This thesis undertakes to examine the social, political, economic, and intellectual contexts in which the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution—articulating the prescriptive status and rights of African Americans in the American Republic after 1865 and identifying the authorities nominally responsible for their enforcement—came into existence and, subsequently, came to be nullified for almost a century following the end of Reconstruction in 1877. To this end, Ms. Dudikova engages in a detailed study and description of the complicated and diverse phenomenon of so-called Reconstruction and of the complicated and diverse forces and influences that shaped its political and statutory vagaries and its ultimate demise.

All of this is done with a very high degree of scholarly determination, application, and penetration. Ms. Dudikova has produced a subtle and appropriately complex analysis of many of the forces at play in shaping the lives of African Americans in the crucial and oft-neglected periods of “Reconstruction” and subsequent “Redemption.”

In this undertaking, Ms. Dudikova has produced a balanced and nuanced treatment of a wide and tangled set of issues and problems, and has done so in an intellectually elegant manner, an impressively accessible narrative, and a fluent and engaging English.

As is normal among scholars, I have minor disagreements with certain aspects of Ms. Dudikova's work. Her insightful narrative regarding the relation of railroad investment, public shortages of funds, and economic crisis during the 1870s, while highly relevant and illuminating regarding the fate of Reconstruction, seems at times, perhaps unavoidably, either confusing or confused. The identification in the thesis of the Reconstruction period as the seed time of the Women's Rights movement in the U.S. ignores activities which did indeed grow out of agitation around African-American rights but which began in the 1840s. And despite visible efforts on Ms. Dudikova’s part to broaden the number of scholars whose works are included, the bibliography remains somewhat limited and Foner-centric. Nevertheless, within my area of particular research competence, her premises and historical background are sound and consistent with current scholarly consensus, and her conclusions based on them often point in valuable new directions not at all incompatible with the current trajectory of exploratory scholarship.

This is, in my view, an exemplary bachelor’s thesis, excellent in conceptual understanding of the interlinked issues and practices of the Reconstruction era and its aftermath, and much more than adequate to the question it attempts to frame and address.
I strongly endorse the quality of its expository style, the analysis that it presents, and the philosophical and cultural conclusions that it offers.

Thesis evaluation: “1, vyborne”

Signed:

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September 2, 2013.

If the reader has any questions or needs additional information, please contact me at drobbins22@netzero.net.