

Pré-rapport du mémoire de M2
Pre-report of the Master's thesis
Édition/Edition (2018—2020)

Étudiant(e)/Student :

Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name : Cláudia García Pereira de Oliveira
Titre du mémoire M2 / Title of the Master's thesis : Sintra in the Twentieth Century European Narratives

Mobilité / Mobility :

Veillez souligner les établissements !/ Please, underline the institutions !
Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest (ELTE)

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris (EHESS)

Università degli Studi di Catania (UNICT)

Univerzita Karlova, Prague (CUNI)

Université Laval, Québec (UL)

Directeurs de recherche / Supervisors¹ :

Prénom, Nom / First Name, Family Name : Jaroslav Ira
Titre /Title : Assistant professor (Ph.D.)
Université/University : Charles University (CUNI)

Évaluation/Evaluation:

Veillez consulter le tableau de conversion ci-dessous !/ Please, consult the grade conversion chart below !

Note dans l'établissement / Grade at the institution: 2/ B

Note dans le 2eme établissement (ELTE) / Grade at the 2nd institution (ELTE): 4

Note dans le 3eme établissement / Evaluation – grade at the 3rd institution:

Note TEMA+ / TEMA+ grade: Very good

¹ Le pré-rapport est écrit par le 2eme directeur (ou par le 2eme et 3eme directeurs) qui ne participe pas à la soutenance et inclut des questions à aborder lors de la soutenance./The pre-report is written by the 2nd supervisor (and in case the 3rd supervisor too), who does not personally take part in the defense and it includes questions to be addressed to the student during the thesis defense.

Pré-rapport / Pre-report :

max. 4500 caractères espaces inclus/max. 4500 characters including spaces

The master thesis by Cláudia de Oliveira explores various representations of the Portuguese town Sintra in the twentieth century. Cláudia drew inspiration from literary and cultural studies, and in particular, from the novel approach in literary criticism called ‘geocriticism’, which seemed best suited for what Cláudia wished to explore and thematize from the outset, i.e. how representations from different perspectives of the very same place have layered up, interacted, reinforced certain patterns in the imaginary or contradicted, forming thus a particular – but always open, unstable and heterogeneous - imaginary of a concrete space. From the outset, Cláudia aimed at very critical and engaged inquiry into, and radical re-conceptualization of, the identity of Sintra (or cultural landscape of Sintra), that – in Cláudia’s view – tends to be reduced and flattened, e.g. by touristic propagation, by long-established clichés by travellers, or by heritage authorities such as UNESCO. Her approach to the empirical material has been therefore somewhat particular and differed from more standard and detached analyses of spatial representations.

To achieve her aims, Cláudia elaborated conceptual and theoretical framework in the first chapter, followed by second chapter about the evolution of Sintra’s landscape and a brief survey of literary and travellers’ representations of Sintra in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the third chapter. The major, analytical part comes in chapter four, in which Cláudia scrutinized a set of textual and visual representations, with the aims of identifying and interpreting typical or recurrent themes or motifs that have appeared in the analyzed media, while also cross-reading the media, and thus assessing convergence or different patterns in Sintra imaginary.

On the positive note, I really appreciate the intellectual ambition of the thesis and Cláudia’s genuine quest for a robust theoretical underpinning of her theme. Furthermore, Cláudia has undertaken enormous work with gathering and assessing a large pool of sources, of which many have not been used in the end, as it turned out that processing all of them would be impossible. It should be also noted in this context that the original focus of the thesis (nineteenth century) has shifted to the twentieth century, as it turned out that original plan would just replicate already completed researches.

On the critical note, it turned out that the thesis objectives were perhaps too ambitious for a master thesis, and that a more limited scope and aim would lead to more convincing results. The theoretical and conceptual framework is rather complex but unfortunately also difficult at some points to follow and sometimes complicating rather than clarifying the story. For instance, Cláudia uses many analytical terms (representation, narrative, image, identity, and cultural landscape), but the relation between them is not always clear. The role of the concept of narrative remains a bit confusing, too. It seems that narratives are structures that only emerge as products of Cláudia’s text rather than being semantic structures already present and decipherable in the analyzed media. While I, as major supervisor, know the intentions and line of thoughts of the author, these remain obscure for more external readers, which may unfortunately lessen the value of the thesis in their eyes. The somewhat clumsy English that would still need some improvement doesn’t help in this respect. Also, the analysis and interpretation in chapter four could still be developed further and deeper, but I am aware of the shortage of time that did not allow for some of Cláudia’s original plans, namely comparison – or cross-reading and intertextual analysis – of different sources.

In spite of the critical comments, I consider Cláudia's thesis as a very good piece of academic text, which fully meets academic and formal criteria for a defensible master thesis, and which brings forward many interesting insights and opens up many fresh perspectives. I believe that the results can be further developed and fructified in Cláudia's future career, while I can also confirm that Cláudia has undergone a revealing experience and made a considerable intellectual advancement. I recommend the thesis for successful defence and suggest the grade very good.

Questions :

Based on the results of your thesis, how would you promote and present Sintra to outsiders, or re-define its landscape to be protected, in a way that would better reflect identity of the place ?

Place and date : Prague; June 14, 2023

Name and signature : Jaroslav Ira

TEMA+ Grade conversion table

ELTE (Hungarian)	EHESS (French)	UNICT (Italian)	CUNI (Czech)	UL (Canadian)	Notes TEMA+
5	16-20 (pas de 19 et 20)	30 (A, Excellent)	A	95-100 (A+, 4,33) 90-94 (A, 4,00) 85-89 (A-, 3,67)	Très bien/Excellent
4	14-15	27-29 (B, Very Good)	B	80-84 (B+, 3,33) 75-79 (B, 3,00) 70-74 (B-, 2,67)	Bien/Good
3	12-13	23-26 (C, Good)	C	66-69 (C+, 2,33) 63-65 (C, 2,00) 60-62 (C-, 1,67)	Assez bien/ Amply sufficient
2	10-11	21-22 (D, Satisfactory) 18-20 (E, Sufficient)	D, E	55-59 (D+, 1,33) 50-54 (D, 1,00)	Passable/ Satisfactory/ Almost sufficient
1	0-9	1-17 (F, FX)	F	49 et moins (E, 0,00)	Insuffisant/ Insufficient