

Opponent's Report on B.A. Thesis
METAPHORS AND SYMBOLS OF STATES OF MIND IN POE'S POEMS, SHORT
STORIES AND ESSAYS
by Iva Martináková

This is an interesting and extremely well written thesis that analyzes Poe's works from through the concepts of metaphors and symbols. I was impressed at every turn at the intelligence and discrimination displayed by the student, and her critical thinking. The student works judiciously with secondary sources. I recommend the grade of "excellent" (výborně).

Nevertheless, in what follows I will explain my reservations about the thesis. First, I found the excursus on theories of metaphor and symbol in the first chapter a little pedestrian. I would have thought that such issues could be taken for granted. Second, for all the sophistication of the argumentation, the reading of Poe that the thesis presents is unoriginal. For instance, by the end of the thesis, we are returned a Poe who uses plot doubling to allegorize states of mind, a mathematical approach to the writing of poetry, and an account of "The Fall of the House of Usher" which stresses its "strong symbolic layer" (46). The requirements for the B.A. thesis state that it "need not be focused on introducing new research results", and it may seem niggardly then to express this reservation here. However, when the student displays such obvious intelligence, she raises the expectations a little higher than the norm; in its perverse way, this reservation is a compliment.

On one detail: I found the account of mathematics, poetry and "The Philosophy of Composition" somewhat weak. The student writes: "the form is the poet's means of conveying the content--it is by the *effects* of formalistic aspects, be it repetition, sonorousness, or rhythm, that the content's purpose is fully achieved, and sometimes even determined" (37). I don't see how this is particular to Poe's poetry. After all, the old name for poetry was "numbers", and when W.B. Yeats was asked where he got his ideas from, he replied "when looking for the next rhyme". It seems to me that it is particularly at such points that the student should look in detail at Poe's *particular* methods and not settle for anodyne comments like "well-timed rhythm and a pattern-like structure of the stanzas" (37); again what good poem is this not true of?



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