



## **Mocking the Mob of Middle-Class Tourists: Dutch Nineteenth-Century Novels Competing with Travel Guides**

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**Abstract:** Non-fictional texts, such as travelogues and travel guides, are the privileged sources of tourism studies. Travel novels, however, offer interesting insights in travelling habits as well, when approached through discourse analysis. Two nineteenth-century Dutch novels, *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud* (1841) and *Een Drentsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam, in 't voorjaar van 1843* (1845, 1853), reveal traits of mass tourist behaviour, long before the actual rise of mass tourism at the end of the century. They combine normative statements on tourist behaviour, criticizing travel guide induced tourism, with factual tourist information, as if competing with travel guides.

**Keywords:** Mass tourism / Massatoerisme; Rhine tourism / Rijntoerisme; Travel guides / Reisgidsen; Bernard Gewin; D.H. van der Scheer

There is no more than a thin line between literary and non-literary travelogues: both influence our behaviour as tourists and tell us how to distinguish ourselves from our fellow travellers. This paper explores how two mid-nineteenth-century Dutch novels depict modern ‘mass tourism’, and what normative statements are tied to this form of travel. It points out how literary texts reflect critically on tourist behaviour prescribed by travel guides while at the same time imitating the travel-guide genre by offering descriptions of tourist scenery and travel practices. By taking the interaction between novels and travel guides into account, this paper highlights concepts of travel in the mid-nineteenth century that may help us answer two questions. First of all, on a theoretical level, it considers how to relate novels (the domain of literary studies) to travel guides (an object of interest in tourism studies); second, this paper identifies the kind of travel-guide-induced tourist behaviour that was criticised by novelists and what literary imagery they chose to mock mass tourism.

According to the two novels we have studied – *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden* [Travel Encounters of Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and His Friends] (1841) and *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam in 't voorjaar van 1843* [A Council Tax Assessor from Drenthe and his Two Nephews Travelling to Amsterdam in the Spring of 1843] (1845, 1853) – the contrast between the upper class and upper-middle class traveller and the lower- and middle-middle class tourist had become a common literary stereotype as early as the 1840s, representing different forms of travel.<sup>1</sup> This assertion may seem at odds with what Anna Geurts has concluded from her analysis of travel accounts dating from the nineteenth century that have been collected in a database.<sup>2</sup> She argues that in the travelogues that she studied there is little evidence of travel being modernised (i.e. developing into mass tourism) in the 1800s. But the early mass tourist was probably not wont to write down his travel experiences. Nineteenth-century literary novels not only hint at the existence of the modern tourist, but actually may have influenced tourist behaviour and the shape of travelogues. Tim Youngs points out the importance of Romanticism for the depiction of modern travel and for travel writing – and, one would like to add, for travel guides, the booklets that shaped modern travel and travelogues. Travel guides both induced and restricted the Romantic traveller’s yearning for uniqueness when visiting foreign countries: hence the sense of ‘belatedness’ felt by nineteenth-century travellers.<sup>3</sup> Our two novels are set in a world in which travel was dominated by travel guides and the autonomous traveller was lost in the masses of middle-class tourists.

Although mass tourism as we know it today<sup>4</sup> is supposed to have developed no earlier than the end of the nineteenth century, the novels studied here are not the only ones to show that the phenomenon had already been noted quite a bit earlier. Johannes Kneppelhout and J.P. Hasebroek wrote about the ‘touristification’ of Switzerland, where small cannons were fired to

<sup>1</sup> Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 55, citing and commenting on James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to ‘Culture’ 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Anna P.H. Geurts, ‘Reizen en schrijven door Noord-Nederlanders: een overzicht’, *De negentiende eeuw* 37 (2013), 4, 264-88.

<sup>3</sup> Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Krystian Woznicki, *Abschalten: Paradiesproduktion, Massentourismus und Globalisierung* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2008).

induce an avalanche and coloured screens were set up that gave tourists a view of the mountains tinted blue, yellow or red.<sup>5</sup> Kneppelhout asks himself whether he is nothing more than a cloud in the ‘torrential downpour of tourists that descends on the waters of the Rhine every summer’.<sup>6</sup> Carel Vosmaer commiserates with travellers who return home ‘with a head as empty as it was when they embarked on their journey, except for a few cubby-holes filled with information retained from the Guide.’<sup>7</sup>

The present paper shows how – according to nineteenth-century novelists – contemporary travel guides (like Ébel’s *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse*,<sup>8</sup> Delkeskamp’s *Panorama of the Rhine*,<sup>9</sup> Tombleson, Schreiber and Osswald<sup>10</sup>) helped to shape tourist behaviour. Novels, however, competed with travel guides in that respect: they provided factual tourist information and descriptions of cities and landscapes that would not have been out of place in a travel guide. The two genres were in fact intertwined. In his master’s thesis on *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud*,<sup>11</sup> Ton van de Wijngaard has compared Gewin’s novel with John

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<sup>5</sup> J. Kneppelhout, ‘In den vreemde’ (1839), in *Geschriften van J. Kneppelhout. Zevende deel. Reisverhalen* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1862), p. 35 (‘voor een footje wordt op de hemelhooze bergen een kanonnetje gelost, ten einde avalanchetjes los te maken’); J.P. Hasebroek, *Op de Bergen. Herinneringen en indrukken van eenen reiziger door Noordelijk Italië en Zwitserland*. II (Amsterdam: H. Höveker, 1862), p. 188.

<sup>6</sup> Kneppelhout, ‘In den vreemde’, p. 59: ‘[...] [A]ls ik mij nu afvraag: welk voordeel brengt u uwe reis door Zwitserland aan? rijst mij dikwerf een schaamroode bloes op het aangezicht. Onder welke soort van reizigers moet ik mijzelf rangschikken, met wie hunner gelijkstellen, en ben ik niet een wolkje dier ontzaggelijke bui van touristen, welke iederen zomer losbarst over de wateren des Rijns, een gedeeltetje van dat in beweging gebrachte niets-doen, dat niets anders vindt dan mooi en leelijk, en tegen het korten der dagen, ziel-onder-den-armachtig naar huis gestoomd, den pels voor den dag haalt, reikhalst naar de nieuwe wintermodes en zich in een baltoilet pavaneert tot eene andere lente aanbreekt?’ ([...] [W]hen I ask myself of what benefit was my trip around Switzerland, then I oftentimes feel a blush of shame rise to my cheeks. Among what type of traveller must I class myself, with whom do I compare, and was I not a mere cloud in the torrential downpour of tourists that descends on the waters of the Rhine every summer, a tiny particle of do-nothingness set in motion, incapable of any opinion beyond finding something beautiful or ugly; one who, with the days growing shorter, aimlessly steamed back home, got the furs out of storage, hankered after the latest fashions and paraded around in ballroom finery until the arrival of another spring?)

<sup>7</sup> C. Vosmaer, ‘Wandelingen door de wereld, I’, in *Vogels van diverse pluimage*, tweede deel (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1872), p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> The second edition – the first to bear this title – of the French translation of this classic travel guide dates from 1805 (Zurich: Orell, Füssli & Cie). Numerous reprints were published in the course of the nineteenth century. In this article we refer to the 1826 edition.

<sup>9</sup> F.W. Delkeskamp, *Panorama des Rheins und seiner nächsten Umgebungen von Mainz bis Cöln* (Frankfurt a.M.: Friedrich Wilmans, 1825). This travel guide is mentioned on p. 120 of *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden*.

<sup>10</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 161; W.G. Fearnside (ed.), *Tombleson’s Views of the Rhine* (London: Tombleson, 1832); A.W. Schreiber, *Handbuch für Reisende am Rhein von Schafhausen bis Holland, in die schönsten anliegenden Gegenden und an die dortigen Heilquellen. Anleitung auf die nützlichste und genussvollste Art, den Rhein von Schafhausen bis Holland ... zu bereichen*. 3. Auflage (Heidelberg: Engelmann, 1832). ‘Oßwald’ (if meant as the name of the publisher) possibly refers to this travel guide: Johann Metzger, *Beschreibung des Heidelberger Schlosses und Gartens* (Heidelberg: Oßwald, 1829). The group actually visits the castle at Heidelberg.

<sup>11</sup> H.H.A. van de Wijngaard, *Bernard Gewin (1812-1873), auteur en predikant* (unpublished master’s thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1982), p. 67.

Murray's *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* (2nd edition, 1838),<sup>12</sup> noting a striking similarity between the itineraries in the two. Moreover, Polsbroekerwoud and his fellow travellers visited all the places of interest recommended by Murray's guide. A travel guide thus served as the blueprint for the novel.

## Two 'Romantic Travel Novels'

Bernard Gewin (1812-1873)<sup>13</sup> – whose pen name was *Vlerk* [Scoundrel] – drew on a number of typically Romantic humorous treatments, such as those described by Elisabeth Jongejan in *De Humor-'Cultus' der Romantiek in Nederland* (1933), when he wrote *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden* (1841).<sup>14</sup> It is a novel about a trip along the Rhine by five young Dutchmen who, at *tables d'hôte* and places of interest en route, run into compatriots who are trying their best to get away from it all, but at the same time resent other tourists as well as anything that is recognised as typically German. As a satirical literary portrait of tourism, Gewin's novel offers an interesting comparison with another travel tale in literary form, *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam, in 't voorjaar van 1843* (1845), written by Dubbeld Hemsing van der Scheer (1791-1859), Harm Boom (1810-1885) and Alexander Lodewijk Lesturgeon (1815-1878).<sup>15</sup> The comparison is supported by the unadventurous journeys of both novels: though Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and his fellow travellers venture along the Rhine as far as Switzerland, it becomes quite clear that they are following in the footsteps of many precursors. Uncle Berend and his two nephews never leave Holland, but their journey to Amsterdam is just as exciting to them as the trip to Switzerland is to Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and his friends. The tourists in *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam* leave their familiar provincial environment to venture into distant and dangerous Amsterdam, for entertainment and to see more of the world. By depicting diverse motives for making a journey and different forms of travel, the novels explicitly discuss the normative concepts that travel guides implied.

Both books can be described as 'romantic travel novels' ['der romantische Reiseroman'], a genre that, according to Hendrik Schott in his dissertation *Niederländische Reiseliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, lacked a clear structure. These patchwork books comprised travel stories,

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<sup>12</sup> *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent, Being a Guide through Holland, Belgium, Prussia and Northern Germany and along the Rhine, from Holland to Switzerland*. Second edition, augmented and carefully revised (London: Murray, 1838; 1st edition 1836).

<sup>13</sup> Gewin belonged to the group of Leiden 'student authors' known as 'De Romantische Club' who flirted with Romanticism in the 1830s; see: Peter van Zonneveld, *De Romantische Club. Leidse student-auteurs 1830-1840* (Leiden: Athenae Batavae, 1993), p. 81. Gewin studied theology and became a minister.

<sup>14</sup> See Fieke de Hartog, 'Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden*', in *De leeslijst. 222 werken uit de Nederlandstalige literatuur*, ed. by Nina Geerdink, Jos Joosten and Johan Oosterman (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2015), pp. 184-85.

<sup>15</sup> Lesturgeon was a poet and a minister in Drenthe; his cooperation with Van der Scheer (a publisher) and Boom (a journalist) had previously resulted in *Drenthe in vlugtige en losse omtrekken geschetst, door drie podagrasten* [Miscellaneous Volatile Sketches of Drenthe Outlined by Three Podagra Patients] (Koevorden: D.H. van der Scheer, 1843-1844), a travel book featuring one of the least-known provinces of the Netherlands.

poetry, translations, etc.<sup>16</sup> In our two novels, we also find ‘scientific information’ concerning the history or geography of touristic destinations, perhaps linking them to the nineteenth-century travelogues identified by Tim Youngs, which provided ‘a combination of ethnographic, geographical and other scientific information with personal travel narrative’.<sup>17</sup> Schott’s concern is primarily with fiction, while Youngs focuses mainly on non-fictional travelogues. In fact, some books – like the two we are dealing with – may belong to both categories.

## Literature, Reality and Normative Statements

To access views on tourism implicitly expressed in these novels, we focus on (1) the traveller, (2) the act of travelling and (3) the tourist destination. To reveal the value judgements underpinning the characters’ appearance, behaviour and personalities, we have made use of the normative analysis presented by Vincent Jouve.<sup>18</sup> When applied to our two novels, it reveals that we must pay closer attention to the normative nature of the narrator’s commentary and to the characters’ statements and behaviour. Because normative statements in these novels are sometimes steeped in irony, we turned to ‘Clues to Irony’, in Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974). Some of these ‘clues’ (‘Known Error Proclaimed’, ‘Clashes of Style’, ‘Conflicts of Belief’) correspond to Jongejan’s Romantic humorous treatments.

This study is consistent with a discourse analysis approach to literature. Dominique Maingueneau, the author of *Le contexte de l’œuvre littéraire* (1993), regards literature as a form of communication: it not only ‘mirrors’ reality in one way or another, but also helps give it shape. Our concept of mass tourism as a societal ‘evil’ has been formed in part by its depiction in literature – an insight that concurs with Maingueneau’s view of the relationship between reality and literature.

A stereotypical and ironic representation of reality was the main feature of genre realism, which dominated Romantic prose in the 1840s and 1850s. Genre realism can be defined as the first, primitive stage of realism. It is characterised by detailed descriptions of the lives and opinions of ordinary, middle-class people – descriptions that can be either humorous or contemplative.<sup>19</sup> Though Dickens’s novels fall largely under the realism heading, his caricatural portrayal of typical representatives of the human species bears a striking resemblance to genre realism. As a matter of fact, Gewin’s novel imitates *The Pickwick Papers*.<sup>20</sup> The best-known Dutch example of genre realism is *Camera Obscura* (1839) by Nicolaas Beets; the Stastok family in that book resembles the characters in the novels we are studying here. We may not find an actual depiction of the early days of mass tourism in these novels, but the ironic

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<sup>16</sup> Hendrik Schott, *Niederländische Reiseliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts: Geschichte, Umfeld und Vielfalt einer Literaturgattung* (inaugural dissertation, University of Cologne, 1990), p. 160: ‘Der romantische Roman hat häufig keine klar gegliederte Struktur. Stil und Thema verbinden die einzelnen, oft nur lose miteinander in Beziehung gesetzten Teile (Reiseerzählungen, Gedichte, Übersetzungen etc.) des Gesamtwerkes.’

<sup>17</sup> Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Vincent Jouve, *Poétique des valeurs* (Paris: PUF, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> W. van den Berg en P. Couttenier, *Alles is taal geworden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1800-1900* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009), p. 246.

<sup>20</sup> Dick Welsink, ‘Bernard Gewin en Charles Dickens’, *Dutch Dickensian* 13 (Dec. 1991), 22, 57-60.

description of the ‘typical tourist’ provides us with a reflection – albeit distorted – of how the mass tourist behaved and what kind of behaviour the self-conscious, independent traveller should avoid.

*Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden* relates the adventures of a group of five friends in their twenties and thirties who embark on a journey from Rotterdam to Switzerland. By 1841, a trip along the Rhine was far from adventurous and had become a favourite outing for the middle classes.<sup>21</sup> In 1850, William Thackeray (writing under the pseudonym Mr M.A. Titmarsh) published *The Kicklebury's on the Rhine*, a book similar to Gewin's novel, in which English tourists were ridiculed.<sup>22</sup> Typical representatives of these tourists, many of whom were journeying outside of Holland for the first time, cross the path of Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and his friends, who are inexperienced travellers themselves.

The journey from Drenthe to Amsterdam undertaken by two young brothers and their uncle, municipal assessor Berend, is hilarious from the outset, as the provincial clodhoppers have never before left their native village and its immediate surroundings. Even Hardenberg and Ommen, two small, bucolic provincial towns not far from home, overwhelm them completely, leaving deep and disturbing impressions of what they perceive as modern city life. From the island of Urk they cross the Zuiderzee to arrive in Amsterdam, where they plunge into the metropolitan buzz. The story of their journey alternates with long, somewhat dreary expositions on the places of interest they visit – expositions clearly meant to instruct readers about various parts of their own country. This tourist information seems to come from one of the two young boys, although the knowledge exhibited in these fragments is at odds with the nephews' ignorance in the narrative sections.

## Travellers

In genre realism, reality is observed at arm's length and commented on ironically. As we evaluate the narrator's point of view in our two novels, we must be careful not to take his observations at face value. They need to be deconstructed, with disbelief in his assertions suspended and with a growing conviction, based on several textual clues, that his upper-class world view is diametrically opposed to that of his middle-class characters. Our two novels subject mass tourism to mild ridicule, along with the vain, awkward, swaggering traveller who thinks he is indistinguishable from the local population. The superior, amused tone that the narrator adopts when commenting on his characters' behaviour leaves no doubt about his social status.

How do the somewhat caricature-like tourists in these novels gaze at the places they visit? Do they in fact behave like ‘typical’ tourists? What frame of reference do they use to adjust to the wonders of their destinations, and in what way does the experience of crossing the

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<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Josef Dollhoff, *Die Kölner Rheinschiffahrt. Von der Römerzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Köln: Bachem, 1980). On the rise of tourism: Susanne Müller, *Die Welt des Baedeker. Eine Medienkulturgeschichte des Reiseführers 1830-1945* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2012), Chapter 3, ‘Am Vorabend des Tourismus’, pp. 61-92; on Rhine tourism: pp. 80-4.

<sup>22</sup> See Gertrude Cegl-Kaufmann and Antje Johanning, *Mythos Rhein. Zur Kulturgeschichte eines Stromes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), pp. 108-32 (‘Die Grand Tour als ästhetische Eroberung des Rheins. Von der Seelenlandschaft zur Bilderfabrik’, pp. 119-23).

boundaries of space affect them? John Urry's analysis of the 'tourist gaze' offers useful pointers for interpreting the tourist attitudes of the characters in our two novels.<sup>23</sup> Urry suggests that that gaze is 'highly mediated and *performed* through circulating representations and architectural theming':<sup>24</sup> tourists marvel at what they expect to see. The different kinds of gaze he lists are grounded in and legitimised by various discourses and practices. The tourist's expectations are roused by what he has read, what he has heard and what he has dreamt. Urry distinguishes the *romantic gaze*, which reflects 'solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze', from the *collective tourist gaze*, which involves conviviality.<sup>25</sup> Which gaze is predominant for the characters in our two novels?

### *A Preconditioned and Social Gaze*

*Joachim Polsbroekerwoud* makes several references to tourist guides. One is especially striking: Ébel's *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse*. Ébel's manual not only provides the tourist with information about mountain tours but also includes practical tips, of a somewhat redundant nature. These tips help the traveller with the kind of painstaking preparations Polsbroekerwoud himself felt compelled to make. For instance, once he is in Switzerland, he feels sorry that he has forgotten to pack a scrap of green silk, which, according to Ébel, would have been very comforting for the eyes there.<sup>26</sup> In *Manuel du voyageur*, one reads that this *crêpe vert* served as sunglasses.

The novel shows little sympathy for travellers who cling to their tourist guides. The narrator mocks tourists who take scant notice of the environment because they are constantly comparing what they see to what they read in their guides: "They don't seem to trust their own impressions of the surrounding landscape and are cautious to utter their opinions only after they have read in their books: "*environs pittoresques*" or "*entzückend schöne Gegend*".<sup>27</sup> Usually they do not hesitate to bore their fellow travellers with all kinds of petty historical facts. And as if all this weren't bad enough, they hire a loquacious guide as soon as they have checked into their lodgings, to complement the silent guide carried in their pocket.<sup>28</sup> This person drags them along to churches, libraries, palaces, anatomical theatres, city halls, cemeteries, arsenals, factories,

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<sup>23</sup> John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, p. 206.

<sup>25</sup> Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> We cite from the second edition of the novel: Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden* (Arnhem-Nijmegen: Gebrs. E. & M. Cohen, 1902), p. 213. J.G. Ébel, *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse, ouvrage à l'aide duquel l'étranger curieux recueillera facilement le fruit et les jouissances que ce pays promet*. Nouvelle édition (Paris: Hyacinthe Langlois père, 1826): 'Instruction pour les voyageurs', p. XLIV: 'Munissez-vous d'un morceau de crêpe noir ou vert pour en couvrir vos yeux lorsque vous aurez plusieurs lieues de suite à faire sur la neige. La répercussion des rayons du soleil réfléchis par la neige, fatigue excessivement la vue et cause même quelquefois des douleurs cuisantes au visage, à la suite d'une longue marche dans les glaciers et sur les neiges. On peut calmer ces douleurs en se lavant avec de l'eau, dans laquelle on a étendu un peu d'alcali volatil.'

<sup>27</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 82: 'Zij schijnen hun eigen gevoel niet genoeg te vertrouwen, om de hen omringende landstreek mooi te vinden, en wachten zich dus wel, hieromtrent iets in het midden te brengen, voordat zij in hun boek zien aangeteekend: "*environs pittoresques*" of "*entzückend schöne Gegend*".'

<sup>28</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 84.

orphanages, old men's homes, madhouses, barracks and prisons. Completely exhausted, they envy the reclining stuffed animals in museums of natural history and stare with yearning eyes at the chairs in paintings of interior scenes in the galleries they are forced to visit. These tourists, used to an everyday leisurely life, work themselves to death on vacation. They willingly endure this self-punishment to impress those who stayed at home.

The narrator reassures the reader that Polsbroekerwoud and his friends are not this kind of tourist. This reassurance is followed by a hilarious paradox: the narrator tells us that his characters' ignorance of travel guides relieves him of the obligation of checking Joachim's historical information about the city of Aachen because this character does not in fact provide any such information. And so it was that not one of the company was aware that Ptolemy was the first to mention the city, which he called *Veterra* and the Romans renamed *Aquisgranum*. Nor did Polsbroekerwoud and his friends know that the Normans destroyed the city in 822 and that it was rebuilt by Henry I, etc. Evidently, this digression is to be understood as a parody of the travel guide genre.<sup>29</sup> Curiously enough, other similar digressions lack this parodic meaning; they are provided by the characters as well as by the narrator.<sup>30</sup>

'Travel-guided' tourists of inferior quality unavoidably cross the path of Polsbroekerwoud and his friends. Today's *Lonely Planet* guides give readers the top ten highlights that they mustn't miss: evidently, nineteenth-century tourist guides were just as insistent. An English tourist who visits Heidelberg Castle in the company of Polsbroekerwoud and his friends impatiently keeps repeating that he wants to see 'the tun' so that he can check off this 'curious object of interest' in his tourist guide. Once he has spotted the famous tun he is satisfied and departs immediately. His curiosity is ridiculed by Polsbroekerwoud and his friends, who can only laugh at being interested in a tun that can hold as much as 236,000 bottles of wine.<sup>31</sup>

Tourists were clearly not allowed to pass through certain regions without paying their respects to designated places of interest. As early as in the 1840s, there were written and unwritten rules (in travel guides and social conversation) as to what should be visited and what could be skipped, especially for well-known tourist destinations. Now as then, it is disappointing to return from a trip saturated with impressions and stories to share with those left behind, only to hear that you have clearly missed the highlights. Fear of similarly missing out can be detected in Polsbroekerwoud and his friends. When rain forces them to travel through the famous Bergstrasse region between Frankfurt and Heidelberg in a closed cab, Torteltak comments: 'It's a shame we didn't see anything of it, especially because we will be

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<sup>29</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 84: 'Gelukkig behoorden Polsbroekerwoud en zijne vrienden niet tot die soort van reizigers. Zij besparen ons dus de moeite om hunne berigten met die van geaccrediteerde *Guides* te vergelijken. Niet één hunner liet er zich aan gelegen liggen, toen zij Aken binnenreden, dat Ptolomaeus reeds van die stad, onder den naam van *Veterra*, melding maakt, dat de Romeinen ze *Aquisgranum* noemden, dat de Duitschers vroeger *Aach* en nu *Aachen* zeggen, en de Hollanders *Aken*. Zij lieten er zich minder meê in, dat Hendrik I de stad, door de Noormannen in 822 verwoest, weêr opbouwde ....'

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 179, 201 (narrator), p. 180 (Van Aartheim), p. 246 (a Swiss guide).

<sup>31</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp. 183-84.

told, when we get home, that we haven't seen anything at all if we didn't get the opportunity to enjoy it in fine weather.<sup>32</sup>

Not only rain spoils tourist attractions, sleep can also rob our friends of unique experiences:

Most of our friends slept their way through the beautiful scenery between Ohlsbach and Donaueschingen. That was a pity, but comfort was found in thinking one couldn't see everything on the road. They only hoped they would not meet any travellers, on their way back home, who had become experts on trips to the Black Forest and would comment on their ignorance by stating they might as well have stayed home.<sup>33</sup>

If one were to decide whether Polsbroekerwoud and his friends are preoccupied by a romantic or a collective tourist gaze, the conclusion might be that the places of interest they visit are often too crowded for a romantic gaze and that the conviviality of the collective tourist gaze is experienced when back home, while evaluating the itinerary and its highlights, missed or otherwise. The same goes for Uncle Berend and his nephews: they do not seek solitude, but stories to be told back home.

### *Enjoying the Strangeness*

In *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam*, Uncle Berend and his nephews not only visit the highlights recommended by experts, but indulge in everyday Amsterdam life. They want to experience the wonderful uniqueness of what everyone in Amsterdam takes for granted. This approach to enjoying everyday life in a foreign environment can be described as a kind of appropriation by imitation. Arguing 'I am in Amsterdam now, I don't want to eat everyday food', Uncle Berend orders several curious dishes in a restaurant, in an astounding order: 'Gerstesoep en gestoofde paardebloemen en geforceerde uijen en geforceerde snoek en oliekrabben en pekervleesch' [barley soup, steamed dandelions, stuffed onions and stuffed pike, fried dough and salted meat].<sup>34</sup> Fortified by this menu, he visits the fashionable hairdresser Ferminet, who runs a 'salle pour la coupe des cheveux' in Kalverstraat, for a flashy haircut that is spoiled dramatically the next night by his sweaty night cap.<sup>35</sup>

He also has his measurements taken for what he considers to be a fashionable, typical Amsterdam outfit: a wide-brimmed hat and a pair of rubberised trousers neatly tightened by trouser-straps. These clothes are not weatherproof however: the rain soaks the brim off his hat

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<sup>32</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 153: "Het is jammer van de *Bergstrasse*," zei Torteltak, "en wel het meest daarom, omdat wij bij onzen retour zullen moeten hooren, dat als wij die niet bij mooi weêr gezien hebben, wij dan niets hebben gezien."

<sup>33</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 210: 'Het schoone gedeelte van Ohlsbach tot Donauëschingen werd door de meeste onzer vrienden slapende doorreisid. Het was jammer; maar men troostte zich met het denkbeeld, dat men niet alles kan zien, en hoopte maar, bij den retour in Holland, geene reizigers te zullen aantreffen, die, hun *fort* gemaakt hebbende van de Schwartzwalddreis, zouden zeggen, dat het nu voor hen net zoo goed was, alsof zij geheel waren te huis gebleven.'

<sup>34</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, pp.124-25, 136.

and the straps under his shoes snap when his trousers shrink. Fighting his hat and a trouser leg that is riding up, he becomes acquainted with yet another typical Amsterdam phenomenon: public laughter and ridicule. All this mimicry costs heaps of money, as he writes home in a letter: ‘Wi geeft den heelen dag geld oet, van dat d’oogen lös tot dat ze weer toe goat’ [We spend money all day long, from the moment we open our eyes till we close them again].<sup>36</sup>

### *The Panoramic View*

From the tower of the Felix Meritis observatory (Uncle Berend expresses his appreciation for the building by observing that ‘this mister Felix has a fine home that is wonderfully furnished’), the three travellers from Drenthe look down on the city and its surroundings. Peering into the distance, they imagine they can see the Zuiderzee and think they can even catch a glimpse of their home base Drenthe. Their hearts are filled with homesickness: in this mood, they prefer the high moral standards of Drenthe over Amsterdam’s materialism. Addressing successively Drenthe and Amsterdam, the narrator (‘we’) states:

Are we the only ones at this moment whose eyes are filled with tears and whose hearts are lifted, because in the midst of worldly abundance and wealth we still can and may think of your sober bleakness and your harshly treated regions? How the splendour of the metropolis diminishes at these thoughts! Eventually it is other things more precious than material treasures to which the heart clings more closely than the ivy to the oak! Poor Amsterdam, you can satiate us ad nauseam with the finest of life’s delights, you can refine your joys day by day and present them in ever more attractive attire, but you are unable to give us the one thing that only frugal, poor Drenthe can furnish.<sup>37</sup>

The moral aspect of the comparison induced by the panoramic view emerges in yet another moment of homesickness, when our friends feel repelled by the nightly *gallopade* performed by smart young women at Frascati’s, who dance on stage between mock trees and paper flowers. In Amsterdam there is only masked deceit; Drenthe has real, authentic nature to offer:

Come to us – our pleasures are not the fruits of the imagination, we don’t pay for them by shaming ourselves to admit that we were deceived and enthralled by the talent of artful genius. She who gives us these pleasures, does so by generous, inexhaustible fullness, she hasn’t paid for it by her night’s rest, or by sweat, exertion or fatigue. ... Sit down with us under the lime tree, planted by our ancestors, and tell us, you noble citizen of Amsterdam, whether your artificial waters can compete with the scent of its

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<sup>36</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, p. 126.

<sup>37</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, p. 226: ‘Zijn wij de éénigen, die op dit oogenblik ’t oog vochtig en ’t hart ontroerd gevoelen, omdat wij te midden van wereldschen overvloed en rijkdom nog kunnen en mogen denken aan de sobere schraalheid en ’t stiefmoederlijke uwer oorden? Hoe verkwijnt bij dergelijke gedachten de luister der wereldstad! Er is dan toch op aarde nog iets anders dan stoffelijke schatten, waaraan zich ’t hart vasthecht met onverbreekelijker banden, dan ’t klimop om den eik! *Arm Amsterdam*, dat ons tot walgens toe kunt verzadigen met het volop der levensgeneuchten, dat uwe genietingen dagelijks meer verfijnt en in behagelijker vorm ons aanbiedt, maar ons het éénige niet vermoogt te schenken, wat alleen het schrale en armoedige *Drenthe* in zich bergt!’

blossoms. Poor *Amsterdam!* with all your wealth – within your wide canals you can only appreciate nature by imitation, by imposture, by deceit!<sup>38</sup>

### *The Playful View*

These serious musings are rather odd however. Most of the time, our three travellers are simply enjoying themselves, enjoying the game of tourism. They participate willingly in the various public amusements they come across, be it a fair, a cyclorama or a puppet theatre.<sup>39</sup> In Broek in Waterland, they visit a country estate and its surrounding gardens. Entering a garden house, they marvel at what at first glance looks like a man holding a reel [‘met een haspel op de knieën’], a woman at a spinning wheel and a dog under a table. Only when these begin to move after the guide pushes a button do the travellers realise that they are mechanical puppets. The dog is broken, however, and cannot bark.<sup>40</sup> Even a public execution at the Nieuwmarkt is not shunned (‘*Dao mowwe hen*’ [That’s where we’ve gotta go! – , Uncle Berend exclaimed enthralled.]).<sup>41</sup>

A visit to the Salon des Variétés in the Nes is as inevitable as attending a theatrical performance at the Leidseplein theatre.<sup>42</sup> An appraisal of the evening spent at the Salon des Variétés ends, however, in a discussion of the value of public entertainment for the middle classes. The vaudeville performances there are vulgar and unnatural, but if you see the Salon as a coffee house for the working classes, all objections disappear. A complaint about the decay of the national theatre, the outcome of a visit to the Leidseplein theatre, recalls the theatre reviews by E.J. Potgieter in *De Gids* in 1850.<sup>43</sup> The lamentable state of Dutch theatre around 1835 was criticised not only by *De Gids* but by other periodicals as well. The narrator’s reflections concerning social or cultural questions beyond the fictional world give the novel a certain ambiguity and invite readers to distance themselves from uncritical tourist fun.

