

POSUDEK BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE
KATEDRA ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA A LITERATURY PedF UK

Autor práce: Lenka Prücknerová

Název práce: The Role of Religion in Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth and Mary Barton

Vedoucí práce: Bernadette Higgins MA

Rok odevzdání: 2015

Rozsah práce: 39 stran, bez příloh

Posudek: Vedoucího práce

Autor posudku: Bernadette Higgins MA

Posuzovaná oblast	Zvažovaná kritéria	Body (0-5)¹	
1.	Celková charakteristika	Splnění zásad zpracování práce, adekvátnost titulu práce, naplnění stanoveného cíle, logická struktura práce, vyváženost a propojenost teoretické a praktické části	4
2.	Teoretická část	Stanovení a splnění cílů, prezentace různých teoretických přístupů k řešení problému, jejich kritické posouzení a zvolení relevantní teoretické základny pro realizaci praktické části	4
3.	Praktická část	Vhodnost a aplikace zvolené metodologie, jasnost formulace hypotéz, relevantní a srozumitelná argumentace a interpretace získaných výsledků, jasnost formulace závěrů práce	3
4.	Jazyková úroveň	Gramatická správnost a komplexnost, slovní zásoba, koheze a koherence textu, interpunkce a stylistické aspekty, celková úroveň jazykového projevu	5
5.	Struktura a forma	Přehlednost struktury, členění, řazení a proporčnost kapitol a oddílů, konzistentnost úpravy práce, odpovídající rozsah práce, adekvátnost a provedení příloh	4
6.	Práce s odbornou literaturou	Kvalita, množství a relevance odborných zdrojů, kritický přístup ke zdrojům, odpovídající úroveň citační praxe	4

Celkové zhodnocení práce (včetně kritických výhrad):

The thesis is a very well-written analysis of the important role religion plays in two novels by leading Victorian author Elizabeth Gaskell; her first novel, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848) and her controversial novel about a 'fallen woman', *Ruth* (1853). As theoretical background to her analysis of the two works, the author describes the social context in which the novels were written, i.e. the dark, 'hungry forties' of the 19th century when crop failure and rapid industrialisation helped to make destitute thousands of working-class people. She points out that Manchester, as the main engine of the industrial revolution in the north, witnessed particularly horrific social conditions for the thousands of poor operatives in the factories and mills, as evidenced in its inspiration of Engels' 1845 classic work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* is discussed as being representative of the so-called 'social novel' or 'condition of England novel' in its focus on the dreadful sufferings of the industrial working class whose situation Engels scientifically described. The author in particular aims to outline Gaskell's concept of religion as it affected the lives of the poor and the extent to which "their faith could be seen as a form of escape from social suppression" (p. 7). Another central theme she outlines in the theoretical part is that of 'the fallen woman'. The author points out how Gaskell, particularly in *Ruth*, paints an extremely sympathetic picture of a 'fallen woman' who, sustained by her religious faith, survives the ignominy of single motherhood. This section could have been longer, given the centrality of the theme in *Ruth*. In the theoretical part the author also demonstrates how inextricably linked Gaskell's social activity and religious belief were to her literary output, and justifies the inclusion of biographical material.

The practical part is somewhat unbalanced in that twice as much attention is paid to *Ruth* than to *Mary Barton*. This is possibly because the 'bildungsroman' structure of the novel made a summarising analysis easier – *Mary Barton* is more complicated by having two main protagonists, i.e. the eponymous Mary and her father, John, whose murder of his employer's son, Harry Carson, is the main focus of the plot, particularly in the second part of the novel. The section 5.2 on religious discourse, which focuses on the characters Benson and Bradshaw, who epitomises opposing approaches to Christianity is very well elaborated. The practical analysis of *Mary Barton* feels rather sketchy in comparison. The discussion of Job and Jem with Mr Carson, for example, a crucial scene in the book, particularly in terms of the topic of the thesis, is touched on only in passing (p. 20) and it would be interesting to hear the author's views on the extent to which this scene encapsulates Gaskell's thoughts about social inequality and religion. Some sections in the practical part where the author compares the two novels seem to be a distraction from the main themes of class inequality and the status of women that the author focuses on in the theoretical part, e.g. the section on superstition, and it would have been more interesting instead to read more on the theme of the fallen woman in *Mary Barton*, particularly the character of Esther and how the portrayal of her differs from that of Ruth.

The author is to be praised for her adroit use of so many interesting, and very up-to-date secondary sources. However, her extremely dense, allusory style means that at times the text feels like a patchwork of citations and her own perspective is diminished to a mere sewing together of references, albeit extremely skillfully. This is frustrating for a reader who wishes to know more of the explicit views of the author, and this frustration also occurs at times when a section ends rather abruptly, with no synthesising conclusion from the author e.g. the end of 2.3 (p.11). This may be a matter of confidence, but whatever the reason, it would be a great shame and also a limitation if the author were not more forthcoming in elaborating her own ideas in future work; her writing style is certainly sophisticated enough to express them with great subtlety and verve. On the whole, this thesis shows evidence of extensive and deep research, intelligent and sensitive analysis and a profound knowledge of both the novels and of the arguments contained in a wide array of sources. It would be disappointing if the author did not continue with her research into Gaskell's work.

Témata a náměty k diskusi při obhajobě:

How does the depiction of the 'fallen woman' Esther in *Mary Barton* differ from the depiction of Ruth?

To what extent does the conversation between Jem, Job and Carson reflect Gaskell's ideas about religion and class conflict?

Gaskell originally intended to call the novel *John Barton*. Would her treatment of the 'social question' have been more powerful if she had not changed the title and had kept the focus on John?

Práci tímto - doporučuji

Datum: 13.1.2016

Podpis: Bernadette Higgins