A Brief Overview of the Critical Writings on *The Ambassadors:* Two viewpoints – of literary criticism and of stylistic criticism

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Abstrak

Nilai sastra sebuah novel karya Henry James yang berjudul *The Ambassadors* telah banyak dipuji maupun dicela. Para kritikus yang memuji novel itu tampaknya mengikuti pendapat James sendiri yang telah mendeklarasikan bahwa *The Ambassadors* adalah novelnya yang paling berhasil. Sedangkan orang-orang yang mencela nilai sastra *The Ambassadors* tampaknya mengikuti Henry M. Alden yang mulai meluncurkan kontroversi tentang *novel* itu di tahun l900, tiga tahun sebelum penerbitannya. Dalam artikel pendek ini penulis memaparkan polemik yang terjadi tentang nilai sastra novel ini untuk mengetahui dan memahami lebih dalam alasan-alasan ke dua kelompok kritikus sastra yang berpolemik itu. Penulis juga memaparkan sejumlah pendapat dari sudut pandang stilistika. Informasi akademik dua sudut pandang ini diharapkan bermanfaat untuk memperluas cakrawala pemikiran kritik sastra dan kritik stilistika pembaca.

Katakunci: *The Ambassadors*, kritik sastra, interpretasi teks, novel populer, jejaring mental yang kompleks, puncak kesalahpahaman, stilistika.

1. Introduction

There are two possible viewpoints of critical writings to observe when we try to understand a bit broadly James's *The Ambassadors*. The *first* is **literary criticism**, and the *second* is **stylistic criticism**. **The literary value** of *The Ambassadors* has been both praised and denounced. Those critics who praised the novel seem to follow James himself who has considered *The Ambassadors* his most successful novel: 'Fortunately thus I am able to estimate this as frankly quite the best, "all round" of my productions' (James, 1909 in Blackmur, 1934:309). And **those who denounced** the literary value of the novel seem to follow Henry M. Alden who began the controversy in l900, three years before the publication of the novel. In his famous memo for Harper and Brothers, he criticized the 20,000-word "Project" or the 'scenario' of *The Ambassadors* James had written and hoped would appear serially in Harper's Magazine. Alden advised his fellow editors against acceptance for it by confirming that

> "The scenario is interesting, but it does not promise a popular novel. The tissues of the project are too subtly fine for general appreciation. **It is subjective fold within** fold of a complex mental web, in which the reader is lost if his much - wearied **attention falters.** / .../ I do not advise acceptance. We ought to do better" (Alden's, cited by Matthiessen and Murdock, 1947:372).

Countering Alden's criticism in their introductory remark to *The Notebooks of Henry James,* Matthiessen and Murdock launched their counterargument, stating that Alden's memo is just 'a masterpiece of miscomprehension' (Stone, 1969:14). And they confirmed that "all the

stock prejudices against James international material are there, and no indication that Strether, whose central consciousness marks James's final perfection of his method, ever figures in the novel" (Matthiessen & Murdock 1947:372).

2. From the viewpoint of literary criticism

The richness of James's creative method during his last period demonstrates the strength of his imagination. This method 'progressively recognized, defined, related, and finally expressed the elements of Strether's situation in the final form of *The Ambassadors'* (Stone, 1969:7). Critics who denounced the literary value of the novel disagree about the worth of that final form. 'But those acquainted with James's whole creative experience as successively revealed in the notebooks, the "Project" sent to Harper's, the serial and first edition versions of the novel, in the Preface to the later New York Edition, and in letters to friends (Stone, 1969:7) agree that "James knew exactly what he wished to do, and did it win extraordinary perfections". This critical controversy has continued up to the early l990s and it may be continuing. The following overview is just to give a brief critical illustration of the controversies that is relevant particularly to the core analysis of the dissertation.

Forster's description "that the plot of *The Ambassadors* resembles an hourglass, with Paris at the center and Strether and Chad moving gracefully, like dancers, into each other's position" (Stone**,** 1969:13), raises controversial issues. In his critical review 'The Hourglass Pattern in *The Ambassadors',* Doodley seems to accuse Forster of making a sort of inconsistent judgment. For him, Forster has described the plot of the novel as perfect and artful on the one hand but prearranged and fitted on the other hand.

