

**--Opponent's Report on**  
**Karolina Vančurová's**  
**MA Document Thesis:**

**“Affinities Between the Poetry  
of Wallace Stevens and Paul Valéry”**

**Ms. Karolina Vancurová** sets out in this ambitious study, on a very difficult subject area, to delineate the major congruencies and possible points of influence between the corpuses of poetic texts authored by two major poets of international stature, the American bard Wallace Stevens and the French poet Paul Valéry; the topic is a fine one and certainly well worth investigating.

The body of the thesis contains eighty pages; further than this, there is a three-page bibliography and an eight-page summary of the thesis in Czech. The text is quite long for an MA level document, for it has been composed in a small font, and it seems to me single spaced; certainly it is not double spaced.

As for the prose style, the thesis is generally well written and devoid of any significant number of errors, and it is a pleasure to read. It also contains a number of wonderful verbal combinations not always found in MA level thesis work. Never the less, because I have perused this (long) MA thesis with considerable care, I would point out the following glitches in composition that need to be noted if not corrected by the candidate:

Words in brackets should be added to the original text

- 1) a space missing before “mental” in the typescript (5)
- 2) “became [a] member” (6)
- 3) “which [is a] position I rather appreciate” (8)
- 4) “[a] NY review” (11)
- 5) “[and] yet fabricate” (20)
- 6) “[from] his master” (23)
- 7) “in order to be [able to] do this” (27)
- 8) “cutting off of words their impure meanings” (29) better as “cutting off words from their impure meanings” (29)
- 9) “a to” reads better as “to a” (32)
- 10) a footnote is missing from some of your mentions from R. Wellek
- 11) “an postmorten article” should be “a postmortem article” (34)
- 12) “an offered” should be “and offered” (49)
- 13) “which [as a] curious oddity adds to its effect” (59)
- 14) one single double quotation mark is missing on page sixty; you will see it if you look
- 15) the second time you quote “Stevens” it should be “Stevens” (65)
- 16) “term” should be “terms” (65)
- 17) “language in [the] case of the poet” (75)
- 18) “inspired to me” shd be “inspired in me” (77)
- 19) “having [an] origin in ethics” (77)

20) “[and the] search” (78)

21) “[a] deity” (78)

The strongest point of the thesis is its digging deep and intense quality of research; also it contains much interpretive work to be commended. However, the whole notion of influence does not really receive any especially theoretical treatment as it might have done (Niklas Luhmann and autopoiesis, Gérard Genette on transtextuality or intertextuality, Julia Kristeva on intertextuality, Michael Riffaterre on intertextuality, Harold Bloom on influence or others could have been consulted) but the more classical formalist critical approach never the less works very convincingly as it dives in and out of notions of resonance, of indirect communication, and even more crucially of the whole dynamic of contextual influence, per se. Also, homing in on the category of symbolism for one chapter works well for her research program.

I would like now to pose a few questions for the candidate to answer if she could attempt to do so:

- 1) you mention that for Valéry “Charms and enigmas are to be the constitutive elements of perfection in language” (57); could you give some simple examples of this from works you discuss? And perhaps even elaborate on the critical implications of this angle of vision from Valéry for his aesthetics?
- 2) Could you please comment on what constitutes for you the specialness of the early Jacques Derrida’s essay “Plato’s Pharmacy” and why it informs your sensibility with regard to the poetic act? Or more precisely: of your target poets under consideration here.
- 3) What does the candidate consider the chief strengths and weaknesses of works by Stevens and by Valéry, respectively, and how do these attributes reflect on, if at all even, the relation between the two bodies of verse?

Well done research again to be sure.

**Pre oral exam mark: výborná-**

**Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil.  
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