

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT
BA THESIS

The Portrayal of Female Sexuality and Sensuality in Selected Works
of Anne Sexton and Adrienne Rich
Sára Benešová

Following a brief introduction to selected texts of Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, the thesis aims "to explore the expression of female sexuality and sensuality in the poetry of Anne Sexton and Adrienne Rich, using the mentioned works of *l'écriture féminine* as its theoretical foundation" (10). To this end, Ms. Benešová analyzes the poems "Her Kind," "Rapunzel" and "In Celebration of My Uterus" by Sexton, and "Diving into the Wreck" along with "(Unnumbered, The Floating Poem)" by Rich.

While the thesis was being written, my comments concerned mostly generalizations about French feminism as well as the choice and interpretations of specific poems. Concerning French feminist thought, I have tried to draw Ms. Benešová's attention to its diversity, in order to avoid sliding into essentialist arguments about innate "female difference," and linking "women's writing" solely to women and the female body. This has also been my concern in relation to the poems discussed in the thesis; in addition, I have questioned for example the interpretation of Sexton's "Rapunzel" as an unproblematic representation of a reciprocal lesbian romance or the reading of "In Celebration of My Uterus" as not (at least partially) ironic. Most of these queries are now quite well reflected in the thesis, which is supported with references to several concrete works of selected French feminists and with critical studies of the said poems, although Ms. Benešová could have addressed more explicitly the issue of essentialism. My only question for the defence then concerns this problem; the thesis states in conclusion that Sexton and Rich "start with the primal and most powerful tool – the language, which they deconstruct and discard its masculine attributes to introduce new forms. Those are then inscribed with the female experiences through a feminine language" (47). What, in Ms. Benešová's view, would be further examples of "female experiences" inscribed through "feminine language" and what in her view would not be "female experiences" inscribed through "feminine language" (in these poets' works and perhaps more broadly)?

Proposed grade: Výborně (1) or Velmi dobře (2)

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August 28, 2021