

## Opponent's Report

### Tomáš Kejmar, "The Road Not Taken: An Analysis of Representation of Significant Events and Personalities of Irish History in the Period 1916-1923 in Irish Film" (BA Thesis)

Tomáš Kejmar's thesis focuses primarily on the depiction of Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera in three recent films that deal with historical events in Ireland from the Easter Rising up to the end of the Civil War. The structure of the thesis is lucid, the work uses almost all the available sources on the films that are analysed. The depiction of the historical events and their central figures is appropriately juxtaposed with the work of at least one prominent historian. Stylistically, the thesis is quite accomplished; however, more careful editing would have resulted in the elimination of minor language errors and annoying spelling mistakes (such as "Forster" for "Foster", repeatedly; "Mystical" for "Mythical" in a chapter heading, p. 10). Overall, the thesis manages to achieve the goal set in the introduction.

Several points should be raised nonetheless, which should be addressed at the defence of the thesis. The single weak passage concerns, in my view, the depiction of de Valera in Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (23-27). The argument here does not seem to be particularly coherent: at times, it almost seems that de Valera comes out of the film as a positive character, contrary to the view of most critics. Furthermore, the candidate does not seem to take note of the casting of Alan Rickman in the role, who endows it with what are almost features of caricature, not to mention all the scenes in which his de Valera appears to be literally dwarfed by Liam Neeson's Michael Collins. The inconsistency in this passage is moreover flagged by a somewhat uncritical acceptance of Jordan's claim that his Collins merges "the hero and the villain into one" (23), despite the fact that the glorification of Collins in the film is otherwise quite appropriately detailed.

It is also somewhat regrettable that the candidate did not find room for a reflection on the reviews of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*: unlike the other two films, Ken Loach's has not yet been covered extensively by academic commentators (being the most recent one). Hence, it would have been interesting to summarise the coverage of the film by reviewers; I presume that it would have become clear then that no critical study of the politics of Loach's film would be succinct if it did not discuss the depiction of the British in it – probably the most controversial feature of the film for many, together with the timing of its making (i.e., why did Loach decide to make a film about this period particularly now?). Finally, the ultimate assertion that Loach deals in his film with "versions of Irishness" that he would have preferred (41) requires further substantiation.

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "very good" or "excellent", based on the result of the defence.

Prague, 6 June 2011

doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD