

Supervisor's Report

Anna Kudrnová, "Movement and Stagnation in Samuel Beckett's Work" (BA Thesis)

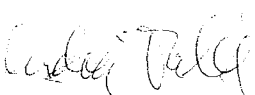
Anna Kudrnová's thesis features an ambitious topic accompanied by a challenging choice of primary texts. However limiting the choice of a single novella and a radio play may seem in view of the centrality of the topic to Beckett's oeuvre, the specific analysis of the two texts as representative examples is informed by a reasonable knowledge of other seminal works by their author, and results in an appropriate consideration of the motif of stasis in Beckett. The thesis features a plausible central argument which views physical and spiritual stasis as fundamentally related, and moreover reflected in the form of Samuel Beckett's texts.

Ms Kudrnová's thesis may generally be regarded as an accomplished piece of work. Several critical remarks are due however: in the opening chapter, failure of communication is regarded as a type of stagnation (p. 13). This observation needs to be perceived in the full context in which it is discussed: consequently, it may be pointed out that Beckett's texts presumably communicate the stasis of their characters quite successfully. The paradox then demonstrates that a better distinction needs to be made between communication as a theme and communication between the text/play and its readers/audiences. Another problematic moment in the overall argument is its occasional reliance on authorial intention, which tends to be simply assumed without the provision of requisite evidence. Generally speaking, the position of the author calls for a more careful conceptualisation (cf. passages as "*even* the author refuses to change the dramatic world" – p. 20, my emphasis).

An issue that the candidate may wish to address in the thesis defence concerns her interpretation of Beckett's statement on the contemporary situation of the artist that asserts "No desire to express." Ms Kudrnová interprets this as "there exists the eternal *will* (*i.e. the obligation*) to communicate" (p. 21, my emphasis). Some clarification is apparently due here: is it possible to equate will with obligation in the context, and if so, why?

Despite the shortcomings pointed out above, the discussion of the selected texts in relation to the topic of the thesis is coherent, lucid, and often original. I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "very good".

Prague, 12 June 2010


doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD