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Translation Astrid Kulsdom (2015)

## The importance of international collaboration<sup>1</sup>

### Large numbers of women writers in this small country

The most recent historiography of nineteenth-century Dutch literature – *Alles is taal geworden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1800-1900* (Everything has become language. History of Dutch Literature, 2009)<sup>2</sup> – mentions a couple of women writers, but so few that one wonders if *Met en zonder lauwerkrans. Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850* (Crowned and uncrowned women writers in the Netherlands during the early modern period) would have appeared in vain. Published in Dutch in 1997 and reissued later in a more elaborate English edition,<sup>3</sup> this anthology presented dozens of women writers from Flanders and the Netherlands. Were most of them unworthy of being included in ‘the’ literary history? This prompts important questions about the relation between *women’s* literary history and *general* literary history.

September 2013 saw the start of the European research project *Travelling Texts 1790-1914. The Transnational Reception of Women’s Writing at the Fringes of Europe* (TTT) in five countries, including the Netherlands. This HERA<sup>4</sup>-funded project focuses on female authorship in nineteenth-century Europe and the (inter)national role played by female authors. The broad scope should facilitate the inclusion of women from the considered period in future literary historiography<sup>5</sup>. On the basis of source material rarely used for this purpose up until now, the ‘female contribution’ to the literatures of five ‘smaller’ countries is being researched: alongside the Netherlands, the research focuses on Finland, Norway,

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Ton van Kalmthout for his comments on an earlier version of this text.

<sup>2</sup> W. van den Berg and P. Couttenier, *Alles is taal geworden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1800-1900*. Amsterdam 2009.

<sup>3</sup> R. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, K. Porteman, L. van Gemert, P. Couttenier (eds.), *Met en zonder Lauwerkrans. Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar*. Amsterdam, 1997; L. van Gemert, H. Joldersma, O. van Marion, D. van der Poel, R. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (eds.), *Women’s Writing from the Low Countries, 1200-1875. A Bilingual Anthology*. Amsterdam, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> *Humanities in the European Research Area* (HERA) is a programme funding international research. It concerns a partnership between 21 European countries. See also <http://heranet.info/ttt/index>.

<sup>5</sup> In the Netherlands this project originated partly from *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. See also S. van Dijk, L. van Gemert, S. Ottway (eds.), *Writing the History of Women’s Writing. Toward an International Approach*. Amsterdam, 2001.

Slovenia and Spain. In this article I will discuss the starting points and the importance of this investigation<sup>6</sup>, which we were able to prepare during the last years thanks to funding by NWO, COST and CLARIN-NL<sup>7</sup>. I will limit myself to Dutch authors - considering the question: could *Alles is taal geworden* have mentioned more female authors?

First I will briefly address the female authors selected by Willem van den Berg and Piet Couttenier for inclusion in *Alles is taal geworden*, and look at the (apparent) reasons for their appearance in the book. On behalf of a number of women not mentioned by them, but previously presented by Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen and her co-editors in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, I ask the following question: why not them? Can these authors only thrive in an exclusively female context? And what about those female authors who do not appear in any of the two books, but about whose authorship we certainly possess information? The HERA TTT-project may provide material for answering these questions in the coming few years<sup>8</sup>.

### **Women in *Alles is taal geworden***

*Alles is taal geworden* endeavours “to describe and evaluate nineteenth-century literature from the perspective of that period as much as possible”: the authors want to distance themselves from “the usual condescending attitude” adopted in regard to nineteenth-century literature and taste for so long (p. 11). Like the other volumes in this series initiated by Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union), the work describes the Dutch literature of North (the Netherlands) and South (Belgium). The collective literary history of the entire century is divided in three periods (1800-1830, 1830-1860, and 1860-1900) and discusses for every period first the North (Willem van den Berg), and secondly the South (Piet Couttenier). I will only address the contributions dealing with the North here<sup>9</sup>.

These contributions contain 28 female authors altogether, presented in chronological order in the following graph.

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<sup>6</sup> See a.o. S. van Dijk, “Les jugements universellement portés sur les femmes...”. Schrijfsters en lezeressen in een internationale database’, in: *Historica* October 24 (2001) 3, p. 3-5; S. van Dijk, P. Broomans, J.F. van der Meulen, P. van Oostrum (eds.), “I have heard about you”. *Foreign Women’s Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: from Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf*. Hilversum, 2004; S. van Dijk, A. Gilleir and A.C. Montoya, ‘Before NEWW (New approaches to European Women’s Writing). Prolegomena to the Launching of an International Project’, in: *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 27 (2008) 1, p. 151-157.

<sup>7</sup> NWO: Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek/The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. COST - European Cooperation in Science and Technology: European intergovernmental framework for the coordination of nationally or regionally funded research. The CLARIN-NL-project is a big national project in the Netherlands (2009-2015), aiming to contribute significantly to the European CLARIN infrastructure.

<sup>8</sup> See S. van Dijk, L. van Gemert, S. Ottway (eds.), 2001.

<sup>9</sup> A comparison between these two sections may seem interesting, but is not up for discussion now: Belgium is not a part of the HERA TTT-project.

Roemersdr. Visscher, Maria Tesselschade	1594	1649	NL
Merken, Lucretia Wilhelmina van	1721	1789	NL
Lannoy, Juliana Cornelia de	1738	1782	NL
Wolff, Betje	1738	1804	NL
Deken, Agatha	1741	1804	NL
Moens, Petronella	1762	1843	NL
Staël, Germaine de	1766	1817	SWI
Neufville, Margaretha Jacoba de	1775	1856	NL
Schweickhardt, Katharina Wilhelmina	1776	1830	NL
Schilperoort, Anna Barbara	1778	1853	NL
Herbig, Froukje	1781	1857	NL
Sand, George	1804	1876	FR
Hasebroek, Elisabeth Johanna	1811	1887	NL
Stowe, Harriet Beecher	1811	1896	US
Bosboom-Toussaint, Anna Louisa Geertruida	1812	1886	NL
Eliot, George	1819	1880	ENG
Calcar, Elise van	1822	1904	NL
Perk, Betsy	1833	1906	NL
Kruseman, Wilhelmina J.P.R.	1839	1922	NL
Ouida	1839	1908	ENG
Clant van der Mijll-Piepers, Jeanne	1842	1923	NL
Huygens, Cornélie Lydie	1848	1902	NL
Stratenus, Louise Antoinette	1852	1908	NL
Junius, Sophia Margaretha Cornelia	1853	1904	NL
Swarth, Hélène	1859	1941	NL
Hoven, Thérèse	1860	1941	NL
Vloten, Kitty van	1867	1945	NL
Roland Holst-van der Schaik, Henriette Goverdine	1869	1952	NL

Some of these women are discussed together, with only limited space for individual appreciation: Moens, Neufville, Schilperoort and Herbig receive some individual attention on p. 116-118, but on p. 494 Sand, Beecher Stowe, Van Calcar, Perk (*see presentation below 2*), Kruseman, and Huygens are gathered in one single paragraph. Junius, Hoven, and Stratenus take up some lines on p. 503 - with the addition: "just to name a few". None of the 28 female authors receive a chapter of their own - not even Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (*see below 1*), although she is described as "the most important female novelist of her time, whose historical and other novels left her male colleagues far behind" (p. 231). Twenty male authors, however, do receive their own - sometimes small - chapter, amongst whom writers considerably less reputed as Kneppelhout (2 pages), Bernard ter Haar (4 pages), and Allard Pierson (3 pages). Throughout three chapters Bosboom-Toussaint receives twelve pages in all dealing with her writing.

Especially important is of course *how* these ladies are presented, which criteria seem to have been used for their 'admission', and which impression the readers are left with after reading about these authors. To start with, five of them were active *before* the nineteenth century: their presence in this book bears witness to the prolonged or renewed reception of their work and their reputation in the nineteenth century. Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken are mentioned as 'examples' to nineteenth-century epistolary novelists such as Margaretha Jacoba de Neufville (pp. 115, 117). The eighteenth-century Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken is the only (Dutch) female playwright present in the book: again as an example, but not exclusively for women (pp. 44, 133). Five other authors are famous foreign women writers who drew a large audience in the Netherlands - and who are presented as important and 'prominent'. Their presence is valid, but leaves us wondering about the absence of other much read and translated authors such as Stéphanie de Genlis, Fredrika Bremer, Eugénie Marlitt, Luise Mühlbach and Louisa Alcott (to just name a few) - if only under the denominator of 'second-rate authors', just like Lafontaine, Iffland and Kotzebue, male German authors who were important to Multatuli (p. 546).

