

Wild Waters

*An Analysis of the Dynamics between
People and Water in Dutch Children's Literature
from the Vantage Point of the Ecohumanities*

M. Ginting

17 August 2015

MA in Children's and Young Adult Literature
Tilburg University, The Netherlands

Student number (ANR): 964907

First reader: Drs. Sara van den Bossche
Second reader: Prof. Dr. Helma van Lierop

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ABSTRACT

This study revolves around dynamics between culture and nature, with water as its main component, in Dutch children's and young adult literature. It approaches the subject from the perspective of the ecohumanities, including concepts from the disciplines of ecocriticism, ecofeminism and (ecological) posthumanism, and argues for cross-fertilisation amongst these disciplines.

The Netherlands has a complicated relationship with water, which, the author argues, is primarily defined by aquaphobia. Dutch media, and Dutch education, are pervaded by aquaphobic rhetoric, in which the Dutch and the element of water are envisioned in a hierarchal dichotomy. The prevalence of this rhetoric inspired the inquiry.

The corpus consists of five recent Dutch children's and young adult books, and one book published in the 1970s. They are: *Oosterschelde windkracht 10 [Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10]* by Jan Terlouw, 1976; *De stem van het water [The Water's Voice]* by Lydia Rood, 1997; *Die dag aan zee [That Day by the Sea]* by Peter van Gestel, 2003; *Overal water [Water Everywhere]* by Ineke Mahieu, 2010; *Overstroomd [Flooded]* by Eva Moraal, 2012; and *Vlieg! [Fly!]* by Marco Kunst, 2013.

The study shows that five out of six novels contain genuinely aquaphobic imagery, which is reminiscent of Dutch aquaphobic rhetoric. These books anthropomorphise the water, and present the element as a violent entity, which often has evil intentions. Waters may also be gendered as female, and such depictions endorse the logic of domination that lies at the core of Western philosophy. Most of all, water in Dutch children's literature is associated with death, destruction, and the underworld. Marco Kunst's *Fly!* (2013) is the only book in the corpus that does *not* anthropomorphise water, and it is also the only book in which water is *not* portrayed as threat to culture. Anthropomorphism and aquaphobia are closely intertwined in the corpus.

With the exception of one character in *The Water's Voice*, all characters who are in touch with nature are *othered* in the corpus. They are presented as social outcasts who do not fit the norms of Dutch society. These characters often die from natural causes, emphasising the idea that nature, and especially water, are dangerous places. Children who share a close bond with these in-touch-characters, symbolically lose this connection to nature at the moment the in-touch-characters die. The books vary in their approaches to Dutch water management, and the corpus suggests that attitudes to water management have changed over time.

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FOREWORD

One of the main reasons why this study is written in English, and not in Dutch, is the prospect of alienation. It is an attempt to create – if at all possible – an outsider’s view on something that has been an important part of Dutch nature and culture for several centuries: water.

Almost everyone in The Netherlands is familiar with “de strijd tegen het water”, but when this phrase is translated into the “the war against the water”, it loses a sense of normalcy. Why is it that this phrase is so familiar to us, that it is used in almost every informative work on water in The Netherlands, be it academic, educational, or popular? And what does this rhetoric tell us about our relationship with the environment? Or, in the words of Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (1996)*: “How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it?” (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xix).

While this master’s thesis will not address such a broad, interdisciplinary question, it will look at the issue from the perspective of Dutch children’s literature, in which water has played an important part for more than a century. Today’s and tomorrow’s young people have inherited, or will inherit, the environmental issues that earlier generations have left behind. Rising sea levels will in all probability fire up debates about water, and water management in the low-lying Netherlands. The question that remains is: do we need to reinforce our dykes, or do we need to rethink our relationship with water altogether?

This study aims to shed light upon portrayals of water, and dynamics between people and water in Dutch children’s literature, in order to better understand the ways in which Dutch “war against the water” rhetoric is interwoven in these stories, and the ways in which these stories reflect Dutch ideas about nature.

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This study was conducted during some very hectic months in my life, during which I was up to my neck in various funding applications, and my application to Cambridge University. I would like to thank those who helped navigate the rough waters.

Bas, mom, dad. Thanks for the support.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sometimes at night, in bed, I think:

Hey,

I can hear the murmur of the sea.

But it is too far away

and it's only the highway

which (especially in the night

from Friday on Saturday) appears

like an endless wave

to my ears. (My translation)¹

Soms denk ik 's nachts in bed:

Hé,

ik hoor het ruisen van de zee.

Maar die is te ver weg

en 't is alleen de snelweg

die zich (vooral in de nacht

van vrijdag op zaterdag) doet horen

als een eindeloze golfslag

aan mijn oren. (Andreas 1973: 9)

For a thousand years or more the Frisians and Hollanders have been pushing back the North Sea, and the process is culminating in our own time in the reclamation of the *Zuider Zee* [sic]. What, if any, species of animals, birds, fish, shore life, or plants have died out in the process? In their epic combat with Neptune have the Netherlanders overlooked ecological values in such a way that the quality of human life in the Netherlands has suffered? I cannot discover that the questions have ever been asked, much less answered. (White 1967: 4)

Water plays an important part in Dutch culture, and this is visible in its presence in Dutch children's literature. A 2014 study by Erik Mostert looked at the theme of flooding in Dutch children's books published between 1901 and 2000, and found a total of 89 relevant books – not including poetry, songs, non-fiction or the many Dutch children's books that feature water and the sea in a general context – showing the prominence of the theme.² This thesis revolves

¹ My translations throughout. The original Dutch quotes can be found in the appendix.

² The study showed “how children's books can be used as a historical source of cultural values and perceptions concerning water and what results such an analysis can yield” (Mostert 2014: 1).

around the dynamics between culture and nature in recent Dutch children's and young adult literature, with a specific focus on the element of water.

The above quote is taken from Lynn White's essay "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", published in 1967. The essay was one of the first scholarly articles to shed light upon the connection between the ecological crisis and the anthropocentric beliefs and values of Western society, which envision humans as the most important life form on Earth.³ White argues that the opening chapters of Genesis, in which God tells humanity to "rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28), are the source of today's ecological crisis. They instilled in man the idea that *he* – as he is formed in God's image – is superior to the rest of creation, thereby creating a hierarchical man/nature dichotomy⁴ (White 9-10). Though others have countered perceived connections between the Bible and anthropocentrism through different textual interpretations, often interpreting God's words as a "stewardship" over nature instead of the dominion of it (Buell 2005: 2), White's article was one of the oldest to be included in Glotfelty & Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader* in 1996 (see below). It is nowadays believed to be part of the root system of contemporary ecocriticism (Glotfelty 1996: xxvi-xxvii).

The term ecocriticism is thought to have been coined in a 1978 essay by William Rueckert: "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in which Rueckert argues that the literary community must concern itself with the physical world in which it exists (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xix-xx; Rueckert in Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: 121). Rueckert defined ecocriticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature".

³ In this study, the noun "earth" is capitalised when it is a proper noun, (i.e. planet Earth) and not capitalised when it is a common noun (i.e. the earth), according to the grammar rules. This is not meant as an attempt to anthropomorphise the planet.

⁴ Ecofeminists argue that the hierarchical dichotomies such as man/woman, culture/nature, and ratio/emotion are interconnected. Women have historically been associated with the natural, which then justified the superiority of "rational" men over "emotional" women (Mack-Canty 2004: 155; see below).

As we will see below, contemporary definitions take a broader approach to the field. Ecocriticism is one of three disciplines within the ecohumanities⁵ – the others being ecofeminism and posthumanism – that will frame this study on water in Dutch children’s literature.

As the above quote implies, the Dutch reclamation of the Southern Sea (NL: Zuiderzee) may have inspired Lynn White to write his now canonical essay “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” in 1967. From 1920 to 1932, the Dutch government built the Afsluitdijk⁶, which closed off the Southern Sea – a large, marginal sea bordering on the Northern provinces of The Netherlands – thereby creating a large freshwater lake which is now known as the IJsselmeer. After the completion of the Afsluitdijk, dykes were built around the IJsselmeer, and the project resulted in the creation of four polders⁷: the Wieringermeerpolder, the North-East Polder, Eastern Flevoland and Southern Flevoland. The entire Southern Sea reclamation process lasted until 1968, and the last three polders now make up the manmade province of Flevoland (Ven 2003: 369-394). Lynn White was right when he remarked that the Dutch did not seem to express much concern for any ecological consequences of the project at the time (see above): the Southern Sea project was adopted with near overall political agreement in 1918

⁵ I have chosen the term “ecohumanities” over “environmental humanities” or “environmental criticism”, because the word “eco” signifies a wholeness, an interconnectedness of all living and inanimate things on the earth. Many scholars feel that the word “environmental” supports an anthropocentric worldview in which humanity is at the centre of all “other” things, surrounded by something which is merely a *backdrop*, or a *resource* for the survival of humanity (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996: xx). “Humanities” implicates the importance of an interdisciplinary eco-approach, and signifies that all disciplines – including ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and posthumanism – share, at least to some extent, a common goal.

⁶ The Afsluitdijk, Dutch for “closing dyke”, is a 32 kilometre causeway which closed off the Southern Sea at its completion, thereby creating the IJsselmeer lake (Ven 2003: 369-394).

⁷ A polder is a low-lying parcel of land enclosed by dykes that has no connection with outside water other than through machines. The Netherlands has about 3000 polders, which are the result of land reclamation, and have gained the country international fame (Bekkering 2006: 18).

(Ven 2003: 369). According to *Leefbaar Laagland* (1993), a standard work on the history of water management and land reclamation in the Netherlands, “the *attacks* by The Netherlands’ *archenemy and friend: the sea*”, were ultimately decisive⁸ (Ven 2003: 369; emphasis added). The study also remarks that foreigners might be somewhat more impressed by the project than the Dutch themselves, which has much to do with the country’s history of water management and land reclamation (Ven 2003: 369).

However, to claim that reclamation projects have never sparked environmental debate in The Netherlands, is not entirely correct. At the end of the 1960s, concerns about water pollution and the disappearance of natural spaces were growing in The Netherlands (Ven 2003: 408). When the government decided to close the Eastern Scheldt, in response to the 1953 North Sea Flood Disaster which had claimed 1.835 lives in the province of Zeeland, environmental groups were outraged. Many people felt that the unique ecological characteristics of the estuary needed to be preserved, but their concerns clashed with the fears of those who had survived the disaster and with the country’s hydrological history (Ven 2003: 408-409). Jan Terlouw, a well-known Dutch politician and author, wrote a children’s book about the debate: *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, which was published in 1976. The book is split in two parts: the first half takes place during the 1953 flood disaster, showing the victims’ perspective, and the second half takes place in the years 1973-1974, and focuses on the clash between flood survivors and their children, who are involved in an environmental activist group. Terlouw, an advocate of an open, natural Eastern Scheldt himself, wrote the book to stimulate young people to contemplate important issues, and to clear his mind after having participated in the Eastern Scheldt debate as a politician (Terlouw “Interview”).

Like Terlouw’s book, the poem by Hans Andreus – cited at the beginning of this introduction – also shows that Dutch children’s literature did not shun environmental topics during the construction of the Delta works from 1958 to 1997. Andreus’ poem could be called

⁸ The nature of this rhetoric will be addressed below.

environmentalist due to the way in which it reflects on the way technology impends the narrator's direct contact with nature: the real sea is "too far away". The poem also contemplates the concept of nature/culture boundaries: the element of water is compared to the man-made highway and the narrator is at first unsure if what he or she hears is the sound of nature, or technology. Clearly, Dutch children's literature addressed water, and environmental concerns in the 1970s.

Nowadays, water still has a central place in contemporary media – including children's literature – and in the Dutch educational system. When researching water in a Dutch context, it is important to address the centuries-old myth of a war on the elements, and the national fear of floods, that pervades Dutch representations of water, and fuels an anthropocentric discourse (see below). Contemporary fields of research within the ecohumanities, such as ecofeminism and posthumanism, aim to deconstruct anthropocentric discourse and generally advocate an egalitarian approach to nature and culture. However, these disciplines have not yet received much attention in The Netherlands, and contemporary Dutch water rhetoric is therefore an area that has been largely overlooked.

This thesis aims to contribute to ecocritical research on Dutch children's literature, including topics from the areas of ecofeminism and posthumanism. This introduction follows Simon Estok's suggestion that "ecocritics begin their analyses of texts – literary and non-literary – through nuanced discussions of the cultural, intellectual, and environmental history surrounding a given text" (Estok 2009: 211). Therefore, the following paragraphs are first and foremost devoted to a history of water management and (contemporary) water rhetoric in The Netherlands, so that readers may have a clear understanding of the socio-cultural space in which Dutch children's literature is written, published, sold, and read.

After the interlude, the introduction will continue into the central aim of this study: to analyse the interconnectedness – or lack thereof – between culture and nature in recent Dutch children's literature, and to assess if Dutch children's literature interacts with the "war against the water" rhetoric. For this purpose, the following research question was formulated: *How are dynamics between culture and nature, with water as its main component, represented in recent*

Dutch children's literature, and how do these representations relate to contemporary research topics within the ecohumanities?

1.1 “GOD CREATED THE WORLD, EXCEPT FOR THE NETHERLANDS”

This famous saying by Voltaire accurately illustrates the worldwide reputation of The Netherlands as a man-made country, which is mainly informed by its continuous efforts to reclaim land from the sea (Mensvoort). Dutch water management has received international attention. 25% of the country's land lies below sea level, and if dykes had not been built throughout the centuries, about 65% of the country would be subject to frequent flooding (Ven 2003: 8). Humans have regulated Dutch waters since the early Middle Ages. In the 9th century, people began to dig ditches and canals to drain peat fields, which caused further subsidence of grounds already prone to natural subsidence. The sediment of the rivers was not sufficient to compensate for this extra, human-induced subsidence. With Dutch grounds now sinking an average of seven inches per century, people began building dykes in the 11th century, in order to protect the land from both sea and river floods. This resulted in a vulnerable country, which can only exist through the aid of technology (Ven 2003: 8).

Water management in The Netherlands thus has contradictory origins. Human influence caused the country to sink at an increasing rate, and as a result, people further impacted the land, in order to protect themselves from floods. This fact was – and is still – often marginalized or omitted in Dutch representations of water management. Rather than the results of a self-inflicted injury, floods have been depicted as *ordeals*, and have been connected to Dutch nationhood, especially in the period from 1550 to 1650. During this period, disastrous floods that took place during the late Middle Ages were retold through fairy tales, fables and ballads, which depicted the Dutch as “ordained and blessed survivors of the deluge” (Schama 1987: 34). This idea was supported and strengthened by Calvinist preachers (Schama 1987: 35). The Dutch War for Independence (known in The Netherlands as the Eighty Years' War), took place in a period of great inundations, and in this period, the struggle against the sea and the war with Spain became metaphorically connected. Both Spain and the sea were depicted as tyrants,

against whom the Dutch needed to defend their nation (Schama 1987: 38; 42). After the war, this rhetoric stuck. When Henric Stevin presented the first plans to close the Southern Sea in 1667, he described his goals in the following words: “To expel the *violence* and the *poison* of the North Sea from the United Netherlands” (Ven 2003: 370; emphasis added). The sea had become an anthropomorphised entity, an enemy of the Dutch nation. As we will see below, such water rhetoric is still omnipresent in present-day Dutch society.

1.2 ON CONTEMPORARY DUTCH WATER RHETORIC

When looking for information on water and water management in The Netherlands today, one must conclude that a striking amount of resources contain antagonistic images of water. As mentioned above, *Leefbaar Laagland* (1993), a standard work on the history of water management and land reclamation in the Netherlands, states that “the *attacks* by The Netherlands’ *archenemy and friend*: the sea”, were ultimately decisive in the plans to close off the Southern Sea (Ven 2003: 369; emphasis added). Evidently, the book, which is presented as an objective, informational source, is pervaded by explicit, ideological rhetoric, which positions the sea as a sentient being, which is in a complicated relationship with the Dutch. It is in fact, one of many sources to do so. A search prompt for “Nederland” and “water” within Dutch university catalogues brings up book and article titles such as *The Netherlands and the water: a 2000 year battle*⁹, “Image of the Netherlands. War against the water”¹⁰ and “Water Boards in The Netherlands: working with water, an unreliable friend”¹¹. A brochure published by Rijkswaterstaat¹², meant as an educational introduction to water management, states the

⁹ Werkman, Evert. *Nederland en het water: een gevecht van 2000 jaar*. (1973)

¹⁰ “Beeld van Nederland. Strijd tegen het water. 1953-1950.” Documentary series by T2 Entertainment.

¹¹ Groen, Koos & Schmeink, Toon. *Waterschappen in Nederland: werken met water, een onberekenbare vriend*. (1981)

¹² Rijkswaterstaat belongs to the Dutch *Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment*. It is responsible for the design, construction, management and maintenance of the main infrastructure facilities in the Netherlands. (Rijkswaterstaat)

following on the country's history: "Living on the border between land and water offers many benefits. That is why our ancestors stayed here, notwithstanding the *obtrusive* sea, and tried to *come to terms with* the water" (Rijkswaterstaat 2011: 13; emphasis added). These various sources share a common rhetoric: many anthropomorphise the element of water, using personality adjectives such as "unreliable" and "obtrusive", and all sources seem to envision the Dutch and the water as opponents, parties at war even.

In the mainstream media, this rhetoric is even more prominent. A documentary series called *The Netherlands from Above*¹³ was broadcast on the Dutch public broadcasting system some years ago. In October 2012, it aired an episode titled "Water, *friend* or *enemy*?" ("Water, vriend"; emphasis added). On the website the episode is described in the following terms:

If one thing has formed the Dutchman, then it is the *war against the water*. With a lot of *perseverance* and *ingenuity*, we *conquered our land from the sea* and made an *uninhabitable* delta one of the *wealthiest* places on Earth. With the completion of the Delta Works *we had won the battle against the water permanently*. Or so we thought. But when the sea level was rising, the rivers were more likely to burst their banks and the climate became more volatile. *How safe are we* behind our tough dykes? ("Water, vriend"; emphasis added)

The episode, which consists of aerial helicopter images and a male voice over, contains lines such as: "We think the water is our *friend*, but it is still a dangerous *enemy*" (00:44; emphasis added) and "After a *bitter struggle* that lasted hundreds of years, we are the *supreme rulers* [of the water]" (01:46; emphasis added). Like the various sources discussed above, the documentary series uses rhetoric that anthropomorphises and antagonises the water. Water is presented as a common enemy in a war that unified the Dutch nation, an image reminiscent of the seventeenth-century water rhetoric discussed in the previous paragraph.

¹³ "Nederland van boven." Documentary series by the VPRO.

As visible in many sources, a running theme in Dutch media is the dualistic, anthropomorphic relationship between the Dutch and the water. Books, documentaries, articles and brochures pose questions such as: *Is the water our friend, or is it our enemy?*; *Should we trust the water, or will this unreliable, backstabbing ally betray us in the end?* The relationship between the water and the Dutch seems to be characterised by dualism and distance: water is portrayed as the “other”. It is regarded through an anthropocentric lens, which places humans, or the Dutch nation, at the centre of the world and often characterises them as “inherently good”, “civilized” and “the norm”, while water is characterised as something “inherently bad”, “wild” and “foreign”. These assertions then justify the control the Dutch nation exerts over water, and validates the country’s position as “supreme rulers”.

It is clear that such supremacist rhetoric shares a great many similarities with colonialist rhetoric.¹⁴ The discipline of ecofeminism in particular, has connected different forms of oppression and identified dualistic thought as the root of the issue. Ecofeminists state that Western society and philosophy is based on binary oppositions such as man/woman, mind/body, ratio/emotion and human/nature, and that these hierarchical dichotomies need to be unveiled and rewoven (see below). The discipline of posthumanism addresses the human/nature dichotomy in particular. It recognises anthropocentrism as something inherent to humanist philosophy, and advocates the decentralisation of humanity as the earth’s supreme life form (see below). A dualistic approach to humans and nature, and – to come back to the issue of Dutch water rhetoric – to humans and water in particular, blatantly ignores the physical fact that human bodies are made of roughly 60% water, and that humans are, through their bodies, embedded in the earth itself. From an ecological point of view, water equals life – one could even say that it is “the essence of life” (Strang 2004: 62). After all, all life on Earth initially came from the seas, and most scientists agree that life is physically impossible without water.¹⁵

¹⁴ For more on such rhetoric, see for instance Edward Said’s influential book *Orientalism* (1978).

¹⁵ The possibility that other liquids, such as methane, could provide a base for life on other planets is currently under discussion (Cooper 2011).

For these reasons, any dichotomy that positions humans and water as enemies is inherently false. The antagonistic image of water in Dutch media is furthermore peculiar, because water scarcity is a genuine problem for human populations in other world regions. Thus, the demonization of water may be unique of the context of The Netherlands, or possibly of other regions struggling with an abundance of water.

The prevalence of antagonistic water rhetoric in contemporary Dutch media and culture, of which the above examples are signifiers, has not yet been studied by the social sciences. The area will possibly receive more attention in the future, if the influence of disciplines such as ecocriticism, ecofeminism and posthumanism flushes over Dutch borders, a process that has already begun. For the purpose of this thesis, Dutch water rhetoric in educational contexts may hold extra significance, as children's literature is often read, reviewed, distributed and sometimes created within educational contexts. The next paragraph will deal with water and water rhetoric in the Dutch education system.

1.3 DUTCH WATER RHETORIC, CHILDHOOD, AND EDUCATION

Knowest thou the country, *wrenched from the sea*
 By the *labour of ancestors*,
 That *never bowed in defeat*,
 Or to *rise with greater power*?
 That country, known at the furthest beach,
 Is *our dearest Netherlands*,
 That country, known at the furthest beach,
 Is our dearest Netherlands! (De Boer and Veldkamp 1911: 35-36; emphasis added)¹⁶

¹⁶ Song-breaks have been removed in favour of readability.

This version of the school-song “Knowest thou the land?” was published in the 1911 song collection *Can you still sing, then sing along! 100 universally known school-songs* (first printed in 1908). The song shows the strong sense of nationalism that pervaded the way Dutch schoolchildren were taught about the sea more than a century ago: it is permeated by war-rhetoric that emphasises the endurance and the victory of the Dutch nation over the sea. As the title of the song-collection indicates, the song was common knowledge for children growing up in the early decades of the twentieth century. My own grandfather, who was born in 1898, was among them. He went on to become a ship engineer for the Dutch Royal Loyd.

My mother, born in 1950, remembers lying in bed as a child, and hearing the announcements of the water levels on the radio, around six in the morning. A male voice would sum up Dutch cities, followed by their current water level, and the difference between today’s and yesterday’s level. In elementary school, my mother and her classmates would sometimes assemble in the gymnasium, and they would sit and watch a black-and-white movie about the Delta Works, narrated by male voice-over. They also visited a lock during a school excursion, with teachers showing them how the polders were artificially kept from flooding. In 1966, my grandfather gathered the whole family – including an exchange student from Belgium – for a drive across the newly built Closing Dyke (see above), to admire the newly created Southern Flevopolder. Reclamation was progress, and technology was revered.

About forty years later, I was taught similar ideas in high school. I lived in a polder, and went to school in Leiden, at the west coast of The Netherlands. Geography and history teachers would remind us of our proximity to the sea, of past flood disasters, and of the possibility of future disasters. Our country was *innovative*, and *internationally revered* for our water technology. We were taught to be glad for our dykes, and were constantly reminded of our position as a city located at seven feet below the sea level. While we did learn about the hydrologic cycle and the importance of drinking water as well, the lessons that stuck were mostly those that were filled with stories of dramatic floods and Dutch *perseverance*. A favourite story of history teachers was that of the Watergeuzen, or “Sea Beggars”, who used water as a

weapon against the Spanish invaders during the Dutch War of Independence. The very same war in which Dutch aquaphobic water rhetoric may have been born (see above).

These narratives must have had their effect on me, for in my final year of high school, I chose the subject of muskrats and dyke safety for my final essay, fully convinced that muskrats posed a genuine threat to the safety of The Netherlands. Things, however, turned out quite differently. In the end, I concluded that while there was much ado in politics about the danger musk rats posed to our dykes, no extensive ecological research had ever been performed on the actual digging habits of musk rats.¹⁷ Debates seemed mostly fear-driven at the time. The mere thought that *anything* could *possibly* harm our dykes, was enough reason for the yearly killing of thousands of muskrats and other animals, who were caught in the various traps and would often suffer long, and cruel deaths. For the first time in my life, I started to doubt some of the fear-inducing rhetoric that I had heard throughout my school years.

