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Zásady pro vypracování:

A brief sketch of the history of feminism should be outlined, including first, second and third wave movements. Key concepts along with definitions of 20th century feminist issues should be directed according to seminal works such as Simone de Beauvoir's *THE SECOND SEX* and Betty Friedan's *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE*. Special attention should be given to the unique concerns of American feminists. A short biography of Irving should be included along with a short overview of his most important works and themes. A very brief plot summary of *THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARP* may be featured. Events, characters and themes in *GARP* should be described and directly related to definitions and concepts of second wave feminism described earlier in the paper. This should be the longest and most important part of the BP. Another interesting issue which may be addressed is how and why male authors use feminist issues and characters in their works; examples from other literary works of the period may be used. In conclusion, continuing challenges for women in American society since the novel was written until today may be characterized.

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Annotation:

The bachelor thesis deals with the features of feminism present in the novel *The World According to Garp* by John Irving. History of women's movement is briefly described, including the first, second and third waves. The most important events and representatives of the American feminisms are introduced as well. A short biography and bibliography of John Irving is included together with a brief summary of *The World According to Garp* and its characters. In the practical part the particular examples of feminist behavior in the novel are analyzed using the knowledge of feminist concepts provided in the theoretical part of the thesis. The attitude of men towards the women's movement is dealt with as well. The conclusion provides the summary of possible readers' interpretations of the features of feminism in the novel.

Key words: feminism, women's movement, *The World According to Garp*, John Irving

Souhrn:

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá různými znaky feminizmu, které se objevují v románu *Svět podle Garpa* od Johna Irvinga. Stručně je zde popsána historie ženského hnutí, včetně první, druhé i třetí vlny. Rovněž jsou zde zmíněny nejdůležitější události a představitelky amerického feminizmu. V krátkosti je popsán také osobní život a tvorba Johna Irvinga, společně se stručným souhrnem děje a postav objevujících se ve *Světě podle Garpa*. Následující praktická část práce analyzuje konkrétní příklady feministického chování v románu za použití teoretických znalostí různých feministických konceptů z předchozí části práce. Také mužskému pohledu na ženské hnutí je věnována pozornost. Závěr je tvořen shrnutím možných interpretací feministických rysů, které čtenář získává v průběhu čtení románu.

Klíčová slova: feminizmus, ženské hnutí, *Svět podle Garpa*, John Irving

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INTRODUCTION

Although there were many attempts to win the right for the women vote, own property and be heard in the public life, the “fight” is not over in every part of the world. It is always hard to describe any process that has lasted for several centuries, especially when it is a process so extensive in terms of aims and means. But, as William O’Neill writes in the very first chapter of his book *Feminism in America*, it is still “easier to describe than explain, and this is especially true where our domestic institutions are concerned.” (O’Neill 3)

This bachelor thesis provides a brief outlook of the history of this struggle, focusing on the feminist movements and the important events related to them. The situation in Britain at the end of the 18th and in the 19th century is introduced, as this country was a cradle of the fight for suffrage (the right to vote for women). The first wave in the U.S.A. is discussed, mentioning the Seneca Falls Convention, the Declaration of Sentiments and the Equal Suffrage Amendment. The second wave feminism is dealt with in greater detail – *The Second Sex* by Simone De Beauvoir, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, the National Organization of Women and variety of new feminist attitudes that emerged during the second half of the 20th century are discussed. Also the third wave is mentioned, clarifying mainly the division of the new sub-streams in feminism.

The most important events in John Irving’s life are introduced together with the brief outlook of his novels. The practical part is focused on the characters and the plot of the novel *The World According to Garp*. The issues of feminist behavior, violence against women and perception of women by the American society are dealt with and related to the previous, theoretical part of the bachelor thesis. The conclusion provides a brief analysis of the author’s, i.e. male, attitude towards women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

1. HISTORY OF FEMINISM

1.1. General historical background

In *Sociological Dictionary* feminism is defined as “the struggle of women’s movement to overcome the oppression and the marginalization of women and for a change in the male-made social structures and ways of life.” (Jandourek 83, my translation) According to Pam Morris, feminism is a political view of the gender differences resulting in systematical social injustice, regarding the fact that the inequality appears as a result of cultural interpretation of these differences and is not only biologically given. (Morris 11)

The right to vote, to become educated and own property had been mostly achieved by American women during the first half of the 20th century, excluding Afro-American female part of the society. Before that, the perception of women by the western society was quite clear - they were subordinate to their husbands, bearing children and keeping households. It was men who had the right to make decisions about the family, the property (even that of their wives) and the children’s education.

The equality of civil rights became the question during the 18th century. The first literary work in Britain dealing with women’s rights seems to be *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft. The book was written in 1792 and is based on “an analysis of the psychological and economic damage done to women from a forced dependence on men and exclusion from the public sphere.” (Humm 4) In the 1830s and 1840s, first organized feminism started to appear in public life, either in Western Europe or America. The reason for this radical step after the long time of the oppression could be that women felt at last encouraged by the French and American revolutions to fight for what they believed was a part of an ideal social arrangement of the 19th century. (O’Neill 4)

But it was not until the mid-19th century that feminism became a political issue. Several campaigns were held in Britain, e.g. to support the Married Women’s Property Act, dealing with the problem of coverture, “by which the married women’s civil identity was covered by or absorbed into her husband’s” (Kerber, De Hart 531), and as an answer to Parliamentary debates the National Society of Women’s Suffrage was founded, supported by few proponents among the Members of Parliament, as was J. S. Mill, one of the first male feminist supporters. (Humm 5)

When speaking about the historical background of the feminist movement, the foundation of the National Society of Women's Suffrage is a good milestone to stop at, since it is widely believed that the first wave of the feminism started at approximately the same time as the fight for suffrage in the middle of the 19th century. (Věšíňová - Kalivodová 23)

1.2. First wave of feminism in the U. S. A.

Three important women were involved in the women's rights movement emerging during the 1840s and 1850s in the United States - Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony. They participated in public life because of the anti-slavery movement. As O'Neill writes:

The parallel with slavery which the early feminists drew again and again was, on the face of it, strained and unreal. Yet, even though feeling enslaved is clearly not the same as being enslaved, there were real similarities between the women's rights and anti-slavery movements. Both aimed at removing unconscionable handicaps imposed by law and custom on specific groups in American society. (O'Neill 10)

Since the women delegates were not allowed to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, strong campaigns held by the movement in the U.S.A. resulted in the Seneca Falls Convention eight years later (Humm 2), sometimes called the Woman's Rights Convention (Friedan 141), with a clear statement: the Declaration of Sentiments. This called for respecting the principles of the Declaration of Independence and applying them to women as well. After the Civil War, when the slavery was abolished, the anti-slavery movements became pointless. The fight for the women's right, on the contrary, became the main question, thus in the second half of the 19th century, several feminist associations emerged, either conservative or more radical. (Humm 2-3)

At the beginning of the 20th century, these feminist associations seem to become, as Betty Friedan writes in *The Feminine Mystique*, "too much smooth and gentle. When Harriet Blatch, a daughter of Elizabeth C. Stanton, came back from England, she found out that the movement, in which she had been grown up, consisted of regular tea parties." (Friedan 158, my translation) Still, there were women who continued the fight for the women's vote right and most of them later united in the National American Woman Suffrage Association. (O'Neill 123-127) The main aim of the NAWSA was to prevail on both houses of Congress to accept the Equal Suffrage Amendment and then to make it approved by the three-quarters of states' legislatures. (Scott,

Scott 326, 329) The most important part of the Equal Suffrage Amendment says, “The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” (Kerber, De Hart 542)

The means used for achieving this aim differed. Some of them were rather conservative and traditional; others were even militant. The situation was even more complicated by the World War I. Finally, the Amendment was ratified by all states and on 26 August, 1920, it was formally proclaimed that women of United States had the legal right to vote. (Scott, Scott 327-338) There was no chance to keep the common intention of an American feminism any more. The official recognition of the women’s right to vote is considered the end of the first wave, not only in the U. S., but also in the European states, where women got the right to vote approximately in the same time, usually after the end of the WWI. Another reason for temporary quitting of the struggle was the Great Depression together with the emerging threat of Fascism and Nazism. (Havelková 175)

1.3. Second wave of feminism in the U. S. A.

Two essential books by Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan were written on the topic of women’s position in the society after the Second World War, and immediately influenced the development of the second wave feminisms. These authors focused on the psychology of women, their destiny and perception of their social roles, but no longer on the basic rights – because they had been already (or at least partly) achieved. It was Simone de Beauvoir with the book *The Second Sex* (1949), whose main argument was that “Society sets up oppositions such as culture/nature, production/reproduction all of which combine to place woman in an inferior position.” (Humm 44) The book may be considered a response to the new situation after the World War II, when the position of women, no matter how much it had improved since the beginning of the 20th century, became once again subordinate. Men, who needed to gain their former roles (gone together with the illusions they had had before the World War II) and be economically productive, pressed women back to the roles of housekeepers and child-bearers.

Fourteen years later after *The Second Sex*, in 1963, the book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan was published. Some authors consider this book a milestone of the second wave of feminism, as it is usually dated since the early 1960s (Havelková 175), and Betty Friedan became an important spokesperson of the subsequent feminist activities. There are several similarities in

Friedan's life with the life of the main character of *The World According to Garp*, Jenny Fields, who also wrote a book which influenced many people and who became a celebrity as well.

The main problems described in *The Feminine Mystique* lay beneath the conservative and neat surface of American society; women often think that the dissatisfaction and disappointment they feel about their unfulfilled lives is their own psychological dysfunction, and this lasted several years until they realized that the problem had been in the establishment, not in themselves. (Havelková 175-177) As Friedan writes,

[...] Words like "emancipation" and "career" sounded strange and embarrassing. [...] If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. [...] What kind of a woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor? [...] For over fifteen years women in America found it harder to talk about this problem than about sex. (Friedan, in Kerber, De Hart 482)

The book provides dozens of examples of statements by bored, unhappy wives whose lives are focused only on the family. Although they have an access to the proper education, they are expected to be more satisfied staying at home, unlike Jenny Fields in *The World According to Garp*. Friedan criticizes the society, which allows and even supports the spread of this "feminine mystique", as she calls it, by mass media and even by medical journals. The research on the women's orgasm and sexual frustration could serve as a good example: the conclusion was that "the more educated a woman is, the higher is the likelihood that she will suffer from a more or less serious sexual disorder." (Friedan 281, my translation)

Betty Friedan was also the founder of the National Organization of Women in 1966. It was an association that supported a policy of changes in the education of women, legislative policy including abortion on demand and gay rights. (Humm 4) The similar situation is also described in the novel; Jenny Fields' manor became a base for women in need. The NOW supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which stated that "Men and Women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction." (Humm 3)

Women are allowed to work in every sphere of market they want, and more of them become college graduates and then professionals. In *The World According to Garp*, Jenny's daughter-in-law, Helen, is one of these professionals. But although women have more equal work opportunities, their salaries are still lower than those of men; for example, "by 1988 female workers earned 70 cents for every dollar earned by males." (De Hart 516) Also governmental

programs of social support were not really interested in the situation of working mothers, and so-called “feminization of poverty” appeared, as, “by the end of the 1970s, two out of every three poor persons in the United States were female.” (De Hart 517) The question of economic dependence is not really obvious in the novel but still we can assume that Jenny was financially supported by her rich family when she became a working single-parent and years later, Jenny supported her son’s family, in which – paradoxically – her daughter-in-law was the one with own regular income.

The second wave feminisms started to be hugely interested in the culture, which served as a tool of inequality, and finally a new science emerged – women’s studies. These new approaches brought new arguments, now based on the results of many researches. (Havelková 177-182) The gender relations and different approaches towards women were sought after in such disciplines as anthropology, economics, law, literature, media or psychoanalysis. (Humm 57) The further course of feminist movement was marked by the development of the whole society – by the 1990s many campaigns emerged, including feminist groups protesting against pornography and gay discrimination as well as groups supporting the fight against AIDS and violence against women of every race. (Humm 4) As Martha Rampton writes:

Whereas the first wave of feminism was generally propelled by middle class white women, the second phase drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity and claiming "Women’s struggle is class struggle." Feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as "the personal is political" and "identity politics" in an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression are all related. They initiated a concentrated effort to rid society top-to-bottom of sexism, from children’s cartoons to the highest levels of government. (Rampton, “The Three Waves of Feminism”)

1.4. Third wave of feminism

According to Věra Sokolová, all feminisms can be divided into three main streams: reformatory feminisms, seeking to rebuild the patriarchal system from inside by changing the law and socio-economic structures; feminisms of the resistance, which see the only possible solution in women's own structures outside of the male world; and the last one, generally called the third wave of feminism. The movement consists of many sub-streams, facing mainly the problems connected with the recognition of gender in the issues of the race or ethnic equality, sexual orientation, religion or social class, where "the gender inequality is perceived as an essential, but not the only one part of the complicated system of social stratification and discrimination." (Sokolová 207, my translation)

The most significant streams of the third wave according to Sokolová are: *multi-racial feminism*, which shows the differences in the perception of gender in unlike societies, for example in the Afro-American and Islamic environment; *feminism of the social construction*, in which the social constructions of gender roles are contrasted with the biologically given characteristics of a sex; *post-modern feminism*, dealing with the question of acting by our inherited social roles; *queer theory*, which emerged from the post-modern feminism and which analyses a personal identity; and *cyber-feminism*, dealing with the influence of the information and communication technologies on our perception of gender differences. (Sokolová 202-211) The most significant indications of the third-wave feminist features in the novel are represented by the presence of a transsexual character.

2. JOHN IRVING

2.1. Biography

John Irving was born in Exeter, New Hampshire in 1942, the same year in which one of the main characters of *The World According to Garp*, Jenny Fields, was born. He was grown up by his mother and step-father, a teacher in the history department at Phillip's Exeter Academy. He graduated from Exeter in 1961 and then studied at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Vienna in Austria. When he came back, he started his studies at the University of New Hampshire, during which he got married and his first son was born.

Irving received his MFA in 1967 and then worked as an assistant professor of English. After a while, he and his family moved to Vienna and stayed there for three years. When they came back to the U.S.A., the second son was already born. Irving continued writing and teaching in following years, supported by money which he had received as a part of literary prizes given by several literary foundations, until *The World According to Garp* was published in 1978. There are some biographical features in the novel (the absence of father, living in Vienna, life-long relationship to wrestling) that have the main character, Garp, and John Irving in common. But it also deals with the perception of good, evil, sex and violence in the American society – the topics widely discussed in public during the 1970s. After the publication, Irving instantaneously became a celebrity.

Few years after *The World According to Garp* was published, Irving and his wife divorced and he moved to New York City; later he got married for the second time and his third son was born. He has won an O. Henry Award, a National Book Award and an Oscar. In 2001, he joined the American Academy of Arts and Letters. By 2012, Irving has published fifteen novels, four of which have been adapted into films. John Irving currently lives in Vermont and Toronto. (Woods, "Biography of John Irving")

2.2. Bibliography

The three novels published before *The World According to Garp* were not unsuccessful, although the third one, *The 158-Pound Marriage*, is considered Irving's least significant work by his critics. The first novel that followed after *The World According to Garp* was published in 1981. It was called *The Hotel New Hampshire* and it further developed the idea that had been introduced in a fictional short-story written by the main character of the previous novel, T.S. Garp. *The Cider House Rules* was the name of next novel which was published in 1985, and (as well as the two previous ones) made into a film. The last novel that has been made into a film was *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, published in 1989. By the end of the 1990s, Irving published four more books, two of which were his memoirs; and one collection of stories.

John Irving has published four novels since 2000. The most elaborate one, *Until I find You*, is the book he was writing when the family of his biological father unexpectedly appeared in his life. The matter of single-parenting and searching for parents is quite a common feature of his novels, as well as confusion about one's sexual identity and relationships between family members. The last novel by John Irving was published in the U.S.A in 2012 and is called *In One Person*. (Woods, "Biography of John Irving")

3. THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARP – characters and plot

The story begins in 1942 and is set in New England, mostly. Jenny Fields, a twenty-two-year old nurse, takes care of soldiers who came back from the Second World War. She is an extraordinary young woman, since she has refused the college education, marriage and men in general. Her occupation gives her a special opportunity for becoming pregnant without marrying a man. She conceives with a mortally wounded soldier, about whom she knows only the name and rank - Technical Sergeant Garp, and thus T.S. Garp, Jenny's son, is born. Garp spends his childhood at the Steering Academy, where Jenny works as a school nurse. He also gets the education here, either scholarly or secular. As he gets older, he realizes that there are two things which interest him the most – wrestling and writing. Thanks to both activities he meets Helen Holm, a daughter of his wrestling coach, and lately marries her.

After Garp's graduation from Steering, mother and son decide to leave to Europe for a while. Jenny is already thinking about writing a book at that time. The place they choose is Vienna, where Garp explores his sexuality by regular meetings with a prostitute, while his mother is writing an autobiographical book, which is called *A Sexual Suspect* and is an immediate success. When Garp and his mother come back to the U.S, they learn that Jenny has become “a spokesperson” of the women's movement, thus she moves into her late parents' house and establishes a center for abused and exploited women there. While Jenny is dealing with her new role, Garp gets married with Helen. Helen has already graduated, too. She becomes a University professor and Garp stays at home, looking after their first son, Duncan, and writes. They have quite happy a marriage, even happier when the second son Walt is born, although both Garp and Helen have several affairs throughout the years. One of these Helen's affairs with a student is crucial for the family – a car accident happens, and it ends with Walt's death and permanent injuries of Duncan and Helen's lover. The family stays at Jenny's to recover. Another child is conceived there – a daughter named Jenny.

The Garp family meets many interesting people in Jenny's house. There is Roberta Muldoon, a transsexual who was formerly a famous football player. Roberta becomes a very close friend to Garp and Helen and guards Jenny, who is not considered popular by a certain part of the society. And there are also the Ellen Jamesians - a radical group of women who want to support an eleven-year old rape victim, Ellen James, whose tongue has been cut off by the rapists, by cutting

off their own tongues. During the time of recovery, Garp writes a book called *The World According to Bensenhaver*, which deals with rape and is influenced by the environment it was written in. Garp becomes even more controversial person and writer than he was, as a son of the feminist, considered before. At the time of the publication of the book the Garp family lives in Vienna. There they also learn that Garp's mother Jenny was killed during a public meeting. Garp scarcely escapes from Jenny's funeral, which is more a feminist demonstration and no men are allowed to participate.

Garp struggles with the critique of his "intolerance of intolerance" more than ever, since he is now expected to follow his mother's legacy. This intolerance is obvious mostly in his attitude towards the Ellen Jamesians, whom he ridicules and criticizes openly. He is killed not so long after his mother's death – a sister of his teenage love, also an Ellen Jamesian, is convinced that Garp is responsible for her sister's death and kills him during a wrestling training.

4. FEATURES OF FEMINISM IN THE NOVEL

In the *Encyclopedia of American Popular Fiction* by J. Hamilton and B. Jones we find the following about *The World According to Garp*: “Garp is an unusual and challenging novel, adopting a range of literary forms (including embedded short stories and extracts from Garp’s novels, faux autobiography, and epistolary interludes) to relate a pan-generational saga of misfits, writers, wrestlers, transsexuals, and feminists, each one idiosyncratic yet empathetic, as they encounter self-mutilation, adultery, oral castration or assassination.” (Hamilton, Jones 171-172)

This bachelor thesis is focused mainly on two types of the characters mentioned above: transsexuals and feminists. The aim is to analyze all the key feminist features that are present in the novel within a wider social and historical background from several different perspectives. Firstly, general situation of women in the 1960s and 1970s is introduced, focusing on middle-class white female society. The first subchapter below provides an analysis of the perception of women by the society of that time, including sections dealing with the education of women, marriage and family life, and a section dedicated to an image of being a feminist. The second subchapter is focused on the depictions of violence against women in the novel. The act of rape and murder are discussed, as well as “social violence” in a form of job discrimination and the self-mutilation of the Ellen Jamesians. The last subchapter deals with specific examples of human sexuality and gender roles.

