



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

EXAMINER'S REPORT: Anežka Stehlíková: *Renderings of the Self: The Theme of Fluid Identity in the Work of Jackie Kay* (BA thesis)

This BA thesis seeks to explore the theme of identity in three selected works by the acclaimed Scottish writer and current Makar Jackie Kay. First, I would like to commend the author for her choice of topic, since Kay's writing is not part of the compulsory BA curriculum and the work is thus a result of Ms Stehlíková's own initiative. The thesis is written in a fluent, sophisticated style, it is carefully formatted, and it employs an impressive list of sources, both theoretical treatises and studies related to Scotland, women's writing, and to Kay's work specifically. The interpretations of Kay's works are insightful and balanced, combining relevant input from secondary sources with Ms Stehlíková's own observations. In my view, the thesis far surpasses the usual standard of dissertations at this level of study.

My only recommendation would be to make the discussion of Scottish history and politics (p. 20-21) and culture (p. 24, p. 31) somewhat more robust, though not necessarily much longer. The choice of examples of Scottish culture seems slightly random and Ms Stehlíková does not mention whether the listed phenomena associated with Scottish culture are part of the popular image of Scotland, or embraced by the Scots themselves, who puts them forward, etc. I also think a more substantial discussion of the linguistic situation would be beneficial, together with a more careful use of terminology (accent / dialect / language). I believe the deeply ingrained bias against the Scots language and the shaming of its speakers, which generations of them have internalised, cannot be ignored when discussing an author who engages with Scots, and it could be profitably explored in relation to Kay's characters who adopt the language or lose it. The linguistic situation has had a deep influence on the nature of Scottish nationalism and the conceptions of national identity, also in relation to cultural nationalism.

Possible questions for discussion during the defence:

1. Would you describe Kay as a political writer, and if yes, in what sense?
2. What sort of a message does her appointment as Makar send about Scotland and its self-image?
3. Does Kay ever explore religion and religious identity in her works (as religion has, in the history of Scotland, often been considered a cornerstone of Scottish identity in some conceptions)?

I warmly recommend this highly promising BA thesis for defence and propose the grade A (excellent). *S radostí doporučuji tuto velice slibnou práci k obhajobě a navrhuji hodnocení 1 (výborně).*

Petra Johana Poncarová, PhD.
11 June 2020, Prague