



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Posudek oponenta na bakalářskou práci **Simony Milotové**
“Feminism in Women’s Canadian Literature in the 1960s and the 1970s”

The sweep of the submitted BA thesis is a remarkable feat. Ms Milotová takes on the task of analyzing four novels and their connection with the growing feminist agenda of the 1960s and 70s in Canada, including raising issues of their typical Canadian features. What emerges as the fabric that binds all the selected texts together is their focus on the topic of women’s rebellion against a male-centred society and the overarching theme of survival in wilderness, according to the author of the thesis a main Canadian feature. The structure is clearly laid out, i.e. the first two chapters providing an introduction into the specific issues and contextualizing the individual case studies. Argumentation is clear and logical. What I find fault with is perhaps the too large selection of texts. I understand the logic of the selection, but for a thesis of such limited length, quality and depth was necessarily sacrificed. In many cases, I lack a more thorough analysis of important issues the novels raise. Also, despite the space the introductory two chapters take up, their informative value is not sufficient. Below are my specific points:

Page 7 – I would like to get a clearer distinction between second- and third-wave feminism. More examples of profile texts (of theory and criticism) could perhaps shed light on the slightly different focus of the eras concerned and consequently expose the agenda of the 60s and 70s, including the limitations and shortcomings of consciousness-raising novels. That is, convincingly argue how “representative” these texts are (page 52).

Page 10 - I appreciate the interesting discussion of the link between feminism and the growth of nationalism in Canada. However, brief mention could be made of how/why this also leads to severe criticism from the 80s onwards, with regard to the white-centered bias of the Canada construct. Novels by First nations and immigrant novelists from then on show, for example, the limitations of the survival myth.

Page 17 – as the novels show, symbiosis between nature and women can be empowering (although the link between women and nature is hardly a revolutionary breakthrough). But as Ms Milotová states herself, can cause problems. Can it not function as a tool of exoticisation, objectification, opening the land to “exploitation”? Similarly, *Bear* obviously shows how unsatisfactorily liberating is a simple reversal of power structures, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction, even guilt, and paradoxically (or inevitably?) inviting acts of violence.

Page 22 – Can indeed “imitation” be “one of the most creative ways” of appropriating male language? What is “new” about the space that Engel’s realistically descriptive language opens for women? Perhaps rather than imitation, can we apply Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, i.e. being similar is emphatically not to be the same, thus opening up ways of deconstructing the power structures in male dominated language?

Chapter 4 – I miss a more sustained discussion of Laurence’s use of 1st person present tense narration and its role for the conveying of the heroine’s consciousness. This is talked about several times but not illustrated by any textual analysis.

Page 37 – Although Del’s life is “exceptional”, the title of Munro’s novel *Lives of Girls and Women* seems to imply some kind of general validity, which also the genre (Bildungsroman) seems to invite.

Page 42 – The history that Munro creates for her fictional family seems actually rather ridiculous and presented in a parodic manner rather than functioning as a history impulse which Ms Milotová deems to be typical for Canadian literature. The history goes back centuries yet is extremely UN”remarkable”.

Finally, although the language, register and style are appropriate for a BA thesis, the text is marred by numerous typos, which more careful proof-reading could have eliminated (e.g. page 23 – wage instead of vague), also unfortunate is the oversuse of upper case in the Czech abstract (Kanadská literature, Kanadská příroda, Kanadske prvky etc).

In conclusion and in view of the comments made above, I recommend Simona Milotová’s BA thesis for defence with the suggested grade of **VERY GOOD (velmi dobře)**.

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