

Jan Zasadil's B. A. thesis – review written by the opponent

Mr. Zasadil's B. A. thesis provides an in-depth and persuasive analysis of the uncanny and the grotesque of the self in the selected stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann and E. A. Poe. Mr. Zasadil certainly understands all the sophisticated theoretical concepts he is working with, and applies them on the primary texts remarkably well. His argument is very precise, the only passage that in my opinion requires some clarification deals with realism (p. 18) and would not, properly speaking, even need to be there, and the conclusion drawn is quite solid.

As to the secondary sources, Mr. Zasadil works with the ultimate contemporary authorities in the field of Gothic, and his choice (based probably upon the recommendation of the supervisor) is thus extremely wise. He also partly relies on Freud, which could have been expected, but mentions Rank just once (on p. 29), and not even that directly. Is there a reason why Rank is not discussed in more detail namely in connection with death?

As to the primary texts, then, I feel that while Mr. Zasadil's decision to include only a few short stories is very legitimate, he could have explained the grounds for both the inclusion and the exclusion. And, once the decision was made, maybe it is not enough to say „at least in William Wilson“ on p. 58 – how about e. g. Roderick Usher and his twin sister?

A minor point next. I find it interesting that Mr. Zasadil decided to translate the relevant passages from Hoffmann's short stories himself. While he actually did quite an adequate job, I wonder whether this was something he chose to do, or whether he simply could not find an English translation that would satisfy him. Are there, in his opinion, certain advantages as to being able to work with his own translation?

Finally, I feel obliged to comment on Mr. Zasadil's Czech. It has to be pointed out that the Czech title does not make much sense (and neither does the first sentence of the third paragraph on p. 67), that certain concepts are not expressed correctly (e. g. on p. 67 „k hranici tabua vztahu k mrtvému“), and that there are way too many misprints or simply errors as well (see p. 72 at the very end, Poe instead of Hoffmann). While this does not, in my eyes, immediately downgrade the thesis as such, it is very unfortunate and could have been avoided.

Having said that, depending on the review written by the supervisor and Mr. Zasadil's performance during the oral defense, I am suggesting the following grade: výborně/1/excellent.

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