

# Religious Images of the Netherlands in Italy: An Analysis of Press Articles and Novel Translations

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## ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to investigate the image of the Netherlands in Italy, a topic which has so far received scant attention in Dutch Studies. Drawing on the theoretical framework of imagology<sup>1</sup> – which analyses how clichés about a country or a population appear in different communication media – this study will lie its focus on the contrast between the stereotypes on the Netherlands spread by the Italian press and the image of the Dutch that emerges from the translation of Dutch novels into Italian. An online search into the archives of the two most sold Italian newspapers<sup>2</sup> from 1990 to 2017 and the database of Dutch novels translated into Italian in the same time span revealed that the Netherlands is portrayed in two different ways, especially when it comes to religion-related debates. The results seem to suggest that different media tend to create different images of the same country.

## Introduction

This study aims to shed light into one of the most long-standing stereotypes ever existed, which concerns the opposition between North and South and, in particular, the way in which these two poles tend to stereotype each other when dealing with religion-related topics. The theoretical framework hinges on imagology, which is ‘the study of an intellectual discourse on national characteristics and commonplaces’.<sup>3</sup> In imagological literature, religion is often referred to as one of the main features defining the national character of a nation, and is therefore very much likely to be stereotyped. This is why the imagological dualism North/South<sup>4</sup> could well be understood in religious terms, as a dichotomy between traditionalist and secularized nations. The case study brought forward in this paper illustrates how a Southern, mostly traditionalist country – Italy – looks at a Northern, mostly progressive one, the Netherlands. The perspective adopted is twofold: it seeks to investigate the image of the Netherlands built by the Italian press and by translated Dutch novels in Italy in the period from 1990 to 2017. The question that this study seeks to address is: when religion-related topics are dealt with, do the press and translated literature present a different image of the Dutch to Italian readers?

To investigate this matter further, this contribution will be divided into three parts. The section entitled “The Construction of Stereotypes about the Dutch in Italy” will gain insights into the way in which Italy looks at the Netherlands, and how it stereotypes the Dutch when it

comes to religion. In this part of the study, reference will be made to some cultural and historical features, which could explain why certain stereotypes about religion in the Netherlands have been created. The “Methodology” part will show some examples taken from the online archives of the Italian newspapers *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* from 1990 to 2017, which illustrate the main religion-related stereotypes that Italian journalists attribute to the Netherlands. Two topics which are strictly connected to the image of the Netherlands as a tolerant country – gay marriages and euthanasia – were chosen for the news analysis. The reason why these two themes were selected is that the implementation of laws regulating gay marriages and euthanasia has always been opposed by Italian Catholic political forces, which has led the press to express fierce criticism towards the Netherlands. The section entitled “Religion May Come Back in Literature” will scrutinize religious images by showing a few examples taken from a corpus of 94 Dutch novels translated into Italian from 1990 to 2017. Throughout the paper, a special focus will be placed on the contrast between the self-image and the hetero-image of the Dutch. The first concerns the way the Dutch describe their religious feelings in literature, while the second deals with the opinions expressed by Italians on the Dutch. Therefore, as far as religion is concerned, the hetero-images of the Italian press presenting the Netherlands as a ‘country without God’ will be compared with the abundance of religious references that can be found in modern Dutch literature, which reveal a very different self-image of this country.

## **The Construction of Stereotypes about the Dutch in Italy<sup>5</sup>**

In order to investigate how Italian readers construct religion-related stereotypes about the Netherlands, a closer look at the differences between these two countries could prove fruitful to highlight the way in which religious issues and traditions have been one of the main determinants of prejudice between Italy and the Netherlands. Furthermore, to analyze in detail Italy’s perspective as the *spectant*<sup>6</sup> country in this context, special attention needs to be paid to the link between religious faith and political progress, which could be one of the main looking glasses through which the Italian people construct clichés about others, and could help explain why a certain image about the Netherlands has been created in this country. As for religion, the Netherlands and Italy present a completely different historical background. An overview of the history of the Low Countries illustrates that the Netherlands has traditionally been regarded as a world region where religious tolerance has prospered, especially from the Age of the Enlightenment (18th–19th centuries). According to de Vries:

The Dutch Republic was the perfect breeding ground for modern ideas, enjoying as it did a strong cultural and intellectual tradition of tolerance, republicanism, and individual freedom. The power of the church, the crown, and the aristocracy had long been curtailed here, and there was a strong publishing trade.<sup>7</sup>

It is therefore clear in this statement that this climate of tolerance has brought, over the years, a great deal of social progress in the Netherlands. The very concept of tolerance, for which the Dutch are famous, was mainly linked to religion, and several scholars<sup>8,9</sup> have argued that religious tolerance represents still today a substantial part of the Dutch image and self-image. As Parker points out: “The reputation of the Dutch for religious toleration grew from the nineteenth century onward, as Protestant and liberal historians identified tolerance as a central component of the *Nederlandisch* society, and religious liberality as innate to their national

character.’<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, like several other stereotypes, tolerance is a concept which can be subject to a negative and a positive interpretation. On the one hand, it is often seen as the main condition allowing peaceful coexistence to thrive. On the other, and especially in more recent times, it could have been linked to certain permissive policies which regulate the free use of drugs and the liberalization of prostitution and euthanasia.<sup>11</sup> This aspect, combined with the statistics showing the increasing secularization in this country,<sup>12</sup> could have created a fertile ground for the spreading of the image of the Netherlands as a lax country, especially in Southern European regions, which have often been stereotyped as greatly attached to religious traditions.<sup>13</sup>

The latter aspect has been confirmed by sociological studies,<sup>14</sup> which analysed the role that the stereotypes attributed to Southern Europeans by school pupils in Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. The two sets of clichés which characterized Southern Europeans were (1) empathic (helpful, friendly) and (2) emotional (enjoying life, religious). These findings reveal not only that stereotypes are acquired and internalized at an early age, but also that the description of Southern populations as attached to religious traditions has been constant throughout the years. Although the stereotyped association ‘Northern-secularized’ and ‘Southern-religious’ deserves further investigation – especially in the light of recent data illustrating that secularization is gaining ground in Southern countries as well<sup>15</sup> – the way in which Italy looks at the Netherlands is particularly interesting for several reasons.

The first is that the Roman Catholic Church has a long-standing tradition because it was established on the Italian territory. Recent statistics have shown that Italy ranks 9 among the most Christian countries in the world, with 83% of the population declaring itself Catholic.<sup>16</sup> The second aspect concerns the profound influence that the Catholic Church has had on Italian politics, especially on those topics which are strictly connected with religion, such as gay marriage, prostitution, euthanasia, living will, assisted in vitro fertilization, de facto couples and research on human embryonic stem cells. The meddling of the Church in these state affairs is perhaps one of the aspects that renders the Netherlands and Italy two completely different societies. Nevertheless, this does not mean that religious parties did not exist in the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, throughout the 20 century, a few religious parties have been present (and still are present today) in the Dutch Parliament, among which the Christian Democratic Appeal and the Christian Union. There was even a period, between 1958 and 1965, in which the then Catholic People’s Party reached the peak of its popularity and managed to obtain more than 30% of votes in the 1963 elections. However, ‘in the 1960s and 1970s, the Netherlands was a country where Roman Catholics [...] transformed themselves almost overnight from a reliably orthodox part of the church to some of the church’s most progressive critics’.<sup>18</sup> As Frijhoff points out:<sup>19</sup>

In their struggle since the 1960s to modernise the Catholic Church against the moral conservatism of the Vatican, Dutch Catholics invariably point to their unique history, which has brought them into the sphere of Calvinist culture: work ethic, rejection of hypocrisy, moral purity, individualism, sobriety in the expression of one’s faith, with a liturgy close to one’s everyday experience. In their contacts with Catholics from other cultures, Dutch Catholics often felt decidedly Protestant, and certainly non-Vatican.

In contrast to that, not only did in Italy the Christian Democratic Party almost undisputedly wield its political power from 1944 to 1994, but, in collusion with the Catholic Church, this party and its successors have considerably delayed the approval of several civil rights pieces of

legislation. Suffice it to mention the approval of the divorce law in 1970, the non-existing legislation on euthanasia and the entry into force of the law on gay marriages in 2016, with considerable delay compared to other Western European countries. If on the one hand, the Dutch *verzuiling*, i.e. the political and religious segregation of a society, has marked Dutch political life, characterized by a milder influence of religious ideologies, on the other, a glance at the above political events in Italy reveals that the Catholic Church has had (and still has) a rather strong influence on the Italian political life. For these reasons, it could be hypothesized that the Italians construct images of the Netherlands through the lens of the imagotype 'morality vs. permissiveness'. As Kennedy points out:

All of these progressive projects strengthened the image of the Netherlands as an uncommonly liberal country – both within the Netherlands and abroad. But it was not only progressive movements and legislation that informed the Dutch image of themselves. They also tend to think of themselves as a well-regulated country [...].<sup>20</sup>

Although there are very few studies on the way the Italians see the Dutch,<sup>21</sup> if a Google search for word combination 'stereotypes/Holland' is made, several websites appear. In one of these websites,<sup>22</sup> the Dutch are said to be 'a non-religious population which has legalised drugs, prostitution and euthanasia and whose capital, Amsterdam, is referred to as "the city of sin"'.<sup>23</sup> Other Italian websites, especially those who provide tourist information, indicate that the Dutch are 'cannabis users, night-club goers, wearing clogs and carrying tulips with them',<sup>24</sup> 'heavy cannabis users'<sup>25</sup> and that the Netherlands is 'the country where you can take driving lessons in return for sex'.<sup>26</sup> The Netherlands is often referred to also as *la liberalissima Olanda* (The oh-so liberal Holland),<sup>27</sup> *l'Olanda permissiva e libertaria* (Permissive and libertarian Holland)<sup>28</sup> and *la Mecca della trasgressione* (the Mecca of transgression).<sup>29</sup> This is the reason why, during the recent debate about the declarations made by Dijsselbloem on Southern European countries, which were said to waste their money on alcohol and women, Italian newspapers replied with one of the most long-standing stereotypes about the Netherlands. Among these we find:

the concept of corruption changes according to the latitude: in the Netherlands, for example, where the individual tax evasion is rather low, Starbucks enjoyed a very generous fiscal agreement. A 'double Dutch'. We know nothing about this agreement except that the EU has declared it irregular. Is this their interpretation of Calvinism?<sup>30</sup>

However, as imagologists point out,<sup>31</sup> every stereotype also features some contrary characteristics. If, on the one hand, the Netherlands is seen as 'the country of permissivism and nonconformism par excellence, where drugs are legally and serenely sold in the streets, where euthanasia is a formally recognized practice and where gay marriages do not cause outcry as they do in Italy',<sup>32</sup> other sources, though few, describe the Netherlands as a country full of contradictions, especially as far as religion is concerned. As one article in *la Repubblica* pointed out, 'A very curious country, the Netherlands: ultra-organized, but flexible when it comes to implementing the double-track policy; conservative and, for this reason, avant-garde; solidarist and individualist; Calvinist and hedonist [...]'.<sup>33</sup> This second image of the Netherlands represents the other side of the coin, which leads to hypothesize that the clichés attached to a country or a population can vary, and above all, that this change in perception could depend on the medium which transmits them. For example, in a left-wing Italian newspaper, *Il Manifesto*, this traditionalist side of the Dutch is brought forward:

In a secular but strongly Calvinist country, in which the translation of the Bible has been regarded as the most important book in the Dutch language, several writers have devoted to religious themes – particularly to the life in the most orthodox Protestant communities – novels with a high impact. These are Jan Siebelink, Willem Jan Otten and other writers who are very famous in the Netherlands, such as Maarten 't Hart.<sup>34</sup>

In the light of these premises, one question remains unanswered: when it comes to religion-related stereotypes, does the Italian press present a contrasting picture of the Netherlands compared to that illustrated by the literary field? To that end, an overview of the image spread by the Italian press and by the translation of Dutch contemporary fiction into Italian will be provided to gain insight into the image that Italy has of the Netherlands (hetero-image) and the image that the Dutch have of themselves (self-image).

## Methodology

The methodology proposed in this paper is twofold: the first part will deal with the image of the Netherlands created by the Italian press concerning certain religion-related topics. Drawing on the theories advanced by van Doorslaer,<sup>35</sup> it could be argued that the press plays a key role in the production and the dissemination of stereotypes: 'It seems to be self-evident when studying national images and cultural representation that translation and journalism studies should also consult the findings of imagology or image studies, the discipline that studies how nations and nationalities are represented.' The second part will show an outline of the presence of religion in Dutch contemporary literature in the novels translated into Italian to see whether the image shown by the press is different from that contained in translated Dutch literature. The results obtained from the two most widespread Italian newspapers (*La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*) will be shown. The newspaper articles were selected on the basis of on two main religion-related topics: euthanasia and gay marriages. In the two newspapers under scrutiny, 810 occurrences in total were found for the word combination 'Olanda/Paesi Bassi' (Holland/the Netherlands) and the two above-mentioned topics for the time span 1990–2017. In the newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, 66 references to gay marriages and 242 references to euthanasia were found. However, this analysis will take into account only the 21 articles which are devoted exclusively to the situation in the Netherlands and in which the words 'Holland/The Netherlands' appear in the title. In the newspaper *La Repubblica*, the Netherlands is mentioned in 90 articles on the topic of gay marriages and in 412 on euthanasia. However, only 15 articles focus only on this country, which is why they were selected for the purpose of this study.

The second analysis will provide some examples of the presence of religion in Dutch literature. A bibliographical search of the most translated authors into Italian in this period shows that several Dutch novels published from 1990 to 2017 contain several references to religion. Two research tools were adopted for this study: the translation database of the *Dutch Foundation for Literature* and the volume on the Italian translations of Dutch books.<sup>36</sup> In the database, the following criteria were set for the online research: the time frame (1990–2017), the literary genre (fiction), the language (Italian) and the type of funding the book received. In this case, the options 'Nederlands Letterenfonds' and 'Literair Productiefonds' were selected since the two, which were once separate institutions, were merged in 2010. Moreover, it was possible to choose between published and forthcoming books, and in this case, only the option 'published' was ticked. Based on these criteria and after eliminating all the reprints, 94

books made up the final selection of the corpus. After providing an overview of the occurrence of religion in translated Dutch literature, the case study of *Mystiek Lichaam* by Frans Kellendonk, translated into Italian in 2009, will be scrutinized to illustrate the extent to which religion is present in Dutch translated fiction.

## **'A Country without God': The Representation of the Netherlands in the Italian Press**

Some of the examples quoted above have shown that the Italian press tends to represent the Netherlands as a land where religion is considered a marginal aspect of the life of its population. The progressive policies implemented in the Netherlands have led, over time, to the construction of a certain auto-image :

The Netherlands was able to develop a sober and clearheaded approach to social issues that perplexed other societies. In this way, the Netherlands was able to develop a strong brand recognition. It was not only a charming country of dykes and tulips, but a country with a different moral ethos. For that reason the Netherlands could become a Mecca not only for the hordes of tourists who visited the country's coffee shops and Amsterdam's Red Light District, but also for the occasional sojourner who sought [...] assistance from a Dutch physician in ending his or her life.<sup>37</sup>

In the light of this 'sober' and 'clearheaded' approach to certain social issues, the Netherlands could be said to project an image of itself, which was received in other countries – and especially in traditionalist countries like Italy – as that of a non-religious country. A Google search of the terms 'Holland/the Netherlands' and 'religion/church' shows that the Netherlands is a nation of non-believers: *Holland without Christ*,<sup>38</sup> *Holland. For the first time, the number of atheists exceeds that of believers*<sup>39</sup> and *Holland, record of Churches fallen into disuse*,<sup>40</sup> *Religion and liberal spirit in Holland*<sup>41</sup> are only a few examples showing how the Netherlands is depicted by the Italian press. It should be noted, however, that according to Brambilla<sup>42</sup> and Loporcaro,<sup>43</sup> the Italian press is characterized by an extreme lack of objectivity, which tends to mix facts and opinions without making a distinction between them. Drawing on Hunston, who divides assertions into facts, assessments and hypotheses, Caimotto adds:

A fact makes an assertion open to verification while an assessment does not. Hunston points out that assessments can be presented as if they were a fact: this is what, according to Brambilla and Loporcaro, happens in Italian newspapers more often than appropriate.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, even though the above-mentioned newspaper titles claim to analyse facts, the way in which they present these facts in the text could be rather subjective:

Being Dutch means being an individual who has an opinion about everything and says it to your face even if you don't like it. The Dutch are liberal, they don't care about the religion you believe in and the way in which you make love, as long as you leave them in peace. Being Dutch means demanding from others the same unlimited freedom they enjoy. [...]. Society is extremely individualistic. Individualists are self-referential, they believe they have the right to build their own way of being and their own ethical values. They do not look for points of reference elsewhere, like in transcendental realities or structures, but only within themselves.<sup>45</sup>

These references to newspaper articles point out that the secularization process is gaining ground in the Netherlands, which is 'one of the world's most secularised countries',<sup>46</sup> by

referring to the findings of surveys which showed that only one-third of the population declares to be affiliated with a church.<sup>47</sup> The secularization in the Netherlands is often linked to ‘the unbridled liberty spread as a dogma, the legalisation of drugs, showcased prostitutes, euthanasia, abortus, and gay marriages’.<sup>48</sup> In the same newspaper, harsh invectives against the political choices made by the Dutch government are made, such as when euthanasia for children was approved:

There is no need to be Catholics or extremely intelligent to understand that there is something pathological, morbid and obscure in a country which puts so much energy and spends so much time and money to find out how the death of children could be favored.<sup>49</sup>

In the light of these assumptions, the Italian press establishes a clear link between the increasing secularization of the Netherlands and its liberal political measures. These results are confirmed if a glance is cast to the two Italian newspapers, *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, with roughly 188,300 and 201,500 sold copies, respectively.<sup>50</sup> These two newspapers were also chosen based on their political orientation: *La Repubblica* has always had a moderate left-wing positioning, whereas *Il Corriere* adopts moderately conservative political lenses. The analysis will be divided according to the two themes under scrutiny (gay marriages and euthanasia).

### Gay marriages

The Netherlands is often referred to as one of the most gay-friendly countries in the world. Indeed, it was the first country in the world to regulate same-sex couple marriages and adoptions in 2001. Nevertheless, while this milestone has been regarded by many as a great achievement in terms of civil rights, the Italian press did not have the same positive opinion (Table 1).<sup>51</sup>

**Table 1.** Newspaper titles on gay marriages.

La Repubblica	Il Corriere della Sera
(1) 10 November 1993: ‘Holland, even gays and non-married couples become “real” families.’	(6) 5 May 1993: ‘Holland upstream, homo couples have their rights.’
(2) 19 April 1996: ‘Here’s Holland: the country-scandal of gay marriages.’	(7) 17 April 1996: ‘Holland “blesses” gay brides and grooms with all their rights.’
(3) 13 September 2001: ‘Gay marriages: in Holland you can.’	(8) 18 April 1996: ‘Gay, the Church against Holland.’
(4) 1 June 2002: ‘Gay marriages in the Netherlands. The first “yes, I do,” pronounced by Italians.’	(9) 2 June 2002: ‘Latina, the public prosecutor attacks the gay couple married in Holland.’
(5) 3 December 2013: Gay marriages: Holland, the Praise of Normality. ‘Here everything becomes possible.’	(10) 2 August 2016: ‘In the liberal Amsterdam, the Gay Pride is still divisive.’

The above-mentioned 10 titles show that the Italian press took a negative stance against gay marriages. The ironic tone of the adjective ‘real’ and the verb ‘to bless’, the juxtaposition of the noun ‘scandal’ and the adjective ‘liberal’ underline the negative image which is built by Italian newspapers. Interestingly, the use of the noun ‘normality’ in a wordplay winking at Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly* leads Italian readers to believe that the Dutch are at ease with gay marriages, which are regarded as ‘normal’. Although some moderate tones are used in these articles (‘It’s a huge step forward that must influence the debate in Southern Europe, which is more exposed to religious fundamentalism’),<sup>52</sup> the content of most of them emphasizes the



so-called perverted character of the Dutch: ‘this decision represents a political and social involution’,<sup>53</sup> and ‘this is the country where coffee shops, prostitution and euthanasia are tolerated’<sup>54</sup> are only a few examples of this stereotyping process. It should be pointed out, however, that most articles date back to the 1990s, when Italy was still far from conceiving the idea of approving gay marriages. Interestingly, in an article in *Il Corriere della Sera*,<sup>55</sup> which tells the story of two Italian gay men who got married in the Netherlands, the words of an Italian public prosecutor are reported:

It is a folkloric initiative [...]. This kind of union will never be welcomed in Italy, in that it goes against the foundations of the Italian Constitution, which stresses that a family is made up of a man and a woman who get married to generate, maintain and educate their children.

In the light of the approval of gay marriages in 2016, it could be argued that many things have changed since then, even in Italy.

## Euthanasia

If on gay marriages the Italian press did not express a favourable opinion, it is on euthanasia that it expresses its hardest judgement, perhaps because this practice, which is strongly opposed by the Catholic Church, remains illegal in Italy. This could be one of the reasons why Italian newspapers build a demonized image of the Netherlands, since its decision to regulate euthanasia in 2001 was seen as contrary to the principles of Christianity (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Newspaper titles on euthanasia.

La Repubblica	Il Corriere della Sera
(1) 20 February 1993: ‘Euthanasia, Holland goes against the Vatican. The Pope insults us.’	(11) 30 July 1992: ‘The Hague. Malformed children? Euthanasia is the solution.’
(2) 1 December 1993: ‘Holland says “yes” to the sweet death.’	(12) 10 February 1993: ‘Holland says “yes” to euthanasia. The Vatican is furious.’
(3) 11 August 1999: ‘Holland, even children have the right to the sweet death.’	(13) 17 February 1993: ‘Holland is thinking to practice euthanasia on mentally-ill people.’
(4) 11 November 2001: ‘Holland, a law to die.’	(14) 21 February 1993: ‘Holland has chosen the culture of death.’
(5) 12 April 2001: ‘Holland, a social lab. We are free, not only to die.’	(15) 23 February 1993: ‘Holland is not the Empire of Evil.’
(6) 14 April 2001: ‘Shocking proposal from Holland: a pill for the “sweet suicide”.’	(16) 10 July 1993: ‘The Netherlands. The hotel of suicides is now open.’
(7) 29 November 2001: ‘Holland. Clonation, euthanasia and the tourism of rights.’	(17) 2 December 1993: ‘The <i>Osservatore Romano</i> goes against the Netherlands. Euthanasia is evil.’
(8) 2 April 2002: ‘Holland, another taboo is broken. Euthanasia becomes legal.’	(18) 10 December 1993: ‘In Holland there is a direct line for aspiring suicide victims.’
(9) 3 April 2002: ‘Clash over euthanasia. Italy dismisses Holland.’	(19) 8 June 1994: ‘Euthanasia. Call and response between the Vatican and Holland.’
(10) 23 January 2005: ‘Chastity and loyalty are the solution against Aids. His appeal to Holland: stop euthanasia.’	(20) 12 April 2001: ‘The Vatican talks about euthanasia. Holland’s choice is macabre and criminal.’
	(21) 23 January 2005: ‘Euthansia. The Pope’s call to Holland.’
	(22) 12 March 2005: ‘Holland. Pediatricians’ protocol for hopeless children. This is how 22 children died.’
	(23) 20 March 2006: ‘I don’t regret what I said, Holland’s measures are worthy of Mengele’ <sup>56</sup>
	(24) 19 April 2009: ‘Holland hands over to Belgium the flag of secularity.’
	(25) 15 November 2013: ‘Holland denies hope even to sick children.’
	(26) 17 September 2016: ‘Belgium and Holland, Europe’s two most religious countries on the frontline for the battle for the “sweet death”.’



These examples show that, when it comes to a religious-sensitive topic like euthanasia, Italy constructs a very negative image of the Netherlands, which is described as the 'Empire of Evil', the country which chooses 'the culture of death', which makes 'criminal and macabre choices', which practices euthanasia on children, and is constantly working against the Church. The two newspapers adopt a slightly different attitude: as was previously mentioned, *La Repubblica* is a moderately left-wing newspaper, which is why its tones are somewhat more moderate than those used by the *Corriere della Sera*. At linguistic level, the use of the rhetorical figures of hyperbole (*aspiring suicide victims*), metaphors and comparison (*measures worthy of Mengele*), frequently used in the literary genre of epic poetry, tally with the thesis put forward by Loporcaro,<sup>57</sup> who argues that news in the Italian press is presented more as a mythical tale than as plain information.

At imagological level, what can be clearly noticed from the analysis of the titles is the constant link between what the Pope or the Church says and the measures the Netherlands implements. The titles nr. 1, 10, 12, 17, 19, 20 and 21 portray the debate between the Netherlands and the Church as a farce in which the Netherlands is the naughty child and the Church the Master Father. In so doing, the image of a country where everything is allowed, even killing terminally ill children or opening hotels to commit suicide, has been spread in Italy over the last three decades. From these articles, the image of the Dutch as an immoral people emerges, especially if title nr. 26 is considered. This article points the finger against Belgium and the Netherlands, which have not only approved the law on euthanasia, but seem to be in the frontline in the battle against the Church. However, the most interesting feature of this title is that the two countries are yet described as 'Europe's two most religious countries', which introduces a completely new image. Therefore, this reference to a religious character of the Netherlands which, up to very recently, has been ignored by the Italian press, admits the possibility that there is a religious sentiment in this country, even though it is not reflected in some choices made in the public sphere. Although the main image of the Netherlands which is propagated by the Italian press is still that of a non-religious country (e.g. no occurrences were found on the two newspapers for 'Dutch Bible Belt'), it could be hypothesized that a different image of the country could be constructed, and that it is spread by a different medium: translated literature.

