

Faculty of Arts
Charles University
Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

-Mr. Tomáš Veselý
-"We Are All Metamoderns: An Introduction To Metamodernism"
-MA thesis
-Opponent's Report

Brief summary of subject: The thesis explores the cultural phenomenon of metamodernism, and in so doing argues that it stands as an exemplary paradigm for today insofar as it grows out of so-called postmodernism. For instance, we read that "whereas postmodernism as a stage of development emerged from the resentment of modernity, and modernism by extension emerged from the rejection of its cultural antecedents, metamodernism emerges from the synthesis of the various stages, although it does mock postmodernism for its inner contradictions quite a bit" (10). Moreover: "this thesis will not focus specifically on explaining the decline of postmodernism, but will employ the postmodern paradigm for the contextualisation of the emergence and proliferation of metamodernism" (11). Also on the same page we read that, "Metamodernism offers what postmodernism never could: hope. The postmodern offerings of pastiche and collage, of melancholy and apathy mixed with cynicism have gotten stale. Metamodernism, on the contrary, consciously strives to offer a resolution, albeit with an ironic undercurrent. This work will thus offer the perspective of actor-network theory as a viable metamodern framework as opposed to postmodern deconstructions." Later on we read this qualification to be sure: "In short, I have come to the conclusion that it is not postmodernism per se that is the object of critique in this work, but the radical, nihilistic version of it, the postmodern kitsch that serves not to elucidate, but to confuse and break down. It is nothing but reawakened sophism" (52). These serve as an apt summation for the subject.

Methodology and structure: The 89 pp. thesis contains an Introduction, three principal chapters, a Conclusion, a Bibliography, and an Abstract/Abstrakt with Keywords. It engages various tenets of modernism, postmodernism and metamodernism and in so doing offers larger theoretical perspectives in negotiating these respective positions.

Achievements: The thesis underscores some crucial matters, such as this: "Metamodernism, in short, oscillates between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony. The postmodern stance of detachment is no longer viable, but neither is the modernist over-commitment. Where postmodern irony begets apathy, metamodern irony begets desire" (8); "metamodernism seeks a return to depth models as well as to historicity and affect, which postmodernism had previously dismissed" (9); "Instead of clinging to the modernist models of the past (which would only reduce it to rebranded modernism), metamodernism is rather closer to the critical and experimental spirit of modernity" (21). The candidate also claims that: "In order to fill the critical void left by the exhaustion of the postmodern project, David Foster Wallace began to push for New Sincerity" (30). There is also discussion of hypermodernism as a form of

neoliberalism or hypercapitalism. It utilizes writings by various authors including but not limited to Jason A. Josephson-Storm's text *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory* (2021), Bruno Latour, Žižek, Baudrillard, Habermas, Jameson, Sloterdijk, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, D.F. Wallace, Linda Hutcheon, Erik S. Roraback, and Mark Fisher.

Shortcomings: The language contains some glitches, which I explain in the next section under, "Formal features". Also there are some moments of indirection and unclarity in the investigations, which derives at least in part from the highly exploratory nature of the text.

Formal features (e.g., language & style, referencing, bibliography, formatting, abstracts): The language is good though there are some lapses: e.g. on rare occasion an extra space might occur between two words e.g. p. 25 line 2; also I believe that the candidate meant not "Barth" but "Barthes" on p. 41 (in reference to a French post-structuralist); on p. 71 "One reminded of" should be "One is reminded of", and "Happinness" should be "Happiness" (78). Other formal features are good.

Questions: We read "Hanzi Freinacht, the "mascot" of the Nordic school of metamodernism, summed up metamodernism thusly:

[Metamodernism] accepts progress, hierarchy, sincerity, spirituality, development, grand narratives, party politics, both-and thinking and much else. It puts forward dreams and makes suggestions. And it is still being born.[fn.33] (20)

Can you clarify here what you mean by hierarchy? Also we read this rich quote: "One [is] reminded of Žižek's notion of aborted modernity: "the New we are dealing with is not primarily the future New, but the New of the past itself, of the thwarted, blocked, or betrayed possibilities ("alternate realities") which have disappeared in the actualization of the past" [fn. 211] (71). Second question: can the candidate clarify how this relates to the take on our present history and metamodernism? Finally, we read this long passage at the end of the thesis:

I dare to declare that our research should strive towards the exploration of Happiness, or as the Greeks called it, eudaemonia. This is not a novel thought and the one philosopher perhaps best known for his scholarly focus on happiness is Baruch Spinoza. E.S. Roraback investigated this Spinozian notion of Happiness in the context of the what the author refers to as the 'power of the impossible': "powerful lives and communities of meaning and value informed by the principles of justice, freedom and democratic equality." [fn. 226] Conceptually, this idea is in fact similar to what Storm calls "Revolutionary Happiness" [sp. Happiness] in the context of metamodernism. [fn. 227] Despite different labels, these authors offer a way forward, a genesis for human flourishing through the research of (not exclusively) the Humanities and that is why metamodernism matters today and will continue to matter tomorrow. Instead of deconstruction (Abbau), metamodernism promotes reconstruction (Wiederaufbau). In the end Irony has become a tool of communication: we rely on it to simultaneously escape the gravity of situations while also to establish ironic intimacy among ourselves.

It is this kind [79] of irony that is at the forefront of metamodern thinking. To conclude with Freinacht: “Irony brings trust. And trust crowns a winner. [fn. 228] (78–79).

Third question: does the candidate consider this “Revolutionary Happiness” project as a viable one? If so why, or if not why not?

Conclusion: I recommend the thesis for defense and propose a preliminary grade of 1.

Seattle, 18 i 24
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