A few things stand out for the remaining eighteen Dutch women writers. Schweickhardt and Van Vloten are mostly mentioned in relation to their famous husbands: authors Willem Bilderdijk and Albert Verwey. Huygens, Van Calcar and Krusemann - all of whom had quite some strings to their bow - are exclusively mentioned as journalists employed by the women's periodicals of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Perk favourably no longer is known only as 'the aunt of poet Jacques Perk', although the conflicts she was supposed to have raised as founder of some of those periodicals. This may not be untrue, but it does present a somewhat narrow perspective.

Herbig is granted a rather negative presentation as well, as her use of the modesty topos (frequent in texts by women writers) is taken completely literally: her reference to "a woman's deficient pen" leads to the observation that she possesses "disarming self-awareness" (p. 118). About the blind, but very productive Petronella Moens, who was "greatly admired by contemporaries", the authors pose that she cannot captivate "us" anymore, and neither can Neufville (who is presented as "niece of author David Jacob van Lennep"; p. 224). And Schilperoort, author of "the first successful women's periodical [*Penélopé* (1821)]", is mentioned to be treated with disdain by her contemporary critics (p. 116), as later also Hoven, Junius and Stratenus (p. 503) - each time without raising the question whether or not current historians see reasons for this treatment.

Three women are presented in a positive and even quite elaborate way: Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint, Helene Swarth ("praised by famous poet Kloos") and Elisabeth Hasebroek (*see* 5)<sup>10</sup>. Especially Hasebroek, who usually appears as sister to minister-poet J.P. Hasebroek, seems to be the *discovery* this book has to offer in the field of female authorship. The reader receives an impression of the work of these three authors and its reception. These three<sup>11</sup> are also the only women included in lists otherwise populated by men. For instance, the "literary hits" (Bilderdijk, Bosboom-Toussaint, Geel, Gezelle, Busken

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<sup>10</sup> In 12, 2, and 2 pages respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Henriette Roland Holst falls in the same category, but is only briefly mentioned once: she is actually more of a twentieth-century poetess. She is connected to William Morris and Jan Veth (p. 619).

Huet, Multatuli<sup>12</sup>; p. 18), the contributors to the annual *Tesselschade* (Hasebroek, his sister Betsy, Bakhuizen van den Brink, Heije, Staring, Tollens, Bogaers, Ter Haar and Potgieter; p. 216), and the authors who made their debut in *De Nederlandsche Spectator* (Marcellus Emants, Louis Couperus, Jacques Perk, Wouter Paap, Albert Verwey, Frederik van Eeden, Hélène Swarth and Willem Kloos; p. 494).

Due to the limited space my short overview cannot be other than schematic; it does not sufficiently account for the many nuances that are certainly present in this historiography. The presentation of women writers in *Alles is taal geworden* is by no means exclusively negative. Furthermore, several male authors (such as Kist and Daalberg) are also said to fail to captivate later audiences (p. 119) and consequently “have fallen into oblivion” (p. 120). There is an -implicit- condemnation of certain nineteenth-century critics’ attitude in regard to women, described as “goodwill bordering on arrogance”. The fact that women writers will not have felt unhindered in their choice of subject and genre is also discussed: their “preference” for the domestic novel is traced back to “an imposed order” (p. 116). Several times the book emphasizes the problems surrounding female authorship and there seems to be certain contentment about Bosboom-Toussaint’s positive influence on behalf of women: “if in the coming years women writing is regarded in a less paternalizing manner, it is mainly owing to Truitje Toussaint” (p. 254).

Strangely enough Wallis (pseudonym of Adèle Opzoomer), the youthful novelist considered ‘successor’ to Bosboom-Toussaint, is never mentioned in the book, nor are many other women who might have benefitted from Toussaint’s wholesome influence. Wallis’ contemporaries Melati van Java, Cécile de Jong van Beek en Donk (see 3), for example, are not included either, even though their work, like Toussaint’s and Wallis’, has been translated in several languages.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Met en zonder lauwerkrans***

We must realize however that there has certainly been progress compared to the work of earlier historians: Knuvelde’s handbook, until recently often used in Dutch studies, only contained four of the previously mentioned eighteen Dutch women writers from the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand we have *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* which presented over thirty Dutch women writers for the first half of the nineteenth century, only half of which are present in this *general* literary history - in which we do find male authors with little-known names such as L. van den Broek, H.A.L. Rietberg, and the brothers Klijn.

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<sup>12</sup> Peculiarly, the five male ‘hits’ are all given a paragraph of their own (between 4 and 20 pages), just like 20 other North-Dutch authors, whereas Bosboom-Toussaint is not granted the same favour.

