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Edgar Allan Poe and the Romanetto of Jakub Arbes

Diplomová práce

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Práce se zaměří na porovnání specifického prozaického českého žánru vytvořeného Jakubem Arbesem s vybranými prózami Edgara Allana Poea. Porovná charakter a výstavbu příslušných vybraných próz. Přihlédne i k teoretickým článkům Jakuba Arbesa o Poeovi a anglofonních literaturách. The paper will compare the specific prose genre created by Jakub Arbes and selected prose by Edgar Allan Poe, mainly comparing the character and structure of the pertinent pieces of literature. It will also discuss the topic in relation to Arbes's theoretical articles on Poe and anglophone literatures.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala (pod vedením vedoucího diplomové práce) samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne 19.9.2018

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Anotace

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Klíčová slova: Jakub Arbes, Edgar Allan Poe, romanetto, povídka

Annotation

CACHOVÁ, Lenka. *Edgar Allan Poe and the romanetto of Jakub Arbes*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2018. 56 pp. Diploma Thesis.

The paper compares the specific prose genre created by Jakub Arbes and selected prose by Edgar Allan Poe, mainly comparing the character and structure of the pertinent pieces of literature. It will also discuss the topic in relation to Arbes's theoretical articles on Poe and anglophone literatures.

Keywords: Jakub Arbes, Edgar Allan Poe, romanetto, short story

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Introduction

The author of the thesis has chosen the topic “Edgar Allan Poe and the Romanetto of Jakub Arbes” due to her interest mainly in the work of the American writer. The interest of Arbes in the writings of the American writer is generally known and the author of the thesis has decided to examine these issues in more details, focusing on Poe’s short stories and Arbes’s romanetto, his original contribution to Czech literature.

The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate Poe’s inspiring writings for Arbes in all four elements of fiction – themes, settings, plots and characters. To reach the goal, the practical part of the thesis analyzes selected romanettos of Jakub Arbes, viz. *Newtonův mozek* [Newton’s Brain], *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius], *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper] and *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind]. It discusses the romanetto in general and tries to find similarities and differences in Jakub Arbes’s and Edgar Allan Poe’s writings. Based on the existing studies of Arbes’s romanetto and on the present author’s reading of them, the author of the thesis has come to the conclusion that these four romanettos indicate some influence of Edgar Allan Poe’s writing. The theoretical part deals with the definition and characteristics of the romanetto. It also introduces both author’s writing and reception of Poe in the Czech Republic and translations of his works into the Czech language.

1 Jakub Arbes and his work

Jakub Arbes (1840 – 1914) was a Czech writer and journalist, best known as the creator of the literary genre called romanetto. After his studies of Philosophy and Literature at Prague Polytechnic, he began his career in journalism by publishing in more magazines. He is said to be influenced by work of Edgar Allan Poe and has even translated many of Poe’s writings into Czech. The theme of Arbes’s work is life of urban working classes. His work incorporates the themes of moral justice, free thinking and rationalism, and also includes autobiographical elements. His characters are often creative and rebellious free-thinkers, whose intellectual abilities make them independent, but are eventually destroyed by non-conformism. Arbes’s most well-known works are his “romanettos”, written in the 1860s and the 1870s, some of them being predecessors of the modern detective story. They are mostly set in Central Europe, and they usually feature a gothic mystery, which is resolved by logical reasoning. Arbes’s romanettos introduced technical knowledge and scientific reasoning into modern literature.

As for the term “romanetto” itself, it is spelt “romaneto” nowadays. Nevertheless, the author of the thesis has decided to use “romanetto” as this name was used in the time when Arbes wrote. According to Lederbuchová, the genre signification has its origin in Italian “romanetto”, meaning “a small novel”. The genre whose title was created by Jan Neruda, is an originally Czech genre, although it is similar to some of the tales of Edgar Allan Poe and some other foreign writers. The themes of romanettos are mysteries which readers want to solve and moreover, they are afraid about the destiny of the main protagonists. The genre is specific for its rule that the central mystery is finally revealed using logical courses of action of the narrator who connects knowledge of science with his investigation. Nonetheless, some motifs still remain mysterious. In Arbes’s romanettos, even scenarios typical of sci-fi prose (e.g. travelling in time) have its place. (Lederbuchová 2006, p. 120)

“Jakub Arbes is in psychology a predecessor of Freud’s lecturing about unconsciousness. Memories from childhood are very important for Arbes’s characters. In the social field, he is a representative of socialism. Therefore, Jakub Arbes became a Romantic even in socialistic studies. He saw it – as all its first representatives – too unexperienced and ideally. For his conclusions, Arbes did not only read and use books of socialistic authors – he identified with them. However, his socialism wanted to be higher. In his socialism, moral and outer rebirth of man and then the whole society without organizational hatred of social class fighting was significant. All socialistic theoreticians usually have relations to the organization of the socialistic movement. Jakub Arbes, on the other hand, was scared of organization as it would mean that being a program, organization would lead to mottos and formulations that would be beneficial just for a few individuals. Furthermore, poverty in the shadow of phrases would blossom without mercy. *Newtonův mozek* [Newton’s Brain] is an excellent example of it. He also thought that people whom we today consider friends of freedom, appear to us in a few years as cruel despots and people who today speak about humanity and progress of human race, appear to us as evil monsters who exploit us to satisfaction of their selfish interests. This can be seen in *Kandidáti existence* [Candidates of Existence]. Much more than a socialist, Jakub Arbes was a doubtful democrat. T.G. Masaryk thought that democracy protects individualism and a man and his relationship to other people is important in it. On the contrary, the writer saw individualism as an enemy of democracy and he writes about it. It is quite a paradox. Nevertheless, Arbes had an opinion that individualism wakes egoism, egoism leads to power and power makes people bad. Jakub Arbes believes that even bad life is worth living as it might satisfy interests of society and he does not presume that suicide is a heroic deed. Positivity in negativity is a consequence of socialism. The author was also very

educated man and he wrote about science not only because his aim was to attract readership and gain more readers, but he used his writings to solve problems with which he dealt himself.” (Bulánek 1930, p. 8 – 10, translation my own) The litterateur faced existential trouble – at the time of his life, journalists and writers were not acknowledged enough by the society in the Czech lands, so they, when relying only on gain from their pen, were poor and received only enough money to defend themselves in front of death from hunger, how Jakub Arbes writes in many of his works. His characters almost always suffer from existential problems and some of them are interested in science which may reflect his own interest in it. The author of the thesis can illustrate this statement on one example of Arbes’s romanettos, *Zázračná madona* [The Miraculous Madonna], where the main protagonist accepts an offer to teach chemistry and he receives the offer in the right moment – when he is in need of money and suddenly, without his efforts, he gets a chance to earn some.

As for lecturing about unconsciousness and memories, they play no negligible role for both authors, Jakub Arbes and Edgar Allan Poe, because both of them liked to reflect on them. Protagonists of both writers are obviously exposed to certain difficulties in their lives. They have in common the fact that their memories are significant for them. They are all already adults and they reflect on their memories from childhood or, when they are older, from their youth. The memories are mostly painful – they suffered death of somebody whom they loved, they were treated badly or in the case of Jakub Arbes, they fought with poverty. Poe, on the contrary, does not seem to deal himself with role in society of his characters, he discusses more likely what is happening in their souls and their minds. Therefore, we might claim that unconsciousness appears as a topic in his tales. He examines what leads his protagonists to commit murders, why they suffer from dangerous illnesses or inexplicable fear, what are their feelings towards other people in their surroundings.

2 Reception of Poe in the Czech Republic and Jakub Arbes

“The first translation of work of Edgar Allan Poe was created four years after his death. In our state and in the all world, he became famous for the first time, when he was alone and hungry dying. Since that time, his readership and popularity have continued to increase and now he is ranked among the most read authors. Some of the best Czech poets, including Josef Václav Sládek, Jaroslav Vrchlický and Vítězslav Nezval, have tried to translate Poe. His reception has always been a kind of problematic. Children in schools learn his poems, but they just accept only a few of dream symbols that correspond with their innocent children phantasy.

Poe is read as an author whose works are published in literary magazines, but by literary critics, he is compared to popart that was created more than one hundred years after his death. Poe was a great artist who has overtaken his literary epoch with his geniality. He has overtaken all poetry of the nineteenth century with his work and has become one of the first modern authors of literature whose wealth lies not in a dead beauty of pictures, but in a deep personal experience that is repeatedly experienced by other readers. Poe has made the first step from romanticism to expressionism.”¹

First translations of Poe’s writings into Czech appeared in the 1850s. Among the authors who translated Poe at that time are ranked František Šebek, Vratislav Kazimír Šembera and Edmund Břetislav Kaizl, responsible for the first translation of Poe’s poetry. As for Poe’s prose, František Šebek has translated “*The Gold Bug*” [Zlatý Chrobák] and “*Some Words with a Mummy*” [Několik slov s mumií] in 1853. Kaizl has published a collection of Poe’s poems named “*Edgar Allan Poe. Básník severo-americký*” [Edgar Allan Poe. A North-American Poet].

In his study on the reception of Poe in the Czech Republic, Marcel Arbeit (1999, p. 89 - 99) writes: “In 1869 the first Czech translation of “The Raven” appeared in the most popular Czech weekly of that time, *Květy* [Flowers]. During the next 125 years, sixteen more translations of the poem were published. Sometimes it looked as if all translators of poetry thought they could not become real masters without coping with Poe’s most famous poem. Perhaps the popularity of the piece was due to the frequency of “nevermore” in the minds and mouths of Czech people throughout history: The Austro-Hungarian monarchy? Nevermore! Another Munich Agreement and Nazi era? Nevermore! Real” Socialism and Soviet troops in Czech lands again? Nevermore! Konstantin Biebel in his Communist “Raven” (1950), even asks the bird to fly to the White House and say the famous refrain to Harry Truman. At any given time, Czech people, “weak and weary,” were scared when somebody was tapping at their “chamber door” because it could have been the secret police, the inquisition from “The Pit and the Pendulum”.

Their “nevermore” was associated with a barely visible yet inconceivably huge and ominous bird, even if they were not familiar with Poe.

As in Russian, “The Raven” in Czech could have become a political poem, a metaphor of the murky life of social oppression, a parable for people used to reading between the lines. But translators decided otherwise. The better of them did not want to masquerade Poe as an

¹ <http://www.odaha.com/edgar-allan-poe/edgar-allan-poe-zemich-koruny-ceske>

antitotalitarian poet, the worse distorted the poem but for “different reasons” they tried to adjust it to their own poetic individualities and fashionable “isms”.

Alois Bejblík, author of a comprehensive study of translations of “The Raven”, claims that the poem follows a mythical pattern using segments typical of ballads, common for Romantic poems in many European literatures. For this reason, Czech translators who had not yet read Baudelaire stressed the storyline and did not see Poe as “a predecessor of modern poetic alchemy”. This is the case for the author of the very first translation of “The Raven” into Czech, the journalist and minor poet Vratislav Kazimír Šembera, as well as for Jaroslav Vrchlický, one of the most versatile nineteenth-century Czech poets. The latter’s translations of “The Raven” and thirty-two other poems by Poe, published between 1881 and 1890, were more poetic exercises than anything else. (The archaic, awkward language of his “Annabel Lee” is now antiquated language.) Nevertheless, his volume *Havran a jiné básně* [“The Raven” and other poems] was the first representative collection of Poe’s poetry in Czech lands. The third translation of “The Raven,” by Augustin Eugene Mužík, appeared in 1885, again in *Květy*. Mužík translated “nevermore” as “*nadarmo*” (in vain) and started the line of translators who deprived Poe’s poem of all its qualities, then tried to have their approach vindicated (or to vindicate it themselves).

The overwhelming majority of Czech people know Poe’s poetry through Vítězslav Nezval, who presented Poe as one of the “cursed poets” together with Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, thus becoming the first Czech translator of Poe to reflect Baudelaire’s image of the American poet.

Nezval’s goal was to make foreign poems sound like Czech originals, and he succeeded. His fourteen translations of Poe, published for the first time in 1928 and then numerous times in selected works and anthologies, read like masterpieces of Czech poetry. Unfortunately, the real Poe is gone. The uncanny, unique atmosphere has evaporated, obsessions and nightmares are replaced by pleasant, noncommittal dreaming, and instead of the desperate metaphysical quest there is only a fairy-tale magic. Rather than being sad, Nezval’s narrator is continuously amused by the presence of the funny animal speaking in human tongue. Jiří Levý, one of the leading European theorists of translation, highlights the irony in the Czech text and points out an unintentional parody. In his opinion, “Nezval’s version cannot stand the test as a translation which is supposed to grasp the meaning and mood of Poe’s poem. But it has its charm and a touch of playfulness, if we are willing to take it as a slightly ironical paraphrase of motives which are to a great extent foreign to our contemporary thinking.

The popularity of Nezval's translations of Poe had political causes as well: the majority of the pre-World War II artists and literary critics who had enormous influence on public opinion were on the Left and tended to reject everything depressing and pessimistic as "foreign" to the supposedly optimistic nature of the Czechs. Even when much better translations by Josef Hiršal appeared in 1959, readers still preferred Nezval's versions (Hiršal did not translate "The Raven," however.)

