

## **M.A. Thesis Evaluation**

Student: **Bc. Nikola Petrusová**

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Opponent reviewer: prof. PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr.

	Grade A, B, C, D, E, F (F = fail)	Notes
1/ Aim/Goal: Definition Accomplishment	A A	
2/ Context, Background, Review of Literature	A	The context is laid out in a great detail, I appreciate the review of literature covers the major sources on Gothic novel and Gothic literature.
3/ Theory, Key Concepts, Method, Approach: Definition Accomplishment	A B	The key concepts are generally carefully introduced and accurately defined, only in two cases it was not so: pathetic fallacy and satire. The passage on satire is not referenced, which is surprising given the fact the supervisor of the thesis is an author of monograph on satire.  The thesis employs Freud's theory for the study of the Gothic novel, but it does not make any good use of it in the rest of the dissertation.
4/ Argumentation (ability to accurately form initial and closing arguments, logical coherence, ability to generalize as well as present pertinent specific details)		This is not exactly an argumentative kind of thesis. The thesis meticulously reconstructs the context of the Gothic as a genre and mode, and then examines how Muriel Spark's novels fit this category and what they do with the Gothic tropes and narrative techniques. Given this frame, the analysis is coherent and draws relevant and accurate conclusions.
5/ Knowledge of primary literature	A	
6/ Knowledge of secondary literature (extent, adequacy)	A	Impressive, extensive.
7/ Originality (in argumentation, critical approach and conclusions)	-	Not applicable. The field has already been extensively mapped and has not left much space for any original argumentation. Occasionally, the thesis engages in a polemic with secondary sources.
8/ Formal level (adhering to citation and bibliographic standards)	A	The author uses British academic style (single quotation marks), which is not the recommended standard at the department. But her system is consistent.
9/ Stylistic level of the thesis	A	Very rich, eloquent, idiomatic, to the point of being verbose, as if the thesis author wanted to compensate for Spark's dry style.
10/ Stylistic level of the summary	A	
11/ Typography, graphic appearance, absence of errors	A	

12/ Structure (organization, arrangement)		In the analytical part, I miss a more unifying line of argument, the analyses tend to become brilliant, interesting, well-informed but separate pieces.
13 / Thesis's contribution to the field		The thesis offers a state-of-art survey of the Gothic as a genre and mode and an enticing analysis of metafictional narrative strategies in Spark's novel as a form of new Gothic mode.

#### Discussion:

While the introduction offers a fine survey of recent trends in the approach to the Gothic and penetrating analyses of Muriel Spark's novels, some problems stand out.

I would welcome a more critical reflection of some of the recent theory on the Gothic. Since so much has already been said on this topic, the new critics are often forced to bend the original concepts to the point of misinterpretation and misconceptualization:

What Mishra says about Burke's sublime, does not make sense to me. Why should the sublime be "a sign of the power of reason as well as source of images which signified its very opposite?" (p.28) The sublime, as Burke defines it, has little to do with reason or rationality.

Should Romance be really associated with the "savage?"

Similarly, Spooner's claim is such a sweeping generalization that it loses any potential for a more subtle differentiation: "the female Gothic also unwittingly consolidates the harmful image of the genre as perpetrating 'a sado-masochistic dynamic that appears to enjoy the spectacle of violence against women and the reaffirmation of cultural stereotypes projecting women as either victims, monsters or femmes fatales.'" (p.57) This misses the range and nature of responses in melodrama where rather than sadomasochistic pleasures, the reader is invited to experience pity, pain and fear.

Also, the dichotomy angel/monster is a gross simplification, already evident in the character of Biblical Eve. She is none of that. If Jane Eyre is categorized as an angel, then we need other thematic axis to capture her type of character: activity/passivity, independence/dependence scales, etc.

Why should Gothic interest in the language be pathological?

In spite of these objections, the MA thesis is an impressive, extensively researched study of the Gothic and its varieties in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a penetrating, insightful discussion of metafictional aspects as Gothic features in Muriel Spark's novels.

In closing:

The thesis is ~~is not~~ recommended for defense.

Suggested classification (A, B, C, D, E, F): A

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prof. PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr.