



FACULTY OF ARTS
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

M.A. THESIS
AMERICAN LITERATURE SPECIALISATION
THE DEPICTION OF THE CHANGING CONSCIOUSNESS OF WOMEN IN THREE
NOVELS OF THE TURN OF THE CENTURY
Kristýna Patočková

Through an attentive analysis of the female protagonists from Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, Ms. Patočková sketches the authors' visions of marriage, motherhood, social class, and desire. She proposes that the three novels echo the realities of the era in which women's possibilities grew, but their abilities to thrive stagnated due to their conventional mentalities—like Lily Bart's desire for luxuries, her fear of “dinginess,” or Edna Pontellier's dependence on male companionship.

The strength of the thesis is its perceptive, close reading of the characters. At the same time, the student's greatest difficulty was to avoid renarrating the heroines' fates. She has succeeded, I think, in the chapters on Chopin and Wharton, less so in the chapter on James, which concentrates solely on the inseparability of marriage and money, and which somewhat drags (although one could say to the student's defense that this just mimics the pace of novel itself—or at least Geoffrey Moore's judgment of it). The remaining themes, like class, could have been perhaps more developed, and the same is true for the ties between the history of feminism (the second chapter) and the rest of the thesis. In other words, what exactly is the relationship between the “unified feminist movement” (85) of the “New Women” and these tragic heroines with old-fashioned interiorities? Does the student see the novels as pro- or anti- feminist?

The student's writing is engaging and creative, and the thesis can be graded as “**very good**” (**velmi dobře**).

Pavla Veselá, PhD
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