The first scholarly study of Poe in Czech lands was by Jakub Arbes (1840 – 1914), a popular author of tales of mystery as well as social novels. Arbes writes about true creation, immediacy, intuition, and even naiveté, thus undermining the belief in Poe's totally rational and almost mathematic approach toward the creative process as presented in his essays. He also compares Poe to Lord Byron and considers Poe's imaginary journey to Russia as fact. In the last two parts of his study, Arbes criticizes Poe's later works as being aesthetically unsatisfying, points out his inability to describe passions like hatred, jealousy, and ambition, and draws attention to the fact that Poe never created female characters who were not "hysterical and pathological." Although Arbes did not dwell on Poe's alcoholism, he reprinted his study in a volume of essays entitled *Nesmrtelní pijáci* (The immortal drunkards, where Poe found himself in the company of two famous heavy-drinking actors (Edmund Kean and František Krumlovský, a Czech tragedian) and a painter (Adrian Brouwer).

In the early twentieth century Poe had an influence on the Decadents and Symbolists grouped around *Moderní revue* [Modern review], which in 1919 published "The Conqueror Worm," "The Haunted Palace," and "To One in Paradise." Czech Decadents borrowed from Poe the images of decay, destruction, and death.

Turning to Poe's fiction, we find out that the quality of the translations is much better than for his poetry. The first Czech versions of "The Gold Bug" [Zlatý Chrobák] and "Some Words with a Mummy" [Několik slov s mumií] appeared in František Šebek's translations in 1853. Jakub Arbes not only translated "The Oblong Box" but also created under Poe's influence a new genre in Czech literature, the "romanetto," a mystery and/or adventure novella with a rational, scientific denouement. His first and enormously successful prose work of this type, *Svatý Xaverius*, combined the motive of the hunt for a hidden treasure from "The Gold Bug" with the theme of a magic picture from "The Oval Portrait." The painter's cipher is decoded, but instead of gold the reward is a symbolic treasure of wisdom which, ironically, results in the protagonist's death.

Arbes never kept his affection for Poe a secret. The American writer continued to influence Arbes's work, especially *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain], in which he describes the dream journey of a deceased inventor and the narrator (his best friend) in their time machine to different points in the universe, from where it is possible to overlook the whole history of humankind, which appears to be exclusively the history of violence. Knowing that some of his ideas were not original, Arbes has his protagonist mention Poe and Jules Verne, who had used them much earlier.

The best known Czech writer of the interwar period, Karel Čapek (1890 – 1938), once said that he had never described his creative process because he was afraid of being accused of imitating Poe. From his review of “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall,” in which he refers to Poe's soul as “midnight” and “owlish”.

Two other Czech writers whose works are available in English translation show connections with Poe. Ladislav Fuks (1923 – 1994) rarely mentions Poe in his fiction, yet his powerful dark novels, which rank among the best ever produced in Czech lands, bear many similarities to Poe's short stories. In a scene from his novel *Spalovač mrtvol* [The Cremator], an employee of the Prague crematorium shows a new colleague the corpse of a young woman whose “skin is pink and her eyes cast down as though she were asleep” and who “looks as though she might wake and get up at any moment.” The woman is evidently in a state of catatonic sleep, known from “Berenice,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and “The Premature Burial,” but the cremator says: “She has been pronounced dead. To pronounce somebody dead is not only the most responsible, but also the most sublime official act carried out in the world. It is a decisive act, and we carry out our duties precisely.” (Arbeit 1999, p. 95 - 99)

4 Jakub Arbes's literary studies of Edgar Allan Poe

As one part of his literary study *Z duševní dílny básníků*, Jakub Arbes describes how Edgar Allan Poe came to the publishing house of the newspaper *Saturday Visitor*. He was still young and he came to the editor's office in dirty clothes revealing his poverty, and asked for a salary. Readers find out that Poe sent a few of his works to the editors. They are the following: the poem *The Coliseum* and the tales *MS. Found in a Bottle*, *The Visionary* and *Lionizing*. Poe won some literary rewards for these writings.

In *Z duševní dílny básníků* Jakub Arbes processes Edgar Allan Poe's biography. He deals himself both with the writer's literary career and his miserable life. One of the most popular Poe's works in the Czech Republic was *The Raven*. It was translated more times by a few

Czech authors of that time. In *Z duševní dílny básníků*, Jakub Arbes describes a scene where Edgar Allan Poe is depicting his friends how he created *The Raven*. Poe is one of the main protagonists of this passage of the book and he is narrating that at first he had to come up with a literary agent. His goal was to write a piece of art that would suit the desires of the society. Poe is telling his friends that he should have written a poem that is possible to be read in one moment and not with breaks as reading with breaks would not make so strong impression on a reader. Therefore, Poe wrote one hundred and eight lines. Then he created beauty as a subject, because beauty is something that people love. He wanted to express beauty through sorrow as it can touch people the most. As another step, Poe was thinking about the refrain and came to the conclusion that it would be just one line and he told his friends that he would end each strophe with the refrain. As the refrain, he used the word “Nevermore” and as he realized that it should have been repeated by a creature without reason, he decided for a raven. After creating the protagonist of his poem, Poe connected death and beauty as it is poetic. As the object of death, the poet took a woman whose lover would ask the raven questions about her death. Later he was thinking about the place where the man and the raven would meet and this place was a room where the young lady was often staying. As the last question in the interview of the lover and the raven was if the man will meet his Lenore again and the bird answers “Nevermore”. The protagonist gets angry and orders the bird to fly away as he thinks it is lying, but it remains in the chamber.” (Arbes 1977, p. 28 - 35)

We can see similar scene in one of romanettos of Jakub Arbes, called *Zázračná Madona*. Here, one of the main protagonists is called Ismena, a young woman with a desire to enhance her beauty (because, as a consequence of an injury, she is not naturally beautiful) to be more attractive for her husband, and she makes a decision to use arsenic to achieve success. Unfortunately, she is not good at chemistry and she dies from overdose.

Arbes also writes about Poe’s literary activity. He informs readers that Poe seems not to have sense for various vices such as hatred, jealousy and so on. Instead, he uses phantasy and connects it with reason which is a result of his temperament. His soul is most visible in his short stories. What is more, Jakub Arbes studies the soul of the American author and influence of the environment he lived in on his personality. “The imperfection of the world, the shackles that bind a man eternally, the ponderousness and laziness of the flow of thoughts, the shame of sin and consuming longing for unknown, never felt an unreachable happiness that forced many poets of all time so many sighs and tears, oppressed and consumed also Poe’s soul in such a measure that his creations are almost only sighs from the depth of a

tortured and by a terrible passion mastered heart. The life of Poe was disorganized, wild and quite short. For his unhappiness, however, it was too long, as the star of satisfaction shone only rarely and shortly for him. Soon, he fell into the arms of dismal melancholy and hopelessness. The bad luck that almost did not leave this admirable man, gave all his creations a demonic characteristic. Poe does not seem to have sense for diverse passions such as hatred, jealousy, ambitiousness or others. These indulgencies seem to be completely unknown to him. Poe's soul flies on the wings of dismal phantasy to dreams and the furthest, the most unknown and the bravest thoughts are the most appropriate threads from which with an admirable virtuosity weaves his more or less awkward, but always original pictures. Poe went to mysterious empires of horror only with the company of his most faithful companion, his cold reason, and we can courageously say that all his creations emerge from two crossing abilities of his soul: from his almost wonderful and brave phantasy and his extraordinarily smart analysing reason." (Arbes 1977, p. 13 - 15)

As for Poe's work, Jakub Arbes writes: "The demonic beauty of horror that captivates a man on towering rocks, over deep, dark pits, guides us as a faithful companion while reading works of this mysterious writer. Often it seems to us that the ground under our feet retreats, that we sink and crash down from a staggering height to a chasm, we often cannot even fight against a thought that we stand hand in hand with the writer on the verge of terrifying madness."² (Arbes 1977, p. 11 - 12)

The Czech author admires mainly harmonic combination of exact logic with fantasy and his efforts to explain seemingly most fantastic event surprising by scientific truth. He highlights Poe's conviction that a short writing has the biggest impact on readers as it keeps them attentive from the beginning to the end. The most important aspect is Poe's technique – he highlights the central motif that repeats itself in different variations. This motif leads to the basic point of his writings. Arbes finds inspiration in Poe's work. (Krejčí, 1946, p. 157 – 158)

² All Czech texts are translated by the present author. "Démonická čarokrása hrůzy, která uchvacuje člověka na strmých nebetyčných skalinách, nad hlubokými, temnými propastmi, provází nás jako věrný soudruh při čtení poetických prací podivného tohoto básníka. Mnohdy zdá se nám, že půda pod našima nohama ustupuje, že klesáme a řítíme se již ze závatné výše do propasti, ba mnohdy nelze se ubrániti myšlence, že stojíme ruku v ruce s básníkem na pokraji děsné šílenosti."

5 Romanetto

According to Arbes's testimony, the author of the genre signification was his mentor and Czech author Jan Neruda, but Arbes began to write it. The first book belonging to this genre was his *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius].

The genre is thematic, readers observe characters, plot, setting and time, attitude of the writer is significant, there is a process of an utterance, direct narrator, fictional figures and retrospect. The characters are mostly without names.

Interesting about romanetto is a direct particular narrator empowered by features of intellectual and artistic interests and a job of a journalist, focusing romanetto on Czech society of its time in its agent, on its problems, both national and social and on critique of capitalism. However, whole utterance is focused on meeting an outstanding individual in his position in the contemporary world. Critical point of view having its roots in conflict of an individual and the society expresses romanetto in abbreviations. Picturing of reality does not rule in it, instead there are symbols and allegory. It is an expressive genre. Fantastic motifs and often appearing reflections create generalizing and evaluating point of view on reality.

Unbelievable and fantastic motifs are presented in the way that we gradually come to deciphering of their real essence and logic, they are carried by a dream, a condition of hallucination, and the protagonists wake up from them with difficulties (*Newtonův mozek* [The Newton's Brain], etc.). However, the mysterious atmosphere remains in the plot.

The role of the narrator of romanetto and his relationship to a reader is not a role of a teacher and the last authority, instead, it is a role of an informer and commentator, the narrator presents characters and events, observes them and evaluates them from his point of view and forces an attentive reader to an active following of events and to thinking. Generally, the structure of romanetto expects a great activity of a receiver. It even counts with his interest in a theoretical thinking about human being, society, nature, technique, art and even poetics.

As for characters, they often have radical thinking and stand in opposition against social and political order of the time and they are often poor and enslaved and want to free themselves.

As for topics, poverty, war and violence are ubiquitous in the work of Arbes, together with human yearning to be free.

The narrator is superior to other characters.

As all literary genres, this one carries a few characteristic features as well. The romanetto contains four main features. They are the following:

- 1) Relationship among particular narrator and fictional characters. Their language is not different and their speech is strongly intellectualized.
- 2) Omnipresence of the narrator as a thinking and seeking subject makes reminiscence of objects, characters and settings dynamic. This narrator partly creates intensity and broadness of psychological characteristic. He also makes text of romanetto more mysterious.
- 3) Readers should evaluate the text.
- 4) Opposites.

More descriptions of the genre exist. The most detailed one until today has been processed by Karel Krejčí in the monograph *Jakub Arbes, život a dílo*. Passages dedicated to the interpretation of the genre are developed from the idea in this book that the speciality of Arbes's neologism had not its essence in the literary agent (it is the same as the plot), but in the form – the construction of a story whose individual parts are wisely composed in a unit with help of abstract logic. Karel Krejčí speaks about a range of symptoms and three main axes of romanetto. He ranks here the central motif that binds the epizodes, is the starting-point of the plot and the name, first person narration that is the support of constructions of romanetto (although he points to the subject of the author, he makes the picture of reality and stylization objective), then the acting protagonists that are significant because of detailed depiction of their physiognomy and its connection with their essence (they follow illusion as heroes, they often carry pathological features).

Arbes's romanetto works with actual social agent, typical of Czech nationality and Prague inhabitants, his heroes act under pressure of existential need or in revolt against it.

Protagonists, mainly narrators, are more or less poor people and they are intelligent. In the works of Poe, there appears more often a man, about whom we do not know much. On the other hand, Arbes highlights national, political and social determination of human stories and efforts.

The meeting and closing of Arbes with Poe happened about ten to fifteen years after the time when the American poet was introduced in France by Charles Baudelaire.

Edgar Allan Poe loved beauty and he was, probably unlike Arbes, not a political poet.

The development of Arbes's romanetto seems to be a variation of agent and idea seeking at the first sight. Topics and settings changed, philosophical problems and idea areas discussed basic life situations of a man of his time and his different conflicts always from new and new points of view. As if particular narrator took notes of growth and changes in the author's life

and social experience. These innovations have become a source of liveliness of the relevant part of Arbes's writings.

Development of romanetto as a genre has not been limited and could not limit only on agent and idea variations. At the same time, the author enriched and changed his way of narration, he looked for new sources of mystery, new ways of giving names and constructing.

