

Supervisor's Report on B.A. thesis by

Mr. Václav Kyllar

### **Woman's Revolt: Revolt in *The House of Mirth* and *The Awakening***

In his bachelor's thesis, Mr. Václav Kyllar evaluates the phenomenon of revolt as it pertains to the compositional work of Edith Wharton in *The House of Mirth* and Kate Chopin in *The Awakening*. These constitute two leading edge works of long nineteenth-century early modernism.

The thesis contains fifty-eight pages across six principal parts. These include "1. Introduction 2. Contexts 3. *The House of Mirth* and the Anatomy of Oppression 4. *The Awakening* of the Revolt 5. Conclusion and 6. Bibliography". Overall, the thesis contains a logical structure and is lucid in its presentation strategy. The thesis also contains good English, albeit there are some spelling errors or other small mistakes such as when the reference to "Wharton's America" should read as "Wharton's New York City" (9) or when "well know" should be "well known" (22), "at a possible explanations" should be "at a possible explanation" (29), "main heroin" should be "main heroine" (37), "Edna Montpellier" should be "Edna Pontellier" (50), and "asses" should be "assess" (53). Nevertheless the prose style is good in general.

All in all, the study also finely delineates the general historical context in which the two aboveindicated novels were written and so are culturally embedded. An interesting point occurs when the candidate argues, "It cannot be said with certainty, if Kate Chopin was a naturalist, local color or feminist writer—or if she was all these things at once"(15). I ask the candidate what is his own position on this matter?

Also, Mr. Kyllar accurately argues how in *The House of Mirth* Lily Bart's "unwillingness to either cooperate with or stand out of the society's boundaries is of crucial importance for the book but serves as a hindrance to any simplistic reading of the novel."(20). Articulating this impasse allows the candidate to effect a multi-pronged and nuanced reading of the narrative. In an excellent section on Wharton's novel "3.1 The Power of the Market", the candidate argues well for the crucial fact of money in this fictional world and of how, "Free and egalitarian as the market may ostensibly be, the negotiations within this social market are undemocratic, snobbish and elitist" (23). Could the candidate elaborate on these points about the "undemocratic, snobbish and elitist" nature of human negotiations in Wharton's book?

An acute psychoanalytic reading of Lily Bart ensues on pp. 31–36, which closes with, "It is a personal drama of a neurotic and a cruel and an unforgiving society" (36). A crucial deadlock in *The Awakening* is given eloquent voice when we read: "There is no framework or a signifier that could translate her experience and allow her to communicate without the loss of her self-hood, or at least there is none [sic, no] such framework in existence yet, although Edna can create it" (46); another vital point issues after a discussion of Robert, Edna's

children and her spouse Léonce with, “The reason for Edna’s suicide can be found in her inability to detach herself from these voices, and it is crucial for us, as readers, to see her love affair with Robert critically” (49). Last not least, in a comparison of the two novels, “Lily finds her demise in the impossibility to express herself through language while Edna dies because of her inability to find a way out of this language” (53). I close by asking Mr. Kyllar if either or both of the two chosen novels, mediate through the power of negation, any kind of future-oriented or positive vision for their respective social worlds, beyond the bounds of their respective fictional pages?

In light of the foregoing mentions, I hereby recommend the pre thesis defense mark of 1 (výborně) for this thesis work.

doc. Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)  
9 June 2019