Opponent's Review
Linda Fořtová, "'Words Versus Music': Analysis of Samuel Beckett's Words and Music, Cascando and Rockaby," BA thesis

Choice of Topic:
The topic area selected for the thesis is a demanding one, and shows both intellectual initiative and creative thinking.

Thesis statement / aims and objectives:
The opening chapter of the work clearly identifies the challenge and embedded aspects of the issue. There is a lack of a well-articulated guiding argument at the outset; however an analytic position gradually evolves as the work progresses. The list of rather counterproductive and simplistic rhetorical questions that concludes the first chapter is a weak point in an otherwise impressive work. Additionally, the initial suggestion that music may transcend the verbal is rather undermined by frequent recourse to “vice versa” in this same chapter. Similarly, there is a problematic instability among the key terms (language, words, music, poetry) that takes some time to snap into focus and this imprecision both in terminology and purpose limits the overall achievement of the project.

Structure and development:
The overall structure of the work is counter intuitive. The intense and multifaceted focus on Words and Music and Cascando is remarkable and quite lucid, but is out of balance with the attention to Rockaby. There is also an over dependence on discursive footnotes. Some of this material would have been better integrated into the main text; much of it could easily be omitted altogether. At graduate level these issues would certainly warrant a reduction in the final evaluation of the work.

Research:
The work demonstrates advanced skill in searching for, selecting, and evaluating sources.

Use of sources:
On the whole there is an attempt to deal with multiple viewpoints and comparison of ideas but it is only partial success. As mentioned above, the footnotes need serious editing.

Stylistics and language:
A linguistically accomplished piece of work.

Format:
Numbering of footnotes is out of synch and there are some minor errors throughout the Works Cited page.

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade the work “excellent” / 1.

14.6.2010

Clare Wallace, PhD