University of Groningen

Fiction for Peace?

Parlevliet, Sanne

Published in:
International Research in Children's Literature

DOI:
[10.3366/ircl.2015.0146](https://doi.org/10.3366/ircl.2015.0146)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2015

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Parlevliet, S. (2015). Fiction for Peace? Domestic Identity, National Othering and Peace Education in Dutch Historical Novels for Children, 1914-1935. *International Research in Children's Literature*, 8(1), 17-30.
<https://doi.org/10.3366/ircl.2015.0146>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Fiction for Peace? Domestic Identity, National Othering and Peace Education in Dutch Historical Novels for Children, 1914–1935

SANNE PARLEVLIET

Historical fiction for children has long functioned as a continuation of history education. World War I brought about critique on history education in several Western European countries. The nationalistic and chauvinistic representation of historical events was claimed to have contributed to the outbreak of war. In the educational discourse a discussion arose about changing history education into peace education. In this article the impact of this discussion on historical novels for children is investigated. Dutch historical novels for children serve as a case study. The novels are contextualised within the educational debate from the perspective of imagology. Representations of the own identity and national others are analysed, supplemented with an analysis of references to war and peace. The article shows how historical fiction for children held on to the glorification of nationality for a long time, but joined the educational discourse by occasionally framing the represented battles in the spirit of peace education.

Key words: *national history, peace education, identity, imagology, children's literature in the Netherlands*

INTRODUCTION

From the introduction of history education as a compulsory school subject in many Western European countries in the nineteenth century till World War I, history was deployed to arouse pride in and love for the nation in future citizens (Jans; Parlevliet; Ros; Wilschut). Historical figures were presented as national heroes; victorious events were dug up to emphasise the nation's greatness. In line with history education, the historical novel for children was discovered as a powerful means of building national identity. However, during and especially after World War I, these nationalised historical expressions became criticised.

International Research in Children's Literature 8.1 (2015): 17–30

Edinburgh University Press

DOI: 10.3366/ircl.2015.0146

© International Research Society for Children's Literature

www.euppublishing.com/journal/ircl

It was stated that the emphasis on the greatness of one's own nation and people implied, or explicitly brought along, the downgrading of other nations and people. This had poisoned future citizens with nationalistic sentiments and chauvinism, which had contributed to the outbreak of World War I. This critique resulted in the organisation of several international conferences on history education and possible ways to adapt history school books in order to transform history education into peace education, and in pleas for the sifting of chauvinistic books from school libraries (Gunning and Kohnstamm). At the same time, historical fiction remained one of the most popular literary genres for children, often telling about historical battles and times of colonisation and war.

Historical fiction, whether written for children or not, is one of the media for cultivating the national past (Leerssen 'Nationalism'; Rigney). It brings images of the past into circulation, just as historiography, history education, museums or commemorations do, although in a different mode: it muddies fact with fiction. It often focuses on fictional characters caught up in historical moments, governed by the principle of poetic licence, defined by Rigney as 'the freedom in principle to deviate from what is accepted as factual for the purposes of producing artistic works' (82). Together with other mnemonic practices, such as statues, commemorations and historical films, it feeds collective remembrance, spreading familiarity with historical figures and events.

However, the historical novels for children in the period researched for this article do more than bring images of the past into circulation in order to commemorate or build a collective memory. They are explicit agents in the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. They use historical events to transmit social norms and values. These are not the norms and values of the time represented. The novel projects the norms and values of the time of representation onto the time represented. Moreover, by wrapping the stories in explicit and implicit ideological codes the novels not only represent a system of social norms and values but are also attempts to construct a particular view of the world.

The historical novel for children uses its own form, has its own audience and exercises its own degree of authority, just as other mnemonic practices do. Confirmation of historical representations in various practices may reinforce its power. Therefore, parallels between variable mnemonic practices are interesting. Do they reinforce each other by mimicking or echoing representations? Or do they criticise or modify them? This article focuses on the impact of history education on historical novels for children from the perspective of imagology.

Imagology has proved to be a useful method for studying the construction of identities (Beller and Leerssen). An imagologist is concerned with texts, not with real state affairs – that is, in an imagological approach a researcher exclusively studies textual representations of people or nations and will not pronounce on actual identities. Both the stereotypes presented of the own people or nation, auto- or self-images, and notions of the other, hetero-images, are defined. The subjective perspectival framework of the manufacturers of the research material, the senders, brings about the interwovenness of auto-images and hetero-images;

the image of the represented is inextricably bound up with the image of the representant (Leerssen 'Imagology'). In other words, one's own identity is, to a large extent, if not always, constructed in contrast to the other, and otherness is almost inevitably formulated in relation to one's own identity, either explicitly or implicitly. Originating in literary studies, imagology has proven that national stereotypes, self-images and hetero-images, are particularly formulated in and spread through literary texts, such as novels, poems and essayistic work (Beller and Leerssen).