<sup>13</sup> Toussaint was translated into English, German, French, Danish, Russian, and Swedish; Wallis into English and German; and De Jong van Beek into German, French and Swedish.

<sup>14</sup> Namely Schweickhardt, Toussaint, Melati van Java, Swarth. See G.P.M. Knuvelde, *Beknopt handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse letterkunde*. Den Bosch, 1982 (10<sup>th</sup> ed.).

What, then, causes Adriana van Overstraten (*see 4*), Francijntje de Boer, Fenna Mastenbroek, Dorothea Beets, Henriette Langelaan and Anna Ampt to be included in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, but not in *Alles is taal geworden*? Which criteria were used? Because the authors of this new literary history do not mention the criteria used for these implicit judgements, but do explicitly invite discussion about their work (p. 15), I will nevertheless address this issue.

In the chapters *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* dedicates to these six previously mentioned women writers, we can definitely find arguments for their inclusion in a general literary history. We learn that Van Overstraten published her *Dichterlijke gedachten bij de slavenhandel* (Poetic thoughts about slavery) in 1791, long before Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous work (p. 708). Mastenbroek's reputation was so big that "her fame endured into the twentieth century" (p. 819), just like the novel *Onze Buurt* (Our part of the city) by Beets (sister to canonized author Nicolaas Beets) which was reprinted even in 1911 (p. 827).<sup>15</sup> Ampt was regarded as the best among Dutch poetesses in 1854 (p. 931) and De Boer would have provided a good illustration of Moens' sphere of influence, as the latter was a role model to De Boer (p. 813). Only for Langelaan, author of a relatively small oeuvre, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* mentions explicitly that she has been "included as a representative of the mediocrity that filled the immense amount of periodicals and annuals of the nineteenth century", with the addition that she was read frequently and that her work was reprinted (p. 897). Of this "mediocrity" omnipresent in the nineteenth century and which is more or less necessary as a framework for the "literary hits", *Alles is taal geworden* mentions a decent amount of male examples,<sup>16</sup> but women are not represented for this specific reason.<sup>17</sup>

Was *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* actually meant to directly influence the regular historiography? In fact the book does not pretend to be a 'supplier' of women writers for the benefit of general literary history. This anthology does want to "stimulate further highly necessary research" (p. 95), but implicitly aims mostly for a *non-specialised* audience, with the assurance that these novels and stories "are still readable" (p. 853). The texts are therefore presented rather than analysed. *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* may have been included in the "Literature" list of *Alles is taal geworden*, but an edition of one single text also included in that list has had more visible effect - and has led to the abovementioned 'discovery' of

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<sup>15</sup> And more recently: Dorothea Bohn-Beets, *Onze buurt*. Margaretha H. Schenkeveld en Maria A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen ed., Zoetermeer, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> See above: Multatuli's inspirations. About Tollens' many followers it is even stated that "their names have fallen into oblivion and do not deserve a revival" (p. 243). Nevertheless their names were mentioned before: B. Klijn Bz, H.A. Spandaw, M. Westerman, H.A.L. Rietberg, W.H. Warnsinck, H. van Loghem jr., J.L. Nierstrasz jr. (p. 71). About the (unnamed) minister-poets we read that they were not only "much loved by the common audience", but also that "more wheat is hidden under the chaff of all those compilations than usually acknowledged" (p. 506). For more information on the role of minister-poets in the case of female authorship, see my contribution to the *Cultures and Literatures in Translation* conference on 5-6 December 2013 in Kielce, Poland (a publication of the proceedings is in preparation by Hanna Mijas and Agnieszka Szwach). Kloos, too, gave "short shrift to the contemporary mediocrity of J. Bohl, Pol de Mont, W. Hofdijk, H.J.A.M. Schaepman" (p. 588). In short, there could have been a little more attention to the fact (so alarming to for example Van Oosterzee) that "the number of female authors increases steadily" (p. 502).

<sup>17</sup> Maybe the mention of Ouida ("the British author of extravagant, melodramatic stories", read by Eline Vere [central character in Louis Couperus' famous novel *Eline Vere*] in a "fanatical, coquettish" manner) is meant in this way with reference to Couperus, who wrote: "I resemble Ouida" in an article in *De Gids* (1897).

Elisabeth Hasebroek. This is the edition of Hasebroek's novel *Elize* in 2004, provided by Margaretha H. Schenkeveld and Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen. Undoubtedly it is an example of the "highly necessary research" that should be stimulated, and which has clearly been taken to heart by historians.

### Hasebroek as innovator?

A comparison between the introduction to the 2004 *Elize* edition and the passage devoted to the novel in *Alles is taal geworden's* recent literary historiography is interesting. In the introduction Schenkeveld and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen stated that Hasebroek's earlier novel *Te laat* (Too late) was "an innovative novel in the Dutch context [of 1839]" (p. 11). They conclude their introduction with an explicit invitation: "In the great literary historiographies of the twentieth century Hasebroek's writing is hardly or not at all mentioned. This is actually incomprehensible. This writer would have deserved to be put on record as an innovative author" (p. 43).

Van den Berg and Couttenier copy this verdict: the novelist had brought "something new" to Dutch literature, namely her attention to the inner life of female characters. They add: "Critics reacted favourably to this debut" (p. 253) – an addition which is, of course, based on a debatable interpretation. In this respect it is interesting to note that both the female editors and the male historiographers refer to an article published in *De Gids* by author and influential literary critic Conrad Busken Huet in 1877 (almost 40 years after *Elize* was published). Both recent publications cite quite different passages from this article, which covers 40 pages. Schenkeveld and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen report that "critic Busken Huet, not exactly known for his mild criticism" designated Hasebroek's novels as "a date in the newer literary history" (p. 7). They remark that "some irony" is not lacking in Huet's comment (p. 42), but that he also "emphatically" states that according to him, "nothing printed between 1844 and 1877 overshadowed the work of 'Miss Hasebroek'" (p. 43). According to Van den Berg on the other hand, in "this sympathetic contribution" Huet places emphasis on the fact that he is dealing with "the work of an 'inexperienced hand'", while all of it contains "character" (p. 254). However, neither of both cites this:

My conclusion is that Miss Hasebroek's novels take up a *modest*, but *worthy*, and moreover their *own* place in that movement between 1830 and 1840, which was a new time of prosperity for our literature and which prided itself on a host of young talents to which we at present possess no equal. (pp. 85-86, my italics)

A comparison of the successive statements about Hasebroek may teach us that they could be biased due to the differing levels of the assessors' involvement with female authorship. Even Busken Huet in his different roles makes for an interesting example that is difficult to interpret: on the one hand he is not a "mild critic", on the other hand he is husband and brother to female authors/translators Anne Busken Huet-van der Tholl, Anne Marie van Deventer-Busken Huet and Miss C.E. Busken Huet. The latter would explain his well thought-out conclusion which is not used by the modern Dutch literary historians. Schenkeveld's citation concerning Hasebroek as innovator, therefore, is placed in opposition to Van den Berg's choice to emphasise the "inexperienced hand", for which a critic needs "benevolence". How should we interpret this when earlier in *Alles is taal geworden* it is suggested that - with regard to

women - “benevolent” borders on “condescending” and “arrogant” (p. 116)?<sup>18</sup> This suggestion should be examined further. Is there truly a consistently condescending attitude towards women writers? And does this manifest in more than one periodical?

### A broader approach

The Hasebroek case is only one of many, and furthermore it deals with a woman writer with a comparatively small oeuvre. However, the online *WomenWriters* database<sup>19</sup>, which has been (and is being) filled with data over the course of consecutive projects, contains information about several hundreds of Dutch nineteenth-century female writers, translators, journalists, and especially about the way in which their work was received by contemporaries: enthusiastic/negative/benevolent/ironic? Systematic examination of this material offers the possibility of gaining insight into the attitude of reviewers, historians, and authors of school books. This way, more justice can be done to the broad participation of women in the literary field, which we gradually appreciate more and more due to the online availability of periodicals.

Largeness of scale appears to be the only option, as Franco Moretti asserted during the opening workshop of our European COST Action “Women Writers in History”, elaborating on his *Graphs, Maps, Trees*.<sup>20</sup> The female participation in the literary field of the nineteenth century was not a matter of a few individuals: it is for example tied to the growing number of published women writers abroad. Their work also reached the Netherlands: in the periodical press we find many statements concerning this. Critic P.N. Müller wrote in *De Gids* in 1876:

Especially the English ladies appear to possess a great ease for writing novels. When one looks at the list of authors of *Works of Fiction*, which is how our neighbours call novels, one will almost exclusively see female names.<sup>21</sup>

Not everyone was pleased with the translation of these works:

The English women writers [...] are often so methodist and pietistic... There is a sickly quality to all those translated novels by women,

as J. Hoek writes in the *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* in 1866.<sup>22</sup> Possibly however the activity of those foreign women writers did function as an example for the numerous Dutch women writers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This applies to a far lesser degree if the term is used for male authors (see pp. 241, 579, 582), although on p. 518 “benevolence” is more or less identified with “insincerity”.

