

Statement prepared by the supervisor of Mgr. Anna Krýsová
relating to her studies and dissertation entitled
“Beyond Postmodernism: Oscillation, Reparation and Affect in Contemporary
Dutch Novels”
submitted in 2023 at the Institute of Germanic Studies (Ústav germánských studií)

I. Overall evaluation of PhD studies

Years ago, I noticed the extraordinary qualities of Anna Krýsová as I was getting to know her during her bachelor and master studies of Dutch Language and Literature and English Language and Literature. She always inclined to the literary part of her studies, but since I knew she focused in both her bachelor and master thesis on English Romantic Literature she quite surprised me in 2017 with her request to write her dissertation on Dutch literature. She came up with an original topic of her own, something that would be typical for this independent PhD-candidate.

She spent the first years of her PhD-trajectory primarily in Prague fulfilling the obligatory requirements, such as exams in philosophy, literary theory, and history of Dutch literature. She always gave a convincing performance, especially at the so-called state doctoral exam when she persuaded the commission without difficulty that she does not have only a thorough knowledge of literary theory, but that she is also a great expert on the contemporary development of literary, philosophical, and cultural theories.

Apart from that, she started to network and exchange her thoughts with colleagues at international conferences (Czech Republic, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia...), providing lectures and posters. Her papers were published in foreign peer-reviewed journals, but she also wrote some popular articles on Dutch culture and literature for the Czech press. She translated her first fiction book into Czech and joined many of the department's activities by co-organizing them, such as *Pra-Do-Ha* 2018 and *Cross-Over* 2021. In 2019 she was awarded a Charles University grant (GAUK), which would enable her to work more intensively on her dissertation topic and which would be crowned with a publication.

From the very beginning she was engaged in academic teaching, at first under my supervision, and after my retreat in connection with maternity and parental leave, she became an independent and fully respected tutor of Dutch literature. And as I found

out later, she was a strict, but fair teacher, and was able to pass on lots of thoughts on modern and postmodern Dutch literature and the contemporary development of literary theory.

She did not spend her research time only in Prague. Soon it became apparent she would have to go to the Netherlands regularly. She started networking with the specialists at Leiden University. The regular contacts, physical or virtual, led to the forming and signing of the first cotutelle PhD-contract within Dutch Studies in cooperation of Leiden and Prague. Anna was lucky enough to attract the attention and later the enormous support of two co-supervisors, dr. Esther Op de Beek and prof. Frans Willem Korsten, on whose expertise she could rely while writing her book. And as I know, there were at different moments also other specialists in Dutch literature who helped her on her way to completing the dissertation. A great part of this work took place while I was on parental leave, so the merit of the Dutch co-supervisors and other experts must be underscored.

II. Overall evaluation of the dissertation

When Anna Krýsová first consulted me with the germinating topic, I knew it would be a tough proposition. Dealing with a topic that was literally up-to-date, still developing, changing and hard to define and restrict in terms of time, was something I had experienced myself when writing my dissertation. Anna's first thoughts revolved around the period that replaced, or simply came after, postmodernism, the period we live in ourselves: post-postmodernism, late postmodernism, metamodernism – those were some of the designations she found in the first sources she had explored. Afterwards, she would leave the problem of characterizing a new period, as she focused more on the continuities between literary periods.

In the following months and years, the topic would eventually crystallise into: “Beyond Postmodernism: Oscillation, Reparation and Affect in Contemporary Dutch Novels”, with the main research question: “How can the reading practice of scholars do justice to the shift towards affective concern in contemporary Dutch literature without repeating the tendency to declare this to be a new period?”.

In terms of time, Anna Krýsová limits her research to the last fifteen years and in terms of theoretical starting points, she proceeds from three up-to-date theoretical debates, namely on (1) the problem of periodization, (2) critique and readerly position, and (3) the affective turn in the humanities. These three debates also form three main chapters of the dissertation. In each chapter, a Dutch novel from the period in question is examined: *Zonder noorden komt niemand thuis* (2009) by Nelleke Noordervliet, *Klont* (2017) by Maxim Februari, and *Wij zijn licht* (2020) by Gerda Blees, respectively. Apart from these problematized debates, there are some other conceptions constantly present throughout the analyses, especially the conception of

oscillation, which is considered one of the few symptomatic signs of the current period after postmodernism; and to some extent also reparation, being understood and practically used as reparative reading (Sedgwick) in order to involve the reader affectively in their role.

Throughout the preparation of the project and the writing process itself, Anna spent a lot of time deliberating about the corpus of fiction works to be analysed. She read dozens of novels, while the book market constantly produced new ones. Some of the other books she found also relevant and useful, but which were eventually left out, are mentioned in the dissertation and may be certainly used by students for minor analyses. Those three novels, which were finally chosen, served as material upon which the above-mentioned approaches were illustrated and her slowly emerging reading method was tested. In her conclusion she argues that the gap between the traditional critique and the readerly attitude can be consolidated by reparative reading, engaging the reader's affect while reading about the characters' affects.

III. Comments relating to the dissertation

It would be interesting to hear whether Anna thinks that the method she developed can be employed universally to any fiction book written in the period in question, or whether its application is limited only to certain genres and "high-brow" literature. Is popular fiction subject to the same development? Can you discern the same oscillation between the modern and the postmodern in it, and the same inclination to affect? And if not, how can you draw a boundary between the "relevant" and "irrelevant" kind of fiction?

IV. Conclusion

With her dissertation, Anna Krýsová brings a considerable contribution to a number of up-to-date debates, going on not only in the domain of Dutch literary studies. Her research is therefore remarkable for a potential international reach, and its results can be, probably, transferred to other literatures beyond the Low Countries.

In conclusion, it must be remembered that life was not a bed of roses in the period Anna worked on her dissertation. There are some difficulties in every PhD-project, but a considerable part of Anna's most fruitful research period overlapped with the Covid measures and the limitations related to them. Luckily, none of these have left a mark on the quality of Anna's scientific performance. Paradoxically, it was in this strange and difficult period that the first cotutelle PhD-contract between Dutch Studies in Prague and Leiden took form. I am honoured I could have taken part in it,

as Anna Krýsová proved she is a literary thinker and researcher of international stature.

I provisionally classify the submitted dissertation as **passed**.

25 September 2023

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Mgr. Lucie Komrzý Sedláčková, Ph.D.