Historical fiction for children seems to allow for varying the readers' distance towards the story, by alternating between the narrator's perspective rooted in the time of representation and the perspective of the main character(s) rooted in the represented time. However, the main characters are often imaginary. Fisher distinguishes two categories of historical fiction: 'those books which use real historical figures and those whose characters are wholly imaginary' (368). In most children's books the story of a real historical event or figure is told through the eyes of an imaginary protagonist. This protagonist is a kind of mediator between the narrator's contemporary perspective and minor historical characters' historic perspective. This brings about the question whether historical fiction was perhaps again used as an extension of history education during the years that the latter was prone to a transformation into peace education. After all, a change of beliefs was what history education was after. This can be characterised by what Rüsen calls the 'political dimension' of historical expressions; an orientation of the past towards the present or the future. Therefore, this article studies the impact of the international discourse on the relevance of history education for peace between nations on historical fiction in a period in which the former was severely criticised and subject to change: circa 1914–1935.

The Dutch discourse on history education and Dutch historical children's books serves as a case study. Therefore, the first database of Dutch historical books for children published between 1914 and 1935 was compiled, consisting of 150 books written by Dutch writers that relate a story based on a period, event or figure in Dutch history that occurred before they were born (Drop; Ros). In order to construct a representative selection for the current study, lists of books that were recommended for children were consulted to determine which books were considered pedagogically appropriate for and attractive to children. Moreover, books that won prizes were selected. Based on the database, the lists and the prizes, eleven books were eventually selected to be analysed (see the list of primary works). As in the nineteenth century, most writers of these historical novels for children were teachers. It can be assumed that they were acquainted with the educational discourse. The other writers worked in other disciplines. It is unknown to what extent they were acquainted with the discussion on history education. However, this discussion originated in the much broader international peace movement that led to the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920. As artists and members of the intellectual elite it can be assumed that they were at least acquainted with this movement. Consequently, it is interesting to investigate whether this influenced their writing and in what ways.

Strikingly, most of the selected books tell about a journey away from the home country. On the one hand, this had to do with the glorifying of the Dutch Golden Age, the seventeenth century, when shipping trade and colonisation thrived; many books are set in that period. On the other hand, the plot of a protagonist leaving home to discover the real world meets the classic narrative structure of children's literature home–departure–adventure–homecoming (Nikolajeva 16), offering exciting possibilities for adventures away from the scrutinising eyes of parents.

Two aspects were investigated. The first aspect concerns references to national identity and representations of other nationalities. This was done from the perspective of imagology. Imagology studies the literary expression of nations. It examines the representation of the own domestic identity (self- or auto-images) and representations of the other (hetero-images) in literary texts (Beller and Leerssen; O'Sullivan). In relation to this, references to war and peace were analysed and compared with the discourse on history education during and after World War I.

HISTORY FOR PEACE

In the second half of the nineteenth century Dutch Christian humanists, who also governed public education, started writing historical fiction for children, attuned to the educational discourse at that time. They aimed at moulding children into future citizens of the nation-state by emphasising national solidarity and civic virtues (Parlevliet). Patriotic pride was one of the main goals. The home country was praised and fighting for it in battles against other countries was often glorified (Parlevliet). From the beginning of World War I this chauvinistic ideology was criticised in debates about history education, and the role of historical fiction was also mentioned in this respect. In a public lecture on the practical value of history, in 1915, the lecturer in history at the University of Amsterdam, M. G. de Boer, stated that historians had been biased and xenophobic: 'Even before the current conflict, historians belonging to the great people of Europe, found it difficult to get rid of all partiality for the own country, all sense of hatred and distrust towards others, when treating national or international matters' (19–20). After World War I history education was even accused of having contributed to the conflict by fostering nationalistic pride and chauvinism (Van der Vlies 53). The idea occurred that if history could contribute to war, the other way around would also be possible. Gerard Heymans, a philosopher and the founder of academic psychology in the Netherlands, who was an early and active member of the Dutch peace movement, was one of the first to propose that history could play a role in preventing war and fostering peace (Dane). One can invoke history to claim that war is inevitable by saying 'there has always been war, so there will always be war', he stated in a public lecture, but history might also point to the opposite: it shows that

the circles within which a war has become impossible, or almost impossible, have continually grown. There have been times in which disputes between individuals,

between cities or small regions were often settled with arms; but step by step they joined together in legal communities, within which taking justice into one's own hands was no longer thought of. Following this line, it becomes clear that she ends in world peace. (Heymans 10–11)

After World War I the critique on the nationalistic and chauvinistic disposition of history education increased and several international conferences were organised to change history education. Also the League of Nations was interested in the matter (Gunning and Kohnstamm 3). In this context (historical) fiction was mentioned as well. A sifting of school libraries for chauvinistic novels was called for (Gunning and Kohnstamm 38). It was claimed that the character building of pupils would be fostered by an objective attitude towards other peoples, individuals, religions and nations, by not keeping silent about the own bad deeds and the good deeds of others, and by emphasising what joins peoples together. Also in international historical fiction for children the glorification of war in service of chauvinism, nationalism and colonialism, which was most often found in historical children's fiction in the nineteenth century, started to be condemned in this period (Dasberg 222–237). However, the positive side of historical children's books was still mentioned as important: narratives were claimed to have the power to immerse children in history (Gunning and Kohnstamm 52–64).

In what way did the pleas to internationalise history education and historical fiction, and to emphasise nations' connections and similarities instead of their differences, influence writers of historical novels for children in this period? To answer this question, first the analysis of the representation of Dutchness and how this was contrasted to other nationalities will be presented. Second, references to war and peace will be evaluated.

DUTCHNESS IS...

The setting of the stories reveals the chauvinistic and nationalistic intents of the authors, for most stories are set in the seventeenth century, which has long been considered to be the most glorious period in Dutch history, the Dutch Golden Age, when overseas trade and colonisation thrived. According to the authors writing about this period during and after World War I, Dutchness was a combination of two things: love for the home country and personality.

Love for the home country was particularly expressed in longing for home, for almost all novels relate about a journey away from home. They all meet the classic narrative structure of children's literature described by Nodelman and Nikolajeva: home–departure–adventure–homecoming. The first two stages, home and the departure from home, are determined by the protagonists' desire for adventure: a young person, driven by the urge to discover the world and have adventures, leaves his family and the home country. However, in all books this is immediately followed by a longing for home during their adventures. This third stage reveals the image of Dutchness the authors want to convey most

clearly, for it is determined by longing for home and explicit expressions of love for the home country. In loving and longing for home several characteristics are ascribed to Holland, and these are characterised as typically Dutch. An analysis of these characteristics of 'home' reveals the auto- or self-image (Leerssen 'Imagology', 29).

The longing for home is often depicted not so much as home within the family, but the home country. It is expressed in memories of customs and habits that are characterised as typically Dutch, such as simple lunches of rye bread and cheese (Valkema Blouw 63), the celebration of Saint Nicholas (Kramer 286; Been *Dubbeltanglers*, 167) and Dutch songs sung by the crew on the ship to still their desire (Fabricius 59, 217, 389). The emphasis on a non-hierarchical structure in work situations is striking: on the ships famous captains help their seamen when needed (Been *Il Tigretto* 13) and it is remembered that in Holland a tailor does the same work as his servants (Valkema Blouw 70). Also objects and settings that were considered to be typically Dutch were mentioned, such as box beds (Fabricius 224), the track boat (Kramer 262), dunes, a long coast, mist, spires and fresh green grass (Den Hertog 112, 289, 294). In addition, the Beggars and the Beggars' flag are honoured (Fabricius 59; Kramer 232). And even negative aspects of the country are missed. For example, Holland was described both ironically and lyrically as 'that miserable damp country of ours' where it was so cosy all the same:

Where, instead of jungles, there were geraniums in a jar on the windowsill; [...] that half flooded piece of land that was only just wadable by pumping hard and with firm boots; [...] that butter-and-cheese-country, where your aunt and your girl knitted you stockings and presented you a nice cup of coffee from the old cracked coffee-pot, that buzzed so nicely above the fire. (Fabricius 160)

And finally, the fourth stage, the homecoming, also adds to the image of Dutchness in the books, as it brings much praise for the country's landscape and customs. For example, when the protagonists eventually come home, the homecoming adds to the image of Holland: it is winter and the boys have to travel on skates (Fabricius 389).

