

Příloha k protokolu o SZZ č.....
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~~Recenzent*~~)

Vedoucí*) diplomové práce
Ch.Koy,M.A.

POSUDEK DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

The Great Elizabethan 'Other': An Examination of the 'Black' Characters in Four Shakespeare Plays (téma)

Format/Structure:

The formatting of the diploma work is appropriate, though there are some minor errors. In starting a chapter dedicated to a play, Miss Kuželová moves directly into a sub-chapter whereas a more common approach would be to state some introductory remarks about the play itself (year of assumed composition, first performance, source of the play, the role of the black character within the drama etc) before moving directly into, to take the first example, "4.1 Introduction to the Character," which in the case of *Titus Andronicus* is not a title character. Also somewhat confusing is the decision to format some questions/issues as subchapters and others merely as headings (for ex., on p. 17). The writing is generally a pleasure to read. In spite of my nitpicking criticism above, the formatting is on the whole excellent. The very small number of grammar and spelling errors show that attention was paid to editing and proofreading.

Content:

Chapter 1 sets out to introduce the theme of the diploma work. Any diploma work on Shakespeare is challenging and so it is with this work. The aims were set out and delineated in the chapters, one play at a time, in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Chapter 2 offers a very brief biographical accounting of the bard's life as it can be documented and has been partially surmised. Some relevant information about the author's potential encounters with blacks documented to have lived in London at that time might have been referred to.

Chapter 3 goes into etymology (as she does later in the text too with names) of "Moor" as Shakespeare employs this now rarely-used term rather often since it was more common in his time. There is however no reference in *The Tempest* to Calaban with this term (which should have been mentioned here). In discussing many of these plays, it should be noted in some way that Shakespeare's plots were not wholly his own invention but in fact a revision of previous texts (for example, the chapbook referred to on p. 29 for *Titus Andronicus*, Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565), "Un Capitano Moro" for *Othello*, Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" for *The Tempest*). Hence a separation between Shakespeare and his literary sources might have been profitable when discussing either black characteristics when Shakespeare's texts deviated from the source or the etymology of the often borrowed names. In other words, Shakespeare wrote plays which may have had shared characteristics (of black characters) with his sources, and he may have deviated from the sources and we learn nothing of this in this study, even though the sources are published in the Signet Classic Shakespeare editions. The availability and liberal use of *The Shakespeare Name and Place Dictionary* by Davis and Frankforter throughout later

Chapter 4 focuses on Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* which is no longer such a highly regarded nor popular play as in Shakespeare's time. It is a play confusing in plot as to whether it concerns conflicts between Goths and Romans or about Romans turning on themselves, in decline through decadence. Aaron in many ways moves the plot along once his lover ascends the throne and gains power. This is somewhat unacknowledged, as Miss Kuželová simply describes Aaron as silent initially but without explanation. Aaron is characterized appropriately enough. It would have been enlightening to compare the title character, Titus, for whom honor was worth more than his son's and daughter's own lives, with Aaron, who is only described positively in showing love for both his queen (until he informs on her near the end) and his steadfast love for his mullato son, the latter which he saves at the expense of his own honor. Honor is clearly a characteristic Shakespeare clearly juxtaposes in this drama among these two characters.

Chapter 5 concerns itself with the relatively short episode of the Prince of Morocco in the famous comedy *The Merchant of Venice* which today is more often than not regarded as a tragedy since the title figure, Shylock, suffers enormously. The Prince of Morocco is clearly an exotic figure, taken wholly, and the chapter otherwise covers his characteristics well, in his pursuit of Portia, whose opulence was also a major factor in his interest in Portia (besides her beauty), and this could have been mentioned.

Chapter 6 pertains to *Othello*, one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. Miss Kuželová relates the fact that Othello keeps his royal blood secret, and believes Desdemona's father, a senator against his daughter's marriage to him, might have been persuaded that Othello was a good pick had he known of Othello's noble blood. Yet both Othello's race, (the exogamic marriage generally) and his daughter's disobedience seem really the keys to Senator Brabatio's hatred and ultimate death. As in the drama covered in the previous chapter, Shylock wished his daughter Jessica dead when she disobeyed, and Portia had no genuine interest but rather disdain for the man of greater royalty than Othello, the Prince of Morocco. Thus the motives for Brabatio's hatred are clear enough in *Othello* as well. Moreover, Othello does in a way reveal his nobility, as one does in Elizabethan literature: he acts and above all SPEAKS nobly, in spite of his permutations from an almost state of madness back to sanity. This appears unnoticed by Miss Kuželová. The fact that race plays the biggest role in this tragedy is born out through the partial sourcing of Othello's doubt in himself as loveable: only a "loose" woman would marry a black man; a second issue, unrelated to race is Desdemona's history of disobedience. Earlier Othello expressed his own doubts about Iago's cunningly persuasive accusations of Desdemona's disloyalty, but his racial sense of inferiority wins him over to Iago's argument. In the end, Iago kills his wife before everyone for divulging her husband's diabolical trick, thus replicating Othello's unfair murder of honor of his beloved wife Desdemona. Miss Kuželová ignores this by stating that Othello is "not so cruel but just misled by Iago" (p. 49). Yet after wounding but not killing Iago, Othello clearly states that "I'd have thee live; For in my sense, 'tis happiness to die." (V.ii.285-6), and in his next sentence Othello speaks again of honor. To live dishonorably (like Iago) is worse than to die, even poignantly, with honor. Othello does just that, remaining all the way up to his death an honorable man, and strangely, happier, for he is then sharing the fate of his beloved. With this conclusion, Shakespeare bestows the greatest honor on Othello. (In Shakespeare's source in Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, Othello does not murder Desdemona but the Iago character does so in conspiracy with Othello, and Othello does not kill himself honorably but is wounded and dies miserably after many years.) As stated above, comparing Shakespeare's sources with his actual plays would demonstrate more interestingly where Shakespeare stands on his characters, and without belaboring the point, the conclusion shows how effective this comparison might have been.


Chapter 7 interestingly covers Caliban appearing in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's final complete play written only by himself around 1610-1611. It is the strongest chapter, probably because of the liberal use of *The Tempest Notes* and the play Miss Kuželová studied first. Never named a Moor, Miss Kuželová accurately shows Caliban's mother's African origins, and combined with slavery, most critics look upon Caliban as either a "Indian" enslaved or a Black exploited by European colonialists. Miss Kuželová handles this play commendably in spite of its difficulty.

Conclusion and bibliography, following format requirements, are complete and thorough. The appendices are never really commented upon in the text, so they would appear unnecessary, although a discussion of Othello's representation over the centuries as discussed above may have been described visually in a way fitting to the theme of this diploma work. The representation of Shakespeare's blacks over the centuries on stage was referred in secondary literature which was also made available to Miss Kuželová.

Assessment: **velmi dobře (2)**

- velmi dobře -

Návrh na klasifikaci diplomové práce:


podpis vedoucího diplomové práce

28.5.

V Českých Budějovicích dne 2009.....

Stupeň kvalifikace	výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	nevyhověl
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