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The Ideal of Beauty in the *Lyrical Ballads*

Ideál krásy v Lyrických baladách

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Poděkování

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Prohlášení:

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V Praze dne 7.1.2016

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Abstrakt (česky):

Cílem této bakalářské práce je studium ideálu krásy v období romantismu. Základem je důkladná analýza jednoho z klíčových textů romantismu – Lyrických balad napsaných Williamem Wordsworthem a Samuelem Taylorem Coleridgem. Hlavním cílem práce je porovnání vize krásna ve vztahu k estetice vznešena, jak se vyvíjel ideál krásy v dobách před romantismem, a jak se tato vize změnila právě v období romantismu. Otázkou tedy je, jaký byl ideál krásy v době romantismu a jak je tento ideál reprezentován v Lyrických baladách? Existuje jeden společný ideál krásy pro Wordsworthe a Coleridge nebo se tyto dva básníci liší v jejich chápání krásna?

Hlavní pozornost je v práci zaměřena na rozdíl mezi krásnem na jedné straně a vznešenem či grotesknem na straně druhé. V obou případech pohlíží práce na přírodu a na lidské bytosti. Romantici mají mnoho společných znaků stejně jako vizi krásna, nezáleží, zda opěvují ženy, muže nebo přírodu, či jestli se místo povrchní krásy zabývají krásou vnitřní – krásou duše. Podobnosti mezi těmito druhy krásy se v práci také zabývám. Reflexe estetiky krásna a vznešena je primárně převzata z knihy Edmunda Burkea *Filozofické zkoumání původu našich idejí o vznešenu a krásnu* (v originále *The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*), nicméně práce se zabývá i jinými filozofy, kteří svými myšlenkami ovlivnili romantické hnutí.

Práce je rozdělena na pět samostatných částí. První úvodní kapitola se zabývá vývojem estetiky, měnícím se ideálem krásy a vznešena a to až do doby romantismu včetně. Druhá kapitola je zaměřena na Předmluvu k Lyrickým baladám a krásno, které je prezentováno v teorii Předmluvy. Analýza je provedena na základě Burkových teorií a na čtení knihy M.H.Abramse *Zrcadlo a lampa* (v originále *The Mirror and the Lamp*). Tato kapitola je dále rozdělena na čtyři podkapitoly podle hlavních bodů Předmluvy a to na téma básní, jazyk a styl poezie, osoba básníka a obecnstvo. Ve třetí kapitole je analýza jednotlivých básní Williama Wordsworthe, co se týče krásna a vznešena vzhledem k Burkovým myšlenkám, ale i vzhledem k Wordsworthově vlastní teorii o krásnu a vznešenu. Kapitola je rozdělena ve vztahu k tématům jednotlivých básní, například přírodní poezie či mateřství. Coleridgeovy příspěvky do Lyrických balad jsou předmětem čtvrté kapitoly. Jeho básně i teorie jsou zkoumány ve vztahu k Wordsworthovi, Coleridgeově vlastní teorii a vizi krásna a vznešena prezentovaných v jeho básních. Výsledky jsou shrnuty v páté závěrečné části práce.

Abstract (in English):

The aim of the thesis is to study the ideal of beauty in the period of Romanticism. The study is based on a close analysis of one of the crucial texts of the Romantic period – the *Lyrical Ballads* written by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The thesis is concerned with the vision of the beautiful in relation to the aesthetics of the sublime. It focuses on the development of what was perceived as beautiful in the periods preceding Romanticism and how this vision changed for the Romantics. The question is what is the ideal of beauty in the period of Romanticism and how it is presented in the *Lyrical Ballads*? Is there a common ideal for Wordsworth and Coleridge, or do they differ in their notion of the beautiful?

The main focus of the thesis 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. The Romantics have several similar features as well as the vision of the beautiful, whether they praise women or men or nature, whether they deal with the beauty inside or the surface. Similarities between those are considered as well. The reflexion of aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime is drawn primarily from Edmund Burke's *The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, however, other philosophers who impacted on the Romantic vision of the beautiful and the sublime are considered as well.

The thesis is divided into five separate parts. The first introductory chapter deals with the development of the aesthetics and the changing idea of the beautiful and the sublime as far as and including the Romantic period. The second chapter examines the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* and the beautiful as presented there. The analysis of the text is based on Burke's theory and reading of M.H.Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*. The chapter is subdivided into four main points of the Preface – the subject-matter, the language and style of poetry, the poet, and the audience. In the third chapter there is the analysis of Wordsworth's poems in terms of the beautiful and the sublime according to Burke's ideas and Wordsworth's own views. It is subdivided in relation to the subject-matter of those poems, such as natural poetry or motherhood. Coleridge's contributions to the volume are the subject of the fourth chapter. His theory and poems are examined in relation to Wordsworth, Coleridge's theory and the vision of the beautiful and the sublime presented in those poems. The results are manifested in the conclusion to the thesis.

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE IDEAL OF BEAUTY

Beauty is something that has influenced people from the beginnings of time. It is even possible to claim that it is beauty, which has shaped our history and culture. People have always searched for it. But is there a true definition of beauty? Umberto Eco claimed that people have a tendency to ascribe the virtue of being beautiful to the things they tend to like. “In this sense, it seems that what is beautiful is the same as what is good, and in fact in various historical periods there was a close link between the Beautiful and the Good.”¹ Nevertheless, there is a difference between liking something for itself and wanting something for oneself.² Because beauty is not something to desire, it is something to admire without any purpose. Beauty is an important aspect of historical development of many different cultures, nonetheless, the ideal of the beautiful was distinctive for each period of our history. It also differed for each means of art which tried to capture it in its very essence.

The ancient civilizations such as the Ancient Greece linked beauty with love, truth, goodness, being and the divine. They found it in harmony and proportion as well, for example Pythagoras, giving beauty a mathematical aspect of balance. The beautiful was not perceived solely by the senses, but also by moral ethics. The ancient societies valued character, noble conduct, social status and usefulness.³ Plato introduced the idea of beauty to his metaphysics, where he explained his theory of beauty being an eternal divine existence in the world of ideas. Remnants of which people can recollect in their world - starting with physical beauty and searching for more perfect beauty in incorporeal realms. In the Middle Ages, the idea of moral beauty was still incorporated in popularly held beliefs. Minstrels sang of elusive women, whom they believed had higher moral standards.⁴ In the visual arts, the beautiful was often related to deity. The same was valid for in the medieval philosophy of Saint Augustine and later of Thomas Aquinas who understood beauty together with goodness and ascribed its origin to God. “After Christian thought receded from the mainstream of philosophy, the discussion of beauty also shifted from its metaphysical treatment to the studies of the perception of beauty.”⁵ Renaissance gave space to the rise of the visual arts, humanist thought and transition, in the following periods, of the beautiful into the beauty which is linked with the sublime, terrible and even ugly. This is nowadays best exemplified in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, where a larger part is dedicated to a handsome young man, and the other part, with

¹ Umberto Eco, transl. Alastair McEwen, *On Beauty*, (London: Secker&Warburg Random House, 2004) 8.

² Eco 8.

³ New World Encyclopedia contributors, “Beauty,” *New World Encyclopedia*, 11 Jan 2013 <<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Beauty>> 23 Dec 2015.

⁴ J.J. Sylvia IV, *Umberto Eco’s History of Beauty*, *Philosophy Matters* <<http://www.philosophymatters.org/2012/05/umberto-ecos-history-beauty/>> 12 Dec 2015.

⁵ New World Encyclopedia contributors.

exception of the last two sonnets, to a dark lady. Renaissance favours fair maids, the dark lady then is atypical for arousing such emotions in the poet. She is even treacherous and unfaithful.⁶ In the following periods beauty became an independent field of study with the creation of the 'aesthetics' in the eighteenth century. Immanuel Kant asserted "that the basis of aesthetic experience is dispassionate pleasure produced on the contemplation of beauty,"⁷ which brings one back to Eco and his understanding of the beautiful. This "disinterested pleasure"⁸ makes beauty not solely a subjective matter but also a social one. People have to talk about beauty and argue about what is beautiful that they may determine it. Further, one should not forget other views on beauty, for example, the Platonic view of the beautiful being the same as the good. In this category of moral beauty one can place self-sacrifice, which is known primarily to the Eastern philosophy; chastity, filial piety, the beauty of motherhood, coined on the basis of motherly love; or simply any kind of love.

It is the aim of this thesis to look upon the notion of beauty in the period of Romanticism and examine it in one of the crucial texts of the movement - the *Lyrical Ballads* written by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is my belief that the collection is a great example of Romantic poetry and thought concerning the beautiful, and that the two poets, although creating the volume together, both provide a slightly different notion of the beautiful. The volume also discusses Romantic thought on the beautiful included in the Preface written for the second edition of the *Ballads*.

1.1. THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE MATTER OF TASTE

Aesthetics were introduced to philosophy in the eighteenth century and were descending from the matter of taste. Taste in sociology is defined as such: it is "individual's personal and cultural patterns of choice and preference."⁹ However, it was not always this way. Until the mid-eighteenth century when *Aesthetics* written by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten were published, the prevalent idea was of a 'class taste.' Lord Kames wrote in his *Elements of Criticism* that discussion of the arts – 'the science of criticism'; is a "subject to reasoning as well as of taste."¹⁰ Kames understood taste as something that develops from "experience, learning and comparative judgment,"¹¹ hence the idea of individual taste was

⁶ William Shakespeare, transl. Martin Hilský. *Sonety – The Sonnets* (Brno: Atlantis, 2009) 50.

⁷ Eco 275.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §2 <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1217>> 1 Jan 2016.

⁹ "Taste and Aesthetics", *Taste (sociology)*, Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taste_%28sociology%29> 28 Dec 2015.

¹⁰ Henry Home, Lord Kames; "The Argument of Elements of Criticism," *The Elements of Criticism*. Ed. Peter Jones, Liberty Fund, Inc. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1430>> 1 Jan 2016.

¹¹ Kames.

also present in his text. Immanuel Kant criticized Baumgarten for his theory that taste was individual, although he refused the idea of the ‘class taste’ as being a good one, and he offered his own theory instead.¹² Kant claimed that “the judgment of taste is not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be *no other than subjective*.”¹³ Therefore, distinction between judgment of taste and empirical judgment, or judgment of experience, developed. Nonetheless, the judgment of taste cannot stand alone, because one needs “an account of the nature of the pleasure on which judgments of beauty are based”¹⁴ to understand it in Kantian sense – as “universal validity.”¹⁵ Kant asserted that people care for agreement on their judgment from other people, or rather that they insist on it. This led Kant to thinking of a consensus of taste, a correctness of judgment in case of beauty.¹⁶

Alexander Gerard influenced the eighteenth century British aesthetics with his essays on taste and genius. Kant claimed that genius is a manifestation of a natural force put into practice by the creative powers of an artist, a connection of the subjective and the objective. The latter being not only a consensus on taste but primarily Nature, which gives rules to Art.¹⁷ Genius “is a talent for producing that for which no definite rules can be given,”¹⁸ hence its products must be original and they should be exemplary. Therefore, beautiful art is the art of genius.¹⁹

The issue of genius held importance in the development of organic theories. Coleridge, historically important with his theory of imagination, strongly differentiated between ‘mechanical fancy’ and ‘organic imagination’. He explained, inspired by Kant’s theory, that in the organic body the whole precedes the parts and in the inorganic body, it is vice versa. For him, imagination symbolized a living, creating power; while mechanical fancy represented no more than repeating from memory.²⁰ Coleridge further distinguished between ‘talent’ and ‘genius’. Talent means applying knowledge, it is a mere shaping skill. On the

¹² “Views on Aesthetic,” *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten*, Wikipedia
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Gottlieb_Baumgarten> 2 Jan 2016.