The above has illustrated cross-generation, first-hand experience with the representation of water and water regulation in Dutch education, until roughly 2008 (which was the year that I left high school). With regard to recent developments in water education, the Dutch government has dictated that Dutch water education is “aimed at increasing *water awareness* and strengthening *water-conscious behaviour*” (SLO 2012: 6; emphasis added). The SLO, the national expertise centre for educational development in The Netherlands, identifies the following goals for Dutch water education:

- Making young people *aware* of the *implications* of living in a river delta.
- Making young people *aware* of the *consequences* of their own actions for the water environment.
- Making young people *knowledgeable* about water, water management and study and career opportunities in the water sector. (SLO 2012: 6; emphasis added)

¹⁷ Ecological research has since been conducted.

The organisation derived the following educational domains from these goals:

1. Water and life: *water is a primal source of life.*
2. Water supply and use: *safe and adequate clean water is an essential human right.*
3. Water safety and protection: the understanding that *the defence against the water* in The Netherlands, as a river delta country, *is indispensable.* (SLO 2012: 6; emphasis added).

The goals named by the SLO focus on both the *importance* of water for life, and the *danger* it poses to the Netherlands, though the choice of words – i.e. “aware”, “implications”, “consequence”, and “defence against the water” – does leave the impression that water is mainly viewed in a negative light. The report somewhat contradicts my own experience with Dutch water education, which may be explained by my age at the time. While the sensational stories about Watergeuzen, and future flood disasters stuck, the relatively dry material about the hydrological cycle quickly vanished from my teenage memory. Many educational programs nowadays have an interactive approach for these reasons.

In 2009 a feature film, *De Storm (The Storm)*, a drama based on the 1953 Flood Disaster, attracted 450,000 viewers and quickly reached platinum status, proving that the North Sea Flood is still an important part of Dutch cultural memory. In reaction to the film’s success, an educational project titled *Webquest – De Storm* was created by the Dutch Flood Disaster Museum (Watersnoodmuseum). The project received the Comenius EduMedia Award in 2010 and is just one example of the many disaster-focused water education projects in The Netherlands. On the website Watereducatie.nl, many such projects can be found, including excursions for primary and secondary school students by Belevenisonderwijs.nl. Their programme includes a flood-disaster re-enactment game for primary schools (“Save your family!”), a water managing excursion (“Save the polder!”), and an excursion called “Our water managing system: *unique* and *vulnerable*” (Belevenisonderwijs; emphasis added). Clearly, the programme first and foremost envisions water as a *threat* to the *vulnerable* Netherlands, and emphasises safety above all else. Another project that is mainly geared towards water

management and the *prevention* of possible disasters is a computer game called *The Water Manager*, in which secondary school students learn to monitor the Dutch water system. The goal is for students to

gain an understanding of *the water system*, the way the various *uses* are *dependent* on water and *threatened* by water, and the various *measures* that can be taken within the *system*, and the effects of those measures. (WaterEducatie)

It seems that many Dutch water education programs – or at least many interactive programs – mainly focus on the third SLO goal: *Safety and Protection* (see above). The programmes take an anthropocentric approach to water, mainly positioning it as a *resource* for humans, and as something that needs to be *regulated* and *controlled*. The previously related experiences within my family also show that water has been an important subject in Dutch education for more than a century.

The Dutch education system is currently in the process of gaining world-wide recognition for its water education programmes.¹⁸ Research has yet to be performed on the water rhetoric used in Dutch educational materials and settings, but the above examples suggest that further research may be necessary from an ideological perspective. The issue may be complicated by the world-wide fame of The Netherlands as a country of *innovative* water management technology. The scope of this thesis does not allow for such a broad enquiry, but may shed some light on Dutch water rhetoric and education, through the medium of children’s literature.

¹⁸ The May/June 2013 issue of the American journal *Social Education* contained the article “Water Education in The Netherlands: An Integrated Curriculum Using NCSS Standards for Social Studies” by Bron and Van Vliet. In the same year, the Dutch education program *Waterwise* received the prestigious Comenius EduMedia Award in Berlin.

1.4 IDEOLOGY, CHILDREN’S LITERATURE, AND NATURE

All writing is pervaded by ideology, which can be obtrusive and easily recognisable, but can also be implicit (Stephens 1992: 1-2). Though reader response criticism has shown that individual readers may read one text entirely differently, many scholars still agree that readers, especially young readers, are influenced by these ideologies (Hunt 1999: 1). Children’s literature has historically been regarded and treated as a means to socialize children. For this reason, many adults still feel that children’s books should first and foremost have educational value, before aesthetic value – though most contemporary children’s literature scholars disagree, favouring aesthetic approaches to the genre instead (Nikolajeva 2005: xiii; Sarland 1999: 39; Zipes 1981: 19). According to John Stephens, children’s literature has a unique relationship with ideology:

Writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive appreciation of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience. These values include contemporary morality and ethics, a sense of what is valuable in the culture’s past [...] and aspirations about the present and future. Since a culture’s future is, to put it crudely, invested in its children, children’s writers often take upon themselves the task of trying to mould audience attitudes into ‘desirable’ forms, which can mean either an attempt to perpetuate certain values or to resist socially dominant values which particular writers oppose. (Stephens 1992: 3; emphasis added).

With regard to Dutch “war against the water” rhetoric, “a sense of what is valuable in [The Netherlands]’ past” and the aim to “foster in the child reader a positive appreciation of [Dutch] socio-cultural values” may lead some authors to purposely write about historical inundations, or to emphasise Dutch nationhood and ‘perseverance against the water’ in the same ways that they are addressed in Dutch education (see above). Of course, authors may also actively oppose such values, according to their own (political) beliefs.

Authors who adhere to the idea that children’s literature has a foremost educational function may be *even more* likely to intentionally communicate ideologies (about water and nature) through children’s texts, than authors who mainly write for aesthetic purposes, or those who write for adult audiences. At least two authors of books included in the corpus (see below),

Jan Terlouw (see above), and Ineke Mahieu, have stated that their works have an educational purpose in interviews (Terlouw “Interview”; Mahieu “Een interview”). Both stories are historical fiction, and take place in Zeeland, during the 1953 North Sea Flood Disaster. Mahieu states the following about her reasons to write *Water Everywhere* (2010):

There used to be a photo book about the North Sea Flood Disaster in my parents’ bookcase. They were large black-and-white photos of flooded villages, of horses standing *helplessly* on an endless stretch of water, of *people who were saved from rooftops*. That photo book *really impressed* me as a young girl. [...] In elementary school, I even chose to do a class talk about the North Sea Flood Disaster and the *Delta Works* twice. [...] A few years ago, I discovered that many children don’t know about the Flood Disaster in Zeeland. That’s why I decided to write a children’s book about it. (Mahieu “Een interview”; emphasis added)

Mahieu talks about the impression the photo book made on her as a young girl, and emphasises the *helplessness* of people and animals alike. She also points out that the Delta Works played an important part in her fascination with the disaster. Lack of knowledge within younger generations about the event is what drove her to write the book. Clearly, Mahieu thinks that the flood has an important place in Dutch cultural memory, and wants to preserve it for future generations. A main focus on the helplessness of the Zeelanders may imply a retelling of the Dutch “war against the water” myth in *Water Everywhere*.

Ecocritics, and especially ecofeminists and ecopedagogues, generally agree that ideas about nature, reflected in children’s literature, influence children’s environmental empathy and/or engagement – now, and in adulthood (e.g. Greta Gaard, Alice Curry, Bigger & Webb). Dutch authors who write about water may therefore influence young readers with the idea of a false culture/nature or Dutch/water dichotomy (see above). However, John Stephens points out that young readers can themselves choose if they accept the values presented to them in children’s literature (Stephens 1992: 64). It is thus important to keep in mind that, while adult authors may indeed try to influence the worldview of young readers, these readers may question these values, or set them aside altogether. This study analyses portrayals of nature in Dutch

children's books, in order to shed light on contemporary Dutch ideology about water, and on the way these values may possibly be transferred to new generations.

1.5 METHOD

This MA thesis, which focuses on dynamic relationships between humans, water and nature in recent Dutch children's and young adult literature, is meant as a first inquiry into the area of water rhetoric in Dutch books for young readers, framed within ecocritical, ecofeminist and posthumanist theories. As discussed above, Dutch children's literature has addressed environmental issues during periods of rapid technological innovation in the area of water management. In order to come to a better understanding of literary portrayals of the dynamics between people and water, chapter two of this thesis will discuss relevant disciplines such as ecocriticism, ecofeminism and posthumanism, contemporary topics within these fields, and their significance for children's literature research and this thesis in particular.

Ecocriticism, ecofeminism and posthumanism have all brought forth useful concepts and discussions on literature and the representation of nature, and on relationships between humans and the nonhuman. The actual analysis performed within the scope of this thesis has been split into two chapters. Chapter three, *Dark Depths: On the Representation of Water* focuses on the portrayal of water in the chosen corpus, while chapter four, *In-Touch Outcasts: People, Water, and Nature* revolves around relationships between the Dutch and the earth in these books.

In order to form an accurate image of the dynamics between water, nature, and people in Dutch children's literature, a corpus was compiled. Six books were analysed for this study. They are:

- *Oosterschelde windkracht 10 [Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10]*, Jan Terlouw, 1976
- *De stem van het water [The Water's Voice]*, Lydia Rood, 1997
- *Die dag aan zee [That Day by the Sea]*, Peter van Gestel, 2003
- *Overal water [Water Everywhere]*, Ineke Mahieu, 2010
- *Overstroomd [Flooded]*¹⁹, Eva Moraal, 2012
- *Vlieg! [Fly!]*, Marco Kunst, 2013

The books were selected using the following criteria: they were published within either the higher middle grade market²⁰ (ages 10 to 12) or the lower range of the young adult market²¹ (ages 12 to 15); they were originally published in Dutch; and the story's setting was The Netherlands. The books were selected using the online catalogue of the Utrecht and Leiden public libraries, as well as the website Boekenzoeker.org.²²

The age range was chosen because water and nature education programs in The Netherlands are mainly geared towards children aged 10 to 15.²³ Translated books were excluded, because this thesis specifically focuses on *Dutch* water ideology and rhetoric, and it was thus important that the authors were embedded in Dutch culture. Some books contained

¹⁹ An English translation of Eva Moraal's *Overstroomd* will debut in the United States in fall 2015, under the title *Current*. This thesis was written before the publication of said translation. A German translation, *Zwischen uns die Flut*, appeared in May 2015.

²⁰ This corresponds to groups six to eight in the Dutch primary school system.

²¹ This corresponds to classes one to three of the Dutch secondary school system.

²² Search words included "water", "flood", "waves", "sea" and "river". On Boekenzoeker.org, the searches were performed in the ages 8-12 and the ages 12-15 categories.

²³ This was found through online research on the water education projects discussed in chapter 1.3.

stories that took place in other countries, and these were excluded for reasons of cultural appropriation: the Dutch authors of these books may have immersed themselves in the cultures they describe, or they may have conducted research on the role of nature and water in these cultures. For reasons of consistency in the chosen corpus, non-fiction, poetry, songbooks, fantasy genre books, and books about the Dutch East India Company were also excluded.²⁴

While five of these books are relatively recent, having been published between 1997 and 2013, Jan Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* has been included for its unique status as a children's book written by an environmentalist politician, and as a means to reflect on the position of environmental issues in Dutch children's literature throughout recent history. For the rest of the analysis, a more recent approach was chosen in order to shed light upon recent views on water in Dutch children's literature.

The aim of this study is to analyse the interconnectedness – or lack thereof – between culture and nature in recent Dutch children's literature, and to assess if Dutch children's literature interacts with the “war against the water” rhetoric, through portrayals of water. The central question of this thesis is: How are dynamics between culture and nature, with water as its main component, represented in recent Dutch children's literature, and how do these representations relate to contemporary research topics within the ecohumanities?

²⁴ East India Company books, or “VOC” books, form a specific genre within Dutch children's literature. These books often have a focus on hazardous life on the VOC ships and are used in historical contexts in schools. Research on the VOC corpus in general is the logical way to go with this genre. Joke Hage and Tessa Kleijn researched cultural memory and perception of the VOC period in contemporary Dutch children's and young adult literature in “Een hemelbed in het ruim” (Hage & Kleijn, 2014).

2 CRITICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE AND NATURE: THE -ISMS

How does one frame research on the dynamics between nature and culture in children's literature? Nowadays, many disciplines are concerned with the connection between the humanities and the earth, and many have started to question the anthropocentrism that lies at the core of Western philosophy. The field of *ecohumanities* is versatile and dynamic. While the most widespread term for the "environmental turn" in literary and cultural criticism is nowadays ecocriticism (Buell 2005: 1), disciplines such as ecofeminism and posthumanism offer their own unique perspectives, and have made significant contributions, especially within the field of children's literature.

This chapter endeavours to give a brief overview of three disciplines that frame this study: ecocriticism, ecofeminism and (ecological) posthumanism, with a focus on their importance for the field of children's literature and their relevance to the analysis. In doing so, it aspires to avoid a homogeneous approach to ecocriticism, often found in general introductions to the field. While all three disciplines have historically emerged as separate movements, there is nowadays much overlap between their central issues, their goals, and sometimes their approaches. All extend their concern to nonhuman others, and all more or less advocate a sustainable approach to human-Earth relationships. To emphasize this cross-discipline interconnectedness, the term *ecohumanities* was chosen as flag term in this study over *ecocriticism*, although the terms may in fact be used interchangeably. While ecofeminist studies are usually also ecocritical in nature, not all branches of posthumanism are ecocritical, and this thesis mainly concerns itself with the ecological branch of posthumanism (see below).

Now that the influence of the *ecohumanities* is growing in the United States and in England, environmental approaches are slowly gaining recognition in Dutch cultural criticism. The majority of Dutch work is conducted by students, who often base their research on general handbooks or introductions to *ecocriticism* (e.g. Buell 2005, Garrard 2004), which have been

said to marginalize and even omit (historical) ecofeminist positions (Gaard 2010: 643) and seem to omit posthumanist perspectives altogether. By focusing mainly on these sources, Dutch students unwittingly spread the idea of ecocriticism as a homogeneous, male-dominated movement. This thesis is an attempt to introduce the fields of ecofeminism and posthumanism to the Dutch ecohumanities.

2.1 ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism began as a movement of literary scholars with a shared interest in traditional representations of the natural world, such as the European pastoral and American nature writing (Westling 2006: 26). Though coined in 1978, the term did not become mainstream until Cheryl Glotfelty used it at a conference in 1989 (Dobrin and Kidd 2004: 2). In the 1980s and 1990s, literary scholars who shared an interest in the environment started to connect with one another, and a movement began to take form. In the United States, this resulted in the 1992 foundation of ASLE: The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. ASLE is now an international organisation, with a European branch (EASLCE), and many branches in individual countries such as the United Kingdom, India, Japan and Korea. Its international journal, *ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment)* is currently the leading journal on ecocriticism, but some branches publish their own journals, such as the British journal *Green Letters*. Ecocriticism as a movement is rapidly expanding, with a growing amount of books, articles and conferences appearing on the subject, and universities all over the world (but mostly in the United States and the United Kingdom) now offering courses on literature and the environment (Westling 2014: 2).

In 1996, *The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology* by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm was published. In this anthology, which is now well known amongst ecocritics, Glotfelty and Fromm collected ecocritical research conducted between the 1970s and 1990s, which had until that moment been scattered under terms such as “environmental literature studies”, “green studies” and “nature writing”. In the anthology, Glotfelty and Fromm

argued that the institution of literary studies had ignored the environmental crisis on a large scale, stating:

If your knowledge of the outside world were limited to what you could infer from the major publications of the literary profession, you would quickly discern that race, class, and gender were the hot topics of the late twentieth century, but you would never suspect that the earth's life support systems were under stress. (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xvi)

The emergence of ecocriticism is closely intertwined with environmental concerns. Most ecocritics acknowledge the existence of an urgent, world-wide environmental crisis and want to contribute to the protection and restoration of the earth, through their position as literary scholars. Their work therefore often has a green political agenda (Garrard 2004: 3; Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xxi; Kerridge 1998: 5). Glotfelty and Fromm gave the following definition of the discipline in their anthology, which is now well-known and is often cited by ecocritics:

Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. [...] As a critical stance, [ecocriticism] has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman. (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xviii; xix)

The authors hereafter illustrate the broad scope of this definition with some examples of ecocritical research questions, e.g.: “How is nature represented in this sonnet?; [...] *How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it?*; [...] How has the concept of wilderness changed over time?; In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture?” and “What cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, art history, and ethics?” (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xix; emphasis added).

The sample question that Glotfelty and Fromm pose with regard to “metaphors of the land” is interesting for this study, when considering Dutch “war against the water” rhetoric, and the many Dutch tropes about water. The Dutch language contains a great amount of commonly known tropes for water, such as “het razende water” – which best translates to “the raging water”. Some of these are very difficult to translate. For instance, “het woedende water” may be translated into “the furious water” or “the raging water”, but is so typical for the Dutch language that the translation cannot accurately cover the true meaning of the word, which is used for either “violent” natural occurrences such as storms, or intense happenings, such as battles, wars or debates. The fact that the Dutch language has so many ways to describe water, and that many of these tropes suggest an anthropomorphic view of water, and ascribe a violent tendency to water, may very well influence the way the Dutch treat the water. While such an enquiry is beyond the scope of this thesis, the possibility of such a connection does emphasize the importance of research on Dutch water rhetoric, and the importance of the information that this study may add to future research in that area.

Glotfelty and Fromm define ecocriticism as a *literary criticism*, although they acknowledge that the possibility of “cross-fertilization” between literary studies and other disciplines is an interesting research topic. Note that while the proposed research questions all contain environmental elements and concepts (“land”, “wilderness”, “nature”), the *definition* uses very broad terms such as a negotiation between the “human” and the “nonhuman” and “physical environment”. In acknowledging the importance of human/nonhuman dynamics, Glotfelty and Fromm’s definition of ecocriticism has a clear overlap with the area of posthumanism (see below), and leaves a possibility for the inanimate and/or animate nature (such as rocks and rivers) to be included, which is further addressed by deep ecology (see below).

In *Writing the Environment* (1998), Richard Kerridge gives the following definition of ecocriticism:

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. (Kerridge 1998: 5)

Kerridge does not address ecocriticism as a literary criticism, but as a *broad cultural criticism*: “wherever they appear, [...] in a great many cultural spaces”. He also emphasizes the fact that ideology is often hidden, leaving an opening for the analysis of texts that are not explicitly environmentalist or have a natural setting. Kerridge furthermore underscores the connection between ecocriticism and the environmental crisis, using the term “usefulness” to show that ecocritical research may in itself be an act of activism.

While this thesis is the result of a *literary* study, I, like Kerridge, define ecocriticism as a broad, cultural criticism. Today’s children are, after all, not limited to literary portrayals of nature, but rather

have unprecedented and revolutionary access to nature through the technological inventions of television, film, video, computers, the Internet, and other electronic media. As a consequence of these changes, children experience far greater exposure to natural settings and creatures than could have been imagined previously [...]. (Kahn and Kellert 2002: 143)

To systematically separate literary and non-literary sources in today’s digital world would not make sense to many Millennials or members of Generation Z, who are adept at switching between various media effortlessly, and nor should it be a sensible option for those who research ideology in children’s media. Dobrin and Kidd’s 2004 anthology *Wild Things: Children’s Culture and Ecocriticism*, the first compilation of ecocritical work on children’s literature culture, also defined ecocriticism as a broad cultural criticism, including chapters on children’s

films, television shows and music.²⁵ Still, most ecocritical research to day focuses on the medium of children's *literature*. For the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to include other Dutch children's media. An analysis of, for instance, educational videos on water management in The Netherlands could significantly contribute to the enquiry into Dutch water rhetoric started by this study.

Ecocriticism, thus, is a movement which originated in literary studies. At the heart of ecocriticism lies the premise that humanity is connected to the physical world: human culture affects the earth, and is affected by it (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xix). Many – if not all – ecocritics are inspired by the deep ecology movement. In George Sessions' anthology *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (1995), Arne Naess, known as the movement's "philosophical guru" (Garrard 2004: 21), defines eight basic deep ecology principles. The first point, which is most central to the movement, and most crucial to this study, is the idea of *intrinsic value*:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: inherent worth, intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes. (Sessions 1995: 68)

Intrinsic value is thus the notion that the earth is not a *resource*, a means for humans to exploit (an idea that Lynn White traces back to Genesis; see above), but that all life on Earth has value in itself. Warwick Fox expands on this notion of intrinsic value, stating:

Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an *egalitarian attitude on the part of humans* not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even *toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere*. Thus, this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as *rivers*, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right. (Fox in Sessions 1995: 269-270; emphasis added).

²⁵ Another example of a study that addresses children's film is David Whitley's *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*, 2008.

Deep ecology's consideration for inanimate entities, such as "rivers", shows the relevance of the movement to this study. Though not exclusive to the ecocriticism movement, the concept of intrinsic value is most often posed as a central concept in introductions to ecocriticism. While ecocritics may or may not touch upon the binary oppositions and the interrogation of anthropocentrism central to ecofeminism and posthumanism, they almost always the deep ecology principle of intrinsic value. If they do not, they are most likely not an ecocritic, but an "environmentalist".

Environmentalists are, in short, people who care about the environment and environmental concerns, such as pollution and global warming, but who do not welcome radical change of the current social order, and wish to maintain their current standard of living (Garrard 2004: 18). Such critics "still regard Western traditions such as liberal democracy, human rights, Christianity and notions of historical or scientific progress as valuable, to a greater or lesser degree, even in the light of the environmental crisis" (Garrard 2004: 19). As we will see in the analysis, some books in the corpus contain environmentalist rather than ecocritical ideas.

2.1.1 Ecocriticism, Children's Literature, and this Study

Children's literature has a unique position within the area of ecocriticism, and within the ecohumanities for that matter. As Karin Lesnik-Oberstein states in her chapter on children's literature in Kerridge's *Writing the Environment*: "There can be few ideas in Western culture as intimately connected and intertwined as 'nature' and the 'child'" (Lesnik-Oberstein 1998: 208). Lesnik-Oberstein points out that John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau established connections between the child, nature, and reading, at the end of the eighteenth century. In *Emile*, Rousseau formulated the idea that children should learn in natural environments, shielded from the negative influence of so called "civilized" adults. Rousseau thought only one book suitable for his Emile: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. This sparked a tradition of Robinsonades, and "more importantly, initiated the paradox of the child learning from

experience through the book which represents learning from experience” (Lesnik-Oberstein 1998: 211):

[Rousseau] and Locke shared an allegiance to the idea of the child learning first from direct experience and then from texts that were seen to incorporate natural experience and learning from nature and experience. They also saw these books as being inherently pleasurable and attractive to the child because of the child’s own naturalness. (Lesnik-Oberstein 1998: 211)

Locke and Rousseau’s ideas on child-rearing contributed to development of the concept of “the children’s book”. As books were the ultimate medium and symbol of civilization, the only books that suited their views were books which envisioned natural worlds, and addressed nature as a space of learning. Inspired by Rousseau and Locke, children’s books became “texts with ‘pictures’ and ‘animals’, and lone individuals (Robinson Crusoe) surviving outside of a contaminated and contaminating human society” (Lesnik-Oberstein 1998: 212). Thus, the origin of the children’s book is inextricably linked with ideas about nature, and the natural.

Traces of the children’s book’s nature-oriented origins are still abundant. One has only to enter a children’s bookstore to find that a great many children’s stories take place in natural settings, and/or revolve around (anthropomorphic) animals. In the young adult age group, dystopian fiction has been a popular genre for several years. In *Environmental Crisis in Young adult Literature: A Poetics of Earth* (2013), Alice Curry, who mainly writes from the perspective of ecofeminism (see below), notes that many dystopian young adult novels “invoke an ecophobic discourse to portray the planet as vengeful and vitriolic” (Curry 2013: 18; 40) and warns that such narratives may cause “an excessive sense of despair, paralysis or disempowerment” in young readers (Curry 2013: 41). Curry borrowed the concept of *ecophobia* from ecocritic Simon Estok, who describes the concept as an “irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world”, similar in nature to homophobia, racism, or sexism (Estok 2009: 208). According to Estok, the media play a large role in the distribution of ecophobia. Often, nature is portrayed as “a hostile opponent who is responding angrily to our

incursions and actions, an opponent to be feared and, with any luck, controlled” (Estok 2009: 210). Ecophobia, or more accurately – *aquaphobia* – is central to the many examples of Dutch water rhetoric discussed in the introduction of this thesis, and may very well apply to the selection of Dutch children’s books.

For the purpose of this thesis, the ecocritical concepts of *intrinsic value* (deep ecology), *aquaphobia* and the *nature-child connection* will be addressed in the analysis of the corpus. With regard to ‘intrinsic value’, the analysis will focus on humanity’s relationship with nature. The study will assess if nature is mainly envisioned as a human resource, or if it has value in itself, independent of its usefulness to humans.

The concept of aquaphobia is arguably most central to this study. It concerns both *portrayals* of water, and the reaction of (human) characters to water. The main enquiry, is then, if water is presented as “a *hostile opponent* who is *responding angrily* to our incursions and actions, an opponent to be *feared* and, with any luck, *controlled*” (Estok 2009: 210; emphasis added), and furthermore, if it is “*vengeful* and *vitriolic*” (Curry 2013: 18; 40; emphasis added).

The nature-child connection is relevant for chapter four, in which much attention is paid to people’s connection (or lack thereof) with the earth. Some children, as chapter four will show, fulfil a unique position between the natural, and the civilised world.

2.2 ECOFEMINISM

In recent years, issues have been arising about the representation of the field of ecocriticism, and its canon. In “New directions for ecofeminism: Towards a more feminist ecocriticism”, Greta Gaard argues that ecofeminism is often marginalized, misinterpreted or even omitted in major ecocritical works (Gaard 2010: 643). Students of children’s literature and the environment are sometimes confronted with conflicting sources. While Greg Garrard’s accessible introduction to the field (*Ecocriticism*, 2004) was helpful during the orientation process of this thesis, the book seemed to marginalize ecofeminism – and while Simon Estok has been accused of antifeminism (Gaard 2010: 659), his article on ecophobia was very insightful and useful for

this study. This situation has led me look beyond the scope of ecocriticism handbooks, and instead choose the broad vantage point of the ecohumanities, in which ecofeminism has an important position.

The term ecofeminism was first introduced by Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, who emphasised the importance of women in addressing the ecological crisis (Curry 2013: 1; Warren 1994: 1). According to Karen J. Warren and Barbara Wells-Howe, contemporary ecofeminism, or “ecological feminism”, is used as

[a]n umbrella term which captures a variety of multicultural perspectives on the nature of the connections within social systems of domination between those humans in subdominant or subordinate positions, particularly women, and the domination of nonhuman nature. (Warren and Wells-Howe 1994: 1)

Contemporary ecofeminism thus addresses the *logic of domination* that lies at the core of Neoliberal, patriarchal societies. The discipline aligns the oppression of those who are “othered” in societies, and placed in binary oppositions, which place male above female; white above coloured; adult above child; heterosexual above LGBT; and human above nonhuman nature (Mack-Canty 2004: 169).

Though Ecofeminism is informed by different strands, which may or may not see eye to eye, at the core of the discipline lies the premise that there are important connections between women and nature – especially between the domination of women, and the domination of nature (Curry 2013: 1; Warren 1987 in Warren 1993). Ecofeminism is unique in its insistence that nonhuman nature is a feminist issue (Warren 1997 in Mack-Canty 2004: 169). According to Colleen Mack-Canty, “one of the main endeavours of ecofeminism, in its efforts to reweave the nature/culture [sic] duality, is to understand the ideology that perpetuates the domination of women, other humans, and nonhuman nature” (Mack-Canty 2004:170).

While some ecocritics emphasize the historical connection between *children* and nature, ecofeminists point out a connection that is in all probability much older: the link between

women and nature. Colleen Mack-Canty explains that in the culture/nature dichotomy, which can be traced back to Ancient Greece,

man was seen as representing culture, and needing to be unconstrained by and to have domination over natural processes, both of a nonhuman nature and of human embodiment (Brown 1988). *Men were identified with disembodied characteristics such as order, freedom, light, and reason*, which were seen as better than, and in opposition to, *women's allegedly more "natural" and/or embodied characteristics such as disorder, physical necessity, darkness, and passion* (Brown 1988). [...] [W]omen's embodiment generally, given its reproductive capacity, is harder to deny than men's. Early modern philosophers developing classical liberalism (e.g., Hobbes and Locke) continued the association of men with culture and women with nature. (Mack-Canty 2004: 155).

Women, thus, have historically been associated with the *natural* in Western philosophy, and they have traditionally been placed in a false, hierarchical dichotomy with men, who were thought to represent the *cultural*. As evident from the above, hierarchical dichotomies such as man/woman, culture/nature, and ratio/emotion stem from the same origins, and are thus closely intertwined. This notion is important, because it emphasises why nature *is*, and *should be* a feminist issue. The connection between women and nature is not only an old, but a complex issue, which leads to much discussion within feminist circles.

Some resources call ecofeminism a Third Wave Feminism (e.g. Mack-Canty 2004), and several make a distinction between two ecofeminism-movements, the first of which they call either "First Wave Ecofeminism", "radical ecofeminism" (e.g. Garrard 2004) or "cultural ecofeminism"; while calling the second "Second Wave Ecofeminism", or "contemporary ecofeminism".

The first "wave" of ecofeminism is then said to consist of feminists who believe in a biological connection between women and nature – asserting the very connection that has dominated Western philosophy since Ancient Greece (see above) – and underscoring female proximity to nature through childbirth, childcare and the reproductive cycle (Curry 2013: 3). In this "wave-narrative" of ecofeminism, the second wave corresponds to the *contemporary* ecofeminist movement, which seeks to *transcend* this historical woman-nature connection.

Many feminists however oppose the “wave-narrative”, stating that the idea of *consecutive* historical *waves* disregards the (historical) narratives of women of colour, who are omitted in the first and second waves, and defines feminism through white women’s perspectives (Gaard 2010: 646). In addition to this, Greta Gaard states that ecological feminism, “like feminisms developed by women of colour, [...] is neither a second- nor a third-wave feminism; it has been present in various forms from the start of feminism in the nineteenth century” (Gaard 2010: 646). Instead, Gaard identifies three approaches to the woman-nature connection: (1) the rejection of any such connection, propagated by liberal feminism, (2) the embrace of “attributes of feminine culture-darkness, the wild, nature, animals, spirituality, the body, emotion” practised by cultural feminism and (3) which is, according to Gaard, “the only logical way to go” and *the only method practised by the ecofeminists she knows*:

[The third option] acknowledges the association patriarchy has traditionally made between women and nature, and shapes an analysis of oppression that is based on an understanding of hierarchy and domination. [...] The third way – *the way that is ecofeminism* – acknowledges these false dualisms as created by an oppressive structure, patriarchy, and seeks to transcend them. (Gaard 1994: 21; emphasis added)

According to Gaard, ecofeminism is often misrepresented in mainstream media and scholarly articles, especially in works by establishment feminists and ecocritical scholars. These sources often focus on – or rather revolt against – “cultural ecofeminism” (see above), which leads many to believe that ecofeminists advocate the very inherent, physical connection between women and nature that *they are actually trying to transcend* (Gaard 1994: 22). Within the context of literary research, I agree with Gaard’s assertion that this third option – which focuses on the analysis of “false dualisms” and an underlying logic of domination – is the only sensible way to go. This notion, which is shared by most contemporary ecofeminists, is the notion applied in this thesis.

2.2.1 Ecofeminism, Children’s Literature, and this Study

Bradford et al, who follow Colleen Mack-Canty’s view of ecofeminism as a Third Wave Feminism, state that the feminist criticism practised within children’s literature studies is primarily Second Wave, and has therefore not shown much regard for ecofeminist perspectives (Bradford et al 2008: 85). A notable study within the area of ecofeminism is Alice Curry’s *A Poetics of Earth: environmental crisis in young adult fiction* (2013), which has already been mentioned under “ecocriticism”. Curry extends the ecofeminist discipline to include children and young adults, as a group which has traditionally been “othered”, or in Curry’s words, “feminized”. Her study focuses on post-apocalyptic young adult fiction – a genre to which one of the books in this study, Eva Moraal’s *Flooded* belongs – and on the ways in which such books reflect on the current ecological crisis. Curry’s study is was important during the orientation process of this thesis.

In this specific study, ecofeminism brings to the table the specific attention to an underlying *logic of domination* and the representation of the *false culture/nature dichotomy*, as well as a special interest in the historical *woman-nature connection*. The analysis will show if the chosen texts present culture and nature as a hierarchical dichotomy, or rather promote an embedded relationship between humanity and the earth.

The unravelling of such dualisms is of special importance in the light of the Dutch “war against the water” rhetoric, which envisions the Dutch nation and the water as parties at war, and even crowns the Dutch the “supreme rulers” of the water – envisioning the oppression of water as a symbol of Dutch perseverance and Dutch nationhood (see above). An ecofeminist perspective may shed light on hierarchical social structures present in the corpus. With regard to the historical connection between women and nature, this study will also pay attention to the different ways male and female characters in the stories relate to nature, and to the *gendering of nature itself*, as a subject of special interest.

2.3 POSTHUMANISM

Posthumanism as a cultural discourse emerged in the late twentieth century (Jaques 2015: 2). In “Towards a posthuman methodology” (2012), Fransesca Ferrando describes the discipline as follows:

Posthumanism [...] criticizes anthropocentric humanism and opens its inquiry to non-human [sic] life: from animals to artificial intelligence, from aliens to other forms of hypothetical entities related to the physics notion of a multiverse. [...] Posthumanism calls for environmentalism, deep ecology, animal rights and roboethics, simultaneously emphasizing its own human-centrism on the grounds that Posthumanism is still theorized by and for human beings. (Ferrando 2012: 10)

Posthumanism is thus, a critique on humanism and its anthropocentric nature. It dismisses the idea that the world revolves around humans, but rather regards humans as one of many life forms present on this world, and other worlds. Still, posthumanists also acknowledge that they, *as humans*, theorize from a human perspective. Neil Badmington explains why humanistic philosophy calls for a posthuman alternative:

Humanism is a discourse which claims that the figure of “Man” (sic) naturally stands at the centre of things [and] is entirely distinct from animals, machines, and other nonhuman entities. [...] Its absolutist assumptions, moreover, mean that anthropocentric discourse relies upon a set of binary oppositions, such as human/inhuman, self/other, natural/cultural, inside/outside, subject/object, us/them, here/there, active/passive, and wild/tame. (Badmington in Jaques 2015: 11; note in original)

Posthumanism thus, like ecofeminism, interrogates *hierarchal dichotomies*. However, unlike ecofeminism, which predominantly aligns the concerns of the human oppressed (e.g. racism, sexism, ageism) with the oppression of nature, and often advocates oppression as a unified

cause²⁶, posthumanism first and foremost seeks to “define the human place within the ecosystem by interrogating or erasing the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community” (Westling in Jaques 2015: 10). Thus, while the focus of ecofeminism lies with addressing the “logic of domination” which *unifies* all groups outside of the empowered *white male human* subject, posthumanism is mainly concerned with the *decentralisation of humanity altogether*. Central to the discipline is the concept of “aliveness”.

While the deep ecology movement theoretically extends its interest to inanimate, *natural* entities such as water (see above), most ecocritical and ecofeminist publications seem to focus on animals. The discipline of posthumanism extends its enquiry to include “nonhuman life” or the “nonhuman other”. Areas of interest include cyborgs and alien life forms, but the discipline also has a special interest in the environment.

In “Literature, the environment, and the question of the posthuman”, Louise Westling identifies “two main tendencies” in contemporary posthumanism, the first being *techno or cyborg posthumanism*, and the second – which Westling aligns herself with – being *ecological posthumanism*. Westling then points out that the movement’s first manifestation, though best-known, promotes an unsustainable worldview, and is actually in opposition with the views of the latter manifestation:

[Techno posthumanist studies] suggest a cyborg vision of the posthuman, opening the prospect of *escape from bodily limitations and environmental constraints* through computerised virtual reality, nanotechnology, genetic engineering, and biotic mechanisation. [...] Such a posthuman vision *does nothing to address the dilemmas posed by a threatened environment*, but instead implies that we can escape involvement in the rhythms of growth and decay in the biosphere. (Westling 2006: 29-30; emphasis added)

²⁶ Ecofeminists have argued that feminists and other oppressed groups may find many similarities between their situations, and build a solidary movement together (Gaard 1994: 23).

As opposed to techno posthumanism, ecological posthumanism does not recognise such an escape from the biosphere as a viable route for humanity, but instead seeks to “define the human place *within* the ecosystem by interrogating or erasing the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community” (Westling 2006: 30; emphasis added).

This study follows Louise Westling’s view on the *ecological* application of posthumanism, which focuses rather on the *interrogation* of historical dichotomies between humans and nonhuman nature, than on the reinforcement of such dichotomies embraced by techno posthumanism.

2.3.1 Posthumanism, Children’s Literature, and this Study

Within the area of posthumanism, the most extensive work on children’s literature to date is the recent *Children’s Literature and the Posthuman* by Zoe Jaques (2015). Jaques discusses posthuman identities in children’s literature, stating that children’s literature offers unique insights into possible notions of a posthuman world, because of its fascination with the “what if”: children’s literature often plays with boundaries, between humans and animals (e.g. anthropomorphism), but also between the inanimate and the animate (Jaques 2015: 8). Jaques’ study is split into three parts, which address animals, the environment, and cyborgs (including toys). The section on the environment contains a chapter on trees, and a chapter on water – the last of which was very useful for this thesis.

From posthumanism, this study takes the specific interest in the interrogation of *anthropocentrism*, and in the concepts of “*aliveness*” and *anthropomorphism/animism*. As of today, the only extensive research into children’s literature and water has been conducted by Zoe Jaques, who identified her research as posthumanist, though also acknowledging that her research on water and trees is in fact, just as much ecocritical (Jaques 2015: 14). For these reasons, her chapter on water will be an important resource for chapter three. Jaques builds upon ethnographic research on water, especially Veronica Strang’s *The Meaning of Water*

(2004), which also contains many concepts that turned out to be very useful for this literary inquiry. Concepts from Jaques' and Strang's work will be touched upon in the next chapter.

Anthropocentrism is a relevant research topic for this study, because it incorporates the nationalistic, dualistic imagery used in aquaphobic Dutch water rhetoric (see above), which envisions a hierarchical Dutch/water dichotomy, disregarding the fact that humans, and furthermore, *all life forms*, came from water and need water to survive. A focus on the analysis of anthropocentrism in the corpus may thus not only shed light upon "the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community" (Westling 2006: 30), but also on the boundary that has been assumed to set the Dutch apart from water. The concept will be valuable for the analysis of water portrayals in chapter three, as well as the interrogation of human-nature relationships in chapter four.

Anthropomorphism/animism and aliveness will also be central to this study, which will analyse the importance of these concepts to the corpus of Dutch children's books, especially with regard to the representation of water. As evident from chapter one, anthropomorphism plays an important part in Dutch "war against the water" rhetoric, which is not restricted to adult sources and the Dutch mainstream media, but also pervades Dutch education.

3 DARK DEPTHS: ON THE REPRESENTATION OF WATER

This chapter revolves around the representation of water in the chosen corpus of children's and young adult books. The focus lies with the various meanings²⁷ ascribed to water, either by characters, or by the stories' narrators. Water is a relatively new area of research in children's literature. This is not surprising, considering that the ecohumanities are a relatively new area of research in literary studies, but it is still remarkable, in the light of the large number of Dutch children's books about floods, and the sea. Zoe Jaques' aforementioned study, *Children's Literature and the Posthuman* (2015), is one of the first studies – if not the first ever – to discuss depictions of water in children's literature. Jaques cites ethnographic research on dynamics between people and water, especially Veronica Strang's *The Meaning of Water* (2004), and discusses the relevance of these concepts for children's literature, from a posthuman perspective. Strang's study has been incorporated into this thesis, both separate from, and embedded in Jaques work.

In *The Meaning of Water*, Veronica Strang states that water

[h]as an extraordinary ability to *metamorphose rapidly into substances with oppositional qualities*, that is, the highly visible, concrete solidity of ice, and the fleeting dematerialisation of steam. Each state is endlessly reversible, so that this polymorphic range is always potentially present. In every aspect, *water moves between oppositional extremes*: it may be a roaring flood, or a still pool, invisible and transparent, or reflective and impenetrable. It may be life-giving, providing warm amniotic support and essential hydration, or it may burn, freeze and drown. Each of these states has its own qualities and is imbued with its own meanings, and *all are always there in potential*. (Strang 2004: 49; emphasis added)

²⁷ In her ethnographic study, Veronica Strang understands cultural meaning as “the metaphors, images and systemic models that flow from human engagements with water” (Strang 2004: 245). In this literary study, meaning is predominantly understood as “the literary tropes and images that flow from human engagements with water.”

Clearly, water is not merely an element, a substance, or a backdrop, but carries many potential meanings to humans. Strang also underlines that water is “the ultimate fluid” (Strang 2004: 49), for it always carries the ability within to move “between oppositional extremes: it may be a roaring flood, or a still pool [...]”

In her chapter on water, Zoe Jaques focuses on the “slippery”, “uncooperative” nature of water, and the way it destabilizes human control (Jaques 2015: 144). She states that children’s literature “frequently interrogates watery ontology”, and relates this to the genre’s characteristic to envision the inanimate as animate; a subject of special interest to posthumanism (see above). Jaques illustrates this with an animistic quote from Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), which envisions a river as “chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh” (Graham in Jaques 2015: 143). Such anthropomorphism, can, according to Jaques

provide a constructive mechanism for destabilizing the nature-culture divide. Water is not inert silent scenery but is instead invested with life, agency and wit in a manner that makes it more than anthropocentric. (Jaques 2015: 145)

The fact that the river is presented as a living, sentient being – that it is anthropomorphised – may thus emphasise its existence to humans, and point out that it is not merely a “resource”, or something to be enacted upon without consideration for its wellbeing, as if it were an inanimate piece of furniture. In this sense, such anthropomorphism may destabilise the culture/nature dichotomy.

However, Jaques also notes that “a sense of monstrous autonomy” pervades many of these narratives, for water now has the agency to move beyond human control, which can be an uncomfortable idea (Jaques 2015: 146). She states that monstrous representations of nature may indeed not *destabilize*, but *endorse* the nature-culture divide *even more* than depictions that

present nature as something without agency, or in need of human protection (Jaques 2015: 146-147). As discussed previously, the Dutch situation, and the cultural context in which Dutch children’s literature is created, is unique in its history of water management and its antagonistic, anthropomorphic representations of water. Jaques’ thoughts on anthropomorphism, and the destabilisation of human control, are thus very relevant to this study.

This chapter explores the meanings that the six Dutch children’s books ascribe to water and analyses them in the light of Zoe Jaques’ notes on water and human control, and Veronica Strang’s ethnographic research on water and meaning – alongside the central concepts defined in the previous chapter. Special attention will be paid to the concepts of animism/anthropomorphism, the oppositional extremes of water, gender, and the connection between water and the cycle of life. Chapter four will hereafter focus on the different ways in which individual characters or societies in the corpus connect – or fail to connect – to nature, through the element of water.

3.1 ANTHROPOMORPHISM

As discussed above, anthropomorphism, or animism, is a central issue to the discussion of water and nature in children’s literature. Water is positioned as alive in five out of six books in the corpus, though it is depicted with varying amounts of agency²⁸. The only book in which the water has no sentient qualities is *Fly!* by Marco Kunst (2013). Strikingly, all five animistic books depict the water’s agency in a negative way, which by far surpasses the “monstrous autonomy” of Grahame’s “chasing and chuckling” river. The next paragraph revolves around violent waters, and it is followed by a paragraph on gendered waters.

²⁸ In this study, *agency* is understood as ‘a capacity for conscious and deliberate thought and action’ (McCallum in Stephens 3).

3.1.1 Violent Waters

Four books in the corpus, *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* (1976), *The Water's Voice* (1997), *Water Everywhere* (2010), and *Flooded* (2012), deal with floods. This is not surprising, as floods are a prominent theme in Dutch children's literature (see above). The stories either take place during a historical inundation, and/or discuss past floods that affected the communities represented by the stories. A title which immediately stands out for its anthropomorphic qualities is *The Water's Voice*, by Lydia Rood. The story is situated on the Dutch island²⁹ of Marken, around the start of the twentieth century. The island, which experiences frequent inundations, is inhabited by a traditional fishing community. Twelve-year-old twins Tilly³⁰ and Sam are the story's protagonists, along with their family: their father Mos, and their grandfather – both fishermen – and their younger brother and mother. Gender roles on Marken are strictly defined: nearly all boys become fishermen, while girls become homemakers. *The Water's Voice* was named after a famous Dutch poem by Henri Marsman, the end of which is displayed at the top of the book's first page:

And in all regions
the water's voice
with its eternal disasters
is dreaded and heard (Marsman in Rood 1997: 7)

Although the poem foreshadows a negative, anthropomorphic representation of water, this is not the case throughout the first half of the book. Even when the main characters' house is consumed by anthropomorphised flames, water initially remains a lifeless source used to put the fire out: "The puny spurts of water that came from the fire hoses dropped down feebly;

²⁹ Marken became a peninsula in 1957, when it was connected to the main land by a dyke.

³⁰ A few (old-)Dutch names have been altered in order to increase the readability of this study. The original names have been included in the appendix.

most of the water had probably evaporated before it reached the flames” (Rood 1997: 56). While the water is not ascribed any sentient qualities in this part of the text, the fire is said to “gain new strength”, to “charge their home” and to “outsmart” people (Rood 1997: 56; 58; 59). This is strangely contradicted by the text on the cover, which states: “Then one day, a fire breaks out. *The water, the enemy, is now an ally!*” (Rood 1997; emphasis added), thereby clearly anthropomorphising the water and employing Dutch aquaphobic war-rhetoric.³¹

In the main text, water only gains anthropomorphic characteristics when a storm is coming: “But this evening would, when darkness fell, only show the *enraged* white crests, and the waves passing over each other in their *hurry to attack the land*” (Rood 1997: 93; emphasis added). This is one of many passages in the book in which water is portrayed as having *evil intentions*, and possessing negative emotions, in this case anger. When *The Water’s Voice* addresses the human-endangering, destructive aspects of water and fire, the elements are anthropomorphised: they are portrayed as *intentionally* wreaking havoc on people and their surroundings. However, when the elements are vessels for human control – for instance, when water is used to extinguish a fire – they are presented as inanimate substances. The book also contains some strong connections between water and gender, which will be discussed below.

Another book in which water is anthropomorphised, though to a lesser extent, is *Water Everywhere* by Ineke Mahieu (2010). This story, which is set in a fictional 1950s village in the province of Zeeland, covers the events leading to the 1953 North Sea Flood Disaster, and follows main character Nate as he and his older brother Lane try to bring themselves and other villagers to safety. Nate comes from a poor background and his family lives in “the Neighbourhood”, the poorest part of the village, which makes them subject to discrimination. In this book, water is mostly anthropomorphised through common tropes used in the Dutch language, such as “the water is coming”, “the raging water”, “the furious water”, and “the roaring sea”. These tropes are used to express the destructive power of the water: “It was no use shouting. They would not

³¹ Leopold, the book’s publisher, may have presumed that the use of familiar, aquaphobic rhetoric would speak to potential buyers.

understand each other in the roaring storm and the *thundering violence* of the *raging water*” (Mahieu 2010: 93; emphasis added). The text also uses similes to attribute a childish, devious character to the element: “some boats had been lifted from the harbour and thrown onto the Harbour Square. *As if they were toy boats*. Now they lay there, maimed wrecks amongst the rest of the junk” (Mahieu 2010: 102; emphasis added).

Evidently, water is something more than merely an inanimate backdrop in *Water Everywhere*. However, unlike the sea in Lydia Rood’s *The Water’s Voice* (see above), it is not attributed an *evil intent*. Although some tropes suggest that the water displays various negative emotions, for it can “rage” and “roar”, it does not seem to be *purposefully* attacking humanity like it does in Lydia Rood’s book. In Mahieu’s book, the portrayal of water resembles that of an angry human toddler: though it is anthropomorphised, it does not seem to possess a developed conscience, or to act out of a specific intention. This is different for two other books; *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* and *Flooded*.

Eighteen-year-old Anne, the main character of Jan Terlouw’s *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* (1976), loves to sail, and has a strong connection to water. Like Mahieu’s *Water Everywhere*, the first part of Terlouw’s book takes place in the province of Zeeland, during the 1953 North Sea Flood Disaster. Anne, who lives on her family’s farm, has frequent conflicts with her religious father, who fails to understand her love for the sea, and her yearning for freedom. Anne is the odd one out in her family: her younger sister and brother are both well-adjusted and obedient teenagers, and her mother never questions the household’s patriarchal structure. When Anne accidentally falls pregnant by boyfriend Hank, her family is shunned by the community.

While water is initially depicted in an inanimate, positive light, serving as a backdrop for Anne’s sailing trips and her escapist dreams (see below), this changes dramatically during the 1953 Flood Disaster, which hits Anne’s village hard. During the event, water suddenly gains violent, anthropomorphic characteristics:

Mr Tiler's car, which the woman with the two children had just entered, sloped and slid down, because a large part of the dyke was crumbling, and hung in the the air for a few moments. *A large wave smashed into it.* The car disappeared into the *furious water.* (Terlouw 1976: 72; emphasis added)

Five feet from grandma's bed, the house had been *ripped apart.* Seven feet below her, the water swirled its *triumphant victory dance.* (Terlouw 1976: 74; emphasis added)

While in the first quote, the text employs a common Dutch trope, the "furious water", in a similar way to the abovementioned quote from Mahieu's *Water Everywhere*, the trope is reinforced by the accompanying *act* of the water: it smashes into the family's car, and drowns them. In the second quote, the water is shown to *rejoice* in its kills. Here, water is not just violent, but sadistic. It has an *evil intent* similar to the sea in Lydia Rood's *The Water's Voice* (see above). Anne, who has always had a strong connection to water, now feels "great anger" towards it (Terlouw 1976: 83; see below). The water she once felt so at home with, has become her enemy.

The anthropomorphic representation of water in Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* is short-lived. The second part of the book, set in the 1970s, promotes an environmental agenda, and shows characters protesting government plans to close off the Eastern Scheldt. In these parts, the water's violent characteristics are conveniently forgotten, and Anne is once again described as having "always loved it" (Terlouw 1976: 96). In *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* water is either an anthropomorphised, threatening entity with malicious intent (1950s), or an inanimate, non-threatening background element, which is enjoyed by sailors, harvested by fishermen, or threatened by technology (1970s; see below). The moment water gains agency, its "evil nature" is simultaneously revealed. For it to be appreciated by characters, its sentience and/or (monstrous) autonomy must be momentarily forgotten or denied.

Another book which contains violent, anthropomorphic images of water is Eva Moraal's *Flooded* (2012). This story revolves around teenagers Nina and Max, who live in a future, post-apocalyptic version of The Netherlands. "The Great Floods" have split the land into a submerged region, an in-between region, and a dry region. Segregation has occurred between

the poor “Wet” and rich “Dry” citizens: only wealthy families can afford to live behind the thick, protective walls of the Gated Communities in the dry parts, with the rest of the people living in the in-between region that is in constant danger of flooding. “Wet” people are treated as lower-class citizens, who are subject to police violence and are deprived of essential needs, such as medical assistance and nutritious food. As a result, resistance is growing in the in-between region. Nina, a “Dry” girl from a Gated Community, starts visiting a “Wet” school after her own school is destroyed during a dyke break – a disaster in which her younger sister Isa drowned. She meets Max, a “Wet” boy whose father has died in the same dyke break, and the pair gradually fall in love. However, Max’s older brother Liam unexpectedly reveals that he is part of the Wet resistance, and persuades Max to help kidnap Nina, who is the daughter of an important Dry government official. While overseeing her kidnapping, Max starts to feel remorse and resolves to help her escape.

Eva Moraal’s *Flooded* uses many aquaphobic Dutch tropes, such as “the water is coming”, “roaring” and “raging” (Ginting 2015: 4), and like *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, the book reinforces these images with detailed descriptions of vicious *acts* of the water:

These are *horrific* photographs of people in *mortal agony*, who know that they will not survive, that *the water will come* and *drag* them to the *dark depths*, where a *nameless grave* awaits. These are photographs of ruined buildings, people jumping off their rooftops. But it does not matter, there is *no escape*, because underneath *the water waits*, the *hungry water* that will *swallow* them *without mercy*. (Moraal 2012: 47)

While the scene from *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* (see above), in which a young family drowns in a car, already invokes quite a lot of drama – the car hanging suspended in the air for a few moments, until the family plunges to their death – *Flooded* lengthens the suspense even further. The text zooms in on the horror of the situation, and the helplessness of the water’s victims, who are “in mortal agony” and know that “it does not matter, [because] there is no escape”. The water is shown to have outright *evil intentions*, for it drags humans down or

hungrily “waits” for them to commit suicide. It is violent, merciless, and also wilfully erases people’s identities: the victims get a “nameless grave”.

Veronica Strang thinks that “loss of self” is what makes the idea of drowning so terrifying. As opposed to voluntary immersion into water, drowning is “the ultimate overwhelming of identity” and is often equated to being “swallowed by the ‘other’” (Strang 2004: 72). This perspective goes hand in hand with a monstrous, anthropomorphic portrayal of water, in which a character does not merely lose his or her life *in* the water, but is actively *consumed* by it – biologically merging with its identity during the process of digestion. These concept of being “consumed” and “loss of self” are both visible in *Flooded*. While all other books in the corpus offer possibilities for characters to experience (inanimate) water in positive ways (see below), *Flooded* only portrays water in a negative sense, be it animate, or inanimate water. As we will see in chapter four, this negative approach to water is connected to a negative experience of nature in general.

The four children’s and young adult books discussed above all portray violent, anthropomorphised water. While the texts often suggest that the water has evil intentions, none of these books offer an explanation for its behaviour. Its acts do not seem to be driven by some form of revenge on humanity, thus, they are not “vengeful and vitriolic” (Curry 2013: 18; 40; see above), but rather, they are presented as a disaster waiting to happen. This holds true even for *Flooded*, the only futuristic story in the corpus. Humans are not held accountable for the apocalyptic floods, and though the book touches upon historical events, there is no mention of a preceding ecological crisis (Ginting 2015: 7).

One aspect of *anthropomorphised* water in the corpus of Dutch children’s and young adult books, is that it is portrayed as violent, inherently evil, and in some cases, sadistic and merciless – or at least perceived to be so by the narrators of the stories. Thus, to speak with Simon Estok’s words on ecophobia, nature in these books is “a hostile opponent who is responding angrily to our incursions and actions, an opponent to be feared and, with any luck, controlled” (Estok 2009: 210; see above). A genuinely aquaphobic attitude seems to pervade

these books. The next subchapter will deal with another important aspect of anthropomorphised water: gender.

3.1.2 Gendered Waters

The gender of words varies across languages, and the gender of some frequently used nouns was an obstacle in the translation of a number of Dutch passages. While the English language distinguishes humans from objects, the environment, and most non-domestic animals by referring to humans with gendered pronouns (he/she) and calling all others “it”, the Dutch language does not know this clear distinction.³² Dutch writers who write in Standard Dutch, will refer to the sea using either the pronoun he or she. While once governed by grammatical rules, which state that “sea” is a female word, contemporary versions of the authoritative Van Dale dictionary acknowledge that people have begun to perceive “sea” as a male word in recent times. Thus, the choice of pronoun depends on the writer’s personal preference. The word “water” is a neuter word in Standard Dutch, while “nature” is a feminine word, and most writers thus refer to it with a feminine pronoun.

In the chosen corpus, one book was particularly engaged with the gender of water, and more particularly, the sea. Peter van Gestel’s *That day by the Sea* (2003) tells the story of young Sybil, who calls herself Sip – Dutch for “glum” – and her older brother Cham.³³ On the first page, Sip, who functions as the book’s narrator, bluntly tells the reader that Cham drowned: “at dawn the sea dropped Cham’s dead body on the beach” (Gestel 2003: 7). The story then shifts back seven years, as Sip recalls her relationship with Cham, who is five years her senior, starting from when she was five years old, up to the depressing days after his death, seven years later. Cham is obsessed with nature, and specifically with the sea, which he identifies as a woman:

³² Language may thus influence degrees of animism in different cultures.

³³ Cham is in all probability named after one of Noah’s sons in the Bible, who was cursed for disrespecting his father.

“‘The sea is a woman,’ Cham said. ‘She bewitches you and swallows you’” (Gestel 2003: 111). Sip, who adores her older brother, but is also puzzled by his odd behaviour, is torn between acting “normal”, like her family and friends expect her to (see below), and honouring her special bond with Cham. Following Cham’s example, she mostly addresses the sea with female pronouns, and treats it like a human woman. To Sip, however, this female sea is not a subject for adoration but a threatening, malicious force. She even suspects that it lured Cham to his death:

‘Sleep sleep sleep,’ the sea whispered.

‘Yes,’ I softly continued, ‘that *vicious hag* of a sea *tricked you* badly. [...] You had strong arms, you wouldn’t let that stupid sea surprise you. But suddenly, the beach and the dunes were so far away, you could barely see them, you tired and you wanted to sleep, sleep, in the end, you just saw water, it became dark around you. (Gestel 2003: 199-200; emphasis added)

Clearly, this gendered body of water has malicious characteristics, though the text leaves much open for interpretation. It is never clarified if the sea truly has *evil intentions* or if it merely wanted to be with Cham and *selfishly* lured him away from the living world, without consideration for his family – although it is obvious that Sip blames the sea for what happened. At another point in the text, Sip states that “the sea fell crazy in love with him, and he with her”, and thus, the sea took her brother away from her (Gestel 2003: 135). At a certain point in the story, Sip notices that some adults suspect her brother’s death to be suicide. When she confronts her father about this, he answers: “We don’t know, [...] the sea can be vicious” (Gestel 2003: 193), again emphasizing the sea’s malicious character. The cause of Cham’s death, and the “true nature” of the sea remain gaps in the text, and they are complicated by Sip’s reliability as a narrator.

Sip’s perception of the sea seems at times disproportionately negative. Even before Cham’s death, she often states that she hates the sea. Her behaviour can be interpreted as jealousy, as she is also shown to be excessively jealous when Cham starts to date a girl from school, making her friends tease her for being “crazy in love with her brother” (Gestel 2003:

50). This impacts Sip's reliability as a narrator, and may influence the way potential readers perceive the sea's true nature and intent.

Sip is also shown to like the sea, but *only* when she can let go of her anthropomorphic perception of it: "I don't like the sea. I never did. It's evil water, that sea water, the sea always wants something different from what you want. [...] I adore the sea too, you know. Sometimes it keeps me awake. Because it's always so close, right" (Gestel 2003: 182). The quote shows that, when experienced as a background element, Sip is able to enjoy the sea, but when she describes it as an entity with agency, able to affect humans, she experiences the water as "evil", and malicious.

The book ends on a dark note, with Sip wading into the sea at night, seemingly lured in by the sea's whispers: "The murmur was softer and more mysterious now that I was standing in the seawater. [...] I wanted to fall flat onto the water and swim away. What had thriven Cham? I could feel it slightly, and I didn't want to" (Gestel 2003: 199). Sip is "saved" by her estranged father, who calls her back to the beach. Though the book leaves Sip's intention open for interpretation, the text underlines Sip's loss of control during the scene: "Dad was quiet, I was quiet. Did he really think that I wanted to drown myself? Not like me at all. *But with the sea, you're never sure*" (Gestel 2003: 202). What happens to Sip is reminiscent of Cham's mysterious death, and may steer a potential reader to the conclusion that the anthropomorphised sea *does* indeed have evil intentions. After all, it does not share the same bond with Sip as it is said to have shared with Cham, and thus has no reason for luring her in, other than wilful murder. Still, because Sip is a somewhat unreliable narrator, it is up to each actual reader if the sea is truly an evil, anthropomorphic entity, or if Sip has an overactive imagination.

The sea in Lydia Rood's *The Water's Voice*, which was discussed in the previous paragraph, is also explicitly gendered as female. While twelve-year-old Sam is destined to become a fisherman, his twin sister Tilly also dreams of far-off coasts, but she has to come to terms with the fact that "a girl's, and a woman's place [is] at home" (Rood 1997: 13).

‘She looks so peaceful, the sea,’ Sam said thoughtfully. [...] You would never say that she can be so dangerous. [...] I love it! [...] *Danger*. I love it when the sea starts to swirl so *stubbornly*, even before you noticed that the wind is increasing. [...] As if you’re entering a *battle*. [...] The sea is my life. But *that doesn’t mean you have to give her everything she wants.*’

Tilly giggled. ‘*That’s how men talk about women.*’ (Rood 1997: 82; emphasis added)

While the sea in *That Day by the Sea* is presented as a powerful, malicious woman, the sea in *The Water’s Voice* is presented as a woman with restricted agency. She may “stubbornly” protest, but she should not expect the fisher*men* to take her seriously. Tilly recognises an analogy between the way women are treated in the Marker society, and the way fishermen treat the sea. Indeed, Sam’s monologue about the sea is reminiscent of his sister’s situation. While Sam will soon depart for the far coasts Tilly fantasizes about, *she* will have to accept that any resistance against her situation will not be taken seriously by the patriarchal community. While Sam is entitled to freedom, Tilly will never get “everything she wants”. Instead of protesting against Sam’s patriarchal vision of the female sea, Tilly rather endorses it by *giggling* about it. A sign, perhaps, that she is already in the process of coming to terms with her predestined domestic role.

The sea’s “stubborn protest” eventually culminates in a great flood that hits Marken, and takes the lives of sixteen people. According to Tilly, retribution is in order, and will be inflicted by society in the near future: “She [...] stuck out her tongue at the sea. That bitch should know that she would never subdue the Markers! Never! [...] They would reclaim her, pump her dry, and paralyse her” (Rood 1997: 117). Again, Tilly seems to be endorsing her community’s patriarchal views on gender roles, by claiming that the unruly “bitch” must be punished for her disobedience. Sam and the other fishermen, who throughout the story have been characterised as the sea’s “lovers”, and who have protested reclamation plans for some time, quickly turn on the sea after its “protest” and agree that it needs to be closed off:

She hesitated. For the sea was still Sam's great love. And you, are you at peace with [the plans to close of the sea]?

Sam smiled.

'There's lots of seas left,' he said. [...] 'We don't need this tiny piece.' (Rood 1997: 119)

While the Southern Sea is initially said to be Sam's love and life, he is quick to decide that "she" is just a "tiny piece", and his adoration for her is interchangeable. Again, through the analogy between the sea and the Marker women, this negatively reflects on their position and value in society. The book ends with a short, historic account of the reclamation of the Southern Sea, showing that in the end, patriarchy prevailed and "she" was indeed subdued.

Both Peter van Gestel's *That Day by the Sea* and Lydia Rood's *The Water's Voice* connect the sea to womanhood. The water is interacted upon by male characters who fashion themselves in love with "her". However, the malicious sea "betrays" these characters, either by killing them, or by destroying their village in a "stubborn protest". Female characters distrust the sea, and even "offend" her with gendered words like "hag" and "bitch". The sea is never explicitly gendered as male in the corpus, even though in Standard Dutch, the word is generally perceived as male in recent times. The *logic of domination*, addressed by ecofeminism, is very prominent in both analysed books. Through analogies, the narratives link the culture/nature dualism to the man/woman dualism. In *The Water's Voice*, this analogy is explicitly *hierarchal*: the oppression of women is likened to the oppression of the sea, and both are condoned by the main female character. The "female seas" in both books are characterised as archetypal *female deceivers* or *sirens*. They make young men fall in love with them, only to turn on them, or even kill them.

That Day by the Sea does not only ascribe female characteristics to nature, but also comments on the *biological* connection between women and nature. On the evening of Cham's death, Sip experiences her first menstruation, which initiates her into adulthood, and simultaneously connects her to the *fluid, cyclic* aspects of life. Thus, Sip and Cham are in a way connected through their simultaneous immersion in the cycle of being: Sip is now fertile, and

theoretically able to bring forth new life, while Cham, at the end of the cycle, dies. The book also connects water, and the cycle of life, in a more explicit way, which will be discussed below.

Another book which comments on the connection between water and women's reproductive cycles, is Jan Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*. Anne is pregnant during the disaster, and is unsure if Hank, the child's father, has survived. She feels her baby reacting to her emotions: "Anne felt a great anger against the water growing inside of her. She put her hand on her belly, where the child was ranting and raving (Terlouw 1976: 83). Anne's anger, and the baby's anger, are not specifically concerned with "the sea" or with "salt water", but with "water" in general. At this desperate moment of destabilised human control, the human characters emphasise the water's destructive characteristics, forgetting – or denying – for a moment, that the baby, a symbol of "life", is actually swimming in water itself.

In *That Day by the Sea* and *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, the women-nature connection is emphasised during moments of (presumed) death, and despair. Sip loses her brother and is abruptly confronted with womanhood's connection to the very fluid substance she despises, while Anne's growing anger against the water emerges at a time when she is, physically, most connected to it. The woman-nature connection is thus not presented in a positive, immersive light in these books, but is presented as a cruel, but undeniable aspect of the female sex.

In the selected corpus, *anthropomorphised* water equals danger. It may, or may not, be malicious, gendered as female, or have evil intentions, but it is always violent and poses a threat to humans. Two novels comment on the physical connection between women and nature, and emphasise the negative implications of this connection. The next paragraph will deal with portrayals of *inanimate* waters.

3.2 INANIMATE WATERS: FLUIDITY, REFLECTION

While the water's agency is closely intertwined with its anthropomorphism in the selected corpus (see above), the selected books often comment on water, power and control *without* playing

with animism. While anthropomorphic water often has a “monstrous autonomy” (see above), this is not necessarily the case for water that is experienced as non-sentient scenery. Sometimes, the sea is even admired before it “strikes”:

Never before had Nate seen the waves this wild. They rushed high against the dyke. He trembled, awestruck by the beauty of the swirling waves. Was this the sea in which grandpa Hidd had taught him to swim? (Mahieu 2010: 69)

The sea’s changeable nature, or “fluidity” (see above) renders it almost unrecognisable to Nate, who fondly remembers the mellow sea from his childhood. While Nate is positively amazed by the changing water, this same *fluidity* causes many characters in the books to fear the sea. Veronica Strang has interviewed people about this issue for *The Meaning of Water* (2004), and found that many find the water’s physical transmutability “untrustworthy”, and are therefore afraid of it, or avoid it altogether (Strang 2004: 71).

While the previous paragraphs have mainly focused on aquaphobic *depictions* of water as a violent or malicious entity, some books in the chosen corpus portray aquaphobic characters, whose fear is not merely a reaction to direct “attacks” of the water, but who rather live in constant fear of its changeable nature. This is, for instance, visible in Lydia Rood’s *The Water’s Voice*. Tilly and Sam’s father Mos is often said to be terrified of the sea, and fears that the water will surprise his family during their sleep (Rood 1997: 12). Mos is obsessed with the possibility of an inundation, and works tirelessly to save enough money for a house in Neighbourhood II, in which the houses stand on higher ground. In the end, Mos’ house is destroyed by another “natural force”: fire. Mos loses his mind during the flood disaster, and keeps citing Bible texts about inundations. He is the only family member to die during the event. The text suggests that fearing the sea is “unmanly”, and Sam is embarrassed by his father, who, despite being a fisherman, “was always looking back, at the little piece of land in the middle of the sea, that threatened everything he held dear”, unlike the fathers of other boys, who were “strong, tough, and never afraid – or so it seemed” (Rood 1997: 33; 78-79). As the sea in *The Water’s Voice* is

likened to a woman (see above), Mos' fear of it may be perceived as a double failure to meet the strict gender roles of his community: it is not just the fact that he *is* afraid that makes him less of a man than "other fathers", but the fact that he is afraid of a powerful *female* entity, and is eventually overpowered and drowned by "her".

Another character overwhelmed by fear of water is Nina from Eva Moraal's *Flooded*. She is shown to be so distrustful of water, that she cannot bare to look at it in any form: "A thick layer of snow covers the lawn [...]. Mum's rose bushes almost collapse under the thick white blanket. Snow is water. Even more water. Suffocating, all-drowning water" (Moraal 2012: 10). Clearly, to Nina, the water's fluid ability to transform means that it always carries potential hazard. Her fear of water is – like Mos' fear (*The Water's Voice*) – so strong that it becomes irrational and even self-destructive. For instance, when she is held captive, the idea of drinking seems repulsive to her: "My mouth tastes like sandpaper. So dry. *Dry*. Water. No, not the water again!" (Moraal 207; emphasis in original), and even while showering after she has been physically abused, she cannot help but think: "The water I hate, but need more than ever" (Moraal 2012: 173).

Nina (*Flooded*) and Mos (*The Water's Voice*) both know that they need water to live, to wash themselves, and to feed their families, but their contempt for it is so great, that they experience these daily facts of life as necessary evils. While other characters in the corpus often exhibit aquaphobia as a rational reaction, for instance, when they are at *actual* risk of drowning, Nina and Mos fail to acknowledge the importance of water for (human) life. Their worldview is highly anthropocentric: humans are set apart from the earth, as beings who *should not* be dependent on water, and to whom any contact with nature is vulgar.

Though the fluidity of water is often connected to "untrustworthiness" and aquaphobia in the corpus, it may also inspire positive or reflective thoughts in characters, or they may admire the inanimate water's power like Nate from Mahieu's *Water Everywhere* (see above). Water's visual characteristics are influenced by the surrounding light, which many people find mesmerising and many enjoy sitting by the sea, rivers or lakes, watching the water (Strang 2004: 50). Water is said to bring relaxation and to inspire reflection, through light, sound and

movement (Strang 2004: 52). Indeed, while writing this thesis, I have been listening to water sounds myself. The calming, introspective qualities of water are also present in some of the analysed books, though not as prominent as the violent, dangerous and malicious aspects of the waters described. Mr Brittlehead, from *Terlouw's Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, has written a poem about the sea, which Anne and Hank find in a box filled with papers, floating in the Grevelingen estuary³⁴:

From blue you turn green you turn yellow you turn grey,
deadly sea.
Ever changing, ever on a journey.
Take me with you. (Terlouw 1976: 21)

Brittlehead's poem addresses both the attractive and the terrifying aspects of aquatic transmutability. Anne later remembers this poem, and reflects on the link between the sea and her community:

Every day, she climbed the dyke, every day, it was different. [...] The people on the island never changed, changes were perceived as unholy or frivolous. It was as if people, the closer they lived by the sea, became more unchangeable, more conservative, Anne thought. Is it because of their resistance to the changeable nature of the sea, or is it fear for the water – deadly sea? Or is the sea not actually that changeable, because it always comes, always goes, up, down, the heartbeat of endlessness? (Terlouw 1976: 61)

Both Brittlehead's poem and Anne's reflections show the attraction of water on humans, and present water as a source of introspection and inspiration. Anne, a character who values

³⁴ Brittlehead has been murdered, and his body lies beneath the water, but Anne and Hank do not know this at this point in the story (see below).

freedom and longs to leave her restrictive community, reflects on the “changeable nature” of water and observes that its effect on near communities is negative, they become “unchangeable”. Anne identifies her own, free nature with the fluidity of the water, and poetically calls the sea’s movement “the heartbeat of endlessness”. Two decades later, Anne’s son Valeer also likes to reflect on life, and states that this is easier near the Eastern Scheldt, “which is mighty broad and impressive” (Terlouw 1976: 96).

The vastness of the sea is popular topic for reflection in the selected Dutch books, and many characters, even those who are relatively removed from nature, at least notice this aspect. Sip and Cham’s father (*That Day by the Sea*), a miniature canvas painter, is frustrated by the vastness of the sea:

‘I don’t like the sea,’ dad said.

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘rotten sea.’

‘I could never paint her, it just never worked out. It angered me.’ [...]

‘Yours would have been a tiny sea,’ I said. (Gestel 2003: 140)

The father’s failure to frame the sea alludes to his secluded lifestyle, and his failure to understand nature and connect to it (see below). A man with a confined mind-set is simply not able to capture or understand the vastness of the sea, or so the narrative suggests.

The awe for the “vastness” or “endlessness” of the sea in some books is somewhat problematic from an ecocritical perspective. Take, for instance, the following quote from *That Day by the Sea*: “‘Next to the sea,’ mum said, ‘you’re very small as a human being.’ ‘Next to a human being, you’re very small as a mosquito,’ dad said” (Gestel 2003: 124). By likening “sea versus human” to “human versus mosquito”, the father presents the sea as something which is nearly untouchable by humans. The mosquito – or rather, the “humanity” it symbolises – may prick or annoy the sea, but in reality, it could never pose a threat to or irrevocably harm this vast body of water. In reality, nothing is further from the truth. A large study by the European Environment Agency (EEA) recently concluded that “human activities and climate change are

increasingly putting a number of pressures on Europe's seas, the cumulative effects of which threaten the functioning and resilience of marine ecosystems", stating, amongst other numbers, that "9% of marine habitats and 7% of marine species assessments were in 'favourable conservation status', while 66% of habitat and 27% of species assessments were 'unfavourable'" (EEA). Clearly, human life on Earth has a devastating impact on the world's oceans. If societies continue to harm the seas as they have done up to this day, the sea will prove not to be as "endless" as Jan Terlouw makes it sound in *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*: "There is no end to the sea, and that makes you happy and sad at the same time, like the endlessness makes you happy and sad" (Terlouw 1976: 183). However, while such depictions have the negative side effect of positioning the sea as an incorruptible, everlasting environment – an image that does not agree with everyday reality – they do instil the idea that nature is vast, powerful, and worthy of human admiration. Deep ecology's principle that nature has an *inherent value*, apart from its usefulness as a resource for human life, lies at the core of many such depictions. In this sense, scenes that praise the sea's vastness and beauty may counter or soften the negative, aquaphobic representations of water elsewhere in the texts.

Apart from its link to reflection and inspiration, water is also connected to healing, especially emotional healing. Main characters can find some form of solace through contact with water. Nate from *Water Everywhere* imagines swimming in the sea with a friend, while he is trapped on an attic that is about to be flooded (Mahieu 2010: 88), and Anne from *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* feels her anger subside when she sails on the Grevelingen estuary (Terlouw 1976: 10). In *Fly!* by Marco Kunst, the water is not portrayed in the violent, anthropomorphic way which is typical of the other books.

Fly! is about eleven-year-old Marius, who feels different from other people. He shares a strong bond with his grandfather, who lives in a cottage by the beach, and he often visits him on his own. Together, they go on walks, visit the planetarium, and build a kite. Marius' father and older brother don't understand his sensitivity. They call him "Mouse", which highlights his insignificant position in the family, and often scold or tease him. His mother, who is afraid to anger her husband, stays in the background. In his neighbourhood, Marius meets an older boy

who is called “Bird Poop” by other children. Gradually, Marius learns about the common history of his and “Bird Poop’s” family.

Marius enjoys playing in and near the sea, and often visits it with his family. *Fly!* does not portray water as an anthropomorphic entity. Rather, the water seems to be in tune with the emotions of the main character. When Marius is finally fed up with the mistreatment by his father and runs away from him at the end of the book, the sea is

muddy, green-grey and cold. A dead crab lies in the water. A few legs have been ripped off. [...] The icy water enters his shoes and his feet sink into the wet sand. At sea, fog horns sound, but there are no ships to be seen. There is nothing to see. (Kunst 2013: 140)

During this scene, the sea seems to prevent yet another escalation between Marius and his father: “The impatient look appears in his eyes again, the look Marius is so afraid of. Then dad’s gaze is led to the sea. His eyes soften” (Kunst 2013: 140). The scene results in the first ever bonding moment between father and son, seemingly inspired by the opportunity for reflection associated with the calming, softening water. The idea that water has healing properties is, of course, centuries old, having been adapted into Christianity from old European folk belief (Strang 2004: 102). Nowadays many people still visit mineral springs to experience the healing effects of water, and many agree that water is “soothing” and “meditative” (Strang 2004: 56; 98).

References to healing water, or moments of reflection near the water are rare in the selected books, and this may be because reflection and anthropomorphism seemingly exclude each other in these stories. Scenes in which water has soothing effects, or in which it inspires introspection, present the water as an inanimate backdrop. Humans may marvel over its vastness, or may feel healed or comforted from a distance, as if staring at a beautiful painting. Water in these scenes is a vessel for reflection on life, and culture, but rarely leads the introspective character to align themselves with the water, or to immerse themselves in nature – be it in a literal or a mental way.

Many books contain both violent, anthropomorphic and beautiful, inanimate representations of the sea. The anthropomorphic sea is shown to exert monstrous autonomy over humans, and is often motivated by evil intentions. Some characters are so afraid of the water's potential to transform, that they live in a permanent state of aquaphobia. While the sea may have a positive influence on characters, this is only true when it is presented as a passive backdrop. The moment that water gains agency, its beauty generally evaporates, and its vile nature is "revealed".

3.3 DREAMS OF ESCAPE, AND THE SUBSEQUENT RETRIBUTION

The vastness of the sea is not only cause for reflection on one's personal life, but inspires some characters to dream of lands beyond the horizon. This is especially true for characters whose agency is restricted by gender or social class. Water provides Anne, the main character from Jan Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, with an escape from the island's physical and social boundaries:

Anne had not been home for one hour, but she already longed to flee it, away from the stifling atmosphere, away from the island, away from every island, because islands have such defined boundaries. She wished for it to become summer again, then she could go into the vastness with her boat, that always helped. (Terlouw 1976: 61)

As a pregnant, unmarried teenager in the 1950s, Anne is the subject of ridicule in her village. She rebels against the strictness of her father and the entire community, and dreams of leaving the island behind. The sea provides temporary relief during moments of distress, until she is able to leave for the city.

Tilly from *The Water's Voice* also longs to leave the island. While her brother Sam connects to the sea as a fisherman, Tilly associates the water with the freedom she, as a girl, will never be able to experience at the start of the twentieth century. She connects to a deaf man

called Jan Moenis³⁵, who, like her, is interested in books which show “foreign coasts, new horizons, other worlds” (Rood 1997: 43). Sam, however, thinks that their interests are ridiculous:

‘I don’t get all the fuss you and Moenis make.’

‘No, you don’t,’ said Tilly, a bit haughty. ‘You only think of the sea. That boring, grey sea. But Jan and me, we think of the coasts.’

‘Jan is crazy, and so are you,’ said Sam.

‘Of course we’re not. But how could you ever understand. We have romantic sensibility.’

‘You have a disease,’ said Sam. [...]

‘Yes. And that disease is called *longing*.’ (Rood 1997: 74; emphasis added)

Moenis and Tilly are both restricted in their agency: Moenis through his deafness, and Tilly through her gender. They both know that the chances they will ever get to visit other countries are small, but the *sight of the sea* provides them with a dream of freedom from social and physical restrictions, and stimulates their curiosity. Sam, however, as a boy in a privileged position, cannot relate to such longing.

In *Water Everywhere*, Nate, who comes from a poor family, also dreams of a different life:

The sea roared and Nate saw the foam heads shine bright in the dark. [...] If I go to Belgium with Lane, we could maybe visit Antwerp one day. They have a large port over there. With boats that travel the whole world. (Mahieu 2010: 25)

Nate, Tilly and Anne experience the sea as a road, an area in-between different lands and different lives. All three of them frequently look out over the sea. Their interest does not concern the water itself, as evident in the above quote in which Tilly calls the sea “boring, and grey”,

³⁵ Jan Moenis is a historical figure who lived in Marken during the 1916 flood, and later travelled to Surinam.

but the potential places it can take them – or rather take them away from. While all three characters long to take control of their own destiny, and symbolically associate the sea with this wish, they are all in a way “betrayed” by the sea. In all three books, the anthropomorphised sea floods their community, “turning” on these characters by destabilizing their control. As a result, Anne and Tilly experience moments of great anger against the water (see above).

It seems a cruel retribution that these disadvantaged (pre-)teenagers, who dream of better lives, are punished with the destruction of their homes and families. However, for some the flood seems to resolve some of their former issues. Nate’s family receives a new, modern home from the government after the flood, and Anne’s community stops shaming her family during the disaster. In a way, the water has “cleansed” some social wrongs in the communities, and the characters are allowed to start over. The floods seem a form of retribution, that re-installs appreciation for their communities in characters.

Veronica Strang notes that floods “are characterised by duality: [they] often contain generative as well as destructive forces” (Strang 1976: 70). This regenerative side of floods is acknowledged in these books. The next paragraph will zoom in on this cyclic aspect of destruction and regeneration in the corpus.

3.4 WATER, LIFE, AND DEATH

While it is evident from the above that water is often powerful and violent in the six children’s and young adult novels, it is important to note that water is not only construed by meaning, but has a physical relation to humans as well. As Zoe Jaques notes in *Children’s Literature and the Posthuman* (2015):

By virtue of not being able to survive in water for long, land-dwelling humans are subject to a certain binaried separation from [water]. Any attempt to read the relationship between humanity and nature in aqueous terms must, therefore, also recognize an implicit ‘sceptical’ binary even if refusing to “endorse” it. (Jaques 2015: 147)

As Jaques points out, one cannot discuss the relationship between humanity and water, without acknowledging that water can, to some extent, pose an actual threat to humans. Many characters, be it main characters, minor characters or whole villages, drown in the analysed Dutch children's books. And while these events often go hand in hand with an anthropomorphic, violent representation of water, we must not forget that these are also depictions of the physical reality of water. A great amount of people actually died in the historical floods depicted in *The Water's Voice* (Storm Surge of 1916 – 16 dead in the village of Marken), and in *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* and *Water Everywhere* (1953 Flood Disaster – 1.836 dead). This poses the question if novels about water are really able to deconstruct anthropocentrism, or re-imagine the hierarchical dichotomy between nature and culture. After all, when taking their physicality in consideration, must human characters not always possess some form of aquaphobia, at least to a degree that it protects them from drowning in floods, or in the sea? And is it then not inevitable that Dutch stories, which take place in areas that are several feet below sea level, address the danger this situation poses to human life? This issue will be further addressed in chapter four, and in the conclusion.

According to Strang, *voluntary* immersion into water, as opposed to drowning, “may represent a comfortable way of experiencing a loss of self and ‘disembodiment’ – an opportunity to imagine a symbiotic (or erotic) reunion with ‘nature’ and its generative seas. It may even be a way of ‘dipping toe’ into the dissolution of mortality and the underworld” (Strang 2004: 72). This imagery of swimming as “toe dipping” in the underworld is literally envisioned in some of the novels, in which water and death are often connected on a metaphorical level. The connection of water and death may sound confusing at first, as water is “essential for life, and therefore the essence of life”, and death may thus be perceived as the opposite of water (Strang 2004: 62). The phenomenon can be explained in two ways.

First, life and death can be considered as two aspects of a whole: when life is not merely considered as an individual's lifespan, but as an endless cycle – the cycle of life – an ending is not merely destruction or decay, but it is simultaneously a new beginning. From this perspective,

life and death are not opposites: both are “the essence of life”. According to Strang, the hydrological cycle may function as a model for this cycle of existence: “in generating life, water is also seen as part of a larger process of regeneration integral to a cycle of death, dissolution, reintegration and renewal” (Strang 2004: 62). In the chosen corpus, one novel directly addresses this concept; *That Day by the Sea* by Peter van Gestel has main character Sip reflecting on the interconnectedness of water and the cycle of life:

You cannot drown in baths, I thought, though I believe old people drown in baths sometimes. Before you are born, you swim in your mother’s belly. Those old folk long for those times and they die in a beautiful way. (Gestel 2003: 126)

Sip muses on the fact that life starts in water, and the idea that a life may end in water as well – forming a full cycle – is beautiful to her. Although she does not directly reflect on the fact that her brother’s life ended in this way, the thought might still explain why Sip takes over Cham’s imagery of the sea as a woman after the latter’s death. If Sip indeed believes that Cham longed for, and returned to, the safety of the *womb*, one could say that she suspects his death to be suicide. On the other hand, the quote could also be explained as Sip merely comforting herself with the idea that her brother died beautifully – or the thought could even be unrelated to Cham. Other novels address the regenerative power of water in natural terms:

They knew that high water threatened their belongings and earnings – but at least it was something different. And it had advantages too, for the farmers at least, because it made the island fertile. When the water retracted, a thin layer of sludge would stay behind, and the grass would grow well on it. (Rood 1997: 15)

This quote from *The Water’s Voice* shows that life follows after destruction. Though floods are feared by the people of Marken for their destructive force, they are also praised for the fertility they bring to the land. Still, in all novels, the association of water with death is far more

prominent than the connection between water and life. As such, the water-death connection in the selected novels cannot be fully explained through the idea of cyclic destruction and regeneration, in which water is as much a symbol for life, as it is for death.

A second explanation for the strong connection between water and death in the analysed children's and young adult books, is the cultural context of the Dutch "war against the water rhetoric", which envisions water as an enemy of culture (see above). In this war-rhetoric, flooded lands are the ultimate defeat of civilization: they present a situation in which nature has *defeated* culture. In the corpus, these places are often presented as wastelands, and likened to the underworld:

Nate saw the farmer from a distance, he was standing near the fence of his farm, the water came to his waist. [...] Suddenly, Nate's oar hit something heavy in the water. [...] He gasped for breath when he looked right in to the dark, empty eyes of a dead cow. And further on, by the shed, he saw many more carcasses. They floated on the water with bloated bellies. [...] Suddenly it struck him: the farmer near the fence, he wasn't standing, he was hanging, motionless. He was dead. [...] Panting, he lowered the oars and stared, dazzled, at a grey, empty world. Not a living soul to be seen. (Mahieu 2010: 166-167)

Nate (*Water Everywhere*) is lost in the flooded lands, and realises that he is surrounded by death and disease. The world has become "grey" and "empty", and reminiscent of the underworld: it has killed humans and animals alike, leaving a wasteland littered with dead bodies – "carcasses" even – rendered unrecognisable after a long stay in the water has erased their identities. Here, water has not merely defeated culture, but has defeated life itself. It has left no living creatures. A different sort of wasteland can be found in Eva Moraal's *Flooded*. When Max enters the Submerged Parts of the country, his eye lingers on the remnants of civilization:

I look. At the flooded city, half of which still extends above the water. At the islands of ruined buildings. At a hill on which a collapsed monument stands, a horseman above the waves. At the waterfowl who shriek because someone dares to enter their domain. (Moraal 2012: 202)

Max views the flooded land through an anthropocentric lens: while the new area is apparently blooming with wildlife, he sees death and destruction (Ginting 2015: 4). The city has been destroyed and “claimed” by nature. Humans have been banished from their grounds, now defended by hostile animals. Only the “ruined buildings” and the “collapsed monument” remind the reader that humans once lived here. Nature has defeated culture and is still in the process of driving people out. Unlike in *Water Everywhere*, where the flood erases all life, water in *Flooded* has instead created an opportunity for nonhuman life forms to inhabit and “protect” the area. To the narrators, these life forms are symbols of the underworld rather than signs of life or regeneration. This has to do with their estrangement from nature, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Flooded establishes an allegorical connection between water and death (Ginting 2015: 4). When Max is in a drowning-induced coma at the end of the book, he has visions in which he sits on a dyke and talks with his deceased father, who drowned before the start of the story. In these visions his father is always standing or sitting, in or near the water. The dyke here symbolises the borderland between water – the land of the dead – and the living world. The book ends with Max saying his final farewells to his father, and Liam, his recently deceased brother, and being “called back” by Nina, who resides in the living world:

Liam walks into the water and stands at dad’s side. Dad smiles, surprised. [...] I want to join them, but I can’t. [...] I watch my dad and my brother. Tears stream down my cheeks. They form a delta of salt.

‘Max?’

I turn around. She is standing on top of the dyke.

‘Are you coming?’ (Moraal 2012: 395)

In these books, water, and flooded land, are not only spaces of death in the literal sense – that is, by posing a physical threat to life – but are a *symbol* for the underworld. Max cannot enter the water, for it is not yet his time to leave the land of the living.

This border-symbolism is also present in *That Day by the Sea*, in which Sip’s brother Cham literally and metaphorically swims to his death. Sip often thinks and dreams about this decisive moment: “Cham swam far away from me in the sea and waved at me” (Gestel 2003: 131). She is left behind in the “living world”, but in one dramatic scene, which has been discussed above, is suddenly tempted to run into the water out of longing for Cham. Sip seems to believe that the only way to see Cham again is through immersion in the sea. This suggests that water is a metaphor for the underworld in this story as well.

There are more novels in which submersion in water or proximity to water symbolises contact with departed loved-ones. As mentioned before, Max’s limbo-visions of his father are induced by *drowning*. In *Water Everywhere*, main character Nate almost dies when he is lost on the flooded land, but his recently deceased grandfather rises out of the water to guide him home:

Above the boat, seagulls circled and cried, but Nate didn’t look up. Cause in front of him was grandpa Hidd. ‘Come with me, boy, [...] it’s time.’ He turned around, and beckoned. ‘Come, it can’t be worse than death.’ Then he walked away. (Mahieu 2010: 169)

The deceased people who are connected to watery underworlds have all been killed by water, and in the case of grandpa Hidd³⁶ (*Water Everywhere*), and Max’ father (*Flooded*), they give guidance to their living family members, either by giving them advice, or by leading them to the living world. In *The Water’s Voice*, there is mention of an apparition called “Silly Casey”:

³⁶ The book does not clarify if grandpa Hidd has drowned, or committed suicide in due to his desperate situation when he is surrounded by water (see below).

“The boy had perished in the last flood disaster and since then, his ghost had haunted the island, looking for his boat” (Rood 1997: 26). The mention of the young ghost emphasizes the horror of floods, and also suggests that people who drown are not able to “ascend” or “depart” to an afterlife, staying forever “trapped” in the physical world. Grandpa Hidd’s apparition could also be interpreted in this way, as Nate seems to be awake to some degree when his deceased grandfather appears.

In the books that were addressed in this paragraph, human civilisation stands for “the land of the living”, a place of growth and creation, while water, a natural area, is posed as the underworld, a place of death, destruction and emptiness. In the light of the current ecological crisis, such dualistic representations are questionable. Scholars from all disciplines within the ecohumanities generally agree that the human growth of the past centuries has badly impacted the earth, and many have highlighted the destructive patterns of human societies. The association of water with death and destruction, and human civilization with life, does not agree with scientific reality. Such a depiction highlights the dangerous, physical aspects of water and ignores the fact that water is an essential need for (human) life. It suggests that humans are separate from the rest of the world and that their (industrial) progress is inherently a good thing, while natural places are inherently threatening and lifeless, making the idea of “water underworlds” highly anthropocentric.

These “water underworlds” seem typical for Dutch children’s books that deal with floods, and such depictions could well be influenced and driven by cultural memory. Many authors, including Ineke Mahieu, agree that the floods – and possibly the horror associated with them – should not be forgotten by new generations of Dutch children (Mahieu “Een interview”). Some authors may have wanted to hide a history lesson in their description of the water, visualising the pain and suffering of the actual flood victims through allegorical comparisons with hell, in order to leave a lasting impression on young readers. The historical Dutch “war against the water” rhetoric may have guided these authors – none of whom have experienced actual floods during their lifetime – in creating their stories, leading them to (unconsciously)

link death and despair to the element of water itself. The same, of course, holds true for the striking presence of violent and malicious representations of water in the corpus.

This chapter has addressed the various ways in which water is depicted in six Dutch children's and young adult books. The next chapter revolves around dynamics between water and people. Most of all, it revolves around the position of characters who are in touch with nature in Dutch society.

4 IN-TOUCH OUTCASTS: PEOPLE, WATER, AND NATURE

Now that some light has been shed on the different ways in which water is portrayed in the selected corpus, this chapter will focus on the ways in which different characters relate to water and nature, and how their connection to nature serves to reflect the Dutch societies depicted in the novels.

The first part of this chapter will discuss the prominent, structural dichotomy that separates characters who are in touch with nature from society and characterizes them as the “other”. The first paragraph will revolve around these in-touch-characters, while the second paragraph will focus on the “normal people/in-touch-characters” dichotomy. The last paragraph is about nature and human control, with a specific focus on water management.

4.1 IN-TOUCH-CHARACTERS: CLOSE TO WATER, CLOSE TO NATURE

All books in the corpus depict one or more characters who are in touch with nature. Some are main characters, others play a minor part, and a few do not have a role in the actual text, but are referenced. Out of a total of nine characters, only two characters are female. In-touch-characters are characterised as people who like to spend time in nature, either by purposely living close to the sea or other natural areas, or by visiting these spaces for leisure. They are often very knowledgeable about nature, and share a strong, intuitive or emotional connection with the environment. With the exception of one story, all books portray these characters as *social outcasts*. This idea is conveyed through their spatial separation from society, or through the ways other characters react to them.

Some of these characters share a close bond with “in-between characters”. These characters, all of them children, move between the natural and the civilised world. They are alone in their attempt to understand the in-touch-character’s atypical perspective. Many in-touch-characters die towards the end of the story, thus severing the in-between-character’s link to

nature. Considering the historical association between nature, innocence and the child in Western philosophy, especially the associations made by Jean Jacques Rousseau (see above), it is not at all surprising that these characters are children. Their “in-between” or “messenger” position symbolises their situation in life, as people on the brink of adulthood. Loss of a special bond, resulting in the rupture of their connection to nature, signifies initiation into “civilized” adulthood.

4.1.1 The Male In-Touch-Character and the In-Between-Character

The main characters from *The Water's Voice*, *Water Everywhere* and *Fly!* all have a grandfather who is closer to nature than the rest of the community. Grandpa Hidd from *Water Everywhere* and “grandpa” from *Fly!* both live in small, secluded cottages near the sea. Nate's grandpa Hidd

never left the island. He [and Nate rather] looked for periwinkles at low tide. [...] Nowadays Nate would sometimes look for periwinkles himself. He would bring a full bucket to the tiny house on the dyke, where grandpa Hidd would cook them in the salty water, on a petrol cooker. He didn't own a stove. (Mahieu 2010: 21)

Nate is the only family member who visits grandpa Hidd's cabin on the dyke, making him an “in-between” figure. He enjoys quality time near the sea with his grandpa, and fondly remembers that he taught him to swim. Grandpa Hidd keeps a close eye on the dykes and the sea, and he is the first to warn the dyke warden about the impending 1953 storm, which he has anticipated for some time. However, the dyke warden ignores him and refuses to take action, resulting in many deaths during the flood. Grandpa Hidd is amongst the casualties (see below).

Apart from his special relationship with his grandfather, Nate is shown to have a strong connection with his goat Whitey. He often visits her, talks to her, and when the village floods, he takes her to the attic. However, when the water rises to the roof, Nate and his older brother Lane have to leave Whitey behind, and to Nate's horror, she drowns: “Now and then, Whitey's

wretched bleating was audible above the roaring natural violence. Nate bended down to the hole between the tiles. ‘Don’t look,’ Lane commanded” (Mahieu 2010: 91). Older brother Lane has already learned to distance himself in these situations, and Nate learns that he must leave grandpa Hidd and Whitey behind, if he is to survive. Over the course of the story, Nate moves away from those who bind him to the natural world. At the end of the novel, Nate and his family receive a new, modern house from the government, with “no mud pools for pigs to rummage in, and [...] no goats behind the garden fences” (Mahieu 2010: 173). The inundation has initiated Nate into orderly, cultured adulthood.

Marius from *Fly!* also spends a lot of quality time with “grandpa”, who lives in the dunes, near the beach. Marius’ grandfather is the only character who understands his sensitive grandson. At the start of the book, Marius is distraught when he sees a kite surfer bump into a seagull, leaving the bird wounded. His grandfather then attempts to help the seagull:

With one hand, grandpa shields his eyes and face from the sharp beak, and with the other hand he picks up the bird. Then he folds the good wing against the animal. [...] He is so at ease, that it seems as if he folds seagulls every day.

The animal is instantly quiet.

‘Look, if he doesn’t see anything, he will keep quiet.’

‘What now? Should we take it to the animal doctor?’

‘Well.’ Grandpa looks at the animal. ‘I’m not sure. Maybe... I’m afraid that –’

‘But we can’t just leave it behind, can we?’

Grandpa looks at Marius hesitantly. Then he nods. (Kunst 2013: 11)

Grandpa instantly knows how to handle the wounded seagull, he is knowledgeable about the animal, and in tune with it. Although he clearly does not expect the bird to survive, he understands that Marius’ feelings will be hurt if they leave the bird to die. Two pages later, the

bird dies anyway, and Marius instantly states: “We have to bury it.³⁷ [...] In the dunes. [...] Without the box. Directly into the sand. That’s better” (Kunst 2013: 13). They go on to bury the bird according to Marius’s wishes, on top of a dune, “with a sea view” (Kunst 2013: 13).

Marius is, like his grandfather, in touch with nature. He empathises with animals and goes to great lengths to make sure that the bird is directly in touch with the ground, refusing it to be placed into a human-made box. When the grave later turns out to be opened, Marius accepts this as well: “The grave is open. Marius looks at the dig marks. It must have been a fox, he decides. [...] If it was a fox, it doesn’t matter. *That’s nature*” (Kunst 2013: 33; emphasis added). Marius immerses himself in nature, and understands that the cultural act of grave robbing does not hold any significance in the natural world. In his experience of life and death, Marius unites the cultural with the natural by trying to save the seagull and giving the bird back to the ground – instead of leaving it to die – but at the same time, he does not *force* nature to abide by his rules, nor does he expect that it will.

Marius and his grandfather, like Nate and his grandpa Hidd, bond over their quality time in nature. However, while his grandfather has the freedom to live near the sea, Marius has to live with his parents, who do not understand his special bond with animals and the environment. Marius is forced into an “in-between” position. He constantly moves between his grandfather’s house in the dunes, where he can be himself, and his parents’ house, where he is misunderstood and bullied by his older brother Peter (see below). When his grandfather dies at the end of the book, Marius is mortified. He has lost the only person who truly understands him, as well as his bond with the environment.

Tilly and Sam from *The Water’s Voice* also have a grandfather who is knowledgeable about the environment, and in touch with it: “Peter Sailor [...] was the island’s weather man. No one could *read* the skies like him” (Rood 1997: 10; emphasis added). Peter is the only in-touch-

³⁷ The original text uses the word “him” for the seagull. This is the grammatically correct way for revering to animals in Dutch, and it strengthens the anthropomorphism of the scene.

character in the corpus of children's books who is not an outcast, but is revered for his fishing and forecasting skills: "In earlier times, old Peter easily found the best spots" (Rood 1997: 32). Sam dreams of following into his grandfather's footsteps: "Sam wanted to become like his grandpa later. Telling where herring was hiding, just by looking at the sea. [...] No herring in the Southern Sea or North Sea would be safe from him!" (Rood 1997: 51-52). While Peter Sailor has an *intuitive* connection to the environment, and knowledgeable about it, forecasting many storms and always finding the best fishing spots, he only uses this trait to feed his family and thus exerts human control over nature, viewing it only as a resource. His grandson Sam seems to mainly interpret his grandfather's intuition as a useful hunting tool, taking pleasure from the idea that "no herring will be safe". In Lydia Rood's *The Water's Voice*, knowledge about nature equals control over it.

The three discussed in-touch-characters are all male, and all are grandfathers. Another elderly male character, Brittlehead from *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, is also close to nature, but is only mentioned by other characters and will therefore be discussed below. Eva Moraal's *Flooded* hints to the existence of a *female* recluse who lives on an island in the flooded parts of the post-apocalyptic wasteland. However, this woman never appears and is only supposed to be a woman because of "the colourful flower pots in the windowsill" (Moraal 2012: 264). Like Brittlehead, her existence is only mentioned by other characters, and she will therefore be addressed below.

As mentioned in chapter three, Cham from Peter van Gestel's *That Day by the Sea* also feels a strong connection to nature. Cham perceives the sea to be a woman, and this is also visible in his treatment of "her":

Not far from the waves, he stopped. Slowly he tipped his top hat and bowed deeply, with the sea at his feet. I was immensely proud of him. Tipping your hat and bowing for the sea, to think of such a thing. (Gestel 2003: 29)

Cham often visits the sea on his own, which his family finds strange (see below). Cham talks to the sea and the moon, and even pets a jellyfish on the beach once, saying “poor animal, it’s sick of longing for the sea” (Gestel 2003: 153). It could be said that Cham is not just immersing himself in nature, but is attempting to *civilize* nature through his forced animistic approach of it. While his attention for nature shows that it holds value to him, nature in *That Day by the Sea* is not of *intrinsic value*. Unlike Marius from *Fly!*, Cham enforces his own cultural principles and values on nature, likening the sea and the moon to women in his imagination, and treating them as if they were human, for instance, by tipping his hat to the sea. Thus, while Cham clearly loves nature, his treatment of it is still anthropocentric. Furthermore, Cham’s way of speaking *for* nature, for instance, by stating that the jellyfish is “sick of longing for the sea”, could be interpreted as an act of domination. The text does not show if the jellyfish, the moon, or the sea actually agree with Cham’s interpretation of their “thoughts”, and thus, Cham is effectively silencing them, by denying their voices and filling them in with his own voice.

In *That Day by the Sea*, younger sister Sip, who is also the main character, is the in-between-character who moves between the animistic, natural world of her brother and the “normal” world, which puts different expectations on her. This position leaves Sip torn and makes her rebel against both her brother and other people (see below). As mentioned before, Sip experiences her first menstruation on the day of Cham’s death, which physically symbolises her initiation into adulthood. As her bond with Cham is severed, so is her bond with the “natural world of childhood”. However, this moment also signifies her initiation into natural womanhood (see above).

4.1.2 Female Emotion, Female Ignorance

While the above shows that most in-touch-characters are male, Anne from *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* is an exception to this rule:

It was wonderful, sailing like this, with the wind in the sails. Sometimes it rose with gusts, filling the sail, and you would feel like the boat would be scooped up by the wind and fly away like a seagull, close to the water surface. (Terlouw 1976: 11)

Anne frequently flees her restrictive, religious 1950s home to sail the Grevelingen estuary. She has an emotional connection to water and nature, as becomes visible in her detailed experience of the wind and the liking of her boat to a seagull, but is not very knowledgeable about the environment, as opposed to the elderly male characters described above. In the second part of the book, which takes place in the 1970s and centres on the debate surrounding the closing of the Eastern Scheldt after the 1953 Flood Disaster, this causes conflict between her and her sons. Anne's sons, Valere and Peter, try to explain to Anne that the closing of the Eastern Scheldt will make many plant and animal species disappear, but she fails to understand the importance of conservation:

She never heard that [her sons] kneeled, fascinated and hunched over, to look at *Nodding Beggarticks*, which apparently doesn't grow at the shores of the Grevelingen Lake anymore, or so she read in that article. She can honestly say that she did not miss it much. (Terlouw 1976: 123; emphasis in original)

Anne reflects on the disappearance of a plant species, *Nodding Beggarticks*, and decides that she does not mind its extinction, as she has never noticed it before, and does not believe that her activist sons have ever paid it any interest. In the end however, Anne begins to understand her sons' point of view, and agrees that the estuary should be preserved (see below). A striking difference between Anne, her sons, and the many male in-touch-characters, is the absence of ecological knowledge. Although Anne feels that "she missed something" (Terlouw 1976: 123)

when she sailed the Grevelingen after the estuary had been turned into a lake³⁸, she does not attempt to study the environment she so enjoys, and is thus not able to defend the existence of the Eastern Scheldt like her well-articulated sons are.

There is a clear tendency within the chosen corpus to present nature, especially ecological knowledge, as a male-privileged experience. Often, in-touch-characters are elderly gentleman, and three of them are grandfathers, who share the experience of nature with their grandsons. Female characters are absent from these moments of “male nature bonding”. This is clearly visible in Marius’ (*Fly!*) relationship with his mother. Though she tries to understand her son, she is shown to be ignorant about nature:

‘I’m taking Peter to soccer. You can play there. Maybe catch tadpoles in the ice hockey pool.’ She smiles at Marius. ‘You’ve always liked that, right?’ Marius grabs the salt. ‘There are no tadpoles in October mom.’ ‘Oh well, other critters then?’ (Kunst 2013: 51)

Marius’ mother’s ignorance about the environment stands in strong contrast to his grandfather’s knowledge and is somewhat similar to Anne’s disregard for plant species. The books by (male) authors Jan Terlouw and Marco Kunst promote the idea that women are unable to experience the environment as a place for learning, though Anne (Terlouw) does share an emotional connection with nature. From the perspective of ecofeminism, the dualisms man/woman, ratio/emotion and civilized/wild come together in men and women’s relationship with nature in these two books. Women *may* have an emotional connection to nature, but are exempt from any intellectual connection to the environment. Moreover, men’s understanding of nature is shown to be superior. The young Marius easily outwits his much older mother, and as mentioned before, Valere and Peter are able to defend the Grevelingen estuary, while the older

³⁸ As the Grevelingen estuary was closed off in 1965, followed by a subsequent dam in 1971, it is an estuary in the first half of Terlouw’s book, which takes place in the 1950s, but has been turned into a lake in the second half.

and more experienced Anne is unable to stand up for her favourite place. The only exception to this rule is Peter van Gestel' Cham, who mainly shares an emotional connection with nature, and does not seem to be interested in its scientific aspects. Still, Cham's *connection* with nature is portrayed as superior to that of his sister Sip, and the other female characters in the novel.

4.1.3 Death of the In-Touch-Character

In-touch-characters die a significant amount of times in the six books that are part of the analysis. While Marius' grandpa (*Fly!*) dies from old age and disease, Cham (*That Day by the Sea*) and grandpa Hidd (*Water Everywhere*) drown in the sea, and Brittlehead's body (*Eastern Scheldt*) is found in the Grevelingen estuary. Cham's death, which has a strong connection to the anthropomorphic, gendered representation of the sea, was discussed in chapter three. Though his death is clouded in mystery, there is no doubt that the sea has caused it – be it as an element or as a malignant entity. Grandpa Hidd dies by drowning as well. He refuses to leave his home during the oncoming flood, and his body is later found by Lane and Nate. Though Lane prevents Nate – and thereby the reader – from seeing his grandfather's body, the text suggests that it is severely mutilated by the water:

Suddenly, they saw grandpa Hidd's shredded raincoat hanging from one of the treetops. [...] Terrified, he gulped for air, when Lane, high on the front deck, screamed like a wounded animal. What did he see? Nate wanted to stand up as well, but Lane turned his way. His face was ash grey and strangely distorted. 'Don't look,' he demanded. (Mahieu 2010: 116)

As grandpa Hidd's body is hanging in a tree, there is a suggestion of suicide, a case reminiscent of Cham's mysterious death in *That Day by the Sea*, which suggests that proximity to nature may have driven these characters mad (with fear). The deaths of grandpa Hidd and Cham may be interpreted as a warning sign: never underestimate nature's danger. *Loving the sea too much may cost you your life*. Nate strengthens this interpretation by telling a remorseful Lane that grandpa "didn't want to leave his house" and that it thus would have been no use trying to save

him (Mahieu 2010: 116). This emphasizes grandpa's stubborn, *deadly* attachment to his home by the sea. If grandpa Hidd had not lived so far away from the rest of the community, his desperate situation might have been noticed sooner and he could have been saved.

The same is true for Marius' grandpa in *Fly!*, who dies alone in his house by the beach. Grandpa's dog Fox leads Marius to his body, again signifying Marius' strong connection with animals and nature, as he immediately feels what the dog is trying to tell him: "He must go. Something is the matter with grandpa, it can't be anything else. He feels it. School can wait. 'I'm coming, Fox! I'm coming!' he whispers to the dog" (Kunst 2013: 130). When Marius arrives, he finds his grandfather dead in his bed. Though the actual cause of grandpa's death is not given, the book hints that he is already sick when he and Marius go stargazing on a cold night, and slowly walk home. Marius fears that their outside adventures may have weakened his grandfather, and blames himself. One could interpret this as yet another link between the character's love for nature, and his eventual death. If Marius' grandfather would just have stayed home like "normal" elderly people, instead of going on a nightly *nature* walk with his grandson, he might have lived for a while longer.

Like grandpa Hidd's body, the body of Brittlehead in *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* is also heavily maimed by the water. Brittlehead researches storms and tries to warn the government and the media many times. On his way to contact a newspaper, he is killed by a dyke warden, and his body and papers are dumped into the Grevelingen estuary. After Anne finds Brittlehead's box of letters in the water, Hank recites Brittlehead's poem about the sea, which ends with the line "Take me with you" (see above). Hank then dryly remarks that "he couldn't float as well as the box, so he's probably at the bottom of the [...] sea" (Terlouw 1976: 21). At this point, Anne and Hank don't yet know that Brittlehead was murdered by a dyke warden, and that his body is actually lying at the bottom of the estuary. It is later found by law enforcement:

The body was in a f ar stadium of decay and unrecognisable. But, because Brittlehead had been missing for a long time, the police had a lead, and they were able to identify him. According to an

anatomic pathologist, he had been dead for four to six months. That was right. (Terlouw 1976: 33; emphasis in original)

Brittlehead, also close to nature according to the accounts of his neighbours (see below), is so heavily disfigured by the water, that only the time of his death can determine that the body is – in all probability – his. Zoe Jaques pays attention to the manner in which a long stay in the water can render a dead human body almost completely unrecognisable through decay, effectively erasing human individualism (Jaques 2015: 146). She discusses a similar case in *Children’s Literature and the Posthuman*: a scene in which the father of Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn is thought to have been found in the water. This corpse, of which the features are also rendered unrecognizable after a long stay in the water, later turns out to be a woman’s body. Water can effectively erase a person’s identity, and, according to Jaques, such scenes can “emphasize the interconnectedness between organic and inorganic matter and encourage readers to rethink the nature of being” (Jaques 2015: 146). One could say that a body that decays in the water merges with the water, becoming one with it. For this reason, it is interesting that in-touch-characters often die in water. Still, the depictions of drowned bodies in the corpus are mostly negative, and do not explicitly inspire any reflection on “the nature of being” in characters.

4.2 THE OUTCAST VERSUS THE NORM

While the previous paragraph showed that all six books contain at least one or more characters who either live close to the sea, empathise with animals, love to immerse themselves in nature or are knowledgeable about weather or ecology, it has also hinted at the position of these characters outside of society. Some characters literally live far away from their communities, such as Nate’s grandpa Hidd (*Water Everywhere*) and Marius’s grandfather (*Fly!*), who both die alone (see above). Brittlehead, from Jan Terlouw’s *Eastern Scheldt Windforce 10*, is shown to be away from home often, while researching weather, storms and dykes. He writes many well-informed – though somewhat muddled – letters to the newspapers, warning of the

possibility of a flood in the near future. However, all these letters are systematically ignored. When Hank and Anne ask Brittlehead's neighbours about his whereabouts, after he has been missing for quite some time, one of them answers: "Brittlehead? You mean the professor? [...] He's not a real professor, that's just what we call him. Because he's always acting like he's some learned person" (Terlouw 1976: 25). When Hank then explains that he and Anne are interested in speaking with Brittlehead, the woman goes on to talk about his "otherness":

'Good heavens,' said the fisherman's wife, 'he ain't mad, then? Here I was thinking that he was spoutin' hot air from some hole in his neck. [...] He wanders around Schouwen, in the polders, over the dykes, sometimes he also visits one of the other islands. My husband took him onto the boat once, when the servant was ill. Never doing that again. Sometimes, he just stands there for ten minutes, staring at the sky, dropping whatever he's holding – without even noticing it. No use on a fishing boat. (Terlouw 1976: 26)

While Brittlehead has been recording the warning signs of an oncoming flood for years, and has put much effort into his personal environmental research, he is ridiculed and ignored for his odd behaviour. Only after the 1953 Flood Disaster do people realise that much suffering and damage could have been prevented if they had listened to his warnings.

The text portrays people who are interested in nature, like Brittlehead, or like to recreate on the water, like Anne, as social outcasts. Though Valere, Anne's nature-loving son from the second part of the book, receives more recognition from his family, he is also part of an environmental activist group that is ridiculed by the government and the media. "Normal" people, the book suggests, do not understand nature, or characters who are in touch with nature. A similar form of 'othering' is present in Marco Kunst's book. Marius' family – especially his father – constantly disapproves of his immersion in nature:

'Hey, wait for us!' his mother calls out, but he is already gone. [...] Dew is glistening on the spider webs. It smells like summer, blackberries, sand and... Marius doesn't know what it all smells like.

He knows it makes him dizzy. Dizzy with happiness. [...] Dad looks at Marius. He frowns. ‘Really, couldn’t you just have waited for us?’ Marius looks at the ground. ‘What is it with you?’ dad continues. ‘Always doing everything different from the rest... I don’t get it.’ (Kunst 2013: 18-19)

Marius and his father are very different people, and this leads to a lot of conflict. The boy’s immersion in nature, and his sensitive understanding of life – noticeable in his detailed experience of the “glistening dew”, and the presence of all the different scents – are alien to his father. A running theme in the book is Marius’ fear of being seen as insane, and locked away in an asylum. Though this fear is lifted at the end of the book, when his father explains that no one has any intention of placing him in an asylum, Marius’ love for nature is consistently regarded as “different”. *Fly!* suggests that people who love nature differ from the norm, and will be othered by society. Furthermore, this concept is exemplified by the way outcasts are branded and name-called in animal terms. Marius is always called “Mouse” by his family, which makes him feel small and insignificant. Another family is called by bird-themed-names, such as “Crow Roof-shitter”, “Smelly Egg” and “Bird Poop”. It is later revealed that Marius’ grandfather has started this cycle by accident, by calling another boy “Crow Roof-shitter” decades ago, when he was a child himself. His grandfather now sorely regrets the incident, and Marius comes to understand why his grandfather has always disapproved of the nickname “Mouse”. Regardless, animal names seem to have a negative connotation in the story.

Marius’ otherness is also visible in the difference between his – and his brother’s experience of nature and the sea. While Marius’ immerses himself in nature, his older brother Peter mainly attempts to control it:

The fort is much bigger than the ones they built in the past. Now they have to *defend* it against the waves. [...] ‘Lie down, Mouse! Lie down in front of it. Then I’ll make it higher. *Stop those waves. Quick!*’ Marius lies down in front of the fort, with his back to the waves. On his side, like a dyke. He looks on as his brother *fights against the sea*. He’s *upset*, he’s just lying there, like a *stranded whale*. The water flushes around him and licks the castle. [...] Marius rises to his feet and walks into the sea. [...] He stays in the water and lets the stream and the waves take him away, he *moves with the*

swell like a strand of seaweed. He doesn't want to be part of the fort anymore. *The sea always wins.*
(Kunst 2013: 28-30; emphasis added)

The scene is very different from the scene in which Marius and his grandfather carefully handle the wounded seagull (see above), and shows that Marius is not able to connect to his brother as he connects to his grandfather: by bonding through nature. Still, he tries to please his brother by fighting the waves, although it makes him feel like “a stranded whale” inside. Eventually, Marius gives up and decides to remove himself from the scene. He immerses himself in the sea, “moving with the swell” and imagining that he is part of nature: “a strand of seaweed”. Nature in *Fly!* is of intrinsic value. Marius lets the sea lead him, and refuses to control it like his father and brother do. Instead of controlling nature, Marius immerses himself into its flow. While the death of other in-touch-characters may be interpreted as a warning sign, and the same goes for characters who dream of marine travel but are instead confronted with a dangerous flood, Marius lives on unscathed by water. He is however, still scathed by society.

Cham from Peter van Gestel's *That Day by the Sea* is also depicted as an odd character. He frequently visits the sea alone, and is the only character in the book – except for Sip – with an animistic view of nature. His younger sister Sip is torn between her love for Cham, and the feeling that they should act “normal”. Though she adores Cham, she often reminds him that he is acting abnormal:

‘I want to go home,’ I said.

‘Why couldn't the beach and the sea be your home?’ Cham said.

‘You're nagging,’ I said, and those were not my words, mom always said that when Cham was twaddling again. (Gestel 2003: 29)

Sip is desperate to keep her family together, but suspects from a young age that other people will not understand her brother: “Grandma Jeanne didn't speak to Cham for the rest of the evening. [...] I didn't tell her that Cham had tipped his hat and bowed to the sea. I kept that to

myself” (Gestel 2003: 29). Her parents’ behaviour also works to convince Sip that love for nature is abnormal, for they call it “twaddling” (see above) and marginalize it: “Do you like the sea, dad?” I asked. ‘Hm,’ said dad, ‘how would that do me any good?’” (Gestel 2003: 124). Sip’s difficult position leads her to remark that she hates the sea, and that it is “an annoying load of water” (Gestel 2003: 108). She even acts out against the water, screaming “You’re a useless sea!” at it after a disappointing conversation with her father, and even trying to provoke it: “I halted, raised my head and looked at the sea, raised my fist and extended my middle finger. That’s that. I felt relieved” (Gestel 2003: 198). After this scene, Sip momentarily breaks down and runs into the sea (see above), stating: “I had been deceiving myself for weeks” (Gestel 2003: 200). While the sentence is never explained, it may indicate that Sip now realises that she never really hated the sea, but that acting in this manner was her only way of coping with her position between Cham’s natural, animistic world and the “normal”, cultured world.

In Eva Moraal’s *Flooded*, loving nature – especially water – is presented as the most unnatural thing in the world. The characters live in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, destroyed by great inundations, and water is represented as violent and malicious (see above). Nina harbours great hatred for the water, because her sister Isa has recently drowned during a dyke break. Though Max is not as afraid of nature as Nina, he is not particularly impressed by it either, experiencing it mostly as a threatening invasion of culture:

The water is everywhere. If you are quiet, you can hear it seep through the walls. And the wind. The wind never stops here. *Never*. I walk down two stairs and already the smell of rot and salt and damp reaches me. (Moraal 214; emphasis in original)

Max focuses on the omnipresence of nature around the half-sunken flat he and the other activists are staying in. He mentions that they must not be fooled by the fact that the water is not visible from inside the building, because it is *secretly* seeping in through the walls and *hidden* below the stairs – underscoring its *untrustworthiness* (Strang; see above). Max also states that “the wind

never stops here”, implying that it is supposed to be still in cultured areas, and associates the advance of nature with decay, pointing out the “smell of rot”.

When Max helps Nina escape the activists, they enter the flooded parts of The Netherlands on a water scooter, and find refuge on an island. There, they discover a small house, and conclude that someone must have lived there for some time. Nina reflects on this:

Someone lived here. Even when the world was already flooded. I suddenly realise that this person did the exact opposite of what *we* did. He or she – a she, I decide when I see the colourful planters in the windowsill – did not take refuge, high and dry, where the water could not come. [...] She made a home in the water, between the water, on the water. Water everywhere. *Wasn't she afraid?*” (Moraal 2012: 264; emphasis added)

Nina positions the unknown woman as deviant from the norm: she did “the exact opposite of what *we* did”. It is clear that she cannot identify with the recluse, and can only wonder about her lack of aquaphobia. Max, furthermore, immediately assumes that the unnamed woman has distanced herself from society: “Suddenly, I can imagine it. Someone who decides that the world doesn't matter anymore, and turns her back on everything and everyone” (Moraal 2012: 262). While Max *is* able to identify with the recluse, he does not identify with her immersion in nature, but with her perceived breach with society. The thought of someone living in nature is alienating to Nina and Max, and they never consider staying on the island (Ginting 2015: 5). In *Flooded*, an intense dislike or fear of nature, especially *aquaphobia*, is considered normal. “Wild” spaces are presented as areas unsuitable for living, and the one character that willingly resides on the water is immediately presumed to have left society. The narrator seems convinced that anyone immersed in nature must be a social outcast.

4.3 NATURE, HUMAN CONTROL, AND DUTCH WATER MANAGEMENT

The previous paragraphs have shown that the six selected novels represent varying dynamics between people and water. Characters may feel close or distant from water and from nature, and most characters who are in-touch with nature are branded outcasts by the Dutch societies they live in. How characters relate to water is closely connected to the portrayal of said water in the story. For instance, Marius from Marco Kunst's *Fly!* frequently immerses himself in nature, and is not afraid of water, unlike many characters in the other books. However, *Fly!* is also the only book in the corpus which does *not* anthropomorphise water, and in which the element does not exert monstrous autonomy over humans, or have evil intentions. This chapter addresses ideas about nature and control on a broader narrative scale, with a particular focus on political views on water management.

The violent, anthropomorphised waters that cause floods in historical novels *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, *The Water's Voice* and *Water Everywhere*, are always subsequently controlled by the Dutch societies depicted in these books. Of course, historical novels generally aim to adhere to historical facts – if a dam was built as a reaction to an actual flood disaster in The Netherlands, the Dutch novels include this dam – but the manner in which these historical facts are represented and reflected upon vary greatly throughout the three novels.

The earliest book, *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* (1976) was written by Jan Terlouw, a well-known Dutch politician, who explicitly dedicated the novel to “all those who helped to preserve the Eastern Scheldt as a tidal basin” (Terlouw 1976: 4). The novel shows the hardships endured by the victims of the 1953 Flood Disaster, but ultimately has an environmentalist motive: to show why – with all respect to those who suffered in 1953 – the estuary must *not* be closed off for safety measures, but must be preserved for its ecological value. The omniscient narrator explains why some people in the 1970s disagree with the 1955 plans to close off the tidal basins in the Southwestern parts of the country:

More and more people have *begun to understand* that the creation of new roads, the exchange of natural areas for concrete, and the straightening of rivers in order to sail vaster and safer, *does not make people richer – but poorer*. [...] A few people – and they are increasing in numbers – have *begun to understand* that nature and the environment *have to be protected*, and fast, *otherwise it will be too late*. (Terlouw 1976: 104; emphasis added)

Clearly, the text emphasises that the people who are protesting the closing of the tidal basins are *right*: the narrator uses the word “understand” rather than a more objective term such as “think”, and implies that people have “begun to understand” *the truth* that closing the basin “does not make people richer – but poorer”.

