

STŘEDA, 20. ČERVNA 2012

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Report on Bakalářské Práce(Oponentsky posudek): Rose Tremain: Historical Novels

---

**Vedoucí bakalářské práce:** PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., MA.

**Oponent:** Colin S. Clark MA

**Zpracoval :** Anna Koucká

**Rose Tremain: Historical Novels**

STŘEDA, 20. ČERVNA 2012

**General Remarks:**

Replete with simple errors of punctuation and grammar : i.e. Pepy's for Pepys' etc. too common to enumerate. In addition, the student fails to comply with academic conventions and often lapses into the *ich* form , producing a reduced register in her writing which is inappropriate and deleterious. Despite explicitly intimating a quadruple analytic format using literary devices Tremain favours, the actual text itself again simply sinks into rather mundane reiteration of the characters and plot

summaries of the two selected texts- in short , the claims of the abstract remain unrealized and the thesis is insufficiently prosecuted.

These misgivings aside, this dissertation is quite well constructed, shows signs of having done marginal readings and is reasonably fluent. In addition, there is a respectable complement of the usual suspects from the realms of literary criticism and theory who have been co-opted to add validity to this oftentimes somewhat anemic paper.

The two most substantial problems with this paper are sadly , fundamental ones: the topic and the thesis. Despite a spirited attempt to assert otherwise Tremain simply cannot be airbrushed into a position in the canon which she does not hold and does not merit. The essential issue of the merit of Tremain as a novelist remains and it is striking that the student remains fixated with this second-rate writer despite advice to the contrary. It is not an issue of whether *Historiographic metafiction* is a valid notion, but rather if Tremain is the most representative exponent, or even if she is consciously deploying this narrative device . Why not consider Sir Walter Scott , Hilary Mantel or even John Prebble; why fixate upon this author? Good reasons for this are simply not offered.

Only one text by Tremain has sufficient provenance to be considered a critical success ( and this coat-tailed on the general popularity of the sub-genre) and the others are of the "Richard and Judy's Bookclub recommends..." variety, i.e. entirely pedestrian.

To then consider the thesis at the heart of this student's work is to be treated to a dizzying circuitous logical fallacy : History is a fiction and therefore Tremain`s novels are valid because they are also fictions of history. If that is the core of the analytic engine here then perhaps more care should have been exercised in staking out a thesis position rather than empowering an essentially drab idea with the gains of a foray into theory.

Other logical fallacies are not hard to spot - The fact that characters in two novels by Tremain( any reason for the particular choice?) are delusional is NOT evidence of the ultimate unreliability of any person's point of view".. in this instance and in other areas the student falls prey to logical fallacies of the basic sort : i.e. hasty generalizations/post hoc/begging the question etc

The conclusion of the paper cannot disguise the essential lack of academic synthesis and I would single it out for criticism on the basis that it fails to offer a conclusion in any meaningful sense , thereby squandering the work the student has put in. Additionally, it makes the error of raising new material- which remains unanalyzed thereafter -at the end of a paper , a basic academic error. It is also highly questionable to suggest a correlation with McEwan and Carter in terms of Gothicism ( so many other better candidates are overlooked here)and which is not then pursued nor validated.

The abstract asserts that *Music and Silence* "centers around the fairy tale discourse" - while there is mention of such a discourse, it is not entirely convincingly located within critical theory: there are a number of major discourses concerning fairy tales and it is in this regard that the student makes one of many conflation , relying upon a muddy understanding of the role of myth and legend in history

and national narratives. The student also seems to be confusing inaccuracy, fiction and the fantastic( a very specific literary mode)

The fact that characters in two novels by Tremain( any reason for the particular choice?) are delusional is NOT evidence of the ultimate unreliability of any person's point of view".. in this instance and in other areas the student falls prey to logical fallacies of the basic sort : ie hasty generalizations/post hoc/begging the question etc

#### **Recommendation**

Bearing in mind the foregoing reservations , I would recommend that this work may only be passed at a grade of 3(Dobre)

**Colin S Clark MA**