During the adventures the protagonists show several personality traits that are depicted as typically Dutch, often in contrast to personality traits of people of other nations. The authors attempted to realise identification from the readers with the characters by means of their narrators. All books have authoritarian narrators, who link the readers to the historical heroes and characters by repeatedly using the personal pronoun 'we' and the possessive pronoun 'our' in connection with the Dutch characters, the country and symbols of the country. For example, 'we' benefitted from the wind in the sea battle against England in 1666 (Been *Dubbeltanglers*, 85), the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic is called 'our' Republic (Been *Il Tigretto*, 79) and 'our' national anthem 'the Wilhelmus' is referred to as a historical source (Been *Il Tigretto*, 30). This way a connection between contemporary readers and historical heroes, either factional or fictional, was brought about, often from the beginning of the story onward. Consequently,

the Dutchness ascribed to the characters was to be read as something they shared with contemporary readers. Explicit statements of what is specifically Dutch about the characters suggests that the readers have that characteristic too. Or it implies that readers should strive to acquire these characteristics. This seems especially the case when particular characteristics are ascribed to an identification figure for the young readers.

Personality traits were either explicitly connected to Dutchness or implicitly identified as a national characteristic. Explicitly connected to Dutchness by the narrator of the story are, for example, perseverance, royalism, courage, down-to-earthness and love of freedom. The sailors of the Dutch national hero Michiel de Ruyter were described as utterly courageous and persevering: 'The battle was tremendous; but one knows about the Dutch – and our heroes on the lifeboat still show this nowadays – that they would never retreat, unless the battle was either completely won or completely lost' (Been *Il Tigretto*, 17). It was also stated that Dutch sailors are 'down-to-earth, like our national character still is, whatever the circumstances' (Been *Dubbelgangers*, 169). And Dutch fishermen were 'full of courage and fearlessness in their profession' (Hoogewerff 108). In addition, in many of the books the Prince of Orange is highly praised: 'His inspiring words, his unlimited faith in the help of God and his enormous self-sacrifice, which made him sacrifice everything he had on the altar of the suppressed fatherland, kept the hope of our people alive and incited it to great deeds' (Kieviet 5).

Implicit national identification was done in three ways: (1) by ascribing the characteristic to a historical person who was glorified as a Dutch hero, (2) by national 'othering' (contrasting other nations or people with the Dutch) and (3) by ascribing the characteristic to the fictional hero, who was presented as the identification figure for young readers.

Dutch heroes were most often described as pious, fatherly, friendly, good-natured and gifted with supernatural or even biblical talents. Examples of Dutch heroes that were presented in the books are the famous seventeenth-century shipmasters Michiel de Ruyter, Willem IJsbrandtsz. Bontekoe and Jan Pietersz. Coen. For example, Michiel de Ruyter is described as a hero who repeatedly prays and reads the Bible (Been *Il Tigretto*, 11, 15, 44). Bontekoe is good-natured, and leads his sailors as a father figure, affectionately and with care, but stern (Fabricius 158, 184). Almost all historical heroes are described as friendly, at least to the protagonists, and good to their sailors. For example, Bontekoe allows them a drink now and then (Fabricius 88), De Ruyter teaches his cabin boys friendly lessons and his sailors feel safe with him (Been *Il Tigretto*, 9–10). In many books, the historical heroes are even ascribed supernatural talents or compared with biblical figures. For example, De Ruyter senses thunderstorms and is described as 'the saviour of our people' (Been *Il Tigretto*, 13, 45). And Coen is stated to be able to see into the future (Den Hertog 173).

National othering produced the characteristics peace-loving, reliable, neat and civilised. The first two characteristics are given in contrast to individuals from other Western European countries. For example the Spanish are presented as villains trying everything to thwart and hurt others (Den Hertog). They

are mean, truculent, shifty, unreliable, cruel and cowardly, while the Dutch protagonists hate fighting and cruelty, are unconditionally loyal to their captain, their country and each other and very honest. The English are regicides, traitors, unfaithful, unjust, not united, bad, stupid, inhospitable, stiff and eager for money, while the Dutch protagonist loves the Prince of Orange, is smart, loyal, disciplined, devoted, strong, keeps the sailors united and is keen on non-material values, such as patriotism, scorning riches (Been *Il Tigretto*). The second two characteristics, neatness and civilisation, are given in contrast to non-Western European people, mostly Asian and Arabic people met on journeys to the East. For example, Banten is described as a dirty place from which many Dutchmen would never return (Den Hertog 136). One of the protagonists abhors black people 'with their pencil-coloured skin, fat lips and black frizz' and 'he wiped his sleeve whenever he accidentally touched one' (Kieviet 61). Another abhors the skull in his new shipmaster's cabin and is relieved when he finds out that 'the head did not belong to a human being; it belonged to an Arab!' (Fabricius 359). Indians are described as quick and reliable but also naïve, stupid and childish (Kramer 25, 49, 62, 71, 86–87). And European countries are depicted as more civilised than African countries, because the former would declare war before making a raid, while the latter do so without warning (Been *Il Tigretto*, 279). Similarly, it is stated that black people kill for fun, while white people would never do that (Kieviet 183). It is striking that, although individuals from other Western European nations might be described as the other, when it comes to battles, the 'othering' shifts from nations to skin colours or religions: Christians against 'brown scoundrels' (Been *Il Tigretto*, 241).

The last strategy of implicit national identification aimed at imitation by presenting fictional protagonists young readers could identify with. They are often, at least in the beginning of the book, of the same age as the intended readers and display particular characteristics that are presented as worth following. Some of these characteristics are presented in contrast to those of individuals from other nations, implying they are typical for Dutch citizens, such as faithfulness, patriotism, a sense of justice, diligence and family-mindedness. Other characteristics are not so much connected to Dutchness but seem to be an attempt to make the protagonist admirable, so as to become someone whom readers would like to resemble. Intelligence and bravery are examples that are often found in this respect.

A good example of faithfulness and patriotism is the loyalty to Holland of one of the protagonists. Young boy Bast is treated quite badly in Holland, but he is treated well with the Dunkirks. However, he does not want to forget his home country, he feels a bond with it and would not for all the tea in China betray it by becoming a Dunkirk. More than that, he blames the Dunkirks for collaborating with the enemy (the Spanish), although they are originally Dutch (Hoogewerff 171–173, 187). Also, all protagonists are particularly faithful to the historical heroes.

A sense of justice is also praised in the protagonists, and this is often connected with sympathy for the vulnerable. For example, Bast may be rude and

ill-mannered but he throws himself into the breach for a sickly girl and he is good to animals (Hoogewerff 20, 31). One of the other characters, Diederik, wants to become a knight and even swears he will never be 'cruel and bad towards the poor and vulnerable of this world' (Visser 28).

A characteristic all protagonists share is diligence. Without exception they are hard workers for the good cause, which is of course the fatherland or the success of the Dutch historical hero they serve. Often this is already emphasised in the beginning of the story, when the protagonist is introduced: 'Pieter Janszoon Weert had a keen mind and his mother had taught him what it meant to work' (Den Hertog 7–8). The protagonists are most often from low birth, but they manage to rise through the ranks by working hard.

Family-mindedness is expressed by the protagonists showing much respect towards their parents, sacrifices for family members and a high esteem of family values. For example, when one of the protagonists badly wants to become a sailor, but his mother forbids it, he obeys. However, when he is forced to join the Dutch East India Company, he gets what he wanted, without disobeying his mother (Den Hertog 42). Another joins a pirate for the sake of saving his brother from slavery (Kieviet). Even the historical heroes themselves value family matters a lot: Michiel de Ruyter envies 'the poorest beggar' for at least he 'daily experiences the love of his wife and children' (Been *Il Tigretto*, 44).

Intelligence and bravery are presented as worth following for readers in all novels. The protagonists are all smarter than the rest of the characters (cf. Den Hertog 101; Visser 23), often even smarter than adults and hierarchies (cf. Fabricius 110; Hoogewerff 14), although many of them come from poor families (cf. Been 12). Here, a typical meritocratic ideal becomes apparent, which is paralleled by the life story of one of the historical heroes, Michiel de Ruyter: 'the rascal from Vlissingen, who had himself to blame for not receiving enough education and already went to sea at the age of eleven, but [...] learned to read and write by himself' (Been *Il Tigretto*, 8).

Adding to this, the protagonists, who are identification figures for the readers, are always also modest and hard workers. In the course of the story, they are able to show that intelligence and diligence does not make them pen-pushers or chickens. All protagonists without exception bravely conquer great difficulties in battles or on hostile territory. Indeed, they are the young saviours essential to children's adventure stories, either historical, science fiction or fantasy (Thacker 16). They save other characters (cf. Zandstra 47, 53; Knuttel-Fabius), or without them the historical heroes would not have succeeded.

