

Master Thesis Evaluation/Posudek na diplomovou práci

Title of the Thesis: *“You fellars does live in a dream world.”: Identity Crisis in Sam Selvon’s Caribbean Fiction/“You fellars does live in a dream world.”: Krize identity v karibské próze Sama Selvona*

Author of the Thesis: Hikmet Işıl Karayel

Supervisor: PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., M.A.

Second Reader: Mgr. Klára Kolinská, M.A., PhD.

Second Reader’s Evaluation:

Işıl Karayel’s Master Dissertation addresses an extremely relevant, productive, and topical subject matter: it offers a discussion of several novels by Sam Selvon, one of the most influential authors representing contemporary, or, rather, 20th-century Caribbean and typically multicultural fiction, in the context of the ongoing debate concerning (post)colonialism, migration, cultural hybridity and related identity politics. And it can be stated that the complex, and potentially controversial topic is approached with laudable enthusiasm and dedication, and the thesis demonstrates competent acquisition of academic skill on all levels.

The discussion is based on six primary texts; while it may appear that the interpretive scope is too broad for the purpose and the result thus potentially vague, in effect the choice of the material is made with careful deliberation: the novels represent the whole long trajectory of Selvon’s literary career, and reflect the historical development of the public and academic debate of the issues indicated above and its transformations. Admittedly, the project is ambitious to say the least; nonetheless, the author manages to thoughtfully, clearly and meaningfully interface the close reading and interpretation of the novels with the analysis of relevant concepts and arguments articulated in a wide range of theoretical secondary sources. The text of the dissertation thus forms an organic, clearly structured whole with the discussion arriving at generally convincing conclusions.

The author’s approach to the topic is congenially energetic and robust, which results in a smooth reading of the thesis. The author clearly vested a lot of effort in both the research and the articulation of argument, and undertook to use the potential of both the primary and secondary sources to the maximum. While the outcome can, indeed, be qualified as a success,

with a closer look it seems that the author occasionally got “carried away” and in places resorted to slight simplifications, almost poetical formulations, minor grammatical mistakes and stylistic inaccuracies which could have been removed with one other round of careful, disciplined editing. These moments, however, do not appear frequently enough to spoil the overall good impression of the thesis as a whole.

What I consider the most valuable and interesting part of the thesis is the discussion of the concept of language as a means of both reflecting and creating meaning, and of the processes of creolization in the given context. The author supports her claims with well-chosen textual evidence; however, it would perhaps be interesting to indicate how specifically the aesthetics of language evolved in Selvon’s writing, and to juxtapose that with examples of some works by Selvon’s contemporaries creating under the same or similar circumstances. The processes of individual identity formation are closely linked to those of (un)belonging, and Selvon thus clearly belongs in the, admittedly loosely defined, community of literary and artistic cosmopolites, symptomatic in many ways of our era.

In view of the comments made above I recommend Işıl Karayel’s Master Dissertation for defence with a suggested evaluation by the mark A – VÝBORNĚ.

In Prague, August 29th, 2012

Mgr. Klára Kolinská, M.A., PhD.