<sup>19</sup> The database is hosted at the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands: <http://databasewomenwriters.nl>.

<sup>20</sup> F. Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*. London/New York, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> *De Gids* 1876 III, p. 364.

<sup>22</sup> *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* 1866-1, p. 14.



A hypothesis such as this one, and more generally the contemporary response to women writers' work, can be verified thanks to the use of a database in which reception data are being stored. It enables us to make a case for the importance of these authors to domestic and foreign contemporaries, leaving aside our twenty-first-century value judgements about the texts themselves. To achieve this, we use for instance reception data for the aforementioned Dutch female novelists Wallis, Melati van Java and Cécile de Jong van Beek en Donk (who have been translated in several languages), but also those for the many foreign novelists who were translated into Dutch. As far as we now know this group gathers at least 400 authors from English-, German-, and French-speaking countries. All sorts of connections originated between those foreign women and the Dutch female authors. For instance, Hasebroek translated Fredrika Bremer, Margaret Brewster, and Elizabeth Fry - all three very appropriate to her Christian principles. Betsy Perk translated Elise Polko for her periodical *Ons Streven*. Cornélie Huygens translated a lot of Ouida's work, but also the work of Carmen Sylva, the Romanian queen who frequently resided in Domburg and was also translated by Titia van der Tuuk. George Eliot, immediately recognized as an exceptional talent, was remarkably often translated by women in the Netherlands<sup>24</sup>, such as Anne van der Tholl, wife of Busken Huet, but also the incredibly productive novelist Jacoba van Westrheene, an acquaintance of Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (who started out as a translator herself). And so we outline an international network of women writers who translated and commented on each other, where there was not just room for contemporaries but also for 'foremothers': author Helene Swarth, for instance, translated Madame de Lafayette and Elizabeth Barrett-Browning.

### **The role of certain critics**

Our series of projects surrounding the *WomenWriters* database is not just concerned with translations, and does not exclusively focus on connections between *women* writers and their *female* readers, but rather it gathers all forms of reception of those texts. We find information about the different ways in which male as well as female contemporaries reacted to the work of women writers in periodicals, correspondences, catalogues of lending libraries and private collections.

Interestingly enough, it turned out that the same Busken Huet who features so frequently in *Alles is taal geworden* as the one who passed the 'definitive' verdict on many authors, wrote a lot about women as well. Whether this was the influence of his wife or his admiration for Sainte-Beuve,<sup>25</sup> the "authoritative Busken Huet" who "made canonization happen" (p. 109) also reviewed works written by women.<sup>26</sup> His verdict was not always as positive as it was in the case of Hasebroek. A review of a novel by Maria Carolina Frank commences thus:

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<sup>23</sup> *Alles is taal geworden* attributes the growing number of female novelists to the influence of their predecessors Wolff en Deken (pp. 115, 117) rather than connecting it to contemporary developments abroad.

<sup>24</sup> As opposed to for instance France and Norway.

<sup>25</sup> The influential French critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve wrote, amongst other things, several series of *Portraits de femmes* (1844, 1870).

<sup>26</sup> Amongst whom at least 24 Dutch women writers.

It would not be polite to determine the degree of development that the Dutch-Indonesian writer of this story holds her Dutch readers to. (1887)

His comments about Francisca Gallé are equally unflattering:

Francisca Gallé is a relatively fertile author, and although she is still young, she is an old acquaintance of the audience. She too has started, after a few small-scale samples, by writing one or two longer books of which only a few chapters hold permanent value - and could hold it - because the subject surpassed the abilities of a young woman, however talented and ambitious she may be. (1874)

It seems that Huet speaks in a less ironic and even positive way about foreign women<sup>27</sup>. This is not just true for evident celebrities such as George Eliot and George Sand, but also for Wilhelmine von Hillern, author of *Die Geyer-Wally. Eine Geschichte aus den Tyroler Alpen* (1875), which Huet translated himself the very same year. Also in the year of this novel's publication he states:

In- and outside Germany *Wally's* author is already so well-praised that every recommendation of her work can be seen as superfluous<sup>28</sup>. [...] There are pages in this story that compete with the most beautiful in many a literature.<sup>29</sup>

What, then, was the effect achieved by the criticism formulated on the work of women writers by Busken Huet and others? For the time being it seems that the negative criticism coming from Busken Huet and his colleagues had the purpose of dismissing the popularity of these works. This is what we seemed to conclude from research into the reception of George Sand's work in the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> Of course this needs to be examined in more detail, preferably from a comparative perspective.

## HERA Travelling Texts

This is exactly what is happening in this HERA-project, started in September 2013, of which the database described above is the core.<sup>31</sup> We are of the opinion that exclusive attention for one (more or less arbitrarily selected) woman writer such as Hasebroek - however interesting she may be - leaves aside a

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<sup>27</sup> He has reviewed works by at least 22 foreign women writers.

<sup>28</sup> *Die Geyer-Wally* was translated into Dutch notably fast; next to Huet's translation (originally published as a serial), Elise A. Haighton published hers: *Gier-Wally: een Tirolsch verhaal*, also in 1875. An English and a Danish translation followed in 1876, a French and a Finnish edition appeared in 1877.

<sup>29</sup> This article appeared in *Algemeen Dagblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 3 (1875) p. 175 (August 2nd). See also O. Praamstra, *Gezond verstand en goede smaak. De kritieken van Conrad Busken Huet*. Amstelveen, 1991, p. 264. Huet was definitely not the only critic who was enthusiastic about this novel.

<sup>30</sup> This was extensively researched for George Sand's reception in the Netherlands, see S. van Dijk, '[George Sand in Nederland. Ontwikkelingen in het receptieonderzoek](#)', in *De Negentiende Eeuw* 34 (2010), pp. 69-91 ([shortened English version here](#)).

<sup>31</sup> The database is currently being developed further in the CLARIN project COBWWWEB (*Connections Between Women and Writings Within European Borders*), focusing mainly on creating the option of connecting to other relevant databases.

number of important questions: whether or not she is representative, what may have been the significance of those many other dozens of women writers<sup>32</sup> in the Netherlands, and how they relate to women writers in other countries (in number and in influence).

The collaboration that set in motion this HERA TTT-project has been active for quite a number of years, as has been stated earlier.<sup>33</sup> Here too one could say - just as we wrote about *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* - that the effect on literary historiography has remained extremely limited. This can be attributed, among other things, to the large scale of the approach, which demands much preparation time. Development of the tools is also a free-standing effort and the actual research is partly dependent on it. This could be seen as an obstacle. Still, we are of the opinion that reception as a starting point, largeness of scale, and a quantitative approach<sup>34</sup> will take us further than when we keep focussing on individual works and authors, of which Schenkeveld and Schenkeveld-Dussen (maybe) justly remark that they will not always appeal to the twenty-first-century reader (p. 7). By emphasizing nineteenth-century reception we allow for female authors to be placed in the context of their time as well. And by making comparisons with four other relatively small countries, in which much the same women writers were read - such as the French Stéphanie de Genlis, the British Ann Radcliffe and the German Luise Mühlbach -, we can comprehend the position of Dutch women writers in an international perspective.

The historiography of female authorship will no longer be a series of individual cases, each presented separately according to the - all too arbitrary - chronological order of birth dates. A meaningful coherence can be demonstrated between women writers who influenced, or on the contrary did not at all influence, each other. This way, female literary historiography itself would also pay attention to the "recalibration of the nineteenth-century reputations [of women writers]" (p. 37) referred to in *Alles is taal geworden*. This would make it 'easier' to integrate these women in the narrative of general literary historiography.

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<sup>32</sup> Many dozens of male authors were not pushed into oblivion as these women were, and they have been given at least some attention in research whereas for female authors we mostly have to start from scratch.

<sup>33</sup> See also <http://www.womenwriters.nl>.

<sup>34</sup> These three aspects combined, including, of course, the use of existing studies dealing with either reception issues (such as for instance T. Streng, *Geschapen om te scheppen? Opvattingen over vrouwen en schrijverschap in Nederland, 1815-1860*. Amsterdam, 1997), or important and relevant results of bookhistorical research (B. de Vries, *Een stad vol lezers. Leescultuur in Haarlem 1850-1920*. Nijmegen, 2011).

Below: added by editorial board of *Historica*

### 1: Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (1812-1886)

This Dutch woman writer is counted among the best Dutch authors of the nineteenth century. She mainly wrote historical novels and she was a contributor to the literary periodical *De Gids*. One of her most famous novels is *Het Huis Lauernesse* (1840), situated during the early years of the Reformation (beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> century): Ottelijne, Lady of the Castle Lauernesse, converts to Protestantism, while her fiancé Aernoud remains a convinced Catholic. In the end, their love does not survive. Bosboom-Toussaint's most popular work was the contemporary *Majoor Frans* (1875), about a woman who is raised as a boy by her father. A "feminine emancipation novel", according to critic Busken Huet. However, in the end major Frans marries her nephew Leopold: the ideal husband, who shows her her rightful place [NB this interpretation is by the ed.board]. A monument in the name of the 'Women of the Netherlands'<sup>35</sup> is located at Bosboom-Toussaint's grave in The Hague.

### 2: Betsy Perk (1833-1906)

A Dutch author of novels and plays and a pioneer of the women's rights movement. In 1869 she founded the feminist weekly periodical *Ons Streven*, which advocated female suffrage and an increase of education and jobs for girls and women. The upbringing of children and the attitude of employer in relation to their maid-servant are also discussed in the periodical. In 1871 Perk started the feminist women's movement Arbeid Adelt with *Onze Roeping*, a periodical which also dealt with women's issues. Arbeid Adelt's main goal was stimulating unmarried upper-class women to sell their handmade works in order to (partially) support themselves. Perk was also the aunt of Jacques Perk (1859-1881).<sup>36</sup> [NB see in text of art.]

### 3: Cécile de Jong van Beek en Donk (1866-1944)

This noble woman was the most famous feminist Dutch author circa 1900. She was president of committee of the National Exhibition of Female Labour (1898) and author of the emancipation novel *Hilda van Suylenburg* (1897), about a woman who is content with both her job as a feminist lawyer and her family. Over ten thousand copies sold in the Netherlands and the novel was translated into German, French and Swedish.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Wikipedia and R. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, pp. 875-878.

<sup>36</sup> Wikipedia and Lotte Jensen, *'Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt'. Vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw*. Hilversum, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Wikipedia.

#### 4: Adriana van Overstraten (1756-1828)

Dutch poet, often alluded to as ‘the mayor’s daughter from Bergen op Zoom’. She was friends for a while with blind poet and novelist Petronella Moens (1762-18843) and collaborated with her. Van Overstraten wrote, among other topics, about her native country and the slave-trade. As early as 1791 she composed the following verse about the latter topic: “Welk schrikbeeld! ach, Amerika! / Wat drinkt ge al walgend hete tranen / van moe gefolterde Afrikanen; / Langs ‘t suikerveld en koffielanen” [What nightmare! oh, America! / With abhorrence you drink hot tears / of weary tortured Africans; / Along sugar-fields and coffee-lanes].<sup>38</sup> The Netherlands eventually abolished slavery in 1863, the (entire) United States of America did so in 1865.

#### 5: Elisabeth Hasebroek (1811-1887)

Dutch novelist, publicist and translator. Being an unmarried woman, Hasebroek managed the household of her brother Johannes Petrus, a minister and writer, for a while. He often received visits from other authors (such as Bosboom-Toussaint), which eventually led to Hasebroek hosting the ‘Kring van Heiloo’ [Circle of Heiloo]. In 1838 she published the novel *Te Laat* (Too late), which offers a psychological analysis of an unhappy couple. Because of this subject matter, her work was considered innovative. [cf. text of art.] Subsequently Hasebroek published the novels *Elize* (1839), *Twee vrouwen* (Two women, 1840), and *De Bedevaartgangers* (The Pilgrims, 1841). Her work was well-received by her contemporaries. The relationship between the sexes is an important theme in her work: there should be congeniality between man and woman in order to reach equality. Later in her life she devoted herself to writing edifying works.<sup>39</sup>

#### Conrad Busken Huet (1826-1886) (see text of article)

Dutch author and most important literary critic of the century. He started out as a minister, but his ideas about religion were too unrestrained. Therefore he became a journalist and literary critic. Until 1866 he was linked to *De Gids*. Due to his razor-sharp critiques he received the nickname ‘the executioner of Haarlem’. He also wrote a novel and several works on cultural history. (source: Wikipedia)

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<sup>38</sup> R. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans...*, pp. 707-711.

<sup>39</sup> <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Hasebroek>.