



POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura**

Název práce: **The Concept of Identity and femininity in the Handmaid's Tale**

Autorka práce: **Tijana Aleksičová**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **doc. PhDr. Nagy Ladislav, Ph.D.**

Oponentka bakalářské práce: **Einat Adar, M. A., Ph.D.**

Quality of Research

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

The topic of the thesis is suitable for the scope and well defined: 2

Sets clear goals or questions for research: 2

Demonstrates conceptual clarity and accuracy: 2

Demonstrates a good understanding of the literary work(s) discussed: 3

Engages with the subject critically and analytically: 3

Uses relevant scholarship meaningfully: 3

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

The author employs multiple perspectives to analyse aspects of the novel and the world it depicts, using an impressive range of secondary sources which are well integrated with the author's own arguments. This choice was problematic since the project is not focused on any particular issue and no central overall argument has been made. Some of the methodologies used in the analysis, e.g., the linguistic analysis, are deployed with impressive nuance and generate meaningful insights, while others, e.g., sociology, are applied only superficially and tend more towards description. It would have been better to choose only one or two approaches and go deeper into the complexity of the text.

Quality of Writing

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

Has a clear and suitable structure: 3

Employs appropriate register and academic style: 3

Uses correct and relevant terminology: 3

Adheres to academic thesis guidelines, format and MLA style guide: 2

Written in correct and fluent English (both grammar and vocabulary): 2

Carefully edited with few typos or mistakes: 1

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

The thesis structure and overall argumentation are clear and appropriate for the project, and the text reflects a good understanding of academic writing principles and good proficiency in English. Although the work generally follows the MLA guidelines, the Works Cited section contains multiple mistakes, from missing authors (*New York Times* article), through conflation of editors and authors (e.g., article by Canaday in a volume edited by Bloom), authors and translators (e.g., Foucault), italicising publishers instead of book titles, to baffling citations such as 'Margaret Atwood (2006). "Writing with Intent: Essays, Reviews, Personal Prose: 1983-2005", p.92, Basic Books' which is further classified under the writer's first name at M instead of with the other works by the



author under her family name. The general impression is of a text that was developed with care and attention but then completed with great haste and without much attention to details. This is also reflected in the much lower level of English in the introduction.

Overall Review and Assessment

This thesis studies Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale* from a feminist perspective, centering three key issues in the text – identity, language, and femininity. The discussion of identity highlights the pressures exerted on the protagonist's self-image and the mechanisms she employs to defend herself against them. The linguistic analysis shows how the authoritarian state in the novel is using language to shape its citizens' perception of themselves and reinforce their ideology, similar to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*. The final analysis chapter covers three important topics – the Puritan heritage, the division of women along the Madonna/ whore dichotomy, and the influence of strict gender upbringing on children.

Overall, the author maintains a high level of literary analysis, drawing on diverse theories to make her case and incorporating a wealth of critical sources without losing her own line of argumentation, which is an impressive achievement. This approach may seem to be called for by the rich texture of the world imagined by Atwood, but as indicated above, prevents the author from delving deeper into any of the aspects which she skilfully presents. For example, Chapter 2 which deals with identity describes the different ways in which the theocratic regime attempts to deprive the protagonist from any trace of personality, both materially in the form of personal space, personal belongings, etc. and psychologically by enforcing a uniform behaviour and social role on her. Then, the defence mechanisms employed by the protagonist are listed. However, unlike the static picture presented in the chapter, the novel describes a more dynamic process wherein the protagonist's sense of self changes and develops through the novel, while the abstract ideology of the Gilead state gives rise to tensions and contradictions that threatens the seemingly monolithic society. This dynamism is indicated in the thesis, but not developed.

Overall, I would say that the author's ability to work with theories from a range of disciplines and apply them to the text exceeds the expectations from a B.A. thesis, and I hope that she would develop her research in the future.

Questions for Defence

1. How would you compare Atwood's novel with Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*? Is her achievement mainly in creating a female-centric version of his dystopian world or does the novel offer other literary values?
2. How would you answer Le Guin's accusation that Atwood is purposefully using an outdated definition of science fiction in order to reinforce her position as a "high brow" writer? You mention it in the introduction, but you don't seem to discard the notion in the summary without a counter-argument which I would be interested to hear.

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

9. 8. 2023

Datum

Podpis