



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Charles University

## Report on defence of dissertation thesis

Academic year: 2023/2024

**Student's name and surname:** Emanuela Maltese  
**Student's ID:** 46938507

**Type of the study programme:** doctoral  
**Study programme:** Anglophone Literatures and Cultures  
**Study ID:** 626261

**Title of the thesis:** *blackness* Next Time: James Baldwin's Prophecies of Beauty and Love  
**Thesis department:** Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures (21-UALK)  
**Language of the thesis:** English  
**Language of defence:** English  
**Supervisor:** Mgr. Pavla Veselá, Ph.D.  
**Reviewer(s):** doc. Erik Sherman Roraback, D.Phil.  
doc. Alessandro Buffa, Ph.D.

**Date of defence:** 13.09.2024    **Venue of defence:** Praha  
**Attempt:** regular

**Course of the examination:** MINUTES OF THE VIVA  
Date: 13.09.2024 10:00  
Department: Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures  
Room: P111 (door # 111), FF UK, nám. Jana Palacha 2, Praha 1,  
Thesis type: Dissertation  
Committee: Chair: prof. Mgr. Ondřej Pilný, Ph.D.  
Members: doc. Erik Sherman Roraback, D.Phil.  
doc. Alessandro Buffa, Ph.D.  
Mgr. Pavla Veselá, Ph.D.  
Student: Emanuela Maltese  
Defence: *blackness* Next Time: James Baldwin's Prophecies of Beauty and Love  
Thesis supervisor: Mgr. Pavla Veselá, Ph.D.  
Opponent(s): doc. Erik Sherman Roraback, D.Phil.  
doc. Alessandro Buffa, Ph.D.

10:00: Chair Pilny: Commencement, welcome, opening comments- defined his role as conductor. Brief overview of procedure. Supervisor will introduce student. And student will present her work. Opponents will then summarize their reports.

10:01: Veselá : Mentions student's accomplishments. Various exchanges, conferences, graduate schools. Taught at Dutch Art Academy. Translated texts. Copy edited books for catalogues. Extensive publications. Others are forthcoming.

10:03: Ema: Thanks the committee. 2016 Baldwin conference in Paris and book release. He had traction from the black lives movement. Bagan study in 2019, Baldwin reading from particular methodology, post-colonialism. Black tradition. Both Fiction and non-fiction. Compare earlier and later Baldwin. Love and prophecy, anticipates prophet of blackness, not as rational category (Enlightenment) neither as a social vindication movement but a power ontology rather than epistemology, aesthetic, ethics.

4 parts in thesis. Drawing from studies on blackness, returning to "4", the natural elements. First two chapters, introduce literary currents, second on blackness and radical tradition. Marx from a black perspective. Black performances and aesthetics. Last two chapters: beauty and love. Reflection on aesthetics. Contrapuntal reading. Similarities in the texts. No focusing on what is right or not right but analyses Giovanni. Going from the 60s to later, after radicalism. Love change- novel. Groundbreaking work. Profound reflections on love. Characters addressed as blackness through "trans-ness": transnational, possession, no divisions of the I from the other. End of chapter with an openness for the future. Emphasising child in his work. Possibly leading to more work in the future. To change and be changed through love and children. Dense theoretically.

10:12: Buffa : Report: Great interest in reading this work. Idea of oppositional concepts- cultural studies and black studies- Baldwin not translated in Italian- apposition from the Italian- "not in contest" but "in dialogues". Musical theory mentions as benefit in the study. A storing feature. Benjamin and the afterlives- cancellation and afterlives of slavery- looking at these topics- and diaspora- from contemporary perspectives= "history is always now", paraphrase Benjamin. Black music- idea of the limbo. Problematic- middle passage, against humanity. Death toll unknown. Improvisation emerge when there is big trauma. Personal, social. Moments emerge for new ways to interpret. Slave ship and trade, terror and horror- Marcus Rediker "Slave Ship"- A Human History- Book. Notes and material, bibliography are good. Work a bit long.

10:18: Roraback : Achievements: considerable and impressive. Illuminating. Shortcomings: Prior reader pointed out- a bit verbose. Almost twice the length. Need to be more concise. Point raised by supervisor- Anti-Marxist tone at times. Baldwin says he is not a Marxist but

the problem arise in black studies. Paradigms are engagement. Text to consider: Reproachment. White capitalism and racialized capitalism could have been brought into the work for consideration. Fully fledged account of material could benefit work, big finance and populism. Formal features: some typos. Question on the report for candidate: Acoustic component.

10:22: Ema: Addresses questions from report. Urgent question: relationship with Marxism and terrorism. Spirituality to be addressed, a long standing feature of E's work. Unseen order that is undermined. Central role in colonialism and imperial project.

Premise: How Marx and Materialism= Derrida- met the ghosts of Marx, the specters of Marx. Prison notes were introduced by Gramsci. Reading filtered through Gramsci and literary analysis. Agrees that work is anti-Marxist. Mentions her Catholicism and present atheism. Oppositional relationship to Marx. Bringing in black Marxism- post colonialism and material. E struggle to understand- is there something being dialectical thinking? Her own question. Conflict, synthesis. Thinking about Marx from a different lens. Is there something before materialism. Social condition, production, simultaneously effecting social life and thinking. Is it possible to address this when within the system? Baldwin declares himself that he cannot be categorised. Must approach his materialism as spiritual and religious. More spiritual than religion. Non-systematic. Influenced by E's Forgetting of air. Spiritus as connected to body. Not abstract but in the flesh. A material condition. Breathing and thinking linked in spiritus. Internal life can impact reality. Dreams. Baldwin: demands of life simultaneous to choices you take. Marked by material facts. Body marks experience, real material conditions. Embrace love that is difficult to grasp. Pain a difficult aspect. How us there joy in pain? A Poetical persistence. Baldwin sees this as our complex nature. We are prone to fail and be different. Rejoice in the fact of death, accept this reality. Entanglement of joy and pain in slavery, flesh objectified and nullified. Resistance in creative in this painful experience. Infused his style. Derived from involvement as Preacher and listener of blues music.

10:32: Roraback asks: we are not beyond dialects, not beyond tradition. Suggests and notes that this might be useful. Zizek Christian atheism, how to be a real material- book. Interesting ground covered here that overlaps with E's comments. West as Universalist, Christian project, to combine lines of struggle. An interesting approach for radical projects.

10:34: Ema: at conference- her interest in spiritualism- translation of catholic book. Perversion of Christianity and communism. Tendency, specter s of communism. Gramsci trad. Cuba flat mates and Czech friends contest this narrative.

10:35 Roraback: Gramscian presence in Marx. Hegel revolution in phil- precondition for feminism, psychoanalysis and Marx. Building on these tradition of critical thinking. Conceptual architecture, stuck in the vocab

10:36 Ema: personal issue, stuck in faith.

10:36 Roraback : Donald Harris mentioned.

10:37: Ema: European theory: Eurocentric Marx. Migel Milano- Marx at the margins. Various authors at the margins of Marx, Italian writers. Not against Marxism but approach in oppositional.

10:38: Buffa: No real tradition in US for Marxism. Agrees its is European. But Baldwin lived in Paris.

10:39: Ema: Experience of material life. Style Baldwin reading is difficult- clear writing but complex. Fire Next time: requires music, its continually there. Musicality. Blues- intention to use this for entanglement of joy and pain. Couldn't find- The Uses of the Blues- reading American writers, Shakespeare and Dickens- find his own language. Gave words new sound. Toni Morrison- spectacle of way. Patterns individuates- blue notes. Fire next time- last part musical. Ema reads from excerpt. Ema reads another excerpt that has blues musicality. Scene: a black family.