A last characteristic that is often found in the protagonists is devotion to a historical hero. This way the importance of the characteristics ascribed to the historical heroes were even more emphasised. By focalising the historical hero through a character with whom the reader could identify, the writers tried to influence the beliefs of the readers; by accentuating the greatness of the Dutch hero using a protagonist the reader could identify with, their views might easily be adopted; De Ruyter, Bontekoe and Coen are both fathers and models for the protagonists.

FICTION FOR PEACE

The glorification of the Dutch country and character, and the explicit national othering, does not seem to allow much space for the appeal from the educational discourse to emphasise what joins nations together and for fostering peace between nations by showing children unbiased representations of other cultures. However, in contrast to historical novels for children from the second half of the nineteenth century, in which battles and war were often glorified (Parlevliet), in many of the novels in this period there are references to the undesirability of war and the desirability of peace. In one of the novels, even the subjectivity of animosity is emphasised. The discourse on history for peace takes shape in two ways. The first consists of statements on the undesirability of war put into the mouths of characters, thereby suggesting that a critical stance towards war is a transhistorical value. Stephens refers to this as 'the authority of historical actuality' (208). The second is a narrator critically reflecting on the misery of war, often by comparing ideas on war and peace in the represented time with the time of representation, thereby presenting ideas on war and peace as historically determined.

Characters reflecting on war emphasise the suffering it causes. In the case of a historical hero, these kinds of statements gain even more authority. Even conquering enemies is sad, Michiel de Ruyter sighs, 'because of the dead' (Been *Il Tigretto*, 285). Sometimes, a protagonist declares himself against war, for example a Dutch settler in New Amsterdam. He calls himself a 'man of peace' (Kramer 230). Often the misery of war for wives, children and mothers is emphasised by characters because it causes the death of husbands and fathers or sons (cf. Been *Il Tigretto*, 84). One of the authors wrote: 'the hearts of many brisk men pounded when thinking of wife and children and his faith awaiting' (Hoogewerff 131). Another stated that, after signing peace with the Indians, the settlers in New Amsterdam 'had even more opportunity than usual to think about the consequences of the waged war. How many families did not grieve over the loss of a family member, where had the cruel battle not resulted in financial loss?' (Kramer 236–237) Also minor characters hold this opinion: 'You see, if it would be up to fathers and mothers to declare war, I think it would never come to war,' a fisherman contemplates (Been *Dubbelgangers*, 134).

At times a striking plea for empathy with national others was also found. In one of the books a minor character, a working-class woman, explains to one of the main characters that her idea about cultural groups is based on a subjective perspective:

Just as rightfully as we call African monarchs pirates, these African monarchs could [...] treat the Dutch and the English to the name of pirate. They took from Christians what they could nick and take; the Christians did the same to them. [...] Privateer may be a word that an old woman in the house for the poor would shudder and shiver with [...] but again it depends on the point of view. Living in Dunkirk, there are not enough words of abuse and condemnations to denounce their meanness and mercilessness. (Been *Il Tigretto*, 279)

On the other hand, she emphasises that in Zeeland people tell about them on stormy nights and boys go to sleep dreaming of being a privateer one day.

Narrators devote their reflections far more often to war and peace than characters, thereby revealing the ideas of the implied author. In some novels they stick to emphasising the misery of war (cf. Been *Il Tigretto*, 277). Most narrators, however, go beyond stating that war is miserable. They compare the ideas on war in the represented time with contemporary ideas, either by presenting a teleological view of history by claiming that contemporary people have more sense than their ancestors, or by explicitly doubting whether people have become any wiser. For example, one of the narrators explains that his protagonist was 'a child of his time and not of sentimental descent', therefore he was able to watch a cruel battle (Hoogewerff 190). This implies that the scene would be too cruel for children of later (read: his, more refined) times. Others were more explicit in their comparisons and also more negative. For example by referring to the contemporary discussion on peace education:

When such a disaster befalls man, they want to point out a culprit. The true culprit was the war itself, but the people from the seventeenth century could not see that yet, even we can't, although the shimmering of dawn is breaking in this respect. (Been *Dubbelgangers*, 26)

However, later in the same novel this shimmering of dawn is doubted: 'Peace on earth for those who mean well. No, the harsh generation of the seventeenth century did not understand the deep meaning of these words. Do we, children of the twentieth century, who *think* to finally feel them?' (Been *Dubbelgangers*, 168–169) And in another novel World War I is even explicitly mentioned as the reason to doubt contemporaries' understanding of war as something that should be prevented: 'People then did not see any harm [in robbing enemies], and the question is if people in this enlightened twentieth century have made any essential progress. The last World War displayed terrible things in that respect' (Kieviet 161).