Polsbroekerwoud and his friends sample the somewhat erotic atmosphere at the Amalienbad spa in Langenbrücken (between Heidelberg and Karlsruhe). The lascivious entertainment offered there is frowned upon by the narrator, who sarcastically comments on

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<sup>38</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, pp. 99-100: ‘Komt tot ons, – ons genot is geen vrucht van verbeelding; wij betalen ’t niet met de schaamte voor ons-zelve, dat wij misleid en begoocheld werden door ’t talent van een kunstvaardig vernuft, – en ook haar, die ’t ons verleent uit vrijgevege en nooit geledigde volheid, ook haar heeft het nachtrust noch zweetdruppelen, inspanning noch vermoeijing gekost. ... Plaats u met ons onder de linde, door onzer vaderen vaderen geplant, – en zeg gij dan, grootmagtig Amsterdammer, of uwe kunstwateren wedijveren mogen met de geuren van haren bloesem. Armoedig *Amsterdam!* bij al uw’ rijkdom, – gij, die in uw wijde wallen de natuur nog slechts door nabootsing, door misleiding, door begoocheling moogt genieten!’

<sup>39</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, pp. 174-77, 190-96.

<sup>40</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, pp. 180-90.

<sup>42</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, pp. 212-19.

<sup>43</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, pp. 329-46; E.J. Potgieter, ‘Hollandsche dramatische poëzij’, *De Gids* 14 (1850), II, 62-113; 168-230 (pp. 171-87).

the advantages of casting off one's old-fashioned morals.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, he tells us, Polsbroekerwoud and his friends had not enjoyed an education of such a liberal nature that they could appreciate the temptations of this 'innocent pleasure' and fled the spa only after a few hours.<sup>45</sup> To entertain visitors on Sundays, there was an Italian beauty ready to unveil her bosom and a French *danseuse* performing the most voluptuous movements.<sup>46</sup> In his book on the erotic aspects of travel, *Sultry Climates*, Ian Littlewood compares 'the fashion for visiting spa towns and, later, seaside resorts' with sunbathing later on in the twentieth century: each 'called medical evidence in its support'<sup>47</sup> – partly as justification for seeking sensual pleasure. Though our heroes are motivated by curiosity only, they notice very few sick persons among those visiting Amalienbad and quite a few 'beautiful eyes and gorgeous figures',<sup>48</sup> an observation that is quite in line with Littlewood's argument.

### *Posing as Impression Management*

The camera, John Urry argues, has made tourists highly aware of their physical and social performance at tourist sites. Our two novels date from the pre-photographic age, but they include scenes that convey pictorial images in words, scenes that the illustrators of both books chose to depict (a steel engraving by 'Hork' (J.W. Kaiser, 1813-1900), in *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud*, and a woodcut by R.J. van Arum (1812-1883), in *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor*). As tourists 'transform themselves into an image'<sup>49</sup> and become the (happy, social, healthy, sexy) impression they want to give when being photographed, the characters in our two novels are immortalised at a tourist location by making utter fools of themselves. Joachim Polsbroekerwoud succeeds in falling into a pond in the gardens of Schwetzingen Palace: his 'picture' was taken by the illustrator when he poses, soaking wet, before the mosque he was admiring while walking backwards. Uncle Berend is portrayed struggling with his snapped trouser strap and soaked hat brim in the streets of Amsterdam. Long before taking tourist snapshots became an essential part of travel, the phenomenon of staging oneself, 'posing as impression management',<sup>50</sup> was ridiculed in nineteenth-century novels.

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<sup>44</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 198: 'Gewis, het is nuttig, deel te nemen aan de genoegens, die eene badplaats aanbiedt. Haar invloed op de redelijke en zedelijke vorming van den mensch moet heilzaam zijn. Men leert die verouderde begrippen afleggen, dat het verkeerd is om zijne driften bot te vieren; men keert van daar terug, genezen van het vooroordeel, dat deugd alleen waarachtig genot geeft ....'

<sup>45</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 199: 'Het was ongelukkig voor onze vrienden, dat zij niet liberaal genoeg opgevoed en niet diep genoeg in den geest der wereld doorgedrongen waren, om zich terstond met vrijmoedigheid in de armen van dit schuldeloos genot te storten.'

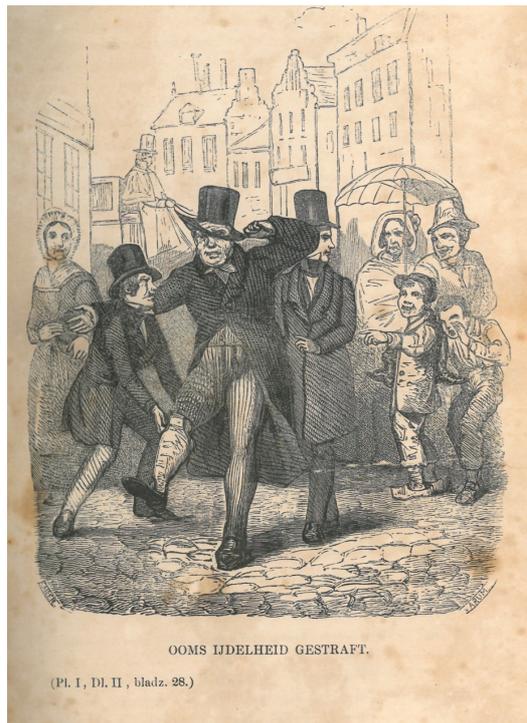
<sup>46</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 198: '[Men] had ... slechts tot den Sabbat te wachten ... waarop ..., om de verveling van den dag des Heeren te verdrijven, ... de Italiaansche schoone ook nog het gaas afrukt, dat haar den boezem bedekte, terwijl de Fransche danseuse hare weelderigste passen uitvoert, om zelfs de zuiverste verbeelding te bezoedelen ....'

<sup>47</sup> Ian Littlewood, *Sultry Climates. Travel and Sex since the Grand Tour* (London: John Murray, 2001), p. 197.

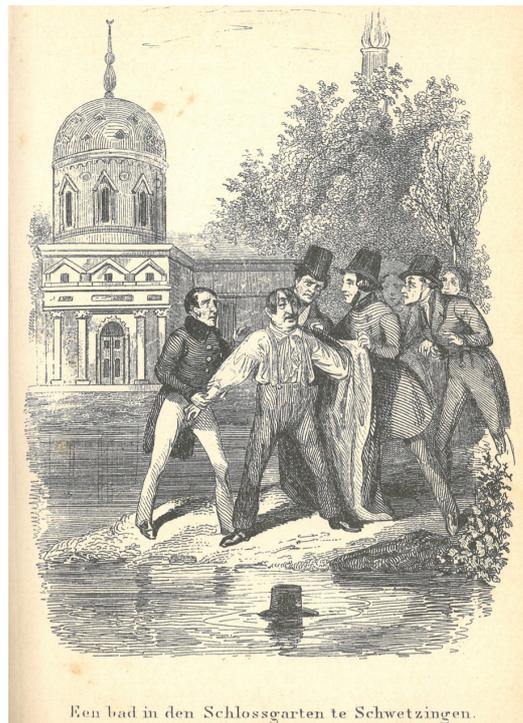
<sup>48</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 197: 'Torteltak [had opgemerkt] dat er een schat van mooie oogen en delicioese figuurtjes te vinden was.'

<sup>49</sup> Urry, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, pp. 208-15.

<sup>50</sup> Urry, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, p. 211.



Woodcut by R.J. van Arum, in *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor*: Uncle Berend struggling with his snapped trouser strap and soaked hat brim in the streets of Amsterdam



Steel engraving by 'Hork' (J.W. Kaiser), in *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud*: Joachim Polsbroekerwoud has fallen into a pond in the gardens of Schwetzingen Palace

## The Act of Travelling

How do the characters in our two novels experience their passage through space: is travelling part of the fun, is it unsettling, what social dimensions open up on the way to their destination? Do they recognise kindred spirits in their fellow tourists or are they considered to be one of the ordeals of travel?

Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and his friends find travelling itself almost as important as the sights they see. They try to make their journey as comfortable as possible and to enjoy the scenery while travelling. The narrator stresses the importance of this by telling the reader why a round-trip coach is preferable to a *diligence* or stagecoach. Although... the advantage of a round-trip coach is quite disputable: the horses are trotting so slowly that the passengers have all the time in the world to ponder the landscape, and because a full coach is too heavy for the horses to pull uphill, the passengers are able to enjoy a walk for a change.<sup>51</sup>

Sometimes the narrator pretends that tourists have a choice in the way they travel. That does not always apply to Joachim and his friends. When they travel by coach they are surrounded by people of their own social class in almost every situation, but when they are forced to board a steamship, both the sophistication of their fellow travellers and their comfort quickly drop to a level that is not considered acceptable. At first Joachim is looking forward to the boat trip to Coblenz because it is a hot day and there is no wind at all. But as soon as the friends go on board they see that the vessel is bursting with people. They cannot find a place to

<sup>51</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 186.

sit, so they are forced to stand next to the smoking chimney all the way. To make the trip even worse, there are not enough refreshments for all the passengers. As the journey continues, more passengers embark and their growing number makes the situation on board less and less comfortable. It is a great relief when most of their fellow travellers transfer to a passing ship. Even so, the journey does not get much better because they are forced to chat with some very annoying people for the rest of the trip.<sup>52</sup>

A steamship has room for a lot of passengers, so it is perfect for running into acquaintances or meeting new people. *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden* opens with a journey from Rotterdam to Nijmegen, and it is not completely coincidental that the friends meet a lot of people on the ship who – as their journey progresses – play a role in their adventures.<sup>53</sup> A boat, be it a steamship or a towboat [‘trekschuit’], is also a perfect narrative device for introducing and observing characters as they engage in tedious conversations meant to kill time [‘schuitempraatjes’]. Passengers are confronted with social situations that they could easily avoid on shore. Some people, the narrator assures us, are only fit to meet on board a steamship, in a carriage or in some other public place.<sup>54</sup>

The social aspect of travel is being threatened by modern forms of transport, such as the train between Amsterdam and Haarlem. The narrator in *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam* contradicts Uncle Berend’s strenuous objections to ‘the fiery salamander’ by arguing that the train represents the triumph of progress and modernity: ‘Progress – there is no alternative. Every step backwards, back to the past, to what is old, is a step that brings us closer to death and destruction.’<sup>55</sup> This position differs radically from that of a contemporary prose sketch by Nicolaas Beets (by the character Hildebrand) in *De Nederlanden. Karakterschetsen, kleederdragten, houding en voorkomen van verschillende standen* (1841) [The Netherlands. Character Sketches, Traditional Costumes, Attitude and Appearance of Different Classes], entitled *De veerman* [The Ferryman]. In this sketch, a ferryman ridicules modern forms of transport. He frightens a female passenger by telling her about a future subterranean network of tubes through which passengers will be blown from one city to the other. Before you are allowed to descend into the tube, you will have to have yourself weighed, to determine the proper amount of air pressure. This prospect appears to terrify the woman even more than the loneliness of a journey through a pitch-dark tunnel.<sup>56</sup>

### *On the Road: Observing Fellow Travellers*

It was undoubtedly Laurence Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* that inspired Nicolaas Beets’ famous description in *Camera Obscura* of fellow travellers in Hildebrand’s coach, in the story ‘De familie Stastok’ (‘a pale lady who sighed sometimes, dozed off sometimes, took eau-de-

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<sup>52</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp. 118-30.

<sup>53</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp. 25-45.

<sup>54</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* I, p. 152: ‘Vooruitgang – niets anders is er mogelijk. Elke schrede achterwaarts, terug naar ’t verleden, naar ’t oude, is een schrede voorwaarts naar doodslaap en vernietiging.’

<sup>56</sup> *De Nederlanden. Karakterschetsen, kleederdragten, houding en voorkomen van verschillende standen* (The Hague: Kruseman, [1841]; photographic reprint 1970, no place, no editor), pp. 35-6.

cologne sometimes, slept sometimes and was ugly all the time').<sup>57</sup> Sterne's example is copied numerous times in our two novels. Observing fellow tourists and judging them to be equal or inferior is a favourite pastime for our travelling characters.

In his study *Bürgerliches Reisen im 19. Jahrhundert*, Philipp Prein points out that travel challenged middle-class tourists to define the boundaries of their own identity and of what they considered proper behaviour.<sup>58</sup> They did so by observing others more closely than they were used to doing, because first-class hotels, train carriages and other tourist facilities were open to anyone who could afford them – even those who did not belong to the upper classes. Prein distinguishes between a tourist gaze *nach oben* (to the higher classes), *zur Seite* (to those considered equals) and *nach unten* (peasants, beggars, servants). Once again, genre-realist irony offers revealing insights by subjecting lower-middle and middle-middle class tourists to social experiments. The social position of Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and his friends might be somewhat indiscriminate: they do not have professional occupations (yet), but their behaviour (e.g. on board the towboat), their clothing and gear point to a position in the middle-middle class. The travellers from Drenthe – peasants who are uneducated but not without means – behave like most people of humble origin when they meet others: they pretend to be gentlemen of standing. On the boat taking them home, a baron from Zwolle ignores their advances and even hides from them behind the chain that separates the first-class travellers from the others. The indignation of our friends from Drenthe is only tempered by their pity for a man who lives according to what they consider to be backward social prejudices.<sup>59</sup> In *Joachim Polsbroekerwoud*, the gaze *nach unten* concerns lower-class, often lamentable passengers, for example a poor woman in rags on the steamship to Nijmegen who had lost her husband and children; even Holstaff, who has a predilection for sorrow and pain, is genuinely touched by her story.<sup>60</sup> Nicolaas Beets' character *Keesje het diakenhuismannetje* from 'De familie Stastok' (in *Camera Obscura*) no doubt served as a model for this – somewhat unrealistic – encounter between the middle-class protagonists and their pitiable fellow travellers.<sup>61</sup>

The narrator usually gives readers an ironic wink when our characters turn their gaze *zur Seite*, to those considered their social equals. The lower middle-class tourists held up to ridicule are unable to keep up appearances because almost nothing escapes the piercing looks of fellow passengers en route. The Van der Kaas family from Delft encounter Joachim Polsbroekerwoud and his friends in Kleve. They are a caricature of a large, grubby family. The mother suffers under the heavy burden of caring for seven disobedient children. She is embarrassed by her offspring, whereas father considers them highly amusing and chooses not to get involved. When Polsbroekerwoud tries to calm one of the children with some friendly words, he is pelted with

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<sup>57</sup> Willem van den Berg, 'Tristram and Yorick op herhaling', *De Boekenwereld* 29 (2013), 4, 66-73 (pp. 72-3).

