OPPONENT'S REPORT
BA THESIS
Young African American Women and their Environment: Contemporary African American
Feminine Identities, Political Views and the Sense of Security
Jana Severová

As stated in the conclusion, the thesis aims to "shed[…] light on how the environment affects the lives of young African American women and how this is addressed in African American literature. It emphasizes the importance of fostering a more inclusive society in which African American women's contributions and experiences are greatly recognized" (84). The literary works analyzed are *Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid, *Nightcrawling* by Leila Mottley and *The Other Black Girl* by Zakiya Dalila Harris. In order to exemplify her argument and to highlight the need for inclusivity, Jana Severová draws attention particularly to instances of "unsafe environment" where the novels' characters suffer from racism, sexism and class inequality, among others.

The topic is good, and so is the choice of three recent works of fiction. However, the analysis of the novels is rather unsystematic. In the entire thesis, there are almost no references to the novels themselves and the focus is largely on the plot. There are relevant—though not so well integrated—digressions, for example to the presidential elections on pages 26-7 or to the movements preceding Black Lives Matter. The sources utilized in both these instances are incorrectly cited (see details on the plagiarism problem below) and some generalizations in these sections are imprecise, such as the short overview on pages 33-5, which does not clearly differentiate between various democratic movements for racial justice and movements that are objectionable. There are also problematic assertions such as: "When talking about Black femininity, one must always include Black hair. Black woman's hair represents her heritage, it is her crown, her identity and how she sees herself" (48).

The entire thesis could be improved stylistically by paying attention to smaller issues such as "Each chapter is dedicated to each novel" (4) or "*Nightcrawling* was written by Leila Mottley, as stated above" (42), by correcting typos (e.g. "This An analysis" [4] or "i.te." [9]), adding missing italics in book titles as well as properly marking block quotes and footnotes (for example on pages 24-6). Most importantly, the text includes numerous unmarked citations and incorrect paraphrases from its sources. Often, long passages are copied but no quotation marks are used, only footnotes. Here are three examples for illustration:

Thesis, page 19:
Masad claims that prior to the 2016 election, the "fun age" was thought by some to be miraculously post-racist and post-sexist because it was impolite to be these things in public; an age of performative white feminism; an age of social media and virality and armchair activism and online virtue-signaling that ironically requires certain people—often times those already more vulnerable—to live in specific politically correct ways while allowing others—usually those with power, influence and privilege-off the hook. […] 28
28 Ilana Masad, 'Such A Fun Age 'Is A Complex, Layered Page-Turner. National Public Radio, accessed September 2, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2019/12/28/791747689/such-a-fun-age-is-a-complex-layered-page-turner
Source:
More broadly, the "fun age" might be our own, prior to the 2016 election—an age that was considered by some to be magically post-racist and post-sexist because it was impolite to be these things in public; an age of performative white feminism; an age of social media and virality and armchair activism and online virtue-signaling that ironically requires certain people—often, those already more vulnerable—to exist in specific politically correct ways while letting others—usually, those with power and privilege—off the hook.

Thesis, pages 23-4:
She claims that images of blackness can be evil and protective, rebellious while also being at the same time forgiving, fearful and desirable—all of the self-contradictory features of the self. Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable. 31
31 Morrison, Whiteness, *58-59.*
Source (Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*):
If we follow through on the self-reflexive nature of these encounters with Africanism, it falls clear: images of blackness can be evil and *protective, rebellious* and *forgiving, fearful* and *desirable—all of the self-contradictory features of the self. Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable. Or so our writers seem to say.*

Thesis, page 31:
Alix built her brand as a WordPress-era proto-influencer, sending handwritten letters to companies and asking them to send her free stuff, then posting both the letters and a review of the stuff on her blog. She now runs a small business teaching women lessons about the importance of making their voices heard through letters. 47
47 Ibid.
Source (Constance Grady, "In Such a Fun Age, everyone wants the black girl's attention, but she just wants a real job," https://www.vox.com/culture/2020/1/8/21055681/such-a-fun-age-kiley-reid-review):
Alix built her brand as a proto-influencer of the Wordpress era, sending handwritten letters to companies and asking them to send her free stuff, and then posting both letters and a review of the stuff to a blog. Now, she has a small business in which she teaches women "Lean In" – inflected lessons about the importance of making their voices heard through letters.

Although each of these instances includes a footnote with a reference to the source, the text is too close to the original, which means plagiarism. (These are only a few examples; the thesis unfortunately includes multiple passages like this.)

I therefore recommend that the thesis be graded "neprospěla" (fail).

Pavla Veselá, PhD
Prague, 5th June 2023