Nature, in this quote, is completely lacking in agency. It is presented as something which is in need of human care in order to survive. The environmentalist movement of the 1970s has a central place in Terlouw’s book. Anne connects the rise of this movement to the power of human wonder:

‘Maybe you have, your generation has, learned to marvel again,’ she then says. ‘We are children of the technical century. And technique has done everything in its power to stop us from marvelling. Technique understands everything, rules over everything, changes everything. [...] ‘You don’t know about Nodding Beggarticks, [...] but you have protested against the conceit of humanity, which thinks that it is fine to exterminate this unknown crop, that you cannot create yourself.’ (Terlouw 1976: 183; emphasis added)

Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10 positions nature as something without agency, in need of human protection, that may have found its saviours in the new generation of the 1970s. Technology is placed in a dichotomy with wonder, and portrayed as a destructive force.

In *Children’s Literature and the Posthuman*, Zoe Jaques states that both negative portrayals of nature as an evil and destructive power, *and* portrayals of nature as endangered and dependant on human care are anthropocentric. Such depictions “[rely] upon an inauthentic (and fundamentally “unnatural”) dislocation of nature from culture: “where culture rules and nature submits, or vice versa” (Jaques 2015: 147; Haraway in Jaques 2015: 147). In fact, *Eastern*

Scheldt Wind Force 10 contains both anthropocentric these anthropocentric modes. After all, in the first half of the book, which takes place in the 1950s, water has a lot of agency, and is presented as a violent, sadistic force (see above). Both part one (1950s) and part two (1970s) of Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* promote a dualistic, anthropocentric world view. While a violent, anthropomorphic nature rules over culture in part one, culture is said to be destroying nature in part two – and the text urges the implied reader to stand up for nature, “otherwise it will be too late” (Terlouw 1976: 104).

Furthermore, the second part of *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* discusses the anthropomorphic sea's “liability” for the 1953 North Sea Flood. Anne, her husband Hank, and their sons Valere and Peter form a family court of sorts, with Anne as the president of the court, Hank prosecuting the water, and Valere and Peter defending it: “May the president know who the suspect is?” “The sea.” (Terlouw 1976: 125). Each party then takes the other to visit various witnesses or “evidence” and concludes with respectively “For these reasons, I demand that the sea be sentenced to separation from the Eastern Scheldt, through the construction of a dam, as dictated in the Delta Law” (Terlouw 1976: 129) and “For these reasons, we ask for the sea to be acquitted, and to have access to the Eastern Scheldt, like it always did” (Terlouw 1976: 150). The case is however, never decided upon, because the government decides to cancel the old construction plans and to reopen the discussion before Anne can decide. At the end of the story, Anne and Valere “make many toasts to The Netherlands' richest tidal basin” (Terlouw 1976: 181). The question of the sea's “accountability” is of course, inherently anthropocentric. It shifts the focus away from *human liability* for impact on the environment, instead only focussing on the anthropomorphised sea's “part” in the disaster. Furthermore, the case emphasises the anthropomorphic representation of the sea in the first book, even though the element itself is inanimate in the second part.

Terlouw's book *does* also address the *intrinsic value* of nature, which is most visible in the above quote, where Anne insists that humans do not have the right to exterminate a species. However, it is anthropocentric in its way of positioning certain human groups as the saviours and protectors of the natural world. Terlouw's book is the most political in the corpus, and

explicitly addresses *environmentalist* values: the text emphasises the urgency of conservation policies, but without the need for characters to drastically rethink or adjust their lifestyles. For instance, the characters never consider *not interfering with the tidal basins at all*. The environmentalist group advocates the reinforcement of sea dykes over the construction of a dam, but never suggest that people should consider moving elsewhere, seeing as the flood was a direct result of the Dutch artificially lowering their own land throughout the centuries (see above). Human concerns are still more important than environmental concerns.

One of the reasons for including Terlouw's novel in this study, was the prospect of a comparison with the recent works. This 1970s book's explicit political engagement, and its environmentalist standpoint, separate it from the other, recent books in the selection. The outspoken, activist engagement of the 1970s characters is typical for the period in which Terlouw wrote the book. In The Netherlands, the later part of the twentieth century gave rise to the ideal of the autonomous, competent child that could solve his or her own problems and often surpassed adults in this sense (Ghesquière, Joosen, and Lierop-Debrauwer 2014: 43). Dutch children's literature from the 1970s and 1980s was characterised by realistic books, and so called 'problem books' which addressed all sorts of social issues, including drug abuse, racism and *environmental concerns* (Ghesquière, Joosen, and Lierop-Debrauwer 2014: 47-48). In this period, children's literature was predominantly critiqued for its educational values.

Twenty-one years later, Lydia Rood's *The Water's Voice* (1997) presents an entirely different outlook on water management. The novel discusses the 1916 flood that ultimately led to the reclamation of the Southern Sea in the 1930s, and shows all characters – fishermen included – agreeing on the reclamation of the sea. The fishermen, who are firmly against the reclamation at first, change their minds after their village is flooded. The anthropomorphic, female sea is posed as the culprit of the story, and one of the main characters, Tilly, rejoices in the thought that humans will exert "revenge" on the sea (see above). Nature is represented as something that is predominantly a human food resource. Peter Sailor, Tilly's grandfather, has an intuitive connection to nature, but only uses this gift to find the best fishing spots. When the

sea's danger to humans exceeds its usefulness, all agree that it must be destroyed – *before it destroys them*. Water and nature have no intrinsic value in this anthropocentric story.

In *Water Everywhere* (2010), which was published thirteen years after *The Water's Voice* and thirty-four years after *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, water is not held accountable for the destruction and death the 1953 Flood Disaster causes. While water is anthropomorphised here and there, humans do not blame the water, or wish for revenge upon nature. Rather, several conceited power figures are blamed for the extensive damage and the large death toll. These include the dyke warden, who underestimated the danger and failed to close the floodgates, the vicar who is only concerned with his own safety, and the town's mayor, who turns out to be incompetent in times of need. The book's main focus is social inequality. Amongst the three historical novels, *Water Everywhere* is the only novel that does not blame the anthropomorphised water for the attacks. This is in all probability, connected to its depiction of water, which does not display the *evil intentions* that water has in the other two historical novels (see above).

The other three books, *That Day by the Sea* (2003), *Flooded* (2012), and *Fly!* (2013) do not comment as much on water management as the historical books do. In the post-apocalyptic *Flooded*, Dutch water management has already failed a long time ago. The anthropomorphic, sadistic sea is depicted as the culprit of the past disasters. As discussed above, water in *Flooded* is not motivated by “revenge on humanity”, but is presented as a danger that was always “upon” the Dutch (Ginting 2015: 6; see above). The sea's vile nature in *Flooded* justifies all measures against the water, and the story emphasizes that the Dutch had been naïve about the “impending danger” in the past:

Again we read about the many warnings that were given [before the Great Floods happened]. Max thinks that people could have, should have prevented the disaster. I am more cynical and protest that those who predicted the disaster were voices crying in the wilderness. It seems that then, no one really saw the danger that was upon us. (Moraal 2012: 121)

The flooded Netherlands are portrayed as a place of extreme aquaphobia and destabilized human control. Nature is demonized, and has no intrinsic value in this anthropocentric story of human survival. At the most, the book underscores the importance of water management and safety, and warns young readers to brace themselves for “what is inevitably coming”. With regard to the sea’s accountability for the floods, the futuristic *Flooded* has much in common with the historical *The Water’s Voice*. The difference is that the historical book celebrates The Netherlands’ “victory” on the water, while the post-apocalyptic book laments the water’s “victory” on The Netherlands.

Marco Kunst’s *Fly!* (2013) does not comment on the national water management of The Netherlands, but *does* show how the exertion of human control over water is viewed as “normal” behaviour in Dutch culture, in the following beach scene:

Together, they build a water city of canals, hills and castles. Right by the sea. Dad comes over to look at their work. ‘It’s alright...,’ he says. ‘But if you make a pathway here, the flow will be much better.

Peter asks how it should be done, and dad starts to dig as well. The three of them make even more canals and rivers. Marius decorates the buildings with shells, feathers and plastic caps.

This is nice, Marius thinks. It should stay like this. He looks at the things Peter and dad make, and then starts to dig a connecting river. Dad looks up and nods approvingly to him. (Kunst 2013: 34)

Marius, who is presented as an outcast in-between-character in the book, is usually ridiculed and patronised by his father and older brother. However, in this scene, instead of immersing himself in the sea and “[moving] with the swell like a strand of seaweed” (Kunst 2013: 30; see above), Marius decides to imitate *their* ways of *water-regulation*, and immediately receives the approval from his father he so desperately seeks. “Normal” Dutch people, the text suggest, *control* water, and do not let the water control *them*.

Peter van Gestel’s *That Day by the Sea* does not comment on Dutch water management. It does, however, contain a malicious portrayal of a female sea, which possibly harbours evil intentions (see above). The book tells the story of an in-touch-character, Cham, who is so

infatuated with the sea, that he is eventually “taken away” by it, and drowns. While Marius (*Fly!*) immerses himself in water and “moves with the swell” without being harmed or “betrayed” by the book’s inanimate water, Cham’s loss or complete lack of control during his encounter with the novel’s anthropomorphic sea costs him his life.

As stated at the beginning of this paragraph, how characters relate to water in the corpus – and ultimately, how the water *affects* them – is intertwined with the way water is portrayed in the respective stories. An immersion into the sea may be either comforting and relaxing, or deathly, depending on the water’s degree of “aliveness”, agency, and intentions. As the majority of children’s and young adult books in the corpus depict water as a dangerous, anthropomorphic entity, characters generally harbour negative feelings towards the water, and in-touch-characters who *do* connect to the element are often “betrayed” by it. The dangerous, anthropomorphic aspects of water-representations in Dutch children’s literature, and the threat they pose to human characters, generally justify human control over water. Jan Terlouw’s *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* attempts to combat this idea in the 1970s storyline, but fails through its aquaphobic representation of water in the 1950s storyline. While Ineke Mahieu’s *Water Everywhere* does not blame the element of water for the 1953 Flood Disaster, it *does* point out that human characters should have better prevented the disaster from happening, emphasising the importance of human control over water. The only book that truly favours an immersive experience of nature over Dutch water management and human control, is *Fly!* by Marco Kunst.

5 CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to analyse the way in which dynamics between culture and nature, with water as its main component, are represented in Dutch children's literature, and to find out how these representations relate to contemporary topics within the ecohumanities. Six books were selected for this study. In order to achieve a thorough analysis, the inquiry was split into three chapters. After the introduction (chapter one), chapter two outlined and discussed the similarities and differences between the disciplines of ecocriticism, ecofeminism and posthumanism. It formulated several key concepts, which formed the base for this study. The analysis was then divided into a chapter on the representation of water and a chapter on human-nature relationships.

ON THE REPRESENTATION OF WATER IN DUTCH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

In the selected books, water is not merely a story-backdrop, but carries meaning: characters and/or narrators may attribute anthropomorphic qualities to water, for instance, envisioning it as a gendered being, or a being with a certain goal; they may associate inanimate waters with relaxation, contemplation, healing and the possibility of escape; or they associate water with death, and the underworld.

In five out of six books – *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* by Jan Terlouw (1967), *The Water's Voice* by Lydia Rood (1997), *That Day by the Sea* by Peter van Gestel (2003), *Water Everywhere* by Ineke Mahieu (2010), and *Flooded* by Eva Moraal (2012) – water is *anthropomorphised*. This anthropomorphism may range from the use of common Dutch tropes, such as “the raging water” to intentional, sadistic attacks on human characters and rejoice in their demise. Anthropomorphised water always has *monstrous autonomy*, and it often has evil intentions.

In two novels - *The Water's Voice* and *That Day by the Sea* – the anthropomorphised water is explicitly gendered as female. These texts have characters interacting with the sea as if it were a human woman, with heterosexual male characters falling in love with “her”, and female characters disliking or mistrusting “her”. Female seas have malicious, and backstabbing “personalities”, for they ultimately betray their male “lovers” by flooding their village, or by killing them. Both books are pervaded by a logic of domination, which aligns the false dichotomies of man/woman and culture/nature. *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, and *That Day by the Sea*, moreover, portray physical connections between women and nature in a negative light.

The only book in which water is *not* anthropomorphised is the most recent book in the corpus: *Fly!* by Marco Kunst (2013). In this story, water does not exert monstrous autonomy over human characters, and it is not portrayed as a threat. In the Dutch corpus, anthropomorphism and violence are strongly intertwined.

When they are portrayed as inanimate backdrops, waterscapes can still induce fear in some aquaphobic characters, through the fluid potential to transform they carry within, but inanimate waters may also stimulate relaxation and contemplation, or inspire dreams of escape in underprivileged characters. Most characters do not immerse themselves in water, but admire it from a distance. In the corpus, water provides the opportunity to reflect on one’s own life, or on cultural topics, but does not inspire reflection on nature, or the connection between human and nonhuman life, and the inanimate environment – though waters may invoke awe due to their “vastness” and “endlessness”. This endlessness is troubling, in the sense that it disregards human impact on the natural world and positions nature as something which is untouchable and unchangeable by humanity. On the other hand, this idea of vastness and endlessness emphasises the power and beauty of nature, and shows that nature is of *intrinsic value*, an import concept within the deep ecology movement.

Characters who admire *anthropomorphic* waters, or who view the sea as an escape-route, are often faced with some form of retribution. Either their village is flooded, or they themselves drown. Floods are often characterised by duality: they have both destructive and

regenerative qualities. Underprivileged characters may find that amidst death and destruction, flood disasters strengthen the bonds within their respective communities and solve some of their social issues.

In *The Water's Voice*, *That Day by the Sea*, *Water Everywhere*, and *Flooded*, water is most and foremost linked to death, destruction, and the underworld. This link ensues from both literal and allegorical associations. In the first sense, water can kill humans and it may carry or hide dead humans or animals, and in the second sense, water may be a symbol for the “land of the dead”. As opposed to this “aquatic underworld”, the civilized, human world is then likened to “life” in an allegorical life/death and culture/nature dichotomy. This image of (industrial) human civilisation as a generative, positive place in opposition with a dead, destructive nature, does not agree with the reality of the ecological crisis. This denial of human impact on the earth, and detachment of humanity from nature, is *anthropocentric*, and advocates an unsustainable worldview. With regard to *water*, such a vision omits the fact that all life on Earth essentially originated in water, making water “the essence of life”.

In the corpus of Dutch children's and young adult books, water is – with the exception of Marco Kunst's *Fly!* – represented as a negative force. The *aquaphobic* representations are reminiscent of Dutch “war against the water” rhetoric, for they are pervaded by the same anthropomorphic and violent portrayals that can be found in a great variety of Dutch media, and in Dutch education. Such aquaphobia goes hand in hand with an anthropocentric worldview, which envisions the Dutch and the water in a false, hierarchical dichotomy, by presenting water as the *enemy* of The Netherlands.

ON HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIPS IN DUTCH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

All books in the corpus contain at least one character, or reference of a character, who is in touch with nature. With regard to water, these characters may live close by the sea, they may enjoy swimming in it, and they may have an intuitive connection to it. The majority of in-touch-characters is male, they are often elderly, and often knowledgeable about weather, water, or

nature in general. Three books, *The Water's Voice*³⁹, *Water Everywhere*, and *Fly!*, portray a grandfather-grandson pair who bond through their shared immersion in nature. A total of three in-touch-characters – portrayed in *Water Everywhere*, *That Day by the Sea*, and *Fly!* – share a close bond with a young in-between-character. In-between-characters are children on the brink of puberty, who bond with the older family member through a shared love for the natural world. The death of the significant family member ruptures these character's bond with nature and initiates them into the “civilized” world of adulthood.

Female characters are less likely to immerse themselves in nature, and although one female character shares an emotional bond with water in Jan Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10*, female characters in general are all shown to be ignorant about nature. *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* and *Fly!* endorse a logic of domination by presenting women as inferior to men.

A significant amount of in-touch-characters dies in the corpus. Their deaths are often caused by nature – or, more specifically, by *water* – and their bodies may be mutilated by water. Their proneness to dying is connected to – and validates – any aquaphobic portrayal of water in these books. It establishes the idea that immersion into nature is a *dangerous* practise, and that nature may “betray” even its most ardent followers, though it is up to the actual readers of these books to accept, or dismiss such ideology. The representation of nature as a “backstabbing ally” is also a prominent feature of Dutch water rhetoric (see above).

Except for the in-touch-character from *The Water's Voice*, who uses his nature-connection to professionally harvest its resources, all in-touch-characters are portrayed as social outcasts. They are ridiculed, bullied, or misunderstood, and they may have chosen to distance themselves from their respective societies, for instance, by living as recluses. Some invoke anger or irritation in other characters through their “otherness”. Apart from the aforementioned *The*

³⁹ Although Sam from *The Water's Voice* shares his grandfather's experience of nature through their shared fishing trips, and bonds with him through their similar interests, Sam is not an in-between-character: he does not have – or wish for – an intuitive connection with nature, and reveres his grandfather's skills mainly for the *results* they yield. Sam is never finds himself torn between nature, and the civilised world, for he meets all expectations.

Water's Voice, all books in the corpus are pervaded by the idea that immersion into nature lies outside of the acceptable norm of (historical or future) Dutch society.

The corpus contains varying views on human control over nature, and on Dutch water management. Human attitudes to water are intertwined with the ways in which water is represented in the respective books. The earliest book in the corpus, Jan Terlouw's *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10* (1976), is explicitly politically engaged and has an environmentalist approach to Dutch water management. Its aquaphobic portrayal of water in the first half, and its needy portrayal of nature in the second half of the story, are both anthropocentric, as is the discussion about the water's liability for its "attacks" on humans in the latter. The didactic engagement of *Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10's* is typical of Dutch youth literature in the 1970s and 1980s.

Lydia Rood's *The Water's Voice* (1997) portrays the anthropomorphic water as the ultimate culprit of the 1916 Flood Disaster, and has characters condone, or even rejoice in the ensuing Southern Sea reclamation project. Ineke Mahieu's *Water Everywhere* (2010) does not *blame* the water for the flood disaster, but rather focuses on patterns of inequality within society. Several authority figures are blamed for *failing to prevent* the Flood Disaster, and for their incompetence during the event. The book thus emphasises the importance of *correct water management*. Eva Moraal's dystopia *Flooded* (2012) represents a future world in which Dutch water management has failed, and underscores the naïve stance of Dutch citizens in the pre-flood Netherlands.

Peter van Gestel's *That Day by the Sea* (2003) does not comment on Dutch water management, but does show how water can exert monstrous autonomy over humans, and how humans who let their guard down can be killed by water. Marco Kunst's *Fly!* (2013), does the opposite, by having a main character immerse himself in inanimate water, and be controlled by its current, without coming to any harm. The book however, does emphasise that it is *the norm* for Dutch people to exert control over water.

The corpus suggests that Dutch attitudes to water management have changed over time. While Jan Terlouw's 1976 novel takes up an explicitly environmentalist position, petitioning the

conservation of a natural area, and favouring the consideration of ecological values over a traditional, nationalistic approach to Dutch water management, the books published between 1997 and 2012 all condone or praise the later, favouring human control and safety over all else.

In contrast, the most recent book in the corpus, Marco Kunst's *Fly!* (2013) portrays nature as something of *intrinsic value*, and presents the possibility of an immersive experience of nature, and water, though still acknowledging that such experience lies outside the norm of contemporary Dutch culture. As an exception to the corpus, *Fly!* shows that Dutch children's literature *can* indeed reweave the hierarchal Netherlands/water dichotomy, although it generally seems to *endorse* it.

ON THE ECOHUMANITIES, AND THE CONCEPTS APPLIED IN THIS STUDY

This study was an attempt at a unified approach of three disciplines: ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and posthumanism. All concepts that were selected from these different disciplines in chapter two, proved valuable for the analysis. Some concepts, such as the *women-nature connection* (ecofeminism), and the *child-nature connection* (ecocriticism) helped to steer the analysis in relevant directions, and led to valuable insights on, for instance, the position of in-between-characters in the corpus. Others, such as the focus on the *anthropomorphic* representation of inanimate entities (posthumanism), were very useful in the analysis of water portrayals. The cross-fertilisation of disciplines has greatly benefited this study, which not only hopes to inspire other (children's) literature scholars through its findings, but also through its approach.

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Cover

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APPENDIX: ORIGINAL DUTCH TEXT

I. List of Translated Names

For reasons of fluency in English, the following character names have been altered:

- *Oosterschelde windkracht 10 [Eastern Scheldt Wind Force 10]*, Jan Terlouw, 1976

Henk	Hank
Brooshoofd	Brittlehead
Tegelaar	Tiler

- *De stem van het water [The Water's Voice]*, Lydia Rood, 1997

Tijne	Tilly
Sijmen	Sam
Muus	Mos
Valeer	Valere
Pieter	Peter

- *Die dag aan zee [That Day by the Sea]*, Peter van Gestel, 2003

Sybille	Sybil
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- *Overal water [Water Everywhere]*, Ineke Mahieu, 2010

Nout	Nate
Leen	Lane
Opa Hidde	Grandpa Hidd
Witje	Whitey

- *Vlieg! [Fly!]*, Marco Kunst, 2013

Pieter	Peter
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II. Original Dutch Quotes

Page 16

Als iets de Nederlander heeft gevormd, dan is het wel de strijd tegen het water. Met veel doorzettingsvermogen en inventiviteit veroverden we ons land op de zee en maakten een onbewoonbare delta tot een van de welvarendste plekken op aarde. Met de voltooiing van de Deltawerken hadden we de strijd tegen het water definitief gewonnen. Dachten we. Maar toen ging de zeespiegel stijgen, traden de rivieren vaker buiten hun oevers en werd het klimaat wispelturiger. Hoe veilig zijn we eigenlijk achter onze stoere dijken? (“Water, vriend”)

Page 18

Kent gij het land, der zee ontruikt
Door d'arbeid van een voorgelacht,
Dat nooit verwonnen heeft gebukt,
Of 't hief zich op met grooter kracht?
Dat land, bekend aan 't verste strand,
Is 't ons zoo dierbaar Nederland,
Dat land bekend aan 't verste strand,
Is 't ons zoo dierbaar Nederland! (De Boer and Veldkamp 1911: 35-36; song-breaks removed for readability)

Page 20

De algemene doelstelling luidt: watereducatie richt zich op het vergroten van waterbewustzijn en de versterking van waterbewust gedrag. Dit betekent dat:

- jongeren zich er bewust van zijn wat het betekent om te leven in een delta;
- jongeren zich bewust zijn van de gevolgen van hun eigen handelen voor de wateromgeving;
- jongeren kennis hebben van en inzicht hebben in water, waterbeheer en mogelijkheden voor studie en beroep in de watersector (SLO 2012: 6).

Page 21

1. Water en leven: water is een oerbron van het leven.
2. Watervoorziening en -gebruik: veilig en voldoende schoon water is een essentieel mensenrecht.
3. Waterveiligheid en bescherming: het bewustzijn dat de verdediging tegen het water in een delta als de Nederlandse, onontbeerlijk is (SLO 2012: 6).

Page 22

leren hoe het watersysteem werkt, hoe de verschillende gebruiksfuncties afhankelijk zijn van water en door water bedreigd worden, welke maatregelen genomen kunnen worden om het systeem in te richten, en wat de effecten zijn van die maatregelen. (WaterEducatie)

Page 24

Vroeger stond er in de boekenkast van mijn ouders een fotoboek over de watersnoodramp. Het waren van die grote zwart-witfoto's van ondergelopen dorpen, van paarden die hulpeloos in een eindeloze watervlakte stonden, van mensen die van daken werden gered. Ik was als jong meisje erg onder de indruk van dat fotoboek. [...] Ik deed op de basisschool zelfs twee keer een spreekbeurt over de watersnoodramp en de deltawerken. [...] Een paar jaar geleden kwam ik er achter dat veel kinderen niets weten van de watersnoodramp in Zeeland. Daarom besloot ik er een kinderboek over te schrijven. (Mahieu "Een interview")

Page 48

En in alle gewesten
wordt de stem van het water
met zijn eeuwige rampen
gevreest en gehoord (Marsman in Rood 1997: 7)

Page 48/49

“De armierterige straaltjes uit de brandweerslangen vielen machteloos neer; waarschijnlijk was het water al grotendeels verdampt voor het de vlammen bereikte” (Rood 1997: 56).

Page 49

“Dan breekt er op een dag brand uit. Het water, de vijand, is nu bondgenoot!” (Rood 1997).

“Maar deze avond zou het, als het donkerder werd, alleen ziedende schuimkoppen laten zien en golven die over elkaar heenrolden in hun haast om het land aan te vallen.” (Rood 1992: 93).

Page 50

“En schreeuwen had geen zin. Ze verstonden elkaar toch niet in de loeiende storm en het donderend geweld waarmee het water tekeerging” (Mahieu 2010: 93).

“Er waren zelfs boten uit de haven opgepakt en op het Havenplein neergekwakt. Alsof het speelgoedbootjes waren. Nu lagen ze als stukgeslagen wrakken tussen de rest van de rotzooi” (Mahieu 2010: 102).

Page 51

De auto van Tegelaar, waar juist de vrouw met de twee kinderen in waren gestapt, zakte scheef weg omdat er een stuk dijk afbrokkelde, bleef een paar tellen hangen. Een grote golf kwakte er tegen aan. De auto verdween in het woedende water. (Terlouw 1976: 72)

Op anderhalve meter afstand van opoe's bed was het huis in tweeën gescheurd. Twee meter onder haar kolkte het water zijn triomfantelijke overwinningswals. (Terlouw 1976: 74)

“een grote woede tegen het water” (Terlouw 1976: 83).

“altijd van heeft gehouden” (Terlouw 1976: 96).

Page 52

Het zijn gruwelijke foto's van mensen in doodsangst die weten dat ze het niet gaan redden, dat het water komt en hen mee zal sleuren naar haar donkere diepten, waar hen een naamloos graf wacht. Het zijn foto's van gebouwen die op instorten staan, waar mensen van grote hoogte uit springen. Maar het maakt niets uit,

er is geen redding want daaronder wacht het water, het hongerige water dat hen zonder pardon opslokt. (Moraal 2012: 47).

Page 54

“Pas ’s avonds wierp de zee Cham zijn dode lichaam op het strand” (Gestel 2003: 7).

Page 55

“De zee is een vrouw’, zei Cham. ‘Ze betovert je en ze slokt je op” (Gestel 2003: 111).

‘Slapen, slapen, slapen, ‘ fluisterde de zee.

‘Ja, ‘ging ik even zacht verder, ‘dat gemene wijf van de zee heeft je lelijk beetgenomen. [...] Je had toch sterke armen, je liet je toch niet zomaar verrassen door die stomme zee? Maar ja, het strand en de duinen waren ineens heel ver van je vandaan, je kon ze nauwelijks nog zien, je werd moe en je wilde slapen, slapen, je zag op het laatst alleen nog water, het werd donker om je heen. (Gestel 2003: 199-200)

“de zee werd stapel verliefd op hem en hij op de zee” (Gestel 2003: 136).

“We weten er niks van, [...] de zee kan gemeen zijn” (Gestel 2003: 193).

“Ze is stapel op haar broer” (Gestel 2003: 50).

Page 56

“Ik hou niet van de zee. Heb ik nooit gedaan. Ik vind het kwaaiig water, dat water van de zee, de zee wil altijd iets anders dan wat jij wilt [...] Ik ben ook hartstikke gek op de zee hoor. Ik kan er soms niet van slapen. Omdat ie altijd zo dichtbij je is, he.” (Gestel 2003: 182).

“Het ruisen was zachter en geheimzinniger nu ik in het zeewater stond [...] Ik wou plat op het water vallen en wegzwemmen. Wat had Cham bezielde? Ik kon er iets van voelen, en dat wilde ik niet” (Gestel 2003: 198-199).

“Pa zei niks, ik zei niks. Had hij echt gedacht dat ik mezelf wou verdrinken? Niks voor mij toch. Maar met de zee weet je het nooit” (Gestel: 2003: 202).

“De plek van een meisje, een vrouw, was in huis.” (Rood 1997: 14)

Page 57

‘Ze ziet er zo vredig uit, de zee,’ zei Sijmen peinzend. [...] Je zou nooit zeggen dat ze zo gevaarlijk kan zijn. [...] O, maar ik houd ervan! [...] Van gevaar. Ik houd ervan als de zee zo koppig begint te klotsen, eigenlijk nog voor je hebt gemerkt dat de wind is aangewakkerd. [...] Alsof je een gevecht aangaat. [...] De zee is mijn leven. Maar daarom hoeft je haar nog niet in alles haar zin te geven.’

Tijne giechelde. ‘Zo praten mannen over vrouwen’ (Rood 1997: 82)

“Ze [...] stak toen haar tong uit naar de zee. Als dat kreng maar niet dacht dat ze de Markers eronder zou krijgen! Mooi niet! [...] Inpolderen zouden ze haar, leegpompen, lamleggen.” (Rood 1997: 117)

Page 58

Ze aarzelde. Want de zee, dat was nog altijd Sijmens grote liefde. En jij, heb jij er vrede mee?

Sijmen lachte.

‘Er blijven zoveel zeeën over,’ zei hij. [...] ‘Dat kleine stukkie kunnen we wel missen.’ (Rood 1997: 119)

Page 59

Nooit eerder had Nout de golven zo wild gezien. Ze stoven hoog op tegen de dijk. Hij rilde, zo mooi vond hij die kolkende golven. Was dit de zee waarin opa Hidde hem ooit had leren zwemmen? (Mahieu 2010: 69).

Page 59-60

“[...] het was alsof hij steeds omkeek, naar het kleine stukje land midden in de zee die alles wat hem lief was bedreigde.” (Rood 1997: 33)

“Vaders van andere jongens waren sterk, stoer, nooit bang of bezorgd – althans zo leek het.” (Rood 1997: 78)

Page 60

“Een dikke laag sneeuw bedekt het gazon [...] Mam’s rozenstruiken bezwijken bijna onder de dikke witte deken. Sneeuw is water. Nog meer water. Verstikkend, alles verdrinkend water” (Moraal 2010: 10).

“Mijn mond voelt als schuurpapier. Zo droog. Droog. Water. Nee, niet weer het water!” (Moraal 2010: 207)

“Het water dat ik haat, maar meer dan ooit nodig heb” (Moraal 2010: 173).

Page 61

Van blauw word je groen word je geel word je grijs,
dodelijke zee.

Altijd veranderend, altijd op reis.

Neem mij mee.’ (Terlouw 1976: 21)

Iedere dag klom ze op de dijk, iedere dag was het anders. [...] De mensen op het eiland veranderden niet, veranderingen werden al gauw goddeloos of lichtzinnig genoemd. Het lijkt wel of mensen naar mate ze dichterbij de zee wonen onveranderlijk, conservatiever zijn, dacht Anne. Komt het uit verzet tegen de veranderlijke aard van de zee, of is het angst voor het water – dodelijke zee? Of is de zee niet veranderlijk, omdat hij altijd weer komt, altijd weer gaat, omhoog, omlaag, de hartslag van de eeuwigheid (Terlouw 1976: 61).

Page 62

“die allemachtig breed is en indrukwekkend” (Terlouw 1976: 96).

‘Ik hou niet van de zee,’ zei pa.

‘Ja,’ zei ik, ‘klote zee.

‘Ik kon haar nooit schilderen, dat lukte me domweg niet. Kwaad werd ik ervan.’ [...]

‘Het zou wel een heel klein zeetje geworden zijn bij jou,’ zei ik (Gestel 2003: 140-141).

“In de buurt van de zee,’ zei ma, ‘ben je als mens erg klein.’ ‘In de buurt van een mens ben je als mug erg klein,’ zei pa.” (Gestel 2003: 124).

Page 63

“Er is geen einde aan de zee en dat maakt je tegelijk blij en treurig, zoals de eeuwigheid je blij en treurig maakt” (Terlouw 1976: 183).

modderig, groengrijs en koud. Er ligt een dode krab in het water. Een paar poten zijn eraf gerukt. [...] Het ijzige water dringt door zijn schoenen en zijn voeten zakken weg in het natte zand. Op zee klinken misthoorns, maar er is geen schip te zien. Er is niets te zien. (Kunst 2013: 140)

Page 64

“De ongeduldige blik verschijnt weer in zijn ogen, de blik waar Marius zo bang voor is. Dan dwaalt papa’s blik af naar de zee. Zijn ogen worden zachter” (Kunst 2013: 140).

Page 65

Anne was nog geen uur in huis of ze had al het gevoel te willen ontvluchten, weg uit die verstikkende sfeer, weg van dat eiland, weg van ieder eiland, omdat een eiland zulke duidelijke grenzen heeft. Was het maar zomer, dan kon ze met haar boot de wijde opgaan, dat hielp altijd. (Terlouw 1976: 61).

“Vreemde kusten, nieuwe horizons, andere werelden” (Rood 1997: 43).

Page 66

‘Ik snap niet waar jullie zoveel drukte over maken.’

‘Nee, dat snap jij niet,’ zei Tijne een tikje hooghartig. ‘Jij denkt alleen aan de zee. Die saaie, grijze zee. Maar Jan en ik, wij denken aan de kusten.’

‘Jan is gek en jij ook,’ zei Sijmen.

‘Welnee. Maar hoe moet jij dat ook begrijpen. Wat wij hebben, dat is gevoel voor romantiek.’

‘Wat jullie hebben, is een ziekte,’ zei Sijmen. [...]

‘Ja. En die ziekte heet verlangen.’ (Rood 1997: 74)

De zee bulderde en Nout zag de witte schuimkoppen oplichten in het donker. [...] Als ik met hem naar België ga, kunnen we misschien wel naar Antwerpen. Daar is ook een heel grote haven. Er liggen boten die over de hele wereld varen. (Mahieu 2010: 25)

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In bad kun je niet verdrinken, dacht ik, ouwe mensen verdrinken geloof ik wel eens in bad. Voor je wordt geboren zwem je in de buik van je moeder. Daar verlangen die oudjes naar terug en dan gaan ze mooi dood. (Gestel 2003: 126)

Ze wisten het wel, hoogwater bedreigde hun bezittingen en inkomsten – maar het was tenminste eens iets anders. En voordelen had het ook, voor de boeren tenminste, want het weiland werd er tierig van. Als het water was weggetrokken, bleef er altijd een laagje slib achter waar het gras best op wilde groeien. (Rood 1997: 15)

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Nout zag de boer al van verre staan, bij het hek voor zijn boerderij, tot zijn middel in het water. [...] Plotseling stootte Nouts roeispaan op iets zwaars in het water. [...] Zijn adem stokte in zijn keel toen hij recht in de donkere, lege ogen van een dooie koe keek. En verderop, tussen het stro bij de schuur, zag hij nog veel meer kadavers. Met bolle buiken dreven ze in het water. [...] Ineens drong het tot hem door: de boer bij het hek, hij stond niet, hij hing, volkomen roerloos. Hij was dood. [...] Hijgend liet hij de riemen zakken en tuurde verdwaasd over een grauwe, lege wereld. Nergens een levende ziel. (Mahieu 2010: 166-167).

Ik kijk. Naar de ondergelopen stad die half boven het water uit steekt. Naar de eilanden van bijna vergane gebouwen. Naar een heuvel met een ingestort monument, een man die te paard op de golven rijdt. Naar de watervogels die schreeuwen omdat iemand hun domein durft te betreden. (Moraal 2012: 202)

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Li loopt het water in en gaat naast pa staan. Pa glimlacht verrast. [...] Ik wil naar ze toe, maar ik kan niet weg. [...] Ik kijk naar m'n pa en m'n broer. Tranen stromen over mijn wangen. Een delta van ingewreven zout.

'Max?'

Ik draai me om. Ze staat boven op de dijk.

'Kom je?' (Moraal 2012: 395)

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“Cham zwom ver van me vandaan in de zee en zwaaide naar me” (Gestel 2003: 131).

Boven de boot cirkelden krijsende meeuwen, maar Nout keek niet op. Want voor hem stond opa Hidde. 'Kom maar met mij mee, jongen, [...] Het is nu tijd.' Hij draaide zich om, wenkte. 'Kom op erger dan dood kan het niet worden.' Toen liep hij weg. (Mahieu 2010: 169)

“Was het de geest van Dwaze Klaasje, die in de laatste watersnood was omgekomen en sindsdien bij nacht en ontij over het eiland spookte, op zoek naar zijn bootje?” (Rood 1997: 26)

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[...] ging nooit het eiland af. Liever nam hij Nout mee op strooptocht in de polder, of ze zochten bij laag water alikruiken. [...] Nu ging Nout weleens alleen op zoek naar kreukels. Dan bracht hij een emmertje vol naar het dijkhuisje, waar opa Hidde ze in het zoute zeewater op een petroleumstel kookte. Een gasfornuis had hij niet. (Mahieu 2010: 21)

“Af en toe klonk het klagelijke gemekker van Witje boven het bulderende natuurgeweld uit. Nout boog zich naar het gat tussen de pannen. ‘Niet kijken,’ commandeerde Leen.” (Mahieu 2010: 91)

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“geen modderplassen waarin biggen konden rondscharrelen en [...] geen geiten achter de tuinhekjes” (Mahieu 2010: 173).

Terwijl opa met een hand zijn ogen en gezicht beschermt tegen de uithalen van de scherpe snavel, pakt hij met zijn andere hand de vogel op. Dan vouwt hij de goede vleugel tegen het dier aan. [...] Hij doet het zo handig dat het lijkt alsof hij dagelijks meeuwen opvouwt.

Het dier is meteen rustig.

‘Kijk, zo ziet hij niks meer, en dan houdt hij zich koest.’

‘Maar wat nu? Moeten we ermee naar de dierendokter?’

‘Tja.’ Opa kijkt naar het dier. ‘Ik weet het niet. Misschien... Ik ben bang dat –’

‘Maar we kunnen hem toch niet zomaar achterlaten?’

Opa neemt Marius weifelend op. Dan knikt hij (Kunst 2013: 11-12).

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“We moeten hem begraven. [...] In de duinen. [...] Zonder doos. Zo in het zand. Dat is beter.” (Kunst 2013: 13).

“met uitzicht op zee” (Kunst 2013: 13).

“Het graf is open. Marius kijkt naar de graafsporen. Het moet een vos zijn geweest, beslist hij. [...] Als een vos het heeft gedaan, is het niet erg. Dat is de natuur.” (Kunst 2013: 33).

“Pieter Schipper [...] was de weerman van het eiland. Niemand kon de hemel zo ‘lezen’ als hij.” (Rood 1997: 10).

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“Vroeger wist de oude Pieter feiloos de goede stekjes te vinden.” (Rood 1997: 32).

“Zoals zijn bap, zo wilde Sijmen ook worden! Aan de zee kunnen zien waar de haring zich schuilhield. [...] Geen haring in de Zuiderzee of de Noordzee zou veilig voor hem zijn!” (Rood 1997: 51-52).

“de kleurige plantenbakken in de vensterbank” (Moraal 2012: 264).

Niet ver van de golven bleef hij staan. Langzaam nam hij de hoge hoed af en maakte met de zee aan zijn voeten een diepe buiging. Ik was apetrots op hem. Je hoge hoed afnemen en buigen voor de zee, je moest er maar opkomen (Gestel 2003: 29).

“‘t Arme beest,’ zei hij, ‘is ziek van heimwee naar de zee’” (Gestel 2003: 153).

Page 79

Heerlijk varen toch ook, met de wind zo ruim in de zeilen. Als hij bij vlagen aanwakkerde bolde het zeil en kreeg je het gevoel alsof het bootje zou worden opgenomen door de wind en als een meeuw zou wegvliegen, laag over het water. (Terlouw 1976: 11)

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Ze heeft nog nooit gehoord dat ze met begeestering op een schor gebogen stonden over knikkend tandzaad, wat dan nu aan de oevers van het Grevelingenmeer niet meer schijnt voor te komen, zoals in dat artikel stond. Zij moet eerlijk toegeven dat ze het niet heeft gemist. (Terlouw 1976: 123)

Page 81

‘Ik breng Pieter naar voetbal. Kun je daar spelen. Kikkervisjes vangen in de ijshockeyvijver.’ Ze lacht naar Marius. ‘Dat vind je toch altijd leuk?’ Marius pakt het zout. ‘Er zijn in oktober geen kikkervisjes, mam.’ ‘O, nou andere beestjes dan?’ (Kunst 2013: 51)

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Plotseling zagen ze in een van de boomtoppen de gescheurde regenjas van opa Hidde wapperen. [...] Hij hapte van schrik naar adem toen Leen, hoog op de voorplecht, brulde als een aangeschoten dier. Wat zag hij? Nout wilde ook gaan staan, maar Leen draaide zich naar hem om. Zijn gezicht was asgrauw en vreemd verwrongen. ‘Niet kijken,’ zei hij dwingend. (Mahieu 2012: 115-116).

“hij wilde niet weg uit zijn huisje” (Mahieu 2012: 116).

“Hij moet mee. Er is iets met opa, dat kan niet anders. Hij voelt het. School kan wachten. ‘Ik kom Vos! Ik kom!’ fluistert hij tegen de hond” (Kunst 2013: 130).

Page 83

“Neem mij mee”. “aangezien B.G. Brooshoofd minder goed kon dobberen dan een kistje, zal hij wel op de bodem van de [...] zee liggen” (Terlouw 1976: 21).

Het lijk was in vérgaande staat van verrotting en onherkenbaar. Maar, omdat Brooshoofd al lang als vermist was opgegeven, had de politie een aanknopingspunt en het lukte om vast te stellen dat hij het moest zijn. Volgens de anatoom-patholoog moest hij al tussen de vier en zes maanden dood zijn. Dat klopte. (Terlouw 1976: 33)

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“Brooshoofd? Bedoel je de professor? [...] ’t Is geen echte professor, wij noemen hem zo omdat ‘ie altijd zo geleerd doet” (Terlouw 1976: 25).

Mensenlief, zei de vissersvrouw, ‘is ‘ie dan toch niet gek? Ik heb altijd gedacht dat ‘ie uit een gaatje in z’n nek kletst.’ [...] Hij zwerft rond op Schouwen, in de polders, over de dijken, soms gaat hij ook naar een van de andere eilanden. Mijn man heeft ‘m eens meegenomen op de botter, toen de knecht ziek was. Dat was eens maar nooit weer. Die man gaat soms ineens tien minuten naar de lucht staan kijken, wat ‘ie in zijn handen heeft valt er dan uit zonder dat hij het merkt. Onbruikbaar op een vissersboot. (Terlouw 1976: 26)

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‘Hé, wacht op ons!’ roept zijn moeder, maar hij is al weg. [...] Dauw glinstert op de spinnenwebben. Hier ruikt het naar zomer, bramen, zand en... Marius weet niet waar het allemaal naar ruikt. Hij weet wel dat hij er duizelig van wordt. Duizelig van geluk. [...] Papa kijkt naar Marius. Hij fronst. ‘Kon je nou écht niet even op ons wachten?’ Marius kijkt naar de grond. ‘Wat is dat toch altijd met jou?’ gaat papa geïrriteerd verder. ‘Altijd alles anders dan de rest... Ik snap het niet.’ (Kunst 2013: 18-19).

Page 86

Het fort is veel groter dan ze ooit gebouwd hebben. Ze moeten het nu verdedigen tegen de golven. [...] ‘Liggen, Muis! Ga ervoor liggen. Dan maak ik hem hoger. Hou de golven tegen. Snell!’ Marius gaat voor het fort liggen, met zijn rug naar de golven. Op zijn zij, als een dijkje. Hij kijkt hoe zijn broer vecht tegen de zee. Hij baalt, hij ligt daar maar te liggen als een aangespoelde walvis. Het water spoelt om hem heen en likt aan de burcht. [...] Marius staat op en loopt de zee in. [...] Hij blijft in het water en laat zich meevoeren door de stroom en de golven, meebewegend op de deining als een sliert zeewier. Hij wil niets met het fort te maken hebben. De zee wint toch. (Kunst 2013: 28-30)

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‘Ik wil naar huis,’ zei ik.

‘Waarom zou het strand en de zee je huis niet zijn?’ zei Cham.

‘Je zanikt,’ zei ik, en dat had ik niet van mezelf, ma zei het wanneer Cham aan het zwetsen was. (Gestel 2003: 29)

“Oma Jeanne sprak de hele avond niet tegen Cham. [...] Ik vertelde haar niet dat Cham zijn hoge hoed afnam en boog voor de zee. Dat hield ik voor mezelf” (Gestel 2003: 29).

“‘Hou je van de zee, pa?’ vroeg ik. ‘Hm,’ zei pa, ‘wat schiet je daarmee op?’” (Gestel 2003: 124)

“vervelend veel water, dat water van de zee” (Gestel 2003: 108)

“Ik bleef staan, richtte mijn hoofd op en keek naar de zee, stak mijn vuist met een omhooggestoken middelvinger omhoog. Zo. Dat luchtte op.” (Gestel 2003: 198)

“Wekenlang had ik mezelf voor de gek gehouden” (Gestel 2003: 200).

Page 88

Overal is water. Als je stil bent, hoor je het tussen de muren sijpelen. En de wind. De wind houdt hier nooit op. Nooit. Twee trappen naar beneden komt de geur van rot en zout en nattigheid me al tegemoet. (Moraal 2012: 214)

“Iemand woonde hier. Zelfs toen de wereld al overstromd was. [...] ZE heeft een thuis gemaakt in het water, tussen het water, op het water. Overal water. Was ze niet bang?” (Moraal 2012: 264).

“Ik kan me ’t plots voorstellen. Iemand die besluit dat de wereld er niet meer toe doet en alles en iedereen de rug toekeert” (Moraal 2012: 262).

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“Aan allen die meewerken om de Oosterschelde als getijdewater te behouden.” (Terlouw 1976: 4)

Page 93

Steeds meer mensen zijn gaan begrijpen dat als je steeds meer wegen maakt, je steeds meer natuurgebieden volbouwt met beton, steeds meer bochten uit rivieren haalt om sneller en veiliger te kunnen varen, dat je dan niet rijker wordt maar armer. Een aantal mensen – en hun getal neemt toe – is gaan begrijpen dat de natuur en het milieu beschermd moeten worden en gauw ook, anders is het te laat. (Terlouw 1976: 104)

‘Misschien hebben jullie, heeft jullie generatie, weer geleerd om je te verwonderen,’ zegt ze dan. ‘Wij zijn kinderen van de technische eeuw. En de techniek heeft zijn uiterste best gedaan om ons de verwondering af te leren. De techniek begrijpt alle dingen, beheerst alle dingen, verandert alle dingen. [...] Jullie kennen het knikkend tandzaad niet. [...] Maar jullie zijn in opstand gekomen tegen de hovaardij van de mens die meent dat je dit onbekende gewas, dat je zelf niet kunt maken, mag uitroeien.’ (Terlouw 1976: 183)

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[...] anders is het te laat. (Terlouw 1976: 104)

“Mag de presidente weten wie de verachte is?”

‘De zee’” (Terlouw 1976: 125).

“Ik eis derhalve veroordeling van de zee tot buitensluiting uit de Oosterschelde door middel van de bouw van een dam, zoals vastgelegd in de Deltawet” (Terlouw 1976: 129).

“Wij pleiten derhalve voor vrijpraak voor de zee van het ten laste gelegde en toegang tot de Oosterschelde zoals dat van oudsher is geweest” (Terlouw 1976: 150).

“toosten veelvuldig op Nederlands rijkste zeearm” (Terlouw 1976: 181).

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Weer lezen we over de de vele waarschuwingen die werden gegeven. Max vindt dat men de ramp had kunnen, had móéten, voorkomen. Ik ben cynischer en werp tegen dat degenen die de ramp voorzagen roependen in de woestijn waren. Het leek wel of niemand echt beseftte welk gevaar ons bedreigde. (Moraal 2012: 121)

PAGE 97

Samen bouwen ze aan een waterstad van kanalen, heuveltjes en kastelen. Vlak bij zee. Papa komt kijken. ‘Mooi hoor....’zegt hij. ‘Maar als je nou hier een doorgang maakt, dan stroomt de boel veel beter door.’

Pieter vraagt hoe dan en papa begint ook te graven. Ze maken er met zijn drieën nog meer kanalen en rivieren bij. Marius versiert de bouwwerken met schelpen, veertjes en plastic doppen.

Zo is het fijn, denkt Marius. Zo moet het blijven. Hij kijkt wat Pieter en papa maken en begint dan een rivier te graven die erbij aansluit. Papa kijkt op en knikt goedkeurend naar hem. (Kunst 2013: 34)