



Supervisor's Report on B. A. Thesis

SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE IN MARY LAVIN'S SHORT STORIES
by **Kateryna Trompak**

As the recent critical turn to Mary Lavin (by D'hoker, Mooney, Flynn and others) has shown, her work has its rightful place on the map of Irish writing and the international short story scene. This thesis began as an attempt at reconfirming Lavin's status within the Irish and international canon and as a prolific, though largely unacknowledged, commentator on feminist themes. The primary topic of the thesis, however, has grown out of close analysis of a selection of the author's short prose and it foregrounds solitude and alienation as some of the binding themes in Lavin's writing. The main chapters of the thesis focus on three different short stories by Lavin that have been appropriately chosen to illustrate the multilayered (and stratified) concept of solitude in Lavin's short stories.

Although the multiple foci combined in the individual chapters have contributed to a slight conceptual vagueness of some of the argumentation, these imperfections have been counterbalanced, in my view, by the thesis' clear structure and consistently applied methodology. The thesis engages with a wide range of critical and theoretical sources and while I have suggested some of these sources outside the scope of Lavin criticism to Ms Trompak, she deftly applied them in her reading of the author's work. I particularly appreciated the use of Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space as determined by and intrinsic to the diverseness of human experience for the discussion of Lavin's narratives concerned with social propriety and exclusion. Indeed, when reading the thesis as a whole, I felt that less focus on the character and greater emphasis on Lavin's use of space as a structural element and a decisive factor in the formation of social relations could have enhanced the clarity and force of some of the thesis' main arguments. I include the remark here as a possible topic for discussion during the defence: in what ways could the representation of space in the two short stories discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 be considered to be instrumental in the communication of the theme of alienation and social disengagement (similarly to how the motif of the fields is discussed in Chapter 4)?

Throughout her research and the writing of the thesis, Ms Trompak has shown great dedication to her topic and was always ready to reconsider her approach and produce second drafts of the individual chapters. The width of research behind this project is remarkable for a B. A. thesis and the discussion of various social and psychological aspects of solitude takes it beyond the scope of a mere structural analysis. I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade the work "excellent" (výborně), depending on the result of the defence.

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