> Forster does not go so far as to accuse Henry James of obviousness (in fact, he describes the plot as elaborate and subtle), but he says that everything is planned' everything fits, and "The final effect is prearranged, dawns gradually on the reader' and is completely successful when it comes. Details of intrigue ... may be forgotten but the symmetry they have created is enduring" (Forster' 1927:141, cited by Doodley, 1968:273).

Doodley also claims that Lubbock's statements 'that *The Ambassadors is* a book in which a world of silent thought is thrown open to us and that 'the subject can only be grasped at Strether's consciousness' (Doodley, 1968:273) are also inaccurate judgments.

> .... we "watch the thought itself, the hidden thing, as it twists to and fro in Strether's brain - watch it without any other aid to understanding but such as its own manner of bearing may supply" (Lubbock, 1965:157, cited by Doodley, 1968:273)
>
> .... And so the subject can only be reached through Strether's consciousness, it is plain; that way alone will command the impression that the scene makes on him. Nothing in the scene has any importance, any value in itself: what Strether sees in it - that is the whole of its meaning (Lubbock, 1965: 161, cited by Doodley, 1968:273)

For Doodley, these statements are 'not strictly accurate, because Lubbock also points out that something different happens when Strether engages in conversation' (Doodley 1968:274):

> Strether's are the eyes, I said, and they are more so than ever during this hour in the garden; he is the sentient creature in the scene. But the author, who all through

> the **story has been** treating Strether's consciousness as a play, as an action proceeding, can at any moment use his talk almost as though the source from which it springs were unknown to us from within. (Lubbock, 1965:169, cited by Doodley, 1968:274)

Another claim of the plot, which is different from Forster's but closer to Lubbock's interpretation about Strether's consciousness, has been made by Elsa Nettles. She pointed out that 'the plot of *The Ambassadors* can be seen as Strether's movement from unverified and deluded perceptions toward a more complete awareness: "In a number of ways the novel creates the picture of a gradual but steady movement from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge" (Nettles, 1977:52-53, cited by Walsh, 1987:54, cited by Doodley, 1968:275). Meanwhile Bell points out that the plot of *The Ambassadors is* not as easily categorized as simple as Nettles would have us believe.

> ... Jamesian narrative does not prowess toward an ultimate and irreversible clarification. It also tends to dispense with the **linkages** of normal plot. (Bell, 1991:17)
>
> In fact, Aristotelian conceptions of plot do not apply to such complex narratives as The Ambassadors. (Bell, 1991:23)

3. Important points to note about the literary criticism of *The Ambassadors*

What is important to note from the above overview is that Bell seems to justify the plot on the base of the physical events that, in *The Ambassadors,* are diminished. In this novel the plot is defined on the base of gradual progression of Strether's consciousness, a voyage from innocence to experience. And this seems relevant to the depiction of the 'thematic development' of the novel. For example, the realization of the episodic theme in each of the selected extracts can be seen from the camel progression of Strether's consciousness.

Joan Bennett in her article 'The Art of Henry James: The *Ambassadors*' argues against three distinguished critics, Spender, Gide, and Greene on their incompatible finding of attitudes to life in the novel. For Bennett, the two scenes, i.e., the ones illustrating Strether's first visit to Mme de Vionnet's room and his visit to her he makes nearly at the end of the novel, which is the prelude to the scene in which Strether discovers the full extent of Mme de Vionnet's love for Chad and of her foresight that she will lose him, do not at all represent what Spender detected as an 'indictment of society as fierce as that of Baudelaire, or indeed of a class-conscious Marxist' (Bennet, 1956:23); rather, they represent 'James's intention to contrast the acquisitiveness of the American émigré with the passiveness of the aristocrat who has inherited historic possessions' (ibid). Bennett also argues that Gide's accusation of James's being both 'profane' and 'mundane' is inaccurate. She proves to us that Strether's renunciation of the happiness Miss Gostrey offers at the end of the novel and 'return to the life of Woollett, about which, Strether has no more illusion', represent the 'lust of the eyes and pride of life', against which the Bible warns people (Bennet, 1956:211).