### **'Religion May Come Back in Literature': The Image of the Netherlands in Translated Dutch Literature**

The translation of literary texts is often referred to as the main tool which creates an image of a certain country. According to Bassnett and Lefevere, translation is a 'shaping force in the construction of the image of a writer and/or a work of literature,'<sup>58</sup> and is therefore interesting to observe which texts are chosen for translation and for what reasons. Recent studies on the reception of foreign literature in Italy have shown that 'the Italian perception of the supposed "exotic otherness" of Australia remain fairly widespread in Italy. Indeed, the interest in Australian literature in Italy is closely linked to this perception'.<sup>59</sup> However, if the image of the Netherlands spread by the press is

that of a liberal and secularized country, the Italian readers would expect to find the same clichés in the books they read. Indeed, texts chosen for translation are often what is seen abroad as typical of a certain country in stereotypical terms.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, an overview of the present corpus of translated Dutch fiction reveals that religion is often present in the Dutch literary production.

Suffice it to think that, over the last few years, several Dutch literary critics and intellectuals have begun to talk about the 'return of religion in Dutch literature'.<sup>61</sup> In December 2010, the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*<sup>62</sup> published an article entitled *Godsdienst mag weer in de literatuur* (Religion may come back in literature), in which the author points out that, in recent years, Dutch literature has witnessed a sort of religious renaissance. If we consider that, in the same year, two scholarly works by de Gier<sup>63</sup> and Goedegebuure<sup>64</sup> on religion in literature were published, the statement made by van de Poll appears to be less of a coincidence or a mere generalization. Indeed, both authors describe the evolution of the presence of religion in Dutch literature during the 20th and 21st centuries, and illustrate that the place of God in literature has not always gone hand in hand with that of God in the Dutch society. If, on the one hand, it is true that the Netherlands could be said to be experiencing a growing and relentless process of secularization there are, on the other hand, plenty of references to the Christian faith in Dutch literature. This aspect has been noticed by foreign scholars too, especially after the latest Frankfurt Book Fair, where the Netherlands and Flanders were honour guests. In a recent article entitled *The Dutch Paradox*, the German professor Goud strengthens this assumption by illustrating that 'In a highly secularised country, writers are intensively and originally dealing with religion and faith'.<sup>65</sup>

According to Nauta,<sup>66</sup> for certain authors – such as Wolkers, 't Hart, Anbeek and Siebelink – religion is an identity symbol. Their references to religion are closely intertwined with their own experience and their criticism over the Christian faith is nothing but a form of concealed self-criticism. The publication of the book by Eugelink,<sup>67</sup> the first of a long series of books over religion in Dutch literature – describes this phenomenon by stating that, even when authors tend to distance themselves from religion, they end up quoting psalms, parables or other passages of the Bible: 'There is irony, mockery and disgust, but there is also great fascination, doubt, curiosity and deep thinking about religion.'<sup>68</sup> Even when Dutch writers declare themselves atheists and take a certain distance from religious rituals and traditions, even when they badmouth him, defy him or write that he does not exist, they feel the need to turn to God, to challenge him or to talk to him. Indeed, from the total refusal towards Christianity adopted by Wolkers and 't Hart, to the uneasiness with his Jewish origin shown by Grunberg, to the rediscovery of certain values of the Reformed Church in the more recent *Knielen op een bed violen* by Siebelink,<sup>69, 70</sup> religion could be regarded as one of the main themes characterizing Dutch modern and contemporary literature. Several other authors like the Reformed Nicolaas Matsier, Oek de Jong, Franca Treur, but also the Catholic Frans Kellendonk, Doeschka Meijsing, A. F. Th. van der Heijden have been intrigued by religion. With this regard, the novel by Kellendonk *Mystiek Lichaam* (Mystical Body)<sup>71</sup> represents a watershed separating the period in which religion was present in literature but still regarded as a taboo and the period in which a discussion over God and the Christian faith was brought to the fore in novels,

poems and essays. Indeed, Kellendonk was, among the authors of his generation, ‘one of the few authors who dared to pronounce the word “God”’.<sup>72</sup>

The translation database of the *Dutch Foundation for Literature* and the volume on the Italian translations of Dutch books<sup>73</sup> illustrate that the most translated Dutch authors from 1990 to 2017 in Italy are Hella Haasse, Harry Mulisch, Cees Nooteboom, Maarten ‘t Hart, Leon de Winter, Adriaan van Dis, Arnon Grunberg, Renate Dorrestein, Margriet de Moor and Tommy Wieringa. Recently, certain works of Connie Palmen and Gerard Reve have been re-discovered, such as *De wetten* by Connie Palmen<sup>74</sup> and *De avonden* by Gerard Reve.<sup>75</sup> In the novel *Rituelen*<sup>76</sup> by Cees Nooteboom, religion – though declined in various ways – is the main theme of the book. According to critics, ‘Religion, the medium that unites the themes of the text, differs greatly for estranged father and son, Arnold and Philip Taads, and yet, paradoxically, seems strangely unified at the novel’s conclusion.’<sup>77</sup>

In Nescio’s work, *De Uitvreter*, *Titaantjes*, *Dichtertje*, *Mene Tekel*,<sup>78</sup> references to God are made when the characters in the novel contemplate a landscape or reflect upon the sense of life:

‘God is overal? Of niet, Koekebakker? Dat zeggen ze toch?’ [...] ‘Dus hij is overal’, zei Bavink. ‘Daar en daar en daar’. Met uitgestrekte arm wees hij om ons heen. ‘En daar achter die zee, in ‘t land dat wij niet zien. En daar, bij Driehuis, waar de booglampen staan. En in de Kalverstraat. Ga eens met je rug naar ‘t water staan en luister. Kan jij eruit blijven?’ ‘Waaruit?’ ‘Uit die zee?’ [...]. Daarin is God ook, God roept. ‘t Is waarachtig geen lolletje, overal is-i.

‘God is everywhere, Koekebakker? Or isn’t he? They say that too, don’t they?’ [...] ‘So, he is everywhere’, Bavink said. ‘There, and there, and there’. He pointed all around us with an outstretched arm. ‘And there, beyond the see, in the land we can’t see. And over there, near Driehuis, where the arc lamps are. And on Kalverstraat. Go stand with your back to the water there and listen. Can you stay out of it?’ ‘Out of what?’ ‘Out of the ocean?’ [...] God is in there too. God is calling. It’s really not a walk in the park, he is everywhere [...].<sup>79</sup>

In the novel *De wandelaar* by Adriaan van Dis<sup>80, 81</sup> religion is a very important theme: Mulder is a non-believer, but when he meets priest Bruno, he starts to think more often and in a more intense way to religion. Renate Dorrestein, whose literary genre is often referred to as ‘gothic novel’,<sup>82</sup> often refers to religious images and metaphors. For example, in the novel *Een vlucht regenwulpen* by the atheist Marteen ‘t Hart, the protagonist quotes several Salms to comfort himself after the death of his mother. Moreover, in *De ontdekking van de hemel*<sup>83</sup> by Harry Mulisch, God is aware of his lost omnipotence and is overwhelmed by mankind, which took power away from him. In this work, the explicit quotes and references to the Bible – and to the book of Exodus in particular – are legion, just like in *Dit zijn de namen*<sup>84</sup> by Tommy Wieringa, a clear metaphor of a contemporary exodus. However despised and praised at the same time, God is present in Gerard Reve’s works, especially in *De avonden*, his masterpiece. In her most famous work, *De wetten*, Connie Palmen describes a scene in which the protagonist visits Professor Brandt and makes love to him. The scene recalls a passage of Luke’s gospel in which Mary Magdalene washes Jesus’ feet with tears. Furthermore, in the novel by W.F. Hermans *Nooit meer slapen*,<sup>85</sup> the protagonist, Albert Issendorf, a young geologist, joins an expedition to the mountainous wilds of Lapland in the hope of making some momentous discovery that will impress the world. He shares his tent with

Arne, an ascetic, and they engage in lively debates over the existence of God. More recently, in the novel *Knielen op een bed violen*<sup>86</sup> by Jan Siebelink, the role of religion is central, since it talks about the deep faith of the protagonist, Hans, and the way it determines the course of his life and that of his family. In the work by Martin Michael Driessen, *Vader van God*<sup>87, 88</sup> the author revisits the Gospel by telling the story of Joseph and his attempts to save Jesus from his destiny of death. In another recent work, *De Bijbel voor ongelovigen* by Guus Kuijer,<sup>89</sup> atheist but fascinated by the Holy Scriptures, revisits the Bible and makes it accessible to non-believers. Descriptions of religious traditions, especially in the Jewish context, also permeate novels like *Blauwe maandagen*<sup>90</sup> by Arnon Grunberg. Although international reviews publicized the book by turning to the stereotype of the unsuited Dutch young boy who wastes his youth in the Red-Light District, there is another theme in the book – not to say a leitmotiv – which is the troubled relationship that the author has with the Jewish world and his Jewish origins. The sense of uneasiness with Jewish rituals, the constant references made by his parents and relatives to the painful past of their ancestors and the excessive respect towards Jewish festivities and traditions weigh down the protagonist, and heightened in him a sense of rebellion, which is manifested in his constant longing for casual sex and alcohol abuse. Interestingly, the genre of the Christian novel – which in Italy is either barely known or often relegated to a niche market – is very popular in the Netherlands and boasts an increasing number of writers, such as Rien van de Berg, Eline de Boo, Marianne Grandia, Janne Ijmker, Guurtje Leguijt, etc.<sup>91</sup> The analysis of the reception in Italy of a masterpiece of Dutch contemporary literature, *Mystiek Lichaam*, would help shed light into Dutch authors' yearning for the transcendent.

### **God in Dutch translated novels: the case of Kellendonk's *Mystiek Lichaam* in Italy<sup>92</sup>**

The novel *Mystiek Lichaam*<sup>93</sup> by Frank Kellendonk sparked fierce criticism by literary experts and intellectuals, who accused the author of anti-Semitism. The book tells the story of the Catholic and anti-Semitic businessman Gijssels who learns that his daughter Magda has gotten pregnant by the Jewish Bruno Pechman. Moreover, he also discovers that his homosexual son suffers from a deadly virus (HIV) and has come back from New York to die in peace in his father's house. The novel can be seen as an allegory of 'the contrast between life and death, hope and despair, between the vitality of life and the art's futile attempts to equal it'.<sup>94</sup> Frans Kellendonk was a highly controversial figure in the literary debate of the 1980s: on the one hand, he was homosexual and died of AIDS in 1990, when there were still many taboos around this disease. On the other, he grew up in a Catholic family and eventually abandoned his religious faith, although his writings are dotted with references to religion. As Hermans points out:

Kellendonk was branded as neo-conservative, an image reinforced by his fascination for religion and more specifically the Catholic faith. [...] It features all kinds of mirror-effects and inversions of situations and texts, including the Easter story, the Song of Songs, and other biblical passages.<sup>95</sup>

The book contains a plethora of religious references and metaphors. To name but a few, when the protagonist Gijselhart looks out of the window and notices that his daughter has come back home, he says: 'De Heer is waarlijk opgestaan. Zalig die niet zien en toch geloofd hebben' (Indeed is the Lord risen. Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed). His son Leendert often makes comparisons between carnal love, instinct and spirituality.

De geest waarin ze tot één mystiek lichaam waren gedoopt begon akelig rond te spoken in de bruidskamer. Die geest rook mensenvlees. Die geest eiste gemeenschap. Wordt één lichaam! commandeerde hij. Bouw uit die ribben en knoken van jullie, op deze matras, maar eens een kerk!<sup>96</sup>

[The spirit in which they were baptised as one mystical body loomed over the bridal room. That spirit smelt like human flesh. That spirit demanded an intercourse. Become one body! He commanded. From your ribs and bones, on this mattress, do build a church!]<sup>97</sup>

In another passage of the novel, when Magda, Gijselhart's daughter, talks about her dream in which she raised from the death her aborted son, Kellendonk makes a comparison with the hagiography of St. Theresa from Lisieux, who is referred to as St. Theresa of the Holy Face because of her devotion of the Face of Jesus ('The tears and blood of Jesus were to be her dew, and her sun was His adorable Face veiled with tears')<sup>98</sup>:

Ik kon mijn tranen niet bedwingen ze vielen op het kind en toen gebeurde er een wonder, ze wasten het schoon en laafden het, het bloeide op van mijn tranen de oogjes gingen open en het lachte!<sup>99</sup>

[I could not hold my tears they fell on the child and then a miracle happened, they cleaned and refreshed him, my tears made him alive, he opened his eyes and smiled].

