



FACULTY OF ARTS Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Supervisor's Report

Marija Zdraveska, “Comic Elements in the Post-Conflict Dramatic Representation of the Troubles in Northern Ireland” (MA Thesis)

Marija Zdraveska’s Master’s thesis examines the function of comedy and the comic in contemporary drama from Northern Ireland, which is a topic that has much potential and may perhaps also serve as a case study for other post-conflict areas of the world. The work opens with an accomplished survey of the “Troubles” and their aftermath, and continues with a fine overview of drama from and about Northern Ireland from the 1970s to the present day. The overview is based largely on the work of Tom Maguire and Mark Phelan and, being comprehensive enough, provides a map on which to position the plays selected for detailed analysis in the thesis. The theoretical foundations for their examination are laid out in section 1.6: the candidate introduces Eric Weitz’s work on humour, the comic, and comedy that is to provide the basic conceptual apparatus. She also summarises Weitz’s classification of theories of humour, and continues by introducing the views of Mikhail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser on the grotesque, preparing the ground for her argument about the significance of grotesque features in the selected plays. Finally, the candidate spends some time discussing the work of Jacqueline Garrick on humour and trauma, a subject that is of much relevance in the discussion of the arts after a major violent conflict.

The selection of the plays by Tim Loane, Martin Lynch, and David Ireland is well justified as regards both their genre and the authors’ background. The meticulous close reading of the dramas in their political and aesthetic context is the chief strength of the thesis: based on sufficient research in existing scholarly work, reviews and interviews, the candidate provides an accomplished critical reading of all the works which demonstrates a fine understanding of a complicated socio-political context. The central argument that the comic may serve a vital social purpose, in that laughing at the traumatic may have a therapeutic effect, is persuasively borne out by the candidate’s analysis of all the selected works, from uproarious political satire to violent, dark comedy.

My only significant criticism of the content concerns the fact that Weitz’s ideas about humour and the comic are virtually absent from the analysis of the selected plays, regardless of having been introduced as the basic conceptual apparatus (this is not the case of the grotesque, as grotesque features in the plays are duly addressed particularly through Bakhtin). This matter should be addressed at the thesis defence, i.e. what would be the function of humour and the comic in the plays in Weitz’s terminology.



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As much as the structure of the work is clear and logical, including the chronological ordering of the dramas under analysis, the candidate has – somewhat tantalisingly – used the general thesis introduction as the thesis abstract.

The writing is accomplished throughout, perhaps with the exception of the final pages of the chapter about David Ireland's *Cyprus Avenue* which become slightly repetitive. A typographical error or a minor language mistake creeps in every now and then, and there are a few minor formatting issues; but all in all, the work is presented with care.

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

Prague, 20 August 2020

Prof. Ondřej Pilný, PhD