

Opponent's Report on B.A. Thesis by

Klára Staňková

“The Problematics of Race in Selected Writings of Toni Morrison”

In her B.A. thesis, Ms. Klára Staňková provides a wide-ranging and capacious critical account of the race problematic in a select band of texts authored by the U.S. novelist, Toni Morrison (1931–2020). These include the following three novel works, *Paradise* (1997), *A Mercy* (2008), and *God Help the Child* (2015).


The thesis document contains fifty-seven pages across an Introduction with four subunits of composition therein, and three individual chapters on “Paradise”, “A Mercy”, and “God Help the Child”. A Conclusion and a rich four-page Bibliography cap the prose text.

All in all, the thesis is well-conceived, well-structured, clear and forceful in its presentation. Stylistically, the thesis is also well-written. Not unimportantly, the candidate too has corrected issues found in a prior version of the thesis.

In the conclusion, a crucial and most interesting passage occurs when Ms. Staňková claims that “Toni Morrison puts the [53] social construction of race at the centre of her novels and examines its meaning and value in society. She tries to distance her oeuvre from “the white gaze” and “the racial gaze”, frees up the language in her novels from the racial and gender implications. This leads to the examination of what race actually is and why is it so important for us to know the race of Morrison’s characters, as race is biologically non-existent and sociologically it is far from identifying a person” (52–53); the candidate closes this in a powerful coda to her thesis: “Toni Morrison reveals the unspeakable acts regarding the effects of racial superiority in her novels and enables her readers to truly feel them, which has an indisputably powerful effect on her readers and contributes to the undeniable significance and influence of her literary work” (53).

In this aboveindicated light, I wish to ask two questions: 1) does the candidate consider that affect theory or engagement with affect would be a way to expand some of the ideas in this wide-spanning study? 2) Does the candidate see that trauma studies could bolster and expand some of her claims? Why if so? And if not, why not?

In light of the foregoing mentions, I hereby recommend the pre thesis defense mark of 1 (výborně) for the thesis work.



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