



POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: **The Expression of Identity and Emotions in the Life and Work of Anne Lister**

Autorka práce: **Eliška Nováková**

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

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

Stručná charakteristika práce / Short characteristics of the thesis

This thesis studies the diaries of 19th century Canadian writer Anne Lister. The diaries, written for her own private use and partially encrypted, reveal many of the thoughts and emotion of a woman whom today we would call a Lesbian, but at the time lacked the vocabulary and concepts to define herself as such. They describe a woman who was confident in her sexuality but struggled to establish a long-lasting relationship in a strictly heteronormative society, and who suffered occasionally from suspicion and hatred due to her non-gender conforming behaviour. The thesis covers key subject about the diaries: their material history and role in the writer's life, Lister's non-conformist appearance and her understanding of her own identity, her sexual relationships, and her family.

Celkové zhodnocení / Overall assessment

The choice of subject for this thesis is original, showing an ability to go beyond the required curriculum on the one hand, and the romanticised images projected by popular culture on the other. Lister's character is treated in the thesis in a balanced manner which sympathises with the plight of the writer whose sexuality did not conform to the repressive norms of her time, yet without trying to romanticise her life or overlook her moral failings and manipulative attitude towards others.

The main strength of the thesis is the ability to synthesise a coherent life narrative out of the disparate details in the diaries and present it in a coherent and systematic manner. Overall, the structure of the thesis and the level of writing are suitable to the subject and the requirements of academic writing, and the text is fluent and intelligent. However, the writing does not fully follow the MLA style, for example quotes are sometimes italicised instead of presented in normal typeface, the diaries are incorrectly cited using the editor's name rather than Lister, etc. In particular, referring to Anne Lister by her first name Anne is not only incorrect and detracts from the respect due to her as a writer, it is often confusing when the discussion mentions other women called Anne or Ann.

One topic which would be interesting to discuss with regards to the diaries is the relation between writing and the formation of identity, which is not consistently treated throughout the thesis. The author opens with an important distinction between life events and their representation in writing, even such an intimate text as a diary. The author also questions Lister's motivations and self-presentation in multiple cases, for



example her disapproval of her sister Marian's suitors (51) and mentions some contradictions in the diary (53). This implies a constructivist approach to both identity and writing which sees the diary as part of the process of self-understanding. Such a process stands in contrast with the view of a stable, fully formed self that is implied by claims such as that "Her diary simply depicts her raw, unaltered self." (11) Questions such as the formation of the self and the interplay between language and identity are inherent to any form of life writing and would probably not be resolved by a single B.A. thesis, but the author should consider where the diaries under discussion stand in this dichotomy and present at least a consistent approach.

The excellent work with the primary sources is, moreover, marred by insufficient contextualisation of the materials which is also reflected in the extremely short bibliography which lists only three sources besides the diaries themselves. More research into topics such as attitudes towards gender and textuality, life writing in the Victorian age, or theoretical approaches to forming identity through writing, would help the thesis contextualise the diaries and go beyond the unusual life story into more general historical and theoretical topics. One small example is the sensitive treatment by the author of the alcoholism of Lister's mother and her daughter's disapproval of her behaviour (49). Historical background about the prevailing views at the time of child loss, grieving, and alcoholism, would provide the necessary background for understanding both the mother's addiction and her daughter's lack of sympathy.

Finally, I would like to commend the author on her interest in the archival aspects of the texts, and her attention to the history of their transmission and discovery. If she intends to proceed with this project, or similar ones, I would recommend learning more about the particularities of working with archive materials.

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **velmi dobře**

26.5.2022

Datum

Podpis