

ZÁPIS Z OBHAJOBY DISERTAČNÍ PRÁCE

Student: Einat Adar

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Studijní program: Filologie

Studijní obor: Anglická a americká literatura

Název práce: "Absurd Consequences: Beckett and Berkeley"

Jazyk práce: angličtina

Jazyk obhajoby: angličtina

Školitel: prof. Ondřej Pilný

Oponenti: doc. Clare Wallace; prof. Matthew Feldman

Datum obhajoby: 12.6. 2018

Místo obhajoby: FF UK, nám. J. Palacha 2, Praha 1, učebna č. 10

Termín: řádný

Předseda komise: prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.

14:00 Předseda komise prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc. zahájil obhajobu, představil sebe a přítomné členy komise a přítomné oponenty. Přítomným pak představil studentku.

14:05 Školitel prof. Ondřej Pilný seznámil přítomné stručně se svým hodnocením studentčina studia a její disertační práce, které uvedl ve svém písemném vyjádření.

14:10 Studentka Einat Adar seznámila přítomné s tezemi své disertační práce. Sdělila zejména:

This thesis looks into Samuel Beckett's knowledge and interest in the philosopher George Berkeley and the integration of Berkeleyan themes, images, and philosophical arguments in Beckett's work. Samuel Beckett's interest in Berkeley has become common knowledge in Beckett studies, backed by archive materials, direct allusions and the occasional mentions in the criticism. This thesis is, however, the first full-length study of the subject.

The thesis proved that Beckett spent time and effort on reading Berkeley and secondary materials about him, even though he mostly kept silence on his interest in the philosopher. The archive materials show that Beckett read Berkeley's main works – *The*

Principles of Human Knowledge and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, that he began to read Berkeley's philosophical notebooks, and was aware of other works, such as *Siris*. Further, the thesis shows that it was Joseph Hone, a Dublin writer and journalist, who first introduced Beckett to Berkeley, and dates this reading to the mid-1930's.

The thesis studied in depth three works that are directly related to Berkeley. The novel *Murphy* written while Beckett was reading the philosopher and is much more influenced by Berkeley than hitherto acknowledged. The post-war theoretical stance expressed in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* was shown to derive directly from Berkeley's arguments in favour of idealism. Finally, *Film* was studied as a work that derives its structure from Berkeley, but remains hostile to some of Berkeley's assumptions, especially his religious optimism.

In addition to overt mention, the thesis found two strands of Berkeleyan influence in Beckett's work – perception as a guarantee of existence, and the cognitive process of vision together with an interest in blindness. These strands were tracked across multiple works throughout Beckett's writing career.

The thesis concluded that Beckett had an extended engagement with Berkeley, but this engagement was not one of emulation but rather an artistic approach that took license with many of Berkeley's tenets.

14:16 Oponentka doc. Clare Wallace seznámila přítomné s hlavními body svého posudku a se závěrem, že doporučuje předloženou disertační práci k obhajobě. Položila studentce tyto otázky:

1. I would like to hear more on Adar's opinion of Iser's perspective and what to do with this paradox that the self-abolishing narrative invites even more intense readerly interpretative endeavour to endow it with a meaning?
2. Worth further discussion is the contention that Beckett's goal in the Trilogy was not the predicament of the artist (p.106) and yet, given, the impossible desire to craft a (completely?) self-abolishing narrative seems to be the driving force here – is this not a foundational artistic predicament?
3. I still wonder to what extent blindness in *Rough for Theatre I* is simply "impairment" and their failure a mere failure to co-ordinate, as the chapter seems to conclude?
4. Although the issue is covered further in chapter 6, I felt that there might be more said about theatricality as such – watching/spectating/being with a performance as well as interpreting a play text – (as was done with narrative previously) and the implications of the turn to the stage on notions of perception and image.

14:25 Oponent prof. Matthew Feldman seznámil přítomné s hlavními body svého posudku a se závěrem, že doporučuje předloženou disertační práci k obhajobě. Položil studentce tyto otázky:

1. The thesis uses the mixed method of archival research and literary interpretation which is the current approach in Beckett studies. It identifies three moments in which Beckett was intensely engaged with Berkeley – in the mid-1930s when writing *Murphy*, in the late 1940s when writing the Trilogy and *Waiting for Godot*, and in the 1960 when he was working on *Film*. The structure of the work should reflect this chronology alongside thematic studies of other works.
2. The last chapter is too compressed and should be unpacked and explained in more detail.
3. The thesis covers Beckett's texts from all periods, but it's not clear what were the criteria for choosing certain works and not others.
4. Berkeley writes a lot about language and its pitfalls and this could be relevant to Beckett's works, especially *Watt*.
5. Suggests to pay special attention to windows, veils, curtains, and similar motifs which are emblems of relation between the internal and the external.

