

Opponent's report:

Evaluated bachelor thesis: Sydney Nicole Zezulová: *Irská diaspora a její vliv na identitu města Bostonu: Jak irští migranti transformovali dědictví města / Irish diaspora and its influence on the identity of the city of Boston: How Irish migrants transformed the city's heritage*, 70 pages

University, faculty, institute: Department of Studies in Culture and Religion, Faculty of Education University of Hradec Králové

Field of study: transcultural communication

Supervisor: Mgr. Luděk Jirka Ph.D.

Thesis opponent: Lukáš de la Vega Nosek, Ph.D.

Evaluation of the opponent's thesis:

Originality and appropriateness of the topic: **A**

Idea elaboration, inventiveness: **A**

Method of work: **B**

Formal treatment of the thesis: **B**

Stylistic and grammatical treatment of the thesis: **A**

Proposal for final grade: ...

Question for the defense: *In your thesis - for obvious reasons - you don't mention the Muslim minority in Boston, which is not prominent, but very important and definitely visible (Shi'ite Islam, African-American Islam, Muslim organizations, mosques, Ahmadiyya, schools...). Can we also talk about it as an important part of Boston's identity?*

In detail:

I) Originality and appropriateness of the topic (proposed rating A)

The present undergraduate thesis focuses on the very interesting topic of the Irish diaspora in Boston and its influence in shaping Boston's urban identity. It then aims to "*provide a detailed analysis of the influence of the Irish diaspora on the formation of Boston's urban identity*". I am not an expert on American culture, so to the layman's and non-expert eye the topic seems to be:

(a) too broad for an undergraduate thesis; this is matched by the exorbitant pagination; in my opinion, a 60-page undergraduate thesis is a negative element; the aspirant is unable to distinguish the important from the unimportant and fit into, e.g., a maximum of 45 sides (i.e. 81 000 characters, including spaces)

b) the topic must have been worked out long ago; I am therefore curious to know whether and how the author will describe the current state of research.

Either way, it is an interesting topic and certainly possible for an aspirant to work on it. The thesis is written in English, which is not pointed out anywhere. I consider this to be an important omission, but one to which reference should be made.

Despite these weaknesses, I recommend the thesis for defence.

II) Conceptualisation, inventiveness (suggested grade A)

The aspirant designed her bachelor thesis in eight chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion.

In the **introduction** (*1. Introduction*, pp. 8-10) the author briefly presents the reasons for choosing the topic, introduces Boston and some cultural elements that are relevant to the topic. Also included is a methodological note that provides an overview of what the author relies on, more specifically which sources and what literature. In my opinion, the absence of a research of the current state of research is a mistake. The author completely omits this and does not put us in the context of this thematic issue, insofar as it has already been treated. This is certainly a mistake. I also don't understand why she chose the featured authors and why not others. The author does conclude by claiming to add transcultural reflection, or that a transcultural perspective can help understand Boston's urban identity (see p. 10). Given the lack of clarity in the global community about what transculturality actually is, then a deeper familiarity with the current state of research is paramount.

In the **second** chapter (*2. Key Terms*, pp. 10-15), she briefly introduces the key theoretical elements and concepts she will work with in the thesis. Their selection is adequate: *Diaspora, Assimilation/Integration Processes, Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity, Heritage, Urban Identity*. Perhaps we could argue why she chose this order and why not another. And by what she chose these terms. Alternatively, aren't other terms key to the topic, such as *culture, religion...*and especially the term *transculturality, multiculturalism, neighborhood, ghetto...*

The **third** chapter presents a partial historical framework (*3. Irish Diaspora /19th - Early 20th Century/*, pp. 15-19), where the aspirant presents important contextual sub-chapters (*Factors of Irish Diaspora, Demographic of the Irish Diaspora*).

In **Chapter 4** (*4. The Irish Bostonian Community in the Multicultural City*, pp. 19-32), the author builds on the previous chapter by presenting the nineteenth-century Boston context, noting minorities and ethnic neighborhoods. This chapter also provides examples of the integration and assimilation of the Irish in 19th century Boston.

