

Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

Supervisor's Report on MA Thesis  
ROBERT FROST: THE VILLAGE AND BEYOND  
by Michal Mecner

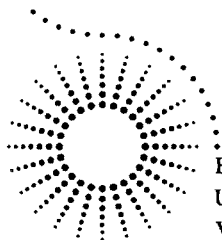
This thesis deals with the theme of the modernism, the village, work, and community in the poetry of Robert Frost. The student has an excellent knowledge of this oeuvre and often expresses his opinions in an engaging and provocative fashion. The level of English prose is extremely high throughout--something which the student can take full credit for.

Despite these points, I have several reservations about the thesis which force me to recommend the grade of 2 (**velmi dobře**). First, the thesis relies too heavily on the lectures of Langdon Hammer, which were delivered at Yale University and are available on line. These are of a general introductory nature, and necessarily rely on the work of generations of Frost critics. I tried on several occasions to convince the student that these lectures were too basic for a Masters thesis, and while he has reduced the number of references to these lectures, I still find the passages to be unhelpful. Indeed I think that they have fundamentally blocked the student's own interpretations of Frost's poetry.

Second, the use of Guy Debord's theoretical work. Many of the points that Debord makes come out of the phenomenological tradition and are based on ideas of authenticity. In my view, the French philosopher merely rehashes many of the points made by Martin Heidegger in his *Die Frage nach der Technik* (1949; *The Question Concerning Technology*), arguably they go back further to John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) and *Fors Clavigera* (1871-1880), where the English writer laments the substitution of manual crafts by an industrialized workforce. The further difficulty here is that I felt the student does not sufficiently contextualize Debord's writing in the thesis. Large paragraphs of Debord are simply dropped in the thesis without sufficient elucidation of their relevance.

Third, I find the definition of Modernism which the student employs to be rather flimsy (especially, pp. 9-10). I am not convinced that the student has a firm grasp of the arguments for the inclusion and exclusion of Frost in Modernism.

Fourth, and most crucially, I find the thesis thin on close readings of poems. Certainly towards the end, there are extended considerations of certain works, but this should have been a general feature of the entire thesis. Also, even when poems *are* examined, the comments are simply not extensive enough, and do not connect sufficiently with the other materials in the thesis (for instance, Debord). I would like to see more close readings that address the theme of the village.



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In general, then, I see this thesis as a lost opportunity. The student and myself debated long and hard about all of the issues above, and I must take some blame in failing to persuade Mr Mecner. Unfortunately, neither did he persuade me, thus I am forced to recommend a grade which I believe is in no way a reflection of the student's outstanding abilities.

doc. Justin Quinn Ph.D.  
6 May 2010