

Posudek vedoucí na diplomovou práci Mai Chi Nguyen “Wilson Harris’s Mythic Vision in *The Guyana Quartet*”

Harris’s writing, both fictional and critical, is marked by a unique and complex vision which although widely admired has not been easily accommodated within Caribbean literary traditions or critical paradigms and is often categorized as being more akin to the so-called magic realism of South American writing. However, his place within the classical Caribbean canon, which is typically formed in the 1960s by male writers who were predominantly active in England at the time, is undoubtable. Yet awareness of Harris in the Czech cultural context is virtually nil and it remains to be said that I very much appreciate the selection of this difficult and complex writer for analysis in an MA thesis.

Moreover, Ms Nguyen proves very good knowledge not only of the primary texts (the four novels that constitute *The Guyana Quartet*) but also of a very impressive number of secondary critical sources (the list of bibliography takes up 5 and a half pages). The author surveys these texts scrupulously while managing to maintain and convey a sense of her own position in relation to them. The thesis itself is written in very good academic English with some minor flaws that can be ascribed perhaps to lack of concentration while proof reading. However, the thesis could have benefited from a more careful editing and pruning of the text in order to avoid several unnecessary repetitions. Also, switching fast between the novels can sometimes prove confusing to a reader not fully well acquainted with the novels. It could have been a good idea to keep the reader in touch with the current stage in argumentation by articulating a clear line that would run through the thesis.

Despite the length of the thesis and the number of discussed topics (perhaps way too many) some questions remain to be asked.

- 1) How does Ms Nguyen view the precise place of Harris in the creation of the concept of “West Indian literature”? And, how does she conceptualise the idea of the West Indies and the Caribbean?
- 2) Despite several efforts to formulate it, I miss a simple clearly identifiable thesis statement. “*The GQ*’s validity for understanding of postcolonial identity” (page 14) seems rather too vague. Can you formulate it now?
- 3) How does she actually conceive of the idea of myth in relation to the absence of history?

4) I appreciate attention to the image of women, whose absence or treatment is generally a major problem in the “foundation” texts of the Caribbean canon. Would she agree that at least in one novel (*SL*) there is a certain utopian possibility?

5) In relation to utopia: in one essay Melanie Otto writes that in *The Palace of the Peacock* “The journey in pursuit of the folk becomes a quest for personal and communal salvation, during which the atrocities of colonization are magically transformed and healed. ... Harris’s crew reaches and remains in a utopian El Dorado...” Would Ms Nguyen agree?

To conclude, this MA thesis certainly fulfils requirements for such academic work on this level. I fully recommend it for defence. The proposed grade is between **excellent (výborně) and very good (velmi dobře)** depending on the response to the above reservations and questions.

V Praze dne 31.8.2021

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