



FACULTY OF ARTS  
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY  
IN PRAGUE

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

**OPPONENT'S REPORT  
MA THESIS**

**The Female Body and Voice in U.S. Prose Fiction**

Bc. Petra Landerová



The opening chapter of “The Female Body and Voice in U.S. Prose Fiction” introduces selected fundamentals of French feminist criticism, particularly of French feminist criticism of language, with reference to the work of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. While this chapter could have presented the theories of these three critics in more detail, some of their thoughts on gender are also skillfully interwoven into the main body of the thesis, where Bc. Petra Landerová perceptively interprets selected fictional works of Henry James, Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton, Flannery O'Connor, Thomas Pynchon and Kathy Acker. The prose of the thesis is clear and precise, leaving aside a few errors and typos (e.g. “Cixous believe” [5]; “a feeling of a certain disconnect” [29]). These, however, are very minor issues in a text that is eloquently and forcefully written.

During the defense, Ms. Landerová could perhaps discuss what guided her choice of primary texts (are there any other fictional works—prosaic, poetic, dramatic—that she would consider suitable for her analysis?) Also, given the development she sketches already through the titles of the two main chapters of her thesis (“Women Caught in a Tradition” and “New Era, New Opportunities”), how is one to understand statements such as “[by masculine discourse] women are kept in a subordinate position from which there is no escape” (77)? In other words, how can “progress [be] evident” (77) if language is a male system that represses the feminine? Or do Pynchon and Acker use “feminized” or “female” language? Is there such a thing? And what about extra-linguistic cultural forms: in her discussion of Catherine Sloper from *Washington Square*, Ms. Landerová sounds rather dismissive of them, but what about painting or music? Would the student perceive these cultural forms as less masculine and more fitting for what she calls an “authentic, female existence” (30)?

Proposed grade: excellent (1).

Pavla Veselá, PhD.

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