



FACULTY OF ARTS
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

**--Opponent's Report on
Kristýna Patočková's Diploma Thesis:**

**“The Depiction of the Changing Consciousness of Women
in Three Novels of the Turn of the Century”**

Ms. Kristýna Patočková seeks “to document how the substantial change in the social status of women that took place at the turn of the twentieth century is reflected in three novels of that period, The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James, The Awakening by Kate Chopin and The House of Mirth by Edith Wharton” (5). The body of the thesis contains ninety-two pages across six chapters with an introduction and conclusion included in that figure; in addition, there is a six-page long bibliography and a twelve- page summary of the thesis in Czech.

As concerns the prose style, the thesis is generally extremely well written and a pleasure to read.

As regard the content effects of the piece I should point out that the idea of capital and of different forms of capital on the marriage market could have been explored by the candidate: does she have any thoughts on this matter? Also, what of the notion that the power of exploitation is the only real evil and if so what does this say about the social reality in these novel worlds? You broach the notion of ‘exploitation’ on p. 25 and after but in this light nevertheless you do not develop any macro-social, macro-political or macro-psychoanalytic theory about the human in the novelistic accordingly. Also, the idea of ideology could have been used in order to formalize ideas about normative conventions e.g., pp. 31-33. Why did the candidate not use the notion of ideology?

In the fertile conclusion a number of things are brought to a head such as the idea implied if not ever said outright that the real issue here is one of the problem of modernity and so by extension we may say of the commodification, reification and fragmentation of daily experience including the conjugal institution, that of womanhood, of manhood and so on and so forth. The castrated nature of the men in the chosen novel works is also brought to the fore here without being stated as such; does the candidate have any response to any of these foregoing remarks? Why not engage such a theoretical model as psychoanalysis to explain the question of the ineffective male characters in the practical reality of the novel worlds?

To conclude, I want to emphasize how outstandingly the thesis is researched. The range and scope of the sources used is dazzling and all in all, brought in to excellent effect. I would have appreciated a bit more theoretical work (i.e., deeper reflection on certain issues but this is more than offset by my foregoing observations about the sheer solidity of the thesis work).



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Pre oral exam mark: výborná-

ESR

**Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil.
18 May 2010**