

**Department of English and American Studies
Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc**

B.A. Thesis Evaluation

Student: Adéla Urbanová

Title: Disabled Superheroes: What effects did the representation of the resilient and disabled superheroes have on people facing similar problems and on the normalization of the issues concerning disability?

Supervisor: Mgr. Elizabeth Allyn Woock, Ph.D.

Opponent reviewer: Mgr. Šárka Dvořáková

	Grade A, B, C, D, E, F (F = fail)	Notes
1/ Aim/Goal: Definition Accomplishment	E	Clearly stated but becomes extremely problematic. The whole thesis hinges on very short descriptions of a handful of Marvel superheroes with disabilities of various natures (from paraplegia to dyscalculia) followed by the author's personal judgment as to whether or not she considers such portrayals of these disabilities tasteful. Literary analysis is not present and in-depth consideration of the selected literature is very scarce.
2/ Critical overview of sources	E	None in the case of secondary sources (see below) and next to none in terms of primary literature.
3/ Context, background (literary, cultural, social, etc.)	D	When it comes to comics in general, fairly good but repetitive in multiple places. When it comes to the portrayal of disabilities in comics (or in literature in general), there is no critical assessment.
4/ Definitions of key concepts. Approach to analysis	E	The concepts used are defined, sometimes in unnecessary detail. Why is it significant that patients with spinal injury frequently suffer from bladder infections, for example? (5.2) As for analysis, it is mostly replaced by moralizing judgments based on the author's personal opinion of what literature should do.
5/ Conciseness and coherence (ability to accurately form arguments, logical structuring, ability to generalize as well as present pertinent specific details)	D	In chapter 4, the sections on the respective disabled superheroes don't read like parts of a larger whole, e.g., it is unnecessary to repeat that the character is American-made or from the Marvel universe when it was established in the introduction that only Marvel characters will be discussed. In places, the author either makes assumptions about the characters she discusses or fails to provide persuasive evidence. She moralizes too frequently (see my comments below).
6/ Knowledge of primary literature	E	Not persuasively demonstrated. Several comic books are mentioned but not addressed in much detail.
7/ Use of secondary literature (choice, extent, relevance, documentation, critical reflection)	E	Some general studies of comics are used in the introductory chapters, but no previous research on the topic of disabled superheroes is used or considered. No other sources pertaining to disability studies or literary theory are used.
8/ Formal level (adhering to citation and bibliographic standards)	E	Unidentified citation norm is used. As far as I can tell, the thesis follows neither the MLA nor then CMOS guidelines when it comes to the formatting and ordering of information in the bibliographical entry or note. Shortened notes aren't used. In 5.6, the sentence cited as a paraphrase is a verbatim quotation from Kluft.
9/ Level of academic English	D	Some long, overly complex sentences and grammatical errors. Some wrongly used idioms and Czech/Slovak language interference. Read aloud the 4th paragraph in section 4.7 where the word "character" is out of control. This and other similar inconsistencies start appearing prominently halfway through the thesis, probably due to inattentive editing (or the lack thereof).
10/ Quality of the Czech summary	F	Not included.
11/ Typography, graphic appearance, absence of errors	C	Typographically mostly fine, errors occur quite frequently on the level of language use and poor editing.

Comments:

In section 4.9 on Komodo you say, if I understand correctly, that it's wrong to portray a person with a disability being frustrated by said disability, and you give the responsibility for this "wrongdoing" to the author. When I look at Komodo myself, I see a complex, troubled individual. She prefers being a lizard to being a human without legs. This speaks volumes about her insecurity surrounding her disability but also about the society around her which has less problems with her lizard form than with her legless human form. There is definitely something to be considered here but you simply dismiss it as inappropriate portrayal and move on. Claiming that it is not appropriate to portray her feeling weak is, I think, part of the problem you wish your thesis would help remove. If what we want is FAITHFUL representation, we can't paint people's lives pink—insecurity and sadness must be portrayed too because they are definitely part of the disabled individual's experience. To use an example from another field: **Would you say that it's inappropriate for a novel to portray a battered wife who doesn't leave her violent husband and who defends his behavior in front of her friends simply because her actions set a bad example for the readers?**

In 4.12 you mention that it's harmful to depict the disabled character as static, that he/she should clearly progress towards acceptance. Their searching for a way to cure themselves is also apparently not right because it means they don't accept their disability? **If you allow disabled people to be protagonists of only one type of plot, namely the path to acceptance, are you absolutely sure this is adequate and fully representative of their experience?**

On the previous issues we could, I guess, agree to disagree, but my primary reason for giving you a very shaky E is the simple fact that I can't see any literary analysis happening and you aren't offering any evidence to persuade me that your viewpoint has substance. You label a lot of things as "inappropriate" and "insulting" without going into much depth and without any analysis or much evidence from the primary sources. These are surface-level personal judgments which seem to rest on nothing else but your own notion of good taste.

At your defense, I would like you to demonstrate that you:

- a. looked into the relevant secondary literature concerning disability literary studies and (at least some) other research on the topic of disabled superheroes.
- b. have done a more in-depth analysis of (at least) one of the superheroes you discuss in your thesis.

I recommend you include these two points into your defense directly instead of leaving them until question time.

In closing:

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

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

January 5, 2022
Date

Mgr. Šárka Dvořáková
Opponent of the B.A. thesis