In **Chapter 5**, the author comes to a key chapter where she presents several probes in which she describes the Irish Influence on Bostonian Urban Identity (*5. Irish Influence on Bostonian Urban Identity*, pp. 32-51). She first notes political life (*Influence on Bostonian Politics*, pp. 32-37), followed by a look at economics (*Influence on Bostonian Economics*, pp. 38-42) and social life (*Influence on Bostonian Society*, pp. 42-49). This is followed by a probe in which the author describes the influence on cultural and religious life in Boston

(*Influence on Bostonian Culture and Religion*, pp. 49-51). The chapter is unusually page-intensive and certainly goes beyond the obligatory.

The **Chapter 6** seeks to answer the question *Why Irish Heritage in Boston is Long-lasting* (pp. 52-56). Logically, this is also a key chapter, synthesizing previous findings. Here the author shows her ability to synthesize. She notes interesting key elements (*Irish Bostonian Patriotism, Active Preservation of Irish Bostonian Heritage*). It is a pity she did not expand this into other possible perspectives she could have uncovered. As it is, I find her conclusions very minimalist.

In **Chapter 7** (*7. Transcultural Reflection, Identity, and Adaptation of the Irish's Impact on Boston*, pp. 56-64) the author presents an important perspective for our department, i.e., transcultural reflection. She defines it quite succinctly: „*Through the study of transcultural communication, we are able to comprehend why foreign cultures and societies are different from us, and through these differences we are able to define ourselves. The study of transcultural communication not only helps to understand different cultures and our own culture, but also to deconstruct various prejudices about other ethnicities, religions, languages, and other beliefs.*“ (p. 56) She also perceives transculturalism in the context of the terms multiculturalism and interculturalism. A synthesis of these ideas on the topic of research can be shown in the quote: „*Transcultural perspective takes into consideration the complexities of ethnic identity. These complexities stem from the reality of navigating multiple cultural influences, as individuals and communities interact with both their native culture and the culture of the majority society where they newly live. Transculturalism recognizes that cultural identity is fluid and evolving. Even though one's cultural identity evolves through migration, the preservation of cultural heritage continues to play a big role in diasporic communities. Transculturalism acknowledges the significance of preserving ties to ancestral traditions, languages, and customs. This is key for diasporic communities as they adjust to unfamiliar cultural elements of their new environment. A notable transformation here which has transcultural potential is the transformation of Irish identity on the basis of diaspora to Boston.*“ (pp. 58) She bases her ideas mainly on the thoughts of Zdeňka Sokolíčková, which is an excellent choice. It seems to me that it is in this chapter that the author shows how the study of transculturality can enrich the current state of research in the humanities on society, culture and religion. I recommend that the author rework this particular chapter into a journal article. However, the chapter could have been divided into several subsections.

In the **conclusion** (*8. Conclusion*, pp. 64-66), the author tastefully and artfully summarizes her research, stating the clear influence of the Irish community on Boston's urban identity. „*To conclude, the 19th century first- and next- generation Irish immigrants did have a significant influence on Boston's identity and heritage, and this influence resonates beyond the bounds of the Irish community.*“ (pp. 64-65) Or further on: „*This thesis was purely theoretical and relied on primary and secondary sources of information. The goal of this thesis was to*

analyze the influence of 19th century Irish diaspora on the urban identity and heritage in the city of Boston. I believe that enough evidence was presented to confirm that Irish immigrants of the 19th century did leave a mark on Boston urban identity and heritage from the political, economic, social, cultural, and religious perspective. The analysis of the Irish's influence extends beyond urban identity and heritage and shows the impact of the Irish influence on a transcultural level." (p. 65) Alternatively: *„In essence, the 19th century Irish immigrant influence on Boston's urban identity is significant not only for its historical and cultural resonance but also for the enduring legacy of resilience, community, and cultural vibrancy that continues to shape the city to this day. Embracing and celebrating the Irish heritage is integral to understanding and appreciating the multifaceted identity of Boston as a dynamic and inclusive urban center.*" (p. 65-66) Her conclusions are supporting and well written, but again I confess to being a mere layman and non-expert, and these findings do not seem to me to be new in any way. They have probably already been pronounced. What is new, in my opinion, is her argument based on a transcultural interpretation of these proven influences. A list of references is appended to the text at the end (9. Sources, pp. 66-70).

Overall, the work is excellent in thought and content. I cannot judge to what extent it presents new findings, but its grounding in an excellent and supporting understanding of transculturality is the novelty it conveys here. Usually undergraduate thesis is intended to show that its author is adept at contemporary research, he/she can work with the contemporary literature about themes, and can paraphrase and synthesize clearly. The thesis is also intended to show that the author is able to ask a research question and use a clearly conceived methodology to answer it. I find all this in the thesis.

The only flaw is the excessive length.

From this point of view I recommend the thesis for defence.

III) Method of work (proposed assessment B)

The methodology of the work is described in the introduction: *„The methodology used in this undergraduate thesis relies on a comprehensive review and synthesis of primary and secondary sources.*" (s. 9) It is obviously a mistake that the author did not elaborate on what a *comprehensive review* means, and likewise how she will undertake a *synthesis of primary and secondary sources*. And then she adds: *Through the help of research, synthetization, and integration of information related to 19th century Irish diaspora in Boston, this paper aims to contribute a transcultural perspective and bridge a stronger connection between Irish diaspora and Boston identity, a topic which is specifically unique to the defined region in question and impacts the others ethnic communities of Boston.*" (p. 10)

I find the methodology of the work rather unclear, it should have been presented more clearly. Above all, the current question and the state of current research should have been clarified.

Nevertheless, I recommend the thesis for defence.

IV) Formal processing of the thesis (proposed grade B)

The biggest weakness of the thesis - in formal terms - is its excessive length. The student should clearly work with facts and distinguish the important from the unimportant. In my opinion, a bachelor's thesis should not exceed, for example, 45 printed pages.

Besides, I must say that the thesis is not precise in the matter of footnotes. In direct quotation we directly cite the original literature, in paraphrase or reference we indicate *Cf.* or *See.* Similarly, the footnotes are inconsistent and there is an apparent inconsistency. Why does the author include an ISBN in the footnote? Why does she reference web links one way and another? In addition, it is also technically inaccurate when the author refers to the original English texts using the Czech translation (see e.g. Eriksen / Murphy / Cohen, ...). It also seems to me more adequate to refer to quality English monographs than Czech ones especially on general topics such as sociology or anthropology (see e.g. BITTNEROVÁ, Dana; MORAVCOVÁ, Mirjam and Ondřej VALENTA. *Diverzita etnických menšin: Prostorová dislokace a kultura bydlení...* / UHEREK, Zdeněk; HONUSKOVÁ, Věra; OŠŤÁDALOVÁ, Šárka and Vladislav GÜNTER. *Migrace: historie a současnost...*).

The thesis is weaker in formal aspects, but I recommend it for defence.

V) Stylistic and grammatical treatment of the thesis (suggested grade A)

I am not a native speaker, nor a scholar in English language, and I cannot judge the quality of the English language, but after a cursory reading I did not find many errors or unclear statements. So it seems to me that stylistically the author has presented a successfully written work.

From this point of view I recommend the thesis for defence.

Summary assessment:

The present undergraduate thesis deals with the interesting topic of the influence of the Irish diaspora on Boston's urban identity. In terms of content and ideas, the thesis is excellent, especially in its use of transculturality as a kind of the art of interpretation. The thesis limps a bit methodologically and structurally. There is no mention at all of the current state of research and heuristics of the sources. Similarly, the thesis highly exceeds the limits set for a bachelor's thesis, which I consider a flaw, not a positive accent. The formal aspect of the thesis is weaker, especially in the inconsistent and incoherent use of references in the footnotes. Also, the overemphasis on some general Czech books does not seem appropriate to me, especially when the topic is the American context and the thesis is written in English.

In my opinion, from all the aforementioned points of view, the present thesis fulfils all the criteria for a bachelor's thesis, and therefore I clearly recommend it for defence.

In Uhlířské Janovice
19. 5. 2024
Lukáš de la Vega Nosek