The first and basic set of romanettos from the 70^s fixed in a direct narrator social experience of Jakub Arbes from his Smíchov childhood, from the time of his studies and literary beginnings to his job in *Národní listy*, political persecution, imprisonment to leaving of his job of a journalist in Grégr's newspaper and a year service in German newspaper *Politik* [The Politics]. In his thinking, romanetto included various aspects of Czech public, artistic and common life. During this time, the emphasis on limiting pressure of contemporary conditions remained and in its way increased in romanetto. Arbes's national concerns (*Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius]) gradually withdrew social aspects (*Ukřižovaná* [The Crucified], *Kandidáti existence* [Candidates of the Existence]) and generally human aspects (*Akrobati* [The acrobats], *Etiopská lilie* [The Ethiopian Lilly]). Continuously, in its inner organisation and construction, the basic set of romanettos gradually actualized and in different range used techniques included already in *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius].

Karel Krejčí in his work *Jakub Arbes, život a dílo*, writes that Edgar Allan Poe is close to Arbes in the way that we suppose by him absolute independence and originality in creation of agent of writings, a quality that the creator of the new genre of romanetto has always highlighted with peculiar pride in his own pieces of writing." (Janáčková 1975, p. 25 – 43, p. 85 - 94)

5.1 Direct narration

“In a direct narrative, the writer describes the action or events in a story in detail. This description is expressed as if an actual scene is occurring. It is not enough for the writer to merely "tell" the reader what is occurring, they have to "show" the reader what is occurring. For example, if the writer tells about a character walking down the street in a direct narrative he would discuss every detail of that experience. This often involves narrator commentary in between, surrounding and even throughout the speech. The purpose is to express exactly what a character says by using point of view, characterization, atmosphere and conflict.”³

³ <http://penandthepad.com/direct-narrative-1834.html>

One of the characteristic features of the literary genre of romanetto is direct narration. When we focus on the definition above, we find features of direct narration in romanettos of Jakub Arbes. The narrator can be referred to as the main protagonist as it is him who guides readers through the whole story. In the romanetto of Jakub Arbes, this narrator is always a man about whom we do not know that much as we know about other characters that he depicts. The narrator is usually not introduced at the beginning as readers would probably expect. Instead, he informs us about a mysterious event and later, following this event, he begins to unravel his life in retrospect (he narrates about his past). Memories are probably valuable for him. Unfortunately, they are mostly bitter. When reading about past life of the narrator, we discover that it has a connection with other protagonists of the romanetto whom the narrator met and continues with a relationship with them until now. Typical for romanetto is that the narrator introduces a part of the plot and then comments on it before going on in depiction of real events. These “interruptions” might disturb readers as they usually become uptight and are curious what will happen next, but at first, they have to read what the main protagonist thinks about the event that just happened or about one of the characters. On the other hand, his attitudes may be important, too, as they make the plot richer and provide readers with more information and evaluation of the reality presented in the romanetto.

Václav Dresler in his study *Jakub Arbes, život a dílo* writes: “The author’s confessional subjectivism (majority of the plots are narrated in the first-person narration) amplifies his reflective problematic and calls an impression as if the writer gradually depicted an interesting and complicated history of philosophical, contemplating modern soul in its natural development and inner maturity in his romanettos. From this we logically draw everything else from Arbes: nature descriptions have just a little space in his work. Arbes is mainly an observer and thinker, painter and artist afterwards. He makes use of each opportunity (form of letters, interview, memory, narration, presentation) to develop a certain problem or explain a riddle during the stream of the plot, eventually out of it and next to it.”⁴ (Dresler 1977, p. 59 - 60)

⁴ “Autorův zpovídací subjektivism (většinu svých dějů vypravuje spisovatel v první osobě) tuto úvahovou problematiku ještě zesiluje a vyvolává dojem, jakoby romanopisec líčil ve svých spisech postupně nadměrně zajímavou i složitou historii filosoficky založené, myslící moderní duše, kus po kuse, v jejím přirozeném vývoji a ve vnitřním uzrání. Z toho pak logicky vyvodíme u Arbesa vše ostatní: popisy přírodní mají u něho málo místa, jímž jest v pravé míře plýtváno při vložkách dušezpytně i dojmově popisných, ne dost bohatý smysl pro náladovost a malou odstíněnost slohovou. Arbes jest především pozorovatel a myslitel, malíř i umělec až v druhé řadě. Užívá každé příležitosti a kde kterého přípustného prostředku (formy dopisové, rozhovoru, vzpomínky, vypravování, referátu), aby rozvinul určitý problém nebo osvětlil nějakou záhadu i během proudu dějového, popřípadě mimo něj a vedle něho.“

As for mysterious beginnings, Edgar Allan Poe goes even further. His first-person narrators provide just hints of information about themselves and even later, they do not share with readers such detailed descriptions of their personalities. When we focus on this aspect, we find out that Poe's short stories are unlike romanettos of Jakub Arbes. Romanettos are longer and thus allow narrator's reflections of what happens in the plot. Poe's characters, on the contrary, do not comment on particular situations, but on what led them to take some step, how they think of themselves. Poe is more focused on psychological side of the protagonists, Arbes is more interested in facts about them.

We may say that Edgar Allan Poe's short stories are written subjectively as well. The author takes his own standpoint to the plot, to the narrator, the setting or the topic. As Jakub Arbes, the American writer also tells his readers his opinions on content of his tales.

For both literateurs, the soul of their characters means more than description of settings, especially when the work is set in nature. Both of them try to present the personalities of their protagonists through their writings.

5.2 Coincidence and human reason in romanetto

“Arbes intentionally uses coincidence, even theoretically he speaks about it as about an important factor in life and often, he allows it to decide. Arbes's protagonists are passed on the iron laws of nature and a blind coincidence, traditional faith is just certain help, hiding helplessness of the characters. His heroes bravely reveal this kind of help, but do not find support yet that would fully let them develop their own powers and capabilities. In the tone of the writer's romanettos, there appear even typical features of historical break of bourgeois ideology, even Arbes is affected by the crisis, but he tries to face it by his optimistic faith in the power of human reason.”⁵

Both coincidence and power of human reason play a significant role in romanettos of Jakub Arbes. It is true that the protagonists are usually affected by coincidence in any form, but in contrast, they try to make use of their reason to overcome it. Coincidence has often a negative impact on the protagonists. For example, it kills their loved ones as in the romanetto *V osmi minutách* [In Eight Minutes] when one of the characters, an adult man, strongly criticizes laws of nature and probably assumes that they have no power over human beings as they are progressive, but in the end, he finds out that this his statement is not at all truth as nature

⁵ <http://www.ucl.cas.cz/edicee/data/dejiny/hcl/dcl3/16.pdf>

murders his child once which he deeply regrets. In *Míšeňské jablíčko* [Meissen Apple], there is a mortally ill boy who wishes to have this kind of apple so the old servant of the family undertakes a journey through cold winter landscape at night to get a few apples. He loses them all except one and what is more, he gets ill and dies. In *Zázračná madona* [The Miraculous Madonna] and *Akrobati* [The Acrobats], we can read about death of young women. In the first of these two romanettos the heroine enhances her beauty with help of a chemical agent, but it kills her. In the second instance, the heroine is killed by a knife thrown on her by her brother. He did not intend to murder her but free her from ropes tied around her body, but a cat causes that the “weapon” flies in an incorrect direction. In *Ukřižovaná* [The Crucified], there is a girl who is crucified and cannot be saved as the hero who might do it becomes unconscious when somebody hits him in an uprising and when he finally wakes up, she is already dead. In better cases, coincidence leads “just” to getting the protagonists into trouble. In *Moderní upíři* [Modern Vampires], for example, it dumps them into debts. Very good example represents the romanetto *Newtonův mozek* [Newton’s Brain] where one of the characters presumes that he can overcome laws of nature and travel through time which he does, but it leads to his death. Each of the examples shows that nature is stronger than people, not that people are stronger than nature as they in most cases assume. It also points on foolishness, limited knowledge and naivety of human beings. How can they be more powerful than nature when nature is the environment where they live and they are just part of it? Nature provides people with everything they need, they do not get it themselves.

The American author tackles with both coincidence and power of human reason as well when he writes. *The Angel of Odd* is one of the instances. Here, the main character does not seem to be reasonable, he is rather naïve and stubborn and supposes that only what he thinks is correct. However, he meets the angel, a provider of different odd situations. By putting the reader into these situations, he wants to persuade him that odd things happen. Good examples represent tales in which “human reason” brings about even death. Usually female characters die in Poe’s work, and usually because they were prematurely buried as their male companions presumed that they are already dead.

6 Topics of Poe’s tales

The following chapter is going to discuss a few topics that are characteristic for Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories. These themes might have inspired Jakub Arbes and his writing so the author of the thesis informs about them before analyzing romanettos of the Czech writer.

6.1 Insanity versus rationality

“In many of Poe's short stories, such as *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the narrators are madmen and murderers who fail to disguise their lack of rationality with a discussion of their thought processes. However, their stories inevitably reveal gaps in their chains of thought that speak to their descent into immorality and selfishness. In many cases, insanity is interlocked with the narrators' emotional egotism; they are incapable of empathizing with others and think only of their own desire to satisfy their honor or their need to end the disruptions to their lives. On the other side of the equation lie Poe's rational characters that are capable of consciously setting aside their own emotions in order to logically solve their problems.”⁶ Other examples are *The Pit and the Pendulum* where the narrator is able to think logically and save his life when he is going to lose it. In *The Black Cat*, he gets an idea how to hide the corpse of his wife, but he was insane when killing her.

6.2 Obsession

“The majority of Poe's narrators are nervous, oversensitive, and given to excessive worrying or strange fixations. In his works, Poe explores the consequences of such obsessive tendencies. In the case of the narrator of *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the protagonist's declarations of oversensitivity are merely a thin disguise for insanity.”⁷ In other of Poe's tales, there are men obsessed by their love towards women they live with or meet (*Berenice*, *Lenore*).

6.3 Man's relationship with death

“The fear of death drives the actions of several of Poe's characters. In particular, the narrator of *The Premature Burial* obsesses about the possibility of premature burial, and his fear makes him so paranoid that when he wakes up in the berth of a ship, he mistakes it for a grave and has a terrifying experience for no real reason. At the same time, Poe describes several characters whose response to their fear of death is to avoid it, although the usual result of their avoidance is increased trauma. Prince Prospero and his courtiers in *The Masque of the Red Death* try to shut themselves away and ignore the slaughter caused by the Red Death, but death pays no attention to their barriers and kills them en masse. However, the main character development of the narrator of *MS. Found in a Bottle* is that he learns to accept his impending death and replace his fear with anticipation.”⁸

⁶ <http://www.gradesaver.com/poes-short-stories/study-guide/themes>

⁷ <http://www.gradesaver.com/poes-short-stories/study-guide/themes>

⁸ <http://www.gradesaver.com/poes-short-stories/study-guide/themes>

6.4 Curiosity

“In *MS. Found in a Bottle* the narrator overcomes his fear of death by invoking the example of the crew of the *Discovery* and by cultivating his sense of curiosity about the southern regions of the Earth. Similarly, although the narrator of *The Pit and the Pendulum* suffers from frequent fainting because of his terror over the Inquisition's plans, he nonetheless chooses to explore his cell and thus avoids becoming totally incapacitated by his distress. In both cases, the ability of the characters to set aside their fear indicates their mental and emotional strength. In *The Gold Bug*, Legrand does not face imminent destruction, but is instead driven by curiosity to decipher the clues found on a scrap of parchment, and is ultimately rewarded for his curiosity. In all of these stories, Poe treats curiosity as a sign of the narrator's sanity and intelligence.”⁹ Curiosity appears also in *Some Words with a Mummy* in which the narrator is interested who will be the president of the USA in 2045.

6.5 The power of human resolve

“Some stories, such as *The Pit and the Pendulum* and *A Descent into the Maelström*, have characters that seem to face certain death but overcome despair because of their iron will. *The Pit and the Pendulum* depicts the struggle between hope and despair in sharp detail, but in the end hope wins, and the narrator shows remarkable presence of mind by luring the rats to chew at his strap, thereby freeing him from the swinging blade of the pendulum.”¹⁰

6.6 Love and hate

“Another topic in Edgar Allan Poe’s work is love and hate, related to one person. This topic appears in *The Tale-Tell Heart*, when the narrator loves the old man, but hates his “vulture eye”. The other example is *The Black Cat*, in which the narrator loves both of his cats, but at the same time, there is something he hates about them (when a cat avoids his presence, or the shape of gallows that can be seen in the part of the cat’s spot of white fur).”¹¹

⁹ <http://www.gradesaver.com/poes-short-stories/study-guide/themes>

¹⁰ <http://www.gradesaver.com/poes-short-stories/study-guide/themes>

¹¹ <http://www.gradesaver.com/poes-short-stories/study-guide/themes>

7 Topics and motifs in work of both authors

Jakub Arbes does not discuss death and decay in his creation that much, his work is not so decadent. Nonetheless, he also processes these subject matters as he writes. The author of the thesis has remarked that death and decay appear in works of Jakub Arbes which are more phantastic than his other romanettos partly serving as biographies of his life and are more realistic. However, for example *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind] is quite fantastic romanetto talking about a theory of certain Count Buquoy, a madman, and the theory is connected with quantity of nitrogen in the atmosphere, the fact that people still aspire for more and more and how they also want to experience new things, and conceivable murder of mankind which fortunately does not happen. Another instance is represented by *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain] which puts fighting, wars and dying forward and has a tragic end – it leads to death. *Zbožný Tomáš* [Pious Thomas] is not that catastrophic work but it includes Tomáš, an alcoholic, who turns his anger from being deluded towards his daughter when he comes home drunk, but in the last moment, he manages to quieten and his anger leads just to cracking a picture and his daughter is saved. *Moderní upíři* [Modern Vampires] represents decay of relationships in a family because of intervening of one wicked and bossy character. Moreover, decay of one company appears in this work and it is caused by irresponsibility of a son whose father does not reject to pay his debts and therefore he lacks money for his company. The same motif is present in another Arbes's romanetto *Kandidáti existence* [Candidates of Existence] where two men own a company together and one of them starts to love wealth and spends too much on expensive projects and then the company goes bankrupt. One of Arbes's works is analogous to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* and the romanetto *Adamité* [Adamites] speaks about decay of moral values among members of society of rich and influential people.

