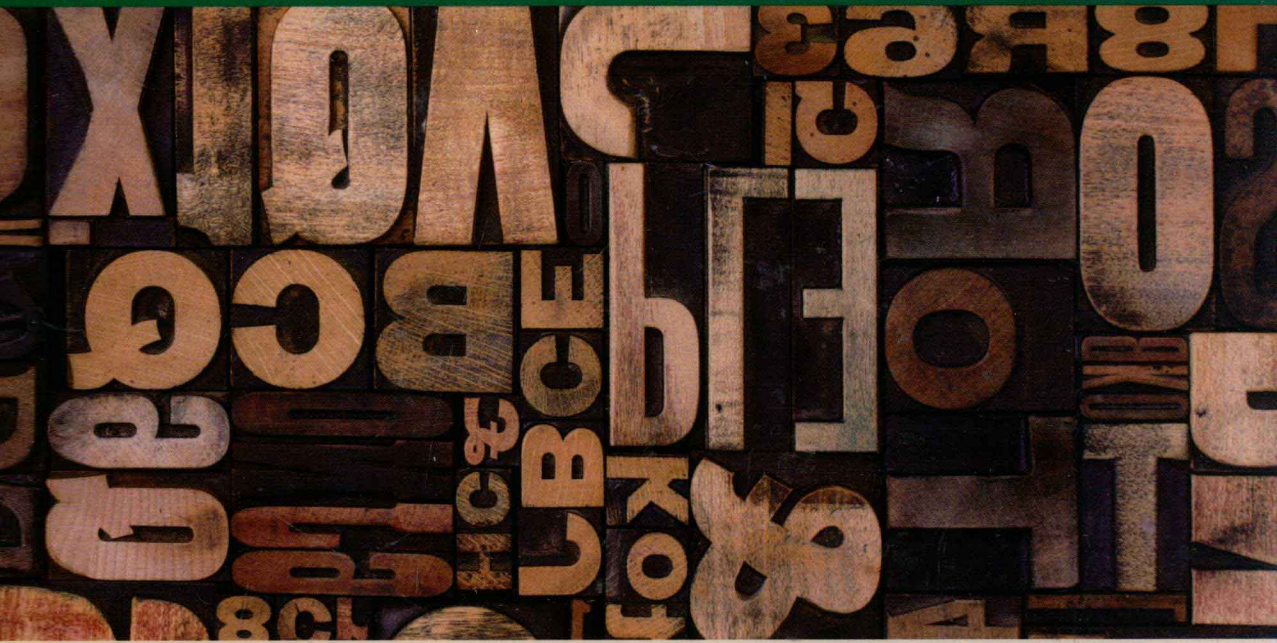


THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
THE NOVEL

Lo–Z

VOLUME II



General Editor

Peter Melville Logan

Associate Editors

Olakunle George, Susan Hegeman, and Efraín Kristal



WILEY-BLACKWELL

The Encyclopedia of the Novel

Edited by
Peter Melville Logan

Associate Editors:
Olakunle George, Susan Hegeman,
and Efraín Kristal

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Low Countries (Europe)

JAAP GOEDEGEBUURE

The modern novel in the Netherlands dates to the end of the eighteenth century. The examples of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–48) inspired Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken, two female authors who lived and worked together for more than twenty-five years, to write one EPISTOLARY novel after the other. The first of these, *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (1782, *History of Miss Sara Burgerhart*), marked their greatest success and is still considered as the first PSYCHOLOGICAL novel in the Netherlands. We follow the young heroine, an orphan who is given the chance to grow up more or less independently, on her path to knowledge and virtue, taking risks by getting acquainted with a man who appears to be an unscrupulous seducer, quarrelling about religion and morals with bigoted people, but, in the end, being happily married to a righteous husband. It is clear that the authors intended to give a positive example to the young women among their readers, but their novel is still enjoyable because of its wit and its variety of characters, who are portrayed through their letters.

