



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Opponent's Report

Mai Chi Nguyen: WILSON HARRIS'S MYTHIC VISION IN THE GUYANA QUARTET

I appreciate and commend the candidate's decision to engage with demanding texts by a major Anglophone writer who is however not part of the compulsory curriculum of the degree, and whose works are almost unknown in the Czech context.

The candidate demonstrates detailed knowledge of the author's oeuvre, including his critical writing, and is widely read in secondary and theoretical literature. The bibliography is impressive, and the use of sources is balanced: the candidate's own voice and perspective always come through. The candidate is able to introduce complex general topics assuredly and in a way that benefits the analysis of the texts (Caribbean studies, the history and politics of the region, existing research into Harris's writing, magical realism as a concept, etc.). The text is fluently and confidently written.

There are some stylistic issues (redundancies, repetitions, inconsistencies), which could be easily remedied, as it is evident the candidate writes well, and these small problems seem to result from lack of time for proofreading.

The appendix, consisting of two artworks, though referred to in the text, seems strangely limited and accidental (I would recommend either adding more visual materials or removing them altogether).

My main reservation would be that the thesis attempts to do too much at the same time and in the limited space of an MA dissertation, perhaps influenced by the richness, diversity, and fragmentation of its source material. Not only does it work with four dense novels, but the perspectives and approaches employed include Jung, Deleuze, and postcolonial theory, and the thesis touches on the representation of women, magical realism, virtual and actual time, among a number of other topics. Although myths are mentioned extensively throughout the thesis and in the title, I miss a more focused introduction into the concept, other than Harris's own essays and works focused on the Caribbean in particular.

As a result, the structure is unclear, and the work reads as a blend (however engaging, learned, and insightful) of shorter individual texts on Harris, many of which could be fruitfully developed into full-length studies. The choice of focuses for the individual chapters seems imbalanced and slightly arbitrary, with no overarching argument the reader would be able to follow. Perhaps one of the perspectives would be enough for the whole thesis and would make it more cogent and compact.



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In spite of these reservations, I propose the grade excellent / výborně, if the candidate satisfactorily responds to the points raised (in this report, especially Question 1), or very good / chvalitebně.

1. Which of the many perspectives and focuses that you employ in the text seem most relevant and useful to you in retrospect – were you to restructure the thesis (which I would recommend), how would you do it? Is there anything else that you would change with the benefit of hindsight, for instance if you were to prepare the text for publication?

2. What has been the response to Harris' work, both creative and critical, among the following generations of writers from the region? Is his vision followed and developed? Is he criticised? What are the responses to such a large-looming prolific figure?

Mgr. Petra Johana Poncarová, PhD.

Prague, 1 September 2021