¹³ Kant §1.

¹⁴ Nick Zangwill. "Aesthetic Judgment", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/aesthetic-judgment/>> 27 Dec 2015.

¹⁵ Zangwill.

¹⁶ Zangwill.

¹⁷ Kant §46.

¹⁸ Kant §46.

¹⁹ Kant §46.

²⁰ Abrams 168-171.

other hand, genius “consists in the action of reason and imagination,”²¹ it is a “creative and self-sufficing power.”²²

At the beginning, Wordsworth and Coleridge agreed on Coleridge’s theories which he started to develop after meeting Wordsworth. However, Wordsworth started to blend fancy and imagination together, saying that “both powers serve alike ‘to modify, to create, and to associate’”²³ which lead to a dispute between the poets. Nonetheless, both of them worked on the Preface to the *Ballads*, presenting their ideas behind their poems. In the Preface they asserted that the beautiful of the collection lies in the pleasure evoked in the audience, the person of the poet, in the subject-matter and the language and style of poetry, all of which will be discussed in the chapter dedicated to the beautiful in the Preface.

1.2. THE SUBLIME

A notion very much related to Romantic beauty, is the idea of the sublime. The sublime comes to be widely known among people due to translations of an ancient text from Longinus. First translated to French and worked on by Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux in the seventeenth century, and then to English, it influenced early eighteenth century literary critics.

“Authors of classical antiquity interpreted the sublime in a rhetorical-form way with its final intention of exciting delight and affection in the audience of the orator.”²⁴ Critics as Abrams viewed Longinus as the source of many characteristics and elements of the Romantic poetry since he claimed that the sublime was “an expression of grand and noble passions”²⁵ and as such it was achieved through art only. In relation to his theory, “instances of sublimity range from only a single phrase, or sentence to short phrases.”²⁶ Longinus also determined five sources of the sublime – ‘the power of forming great conception’, ‘vehement and inspired passion’, figurative language, elevated composition and noble diction, where the last three are a matter of art.²⁷ Longinus stated that the “sublime art is an achievement of genius,”²⁸ whose work stayed sort of a mystery. Longinus’ comparison between the sublime and the beautiful rested on eidetic origins - physical beauty, whereas the sublime originated from non-eidetic

²¹ Abrams 176.

²² Abrams 176.

²³ Abrams 181.

²⁴ Zoltán Cora. *From the Rhetoric of Longinus to the Poetics of John Dennis: The Role of Terror in the Theories of the Sublime in the 18th Century*, Et al. – Critical Theory Online <<http://etal.hu/en/archive/terrorism-and-aesthetics-2015/cora-from-the-rhetoric-of-longinus-to-the-poetics-of-john-dennis/>> 28 Dec 2015.

²⁵ Eco 278.

²⁶ M.H.Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) 133.

²⁷ Abrams 73.

²⁸ Cora.

sources.²⁹ The works of Burke or Kant helped to intensify this contrast between the beautiful and the sublime in the eighteenth century.

During the eighteenth century, the sublime was continually altered from its original rhetorical interpretation “towards a more imaginative and empiricist psychological aesthetic concept”³⁰ making way for the sublime that had its source in terror. Thomas Burnet examined “the ideas of infinity of nature and the sublime from a religious perspective.”³¹ He connected the feelings of awe and fear one had while observing nature, to the same emotion a man had when contemplating about God. These notions lead John Dennis to his theory that the sublime had its source in emotions and it always incited desire. As the previous thinkers, he distinguished between the beautiful and the sublime stating that the beautiful was an ‘ordinary aesthetic response’, whereas the sublime was ‘enthusiastic’ response with active reflective passions.³² Similarly to Longinus, Dennis advocated that great passions were the work of a poetic genius, he further stated that “passion is an essential component of poetry” making way for the later romantic thought.

Nonetheless, the prevalent ideas of the sublime in the eighteenth century were rooted in Edmund Burke’s *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, first published in 1757. Burke's work strongly influenced not only the Romantic movement but also the antecedent developments, especially the later eighteenth-century revival of the Gothic in literature, painting and architecture. “He discussed the attraction of the grotesque, the terrible and the uncontrollable, a stark contrast to the prevailing 18th-century preferences for the controlled and balanced.”³³ His idea of beauty was associated with love, whilst the idea of the sublime was directly linked to the emotion of terror.

1.3. THE SUBLIME AS EXPLAINED BY BURKE

The qualities of beauty were contrary to the qualities of the sublime for Burke. While beauty was not strong or grand, the sublime was so in its very essence, The effects those qualities evoked were astonishment, admiration, reverence and respect none of which was once found as an effect of beauty.³⁴ It was so that as love was the prime emotion which made

²⁹ Cora.

³⁰ Cora.

³¹ Cora.

³² Cora.

³³ Alasdair Ball, et. al. “Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*,” British Library <<http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/burkes-a-philosophical-enquiry-into-the-origin-of-our-ideas-of-the-sublime-and-beautiful>> 1 Dec 2015.

³⁴ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Basil: Tourneisen, 1792) 130.

us feel beauty, terror was the prime emotion for the sublime. Even Dennis had already claimed that terror was the strongest of all emotions and as such it was the principal source of the sublime.³⁵ As Burke wrote there is no passion that “so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.”³⁶ He claimed that fear is closely associated with dread of death and pain and such dread can resemble an actual pain, making anything which is terrible sublime.³⁷ “The sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation; that is, therefore, one of the most affecting we have; that its strongest emotion is an emotion of distress; and that no pleasure from a positive cause belongs to it.”³⁸

Burke claimed that everything that possesses the quality of the sublime came with a certain amount of power. Everything with power that is accompanied with ability to hurt, make suffer and even with a degree of strength is terrifying to the human mind. When strength would be employed for benefit or pleasure it would not be sublime, but vast strength with power to destroy is sublime.³⁹ An example of the sublime could be the ocean or any god, no matter the religion of origin. Both have power and strength to destroy or take life, even to give life. They are vast, magnificent and great, filling the human mind with “delightful horror, which is the most genuine and the truest test of the sublime.”⁴⁰

1.4. KANT’S SUBLIME AND THE BEAUTIFUL

In his *Critique of Judgement* Immanuel Kant also explored and divided the beautiful and the sublime. He split the sublime into two categories: dynamic and mathematical. A starry sky works as an example of the mathematical variety. While looking at the sky a man feels that what he sees is beyond his capacity of understanding and the mind creates an effect of infinity. Something that cannot be grasped by his senses, nor his imagination. This evokes a “negative pleasure, which causes us to sense the magnitude of our subjectivity, capable of wanting something that we cannot have.”⁴¹ The dynamic sublime resembles a storm observation. Instead of infinite space, the human mind is agitated by endless strength.⁴²

Overall, the sublime was connected to infinity conforming to philosophers as Schiller, Hegel, Burke, or Kant. On the other hand, the beautiful became more complex. According to Kant the beautiful possesses these characteristics: “disinterested pleasure, universality without

³⁵ Cora.

³⁶ Burke 130.

³⁷ Burke 131.

³⁸ Burke 164.

³⁹ Burke 141.

⁴⁰ Burke 148.

⁴¹ Eco 294.

⁴² Eco 294.

concept and regularity without law.”⁴³ He explained differences he thought laid between the beautiful, the pleasant and the good, distinguishing between three various sources of pleasure. He claimed: “That which GRATIFIES a man is called *pleasant*; that which merely PLEASES him is *beautiful*; that which is ESTEEMED by him, *i.e.* that to which he accords an objective worth, is *good*.”⁴⁴ Of all three, only the beautiful provided a man with a ‘free satisfaction’ since it has its basis in ‘disinterested pleasure’.⁴⁵ No sensible or rational force causes one to call something beautiful.

1.5. THE BEAUTIFUL ACCORDING TO BURKE

Contrary to Kant, Burke found love and similar passions such as sympathy as the primary cause of beauty.⁴⁶ He determined that by love he meant “satisfaction that arises to the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful.”⁴⁷ He distinguished love from desire and lust which for him were only an energies of the mind with a purpose of possession of certain things.⁴⁸ Burke pondered that desire can be a lateral effect of love, but when there was desire and not love, the desire could not be beautiful on its own.

One way to clearly explain beauty is to look at it from a familiar point of view and Burke used the human body, mind and society to expound his ideas. First, he drew examples which would generally be understood as a cause of beauty and he clarified why they were not. The perfect example is a woman. Although she might be considered perfect, Burke claimed that it is not perfection that causes her beauty but imperfection and an idea of her weakness. When a woman is modest, she admits to being imperfect and people find modesty an amiable quality. Burke said that “beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty.”⁴⁹ He continued with imperfection in the female sex as the cause of beauty. If one was to look at a person and calculate the person's beauty on his or her proportion or fitness of parts, one would lose the effect of beauty which is previous to any calculated knowledge.⁵⁰

Beauty is almost like a mechanical quality “upon the human mind activated by the intervention of senses.”⁵¹ And of those senses, the sense of loveliness helps us understand other properties of beauty. Loveliness is associated with kindness, softness, smallness,

⁴³ Eco 294.

⁴⁴ Kant §5.

⁴⁵ Kant §5.

⁴⁶ Burke 165.

⁴⁷ Burke 165.

⁴⁸ Burke 166.

⁴⁹ Burke 187.

⁵⁰ Burke 187.

⁵¹ Burke 191.

smoothness and delicacy which for Burke were beautiful. He asserted that most languages use diminutive terms to express affection and tenderness and those terms often “add the endearing name of little to everything we love.”⁵²

1.6. ROMANTIC BEAUTY

The Romantic thought was highly influenced by the thinkers of the late eighteenth century such as Kant or Rousseau. Since Kant’s ideas concerning the beautiful and the sublime have been already mentioned, one should look at Rousseau’s theory that had an impact on the Romantics. Of prime importance is his work *Julie, or the New Heloise*. In essay called *Dialogue on the Subject of Romances*, intended as introductory to the above-mentioned work, he formed his ideas according to rationalism of the Enlightenment, ironically pointing out its discrepancies with sentimentality. For example, he stated that love is a different universe created by our imagination. He claimed that enthusiasm is the last stage in which the object of love is idealized and of course the language varies from the ordinary one – it is figural.⁵³ Another important aspect of Rousseau’s theory is crucial, especially for Wordsworth and Coleridge, and that is Rousseau’s belief in natural goodness of men who are uncorrupted by civilization.⁵⁴ For the two poets, there was certainly also a special appeal in Rousseau’s rural upbringing, which lead to his theories.

Romanticism does not determine a historical period, nor precise artistic movement. It is rather a “set of characteristics, attitudes and sentiments whose particularity resides in their specific nature and especially in the originality of the relationships between them.”⁵⁵ The term itself is full of contradictions. First, a term ‘romantic’ meant ‘like old romances’, signifying medieval romances. Unfortunately, the connotation was negative. Second, a term ‘Romanesque’ linked with picturesque, giving it a chimerical charm. Third, a German term ‘Romantisch’ comprised all that was vague, magical, distant and unknown. Romantics aspired to all of these.⁵⁶ With the three words one can trace important aspects of Romanticism.

