Faculty of Arts, Bachelor’s Thesis

Thesis Supervisor’s report

Thesis Title: Edwardian Society, Homosexuality, and E. M. Forster’s Short Stories
Field of Study: FF B-FI AJ [sem 6, cyk 1]
Department: Department of English and American Studies
Author: Michal Kříklava
Supervisor: doc. Michael Matthew Kaylor, PhD.
Reviewer: Mgr. Eva Valentová

Supervisor’s recommendation for overall mark: A

1. Evaluation of central idea, thesis, focus and purpose: A
2. Evaluation of organization, logic and arrangement: A
3. Evaluation of topic development, support and evidence: A
4. Evaluation of language, style, standard usage, citation and bibliographic standards: A

Comments and/or topics and questions for the thesis defence:
This Bachelor paper successfully elucidates various acts of homoerotic “coding” that are at play, as well as contribute to the humour, in five short stories from E. M. Forster’s posthumously published collection *The Life to Come*.

Firstly, this paper contextualizes Forster’s stories within Edwardian society and its attendant values, a society that was hostile to actualizing as well as to textualizing the “homoerotic.” Using two key historical studies—Matt Cook’s *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*, and Matt Houlbrook’s *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*—the paper highlights the dangers associated with the acts and locations of sexual dalliance, discusses the importance of costumes and gestures for erotic insinuation, notes the evolution of various stereotypes, and considers the distinct difference (for English laws, customs, and practices) between public and private spaces.

Secondly, this paper provides a decent “close analysis” for each of the selected stories, teasing out the erotic nuances that are certainly less obvious to gay readers today than they would have been to Forster’s contemporary gay readers, who were privy themselves to the rules and currents of Edwardian life.

Thirdly, this paper considers various secondary aspects present in Forster’s stories that contribute to their “Edwardian” erotic quality, such as an ever-present fascination with transgressing class barriers and with frolicking with strangers.

Lastly, this paper argues that, given the public reception and perhaps even censorship that his stories would have faced had they been published soon after being written, Forster’s decision merely to circulate them among his closest friends was both appropriate and necessary. An apt comparison is achieved by considering the reception history of James Hanley’s censored novel *Boy*, which was, in many ways, a far more agreeable work, in terms of the expectations of the Edwardian audience, than Forster’s stories would have been.

On the whole, the paper is well written and nicely argued, as well as technically precise and supported by sufficient evidence (particularly in terms of its close readings). Further, it displays analytical skills that are rather rare on this academic level. This paper deserves a solid “A.”

In Brno 08th June 2015

doc. Michael Matthew Kaylor, PhD.