Whereas Wolff and Deken represent the voice of reason, Rhijnvis Feith is under the spell of sentimentalism, the other extreme of the culture of Enlightenment. His novel *Julia* (1783), whose title reminds us of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, is a lachrymose tale full of moonlight and churchyards. Its innovative qualities have, as is the case in contemporary English, French, and German novels, to do with an emancipating shift in content and characters. Narrative themes are no

longer restricted to heroic events of princes and noblemen, or to the comic actions of common people (see CLASS). The leading role is emphatically taken by the citizen, now taken seriously as an individual with feelings and emotions.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the first half of the nineteenth century the Dutch and Flemish novel moved in the HISTORICAL direction, following Walter Scott. In the Netherlands the great national events of the past—especially the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) with Spain, whose king, since Charles V, was also sovereign of the Low Countries—were told time and again. The characters of these stories are not only heroic, but also industrious, patriotic, and chaste. By being so they represent the civil virtues of the era.

Flemish nationalism, a result of resistance against the dominance of the French-speaking ruling classes in the nascent Belgian state (which broke away from the Netherlands in 1830), manifests itself in the work of Hendrik Conscience. His novels *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen* (1838, *The Lion of Flanders*) and *Jacob van Artevelde* (1849, *Jacob Artevelde*) glorify the struggle of the medieval Flemish towns of Ghent and Bruges against the French king, culminating in the famous Battle of the Spurs (1302).

Isolated among his contemporaries and unique in his literary and social opinions is Multatuli (pseud. of Eduard Douwes Dekker). Although he wrote and published many books in different genres, his fame is based on one novel, *Of de koffveilingen der Nederlandsche Handelsmaatschappij* (1860, *Max Havelaar: Or the Coffee Auctions of a Dutch Trading Company*). The eponymous character is a thinly disguised portrait of the author, but the *Max Havelaar* story is also an

act of self-justification. Part of the colonial administration in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Multatuli tried to improve the living conditions of the native people, and in so doing came into conflict with his superiors. For reasons of honor, he resigned, and vented his frustration in a book that remains a classic, not least because of its refreshing, lively, and witty style, and its capricious and fanciful structure, by which the author shows affinities with writers such as Laurence Sterne (whom he probably never read) and Jean Paul Richter. The (unreliable and ridiculed) narrator, Batavus Droogstoppel, whose acquaintance the reader makes in the first paragraph, is an Amsterdam coffee broker, who voices his antipathy to literature, saying it is nothing but lies and deceit, and of no practical use whatsoever. This harangue shows him to have the typical nineteenth-century Dutch mentality that attached great weight to such bourgeois virtues as diligence, thrift, DECORUM, and piety. The name Batavus refers to the Batavi, a Germanic tribe believed by nationalist historians to be the original inhabitants of the Netherlands (see NATIONAL); *Droogstoppel* (dry stubble) can be taken to mean a dull, boring person, someone to whom idealism and deeply felt emotions are entirely alien. Droogstoppel is indeed the antithesis of the romantic hero Havelaar, who joins battle with the corrupt and profit-seeking authorities.

Characteristic for Multatuli is his talent for satire. *Woutertje Pieterse* (1890, *Walter Pieterse: A Story of Holland*), his other major novel on which he worked for many years without finishing, is famed for the ridicule it heaps on petit-bourgeois Holland. One of its highlights is the scene in which the schoolmaster Pennewip, pedantry incarnate, proves in a discourse that Miss Laps is in fact a mammal.

FIN-DE-SIECLE

The next major changes in Dutch and Flemish narrative prose have to do with a radical turn toward realism. French REALISM and NATURALISM, represented by authors such as Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola, became the new literary paradigm, although in a moderated way. The most dedicated follower of realism is Marcellus Emants, who showed serious interest in the scientific pretensions of Zola's naturalist doctrine. Some traces of naturalism, such as the belief that heredity is the cause of mental disorder, are also to be found in the novels of Louis Couperus, without doubt the most important novelist of his generation. His first novel, *Eline Vere* (1888), shows clear influences of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). Like Emma, Eline is a woman of her time and her milieu: educated and sensitive, but shackled by the conventions and etiquette prescribed by bourgeois morals. Her romantic daydreaming clashes with reality, nourishing the neurosis which ultimately drives her to commit suicide.

In his novels Couperus steadily progresses from storytelling to social criticism. In his portrayal of the life of the upper classes he exposed their hypocrisy, prejudices, and narrow-mindedness. A highlight in this respect are the four volumes of *De Boeken der Kleine Zielen* (1901–2, *Small Souls*), a family epic which readily bears comparison with Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901) and John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (1906–21). Like Mann and Galsworthy, and Zola, whom he greatly admired, Couperus described the decline of the *haute bourgeoisie*.

The cultural and philosophical implications of the theme of decline turned Couperus's attention to a comparable period of history. Like other authors at the end of the nineteenth century, he was

preoccupied with the decadence of the Roman Empire, a phenomenon which he and others related to the establishment of imperial rule, which destroyed republican virtues, and the inescapable law of nature that states and civilizations, just like living organisms, have a limited life span (see DECADENT). He expressed these ideas in *De Berg van Licht* (1905, *The Mountain of Light*) and *De Komedianten* (1917, *The Comedians*).

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the Flemish novel the realistic turn to everyday life manifests itself in a preference for rural settings. The important authors here are Stijn Streuvels (pseud. of Frank Lateur) and Cyriel Buysse. Both show their commitment with and pity for poor, exploited, and humiliated working-class people. Buysse's frank dealing with sexual taboos caused angry reactions among Catholic critics. Because of his novel *Tantes* (1924, *Aunts*), now considered his masterpiece, he was condemned as a "perverse decadent."

Streuvels is an outspoken pessimist, who depicts life as an inescapable chain between birth and death. His characters act as if they are passive prisoners of fate, unable to change or influence the eternal laws of nature. His worldview is best expressed in his EPIC novel *De vlasschaard* (1907, *The Flax Field*) and the novella *Het leven en de dood in den ast* (1926, *Life and Death in the Drying Kiln*), which is often compared with the work of Henrik Ibsen and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

During the 1920s and 1930s narrative prose in Flanders was radically renewed under the impetus of Maurice Roelants and Gerard Walschap. These two writers were far ahead of most of their Dutch colleagues, who still worked within the nineteenth-century realistic tradition. In *Komen en gaan* (1927, *Coming and Going*), Roelants

restricted events and descriptions to a minimum while giving ample rein to the reflections of the protagonist-narrator. Walschap distinguished himself through a sharp increase in narrative tempo, which manifested itself in the schematic, quasi-chronicling nature of the factual account. Where Roelants made frequent use of dialogue, Walschap avoided it as far as possible. This latter feature has been associated with the vitalistic nature of Walschap's novels: words are much less direct than actions.

In their early works both Roelants and Walschap struggled to free themselves from Catholic dogma and the authority of the Church (see RELIGION). As the story of a love triangle that does *not* come about, *Komen en gaan* is dominated by a conflict between good and evil that issues from the Christian sense of sin. In this context Roelants's analytical and ethically oriented approach is striking. Unusually, perhaps, given the spirit of the age, there is little or no influence of Sigmund Freud's stress on the instinctual life as the basis of all action (see PSYCHOANALYTIC).

Where Roelants concentrated on a crisis-like situation in the life of an individual, Walschap tended to opt for the story of a whole life, a dynasty embracing several generations or a complete community. His trilogy *Adelaïde, Eric, and Carla* (1929–33) were conceived as family novels in the great nineteenth-century tradition; in style and composition, however, they are much more sober and taut. The NARRATIVE STYLE remains remarkable, recording the spoken word not as monologues and dialogues but in a form halfway between direct and free indirect speech (see DISCOURSE). The language register stands close to the spoken word and the syntax is simple. In his later novels Walschap continues this process of formal renewal.