14:45 Studentka reagovala na posudky oponentů a jejich položené otázky.

RE: Clare Wallace:

1. Iser is a perfect example of how the self-cancellation strategy of the Trilogy ultimately fails to foreclose representation. He is reading Beckett's novels as the representation of a subjective reality (the need to invent stories) despite all of Beckett's efforts to deny the existence of anything beyond the text. This interpretation is valid and creative, but seems to go against Beckett's wishes.
2. The paradox that makes any attempt to create non-representational art fail since readers are always interpreting the work in representational ways, can definitely be described as a kind of predicament. Beckett ultimately moved on to images and the visual as an alternative to outright denials.
3. The blind man in *Rough for Theatre* is a transition figure, from the tyrannical Pozzo and Hamm to a more subdued figure that does not try to impose its will on other people. The blind A shares with Beckett's previous blind men a lack of empathy and a materialist approach, but it is the cripple B who takes on their imperiousness and cruelty. In later texts, blindness is no longer associated with moral failure, but is the result of environmental conditions.

4. Theatricality in Beckett has been studied extensively, therefore the thesis focused on the prose works, and only mentioned the interplay of audience and performers as relevant to the discussion. In a future publication a review of relevant research may be added.

RE: Matthew Feldman:

1. The structure will be reconsidered for a future publication along the lines suggested by Prof. Feldman.
2. The last chapter will be broken into separate segments and further elaborated.
3. The texts were selected based on their relevance to the themes under discussion, as well as for the novelty of interpretation. The Berkeleyan perspective is relevant to many texts in the Beckett canon, but in the texts chosen it is particularly pertinent and productive.
4. Language scepticism in *Watt* may be attributed to many sources, and it is hard to isolate a specifically Berkeleyan connection. It may be reconsidered for a future publication.
5. Alison Hale and Naoya Mori have done some work on the motifs of windows especially, which is also relevant to Beckett's engagement with Leibniz. This could be a subject for an article.

14:50 Předseda komise zahájil diskusi. V následné diskusi vystoupili:

- 1) Prof. Matthew Feldman: Suggested using the concept of "a map" to enhance the structure of the future publication
- 2) Prof. James Hill:
 - a) Could you comment more on the relationship between Beckett and Berkeley, in other words, would you agree that Beckett defines himself against or in opposition to Berkeley?
 - b) How is the notion of solipsism reflected in Beckett/Berkeley?
- 3) Prof. Ondřej Pilný:
 - a) Suggested that Beckett's later play *Catastrophe* might be interesting to include in the discussion of perception as it examines the political role of perception.
 - b) Suggested using Beckett's *Footfalls* for the discussion of the partially obscured vision in relation to the previously mentioned image of "windows, curtains, veils".

4) Radvan Markus, PhD:

How does Beckett's engagement with Berkeley's philosophy change Beckett's position in terms of Irish modernism?

5) Prof. Martin Procházka:

Suggests considering Berkeley's philosophy and Beckett's work in relation to Kant, Leibnitz and Deleuze and Iser.

Odpovědi studentky:

Re Feldman: Thank you for the helpful suggestion.

Re Hill:

a) There is not enough archival evidence to build a clear picture of Beckett's relation to Berkeley. He tended to avoid the subject which seems to indicate some unease. Beckett was certainly not an adherent of Berkeley's philosophy, but also not an outright opponent. It seems he saw him as an important with which he had to contend repeatedly.

b) Berkeley was careful to clarify that he did not hold a solipsist position and Beckett was aware that this was not his position. In Beckett there are many solipsistic and quasi-solipsistic moments that always fail to be completely closed, so this might be another similarity between the two authors.

Re Pilný:

a) Thank you for the suggestion. The play introduces the political dimension to the relation between perception and existence that is usually treated in Beckett on the psychological level.

b) Very interesting suggestion which I will consider for the future.

Re Markus:

The engagement with Berkeley adds another aspect to our understanding of Beckett's formation as a young artist in Dublin.

Re Procházka:

Beckett was widely read in Western philosophy and especially Leibniz and Spinoza are important for his work.

15:20 Předseda komise ukončil samotnou obhajobu a komise zahájila neveřejné zasedání o klasifikaci obhajoby disertační práce.

15:15 Předseda komise seznámil studentku a přítomné s výsledkem obhajoby: komise hlasovala zdvižením ruky, počet členů komise: 4 – přítomno členů komise: 4 – kladných hlasů: 4 – záporných: 0. Obhajoba disertační práce byla klasifikována jako PROSPĚLA.

Zapisovatelka:

Hana Pavelková, Ph.D.

Jméno a podpis předsedy komise:

prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.



Jméno a podpis dalšího člena komise:

Mgr. Radvan Markus, Ph.D.

