The Tension in Mother-Daughter relationship in Jamaica Kincaid’s works

Field of Study: FF N-FI AJ [sem 5, cyk 2]

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Reviewer: PhDr. Věra Pálenská, CSc.

Reviewer’s recommendation for overall mark: B

1. Evaluation of central idea, thesis, focus and purpose: A
2. Evaluation of organization, logic and arrangement: B
3. Evaluation of topic development, support and evidence: A
4. Evaluation of language, style, standard usage, citation and bibliographic standards: C

Comments and/or topics and questions for the thesis defence:
This thesis, consisting of six Chapters, Introduction and Conclusion, is devoted to four works by Jamaica Kincaid. These are: Annie John (1985), Lucy (1990), The Autobiography of My Mother (1996), and My Brother (1997).

In the Introductory part the author informs the reader about the theme, scope and structure of her thesis, in Chapter Two she mentions some facts about personal history and literary career of the writer, particularly about her life outside the Caribbean, and also names major thematic and stylistic features of her literary production. Chapter Three concerns colonial education in Antigua, Kincaid’s birthplace, and the position of women on this island. Chapters Four to Seven deal with individual works. Annie John concentrates on an increasing tension between Annie and her mother, which eventually leads to the heroine’s complete separation from her family; Lucy follows the title character to America, where she becomes free and independent though her old problems and desires remain unresolved. In The Autobiography of My Mother the author sees Xuela as a selfish woman who “has no use of love and no desire to bear children” (59) and characterizes her way of life as a result of the loss of her mother who died in childbirth. My Brother, Kincaid’s nonfiction, concentrates on different themes that have already appeared in the above mentioned novels. In this text Kincaid returns to Antigua both physically and in her memories and openly admits and tries to justify her hostility towards her mother. In Conclusion the author points out that love-hate relationship between mother and daughter, the theme Kincaid is pre-occupied with in all her works, is nowhere satisfactorily explained and can be only understood if we take into account the double standard traditionally applied to boys (men) and girls (women) in the Caribbean region.

The thesis is a many-sided examination and comparison of Jamaica Kincaid’s four books based on the author’s thorough reading of primary literature and supported by her detailed study of a great number of secondary sources.