A third innovator in Flemish prose, Willem Elsschot (pseudo. of Alfons de

Ridder), was far more radical in his anticlericalism than Roelants and Walschap. His novels are shot through with a cynical skepticism. Elsschot mercilessly exposes the nature of the petit bourgeois with his hypocrisy, selfishness, and greed. The critical and satirical tendency of his work is manifest in *Lijmen* (1924, *Soft Soap*), the story of the gentleman con-artist Boorman and his "World Review of Finance, Trade and Commerce, Art and Science." The publication with this sumptuous title is nothing but a subtle way of exposing vain businessmen anxious for publicity. Boorman usually writes an over-inflated article about their business and subsequently offloads a few thousand copies onto the company in question. In *Het been* (1933, *The Leg*), a sequel to *Lijmen*, Boorman becomes sentimental and hence falls prey to his own system. After having dumped 100,000 copies of the "World Review" on the widowed female boss of a metal works, he is subsequently moved to pity and offers compensation to the victim. She, however, proudly refuses, which leads to a fencing match to decide who will be left with the "blood money." Boorman wins, but in so doing he loses his reputation as a ruthless cynic in the eye of his subordinate Laarmans, with whom the author more or less identifies.

The Dutch author Nescio (pseud. of J. F. Grönloh) shows a kinship with Elsschot. He too was a skeptic, because of frustrated idealism. He too showed that all human effort is in vain, by demonstrating how his heroes, "little Titans" in their youth, become disillusioned and frustrated when they grow old. And, just like Elsschot, he wrote in a sober, non-ornamental style. For this reason both authors were appreciated more than ever after 1970.

DUTCH MODERNISM

Carry van Bruggen, one of the first Dutch authors who, in her novel *Eva* (1927), used

the modernist "stream of consciousness" technique (see NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE), had already turned away from the realist paradigm in *Heleen* (1913). The main character's spiritual development is not described in relation to factors such as social environment and material circumstances, but the author portrays her as a self-assured individual who tries to determine her attitude toward life's great existential questions and problems.

In the context of international MODERNISM, *Het verboden rijk* (1932, *The Forbidden Empire*), by J. J. Slauerhoff, bears comparison with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1927). Two characters appear in successive episodes in the story that, historically, are centuries apart. Eventually these characters, the Portuguese poet and globetrotter Luís Vaz de Camões and an anonymous radio operator, coalesce, just as the various time levels merge. The whole is dominated by typically modernist themes such as identity and depersonalization.

Ferdinand Bordewijk combined a proclivity for the fantastic and grotesque with a compact, graphic style which displayed an affinity with German New Objectivity. But he went further than the detached registration of a world dominated by technology and urbanization; he hinted at mysterious powers active in everyday life. In this respect he has much in common with surrealist painters such as Giorgio de Chirico and René Magritte (1898–1967) (see SURREALISM).

Simon Vestdijk, author of many volumes of poetry, short stories, and essays, also wrote fifty-two novels. Among them is a fictionalized autobiography in eight volumes, the Anton Wachter cycle, which parallels Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27, *Remembrance of Things Past*) and Meneer Visser's *hellevaart* (1936, *Mr. Visser's Descent into Hell*), a novel clearly inspired by the narrative technique of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). First and

foremost an analyst, Vestdijk dissects psychological complexes, emotions, and interpersonal relationships with almost clinical precision.

Vestdijk was also very productive as the author of HISTORICAL novels. *Het vijfde zegel* (1937, *The Fifth Seal*) centers on the life and work of the painter El Greco, with King Philip II of Spain looming in the background. The relative patchiness of El Greco's biography enabled Vestdijk to fill in the gaps with his imagination. He was to do something similar in *De nadagen van Pilatus* (1939, *The Last Days of Pontius Pilate*). Here the principal roles are played by Pilate, Mary Magdalene, and the mad emperor Caligula; in the background stands the figure of Jesus Christ.

Also semiautobiographical is *Het land van herkomst* (1935, *Country of Origin*), by E. du Perron. The novel has two story lines: one consisting of memories (see MEMORY) of a youth in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and one in which the first-person narrator, Arthur Ducroo, notes down the effect that writing has on him and what he feels and experiences in the here-and-now (early 1930s Paris). The key word is "authenticity": Ducroo/Perron is determined to reveal the truth about himself, even if it will be painful and embarrassing. But, in the end, he has to admit that as soon as one writes stories, every "I" inevitably turns into a character.

POST-WWII FICTION

After the German occupation of the Netherlands and Belgium a new generation of novelists made their appearance. Many of them wrote about the terror and violence of the Nazi period; in this respect they show an affinity with French existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Willem Frederik Hermans treated the war theme in

De tranen der acacia's (1948, *The Tears of the Acacias*) and *De donkere kamer van Damokles* (1958, *The Dark Room of Damocles*). The latter novel, which can also be read as an exciting thriller, is particularly interesting because it reveals Hermans's ambivalent attitude when it comes to philosophical questions concerning reality and truth. In his view it is impossible to decide whether someone was a hero or a villain during the war. The interests of an individual or a group are the sole criteria for such concepts as truth and justice. This is what the main character of *De donkere kamer van Damokles* experiences. A colorless figure who gets the chance to shake off his mediocrity during the German occupation by joining the resistance, he becomes so entangled in the web of espionage and counter-espionage that after the liberation he is considered a traitor rather than a patriot. Since every proof of his innocence has disappeared, the only possibility left is "to be shot while attempting to escape."

Harry Mulisch has written little that does not refer to the events of WWII. The son of a father who collaborated with the German occupying forces and a Jewish mother, he feels himself to be the personification of the war. This obsessive involvement has resulted in a number of novels which could be called milestones in Dutch postwar fiction. *Het stenen bruidsbed* (1959, *The Stone Bridal Bed*) is a forceful and convincing treatise on the problem of guilt and responsibility, showing that the hero, an American pilot who took part in the senseless bombing of the German city of Dresden at the end of the war, was guilty of a war crime. This theme recurs in *De aanslag* (1982, *The Assault*). The question here is whether an act of resistance against the Nazis was justified when it was inevitably followed by reprisals against innocent people. It is significant that Mulisch, when dealing with these problems, constantly refers to ancient

Greek myths. By connecting the recent past to MYTHOLOGY he stresses the constantly recurring chain of events, views, and traditions.

Much more embedded in the postwar here-and-now is Gerard Reve's *De avonden* (1947, *The Evenings*), which bears a striking resemblance to Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938, *Nausea*). The boredom and disillusionment of young people, whose ideals had been shattered by the horrors of the Nazi period, are depicted here in a way which evokes the grayness of the December days during which the action takes place. Reve's absurd, black humor and the stylistic mixture of the pompous and the trivial provide a counterweight to the gloom.

In Flanders Louis Paul Boon stands out as an existentialist author. In *Mijn kleine oorlog* (1946, *My Small War*) he formulated his personal creed: "I want to kick a conscience into people." The simple soldier who lets himself be conscripted for war service is the same man who lets himself be ordered about by his boss. Boon blames the authorities—the government, the administrators, the Church—for inciting the ordinary man to vice and misconduct.

Boon's masterpiece is without any doubt his diptych *De Kapellekensbaan* (1953, *Chapel Road*) and *Zomer te Ter-Muren* (1956, *Summer at Ter-Muren*). In its form this saga of "the rise and fall of socialism," as the author called it, mirrors the disintegration of twentieth-century society and the disturbed mind of modern man. The novels are a mixture of narrative, comments, fables, and more. The everyday life of the people who live in Chapel Road parallels the adventures of the protagonist of the medieval satirical epic *Reynard the Fox*, one of the canonical texts of Flemish literature.

The other major figure in postwar Flemish literature is the multi-talented Hugo Claus, who excelled as a poet, playwright, and novelist, and was also a film director

and a painter. At the age of 19 he wrote *De Metsiers* (1950, *Sisters of Earth*), a somewhat torrid pastoral which owes much to the example of William Faulkner. Claus was one of the first to recognize the importance of the French *nouveau roman*. In *De verwondering* (1962, *The Amazement*) his theme is the fragmented experience of reality and the inextricable entanglement of appearance and substance, which make the conventional sequence of a story, with its beginning, middle, and end, a falsification. The main character keeps a diary on the advice of his psychiatrist, but the fragmentation of his personality increases rather than diminishes as he writes.

Claus's masterpiece is *Het verdriet van België* (1983, *The Sorrow of Belgium*), set in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the years when Flemish nationalists sympathized and even collaborated with the German occupying forces. Louis Seynave, the young hero of this novel, comes to realize that a detached, ironic smile is the only possible means of surviving the torments and frustrations arising from his adolescent problems, and from the tragicomic fate of tiny Belgium torn by the language conflict between the Flemish and Francophone parts of the nation. Claus holds up a distorting mirror to the failures and shortcomings of his compatriots.

POSTMODERN FICTION

Boon and Claus nowadays are seen as forerunners of postmodern fiction, which became dominant in the Netherlands from the 1970s on. In this decade the newly founded literary review *De Revisor* became a platform for a group of young writers, who all shared the view that reality as such exists only in so far as it can be represented in language. Skepticism and solipsism are the inevitable consequences of such an outlook; it also brings in its wake the political

indifference that became widespread in the Netherlands after the euphoric years around 1968. “Imagination,” a key term in the fictional and critical works of authors such as Nicolaas Matsier, Dirk Ayelt Kooiman, and Frans Kellendonk, proved worthless as a political agent after the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s had vanished; therefore it had to be returned to its original environment: art and literature. This formula has been worked cleverly and elegantly into the action of *Rituelen* (1980, *Rituals*), a truly post-modern novel for which the author, Cees Nooteboom, received positive acclaim at home and abroad. In present-day Dutch literature no one has thematized the perception of TIME so frequently and persistently as Nooteboom. In his capacity as novelist, poet, and travel writer he has for years now shown himself to be fascinated by the selective and at the same time creative ways in which we transform the passing of time—how memories are filtered in the labyrinth of our memory by the falsifying yet liberating powers of the imagination. The wonder of fiction, as Nooteboom reminds us, depends on the impossibility of recalling everything and the concomitant need to imagine. More wondrous still is that, thanks to our collective memory, we share a common past, no less selectively. In this way art fulfills the role of intermediary between our individual existence and a tradition of thousands of years, and a triangle comes into existence in Nooteboom’s work between time, memory, and art. In this respect *Rituals* is a high point.

If the perception of time for Nooteboom is cause for PHILOSOPHICAL and cultural-historical reflection, other Dutch and Flemish writers perceive a challenge in the way in which *this* time, *this* moment in history, asks specific questions of us and makes specific demands on our conscience. Since the late 1990s, not by chance the decades of an “ethical turn” in literary criticism, various

writers in the Dutch and Flemish language area have wrestled with questions having to do with the eternal conflict between good and evil. Here Harry Mulisch has been at the forefront; as can be seen from his novel *De Ontdekking van de Hemel* (1992, *The Discovery of Heaven*). The core of the plot, God’s action in restoring to heaven the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, is not to be seen as an ironic story-line but an expression of concern with increasing decay in moral values. That this concern was serious became evident from a subsequent novel, *De procedure* (1988, *The procedure*; the title is borrowed from English), in which biogenetic manipulation forms the object of a Kafkaesque game involving crime and punishment. And in *Siegfried* (2001, *Siegfried: A Black Idyll*) Mulisch allows us to see how Adolf Hitler—as an historical concept—is “beyond good and evil”: he represents the totality of emptiness, the great Nothing.

With *Siegfried* Mulisch returned to his favorite subject, WWII. In *De vermaledijde vaders* (1985, *The Accursed Fathers*) the Flemish writer Monika van Paemel connected the war theme with the persistent patriarchal power structure in Western society, the source—for her—of all evil. Later novels such as *De eerste steen* (1992, *The First Stone*), *Rozen op ijs* (1997, *Roses on Ice*), *Het verschil* (2001, *The Difference*), and *Celestien* (2004, *Celestine*), while maintaining a FEMINIST perspective, focus on the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia, overpopulation, and environmental destruction, along with other issues high on society’s political agenda. It is clear that, for van Paemel, engagement is an existential matter.

A much more frivolous and sardonic attitude is to be found in the work of the Flemish writer Tom Lanoye. His trilogy *Het goddelijke monster* (1997, *The Divine Monster*), *Zwarte tranen* (1999, *Black Tears*),