

Opponent's Report on Damian Manire's Diploma Thesis:

“Living' Europe: The Alien Impressions of Henry James and Lambert Strether”

Mr. Damian Manire seeks to illuminate certain aesthetic intentions, properties and strategies of both the persona and figure of Henry James as well as of the protagonist Lambert Strether who populates James's late-style novel *The Ambassadors*. The eighty-four page diploma text contains component parts on “Introduction: Going Abroad”, two parts “James, Nation and Modernity” and “Observation in *The Ambassadors*”, a “Conclusion: The Double Perspective of Henry James”, a 3.5 page Summary in Czech and a 2.5 page Bibliography.

As concerns the prose, the thesis is generally well written; but there are some quite irritating lapses or typos that betray a certain lack of high quality careful attentiveness not least because the candidate is a native speaker. Here are a few simple examples as textual supports of this feature of the thesis-work:

- 1) 'wit his delicate requires' should be 'with his delicate' (3),
- 2) 'giver rise' should be 'gives rise' (42),
- 3) 'done some much' reads better as 'done so much' (42),
- 4) 'a doomed' should be 'as doomed' (47),
- 5) 'James's observed' must be 'James observed' (51),
- 6) 'others guests' shd read 'other guests' (54),
- 7) 'Strether's envies' shd be 'Strether envies' (58),
- 8) 'in the spied the intimacy' reads well as 'in the espied intimacy' (58),
- 9) 'In the text view is expressed' shd be 'In the text a view is expressed' (61) and
- 10) 'Strether self-discovery' shd be 'Strether's self-discovery' (71).

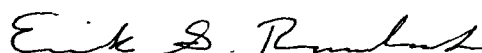
The bulk of this diploma thesis, however, remains a pleasure to read.

As regard the content effects of the piece I should adduce the following mentions from Manire that well reveal the very good level at which he works in the thesis: “His stories of Americans in Europe present a myriad of cultural clashes that are the driving force behind his greatest novels, and which give James his greatest musings as a writer [...] In fact, James navigates the tropes of international difference as part of the landscape of cosmopolitan identity” (3); does the candidate think that the foregoing though is more of a setting of the plate for the real topic of James that is for some critics such as Leo Bersani “freedom”?

Further, Manire notes, “the question of national identity is also the question of the balance of power globally” (10) and “Though indicating the pitfalls of America's role in the world, James's narratives identity much potential for the American taking up his place in the world of international values and cultures” (18); given these two broadcastings, what does the candidate more elaborately think some James-inspired tacks (from the fiction or from the author position) on current topical questions about globality and globalization would more precisely be?

Manire also asserts that “The politics of James's writings seem to exist on the cusp of re-imagining national identity while simultaneously being immersed in it” (19); given this, what sorts of other questions does James's work in language therefore pose beyond those elucidated in the pages of the thesis work? In other words, how would one 're-imagine' national identity through the prism of James? Further, we read in an excellent spotlighting, “Jonathan Freedman accurately sums up the state of Strether's final position as one of empty aestheticism: ‘Somehow it seems, merely seeing is enough: he can return to America not so much with a *knowledge* of his own, but with a knowledge of what knowledge looks like, with a greater intimacy with intimacy itself’ (72). Last not least we read that “James utilizes the cacophony of modern life—of gender, family, history, class, race, and other socio-cultural qualities—to situate his authorial presence in his observer-hero. In *The Ambassadors*, the powered positions of modern life limit the fictional subject to the observer function, thereby facilitating the narratory position (the author's main point of access). In short, James conjoins modern issues and authorial technique to achieve reciprocity between theme and form that marks his fluency as a modern American writer” (77). I would ask the candidate what are the more simply and exactly put in a nutshell sort of way critical implications and the theoretical consequence of the foregoing since with that asseveration we are rather left hanging in mid air at the end of the thesis.

Pre oral exam mark: výborná-/1-



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