



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

OPPONENT'S REPORT
M.A. THESIS
AMERICAN LITERATURE SPECIALISATION
The Portrayal of Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes in American Animated Cartoons
Bc. Iva Vejvodová

The thesis aims to map “how animation reflects and shapes American racial identity and how it critiques and promotes American values and attitudes regarding race and ethnicity in particular” (p. 7). With the exception of *The Brotherhood of Man* (UPA 1946), *Norman Normal* (UPA 1961), and *Hashimoto Mouse* (Terrytoones 1959), the cartoons analyzed by Ms. Vejvodová reproduce derogatory and humiliating stereotypes, primarily of African-Americans and to a lesser extent, the Japanese and the Russians. However, we learn that “black, Asian and other negative stereotypes gradually faded from animation by the end of the 1960s as the term ‘political correctness’ was consolidated” (p. 73).

On the whole, Ms. Vejvodová’s thesis is fairly satisfactory. It discusses a reasonably broad variety of texts (although the focus is solely on mainstream cartoons). In the pre-1960s context, the student could have discussed *Donald Duck*, a cartoon that along with *Mickey Mouse* became a symbol of Disney hegemony. The conclusion, too, could have described the contemporary scene in more detail; at least mentioning classic cartoons like *The Pink Panther Show*, *The Flintstones*, *The Simpsons*, etc. etc. Moreover, Ms. Vejvodová could have certainly found examples of contemporary cartoons where racist and ethnic stereotypes persist, even if not in such a blatant form as in the past (?) More significantly, finally, what seems almost missing from the thesis is an analysis of cartoons as commodities; the word “consumer” appears in the entire thesis once and there is little emphasis on the economic and nationalist motives behind the trajectory from “racism to political correctness” in the world of animation (and in the army of related products that accompany, or even stimulate, the production of cartoons nowadays). A related question, then, could be: assuming that some cartoons are “post-race,” what remaining stereotypes and myths do they perpetuate?

The prose is lucid, clear and virtually error-free; there are minor stylistic problems such as on p. 12 (“Felix the Cat and Mickey Mouse were characters that quickly caught the attention of the viewers due to their rascal nature and comedic actions”) or an incomplete sentence on p. 23 (l. 3). Harris’s *The Tales of Uncle Remus* is not a novel (pp. 55 & 56) and it is not true that “no African-American citizen had the right to vote in 1948” (p. 63)—formally they all did, even if the reality was different.

Finally, on p. 74, Ms. Vejvodová writes: “For further research ideas, I would suggest that one could focus on a more in-depth analysis of the key issues that have been raised during this paper; however my completed secondary reading has supplemented a detailed analysis of the given key topics.” What exactly does she have in mind?

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28th January 2013

Proposed Grade: Velmi dobře (Very Good)