

Abstract

This M.A. thesis focuses on the problematic relationship between Henry James and Aestheticism and Decadence on the example of his two masterpieces—*The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). The main task is to document the evolution of this relationship and to point out that despite his lifelong preoccupation with these two artistic movements in his literary works, James refuses to assume a concrete stance toward them. Before the literary analysis of the two abovementioned novels, the author devotes the first chapter to a brief historical survey as to the nature and purpose of the work of art, to the development Aestheticism and Decadence in Europe and Britain, and to James's relationship with some of the proponents of British Aestheticism. The rest of the thesis is devoted to the literary analysis of the two novels through the optics of Aestheticism and Decadence.

Keywords: James, Henry; Aestheticism; Decadence; literary analysis; transatlantic studies