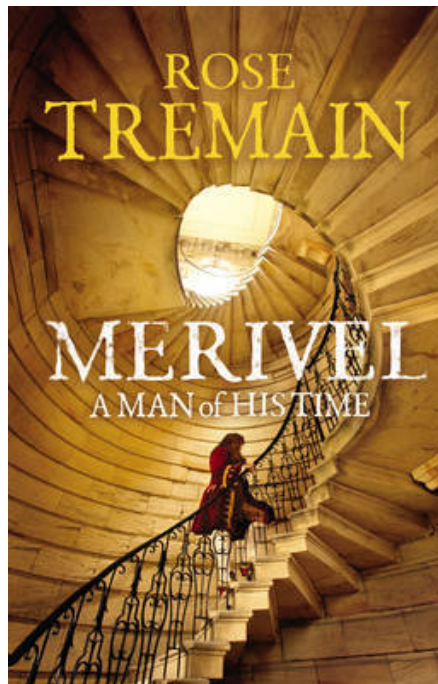




Merivel: A Man of His Time

Rose Tremain

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Merivel: A Man of His Time Rose Tremain

The gaudy years of the Restoration are long gone and Robert Merivel, physician and courtier to King Charles II, sets off for the French court in search of a fresh start. But royal life at the Palace of Versailles – all glitter in front and squalor behind – leaves him in despair, until a chance encounter with the seductive Madame de Flamanville, allows him to dream of a different future. But will that future ever be his? Summoned home urgently to attend to the ailing King, Merivel finds his loyalty and skill tested to their limits.

Merivel: A Man of His Time Details

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From Reader Review Merivel: A Man of His Time for online ebook

Jeanette says

Rose Tremain does this period of Charles II well. Historical fiction deluxe here- and the minutia detail and sensual description lends itself far more to this era (smellovision would really work for this story too) than it does to her moderns.

Restoration was enchanting. This one was even better, Merivel has deeper thoughts with age, especially upon the beloved servants of his recent years. The older Merivel seems more complex and vastly more intriguing to me. A little less randy and a bit more rational. He was always for his century, too empathetic. I would give it a full 4.5 stars.

It's slightly revisionist in spots, but that is totally forgiven.

Best she has done, IMHO. And definitely the most enjoyable Rose Tremain that I have read. I don't give stars for levels of writing that equate to literature with the big L, but on what is readable entertainment for me. For my taste. And what it has taught me too.

And I read this in 2 days off and on while smoking a bunch of meat for a huge gathering today. The book surprised me several times and I almost forgot to add wood chunks.

Nigeyb says

Funny, unexpected, elegiac, insightful, and beautifully written

'Merivel: A Man of His Time' (2014) is the follow up to 'Restoration' (1989), which I have just finished and which I adored. Discovering there was a sequel was wonderful. I read it with some trepidation as it seemed unlikely that Rose Tremain could repeat the trick - especially with over two decades between writing the first book and the second.

I needn't have worried. 'Merivel: A Man of His Time' is every bit as good as 'Restoration'. It is set nearly 20 years after 'Restoration', in 1683-85, and England is going bust, poverty and unrest are threatening to overrun it, and the certainties of Charles II early reign are coming undone.

This is also an older, wiser Merivel, confronting his mortality and his love for his daughter, who is becoming ever more independent. Merivel is coming towards the end of his life, as are the book's other two main characters, Merivel's faithful manservant, Will, and his beloved monarch Charles II.

Merivel remains both deeply flawed and extremely likeable. To try and summarise this book would be counterproductive however, rest assured, if you liked 'Restoration' then you will feel the same way about this. It's funny, unexpected, elegiac, insightful, and beautifully written.

5/5

Helle says

The first book about Robert Merivel, *Restoration*, is one of 15 books which have made it to my favorites shelf here on GR. It is a kind of 'Bildungsroman', in 17th century England: one man's journey to find himself through a maze of debauchery, tragedy, the Great Fire of London and other calamitous events. This is the sequel to that story - written many years later.

The novel picks up Merivel's story some years later than when we last met him, in order for us to explore what has become of him, and without revealing too much, I'd say this is a kind of reversed Bildungsroman. He himself ponders the different endings to a man's life, and though he in many ways is still the King's Fool, he is also more thoughtful, worried and in some ways cuts a tragic figure.