<sup>58</sup> Philipp Prein, *Bürgerliches Reisen im 19. Jahrhundert. Freizeit, Kommunikation und soziale Grenzen* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005), pp. 191-248.

<sup>59</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor II*, pp. 365-67.

<sup>60</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp 40-3.

<sup>61</sup> In *Camera Obscura* ('The Stastok Family'), the main character Hildebrand interviews a poor old servant (Keesje) whose meagre savings were taken from him by the directors of the old men's home where he lived. He had saved some money to buy his own shroud.

berries. Father ignores the incident and chuckles that his child is becoming a real little rascal.<sup>62</sup> Their eldest sprog, a sixteen-year-old boy, gets the most attention from his parents. He keeps on interrupting his father by exclaiming 'You're wrong again, daddy'. His impertinence is considered to be a mark of superior intelligence, whereas the genius' main occupation is to pinch his sisters under the table until they cry.<sup>63</sup>

## The Tourist Destination

The characters in Gewin's novel hardly ever speak about the tourist attractions they are visiting, except when they are overwhelmed by the scenery. They are primarily preoccupied with their own particular concerns. Polsbroekerwoud is constantly worrying about his belongings and the well-being of his friends, Torteltak is dreaming about girls, Holstaff is depressed by real or imaginary sorrows, De Morder never stops complaining and Veervlug either has a lively conversation or entertains an interesting thought. Because all the characters are preoccupied with themselves, there is no one left but the narrator to tell readers about the places of interest his characters are visiting. He feels obliged to recount the history of Aachen or to describe the beauties of the Black Forest.

Remarkably, the narrator obviously means to compete with tourist guides when his informative interruptions concern the quality of the available lodgings in the Black Forest (which are not as comfortable as those along the Rhine or in Switzerland), the facilities of the region (walking) and its places of interest (unspoilt nature, as yet beyond the reach of civilisation). Readers are told the two most obvious ways to explore the woods, the leisurely way and in a hurry, as if they are actually planning a trip to the Black Forest.<sup>64</sup> Literature is supposed to create tourist spaces unintentionally, as Mike Robinson argues:

What is there contained between the covers of a book that can induce, inspire, motivate and transform readers into tourists? In this sense, literature is accorded a quasi-promotional role. Though this is largely an unintentional function ..., literature can nevertheless present the reader with implicit and explicit representations of places as potential destinations ..., and thus influence, directly and indirectly, where tourists go and what they do.<sup>65</sup>

In our two books, fictional characters visit real tourist attractions and are guided by existing tourist guides, while the narrator encourages readers to follow in their footsteps by instructing them as if he himself were a tourist guide.

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<sup>62</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 70.

<sup>63</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 63.

<sup>64</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>65</sup> Mike Robinson, 'Between and Beyond the Pages: Literature-Tourism Relationships', in *Literature and Tourism*, ed. by Mike Robinson and Hans Christian Andersen (Andover, Hampshire: Cengage Learning, 2011), pp. 39-79 (p. 40.)

## Dark Tourism

It is only by accident that our tourists from Drenthe become acquainted with the darker sides of Amsterdam: the Jewish quarter and streets where prostitutes ply their trade. A description of ‘the grimy streets of the Jewish quarter, where the five continents are represented both by their inhabitants as well as their products’, is meant to be part of a comprehensive book, as yet to be written, entitled *Amsterdam as It Is and the Amsterdammers as They Are* [‘Amsterdam, zoo als het is, en de Amsterdammers, zoo als ze zijn’]. The narrator assures us that such a book would not resemble the infamous ‘mysteries’ – he is referring to *Les mystères de Paris* by Eugène Sue and its reproductions – ‘those disgusting miscreants of our sick age’.<sup>66</sup> Evidently, Sue’s novel and the mysteries of London, Berlin and Amsterdam, published in rapid succession, were considered to be powerful instruments of city branding. European capitals were no longer regarded as centres of civilisation but viewed with dismay: their maps had become a patchwork of no-go areas.

Fleeing in panic from a coffee house where Uncle Berend has torn the baize of a billiard table, the three companions get lost and end up in the Antoniesbreestraat, in the heart of the Jewish quarter.<sup>67</sup> Uncle Berend is horrified, but his nephews are delighted by this unforeseen opportunity to inspect the ‘Jodenhoek’, described as authentic Amsterdam, a quarter that is no less interesting to those who like to examine real life beyond the Heeren- or Keizersgracht canals, with all their wealth and luxury.<sup>68</sup> Their visit to the Jewish quarter qualifies as ‘dark tourism’: it is little short of a descent into hell. The sound and the fury are surpassed only by the stench in this chaotic mock society. This is represented by a huge display of second-hand clothes to which a volume could be devoted entitled *Mysteries* [‘verborgenheden’] *of a Junk Shop* – a clear reference to the Dutch translation of Sue’s famous novel *Verborgenheden van Parijs*.<sup>69</sup> The sight of piles of cast-offs reminds the narrator of a cemetery, where all social distinctions are ridiculed and erased. As carelessly as the gravedigger buries the corpses of the poor and the notable alike, so does the merchant pile elegant robes and military outfits next to fishermen’s underwear and prison clothes.<sup>70</sup> To avoid further harassment by pushy salesmen and shoeshine boys, Uncle Berend runs through the crowd with his eyes tight shut, guided by

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<sup>66</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, p. 24: ‘Zoolang onze lezende wereld nog smachtend uitziet naar een boek, welks titel kon luiden: *Amsterdam, zoo als het is, en de Amsterdammers, zoo als ze zijn*, zullen wij, zwaluwachtige wezens, ons niet wagen of vergrijpen aan de stoute onderneming, eene schets van het volksleven der befaamde hoofdstad te leveren. Wie zou ’t loochenen willen, dat dit een werk vol afwisseling zou kunnen zijn? ’t Spreekt van zelf, niet in den trant dier schandelijke verborgenheden, die walgelijke misgeboorten van onzen ziekelijken leeftijd; maar, gelijk buitenlandsche schrijvers ons in fiksche trekken het beeld van dit of dat volk hebben veraanschouwelijkt ...’

<sup>67</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, pp. 157-67.

<sup>68</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, pp. 158-59: ‘De zoogenaamde “Jodenhoek” is immers iets echt-Amsterdamsch, dat even zoo wel zijn interessante zijde heeft voor elk, die lust vindt in beschouwingen van ’t werkelijke leven, als de pracht en weelde, waarmeê de Heeren- en Keizersgrachten zijn uitgestoefed.’

<sup>69</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, p. 164: “verborgenheden van een oudekleeren-winkel”.

<sup>70</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, p. 164: ‘... onder de handen van den kleerkoop wordt alleronbarmhartigst met de standen der maatschappij gespeeld en wij hebben, behalve het kerkhof, nog nergens een plek op aarde ontmoet, waar de gelijkheid en de broederschap pikanter ten tooneele worden gevoerd, dan op de stoepen en voor de glasvensters in de *St. Anthony-Breestraat* te Amsterdam.’

his two nephews, who help him struggle against ‘elbows, feet, knees, backs and other body parts of roaring and buzzing Israel’.<sup>71</sup>

A trip to Broek in Waterland, a village some 12 kilometres from Amsterdam, offers quite the opposite experience: everything there is neat and clean. Nevertheless, the narrator feels obliged to criticise travel guides in which spick-and-span households are said to reflect the state of mind of the villagers: the place needs to be ‘rebranded’. ‘Once they have become widely known as a curious species, one can’t blame the inhabitants for refusing to appear in public before the numerous visiting strangers in order to prove how little they differ from other Dutchmen; once they have heard their cleanliness being ridiculed, one can’t blame them for refusing to open their doors to anyone who feels like checking out their neatness by inspecting their home with a magnifying glass.’<sup>72</sup>

### *Appropriation: Reducing the Overwhelming Reality to Everyday Proportions*

By imitating local behaviour, the traveller may try to distance himself from the narrow-minded mass tourist who only appreciates what is artificially prepared for him in order to accommodate his dislike of the extraordinary. The dispute as to what constitutes a genuine tourist attitude always involves adopting a certain stance towards one’s homeland culture: a chameleon-like admiration of foreign ways of life leads to the disapproval of nationalist self-esteem. On the other hand, those who bring their own potatoes with them on their travels probably mistrust anyone who does not speak their language and was born abroad.

