

Abstract

In my bachelor's thesis, I would like to research the subject of woman's revolt in late 19th-century and early 20th-century American women prose. I have been prompted to do this by a series of inspiring lectures on American literature provided to me by Charles University and especially by those discussing the work of Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton. The arguably most famous works of these authoresses—namely *The Awakening* and *The House of Mirth*—deal with a woman's revolt against the patriarchal structures that are oppressing them. Their revolts succeed only to a varying degree and what is most important, they all end in the death of the main protagonist. Such a price for a revolt against the patriarchal rules made me wonder about a couple of problems involved in the relationship between women of late 19th and early 20th century and their society at large.

Firstly, I would like to explore the nature of these revolts—who was rebelling against what, why did they rebel and how? Secondly, I would like to answer the question, if the revolt that the heroines of the previously mentioned books succeeded and if not, if it was even possible to succeed (giving the prevailing patriarchal ideology of that time)? My objective is to provide sufficient answers to these questions. The core of my argument and thesis is that there was a very high price, for women living during the turn of the last century, for revolting against the patriarchal institutions, often leaving them no room for a meaningful and enjoyable life in their community and leading them to various neuroses, in the better case, and to death, in the worse. I will show this on a close reading of the two above mentioned books and present my views in accordance with the broader theoretical discussion of the topics.

My approach to the work will be mainly influenced by feminist and psychoanalytical criticism with figures such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Toril Moi (among others) providing the theoretical background for my work. Other purely feminist and psychoanalytical writing will also serve me in my efforts.

