

## Opponent's Report

### Hana Němečková, "*Aided Derbforaill*: Recurrent Motifs in the Ulster Cycle and Their Relation to the Status of Women" (BA Thesis)

Hana Němečková's Bachelor's thesis is an exemplary work in a number of respects. First, it is based on comprehensive research, with hardly a substantial secondary source missing in the bibliography. Second, Němečková's writing is marked by fluency and lucidity, together with the absence of unnecessary jargon; it is only a few minor language errors and misprints that interfere on rare occasion. Finally and as importantly, the candidate has set herself realistic objectives in deciding to focus only on a single text from the Ulster Cycle and its intertextual links. This is particularly laudable given the complexity of the area on the one hand, and also the fact that her lack of knowledge of Old and Middle Irish necessitated work through English translation.

In the first part of the thesis, the candidate provides a succinct description of early Irish society culled from the law tracts: her treatment of the matter is brief, but at the same time fully serves its purpose. The same holds true of Ms Němečková's outline of the provenance of the texts that she intends to discuss. Her subsequent analysis of *Aided Derbforaill* with a particular focus on the role of women is accomplished, articulate, and marked by judicious use of existing commentaries on individual motifs or plot elements. What is to be appreciated as well is that the candidate is aware of the lack of information that we have about many aspects of medieval Irish society and literature; this she demonstrates especially in her reluctance to preference a speculative interpretation in place of stating with appropriate intellectual modesty that something will very likely remain unknown (e.g. on p. 36).

My only reservations pertain to a couple of minor points in the thesis abstract. In place of describing the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* as "the longest epic of the Ulster Cycle", the wording should be either "the longest epic text of...", or perhaps "the central epic of...", in order to maintain generic accuracy (a similar issue arises in the Czech version of the abstract). Also, the Czech translation of the title of this text – *Dobytčí nájezd na Cooley* – is misleading, as it seems to position the cattle as the actor.

As regards the thesis defence, I would like to raise a couple of points for consideration, which are triggered by mere curiosity rather than any shortcomings in the candidate's work: 1) when considering the ridiculous and often grotesque manner of death of some of the heroes (discussed on p. 38), is the candidate ready to venture an opinion as to whether we are to interpret it as an ethical message concerning open adultery, or rather a derogatory comment issued by Christian monks (who wrote down the texts) concerning the pagan world? 2) Has the candidate come across parallels in other texts regarding the cruelty with which *Derbforaill* is treated, or indeed explications concerning the reasons for such extreme violence inflicted on a woman?

It is without hesitation that I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "excellent".

Prague, 1 September 2016

doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD