



Supervisor's Evaluation of the M.A. Diploma Thesis of

Maria Andriukhina:

Punitive Gynaecology in Modern Russia: Crafting the Docile Female

The submitted M.A. thesis of Maria Andriukhina is absolutely superb. As an M.A. thesis (moreover written in a second language) it's simply stunning. It is a theoretically and methodologically sound, conceptually mature, analytically convincing and last, but not least, beautifully eloquent piece of work. A critical review of the thesis is the task of the opponent so in my evaluation I will focus on the process of preparing and writing the thesis, the strong and positive aspects of the text, and the overall academic contributions of Maria's work.

First, I must mention the extraordinary independence and maturity, with which Maria worked on her thesis throughout the entire process. From coming up with the topic, through studying the relevant scholarship and preparing the research design, the conceptual anchoring and methodological questions, to the analysis of the collected material itself, most of the time Maria was able to work independently and responsibly by herself. Formally, the work is polished, articulate, with more than adequate and correctly referenced citation apparatus and extensive bibliography. Maria cared not only about academic eloquence but also about grammatical flawlessness and perfect transcription from the Russian to the English language (which, of course, use different alphabets). There is a minimum of omissions or mistakes in the text (such as a banal missing chapter number on page 94), the text as a whole is conceptually and analytically fluent. Making sure the analysis is constantly referenced back with the concepts used in the theoretical part, Maria manages to connect the theoretical and empirical parts in a seamless way. Needless to mention that this is very hard to do, especially for students. The presented thesis is indeed a surprisingly mature piece of standard academic scholarship.

It was an honor and joy to work with Maria, as she always came ready and prepared to our consultations and was always willing and able to enact promptly suggestions and changes I had in my commentaries. Especially towards the end of the process, when we were working on the final drafts and edits of the thesis, Maria exhibited an exceptional ability to improve her already excellent work based on my remarks, mainly of structural nature. At the same time, she did not hesitate to disagree with me and stand her ground when she wanted to keep her own approach or solution to a particular issue. In the last weeks before the submission, Maria was able to substantially rework the structure of both the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis in a way that moved the text into a publishable level.

In many ways, Maria's is an exceptional thesis. She works with an impressively broad range of concepts, from Foucault's power, embodiment, discipline, and docility, through Kligman's duplicity, surveillance, and retroactive empowerment, to the concepts of gaze, agency and discursive freedom, to produce an informed and convincing picture of the institutional brutality and misogyny in gynecological establishments in contemporary Russia. At the same time, Maria is able to aptly demonstrate that there is no "higher design", policy or order that would instruct the doctors and institutions to perform medical practice in this particularly cruel, sexist, and punitive way. In fact, I find this aspect the most troubling of all, not only in Maria's work but in many other research projects (my own including) as well.

Importantly, Maria's thesis is the strongest where it matters most – that is, in its focus on and the treatment of the women participants themselves. Maria treats the women participants as real partners and co-authors of her research study, which is apparent not only from the text itself but also from the explicit, touching dedication of the thesis to them. In her ability to not just declare respect and empathy for the women participants but actually work them into the methodology, positionality and finally analytical interpretations of the women's experiences, Maria offers a remarkable understanding of what feminist project should mean. Combined with her theoretical part and without needing a separate chapter on "gender" or "feminism", the thesis confidently and coherently articulates a devastating gendered and feminist critique of mistreatment and abuse of power. The women participants are in the center of this story and Maria makes sure to transform their physical and psychological victimization into a narrative of agency and retroactive empowerment. This, in my opinion, is a real (and very fine) talent that has the potential to inspire and change lives.

Overall, as a supervisor I have only the highest comments for this particular thesis and its author. It is without a doubt one of the best theses I've ever seen in our department. I can only suggest that Maria works on preparing her thesis for publication and that, if it fits her personal and professional plans, she applies for doctoral studies.

I formally recommend the thesis to the defende procedure and suggest to evaluate it with grade 1.

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doc. Věra Sokolová, Ph.D.
Thesis Supervisor