

Příloha k protokolu o SZZ č.....
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Diplomant: Kateřina Kalíšková

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Recenzent*)

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POSUDEK DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

Tragic Mulattoes in Black Women Novels from the 19th Century (téma)

The stated purpose of this work is to reveal themes related to the “tragic mulatto” motif in 19th century literature, though not using the traditional texts (i.e., by white males – Mark Twain, William Dean Howells or George Washington Cable, or white women authors – Louisa May Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe etc) but by African American women authors, thus an arguably more authentic voice articulating the interracial / intraracial issues surrounding these people of a legally questionable and confusing status at that time. This attempt is facilitated by Ms. Kaliskova’s use of specific novels, some of which only recently have been published or republished (otherwise they were not published near the time of composition or if so, utterly ignored by literary historians until recently). For example, Julia C. Collins’s novel was republished only four years ago (after only a serialization in a black church magazine), hence this is quite a timely undertaking with relatively little critical tradition for Ms. Kaliskova to lean upon. Written in English, it is an enjoyable read.

The introductory chapter offers a succinct overview of the “tragic mulatto” motif in all of its permutations as well as biographical information of the four novelists under study. It might appear somewhat skimpy except that, as Ms. Kaliskova informs us, precious little is really known of these neglected African American novelists, one of whom most probably was born a slave, and a second one of whom little distinguishes her youth from that of a formal indentured servant both in mistreatment and outright racism. It is well written, covering each author with the wealth of information available.

The second chapter covers Hannah Crafts’s novel, *The Bondwoman’s Narrative* first published in 2002 and becoming a *New York Times* bestseller in that year, was composed in the 1850s, the exact time elucidated in much detail by Ms. Kaliskova. The plot structure, narrative style, and the issues surrounding the melodramatic escape from slavery as well as an examination of the corollary literary conventions of that time – including Gothic elements – are succinctly described and analyzed. This novel is the only bestseller of the four under examination. Ms. Kaliskova incorporates the historical and literary past brilliantly here.

The third chapter concerns *Our Nig* by Harriet Wilson. This Northern-born woman dispels the cliché that blacks were well-received and treated humanely in the North, not to mention the conventional view of the abolitionist lecturers as benevolent kind people. The main Ballmont woman, Mrs. Ballmont and her daughter Mary too are portrayed in *Our Nig* as the captious great tormentors and torturers rather than evil white males seducing or raping slave women. The white men, particularly James Ballmont, in fact acts as protector of the mulatto servant Frado. Wilson’s autobiographical novel also breaks the literary genteel convention of underscoring Christianity as a salvation for the protagonist, something Ms. Kaliskova might have better emphasized.

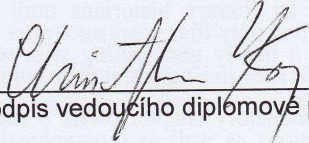
The forth chapter and fifth chapters cover the Collins and Harper novels superbly, one showing a Louisiana octoroon reminiscent of the 1880 novel by George Washington Cable *The Grandissimes*. A victim of the local laws forbidding marriage between the races, the parents of Claire Neville send her north to be raised white. Both parents are dead, very melodramatically because of their forbidden love to each other. Her attempt to live a happy life appears threatened by the same circumstances that thwarted her parents. Ms. Kaliskova has rendered her analysis of the novel exquisitely. The Frances Harper novel, *Iola Leroy* the most famous novel in the 19th century by an African American woman and generally positively received in her time, is aimed more politically and didactically towards "social uplift" following emancipation and Ms. Kaliskova shows how this work both undermines conventional melodrama (the heroine's adamant rejection of a white gentleman's marriage proposal) and yet unrealistically offers a happy ending to the novel. Once again, an excellent analysis is provided to the novel.

My questions for the state examination defense are 1) if Claire were allowed to marry in Collins's novel, would she really be a tragic mulatto? 2) Arguments by some critics have been made that *Our Nig* is not a novel but autobiography. What is your opinion on this matter?

My assessment for this work is

- výborně -

Návrh na klasifikaci diplomové práce:


podpis vedoucího diplomové práce

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V Českých Budějovicích dne 2010.....

Stupeň kvalifikace	výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	nevyhověl
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