4.1. Perception of women by the American society

In western societies, the situation of women improved substantially since the beginning of the 20th century. By the 1960s, women in America already had the right to vote and they were allowed to obtain a higher education (although not at every school, as the typical division of boys and girls was usually very carefully maintained at many institutions), and also the liberalization of job opportunities took place. But still, there was something hidden behind these possibilities and some women could feel a certain kind of pressure put on them. They were expected to take care of their families, no matter how much they were educated or successful in their jobs. The common aim of some women, who soon started to gather together in various feminist organizations, was to be allowed to decide for themselves about their own lives.

4.1.1. School and education

Since the time women have been enabled to attend institutions of higher learning, the general idea about the education concerning middle class white female students was that women were allowed at schools mostly in order to make acquaintances which would, hopefully, develop further into marriage. Betty Friedan writes in her book *The Feminine Mystique* that many professors agreed that girls took the advantage of college education just for this reason. (Friedan 245) In *The World According to Garp* Jenny Fields soon becomes aware of the fact “that the chief purpose of her parents’ sending her to Wellesley [college] had been to have her dated by and eventually mated to some well-bred man. The recommendation of Wellesley had come from her older brothers, who had assured her parents that Wellesley women were not thought of loosely and were considered high in marriage potential.” (13-14) Jenny decides to leave school and finishes only nursing-school program. From the contemporary point of view, her decision would be easily tenable and logical, as western society recognizes freedom of choice regardless of gender. But in the 1940s, Jenny probably does not realize all the consequences her decision is to have; her relatives do not understand her and she becomes “the black sheep of the family”.

As a reaction to her daughter’s independent and thus generally inappropriate behavior, Jenny’s mother starts to become quite interested in her daughter’s privacy, pretending to be concerned about her health. She finds out that her mother “assumed that Jenny’s sexual activity was considerable and irresponsible.” (23) Since most of the other girls are controlled either by authorities at colleges, or are married or working but still living with their families, Jenny is an exception that arouses unwanted interests, breaking one kind of stereotype but fitting into another one that says girls are certainly sexually over-active and irresponsible if they do not obey their parents. Her family has taken a stand easily expressed by the utterance: “If she is to be a whore, let her at least be clean and well shod.” (25) Jenny did not consider the denial of college a brave step of her own; for her, a Wellesley education “was merely a polite way to bide time, as if she were really a cow, being prepared only for the insertion of the device for artificial insemination” (14), and thus meaningless.

Another female character of *The World According to Garp*, Helen, has different experience with education. She is smart, lettered and ambitious in terms of gaining a quality education. She “would graduate from college two years after she began; she would have a Ph.D. in English literature when she was only twenty-three, and her first job – an assistant professor at women’s college when she was twenty-four.” (178) To be a successful female student and professional in the 1960s is not impossible but still a sense of inequality would be rooted in women like Helen – at the end of the novel she strictly refuses her ashes to be scattered in the area of the Steering School, where she and Garp had grown up, with the comment that “she would be damned [...] if the Steering School, which did not admit women students when she had been of age, would get to have any part of her now.” (546)

Education, as the two characters show, is a powerful tool of the society of the time the novel is set in. On one hand, it served for the most elevated purposes – to create intelligent, self-reliant and capable human beings, men or women. On the other hand, the image of a successful woman graduate could be easily influenced by the needs of society. As De Hart writes about the possible reason for this ambiguity:

Although women themselves may have thought they chose “freely”, few were actually in a position to do so. Most had grown up in an atmosphere of profound conditioning that from infancy through adulthood assigned individuals of each sex social roles defined essentially by gender. (De Hart 498)

4.1.2. Marriage and family life

Marriage and a women’s life within a family is another perspective. In the novel Jenny is a real pioneer in controlling her productive ability and single mothering. At the beginning of the story, she realizes a very important fact concerning her future personal life – “she would like to have a baby – just one. But the trouble was that she wanted as little to do with a peter [a penis] as possible, and nothing whatsoever to do with a man.” (18) The question of Jenny’s sexuality is to be discussed later; here the most important information that a reader gets from the quotation concerns Jenny’s strictly refusing attitude towards the generally acknowledged concept of family. This is not an early sign of later feminist thinking at all; Jenny simply does not follow the rules of the society to marry a man and bear his children, which is completely natural for her, as she writes in her autobiography: “I wanted a baby, but I didn’t want to have to share my body or my life to have one.” (26) It is possible that this part of the novel deals not only with a very special

and extraordinary way of conceiving, i.e. having sex with a mortally wounded soldier in order to get pregnant; it can be also a hidden critique of a society in which there was an alarming lack of accessible contraception. This claim could be supported by Jenny's comment on what she saw in the hospital: "Of course she saw people who didn't want to have babies, and they were sad that they were pregnant; they shouldn't have to have babies, Jenny thought." (18) In early the 1940s, when the beginning of the novel is set, there is no oral contraception available. This fact has a great impact on women, who, logically, cannot really control their productive abilities and many of them, although they may have wanted to go to college or have a job, have to stay at home. As Gail Collins says:

Although people were discriminating against women, it's also true that very few women applied to law school or medical school or any kind of a job that required a really long-term commitment for preparation back in the 1960s and before because they [...] all believed you should marry very young [...] and that once you got married, [...] there was not much you could do to really prevent pregnancy. (Collins, "When Everything Changed: American Women from 1960 to Present")

In the novel, Jenny does not care about contraception at all, as her only intention is to become pregnant, since she did not find anything enjoyable in having intercourse. After giving birth to a boy, named Garp, she decides to find a job, which is of course a decision not really satisfying for her family; "he was [her father] irritated with her that she chose to work at all; there was money enough, and he'd been happier if she'd gone into hiding at the family estate in Dog's Head Harbor until her bastard son had grown up and moved away." (41) This quotation shows that not only having a child outside a proper marriage but also being a working mother was not really usual for American middle-class women in the 1940s and the reactions of the society and even of one's own family were not supportive at all, since such a behavior defied the after-war idea that women's happiness lays in taking care of children and husband. (Havelková 176) Although Jenny is expected to "show a little humility" (42) in her new job at the Steering Academy for being a single working parent, she in fact seems to enjoy the confusion she arouses. Her attitude towards other people interested in her son and his father's absence is based on the belief that everyone, including women, has a right to make decisions about him or herself:

But Jenny was not only proud of Garp, she was especially pleased with the manner in which she had gotten him. The world did not know that manner, yet [...]. She was waiting for Garp to be old enough to appreciate the story. The story Garp knew was all that Jenny would tell anyone who was bold enough to ask. Jenny's story was a sober three sentences long. 1. The father of Garp was a soldier. 2. The war killed him. 3. Who took the time for weddings when there was a war? [...] For one thing, she seemed too pleased with her

aloneness; she didn't appear in the least misty about the past. She was never distracted, she was simply all for little Garp – and for being a good nurse. (42-43)

A different perspective of the concept of family and marriage is shown in Garp and Helen's case. Helen is willing to conceive with Garp on the condition that he stays at home with their children while she is working on her career. She is, at the time when their deal is done, far more successful than her husband. In the early 1960s this certainly was not very usual; Betty Friedan writes that the general (young) women's attitude was not to take things seriously unless you are talking about your marriage and children. (Friedan 233) But despite all her skills and knowledge, Helen is aware of the fact that she would not be so successful if she were a man, since

(...) [her] own tenure at the university (...) had been a token gesture on the part of the English Department. Someone had probably told them that they needed a woman on the department at the associate professor level, and Helen had come along. Although Helen did not doubt her own qualifications, she knew it hadn't been her quality that had gotten her tenure." (214)

Nevertheless, Helen has a job which satisfies her, and Garp spends time at home with their children, which is a family concept not commonly seen even now, at the beginning of the 21st century; in the mid-20th century it certainly was something very extraordinary. The traditional model of the family is denied even more by the fact that Helen earns enough money for both of them, while Garp is trying to write his first novel. In the book *ABC of feminism* a chapter dealing with "father-mothering" says that the longer partners live together, the greater is likelihood that they will, when the first child comes, accept traditional family concept. (Šmídová 58) Thus, Garp's willingness to stay at home is not so surprising when the length of his relationship with Helen is considered as one of the aspects that influenced their decision about their own family's arrangement.

