

Posudek školitele

Einat Adar, “Absurd Consequences: Beckett and Berkeley”

(Doctoral Dissertation)

Einat Adar’s dissertation is the result of conscientious work during the whole course of her doctoral programme, in which she has completed all the assignments with excellent results and within the designated time frame.

During her time as a doctoral student, Ms Adar published two articles in refereed periodicals (*Partial Answers*, *Estudios Irlandeses*) and two chapters in edited collections of essays, and was a co-editor of a volume of essays (*Tradition and Modernity: New Essays in Irish Studies*, eds Radvan Markus, Hana Pavelková, Einat Adar and Michaela Marková, 2014).

Ms Adar has presented the results of her research at international conferences on a regular basis, including the EFACIS conference at NUI Galway, the Samuel Beckett and the State of Ireland conference at University College Dublin, the Beckett and Modernism conference at the University of Antwerp, the 4th International Flann O’Brien Conference at the University of Salzburg, the Beckett Beyond “the Normal” conference at the University of Halifax, the Chaos and Form colloquium at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and two graduate students’ conferences in Irish Studies at Charles University, which she also co-organised. She participated in the EFACIS PhD seminar at KU Leuven and the Samuel Beckett Summer School at Trinity College Dublin, and was a visiting researcher at the Beckett International Foundation at the University of Reading and at Trinity College Dublin. During her research stay at TCD, she gave a lecture and taught seminars on Samuel Beckett and W.B. Yeats; her pedagogical experience has included teaching a semester-long MA-level course on Samuel Beckett and Philosophy at Charles University. Last but not least, Ms Adar is a principal organiser of the upcoming Samuel Beckett and Technology conference at Charles University (September 2018).

Ms Adar’s doctoral dissertation is the first extended study of Samuel Beckett’s engagement with the ideas of George Berkeley. It builds upon – and critically engages with – earlier essays on the subject by Ruby Cohn, John Fletcher, Edouard Morot-Sir, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Anthony Uhlmann, Branka Arsić, Steven Matthews and others, developing an original argument concerning the way in which Beckett “continuously turned to Berkeley for inspiration and simulation” (175) throughout his career as a writer. Using archival materials such as Beckett’s reading notes, letters and books from his library that have come to light in recent years, Ms Adar has been able to rectify numerous misconceptions and speculations, and prove that Beckett’s reading of Berkeley has exercised much stronger influence on his work than has been acknowledged up to date.

However, one of the principal strengths of Ms Adar’s work consists in that her topic has not made her blind to other valid interpretive contexts, which has happened to many a thesis writer; in other words, Ms Adar does not make Beckett a “Berkeleyan” any more than he can be

perceived as, for instance, a “Cartesian”. As a matter of fact, she demonstrates that any such exclusive reading misses the point, since “Beckett did not adhere to the doctrines and main concerns of any one philosopher, but rather harnessed his broad knowledge of various philosophical systems in the service of his own personal preoccupations” (179-180), radically re-imagining philosophical ideas and images for a world that is remarkably different from that of their origin. This attitude indeed significantly contributes to making Ms Adar’s work an important addition to our understanding of Beckett’s oeuvre in its philosophical and aesthetic context.

Ms Adar’s writing is consistently lucid and to the point, and is characterised throughout by judicious use of both archival materials and secondary sources. If I were to single out individual passages that I regard as particularly accomplished, it would be the discussion of the structure and argument of Beckett’s “Three Dialogues” in the light of Berkeley’s “Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous”, the analysis of Berkeleyan references in *Murphy*, and particularly the meticulous and highly original engagement with Berkeley’s theory of vision, with its climax in the discussion of the so-called Molyneux problem and its juxtaposition with Beckett’s *Rough for Theatre I*.

I am fully confident that Ms Adar’s dissertation represents a solid core for a monograph acceptable for publication by a prestigious international house.

It is with pleasure that I recommend the dissertation for defence. / Práci s potěšením doporučuji k obhajobě.

Prague, 17 April 2018

Prof. Ondřej Pilný, PhD