Bennett also shows her disagreement with Greene's opinion that Strether's wandering into *Notre Dame* at the beginning of book seventh indicates that James was 'fascinated, repelled and absorbent' of the Roman Catholic Church. For Bennett, the language used in this scene does not seem to represent the language of one who is 'fascinated and repelled'; rather it is the language of secure detachment, sure enough of his own position to contemplate that

of the believers with 'a vague and fanciful kindness' (Bennet, 1956:24). She also proves that she does not detect James's indignation against Roman Catholicism and that the novel is concerned neither with politics nor religion, but for her, it is about a particular human situation, the representative of universal human predicaments.

> But I detect nothing in the presentation either of nostalgia for Roman Catholicism or of indignation against it, any more than I can detect a message about a doomed social order. In short, the novel seems to me to be about a particular human situation—though one sufficiently serious and sufficiently deeply explored sufficiently amusing and ironical too' to be representative of universal human predicaments. The novel is not, in my opinion, concerned with either politics or religion except in so far as the selected human beings are molded by religious faiths and by economic and social conditions. (Bennet, 1956:25)

Even distinguished critics, for Bennet, may have made controversial findings in their attempts at describing 'the hard latent *value*' of 'the tiny nugget' James found in 'the buried bone' that he unearthed, 'washed free of awkward accretions' (James (1909), in Murdock, 1947:xvi). What can be drawn from this controversy is that the evaluation of a writer through his work must not only be based on the enjoyment, appreciation, and critical reading of a certain part of the work, but comparations with any possible related parts of the work should also be taken into consideration.

Another severe criticism on the ground of 'puritanical reader' principle and overlooking the utilization of a mixture of verifiable and fictitious elements of a novel, has been made by F.W. Bateson, which has been countered by Jochum. In his critical evaluation 'Henry James's Ambassadors in Paris' (1983), Jochum took issue against Bateson's judgment of *The Ambassadors* in his article 'The Novel's Original Sin' (1973). Jochum believes that Bateson has made an unjust evaluation on the base of his 'ludicrous' or 'eccentric' puritanical principle. Bateson regards *The Ambassadors* as not serious, a frivolous and sinful production as he holds the same judgment on the other six novels he listed in his articles, namely *War and Peace, Moby Dick, David Copperfield, Middlemarch, ... Women in Love, Ulysses - et hoc genus omme* (Bateson, 1973:113). This is due to his opinion that there has been no serious novel to speak of since those of Gide, Proust, Mann, Joyce, and D.H. Lawrence. This opinion seems to be strengthened by his attitude 'that a novel is a decidedly inferior work of art because it suffers from a fatal and incurable disease: the original sin of its untidy conception' (Bateson, 1973:112, cited by Jochum, 1983:l09), and his concluding definition about novel:

> A novel, then, is a kind of social history. But that history must be pseudo-history. For the second thing that we normally ask of a novel is that it shall be fiction, "life of the times" enacted by characters who have never existed, proceeding fry situation to situation that are all equally unverifiable historically. (Bateson 1973:113)

In defense of the literary value of *The Ambassadors,* Jochum writes that 'real names, dates, and places are an embarrassment to the puritanical reader' (Jochum, 1983:109, cited by Edel, 1957:30) like Bateson, because they 'prefer the author's invention to be pure and undiluted' (ibid). Jochum believes that there wild never be any novel that can satisfy a reader like Bateson. In Jochum's opinion 'Bateson seems to have overlooked that it is not only the novel that utilizes a mixture of verifiable and fictitious elements' (ibid), but poems and dramas do as

well. Referring to literary theory of realism, which he briefly simplifies as theory that reveals 'not an objective but a highly subjective movement in art' (Jochum, 1983:110, cited by Edel, 1957:31), and to which he believes that James might have much the same thought in regard to his idea about the novel:

> "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and to say" (James's, cited by Edel, 1957:29)
>
> .... the Novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms (James, [l909], in Blackmur, 1934:326)

Jochum claims that *The Ambassadors is* not a frivolous and sinful production as Bateson thought it was. In the concluding remark Jochum writes:

> To come back to Bateson's remark with which I started. The original sin of the novel's conception may or may not have been a mistake. The combination of verifiable and invented elements may very well disturb, perhaps annoy an attentive reader. But I hope to have shown that this combination is unavoidable in a realistic novel. It is more than that; it is necessary. It opens up areas of meaningful intercourse between novelist and reader which have not been explored to any great extent up to now. Bateson's loss is that he does not see these opportunities. There was really no need for him to despair. Novelists' readers, and critics are all sinful creatures; they can be expected to like the forbidden pleasure of writing and reading works of fiction. More novels will be written, even though most of them will not be as rewarding as *The Ambassadors*. (Jochum, 1983:118, cited by Edel, 1957:33)

Broader and deeper considerations are thus necessary to be taken by a critic to achieve a minimum controversial response. And it seems unwise to sharply criticize a work just on the base of a one sided theoretical conception, as Bateson has demonstrated.

The observation on the idea of 'world building' and concerning the ethical issues of the novel, has been made by Julie Rivkin (1986) in her article 'The logic of Delegation in The *Ambassadors'. On* the base of literary and philosophical interpretation which Derrida calls the 'logic of supplementarity,' a logic, which Rivkin interprets as that which 'governs not only such textual concerns as authority, reference, and intention but also the novel's central thematic conflict between the New England ethos of propriety and property and the Parisian ethos of experience and expenditure', Rivkin argues that the ethical issues of the novel need to be reconsidered (1986:819). She believes that the logic of supplementarity bears an uncanny resemblance to the 'logic' traced in *The Ambassadors;* and she is also convinced that 'all begins through the **intermediary'** which could be the **novel's own epigraph** (1986:820). In her conclusion Rivkin writes:

> Thus, what Mme de Vionnet comes to reveal is that behind representation there is no firm ground. The supplements that make up representation, delegation, ambassadorship are potentially infinite. Indeed, she confirms what Strether had already begun to learn from Maria Gostrey - that property (as the self of proper

> names, the wealth of family, the propriety of behavior, and the presence that stands behind representation) is itself an effect, a product of the interplay of likenesses and likelihoods, the inersubstitution of representations. In Mme de Vionnet's world, there are no final authorities of the sort Mrs. Newsome claims to be, there are only ambassadors. Moreover, by displacing the economy of representation that governed Strether's initial conception of experience, Mme de Vionnet also displaces the economy of commercial transaction that governed his initial conception of his mission. Though Mrs. Newsome would have her ambassador hold fast to a single identity as her representative - and receive his promised reward in fair exchange - Strether learns from Mme de Vionnet a freely disseminated selfhood that asks for no return. The new economy is not all celebratory: as Mine de Vionnet acknowledges about her relationship with Chad, loss is the only certainty. But it is her economy rather than Mrs. Newsome's that accounts for Strether's final gesture. In renouncing profit, he renounces a New England system of representation and a New England exchange rate. But the logic that requires that renunciation is the logic that gives him the freedom to deviate and revise, to become fifty ambassadors if need be, even if only one at a time. (Rivkin, 1986:829-830)

4. From the viewpoint of stylistic criticism

Unlike the critical evaluations of *The Ambassadors* from the point of view of literary theory/criticism, the critical evaluations from the point of view of linguistics do not seem to create such kinds of (sharp) controversies. In his observation upon the sentence structure in the novels of James's greatest period, R.W. Short (1946:71-88) points out several interesting findings concerning with *The Ambassadors,* showing James's preference of: (1) using long and complex sentences, which are 'rangy and convoluted' and often with loose punctuations, (2) a consistent disregard of normal sentence order, (3) frequent use of the parenthetical expressions with which James breaks down the continuity of many of his statements. Further more Short finds 'that the majority of James's sentences contain the kind of departures from normal, and a smaller number of them contain no structural peculiarities and seem on the whole rather simple and straight forward. A still smaller number are again highly wrought, but in accordance with traditional principles of sentence elaboration' (Short, 1946:87).

Without showing any controversial reaction to the findings of the previous study, Hisayoshi Watanabe presents his own findings in his description on the effect of James's use of past perfect tense and its relation to his art. One of his interesting findings in this observation is that he is able to demonstrate, although a bit briefly, that in *The Ambassadors* James uses the past perfect tense for retrospection most effectively and that his method is especially successful in the case of this novel because Strether is of a meditative nature, and his concern with his past and the significance of the present events leads to rumination rather than action' (1962:165-181).

