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Irish Issues in Ken Loach's "The Wind That Shakes the Barley"

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Bakalářská práce se zaměří na zobrazení irské občanské války ve filmu "The Wind That Shakes the Barley" Kena Loache (2006). Teoretická část se bude věnovat historickému vývoji anglo-irských vztahů s cílem sledovat příčiny občanských i vojenských konfliktů v Irsku (The Irish War of Independence; Civil War). Tyto skutečnosti pak porovná s interpretací složité kapitoly irských dějin ve výše zmíněném filmu.

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ANOTATION

The bachelor thesis deals with the topic of the Anglo-Irish conflict, namely the Irish fight for independence, and its' depiction in Ken Loach's film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*. The theoretical part explores the director's imprint in the field of cinematography, and it provides an insight into the director's interpretation of the matter as well as the historical background of the Irish struggle – particularly the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. The practical part places the film into historical and cultural contexts, thus creating an analysis of the director's work.

KEYWORDS

Ken Loach, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, Irish War of Independence, Irish Civil War, cinematography

ANOTACE

Bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem anglo-irského konfliktu, konkrétně irského boje za nezávislost, a jeho vyobrazením ve filmu Kena Loache *Zvedá se vítr*. Teoretická část zkoumá režiséřův otisk na poli kinematografie a poskytuje vřled do režiséřova výkladu věci, včetně historického pozadí irského boje – zejména Britsko-irské války a Irské občanské války. Praktická část zasazuje film do historických a kulturních souvislostí, a vytváří tak analýzu režiséřova díla.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Ken Loach, *Zvedá se vítr*, Britsko-irská válka, Irská občanská válka, kinematografie

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Introduction

The desire of the Irish to be free and independent goes deep into history. The people of Ireland were being oppressed throughout many centuries and they were involved in many conflicts with the British. Due to great geopolitical, social and cultural changes all over the world in the twentieth century, conflicts between the two nations at that time along with their outcomes played a significant role in the struggle of the Irish people. The so-called Irish revolutionary period was defined by two major conflicts, the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. The so-called Anglo-Irish war, the first of the two encounters, was waged by the Irish Republic, which was an unrecognized revolutionary state at the time, and its Irish Republican Army against the United Kingdom and its forces stationed on areas of British rule in Ireland. Beginning on 21 January 1919, the war lasted more than two and a half years and resulted in an Irish victory and the creation of the Irish Free State. However, the outcome was not accepted by all revolutionaries and stirred many controversies amongst them. The main issue lied in the Anglo-Irish Treaty, an agreement which concluded the Irish war of Independence. The document essentially divided the Irish into two separate sides – the pro-Treaty and the anti-Treaty. In 1922 this split escalated into the second conflict of the two, the Irish Civil War, a conflict which was waged between the forces of the newly established Irish Free State and the Anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army. After 10 months the war resulted in a victory of the pro-Treaty forces, but it ultimately left the Irish society torn apart and rancorous for decades to come. Needless to say, these events shaped the nation as a whole and their outcome influences the Irish society still to this day.

The aim of this thesis is to show the overall depiction of the Irish struggle during the Irish revolutionary period in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, a film by the director Ken Loach which gives an insight into both the initial fight for the Irish independence and the internal schism that came afterwards. The thesis itself is divided into two major sections, theoretical and practical, more specifically into three separate chapters.

The first chapter contemplates on Loach's notion of "concept of film." It takes a look upon Ken Loach's political background, as he has been politically active throughout his whole life, which affected certain narratives of his films, including the one which this bachelor thesis is based around. The purpose of this chapter is to show that Loach's work is tendentious and has a narrative of social appeal, while it also discusses the director's signature motives that make his films, such as the main protagonist and his features, as well as his importance in particular

films. Author's other films which are portraying a similar issue – *Jimmy's Hall* and *I, Daniel Blake* – are discussed on the level of main protagonists in order to point out similarities with *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* to further stress the major features of the examined film. The chapter also sets Loach's work into the British New Wave, a filmmaking style of the 1960s. The ways author's work has influenced the society are being looked at in this chapter as well – mainly the left-wing and Marxist groups in the United Kingdom.

The topic of the second chapter covers the Irish struggle for a free and independent state of their own. The roots of their endeavor are mentioned firstly, from the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland which marked the first Irish encounter with the people from the British islands, through the Cromwellian period in Ireland, to the Irish Rebellion of 1798 along with the Acts of Union of 1800. The chapter also discusses the role of the Catholic Church in the Irish struggle. The main purpose of the chapter is to analyze the events of early twentieth century – the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War respectively – which considerably changed the Irish society and their nation as a whole. The chapter is devoted to defining the key elements which will be discussed upon in the practical part.

Third chapter takes on the film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* in light of historical as well as cultural context. Apart from examining of the film's historical accuracy, judging by the analysis made in the previous parts, the chapter observes how Loach himself approaches the issue in his work as he certainly is inclined towards a certain narrative. Both these elements are being demonstrated on specific scenes from the film itself. An additional layer of symbolism within the film is highly accented as well. Being the practical part, the third chapter acts as a climax of the thesis as a whole.

Ken Loach depicts the struggle of the Irish on various levels, but he mainly reflects the situation specifically on a social level of the issue. The fight of the Irish for a free and independent state is a fight of the oppressed working-class men against their oppressors from the British Islands. This paper takes on this idea of Loach's, contemplates it with a historical background of the Anglo-Irish conflict along with the significant characteristics of it, and as a result creates an analysis of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, pointing out the differences and similarities with the actual historical events and evaluating author's portrayal of the issue as a whole.

1. Loach's Notion of the Concept of Film

In order to get a deeper understanding of Loach's work, the author's background, motivation, and inspiration shall be acknowledged firstly. The aim of this chapter is to lay the ground for later analysis of the author's work. The director is known to create films which tend to be socially appellative and have a tendency of portraying the common people being downtrodden by the wealthy in power. This particular style of filming derives from Loach's personal beliefs and values of how he sees the society and the world around him, as he has been politically active and socially aware throughout his whole life.

Quite expectedly, from 1962 to 1994 he was also a member of the Labour party, one of the two Britain's traditional political parties. Loach reportedly left the Labour in the year 1994 in disgust at Tony Blair, after three decades as a member.¹ In 2015 he rejoined the party but was later expelled in 2021, as the party leadership deemed his support of an antisemitic organization Labour Against the Witchhunt to be too extreme.² In general, the left-wing politics strive for social equality and oppose social hierarchy by stressing the idea of redistribution of wealth and privileges. It defends the rights and interests of lower social classes, namely the working class, and seeks to put the means of production directly in the hands of the workers by preferring state form of ownership over a private ownership as a way of combating the exploitation, although nowadays the remaining idea of a literal exploitation is exclusively associated with communist and extremist branches of the left. The so-called center-left ideology, which is the most popular one in today's politics of the Western world, is based on a regulated market economy along with sustaining a welfare state rather than persisting on the idea of oppression of any kind. Loach's opinions and attitudes towards the society put him in a rather radical spectrum from today's standpoint and may portray him best as a socialist, even though some authors on the left often dub him a social realist or a socialist realist.³ After all, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, decades during which he filmed *Kes*, one of the most influential films in the realm of social realism, Loach was associated with the Socialist Labour League, the International Socialists and the International Marxist Group.⁴ The director's left-wing orientation is essential to his film work because it often leaves significant imprints in his narratives.

¹ Mattha Busby, "Director Ken Loach says he has been expelled from Labour," *The Guardian* (August 14, 2021)

² LabourList, "Socialist Campaign Group of MPs urges Labour to reinstate Ken Loach," *LabourList* (August 16, 2021)

³ Peter K. Tyson, "Ken Loach: Social or Socialist Realist?" *A Question of Style: Collected Writings* (February 15, 2021), 18.

⁴ Simon Hattenstone, "Ken Loach: If you're not angry, what kind of person are you?" *The Guardian* (October 15, 2016)

There are quite a few characteristics that make Ken Loach's film truly and undeniably his work. The ever-present socially appellative atmosphere is something the director clearly strives for. A Ken Loach's film leaves the viewer with an urge to empathize with the protagonist characters portrayed in it. The people are usually struggling on a social level, such as not being able to live a full life without a presence of an oppressing force of some sort, and the director uses their struggle to paint a bigger picture of many social issues in the real world. The topics and settings of his films are chosen deliberately to truly stress the importance of paying attention to the problems of common men. In *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* typical examples of such scheme may be observed, where the two main protagonists from a poor rural working-class family, living in a land taken from them while being oppressed by a foreign force, are to set to lead a revolutionary rebellion against the oppressors to break themselves and whole society free from the chains of exploitation, thus set to create a socialist society, a society based on a social equality rather than a social hierarchy.

Loach's work is often tendentious, meaning that it depicts a point of view that tends to lean strictly towards one side of the issue. Once again, in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* it is the Irish side being portrayed as the good side, while the British as being the evil one – not only that, throughout the film as the plot unravels, even part of the Irish which slightly sympathize with the Brits turn out to be portrayed as evil at the end as well. Such elements of Loach's work are observable all throughout his years of filming. This one-sided style of plotting gives the viewer a limited point of view of the issue, that puts him just where the director wants him to be – leaned towards the given narrative – which is a typical feature of Ken Loach's films.

Tyson describes a distinction between social realism and socialist realism, stating that social realism uses a realistic style to attacks social ills but does not offer solutions whereas socialist realism uses a realistic style and condemns social wrongs but also offers a solution in the form of revolutionary socialism. He then concludes that Loach is rather a social realist, but in few of his films he offers a “failed” socialist realism, such as the one towards the ending of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, where a form of revolutionary socialism as a solution is executed, but it eventually turns out to be contra productive, leaving the issue in its core more or less the same, which does not make him a socialist realist, as socialist realist works are supposed to be positive and uplifting.⁵

⁵ Peter K. Tyson, “Ken Loach: Social or Socialist Realist?” 24.

Graham Fuller comments on the power of a political debate in Loach's narratives. Throughout his tendentious films there happen to be scenes where the protagonists discuss how to change their dismal situation for the better. This portrayal of a political debate sends a clear message that no action can be acted upon by oneself, but a broader group of people is needed. None the less, as in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, such discussion may resolve in a disagreement, which author then uses to depict an act of betrayal, thus fundamentally moving the narrative to further resemble a "failed" socialist realism. In his article *The Cut and Thrust: The Power of Political Debate in the Films of Ken Loach*, Fuller states:

These debates – the organization and filming which demonstrates the cooperativeness and community spirit among members of different film trades – became integral to Loach's films after he began his twenty-seven-year collaboration with Allen on *The Big Flame*. [...] Though not politically balanced, this discussion is important in Loach's early work for establishing the theme of the left being betrayed by the left.⁶

Being a screenwriter and a playwright, James Allen is a decisive figure when it comes to narratives of the films as he has been known to collaborate with the director since the year 1969. Though he did not write screenplays to all of his films, he certainly influenced Loach in his further development of storytelling. Nick Grant adds that a more radical writing contribution to Loach's career came from Jim Allen.⁷ Allen wrote the screenplays for films such as *Hidden Agenda*, *Raining Stones* or *Land and Freedom*. Their collaboration ended with the before-mentioned *Land and Freedom*, released in 1995. Being diagnosed with cancer, Allen passed away four years later in 1999. When it comes to Loach's films, a name of Paul Laverty must not be forgotten as he is the other important author known to collaborate with the director ever since the late 1990s. Being Loach's screenwriter of choice ever since, Laverty is the author of screenplays to films such as *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, *Jimmy's Hall*, *I, Daniel Blake*, and the list goes on. The screenwriter indeed influences Loach's narratives still to this day, as their latest film, *Sorry We Missed You*, came out in 2019 and their collaboration has not been known to have ended yet.

Grant comments on his distinctiveness, saying that what separates Loach's work from conventional melodrama is the way it discourages too strong an emotional identification with the characters while insisting on the economic and social underpinnings of their actions. In this

⁶ Graham Fuller, "The Cut and Thrust: The Power of Political Debate in the Films of Ken Loach," *Cinéaste*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Fall 2015), 31,32.

⁷ Nick Grant, "Keeping it Real: The Brutal Art of Ken Loach," *International Socialism*, Issue 160 (18 October 2018)

way the impossible dilemmas and choices are seen to derive less from personal trait or moral shortcomings than from economic circumstances.⁸ Loach speaks directly to the working-class and socialist-inclined part of society. The socially appellative atmosphere of his pictures, the tendentiousness, the social or even socialist realism and his fairly radical approach – these characteristics undoubtedly make Ken Loach’s films uniquely original and by the virtue of it the viewer may discern a signature imprint in the director’s work.

Needless to say, a main protagonist plays a key role in any picture and Ken Loach’s films make no exception of that. The typical main hero of his is a working-class man, or at least a man having working-class roots, who is frustrated by the system, decides to make a change in society and often gets put down by his decision at the end. He is the “Loach’s Everyman.” The director often depicts the protagonist as being angry, disappointed, and cast down. In an interview with Simon Hattenstone Loach stated that for *I, Daniel Blake* he did a research for his characters amongst ordinary people. He talked about a woman ashamed of attending food banks while not having anything in her fridge, and a man told to queue for a casual shift at 5.30am, then sent home an hour later due to not being needed.⁹ In the interview he commented on such issues saying: “Angry? Mmmmmmm, [...] That constant humiliation to survive. If you’re not angry about it, what kind of person are you?”¹⁰

Such statements made by the author illustrate how he perceives the social issues in society. Also, they might give an insight into just how much effort he puts into creating the main protagonist and what sort of responsibility the hero has in the narratives. A certain pattern can be observed, in which a main hero is created by the standards mentioned earlier in this chapter, he manages to go through a change within the films time frame – a buildup of character – leads a rebellion against the system and is sacrificed at the end, due to being crushed by the society and its everlasting issues. This approach of Loach’s may be observable in larger extend due to the number of films he has made over the many decades of his career.

The pattern is best seen when particular motion pictures are matched and being examined in order to spot any similarities or differences. The vast majority of Loach’s films are tendentious and given the broad timeline of the director’s filmmaking, the change of the main character, or the possible lack of such change, is recognizable. Damien O’Donovan, the main protagonist of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, is a man of working-class roots and he comes from a nation

⁸ Nick Grant, “Keeping it Real: The Brutal Art of Ken Loach”

⁹ Simon Hattenstone, “Ken Loach: If you’re not angry, what kind of person are you?”

¹⁰ Simon Hattenstone, “Ken Loach: If you’re not angry, what kind of person are you?”

that is being oppressed by a foreign power. When he realizes through series of different events that his country is in a state of decline, he decides to make a change. His journey takes him to multiple dark places, such as an execution of a lifelong friend for a greater good or a serious political disagreement with his brother, which ultimately results in a sentence of execution of his own. In *Jimmy's Hall*, the main character is Jimmy Gralton, a man with working-class roots but a successful career overseas, who returns to his home in native Ireland to give back to his mother. He is portrayed as a society-building leader who wants to help the community by reestablishing a community center – the Jimmy's Hall. The center serves as a platform for people to express their communist ideas which they are not able to say out loud in the public due to the government policies at the time. The social activism brings Jimmy into interests of the National Police Service of Ireland and starts a chain of events that eventually lead to closure of the Hall and the protagonist's deportation back to the United States. Daniel Blake, the main character of *I, Daniel Blake* is an older working-class man who, due to a recent heart attack, is no longer able to work but is told to keep on doing so by the authorities either way, as he is deemed physically fit. Daniel becomes the trailblazer of a revolt when he spray paints "I, Daniel Blake, demand my appeal date before I starve" on the side of a building which brings him a lot of attention from the people who are struggling in a similar manner. Nevertheless, he gets arrested by the police and is given a term for the demanded appeal. In court, due to the massive pressure on him he suffers another heart attack and passes away.

Thus, many similarities may be found amongst Loach's protagonists, the characters that all the stories are based around. They all share noticeable characteristics that make a part of a larger schema – an everlasting strive for a socialist society and its denial by the system – Loach's films often end with a failure of such endeavor and his great theme is betrayal.¹¹

Ken Loach's career as a film director started in early 1960s. Grant comments on Loach's beginnings, saying that he came to directing as an unemployed actor in 1963 and that his practical knowledge of an actor's preparation for any role, and how they can enjoy being directed when cast, has informed his own handling of these two crucial stages of filmmaking ever since.¹² The director is associated with the so-called British New Wave, which is a term used to describe works of filmmakers that were mostly active throughout the 1960s – the decade during which their films made a significant impact. David Cairns writes about the screenwriter

¹¹ Peter K. Tyson, "Ken Loach: Social or Socialist Realist?", 25.

¹² Nick Grant, "Keeping it Real: The Brutal Art of Ken Loach"

Charles Wood, who was known for his collaboration with directors of that era, and adds to the topic of British New Wave:

British film has always been beholden to theater and literature, but in the late 1950s the kinds of theater being performed had begun to change radically. The Brechtian alienation, dizzying shifts of tone between flippancy and horror, surrealism, and verbal gymnastics of Wood's writing all fitted perfectly with the Nouvelle Vague tricks filmmakers were beginning to use.¹³

The term Nouvelle Vague, essentially describing the principles of the British New Wave which derived from French filmmaking of late 1950s, suggested a further weakening of the autonomy of the Continental cinema under the pressure generated by the American studios.¹⁴ The New Wave closely ties with the literary movement of "angry young men" and they both have their distinct characteristics, mainly drawing attention to the reality of life of the working-class people, which Loach's films of that era fit in perfectly. This social realism of Loach's and other author's is often called "kitchen sink realism." Most prominent faces of the British New Wave are Tony Richardson with his 1960 film *Look Back in Anger*, Czech-born Karel Reisz with *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and Bryan Forbes with his *The L-Shaped Room*.

Along came the Czechoslovak New Wave, a phenomenon of the 1960s which ended with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Miloš Forman, perhaps the most prominent face of the movement, is known for making quite the impression on Loach, along with Jiří Menzel – other prominent face of the Czechoslovak New Wave. The director has even put Forman's *Loves of a Blonde* and Menzel's *Closely Watched Trains* amongst his favorite films of all time, motion pictures that influenced his own work the most, noting on Forman's film:

Because of the shooting, the lighting, the performances, the pacing of it, the concern with ordinary lives, the respect and the lack of melodrama... the humanity of it, really. Forman's approach makes it far more touching than something souped-up, over-lit and over-acted with too much music.¹⁵

Over his long-spanned career of filmmaking, Ken Loach has definitely influenced the British society, and probably the society in general. His films have made quite an impact on the film industry, as he has won many prestigious film awards. He is arguably the most successful participant of the Cannes Film Festival, having won the festival's top award Palme d'Or a joint-record twice for his films *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* and *I, Daniel Blake*. Loach's 1969

¹³ David Cairns, "DANGER! EXPLODING SCRIPTS Screenwriter Charles Wood and the British New Wave Cinema of the Sixties," *Cinéaste*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Summer 2020), 26.

¹⁴ Dennis Turner, "Breathless: Mirror Stage of the Nouvelle Vague," *SubStance*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1983), 51.

¹⁵ Callum Russel, "Ken Loach's Top 10 Favourite Films of All Time," *Far Out Magazine* (18 June 2021)

motion picture *Kes* was even ranked seventh in the British Film Institute's Top Ten British Films chart in the year 2000.¹⁶

Being discussed earlier in this chapter, Loach's political career – or rather a political activism – is another key element of his influence. The author's work is certainly appealing to the working class and may be portrayed as a voice of theirs. Such ideas may be tracked way back to the ideology of Marxism. In an interview for the Guardian, Loach stated that the term socialist is a difficult one because it is devalued and cannot make sense without Marx, but he also added that the rightwing press uses the word Marxism against anyone who stands to endorse it.¹⁷ Despite that claim, his films are often brought up during Marxist meetings and he even publicly attends them occasionally. For instance, such event happened in 2012, when the University College London Marxist Society members gathered to watch Loach's *Days of Hope: General Strike* along with the author himself, and the director even held a discussion afterwards.¹⁸

Needless to say, Ken Loach is a significant figure both in a cultural field as well as a political field. The filmmaking of his has undoubtedly been influential to many and his importance to the British cinematography and its evolution cannot be denied either. Though he may be controversial to some, the opinions he presents in his work are certainly being heard and have their own place and value in the society.

To conclude, Ken Loach is undoubtedly an influential character in many ways. His left-wing political orientation plays a significant role in his filmmaking, as his film's tendentiousness and socially appellative atmosphere derives directly from his own political beliefs. Based on this idea, his signature style of directing lies in pushing forward the idea of socialism and imprinting the decisive importance of such idea into the perception of the viewer. Loach sees the main protagonist as a key element, as his narratives are based around the character. Throughout his films this working-class hero is undergoing a personal growth and often leads a revolt, either on his own or in a collective of other people, against the system which oppresses him or his ideals. However, he often fails miserably due to the system being undefeatable – such is the portrayal of a “failed” socialist realism. The protagonist often goes through a “martyr death”, although not always literally, which acts as a depiction of his sacrifice for the greater good of his principles. In the director's films, such sacrifice tends to represent the significance of

¹⁶ British Film Institute, “The BFI 100: 1-10”

¹⁷ Kira Cochrane, “Ken Loach: the ruling class are cracking the whip,” *The Guardian* (28 August 2011)

¹⁸ Ben Peck, “Britain: Over 130 attend UCL Marxist meeting with Ken Loach,” *International Marxist Tendency* (16 October 2012)

striving for a socialist society. Loach's notion of the concept of film is to showcase the reality of the miserable lives of the poor, while directly criticizing the society for it, and to give the viewer an urge to be a part of a social change.

2. The Irish Struggle for a Free and Independent State

The people of Ireland strived for the sovereignty of their state throughout much of the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the initial thought came many centuries earlier, as they had been in the presence of the English since the dawn of millennium. Despite being under their rule for literally hundreds of years or rather because of that, the Irish did never truly get on well with the Brits and felt like their national identity was being oppressed along with themselves. Nevertheless, the British have always suppressed any signs of defiance by force, which made both the Irish spirit and their endeavor much more intense decade after decade. The people of the Emerald Isle, as Ireland is often being referred to as, have truly taken their chance during and after the First World War throughout series of events called the Irish Revolutionary Period which ultimately led to a creation of the Irish Free State. This chapter not only covers that particular period of the Irish history but focuses on the roots of the Irish struggle as well. The purpose of the second chapter is to define the key concepts and elements, which are discussed in the final part of the thesis, in order to fully understand the issue as a whole.

The Irish land came first into contact with the English people, more specifically the Anglo-Normans, in the late twelfth century during the infamous Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland. Despite the tendency to assume that nothing but evil resulted to Ireland from the invasion, Goddard H. Orpen, an Irish historian known for his work from early twentieth century, suggests seven positive aspects the Irish have benefited from significantly – the introduction to feudalism, the freedom from the peril of external raids resulting in a possibility of social advance, the growth of town throughout the feudalized districts, the growth of trade both inland and foreign, the bringing of the Church into a closer conformity with that of Western Europe, the undermining of Celtic tribalism and the closer contact with the art and thought of life of Western Europe directly due to the connection with England.¹⁹ John T. Maple comments on the Irish economy and the overall state of the land at that time, saying:

Anglo-Norman trade regulations seem to have rendered no ill effects to the Irish economy. Although the establishment of manors for mixed agriculture and the influx of immigrants transformed the economy, the Anglo-Norman monarchs had neither a monopoly on the Irish grain trade nor the intent to establish one. Instead, merchants of England, Wales, Ireland and France seem to have traded freely in grain and other commodities, with licenses needed only in special circumstances, usually during war.

¹⁹ Goddard H. Orpen, "The Effects of Norman Rule in Ireland, 1169-1333," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (January 1914), 254.

Finally, the creation of a large number of towns, with the attendant immigration, further attests to the vigor of the Irish economy after the Anglo-Norman conquest.²⁰

That being said, the Norman rule in Ireland undeniably brought the isle nation up to the standards of that age, while it also introduced an English intervention into the interests of the Irish lasting many centuries forward. Needless to say, in spite of such opportunities and values the roots of the known British oppression may be found directly in that particular era of Anglo-Norman rule, as many of the Irish view it exclusively as an act of suppression of their national identity.

The era of the Anglo-Norman rule lasted up to the year 1536, when the king of England Henry VIII decided to reconquer the Irish isle. The notorious king has engraved his name into the history books substantially because of the creation of a protestant branch of religion, the Church of England. The course of action caused by such decision made the divide of the English and the Irish even larger, as the Irish national identity has been built on a catholic basis and has enrooted a catholic tradition of its own into the people of the Emerald Isle. The tension between the two nations gradually led to the Irish Rebellion of 1641, an uprising of the Irish Catholics. Lindley mentions that the rising marked a climax of one of those key periods in Anglo-Irish history in which events in Ireland had direct impact upon the events in England, as the Irish rebellion was of central importance in helping to precipitate the armed confrontation of king and parliament, while it may also have made some contribution to the final collapse of royalist fortunes.²¹ Despite not having a distinctive outcome, the rebellion essentially resulted in an Irish victory and founding of the Irish Catholic Confederation, an Irish Catholic self-government lasting until 1649.

The Irish became a part of a period called the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, a period that is dated from 1639 to 1653, essentially being described as the British Civil War. The importance of that era for the Irish came from the so-called Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, which was an invasion of the parliamentary forces to Ireland led by Oliver Cromwell, an infamous English revolutionary. Barnard calls it a period of great importance for Ireland's subsequent history.²² The Cromwellian war plant a seed of religion unrest among the Irish people along with a

²⁰ John T. Maple, "Anglo-Norman Conquest of Ireland and the Irish Economy: Stagnation or Stimulation?" *The Historian*, Vol. 52, No.1 (November 1989), 81.

²¹ Keith J. Lindley, "The Impact of the 1641 Rebellion upon England and Wales, 1641-5," *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 70 (September 1972), 143.

²² T. C. Barnard, "Planters and Policies in Cromwellian Ireland," *Past and Present*, No. 61 (November 1973), 31.

revolution in land ownership. Barnard comments on the issue of land ownership and its importance by saying:

In 1641, 59 per cent of Ireland was owned by Catholics. [...] By 1660 the Catholic share of land had fallen to 22 per cent. Before 1641 Catholics have owned the majority of land in all counties, except those of Ulster, and Wicklow and Kilkenny; by 1660 the bulk of their holdings was in the inhospitable western province of Connaught.²³

Roots of the unrest of later years may be found in the land ownership changes during the Cromwellian conquest. Not only the Catholics were oppressed, but the society as a whole also suffered greatly as the impact of the war resulted in a famine which was accentuated by an outbreak of the bubonic plague. Nevertheless, the Brits have strengthened their influence in Ireland during the Cromwellian period, and began gradually turning mainly the northern part of Ireland to Protestantism.

Late 18th century is being marked today as a period of great revolutions, with the American Revolution and the French Revolution being the most prominent amongst the others. Their ideas were taken up by the revolutionaries in Ireland, leading to the Irish Rebellion of 1798. The act was led by the Society of United Irishmen joined by Catholics all across Ireland. James Quinn mentions that while some left-wing writers have claimed the United Irishmen as the founders of an Irish tradition of radical social thinking, most historians over the years stressed the society's social conservatism.²⁴ The rebellion essentially laid down the basis of Irish republicanism which ideas were expanded later in the twentieth century. However, it was brutally suppressed by the government militia and the British forces from abroad and the events led to the Acts of Union 1800, which resulted in cojoining both the nations under the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, lasting until 1922.

The roots of the Anglo-Irish conflict may be traced deep into history. Needless to say, the lasting pressure towards the Irish resulted in unease amongst them, mainly amongst the Irish Catholics and the working-class common people who were being oppressed the most and who felt their Irish national identity being gradually taken away from them. Up until the nineteenth century, the revolts in Ireland were always oppressed, standing virtually no chance against the Brits. However, the everlasting Irish endeavor may be best described the way Howe described it in his book *Speaking of '98: History, Politics and Memory in the Bicentenary of the 1798 United Irish Uprising* by quoting the United Irishmen: "We have thought much about our posterity,

²³ T. C. Barnard, "Planters and Policies in Cromwellian Ireland," 32.

²⁴ James Quinn, "The United Irishmen and Social Reform," *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 122 (November 1998), 188,

little about our ancestors. Are we forever to walk like beasts of prey over the fields which these ancestors stained with blood?”²⁵

The closest consequential moment of the Irish resistance against the British was the Easter Rising of 1916, taking place one hundred and sixteen years after the Acts of Union. It was the climax of an Irish-Ireland movement which was started nearly twelve years ago by the Sinn Féin Organization.²⁶ In the early twentieth century, Sinn Féin was a recently established left-wing political party with a program consisting mainly of the idea of Irish republicanism and creation of a free Irish state – the party later played a key role during the Irish War of Independence. One of the key elements of the events of the Easter Rising was the Home Rule Bill of 1912 along with the Government of Ireland Act of 1914, which was directly linked to it. Buckley explains the bill by saying:

A Home Rule Bill, providing for the establishment of a special Irish Parliament in Dublin, subordinate to the British Parliament in financial, military and certain other matters, was introduced into the House of Commons. Like other proposals for establishing a separate administration in Ireland, the bill contained no provisions for the exclusion of any part of the Province of Ulster from the scheme of administration, but in June an amendment was introduced which would exclude the four Ulster counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down and Derry which had Protestant and Unionist majorities.²⁷

Being the largest uprising since the year 1798, the Easter Rising characterized a climax of unease amongst the Irish people, mainly the Irish nationalists. The common people of Ireland had always despised their British oppressors and events such as The Great Irish Famine during the 1840s only added up to their frustration. The uprising was led by the Irish Volunteer forces and the Irish Citizen Army, a small paramilitary group. Although the British forces suppressed the events brutally by force, the Easter Rising had its own figurative meaning as it marked the beginning of the Irish revolutionary period. Guy Beiner describes its significance by saying that “the Easter Rising of 1916 marked the zenith of the nationalist republican tradition of triumph of defeat,”²⁸ alluding to the Irish defeats of the past.

Although the uprising lasted merely six days, it contributed largely to pushing further the importance of Irish independence on the United Kingdom as well as carrying the message of truly standing for the idea of the Irish Free State.

²⁵ Stephen Howe, “Speaking of ’98: History, Politics and Memory in the Bicentenary of the 1798 United Irish Uprising,” *History Workshop Journal*, No. 47 (Spring 1999), 239.

²⁶ Maureen Buckley, “Irish Easter Rising of 1916,” *Social Science*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 1956), 49.

²⁷ Maureen Buckley, “Irish Easter Rising of 1916,” 49.

²⁸ Guy Beiner, “Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland,” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (April 2007), 377.

A direct consequence of the Easter Rising emerged from the Irish general election of 1918, during which the before-mentioned republican party Sinn Féin managed a landslide victory over their opponents. Not only did the election result send a clear message of the Irish independence movement becoming a mainstream topic amongst the Irish people, but it also sparked a chain of events essentially leading up to the Irish War of Independence. Laffan describes the aftermath of the 1918 general election:

In January 1919 the newly elected Sinn Féin MPs proclaimed themselves the independent parliament of Ireland, the Dáil. They later formed a government that attempted to run the country and – in so far as was possible – to act as if the British rule no longer existed. Unsurprisingly, the British paid no attention to Irish claims, and the actions of some radical republicans soon ensured a return to war.²⁹

The newfound independent Irish parliament showed the people of Ireland that a creation of an anti-British opposition force is possible. Graham Walker mentions that with the introduction of an alternative system of justice, the Dáil Courts, freedom was no longer merely an imagined concept and from 1919 to 1921 many Irish people felt they had seized it and were living it.³⁰ That particular time period is synonymous with the Irish War of Independence waged by the Irish republican forces against the British troops stationed on the territory of Ireland. During the conflict, a major key role on the Irish side was played by the Irish Republican Army – often referred to by its acronym IRA – a republican revolutionary paramilitary organization with roots that may be traced back to the Irish Volunteers that staged the Easter Rising of 1916. Townshend mentions that members of the IRA were mostly self-taught, with a noticeably conventional tinge imparted by Great War veterans.³¹

However, the war was not a traditional conflict but rather a guerilla style warfare, meaning that smaller groups of the IRA often ambushed British patrols. The tactic worked so well that the prime minister of the United Kingdom at the time, Lloyd George, ultimately chose to negotiate with the opposing forces in Ireland. Laffan further examines the issue by saying:

By now Ireland was seen as a millstone and a nuisance, and the British were prepared to concede vastly more than had ever been offered to Irish nationalists in the past. Recognition of a republic was inconceivable because that would represent British defeat and humiliation, but most other Irish demands were granted. [...] National unity and an end to partition were popular objectives, but the Sinn Féin leaders' principal objective

²⁹ Michael Laffan, "The Emergence of The Two Irelands, 1912-25," *History of Ireland*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 2004), 44,

³⁰ Graham Walker, "The Irish Dr Goebbels: Frank Gallaher and Irish Republican Propaganda," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 1992) 154, 155.

³¹ Charles Townshend, "The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerilla Warfare, 1916-1921," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 371 (April 1979), 321.

was the achievement of as much sovereignty as possible for the South. [...] Once more the question of “the North” was postponed, and it was agreed that a boundary commission would decide the border between the two parts of Ireland.³²

The negotiations between the two sides led to a signing of the infamous Anglo-Irish Treaty which ultimately ended the British rule over Ireland, established the Irish Free state and gave it the status of a Dominion. Northern Ireland was granted an option not to join the Irish Free State, which the Parliament of Northern Ireland accepted and thus remained a direct part of the United Kingdom. The treaty caused major disagreements amongst the Irish revolutionaries, which then grew into a larger conflict inside the Irish Free State.

The Irish Civil War of 1922-23 is from today’s standpoint seen as a complex, chaotic and consequential moment in Ireland’s turbulent evolution from a quasi-colony to an independent republic.³³ Needless to say, the civil war was the direct outcome of an intra-national divide caused by the Anglo-Irish Treaty which concluded the Irish War of Independence. The two opposing sides of the conflict are also conveniently referred to as the pro-Treaty forces and the anti-Treaty forces. The so-called Treaty split in the Irish society was driven by the amount of compromise the treaty held in itself. Bill Kissane comments on the matter:

To pro-Treatyites, it was an honourable compromise, dictated by military necessity, but one that could serve as “a stepping stone” to full independence. To anti-Treatyites, it was a sell-out, one that achieved neither unity nor independence, and which tied the new state as closely to the British Empire as the Act of Union done in 1801. Given the broken promises of the past, why trust in Britain’s capacity to deal with Ireland in a generous way in the future?³⁴

Michael Laffan adds to the topic of the civil war breakout, mentioning the president of Ireland Éamon de Valera and Michael Collins, a Chairman of the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State:

The treaty was supported by narrow majorities in the Irish cabinet and the Dáil, and in January 1922 Collins formed a provisional government. De Valera went into opposition, but the strongest opposition to the treaty came not from politicians but from elements in the IRA. Some soldiers were unwilling to accept civilian authority. Despite elections in June 1922, which revealed the popularity of the treaty, civil war broke out soon afterwards.³⁵

³² Michael Laffan, “The Emergence of The Two Irelands, 1912-25,” 44.

³³ Gavin Foster, “Res Publica na hÉireann? Republican Liberty and the Irish Civil War,” *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 2012), 20.

³⁴ Bill Kissane, “From the Outside In: The International Dimension to the Irish Civil War,” *History Ireland*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (March – April 2007), 37.

³⁵ Michael Laffan, “The Emergence of The Two Irelands, 1912-25,” 44.

Either way, on both of the opposing sides of the war stood the same men who fought side by side merely a few months ago during the Irish War of Independence against the British forces. One of the factors that truly pushed the tension over the edge was the assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, who was a senior British Army staff officer and a prominent security adviser to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.³⁶ Prior to the assassination, the anti-Treaty forces occupied the Four Courts located in Dublin – Ireland’s most prominent court building – and demanded a new armed confrontation with the Brits. The act of homicide of Wilson ultimately resulted in the beginning of the Irish Civil War as a whole.

The church also played a certain role in the conflict, as the culture of the Irish society has been built on the moral values of Christianity. Men on both sides throughout the whole Irish revolutionary period were acting in the name of God, but each with very different purposes. During the Irish War of Independence, the common people, who were often poor, were mainly catholic, as many of the land in Ireland at that time was owned by either the wealthy British Irish or the simply the British from abroad. Either way, the wealthy people were protestant in most of the cases. During the Irish Civil War, the priests often commented on the fall of Irish society, as the Irish men were facing each other in the conflict. O’Callaghan gives an example of such issue:

The attempt to confront this wrong without sullyng the accepted image of Irish purity was accomplished by viewing the Republican cause as a degenerating malaise that took hold of warped innocent minds: It is almost inconceivable how decent Irish boys could degenerate so tragically, and reconcile such a mass of criminality with their duties to God and to Ireland... When we think of what these young men were only a few moths ago; so many of them generous, kind-hearted and good, and see them now involved in this network of crimes, our hearts are filled with bitterest anguish.³⁷

Politics and religion were related to each other during the Irish revolutionary period. Townshend approaches the topic by quoting Peadar O’Donnel, an Irish revolutionary and a member of the Irish Republican Army during the Irish War of Independence, and later a member of the anti-Treaty IRA during the Irish Civil War:

The imbrication of religion and politics has been perpetuated by multiple mechanisms, so consistently as to become unconscious and invisible to Catholics themselves – though none the less obvious to Protestants. [...] The point was vividly made by the veteran republican organizer Peadar O’Donnel, whose patient efforts to recruit Protestants had succeeded to extent of persuading several to join a commemoration in Belfast of the

³⁶ Bill Kissane, “From the Outside In: The International Dimension to the Irish Civil War,” 39.

³⁷ Margaret O’Callaghan, “Religion and Identity: The Church and Irish Independence,” *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (1983), 67

1916 rising; but when the march was stopped by police, “the whole republican procession flopped down on its knees and began the rosary.”³⁸

The Church was pointing out the pointlessness of the Civil War and thus was often seen as “siding with the rich” by the anti-Treaty IRA forces, while all that the priests did was standing by the principles of Christianity the Irish society and nation as a whole has been built upon.

Along with a military support from the United Kingdom, the Irish Free State pro-Treaty forces managed to emerge victorious at the end after more than ten months of fighting. The war itself had actually become a much bloodier and more savage conflict than the war with the British that preceded it.³⁹ Bill Kissane glosses the outcome of the war, mentioning the point of view of Lloyd George’s government on the issue:

The Civil War had come from the “outside in”, and, despite the Irish obsession with personalities, there is no evidence that he [de Valera] or Collins could have stopped it, short of abandoning their basic positions on the Treaty. Most remarkably of all, the British government would soon lose interest in Ireland, leaving a troubled legacy for which it felt little responsibility. In 1922 Churchill and his colleagues had ensured that the process of ideological polarization would reach its logical conclusion in civil war.⁴⁰

The events and changes of the early twentieth century in Ireland became synonymous with freedom and independence in the Irish history books. However, the freedom of the Irish people was paid by the blood of their men. The so-called Irish revolutionary period marked a crucial change of course on the Emerald Isle, as not only did the people finally break free of the British rule, but they regrettably underwent an intra-national conflict as a direct consequence of that. The Church had its own influence over both the fighting sides of the Irish Civil War, as the pro-Treaty side saw the Catholic church as a bringer of wisdom and tradition, while the anti-Treaty one viewed the Catholic priests as the “ones who side with the rich,” which made them their enemies. The end of the civil war in Ireland in the year 1923 brought peace to the land, but also left the Irish society divided, both categorically and politically, for many decades to come. Needless to say, the outcome of the Irish Civil War influences the Irish still to this day, as, for instance, origins of the two main political parties in Ireland – Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil – may be traced back to the two opposing sides of the civil war – the pro-Treaty and the anti-Treaty respectively.

