

**External Examiner’s Report on the Dissertation of Martina Reiterová**  
**“Revivalist Movements in Brittany, Ireland, Scotland and Wales around 1900.**  
**Discursive Strategies of Self-representation and relationship to Celtic Identity”**  
**Submitted in 2024 at the Institute of World History**

**I. Brief summary of the dissertation**

This dissertation analyses four cases of Celtic revivalist movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Around a set of comparative questions - along with some transnational / transregional connections and influences between them – it analyses the Irish, Scottish, Breton, and Welsh cases of Celtic revivals. The work follows primarily a discourse analysis of self-representation of all four movements along major journals along with some additional material. The four revivalist movements (their associations and first and foremost publications) are analysed and compared along questions of languages, education, popular culture but also attachments to and involvement in pan-Celtic organisations and events.

**II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation**

Overall, this is a strong and coherent dissertation. It is well laid out in its analytical remit, it focuses clearly on a set of analytical questions that translates into a lucid structure from start to finish. It is based on a broad range of primary source material on all four cases of Celtic revivalism as well as ample contextual secondary literature. The dissertation is well crafted and written (with only some minor typographical errors here and there). The dissertation meets all the criteria of a PhD.

**III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects**

[Please provide a detailed evaluation of the dissertation. Among other things, this evaluation should consider the criteria listed below (preferably providing examples from the text to illustrate all critical points). You can either organise your comments separately, according to the individual criteria, or formulate a longer overall summary addressing all the criteria at once.

*1. Structure of the argument*

The dissertation is overall lucidly structured around Introduction, core chapters and a Conclusion. As a comparative (cum transnational) dissertation it follows a clear case by case structure that – ultimately – foregrounds the comparative framework rather than transfers and transnational connections. This is not a criticism as such and the choice of structure makes sense given the main questions asked yet it makes the trans-regional aspects of mutual influences less prominent. These kind of comparisons, in particular one like the one tackled in this dissertation, with four cases makes this case-by-case and theme-by-theme structure a logical one – it just comes at the cost of a rather schematic structure.

Generally, the arguments pertaining to main questions and interests of the author, that is

around questions of discourse and self-representation of the four movements, their respective similarities and differences are well presented. The focus on self-representation and discourse is, of course, a legitimate choice. There were moments where I wished to see other aspects also covered. For instance, at times I wished to learn more about actors that filled the societies and the movements with life and activity. Also, I would have liked to hear more about the chosen journals, their making, the editing, distribution or print runs – just to have a better contextual understanding of how far the reach and echo was of such publications before the main analysis goes into discursive strategies.

To give an example. P. 86 (Scotland) on a festival in Oban in 1892. (“...moved around Scotland, growing in size and variety.) This is one such example where I would wish for more context or flesh-and-bones: who organised these events, how large were the audiences, what did local press report? I know this is not along the core questions of discourse analysis but still important as discourse ultimately is human-made. – A bit further down it says: “The popularity of the Mórd increased each year...” – what does this mean in numbers? Who exactly took decision to move from a one-day event to longer, longer more extended events?

## 2. *Formal aspects of the dissertation*

In terms of formalities this is a very tidy dissertation. It is well written in a scholarly fashion, i.e. it is coherent in terms of style and referencing and footnoting. The command of academic English is superb and of a very high standard. Overall, I only found a few minor typographical errors. To me, it was a pleasure to read.

## 3. *Use of sources and/or material*

The dissertation throughout makes excellent use of primary source material, mainly along the published journals that came out of the four movements. In some cases the choices were rather obvious along a focus of main journals, in other cases choices had to be made to downscale the scope of the material yet that is well-explained. The primary source material is rich and allows the author to paint a detailed picture of the movement’s aims and scopes. There is ample of material in the main text with tidy multi-lingual translations in the footnotes.

## 4. *Personal contribution to the subject*

I am not an expert in this particular field as such, that is Celtic studies and the revivalist movement. In that regard I find it difficult to comment on the personal and original contribution of this PhD. Yet as someone with a comparative history background myself, I have no doubt that this dissertation in its ambitions yet clearly successful four-case comparative (cum transregional) set-up makes a successful contribution of putting all four cases into one coherent comparative analysis. An analysis that ultimately shows what holds these cases together (also chronologically) but also what sets them apart along differences from language, to education to popular culture. So rather than seeing Celtic revival as one phenomenon, what this dissertation achieves as a personal and scholarly original is a far more nuanced understanding of the rhetoric and discursive strategies of the four movements. This is done by a superb and careful handling of the chosen primary source material that allows to

weigh each case against factors such as language, education or popular culture.

#### IV. Questions for the author

I have both factual questions driven by interest and curiosity (first below) and more conceptual and methodological questions (further down starting with comparative history).

As the dissertation is set up, primarily, as a comparative analysis, I would like to hear more about a) comparative history more generally as an approach but also as a field (e.g. what other studies have influenced this dissertation?), b) speak briefly to core texts such as Marc Bloch or Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhardt Haupt's 'classic' on comparative European history, c) speak to the set-up and alternatives – why do all four cases? Why not two out of four? Comparative history comes with a priori choices, and analysis of all four cases is legitimate, yet while it allows for breadth it comes at the cost of depths (one could argue).

What constitutes a case study?

Who were the main makers and shakers of the movement, organisers, publishers? What else were they in careers and life? Do we or would we see patterns along gender? Were these primarily male domains?

The latter leads to a question on discourse analysis as a method and approach. Can this be explained further. To me it seems Michel Foucault inspired (the death of the author at the end of "Les Mots et les Choses") as actors such as authors never become human beings and flesh and bones. The text mentions "authors decided..." but who were they? Or are authors as actors with life experiences not important?

When focusing on language and discourse (e.g. articles in journals) is there a methodological danger of falling into the trap of seeing the development and actions as a success (see e.g. p. 88 re theatre troupes).

Are these (four) movements of Celtism regionalisms, nationalisms, or regional nationalism?

How do the movements fit into a) globalisation and the nation (e.g. S. Conrad) or B) internationalism in times of nationalism (e.g. G. Sluga) – here along lines of regionalism in times of...a) nationalism, and b) globalisation?

– Note: While the dimension of both the last two questions is different, both share my concern that the dissertation (while strong in what it does: discourse analysis of self-representation) it tends to lose sight of wider contexts such as the state / empire in which and to some extent (or the Irish case – I suppose) the Celtic movement was working against as a kind of 'liberation movement'.

With the Irish case being the 'negative' one – how does this case a) relate to British Empire and Irish nationalism at the time, is the Irish case national / nationalist as a revivalist

movement and thus anti-empire, whereas this was b) different in Wales and Scotland – as regional nationalism but not anti British empire? – Breton the most positive towards Celticism – I missed a bit more the “why” questions and explanations, not just present the findings.

## **V. Conclusion**

I provisionally classify the submitted dissertation as *passed*.

21.11.2024

Bernhard Struck