The novel in the eighteenth century depicted everyday lives of its heroes whose lives were submitted to their feelings and passions. The romantic hero lived his life similarly. The romantic protagonist was defenseless to his sentiments.⁵⁷ Therefore, the common man

⁵² Burke 192.

⁵³ Jean Jacques Rousseau; *Eloisa, or, a Series of Original Letters*, (1810): xviii, Internet Archive <<https://archive.org/stream/eloisaoeraseries00gardgoog#page/n28/mode/2up>> 5 Jan 2016.

⁵⁴ Luke Mastin, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* <http://www.philosophybasics.com/philosophers_rousseau.html> 3 Jan 2016.

⁵⁵ Eco 299.

⁵⁶ Eco 303.

⁵⁷ Eco 304.

appeared in literature with his rustic beauty, which was not polluted by culture or higher education. Though, he could not be fatuous.⁵⁸ Opposites were not in contradiction, they were accepted and embraced by the Romantics.⁵⁹

The eighteenth century understood that beauty was a relative term and the Romantics worked with it as such. For example, the aim of poetry has always been to bring delight to the reader and to reflect beauty.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding, the Romantics shift from mirroring beauty to incorporate in their poetry „objects of sense which have already been acted on and transformed by the feelings of the poet.”⁶¹ Of all the Romantics, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the one most worried about “how the poetic mind acts to modify or transform the materials of sense without violating the truth to nature.”⁶² Nature for the Romantics played a key role, they turned their back on the society and they looked toward nature for inspiration and beauty.

1.7. THE BEAUTIFUL IN THE *LYRICAL BALLADS*

The beauty of nature is one of the great themes of the *Lyrical Ballads* since both Wordsworth and Coleridge viewed nature as their solace. The poets concerned themselves with themes of motherhood, solitude, corruptive influence of society among others. When they republished the collection, they inserted a Preface dealing with their theory behind the composition of the poems in the volume. The Preface is nowadays recognized as the Romantic manifesto, although its theory is not generally applicable to all the Romantics in its full length. The poets wrote their ideas on the aesthetics of poetry in the Preface and elsewhere, but the simplest way to examine their poems from the point of the beautiful, and also the sublime, is to explore it with Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.

As Burke compared the feelings of the beautiful and the sublime, he put them directly opposite each other. While beauty was gentle, clear, pleasant and polished, the sublime was grand, obscure, possibly dangerous and massive. He also claimed that we had to understand that both qualities might be combined in the same object.⁶³ Due to his influence on other philosophers such as Kant, and clarity of his theory and provision of exact examples, Burke's work will provide the core background for the analysis of the beautiful. Umberto Eco's

⁵⁸ Eco 305.

⁵⁹ Eco 299.

⁶⁰ Abrams 53.

⁶¹ Abrams 53.

⁶² Abrams 55.

⁶³ Burke 205.

understanding of the sublime in Romanticism as a different aspect of the beautiful, as a variety of it, matters likewise. However, his work on the development of the perception of beauty is concerned, primarily, with the aspect of the visual arts. Although he presented many literary sources there, I come to prefer M.H.Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* which deals not only with the Romantic aesthetic theory, which he presented as contradictory to the previous periods; but further specifically examines in length the poets in question – Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The experiment of two well-known Romantic poets that contains almost two dozens of poems, which present a new form of making poetry, shows a remarkable merge of two qualities. While the prime aim is to show beauty in its origin, nature and ordinary causes, the other is for the reader to understand that the ordinary and natural also possess the passions that give rise to the feeling of the sublime.

The thesis will deal with different perception of beauty of each poet and the theory expressed in the Preface. The authors differed in their notion of poetry, sometimes their opinions were in absolute contradiction. It is my belief, however, that even though the poets were very different both in their nature and writing, they show few similarities in understanding the beautiful. The thesis then will be divided into three parts according to relation of texts in the volume. The first chapter will deal with the Preface of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the theory behind the poems published in the collection. The second chapter will be dedicated to the texts of William Wordsworth, where his theory was put to practice. The third chapter will examine Samuel Taylor Coleridge's contributions to the *Ballads* and the varieties of his perception of poetry as well as his understanding of the beautiful.

2. THE CORE OF THE BEAUTIFUL AS IN THE PREFACE TO THE *LYRICAL BALLADS*

To determine the ideal of beauty in the *Lyrical Ballads* it is prudent to start with the theoretical aspect that is with William Wordsworth's aesthetic theory, especially as it is written in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. The Preface was the essential addition to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 where Wordsworth constitutes "lengthy theoretical justification for the works to follow,"¹ which directs the readers on how to read the poems written in the compilation. Although Wordsworth's theory differed from the theories of the later Romantics, it is possible to say that the Preface of the *Lyrical Ballads*, recognized as the Romantic manifesto, provides the basic Romantic theory common to all the Romantics.

The importance lies in feeling and not in action. Emotions give meaning to actions and situations and not the other way round.² The Romantics believed in almost losing their identity in order to perceive their surroundings without their own character being in their way. Wordsworth and Coleridge found the artistic creation and perception as universal since they worked on the basis of mental associations whereas the Classicists believed that universality is in the subject matter of artistic depiction.³

Wordsworth criticizes the Classicists for their artificiality because Nature is universal and unchanging and needs not to be made better by words. Wordsworth liberates himself from the Classicist notion of *la belle nature* and their rather small impact on general public due to the narrow circle of intellectual readers instead he declares that the poetic language is natural, thus it is not necessary to employ intricate figures of speech, as well as universal.⁴ The Romantics did not present the world with an entirely new rule for writing good Poetry they merely revised the notion of Poetry of the Enlightenment and the sentimentalists.⁵

Contradict to the Classicists' belief Poetry according to the Romantics has to deviate from previously employed 'hereditary poetic language,' which is artificial and exclusive for only some intellectual classes so as to fulfil its aim to express common feelings which are evoked by Nature. It follows then that Poetry has to truthfully represent Nature for the purpose of exciting real emotions. It should employ the real language of men, a point Wordsworth stresses throughout the Preface, found in the country where people still lived influenced by Nature.

¹ Stephen Gill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 48.

² Gill 41.

³ Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a osobnost* (Praha: Kruh moderních filologů, 1999) 22.

⁴ Procházka 21-22.

⁵ Zdeněk Hrbata, Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a romantismy: Pojmy, proudy, kontexty* (Praha: Karolinum, 2005) 18.

The Preface can be divided into four crucial topics as it is in M.H.Abram's *The Mirror and the Lamp*: the subject matter of poetry, the poet, the audience and the diction of poetry;⁶ in all it is possible to determine the beautiful which will be later applied to the poems.

2.1. THE BEAUTIFUL IN THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE *LYRICAL BALLADS*

Wordsworth turns away from the processes of urbanization and industrialization of his era which he considers as subduing the powers of the mind lowering them to nearly savage inertia. The reason for this state of mind was the monotony of life led in the cities.⁷ Instead he looks toward the countryside, toward the "low and rustic life"⁸ where "essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language."⁹ Wordsworth sees beauty in the simplicity of the language of the countrymen as well as in their simple thinking which is directly connected to Nature; he claims the language is easier for understanding as it is the real language that real people speak, not artificially decorated language of higher classes or some poets. Wordsworth believes the purity of the language is preserved due to its limited possibilities of exposure to the embellished kind. Most importantly the rustic conditions determine that "the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."¹⁰ In spite of the critique of the commonplace of the subject matter inadequate for poetry, for Wordsworth the importance lied in the tranquil recollections of emotions generated in observations of rural life which created a spontaneous overflow of feelings.¹¹

The Romantics indeed introduced association of feelings in the state of emotional excitement and a tranquil reflection of them¹² as their creative process, whether their feelings were of the sublime or beautiful origin, which often reflected in their work or it mirrored upon the reader. To illustrate Wordsworth's poem "The Idiot Boy" is a poem compiled from several images producing terror such as dark night, fear and both physical and mental pain; which according to Burke is the direct line to the feeling of the sublime.¹³ The poem also creates the feeling of the beautiful with the unconditional motherly love.

⁶ M.H.Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) 106 – 112.

⁷ Patrick Campbell, *Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads, Critical Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1991) 96.

⁸ William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Lyrical Ballads* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 245.

⁹ Wordsworth, Coleridge 245.

¹⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge 245.

¹¹ Campbell 97.

¹² Wordsworth, Coleridge 266.

¹³ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Basil: Tourneisen, 1792) 130.

Maternal passion is one of the themes of the *Lyrical Ballads*, developed in “The Idiot Boy” and the “Mad Mother.” Wordsworth gives other specific examples of the themes of the ballads because he believes that every poem is to have a purpose. Aside from the maternal passions he concerns himself with "moral attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature."¹⁴ The sublime would be then associated with Wordsworth's inquiry into the notion of death by both children and adults who are on the verge of it, the notion of solitude and rejection of the individual by the society. Wordsworth also explores dubious characters such as thieves, gipsies, or idiots. He argues that poetry can contain even the most recent discoveries and inventions of science¹⁵ by asserting this he extends the range of the appropriate subject matter to all mankind.¹⁶

2.2. WHO IS THE POET AND HOW THAT DETERMINES THE BEAUTIFUL

The poet is "the man speaking to men"¹⁷ and because of that he needs to understand the feelings of others and he must be understood by them. This may be applied to Wordsworth's belief that the poet should not make use of a decorative language, strange metaphors and other literary figures since they are not natural and as such they would not be comprehended by all. It is written in the Preface that the Poet can and is able to produce the feelings mechanically without the actual stimulus because the Poet is proficient in his field and thus he needs not always experience what he is writing about.¹⁸ Instead of the ornamental language he is to pursue the plain language of prose.

Wordsworth claims that prose and poetry are not at all opposites of one and each other. Instead he argues that the true contrast lies between poetry and science of fact in that both the poet and the scientist seek pleasure but "the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow beings."¹⁹ Once again Wordsworth stresses the weight of passions which despite being seemingly individual are more universal and thus creating ties between people. This defensive attitude may be related to the very beginning of the Preface where Wordsworth tries to vindicate the metre and rhyme of the *Lyrical Ballads* which although they are called ballads and resemble the ballad stanza they vary in the poems and the

¹⁴ Wordsworth, Coleridge 247.

¹⁵ Wordsworth, Coleridge 260.

¹⁶ Abrams 101.

¹⁷ Wordsworth, Coleridge 255.

¹⁸ Wordsworth, Coleridge 256.

¹⁹ Wordsworth and Coleridge 259.

rhyme scheme. Wordsworth says that the language may seem prosaic, as it was called by some,²⁰ but that it resembles the real language better.

It is the aim of the rightful poet to look for the true language, to know the words which accompany the state of excitement. The poet otherwise similar to other people has one classifying feature which makes him a poet. As Abrams interprets the Preface "the born poet is distinguished from other men particularly by his inheritance of an intense sensibility and a susceptibility to passion."²¹ The Poet's strength lies in his capacity to sincerely acknowledge the beauty of the universe which is not difficult for him for he looks at the world in the spirit of love.²² This statement elevates the Poet above other humans with his inborn ability to recognize the beautiful. Such a quality enables him to create powerful images which are more effective in producing the beautiful or the sublime than saying long descriptions in prose. Even with his power to depict and imitate passions and emotions his status is nothing more than that of a slave when compared "with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering."²³ As written above the Poet does not have to undergo the real experience but he attempts to create the feelings within himself to even engage in an illusion of his in order to nearer them to the true emotions.

Wordsworth claims that the most problematic may be when the Poet speaks through his characters because he can easily diverge from the real language. The Poet would then substitute his own language characteristic for him or for the Poets in general with the natural language of common men. He develops the argument further when he explains that it is actually not in the dramatic parts that we search for the distinction of language but in the instances where the Poet is himself in person and character.

When recreating the passions that led to the state of excitement, the perception of the beautiful and the sublime the Poet's sole interest should be producing pleasure. It is the Poet's only aim and with all the abilities of the Poet already listed, the task for the Poet is less challenging than it would be for the historian or the biographer. These have many obstacles to overcome before reaching an actual pleasure.²⁴

2.3. THE IMAGE OF THE BEAUTIFUL EVOKED IN THE AUDIENCE

Burke distinguishes two kinds of pleasure, a positive pleasure and the pleasure succeeding the removal of pain. The positive pleasure then is of prime importance for the

²⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge 252.

²¹ Abrams 102.

²² Wordsworth, Coleridge 258.

²³ Wordsworth, Coleridge 256.

²⁴ Wordsworth, Coleridge 258.

feeling of the beautiful. Only the beautiful can produce passions connected with the positive pleasure.²⁵ As Wordsworth writes the Poet's chief task is to give immediate pleasure²⁶ to his audience creating vivid images which is in accordance with Burke's statement for the stimuli of the beautiful being possibly both visual and written.²⁷

Wordsworth aims to invent such Poetry that would be of never-fading interest of mankind and that would not yield to fashion and current taste of particular era.²⁸ The main issue here is that the whole Preface is his defence of his own principles and practice against the expectations of his readers and their hostile judgments.²⁹ The Poetry he produces which resembles Prose and is not bound by strange metaphors or other figures of speech requires an open-minded Reader.

The Preface is addressed to the Reader. Wordsworth explicitly uses the term several times throughout the Preface to direct 'his Reader' to a point he makes or he has made. He asks the Reader permission, or to think about discrepancies he sees in certain fixed ways of Poetry. The Poet refers him to certain poems or appeals to his own experiences³⁰ to ease the Reader's understanding of his theory.

Explaining Wordsworth Abrams makes a point in his work that "the most important function of poetry is, by its pleasurable resources, to foster and subtilize the sensibility, emotions, and sympathies of the reader,"³¹ a statement which is completely in accordance with Burke's definition of the beautiful. Things which are able to evoke sympathy are things we tend to like; Burke goes further and claims that even pity is caused by the feeling of the beautiful because it is "a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection."³²

2.4. THE BEAUTIFUL IN THE STYLE AND THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY

Wordsworth believed that poetry was from the earliest days connected with rhythm, figurative language and passions. Abrams writes "poetry is competent to express emotions chiefly by its resources of figures of speech and rhythm, by means of which words naturally embody and convey the feeling of the poet."³³ Burke claims that we receive emotional

²⁵ Burke 105.

²⁶ Wordsworth, Coleridge 257.

²⁷ Burke 246.

²⁸ Wordsworth, Coleridge 272.

²⁹ Abrams 108.

³⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge 264.

³¹ Abrams 103.

³² Burke 119.

³³ Abrams 102.

impulses not solely visually but the feelings of sublime and beautiful may be raised by touch, smell, taste and hearing. There is similarity between the senses and how they perceive the beautiful.³⁴ Poetry according to Wordsworth should also be spontaneous and genuine, it should not adopt any intricate figures of speech because they are not sincere and thus they do not honestly represent the emotional state of the poet.³⁵ From reading of Burke one can advocate that simplicity and genuineness would be causes of the beautiful since they pose no threat, whereas tangled intricacy has the conceivable prospect of becoming terrifying due to its complexity in which one could get lost.³⁶

Wordsworth acquaints the Reader with exemplary names of nowadays canonical writers such as Terence, Shakespeare, Dryden or Pope and he distances himself from all of them. It is not the wit that makes a Poet but his ability to write in a versatile language of passions.³⁷ To illustrate the contradiction between Wordsworth and some of his predecessors Abrams paraphrases from Pope's *Essay on Criticism* where Pope claims that of importance in Poetry is the true wit, that Nature should be improved and decorated. Wordsworth strongly disagreed with adjustments made for the sake of art of Poetry and he believed it only corrupted the 'genuine' Poetry.³⁸ The only intervention into the language that Wordsworth views as righteous is that of a selection. To preserve the image of pleasure and the beautiful the Poet may rid the passion of what could be understood as painful and revolting in it.³⁹

Wordsworth shows sympathy for the Poet when he claims that it is not always in the Poet's powers to recreate true imitations of language as it would be naturally used. He advocates the Poet's status of a translator, someone who is capable of interchanging what he fails to reach with something of similar weight in pleasure.⁴⁰

One way to remain within the bounds of pleasure is to underline the words with a sense of regularity. Regularity serves several purposes; it creates order and helps to sustain the powerful passions in balance with the beautiful and pleasurable. The most convenient way to produce regularity is through metre. Wordsworth claims that "words metrically arranged will long continue to impart pleasure to mankind,"⁴¹ chiefly because the mind enjoys "the perception of similitude and dissimilitude."⁴²

³⁴ Burke 202.

³⁵ Abrams 102.

³⁶ Burke 165.

³⁷ Procházka 21.

³⁸ Abrams 111-112.

³⁹ Wordsworth, Coleridge 256.

⁴⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge 257.

⁴¹ Wordsworth, Coleridge 263.

⁴² Wordsworth, Coleridge 265.

What Wordsworth finds unfortunate are critics' who look on prose and poetry as two different or even opposing subjects. If poetry is coloured by sentiment and produces images that are subjective rather than objective, it is the opposite of factual knowledge not prose which can focus on the same topic. Wordsworth claims that reverse to poetry is history and that it has been a practice since antiquity to contrast those two.⁴³ He argues that if language identical to the language of prose is put in natural order with regard to metre, which the critics call *prosaisms*, it is a better language of Poetry than any artificial one would be no matter how well arranged and how full of various figures of speech it may be.⁴⁴

Wordsworth abhorred the usage of personification for the abstract ideas because it did not imitate the real language of men. When it did not serve only as a means of elevating poetry but it was justified by a passionate outburst he occasionally employed it. Another figure which he has "taken as much pains to avoid as other ordinarily take to produce"⁴⁵ is poetic diction so common for other Poets. He further avoids expressions which once were beautiful but due to their overuse they no longer retain the proper meaning and thus produce feelings of disgust rather than positive emotions.⁴⁶

2.5. THE BEAUTIFUL AS IN THE PREFACE

The Preface was Wordsworth's first defence of his work. Unfortunately, it does not preserve its full value when contrasted with some of his later works such as the "Essay Supplementary to the Preface" and the *Essay upon Epitaphs*, because in the Preface Wordsworth stresses reality as the poet sees it, in the other essays he emphasizes reality heavily influenced by passions.⁴⁷ Its significance lies in its deep and thorough explanation of what it is that Wordsworth considered as beautiful and why.

The subject matter is found in the ordinary lives of the country people and their connection to Nature. The language must be pure of any intricacies and poetic devices which would devaluate it to the false language spoken in the cities and by poets, namely the Classicists. The Romantic poet is simply a mediator who with his work passes on the experienced emotions and images of the beautiful. The audience is then of a great importance since the poet must evoke pleasure in the audience thus creating the passions connected with the beautiful.

⁴³ Abrams 101.

⁴⁴ Wordsworth, Coleridge 252.

⁴⁵ Wordsworth, Coleridge 251.

⁴⁶ Wordsworth, Coleridge 251.

⁴⁷ Procházka 15.

3. WORDSWORTH'S IMAGES OF THE BEAUTIFUL

In his well-known work *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge recalled that “Wordsworth would concentrate on subjects from 'ordinary life', giving 'the charm of novelty to things of every day' and showing 'the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us'.”¹ This was most certainly Wordsworth's aim - to have the 'ordinary life' as his main subject-matter.

There are positive and negative passions that can be associated with ordinary things and Wordsworth's poetry shifts “from valuing the sublime, solitary moments in nature to a celebration of more communal experience.”² Wordsworth comes to understand the sublime as terror-based, similarly as Burke in his *Enquiry* and no passion is as paralyzing to the human mind as fear³ and human beings in general fear the unknown, the unpredictable. Wordsworth marks “the sublime experience”⁴ as “an act of troubled pleasure made exciting by potential danger.”⁵ Later, he moves from the notion of Burke's sublime to more Kantian sublime when he reckons that the sublime is not to be found in nature but it is created in the mind and thence it is limitless. The pleasure evoked by the sublime is circumstantial because it arises from awe or admiration, whereas the pleasure from the beautiful is direct and it is compatible with the charms of life.⁶

Wordsworth claims that “his mind was shaped by both fear and love, terror and beauty”⁷ and therefore, both the sublime and the beautiful are present in his poems, whether he focuses on mothers, children or fools or on 'rustic people', both young and old. Those subjects “reveal the workings of the human heart in all their elemental simplicity.”⁸ Since they are simple by themselves, meaning that they are not superficial like urban people, they provide the best sources for the simple language of poetry so heartily advocated by Wordsworth in his Preface, where he puts emphasis on spontaneity.

His poems are about the memories people have connected to different places, or the emotions people feel when they see a beautiful scenery in front of them. He tries to draw the

¹ Stephen Gill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 38.

² Judith W. Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women* (Los – Angeles: University of California Press, 1994): 13, Google Books
<<https://books.google.cz/books?id=buT4oH0bEEIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=wordsworth+and+the+cultivation+of+women&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAGoVChMI-rzY2ePfyAIVYo1yCh2LcQMn#v=onepage&q=wordsworth%20and%20the%20cultivation%20of%20women&f=false>> 10 Nov 2015.

³ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Basil: Tourneisen, 1792) 130.

⁴ Page 17.

⁵ Page 17.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kritika soudnosti* (Praha, Odeon, 1975) 81 - 82.

⁷ Page 15.

⁸ William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Lyrical Ballads* (New York: Routledge, 1991) xxxi.

reader near experiences that he would know or would be able to relate to. The “subjects of his poems were to be chosen from ordinary life, the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them or to notice them, when they present themselves.”⁹

3.1. WORDSWORTH'S VIEWS ON THE SUBLIME AND THE BEAUTIFUL

As written above, Wordsworth's focus shifts through his poetic career from the sublime to beautiful but the sublime never fades. This movement from one to the other is most noticeable in his work *Prelude*, yet one can also find it in the *Ballads*. There, one can see Wordsworth's gender arrangement of the sublime as patriarchal authority that is aligned with power and strength, whereas he relates the beautiful to delicacy and nurturing.¹⁰

Wordsworth himself “refers to the more comforting domestic and natural scenes as beautiful.”¹¹ After all, the *Ballads* were “supposed to be a philosophical vehicle promoting the beauty of the rustic, natural, and pastoral.”¹² Contrary to Burke, he favours the beautiful, which he associates with familial devotion. He gives it the power to overcome the sublime since when something becomes familiar it loses its ability to evoke the sublime.

The poet's interest in sublime can be traced to his early years when he experimented with the Gothic, which he later traduces in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. But in truth, the volume “includes sensational elements such as ghosts, madness, and epic despair”¹³ that are rather significant for the Gothic art. During this period, Wordsworth views the sublime as Burke does. Both find it in terror and both claim that there needs to be psychological distance, because “terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close.”¹⁴ As already indicated, Wordsworth shifts from the Burkean sublime to a more Kantian sublime. He analyses three components of sublime objects: “individual form of forms, a sense of duration, and a sense of power”¹⁵ and in doing so, he combines Kant's

⁹ Wordsworth, Coleridge xxi-xxii.

¹⁰ Page 14 – 15.

¹¹ Page 15.

¹² Kara A. Spencer, *Wordsworth's Gothic and Mournful Imagination* (2010): 4, Georgetown University Institutional Repository <<https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/553049>> 10 Nov 2015.

¹³ Spencer 3.

¹⁴ Page 19.

¹⁵ Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 105, Google Books <https://books.google.cz/books?id=BfokAAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false> 20 Nov 2015.

dynamical and mathematical sublime. “The Wordsworthian sublime is both situated and imagined,”¹⁶ it is a reflection of one's place in the world.

3.2. THE SIMPLER THE LANGUAGE THE MORE BEAUTIFUL IT IS

When “trying to make people see again what had laid before their eyes all the time, the poet had to avoid anything that smacked of poetic cliché.”¹⁷ Wordsworth's views on the language of poetry can be summarized into several points. Those viewpoints are presented largely in the Preface, but the fulfilment of those particular views is a different issue altogether. He believed that “poetry is the expression or overflow of feeling, or emerges from a process of imagination in which feelings play the crucial part.”¹⁸ As written in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth stresses the relevance of emotions and not action, since it is the emotion that gives an action its importance. If there is no positive nor negative feeling, the action loses its value. For example in “The Thorn”¹⁹ the reader does not see any direct action, he gets only possibilities of what might have happened and the more important part is the superstition of the narrator and the emotions the reader should feel while reading the poem. Whether it is connected to the tree, the woman or the man²⁰ is rather up to the reader, but it is certain that emotions follow each of those paths the reader can take. Wordsworth himself believed that the emotion a poem arouses is more important than the poem itself because it raises the “holiness of heart's affections.”²¹

One way poetry can evoke those affections is by being naturally rhythmic and figurative.²² Burke claims that variation is the cause of beauty.²³ It cannot be a sudden, abrupt change, it has to be gentle. Poetry, with its rhythmic schemes, varies nicely and pleasurably to the eye and ear, thus creating a positive pleasure which is the key cause of the beautiful. “We Are Seven” serves as an example of this approach since the central theme of seven siblings repeats several times as a refrain of a song, giving the poem a natural rhythm of a child's speech. The theme of the poem is death and a reason of an adult contradicting the sweet naivety of a child. The simplicity of the child's views has a sense of loveliness that is often associated with children, their appearance, their language and their innocence. The subject of

¹⁶ Brady 105.

¹⁷ Wordsworth, Coleridge xxx.

¹⁸ M.H.Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) 101.

¹⁹ Wordsworth, Coleridge 70.

²⁰ Patrick Campbell, *Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads, Critical Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1991) 83.

²¹ Wordsworth, Coleridge xxx.

²² Abrams 101.

²³ Burke 239.

death is sublime in its very essence, since it is usually connected with ideas of fear and terror, which are sublime in their nature. The concept of death cannot be understood by a child, who answers that she has six siblings, while the reader and her adult listener learn that two of them are in fact buried in a churchyard. But “the conviction of the 'little maid' wins *us* over.”²⁴ The girl's sweet naivety is alluring for an adult reader. She has one fear less than an adult and in her view of the world her family is whole. To raise emotions, such as those in the poem “We Are Seven,” it is important to use a proper language. In the poem, Wordsworth used the refrain 'we are seven' as a resemblance of child nursery rhymes creating a real image of a child and not a poetic construct.

It is the Romantic belief that language should be divided between emotive language and cognitive language.²⁵ Poetry can be as simple as prose and vice versa but it should be more or less genuine. Some people believe that all the poems in the collection of the *Lyrical Ballads* are characterized by their simplicity of language and style²⁶ but others see the discrepancies between some of the poems. “The Female Vagrant,” for example, belongs to the poems illustrating that the simplicity of language was sometimes difficult to create. Wordsworth did not like the poem himself and he saw its flaws explaining that “the diction of the poem is often vicious and the descriptions are often false, giving proofs of a mind inattentive to the true nature of the subject on which it was employed.”²⁷ This is one of the controversies about the collection because the poems “were a conscious attempt to write in a new way”²⁸ and the authors sometimes failed to fulfil this aim when they worked on the idea of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

The general belief of the *Lyrical Ballads* is that poetry does not need great resources of figures of speech to express emotions.²⁹ Poetry does not have to be elevated by words and poetic devices, it can be written in the ordinary language of men. It is the subject-matter – “the great and simple affections of our nature”³⁰ which the poetry must reproduce, that raises it from common things. Poetry should be written in a genuine and spontaneous language³¹ of the countrymen, who are pure in their nature, behaviour and emotions, or about the countryside, which is equally pure and devoid of the filth of the industrial era.

²⁴ Campbell 137.

²⁵ Abrams 101.

²⁶ Wordsworth, Coleridge xxvii.

²⁷ Wordsworth, Coleridge xxxiii.

²⁸ Wordsworth, Coleridge xxvii.

²⁹ Abrams 102.

³⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge, 176.

³¹ Abrams 102.

3.3 HOW NATURE EVOKES THE BEAUTIFUL

It might be claimed that Wordsworth's natural world is strictly confined to the country, tacitly denying any form of urban life as natural.³² But in reading of Wordsworth one has to decide how to treat 'Nature' as a term. In the Victorian era it was subsumed under a larger political, theological or philosophical aspect and seen as a brutal force or as a “harmonious system reflecting the perfect order of its creator or as the world of the heart not head – as a realm of intuitions and affections which counterbalanced the overtly strict dictates of reason.”³³ For Wordsworth the image of the beautiful in Nature is considerably more complex. The beauty of it lies in the sentiments it evokes, in their intensity and in the projection of individual's joy during creative perception.³⁴ The beauty of nature then is sentimental and it is produced by unconsciously uniting images in one's memory which are linked to emotions of fear, joy and happiness.³⁵

When one looks closely at his poems it is possible to discover that Wordsworth first provides his reader with a “glance downward,”³⁶ and starts with a description of what is around on the ground level. In “Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree”³⁷ the reader's attention is first drawn to a “sparkling rivulet” and “verdant herbs,” “barren boughs” and “curling waves” and stones covered with a “mossy sod” (lines 3-9). In “Lines Written in Early Spring”³⁸ the look at the earth is even more detailed. The poet seeing the natural beauty of “primrose turfs,” “green bower,” flowers in general and birds innocently hopping around (lines 9-16) wants to rejoice and feel the love that all beauty evokes,³⁹ but he contrasts the beautiful with his thoughts of “what man has made of man”(lines 8 and 24). All the love he feels from what he sees in nature makes him sad, when he compares it to the world of man in which he cannot ascertain any beauty and with regard to that no love.

When the poet looks up to the heavens, he believes it was a “holy plan” for all living creatures to be beautiful and loving and he has to lament that men had gone a different way. It is the glance upwards that in both poems provides a change of tone. In the “Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree” the poet first sees more beauty in Nature, he explicitly says: “The beauty, still more beautiful!” (line 36) and then he, as in the previous poem, contrasts it with the

³² Gill 180.

³³ Gill 180.

³⁴ Zdeněk Hrbata, Martin Procházka. *Romantismus a romantismy: pojmy, proudy, kontexty* (Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2005) 170.

³⁵ Hrbata, Procházka 171.

³⁶ Gill 186.

³⁷ Wordsworth, Coleridge 38-40.

³⁸ Wordsworth, Coleridge 69.

³⁹ Burke 165.

world of men and he tries to humble the lost men into seeing the beauty around them and to value life and nature.

Nature is also prevalent in the poem entitled “Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey”⁴⁰ and although one can discover a similar scheme in glancing down and up, it is not primarily the difference between nature and the human world, it is the discrepancy between the present and the past. In this poem Wordsworth tries to approach nature as a source of moral symbols, which is understandable to mature individuals only, leading to the contrast between the perception of the place in his youth and in the time of the poem. The poet cherishes nature and he feels harmonious and joyful coming back to Tintern Abbey. He understands that notwithstanding his own personal change the surroundings of the abbey are as beautiful as they always have been. Hartman criticizes the poet's too emotive response to the images of abbey's surroundings, he claims that the objects in “Tintern Abbey” do evoke a sense of beauty, but that the beauty on its own cannot be credited for such a reaction.⁴¹ It is quite possible to say that the emotive echo is overdone because “Wordsworth, however much he wishes to credit nature with influences over our hearts and minds, dislikes the idea that our responses are automatic.”⁴² Therefore, the poem is an effort to deal with the dilemma of whether the beauty of nature is solely a projection of our feelings, which are based on unconscious process of associations of emotions, or if it has a deeper meaning. It is arguable to say that Wordsworth have depicted the feelings too impressive, he himself claims in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* that a poet has the ability to create not just experience sensation.⁴³

3.4. THE BEAUTIFUL SADNESS

The deepest sensation of all is to experience profound love. However, love has many forms and it is Burke, who says, that pity is a kind of love because pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure for it arises from love and social affection.”⁴⁴ He continues to explain that human beings are naturally programmed to feel sympathy and that this sympathy is strengthened with proportional delight when one meets with distresses of others.⁴⁵ It is this statement that creates a possibility of seeing beauty where, originally, one would not dare to look for it. Someone's suffering is indeed sad but since it raises our sympathy we can look at

⁴⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge 113-118.

⁴¹ Campbell 79.

⁴² Gill 189.

⁴³ Wordsworth, Coleridge 256.

⁴⁴ Burke 118.

⁴⁵ Burke 118.

it from a point of view of being the source of the beautiful. Wordsworth goes even further than Burke in creating the ironical frameworks in which the strong feelings are presented. Burke already understands and differentiates between joy and sadness but Wordsworth again pushes it further, making it a contrast between beauty and terror, for which he unites the feelings of the sublime and the beautiful in order to represent powerful emotions.

The female vagrant from the eponymous poem is a survivor, she has outlived her whole family. The poem appeals to its readers on several accounts, though the beauty of it lies in the pity readers feel for the wanderer. A woman losing her home, her country, her love, her children and as a matter of fact herself, since she even had to make concessions in principles she believed in. The female vagrant's life is shattered, every joyous moment ends in terrible events that come right after, and she is shown no mercy and no sympathy by her people nor Nature. It is the gypsy folk that takes her in and helps her - the outcasts, wanderers themselves. The gypsies are appealing to the reader not only with the kindness they showed to the poor woman but also with their easiness of temper. Softer virtues such as kindness, compassion, liberality and easiness of temper bring about the impression of loveliness which is according to Burke more amiable to the human mind than any great virtue concerning more significant issues. Therefore, the smaller virtues are more beautiful and the great ones producing admiration are sublime. Such is the case of the 'wild brood,'⁴⁶ for they are rather attractive but the reader does not admire them. It is in this particular poem that one can truly experience Wordsworth's "bottomless capacity for sympathy, his ability to empathise with the family as their rural heritage crumbles around them; to make us feel 'that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay.'⁴⁷ Although its form of the Spenserian stanza makes it protrude in the *Lyrical Ballads*, the appeal on sympathy for the wanderer the reader feels and Wordsworth's concern with looking for the beautiful even where no one else would dare to look for it, make it very much a part of the volume.

The *Lyrical Ballads* contain three poems about three women which will be discussed with respect to them being mothers and their maternal love but their stories as women outcasts evoke one's sympathy. Their situations are escalated to the point, where there is no possibility of happy ending, or at least a one they can satisfy themselves with. In many ways similar to this poem and primarily to "The Mad Mother" is also an elegy "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman." Yet another solitary being, the woman, is left behind by her company and her son, her solace, is taken away from her. The poem suggest the boy

⁴⁶ Wordsworth, Coleridge 52.

⁴⁷ Campbell 108.

understands he is being taken from his mother and she sees his “anticipation of manhood in which he can protect his mother.”⁴⁸ But the child is only a child and she is abandoned to die alone. Every day she has to live on her own is a torture while she imagines, that she could be with her son. Because she cannot be with him, she wishes that she would not see another day. Yet again this poem shows no positive outcome for the mother. Her situation is hopeless, her only way out is death and as such it evokes even more sympathy from the reader.

3.5. THE BEAUTY AND SORROWS OF MOTHERHOOD

As illustrated above, Wordsworth is able to capture the feelings, so incomprehensible for an ordinary person, without actually experiencing described situations. What Wordsworth could not experience himself and yet powerfully represents, are the joys and sorrows of motherhood. If one was to simplify Burke's theory, the things that make us feel love are the things that are beautiful.⁴⁹ Is there a deeper and more profound love than that one mother feels towards her child? Is there anything so unconditional and so irrational than our concept of maternity, which for Wordsworth lies in projection of powerful sentiments into nature? Is there in fact anything more beautiful then?

Wordsworth presents us with various kinds of mothers, whose lives are, however, in most cases shattered. They are husbandless and sometimes even childless. A prominent mother figure appears in “The Thorn,” however her maternal status is arguable. Martha Ray is presented to the reader through the eyes of an old man whose superstition leads him to believe she committed infanticide of her own child. Martha was abandoned before she was wedded to her dear one, but the credulous narrator believes she was already with a child. With this poem Wordsworth shows how nearly impossible it is to understand someone else's grief. The narrator builds up the superstition, he does not care about Martha, only about the story which is unknown and therefore alluring. The sublime feeling that is evoked by the superstition is created by embroidering what little is known, and owing to the limitless imagination of the human mind and its curiosity. It is not clear whether Martha was pregnant or not. If she was pregnant, then it is ambiguous whether the child was born alive or dead. The only solid matter is that Martha has often visited what could be perceived as an infant's grave. The beauty of motherly affection is expressed only symbolically in the poem and that is when the “hill of moss” is described “as if by hand of lady fair/ the work had woven been”⁵⁰ giving it a woman's touch. A mother's touch? That is unknown and with this Wordsworth intensifies the

⁴⁸ Campbell 118.

⁴⁹ Burke 114.

⁵⁰ Wordsworth, Coleridge 71 (lines 41-42).

discrepancy between the beauty in nature and the feelings we project into it. Martha stays a childless mother. If maternal love is the strongest kind, then mother's despair over a lost child would qualify as the most profound one and the most pitiful one.

The contradiction between true beauty and projection of feelings is escalated up to a comic grotesque for Betty Foy from "The Idiot Boy," who is a mother whose love is truly unconditional. Her son is mentally impaired and yet she loves him deeply no matter his condition. Her strong love for him might seem irrational to everybody else for who could love a fool? John Wilson commented on this in the following way: "that it was almost unnatural, that a person in a state of complete idiotism should excite the warmest feeling of attachment in the breast even of his mother."⁵¹ But Betty loves her boy so much that she cannot imagine losing him, and when the thought of him being lost to her forever occurs to her, she for a little while considers suicide, just to not live without her Johnny. But as a mother she is endowed with hope and at last she finds her lost son and she is happy again. Her motherly affection is not as simple as an ordinary mother's would be, yet it seems even stronger. Her Johnny is so simple that he cannot even say anything meaningful or understandable; he nonetheless has the readers' sympathies and the mother's love. Reflecting on the hero, the poet feels that mother's love for him is "the great triumph of the human heart"⁵² showing "the grandeur of love"⁵³ even when the poem was criticized by Coleridge for showing simply "ordinary morbid idiocy."⁵⁴ It took some time before the poem was accepted by the critics. Aware of this fact, Campbell summarizes J.R. Watson ideas, expressed in Watson's *English Poetry of the Romantic Period*, in this way: "the idiot is in the tradition of Wordsworth's outcasts; unlike the others, Johnny 'has the best of both worlds.' He is a kind of simple mystic but he 'also has the joy of being surrounded by human love.'"⁵⁵

Another mother from the *Lyrical Ballads* also views her son as her source of happiness. "The Mad Mother" is almost the inverse story from "The Idiot Boy" since it is the mother who is mentally ill. Though it may be a temporary condition, the events from the poem suggest no other joy for her than her baby son and, even so they both are probably doomed due to many factors but the major one remains the ill mental health of the mother. The poem is a "portrait of an abandoned woman for whom 'maternal passion' remains the most powerful and elemental feeling, even when her own life is at risk."⁵⁶ The mother feels as

⁵¹ Campbell 89.

⁵² Campbell 89.

⁵³ Campbell 89.

⁵⁴ Campbell 90.

⁵⁵ Campbell 93.

⁵⁶ Campbell 117.

strong devotion to her son as Betty towards hers. Her son is her solace. The last two stanzas of the poem show the boy exhibits marks of being dead and the mother's inability to deal with that. Her love is so strong, so pure, but one has to question its beauty and beauty itself. What is the meaning of beauty if it can be so horrid? For at the end the reader feels nothing but pity towards the lost souls of a mother and her baby. In this particular poem one can see that for Wordsworth the beautiful works together with the sublime to represent truly powerful feelings; unlike Burke for whom the two are separate and unlike Kant, who tried to convert them to moral symbolism.

3.6. WORDSWORTH'S POEMS AND THE BEAUTIFUL

With the maternal poems one can see best the discrepancy between the beauty of nature itself and the beauty of a powerful feeling. There one finds that the unity of primary passions and “the spontaneous overflow of feelings”⁵⁷ is noticeably more problematic than as it was presented in the Preface. Although the *Lyrical Ballads* may seem united by the theory explained in the Preface, they also contain poems that differ from its statements. Although Wordsworth comes to prefer the gentle beautiful over the powerful sublime, one can find both in his poems as well as emotions both positive and negative that inspire the two feelings. Wordsworth sometimes uses the sublime in Burkean terms of terror to intensify poems with powerful manifestation of emotions.

His other device to represent his ideas is the language, because for Wordsworth, it is the medium to convey the true emotions. These are to be found in his subject-matter, the ordinary lives of countrymen although the reader may find them a little more tragic than what one would associate with ordinary. The tragic nature of the poems is namely there to express the manner in which our feelings are associated in the state of excitement.

Another issue Wordsworth concerns himself with is how Nature evokes the beautiful in men. The reader sees a great discrepancy between depiction of nature as a source of true human emotions and the projection of those emotions into nature. The question the reader can ask is whether nature is beautiful on its own or if it is just our feelings that make it that way.⁵⁸ Either way one can find beauty associated with nature and it is up to the individual to decide where to look for the beautiful, whether to search for it in oneself or seek it in the solace of untouched nature. What Wordsworth primarily aspired was “to reawaken his readers to the

⁵⁷ Wordsworth, Coleridge 246.

⁵⁸ Hrbata, Procházka 44.

'inexhaustible treasure' of the ordinary things of nature”⁵⁹ and it did not matter where one found it as long as one did. On the other hand Coleridge was “to treat the imagination's more 'romantic' subjects.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Gill 177.

⁶⁰ Gill 177.

4. IMAGINING THE BEAUTIFUL WITH THE SUBLIME

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Wordsworth and Coleridge published together a volume of poems; however, both of them managed to retain their personal objective. Whereas Wordsworth intended to find novel means of introducing everyday things in order to perceive their beauty, Coleridge's contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads* was to produce poems in which “the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real.”¹

While Wordsworth attempted to stay true to Nature, Coleridge believed in the power of imagination as the cornerstone of his aesthetic theory.² Abrams implies that “Wordsworth's 'nature' was replaced by Coleridge's imaginative synthesis of discordant or antithetic aesthetic qualities as the highest poetic value.”³ This central concept of Coleridge's poetry was influenced by his creative development over the course of time. Coleridge did not believe in the character of a poet as Wordsworth did; instead he believed in “the ideal poet” whose role was essentially identical to that of the imagination.⁴ Procházka suggests that: “This concept of imagination is only one of many possible formulations of the spiritual identity of the poet's character, one of numerous authorities which give meaning and order to the romantic subjectivity.”⁵

Another discrepancy between the poets arose in their views regarding metre. Wordsworth claimed that metre is dispensable or even a superfluous complement of the poetic language⁶ whereas Coleridge had a different view. According to him, metre was of utmost importance to the form of a poem since it occupies the centre of its organic structure and it was presented as a synthesis of spontaneous rhythmic impulses with deliberate intention to abide by the rational arrangement of a verse.⁷

4.1. COLERIDGE'S VIEWS ON THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY

Even though Coleridge himself claimed that the Preface to the *Ballads* is “half a child of his own”⁸ he came to the realization that his theory and views had deflected from

¹ William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Lyrical Ballads* (New York: Routledge, 1991) xxi.

² Martin Procházka. *Romantismus a osobnost – subjektivita v anglické romantické poezii a estetice* (Praha: Kruh moderních filologů, 1996) 26.

³ M.H.Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) 119.

⁴ Procházka 78-80.

⁵ Procházka 79.

⁶ Procházka 27.

⁷ Procházka 27.

⁸ Abrams 116.

Wordsworth's. A relatively significant discrepancy can be found in their conviction about poetic language. Wordsworth advocated common language, almost resembling prose, which Coleridge did not accept. "Poetry is not the language of the common man. Lowering diction and content simply made it so that the poet had a smaller vocabulary of both words and concepts to draw from."⁹ His definition of poetry described it as disparate from science by its object – pleasure, not truth. Coleridge discriminated poetry from other works of art "by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as it is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part."¹⁰ Instead of focusing on common language as the key of poetry, Coleridge opted for imagination.

Coleridge claimed there is primary imagination which he perceived as "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am. The secondary imagination I consider as an echo of the former."¹¹ Abrams contributed to this idea by adding that in "creating poetry, the imagination echoes the creative principle underlying the universe."¹² Coleridge's perspectives regarding imagination might be compared to Wordsworth's primary emotion and its subsequent recollection in tranquillity, both having in common the two-steps process of creating poetry.

Similarly to Wordsworth, Coleridge held as true the notion that great poetry is produced by spontaneous feelings and its purpose is the pleasure evoked in the audience.¹³ He expanded Wordsworth's recreation of powerful human feelings to the recreation of the universe by the poet's subjectivity. Nevertheless, the poets distinctly disagree on the formal issues. While Wordsworth attempted to assimilate it to the natural language as much as possible, Coleridge bound it in rules which he found necessary for distinguishing it as poetry. As previously mentioned, the fundamental rule of poetry, he held of the utmost importance, laid in adhering to metre. He corroborated so in his magnum opus *Biographia Literaria* "metre, rhythm and rhyme are the bearers of meaning and keystones of unity of a work of poetry."¹⁴ Regarding all his ideas it is assertible that he was a more innovative critic than Wordsworth. However, contrary to him he concerned himself more with the sublime than with the beautiful.

⁹ Shawn Rider. *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, Writings .

<http://www.wdog.com/rider/writings/wordsworth_and_coleridge.htm> 15 Nov 2015.

¹⁰ Abrams 117.

¹¹ Abrams 119.

¹² Abrams 119.

¹³ Abrams 122 – 123.

¹⁴ Procházka 28.

4.2. COLERIDGE'S VIEWS ON THE SUBLIME AND THE BEAUTIFUL

In Coleridge's era, the ideas of the sublime were dominated by Burke's terror-based one. Matching Wordsworth, Coleridge shifted from the notion of Burkean sublime to the sublime that is indeed inspired by power; yet the experience is of deep awe and profound joy instead of fear.¹⁵ His sublime was more transcendental; it implied a sense of wholeness and completeness of the world and simultaneously a sense of boundlessness and indefiniteness of particular objects.¹⁶ He illustrated so on the example of a mountain peak hidden in the misty clouds. Were the mountain visible, it would be great or magnificent, however, since it is not, the human mind paradoxically searches for more and creates an image of interconnection of the world, which "is suggestive of infinity."¹⁷ Therefore, the invisible peak on one side and conjectured one on the other made the experience sublime.¹⁸ Likewise Wordsworth, Coleridge deals with the Kantian sublime in means of that no natural object is sublime on its own but it is centred in a subject, "in dissolution into unity that reveals an absolute essence to the mind free from the phenomenal."¹⁹

Coleridge's theory of the sublime which "is charged with mystical elements"²⁰ could be traced to a peculiar phenomenon, children's fairy tales. Together with Wordsworth, he criticized realistic fairy tales serving only "to make children self-conscious and prideful."²¹ He proclaimed that with classic fairy tales and adventure tales, one grows accustomed to forgetting himself and with that the mind is free to inure to the vast and the whole.²² Most of Coleridge's mature poetry is based on his reading of travel books describing adventurous expeditions and voyages. Understanding this explication, one can better grasp Coleridge's fascination with the supernatural which occurs rather frequently in his poems. The model poem illustrating his conviction would most certainly be "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" from the *Ballads*.

The sublime played a great part in Coleridge's works, nevertheless, one must not forget the beautiful which was united with the sublime by imagination. Coleridge's

¹⁵ Nurten Birlik, "The Negative Sublime in Coleridge's Later Poetry: The Irreducibility of Difference." *Journal of History Culture and Art Research Vol. 2, No. 4* (2013): 191, Karabuk University
<<http://kutaksam.karabuk.edu.tr/index.php/ilk/article/viewFile/266/281>> 20 Nov 2015.

¹⁶ David Sandner. *The Fantastic Sublime: Romanticism and Transcendence in Nineteenth Century Children's Fantasy Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996): 49-50, Google Books.
<<https://books.google.cz/books?id=nomXJO7OQkIC&pg=PA49&lpg=PA49&dq=coleridge++sublime&source=bl&ots=2QosFpzu3U&sig=Tfb1z8gdmFURE1Cxc0JqFWSogQ4&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0CFkQ6AEwCDgKahUK EwjD1YWI8eTIAhUGdXIKHWWFAvc#v=onepage&q=coleridge%20%20sublime&f=false>> 20 Nov 2015.

¹⁷ Sandner 49.

¹⁸ Sandner 50.

¹⁹ Sandner 50.

²⁰ Birlik 191.

²¹ Sandner 53.

²² Sandner 53.

imagination was placed within the core of his aesthetic theory. He perceived imagination as an organic process which was best exemplified when contrasted with fancy. Imagination is an organic and a creative power, while fancy is a mere mechanism which originates in memory and is based on associations, experience and will.²³ He used the two to differentiate between a genuine work of art and a copy,²⁴ which does not possess any value of beauty since it is not a product of vital, organic power of imagination. He distinguished between the primary and secondary imagination as written above. The secondary imagination idealizes and unifies all whereas the primary imagination creates. Since Coleridge occupied himself especially with the theory of the sublime, the beautiful shall be measured according to Burke's standards represented in the *Enquiry* and Wordsworth's standards as written in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Although the beautiful was not as strongly presented as the sublime, the poet also focused on it and imagined it with the sublime, although differently from Wordsworth. The notion of the beautiful and the discrepancies within Wordsworth's ideas are best exemplified in how nature evokes the beautiful and how it relates to Coleridge.

4.3 "THE NIGHTINGALE"

"The Nightingale" has never been as discussed as "The Mariner" but it presents more Wordsworthian values, it being a Nature lyric and its subject-matter belonging to one of those worded in the Preface, a man's connection to Nature. On the other hand, it is too "bookish"²⁵ for the *Lyrical Ballads* since Coleridge could not "resist the lure of literary showmanship"²⁶ and included an excessive amount of allusions to other literary works such as Milton's "Il Penseroso" or Wordsworth's views on melancholy.

Coleridge stated that "there is nothing melancholy in Nature"²⁷ and he deliberately chose the nightingale, a bird so commonly used for this purpose, to demonstrate his intention. The direct allusion to Milton appeared when the poet described the nightingale's song as "Most musical, most melancholy"²⁸ a line excerpted from "Il Penseroso," a poem concerned with invoking a divine-like Melancholy. Coleridge transformed nightingales into symbols of lone ones. He regarded them as a metaphor "of individuals creating with mutual impact an

²³ Martin Procházka. *Transversals* (Praha: Litteraria Pragensia, 2008) 121.

²⁴ Procházka, *Transversals* 121.

²⁵ Patrick Campbell, *Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads, Critical Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1991) 146.

²⁶ Campbell 146.

²⁷ Procházka 101.

²⁸ Procházka 101.

organic whole”²⁹ in their singing conversations; first one sang and other responded and it so continued until all of them sang together in harmony.

The harmony is not only achieved through its subject-matter, yet more importantly by the use of proper language.³⁰ Although the poem “opens with a series of negative impressions, the assonance and soft vowels of murmuring and verdure reinforce a mood of peace.”³¹ Coleridge used alliteration, rhythm and onomatopoeia to enhance the sound of the nightingales, creating a vivid sound effect for the reader who may thus better imagine the poet's vision. Due to the well-constructed form, the reader may experience the harmonious and joyous summer night which is a very pleasurable and beautiful illustration. In Burke’s theory, the beauty of sound is found in softness; it will not bear harsh, strong or deep sounds.³² None of these are noticeable in the sweet song of the nightingales or the language of the poem. Sharing the narrator's experience, the reader is exposed to the “beneficial influences of Nature and he desires to be a part of its everlasting existence.”³³ For Coleridge the beautiful consists in sharing immortality with Nature, as he comments on it in his poem “The Nightingale:” “Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song / And of his fame forgetful! So his fame / Should share in nature's immortality.”³⁴ Immortality, meaning an infinite life, was a sublime idea and thus Burke connected it to other ideas of the sublime by contemplating that “hardly anything can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity.”³⁵ Nevertheless, he also found infinity pleasing and even beautiful in a sense of a promise of something more, of something yet unfinished.³⁶ It is my belief that Coleridge blended both views in his. He found the beautiful in Nature, since it was the realm of freedom, in accepting its energy, its rhythm, and thus benefiting Nature in return,³⁷ and with that he managed to share its immortality.

In the third part of the poem, Coleridge presented the reader with a child who was a “nature's playmate”³⁸ and Nature calmed his fears once he was within the orchard accepting its energy so naturally as only a child can. A child figure was also prototypical for Wordsworth who considered children to be sweet, innocent and pure - unpolluted by the urban culture. However, the poem also reminds the readers that nature is a solace to both

²⁹ Procházka 100.

³⁰ Procházka 100.

³¹ Campbell 142.

³² Burke 204.

³³ Zdeněk Hrbata, Martin Procházka. *Romantismus a romantismy* (Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2005) 19.

³⁴ Hrbata, Procházka 19.

³⁵ Burke 137.

³⁶ Burke 153.

³⁷ Campbell 143.

³⁸ Wordsworth, Coleridge 44.

children and adults and it “dispenses joy.”³⁹ Burke elaborated on this issue, stating we are “inspired by tenderness and affection towards that which gives us sense of joy and pleasure.”⁴⁰ Another similarity with Wordsworth found in their shared notion that nature was a better alternative to the confusing urban world; it also being a component of both poets' personalities as they searched for unity within nature.⁴¹

What Wordsworth did not seek in nature and yet Coleridge discovered is the image of “One Life” in nature interconnected with “the ideal of erotic love” represented by a maiden in the second part of the poem.⁴² The perceptive girl has a “close relationship with motives of ecstatic joy”⁴³ and she is susceptible to the Moon and its light. The Moon was quintessential symbol in Coleridge's poems signifying imagination and a regulatory force of natural energy, here prompting the nightingales' joyous song with its light.

When one compares “The Nightingale” with Wordsworth's natural poetry, it is possible to discover similarities as well as discrepancies. Both poets found solace in nature; they saw it as harmonious and inspiring powerful emotions. As in Wordsworth's “Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree,” in “The Nightingale”, a man is calmed by nature as he observes the beauty in it. Similarly to Wordsworth's “Tintern Abbey”, Coleridge's “The Nightingale” provides the reader with two viewpoints based on age. In “Tintern Abbey,” it is the narrator who grows old, in Coleridge's poem, the age difference and the notion of nature based on it are represented by figures of the father and the son. In Wordsworth's poetry, the reader may feel the tension between the beautiful nature offering solace and the powerful one inspiring a divine-like admiration, a sublime one. In Coleridge's poem, the two feelings are united by imagination inspiring awe which subsequently leads to joy of being outside in the orchard during a summer evening.

4.4. “THE FOSTER MOTHER'S TALE”

A poem where one may perceive a more Wordsworthian tendency in the chosen subject-matter, or simply the trend of the *Lyrical Ballads* as advertised in the Preface, is “The Foster Mother's Tale.” Although its dramatic form makes it stand out in the collection due to it being a fragment from Coleridge's tragedy *Osorio*, the subject of motherly love prevails through, showing a slightly different understanding of motherly affection than Wordsworth did in his poems. The maternal love is contrasted with a tale of an orphan who has been

³⁹ Campbell 145.

⁴⁰ Burke 114.

⁴¹ Procházka 91.

⁴² Procházka 100.

⁴³ Procházka 100.

“deprived of the gentle, loving care that the Foster Mother has given her Maria and Albert.”⁴⁴ With the addition of this poem, mothers are portrayed in almost all possible situations within the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth included a mad mother, a childless mother, an abandoned mother and a mother with an idiot son, then Coleridge completed it with his foster-mother.

The poem is interesting in its conjunction with several poems in the collection. First, its narrative strategy is similar to the one in “The Mariner,” in which a man recounts a tale full of danger to his young listeners. Secondly, in succession to this tale, the foster-mother “unfolds her own cautionary tale”⁴⁵ – a story which intertwines with “Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree” and with the “The Mariner,” a man's return to Nature after bookish education and hardships in life. The poem showed the destructive influence of society on a child of nature, which was represented by the young man's imprisonment and the power of sympathy, when a friar helped him escape not only from the dungeon but also figuratively from the society, as the man then sailed to the New World to live among the savages. An important lesson the foster-mother taught was that “the love of nature must coexist with the love of man”⁴⁶ and only then the relationship was equal and the equilibrium, created by balanced love, was beautiful. We were “designed both for contemplation and action”⁴⁷ as Burke regarded the pleasures of society of men and the pleasures of temporary solitude.