³⁸ Charles Townshend, “Religion, War and Identity in Ireland,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 76, No. 4 (December 2004), 885

³⁹ Michael Laffan, “The Emergence of The Two Irelands, 1912-25,” 44.

⁴⁰ Bill Kissane, “From the Outside In: The International Dimension to the Irish Civil War,” 41.

To conclude, ever since the people of the British Isles first came to Ireland in the late twelfth century, the Irish have strived to break free of the British influence. Despite the opportunities the English brought along with them, the Irish have felt their national identity diminishing – year by year, decade by decade, century by century. Once Henry VIII, the king of England, found a protestant branch of faith – the Church of England – the Irish tradition of Catholicism in their lands has been objected, which brought up a new kind of instability and frustration amongst the Irish people. This frustration has crystalized in many uprisings and rebellions throughout the history of the British rule in Ireland. The most prominent uprising, the Irish Rebellion of 1798, came during a period of great revolutions around the world but was rapidly suppressed by force and ultimately resulted in a creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. But then came the Irish Revolutionary period during the first quarter of twentieth century, a period of freedom and independence but also a period of divide and betrayal. It marks the time of two major conflicts, the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. The Irish War of Independence finally brought the Irish Free State, while causing such a disagreement that it resulted in a civil war – a dark period of intra-national dispute that influenced the Irish society for decades to come, even up until today. The Irish struggle for a free and independent state was successful, but it was a success paid by blood and pain of the people of Ireland. A bittersweet success that planted a seed of betrayal and distrust in the Irish society.

3. The Wind That Shakes the Barley in Historical and Cultural Context

Ken Loach's 2006 film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* is a historical war drama capturing the fate of few common Irish men during the Irish revolutionary period. Given the director's reputation, the film is leaning towards a certain kind of socialist narrative, and thus the conflicts that are portrayed in the motion picture may be seen rather political and ideological. The film itself may be interpreted as being divided into two parts, covering the Irish War of Independence in the first half and events of the Irish Civil War in the other one. Being the practical part, this chapter creates a synthesis of both the previous chapters and is based on the key elements, terms and events defined in them. The chapter takes a look upon the film's authenticity and historical accuracy, while covering the director's point of view on the issue of the Irish as well.

The film begins with an opening scene which sets the story in Ireland in the year 1920.⁴¹ The first scenes introduce bunch of Irish men playing hurling, a national sport of Ireland. The "hurling scene" may be interpreted in the manner of symbolism, as not only does hurling represent the Irish nationalism, but also an Irish sense of brotherhood, teamwork, and determination. Multiple hints of such subliminal symbolism occur throughout different parts of the film, which ultimately creates a unique layer of perception for the viewer, on top of the other layers that the film offers naturally. Given the time period, the beginning of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* is set already during the Irish War of Independence, a conflict which started in the year 1919.

Ken Loach introduces his protagonists – Damien O'Donovan and Tedy O'Donovan – two brothers with Irish working-class roots. Both of them may fall into the category of "The Loach's Everyman" – a totally common working-class man, without any special attributes – only with the exception of Damien having a medical degree, which in fact was quite unusual in that particular social class. However, Loach uses the Damien's exception deliberately, as the film's plot unravels mainly around him. Teddy O'Donovan plays a role of a counterpart to Damien throughout the film. Nick Grant suggest that casting is key, when it comes to the director's work: "Loach often casts amateurs and largely rejects the star system. This bulwark of big money film and TV projects is a risk-lessening element enforced by investors who maintain the audience crave familiar faces in new situations, and thus will guarantee seats or downloads."⁴²

⁴¹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, (Sixteen Films, Matador Pictures, 2006, Weinstein Company, 4 September 2007), DVD, 0:01:31-0:01:49

⁴² Nick Grant, "Keeping it Real: The Brutal Art of Ken Loach."

Truth be told, Cillian Murphy, who plays Damien, was already an established actor during the process of creation of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, but on the other hand Pádraic Delaney, who portrays Teddy, and Orla Fitzgerald, who plays the main female protagonist Sinéad, both fit the example suggested by Grant well, as these roles happened to be their breakthrough.

The scene after the hurling match happens near a village hut. First of all, the viewer is told that Damien is about to leave Ireland to practice medicine in London, while his companions, whom he just finished a game of hurling with, do not agree with his decision as they believe he should stay in his homeland to fight the British. The situation suddenly changes drastically when British forces – the so-called Black and Tans, referring to the color of their uniforms – charge in on the men, pointing rifles at them. The Black and Tans officer tells the Irishmen that because of the Defense of the Realm Act they are not allowed to play any games – “All public meetings are banned,”⁴³ he says specifically. When the soldiers ask the men to identify themselves, a young boy Micheail O’Sullivan refuses to tell the British his name in the English language and so they beat him to death in a chicken coop. Not only does it happen in front of Micheail’s friends and family, the Black and Tans simply leave afterwards while demonstrating the boy’s death as a warning to others. Chandler comments on the scene, saying that “the depiction of suffering in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* goes beyond the nationalist allegory of imperial oppression to capture other forms of suffering and depredation.”⁴⁴ Ken Loach uses this scene as the initial breaking point in the plot. The director tries to depict the British cruelty unleashed on the common Irish people, while he also shows the viewer the amount of frustration building up in the Irish men. The scene also contains another example of symbolism, as when the Black and Tans are leaving an old woman is shown singing an Irish ballad *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*⁴⁵, which was written as an homage to the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

Damien then leaves for London, but as he is about to enter a train, British soldiers assault the train crew over a disagreement and beat up the train driver Dan. It is the explicit cruelty of the Brits that ultimately leads him to fight for the freedom and independence of Ireland, his homeland. The scene cuts to Damien saying out loud the Oath of Allegiance, thus becoming a member of the IRA:

I do solemnly swear that to the best of my ability I will support and defend the Government of the Irish Republic, which is Dáil Éireann, against all enemies, foreign

⁴³ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:05:03

⁴⁴ James Chandler, “Cinema, History, and the Politics of Style: Michael Collins and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*,” *Field Day Review*, Vol. 7 (2011), 115.

⁴⁵ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:08:35-0:09:40

and domestic, and I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, and I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion. So help me, God.⁴⁶

Damien's change of heart is very important in a further development of the story, as by the decision to stay and strive for a social change, he begins to gradually become a leader of a revolution. His character is being portrayed as the main protagonist and the narrative further revolves around him and his decisions are crucial.

The following scene then depicts a training session of the IRA forces for a guerilla warfare style of combat – quite an authentic depiction of such happening, as the guerilla fighting style was dominantly used in the Irish War of Independence. During the nineteenth minute mark, Damien is talking with Sinéad – a sister of Micheail, the boy murdered by the British soldiers earlier – and she gives him Micheail's St Christopher's medal, which is a direct symbol of courage and bravery.⁴⁷ The symbolism of the scene is stressed even more by the fact that St Christopher was a martyr, as the medal and its symbolism foreshadows Damien's own martyrdom later in the film. By demonstrating Damien's initial hesitancy and a subsequent decision to make a change, Ken Loach stresses the importance of a collectivist ethos rather than an individualistic way of pursuing one's goals.

Loach's socially appellative atmosphere is present in each and every one of his motion pictures and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* makes no exception of that. The director pushes forward the Marxist ethos – the wealthy social class oppresses the poor working-class people – and in this film he introduces the issue through the character of Sir John Hamilton, who is “a typical ‘big house’ landlord from the old Protestant ascendancy.”⁴⁸ When the Black and Tans officers seek information about the Irish rebels in Hamilton's household, they find out that he employs a young Irish boy by the name of Chris Reilly, who happens to be a member of the IRA in secret. Through a series of psychological blackmail, Reilly submits and tells the officers the location of the IRA hideout in the woods, and by doing so he ultimately betrays his brothers in arms.⁴⁹ The British forces then storm the IRA positions later at night and they throw the men in cells in the barracks. The symbolism lies within the act of betrayal, which is one of Loach's great themes. As Chris Reilly gives the British the information about the position of IRA forces, it may be seen as a manifestation of individualism – rather than sacrificing himself for a greater

⁴⁶ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:14:31-0:14:57

⁴⁷ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:20:01-0:20:09

⁴⁸ James Chandler, “Cinema, History, and the Politics of Style: Michael Collins and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*,” 116.

⁴⁹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:28:20-0:29:42

good of a social revolution and his own nation, Reilly gives up on his moral principles. The depiction of Chris Reilly by Loach is that he is a the type of character not to be looked up onto.

Both the O'Donovan brothers are suddenly held captive, along with the train driver Dan from earlier in the film and others. The Brits take Teddy, as he is in charge of the particular Flying column, and they try to get important information about the IRA while torturing him. Meanwhile his fellow IRA men in the cell start singing out loud in order to send the Black and Tans a clear message that they will not break their spirit.⁵⁰ By depicting their choir-like singing, Loach demonstrates the unity and strength of the Irish republican men. This sense of a community unity sends a signal of a national unity as a whole, while also suggesting the director's leaning not only towards an importance of a social change, but also towards a collectivist ethos.

Damien is the next one taken for an interrogation. During a conversation with the officer, Damien tells him: "I am a democrat. In the last election, Sinn Féin won 73 seats out of a possible 105. Our mandate's for an Irish Republic separate from Great Britain. A democratic decision,"⁵¹ referring to the Irish general election of 1918. He is then told that the IRA men will be executed the following morning. Back in the cell, Damien holds an important conversation with Dan about their vision of the Irish society. They both quote an Irish republican, James Conolly: "If you remove the British Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin castle, unless you organize a socialist republic, all your efforts will have been in vain. And England will still rule you through her landlords, capitalists and commercial institutions."⁵² This explicit leaning towards the socialist ideology is used by Loach deliberately, as he clearly demonstrates the tendentiousness of the film's narrative, which is a characteristic the director strives for intentionally. Both Damien and Dan are the two most prominent characters in the film, which explicitly promote their vision of the Irish War of Independence as being a socialist revolution rather than a "plain" fight for freedom – by their rhetoric, they may be seen as radical socialists, who put the actual state of society above its mere freedom regardless of the type of such freedom. The only true freedom is the freedom within a socialist country, as being suggested by the narrative.

