

Supervisor's Report on B.A. Thesis by

Mr. David Kudrna

## THE COMIC IN HENRY JAMES'S FICTION

Mr. Kudrna sets out in his thesis to delineate the comic dimensions in selected works of fiction of Henry James.

The thesis contains 69 pp. across some preliminary matter, an introduction, three parts, a conclusion, a works cited, and a secondary literature section. As for the prose style, it displays an adequate standard for the level of a BA thesis, even if there are for example lapses with regard to the use of definite and indefinite articles where they are not truly needed in the compositional work.

The precise texts by James under critical review in the present work include *The Portrait of a Lady*, "The Turn of the Screw", *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Golden Bowl*, and "The Beast in the Jungle". Thus the range of reference is wide in James's corpus of texts and clearly gives pride of place to the later style of James's fiction even if the middle period work of *The Portrait of a Lady* is also included in the critical analysis.

This reader appreciated the close reading of the target James works, which is outfitted by a number of critical works. The main shortcoming of the piece is a central core argument around which the thesis would clearly turn, and toward which it would lead to some kind of filled out structure.

As a result of the foregoing, at times the piece repeats certain assertions and does not make it crystal clear what the exact argument is that is being made in each section and how that relates to the overall argumentative line? For this reason, I would **first** ask the candidate to re-state in as simple terms as possible his own basic argumentation in the thesis. What precisely is the basic thesis here? And **second**, against what other major views of James does the candidate more precisely situate his own work and argument? This is an issue, because at times the thesis seems stuck in the maw of critical writing that it could better disentangle itself from in its own presentations.

In light of the foregoing mentions, I hereby recommend the pre thesis defense mark of 2 (velmi dobré) for the thesis work.

Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)  
25 January 2016

