

Alex Lorenzů, *Literary, Cultural and Historical Influences in the Works and Beliefs of Oscar Wilde*

Supervisor's Report on B.A. Thesis

The submitted thesis is a very specific kind of academic writing, in its character considerably surpassing the limits of what is generally expected from B.A. theses. I understand it mostly as an attempt to exploit intellectually one particular aspect of the Oscar Wilde legacy, his controversial, subversive or transgressive cultural role. The perspective is thus dual: on the one hand the student explores the historical context that determined Wilde's status, paying special attention to Huysmans and Pater, on the other his apparent goal is to include Wilde into the context of the (late) twentieth century discourse, especially the one concerning sexuality and the modes of sexual behaviour. It is a very partial portrait of Wilde, indeed, using just some texts of his, a portrait that in a way, perhaps unwittingly, conforms to some of the popular twentieth-century presentations of the artist (such as Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 1983, which culminates with its dying hero's admitting "I am a great scandal, am I not?"). Yet it is not a simplifying portrait: the student's reading is detailed and insightful, even though occasionally biased (e.g. Wilde's treatment of ethic values was more ambiguous as he permanently oscillated between the positions of an avantgarde artist and commercially successful author).

The thesis is ambitious in its scope and perhaps too ambitious at this stage. Though the student is prevalently right in his conclusions, the topic requires greater acquaintance with critical literature which deals with the period. It is hardly tolerable to present the English decadence on the almost sole basis of Holbrook Jackson's *The Eighteen-Nineties* (1913) when so many studies have been published recently (I feel that especially Ellis Hanson's *Decadence and Catholicism* would be of great help for some parts). This is meant not to disqualify the thesis, quite on the contrary: it is to suggest that the student manifested an ability which should be developed further, with more profound goals in view.

It is my pleasure to recommend the present thesis for the defence and suggest the grade of excellent (**výborně**).

PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, PhD.

3 September 2012