4.1.3. Being (considered) a feminist

This subchapter is focused on probably the most significant feature of feminism in *The World According to Garp* - Jenny's book and her newly emerged role in the women's movement. Two different perspectives are to be analyzed; what it feels like for Jenny to be considered a feminist by the society, and whether or not she really is one. For that purpose, Jenny's book *A Sexual Suspect* is to be introduced briefly:

'In this dirty-minded world,' Jenny wrote, 'you are either somebody's wife or somebody's whore – or fast on your way to becoming one or the other.' The sentence set a tone for the book [...]. That sentence inspired others like it, and Jenny wove them as she might have woven a bright and binding thread of

brilliant color through a sprawling tapestry of no apparent design. 'I wanted a job and I wanted to live alone,' she wrote. 'That made me a sexual suspect.' And that gave her a title, too. *A Sexual Suspect*, the autobiography of Jenny Fields. [...] 'Then I wanted a baby, but I didn't want to have to share my body or my life to have one,' Jenny wrote. 'That made me a sexual suspect, too.' Thus Jenny had found the string with which to sew her messy book together. (154-155)

A Sexual Suspect is actually the confession of a woman who has lived her life in accordance with her ideas about what is best for her. Since the American society of the 1950s and early 1960s did not accept such an attitude, in the novel Jenny feels the necessity to defend her intentions. The content of the book is the true story of her life, without any tries to exaggerate or simplify anything that has happened to her. She describes and explains her decision to leave the college, have a job and get pregnant; especially the way she did it. The latter seems to have started a fever after a publication of the book, as "a rash of young women at Florida State University in Tallahassee found Jenny's choice very popular; they generated a small controversy by plotting their own pregnancies." (181) The most important issue concerning *A Sexual Suspect* is, of course, its impact. Jenny's publisher sees the two main possible reaction of the public before the book is published: simply, they will love it or they will hate it. The book eventually becomes a great success connected to a certain level of publicity, which Jenny does not really enjoy. The reactions are generally warm, "though the more serious journals occasionally chided her for her actual writing." (180) But regardless the level of language quality, Jenny's book happens to become very influential, mostly among the members of the women's movement – "she became a figure of famous strength; women sought her advice" (181). *A Sexual Suspect* is seen as "the first truly feminist autobiography that is full of celebrating one kind of life as it is full of putting down another." (180) The main confusion and uneasiness for Jenny are aroused by the statements which call her book a feminist's one:

She was taken as the right voice at the right time, but Jenny Fields, sitting whitely in her nurse's uniform [...] felt discomfort at the word feminism. She was not sure what it meant, but the word reminded her of feminine hygiene [...]. She said shyly that she'd only thought she made the right choice about how to live her life, and since it had not been a popular choice, she'd felt goaded into saying something to defend it. (181)

Apart from becoming famous, Jenny unwillingly managed to do something else: "with the sudden success of *A Sexual Suspect*, Jenny Fields uncovered a nation of women who faced making choices about how to live; these women felt encouraged by Jenny's own example of making unpopular decisions." (181-182) With that, the book can be easily considered a political one, even though Jenny has no such intention while writing it. (181) In my opinion, these two

facts clearly refer to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* – a real bible of the women's movement in 1960s. Jenny is of the same age as Betty Friedan when she writes her book, similarly focused on signs of oppression of women by the American society, with just one difference – her book is highly autobiographical. Exaggeratedly – if Jenny had really lived in 1940s and 1950s, she would have possibly been mentioned in Friedan's book as an example of the denial of expected social roles.

Betty Friedan writes about how women were pressed by the society to stay passive and face their own feelings of not being useful and successful (Sokačová 192), all those being aspects of women's lives that Jenny has already overcome. Since both books, *The Feminine Mystique* in the real world and *A Sexual Suspect* in *The World According to Garp*, deal with a very delicate topic, the two authors immediately become famous. Jenny, like Betty in reality, starts to become involved in public life. Betty is a founder of the National Organization of Women, Jenny, on the other hand, establishes “a center for women” in Dog's Head Harbor, and she “first began her role as counselor to the women who sought some comfort from her no-nonsense ability to make decisions.” (182) The basis of being a spokesperson for a women's movement lays somewhere between the huge responsibility for other people's lives and the ability to support even the craziest ideas when needed:

Jenny Fields traveled with a small core of adorers, or with occasional other figures who felt they were part of what would be called the women's movement; they often wanted Jenny's support or her endorsement. There was often a case or a cause that needed Jenny's pure white uniform on the speaker's platform, although Jenny rarely spoke very much or for very long. After the other speeches, they would introduce the author of *A Sexual Suspect*. [...] She would rise and say, ‘This is right.’ Or, sometimes, ‘This is wrong’ - depending on the occasion. She was the decision maker who'd made the hard choices in her own life and therefore she could be counted on to be on the right side of a woman's problem. (183-184)

Thus, Jenny becomes the most known feminist of her time, at least in New England. But she is not only adored, in fact. There are people who certainly do not appreciate or support her activities at all: “some people truly hated her. They wrote Jenny that they wished she had cancer.” (220) Throughout the years, Jenny's activity is not constantly the main topic for journalists and reporters, unless there is a special event in public, for example a gubernatorial race. Such an occasion always needs to be supported by a popular person, and Jenny is the right one to get involved in it, since the whole situation turns out as a very sexist competition:

There was, apparently, some feminist issue at stake, and some general illiberal nonsense and crimes the incumbent governor was actually proud of. (...) He was obnoxious and clever; for example, the sense of

fear that he successfully evoked: that New Hampshire was in danger of being victimized by teams of New York divorcees. The divorced women from New York allegedly were moving into New Hampshire in droves. Their intentions were to turn New Hampshire women into lesbians, or at very least to encourage them to be unfaithful to their New Hampshire husbands, and New Hampshire high school boys. The New York divorcees apparently represented widespread promiscuity, socialism, alimony, and something ominously referred to, in the New Hampshire press, as ‘Group Female Living’. One of the centers for this alleged Group Female Living was Dog’s Head Harbor, of course, ‘the den of the radical feminist Jenny Fields’. (448)

That is one of the reasons Jenny gets involved in the campaign. Another one is that “the candidate running for governor against this well-liked fool was, apparently, a woman.” (448) All of this – the highly developed skill for recognizing injustice and inequality in one’s behavior together with the common sense of sisterhood started by the campaign – finally leads to the tragedy. Unlike Betty Friedan in the real world, who remains popular and reputable author and a significant leader of the feminist movement for many years, Jenny Fields is shot during giving a supportive speech on behalf of the woman governor candidate. As Roberta Muldoon says when she informs Garp about the tragedy: “[It was] a man! A man who hated women.” (451) Ironically, the most often mentioned piece of information concerning this murder in media is that the shooter was a hunter and “the dear season had not officially opened” (455), as if it lowered the significance of the fact that a woman had been killed by a man. Garp is watching his mother’s murder on television, the situation between the two candidates there is described by using a typical stereotype of a man being rude and a woman being nice:

The incumbent governor was in favor of all the same, swinish, stupid things. The woman running against him seemed educated and idealistic and kind; she also seemed to barely restrain her anger at the same, swinish, stupid things the governor represented. [...] The pickups were full of men in hunting coats and caps; apparently they represented local New Hampshire interests – as opposed to the interest in New Hampshire taken by the New York divorcees. The nice woman running against the governor was also a kind of New York divorcee. [...] One of the woman candidate’s children was on the team and he had assembled the football players in the parking lot in hopes of demonstrating to New Hampshire that it was perfectly manly to vote for his mother. The hunters in their pickups were of the opinion that to vote for this woman was to vote for faggotry – and lesbianism, and socialism, and alimony, and New York. And so forth. Garp had the feeling, watching the telecast, that those things were not tolerated in New Hampshire. (454)

But even Jenny’s death does not influence the results of the elections, as we are still in the early 1960s and the process of “loosing of rigidity of women’s and men’s social roles” has just started. (Věšínová - Kalivodová 29) Therefore, it is not possible for the woman candidate to win the elections, no matter how much better her program is. As Garp is informed by a taxi driver when he comes back to the U.S. from Austria to attend at his mother’s funeral, the woman candidate really did not win. He also learns the driver’s opinion about what happened, dealing with Jenny’s

death as well, without knowing that Garp is her son. It is highly representing the common view of such a situation by the American society of the 1960s:

‘She [the woman candidate] cracked up, right on the TV [...]. She was so flipped out over the assassination, she couldn’t control herself. [...] She looked like a real idiot to me’, the cabby said. ‘She couldn’t be no governor if she couldn’t control herself no better than that.’ And Garp saw the pattern of the woman’s loss emerging. Perhaps the foul incumbent governor had remarked that Ms Devlin’s [the candidate] inability to control her emotions was ‘just like a woman’. Disgraced by her demonstration of her feelings for Jenny Fields, Sally Devlin was judged not competent enough for whatever dubious work being a governor entailed. Garp felt ashamed. ‘In my opinion,’ the cabby said, ‘it took something like that shooting to show the people that the woman couldn’t handle the job, you know?’ (472-473)

After Jenny is killed, a need to express themselves emerges in many women who used to spend their time at Dog’s Head Harbor and even in those who Jenny had never met. Although Roberta tries to persuade Garp that it is “simply going to be a kind of memorial service” and “better not to think of it as a ‘funeral’”, “the newspapers had said it was to be the first feminist funeral in New York.” (457) Garp is not very comfortable with this label, he is not even allowed to be at the funeral unless he is dressed and masked like a woman. There are speeches held at the funeral and the attitude of the more radical part of his mother’s adorers even try to attack him physically, when they learn he is a man. Finally, the question of Jenny’s being a feminist is discussed in greater detail by Garp and Roberta when they argue about the funeral:

‘I want to go,’ Garp said. ‘I promise you I won’t hiss or boo – no matter what the assholes [the women at the funeral] say about her. I have something of hers I might read myself, if anyone’s interested,’ he said. ‘Did you ever see that thing she wrote about being called a feminist? [...] She said, I hate being called one, because it’s a label I didn’t choose to describe my feelings about men or the way I write.’ ‘I don’t want to argue with you, Garp,’ Roberta said. ‘Not now. You know perfectly well she said other things, too. She was a feminist, whether she liked the label or not. She was simply one for pointing out all the injustices to women; she was simply for allowing women to live their own lives and make their own choices.’ (458)

To sum up, Jenny Fields could be considered a feminist on the condition that the whole society accepts the term to represent a clearly stated definition, e.g. that to be a feminist means to “be able and willing to accept different possibilities and interpretations of the reality than before” (Šiklová, my translation). On the other hand, not to support the inequality between men and women regardless any political or ideological ideas does not automatically have to mean that one is a feminist. And that is undoubtedly Jenny’s case, since she wrote that “she felt only that women – just like men – should at least be able to make conscious decisions about the course of their lives; if that made her a feminist, she said, then she guessed she was one.” (181) After all, it may be a part of her destiny, as Garp notices: “I sometimes think that’s what Mom is for. She makes people happy by letting them think she is something she isn’t.” (357)

4.2. Violence against women

Violence in general is, according to Jan Jandourek, “a one-time acting by which a person causes harm to other person, using a physical strength.” (Jandourek 168, my translation) But it is also “influencing of people so they cannot develop their potential physical or psychical skills.”(Jandourek 168, my translation) There is one more type of violence: the structural one. It is the “violence that is rooted in the social, political and cultural system. It is based on gender, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.” (Jandourek 168, my translation) In this chapter, the two types of violence will be dealt with: rape as a symbol of physical and psychical violence, in cases of Ellen James and a small girl that Garp has rescued, and job discrimination, as a means of society’s denial based on sex and gender difference.

