Master Thesis Evaluation

Thesis title: Negotiation and Hybridization: Constructing Immigrant Identities in Zadie Smith’s White Teeth and Swing Time

Author: Anna Araslanova

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Soňa Nováková, PhD., CSc

External Assessor: Mgr. Klára Kolinská, M.A., PhD.

External Assessor’s Evaluation:

Anna Araslanova’s Master thesis addresses a certainly relevant and productive topic which implies a variety of discursive and methodological approaches: the representation of the notion of hybridization in contemporary British multicultural fiction, upon the examples of two novels by one of Britain’s prominent authors: Zadie Smith’s White Teeth and Swing Time.

The author of the thesis quite correctly notices that the concept of hybridization has been one of the most attractive and generative ones in cultural and literary theory at least since the publication of Homi Bhabha’s theory of hybridity and mimicry, leading sometimes even to its overuse and undue simplification. She discusses its manifestations analytically and critically, considering different, often opposed perspectives upon Bhabha’s theoretical postulates, and generally reaches convincing and well grounded, if not necessarily surprising or innovative conclusions. A comment may be made here about not so much the content, but the language of its formulation: while the author’s arguments are mostly clear and in line with the accepted modes of interpretation, the way they are articulated sometimes creates an impression of simplification and misrepresentation; a more careful and sensitive language realization would have contributed to a more convincing impression of the whole text.

In my view, the author’s stronger point is the close reading of primary texts and their interpretation. The choice of the primary texts, and the juxtaposition of the analysis of White Teeth, today already a well-accepted, nearly “canonical” novel in the given genre, and Swing Time, Zadie Smith’s latest novel, and one upon which much less critical work has been performed as yet, creates an interesting and productive analytical framework within which the author finds apposite common points between the two novels, as well as a clear trajectory of the development of Zadie Smith’s literary career.

The text of the thesis has a clear and purposive structure, the fulfillment of which demonstrates the advantages, as well as possible shortcomings of the comparative method,
including the possible danger of, again, simplification and slight mechanization. In general, however, the interpretation is well thought-through and performed with care and sufficient insight. Also, the thesis is based on sufficient and systematic research in theoretical sources, which were read more or less competently and with understanding, and the discussion of them is organically linked to the analysis of the primary texts.

A comment could be made here concerning the language quality of the text: as suggested above, the text seems to somewhat lack depth and nuance, which becomes increasingly visible towards the last chapters and the conclusion; it may have been caused by the understandable haste and need to meet the submission deadline, but the thesis would certainly benefit from careful and focused language revision.

All things considered, however, Anna Araslanova’s Master Thesis certainly meets all the criteria for submission and represents a solid and convincing undertaking of its kind. In view of the comments made above I recommend Anna Araslanova’s Master Thesis for defence with suggested evaluation of EXCELLENT – VERY GOOD.

Prague, August 20th, 2019

Mgr. Klára Kolinská, M.A., PhD.