

Supervisor's Report

Aneta Kantorová, "Brian Friel's Conception of Forming History and Its Implications" (BA Thesis)

Aneta Kantorová's thesis focuses on three plays written by Brian Friel for the Field Day Theatre Company in the 1980s, *Translations*, *The Communication Cord*, and *Making History*, all of which discuss attitudes to history. The work is based on a sufficient amount of research, and while it also attempts to place Friel's treatment of history in the three plays in a broader context of the philosophy of history, its chief strength lies in a detailed discussion of specific passages or characters of Friel's dramas (particularly as regards *The Communication Cord*).

While the proposed structure of the work and the proposed method are sound, the overall result is somewhat unclear. What is lacking the most – given that the plays were written as part of a remarkable artistic intervention in the politics of the moment – is a critical assessment of the politics of Friel's works. Whenever the subject is touched upon by the candidate, she seems happy to conclude by quoting Friel's statements from interviews, instead of examining how these plays would have acted in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The issue could perhaps be clarified at the defence, focusing also on what the candidate thinks of the nature of the "political state" that may possibly follow from the "cultural" one according to Friel.

The confusion as to the actual result of the candidate's research comes out remarkably in the introductory thesis abstract, most of which is almost entirely incoherent. The actual phrasing of the thesis title is similarly inelegant.

The attempt to trace the roots of Friel's attitudes in modern philosophy of history is laudatory; however, the candidate seems to have a tendency to demonstrate a profound impact of Nietzsche's ideas on the playwright without really demonstrating the influence in the plays themselves.

The thesis features numerous minor inaccuracies, such as the erroneous claim that all the plays under discussion propose "the inevitable acceptance of a hybrid Anglo-Irish society" (p. 3), which is besides contradicted by the candidate's own analysis, or the claim that *Translations* gives rise to new myths – as opposed to reiterating existing ones. The choice of the term "traditional nationalism" is rather unfortunate (used repeatedly).

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "very good" or "good", depending on the result of the defence.

Prague, 28 August 2011

doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD