

La Sapienza

Revisione esterna dottorandi ____° ciclo

Paolo D'Indinosante

Evaluation form for PhD dissertation

Evaluation form

Title of the thesis

“British Voices of Empire: Poetry and Imperial Patriotism in the Long Nineteenth Century”

Affiliation of the reviewer

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Report

This PhD thesis explores a largely overlooked subject: the role of British poetry in endorsing and disseminating imperial patriotism during the long nineteenth century (1789–1914). It presents a well-researched and comprehensive review of the critical literature, demonstrating the author's capacity for rigorous data collection and analysis. Notably, several of the poems examined were sourced through archival visits to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the Lit & Phil Library in Newcastle upon Tyne, and the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, rendering them inaccessible to the general public. As part of the methodological approach, the author combines close readings of the examined poems with an analysis grounded in their socio-historical context, emphasizing four thematic axes: space, time, peace, and war.

The dissertation comprises 263 pages of text, organized into a detailed table of contents, an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and an extensive bibliography. Each chapter is divided into three clearly delineated sections. The overall structure of the thesis is coherent and well-organized, with the author's research objectives consistently and comprehensibly articulated throughout. Nonetheless, the absence of a separate appendix listing all discussed works is notable, as such a resource would facilitate more efficient location and identification of the sources.

The dissertation submitted by Mr. Paolo D'Indinosante merits a positive evaluation. It meets the standards required of doctoral theses, as it demonstrates the candidate's advanced theoretical knowledge within the relevant discipline and the ability to conduct independent scholarly research. The dissertation addresses an original and underexplored research topic. Nevertheless, certain shortcomings—outlined below—are present:

Chapter 1: "The Place of Poetry in British Imperial Culture, c. 1789—1914"

The "Porter–MacKenzie Debate"—In my assessment, the author devotes excessive attention to this critical discussion (as much as 21 pages), despite acknowledging that the treatment of poetry in both analysed publications is marginal. Such an extended digression appears to be only loosely connected to the theme of the chapter and detracts from the clarity and coherence of the argument.

A notable shortcoming of the chapter is the temporal inconsistency regarding the dissertation's chronological scope. While the author thoroughly justifies selecting 1789–1914 as the period of analysis, he simultaneously aligns himself with Elleke Boehmer's position by adopting 1918 as a "cut-off point," as defined in her *Empire Writing: Anthology of Colonial Literature*, and notes that the dissertation also considers publications up to 1918. Given that the timeframe of the so-called long nineteenth century is clearly delineated in the title, abstract, and introduction, this creates ambiguity in the declared temporal framework.

Chapters 2 and 3: "British Royal Jubilee Poetry I: 1809", "British Royal Jubilee Poetry II: 1887"

A notable shortcoming of the chapters lies in the superficial analysis of selected poetic texts, which is primarily focused on summarizing their thematic content. The author fails to harness the full interpretative potential of the examined poems, neglecting such crucial aspects as poetic form and genre, metrical and rhythmic structure, rhyme scheme, characteristic line breaks and the use of enjambment, stanza structure, the construction of the poetic persona, as well as the presence and function of stylistic devices. Additionally, all chapters lack even a brief conclusion that would synthesize the key findings arising from the analyses and highlight the significance of these insights within the broader context of the dissertation.

Chapter 4: "British Patriotic Poetry Anthologies, c. 1880s—1910s" and Conclusion

In Chapter Four, the discussion of the individual anthologies is notably superficial. A more effective approach might have been to concentrate more thoroughly on a limited selection of volumes that differ in their treatment of history, conceptualisation of empire, and choice of poems.

The dissertation concludes with a relatively brief final section (approximately two and a half pages). Given that none of the chapters includes a synopsis of the principal insights stemming from the analysis, it would have been appropriate to place a more comprehensive synthesis at the end of the thesis.

The thesis is written in correct academic English; however, minor editorial and stylistic lapses do appear, including instances of overly colloquial language. A few examples are as follows:

- p. 44: "Boehmer largely focusses on 'the operation and reception of two iconic jingo poems of high imperialism' penned by usual suspects such as Kipling and Newbolt"
- p. 52: "As suggested above, I occasionally the latest limit of the period on which I largely concentrate"
- p. 90: "both Pye and the anonymous poet that penned *An Heroic Poem to Britannia* try to have their cake and eat it, too"
- p. 121: "he bad for a visitor at the time no less a personage than George the Third"
- p. 159: "decrease!'"

It is worth emphasizing that the thesis has been meticulously prepared in terms of editorial layout.

Presentation and clarity

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☒ **Good** ☐ Excellent

The reviewer should be able to read the text without difficulty. This implies that the dissertation is clear and 'user friendly', without duplications or repetitions.

Evaluation file (optional)

Integration and coherence

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☒ **Excellent**

The manuscript should present logical and rational links between different parts of the thesis.

Introduction to scientific background

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☒ **Good** ☐ Excellent

The text should contain a satisfactory introduction to the scientific background which is relevant to the research, preparing the reader to the exposition of the problem.

Review of relevant literature

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☒ **Excellent**

The candidate must have a detailed knowledge of original sources, have a thorough knowledge of the field, and understand the main theoretical and methodological issues.

Statement of research problem

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☒ **Good** ☐ Excellent

A clear statement of the research problem should be made, together with specific hypotheses, predictions, or questions which the research is designed to address.

Originality

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☒ **Excellent**

The research must be the candidate's own work. The degree of independence may vary according to the research topic.

Contribution to knowledge and scientific relevance

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☒ Good ☐ Excellent

The dissertation should be substantial enough to be able to form the basis of two articles on refereed journal, a book or research monograph.

Mastery of the English language

☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good ☒ Excellent

The candidate must be proficient in written English and show mastery of appropriate scientific/technical language.

A major goal of the review process is to evaluate if the present version of the thesis is:

- 1) adequate as is
- 2) require minor revision
- 3) require major revision

for admission of the candidate to the defense of the work in front of a national evaluation board.

☒ **Accept as is** ☐ Minor revision ☐ Major revision

Date: 31 July 2025

Reviewer:

Magdalena Pypec
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