



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Opponent's Report

Štěpán Krejčí, "The Irish Prince: Irishness in the Works of Oscar Wilde" (BA Thesis)

The appropriation of Oscar Wilde for Irish literature, not to mention the adoption of him as an Irish patriot, is a notoriously problematic matter, as evidenced in the critical discord since the 1990s when the first attempts at doing so started emerging. As such, it is a highly ambitious topic for a Bachelor's thesis, and Štěpán Krejčí is to be commended on the choice. His work is based on extensive research, the range of which exceeds the requirements on this level; moreover, secondary sources are always used judiciously and are critically analysed.

Another strength of the thesis consists in the choice of Wilde's texts for discussion, as these include a number of works that are rarely discussed by scholars in detail, particularly the early play *Vera*. The work is clearly structured and the writing highly accomplished, with only a minor glitch here and there. A number of sections present excellent critical interpretations of the texts: the fine readings of *Vera* as – partially – a reflection on Ireland, Wilde's understanding of socialism, and the anti-imperialist strain of Wilde's early poems (which are very plausibly juxtaposed with Shelley's writing) stand out in particular. Here, Mr Krejčí's work easily bears comparison with that of an established scholar.

However, a number of points require further clarification. First, as much as the introductory chapter has been extensively researched, it leaves the position of the candidate on national identity rather blurred, since the terms "English" and "Irish" are handled, alternately, as opposites, doubles, or as complementing each other in relation to Wilde. This should be clarified at the thesis defence. Moreover, several assertions appear spurious without further clarification or development; these include the claim that *Vera* and *Speranza* are similar in their sacrifice for the country (pp. 24-25), Christ being treated as an Irish element in fairy tales (p. 56), and Christ being described as an Irish metaphor (p. 79). Finally, the accomplished interpretation of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* as Wilde's farewell to English society (as much as it may be following in the footsteps of other commentators, including Seamus Heaney) concludes with the suggestion that Wilde has thereby embraced his Irish identity (pp. 72, 77) – but can this be evidenced in the poem?

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "excellent" (1) or "very good" (2) based on the outcome of the defence.

Prague, 10 January 2020

Prof. Ondřej Pilný, PhD