



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Beyond postmodernism: oscillation, reparation and affect in contemporary Dutch novels

Krýsová, A.L.C.

Citation

Krýsová, A. L. C. (2023, October 12). *Beyond postmodernism: oscillation, reparation and affect in contemporary Dutch novels*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3643746>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3643746>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

**Beyond Postmodernism:
Oscillation, Reparation and Affect in Contemporary Dutch Novels**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir.drs. H. Bijl
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 12 oktober 2023
klokke 10:00 uur

door

Anna Krýsová
geboren te Havlíčkův Brod
in 1992

Promotor: Prof. dr. Frans-Willem Korsten
Co-promotor: Dr. Esther Op de Beek

Promotiecommissie:
Prof. Dr. Maria Boletsi
Prof. Dr. Yves T'Sjoen
Dr. Hans Demeyer
Dr. Madeleine Kasten

Charles University

Faculty of Arts

Ústav germánských studií

Germánské literatury

Dissertation

Mgr. Anna Krýsová

Současný nizozemský román po postmodernismu: oscilace, reparace a afekt

**Beyond Postmodernism: Oscillation, Reparation and Affect in
Contemporary Dutch Novels**

Dissertation supervisor Mgr. Lucie Komrzý Sedláčková, PhD.

2023

Examination committee:

Prof. Dr. Yra van Dijk

Prof. Dr. Yves T'Sjoen

Dr. Ellen Krol

Dr. Hans Demeyer

The research and writing of this dissertation has been financially supported by:

- Charles University Grant Agency, grant no. 88120, called ‘Beyond postmodernism: oscillation and emancipation in contemporary Dutch novels’, affiliated with Faculty of Arts, Charles University
- Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society, grant for completion of dissertation for external PhDs (September - November 2022)
- Dutch Language Union, grant for purchase and acquisition of primary and secondary literature in 2021 and a grant for a research stay at Leiden University in June - August 2019.

„Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci napsal/a samostatně s využitím pouze uvedených a řádně citovaných pramenů a literatury a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.“

V Haagu 20. 12. 2022

I hereby declare that I have written this dissertation independently, using only the mentioned and duly cited sources and literature, and that the work has not been used in another university study programme or to obtain the same or another academic title.

In The Hague on 20 December 2022

Abstrakt v češtině

Tato disertační práce se vypořádává s estetickým posunem k afektu a s dědictvím modernismu a postmodernismu v současných nizozemských románech. Klade si tuto výzkumnou otázku: Jak může praxe akademické interpretace učinit zadost posunu k afektivním otázkám v současných nizozemských románech, aniž by opakovala tendenci považovat tento posun za nové období? Tato hlavní otázka shrnuje podotázky vznesené ve třech akademických debatách o současné nizozemské literatuře v posledních 15 letech. Disertace je strukturována teoretickými příspěvky k těmto třem debatám vedeným v odborné literatuře. Teoretické obrysy příspěvků, které jsou rozpracovány v kapitole 1 jsou pak ilustrovány a testovány analýzou tří současných nizozemských románů.

První debata si klade otázky okolo periodizace: (1) Je postmodernismus za námi? Pokud ano, jak se to projevuje v literární produkci? Za touto otázkou se skrývá metodologický problém: je literárně-historiografický přístup, tradičně vedený představou ohraničených a po sobě následujících období metodologicky zodpovědným přístupem k současné literatuře? Moje analýza románu *Zonder noorden komt niemand thuis* od Nelleke Noordervliet ukazuje, že současné romány by měly být čteny spíše pomocí důrazu na kontinuitu s předchozími obdobími mezi nimiž oscilují signály přítomné v textu románu než pomocí důrazu na inovativní prvky, jakým je afektivní dominanta.

Druhá debata se soustřeďuje na otázku silných a slabých stránek kritiky jakožto dominantní interpretační praxe, skrze kterou přistupujeme k současným románům. (2) Potřebujeme jinou metodologii, interpretační praxi nebo výzkumnou agendu pro studium literatury a pokud ano, jak by měla vypadat? Kapitola 2 pomocí metodologie aktualizace (foregrounding) dochází k závěru, že důraz na kontinuitu s předešlými obdobími je na základě analýzy textu charakteristický pro současné nizozemské romány. V kapitole 3 si však musíme položit následující otázku: kdo způsobuje aktualizaci, text sám, nebo jeho čtenář? Z debaty o interpretační praxi vhodné pro současné romány vyplývá, že je třeba teoreticky vymezit pojem pozice čtenáře (vždy zahrnující také afektivní složku), což v odborné literatuře nenajdeme. V kapitole 3 poukazují v románu *Klont* od Maxima Februariho na rozdíly ve výsledcích interpretace na základě oscilace mezi paranoidním a reparativním čtením jakožto dvěma čtenářskými pozicemi.

Protože afekt je důležitou součástí pozice čtenáře, věnuji se ve třetí debatě definici afektu: (3) Jaké definice afektu vyprodukoval obrat k afektu v humanitních vědách? Vymezují své použití pojmu afekt v návaznosti na různé definice v odborné literatuře a takto vymezený pojem pak používám k vymezení svého použití afektu a reparativního čtení pro návrh nástroje, který pomáhá konsolidovat proces interpretace současných románů do akademické čtenářské praxe. Instrumentem, kterým interpretuji třetí nizozemský román, *Wij zijn licht* od Gerdy Blees, je relační rámec (relational frame). Důraz na oscilaci však zůstává konstantou v mém projektu, protože ve čtvrté kapitole kontrastuji rozdíly mezi interpretací pomocí relačního rámce s výsledky interpretace skrze modernistický a postmodernistický rámec. Vytvořením relačního rámce, který zahrnuje vhledy z posunu literárních věd směrem k afektu a ze třech odborných debat, ilustruji navrženou čtenářskou praxi praktickým a přenositelným způsobem a zároveň odpovídám na výzkumnou otázku této disertace.

Abstract in English

This dissertation deals with the shift toward affect and the legacy of modernism and postmodernism in contemporary Dutch novels. Its main concern is: How can the reading practice of scholars do justice to the shift towards affective concerns in contemporary Dutch literature without repeating the tendency to declare this to be a new period? This research question sums up issues raised by three scholarly debates led around contemporary Dutch literature in the last 15 years. The dissertation is structured around my contribution to these three sub-questions raised by secondary literature. The theoretical outlines of this contribution sketched in Chapter 1 are illustrated and tested out by an analysis of three contemporary Dutch novels.

The first debate poses the question of periodization: (1) Is postmodernism over, and if it is, how is this visible in literary production? Hidden behind the periodizing debate is a methodological problem: is the literary historiographical approach, traditionally inspired by the idea of bounded and successive periods a methodologically sound way to approach contemporary literature? Analysing *Zonder noorden komt niemand thuis* by Nelleke Noordervliet shows clearly that contemporary novels should be read rather through an emphasis on the continuity with previous periods between which the textual signals of the novel oscillate than through an emphasis on the innovative element, such as the affective dominant.

The second debate centres around the question of the strengths and weaknesses of critique as the dominant reading practice by means of which contemporary novels are approached. (2) Do we need a different methodology, reading practice or research agenda in literary studies and if so, what would it look like? Chapter 2 concludes that the emphasis on continuity is more characteristic of contemporary novels by using foregrounding as a methodology. In chapter 3, the following question presents itself: who is doing the foregrounding, the text or the reader? Based on the debate about the reading practice suitable for contemporary novels, I conclude that the readerly position needs to be theorized, including the affective component, which it necessarily always includes, and which has remained unmapped so far. I point out the differences in interpretation that the analysis results in when the readerly position oscillates between paranoid and reparative reading in chapter 3, discussing *Klont* by Maxim Februari.

Because affect is an important component of the readerly position, I turn to the question of defining affect in the third debate: (3) What conceptions of affect has the affective turn in the humanities produced? I place my conception of affect in relation to the existing schools of thought. This conception is then used to define the role of affect and reparative reading in the relational frame. This is an instrument that I have designed and that consolidates the process of interpretation of contemporary novels presented in the previous two chapters into a reading practice. I demonstrate the interpretation according to the relational frame on the third Dutch contemporary novel, *Wij zijn licht* by Gerda Blees. The emphasis on oscillation is however constant throughout this project because I contrast the differences between the interpretation from the relational frame with interpretive results gained by reading through the modernist and postmodernist frame. The creation of the relational frame serves two purposes and is an answer to my research question. Firstly, it incorporates insights from the shift towards affect and the three scholarly debates. Secondly it illustrates my reading practice in a practical and transferable way.

Klíčová slova v češtině

Postmodernismus, modernismus, afekt, afektivní dominanta, oscilace, metamodernismus, současné nizozemské romány, reparativní čtení, paranoidní čtení

Key words in English

postmodernism, modernism, affect, the affective dominant, oscillation, metamodernism, contemporary Dutch novels, reparative reading, paranoid reading

Acknowledgements

With thankfulness, I realize that I have never been completely alone in the writing of the dissertation. Scientific research is a collaborative activity and my acknowledgements reflect that. There have been many people who have surrounded me, helped me, cheered me on and supported me and I would like to name some of them and the ways in which they have done that.

To my sister Eliška, Martina and Martin, three people active in completely different areas of academia; thank you for the honest conversations about the challenges of academic life and about the attitude that a researcher should have.

To Martina and Irena, fellow *neerlandica*'s at Charles University and friends; thank you for the place at your tables, the times that I could hang out in your flats and the hours that we spent working while looking forward to delicious vegetarian food. Apart from these material things, thank you for believing in me and not getting tired of repeating it.

To Yra van Dijk who made me seriously consider researching contemporary Dutch literature; thank you for seeing something in me and being generous with your time and advice even when there was little or no institutional backing.

To Esther and Frans Willem, my supervisors in Leiden; thank you for believing in me, your friendliness, openness, thoroughness, good advice, firm hand and the time you took out for my project.

To Lucie, my supervisor in Prague; thank you for guiding my first steps in the academic world and giving me my first opportunity to teach.

To Melchior, thank your willingness to listen to my half-formed thoughts and doing your best to understand them, for the countless avenues you suggested that my research could explore, for being supportive and patient when I was stuck and feeling hopeless. May the love for books and for each other be a constant in the years to come.

Table of contents

Abstrakt v češtině	5
Abstract in English	6
Klíčová slova v češtině	7
Key words in English	7
Acknowledgements	8
Introduction	11
0.1 The central methodological instruments	13
0.2 The connections between three theoretical debates and three analyses	14
0.3 Choice of analysed novels	16
0.4 Relevance of the research	18
1. Chapter 1 Three theoretical debates	19
1.1 Debate One: The end of postmodernism and the question of periodization	19
1.1.1 Contextualization and critique of oscillation as a concept	24
1.1.2 Contextualization and critique of dominant as a concept	25
1.2 Debate 2 Reading debate	28
1.2.1 Temporal and disciplinary contextualization of Sedgwick's thought	31
1.2.2 Theorization of readerly attitude and its shift in obituaries of postmodernism	34
1.3 Debate 3 The affective turn debate	38
1.3.1 Categorization of literary approaches to affect	41
2. Chapter 2 Oscillation foregrounded: textual movement between innovation and continuity in <i>Zonder noorden komt niemand thuis</i>	45
2.1 Introduction	45
2.1.1 Methodological sketch: oscillation and foregrounding	50
2.2 Interconnected plotlines: oscillating between epistemological, ontological and affective questions	52
2.3 Representation of consciousness: oscillating between affect and rationality	58
2.3.1 Affect as a consequence of the impasse of cognition	59
2.3.2 Cognitive processing of affect in language	61
2.4 Motif, intertextuality: oscillating between various constructions of identity	65
2.4.1 First encounter with a doe	66
2.4.2 Second encounter with a doe	70
2.5 Conclusion	76
3. Chapter 3 Putting affect back into the affective dominant: oscillation between paranoid and reparative readerly position in <i>Klont</i>	80

<u>3.1 Introduction</u>	80
<u>3.1.1 Who is the ultimate narrator?</u>	82
<u>3.1.2 Theorizing available readerly positions</u>	87
<u>3.2 Paranoid reading</u>	91
<u>3.2.1 Paranoid reading: induced by the text</u>	92
<u>3.2.2 Paranoid reading: produced by the reader</u>	96
<u>3.2.3 Paranoia as a regime of knowledge production</u>	98
<u>3.2.4 Ineffectiveness of public intellectuals assuming paranoid position in 21st century</u>	104
<u>3.3 Reparative reading</u>	107
<u>3.3.1 Empathy and reparation required: depression and suicidal ideation</u>	110
<u>3.3.2. Empathy and reparation required: family and fatherhood</u>	114
<u>3.4 Conclusion</u>	121
<u>4. Chapter 4 Oscillating interpretations: <i>Wij zijn licht</i> and the relational frame</u>	127
<u>4.1 Introduction</u>	127
<u>4.1.1 Narratological analysis of kaleidoscopic perception</u>	130
<u>4.1.2 The concept of transhistorical frame</u>	136
<u>4.2 Interpretation of kaleidoscopic perception through the modernist frame</u>	139
<u>4.3 Interpretation of the kaleidoscopic perception through the postmodernist frame</u>	143
<u>4.4 Interpretation of the kaleidoscopic perception from the relational frame</u>	151
<u>4.4.1 Interpretation according to the relational frame with regard to commitment of literature</u>	165
<u>4.5 Conclusion</u>	173
<u>5. Conclusion</u>	177
<u>6. Bibliography</u>	181
<u>7. Author's curriculum vitae</u>	187