



POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura — Německý jazyk a literatura**

Název práce: **Strong Female Characters in Thomas Hardy's Novels**

Autorka práce: **Kateřina Suchanová**

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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: 1

Demonstrates conceptual clarity and accuracy: 2

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

Engages with the subject critically and analytically: 2

Uses relevant scholarship meaningfully: 3

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

The thesis is quite ambitious, covering three novels, but without a clear focus or a single research question, the result is a thesis that is too long (almost 80 pages) and tends to be descriptive rather than analytical. Another issue is reliance on non-academic sources such as YouTube videos or general audience websites, especially in the chapter on the Victorian Era, which leads to a superficial view of the topics.

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: 2

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

Overall the thesis is well-written and adheres to academic style. Still, there are some recurring mistakes in English, for example wrong word order in sentences such as 'One of the reasons for the marginalization represents her exotic origin' on p. 27, or wrong usage such as 'vicious circle' to mean an 'endless circle' on p. 29. Similarly, the thesis generally follows the MLA style correctly, but the bibliography is not so well edited. For example, two essays from *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (Boumelha, Brady and Gatrell) cite the same collection in different ways, one presents the editor as the author and the other does not mention him at all, and the third has the title in all caps. Also, I would recommend not including links to PDF drive where the books are illegally obtained.



Overall Review and Assessment

This thesis studies three female main characters in Thomas Hardy's novels: *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Following an introductory chapter on the status of women in the Victorian era, the thesis studies three important aspects in the formation of these characters – their social environment and financial situation, their ambitions, and their sexual and love life which are an important plot drivers in all three novels. Overall, the author exhibits an intense appreciation for Hardy's achievements in presenting relatable and original female protagonists, and the wide range on reading about the period and his work. The thesis has a clear structure although breaking up the discussion of each novel into three separate parts sometimes leads to repetition and does not provide the reader with a holistic view of each novel. On the positive side, this structure does allow the author to present the broader themes arising out of Hardy's work more generally, and highlight similarities and differences among the novels. It would have been even better if the author had included a short summary to each chapter that will make the comparison among the novels more visible and understandable.

My biggest issue with this thesis is the lack of a clear project for the work and lack of focus. In the introduction the author claims three different goals for the work – to show Thomas Hardy's attitudes and criticism on issues related to women, depict the personalities and motivations of the heroines in his novel, and highlight the exceptional qualities of his female-centred works (p.12). Out of these three, the thesis mostly deals with the second goal – describing the protagonists of the chosen novels. This is reflected in the conclusion which talks only about 'the exceptionality and distinctive qualities of Hardy's heroines' (p.69). This goal is on the one hand too vague to judge whether it was achieved or not, and on the other it is hard to talk about exceptionality without comparing the novels with any other Victorian work centred around an original female protagonist.

Despite these shortcomings in the conception of the project, the thesis is well-written and very fluent in its presentation of the materials, and the author engages with an impressive list of sources. The reasoning is persuasive for the most part and I particularly liked the research into contemporary reviews and reactions as a way of showing how provocative these novels were at the time.

Questions for Defence

1. What would you say are the most important findings of the thesis, what did you learn that you had not realised about the novels before?
2. In his novels, Hardy has described women who go against the conventions of their society, but as you note in the thesis, two of them die and the third conforms to social expectations. In your view, could they really be seen as role models for women or do they instead serve to reinforce conventions by showing the price women pay for trying to break out of their assigned roles?

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

18. 8. 2023

Datum

Podpis