



FACULTY OF ARTS
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Opponent's Review

Lenka Pichrtová, "Contemporary Culture versus Irishness in Plays of Martin McDonagh," BA thesis

Choice of Topic:

The topic area selected for the thesis is a topical one and shows some intellectual initiative. Generally, the thesis successfully summarizes the issue, though some aspects are glossed over or confused primarily due to linguistic imprecision.

Thesis statement / aims and objectives:

The work advances some hypothesis with regard to McDonagh's drama on pages 5-6, namely that the Irish dramatic tradition is "indispensable" "for the works of McDonagh", however the remainder of the sentence is rather indistinct. The argument is not original but Ms Pichrtová presents and explores relevant contexts and assumptions regarding McDonagh's work with some skill and perception. Crucially the work would have benefited from some recourse to a more theoretically inflected understanding of identity politics. Often the distinction between the playwright's identities, his media generated identity, general broad assertions about Irish/English identity and fictional characters' identities, is not made clear enough.

Structure and development:

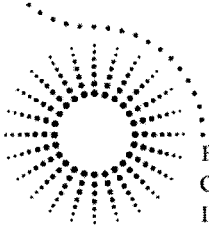
The structure of the work is clear, relatively logical and section headings are strong. Chapter two begins with the question of the playwright's contentious Irish identity, approaching the issue of (national) identity rather naively. The suggestion that McDonagh's English is "suppressed" might be queried—who is responsible for this suppression and why, would be key matters to investigate. However, the playwright's own scepticism about monolithic national identities is well observed. Chapter three opens with a rather misplaced critique of the "clumsy label" "Irish drama". Again the issue of Irish identity could have been analysed in a more complex fashion. Colin Graham's *Deconstructing Ireland* would have provided a critical perspective that would have been useful. Chapter four goes on to identify some of the contemporary and consumer references scattered through the plays analysed, collating quite a range of scholarly work on the subject. Overall the tradition of Irish drama explored by the thesis seems characterised by Synge and the early Abbey, but little else until we reach McDonagh at the end of the century.

Research:

The work demonstrates adequate skill in searching, selecting, and evaluating sources. Some material on the politics of identity would have been useful to provide a conceptual structure for the project. Occasionally discussion is overly dependent on single source.

Use of sources:

Overall there is an integration of multiple viewpoints and comparison of ideas or perspectives. Some ideas are investigated and integrated, but in a partial way, while the differences among critical viewpoints emerges but could have been worked with more throughout.



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Stylistics and language:


This is a weakness in the work as a whole. Awkwardness in expression is persistent as are minor language errors (see for instance the lack of article in the title, confusion of the replica for dialogue).

Format:

Generally the work is well presented. Repeated minor errors are to be found in footnotes and the abbreviation of play titles is distracting and wholly unnecessary, otherwise well done.

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade the work "very good" / 2.

6.9.2010


Clare Wallace, PhD