10:44 Ema: Explains the scene as an intimate one. Repetition. Musical style derived from his past as preacher and echoes of blues. Names different musicians. St Paul's. One person at the fountain Paris. Baldwin frequently sat there. He lived with a lady that was hostile in her politics. But then engagement with Malcom X, etc. Translations and publishers coming out. Post-Colonial- Brazil, new wave of translation. Black Radical trad. Angel Davis. Traditions influenced by Brazil, similar problems as US. Angola: new trans of Baldwin. South Africa played role in his work. Congo politics influenced him too. Reconfirmed the context of Post-Colonial.

10:49: Pilny: There are countries where Baldwin is ignored. No chance for books in Czech market. No one remembers Baldwin. No more editions since 90s. Market small. Publishers unwilling.

10:50: Ema: Italian fetishize Baldwin. Trendy. Risk to compare middle passage to Mediterranean. Refugee crisis today. Two different experiences. Italian translation give in Lisbon. Only 3 people. People unwilling to engage even though it is timely.

10:52 Pilny: increasing levels of English. But no one reads in Czech. Readers rather read in English. Translations effected. No market. France, Germany, Poland.

10:53: Ema: Paris, French editions realised. But the atmosphere in France is strange, Shannon McCann. Property issues and rights. Italian, many tradition. Way of doing things since fascism. Many dialects. Portugal opposite, everything in English. Linked to political decisions. Editions remain only in academic circles in

10:56: Pilny: Q: Baldwin, living with death, what extent is he in convo with French existentialism and Becket, is there link

10:56: Ema: 2 yrs ago, article on black existentialism. Baldwin on this list. Linked to Satre. Black skin, white masks. Struggle useful to understand lit by black writers. Possible links. No unique to address Baldwin. France clear influence. First N conference in Paris, existentialism address. A criticism that was used to read black authors. Some aspects. Brings in pessimism. Baldwin said he cannot be pessimistic. But maybe this is a mistaken reading

10:59 Pilny: emphasises the conversational nature of these theories. Mentions R's book on radicalism and existentialism, mid 50s. Was B interested

10:59 Roraback: Althusser mentioned

10:59 Buffa: Avant Garde, surrealism but filter to own experience. Religion especially. B engaged with existential. Same with Marxism. Black radicalism filters injustice before the workers. Connected with modernity. But slaves, as James says, were the first workers. EU perspective influence B but always filtered and reworking from African religions.

11:02 Ema: Marx on the margins book- ref gender issue as well. Specific stress on the African experience. N conference- no connection with African countries. American and African contexts different. No final solution for pain. Stay with the pain and survive this pain. How to teach a pedagogy of death to children. E cannot bear this. Most ethical passage you can make in world, B. Leave it better than you found it. Only solution B gives to Pain. Thanks panel for points. Forget we deal with beauty. Thanks again. At the start of thesis, t

11:03: Pilny: Prospects of publication?

11:03: Ema: works for publisher. She intends to study. More interesting book to development from this. Berlin based publisher. Specialized in aesthetics and arts.

11:06: Pilny: reports give guidance on what to development. Long book.

11:06: Ema: digression is her style. She needs to narrow the field. A passionate reading and writing.

11:07: Pilny: happy to have you.

11:07: Pilny; asks E to step outside. For committee to decide.

11:19: Candidate reenters room. Easy decision. Pilny: congratulates Ema shakes with everyone. Thesis defence: mark granted: Pass

Minutes take by Rebecca Murray

**CONCLUSION:** The reports on the thesis were very positive. The candidate gave a succinct presentation of her dissertation and then proceeded to address all questions raised in the reports in detail. Her answers to further questions that came up in the discussion were also accomplished.

**Result of defence:** pass (P)

**Chair of the board:** Pilný Ondřej, prof. Mgr., Ph.D. ....

**Committee members:** Roraback Erik Sherman, doc., D.Phil. ....

Buffa Alessandro, doc., Ph.D. ....

Veselá Pavla, Mgr., Ph.D. ....

**I have been acquainted with the protocol:**.....