

## Supervisor's Review

### Michaela Konárková, "McDonaghland as a Global Village"

Michaela Konárková focuses in her thesis on the "Irish" plays of Martin McDonagh, in particular on their relation with globalisation. The opening part of Konárková's work positions the playwright within both the context of British "in-yer-face" theatre of the 1990s and what the candidate calls "Irish realism." After a detailed analysis of McDonagh's mixing of genres and parodic features, Konárková proceeds to juxtapose the world of McDonagh's characters (called, with Aleks Sierz, "McDonaghland") with Marshall McLuhan's notion of the "global village." This juxtaposition then guides the reading of specific aspects of the plays, such as space, time, morality, and the nature of communication. The thesis is concluded by an examination of *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, a play which is perceived by the candidate as a distinct development in terms of McDonagh's work due to its foregrounding of political and ethical issues.

The candidate's work is based on an extensive amount of research and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the plays under discussion, and also a good sense of the dramatic medium. Stylistically the thesis still leaves something to be desired; there is a certain linguistic awkwardness in evidence at times and the work would benefit from more thorough editing. Despite that, however, the argument is generally lucid, presenting a number of valuable observations. Konárková, for instance, highlights the fact that although McDonagh may certainly be viewed as parodying cultural stereotypes of Ireland and the canon of Irish drama, his theatrical method remains essentially conservative. Looking at the world of McDonagh's plays, Konárková remarks on the playwright's essential hybridity (already noted by a number of critics): McDonagh's characters inhabit a simulation of rural Ireland *together* with the contemporary globalised world. This solicits the use of McLuhan's concept of the global village, which receives some practical re-valuation in the course of Konárková's argument.

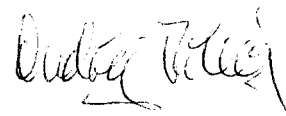
Discussing globalisation in relation to McDonagh, the candidate picks up the dichotomy between "vagabonds" and "tourists" from a more recent writer on the subject, Zygmunt Bauman. From Konárková's perspective, McDonagh's characters may be described as "vagabonds," i.e. those who experience the global only as a media image, lacking the resources which would enable them first-hand experience of the globalised world. Konárková goes on to describe the characters as our Other, implying that we – as audience – should think of ourselves as "tourists." This is quite an interesting observation, especially in view of the criticism levelled on McDonagh for allegedly providing merely what the middle-class audiences worldwide, together with the nouveau riche of Celtic Tiger Ireland, require for easy entertainment.

Konárková does not find herself in agreement with such critical voices. She does admit that McDonagh's work represents a commercially successful global product. However, she repeatedly stresses that the plays should be interpreted as parodies rather than comedies, perceiving in them a level of serious cultural critique. Konárková concludes that despite their very specific local setting (rural Ireland), the plays predominantly offer depictions of life in a globalised world in a more universal sense (rather than providing a commentary on contemporary Ireland of the economic boom). This is a rather refreshing claim which offers to balance up the numerous detailed analyses of McDonagh centred almost entirely around the local.

Considering the presuppositions that guide the candidate's argument, I would like to raise an issue which may be discussed at the defence: it is clearly assumed throughout the thesis that globalisation implies superficiality. Can this be taken for granted (and does the local then – by implication – provide depth)?

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "very good."

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Ondřej Pilný, PhD