Other explicit references to the Old Testament are made when Leendert listens to his father while, referring to his future son-in-law, 'biblically cursed the history of flesh':

In het donker boven aan de trap, achter de deur die op een kier stond, luisterde nog iemand, iemand die Pechman haatte, die de geschiedenis van het vlees oudtestamentisch vervloekte – Ze steunen op verzinsels, spreken valsheid. Gaan zwanger van gekonkel, baren onheil.<sup>100</sup>

[In the darkness on the top of the stairs, behind a half-open door, he could listen to somebody, somebody who hated Pechman, who biblically cursed the history of flesh: 'They trust in confusion and speak lies; they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity].

These are only a few of the countless religious citations in Kellendonk's novel. Yet, despite its highly spiritual character, the novel, translated by Claudia di Palermo, was published in Italy by an independent publishing house, *Scritturapura*, in 2009, 23 years after it first appeared in the Netherlands. In the preface of the Italian version of the novel, the reason explaining this huge time span between its publication and its translation into Italian is illustrated:

A cult-book of Dutch fiction, in the 1980s *Mystical Body* was translated into several languages and published by the most prestigious publishing houses. However, in Italy, the author's death of AIDS and the fierce controversy sparked by European literary critics – which accused Kellendonk of Anti-Semitism – advised against its launch on the market.<sup>101</sup>

[Libro di culto della narrativa olandese, *Corpo mistico* è stato negli anni '80 tradotto in molte lingue e pubblicato dalle case editrici più prestigiose. In Italia invece, la morte

dell'autore per aids e le polemiche feroci suscitate dalla critica letteraria europea che accusarono Kellendonk di antisemitismo, ne sconsigliarono l'uscita.].

Although more in-depth research needs to be carried out on the reception of this book in Italy, it is interesting to point out that it took a long time to translate the novel into Italian also because of the debate about Kellendonk's lifestyle, an aspect which, taken together with the representation of Dutch policies on homosexual couples, could have had an impact on the production of its translation. Nevertheless, only a careful reading of the book could reveal how much this novel seeps out a religious feeling, which 'was meant to refer to the unity of all – the dead, the living, the yet unborn – in Christ'.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to illustrate the way in which the Netherlands is represented by the Italian press and by translated Dutch novels when it comes to addressing religious topics. Drawing on imagological theories,<sup>103</sup> the study analysed the newspaper titles of the two most sold Italian newspapers (*La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*) and Dutch novels translated into Italian from 1990 to 2017. The topics chosen for the selection of the newspaper articles ( $n = 36$ ) were euthanasia and gay marriages, about which Dutch governments have adopted pieces of legislation that were regarded as offensive by the Italian Catholic Church. As for translated literature, the overview provided in this paper, which draws on a corpus of 94 Dutch novels translated into Italian from 1990 to 2017, reveals that several Dutch writers talk about God or about the Christian faith. The presence of religion in Dutch literature is confirmed by a series of recent scholarly publications,<sup>104, 105, 106</sup> which provide an overview of all the recent novels which have religious themes as the main topic, and the case study of the religious references contained in *Mystiek Lichaam* by Frans Kellendonk serves to substantiate this hypothesis.

The results of this analysis – which nonetheless does not claim to be exhaustive – show that these two media spread two different images of the Dutch. In an imagological perspective, the results suggest that one of the most common stereotypes about the Dutch – which is that propagated by the Italian press – is completely different from the image spread by a perhaps less popular but very widespread, communication medium: translated literature. This aspect could also be explained with a historical reference: it might well be that the climate of religious tolerance that has characterized the Netherlands since the dawn of the Modern Age, together with a deeper knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, typical of the Protestant confession, could have led to a rapprochement between religion and literature. However, although more in-depth research is needed to shed light on which actors contribute to the spreading of different images about the same country, these findings suggest that the cliché of outward secularization of the Dutch presented in the press is contrasted by a constant presence of religious references in literature. This mismatch between the self-image of the Dutch, expressed in literature, and the hetero-image contained in the press, could represent a fruitful future venue of research in imagological studies.

## Notes

1. Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*.
2. La Repubblica, 'Archivio La Repubblica' and Il Corriere della Sera, 'Archivio Corriere Della Sera.'
3. Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*, xiii.
4. Leerssen, "The Rhetoric of National Character," 267–92.
5. All the quotes in English are translated from Italian, Dutch and German by the author of the present paper.
6. In imagology, the *spected* (in this case, the Netherlands) is the nation which is analysed and looked at by the *spectant* (in this case, Italy).
7. De Vries, "Literature of the Enlightenment."
8. Ibid., 293.
9. Huizinga, *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century*.
10. Parker, *Faith on the Margins*, 3.
11. Buruma, "Dutch Tolerance," 73–113.
12. Reformatorisch Dagblad, "Nederland neemt (te) snel afscheid van de kerk."
13. Casillo, *The Empire of Stereotypes*.
14. Linssen and Hagendoorn, "Social and geographical factors," 165–182.
15. Statista, "Church attendance Italy 2006–2016 | Statistic."
16. Atlas.com, "Which Countries Have The Most Christians Around The World?"
17. For a comprehensive overview of the role of religion in the Netherlands after the 1960s, see Kennedy, "The Public Role of Religion in Europe," 49–62.
18. Kennedy, "The Guide Has Become Anxious," 22.
19. Frijhoff, "How North and South in the Low Countries Switched Religions," 48.
20. Ibid., 23.
21. Milis, "Travellers of the Southern Low Countries and their Views," 7–35.
22. Olanda.cc, "Popolazione olandese, caratteristiche, stereotipi [Dutch population, characteristics, stereotypes]."
23. Ibid.
24. Travelweare, "Viaggiando tra stereotipi e pregiudizi sui popoli [Travelling around stereotypes and prejudices about peoples]."
25. Il Corriere della Sera, "Ecco le cartine irriverenti che mappano gli stereotipi europei [Here are the Irreverent Maps of European Stereotypes]."
26. Huffington post, "Ride for a Ride."
27. La Repubblica, "Olanda, i pedofili fanno un partito [Holland, Pedophiles Create a Party]."
28. La Repubblica, "L'ultima notte al coffee shop Amsterdam fa il pieno di turisti [The Last Night in a Coffee Shop in Amsterdam is Full with Tourists]."
29. Il Corriere della Sera, "Olanda, «fumo» sempre meno libero [Holland, less and less free 'smoke']."
30. Ilfattoquotidiano.it, "Sud Spende Soldi per Alcol E donne? Dijsselbloem dice quello che gli olandesi pensano" ['The South Spends Money on Alcohol and Women'. Dijsselbloem says what the Dutch are thinking]."
31. Leerssen, "The Rhetoric of National Character," 267–292.
32. La Repubblica, "E' marocchina, che anneghi [She's Moroccan, let her drown]."
33. La Repubblica, "Amsterdam, l'utopia in bicicletta [Amsterdam, Utopia rides a bike]."
34. Di Palermo, "L'occupazione olandese in punta di scrittura [The silent occupation of Dutch writers]."
35. Van Doorslaer, "Translating, Narrating and Constructing Images in Journalism," 1053.
36. Dingenouts, Ferrari, and Pignatti, *Dall'autunno del Medioevo alle montagne dei Paesi Bassi*.
37. Kennedy, "The Guide Has Become Anxious," 23.
38. Il foglio, "Olanda senza Cristo [Holland without Christ]."
39. Il Timone, "Olanda, per la prima volta il numero degli atei supera quello dei credenti. [Holland, for the First time the Number of Atheists Exceeds that of Believers]."



40. Adnkronos, "Olanda: record di chiese dismesse, problema diffuso in Europa."
41. Tempi.it, "La religione e lo spirito libertario in Olanda [Religion and Libertarian Spirit in Holland]."
42. Michele Brambilla, *L'eskimo in redazione*.
43. Loporcaro, *Cattive notizie*, 242.
44. Caimotto, "Images of Turmoil," 242.
45. See note 42 above.
46. See note 40 above.
47. See note 13 above.
48. See note 39 above.
49. Il foglio, "La priorità dell'Olanda? [Holland's Priority?]."
50. Media e Comunicazione, "I Quotidiani più venduti in Italia [The Most Sold Newspapers in Italy]."
51. All the articles quoted are contained in the online archives of *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* and can be retrieved from typing 'Olanda/nozze gay' and 'Olanda/eutanasia': <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/>; <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/land ing.html>; .
52. Il Corriere della Sera, 'L'Olanda "benedice" i gay sposi con tutti i diritti [Holland "blesses" gay brides and grooms with all their rights]', 1996. Available: <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/slider.html#!Olanda-gay/NobwRADghgtgpmAXGAInAngdwPYCcAmYANGAC5wAepSYA8gDZQT5QAEA5lOmAL4C6QA> [Accessed 4 November 2017].
53. Il Corriere della Sera, "Gay, la Chiesa contro l'Olanda [Gay, the Church against Holland]."
54. La Repubblica, "Ecco l'Olanda, paese scandalo delle nozze gay [Here's Holland, the country-scandal of gay marriages]."
55. Il Corriere della Sera, "Latina, il procuratore contro i gay sposati in Olanda [Latina, the public prosecutor goes against a gay couple married in Holland]."
56. This title refers to a debate between Giovanardi, a conservative member of the Italian Parliament, and the Dutch government because he defined the Dutch law on euthanasia as 'an immoral, Nazi act' Il Corriere della Sera, "Lite Con l'Olanda: Giovanardi Rilancia, Fini Frena [Quarrel with Holland: Giovanardi Relaunches, Fini Holds Back]."
57. See note 44 above.
58. Bassnett and Lefevre, *Translation, history, and culture*, 10.
59. Wilson, "Terra Australis Incognita Even Now?," 181.
60. van Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen, *Interconnecting Translation Studies and Imagology*.
61. Mous, 'huubmous.nl' *Religie is terug in de neerlandistiek*.
62. van de Poll, "Godsdienst mag weer in de literatuur."
63. de Gier, *Provocatie en inspiratie*.
64. Goedegebuure, *Nederlandse schrijvers en religie*.
65. Goud, "Das Holländische Paradox."
66. Nauta, *Ik geloof het wel*.
67. Eugelink, *Niets in mij gelooft dat*.
68. Ibid., 89.
69. Siebelink, *Nel giardino del padre*.
70. *Kneeling on a Bed of Violets*, my translation. An English translation of the novel is not yet available.
71. Kellendonk, *Mystiek Lichaam*.
72. Eugelink, *Niets in mij gelooft dat*, 84.
73. See note 37 above.
74. Palmen, *Le leggi*.
75. Reve, *Le Sere*.
76. Nooteboom, *Rituali*.
77. Literature Blog, Rituals, Cees Nooteboom. 2012. Available: <https://lololit.wordpress.com/archive/rituals-cees-nooteboom/> [Accessed: 4 June 2018].

78. Nescio, *Storie di Amsterdam*.
79. Nescio, *Amsterdam Stories*.
80. van Dis, *Il vagabondo*..
81. *The wanderer*, my translation. An English translation of the novel is not yet available.
82. Andeweg, *Griezelig gewoon*.
83. Mulisch, *La scoperta del cielo*.
84. Wieringa, *Questi sono i nomi*.
85. Hermans, *Alla fine del sonno*.
86. See note 70 above.
87. Driessen, *Padre di Dio*.
88. *Father of God*, my translation. An English translation of the novel is not yet available.
89. Kuijter, *La Bibbia per non credenti*.
90. Grunberg, *Lunedì blu*.
91. Abraas and Schuitemaker, “Christelijke romans – nieuwe boeken, recensies, interviews, nieuws.”
92. *Mystical body*, my translation. Only a fragment of the novel – *Secret Dynasty* – was translated into English in 2008.
93. See note 72 above.
94. Nederlands Letterenfonds, “15 Postwar Classics from Holland and Flanders.”
95. Hermans, *A Literary History of the Low Countries*.
96. See note 72 above.
97. Unless otherwise specified, the translation of the passages into English are of the author of the present paper.
98. Thérèse, *The Story of the Soul*.
99. Frans Kellendonk, *Mystiek Lichaam*, 80.
100. *Ibid.*, 144.
101. Kellendonk, *Corpo Mistico. Traduzione Di Claudia Di Palermo*.
102. Goud, “Spirituality and Eroticism,” 151.
103. See note 1 above.
104. See note 67 above.
105. See note 64 above.
106. See note 63 above.

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