Even though there seems to be a slight difference from Short's first notice, i.e., James's preference of using long, complex and convoluted sentences, Ian Watt (1960) in his investigation on the first paragraph of *The Ambassadors* does not show any indication of making any controversial comment. Watt finds out that the difficulty of this novel does not lie on 'particularly long and complicated sentences', but on 'the *delayed specification of referents'*

> .... The main cause of difficulty seems rather to come from what may be called the *delayed specification of referents:* 'Strether' and 'the hotel' and 'his friend' are mentioned before we are told who or where they are. But this difficulty is so intimately connected with James's general narrative technique that it may b' better to begin with purely verbal idiosyncrasies, which are more easily isolated The most distinctive ones in the passage seem to he these: a preference for non transitive verbs; many abstract nouns; much use of 'that'; a certain amount o: elegant variation to avoid piling up personal pronouns and adjectives such as 'he', 'his', and 'him'; and the presence of a great many negatives and near-negatives (Watt, [1960], in Tanner, 1968:287)

In term of the systemic-functional concept, James proves that he prefers the use of non-action verbs or non material verbs rather than the material ones. And it is the fact that amongst the non material verbs, it is the mental verbs in the embedded and interrupting clauses that have the highest difference. This may lead us to see a great deal of narrative interruption, which might create reading difficulty. And it is within this part that James places the 'foregrounding', 'dominant', and 'making strange' devices.

In his study of the style of Henry James's late novel (Johnson, 1971), Robert G. Johnson (1971), utilizing quantitative and reductionist analysis carries out a double comparative investigation, first on the style of Henry James's early and late novels and then comparing the result with the styles of three of his contemporaries. Excerpts Mom *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) have been used to represent James's late style and *Watch and* Ward (1871), *The American* (1876), and *Daisy Miller* (1878) to represent James's early style. Summing of some of his findings related particularly with *The Ambassadors* are worth mentioning here as they seem to be moving towards something that can be interpreted as semantic design: (l) that James's average sentence length increases in the late style, (2) there is less naming, less modification of nouns, and less forward movement in James's late style, (3) there is a greater use of pronouns, and more elaboration of action and states of being in the late style, and more connection, relation, and subordination as well, (4) James's use of nouns, adjectives, participles, and articles declines in his late style (Johnson, 1971:87-881).

Commenting on Giorgio Melchiori's statement that 'James is looking for a complexity of effects (expressed in as complex a form) which no other prose writer of his time was pursuing', Johnson writes:

> .... This complexity of effects was the creation of a world, and the complexity of the form was crucial to this creation. For the world James created exists between the reader and the story. James writes of society, but a living society being constantly created by its members, not a society of fixed values. (Johnson, 1971:98)

Without showing any disagreements Johnson also refers to the previous stylistic studies such as Short's 'The Sentence Structure of Henry James' (1946), Watt's 'The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors*' (1960), Watanabe's 'Past Perfect Retrospection in the Style of Henry James' (1962), and Lodge's 'Strether by the River' (1966). In his article 'Past Perfect Retrospection in the Style of Henry James (1962), **Watanabe points out several interesting** findings concerning with *The Ambassadors.* Firstly, Watanabe points out that the effect of

James's tendency to enlarge the use of past perfect tense and to reduce the normal narrative tense, i.e. the sense of 'inaction' is 'the corollary of a greater subjectivity in a world of remembrance, reflection, impression, and interpretation'. 'Such a style', he continues, 'is important to the unity of the last novels in its relation to the sustaining of the consciousness of the central character' (Watanabe, 1962:165). Although he does not cite any extract from the novel to specially back up this statement, this seems true, as can be seen from the description of extract 5, in which we have unusually long interruptions to the normal sequence of the narration, and where we feel this pervasive sense of 'inaction', as mentalization. Secondly, Watanabe claims that James uses 'past perfect for retrospection most effectively, precisely in order to explore the reminiscences of his characters' (p.165). Illustrating this point, Watanabe cites James's description of Strether's reminiscence of his previous day's events, on his second morning in Paris:

> .... They (Strether and Waymarsh) **had hastened** to the Rue Scribe on the morrow of their arrival, but Strether **had not then found** the letters the hope of which prompted this errand. He **had had** as yet none at all, **hadn't expected** them in London, but **had counted** on several in Paris, and, disconcerted now, **had** presently **strolled** back to the boulevard with a sense of injury that he felt himself taking for as good a start as any other. It would serve, this spur to his spirit, he reflected, as, pausing at the top of the street, he looked up and down the great foreign avenue, it would serve to begin business with (Watanabe, 1963:165).

