

Ganna Shumyk, *The Significance of Female Characters in Joseph Conrad's Novels*

Chance, Victory, and The Rescue

BA thesis

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Supervisor's report

In her BA thesis, Ganna Shumyk deals with the ways in which female characters are presented in Conrad's three late novels; a topic which deserves much attention since there is no agreement among critics as to assessment of the author's ability to provide veritable portrayals of women. Mapping the disparate and ever changing critical attitudes towards this question makes up the first part of the thesis. The critical overview presented here proves that G. Shumyk is familiar with Conrad's critical reception from his times up to the present. This broad knowledge then helps her to define her own position in assessing Conrad's method of portraying female characters.

The three chapters devoted to the three respective novels follow an identical methodological principle: first, the student discusses the form Conrad assumes for each novel and then she attempts to discuss the role major female characters play within such a form. I consider this approach valuable since it reveals that Conrad deliberately uses traditional forms and genres in a polemical, often ironic, manner. Playing upon the stereotyped principles of romance and melodrama enables him to employ multiple subjective views of the narrators whose judgments are only partially (if at all) emancipated from traditional views. Being conditioned by this formal strategy, the women's portrayals, in the student's view, are then complicated by a number of connotative meanings into which the characters are projected in their interaction with the male protagonists (e.g. the dreamy interaction of Mrs. Travers).

In my view, by paying attention to these formal strategies G. Shumyk provides an interesting way of viewing Conrad's female characters, to whom she grants greater status than the critics of the older generation. She suggests relevant interpretive viewpoints based on an intrinsic interconnection of the novels' form and ideas. I **recommend** her thesis for the defence and suggest it to be classified as excellent (“**v ýborn ě**”).

PhDr. Zdeněk Beran

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