



POSUDEK OPONENTKY BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura**

Název práce: **The Reception of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl***

Autorka práce: **Barbora Houšková**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **doc. PhDr. Mariana Machová, 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: 3

Sets clear goals or questions for research: 3

Demonstrates conceptual clarity and accuracy: 3

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 briefly on the quality of the research presented in the thesis:

This thesis achieves a high level of research on the chosen topic of the reception of Harriet Jacobs' autobiography from its inception to the present day. It is clear that the student has made an effort to encompass the existing scholarship on the chosen topic and presents it with accuracy and fluency.

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: 3

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

Carefully edited with few typos or mistakes: 1

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

Overall, the thesis is well-written and leads the reader confidently through a coherent narrative about the reception of Jacobs' work. It employs a high level of academic writing with great flexibility and variety of grammar and vocabulary. Unfortunately, the high ambition of the thesis leads to mistakes in usage, word order and set phrases, for example on p. 37 "both of whom testify Linda's authorship" instead of "both of whom testify to Linda's authorship". It should be noted that such mistakes did not diminish the understandability of the text or the overall fluency, but better linguistic editing should have done away with them.



Overall Review and Assessment

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

This thesis follows the publication history and reception of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* taken as an exemplary text of a slave narrative written by a woman. The key term of 'intersectionality' is used effectively to describe the way Jacobs' experience under slavery and the fate of her manuscript were defined by the double oppression of her gender and race which creates a unique experience that cannot be understood from a single perspective.

The thesis finds that Jacobs had great difficulty in writing and then publishing her account without much support and encouragement. This case is powerfully made in sub-chapter 3.4 where Jacobs' treatment by her publisher is compared with Frederik Douglass and Walt Whitman who also published with the same publishing house. As a whole, the thesis charts the narrative of a text which was brought to public attention with great difficulty, was successful and favourably appreciated by its immediate audience but was forgotten soon after. It picks up in the 20th century with the growing attention to African American literature where Jacobs' narrative was again doubted and rejected in the 1980s due to gender-based stereotypes. A more hopeful ending is provided by the work of feminist scholars and more inclusive attitudes from the late 20th century and into our own, but as the author is careful to add, more work needs to be done to give slave narratives in general, and those written by women in particular, their rightful place in the canon.

Overall, the thesis is written to a very high level of scholarship and academic writing, and I found it very engaging. The author's obvious passion for the subject only adds to the interest without compromising on scientific objectivity and careful documentation of the facts. As such, it meets and exceeds the requirements of a B.A. thesis in our department. My main suggestion for improvement is to try and tighten the text which contains some repetitions and unnecessarily circuitous formulations which is also reflected in the length of the work which slightly exceeds the requirement.

Questions for Defence

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

While the author makes a convincing case, I would be interested to hear more about the literary aspects of the creation and reception of the text. The following questions are offered as ideas for extending the research further:

1. The author mentions the commercial potential of slave narrative a few times but without much detail. It would be interesting to learn more about this especially in connection with the popularity of the sentimental novel which was associated with women's writing – *Uncle Tom's Cabin* being its most famous example. This could also serve to highlight the contrast with the experience of white women which are missing from the comparison in sub-chapter 3.4.
2. As the author notes, Jacobs was highly aware of the prejudices of her intended audience, and this is evident in her text. It could be interesting to compare the strategies Jacobs attempts to overcome these obstacles to understanding with those employed by men writers of slave narratives.



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Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **v ý b o r n ě**

23. 5. 2023

Datum

Podpis