

Opponent's Report

Ilona Procházková, "Psychological Aspects of the Gothic in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Fiction" (BA Thesis)

Ilona Procházková's thesis provides a comparative close reading of several stories by Sheridan Le Fanu, arguing that supernatural beings in these stories are "always firmly connected with the character of the person who is pursued by these spectres" (2). Protagonists are thus viewed as being haunted largely by aspects of their selves and/or their past. Procházková concludes that the horror in Le Fanu's stories originates within the protagonists themselves, despite the fact that aspects of the supernatural clearly remain veiled in mystery.


The chief strengths of Procházková's work lie in the lucidity of its structure and the meticulous nature of her close readings. The thesis is based on an adequate amount of secondary sources that are judiciously used; somewhat lacking are general sources in the area of psychology or psychoanalysis which would have helped to develop the analysis of Le Fanu's characters further.

Procházková's argument is somewhat hindered by occasional imprecision of expression: in contrast with the elegant Czech summary, the English text suffers at times from odd word choice or syntactical errors. As regards the use of terminology, the term "hero" is repeatedly used instead of "protagonist".

There is one issue that the candidate may wish to develop further at the defence: what is the role of the protagonists of the stories that she has chosen in shaping 'their' spectres? In other words, does she perceive the spectres as consciously or unconsciously initiated or shaped by their victims?

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "very good".

Prague, 7 September 2009


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