4.2.1. Feature of rape in the novel

Rape is an enormously callous act of violence, since it consists not only of a sexual treat and physical pain but also of consequent feelings of abuse and humiliation. There is, in most cases, also a risk of pregnancy or a transmission of venereal disease. Rape victims usually feel degraded and the psychical harm can last for many years. (Řičan 91) In *The World According to Garp*, this feature reoccurs several times. Firstly, there is a story of Ellen James. Garp learns about Ellen shortly after his mother becomes an important person of the women’s movement:

‘Two men raped her when she was eleven years old,’ Jenny said. ‘Then they cut her tongue off so she couldn’t tell anyone who they were or what they looked like. They were so stupid that they didn’t know an eleven-year-old could write. Ellen James wrote a very careful description of the men, and they were caught, and they were tried and convicted. In jail, someone murdered them.’ (185)

When Garp meets Ellen personally few years later, she is almost an adult woman. She comes to live with Jenny at Dog’s Head Harbor but unfortunately, chooses the wrong time – just when Jenny is killed. Ellen’s parents have just died in a car accident and she has nowhere to go – the reader’s feeling of her being a victim is even strengthened by this fact. She reveals her story to Garp and he decides to accommodate her in his house. She also confesses, during their discussion while airborne, that she loves Garp’s novel called *The World According to Bensenhaver*, which deals with another rape. She says that Garp has written “the best rape story I [Ellen] have ever read” (476), which is very surprising for Garp, as he thinks it is an “awful book”. (476) But the most surprising and ambivalent feature concerning Ellen James and her rape is the existence of

the Ellen Jamesians. They are those, whose tongues have been voluntarily cut off in order to show a support for Ellen James. They are also a common topic of discussions within the community at Dog's Head Harbor, causing disagreement among its members, mostly between Garp and Roberta. Garp firstly learns about the Ellen Jamesians from his mother, with whom he argues about meaningfulness of cutting of somebody's tongue. Jenny, since she is already a huge supporter of any kind of women's activists, defends the Ellen Jamesians with the very unsubstantial idea that a single woman's problem is every woman's problem:

The Ellen Jamesians represented, for Garp, the kind of women who lionized his mother and sought to use her to help further their crude causes. 'I'll tell you something about those women, Mom,' he said to Jenny once. 'They were probably all lousy at talking, anyway; they probably never had a worthwhile thing to say in their lives – so their tongues were no great sacrifice; in fact, it probably saves them considerable embarrassment. If you see what I mean.' 'You're a little short on sympathy,' Jenny told him. 'I have lots of sympathy – for Ellen James,' Garp said. 'These women must have suffered, in other ways, themselves,' Jenny said. 'That's what makes them want to get closer to each other.' 'And inflict more suffering on themselves, Mom?' 'Rape is every woman's problem,' Jenny said. Garp hated his mother's 'everyone' language most of all. A case, he thought, of carrying democracy to an idiotic extreme. 'It's every man's problem too, Mom. The next time there's a rape, suppose I cut my prick off and wear it around my neck. Would you respect that, too?' 'We're talking about sincere gestures,' Jenny said. 'We're talking about stupid gestures,' Garp said. (187)

This conversation proves the fact that radical approach is not always very successful. Although the Ellen Jamesians could have been exploited and abused women by themselves, as Jenny suggests, cutting off their tongues seems to be a useless act to a majority of public and the publicity they draw on them and the rape victim is not really well-received by Ellen James herself. As she writes: "I hate the Ellen Jamesians. I would never do this to myself. I want to talk; I want to say everything." (478) She even writes an essay called "Why I'm not an Ellen Jamesian", which deals with the question whether the Ellen Jamesians only have personally suffered with her or turned the whole story into a political issue. There are women who mean it well – these are mostly rape victims by themselves and they felt being silenced in a similar way Ellen was. The problem is that "the organization was full of crazies, no one would deny. Not even some Ellen Jamesians would have denied that. It was generally true that they were an inflammatory political group of feminist extremists who often detracted from the extreme seriousness of other women, and other feminists, around them." (506) Finally, Garp writes his own essay about the Ellen Jamesians where he reveals his own opinion, which can be, however, considered an opinion of many other "ordinary" people who have ever read or heard about this strange society: "He spoke with eloquence for those serious women who suffered, by association, 'the radical self-damage' of the Ellen Jamesians – 'the kind of shit that gives feminism a bad

name'." (519) The impact of his writing in the women's community is not really surprising: "Most serious women, of course, agreed with him, but most of them were also intelligent enough to recognize a kind of personal vindictiveness in his criticisms of the Ellen Jamesians." (521)

The relation between Garp and the Ellen Jamesians group, although not a good one, is significant in the novel and it is crucial for Garp. When Jenny dies, the necessity to make decisions about the women to be accepted in Dog's Head Harbor community lies on Garp and the committee. They argue about the Ellen Jamesians most of the time. Garp cannot resist showing that he thinks they are insane, dangerous and fanatical. When it is pointed out for him that they have not killed anyone, he answers "Not yet". (504) He does not know how close to the truth he is. An Ellen Jamesian tries to kill him by hitting him with her car. She fails and dies. The reactions of the Ellen Jamesians are not really sympathetic; "a 'spokesperson' for the Ellen Jamesians remarked that this was an isolated act of violence, not sanctioned by the society of Ellen Jamesians, but obviously provoked by the 'typically male, aggressive, rapist personality of T.S. Garp'. They were not taking responsibility for this 'isolated act', the Jamesians declared, but they were not surprised or especially sorry about it, either." (524) Lately, Garp is killed by another Ellen Jamesian, who happens to be a sister of Garp's first love. Shortly before Garp's death, Helen predicts that the Ellen Jamesians would disappear from the society in five years, which is true. One of the last notes on the Ellen Jamesians in the novel shows what happens to the rest of them:

Now they were just women who couldn't speak. [...] Most of them turned, constructively, to helping those who also couldn't do something. They were good at helping disadvantaged people, and also good at helping people who felt too sorry for themselves. [...]. Some of them, of course, went on trying to be Ellen Jamesians in a world that soon forgot what an Ellen Jamesian was. Some people thought that the Ellen Jamesians were a criminal gang who flourished, briefly, near mid-century. Others, ironically, confused them with the very people that the Ellen Jamesians had originally been protesting: rapist. One Ellen Jamesian wrote Ellen James that she stopped being an Ellen Jamesian when she asked a little girl if she knew what an Ellen Jamesian was. 'Someone who rapes little boys?' the little girl replied. (548)

The Ellen Jamesians are ridiculed, there is even a book written about them, few weeks after Garp dies. The author, of course, benefits from the publicity that Garp's death has aroused. "One of his cruelly forced jokes, [...] was that he conceived of his narrator-heroine as a lesbian who doesn't realize until after she's cut off her tongue that she has made herself undesirable as a lover, too." (548) Since the book is so embarrassing and humiliating for the Ellen Jamesians, many of them change their belief just in order not to be ridiculed any more. There are even attempts to commit suicide. The "rise and fall" of the Ellen Jamesians can be a comparison to the whole feminist

movement, since usually even the most high-minded aims are soon or later misinterpreted and there is always a point in which the movement or the organization seems pointless. According to Sokolová, at the end of the 1980s the feminism was proclaimed to be a dead movement by the western media. (Sokolová 199) Thus the destiny of the Ellen Jamesians can be considered an author's foresighted suggestion about the future of the women's movement.

In the novel, there is one more reoccurrence of the rape. Garp happens to find a ten-year old raped girl when he is jogging in the park and also helps to catch the rapist. On the basis of the experience with rape in his own life, Garp admits that he does not want to have a daughter because of men. He writes following about his life being full of victims of the violence against women, revealing a possible attitude of many men towards rape:

‘I feel uneasy,’ Garp wrote, ‘that my life has come in contact with so much rape.’ Apparently, he was referring to the ten-year old in the city park, to the eleven-year-old Ellen James and her terrible society – his mother's wounded women with their symbolic, self-inflicted speechlessness. And later he would write a novel, [...] which would have much to do with rape. Perhaps rape's offensiveness to Garp was that it was an act that disgusted him with himself – with his own very male instincts, which were otherwise so unassailable. He never felt like raping anyone; but rape, Garp thought, made men feel guilt by association. (202)

The number of rape in the novel may suggest that the author considers American society very violent. Rape is used not only as a symbol of the physical violence and demonstration of male strength but also an illustration of continuous process of oppressing of women. To clearly state the difference between sexual violence and sexual activity, as it is wrongly interchanged, is the first step of minimalizing the occurrence of rape in the society. (Opočenská 124)

4.2.2. Job discrimination

However, the physical violence is not the only type of violence appearing in *The World According to Garp*. Roberta is mentioned in the novel for the first time just when she has her sex-change operation done. Unfortunately, it seems that “the television networks [...] had secretly agreed not to hire her as a sports announcer for the football season.” (219) There are many campaigns to support her case, mainly among college students and professors and Roberta becomes “a figure of striking controversy”. (219) The situation, in which she finds herself, is almost comic. By the society and those television networks she is considered a woman, which means not the right one to become a sports announcer. But she used to be a man, and the most paradoxically, a football player. The possible arguments of those television networks about a lack

of proper knowledge of the field would thus be inappropriate. Since no one can challenge Roberta's skills, she is a victim of the structural violence – in this case based on the gender differences. Although Roberta's occupation is not mentioned farther in the novel, the impossibility of getting the job is a clear example of the violence against women and discrimination of transsexuals. This is, in fact, also a denial of the politics of equal opportunities, which “does not force women to build their careers and resign on the family, it also does not force men to resign on their careers and take care of the family only.” (Machovcová 29, my translation) This issue became discussed in detail during the 1960s and 1970s, since the equality of jobs and women's and men's payment but the question of a transsexual being discriminated in terms of job opportunities obviously was not the main matter in this discussion.

