

**Petra Johana Poncarová, *From the Woods of Raasay to Glasgow Streets: Poetry of Place in the Works of Sorley MacLean and Derick Thomson*
Supervisor's Report**

This MA thesis represents a breakthrough in Czech studies of Celtic literatures and can assume a respectable position even in contemporary Scottish studies. In the former context, it is a first Czech academic monograph on Scottish Gaelic poetry, treating its two major modern representatives and opening important questions of the pluralism of Scottish identities and the dynamic of modern development of a so-far neglected Celtic literature. In the latter context, it combines a very well researched treatment of two principal Gaelic poets of the twentieth century (in Derick Thomson's case, even the first decade of the twenty-first), which has the standard of academic monographs. Here it must be added that half of this thesis is most probably the first academic monograph on Derick Thomson, whose poetry, by its urban turn, significantly expands the traditional dimensions of Gaelic poetry of landscape and place. Moreover, the academic qualities of the dissertation are such that it is publishable after some formal editing, and hence it can readily contribute to present-day Gaelic and Scottish studies.

Another unusual and salient feature of the thesis is a consistent development and use of modern theoretical thought, especially Foucault's and Soja's theories of heterotopias and their relationships to temporality. This framework is adroitly combined with a detailed account of places and their naming in traditional Celtic poetry (which could perhaps be enriched by references to the old Irish *dinnseanchas* mentioned only once in the Conclusion). In stylistic terms, the thesis combines demanding theoretical reflections with very straightforward historical and biographical introductions, which, however, do not reduce the complexities of key cultural features, such as the role of the Free Scottish Church and Presbyterian churches in general in the history of Gaelic-speaking communities. Only this solid grounding of the thesis in historical and cultural facts enables adequate understanding of such complex phenomena as the "displacement" in Gaelic culture, otherwise overused in post-colonial and diasporic studies. It is no overstatement to assert that this thesis persuasively demonstrates the potential of other approaches in Scottish studies than those misguidedly based on post-colonial theories, and indeed, the weaknesses of post-colonial approaches in general.

The range, theoretical erudition and critical thoroughness of this thesis very closely approximate the standard of our best PhD dissertations. This judgement still abstracts from a key feature of the whole approach, the author's knowledge of Gaelic, which enables her to make relevant comments on the problems of bilingualism and translatability in Gaelic poetry. Paradoxically, this excellence opens the space for my only critical comment: the section on Sorley MacLean could more focus on his problematic relationship to Hugh MacDiarmid, especially to the theme of language and identity (including naming) in the latter's late project of poetry (and Celtic identity), *In Memoriam James Joyce*.

To conclude, the thesis by far exceeds the requirements for and the standard of MA dissertations defended at this department. **I am very happy to recommend it to the defence and to propose to grade it "výborně"**. Simultaneously I would like to express my hopes in the further progress of this research which may not only establish a new discipline in the national context but significantly contribute to the progress of Scottish studies in international terms.

3 September 2014

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