7.1 Mystery

A characteristic feature of writings of both discussed authors is mystery. In the work of Jakub Arbes, it appears for example in *Honba na přítele* [Chase for a Friend] where a missing man cannot be found for a long time because of telegraph connection that does not work. In the end, he is found by a police and taken to his scared wife. The reason for his absence was that he secretly went to buy a coat for his wife as he loved her so much. In *Kandidáti existence* [Candidates of Existence], two main protagonists find a baby. This event is mysterious as well. Later, they make a discovery that the baby has been rejected by her mother who did not

have enough money to take care of her child. Finally, the child is given to care of one of the men's girlfriend. Here is another event that is awkward – one of the main protagonists expects to be sentenced for crime, but it does not happen. It seems as if the police forgot about him completely. This mystery does not have a solution. In *Šílený Jób* [Mad Jób], one of the main characters is a man who is considered mad, but it seems that nobody knows anything about his life. The truth is that he lives a normal life and takes care of his family with many children. As a young man, he experienced a tragedy in his life, therefore he behaves so strangely. What happened, had probably affected state of his mind. In *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind], the older lady in the church acts strangely, especially when she sees the preacher. Later, readers are provided with information that she assumed that she knows who he is. Mystery is also the fact that we do not know at which moments the narrator dreams and in which he is awake, as there are many events that do not happen in common life, for example when he sees a man outside a window, although he lives in the third floor, or he cannot explain himself the circumstances under which the climatic changes take place. In *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain], the narrator is at the beginning completely unaware of the reason, why he is lost in the Kinský palace. In *Svatý Xaverius* [St. Xaverius], the connection of the painting and the treasure is strange as well, maybe it just exists in the main protagonist's mind.

Mystery appears through Edgar Allan Poe's creation as well, maybe it is more common theme by him than by Jakub Arbes. Mysterious is for example Poe's tale *MS found in a Bottle* where the narrator is not able to explain himself the existence of the pirate ship when he is used to use natural science to find reasons for events. In *Man of the Crowd*, behaviour of the old man in the crowd is not understandable as he just keeps walking in the direction of the majority of people as if he had no aim where to go. In *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, for police, the murders are inexplicable just because they are extraordinary. However, there is one character who is able to find the solution for them – the detective C. Auguste Dupin. He has a friend, the narrator, whom he explains that they should not ask themselves "What has happened?", but a more appropriate question sounds "What has happened that has never happened before?" For the narrator, the fact that Dupin is able to solve the murders, is a mystery. All Poe's women characters become victims of mortal diseases and die, which is also awkward. *Thou Art the Man* is another example, the murder of one of the main protagonists remains unexplained until the end which is represented by a scene where the best friend and murderer of the protagonist invites his friends to drink wine with him. He supposes the bottles to be stored in a box, but when he opens it, it reveals the corpse of the killed man saying: "Thou Art

the Man!”. In *The Masque of the Red Death*, the figure of the red death remains mysterious. In *Some Words with a Mummy*, the reasons why the mummy is still alive are inexplicable for its examiners. In *The Oblong Box*, there is a mysterious event at the beginning when the narrator is ready to board a ship, but it can't leave yet. However, there are appropriate conditions for the journey. Some time after, the crew come with a large oblong box and the narrator figures out that they have been probably waiting only for this luggage. One of the main protagonists of the short story and a good friend of the narrator is another passenger on the ship, painter Wyatt, who got married recently and according to his own words, his wife is a beautiful and intelligent lady whom he married for no other reason than from pure love. Nevertheless, Mrs. Wyatt really cannot be considered a beautiful woman and she is also quite stupid and uneducated which has a consequence that people laugh at her, not with her, while she is doing her best to entertain them. The narrator cannot believe how Mr. Wyatt, an artist and a sensitive man, could marry such a woman. What is more, the narrator is nervous and suffers from insomnia which has effect that he observes what happens at nights and he sees that the couple do not spend time with each other at nights and each of them sleeps in a different cabin. The oblong box is situated in the cabin of the painter and every night, he opens it and observes its mysterious content. The narrator tries to make a guess that it is a picture of The Last Dinner and when he suggests it in front of Wyatt, the painter almost dies from shock. This event and all his behavior indicates that he might be mad. Some time after this event, the crew and the passengers have to leave the ship in boats to rescue themselves as there is a storm and the ship is sinking. Mr. Wyatt insists that they must take the box with them and everyone considers him mad. Nonetheless, he returns to the ship and jumps with the box into the ocean where he dies. After some time, the narrator meets the captain who explains him that the box contained the corpse of Mrs. Wyatt who died soon after the marriage and the servant overtook her role on the board. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the narrator is reading *The Haunted Palace* to his friend Roderick Usher, but strange is that at the same time they hear the same sounds as in the poem in Usher's house. Later, they are provided with the explanation – it was lady Madeline, Roderick's sister, trying to get out of her grave where she was buried alive. As a revenge for being treated so carelessly, she kills her brother and then dies from being physically exhausted. The narrator runs away from the house, now a terrifying place for him, and as he is escaping, he sees with his own eyes how the house is falling into the tarn around it. This is the strange destruction of the last members of the Usher family and of their residence as well.

7.1.1 Mysticism in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius]

What Edgar Allan Poe and Jakub Arbes have in common is the fact that they include mysticism in their writings. A good example represents the short story *The Fall of the House of Usher* and the romanetto *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius]. In both works, there reigns a mysterious atmosphere.

In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, there are two main protagonists – siblings and twins Roderick and Madeline Usher, from which one is psychologically and one physically ill. They live in solitude, far from other people. Nevertheless, readers are informed that Roderick has a friend – the narrator, who at the beginning comes to visit him. Readers are told that the narrator arrives on horse. However, the horse is taken into care of a servant and from this moment, the animal is not mentioned as at the end of the tale, the narrator escapes on foot. The whole residence and life of the twins are surrounded by mystery – lady Madeline's doctor assumes that her illness which he is unable to diagnose might come from the vapours of the tarn in which the house is situated. The narrator himself depicts the tarn in a negative light. Another interesting fact about the story is that Roderick and Madeline come from a unique, direct line of relatives which means that their ancestors married each other. Neither of the siblings wants to marry as they do not want to pollute the purity of their family. In the case of lady Madeline, it is even impossible to get married as she seems to die at any moment because of her mortal disease. Roderick Usher, on the contrary, becomes oversensitive and psychologically ill. It seems that his soul falls into pieces. The narrator notices that and tries to encourage Usher to lead a normal life with its amusements, but he is unable to do so. Strange is that he is afraid of FEAR. Moreover, the condition in which Usher is affects the narrator and he begins to feel the same – scared. Once, lady Madeline supposedly dies and Usher orders that she should be given into a deep crypt under the house and left there for a couple of days. The narrator cannot explain himself why Usher wishes this, but he does not want to argue with him. Later, readers are provided with the solution – during one night, both Usher and the narrator cannot fall asleep as there is a terrible loud storm outside, keeping them awake and frightened. The narrator notices that Usher is walking somewhere in the house and he starts to imitate him, walking in his bedroom. After some time, they meet and spend the rest of the night together. The narrator is reading his friend one book, hoping that it may calm Usher down but it does not. Usher is terrified as he realizes and even says that they have buried lady Madeline when she was still alive, only fallen into a catatonic sleep. He

recognizes the sounds she made to rescue herself. Horrifying is that the same sounds appear in the story read by the narrator and he also notices them in reality. Usher also predicates that Madeline will come and murder him – which she does. The narrator runs away in terror and on his way back, he only sees how the house of Usher is falling into the tarn around it.

When we take the romanetto *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius] into consideration, we find many elements of mysticism here. As the work is longer than Poe's tale, the plot is more complicated and therefore gives more space for creativity of the author and also mystery as he dealt with it in this writing. The narrator, as in Poe's case, does not have a name. Nonetheless, readers are told what he is like – that he is deeply interested in a certain painting – in the portrait of Svatý Xaverius in one church in Prague. He is interested in it because of the picture's beauty and at one moment, he is spending his time in the church examining it, when he sees there a man who at first seems to intend to steal the picture, but later the narrator discovers that he is observing it as well. In contrast to the narrator, he has a different reason to examine the picture – his grandmother told him that it is painted by a painter Balko and that it hides a plan how to find a treasure in Prague. He wants to find the plan and the treasure. The two protagonists establish a good relationship and they become friends. What is worth mentioning about the unknown man is firstly his name, Xaverius, and secondly his appearance – he is similar to the saint and he discovered this as he was once praying in the church. However, Xaverius firmly believes in the existence of the treasure and the narrator is rather sceptic. Not to hurt his friend, he embarks on a walk to find the treasure with Xaverius. The place where they come is quite mysterious, but in fact, they do not find the treasure. Awkward thing happens when they manage by mistake to establish fire and the friend sees a resemblance of Svatý Xaverius in it and he gets so shocked that he escapes and the narrator sees him again after two years in prison in Vienna where he is because he is supposed to have stolen the treasure which he has not done. But he was caught on the day when the two men went to find the treasure.

7.2 Death

In some works of both writers, there appears the motif of death. In the work of Jakub Arbes, it is not so common, but when it is involved in the romanetto, it is connected either with poverty and hunger or with murder (possible extinction of humankind in *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind], Ismena from *Zázračná Madona* [Miraculous Madonna] and Eldora from *Akrobati* [The Acrobats] die because of an accident). Edgar Allan Poe discusses death in

more examples of his short stories. However, the reasons for death do not differ. Murder is included for example in *The Black Cat*, in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Thousand and Second Tale of Sheherezade*, and poverty or illnesses are associated with women in his work – lady Madeline in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Lenore, Berenice, Mrs. Wyatt in *The Oblong Box*. For all of them, an illness means end of their lives. In Arbes's work, death hits both male and female protagonists. On the other side, in Poe's short stories, it awaits usually women, but there are some exceptions. One example is *The Masque of the Red Death*, where mighty Prince Prospero is punished by Red Death as he did not believe that it can reach him. In *The Cask of Amontillado* and *Thou Art the Man*, male protagonists are killed by their enemies. The same appears in another tale, *The Tale of the Ragged Mountains*, but here, the man who perished in a battle was not the main character. In *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the main character kills his roommate, an old man, because he has a problem with one of his eyes that reminds him of the eye of a vulture and it haunts him. As he wants to get rid of the eye, he commits the murder. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Usher also passes away, as a consequence of premature burial of his sister who wants revenge. She murders him and than she dies.

7.3 Progress

Progress is also one of themes in Poe's *Some Words with a Mummy*. Here, the main protagonist, Dr. Ponnoner, has a chance to see a mummy awake and talking about its life in Ancient Egypt. We can create an opinion based on its speech that people in Ancient Egypt were more progressive than the society in 19th century America, as they really had to invent things, not just improve them.

One piece of writing of Jakub Arbes, called *Mesiáš* [The Messiah], includes progress as its topic. There reigns typical atmosphere of Poe's stories and the main protagonist Dr. Randa, a man of progress and a gifted man, wants to reform the society, but he finds obstacles, prejudices and conservatism everywhere and he dies overtired. It is a picture of Czech national life and society of Arbes's time.

7.4 Perverseness and obsession

The topic that is strongly associated with the personality of Edgar Allan Poe and his literary products is perverseness. By his enemies, the American writer was being referred to as a madman, or an alcoholic, his works being a consequence of his life and thinking about it, but

in fact he was trying to give a good structure to his writings. When reading Poe, we can recognize that his works are well structured, but at the same time they are full of people who are perverse, mad or obsessed. Maybe the time in which he lived asked for these characters as they might have been required by readers of American literature. People who have these vices are certainly not alright, when we consider their mind. For example, in *The Black Cat*, the narrator murdered his wife, because he was angry with his cat. In *William Wilson*, the main protagonist is obsessed with his victory over his rival. In *The Gold Bug*, William Legrand is obsessed with finding a treasure and he seems to have lost his reason, but in fact, he is reasonable. In the *Masque of the Red Death*, Prince Prospero makes effort to protect himself against death, not realizing that this scary enemy of people finds its victims everywhere. In the *Tell-Tale Heart*, the narrator kills his roommate as he minds how one of his eyes looks like. In *Berenice*, the narrator loves his cousin's teeth as they are the only thing which is beautiful on her when she is mortally ill. Otherwise, her body is unattractive – she is skinny and pale. Once she is thought to be dead and prematurely buried, and from obsession, the narrator pulls her teeth from her mouth and kills her by this deed. He must have been insane when he committed this awful crime, because when his servant tries to talk to him after this incident, the narrator is completely unaware of his sin. We can see obsession also in Poe's *The Tale of the Ragged Mountains* where doctor Templeton is obsessed with his patient, Augustus Bedloe, as this man reminds him of his dead friend, and does not want to lose his pleasant companionship.

Obsession is one of the themes of Jakub Arbes, too. His characters are obsessed by their opinions (*Etiopská lilie* [Etiopian Lilly]), where two men argue about what is more important in life – to study foreign languages or natural sciences like biology, geography, etc., by other people (*Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind]), by being rich (some characters in *Moderní upíři* (Modern Vampires), Mr. Nadasdi in *Kandidáti existence* [Candidates of Existence], *Svatý Xaverius* [St. Xaverius]). In the last mentioned romanetto, the narrator's friend is obsessed by finding a treasure.

7.5 Fear

Fear represents an important element in both Poe's and Arbes's works. It appears many times in writings of both authors. Usually, the protagonists are scared of something – in the work of Jakub Arbes of poverty and dying from hunger in *Kandidáti existence* [Candidates of Existence], *Moderní upíři* [Modern Vampires], *Ukřižovaná* [The Crucified], of future in

Poslední dnové lidstva [Last Days of the Mankind]. In the work of Poe, the protagonists are usually scared also of future – of mortal illnesses such as catalepsy and of premature burial in *The Premature Burial*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Eleonora*, *Berenice*, or of another way of death – *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

8 Settings

Although settings of pieces of work of Jakub Arbes and of Edgar Allan Poe are not always the same, sometimes there might be inspiration. The American writer usually situates his stories to haunted castles or chambers with just a little light, dark furniture and gloomy atmosphere. For example, his tale *Medallion* is a great representative of this as the narrator and his servant affected by fight with thieves find a refuge in such a castle, located in the Apennine Mountains. Another example can be represented by the tale *The Fall of the House of Usher* more referred to later in the thesis. *The Descent into Maelström* describes dismal place as well. It is known that Maelström is an enormous whirlpool that represents danger for many ships travelling close to it. The narrator's guide from the story, an elderly man whose job used to be a fisherman was brave enough to do this. He had two brothers and they went fishing near Maelström. Once there was a great and terrible storm in which both of his brothers lost their lives and he almost did. When he narrates his story to the narrator, they sit on the top of one of the mountains surrounding Maelström. Another short story set to a marine environment is *MS Found in a Bottle* where the narrator and the sailors of the mysterious vessel get more to the South than any ship before and this area is also dismal. These places are probably attractive for readers who like to be scared when reading horror stories as they provoke fear. Less often the setting is outside, for example in *The Tale of the Ragged Mountains*, *The Gold Bug*, *Eleonora*. The nature is usually picturesque and well described and, unlike settings inside buildings, provokes pleasant feelings and readers might experience its fairness, silence and safety.

“Usually in a Romantic story, the setting is in some obscure or unknown place, or else it is set at some distant time in the past. The purpose for this is so that none of Poe's readers would be diverted by references to contemporary ideas; Poe created new worlds so that his readers would concentrate wholly on the themes or atmospheres with which he infused his stories. Poe believed that the highest art existed in a realm that was different from this world, and in

order to create this realm, vagueness and indefiniteness were necessary to alienate the reader from the everyday world and to thrust him toward the ideal and the beautiful.”¹²

The following quote is taken from *The Fall of the House of Usher* and it is from the beginning of the tale. The narrator comes to the house of his friend Roderick Usher and he describes the appearance of the residence.

“Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinising observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.”¹³

The following extract from the short story *The Tale of the Ragged Mountains* illustrates an elaborate description of the landscape of these mountains and the main protagonist, Mr. Augustus Bedloe, depicts how the place that he has visited looks like and what impression he has got from it.

“I bent my steps immediately to the mountains, and, about ten, entered a gorge which was entirely new to me. I followed the windings of this pass with much interest. The scenery which presented itself on all sides, although scarcely entitled to be called grand, had about it an indescribable and to me a delicious aspect of dreary desolation. The solitude seemed absolutely virgin. I could not help believing that the green sods and the gray rocks upon which I trod had been trodden never before by the foot of a human being. So entirely secluded, and in fact inaccessible, except through a series of accidents, is the entrance of the ravine, that it is

¹² <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/p/poes-short-stories/critical-essays/edgar-allan-poe-and-romanticism>

¹³ <https://www.englishclub.com/reading/story-house-of-usher.htm>

by no means impossible that I was indeed the first adventurer- the very first and sole adventurer who had ever penetrated its recesses.”¹⁴

In Poe’s tales, the locations are not named, but there are a few exceptions. For example, readers find references to Spanish Inquisition in *The Pit and the Pendulum* or the Apennine Mountains mentioned in *Medallion*. The narrator and his servant dwell in this region for a while. Sometimes Poe’s native America is a setting of his tales, he mentions, e.g., Charlottesville or Charleston. The first town is referred to in two of his tales, in *The Tale of the Ragged Mountains*, the latter one in *The Gold Bug*. Here, Fort Moultrie and all the Sullivan Island is another location. Jakub Arbes also situates his romanetto to the Czech Lands and what is more, he informs readers about it by referring to the places by their own names. The most often mentioned location is his native city, Prague, especially some of its parts or boroughs – the ones where the author spent his time and which he loved because they were associated with his memories and experiences, but there emerge also other towns and sometimes country, sometimes also foreign lands. All these places indicate that the Czech writer knew more about different places – how they look like, what is their atmosphere like, how the inhabitants live and behave and what good and bad qualities they possess. More areas of the city are described, but usually there are mentioned different monuments and historical places, places attractive for tourists, but also not that well-known places where Arbes spent his life, for example Smíchov where he was born and lived. Smíchov is in all probability known in contemporary days, but at the time of life of Jakub Arbes, it looked like a village, just a few houses of poor people were built there. Nevertheless, factories started to operate here, one of known owners was e.g. Mr. Ringhoffer. Nature serves as one of the settings as well. The writer locates some of his romanettos to public buildings such as churches or schools (these institutes are associated with knowledge and education) and sometimes he uses homes of the protagonists, as it is in Edgar Allan Poe’s work. The homes are not very well depicted, they are described vaguely, and they do not all look the same. For example, Jakub Arbes makes differences between homes of poor people which are small and where we cannot find almost any furniture or other equipment, and homes of rich people which are big and well equipped. Edgar Allan Poe, on the contrary, depicts homes of his protagonists also as rather scary, dark and not kind places, a good example is *The Fall of the House of Usher* where the residence and its environment have a negative impact on Usher and his sister and cause his psychological and her physical illness.

¹⁴ <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/poe/raggedmt.html>

The following quote from the romanetto *Zázračná Madona* [The Miraculous Madonna] expresses how Jakub Arbes depicted his settings. It describes the part of Prague called Nový Svět (New World) where the plot is partly set. At its beginning, it is introduced as a location of home of the mother of Ismena, main woman protagonist. “Strange, mysterious recess of Prague! Just one street, actually just one row of houses, and already known by its sad, humbly fawning or creepingly impertinent poverty, by its wandering, shabby and ragged existencies, its careless challenging cruelty, its moral sludge and wild passions!”¹⁵ (Arbes 1960, p. 155) When one reads the illustration, one really imagines how the place looks like, what are its features and what kind of people lives there, and feels its dark, dismal and frightening atmosphere.

On the contrary, Edgar Allan Poe does not have the habit of disclosing where his protagonists come from, what is their social class or their job. Nevertheless, the atmosphere remains similar. His characters, and mainly narrators, seem to be bound by conventions, conditions of the society and its limited knowledge, and they try to escape from it to the world of dreams which has a consequence that they often behave irrationally and this results in rash deeds of committing murders or making bad decisions. One cannot deny that both Poe’s and Arbes’s characters are intelligent people whom the environment they live in lay obstacles in their way, so they have to protest against the society.

9 Plots

In works of both Arbes and Poe, there is quite visible climax which plays a significant role for them. In Poe’s short stories, this turning point is usually represented by a dramatic situation when a protagonist is prematurely buried and then returns back to life, or when a protagonist finds a solution for the problem he is facing. The second point is applicable for Jakub Arbes as well. The plots of both authors are gradating and dramatic. The Czech writer constructs more complicated plots, but it is understandable as his romanettos are longer than Poe’s short stories so they provide more space for building difficult plots. On the other hand, readers can understand Poe more as it is easier to grasp a short plot rather than a long plot. Both authors’ aim might be to attract attention of readers so they get along with reading them. An attentive

¹⁵ “Zvláštní, podivné to zákoutí Prahy! Jediná ulice, vlastně skoro jediná řada domů a baráků, a přece nyní už bezprávně tak smutně pověstna svou pokorně podlízavou nebo dotíravě drzou bídou, svými potulnými, ošumělými a rozedranými existencemi, svou bezohlednou vyzývavou surovostí, svým mravním kalem a pustými divokými vášněmi svými!”

reader interested in these two writers should be amazed or terrified or somehow react to the plots which are really formidable.

10 Characters

Both Edgar Allan Poe and Jakub Arbes encompass characters in their writings, who are either weak women – combating with malady, poverty or bad relationships having a consequence that they are wretched. On the contrary, they are often young and neat, Romantic ideals. They also die young in a great number of cases.

Male characters are gentlemen somehow revolting against society and ideas of the majority of people, so they are typical Romantic characters. Nevertheless, the author of the thesis assumes that Poe's protagonists, usually spending their time on their own, protest against society only in their mind. In contrast, Arbes's heroes meet other people and so have a chance to share their opinions and they make use of the chances to do it. Male protagonists in work of both authors also serve as protectors of their female characters. By readers, they are also usually taken as madmen, but in fact, they are rational. This is observable when we focus on how they think and act.

The following two paragraphs are going to inform about female characters in the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Kevin J. Hayes characterizes Poe's stories' female protagonists.

Poe's vision of the feminine ideal appears throughout his work, in his poetry and short stories, and his critical essays, most notably "*The Philosophy of Composition*." Especially in his poetry, he idealizes the vulnerability of woman, a portrayal that extends into his fiction in stories such as "*Eleonora*" and "*The Fall of the House of Usher*." In these tales, and even moreso in "*Morella*" and "*Ligeia*," the heroines unexpected capacities for life beyond the grave indicate that females may have more strength and initiative than the delicate models of his verse. The most significant trait of his ideal, however, is her role as emotional catalyst for her partner. The romanticized woman is much more significant in her impact on Poe's narrators than in her own right.

The concept of using females merely as a means to a (male) end appears explicitly in "*The Philosophy of Composition*," wherein Poe also supplies his philosophy of beauty: „When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect – they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul – not of intellect, or of heart – upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating „the beautiful““. Thus the value of what is viewed lies solely in the response

induced in the observer, and the subject takes into the realm of the sublime than the beautiful, so instead, the inspiration for the experience of Beauty in all its melancholy extremity is „the death ... of a beautiful woman“ and, appropriately, „equally it is beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover“. The woman must die in order to enlarge the experience of the narrator, her viewer. ... Floyd Stovall comments that Poe’s poetic theory „has been partly substantiated by the excellence of these productions, most of which are among the best things that he did. There is in them, however, much repetition ... and in spite of the poet’s excellent art the theme grows monotonous.“ (Hayes 2007, p. 70 - 71)

Jakub Arbes deals with similar female characters. Female characters in the work of Arbes are usually weak, ill, and unhappy, e. g. Otilka from *Etiopská lilie* [The Ethiopian Lilly]. This young lady dies from tuberculosis. Nevertheless, not each of the characters lives her whole life like this, some of the women change. Among these are Ismena from *Zázračná Madona* [The Miraculous Madonna] who is naturally skinny, pale and weak, but with help of a chemical agent she gains strength and beauty. At the end, however, she dies from overdose. The woman from *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind], on the other hand, leads a quite, carefree life with an illusion that she has everything she can have, but in reality, she lacks knowledge of the world. Later in her life, a tragedy happens which makes her mentally deranged. Eldora from *Akrobati* [The Acrobats] can serve as another example. It is a lady who is gifted for singing and can possibly succeed, but she does not believe in her talent. Finally, a destiny intervenes and she meets her lost brother who makes his living as an acrobat and she joins him in performances. They immediately become famous. However, once an accident happens and Eldora is inadvertently killed by her brother.

Václav Dresler in his study *Jakub Arbes, život a dílo* writes that Jakub Arbes did not primarily intend to create a type of character, and he did not create it. He wanted to depict a character that would not be ordinary, but, on the other hand, a character that would be unrepeatable and unique. Although it might seem that characters of both authors create type, it is not so. The protagonists have always some features that connect them, but in other features, they are different. They may have different qualities, different social background, different opinions. Female characters are more likely to be types. Edgar Allan Poe’s women are weak and the women of Jakub Arbes are mostly weak, but some of them, probably because of what they go through, manage to gain strength, e. g. Eldora from *Akrobati* [The Acrobats], Ismena from *Zázračná Madona* [The Miraculous Madonna] and the lady from *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind]. All these protagonists have experienced something difficult and

powerful in their lives. Eldora had a great talent for singing and a potential to be famous, but everybody except her saw it, she had low self-esteem and did not believe herself. However, she met her brother, working as an acrobat, and she wanted to travel and perform with him. She managed to overcome her weakness and she suddenly became famous. Ismena, on the other hand, was physically weak, she was ill. She disliked her appearance, considering herself unattractive for her husband and she wanted to enhance her beauty with help of a chemical agent and she did and it also gave her energy, but it killed her. The female protagonist in *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind] was happy in her marriage, but gradually, her spouse began to dedicate more time to politics, his hobby, and she felt more and more lonely. At the same time and with her husband often absent from home, she fell in love with her neighbour and he with her. She assumed that he raped her and she became offensive. For example, when she first saw her baby, she presumed to see the similarity between the man and the child and she wanted to kill it. There is one thing that should be assigned to Jakub Arbes, and thus that his female protagonists are more elaborate and not all of them are hysterical. On the other side, Poe's women always bear this trait. Heroines of the Czech writer are rather simple characters, not very educated, with limited knowledge of the world, but they are good people and they also do not lack in ability to think rationally. What is more, in the literary creation of both writers female characters have an inferior role.

In his study on Poe that he wrote in the 70s Jakub Arbes writes: "All Poe's female characters are mysterious, they are either hysterical and ill women, human beings occupying themselves with philosophy, angels of peculiar phantasy of Poe, who live and die in such a strange way as the individuality of Poe is."¹⁶ (Arbes 1977, p. 42) Jakub Arbes wrote essays about artists, poets, writers and dramatists with whom he identified in his literary creation. The author was interested mainly in the way and psychology of writing and in such a way, he processes studies of Poe, Shakespeare, Molière, Cervantes, Balzac, Zola, Dumas, Augier, Sardou, Dickens and Hugo. What he praised on authors was their independence in terms of theme selection, detailed narration of the plot and realistic point of view. Unintentionally, Arbes revealed a picture of his own work in his study.

When we consider the male narrators of Jakub Arbes's stories, we notice that they often suffer from poverty, sometimes from hunger, and they usually do not hope for a better life, realizing that in the society where they live, people remain in the social positions they were born in.

¹⁶ "Všechny jeho postavy ženštin mají ráz mystický, jsou to buď ženštiny všehomíra se zabývající, buď andělkové zvláštní fantazie Poeovy, kteří žijou a umírají způsobem právě tak zvláštním, jako jest básnická individualita Poeova."

Sometimes they are reconciled with their bitter destiny, but in more cases, they revolt against their social status, they cannot bear being despised by rich people and growing in poor life conditions. The protagonists of Jakub Arbes act like two men of the name William Wilson in Poe's tale of the same name. They are rivals, and they compete, and the male characters of the Czech author fight against society which is superior to them. Considering the fact that this is one of the characteristic features of the genre of romanetto, we might claim that it is the idea of the writer, and it certainly can be, nevertheless, one of the protagonists of Edgar Allan Poe's short story *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, C. Auguste Dupin, is such a character. "This young gentleman was of an excellent, indeed of an illustrious family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in this world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes. He was of a well-known family, but he was so poor that he had become hopeless about any change for the better."¹⁷ Edgar Allan Poe has one similar character, and that is William Legrand from *The Gold Bug*. He used to be wealthy, but he somehow lost his money.

11 *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind]

As Poe's short stories, the romanetto begins mysteriously. The narrator goes for a walk through Prague and it is hot weather, so he seeks relax in a church as there is colder. During his spending time in the church that he knows from childhood, a thunderstorm starts which creates a terrifying atmosphere. The narrator observes the scene in the church. There are two figures who attract his attention – the preacher and an older lady in black dress who, when she beholds the godly man, pronounces a name and starts to tear her clothes off. She is obviously mad, mistaking the preast for someone she used to know. Later, a message about this event in the church appears in a newspaper. The woman seems to be like Poe's female protagonists – she is hysterical, but Arbes adds also other qualities to her character – she is loving, aware of her sin and she repents. The setting is also like settings of Poe's tales. The narrator remembers that in his childhood, the church was a haunted, dark and unpleasant place and now it is pleasantly looking, but lit by gas. America of the 19th century was lit by gas and Edgar Allan Poe probably felt like in prison in this country, barbaric for him at that time. In the romanetto,

¹⁷ <https://www.printfriendly.com/p/g/x3s3l/C3t3Y>

however, the church looks intimidating even now, during the storm. Two lamps with red light swing and shine on the floor so it looks like there was blood on it.

The Czech author writes in exact words that the interior of the church created a dismal impression as a dilapidated, to an early destruction dedicated room into which through moist, by cobwebs covered windows, a light so dim penetrated that the smoky roof, blackened walls, rotten benches, dusted statues, paintings and other decorations – everything – seemed to be covered in fog. (Arbes, 1985, p.7) This is the description of the church in the narrator's childhood. Nowadays, it has this image: "Conspicuous, affable cleanness surprised me. A bright daylight, penetrating inside by the windows turned to the west, just illuminated almost one third of the temple. All that was then dismal was not here anymore. All that made this impression was removed, repaired or substituted by something that gave a much friendlier and attractive impression. Whatever the eye looked at, everything revealed features of careful thoroughness resulting in getting rid of former uncongenial, almost depressing resemblance of the temple interior." (Arbes 1985, p.7)¹⁸

After the depiction of this situation the narrator returns in memories to his childhood when he experienced the revolution in 1848. He describes how he once saw an older man looking from a window of his home and after some time, the author informs readers who this man is. He is Count Buquoy, he is rich, but his behavior is worse than his social status – he is calm, but he has a cold heart, he is not sensitive towards other people whom he despises. This man reminds the author of the thesis of Poe's male characters who murder somebody – they could not be calmer when killing their victims and later vindicating themselves.

At one moment, the narrator spends his time with his friends in a café and they talk about politics, philosophy and other serious and complicated topics and Count Buquoy comes to their table and tells them: "In quarrels of all kinds, only a cold logic, the only eligible feature of sovereign reason can persuade, so win." (Arbes 1985, p. 144)¹⁹

During the course of events, the narrator returns to the hospital for mentally ill where the lady is staying now. She spends her time here because she was unfaithful in her marriage and the man (whom she has a child with) is the brother of the preast. The preacher meets her and tries

¹⁸ "Nápadná, přívětivá čistota mě překvapila. Jasně světlo denní, vnikající dovnitř okny na západ obrácenými, osvětlovalo právě skoro třetinu chrámu. Po někdejší nevlídné pošmurnosti nebylo nikde památky. Vše, co druhdy dojem ten činívalo, bylo odstraněno, opraveno nebo nahrazeno něčím, co činilo dojem nepoměrně přívětivější a vábnější. Necht' utkvělo oko na čemkoli, všady postřehlo známky vzorně starostlivé pečlivosti, aby byl někdejší nevlídný, skoro skličující ráz vnitřku chrámového pokud možná vyhlazen."

¹⁹ "Ve sporech všech odstínů může přesvědčit, tedy zvítězit jen chladná logika, jedině oprávněný projev suverénního rozumu."

to convince her that his brother wrote, but did not send, a letter in which he proves his innocence. However, it makes her even more upset. “If the words of the letter are true,” she answered, I harmed your brother. And it is my burden to repent from my guilt.” (Arbes 1985, p. 193 - 194)²⁰

The essential literary agent is the theory of Count Buquoy which deals with human desire to have still more and more and with amount of nitrogen and oxygen in the atmosphere. The result would be extinction of humankind, without people even realizing it... The personality of Count Buquoy is reasonable, while other people are not... The destruction of human race appears in Poe’s *Conversation of Eiros with Charmion*.

As their discussion continues, the lady returns to her fits of madness. She has a vision that Prague will be hit by apocalypse. Apocalypse is represented in Edgar Allan Poe’s *Conversation of Eiros with Charmion*.

12 *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper]

At the beginning, readers are provided with the information that the narrator and the main protagonist in one person has a close friend – his bulldog. This statement reminds the author of the thesis of a certain short story of Arbes’s American colleague, *The Black Cat*. Here, the cat is also male and it is again a great companion for the narrator and the main character in one person. The relationship of the man and the animal in both pieces of writing indicates true love, but as we continue reading, we are told that both owners kill their pet. Nevertheless, there is a difference, because in the romanetto, the narrator shoots his dog as he wants to rid it of suffering from being poisoned by another person, and on the contrary, Poe’s protagonist becomes addicted to alcohol, so he is not able to control his behavior, and he hangs his cat as he suffers by fixed and false imaginations that the animal follows him wherever he goes.

Another point worth to observe in this passage is the great discrepancy between the narrators. As it is typical for Jakub Arbes and his romanettos, his ich-narrator works as a writer (again, he is poor and followed by bad luck as publishers refuse his writings because Czech readers would probably not be interested in their topics and what is more, he complains about it and feels bitter). On the contrary, and again, it is typical for E. A. Poe, his narrator is a man about whom we do not know which job he has (if any). The parallel is that they are both married

²⁰ ““Pravda-li, co stojí v listě, “odpověděla živěji než posud, “ublížila jsem vašemu bratru já, a nikoli on mně. A na mně jest, abych se z provinění svého kála. Na mně jest, abych plakala a nejtěžším pokáním smyla nepromíjitelný hřích... ,“

with the only difference that in the romanetto, the man has a son, but in the short story, he is childless. Both wives are loving and they constantly show it in their relationships towards their spouses, but they are also autonomous characters, ready to argue about anything when they disagree with them. This is observable in the question of killing or not killing the bulldog in the romanetto. The narrator does not want to shoot the animal himself but the woman insists that he should do it and as she has also tears as a weapon he surrenders and suffers when killing his dear friend and witness of his happiness in marriage. Similar situation appears in the tale when at one moment, the narrator wants to murder his cat when he is drunk and his wife laments that he should not do it. Readers can also notice another important factor – that Arbes's narrator is a philosopher and a good person, but on the other hand, Poe's narrator is a bad character – since he has started to drink. This is also characteristic – Arbes describes heroes contributing to the society, but Poe, in contrast, writes about outcasts of society with their vices. Interesting is that Poe's writings were accepted by the publishers. Moreover, they were praised by them. Maybe the readership wanted to observe protagonists who were outsiders, not heroes, maybe Poe's stories were really outstanding.

At the beginning of the romanetto, the narrator's friends, including one man whose job is to be a doctor, look for a devil. The doctor actually finds him and invites his friend, the narrator, to go with him to his house and examine the devil. When we look at *Some Words with a Mummy* written by Poe, at the beginning of this short story, the narrator's friend, Dr. Ponnoner, invites him to follow him to his house and examine a mummy. Devil and mummy are quite mysterious characters. However, there is a difference between these two scenes – Arbes's doctor talks to his friend when inviting him and Poe's doctor sends the narrator a letter. Later, readers are witnesses of depiction of the scene taking place in the houses where more people are visitors. There reigns mysterious atmosphere. In both cases, the companions drink wine to gain courage to their brave deed of discovering unknown.

When we read Arbes's work, we find out that the devil is a man dressed in black, he has pale skin and is a very calm person. He looks like Roderick Usher, but his personality is different as Usher is rather nervous and fearful and this man is calm and brave. When the narrator looks closely at the man, he realizes that the foreigner is probably very intelligent, but also passionate with interest in poetry and building verses. The mummy and the devil are both superior to other gentlemen in the room and they laugh at their limited knowledge. The men feel offended. They argue and the devil and the mummy win. In the romanetto *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper], the devil is ordered to translate a poem written in French by

Victor Hugo. However, he assumes that poems lose their quality when being translated. This is an interesting opinion. The meeting of all the gentlemen is a complicated scene in the romanetto. One of them, the doctor, committed a deep sin – he left his lover whom he had a child with and later, because of poverty, she died and the offspring was left alone and led a difficult life. The child is the devil, now adult man, as we already know, and he narrates about this experience in such a way that the doctor feels extremely guilty. It even leaves him speechless, then he gets angry and hits a table that hits the narrator who faints. His friends carry him home. What is also worth mentioning is the fact that the narrator was accompanied by his faithful dog at the meeting. The dog was scared to enter the room. We cannot be sure about this, but maybe it could expect something bad to happen. The doctor asks the devil questions and the narrator's duty is to write down the answers. Nevertheless, he notices that the light in the room is changing colours. However, nobody else seems to be aware of such a thing. When he gets home, he receives a letter in which the other of his friends, not the doctor, explains the reason for that – he gave some substance to the narrator's wine and it caused his visions. He also tries to provide the narrator with other explanations, but this man is unable to understand it. He again begins to dedicate all his time to writing. The fact that he is not able to decipher the letter, gets him angry and he throws the letter away. It falls on the cooker and as in Poe's *The Gold Bug*, the flame causes that the paper reveals different information – here it shows the picture of the devil. The narrator's wife knows him and she gets shocked. The resemblance of the man on the portrait is the appearance of Edvin that used to be a lover of a friend of the narrator's wife. Their love was unhappy and the woman paid it with her life... The narrator feels sad. Poe's women make the same impression on their male companions, because they also perish. In Poe's work, female characters become victims of mortal diseases. Once the narrator discovers that the doctor has come back from journeys and he visits him in his house. Unfortunately, he finds his good friend ill – he got heart-attack. He narrates that he travelled through Europe and lived for passion and pleasure – like a young man, although he was old – and the consequence was the heart attack. Later, he explains that he wanted to poison the narrator as he loved his wife and begs for his forgiveness. The substance in the wine of the narrator was the antidote. The narrator suffered from an illness and the doctor prescribed him medicine that contained the poison. Fortunately, he did not drink enough of it to get poisoned, but the dog has as at the moment when the narrator was supposed to drink it, he got sick and dropped the bottle. The liquid was consumed by the bulldog. During this meeting, the doctor is broken and begs the narrator to forgive him. He is well aware of impending death. When the narrator is released, he talks with the doctor's servant who

presumes to know the narrator who is not sure about this. The servant reveals that he used to be a soldier. When the narrator shot his dog, this man tried to shoot him, but he did not succeed. He also wishes to be forgiven. Moreover, he has been punished already. The narrator leaves with a guilty feeling and without giving an answer – because of his imagination that it is a good thing to kill the dog (as animals, unlike human beings, cannot hope in eternal life), an innocent man was beaten.

At the end, the narrator seems to criticize the fact that he is a philosopher. Probably it brings nothing good in life.

In the romanetto, there is also similarity with *MS Found in a Bottle* where somebody (in this case the narrator and the main protagonist at the same time) travels because of restlessness.

13 *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius]

At the beginning, the narrator examines a painting of St. Xaverius in a church in Prague and it happens that he is locked there with a stranger (a man who also desires to stay in the church overnight), he notices the stranger's behaviour. The following quote from the romanetto illustrates this: "The attention he dedicated to the painting was very extraordinary: he did not look at it just with a certainty of an expert that had seen the picture many times, but he examined it as if he wanted to discover the most mysterious motive of the painter." (Arbes 1949, p. 19)²¹ Moreover, the foreigner behaves nervous and uncalm. The behaviour of this mysterious man reminds the author of the thesis of Poe's short story *The Gold Bug* and one of its main protagonists, William Legrand, who also finds the way to find a treasure, as the man in the romanetto. Here, the clue is supposedly hidden in the painting, while in the tale, there are several clues leading to the treasure. These clues are a legacy of certain Captain Kidd whom the treasure once belonged. William Legrand, who seems to be very intelligent and curious, also examines what he knows which makes him nervous and sick but he desperately wants the treasure which could return him his lost property and his former good reputation. In the romanetto, during the first meeting of the narrator and the man readers can observe that the man leaves the narrator free choice – he can do what he wants with the man. However, later in the writing, when the man tries to persuade the narrator to embark on an expedition to find the dug treasure, he literally forces him to go with him, so with a growing obsession with

²¹ "Pozornost, kterou věnoval obrazu, byla velmi nápadná, nedíval se naň pouze s jistotou znalce, jenž byl obraz už nescíslněkrát viděl, nýbrž tak zkoumavě, jako by chtěl vypátrati nejtajnější motiv malířův."

the treasure, his behaviour changes. When the narrator sees the man's copy of the original painting, he sees that it is not well done and he becomes suspicious that the intentions of the stranger are not just to copy the picture. Similar scene occurs in the tale of the American author, where at the beginning, Legrand finds a gold bug, but he borrows it to somebody, so the narrator, his friend, has to look at the resemblance of the bug on the paper. Again, he sees a skull, not a bug, so even this painting is not marvellous, and again the narrator begins to think that the intention of his friend was different. Later, when being at the man's house, the two friends discuss the topic of the painting and the treasure and it seems to the narrator that Xaverius (the man) has a fixed idea that the portrait really shows marks of plan how to get to the treasure, so he probably considers his friend insane at the moment as he does not share his belief in the existence of the treasure. The same appears in *The Gold Bug* as William Legrand's friend does not believe in its existence either. What is more, Legrand (he is joking, but the narrator does not know that) makes use of the gold bug that he has found to locate the treasure. He claims that the bug will lead him to the treasure as it contains gold and the insect has golden colour. In both cases, the protagonists who do not believe in the treasure make effort to convince their opposites to let their imagination of it be.

When discussing topics that also E. A. Poe wrote about in his works, obsession can be found in the romanetto as the narrator is obsessed by publishing some pictures and he is still forced to speculate about it, even when it is against his will. So, it happens that he once comes to a church in Prague, where a painting of Svatý Xaverius hangs and he sees there a man. Once again, he is so obsessed by the observation of the picture that it seems to him that the man has the same face as the godly man in the picture, but it is not true. Nevertheless, later we find out that the man and the saint are quite similar, although the resemblance of their face is not completely identical. The mysterious man, later the narrator's friend, discovers this fact by coincidence when his photograph falls out of his pocket when he is praying in the church. The narrator also considers his friend to be mentally ill and followed by a fixed idea that the painting hides instructions for finding a treasure. According to his own words, the author of the picture, painter Balko, told the man's grandmother that it should contain instructions for finding the treasure. The friend is obsessed by finding the treasure and his inclination towards it has a negative impact even on his physical health. He now seems to be mortally ill and as if he should die soon. Nonetheless, when the narrator visits his companion at his home, he is jolly and wants to go and find the treasure. The event at the beginning of the romanetto, when the men meet each other, is a perfect mystification, because the man who seems to intend to

steal the painting, does not want to do this at all – he is just trying to find the plan of Prague and the spot with the dug treasure in it. This is important for the continuation of the plot.

One part of the romanetto depicts that the two protagonists, although they were enemies earlier, become friends and they go to the house of the mysterious man. The motif of a house appears a lot in the work of the American writer as well. In the romanetto, the house is old, dark with narrow and impassable stairs. The rooms are tiny with almost no furniture (in Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, furniture is situated just in one floor in the house of the two murdered women), the windows are slender. What is more, they visit the house in the evening when there is already dark which just increases the scary impression.

Edgar Allan Poe describes his settings in a similar manner as Jakub Arbes. Here is the depiction of the bedroom of Roderick Usher, a character from *The Fall of the House of Usher*. "The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all."²²

As in the short story *The Gold Bug*, two friends in the romanetto *Svatý Xaverius* [St. Xaverius] embark on an expedition to find the dug treasure at night. The man who assumes that the treasure exists, is in both cases the one who suggests that they should go at this time as it eliminates the risk that they will be beheld by people, and their friend is always surprised and upset. In addition, in both works the characters who are persuaded about the existence of the treasure use their cold reason when thinking about the whole situation. That means that they are already equipped with all tools they are going to need for digging, and they take a lamp with them as well. On the contrary, their friends do not share their optimistic faith and follow them with distrust, just because they are worried about their health and presume that if they resisted, their companions would get upset.

²² <https://www.englishclub.com/reading/story-house-of-usher.htm>

The romanetto of the Czech writer has a surprising and unexpected conclusion which the man obsessed by the treasure makes – he finds out that the treasure is something more valuable than jewels – it is knowledge. The following extract shows it.

“I do not believe anything,” says the friend, “a simple faith is just as much as a dream for me, but I think, judge and combine. However, one thing is already sure – that the treasure about which we talk is not located in the place I showed you. Nonetheless, does it eliminate the existence of the treasure?” (Arbes 1949, p. 86)²³

As this protagonist, Edgar Allan Poe’s William Legrand can be also referred to as a mathematician – he thinks, judges, combines. On the other hand, he is lucky enough to find a material treasure, he does not disappoint himself. Nevertheless, the question sounds whether a treasure of wisdom is less important than material treasure. People should realize that it is not so just because they at first want to get the material treasure. Readers of the romanetto should probably learn this.

Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Gold Bug* includes three main characters, but in this chapter, only two of them are going to be mentioned. The first one is the “unknown“ narrator (like in all Poe’s tales, the narrator does not have a name, therefore he is referred to as an “unknown“ narrator) and the other one is his friend, William Legrand, who lives on Sullivan Island, away from people, as he is ashamed because of losing his property and he dreams about gaining money. He seems to be rather mad because of influence of a gold bug and some circumstances on his psyche. He succeeds to find the treasure of Captain Kidd and he is lead by Kidd’s instructions – that who wants the treasure, they have to shoot from the left eye of a skull on a tree which is visible from so called “Devil’s saddle“ in a “Bishop’s court“, but this is just a rock.

The protagonist of *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius] in comparison, attempts to find his treasure using instructions in a painting. “What remains unknown in the cases of Arbes’s romanetto is the protagonist’s reason why he connects the picture and the treasure. We have no evidence that his plan to look for the treasure was really depicted in the picture or if it is just an imagination of the feverishly working protagonist’s brain that guessed the signs right there where he wanted to have them, if he did not transmit the plan of Prague to the painting instead of its features on the plan of Prague. The plot of the romanetto indicates more the second way.“ (Krejčí 1995, p. 65 – 66)

²³ “Nevěřím ničemu,” praví přítel, “pouhá víra je mi tolik jako pouhý sen, přemýšlím však, soudím a kombinuju. Jedno ovšem je už jisto, že poklad, o který se jedná, není na onom místě, jež jsem naznačil. Avšak vylučuje to již existenci pokladu vůbec?”

Matching the picture and the plan of Prague must have asked for a great mental effort.

Xaverius, the man that had the same name as the saint and that discovered the similarity, must have used his analytical reason when trying to find it. In Poe's tale, William Legrand likewise uses his reason and his knowledge to get to the treasure. In his case, however, a coincidence helped him. The day when his friend (the narrator) visited him at the beginning of the story, was the coldest day of the year so he had to create fire. Legrand wanted to show his friend a painting of the gold bug he had found. When the narrator examined the painting, Legrand's dog jumped on him and he gave the painting close to the fire without realizing it. When he looked at it again, he saw a death's-head. This led Legrand to other guesses. He investigated the picture and he found out that it was on a piece of parchment which is used for important announcements. He realized that he found the parchment on the island and a wreck of a pirate ship was close to it. On the parchment, there was also a picture of a kid and certain Captain Kidd was famous for his treasure that had not been found yet. The parchment includes another piece of information, and that was a text (instructions how to find the treasure). It sounded like this:

“A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat forty-one degrees and thirteen minutes northeast and by north main branch seventh limb east side shoot from the left eye of the death's-head a bee line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out“ (Schwarz, 1975, p. 102)

When Legrand found the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat and observed the tree with binoculars, he could see the skull on it's seventh limb. Later, when Jupiter dropped the bug through the left eye of the skull, the point on the ground was the spot where the treasure was located.

When the two friends in the romanetto *Svatý Xaverius* look for the treasure, they find some diamonds, but in the place where they dig, they somehow create fire and the friend sees in it Svatý Xaverius, he gets shocked and runs away to a cemetery and the narrator, not being successful with finding his friend, walks back home. His companion gets lost, but after a year, they meet in a prison in Vienna, where the friend is because of stealing diamonds from the church where the portrait of St. Xaverius was located. Mysterious is that he is innocent and mistaken for someone else. The night when he is supposed to have stolen the treasure, was the night when he was digging the treasure. Nevertheless, the night was not successful for him at all – not only that the treasure was not valuable, but it also caused his stay in prison and his disease of lungs because of which he dies in the prison – at the same time in which he is

liberated. According to Jakub Arbes, the main idea of the romanetto is that a precise thinking is a basis of all progress and only by using it we can reach some results at work.

The magic picture of Svatý Xaverius has an analogy in another one of Poe's short stories, in *The Oval Portrait*.

In *The Oval Portrait*, the narrator reads a note about one painting of a young beautiful lady which he sees and which gives impression of a living person. She married the painter and as he was creating her portrait, she became more and more ill and sad, because her husband praised his art more than his wife. When he had finished the picture, she died.

When we consider the protagonists, Svatý Xaverius, the man looking for the treasure, is in a certain way similar to William Legrand playing role in Poe's short story compared to the romanetto. They have in common the fact that they are poor. Nevertheless, Xaverius has been poor from the beginning, as we read that his parents who wanted to keep him study, gave him the last money they had. Legrand, on the contrary, used to be a wealthy man, but a series of disasters rid him of his money. In both cases, the consequence is that they almost do not want to meet other people and they incline to spending time alone and thinking. However, this is trait of Xaverius, while Legrand would maybe not behave so if he was not ashamed for being penniless.

Arbes's inspiration in *The Gold Bug* is visible, but his original invention is clear and worth to admire. (Krejčí, 1946, p. 205)

14 Newtonův mozek [Newton's Brain]

As for the scheme, *Newtonův mozek* [The Newton's Brain] is similar to the romanetto *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper]. In both of them, the narrating hero – the author – is invited to participate in an unusual event which happens in the night. When he is invited, he is always alone. He finds a man in a position that causes terror in the place where he comes. In *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper], the man is a supposed devil, in *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain], he is a corpse on a catafalque – and this fantastic character, when the first surprise is over, uses concentrated attendance to discuss various problems of human life and culture. (Krejčí, 1946, p. 116)

The topic introduced in the romanetto *Newtonův mozek* [The Newton's Brain] is a construction of a time machine (it is a machine with which people can travel to the universe). This "invention of doom" permits travelling through time, to the past and to the future. Here, Poe's inspiration is visible. The author informs about a hot-air balloon's construction in his

tale *The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaal*. Without doubt, the new invention must have surprised not only other characters of the story, but mainly their readers which illustrates the following contribution of Kevin J. Hayes in his book *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*.

“In an unprecedented feat of human ingenuity and artistic audacity, Mr. Edgar Allan Poe of Fordham today reported a purely imaginary feat of science and technology as a fait accomplissement, creating a near-riot outside the offices of *The New York Sun*. The stir was caused by citizens who sought to purchase a special edition containing the fallacious report of a hot air balloon’s crossing of the Atlantic. By making facts of physical philosophy the basis and central concern of an adventure tale, Mr. Poe has invented science fiction. The seriousness and high-mindedness of this fictional mode will soon undoubtedly allow it to take its place among the most highly esteemed and prestigious genres of literature.

Countless unsuspecting readers were duped by Poe’s report, which claimed the paper’s front page with the large-type headline, “Astounding News! By Express Via Norfolk! Signal Triumph!” The article described in minute and technically plausible detail the flying apparatus allegedly invented and flown by well-known aviator Mr. Monck Mason. In all instances the author of the report was careful to explain the principles of aeronautics, meteorology, navigation and mechanics upon which the unexpected phenomena observed by his protagonists relied.

Mr. Poe, who will be known to the reader as the most beloved of our native poets and literary fabricators, has already earned for himself an untarnishable posterity through his ethereal and ideal poetry, his creation *ex nihilo* everywhere acknowledged to have set American literature of its feet once and for all. One feels that artistic and speculative advances of the widest possible variety and of a truly general and cosmical significance cannot be far behind.”

(Hayes, 2002, p. 70)

Nevertheless, Poe and Arbes are not the only authors dealing with time travel in the second half of the 19th century. H. G. Wells’s novel *The Time Machine* (1895) is another great work, known to many readers. It is possible to find a parallel between the novel and the romanetto discussed in this chapter. Meanwhile Wells refers to his main protagonist just as “the time traveller”, Arbes gives him closer identity – he is a friend of the narrator. When introducing the time machine, their spectacular invention, both protagonists have a company. In the novel, the company is represented by the protagonist’s friends, in the romanetto, it is represented by public, so there are more people. In both cases, the men who are present have various jobs – e.

g. writers, doctors, psychologists, priests. When the main characters in both works talk about the time machine, nobody believes that such a machine can exist. All their companions argue with them and say they cannot be right. Nonetheless, this scene is not similar in all its aspects. At the beginning of *The Time Machine*, the time traveler comes back from his journey to the year 802 701 and narrates about the adventures he has experienced. Furthermore, he travelled alone. In *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain], he talks about the time machine before he travels with it and then he returns to the past with the time machine, he does not travel to the future. Moreover, he is accompanied by his friend, the narrator. At the end, he dies and the narrator survives. In H. G. Wells's work, the time traveler survives so he can share his story with his friends. When they doubt that he tells them truth, he answers: "I do not want to argue today. I would like to tell you my story, but I do not want to and cannot argue with you. If you wish, I will depict what has happened to me, but you cannot disturb me. Unfortunately, a lot of it is going to sound as a lie. So what? Everything is true – each word, and you can think what you want about it. At four o'clock, I was in my laboratory, but then ... I have experienced eight days that no human being has experienced before! I am horribly tired, but I am not going to go sleep until I will have depicted my whole story to you. However, I do not want to be interrupted. Do you agree?" (Mertinová, 1992, p. 20) A crucial idea appearing in both writings is that progress is just a fight for existence and people do not realize this fact, because they somehow imagine the world and want to have it better. When the men in *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain] visit the past, they just see battles and wars. When the time traveler in *The Time Machine* makes a trip to the future, he finds the humankind divided into two races – beautiful people "eloi" who live on the Earth. Nevertheless, all individuals look the same – they wear the same clothes and obviously do not make any effort to distinguish men and women. It seems that this has lost its meaning for these people. The second race, "morlocks", lives under the ground and fights with "eloi". All the people live primitively, as people in the primeval time. This is the result of progress.

Besides the similarities with *The Time Machine*, we can find parallel between the romanetto and the work *The Journey to the Moon* by Jules Verne and Camille Flammarion's *Lumen* where the author talks about "a journey in a sunbeam" and "reversed happenings" and in 1870, he also published an essay about wars in a magazine. *Lumen* is a mystical interview with the spirit of a dead friend. However, there does not exist any safe evidence that Arbes really knew the content of these writings. (Krejčí, 1946, p. 219 – 220).

When we return back to Poe and compare his short story *The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall* and Arbes's romanetto, we can see that in both writings, the author of the time machine depicts reasons why he created this invention and how he did it. The invention of both the hot-air balloon and the construction in the romanetto stem from the protagonists' disappointment with the world rather than from longing to discover unknown. Both male characters are definitely not satisfied with the society they live in. Furthermore, the friend of the narrator of *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain] has a talent for being a magician. He constructs a machine that he can use to travel in space and time, the machine looks like glasses, but when being asked by his friend how the engine is called (the narrator wants to receive this information to share it with people), he answers that the engine is known to all people – that it is - imagination. In *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain] the narrator and his friend embark on a journey to see the history of the mankind from its beginning and in Poe's tale, the main protagonist travels in his balloon to the Moon.

The two compared writings have obviously more features that are similar. It is characteristic for Jakub Arbes that he does not write much information at the beginnings of his romanettos. At the beginning of the romanetto *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain], the narrator begins his story when standing by the grave of his dead friend. This information is content of the first sentence of the romanetto. The second sentence connects his narrative with his thesis that it is cynical, but in the following text, he says:

"Strict, unrelenting science rid many of us of the sweetest dream of life. ... Why to mourn death of a man who believed, and, what is more, was convinced that everything which pleases and saddens us ends with – death?"

One statement of the narrator of the romanetto sounds that he has seen many times how death cruelly and inexorably rages in crowds of living people. Prince Prospero in Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* and his courtiers are persuaded that death cannot do any harm to them, but it finds all its victims and shows its power. Death is something we are unable to avert, although with our education, science and progress we can manage a lot. The narrator and his friend in

Arbes's romanetto undergo similar experience as they observe the history of the mankind on their fantastic trip as they find out that people only fight and kill each other, and another event is when at the end of the work, the friend stops to manage to control the machine and during its fall, he dies. In both *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain] and *The Masque of the Red Death*, the protagonists are naive as they assume that death really has not so great power over them. Another significant point is that in the romanetto, once the friend is performing in the Kinský palace and at the beginning of his marvelous performance, he shows a coffin with an embalmed corpse and experiments with it as the gentlemen in *Some Words With a Mummy*. Both writings reveal an interesting surprise. On one hand, the mummy in Poe's story is alive after lying for many thousands of years in the coffin, but the gentlemen examining it find out that when the man – the mummy – was considered to be really dead, he was just in a state of catatonic sleep. In the romanetto, the corpse looks like the friend, but it is a corpse of a man with similar appearance. As a part of his spectacular show, the friend reveals that he (when he died in a battle) replaced his brain with Newton's one and therefore he probably lives now. Readers do not find the reason in the romanetto and they should probably expect this. The protagonist talks about the speed of thought and in comparison with for example light or electricity, thoughts are slow. He admires the scientist Newton and his genius and therefore he uses his brain. Moreover, he criticizes the society and progress, because thoughts are just slow and other things are more perfect. In Poe's short story, the mummy compares his life in ancient Egypt with the American society of the nineteenth century and claims that ancient Egyptians were more progressive because they invented new things. In contrast, the modern people just improve things so they really do not come with something new, so no progress exists. Important point is the moment when the narrator acknowledges that ancient Egyptians were really more progressive than people in his society which he begins to hate. In both writings, there is thesis that everything created by people is transient and that it will be completely destroyed once. The motif of destruction appears in another Poe's short story, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, where the residence of Ushers is hit by destruction and as it falls, the last descendants of the family of Ushers die within its walls.

In the last paragraph of the comparison of the romanetto, the author of the thesis would like to mention some reflections in the work: "The fight has lasted from the beginning of the world... And in course of several thousands of years, humankind has tried to determine main principle of life, it has fancied that it directs the world using the principle of love and humanity... And after thousands of years, it finally learns that it has made a mistake... It learns that life is

nothing else than eternal fight for pure existence...“ (Arbes 1949, p. 183 - 184)²⁴ What the narrator and his companion have chance to see when travelling in time and in space, is long lasting fighting. It seems that throughout history, people did and do nothing else. When we take time to study this circumstance, we come to a conclusion that it is so in the world, and it is well reflected in the romanetto. Jakub Arbes was a person who had to fight against poverty, against his enemies, as well as his American colleague. Both of them discuss fight in their literature. For instance, competing with a rival is pictured in Poe's *William Wilson*, while other of his male protagonists fight with police and righteousness after committing a murder. Other of his characters fight against natural forces, as well as Arbes's characters.

²⁴ “Boj ten trvá od počátku světa... A v průběhu několika tisíců let snažilo se lidstvo stanovit hlavní zásadu života, namlouvalo si, že řídí svět zásadou lásky a lidskosti... A po tisíciletích konečně poznává, že se klamalo...”

Conclusion

The author of the thesis has come to the conclusion that the aim of the paper has been met. Each of the analyzed romanettos *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain], *Svatý Xaverius* [Saint Xaverius], *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper] and *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind] may not contain features of Jakub Arbes's inspiration in Poe's work in each of the four elements of fiction (themes, settings, plots, characters), but the analysis shows the influence of the literary creation of the American writer. The analysis of the four selected romanettos is always related to all four elements of fiction – themes, settings, plots and characters. Arbes's inspiration in Poe's work is not visible in the whole romanettos, but always in some of their parts. Furthermore, it is usually one or more elements of fiction in which the influence of the American writer is obvious, but rarely, all four of them are similar in a particular work of Poe and of Arbes.

The first discussed romanetto, *Poslední dnové lidstva* [Last Days of the Mankind], creates a mysterious atmosphere which we can find in more of Poe's short stories. Apocalypse is the main theme of the romanetto. It is associated with two of the characters, the first one being a mad woman having a vision about apocalypse. The second one is Count Buquoy, a scientist dealing with apocalypse theoretically. Fortunately, no catastrophe happens in the romanetto. On the contrary, it happens in Poe's tale *Conversation of Eiros with Charmion* where all people die. The two mentioned protagonists remind of Poe's ones. The lady is mad (a similarity with lady Madeline from *The Fall of the House of Usher* who kills her brother). Count Buquoy is a cold person with a broken heart. He is not interested in others. Some of Poe's characters seem to be the same (mainly the ones who murder somebody).

As for *Ďábel na skřipci* [Devil on a Clipper], it has an analogy in *Some Words with a Mummy*. In both writings, people examine other characters – a devil and a mummy – and they kind of fight with them. Interesting is that the devil and the mummy are overpowering, not the people. Poe uses the mummy to criticize the society in the 19th century America, stating that it is not progressive in comparison with Ancient Egyptians. The purpose of Arbes's devil is to point at sins of one of the protagonists. Both works somehow reveal vulnerability of human beings.

Svatý Xaverius [Saint Xaverius] has been inspired by two of Poe's stories – *The Gold Bug* and *The Oval Portrait*. The romanetto's motif of a picture leading to a treasure matches the motif of a treasure from *The Gold Bug* and the motif of a magical picture from *The Oval Portrait* (a painter creates his wife's portrait where she looks like a living person, but in reality, she dies). In the romanetto, a friend of the narrator believes that a portrait of Svatý Xaverius will lead

him to a treasure (that it hides a map of Prague and instructions how to find the treasure). Instead of material treasure, he gains a treasure of wisdom. It is quite symbolic in the romanetto and not really clear what exactly it is. In contrast to the romanetto, William Legrand from *The Gold Bug* finds a material treasure. His story began when he lost all his property. Then he found a gold bug and started to believe that it will reveal him the treasure. He created a plan how to find it and he succeeded.

The last analyzed romanetto is *Newtonův mozek* [Newton's Brain] with the topic of travelling to the universe. The main protagonist is a magician who, after dying in a battle, replaces his brain with Newton's one so he becomes a genius. His spectacular invention is a machine with which people can travel to the universe and also witness the past. This man and the narrator embark on a journey with this machine. Unfortunately, what they see is terrifying – they see that life of human beings has been just a fight for existence and moreover, the machine falls and the man, the narrator's friend, dies. The end of the romanetto reveals that all that happened was just the narrator's dream. In his writings, Poe travels to the universe as well. In *The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaal*, this man constructs a hot-air balloon. This means of transport appears in several of Poe's stories.

As for the general comparison of Poe's tales and Arbes's romanettos, similarities have also been found. The author of the thesis has noticed Poe's influence mainly in themes. There are some topics which are the same in the work of both authors, and they are: mystery, death, progress, perverseness and obsession and fear. Arbes's characters also remind of Poe's ones. In the thesis, the protagonists are divided into male and female protagonists from which the latter ones are more similar in the romanettos and the short stories of the American writer. As for the male protagonists, they are Romantic characters revolting against society. Arbes's heroes make their dissatisfaction known, but Poe's protagonists protest only in their minds. The second significant fact is that Arbes's characters often bear autobiographical features (a job of a writer or a journalist and Prague as a location where they live). On the other hand, Poe's characters never seem to work or socialize with other people. Women in works of both authors are usually weak characters. In contrast to characters, the element of fiction that quite varies in Poe's tales and Arbes's romanettos is plot. Both literateurs create dramatic plots, but the world they lived in has determined their work. Especially in the romanettos, the life in the Czech Lands in the time of Jakub Arbes is reflected. Considering the last element of fiction, settings, they also vary in both authors' writings. Important is that Jakub Arbes always tells his readers where his romanettos are set, but Poe, on the contrary, rarely mentions the places.

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