



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

**Markéta Karlasová: *Magic in Christopher Whyte's Novels* (BA thesis)**

By deciding to focus on the topic of magic in the fiction of Christopher Whyte (1952), Ms. Karlasová chose a major contemporary Scottish writer whose work has, in spite of a number of awards and general recognition of his importance as a poet, novelist, translator, and critic, so far received comparatively little nuanced and sustained critical attention, which is true especially as far as fiction in English is concerned.

The examination of the topic of magic in Whyte's three novels, *Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin* (1995), *The Warlock of Strathearn* (1997), and *The Cloud Machinery* (2000), and the way it is used to disrupt fixed and oppressive notions of gender and national identity, thus represents an innovative and relevant contribution not only in the context of the developing field of Scottish literary studies in the Czech Republic but in Scotland itself.

Ms. Karlasová employs Tzvetan Todorov's seminal study of the fantastic in literature while also acknowledging the limitations of the chosen theoretical lens, and fittingly complements Todorov's concepts by engagement with works of other scholars, including Mikhail Bakhtin, and more modern publications, such as Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. The candidate uses the limited corpus of scholarly works on Whyte's fiction fruitfully, without losing her own voice, and is able to draw relevant points from publications that deal with more general subjects, including Scottish literature and fantasy (Manlove). This approach to Whyte's work, while it may seem standard within some academic contexts, also demonstrates much needed readiness to study Scottish literature with the benefit of theoretical tools, which is still not to be taken for granted in the field in general.

Some passages of the thesis are uneven in terms of editing and proofreading, but other parts are of a high standard in terms of originality of thought, argumentation, employment of secondary sources, and formatting, and clearly demonstrate that under more favourable conditions, Ms. Karlasová's work has excellent potential, should she ever decide to pursue an MA or a PhD.

During the work on her thesis, the candidate demonstrated intellectual curiosity and independence, in terms of formulating the topic and locating many of the secondary sources, and also readiness to take on board feedback and ability to efficiently



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incorporate suggestions. I am happy to recommend the thesis for defence and suggest the grade “very good” (2), depending on the result of the defence.

Possible topics for discussion during the defence:

1. In terms of future work on Whyte’s fiction, what would be, in your view, interesting topics and productive approaches? If you had to pick one topic for each of the three novels, what would it be?
2. Would you see some potential in studying different parts of Whyte’s work (fiction, poetry, criticism, translations) together? If yes, what would be the main benefit in your opinion?
3. Scottish identity is stereotypically associated with Calvinism – how would you comment on Whyte’s take on churches as institutions and the actual religious landscape of Scotland, present and historical, in the novels, especially in *Euphemia MacFarrigle* and in *The Warlock*?

Petra Johana Poncarová, PhD.

Prague, 24/1/2023