

Hana Farniková, *The Doubles That Lost Their Faces: The Role of Physiognomy in the Literature of Doubles in the 19th Century*

BA thesis

Supervisor's Report

Hana Farniková's thesis rests on a solid theoretical basis: its point of departure is Deleuze's recognition of the three roles of a face in artistic (in his case cinematic) representation – individuating, socializing and communicating. The student's analysis of three British nineteenth-century short novels basically revolves around these three roles. Beside this, Farniková seeks a historical perspective, which she finds in the concept of physiognomy, i.e. the relationship between the outer features of a face and a person's inner nature; this lends her an interesting interpretive tool for understanding the use of doubles and doppelgangers in the literature of the period. In relation to this she explores the history of duality, prevailing in modern literature and thought, with a psychological climax in Freud's theory of the uncanny. Though her approach may seem somewhat eclectic, it definitely reveals one important fact: duality is not just a simple split, it is a complex phenomenon that is historically conditioned and thus changing through history, assuming a specific function in 19th-century British art and literature as a means resonating major issues of the age.

James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* fits the student's concept the best as the story of temptation and perdition is projected through relations between characters whose identity is protean and ambiguous exactly due to instability of external appearance. This enables Farniková to analyse the text in detail following various transformations of the face until "Robert Wringhim and Gil-Martin have become one, possibly even along with George Colwan, as neither of them can stand as his own being anymore. Their identities are so closely embedded into each other's that they can no longer be separated even by death." Such a collapse of individual identities is possible exactly because the Deleuzian roles lose their permanence in the Calvinist setting of the novel. The chapter on Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, on the other hand, concentrates on the problem of Hyde's facelessness; though Stevenson was raised in the same Calvinist atmosphere as Hogg, the student shows that his concern is not the diabolical hidden under the human face but inhumanity, a lack of apparent defining feature that makes a person human. The last chapter discusses the character of duality in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The student focuses on the paradox of art as presented in the novel – as Hyde's facelessness deprived him of his humanity, the painting representing Dorian's face, on the contrary, is not merely an inanimate object, but a doppelganger that can steal a sitter's identity.

The thesis reads as a very insightful study of the problem of identity as expressed in significant works of 19th-century British literature through the figure of a double. The student's arguments are supported by a number of relevant secondary sources and, in the case of Stevenson and Wilde, a reference to their other works (though, strangely enough, not to *The Master of Ballantrae*). This proves that the student is well oriented in her topic and is able to work critically. I do not hesitate to recommend her thesis for defence and suggest a preliminary grade to be a one (**v ýborn ě**).

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PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, Ph.D.