The effect of characters referring to an idea that was strongly present in the political and educational discourse of the time of representation is very different from the effect of narrators vocalising it. By putting the statements on war and peace into the mouths of historical characters, the authors suggested that their characters think and experience life the same way as people living in the time of representation. Consequently, the critical stance towards war was presented as a transhistorical value. Narrators, however, situated on a different level from characters, are mediators between the characters and the readers. In the case of the novels investigated for this article, most narrators situate themselves in the time of the readers, so in the time of representation, by mentioning 'we' and 'our time' when addressing readers directly. Consequently, their reflections on the undesirability of war were presented as contemporary, as an idea determined by historical time. This does not change the ideology of the novels, in both ways the message is that war is bad and should be avoided. In the first way, this is a hidden ideology without any historical relativism. The second way, narrators

emphasising the message, is more explicitly didactic, forging truths from facts (Stephens 202). It allows for the idea of impertinence (Brecht in McCallum 167), but also implies an idea of historical progress, of the time of representation being better than the represented time.

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century, Dutch historical fiction for children had been a continuation of history education. When history education started to be criticised, during and especially after World War I, historical fiction partly moved away from the ideals expressed in the new educational discourse. While the educational discourse aimed at a change of history education in favour of promoting the League of Nations and peace between nations by internationalising history education, emphasising similarities instead of differences and highlighting what joins nations together, Dutch historical novels for children clung to their nationalistic representation of history, presenting Dutchness to surpass other nationalities in character. Young readers were stimulated to identify with historical representations in order to realise a meeting of minds between the author, conveying an ideological view on historical heroes, events and circumstances, and the reader. Identification was stimulated by referring to historical heroes, fictional historical protagonists, other characters, the narrator of the story and the readers as a group, commanding a sense of belonging by using personal and possessive pronouns such as 'we' and 'our', presenting historical heroes, and especially fictional historical protagonists, as admirable characters worthy to imitate in behaviour. Consequently, the implicit message is a transhistorical value of certain characteristics that are connected to Dutchness. This might not so much have caused changes of beliefs, but it aimed at implantations of beliefs about the greatness of the Netherlands and the Dutch. Changes of beliefs do seem to be intended by remarks about the undesirability and misery of war. Characters mentioning war as something miserable, and especially narrators claiming that war should be avoided, join the new goal of history education. Consequently, the impact of the new discourse on history education did not seem to have influenced the preference for glorifying the own nation and drawing an exciting adventure story from historical battles and times of violent colonisation in historical novels for children, but it did influence the frame in which the stories were put. Omnipresent third-person narrators bring about the shifting between identification and observation by explicitly emphasising the differences between the represented time and the time of representation when it comes to the issue of war and peace.

WORKS CITED

Primary works

- Been, Johan. *Om de schatten van Il Tigretto*. Alkmaar: Kluitman, 1920.
 —. *De dubbelgangers. Een verhaal uit den tijd van Michiel de Ruijter*. Alkmaar: Kluitman, 1927.

- Defoe, Daniel. *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner*. London/New York, 1719.
- Fabricius, Johan. *De scheepjongens van Bontekoe*. Den Haag: Leopold, 1924.
- Hertog, Ary den. *De nar van Jacatra. Een verhaal uit den tijd van Jan Pieterszoon Coen*. Den Haag: G. B. Van Goor Zonen's U.M., 1931.
- Hoogewerff, Godfried Christiaan. *Onder de Duinkerkers*. Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1928.
- Kieviet, Cornelis Johannes. *De zeeroover van Oostzaan*. Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1927.
- Knuttel-Fabius, Elize. *Sterk en trouw*. Den Haag: Van Goor, 1932.
- Kramer, Jan Gerrit. *Barend Cool. De scheepjongen van de Nieuw Nederland*. Alkmaar: Kluitman, 1925.
- Valkema Blouw, J. P. *De wedstrijd over den oceaan*. Rotterdam: W. L. & J. Brusse, 1928.
- Visser, P. *De zoon van den wapensmid*. Alkmaar: Kluitman, 1918.
- Zandstra, Evert. *De Friezen van het Flevomeer*. Alkmaar: Kluitman, 1930.

