

Supervisor's Report

Lukáš Fíl, “The Dead’ – A Critical Compilation of Existing Interpretations” (BA Thesis)

Lukáš Fíl's BA thesis presents a largely illuminating summary of some of the most viable interpretations of James Joyce's short story “The Dead”. Despite its modesty as regards its range, it is based on extensive research. Mr Fíl's work is generally characterized by judicious work with critical interpretations, and excels in pointing out their principal points and selecting representative quotations. As a whole, it provides a useful map of a variety of readings of the story from the mid-1950s up till the present.

Mr Fíl's style is lucid, the argument is mostly clear; only minor stylistic errors (e.g. the repeated reference to the text as a “piece of writing” – p. 5, 19 – or the incorrect use of the concept of narrative in “an existing narrative between the characters of different stories” – p. 24), language mistakes (“the Romanticism ... the literary theory” – p. 16) and spelling errors (“Evelin” – p. 34) obtain.

What comes across as somewhat flawed is the structure of the work. While individual observations concerning the readings of the story by prominent critics are valid overall, their classification under chapter headings is often inconsistent: for instance, half of the text included in Chapter 3, which is to deal with “The Dead” as read in the context of *Dubliners*, still looks at the story outside the context of the collection. Moreover, there seems no need to use two similar headings for the continuous text included under 3.3 and 3.4., and it remains unclear why “Lack of Dramatic Action” and “No Cause and Effect Progression” are included as part of Chapter 4 (while “No Cause and Effect...” arguably does not relate to the actual content of the text included under this heading). Furthermore, the concept of “Creative Re-readings”, used in the heading of Chapter 4, begs for a definition: “creative re-readings” as opposed to “matter-of-fact readings”? As the explication offered in the introductory paragraph of the chapter is flawed, I suggest that the candidate address the matter at the defence. Finally, an inconsistency of argument appears on pp. 39-40: this is pure biographical criticism which – while it includes some plausible observations – is also rife with speculation, and directly contradicts the earlier refutation of the method in section 2.3.

As regards formal matters, no major flaws appear, with the exception of the manner in which the work of Richard Ellmann is cited: why not quote from the printed second edition of the biography, readily available in multiple copies in the library of the English departments?

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

Prague, 29 August 2012

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