

Ms. Simona Milotová's M.A. thesis – review written by the opponent

Ms. Simona Milotová's M.A. thesis, **Agents without Agency: A Study of Archetypes and Society in Works of Edith Wharton**, is an original study, trying to establish its own definition of archetypes. As opposed to Jung or Frye, Lévi-Strauss was selected as the main conceptual source, together with the leading critics of leisure class (Veblen), capitalism, consumerism, and spectacle. As the extensive and very up-to-date bibliography illustrates, Ms. Milotová is familiar with current scholarship devoted to Edith Wharton, and bravely attempted to contribute – with her own interpretation of the selected titles – to its further development. Which is something that is not even expected at this stage, and Ms. Milotová should be applauded both for the effort and the result.

As to the primary material, Ms. Milotová has wisely used three major novels (*The House of Mirth*, *The Custom of the Country*, and *The Age of Innocence*), and occasionally referred to the shorter prose pieces, too. Here, I would want her to explicitly justify her choice – not disputing their relevance, but questioning why some others were not included (e.g. Wharton's perhaps most famous short story „The Roman Fever“). And maybe also ask how would the discussion of those works that do not feature the given archetypes (that is, „The Fated Heroine“, „The Cowardly Rebel“, „The New Man“, and „The Rule Keeper“) potentially change or modify – as I believe the role of the opponent is to point out weaker spots and not praise the obvious – her argument.

Thus, following the same logic, I found a handful of truly marginal details I would also like Ms. Milotová to respond to. While she could have, for the sake of clarity, divided the whole text into shorter paragraphs and avoided vague „however“ (see e.g. p. 64 at the bottom and p. 65 at the top), I do not quite get what she meant by

„the new money coming from Europe“ (p. 8), or how can certain customs be satirized and glorified at the same time (p. 15). And I admit I have a problem with the adjective „valuable“ on p. 18, as it clearly – in my opinion – suggests something else than the sheer monetary value here, as well as with her analysis of the matriarchal society leading to the utopian community on p. 68 (either there is a shortcut in her thought, or I am too slow a reader).

This being the case, I am suggesting the following grade(s): either „výborně“/“excellent“, or „velmi dobře“/“very good“. The final result will thus very much depend on the review written by the supervisor, as well as on Ms. Milotová’s performance during the oral defense.

Prague, May 14, 2021

Dr. Hana Ulmanová