

**Christopher E. Koy – review written by the supervisor**

In his dissertation *Signifying in the Fiction of Charles W. Chesnutt*, Mr. Koy decided to focus on the work of an African American writer who has recently attracted a great amount of critical attention. Yet, Mr. Koy was able to come up with a new and refreshing perspective: namely, he decided to examine Chesnutt's prose through the lens of signifying, an approach coined, explained and also applied by a widely respected figure of Henry Louis Gates. In that particular light, Mr. Koy is then dealing with the whole body of Chesnutt's works, including those pieces that are certainly not well-known.

In order to build the main argument, Mr. Koy is relying mainly on his own detailed interpretation of the primary texts (including selected letters and journal entries). As to the secondary sources, he has carefully studied all the relevant materials available up to this point, and thus was even able to detect some factual errors in them. As the dissertation shows, though, he did not find them all that useful for his purposes, and based on his own research and analysis, arrived at the original theory – persuasively supported by evidence – of Chesnutt's signifying.

Mr. Koy's dissertation is logically structured into the individual chapters, each one making its own argument, but also proceeding further in the central line of thought. His language is precise, but never dry, and I believe that his compassion for Chesnutt as a writer and passion for reading in general as well as Chesnutt's works in particular become evident already in the introductory passages. Yet, as the bulk of the dissertation illustrates, never at the expense of academic objectivity.

In my opinion, Mr. Koy's dissertation clearly meets all the required standards. Moreover, it challenges generally accepted authorities on some minor points (e.g. Alice Walker), as well as the popular assumption that the author in question signifies largely upon the African American folklore. Thus, it is evident that Mr. Koy made a real scholarly contribution in the field, and I can just add that I am eagerly awaiting prof. Josef Jařab's response.

This being the case, I am pleased to recommend Mr. Koy's dissertation for the defense without any reservations.

Prague, March 30, 2011

Dr. Hana Ulmanová