

## POSUDEK DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

*Jméno a příjmení studenta:* Bc. Adéla Grenarová  
*Název diplomové práce:* Multicultural World in Zadie Smith's Recent Novels

*Vedoucí diplomové práce:* PhDr Alice Sukdolova, Ph.D.  
*Oponent diplomové práce:* PhDr Christopher Koy, M.A., Ph.D.

- I. Cíl práce a jeho naplnění: 2. Cíl práce byl naplněn s drobnými nedostatky
- II. Struktura práce: 2. Přiměřená
- III. Práce s literaturou: 3. Průměrná práce s literaturou
- IV. Prezentace a interpretace dat: 2. Velmi dobrá prezentace dat, úspěšný pokus o jejich interpretaci
- V. Formální stránka: 1. Odpovídá všem stanoveným požadavkům
- VI. Jazyková úroveň práce: 3. Dobrá
- VII. Náročnost zpracování tématu: 1. Velmi vysoká
- VIII. Přínosy práce: 3. Průměrné, omezené využití výsledků práce

### Vyjádření oponenta diplomové práce\*:

The introduction covers many issues which are to be applied to Zadie Smith: post-colonialism, hybridity, ethnicity, race, etc so that this diploma work is less concerned with her literary art (does she write beautifully, for instance aesthetically pleasing sentences?) than sociological aspects of characters in confrontation with society.

It would appear clear that many aspects of multiculturalism are covered minus a few major exceptions: maybe the first one to mention should be voice. Smith is herself mixed white and black and like many authors with Jamaican ancestry (Claude McKay, Lorna Goodison, Andrea Levy etc) she writes about black and white confrontations of both genders, and does so under the background of the Jamaican Diaspora which is never referred to in Grenarova's introduction. Smith's voice is unclear however: does she write with the voice of the colonized (her mother, herself an immigrant) or the colonizer (her father) as a postcolonial author as defined by Grenarova? Can a colonizer voice even write postcolonial fiction? [For that matter, is even Barack Obama's work *Dreams of My Father* concerning his Kenyan father postcolonial, under her definition?] Interestingly, Homi K. Bhabha's (always



misspelled) notion of a "third space" appears to be rejected by Grenarova (and Ashcroft) on pages 7-8, so a hybrid voice appears out-of-the-question.

Accordingly, another issue left untouched is privilege: as a part English woman, the lighter-skinned Zadie is exceptionally well-educated and obviously connected (Cambridge and Harvard are her home institutions), but no mention of how Smith's own background, even within the chapter of a novel (*On Beauty*) reviewed as it were on, among other issues, the theme of privilege (expressed in this diploma work as a dichotomy between "authenticity and academy" at one point and later as "vernacular versus theoretical") influences her texts. While reading this thesis, it is as if privilege were a mere social construct.

If it were not, then the question might be asked by Grenarova: does Smith express guilt about her own privilege via Howard's and Kiki's son Levi who looks up to neither his mom or dad (a kind of "third space") or is his political awareness and anger about the exploitation of Haitians in Massachusetts indicative of Smith's own personal perspective? Ordinarily one would merely opine that this character, Levi Belsey, is whole cloth, but Grenarova opens the door by offering such interpretations as "...by presenting Clare's character, Smith probably attempted to reflect on her own perspective in terms of hoping for a better future..." (p. 18) by which Grenarova assumes Smith to be an optimist rather than a Schopenhauerian pessimist akin to that of Levi. A similar point is made later by Grenarova when, in contrast to Harvard (barely disguised as Wellington College, an Ivy-League school near Boston), "Smith describes the bar [Bus Stop Café] on a rather positive note ... open for everybody without difference" (p. 22) even though restaurants, cafes and bars are by American law not permitted to exclude or discriminate against people based on race or other distinctions.

In short, the introduction offering hybridity as a theoretical aspect of multiculturalism and postcolonialism particularly directed at Smith characters does not get applied or developed. Characters simply act out without reference to their hybrid state, and of course in the USA this happens naturally because of the uniquely American "one drop" rule.

In her brief mention of the art and beauty motif, no multicultural or postcolonial theory is applied, nor is it in her discussion of the subgenre campus novel. I would have recommended excluding this since it deviates from the topic of the thesis, along with the major influences by E. M. Forster et al. (If Smith had been influenced by Jamaican or African texts, that might have been something Grenarova could have found applicable to her postcolonial and multicultural interpretation.)

In her chapter on *N-W*, Leah, the woman with an Anglo-Irish background, sounds to Grenarova as either ethnic or multicultural but in fact her class/religion colonized and dominated over the Catholic Irish for centuries. The Natalie character is assessed on p. 45 with three sentences after a lengthy plot summary of her fate, but most unfortunately, none of the multicultural particulars from the introduction are applied to explain her behavior, and much the same with the others portrayed. As I have not read this novel, I will not write more about these characters. The northwest part of London sub-section describes the area as run-down yet affordable to the poor, akin to an American ghetto or the Paris suburbs for immigrants, and seems ripe for a postcolonial or multicultural discussion which is regrettably missing. The few pages dedicated to her narrative technique is interesting but beside the focus of the thesis so I would have it eliminated.

I am confused about the order by which the novels are analyzed, but the next chapter on *White Teeth*, the most famous novel by Smith, applies the theories more consequentially. Samad's abandonment of his country's culture and British multiculturalism is not an uncommon reaction made by immigrants who see the West (regardless of the country) as corrupt. It is nothing new, as Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul has expressed this confused sentiment in many of his works as well. The Jamaican diaspora comes in full force in the



multigenerational portrait in the novel, as does the colonial past. Class, race, success and to a lesser extent religion are handled well with extensive use of a few literary critics. An interesting (grotesquely funny) nickname, Dr. Sick, brings to the novel the antithesis of multiculturalism: Nazi ideology. Likewise funny, the acronym KEVIN, the fictional precursor to organizations such as ISIS, presents fundamentalist Islamic community to be found in London. Grenarova's interesting presentation of this novel is perhaps the strongest part of the thesis.

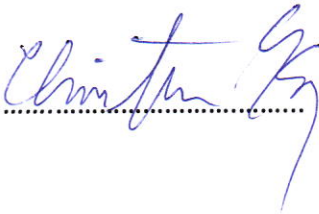
The English should have been proofread before printing. Minimally, spell-check should be learned to avoid the many "words" like "solidatiry" p. 22 which I think should be solidarity. Life and live are frequently confused (for example "...whose adult lives differ dramatically..."p. 42). It frustrates the reading experience to see the black literary scholar Houston Baker rendered as Bakre etc.

Práce splňuje základní požadavky kladené na tento typ prací, a proto ji doporučuji ústní obhajobě.

Navrhovaná známka: velmi dobře –\*

Otázky k obhajobě:

1. Within the postcolonial context, are hybrid authors in your opinion privileged by belonging to both the main [colonizing] and the minor [colonized] ethnicities?
2. Which voice or space do you believe Smith has: main [colonizing] and the minor [colonized] or the Homi Bhabha-theorized 3<sup>rd</sup> space? Explain why using these 3 novels to back your opinion up.
3. You claim that social stratification makes college unreachable (p. 21). Then with the Black Studies Dept critique and the general conflicts of the academic novel *On Beauty* it appears that liberal policies at colleges are unauthentic, and to the extent that they are so, undesirable. What message do you take from this novel: are minorities better off NOT attending colleges of higher education?

Podpis oponenta diplomové práce\*: 

Datum: 11 Jan 2017

\*nehodící se škrtněte