Due to a soldier who sympathizes with them, most of the IRA men manage to escape the barracks. However, the young soldier does not have the keys to all the cells, so they must leave

⁵⁰ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:35:57-0:36:40

⁵¹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:38:11-0:38:21

⁵² Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:41:44-0:42:08

behind three of their men. The Flying column heads back to the cottage in which Sinéad lives with her family, where Damien finds out that it was in fact Chris Reilly who told the Black and Tans about the IRA positions.⁵³ The Irish then capture both Sir John Hamilton and Chris Reilly, taking them to a hut in the hills – they intend to trade off Hamilton’s life for the lives of their three fellow men left behind in the barracks. James Chandler glosses this scene:

The most revealing moment in this subplot occurs when Teddy and Damien come for Sir John late in the film. They confront him with the charge of coercing Reilly to turn informant. This scene offers a telling commentary on the political tendencies of the film. A defiant Sir John refuses to co-operate. He knows he will be executed anyway. [...] The problem with Sir John’s wealth is not least that it dulls his sensibility to suffering.⁵⁴

A messenger delivers Damien a letter from the Black and Tans in which it is stated that the three men left behind earlier were executed. That ultimately seals the fate of both men held captive by the IRA. “Seventeen-year-old Chris Reilly is shot dead by his cousin, Damien O’Donovan, for being an informer, even though a comrade speaks up for him: ‘He is a young fella...he’s one of our own,’”⁵⁵ is how Kao comments on the scene. The portrayal of the execution leaves the viewer desperate and full of moral dilemma. It foreshadows Damien’s gradual descent towards a radical political view of society, where sacrifices are being made in the name of a greater good. The execution itself may raise questions in the viewer, such as if the Ireland the IRA are fighting for is worth such tribulation among themselves. The symbolism of the scene may be a subliminal one, as the director may unintentionally start to divide the audience itself, due to viewer’s sense of critical thinking. However, Loach stresses the importance of the scene by leaving a few seconds long black screen accompanied by atmospheric soft piano music.⁵⁶

The O’Donovan brothers attend a Dáil Court meeting. They watch a dispute between a wealthy man who lent money to a working-class woman, whose have not paid off her debt due to a high interest rate. As the man is objecting against the court’s decision in favor of the woman, he is being backed up by Teddy, which results in a dispute between the IRA members – while Teddy and his companions argue that the man sells them weapons to fight the British, the group around Damien agrees that they should enforce the court’s decision.⁵⁷ Ken Loach sets up the scene in

⁵³ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:46:22-0:46:30

⁵⁴ James Chandler, “Cinema, History, and the Politics of Style: Michael Collins and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*,” 116.

⁵⁵ Wei H. Kao, “Irish Pride and Disgrace in Recent Films: Ken Loach and Paul Greengrass,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 97, No. 387 (Autumn 2008), 340.

⁵⁶ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 0:56:53-0:57:00

⁵⁷ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:02:58

a way so that each brother is standing on the opposing side of the room, which foreshadows the ideological split of theirs later in the film, which is a clear example of symbolism as both the brothers and the people gathering around them will eventually stand against each other in a civil war. The train driver Dan asks the opposing side about the amount of money they possess, which is another example of the social appeal and tendentiousness of the motion picture, as the men do not have much money, nor do they own any land. Dan then stresses that they all should strive for a socialist society. The tendentiousness of the scene is very clear, as Loach deliberately demonstrates Dan's point of view of the issue as being the right one.

In the following scene, the director quite authentically depicts a guerilla warfare as the IRA forces ambush a British convoy, during which they lose one man and run out of ammo. After the ambush, the Flying Column returns to Sinéad's home, only to see that the Black and Tans are assaulting the inhabitants and there is nothing either Damien or Teddy can do about it. The British set the cottage on fire, and they cut Sinéad's hair, leaving her with blood coming out of her head.⁵⁸ As the men are cleaning out the remains of the burned house, a messenger approaches them with a letter from their leader Finbar, stating: "A truce has been declared. Hostilities cease from midnight,"⁵⁹ marking the end of the Irish War of Independence. The setting may symbolize the schism in the hearts of the men about the truce, as while they settle peace with the British, they simultaneously mourn the fallen members of the IRA and clean out the damage caused by the British forces merely hours before the messenger came.

The first half of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* is dedicated to the Irish endeavor of breaking free of the British influence. The director captures many of the events such as the guerilla warfare or the Dáil Courts quite authentically, although Loach's approach has been objected in the past by some critics due to the one-sided point of view when it comes to the British forces. For instance, Brian Hanley states that: "There is no doubt that the Black and Tans are shown as brutal and this may surprise some people in Britain, but in Ireland, to put it mildly, it is hardly controversial."⁶⁰ Once again, this all comes to the tendentiousness of the Ken Loach's work in general. Needless to say, the end of the Irish War of Independence subsequently meant the beginning of yet another one, the Irish Civil War.

⁵⁸ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:16:38-1:18:52

⁵⁹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:22:10

⁶⁰ Brian Hanley, "Review: *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* by Ken Loach," *History Ireland*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (September – October 2006), 50.

During the eighty fifth minute mark, a group of Irish people including the O'Donovan brothers can be seen in a cinema, where they are watching a motion picture informing about the truce between the two nations and its conditions. Having the scene set in 1921, Loach depicts the cinema authentically, even capturing a man playing the piano in the room as a background music to the film itself. The crowd watches the screen with high anticipation, but it all falls off quickly when they see the written conditions of the treaty: "The Agreement will establish a new Irish Free State. It will have full control of customs, tariffs and economic policy. The new state will remain within the British Empire as a dominion. Members of the new Parliament will swear an oath of allegiance to the British crown."⁶¹ Symbolically, it divides both the crowd in the cinema as well as the Irish society itself outside of it. The schism among the crowd in the theatre marks the schism among the Irish society itself, as while one part of the society sees the Treaty as an opportunity to finally regain their national identity, the other views it as an act of treachery.

In a following scene, the Irish revolutionaries – fellow members of the IRA during the war – gather in a room to discuss the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Teddy is depicted as a pragmatic, as he mentions that the British government threatened the Irish Free State with an immediate and terrible war, if they did not ratify the Treaty.⁶² He tries to convince the men in the room, because he believes that the Anglo-Irish Treaty is the only way to settle a peace and freedom in Ireland. The scene clearly demonstrates the sudden split in the Irish society, as the room divides into the pro-Treaty and the anti-Treaty. However, Ken Loach makes the socialist argument the center of the debate over the Treaty, and as Hanley states it: "Most contemporary republicans did not view the debate in those terms."⁶³ Damien can be heard in the scene saying:

If we ratify this treaty, we will destroy the two most precious gifts that we won this last election. One, being a mandate for complete freedom, not a compromised freedom. The second, being a Democratic programme, in which is enshrined the priority, the public welfare over private welfare.⁶⁴

Loach presents the debate as being exclusively a political one, and he does not hide his leaning towards a left-wing socialist ideology. Despite Dan citing the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil – "The nations sovereignty extends not only to all the men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions, the nation's soil and all its resources. All the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes in the nation."⁶⁵ – Hanley glosses that "the reality was that

⁶¹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:25:54-1:26:33

⁶² Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:27:06-1:27:17

⁶³ Brian Hanley, "Review: *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* by Ken Loach," 51.

⁶⁴ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:31:17

⁶⁵ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:33:12-1:33:31

remarkably little attention was paid to the programme at the time,”⁶⁶ which further stresses the film’s tendentiousness. Graham Fuller comments on the issue of the political debate within Loach’s work:

Such conversations, in which politically or socially opposed groups, or factions within the same group, argue their standpoints, or self-organizing working-class people vigorously debate issues essential to their or other’s welfare and survival, have become the signature trope of Loach’s dramatic films.⁶⁷

As the British troops are leaving the Irish cities, Damien and his companions watch them on the street. Once the last British truck leaves the street, Sinéad points at Teddy in a freestate uniform, meaning that he openly joined the National Army, the pro-Treaty armed forces of the Irish Free State.⁶⁸ The scene essentially marks the actual beginning of an open conflict between the two opposing sides of the Treaty. From now on, Loach begins to portray Teddy as a character whose moral values have gradually decline in favor of his vision of personal achievements.

During a training session of the anti-Treaty IRA, Damien is approached by a woman, who asks him for a medical help due to her son being ill. The following scene then marks one of the most crucial moments in the entire film, as when Damien checks the child, he finds out that he is in fact not ill but half-starved.⁶⁹ The symbolism of this scene is very important, as it absolutely reaffirms to Damien that the fight for the Irish freedom is far from over and it sets his views of the society further left. However, the scene intentionally arouses a social awareness in the viewer in order to further portray the whole argument solely one-sidedly.

A scene that follows shows Sinéad bringing the members of the radical IRA information about the events of the occupation of the Four Courts in Dublin. Damien learns that the pro-Treaty forces attacked the occupiers, which leads him to decide that it is needed to hit back. While persuading a man who does not want to fight his fellow Irish men, Damien says explicitly: “No, our comrades are in the Four Courts. They’re our comrades.”⁷⁰ By using the term “comrade,” Loach shapes the debate into a political one, as the term has been associated with forms of radical left-wing ideologies, with Marxism and communism being the prominent ones within the use of it. However, the director omits a key element about the Four Courts occupation, the assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, which essentially pushed the National Army

⁶⁶ Brian Hanley, “Review: The Wind That Shakes the Barley by Ken Loach,” 51.

⁶⁷ Graham Fuller, “The Cut and Thrust: The Power of Political Debate in the Films of Ken Loach,” 30.

⁶⁸ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:35:26-1:35:46

⁶⁹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:38:00-1:39:19

⁷⁰ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:41:08-1:41:12

to attack the occupiers – Loach portrays the issue as being one-sided, which is not historically accurate.

