

Ondřej Polák's B.A. thesis – review written by the opponent

Ondřej Polák's B.A. thesis, *Between Art and Politics: Disunity of Black Drama during the Harlem Renaissance*, focuses, as the title promises, on one of the lesser-known, but still very important, chapters in the history of the African American drama. The goal was to analyze the split that has occurred between the politicized plays and the „folk plays“, and Mr. Polák managed to achieve that goal in a persuasive manner: relying on the existing scholarly sources, he interpreted the relevant plays he has chosen, and thus easily proved his main point.

Admittedly, his discussion of the selected dramas tends to be, from time to time, rather descriptive, but this may be caused – and also partly justified – by a relative lack of theoretical and/or critical secondary literature that could have been applied. The only factor that could have strengthened his argument is, I would imagine, a quantitative one: in other words, how many plays would fall into those two respective categories in that specific time, and what would those numbers imply?

The other thing that could have been interesting and possibly also beneficial is, in my opinion, the larger context. Given the fact that there are just a few sources dealing with the African American drama of that period only, I wonder whether e.g. Christopher Bigsby was not commenting on that phenomenon as well, and what was the reaction of the white audience/critics/playwrights like: Mr. Polák mentions that only briefly on p. 41, but I would very much like to know which plays the so called whites supported, and also why.

As to the language of the submitted thesis, I have to say that there are some sentences I do not quite understand the meaning of: e.g. on p. 46, „irregularities are let loose with abandon in the texts“, p. 6 „He knew that he would have carve out an inch for the blacks“, p. 26 „The exemplary stature of the characters flows over to the language they use“, etc. There is also a number of misprints, some of them even in proper names (p. 9, Mohamed/ Mohammed, p. vii Alan/Alain, etc), and very elementary errors in Czech grammar (in Abstrakt: „hry...se soustředili“, „směry... si našli“). This is simply regrettable, and a more careful proofreading would have been surely needed.

This being the case, I strongly believe that Mr. Polák's grade could have been – and maybe still can be (depending on the review written by the supervisor, and Mr. Polák's performance during the oral defense) – excellent / výborně, but as of now, I am suggesting very good / velmi dobře.

Prague, July 21, 2016

Dr. Hana Ulmanová, M.A.