

Alena Kopečná 'The Development of Lord Byron's Satire'

BA thesis

Opponent's Report

The BA thesis sets out to trace the development of Lord Byron's satire in three satirical texts ranging the gamut of his poetic development in formal as well as contextual and thematic terms: *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, *Beppo* and *The Vision of Judgement*. The thesis is factually very well-informed and well-researched, but overall it comes across as somewhat sketchy – the virtues of this thesis are ironically also its shortcomings. Many of the subsections could form the core of a separate thesis, and the title would perhaps have benefitted from the addition of 'in socio-political, cultural and literary contexts' to clearly mark the absence of any purely literary study of Byron's satire in the thesis, considering that the 'aim of the thesis is to follow the development of Lord Byron's satirical voice' ('Abstract', p. 4).

I see the strength of Kopečná's thesis mainly in its scale (which surpasses that of its formal requirements), in its ambition to provide a core of socio-historical, cultural and literary contexts, and in its attempt to anchor this in a larger critical argument, if inconsistent and disjointed, tracing the various seminal implications these works have for Byron's oeuvre and its development, and the discussion of their thorny place in mainstream English Romantic poetry. I also commend the student's consistent work with a large number of secondary sources, including critical theory. As to the shortcomings of the thesis, I see those in the rather laboured structure of individual chapters which obscures an overall argument, an insufficiently focused study of exactly how and to what extent Byron transgresses the traditional genre of satire in these works, and, possibly most important of all, the palpable absence of the student's own opinion. The thesis would also have benefited from a brief outlook (I am fully aware of the time and scope limitations of the BA thesis, so this is more of a suggestion for further study than anything else) pointing out the ways in which these works might relate to Byron's dramatic works as well as a sample canto of *Don Juan*, not merely the 'Dedication'.

On a stylistic/linguistic level, I advise the candidate to mend the abundantly used 'stresses out/stressed out' (on pp. 24, 25, 27, 28, 45, 48, 49, 52 & 53) – and start using the correct forms, i.e. 'to stress *something* / emphasize / highlight / underline'.

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

- 1) To what extent might *The Vision of Judgement* be considered Byron's most successful dramatic (in a generic sense) work? Does the satirical mode contribute to this and if so, in what ways?
- 2) Is imitation an inherent aspect of literary (or indeed any) satire?
- 3) Specifically how does Byron tackle the onslaught of the 'Satanic School' controversy in his texts?

To conclude, I am happy to recommend the thesis for defence and propose a preliminary grade of 'excellent' (výborně) if the candidate performs well on the day.

30 August 2015

Mirka Horová, PhD