

## **Posudek školitele na dizertační práci**

### **Markéta Olehlová, Identity and Displacement in Contemporary Postcolonial Fiction**

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During her studies, which she began in 2004, Markéta Olehlová has proved to be a promising researcher and scholar. She passed all her required examinations – in philosophy, German language, British and American literatures – according to schedule and with excellent results. She attended courses in literary studies; one planned optional course was substituted by participation in a conference seminar “Beyond the Being: Refiguring the Human”. The session was part of a larger conference on “The Human and Its Others”, held in New York in 2006. Markéta Olehlová read a paper entitled “ ‘WE’ and ‘THEY’: Lévinas’s Same and the Other and Their Further Reflections in Post-Colonial Theory”. She spent 2005 and 2006 in New York, visited seminars and consultations of prof. Robert Young at New York University. Markéta Olehlová has a keen interest in contemporary British literature as she demonstrated during her attendance at the British Council organized seminars in Kostelec nad Černými Lesy (she participated five times), and, first and foremost, in her own publications, mainly in the field of literary journalism, the website [www.iliteratura.cz](http://www.iliteratura.cz) and especially her translations and editing work. The publications are listed in chapter 1.5. of the submitted dissertation.

I consider this dissertation a successful attempt to analyse the connections between fiction and postcolonial theory. It engages with the theoretical insights of prominent scholars, literary critics and postcolonial theorist, while studying also a representative sample of contemporary British fiction dealing with the selected topics of identity and place. Whole chapters are devoted to Rushdie, Kureishi, Kiran Desai and V.S.Naipaul; interspersed are also relevant allusions and references to numbers of others, e.g. Caryl Philips, Buchi Emecheta etc. The fiction is not only a “reflection” of the theory, or proof of the validity of the theory, but the chapters of literary analysis are full of insights that reflect back on to the theory.

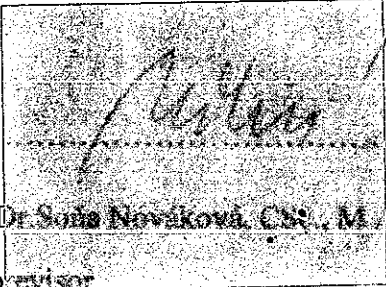
Passages devoted to more theoretical considerations provide a valuable presentation and critical analysis of the main directions in postcolonial considerations of the two, indeed seminal, categories – identity and place. These are historically contextualized with the social and political developments in Britain; although, as explained away in the disseratation, gender is not focused upon, the prominent concepts of nation, race and ethnicity loom large.

What may be lamented is the fact that yet again, as is the case in most Western academy, the dissertation privileges the convergence between postcolonial theory and poststructuralist theory. The challenges to postcolonial studies provided by, e.g. the criticisms of Aijaz Ahmad, Benita Parry or Arif Dirlik about the depoliticization of theory, may have actually harmonized in with some of the conclusions about multiculturalism as presented in the dissertation.

I have two questions about nomenclature. One is related to the very title and the word postcolonial. In her previous conference paper, the word was hyphenated. Here it is not. Is that an accident, or a conscious decision? Also, since names indeed do matter, especially names given to places, is it a political decision to adopt the label of Indian subcontinent?

Finally, although the dissertation focuses mainly on the literary production of the 1980s and 90s, it also touches upon topical issues in the current debate on multiculturalism and nationhood. The PhD dissertation thus manages to combine a historical perspective with a theoretically informed literary analysis of language, themes and forms, including a valuable survey of available positions within the field of postcolonial studies. This is an inspiring and insightful work. **I recommend the dissertation for defence.**

Prague, 25 March 2012

  
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