

Prof. David Robbins, Ph.D., thesis opponent

M.A. thesis evaluation

Matej Moravec

American Suburbia from the 1950s to the 1980s: The Development of the Image of Suburbia in the Short Stories of John Cheever, John Updike, and Raymond Carver

Thesis director: Erik Roraback, Ph.D.

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In his first chapter, Mr. Moravec presents us with a relatively clichéd and oversimplified analysis of Puritanism as the primary cultural root of even U.S. WASP culture, and likewise as the primary cultural root of the suburban myth/ethos. There were many other radical protestant traditions (and more secular and classical ones as well) that contributed to the WASP and suburban sensibilities as outlined in the first chapter of the thesis, and some attention might well with profit have been addressed to some of these.

The problem of oversimplification persists in the specifically literary sections, as well—as in the too-tidy summing up of the discursive content of all three authors (and particularly Cheever and Updike), which makes for very clear explication and writing, but often at the expense of a more adequate understanding of the range and complexity of issues presented by the subject and addressed by each author.

The final chapter, on the explosion of the suburban myth/ethos is good, but the discussion of Carver's writing is not nearly so closely and convincingly connected to the suburbs under consideration as in the case of Cheever and Updike, except by the vague, temporary, and often contingent physical positioning in the sprawl that by this time constituted a new type of post-urban, post-suburban (and not any longer specifically suburban) environment, and in a subject-position that no longer represented a particular (suburban) minority but by then a (post-urban, post-suburban) majority of the U.S. population

With these three non-trivial *caveats*, the fact remains that Mr. Moravec's thesis is a highly competent and articulate navigation (at the level of an M.A. thesis) of multiple complicated and controversial subjects, for which both the author and the thesis supervisor are to be congratulated. I believe that, overall, the work is appropriately to be judged "1, vyborne."

Thesis evaluation: "1, vyborne."

Signed:

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If the reader has any questions or needs additional information, please contact me at [drobbins22@netzero.net](mailto:d Robbins22@netzero.net).