4.3. Gender roles and sexuality

The definition of gender is following: “Gender labels not the biological but the social aspects of sex. People are not born as men or women; they must learn to behave like men or women. There are many behavior patterns which are considered typically male or female.” (Jandourek 90, my translation) The question of gender and sexuality is interconnected with many other topics in the novel. Irving breaks gender stereotypes to illustrate the extraordinariness of his characters, and deals with their sexuality in order to show their attitudes and opinions. Two examples are given by the characters of Roberta Muldoon, when speaking mainly about gender roles, and Jenny, when considering sexuality.

4.3.1. Gender roles typical and atypical

The most significant part of the novel in terms of gender deals with Roberta Muldoon. She is a former standout tight end for the Philadelphia Eagles, who has her sex-change operation done after reading Jenny's book *A Sexual Suspect*. When her decision comes to the matter, Roberta says: “I always knew I should have been a girl. (357) That Roberta has always felt like a woman is obvious in her behavior when Jenny is killed and Roberta informs Garp about it. When they argue about who is to be blamed of Jenny's death, Roberta already thinks as a woman and is also a little bit hysterical, naturally. She says: “I'll tell you who's to blame [...]. It's men, Garp. It's your filthy murderous sex!” (453) And also, when there are decisions to be made concerning Jenny's legacy and the community in Dog's Head Harbor, Roberta “shared with Jenny Fields the

desire to educate Garp and other men concerning the legitimacy and complexity of women's needs" (495) – she definitely feels to be a woman, when having such a "female attitude". The process of Roberta's becoming a woman in a physical way is described by Garp as following:

Robert Muldoon, Garp knew, had spent several months in drag before his actual operation. He'd go off in the morning dressed as Robert Muldoon; he went out shopping for women's clothes, and almost no one knew that he paid for his sex change with the banquet fees he collected for the speeches he gave to boy's clubs and men's clubs. In the evenings, at Dog's Head Harbor, Robert Muldoon would model his new clothes for Jenny and the critical women who shared her house. When the estrogen hormones began to enlarge his breasts and shift the former tight end's shape round, Robert gave up the banquet circuit and marched forth from the Dog's Head Harbor house in mannish women's suits and rather conservative wigs; he tried being Roberta long before he had the surgery. Clinically, now, Roberta had the same genitalia and urological equipment as most other women. (358)

The problem is that in the early 1960s, trans-sexuality was not common and Roberta "had made some people very angry. [...] They wrote Roberta Muldoon, that they hoped his or her parents were no longer living. [...] A high school tight end from Wyoming wrote Roberta Muldoon that she had made him shamed to be a tight end anymore and he was changing his position – to linebacker. So far, there were no transsexual linebackers." (220-221) Such reactions, mainly those which intentionally mix up male and female pronouns when speaking about or to Roberta, show the unwillingness of the certain part of the American society to accept a sex-change operation as a natural process in somebody's life. In these days, such an attitude would be considered highly insulting and discriminating. When the issue would be analyzed on the basis of the queer theory, which deals with the ways male and female roles are formed and how the sexual and gender categories can be broken, Roberta would be seen as a typical victim of intolerance and misunderstanding. (Sokolová 209-210)

But Irving did not make his characters so simple and unequivocal. Therefore Roberta, who is on one hand a victim of discrimination, seems to be, on the other hand, intolerant towards gays and lesbians - the group of people she should, logically, consider to have the same problems with admission to the society in common. She talks about her sex-change operation with Garp and admits that the other women at Dog's Head Harbor have tried to convince her not to have the operation done and be gay by saying: "If you want man, have them as you are" (358), which she strictly refused. Roberta's intolerance is revealed to Garp during the conversation:

'I dreamed about having love made to me, by a man, but in the dreams I was always a woman; I was never a man having love made to me by another man.' There was more than a hint of distaste in Roberta's references to homosexuals, and Garp thought it strange that people in the process of making a decision that will plant them firmly in a minority, forever, are possibly less tolerant of other minorities than we might

imagine. [...] Roberta's vehemence was not unique; Garp pondered how these other women in his mother's house, and in her care, had all been victims of intolerance – yet most of them he'd met seemed especially intolerant of each other. (357-358)

From this quotation we can assume that being a part of minority does not make people tolerant more than the rest of the population. In fact, many other characters in the novel show a certain level of intolerance – “an outspoken anti-lesbian [woman] playwright” (500) who feels uneasiness about living under one roof with a lesbian couple at Dog's Head Harbor, though she should be grateful for being there; Garp with his intolerance of the Ellen Jamesians and the Ellen Jamesians with their intolerance of Ellen James and Garp, who has, according to the most of the Ellen Jamesians, “brainwashed [Ellen] into her antifeminist stance. [...] In the various letters, Garp's relationship with Ellen James was referred to as seductive, slimy, and underhanded.” (517) Such a behavior was not an exception even within a women's movement. According to Sokačová, intolerance of the gay and lesbian communities and groups fighting against racial discrimination was obvious in the activities of the NOW. Betty Friedan is said to “call lesbianism a ‘lavender threat’” during the congress of the NOW in 1970, and reputedly, she said that “the lesbian activism draws the attention away from the real discrimination of women.” (Sokačová 193) On the other hand, there are also quite nice tolerant characters in the novel; for example Duncan, Garp and Helen's son, marries a transsexual woman when he is adult, “because if ever there was a boy with no discrimination in his heart about transsexuals, that boy was Duncan Garp.” (566)

Apart from Roberta Muldoon, there are other examples of the gender roles presented in *The World According to Garp*. The character of the governor of New Hampshire and the woman candidate are described in terms of typical gender and social stereotypes – the man is rude and calculating, the woman is nice and somehow put into the position of a victim (which she may be when speaking about being insulted by the governor but not when her defeat is considered). On the contrary, Garp's and Jenny's lives seem extraordinary enough to break certain expected stereotypes based on gender. Garp is not a “hunter”, he is more a caretaker; his typical day is described as following:

He spent his day writing (or trying to write), running and cooking. He got up early and fixed breakfast for himself and the children; nobody was home for lunch and Garp never ate that meal; he fixed dinner for his family every night. It was a ritual he loved, but the ambition of his cooking was controlled by how good a day he'd had writing, and how good a run he'd had. If the writing went poorly, he took it out on himself

with a long, hard run; or sometimes, a bad day with his writing would exhaust him so much that he could barely run a mile; then he tried to save the day with a splendid meal. (236)

Garp does not go to work, in fact, he becomes almost a housewife – the general image of a man in the 1950s and 1960s is broken. This image was, as Betty Friedan describes, nicely illustrated by a pictured story of a young couple in the newspaper, in which the husband was responsible for all the important decisions, gardening, shopping, and attending PTA sessions. There was, of course, nothing that the husband had to do unless he wanted. (Friedan 94) Garp does not fit into the group of typical husband at all, since the less or more important decisions are sometimes made by him, sometimes by his wife Helen and both were quite comfortable with it, though “sometimes it panicked Garp that Helen seemed to want him to stay at home and ‘just write’ - because that made the domestic situation the most comfortable for her. But it was comfortable for him, too; it was what he thought he wanted.” (239-240)

4.3.2. Relation between gender and sexuality

When speaking about Jenny and her denial of the gender role, it is the most important to consider her sexuality firstly. The first hint is provided at the very beginning of the novel, when Jenny’s attitude towards men is discussed:

At the hospital she saw more soldiers and working boys than college men, and they were franker and less pretentious in their expectations; if you compromised yourself a little, they seemed at least grateful to see you again. Then, suddenly, everyone was a soldier – and full of the self-importance of college boys – and Jenny Fields stopped having anything to do with men. (14)

Since then, Jenny seems to consider sex only a necessary tool for conceiving a child. When she sees a cure for treating syphilis, she “thought that this was the epitome of all that sex could lead to – to introduce arsenic into the human chemistry, to try to clean the chemistry up.” (19) Her intention to become pregnant but not married is ridiculed by her colleagues at the hospital and Jenny happens to find herself being a target of few rude jokes, which she learns to answer in her typical, serious way. As her son Garp writes later, “her colleagues defected that she felt herself to be superior to them.”(27) Thus, Jenny’s sexuality and sexual preferences become the main topic and she is even ordered to leave the babies department of the hospital; “because what she wanted was strange to them, they assumed that she also had slim restraint.” (27) Jenny is discriminated because of her sexuality’s difference the same way she would be if she was a lesbian, which she

is not, of course. Paradoxically, she seems to be asexual, on contrary. Still, her own personal preferences are sufficient reason for others to consider “too soft a heart, or a head”. (27)

The uneasiness Jenny is forced to face stems from the society which “builds the stereotypes and myths of the ‘right manliness or womanliness’ on the basis of the heterosexual orientation being a norm of the social and emotional dispositions of an individual.” (Sokolová, 83, my translation) Regarding this pattern, Jenny is expected to live in a long-term relationship with a man and have his children, even though she does not want to, otherwise there would be a great possibility that her sexuality is to become suspect, which in fact happens. She is criticized not only for her being a single working parent – the fact that denies the stereotypical social role of a woman – but also for the way she conceived Garp. About that, Jenny later writes in her autobiography: “That was the best thing for both of us, the only way he could go on living, the only way I wanted to have a child. That the rest of the world finds this an immoral act only shows me that the rest of the world doesn’t respect the rights of an individual.” (39) From my point of view, the most important thing when considering Jenny’s atypical attitude towards sex and relations is that Jenny herself seems to be confused by the sexuality of others. She simply does not feel like being an exception – she cannot see anything satisfying in having sex and thus she does not understand why the others do and how does a person feel when the lust appears in his or her mind. “Lust” is a very fascinating emotion for Jenny, as she even convinces Garp to hire a prostitute so she could talk to her and ask her about men’s lust. This happens during a year Garp and Jenny spend in Vienna, and Jenny is right in the middle of writing her book. The conversation unfortunately does not reveal any new information to Jenny:

‘Okay,’ said Jenny, ‘ask her why she thinks men like her.’ Garp rolled his eyes. ‘Well, do you like her?’ Jenny asked him. Garp said he did. ‘Well, what is it about her that you want?’ Jenny asked him. ‘I don’t mean just her sex parts, I mean is there something else that’s satisfying? Something to imagine, something to think about, some kind of aura?’ Jenny asked. ‘Why don’t you pay me two hundred and fifty schillings and not ask her any questions, Mom,’ Garp said tiredly. ‘Don’t be fresh,’ Jenny said. ‘I want to know if it degrades her to feel wanted in that way – and then to be had in that way, I suppose – or whether she thinks it only degrades the men?’ [...] For an hour, it continued. [...] Jenny seemed neither satisfied nor disappointed by the interview’s lack of concrete results; she just seemed insatiably curious. (132)

From the quotation above, Jenny’s attitude is quite clear – she does not pretend not to be interested in sex, she really is not. For her, feeling lust and passion is something so unknown that it deserves a research. In fact, her whole perception of what is appropriate to discuss seems to be as original as her own decisions – she does not hesitate to interview a strange prostitute and she

even offers to buy her for her son. It is not a sign of a deviancy; Jenny simply cannot see anything strange in such a behavior:

‘Do you want her?’ Jenny asked him [Garp], so suddenly that he couldn’t lie. ‘I mean, after all this – and looking at her and talking with her – do you really want to have sex with her, too?’ ‘Of course, Mom,’ Garp said, miserably. Jenny looked no closer to understanding lust than she was before dinner. [...] ‘You do what you want to do,’ she told him, ‘or what you have to do, I guess.’ (132-133)

Jenny never manages to understand the “mystical lust”. When she is discussing her son and Helen’s marriage with Helen’s father, she is no more erudite about people’s passions, as she says: “I don’t know why anyone wants to live with anyone. [...] The world is sick with lust.” (180) Jenny’s reaction on Garp’s book *The World According to Bensenhaver* also deals with lust; she appreciates the fact that the characters of a rapist and a victim’s husband in the novel “properly grotesque the vileness of lust”. (451) Although sexuality and sex life are not such significant issues for Jenny, for others they are; when Jenny writes the book about it, it is suddenly revealed “that a woman can have a whole life without a sexual attachment of any kind” (180) which inspires plenty of women, many of them later living at Dog’s Head Harbor.

5. MALE ATTITUDE TOWARDS FEMINISM

This last chapter of the bachelor thesis deals with men's attitude and opinion about the women's movement in the U.S.A in the second half of the 20th century, contrasting the situation described in the novel. According to Věšínová-Kalivodová, there have been many female feminists in the United States, supporting for example the National Organization of Men Against Sexism. Men have also participated in different campaigns held against the violence against women. The common aim of several men's movements has been to deny the business-oriented and success-oriented way of men's life in order to free their [possibly more pro-relationship] potential. (Věšínová-Kalivodová 31-32) Even Betty Friedan in her epilogue to *The Feminine Mystique* wrote, that "many men bought *The Feminine Mystique* for their wives because they wanted to force them [the wives] to come back to school or work." (Friedan 516, my translation) She admitted that she was aware of the fact that men should participate in the movement and become legitimate members. She wrote that she had never considered men to be women's enemies; they were also victims of something what could have been called "the masculine mystique" – "they had to start feeling inappropriate as soon as the bears which needed to be killed had disappeared." (Friedan 524, my translation) Therefore, men's opinions should not be taken less or more important than those of women. In the novel, Garp is the main, almost the only one, representative of the male attitude. Through him, Irving possibly expresses his own attitude or, at least, the feelings and opinions that men in the 1950s, 1960s and even 1970s could have about what was happening around them with many women. Of course, Garp represents quite pro-feminist and liberal approach which possibly would not be found in the majority of American men of that time.

5.1. Garp on women's movement

At the beginning of Jenny's popularity, Garp is not very comfortable with the newly emerged role of "the bastard son of a famous feminist". Just after the publication of *A Sexual Suspect*, he is interviewed by a woman reporter and it goes as following:

When the interviewer discovered Garp's chosen life, his 'housewife role', as she gleefully called it, Garp blew up at her. 'I'm doing what I want to do,' he said. [...] 'I'm just doing what I want to do – and that's all my mother ever did, too. Just what she wanted to do.' The interviewer pressed him; she said he sounded bitter. Of course, it must be hard, she suggested, being an unknown writer with a mother whose book was known around the world. Garp said it was mainly painful to be misunderstood, and that he did not resent his

mother's success; he only occasionally disliked her new associates. 'Those stooges who are living off her,' he said. The article in the women's magazine pointed out that Garp was also 'living off' his mother, very comfortably, and that he had no right to be hostile toward the women's movement. That was the first time Garp heard of it: 'the women's movement'. (184)

The note on "the women's movement" may be easily taken as an example of what could a man like Garp imagine when firstly hearing this expression – a group of crazy women who entertain themselves by mocking men. In the same spirit as in the quote above, Garp's relation towards all his mother's admirers, followers and random acquaintances continues his whole life. He is never absolutely comfortable with the fact that his mother has become a famous spokesperson. From his point of view, the fuss she has aroused with her book is higher than Garp would expect and accept; "the logic behind all this [his mother becoming the person who is supposed to make decisions for others] made Garp fume and stew for days". (184) He is supportive of his mother's work but still aggrieved about the misunderstanding his books or he himself has aroused. After his mother's death, he becomes even more controversial person – he has written a book about rape *The World According to Bensenhaver*, although he does not get on well with the society which supports a rape victim (the Ellen Jamesians) and the real Ellen James now lives in with his family. His relation to the idea his mother represented is not easily explainable but still it is at least illustrated by the following quote:

The most radical criticism of Garp – concerning his relationship to his mother and his own works – had come from various Ellen Jamesians. Baited by them, he baited them back. It was hard to see why it should have started, or if it should have, but Garp had become a case of controversy among feminists largely through the goading of Ellen Jamesians – and Garp goading them in return. For the very same reasons, Garp was liked by many feminists and disliked by as many. (504)

Garp seems to be supportive for his mother's opinions and decisions, tolerant of her activities but not tolerant enough of those who follow Jenny's example or need her help. In my opinion, he does not behave this way because of his selfishness and egoism; there is a fear hidden behind his attitudes towards the people who surround his mother. He "suddenly saw Jenny as a potential victim, exposing herself, through other victims [her female followers], to all the hatred and cruelty and violence in the world." (221) He can be simply worried about his mother's safety, sometimes he even wakes up in the middle of the night when the phone starts to ring thinking about what could have happened to his mother. And finally, when Jenny is killed, he realizes that "it was madness that had killed Jenny Fields, his mother. It was extremism. It was self-righteous, fanatical, and monstrous self-pity." (503) He often uses adjectives of this kind not only to describe his mother's murderer but also the Ellen Jamesians, since according to Garp nothing is

really helpful if it becomes extremist and fundamental. As I see it, by using the character of Garp living in the society in which women fight for their general acknowledgement while his own mother is killed as a result of this struggle, the author tried to question the truthfulness of the well-known motto of the raising women's movement in the 1960s. The motto says that "what is personal is political". But, obviously and naturally, no matter how devoted a supporter of feminist movement would Garp be, death of his mother could not be political for him in any way.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to analyze a particular reoccurring feature in a particular piece of literary work, i.e. feminism in John Irving's *The World According to Garp*. In the theoretical part of the thesis a brief outline of the history of feminism and women's movement is given, including all its phases – the first, second and third waves – with the main focus on the situation in the United States, as the novel is set there. The most important spokespersons of the first wave and, speaking about the second wave, Betty Friedan and her book are introduced. There is also a short summary of John Irving's biography and bibliography. The plot and characters of the novel are mentioned in details needed for the purpose of the following analysis.

The World According to Garp deals with many topics which are typical for John Irving's literary works – lack of a parent and the importance of family life, mixed gender roles, guiltiness or death. It is usually up to the reader to choose which aspect of the book is the most significant for him or for her. For me, the most considerable feature is the one analyzed in this bachelor thesis – the feature of feminism that appears many times throughout the novel. Jenny Fields behaves the way many real women in the 1950s and 1960s did not dare to and thus she becomes a symbol of the women's movement, despite the fact she might dislike it. Helen Garp reaches university education and works as a professional while her husband Garp tries to rise up their children and take care of the house at the same time – in the novel, his character stands for the typical housewife of that time who, driven by the feeling of being useless, attempts to work at home, in Garp's case to write a book. This core of the novel is surrounded by Jenny's followers, more or less extremist and ostentatious in ways they try to achieve their goals, e.g. the Ellen Jamesians or the characters that represent the break of the typically ascribed roles, e.g. Roberta.

Since John Irving managed to create the novel very interesting and surprising but credible, there are many possible interpretations of the image of *The World According to Garp* the reader gets. Either the book was written to celebrate individuality and support the basic ideas of the women's movement, or to ridicule it and illustrate how exaggerated the commotion of women in the mid-20th century was. But most likely, Irving intentionally mixed together both attitudes in order to attain the trustworthiness of the story and the characters. The message I got after understanding the novel is that no one should ever blindly believe in any kind of movement or idea and fight for it by all possible means unless he or she is absolutely convinced it would not hurt anyone else.

