

Posudek vedoucí na diplomovou práci Hikmet Işıl Karayel

“‘You fellars does live in a dream world’”: Identity Crisis in Sam Selvon’s Caribbean Fiction

The submitted MA thesis importantly reminds us that Caribbean literature is not just literature produced in the Caribbean itself but also in other parts of the world, such as Britain (France, Spain, the USA and Canada), i.e. countries where many people from the Caribbean live today or have lived. It is international, both because it is a unique cultural hybrid, and because the Caribbean experience is being lived and explored artistically both in the Caribbean region itself and outside of it. In this sense, to quote Benítez-Rojo, “Caribbeanness will always remain *beyond the horizon*” [emphasis mine]; its parameters will remain fluid. The richness of articulations, sources and creative crises from which Caribbean (post)colonial identity is created in a range of environments, is the focus of this thesis.

Selvon migrated to Britain in 1950 and remained there until the mid-1980s when he moved to Canada. His best novels are noted for the use of “lime” and the form of the extended anecdote as narrative strategy, which gives a dominantly oral feel to his writing, and for linguistic playfulness which characterizes especially his Moses novels.

Although Sam Selvon is an incredibly important writer who helped create the classical Caribbean canon precisely by those novels that Ms Karayel analyses in her thesis, and he has received very much attention in the Anglophone world, he has remained in the background in the Czech cultural and academic context. However, for his combination of (post)colonial themes, (post)modernist techniques, a range of unusual narrative styles and a very clear focus on ways identity can be created through forms of language, he indeed deserves larger attention. The last obviously results from the important role of language, dialect, orality etc. overall in the Caribbean context.

The language context brings to mind one aspect which is implied but not really used to full advantage in the thesis: the terms ballad and calypso are mentioned but not fully explained. Can Ms Karayel define what she means when mentioning these terms and explain how they are applied at least in some of the novels.

Also, we must never forget that Selvon is of Indo-Caribbean origin and his specific take on identity may be influenced by this. Trinidad, just like Guyana, has, unlike most other

Caribbean islands, a very high proportion of inhabitants stemming from the South Asian subcontinent. I feel this has not fully been taken into account. Can this context be considered during the defence?

Another point is the difference in the role Moses plays throughout the Moses trilogy. While Moses is the centrifugal element for the group of “the Boys” in *The Lonely Londoners*, in *Moses Ascending* the community of outsiders (the eponymous lonely Londoners) disintegrates. I think this point should be elaborated upon as another step in the analysed “identity crisis” of the title. Is this an attempt of Moses to shield himself from the suffering of his people? Showing the idea of *The Lonely Londoners*, perhaps that of a utopian black unity which is source of solace and of creative writing energy, as merely futile? Indeed, it is Galahad who becomes the source of Moses’s downfall. And thirdly, another difference: Moses in *Moses Migrating* seems to show ultimate transitoriness of his identity (e.g. the underground hotel room, the open-ended quality of the final episode). Can Ms Karayel take these into account in her conception of identity? Does she agree with the reading presented here in this paragraph; why (not)?

To conclude, the submitted thesis fully meets all the requirements for an academic work on such level. I certainly recommend it for defence. However, taking into consideration my comments and questions above, I suggest the grading of **excellent (výborně) and very good (velmi dobře)**. The final result will depend on the responses during the viva.

V Praze dne 31.8.2021

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PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., M.A.
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