Posudek vedoucí na bakalářskou práci Martiny Mikulové
“Transformations of the Gothic in Nineteenth-Century British Literature”

The topic of this MA dissertation is the Gothic topos inherited from the classical eighteenth-century Gothic and its modifications: in terms of setting, isolation, character types and monstrosity. The underlying premise is that the whole nineteenth century is permeated by a Gothic atmosphere, an interest in death, even the morbid. To prove this thesis, the student has chosen six diverse texts (Frankenstein, The Vampyre, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Carmilla and Dracula). Their themes are studied chronologically, spanning the entire century.

The choice of texts is justified extensively in the introduction. Yet, it is, of course inevitably always, motivated by personal choices. This is clear especially in relation to the Brontës (whom Martina Mikulová studied in her BA thesis). I would, however, like to know why such interesting omissions have been made, as Wilkie Collins, James Hogg, or R.L. Stevenson. What exactly were the criteria for the inclusion of the six named texts? Also, what was the position of the Gothic impulse in the mid-century? She seems to be implying that it transmuted into elements in realist novels.

Structurally, the work is very well organized and clear. Language and style is in keeping with the standards (some, but very few, errors do appear). The dissertation displays a keen sense for logical organization and development of an argument. Language and style is fluent and quite appropriate. Should footnote 26 (page 15) not refer to Baldick (and his In Frankenstein’s Shadow)? Also, the citation of “The Stones of Wuthering Heights” is not quite correct. I appreciate the inclusion of pictorial material. Some of the images are very striking. But the notoriously known painting “The Nightmare” by Fuseli is probably superfluous – especially since no explanation is made as to how exactly it influenced Shelley’s novel.

Some more questions:

How would you reconcile the fascination with morbidity on the one hand and mainstream literature with also its culture of critical realism, scientific interest etc.?

Page 13: the distinction between the monstrous and the grotesque is rather odd. Please, revisit your definition of the grotesque and explain the difference more clearly. You also seem to dismiss the grotesque quality entirely (you do not mention the word again).
What exactly constitutes the category of Female Gothic as mentioned on page 15? (Who came up with it and why?)

I find the submitted thesis fully in keeping with the standards. I certainly recommend it for defence with the preliminary suggested grade of excellent to very good (výborně až velmi dobře).

V Praze dne 17.5.2016

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