RESUMÉ

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo analyzovat konkrétní problematiku, která se několikrát objevuje v daném díle. V tomto případě se jedná o rysy a znaky feminismu v románu *Svět podle Garpa* od Johna Irvinga. Teoretická část této práce pojednává o rozdělení ženského hnutí na tři tzv. vlny a jejich časové vymezení a vývoj především ve Spojených státech, protože právě tam se děj knihy odehrává. Jsou zde představeny nejdůležitější mluvčí a představitelky prvních dvou vln feministického hnutí, především jedna z nejvýraznějších osob druhé vlny Betty Friedanová a její kniha *The Feminine Mystique* (*Ženská mystika*, můj překlad). V teoretické části práce se také nachází stručný životopis Johna Irvinga a souhrn jeho nejvýznamnějších románů, především těch, které vyšly po vydání *Svět podle Garpa*. Poslední kapitolou teoretické části bakalářské práce je shrnutí děje a hlavních postav románu s ohledem na potřeby následující analýzy – některé postavy a události, které se v knize objevují, jsou tedy z tohoto důvodu vynechány.

Feminismus je sociální hnutí, které se snaží upoutat pozornost na roli ženy ve společnosti s ohledem na aktuální potřeby a témata. Pohle historického vymezení (1. kapitola) je možné toto hnutí dělit na tři zásadní „vlny“, z nichž každá měla poněkud odlišné cíle. První vlna, trvající asi od konce 18. století do začátku 20. století, měla za cíl přesvědčit patriarchální společnost o nutnosti přiznat ženám volební, ale i jiná práva (například právo vlastnit majetek *de iure* i *de facto*). Ve Spojených státech se za největší úspěch tohoto hnutí považuje přijetí Dodatku ústavy o právu žen volit v srpnu roku 1920, čímž byl také formálně vymezen konec první vlny feminismu. Druhá vlna feminismu, která na rozdíl od té první, více legislativně orientované vlny, řešila především psychologický dopad na podceňování ženy jako individuality ve společnosti, je vymezena v Evropě vydáním knihy *Druhé pohlaví* od Simone De Beauvoirové v roce 1949 a o několik let později, v roce 1963, vydáním *Ženské mystiky* od Betty Friedanové v U.S.A. Betty Friedanová touto knihou pobídla mnoho amerických žen v domácnosti, aby přestaly ze své nespokojenosti vinit samy sebe a začaly se aktivně zajímat a zasluhovat o svoje vlastní naplnění a uplatnění. Do té doby, Američanky padesátých a šedesátých let dvacátého století vyrůstaly a následně žily v představě jakési tajuplné „ženské mystiky“, kterou nemohly naplnit jinak než tím, že se chovaly jako vzorné matky, manželky a hospodyně, ačkoliv díky změnám, které přinesla první vlna feminismu, se již oficiálně mohly účastnit politického a veřejného života či navštěvovat vysoké školy. Třetí vlna feminismu je pouze okrajově zmíněna, neboť její vymezení

by vyžadovalo prostor neodpovídající požadavkům a cílům této bakalářské práce. Nejvýraznější z proudů třetí vlny feminismu, a také nejvýznamnější pro potřeby pozdější analýzy, je tzv. „queer teorie“, která pojednává o tom, jak se lidé vyrovnávají, přizpůsobují, nebo naopak narušují sociální role, které se od nich v souvislosti s jejich pohlavím očekávají.

V další kapitole teoretické části je stručně popsán život Johna Irvinga, s důrazem na události, které souvisí s motivy v jeho knihách, především ve *Světě podle Garpa*. Irving stejně jako jeho hlavní mužská postava tohoto románu, T.S. Garp, vyrůstal bez otce – tento motiv se v Irvingově díle několikrát opakuje (koneckonců, i Garpova žena Helen vyrůstá jen s jedním rodičem, v tomto případě je to však otec). Nějaký čas také pobýval ve Vídni, která ho očividně zaujmula a v románu se do této rakouské metropole jeho hlavní hrdina nastěhuje dokonce dvakrát. Autor rovněž celý život holduje zápasení, což je sport, který si na škole vybere také Garp a zůstává mu věrný až do konce; jeho postava dokonce zemře, když trénuje mladé zápasníky. V krátkosti je také věnována pozornost Irvingově dílu, především románům, které následovaly po *Světě podle Garpa*, z nichž nejznámější je, pravděpodobně díky filmovému ztvárnění, román *Pravidla moštárny*.

Poslední částí, která předchází praktické části bakalářské práce, je stručné shrnutí děje a charakteristika postav. Je zde naznačena hlavní dějová linie, která souvisí s vývojem ženského hnutí v Americe a mohla být inspirována vlivem Betty Friedanové na změny ve feministickém společenství: Jenny Fieldsová, mladá zdravotní sestra, odmítá manželství či partnerství s mužem, ale touží po dítěti. Během druhé světové války se stará o raněné vojáky a využije příležitosti počít dítě s těžce raněným technikem seržantem Garpem, který krátce na to umírá. Dítě, které je takto počnuto, dostane jméno T.S. Garp. Jenny vychovává Garpa na chlapecké Steeringské akademii, kde působí jako zdravotní sestra. Jak Garp dospívá, seznamuje se se světem, začíná se zajímat o děvčata a zápasení, a také si uvědomí, že se chce stát spisovatelem. Poté, co dokončí školu, odjíždí s matkou do Vídně, kde píše svou první povídku a získává první sexuální zkušenosti s místní prostitutkou, zatímco jeho matka vytvoří svou obsáhlou autobiografii s názvem *Sexuálně podezřelá*. Když se oba vrátí do Spojených států, zjistí, že se Jennina kniha stala „biblí“ pro všechny nespokojené ženy a Jenny sama se stává jakousi mluvčí celého ženského hnutí. Garp se mezitím ožení se svou kamarádkou ze Steeringu, dcerou svého zápasnického trenéra, Helen. Helen je velmi úspěšná nejdříve na vysoké škole, a poté i profesně – získává místo jako

profesorka literatury a Garp se zatím stará doma o jejich syny. Po čase si však Helen najde milence a nešťastnou náhodou je její tímto románkem těžce postižena – Garp s dětmi v autě narazí do auta Helenina milence, ve kterém se právě oba nachází, a jedno z dětí umírá, zatímco starší syn i Helenin milenec jsou oba trvale zraněni. Aby se rodina znovu stmelila, tráví nějaký čas po nehodě v Jennině domě, kde je zřízeno jakési středisko pro ženy v nesnázích. Garpova rodina zde potkává zajímavé osoby, například Robertu Muldoonovou, transsexuální ženu, která bývala hráčem amerického fotbalu. Jak plyne čas, Garp se znovu vrací k psaní, Helen k práci a Jenny pokračuje se svou osvětou. Při předvolebním mítinku, na kterém Jenny agituje ve prospěch ženské kandidátky, ji někdo zastřelí, a nedlouho poté je zabit sám Garp jednou ze stoupenkyň jeho matky.

Jak už bylo naznačeno, ve *Světě podle Garpa* můžeme nalézt mnoho témat typických pro tvorbu Johna Irvinga, například rodinu s jedním rodičem a důležitost rodiny pro člověka obecně, záměnu genderových rolí, pocity viny nebo častou přítomnost smrti. Obvykle bývá na čtenáři, který z těchto rysů a témat ho zaujme a který bude on sám považovat za nejvýraznější. Pro mne to bylo téma feminismu a ženského hnutí. Postava Jenny Fieldsové je téměř prototypem feministky, ačkoliv ona sama sebe za feministku nepovažuje; přinejmenším ne dokud je slovo „feministka“ přijímáno negativně. Vzhledem k tomu, že se chová jinak, než se většina amerických žen padesátých a šedesátých let dvacátého století odvážila, stává se z ní symbol nově vznikajícího ženského hnutí, přestože jí samotné se to možná zpočátku ani nezamlouvá. Helena Garpová, Jennina snacha, je vysokoškolsky vzdělaná žena, která najde uplatnění jako univerzitní učitelka ve velmi nízkém věku, zatímco její muž, T.S. Garp, zůstává doma s dětmi a stará se o domácnost; ve smyslu genderových rolí je Garp ten, kdo se v jejich rodině stává hospodyní. Navíc, stejně jako to bylo typické pro americké ženy v domácnosti, které se cítily nevyužité, i on se snaží alespoň o „práci z domova“, v jeho případě jde o psaní knih. Toto „rodinné jádro“ románu je příležitostně obkloповáno skupinami Jenniných obdivovatelek, z nichž jsou některé poměrně extremistické a ostentativní v dosahování svých ideových cílů, například členky společnosti Ellen Jamesové, nebo těmi, kteří představují narušení typických genderových rolí, tak jako postava Roberty.

Protože *Svět podle Garpa* je nejen velmi zajímavý a překvapující, ale především uvěřitelný, nabízí se několik interpretací, které čtenář může po přečtení románu získat. John Irving použil znaky a motivy feminismu buď jako vyjádření oslavy individuality člověka, který se nebojí činit závažná a leckdy kontroverzní rozhodnutí, jako například Jenny, a potažmo také jako vyjádření podpory základních myšlenek feministického hnutí, nebo jako nástroj k jeho zesměšnění. Nejpravděpodobněji ale využil obě dvě možnosti a právě díky tomu je příběh *Světa podle Garpa* důvěryhodnou, i když samozřejmě fikcí ovlivněnou, kronikou ženského i mužského pohledu na feminismus ve Spojených státech. Závěr, který osobně vyvozují z událostí a myšlenek prezentovaných v knize, je ten, že by člověk neměl slepě věřit žádné ideji nebo hnutí, dokud si není jistý, že jeho konání nemůže nikomu více uškodit než prospět.

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