4.5. “THE DUNGEON”

“The Dungeon” is similar to the previous poem in many aspects. Firstly, like the “Foster Mother” it was a fragment from Coleridge's *Osorio*. Secondly, it exposed the unnaturalness of a dungeon, a prison for men. Thirdly, it was nature which had the ability to save and restore the man after his imprisonment or, even before it.

Coleridge started the poem with what has man made for man,⁴⁸ a sentence highly resembling Wordsworth's “what has man made of man”⁴⁹ from “Lines Written in Early Spring.” Coleridge's poem continued on a similar note. Wordsworth's narrator lamented the men's deviation from nature while Coleridge was more concrete in his idea of a corrupt system of society. According to him, the society had produced the poor who then turn corrupt because of their status, and then were consequently punished by the same society which, in

⁴⁴ Campbell 159.

⁴⁵ Campbell 159.

⁴⁶ Campbell 159.

⁴⁷ Burke 115.

⁴⁸ Wordsworth, Coleridge 82.

⁴⁹ Wordsworth, Coleridge 69.

fact, had created them in the first place. These opinions are very similar to those covered by Wordsworth in his poem “The Female Vagrant.”

In contemporary society, the usual solution of the problem is to throw the criminals into a dark dungeon without any natural light, no sympathy and not any kind of love – just terror. Seeing the brutality of such treatment, the narrator proposes that “the incarcerated criminal's one hope of salvation lies in his exposure to the 'soft influences' of nature's 'general dance and minstrelsy.’”⁵⁰ He felt that the “touch of love and beauty”⁵¹ of nature was a remedy for the “angry spirit”⁵² of the poor men. Once again, Coleridge presented Nature as the solace, the healer of broken spirit and the calmer of erratic nerves, which was welcoming to men.

4.6. “THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER”

Prison imagery is also significant regarding the events happening in “The Ancient Mariner” where it functions as a “symbolic explanation of the Mariner's deed as a loss of freedom.”⁵³ Coleridge’s freedom lied within nature whereas the society controlled men with a dungeon-like power as already expressed in the two previously examined poems. In the “Mariner,” we have an image of a spectral ship, which appears on the sea with the last lights of dusk. The ribs of the ship in front of the setting sun resemble “dungeon grates,” which are symbolize to the situation of the Mariner. The poor man cannot escape his fate and he has to suffer for his crime against nature. On the spectral ship, the Mariner encounters characters that he comes to understand as a crew of a strange woman, whose mate is Death himself. The spectres play a game of dice which is crucial for the whole poem as it gives horror its most powerful asset – unpredictability. The ship disappears with the rise of the Moon, Coleridge's symbol of imagination. The Moon appears in “The Mariner” as an opposite to the Sun. The two together are used as a God-like force. The Sun is powerful and vengeful; it may be observed that most hardships occur during the daylight. The Moon is more benevolent and at the end, the curse is lifted in the moonlight and the mariner is permitted to return home.

As day shifts to night and vice versa, the beautiful is penetrated by terror. The key scene, in which the beautiful arises from the absolute horror, is when the sailor blesses the water-snakes. He stands on the deck of his ship, surrounded by rotting dead bodies of his comrades, and the sea surface is swarmed with hideous snakes as the Moon and stars come up. However, in the moonlight the swarming snakes no longer arouse fear and disgust, the

⁵⁰ Campbell 158.

⁵¹ Wordsworth, Coleridge 83.

⁵² Wordsworth, Coleridge 83.

⁵³ Martin Procházka, *Reading 5 - “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,”* handout in the course “Romantic Symbolic Poetry I – Coleridge” 1.

Mariner notices the beautiful colours of their skins - "blue, glossy green, and velvet black."⁵⁴ While dying of dehydration, the mariner's imagination transforms the horrible creatures into beautiful symbols of life's happiness, and he comes to realize the beauty and wealth of life. The beauty inspires love towards the creatures and he "bless'd them unaware!"⁵⁵ With this subconsciously evoked love comes the end of mariner's punishments and horrors. The mariner's suffering suddenly transforms into joy with this act of love. The albatross, which is also an "analogy to a cross, an emblem of the character's guilt, sins of all mankind and also hope for redemption,"⁵⁶ falls from his neck. The seafarer finds strength and ability to pray, sleep and after a long drought there is even rain. According to Burke, the removal of pain and the pleasure that follows it, which he called delight, is not really beautiful because it was not evoked by love but by removal or moderation of pain which is anything but beautiful.⁵⁷ Coleridge apprehended a profound joy, and indubitably the mariner senses it, as one of the emotions inspiring the sublime.

Many of the horrifying experiences unite with the Burkean sublime in a manner Wordsworth was not capable of adopting. Coleridge's sublime in the poem was developed more intensively and as such it expanded on the sublime presented by Burke in his *Enquiry*. The story represents a large part of the seafarer's voyage as a gradation of terror due to the impossibility of foreseeing what follows our actions and given the unrealistic nature of man's redemption of the absolute guilt.⁵⁸ In its capacity as such, it is very much sublime but not solely in Burke's terms who associated the sublime with darkness, magnificence and with the hidden and unclear cause of terror. Coleridge also worked with the sublime which comes as a result from chance and unpredictability. Randomness and precariousness of events in the poem, possibly best exemplified by the game of dice occurring in the story, are of importance in connection to the sublime.⁵⁹ The mariner's story continues as the beautiful is randomly obscured, destroyed, or, on the contrary, enhanced, by the sublime and supernatural occurrences. Many of the events are numinous in their essence, such as the resurrection of the sailors or the presence of the talking spirits. With the paranormal comes the astonishment of the sublime. Terror for Coleridge was directly linked to the fear of the possibility that the world can be directed by unknown forces which may be explained only through esotery. The fortuitous nature of the poem is developed further in its form – the balladic stanza has an

⁵⁴ Wordsworth, Coleridge 21.

⁵⁵ Wordsworth, Coleridge 21 (line 277).

⁵⁶ Procházka 105.

⁵⁷ Burke 107.

⁵⁸ Procházka 109.

⁵⁹ Procházka 109.

irregular number of verses and its length is likewise uneven, therefore the reader's search for any rules of the composition is hindered.

Even with the matters aligned with the role of randomness in the poem's narrative and thematic structure, "The Mariner" stands for one of Coleridge's best-known poems and the only finished ballad, the other two incomplete ones being "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan." Although they are not part of the volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*, they are crucial for Coleridge. Together with "The Mariner," the two poems are often "classified as poems of the supernatural."⁶⁰ In "Christabel," there are two kinds of beauty. The first one is based on the resemblance of the storyline to old novels and called Romanesque.⁶¹ The second is directly linked to one of the characters, Geraldine. She is sensually beautiful, yet there is more to her than what is revealed to the naked eye. This is indicated by signs such as dog barking when she enters the castle after being carried over the threshold by Christabel, a flame appearing on a dead fire, or the mysterious, terrifying features of her body.⁶² In "Kubla Khan" the poet struggles between the beautiful of the unviolated nature together with its sanctity, and the powerful creativity of imagination producing a miraculous and mysterious vision of Xanadu and „caves measureless to a man.“⁶³

However, as it is written above, only "The Mariner" was completed. It is well-known that the poets started to work on the "Mariner" together, however, Wordsworth soon realized he should yield it to Coleridge, and thus the poem is more sublime than any in the collection and yet it graciously blends with the beautiful. Nevertheless, "Wordsworth seemed to have objected to an unclear religious meaning of the poem: the divergence of the narrative from the scheme 'sin-punishment-redemption.'"⁶⁴ Coleridge conformed to those objections by deleting some passages of the poem and admitting that poetry "should deal with common images"⁶⁵ and that our imagination should be moderated. At the same time, he confronted it by conceding "the existence of innumerable imaginary orders of being."⁶⁶

⁶⁰Poetry Foundation collective. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Poetry Foundation <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/samuel-taylor-coleridge>> 20 Nov 2015.

⁶¹ Umberto Eco. *Dějiny krásy* (Praha: Argo, 2005) 303.

⁶² Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Christabel*, Poetry Foundation <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173227>> 20 Nov 2015.

⁶³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*, Poetry Foundation <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173247>> 6 Jan 2016.

⁶⁴ Procházka, *Reading 5 – "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"* 1.

⁶⁵ Procházka, *Reading 5 – "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"* 1.

⁶⁶ Procházka, *Reading 5 – "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"* 1.

4.7. COLERIDGE'S POEMS AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Although the poets' opinions on few fundamental dilemmas diverged, they both struggled to find the beautiful and the sublime. One may conclude that Coleridge managed to demonstrate Wordsworth's theory a great deal better than Wordsworth himself with his few additions only to the collection of the *Lyrical Ballads*.⁶⁷ His subject-matter were the common people – a sailor, a mother, a father and his son; and their relationship with nature which influenced all. The sailor learned humility and the value of life, the mother taught of balance between nature and the culture of men, and the last two contemplated in their orchard during a night vivid with the nightingales' song.

Coleridge's views on the poet, poetry and its language differed significantly from Wordsworth's ideas; nevertheless, even though his poems were affected by such perspectives, there was not a gravely disruptive element in them. The poems remain valid components of the *Lyrical Ballads* – the poets were after all experimenting with new visions of poetry. The beautiful in Coleridge's pieces was heavily interconnected with the sublime in both Burkean and Coleridgean senses, thus the reader's experience became intense and realistic. Ultimately, there was only a marginal distinction between the beautiful and the sublime in Romantic poetry.

⁶⁷ Edward E. Bostetter. *The Romantic Ventriloquist* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975) 105.

5. THE BEAUTIFUL IN THE *LYRICAL BALLADS*

The aim of this thesis was to examine the notion of the beautiful in the period of Romanticism focusing on the volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The questions asked were whether the collection manifests an ideal of the beautiful applicable to the Romantics since it contains the Romantic manifesto in the form of the Preface, and whether the two poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge, share an ideal of the beautiful and what are their possible differences.

The chapter on the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* has discussed the beautiful in terms of Wordsworth's theory stressing the importance of feelings over actions. In order to create true emotions in poetry, the poet has to use a simple language closely resembling that spoken by village people. Only then the language can be beautiful since it is a true representation of Nature. In Wordsworth's and Coleridge's views, romantic poet has to recreate the capacity of language to communicate powerful human feelings.

In the next chapter, I have demonstrated on several examples that in order to create powerful emotions Wordsworth sometimes uses the terror-based Burkean sublime. Despite this, he prefers the beautiful, which he relates to rather communal experiences. In his poems, there is a discrepancy between the beauty of Nature itself and the projection of feelings into it, which shape Nature according to the current emotion. Nevertheless, either way beauty, for Wordsworth, is strongly associated with Nature.

The chapter dedicated to Coleridge manifests that the beauty of Nature is also very important to him. Although some of his fundamental views concerning language and style of poetry, or the character of the poet, or even the creative process differed from Wordsworth's ideas; his contributions to the collection of the *Ballads* do not present any disruptive element. They actually quite demonstrate Wordsworth's theory as the subject-matter were the common people. The difference is that for Coleridge the beautiful is blended with the sublime, both in Burkean and Coleridgean senses.

The thesis shows that the beautiful and the sublime in the *Lyrical Ballads* are often rather difficult to separate. While Wordsworth uses the sublime to intensify the working of the beautiful by means of unexpected contrasts, the aesthetic effect of Coleridge's major poems depends not only on the interaction, but on the synthesis of both qualities, as it is best evident from "The Rhymer of the Ancient Mariner." Other poets may have different views so it would be interesting to see Wordsworth and Coleridge compared to the other Romantic poets and their ideal of the beautiful.

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