Supervisor's Report

Alžběta Laurincová, “The Reception of Irish Literature and Drama in Czech Translation in the Years 1945-2014” (MA Thesis)

The subject of the candidate’s Master’s thesis offers a great potential in that while an extensive database of translations of Irish literature into Czech already exists (compiled by Daniel Samek and hosted by the Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, on its website) and a limited amount of scholarly work has appeared in the shape of a couple of book chapters, no extended treatment of the subject is available as yet. The candidate’s work goes some way towards fulfilling this potential; however, it does not meet its objectives in full and features a number of serious shortcomings.

On the positive side, Ms Laurincová did not use only Daniel Samek’s database as its starting point but dedicated some time to further research pertaining to the last decade, particularly as regards drama translations and productions. This is clearly an asset. Moreover, the thesis has a lucid structure and is easy to navigate for the reader, being primarily aimed at researchers and students whose command of the Czech language is not sufficient to work with the primary data.

One of the proposed objectives of Ms Laurincová’s work is “to demonstrate how much the reception [of Irish literature] was determined by the political situation in the Czech Lands” (p. 8). This is achieved on the most basic level only, since the discussion of the political and historical context is limited to brief summaries placed at the beginning of each chapter, and largely culled from an eccentric assortment of sources instead of authoritative scholarly studies. More importantly even, the candidate mostly fails to engage with the publication history of albeit the most important texts in terms of how, specifically, it may have been influenced by ideological concerns, censorship, etc. – as much as this may often be difficult to do and hard evidence may be scant. As regards the thesis defence, the candidate should attempt to specify where exactly the reception of canonical works of Irish literature and drama was significantly influenced by political pressure, and how this may have influenced the picture of Irish writing in the Czech Lands.

The candidate’s writing is largely easy to follow, although the argument is often marred by odd word choice, and especially in the latter part of the thesis argument gives way to a mere list of publications. Here and there, factual errors creep in (Alexander Pope as an Anglo-Irish author? p. 10, etc.). On the whole, Ms Laurincová’s thesis provides a comprehensive survey of the texts that
have appeared in Czech translation in the period examined, and as such is the result of painstaking labour; where it mostly fails is in the area of critical analysis.

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as “very good”, provided that the problematic issues are successfully addressed at the defence.

Prague, 12 May 2016

doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD