Supervisor's Report on B.A. Thesis by

Petra Landerová

VERTIGINOUS RELATIONS IN EUGENE O’NEILL’S DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS & MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

Ms. Petra Landerová sets out in her thesis to portray various psychoanalytic aspects of human relationships as delineated in two key play-texts in the corpus of Eugene O'Neill. The thesis contains fifty-three pages across four chapters, a conclusion, and a works consulted section.

As for the prose style, the work reads very cleanly and has been well and carefully written. This reader strongly supports the theoretically informed close reading of the target dramatic works, and the very solid comparative cultural research and wide reading that subordinates the candidate’s compositional work (Friedrich Nietzsche, Raymond Williams, Erich Neumann, Carl Gustav Jung, Sigmund Freud, a number of key O’Neill critics such as Stephen Black, Edwin E. Engel and Doris V. Falk, et. al.); the candidate’s capacity to combine psychoanalytic conceptuality (Jungian and Freudian) with literary art is intriguing and important. The foregrounding of the mother function, of the Electra Complex (Jung), of the Oedipus complex (Freud), of the inner and outer tensions and antagonisms between the characters in her chosen plays, and much else besides, was relevant and enlightening for the world of experience the plays afford, and give the thesis substance and consistency in its line of argumentation.

All in all, the thesis is then very well argued, and clear and compelling in expression. Time and again the candidate offers up good textual supports for her basic contentions, which in the final accounting are to read O’Neill more radically than is usually the case with the help of psychoanalysis.

I would like to shine the light of discussion onto how the O’Neill artwork may be seen as a subverter or a conformer overall in the power dynamic of family ideologies, of dramatic literary culture as a mediating agent in the construction of laws of familial domination at large in culture, and even more historically-empirically and exactly of the American family or even of a world society family? I ask Ms. Landerová if she could articulate her views on this matter with a textual support or two from her theoretical and dramatic research? Lastly, I am keen to know if the candidate thinks there is a way that O’Neill’s work spawns a space for the viewer or reader, for thinking beyond the opposition between consciousness and unconsciousness? If so what would be some concepts or ideas to begin to negotiate this space beyond these standard categories of consciousness and of the unconscious for defining forms of experience?

In light of the foregoing mentions, I hereby recommend for Petra Landerová the pre thesis defense mark of 1 (výborně) for the thesis work.

Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)
24 August 2012