



POSUDEK OPONENTA DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglická a americká literatura**

Název práce: **Vampirism and Queerness in Nineteenth-Century Literature**

Autorka práce: **Bc. Eva Pečenková**

Vedoucí diplomové práce: **Einat Adar, MA, Ph.D.**

Oponentka diplomové práce: **doc. PhDr. Mariana Machová, Ph.D.**

Quality of Research

1) Please rate the following statements about the thesis on a scale of 1 (insufficient) to 3 (excellent)

1. The topic of the thesis is suitable for the scope and well defined: 3
2. Sets clear goals or questions for research: 3
3. Delivers significant research findings: 3
4. Demonstrates conceptual clarity and accuracy: 3
5. Demonstrates a good understanding of the literary works discussed: 3
6. Demonstrates a good understanding of the critical field: 3
7. Engages with sufficient scholarship in a meaningful way: 2
8. Shows independent thinking and originality: 3

2) Comment briefly on the quality of the research presented in the thesis:

The topic is clearly stated and all the main points are well argued and amply supported with references to both primary and secondary sources of which the author has a very good command. At the same time the thesis offers the author's original input and insight.

Quality of Writing

1) Please rate the following statements about the thesis on a scale of 1 (insufficient) to 3 (excellent)

1. Has a clear and suitable structure: 3
2. Employs appropriate register and academic style: 2
3. Uses correct and relevant terminology: 3
4. Adheres to academic thesis guidelines, format and MLA style guide: 3
5. Written in correct and fluent English (both grammar and vocabulary): 3
6. Carefully edited with few typos or mistakes: 2

2) Comment briefly on the quality of the writing presented in the thesis:

The thesis is clearly and logically structured and written in a very readable and engaging, yet clearly academic style. It is also sound on the formal level, although with an occasional typo or a minor error. On a few occasions, the sentences are a bit vague or imprecisely worded, but overall the quality of writing is high.



Overall Review and Assessment

(short description of the thesis and its findings, what has been achieved, and areas for improvement)

The thesis offers an examination of the role of queer sexuality and gender reversal in two Victorian novels dealing with the vampiric topic. One of them is the most significant work of the genre, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and the other is much less known, but similarly relevant novel, Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*, both published in 1897. The thesis puts both in the context of sexuality, and specifically the taboo queer sexuality, in Victorian England, and reads the novels insightfully in this context, focusing primarily on the implicit homosexuality in *Dracula*, and on the potentially lesbian sexuality in Marryat's novel. The issues of queer sexuality are closely connected to the question of gender reversal, which are examined attentively in with attention to subtle details of the texts of the two novels.

The choice of the topic and the material is fortunate (I particularly appreciate the inclusion of Marryat's novel as it offers an important counterpart to the obvious choice of *Dracula*) and the thesis keeps its focus and its obvious enthusiasm about the topic throughout. It reads very well and keeps the reader's attention alert, balancing the contextual information, the critical views and the analyses of the texts of the novels to build its argument. The thesis works with an impressive bibliography and uses her sources well to support its claims (although on occasions I noticed some general claims – mostly about the Victorian society – that would have benefited from a reference to an authoritative source). At the same time, it demonstrates the student's ability to offer her own well-informed readings which are not derivative but are based on the closely read texts of the novels.

While the occasional typo or language error can be easily overlooked and do not offer a major obstacle to the enjoyment of reading the thesis, there are also more problematic mistakes in phrasing and style. Sentences like, e.g. "Harriet Brand provides the reader with a more ambiguous reading of her character", should be thought through better and rephrased to be academically sounder (the sentence basically says that the character provides the reader with a reading of the character, which is bordering on nonsensical). Fortunately, these are not many. In a similar manner, in terms of style, I was mildly bothered by the slightly banal and vague conclusions to the individual chapters that do not live up to the standards set by the analyses themselves: "Stoker's *Dracula* thus expresses numerous anxieties that Victorian society had regarding queer individuals, or Others in general" is a bit disappointing ending of an otherwise engaging and insightful analysis of the role of homosexuality in the novel; so is the last sentence of the analysis of Marryat's novel: "Overall, the entire text is written in a way that allows for many ways of understanding it."

I felt it was a shame that the comparison of the two novels remains largely implicit – it is explicitly discussed only in the relatively short "Conclusion" and is rather limited and superficial. It would deserve a more in-depth commentary.

However, these are minor reservations, which I need to mention as the opponent of the thesis. I enjoyed reading the thesis and I am happy to say that it perfectly fulfills the requirements for an MA thesis and propose the grade of excellent.

Questions for Defence

(please provide two questions for the student to answer during their defence)

1. Could you develop the comparison of the two novels and their portrayal of sexuality?



2. Could you comment more on the relationship between sexual desire and the longing for love in the character of Harriet Brandt? How do the two relate to her destructive (and eventually self-destructive) power?

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **výborně**

30. 5. 2023

Datum

Podpis

* Numerical assessments are provided as a guideline for recommending the final grade following an indicative scale:

over 38 "výborně"

32-38 "velmi dobře"

28-32 "dobře"

below 28 points the work is in danger of failing.

The final grade will be determined by the committee following the thesis defence.