A scene in a church carries an important message of symbolism. A preacher can be seen talking about the pointlessness of the war, while in the crowd there are both the pro-Treaty and the anti-Treaty forces members, as well as the O'Donovan brothers. The priest urges the people that they have an opportunity for the first time in generations for peace and prosperity in Ireland, without English soldiers marching through the streets and outside the churches on a Sunday morning, and that they have the opportunity because they have signed the Anglo-Irish treaty, and he calls it “a treaty of peace.”⁷¹ Ken Loach depicts the preacher being authoritarian and even a pro-Treaty propagandist, as the priest explicitly says that not supporting the treaty will lead to an excommunication. Damien objects to his words and as a sign of disagreement he leaves the church, while the people on his side soon follow. Just before he leaves the door, Damien turns around and shouts at the priest: “And once again, the Catholic Church, with honorable exception, sides with the rich!”⁷² The symbolism of the scene lies within the Marxist idea of rejecting faith in general, as it views the Church as a force of oppression to the working-class. For example, during the twentieth century, countries of the so-called Eastern Block of Europe, being under the influence of the communist Soviet Union, have systematically eliminated the Catholic Church with the perception of it being the part of the oppressing force – given the Loach’s radical attitudes towards society, it might have been a source of inspiration for his depiction of the Church in this film.

Towards the end of the film, Damien and his IRA men sneak into the National Army barracks to steal weapons, but they get spotted by the guards – all the men but Damien manage to escape, while Dan, the train driver from the beginning of the film, gets killed by the barracks garrison.⁷³ Ken Loach stresses the divide of the Irish society by Damien calling the National army soldiers by their actual names, expressing that these are the same men he fought the British with merely a few months ago, but now they are the ones pointing their pistols at him. Damien is then imprisoned in a barracks cell. When Teddy, who is now the one who actually imprisons Damien, visits the cell to talk to him, the irony presented by Loach comes full circle, as it is the exact same cell the O'Donovan brothers were held captive in together during the Irish War of Independence. Teddy asks Damien about the position of weapons stolen by the IRA, an

⁷¹ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:44:30-1:44:52

⁷² Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:46:25-1:46:30

⁷³ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:49:53-1:52:39

information which in return would grant him an immediate release from the prison. Reminding Teddy about the execution of Chris Reilly, Damien rejects the offer by saying: “I shot Chris Reilly in the heart. I did that. You know why. I’m not going to sell out.”⁷⁴ Loach highlights the main protagonist’s moral values, as well as the hypocrisy of Teddy in such a similar situation they both were in during the Irish War of Independence. Teddy implies that his brother will be shot at dawn if he does not tell them where the arms are. It becomes quite clear that Ken Loach uses the betrayal, a great theme of his works, as a mark of the importance of standing behind one’s moral values, explicitly the socialist beliefs and values, as these values are worth even to die for – this depiction is quite radical, but it complements the tendentiousness and carries the given message of the film.

As Damien writes his final letter to Sinead, he implicates that his moral values and his faith in a greater good of morality give him no other choice but to die for his ideals:

Dear Sinéad. I tried not to get into this war. And did. And now try to get out and can’t. Strange creatures we are, even to ourselves. I treasure every bit of you, body and soul, in these last few moments. You once said you wanted your children to taste freedom. I pray for that day, too, Sinéad. But I fear it will be longer than either of us have imagined. Dan once told me something I’ve struggled with all this time. He said, “It’s easy to know what you’re against, quite another to know what you are for.” I think now, I know, and it gives me strength.⁷⁵

Ken Loach illustrates Damien O’Donovan, the main protagonist of the film, as the typical hero of Loach’s work. In the beginning he is just an ordinary man but as the story progresses he becomes a leader of a social rebellion against the system, but ultimately gets punished for it, and Damien pays the highest price of all. As he approaches the place of execution, it becomes clear that it is his brother Teddy who orders the executioners to fire their arms at him. Teddy’s last words to Damien are “It’s not too late, Damien,” to which he replies: “For me, or for you?”⁷⁶ The execution brings the story of the main protagonist full circle, as it is the “martyr death” which makes it a case of the “failed” socialist realism, that is often presented in Loach’s work. Not only does the scene mark the ending of the Irish Civil War as well as the film itself, it also leaves the viewer full of desperation and moral dilemma. The final sequence of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* shows Teddy giving his brother’s last letters to Sinéad along with the St Christopher’s medal of Micheail, which Damien held until the very end.⁷⁷ The scene carries the last bit of the film’s symbolism, as Loach makes it clear that it is set by the same village hut

⁷⁴ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:55:41-1:56:00

⁷⁵ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:56:53-1:57:53

⁷⁶ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1:59:36-1:59:41

⁷⁷ Ken Loach, dir., *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 2:01:54-2:04:21

from the beginning of the film. It may be the director's subliminal symbolism of the "failed" socialist realism, as not only does he suggest that the oppressors only changed their uniforms and did not leave the Irish society at all, but the cottage itself is now merely burnt down and Damien is now forever gone.

The second half of the film is dedicated to the intra-national conflict among the Irish known as the Irish Civil War. By the nature of Loach, the depiction of the conflict may be seen as rather one-sided when it comes to the reason behind it, as well as being a socialist revolution in the first place. Loach stresses the power of the political debate in this part of the film, as opposed to the segment about the Irish War of Independence, putting it in the spotlight of the narrative itself – a choice which may not be historically accurate, but it does serve the purpose of the author himself.

In conclusion, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* might be as typically tendentious and socially appellative as Ken Loach's film can get. Despite the motion picture's somewhat authentic depiction of the early twentieth century Ireland, when it comes to certain historical events the director alters them to serve the purpose of his narrative. Wei H. Kao adds to the issue that British right-wing commentators were often displeased by the presentation of the Black and Tans in the film, deeming it historically inaccurate, and also by the present dramatic clichés, one-dimensional characterizations and the romanticized representation of the IRA.⁷⁸ The political debate plays an absolutely key role in the film, as it often largely overshadows other aspects of the story. The narrative itself carries a considerable amount of symbolism giving it an additional layer of possible understanding of the whole issue, which forces the viewer to read in between the lines of the story. The viewer is essentially invited to judge for himself whether the Ireland the revolutionaries were fighting for was worth all the suffering, such as an execution of a teenage informer or a man ordering the execution of his own brother. Brian Hanley comments on the film's popularity saying that it is possible to draw conflicting conclusions from the arguments portrayed in the film.⁷⁹ However, the conclusion presented by Loach is obvious, as he clearly offers his own "failed" socialist realism and a betrayal on a national as well as a family level. Needless to say, the director offers his subjective "Marxist treatment" of the Irish revolutionary period, which may be seen as an exercise in wish-fulfilment rather than history.⁸⁰ The narrative of *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* is a socialist

⁷⁸ Wei H. Kao, "Irish Pride and Disgrace in Recent Films: Ken Loach and Paul Greengrass," 340.

⁷⁹ Brian Hanley, "Review: The Wind That Shakes the Barley by Ken Loach," 51.

⁸⁰ Gavin Foster, "Class dismissed? The Debate Over a Social Basis to the Treaty Split and Irish Civil War," *Saothar*, vol. 33 (2008), 75.

one with some characteristics of national conservatism – it is driven by the struggle of working-class people who are being oppressed by the wealthy in charge of their country. The main protagonist of the film is a typical “Loach’s Everyman” – a type of character that leads a social revolution but is ultimately crushed by the system. The film depicts a period in Irish history, which influences the Irish society still to this day. It depicts a conflict which might have been avoidable if democracy and human rights had been more in the foreground, rather than national pride, or the pride of a few politicians of both nations.⁸¹ Ken Loach manages to portray the suffering of ordinary men at that time quite authentically and despite the alterations of some historical events in his favor, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* is a film which can leave a bit of a leftist sentiment even in a viewer who does not share such ideals.

⁸¹ Wei H. Kao, “Irish Pride and Disgrace in Recent Films: Ken Loach and Paul Greengrass,” 340.

Conclusion

The Irish revolutionary period marks a controversial era of the history of Ireland. Both the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, which followed soon after, did leave the Irish society free of much of a foreign power influence, but fundamentally divided at the same time. This paper explores how the British director Ken Loach perceives and portrays the Irish issue in his 2006 film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*.

The director is known to create films, which are often tendentious and have a socially appellative atmosphere. This style of filmmaking derives from Loach's personal political beliefs and ideals, as he has always been involved in different types of political activism. The typical narratives of his motion pictures rely heavily on the character of the main protagonist, who is often a common working-class man with no special attributes of any kind, but throughout the story he evolves into a leader of a revolt against the system. Needless to say, the protagonist often fails miserably in his endeavors and may undergo a "martyr death" as a sign of a greater good. The portrayal of such scenario may be viewed as a case of a "failed" socialist realism, as socialist realist works offer a positive and uplifting outcome as opposed to the work of Ken Loach's. The director depicts the life of the poor and their struggle, while he criticizes the society for it. The tendentiousness of his films gives the viewer and urge to become socially aware and to be a part of a change in the society.

The Irish issue of their own national identity along with their conflict with the British may be traced way back into history, as they had been influenced by the Englishmen for many centuries in the past. The frustration of the people of Ireland came not only from the often-harsh behavior of the British, but also from the differences between the nation's faiths and cultures as well. This frustration took shape in multiple uprisings and rebellions in the past, but the British Empire tamed all such efforts by force, which ultimately made the situation worse. However, given the overall atmosphere of a great geopolitical change all across the globe in the early twentieth century both during and after the Great War, the Irish people took their chance which resulted in a period known today as the Irish revolutionary period. The Irish have gone through two major conflicts – The Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War – and by the end of them they managed to break free of much of the British influence, but they also engraved a sense of national betrayal and suffering due to the schism of the civil war into their society, which affects the Irish still to this day.

Ken Loach depicts the major conflicts of the Irish revolutionary period in his film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* in a typical Ken Loach's fashion. The director reflects the issue mainly of the political field, as he presents the Irish endeavor as a social revolution rather than a struggle for the national identity. In fact, Loach often omits certain historical events in favor of his own perception of the historical period, and in order for it to fit the purpose of the narrative. The film introduces a typical Loach's main protagonist, who becomes a leader of a social revolution but is crushed by the system and becomes a "martyr," a figure to be worth looking up to, as the director portrays him. Despite the one-dimensional characterization, Loach manages to depict a day-to-day struggle of the poor at the time quite well, as well as capturing his own perception of the issue.

To illustrate a disputatious chapter of the history of a nation such as the Irish revolutionary period is no simple task. Even though film manages to portray a personalized interpretation of the given period, it still manages to depict the era well, as it captures not only the Irish ceaseless endeavor but also the strife left in the nation still to this day. This thesis showcases that it is indeed possible to take *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* as a depiction of a historical era, but Ken Loach's tendentiousness has to be kept in mind and thus the film should be approached rather critically.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl analyzovat filmové vyobrazení Britsko-irské války a Irské občanské války ve snímku *Zvedá se vítr* od britského režiséra Kena Loache z roku 2006. Konkrétně se pak zabývá historickou analýzou počátků britsko-irských problémů, autorovou tendencí přiklánět se k jednomu konkrétnímu narativu, zejména narativu socialistickému, a nakonec syntézou obou jevů v rámci samotného autorova filmu. Práce se tedy věnuje analýze díla *Zvedá se vítr* a je rozdělena na teoretickou část a praktickou část, konkrétněji pak do tří na sebe navazujících hlavních kapitol.

Ken Loach je známý svými tendenčními filmy, které často oplývají atmosférou sociálního apelu a dávají důraz na ideje socialismu. První kapitola představuje režisérovo politické pozadí, zasazuje jeho dílo do kinematografické éry a poukazuje na to, jakým způsobem jeho dílo ovlivnilo společnost. Loachovo vnímání společnosti pramení z jeho politického přesvědčení, jelikož sám je celoživotním politickým aktivistou, a dokonce dnes již bývalým členem majoritní levicové strany ve Velké Británii, Labouristické strany. Jelikož je zatvrzelým socialistou, samotné Loachovy postoje mohou být vnímány z pohledu dnešní západní společnosti, ve které dominuje trend středo-levé sociální demokracie v rámci levé strany politického spektra, až poněkud radikálně. Sám režisér i navštěvuje setkání britských marxistických skupin, během kterých jsou promítány právě jeho snímky. Loach ve svých filmech protlačuje názory sobě blízké již od šedesátých let minulého století, kdy natočil jeden z nejvýznamnějších sociálně tendenčních snímků, film *Kes*. Typický Loachův film má mnoho specifických charakteristik, nicméně klíčovou roli sehrává jeho hlavní hrdina. Tím je často zcela běžný muž z poměrů dělnické, případně v modernějších snímcích nižší střední společenské vrstvy, ze kterého se v průběhu děje postupně vyvine vůdce sociální změny ve společnosti. Nicméně tento hlavní hrdina ve své snaze změnit společnost k obrazu svému selhává a často prochází jistou „mučednickou smrtí,“ což však může být i metafora a nikoli smrt doslovná – i ta se však ve snímcích autora objevuje. Vzhledem k typickým rysům Loachova filmu jej někteří autoři popisují jako socialistického realistu, který však prezentuje „selhaný“ socialistický realismus – to proto, že díla skutečného socialistického realismu s sebou nesou pozitivní nádechy, což se v díle Loache nevyskytuje často. Loachovo dílo s sebou nese i významnou politickou debatu, která se pne skrze celý děj filmu, nicméně v příbězích prezentovaných režisérem tato debata může zastíňovat například historická fakta, nebo samotnou podstatu problému, což pak přidává na tendenčnosti díla a režisérovi subjektivním pohledu na věc. Sám autor je řazen do Britské nové vlny filmu a mezi své vzory řadí i režiséry Československé nové vlny, zejména pak Miloše

Formana. Ken Loach je bezesporu velmi vlivnou postavou nejen britského filmu, ale i britské kultury, politiky a kinematografie obecně.

Druhá kapitola popisuje kořeny irského boje za svobodný stát, snaží se najít příčiny problematických britsko-irských vztahů, a nakonec analyzuje dopad irského revolučního období na irskou společnost. Samotné kořeny svárů sahají do pozdního dvanáctého století, kdy se odehrála anglo-normanská invaze do Irska, která s sebou přinesla nejen utrpení a počátek několika staletí dlouhé irské snahy o navrácení národní identity, ale i posun irské země blíže k feudalismu a povznesení smaragdového ostrova, jak bývá Irsku přezdíváno, ke standartu tehdejší doby. Roku 1536 se král Jindřich VIII. rozhodl znovudobýt irský ostrov. Jeho nechvalná pověst s sebou nese vznik protestantské větve křesťanství, Anglikánské církve, což ve výhradně katolické irské společnosti vyvolalo další vlnu krize národní identity, jelikož irský národ byl postaven na křesťanských základech. Napětí mezi dvěma státy vyvrcholilo Irským povstáním roku 1641, které nakonec vyústilo ve vznik Irské katolické konfederace. Irové se však stali součástí konfliktu známého jako Válka tří království neboli britské občanské války, kvůli kterému došlo na Cromwellovo tažení do Irska, které mezi Iry zaseló sémě nepoměru vlastnictví půdy, kdy katolíci přišli o většinu vlastnictví na úkor přicházejících protestantů. Konec osmnáctého století je dodnes spojován s velkými revolucemi, zejména s Velkou francouzskou revolucí a Americkou válkou o nezávislost. Tyto události, spolu s jejich ideami a motivy inspirovali Irskou společnost až k Irskému povstání roku 1798, které však bylo násilně potlačeno a vedlo až ke vzniku Spojeného království Velké Británie a Irska, jenž vzešlo ze Zákona o unii z roku 1800 – tato forma vlády zůstala neměnná až do roku 1922. Irský boj za národní identitu byl obnoven až Velikonočním povstáním roku 1916, které i přes to, že trvalo pouhých šest dní, s sebou neslo značnou míru symboliky. Tyto události vyústily až v konflikt známý jako Britsko-irská válka v letech 1919 až 1921, což byla partyzánská válka vedena Irskou republikánskou armádou na irském území okupovaném Brity. Tato válka vzešla zejména z Irských parlamentních voleb v roce 1918, ve kterých dominovala republikánská Sinn Féin, která později deklarovala i svobodný a nezávislý irský parlament. Tato válka byla uzavřena takzvanou Anglicko-irskou dohodou, dokumentem, který znamenal mír v Irsku, ale za cenu setrvání v britském impériu jako dominium, přičemž Severní Irsko setrvává integrované v rámci Spojeného království Velké Británie a Severního Irska. Tato dohoda rozdělila irskou společnost a následně vyústila až v Irskou občanskou válku v letech 1922 až 1923, která byla vedena mezi pro-dohodovou stranou a proti-dohodovou stranou. Občanská válka v Irsku byla velmi chaotickým a nepřehledným konfliktem, ze kterého nakonec vzešla jako vítězná pro-dohodová

strana, a to i za pomoci Velké Británie. I přes to, že to znamenalo počátek nové éry svobodného Irska, toto období zanechalo v irské společnosti hořkou pachut' zrady a nedůvěry, kterou bychom mezi Iry našli i dnes.

Snímek *Zvedá se vítr* z roku 2006, který pojednává právě o událostech Britsko-irské války a Irské občanské války, je typickým Loachovým dílem. Třetí kapitola vytváří analýzu tohoto díla na základě dvou předešlých částí. Film mapuje osudy dvou bratrů z chudých irských poměrů. Nejprve je vyobrazuje jako partyzány Irské republikánské armády během Britsko-irské války, poté jako vzájemné soupeře v rámci událostí Irské občanské války. Narativ snímku je typicky tendenční – Loach v něm vyobrazuje svůj všudypřítomný sociální apel, spolu s klíčovým významem hlavního hrdiny. Tím je mladší bratr Damien O'Donovan, který se v průběhu děje stane vlajkonošem prezentované sociální revoluce v Irsku, nicméně po událostech kolem Anglo-irské dohody se spolu s dalšími názorově blízkými Iry stane součástí proti-dohodové Irské republikánské armády a skrze „mučednickou smrt“ naplňuje podstatu typického „Loachova Everymana.“ Nejenže režisér často upřednostňuje souboj společensko-politických ideálů nad historickými fakty, od kterých se často odklání v zájmu přiblížení se jeho vlastnímu vyprávění příběhu, ale i prezentuje celou problematiku ryze jednostranně. Divák je pak nucen přiklonit se jedné verzi příběhu, bez velkých možností volby. Nicméně autor prezentuje některé části filmu, byť možná neúmyslně, ke kterým divák přistupuje i kriticky. Režisér vyobrazuje realitu těžkého života běžných Irů té doby, zároveň se mu daří zachytit i autenticitu Irska první čtvrtiny dvacátého století. Zdůrazňuje irské antipatie vůči britům, ale zároveň i nutnou potřebu společnosti usilovat o ryze socialistickou společnost. Hlavní postava Damiena pak manifestuje význam stání si za svými myšlenkami a ideály, i kdyby to mělo člověka stát cenu nejvyšší. Autor poukazuje na fakt, že velkým tématem irské historie je zrada, jelikož zradu ve svém vlastním pojetí prezentuje v samotném filmu. Nicméně závěrem autor poukazuje na to, že výsledkem Irského revolučního období byla pouze změna vlajky a přerozdělení státní moci.

Rozbor filmu *Zvedá se vítr* vede k závěru, že vyobrazení natolik kontroverzní etapy irské historie nečiní jednoduchý úkol, a že k režisérovi zpracování je třeba přistupovat s notnou dávkou kritického smýšlení. Ken Loach ve filmu vyobrazuje v první řadě své postoje, a historická fakta až v řadě druhé. I přes to je však možné pohlížet na film jako na jistou interpretaci Irského boje za svobodný a nezávislý stát, která s sebou nese i určitou míru historické autenticity, nicméně člověk při tom nesmí zapomenout, že se právě dívá na film od Kena Loache.

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