

**OPPONENT'S REPORT**  
**BA THESIS**  
**Mental Illness in the Works of Edgar Allan Poe**  
**Alena Hladká**

As the title of the thesis suggests, Alena Hladká discusses insanity in the works of Edgar Allan Poe —“the works” here being his stories “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “Ligeia,” “Eleonora,” “Berenice,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “William Wilson.” Hladká argues that “the selected stories handle a combination of themes typical for the Gothic genre, such as decay, melancholy, mystery, death, and murder. Apart from these, however, Poe also incorporates the mental problems as he often focuses on the mental state of his characters” (9). The aim of her thesis is to “establish a typology of madness based on a variety of characters from Poe's stories, who show similar or even identical features and analyze the way he works with these types of insanity” (9).

The opening note “The Author” seems rather superfluous to the subsequent analysis; instead, there could have been an introduction focused around questions of mental illness. The thesis as a whole frequently slides into a rather standard and descriptive reading of the selected stories, although Hladká is certainly attentive to detail and sensitive to the chaotic interiority of the characters. She also makes several interesting points that could have been elaborated, usually in the concluding pages of each chapter. For example, it is argued that “[i]n essence, by exaggerating the ideal, Poe demonstrates the real” (19). Could this idea be developed? Or, Hladká suggests that when it comes to Poe's criminals, it is “most importantly their crisis of rationality which enables the murder to happen; their belief that reason excludes madness” (31). Again, could this point be discussed at some length? Finally, given that the thesis concerns a relatively studied phenomenon, could its author briefly highlight where she sees the strengths of her own contribution?

Proposed grade: Velmi dobře (2)

Pavla Veselá, PhD.  
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