Through the looking glass of fiction, *Joachim Polsbroekerwoud* shows that this distinction already existed in the 1840s. The Dufduin family – husband and wife, and the husband’s sister, a well-to-do group from Amsterdam<sup>73</sup> – are especially interested in the familiar. Mr Dufduin, richly endowed with money but bereft of any knowledge of the world, and a first-time traveller to boot,<sup>74</sup> compares every place of interest he visits with the attractions Amsterdam has to offer. His sister constantly tries foreign dishes merely to prove to herself that foreign food does not taste like the food she cooks at home. In July, new herring should be on the menu, and certainly not white cabbage, as served to her in Cologne. Even if the food is to her liking, it never tastes as sweet as it does back home: ‘But, fair enough, in Dusseldorf we enjoyed our meal, that is, as far as one can enjoy German cooking: because surely everyone will agree with me that Dutch cuisine is the best in the world’.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, p. 167: ‘Zóó dan zetten wij onze worsteling tegen de ellebogen, voeten, knieën, ruggen en verdere respectieve lichaamsdeelen van het joelend en gonzend *Israël* voort.’

<sup>72</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, p. 17: ‘Vooraf merken wij echter aan, dat het den inwoners, nu ze eenmaal den naam van vreemdsoortige menschenkinderen dragen, niet euvel is te duiden, als ze weigeren voor de talrijke vreemdelingen te paraderen, ten einde te bewijzen, hoe weinig ze van andere Nederlanders afwijken; als ze, hunne zindelijkheid tot in ’t bespottelijke afgeschilderd hoorende, niet de deur wijd open zetten, om elk wien ’t lust, te toonen, hoezeer ze door ’t vergrootglas bezien is ....’

<sup>73</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>74</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, pp. 99-100: ‘rijk aan wereldsch goed, maar niet aan wereldkennis’.

<sup>75</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 102: “Maar in Dusseldorp hebben wij waarlijk goed gegeten, altijd voor een Duitschen pot; want dat zal iedereen mij moeten toestemmen, dat de Hollandsche keuken boven alles gaat.”

Another example of a rather vulgar appreciation of a tourist highlight, in this case a famous painting, is given by Uncle Berend. While viewing *Banquet at the Crossbowmen's Guild* by Bartholomeus van der Helst in the Trippenhuis Building (the former Rijksmuseum), he points out which of his friends and relatives resemble the figures portrayed.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, the narrator patiently explains what questions would have been considered by a more sophisticated tourist: the history of the painting, its origin, the wealth exhibited in it or even the occasion for the luxurious banquet. Once again, ridicule is accompanied by instruction.

Typical petty bourgeois tourists like Dufduin are mocked for comparing their foreign destinations with home. But even more respectable travellers like Polsbroekerwoud and his friends search relentlessly for ways to master the ever-changing unknown and to adjust to the places they are staying and feel at home there. The narrator shows some sympathy for Polsbroekerwoud's adjustments when he ironically describes the 'joys' of entering the bric-à-brac lodgings prepared for the tourist:

After they had enjoyed that happy moment in their inn *Zum weissen Ross* that one usually savours when an unknown apartment in unknown lodgings is assigned to you: an apartment in which everything is present, except the things you immediately need, and where the friendly look of the hostess has to compensate for the unattractiveness of your apartment before the windows were opened wide and the sultry atmosphere vanished, before washing water and towels were brought in and the faded bedspread was changed for clean sheets – after they had survived these moments, our travellers began to freshen up and to prepare for the many pleasures they would enjoy that night.<sup>77</sup>

The respectable, self-conscious nineteenth-century tourist is very similar to today's traveller: he wants to feel at home wherever he goes, but demands luxury and comfort, especially when these are lacking due to the frugal or careless attitude of those who live off tourism. In the meantime he chuckles at less experienced fellow travellers, soon marked as mass tourists, who compare every aspect of their destination with home and life as they know it.

## Conclusion

The irony in our two novels functions as a tool to mock mass tourist behaviour and to get the reader thinking about a more independent, self-conscious attitude towards foreigners and foreign countries (or unknown parts of his own country). In *Reisontmoetingen van Joachim*

<sup>76</sup> *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor* II, pp. 297-98.

<sup>77</sup> Vlerk, *Reisontmoetingen*, p. 130: 'Na in het logement *zum Weissen Ross* dat gelukkige oogenblik genoten te hebben, dat men gewoonlijk smaakt, wanneer u vreemde kamers in een vreemd logement aangewezen worden, waar alles aanwezig is, behalve hetgeen waaraan men in die oogenblikken behoefte gevoelt, waar de vriendelijke blik van de *Gastgeberin* u het onvriendelijk aanzigt moet vergoeden, dat uwe apartementen hebben, voordat de ramen wijd opengeschoven zijn en de benaauwde lucht weggedreven is, voordat u waschwater en handdoeken zijn aangebragt, en de vale spreij op uw ledikant voor helder linnen heeft plaats gemaakt; na die oogenblikken doorleefd te hebben, begonnen onze reizigers zich een weinig te adoniseren en zich te bereiden om dien avond nog vele genoegens te smaken.'

*Polsbroekerwoud en zijne Vrienden* and *Een Drenthsch gemeente-assessor met zijne twee neven op reis naar Amsterdam*, travel is about exchanging petty bourgeois prejudices for a more autonomous view, about distinguishing a preconditioned gaze from a cosmopolitan world view acquired by reading, education and class feeling. By ridiculing typical mass tourist behaviour, the narrator shows readers how to be a proper traveller and tells them how to benefit as much as possible from their trip, as if he were a tourist guide. Sure enough, nineteenth-century middle-class people would not travel (or even read a book) if it weren't beneficial in one way or another.

While distancing themselves from popular tourist guides, the narrators in both novels provide ample historical information that would not be out of place in a tourist guide. As novels cannot deny the existence of travel guides, their implicit advice to readers/travellers is paradoxical in nature: the freedom of the independent traveller to embark on unbiased explorations and have original experiences is limited by the movements of the 'tourist-guided'. The sense of 'belatedness' Tim Youngs refers to can be detected in both narrators' paradoxical attitude.

Travel is about the way in which we view boundaries in everyday life and the mental attitude required to cross these boundaries. Studying travel literature should help us understand how writers think about boundaries, about themselves and what sets them apart from others, and about a reality that they recognise as extraordinary. Tourism studies should also call on literary sources: travel is a way of thinking about real and imagined worlds. Studying nineteenth-century genre-realistic travel novels can help us understand how value judgements associated with the crossing of geographic, social, intellectual and imaginary boundaries arose, were respected and then rejected – value judgements that were submitted for confirmation or rejection to *fictional* tourists and *actual* readers – who were *potential* tourists – in the past and in the present.

The value judgements contained in the two novels discussed in this paper are made more powerful and convincing by the ironic form in which they are presented. According to Booth, readers are made aware of the irony because of the contradiction between what is said or done (by a narrator or character) and what readers think they know about the subject. It then becomes impossible for them to cling to opinions and behaviours like those held up to mockery. The desire of readers/tourists to align their behaviour with what authoritative others (such as writers) consider acceptable and unacceptable is enormous, precisely when they venture, literally and figuratively, into strange territory.

**Translation: Paul Gretton**

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