A more lengthy use of past perfect tense for retrospection is found in James description of Strether's recollection of his past life, on his bench in the Luxembourg garden, in his third morning in Paris. When Strether at last gets the letters, four of them were from Mrs. Newsome, he wanders through the Paris street, coming down the Rue de la Paix, passing across the Tuileries and the river, making a sudden pause before the book-stall, and pulling himself up in the Luxembourg Gardens. In this garden, as he begins to read the letters on his bench, 'he lapsed into deep thought', letting something sink deeply into his mind and then into the recollection of his life, extending from his youth to his recent days in Europe. This lengthy retrospection technique is 'characteristic of James later novels and is peculiarly Jamesian'. And Watanabe believes that 'this method is especially successful in the case of *The Ambassadors* because Strether is of a meditative nature, and his concern with his past and the significance of the present events leads to rumination rather than action' (Watanabe, 1962:167).

Thirdly, Watanabe also proves that 'James's tendency to enlarge the sphere of the past perfect tense and to reduce the normal narrative tense, the past', causes **'**the rendering of action not as action, but as existing facts, depriving portions of the passage of immediate vividness but giving others a greater concentration—a Jamesian intensification' (p. 168). And to what extent this technique relates to the foregrounding principle, i.e., 'pushing the **communication function into the background and placing the act of** expression into the foreground', seems interesting to observed.

No extreme position has been adopted by Hardy (1983) in his attempts to solve some problems arising from Strether's first lengthy conversation with Maria Gostrey, to which the understanding of their answers provides an insight into the characteristic of Strether and the mayor theme of *The Ambassadors.* Based on several conceptions i.e., Grice's maxims of conversation and concept of implicature, Erving Goffman's ideas on the social organization of

conversation, and Halliday's and Hasan's concept of linguistic cohesion, particularly their discussions of reference and ellipsis, Hardy points out that 'the difficulty of this conversation from *The Ambassadors is* a result not of James's particular style, but rather of the character of Lewis Lambert Strether'. Hardy believes that a better understanding of 'the superficial cohesiveness, the use of conversational implicature, and the disunity' may 'not only draw the reader into the conversation itself', but also 'contribute to the better understanding of the major theme of the novel' (Hardy, 1983:16-22).

With a particular aim to gain some insight into Henry James's style and manner in his four novels of different periods, i.e., *The Portrait of a Lady (1880), The Aspern Papers (1888), The spoils of Poynton (1896), and The Ambassadors* (1903), Tuomo (1975), in his study to analyze and elucidate 'the connections between the four rhetorical devices (exclamation, rhetorical question, emphasis, and hyperbole), and the frequencies of certain countable individual features in the development of James's style' in these four novels, claims that:

> …. on the whole, *The Ambassadors* seems to offer much more - and much more interesting- material than the other three novels. It proves quite conclusively that James's style has developed perceptibly, there has been a change that can be gauged with the apparatus in this study. The results attained on the basis of the content of the individual rhetorical figures and the results derived from the general frequency calculations complement and reinforce each other. (Laitinen, 1975:136)

5. Concluding remark

What can be drawn from the above brief observations are: (1) Stylistic criticism creates less controversial issues than the analysis of the novel based on literary criticism, for example, in talking about the difficulty of *The Ambassadors*, Short differs from Watt. While the former points out that the difficulty comes from James's preference for 'long, complex and convoluted Sentences', the latter says that the difficulty is caused by the 'delayed specification of referents'. But they, unlike Bateson and Jochum, do not blame each other so severely. (2) Stylistic studies utilizing a combination of Formalist-Structuralist literary conceptions and systemic-functional grammatical analysis to investigate the 'world building' of *The Ambassadors* has not as yet been undertaken. It is therefore crucial to carry out researches based on this model because this model will provide 'systematic and consistent answers' to three questions fundamental to literature, as has been cited on page 3 of this introduction. (3) The application of Systemic Functional stylistic approach to this novel has not been carried out, except once by Donald E. Hardy (1983) in his article 'Conversational Interaction and the "innocence" in James's *The Ambassadors'.* The finding of his investigation that 'a better understanding of the major theme of the novel is revealed through his analysis' is an encouraging indication of the usefulness of the research based on the systemic-functional model.

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