

David Vichnar, PhD
SUPERVISOR'S REPORT:
re "*Notes from the House of Sleep: Reading the Hieroglyphs
of Night-Language in Anais Nin, H.D., and Anna Kavan*"
by Yaren Gezer (MA dissertation, 2023)

Ms Gezer's MA project deals with three selected women writers—Anais Nin, H.D., and Anna Kavan—and their work at the intersection of modernist poetics, feminist politics, and psychoanalytical discourse.

In her introduction, Ms Gezer cannily surveys some of the cornerstone modernist definitions (to do with the modernist "crisis of belief" [6], its re-conception of the "individual" [8], its post-war "reordering" of the world order [9], etc.), clearly delineating her subsequent theoretical framework in which to analyse her three writers' output. Ms Gezer's thesis comes into its own in the three chapters dealing with her three respective writers, each in a different psycho-analytical/logical frame (H.D. vis-à-vis Freud, Nin and her Rankian affiliations, and Kavan as a Jungian writer). In her (slightly underwhelming) conclusion, Ms Gezer makes her point that while psychoanalysis may well indeed have functioned "as a determining factor in their understanding of themselves and utilizing the dream-producing nature of their unconscious," this determination remained a source of contestation in that it was "coloured by psychoanalysis's controversial approach to woman and its division of male and female attributes" (77).

Ms Gezer's argumentation is lucid and sticks to the point. Her close readings are usually detailed, complex and well-argued, apt at synthesising or drawing parallels between concepts whose affinities are far from evident. Also praiseworthy is the consistency with which she defines her terms and the wide-ranging theoretical sources (apart from psychoanalysis proper, Benstock on modernism, DuPlessis and Friedman on H.D., Cixous, Gilbert & Gubar on feminism, Aldiss and Garrity on Kavan, et al.) which she brings to bear on her argument without ever letting them drown out her own voice.

Although (or maybe since) a labour of love on the candidate's part, the production of the thesis was a lengthy process (also due to the disruptions caused by the covid-19 epidemic) of search and discovery, for both the candidate and his supervisor. The supervisor is happy to state that Ms Gezer took to heart most of his misgivings and criticisms levied during the research and writing process and addressed them in the final product. On that note, it would have been advisable to pay closer attention to the formal side of things, e.g. the formatting of the footnotes and block quotes, which despite all our best efforts are still out of alignment in many places across the final pdf.

Given the above, the supervisor shall constrain himself to raising four questions of a general nature (leaving it up to the opponent's report to raise critical points pertaining to the nitty-gritty of the thesis, should he have any). The first two have to do with the Derridean interplay between the singularity and the exemplar, the latter two with some methodological issues underwriting the entire project.

1. What makes these three writers' cases unique? What constitutes H.D.'s, Nin's, and Kavan's writerly "signatures" and why / how does Ms Gezer seek to "countersign" this signature in her thesis?
2. What makes these three writers' cases general? In what ways can H.D., Nin, and Kavan serve as good "examples" of a broader tendency within modernist / women's / psychological fiction?
3. Which of the three psychological/analytical discourses (the Freudian vis-à-vis H.D., Rankian vis-à-vis Nin, and Jungian vis-à-vis Kavan) proved the most & least fruitful for these three women writers and why was it so?
4. In Ms Gezer's slightly underwhelming conclusion, she finally brings some crucial feminist thinkers to bear upon the overall argument. While Cixous on the struggle of writing vis-à-vis illusionary "wholeness" of subjectivity and Gilbert & Gubar on the pen/penis analogy under patriarchy are useful, nowhere does the work deal with either Cixous' notion of *écriture féminine* or G&G's notion of "anxiety of authorship". I understand this might be in order not to muddle a thesis on profoundly modernist writers with postmodernist critical vocabulary, but still would like to invite Ms Gezer to reflect on these critical terms and discuss their (un)usefulness?

Having raised these issues, I am still positive that Ms Gezer's thesis presents a well-researched work whose theoretical savviness and argumentative skills meet the usual requirements expected of a regular M.A. thesis at the Department. Therefore, I have no qualms in recommending it for the defence and propose a grade of either **excellent – výborně** or **very good – velmi dobře**, depending on the candidate's performance at the thesis defence.

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.



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