Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

MIKHAI BUSCH

BA (University of Victoria, 2014)

“Spirituality and German Romanticism:
The Influence of Jakob Böhme on Novalis and Caspar David Friedrich”

Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies

Friday, May 8, 2020
12:00 P.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Elena Pnevmonidou, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies,
University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Matthew Pollard, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:
Dr. Catherine Harding, Department of Art History & Visual Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Farouk Nathoo, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This Master’s thesis shall attempt to reconcile the notion of the spiritual with that of the aesthetic by focusing on the influence of 16th century German mystic Jakob Böhme, with the 19th century cultural movement of German Romanticism. Böhme’s mysticism outlined a spiritual paradigm that fused alchemy with Christianity wherein the properties of nature are inherently led by a spiritual desire towards unity with God. It is through the process of spiritual desire that unity unveils itself. Consequently, Böhme’s mysticism influenced later generations of spiritual thought, including German Romanticism. Within Romanticism, Friedrich von Hardenberg, know by his pen name Novalis, developed a philosophy and aesthetic theory that expanded away from the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment. This new philosophy focused on the subjective experience and how revelation of the self was to be experienced through creative introspection, as a consequence of encountering and interacting with the other. Novalis’ philosophy incorporated religious motifs and spirituality to assert that it was through creative striving that spiritual revelation was to be achieved from within oneself. Caspar David Friedrich was a Romantic landscape painter whose work focused on the notion of humanity in the face of nature. Friedrich often painted landscapes as an allegory for Christian values and religious inquiry that verges into existential introspection through the sublime. Through comparative analysis I shall demonstrate how the ideas and works of Novalis and Caspar David Friedrich correlate with the spiritual mysticism of Böhme that represent the greater discourse that is spirituality itself.