

Tribhuvan University

Divorce as a Social Scandal for New Yorkers in Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Divorce as a Social Scandal for New Yorkers in Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*” submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, by Sabita Adhikari has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This study analyzes Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* on the feministic theoretical stand points. The novel highlights the marriage and divorce practices of New York society of 1870s through the narratives of Ellen Olenska who is from an aristocratic family background. The study is concentrated on how male dominated traditional practices neglect the freedom of women in personal matter like marriage and divorce. By scandalizing the issues of divorce, aristocratic society tries to control over women by using so called male coded morality and discipline. Ellen, the protagonist of the novel challenges the ongoing practices of New York society by rejecting the norms and values made by male dominated society to have power over female in public space.

Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* deals with the social norms and values as respectable status. It gives more priority to society but it ignores an individual's happiness at the same time. This novel presents society as a superior but the member of its society is inferior at the time. This novel raises a quest about who makes a society. If people make society then why an individual suffers a lot due to the conservative social norms and values. It must be changing with time and society will be in favor of its member's happiness. The 1870s aristocratic New York society scandalizes the issue of divorce and the female protagonist resists living her life on her own choice. In the same time the male protagonist is afraid to resist and live his life as the society itself.

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