

Opponent's Report on B.A. thesis by

Ms. Alina Sokolova

Experiment in Richard Brautigan's Work

In her thesis, Ms. Alina Sokolov assesses the experimental aspects in the US author Richard Brautigan's compositional work. In this context, she uses the work of among others the Canadian critic Linda Hutcheon in her *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-century Art Forms* (2000), the French scholar Gérard Genette and the American Marxist Fredric Jameson, as well as direct commentators on Brautigan's writing by William Hjortsberg and Justin Taylor, inter alia, to illuminating effect.

The thesis document has fifty-nine pages. The units of composition include an "Introduction, 1. Style—Reusing Traditions, 1.1 Hemingway, 1.2 Greek Anthology, 1.3 Haiku and Zen, 2. Figurative Language, 3. Narrative, Conclusion and Bibliography". The thesis is very ambitious in attempting to capture many coordinates of the experimental nature of Brautigan's exertions in writing. From the point of view of structure, the text reads as a survey view of things pertaining to this problem of Brautigan's experimental aesthetics, which is both a strength and a weakness insofar as this approach also mediates a certain waywardness and meandering quality to the presentation. All the same, the text does a fine job of covering so many aspects of the problem it addresses. What is more, this very presentational strategy may be said to replicate Brautigan's cultural work. Nevertheless there is a sense that the text could have had a narrower object of focus with regard to the experimental. Still this is not to minimize the undoubted accomplishment here. I would ask the candidate to justify this wide-angled line of approach as against a more tightly constructed thesis argument?

Stylistically, the thesis is rather well written although there are some errors such as a missing article e.g. "caused controversial response" should be "caused a controversial response" (7) or "feature sof" should be "features of" (8), "if supported enough" should be "if supported by enough" (17), "invited to add" should be something like "invite the reader to add" (18), "is unsteadily places between" (21) needs a rewrite, "one of the longest extended metaphor" should be "one of the longest extended metaphors" (34), "reminding that" should be "reminding one that" (42), "invites to take part in it" should be "invites one to take part in it" (46), "egoes" should be "egos" (50), "their" which occurs two times should be "their" (51), "ether" should be "rather" (51), and "the Hemingway's" should be "Hemingway's" (54).

Two further questions: the candidate makes the claim that "the best approach to Brautigan would be to meet him on his own terms, attempting to understand the internal logic and functioning of his works, and not imposing rigid external constructions on his texts" (10). Notwithstanding some of the gestures in this direction already in the thesis, I ask the candidate to state in concise form why has Brautigan not been treated in this way nearly enough to do justice to his achievement? Secondly, the candidate notes that Brautigan "tried to heal the ever-growing consumerist culture with the minimalist stylistic means, while creating new works by upcycling the existing ones, thus reconnecting to the natural cycle of life and

suggesting alternative communities” (56–57). Could Ms. Sokolova please clarify more concretely and exactly what she means by this powerfully suggestive passage?

In light of the foregoing, I hereby recommend for the present work, depending on Ms. Sokolova’s performance at the defense, the mark of a 2 (velmi dobře) or of a 1 (výborně).

doc. Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)
9 June 2019