

Posudek vedoucí

na bakalářskou práci Anny Koucké „Madness of Love, Love and Madness: A Survey of the Works of Rose Tremain in the 1980s and 1990s“

Rose Tremain was one of the most promising young writers of the 1980s and she has enjoyed a somewhat eccentric career – both labeled as a rather romantic writer (whose persistent topic is love, who writes thrillers set in Paris etc.) and a critically highly acclaimed novelist (her two historical novels reaching for the highest awards: *Restoration* shortlisted for the Booker, *Music and Silence* receiving the Whitbread Prize). This uncomfortable position between a “popular” and “serious” writer has not biased Anna Koucká in her own approach to the novelist. She goes against the grain of contemporary critical voices that tend to value only the historical fiction (and secondary literature of any relative value seems to focus solely on these two novels). Instead, Anna Koucká in her thesis attempts to see connections between several novels written in the 80s and 90s (despite their different temporal settings, the four selected novels are persuasively presented as displaying thematic similarities and stressing similar types of characters).

Despite the clear explanation for the choice of four novels to discuss (time of publication is an obvious indicator), a careful look at the list of Rose Tremain’s publications reveals some omissions (even of novels, not only short stories, so the generic aspect cannot be the only explanation). Why have these four been chosen, in what way are they representative and what would happen to the overall underlying hypothesis if other texts, say, *The Way I Found Her*, (if not also *The Cupboard*, *The Journey to the Volcano*, which may not have been available for analysis) were inserted?

It is highly commendable that ever so much work had gone into the ultimate structuring of the thesis. I appreciate how Anna Koucká had gone through all the available work on Rose Tremain and gathered painstakingly the little information there was to be found. It is a pity that the thesis does not fully reflect and acknowledge all this research and acquaintance with the amount of primary and secondary material, and does not fully critically enter into a discussion with the critical evaluation of Tremain. Some analysis of the reception of Tremain, for example, would have boosted the thesis onto another level of existence.

Pity that the proofreading towards the end of the thesis was not performed as carefully as at the beginning. It is clear that the last pages were written under time stress, when not only the almost obligatory student error of lead instead of led (in the past tense) appears... Otherwise, the level of formulation, style, expression, are all more than adequate. The thesis is easy to follow, logically very well structured, and considering the amount of at first glance unwieldy and lengthy novelistic material, works very well in the devised system for analysis. Indeed, I appreciate the degree of independent scholarship, the ability to structure and draw analogies and parallels between seemingly disparate texts. It seems, therefore, only inevitable that some omissions and oversimplifications had to be made, e.g. the relationship of Peter Claire and Emilia, Christian’s obsession with his guardian angel and numerous other minor motifs are indeed sacrificed.

Notwithstanding my appreciation and positive comments, there are some inherent problems within the conception of the thesis. Not only does the work lack any theoretical or methodological underpinning (the conception of madness, idea of space, realism versus postmodern historiography etc.), but all the characters are presented as if coming before the readers’ eyes in the same manner – formal elements are briefly mentioned in a general and rather offhand way in the Introduction, but in several cases the form of narration and

perspective is crucial for any understanding of the text. Such a major aspect of the topic, as characterization indeed is for this thesis, ought to notice the level of self-awareness and/or self-presentation, possible irony, split identities etc. For example, to just mention a quotation actually used in the thesis (page 18): what is the meaning of the obvious split between Mary's use of "I" and simultaneously referring to herself as an outsider Martin in the 3rd person? What is the "identity" she has achieved as it is shown to us by such narrative means?

Another, more minor comment: What is meant by the "feminised" mode of belonging and of an ending (pages 13/14)? Is not Sceats' reading of Merivel's discovery of his feminised identity at the end of the novel in a kind of contradiction to the "parody" of the lover/beloved reunion (as mentioned by Rozett), rather than, as Anna Koucká says, "another example of more or less the same" (top page 14)? What exactly is the nature of this "parody"?

To conclude, I find the thesis fully in keeping with the required B.A. standards and, therefore, recommend it for defence. The preliminary mark is very good (**velmi dobře**). The final result will depend on the defence.

V Praze dne 31.8.2011

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