For all his quiet ways and bouts of melancholy, Robert Merivel seems to be a veritable magnet for bizarre events, and as a literary creation I quite like him. I also enjoyed hearing about French King Louis's court and about Charles II of England, or at any rate Rose Tremain's rendition of them, as well as bits of London and of life in the 17th century. But it is first and foremost the personal story of Merivel - a man of his times, as the full title reads. It was an interesting read, if not as engrossing as *Restoration*.

Orsolya says

Robert Merivel. To Rose Tremain fans and those having read "*Restoration*"; this name evokes strong images. Merivel is back with all of his flaws, hilarity, and weaknesses aplomb in "*Merivel: A Man of his Time*".

"Merivel" instantly sparkles with the feel and imagery of "*Restoration*" and once again brings the imperfect but lovable Robert Merivel to life. However, "*Merivel*" is definitely a sequel which instantly plunges into the story and mentions highlights from "*Restoration*" without fully backtracking to explain them. Therefore, it is 100% recommended to read "*Restoration*" before diving into "*Merivel*" and having the plot fresh in one's mind in order to make sense of current events.

Tremain surprisingly (due to the fact that it has been almost 25 years since "*Restoration*") captures Merivel's voice and personality almost "like he never left". The characterization is familiar and is an old friend. On the contrary, Merivel's thought streams are weaker this time around and scattered almost like Tremain couldn't grasp how Merivel would think later in life. "*Merivel*" is a bit 'simpler' than "*Restoration*".

Despite this, Merivel's wit/humor plus his deeper philosophical thoughts manage to shine through and carry the story even when it feels there is no plot (in the beginning, for instance, which merely feels like a recap/re-introduction to Merivel). These recaps do answer questions from the ending of "*Restoration*", however.

Some immediate dissonance is exhibited by Tremain's use of capitalizing words in mid-sentence. Although it has been stated that this was done to keep with the writing style of times and therefore make Merivel's storytelling more realistic; I found it a bit distracting and would have preferred the absence of it.

After the "recap"-like beginning, "*Merivel*" gains momentum, excitement, and truly comes alive. Tremain's descriptions are lively, vivid, and believable; whisking the reader away while Merivel settles into his persona. The novel and plot becomes compelling and evolves into a page turner with ease and yet captivity.

“Merivel” is simple but amusing at the same time.

Furthermore, the character of Merivel becomes increasingly lovable and relatable as the novel progresses. He has blemishes to his person and makes errors but has “normal” thoughts all readers can relate to despite the time period. Merivel imposes depth and philosophy into the text while moving it forward with humor. Simply put: “Merivel” is real and accessible.

Entertainment aside, “Merivel” also possesses symbolism albeit not in an overly literary or metaphorical sense but in a more vague and swift way. Despite Tremain’s style of application, these are moving and effective.

I did find fault with the character of Louise, an amour of Merivel’s, whom at 45-years of age acted more like that of a mistress of 20 years her junior. Also frustrating was the obvious shock-value sexual act at the three-quarters mark which may offend some readers. However, these negatives are minor.

Tremain successfully interwove factual historical events concerning the death of King Charles II into the ending of “Merivel” and smoothly places Merivel fictitiously into these theatrics (although I personally didn’t enjoy the focus on Charles’s mistress Louise de Keroualle). At the same time, the ending is befuddled with too many storylines feeling like Tremain couldn’t decide which path to follow and picked a little of each causing some confusion, ill-ease, and a feeling of incomplete plots.

Overall, “Merivel” is a pleasurable and satisfying read which joyfully revisits the life of Merivel and Stuart England. Although not suggested as a stand-alone novel, fans of “Restoration” will be pleased.

Kiwiflora says

Aaah, just like meeting an old friend! Sir Robert Merivel: the most human of human beings you are ever likely to meet. Flawed in many ways like all of us, at times unlikeable, but ever committed to trying to do his best in life, trying to improve himself both emotionally and materially, open to others and other ideas, he could be a man of any time including our time.

Robert Merivel was first introduced to us in the novel 'Restoration', which I reviewed in December. Some say you don't need to have read 'Restoration' to enjoy this novel; I disagree. Sir Robert is a very complex fellow, who has an extraordinary time during the early years of King Charles II reign. In a nutshell the book covers his rise to a position of prominence in the court, and then his fall from grace, and personal restoration. I would not have enjoyed 'Merivel' so much if I had not known the background to the type of man he is now, some 15 years after 'Restoration' ended.

Sir Robert Merivel is now 57, again at a crossroads, as he tries to decide what to do with the rest of his life. His beloved daughter Margaret, is now a young woman wanting to become more independent and spread her wings. So Sir Robert, back in King Charles' good books, obtains a letter of introduction to the French court and heads off to Versailles. He does not manage to meet the King, but along the way, in his rakish fashion, does develop a relationship with a particularly beautiful and well-connected married lady who falls madly in love with him, plus acquires a bear.

Things take a darker turn when he returns to England - his daughter is seriously ill with typhoid, his ex lover is dying of cancer, the local rural population is becoming restless and unhappy with the excesses of the royal court, the bear also does not last the distance. Melancholy sets in and poor old Sir Robert wonders what it is

all for. After all late 50s would be considered old age in this period of history. The aging King takes a shine to the lovely Margaret and Robert frets and frets about her becoming yet another mistress to the King.

But never fear, love is still here. His old flame in France is committed to marrying him, which would solve many many problems, but, in true Robert fashion opens the door to other problems as he deals with a number of internal conflicts.

This novel does not have quite the same depth and scope as 'Restoration', but I enjoyed reading it so much more. As I said it was like meeting an old friend, and I felt genuine affection for this silly old fool. By the end everything is very neatly resolved with the reign of King Charles over and Sir Robert looking forward to a new life in Switzerland. Such a worth while sequel to 'Restoration'.

L.K. Jay says

I couldn't quite believe my eyes when I saw that there was a sequel to Restoration and so when I did, I downloaded it pronto. I remember reading Restoration many years ago and so just like Robert Merivel, my life has moved on as much as his had. We find the funny and flawed Merivel at his home Bidnold house with his beloved daughter Margaret.

This was a real page-turner for me. Seeing Merivel again was like revisiting an old friend. He was up to his tricks; getting into impossible situations, meeting strange people and romping his way through the last days of King Charles II. I liked the fact that Tremain made reference to the first novel, and that old characters such as Pearce was able to make an appearance. I was genuinely gripped and I needed to know what would happen at the end, and was satisfied by the ending.

I like the fact that Merivel is flawed, but ultimately, he appreciates the people who love him. But if Merivel is flawed, then some of the people he meets are more so. There are also some very funny moments, the badger tabards had me in fits. I liked that Tremain had a touch of the 17th style, such as capitalising the nouns, as well as the vernacular. A great novel and worth downloading, even if you haven't read Restoration.

Laureen says

I so love Rose Tremain's writing. Merivel, the character, is beautifully conjured. This novel is full of the same wit and merriment as his first Robert Merivel novel "Restoration", but also full of tragedy and cynical mirth at the condition of man.

I find that novels written in the first person are difficult to pull off. To keep one entertained, I find that a view from different perspectives provides more scope for the story. However, I have no trouble with Rose Tremain's writing. e.g. Merivel is traveling in a coach "I attempted to doze, but I was seated between the Reverend's lank bones and the Landowner's greasy rump, and could find no way to balance myself between these two disparate nubs of flesh, and so felt forced to hold myself upright, as though about to rise from my seat. And then what did the Man of God and the Man of Substance do but fall towards each other in their noisy sleep behind me, so cutting off absolutely my body's contact with the back seat."

The story is set in the time of Charles II of England and Merivel is sponsored by the King to be his confidant and to amuse him with conversation that lightens the King's woes. In return, the King provides Merivel with an estate to care for and a couple of aged servants whom Merivel depends on greatly. All the characters in

this novel are amusingly and cleverly drawn. Tremain's writing reminds me of Dickens but the descriptive passages are shorter and the events in the story proceed at a faster pace.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

This is the sequel to her Restoration. One could read Merivel: A Man of His Time without reading that one because there is plenty of back story in this second installment of the life of Sir Robert Merivel. Even with some of the former story frequent references in the latter story, I think it is better to consider the two one long novel, though the second takes place 17 years after the end of the first.

Again, Tremain lets her prose mimic the cadence of 17th Century English, without all of the trouble we modern folk might have with spelling. Still, she manages to slip in some of that capitalization. Some might find it annoying, but for me it is just part and parcel of what makes this good.

We took turns to play in different teams and whoever played in the King's team won, for that his agility had diminished little since I used to play Tennis with him, and his strokes were very strong and keen. But nobody seemed to mind who won or who lost. Our capering about with Racquets, chasing a Feathered Ball, brought to our hearts an extraordinary gladness, and though we were short of breath and thirsty, and I had to send to the kitchen for Ale and Lemonade, we did not want these games to end.

As for characterization, Merivel tells his own story and so we know him best. We also know his loyal servant Will Gates to a lesser extent.

I thought Tremain lost little in this and yet I have to admit it's almost but not quite as good. It is still 5 stars, but if there were a ladder of my 5 -star reads, this would be a few rungs lower.

Carey Combe says

Very good and sympathetic portrait of a kind but flawed man 'tired of life', but, for me, just a tad too depressing.

Scott says

Having devoured Restoration in one sitting and then forcing my Book Club to read it, I was thrilled to learn that Tremain had revisited the characters of King Charles II, Merivel, Will Gates and the badger tabards. Far from being a book of two halves like Restoration, Merivel is a return to the Sir Robert (or Sir Rabbit as I shall know always know him!!!) Merivel that we originally grew so endeared to and not the gloomier and redemptive soul which made Restoration slightly hard going in the second half. It is funnier than the first book, more shocking and lewd but the book is all the better for the excesses of the age and the contrast with the reversal of England and The King's fortunes. If Restoration was a reflection of the peaks and extravagances of the 1980's then surely Merival is a word of warning about the gloom of the current economic situation, The King is dead, long live the King

Scott says

4.75 STARS

Karan says

A placid and coasting follow-up to Tremain's very own masterful Restoration. While suffused with all the linguistic flourishes and character traits that held the reader in a vice in the book before, this one feels lesser, in the way all sequels usually and inadvertently do. That shocking beauty of the poetry in the artfully reconstructed syntax and the equally charming character idiosyncracies that make you go Bravo! while turning every page in the first book, skate over without impression despite these elements rigorously retained by the author. As a second time visitor to this universe, my interest veered away from the Aesthetics and into the book's Events, but other than Merivel's endearing but excessive sentimental indulgence, I found little else. Tremain's detailed and exacting construction of Merivel's thought-space from the first book was so complete, that one could second-guess the bent of his contemplation even before she has written him venturing onto it and being one step ahead of her was wearisome.

We meet him, our Reluctant Physician from the 17th century Britain two decades after we left him with a babe in his arms and the King gracing with his presence at Merivel's residence at Norfolk. His travails, in what turn out to be his final years, are suffused with a heightened self-awareness and interminable bouts of nostalgia, as he balances parenthood, an overseas dalliance and forever-remodelling terms of dotage from the King. His disarming cluelessness with accumulated years of experience in his first person monologue while soaked in emotionalism derives some humour from observing a going-senile butler, the state of the masses, his sexual adventures, notes from his travels abroad to the French court and as a cuckold to a baron's daughter in Switzerland. There are some setpieces that challenge and/or bring forth his credentials as the physician, but none have the soul-pulping transformative drama of his stay at the Bedlam from the first book. It is certainly a worthy follow-up, but also a very cautious one, never quite gathering a life of its own, and in the process, I found it a reading exercise far more disposable than Restoration.

Emily says

'For I understood then that no life begins only when it begins, but it had many additional inceptions, and each of these determine the course of what is to come.'

For many, a novel is supposed to rise to a peak, then slowly fall into a resolution; a safe way to write. I feel that this novel doesn't do this, but instead resembles that of a 'sine curve', with many peaks and many resolutions as we travel through Sir Robert Merivel's story. And, I guess the above quote proves so us that this would be a long and winding journey full of scandal and love, sorrow and greed. That many events would happen throughout the book, events that would make us weep, or smile or stay up until the early hours of the morning just to read the next few pages. This book traveled everywhere with me during my time reading it, I just could not put it down.

Rose Tremain writes elegantly, capturing the male persona of Robert Merivel whilst taking the reader back to the Stuart times. Here, we learn about the secrets of the aristocracy and about the poverty-stricken

peasants, which encompass the 'historical novel' genre in a way like no other.

The thing that hit me most about this beautiful text was the way in which Tremain utilises animal and natural imagery, especially that of birds. Juxtaposing with the beast-like figure of Merivel, this adds an interesting twist to the story.

I would recommend this book to any history-fanatic, or indeed to anyone who is looking to read out of their comfort zone. Aesthetically, the novel is beautiful and it is a pleasure to have this piece of creative artwork on my shelf.

Ellie says

This was my first experience of the work of Rosé Tremain, which means that, though this book revisits characters first introduced in 1989 in *Restoration*, it is the first time I have become acquainted with Merivel. I can categorically say that this had no impact at all on my enjoyment of this sequel, which is more than capable of standing up for itself.

When I began to read Merivel, I wondered if I would be able to get into it; the style, with its mimicking of 16th century writing, felt alien, and it took me a short while to feel comfortable with it. However, I realised after a while that I was not even noticing the style, but rather just enjoying the story.

And what of the story? We meet Merivel, physician and courtier to King Charles II, in his late 50s, in a melancholy mood, reflecting on his follies and searching for meaning to his life. Merivel himself is an interesting mix of a character, summed up best as a man with many flaws, but aware of everyone of them. He has the typical trappings of the landed gentry, but also has moments of great compassion, and almost embarrassment, at the privileges he enjoys, sometimes at the expense of others.

Merivel has a knack of getting himself into situations, most of which are entertaining to read about, but are unlikely to happen. Where this book excels, in my opinion, is the emotions Merivel experiences, as he approaches later life and looks back over his achievements. These are emotions that anyone can relate to, and are a key reason why this is such a readable book.

Both entertaining and thought-provoking, this is a book I thoroughly recommend.

Siria says

I didn't know this was a sequel when I picked it up, and haven't read the first installment about the life of Sir Robert Merivel, but Tremain's writing was accessible enough that that wasn't an obstacle. This is an amiably picaresque novel set in the twilight of Charles II's reign, vividly written and with characters that are well-drawn. Tremain does a good job at conjuring up a main character who is intelligent and flawed, someone whose reflections have the power to move the reader but not to render them insensible to his role in creating his own problems. There were a couple of scenes which seemed a bit clunky and included more for shock value than anything else—the gangbang in the French coach comes to mind—but overall *Merivel's* melancholy gaiety is engaging.

Lewis Nene says

This is a cracking read. I much prefer this work to much of Tremain's recent writing.

If you're expecting to simply pick up where 'Restoration' leaves off you'll be disappointed but if you're interested in the game Tremain is playing with ageing - both with herself and with her main character - you're in for a treat.

The beauty of this book is that you can see how Tremain's prose style had matured to the point where it's more measured and confident. In some ways this is true of Merivel in that he has reached a balance in his life where he knows who he is and has the strength to avoid self delusion.

Merivel's self awareness means that we're presented with a rounded character who feels his limitations keenly but is nevertheless rarely crippled by his own sense of inadequacy. Whilst some readers may be less than charmed by a man who lives a parasitical life others will no doubt put that to one side and be charmed by the way in which Tremain is looking at what it means to be a man (or woman).

Brian says

Rose Tremain's 1989 novel, Restoration, was such a feast for the reader, so funny, so well-researched, so humane and so moving, that I doubted whether she could possibly succeed with a sequel, especially more than twenty years later. In fact, she pulls it off wonderfully.

Though still liberally peppered with sex and low comedy, this is a more sombre tale. Merivel, King Charles and the other characters who careered through the pages of the first book, are fifteen years older. Old age and sickness are beginning to take their toll. The whole mood of the country has changed and disillusion with the monarch has set in.

Merivel now bears the responsibility for the welfare of his teenage daughter, Margaret. Despite this, he is still a man inclined to pleasure, flawed but likeable, weak but disarmingly honest. It is this weakness that is the wellspring of the plot. When his daughter is given a place at court and Merivel finds himself alone in his big house, he decides to set off for Versailles in search of a purpose and a position with Louis XIV. Instead he becomes enamoured of a captive bear and involved with the wife of a member of the Swiss Guard.

What makes Tremain a really first-class writer is the depth of her characterisation and the honesty of her writing. She is not afraid to tackle any subject. She goes wherever human beings go. There is a remarkable scene in a stagecoach in which a woman exposes herself to a group of male passengers that is simultaneously horrifying and hilarious. I can't imagine anyone else writing it with such ease and such obvious relish.

I enjoyed this book enormously. It made me feel glad to be alive.

Bettie? says

BABT

blurb - Rose Tremain returns triumphantly to one of her best loved characters, in the long awaited sequel to her Booker short-listed best-selling novel, Restoration, published in 1989. Seventeen years after the events related in Restoration, Merivel, a man of wit, wisdom and not a little passion, is facing a crisis. Life on his

Norfolk estate and as a physician, a father and sometimes a fool to his adored King Charles II, is no longer enough. Not only are he, and his loyal servant Will, ageing, but his beloved daughter Margaret is seventeen and will soon fly the nest. Even the King is failing. How can he reinvigorate his life?

As Merivel sets out in search of Wonders, he finds adventure and surprise. In a dazzling journey by way of the glittering court at Versailles, the purchase of a bear and a love affair in Switzerland, and with encounters with old lovers and new, Rose Tremain captures a man who knows himself and his follies and foibles only too well. A delight equally to those who remember the young Merivel and to new listeners, Rose Tremain's novel promises to be a memorable three week Book at Bedtime.

The reader is the stage and screen actor Nicholas Woodeson, currently starring in Chariots of Fire at the Gielgud Theatre and seen recently in Borgen. The abridger was Sally Marmion and the producer was Di Speirs.

#1/15 - Love, lust, approaching age and an empty nest all preoccupy Merivel, physician, father and part-time fool to King Charles II, in Rose Tremain's much-awaited sequel to Restoration.

#2/15 - Merivel finds adventure and surprise as he sets out on a dazzling journey to the glittering court at Versailles by way of the court of Charles II.

#3/15 - Merivel arrives at Versailles but gaining an audience with Louis, or even finding a bed, proves more difficult than anticipated.

Too much content is given over to re-capping events within Restoration which I find annoying.

#4/15 - The adventures of the physician, father and part-time fool. Merivel accepts a lift in Louise de Flamanville's coach but finds more in Paris than he bargained for.

#5 - Love, lust, approaching age and an empty nest all preoccupy Merivel, physician, father and part-time fool to King Charles II. Merivel rescues a bear and returns to Bidnold.

A third of the way through and the score on the door is 1* however I will stick at it for a few more episodes.

#6 After his sojourn in France, Merivel has returned to Bidnold to find his beloved Margaret in the grip of the deadly typhus. But a surprise visitor brings solace and perhaps hope.

#7 With Margaret out of danger, Robert turns his attention to his one-time lover.

#8 Merivel operates to save Lady Bathurst's life and the King makes an offer.

#9 With the loss of Margaret to Court, Sir Robert must find new purpose.

4* Restoration
CR Merivel

4* Trespass
3* Collected short stories

Samantha says

I was really sad when I finished this book. Why? Because it's the last Merival book and he is such an entertaining and engaging character. A sequel to the wonderful "Restoration", we find Merival not full of mirth but world weary and worrying about everything from his servants to the King's friendship with his daughter as he heads into old age. The vivid descriptions of 17th century life are wonderful especially the scenes set in Versailles. The prose is fluid, and very very readable. Read this even if you haven't read "Restoration" as it's a book that stands out on it's own. Wonderful stuff as always from one of my favourite writers.

Laura says

Book at Bedtime

From BBC Radio 4:

Rose Tremain returns triumphantly to one of her best loved characters, in the long awaited sequel to her Booker short-listed best-selling novel, Restoration, published in 1989.

Certainly the printed version of this books is much better than this dramatization.
