

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.