

Kateřina Páchová, **The Ideal of Beauty in the *Lyrical Ballads***

BA thesis

Opponent's Report

The BA thesis sets out 'to study the ideal of beauty in the period of Romanticism. Its 'main focus' 'is the discrepancy between the beautiful, on one hand, and the sublime or the grotesque, on the other, both in perceiving the nature and human beings.' ('Abstract', v). The thesis is generally well-informed, well-researched and meets the formal requirements of its academic genre.

The strength of Páchová's thesis is mainly in its ambition to contextualize and root her discussion of 'the ideal of beauty' in wider philosophical context, and I appreciate her effort to study the work comprehensively, trying to weave in most of its many aspects. However, this is simultaneously the main drawback of the study, as it rushes across various divergent concepts and struggles to keep pace with the short span that a BA thesis provides for dealing with such a challenging and, frankly, too wide a topic. The theme of motherhood, for instance, would have sufficed for a study of this size, or indeed the ways in which Wordsworth and Coleridge (or one or the other) adapt the Burkean sublime to their own experimental purposes. A more focused study would have allowed the candidate to show her mettle in close reading and in working more intimately with theoretical texts, instead of summarizing and moving swiftly on to the next thing.

I have a question for the candidate to respond to during her viva voce examination, on some of the points that might have been raised by the thesis:

Consider the following quotation from Wordsworth's 'Advertisement' to the 1798 edition: 'The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure.' How would you relate your discussion of 'beauty' to the 'purpose of poetic pleasure'?

I am happy to recommend the thesis for defence and propose a preliminary grade of 'very good' (velmi dobře), pending the candidate's performance on the day.

27 January 2015

Mirka Horová, PhD