP V OLOMOUCI**  
**Hodnocení bakalářské práce**

Autor: Filip SALCBURGER

Název práce: **A Close Reading of Samuel Beckett's *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* in Contrast to James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man***

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Oponent: Prof. PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr.

	Hodnocení A, B, C a F (nevyhovující)	Poznámky
1/ Cíl - záměr: vymezení	F	I am familiar with both of these books, and I do not find them so similar (see question 1 below). A comparison was NOT the original topic which was agreed on for this thesis
splnění	F	The background information on the authors is okay, but there is precious little literary analysis here. The title of the thesis is “a close reading”: as Beckett has said elsewhere, “It is not.”
2/ Argumentace (schopnost formulovat východiska a závěry, logická koherence, schopnost generalizace a konkretizace)	F	“I find there to be a certain difficulty in attempting a definite reading of <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> , as well as in producing an in–depth analysis of any of Joyce’s books.” (12) I don’t think it’s that difficult; thousands of others have done it. <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> is a pretty straightforward book.  I find this thesis almost totally incoherent: see comments below.
3/ Znalost primární literatury	F	“Stephen Dedalus is born into a wealthy Dublin family,” so

		begins part 4.1 of the analysis. He was not.
4/ Znalost sekundární literatury (rozsah, adekvátnost)	F	Not appropriately chosen, see below
5/ Samostatnost (schopnost odborné polemiky, kritický úsudek), originalita		
6/ Formální úroveň (dodržování zvolené bibliografické normy)		Bc. theses probably don't belong in the Bibliography  The annotation is not in the proper UP format + hasn't been spell-checked
7/ Jazyková a stylistická úroveň práce	?	The English is lavish, but over-written. It should be much more to the point.
8/ Jazyková a stylistická úroveň resumé		
9/ Typografické provedení, úprava	C	Some minor typos/grammatical mistakes
10/ Poznámka k práci		See below

In all conscience, I **cannot pass** this thesis for the following reasons:

- 1) It is not on the agreed-upon topic.
- 2) It does not even do what it purports to do – “close reading” of two books.
- 3) The argumentation is weak at best, and unconvincing.
- 4) Similarly, secondary sources are poorly-chosen and/or inappropriately used.
- X) Overall, it reads as a hasty first draft, submitted in desperation.

#### 1) Topic

The original topic was the influence of Joyce and Dante on Beckett – it might have been interesting to trace those influences and then see how Beckett developed his own style... but this thesis doesn't do that.

#### 2) Close reading?

The quote on p. 16 from *Portrait* for example:

*His daily life was laid out in devotional areas. By means of ejaculations and prayers he stored up ungrudgingly for the souls in purgatory centuries of days and quarantines and years; yet the spiritual triumph with ease so many fabulous canonical penances did not wholly reward his zeal of prayer [...] The rosaries, too, which he said constantly – for he carried his beads loose in his trousers' pockets so that he might tell them as he walked the streets [...] He had no temptations to sin mortally. It surprised him however to find that at the end of his course of intense piety [...] he was [...] at the mercy of childish and unworthy imperfections.*

is given by no means a close reading, as the candidate fails to see, or at least note, the double entendres of the words “ejaculations” and “he carried his beads loose in his trousers’ pockets so that he might tell them as he walked the streets”. What is more, I cannot understand the focus on this passage. While Stephen’s trials and tribulations in studying for the priesthood vs. grappling with his sexual yearnings are a part of *Portrait*, the book is about so much more than that – and the emphasis on this section is not pertinent to *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*.

It makes me wonder if the candidate has read either book at all. Certainly not “closely” – and that is supposed to be the theme of the thesis.

### 3) Argumentation

The only argument I can find in the entire thesis is that both books are partly autobiographical and both deal with the early sexual experience(s) of their protagonists. Not very convincing in terms of comparing two literary works....

The two books are **finally** compared on pages 23 and 24 of the thesis, with the following passages:

#### Portrait:

*She passed her tinkling hand through his hair, calling him a little rascal. —Give me a kiss, she said.*

*His lips would not bend to kiss her. He wanted to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly [...] With a sudden movement she bowed his head and joined her lips to his and he read the meaning of her movements in her eyes. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips.*

#### Dream:

*But in the morning, not too bright or early, she would skip in in a most rudimentary woollen gymnasium sheath, the plump bright bare fleshstilts warmed up ad rudorem, and make tea to be drunk with a lemon. For weeks, until what we are about to relate to you came to pass, that was the best hour of the day [...]*

*Until she raped him.*

*Then everything went kaputt.*

*The implacable, the insatiate, warmed up this time by her morning jerks to a sexy sudorem, she violated him after tea. When it was his express intention, made clear in a hundred and one subtle and delicate ways, to keep the whole thing power and above-bawd.*

Here is the candidate’s “close reading”/analysis:

*When juxtaposed and compared side-by-side, the similarity in Beckett and Joyce’s approach to the theme is more than obvious. (23)*

Is it “more than obvious”? It is not even slightly obvious to me.

Immediately afterwards the candidate states: “Nonetheless, so are the differences.”

So: the two are more than obviously similar and yet different. I do not see this, nor is this adequately explained... and this is supposed to be the crux of the thesis.

I find this “argumentation” far too weak for a thesis.

#### 4. Secondary sources

The candidate quotes Paul Hannigan in the *Harvard Review* to make a comment on the plot of the book. Describing the plot is something the candidate can and should do himself. I do not understand why he uses this source: Hannigan’s brief book review of the novel states that it is “[c]ertainly the worst [novel] I have read from cover to cover”.

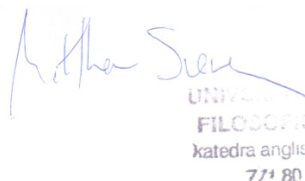
X) The candidate has not proven to me that he is really familiar with the books in question. Nothing is mentioned about why Beckett saw his first novel as a failure, nor how he reworked parts of it into his much better book *More Pricks Than Kicks*. Nothing is said of the literary styles of the two books, which is incomprehensible to me. What are these books “about”? How do their authors tell their stories, and why? What is the point of fictionalizing one’s life? Why is one considered a literary masterpiece and the other not? Etc.

Závěr:

Práce ~~je~~ není doporučena k obhajobě.

Navržený klasifikační stupeň: F

V Olomouci dne 23. 08. 2018

  
UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO  
FILOSOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky  
771 80 OLOMOUČ

Vedoucí ~~oponent~~ bakalářské práce