



Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

## OPPONENT'S REPORT

B.A. THESIS

AMERICAN LITERATURE SPECIALISATION

**A Narrative and Thematic Analysis of Selected Stories of Edgar Allan Poe**

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This engaging thesis discusses Poe's short stories, particularly the different narrators that the author uses and the various features of his style, such as the contrast between melodramatic, poetic and matter-of-fact styles, repetition and gradation. The text demonstrates Ms. Hrdličková's good knowledge of Poe as well as her awareness of selected criticism. Her prose is rich and dynamic (perhaps leaving aside occasionally excessive lists of short citations from Poe [e.g. on pages 28 or 42-43]), it is formally clean (except for several erroneously indicated block quotes [e.g. on pages 20 and 24] and minor errors in the concluding paragraph), and the secondary sources are well-incorporated. The thesis may be graded **excellent (výborně)**. My following questions concern marginal issues.

In the introduction as well as the conclusion, when Poe's impact is being evaluated, I wonder about the status that he is credited with. Without denying his versatility and originality, is he indeed considered "the father of the American short story" (8)? Does Poe's name "persist in provoking literary debates" (8)? Where and when? Given the decades of revising the canon, is his place secure, especially in the Anglo-American context? And what does Ms. Hrdličková think about the argument (made by some critics) that Poe is fashionable primarily in non-English speaking Europe? What could be the reason?

In the context of discussing the term 'arabesque,' which the thesis defines as something fantastic and related to the aesthetics of ornamentation (12), I wonder what Ms. Hrdličková thinks about the connection of 'arabesque' to Arabian; i.e. the exotic, foreign other. Did not Poe in fact consistently deal with Germany, so to speak, and model himself on Europe while trying to distance himself from it, parodying it, even consciously exoticizing the "abroad"?

Finally, although the thesis is perfectly aware of "Poe using practically the same elements in his genuine horror stories and the texts that parody them" (7), perhaps it does not follow on the implication of the connection between the "gruesome and [the] grotesque" (7) in the actual analyses of his "serious" stories (or when discussing "The Philosophy of Composition," where no reference is made to its possible humor). Could Ms. Hrdličková consider stories such as "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart" and certainly "Metzengerstein" as "confessionals of horrors" (16) as well as parodies?

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