Secondary works

- Beller, Manfred and Joep Leerssen (eds). *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters – A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2007.
- Boer, Michael Georg de. *Over de Practische en de Wetenschappelijke Waarde der Jongste Geschiedenis*. Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1915.
- Dane, Jacques. “‘Waarde Henriëtte’ Over twee onbekende brieven uit 1914 van de Groningse filosoof en psycholoog Gerard Heymans aan een onderwijzeres’. *Cultuuroverdracht als pedagogisch motief. Historische en actuele perspectieven op onderwijs, sekse en beroep. Liber amicorum voor Mineke van Essen*. Eds Greetje Timmerman, Nelleke Bakker, Jeroen J. H. Dekker. Groningen: Barkhuis, 2007. 109–126.
- Dasberg, Lea. *Het kinderboek als opvoeder. Twee eeuwen pedagogische normen en waarden in het historische kinderboek in Nederland*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981.
- Drop, Willem. *Verbeelding en historie. Verschijningsvormen van de Nederlandsche historische roman in de negentiende eeuw* [1958]. Utrecht: Hes, 1972.
- Fisher, Janet. ‘Historical fiction’. *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*. Ed. Peter Hunt. London: Routledge, 1996. 368–376.
- Gunning, Johannes Hermanus and Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (eds). *Over geschiedenisonderwijs. Verslag van de conferentie op 7 november 1925 te Amsterdam. Losse paedagogische studiën*. Groningen: Wolters, 1926.
- Heymans, Gerardus. *De oorlog en de vredesbeweging*. Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1914.
- Jans, Jasper. *The Politics of History Education: Teaching National History, Identity and Citizenship in Belgium and the Netherlands, 1830–1880*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. European University Institute Florence, Italy, 2014.
- Leerssen, Joep. ‘Imagology: history and method’. *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters – A Critical Survey*. Eds M. Beller and J. Leerssen. Amsterdam, 2007. 17–32.
- Leerssen, Joep. ‘Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture’. *Nations and Nationalism* 12 (2008): 559–578.
- McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. New York/London: Garland, 1999.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. *Children’s Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*. New York: Garland, 1996.
- Nodelman, Perry. *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*. New York: Longman, 1991.
- O’Sullivan, Emer. ‘Imagology Meets Children’s Literature’. *International Research in Children’s Literature* 4.1 (2011): 1–14.
- Parlevliet, Sanne. ‘Bring up the Children: National and Religious Identity and Identification in Dutch Children’s Historical Novels 1848–c.1870’. *History of Education* 43.4 (2014): 468–486.

- Rigney, Ann. 'Semantic Slides: History and the Concept of Fiction'. *History-making: The Intellectual and Social Formation of a Discipline*. Eds Rolf Torstendahl, Imrline Veit-Brause. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1996. 31–46.
- . 'Fiction as Mediator in National Remembrance'. *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts*. Eds Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas, Andrew Mycock. New York: Berghahn, 2008. 79–96.
- Ros, Bea. 'Het verleden als vehikel voor het heden. Historische jeugdboeken'. *Een land van waan en wijs. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse jeugdliteratuur*. Eds Rita Ghesquière, Vanessa Joosen, Helma van Lierop-Debrauwer. Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2014. 280–310.
- Rüsen, Jörn. 'Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development'. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Ed. Peter Seixas. Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2004. 63–85.
- . 'Memory, History and the Quest for the Future'. *History Teaching, Identities and Citizenship*. Eds Luigi Cajani, Alistair Ross. Staffordshire: Trentham Books, 2007. 13–34.
- Scheff, Thomas Joel. *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual and Drama*. Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1979.
- Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. London: Longman, 1992.
- Thacker, Deborah. *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Vlies, Titia van der. 'Van nationale heldenonderwijs tot "vredesvak". Hoe twee wereldoorlogen het schoolvak geschiedenis veranderden'. *Geschiedenis Magazine* 4 (2014): 52–55.
- Wilschut, Arie. *Beelden van tijd. De rol van historisch tijdsbewustzijn bij het leren van geschiedenis*. Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2011.

Sanne Parlevliet has a doctorate from the University of Groningen for a thesis on children's adaptations of the classics, and subsequently received a post-doctoral grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) to investigate national identity in historical fiction for children. Sanne teaches in the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen. She is also author of the children's books *Zus* (Sister, 2008) and *Juttersjong* (Beachcombing Young, 2011).