

Eleni Ioannou's M.A. thesis – review written by the supervisor

*Great Mothers: Female Empowerment in Selected Novels by Toni Morrison* is an excellent reading of mainly, but not only motherhood in *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved* and *A Mercy*. While I see the choice of primary material as fully justified also by Ms. Ioannou herself (see p. 1), the fact that some other novels could have been included did not escape my attention, possibly namely *Sula* and *Paradise*. Since Ms. Ioannou did not mention where a further research would potentially take her, I would like to know whether she would consider at least those two titles as eventual candidates, and if so, why (or if not, why not). Or would she be able to find other African American female novelists relevant in this connection? Within the context of U.S. literature, or maybe even in the Caribbean context?

Having mentioned that, the thesis is soundly organized and clearly focused, and the main argument as to female empowerment extremely lucid. Ms. Ioannou's approach is interdisciplinary by definition (using both feminism and New World studies primarily, but occasionally venturing, if appropriate, also elsewhere), and one has to appreciate the fact that she mainly relies on very contemporary theories and sources (see bibliography), too. Thus, she was able to make interesting new connections and even partly come up with new original interpretations of the given novels, which is certainly a huge achievement.

Thus, there are just two questions I would wish to raise during the oral defense. 1) On p. 56, Ms. Ioannou states that „daughters are the privileged children“, and I just wonder whether this statement is not somehow contradicting the main ideas of the thesis. In the given context, can one actually talk about the very notion of privilege? 2) On p. 12, Ms. Ioannou mentions how Rich uses the word „feminine“, and on p. 81, then, she herself uses it in the expression „feminine nature“; is it what she wanted to say, or is it rather „female nature“ (see the key words as well)? Could she please define both of the above mentioned adjectives for us, and thus clarify any potential or real confusion?

A few minor comments follow. It is regrettable that Ms. Ioannou's Resumé in Czech is full of different sorts of errors: not only is its syntax rather clumsy, but there are also missing commas, and, moreover, some of the expressions do not make sense: such as „povídky ženského charakteru“. Thus, instead of an agency, which did a very poor job, Ms. Ioannou should have asked for help her Czech fellow-students, who are at least acquainted with the terminology. Her own language, that is English, is, by comparison, almost flawless, precise and analytical, with just a few inadequate verbs: as in „Children benefited by mothers“ (p. 37), or in „Her mothering capacities are expressed upon Halle“ (p.48). Having said that, there is one sentence I found too vague, though: on p. 73, what does the last sentence before Conclusion exactly mean? Could Ms. Ioannou clarify that?

Depending on the review written by the opponent and Ms. Ioannou's performance during the oral defense, I am suggesting the following grade: „excellent/výborně“.

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