Abstract:

The thesis provides analysis of spatial setting in selected short stories by Edgar Allan Poe, and is based mainly on Daniela Hodrová’s works “Places with a Secret” and “The Poetics of a Place.” Additionally, the thesis also considers temporal setting. In the thesis, short stories “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Black Cat,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “Eleonora,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Oval Portrait,” “The Pit and the Pendulum” and “Ligeia” are observed with an attempt to explore how does the spatial setting in them correspond to the concept of “a place with a secret” which Hodrová examines and defines in her work. Simultaneously, the concept of “a character with a secret” is studied, since it deeply intertwines with the idea of “a place with a secret,” and the two cannot be possibly separated. Accordingly, the thesis attempts to uncover how does the setting and the characters affect and reflect each other.

As for the structure of the thesis, it commences with three theoretical introductory chapters which serve as a base for the later analysis. The chapters place Edgar Allan Poe and Daniela Hodrová into context. E. A. Poe is presented in connection to romantic literature and Gothic fiction, regarding both the English and the American context. Daniela Hodrová is introduced together with scholars who dealt with the topic of literary setting, and whose influence can be observed in Hodrová’s approach. The thesis therefore briefly presents the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, Yuri Lotman and Gaston Bachelard. Subsequently, the terminology of Daniela Hodrová is explained, particularly the terms “a place with a secret” and “a character with a secret.” Thenceforth, the first chapters of the analysis focus on “characters with a secret”, especially on Poe’s narrators, characters experiencing madness, masked characters, and the twins and doubles. Furthermore, the significance of characters’ names is studied. Following section of the thesis examines the structure of places in the stories, focusing especially on their resemblance to a labyrinth or a prison. The thesis thence provides a similar analysis of the textual structure of the stories, observing various textual convolutions, such as repetitions, epigraphs, and inserted poems. Afterwards, the spatial setting itself is examined in relation to the characters, firstly as a reflection of the characters and their minds, and then contrastingly as an influencer which alternates the characters’ behavior or emotions. The setting may also be embodied in a character who is a bearer of memories. Final section of the analysis then discusses the significance of temporal setting. The thesis distinguishes between linear and cyclic time, as well as subjective and objective time. Lastly, the motives of old age, night, and autumn are scrutinized.