



Dutch Crossing

Journal of Low Countries Studies

ISSN: 0309-6564 (Print) 1759-7854 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ydtc20>

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To cite this article: Coen van't Veer (2018): The Sea Voyage as a Marriage Snare: Gender in Novels about the Passage between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies (1869–1891), Dutch Crossing, DOI: [10.1080/03096564.2018.1512255](https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2018.1512255)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2018.1512255>



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Published online: 10 Sep 2018.



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The Sea Voyage as a Marriage Snare: Gender in Novels about the Passage between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies (1869–1891)

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ABSTRACT

Nineteenth century fiction about the sailing ships (around the Cape) that crossed the seas between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies between 1850 and 1890 are presented as micro colonies in the novels: a condensed version of colonial society. In the analyzed novels, women are represented as passengers who are finding their ways to exercise power in a colonial micro cosmos that is been dominated by white men.

KEYWORDS

postcolonial studies; gender; Dutch East Indies

Introduction

A remarkable image emerges from nineteenth century fiction about sea voyages.¹ The sailing ships (around the Cape) that crossed the seas between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies between 1850 and 1890 are presented as micro colonies in the novels: a condensed version of colonial society.² Practically, all sections of the colonial community are represented on board. This heterogeneous company is forced to live together for months in changeable weather conditions on a confined living space. The passengers are continuously confronted with each other's presence. They find themselves in a situation that has the effect of being inside a pressure cooker: differences stand out more clearly at sea than on land, because everything is magnified on board.³

According to postcolonial theoreticians, such as Edward Said, Elleke Boehmer and Barbara Bush, novels and short stories play a deciding role within colonial discourse.⁴ In those days, these novels were regarded as an important source for information about colonial life in the Indies. The ideological representations in this literature have formed a long-lasting discourse that has had a great impact on the way we perceive the Dutch Indies.⁵

An important aspect within colonial discourse is gender. An analysis of 18 novels about the passage by sailing ships from the Netherlands, via the Cape of Good Hope, to the Dutch East Indies and vice versa from the period between 1869 and 1891 shows that in these novels, without exception, the central position of power is occupied by the Western, white, Christian, heterosexual male.⁶ Other groups, such as women, non-Western peoples, Muslims, or homosexuals are not allowed access to this power centre, but are directed to peripheral positions.⁷ Colonial discourse was aimed at the

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realization, confirmation, and continuation of this order.⁸ Raewynn Connell indicates in *Gender* that: ‘Colonizing forces, overwhelmingly from men from the metropole, seized women’s bodies, as well as the land; and a fused gender/race hierarchy became a core feature of colonial society. It persists in the contemporary world’.⁹

Travelling through representations

Most novels in which the sea voyage from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies around the Cape of Good Hope plays an important role, lack a clear plot. Without exception, the narrators are mainly concerned with giving a realistic picture of the passage based on the experiences of the passengers. Obviously, the departure, the time spent at sea, the ports that are visited and the arrival at the destination that are discussed in the novels are recurrent representations of the voyage, but there are also representations of things less tangible, such as customs, morals and habits.

The claim that these representations of the passage constitute reality forms one of the building blocks of the travel novel about the passage to the Dutch Indies. In fact in many cases, the narrator of the story makes clear that he had actually made the sea voyage himself and therefore claims to be a reliable source of knowledge about it. To enhance these pretensions of reality the narrator is constantly referring to well-known existing geographic spaces, such as cities, seas and countries. Also, the references – explicit or implicit – to previous stories increase the impression of the travel novel’s reliability. The storytellers present themselves as experts from whom one could learn a great deal about the passage. In this way their books could not only be regarded as books about thrilling sea voyages but also as travel guides.¹⁰

As Siegfried Huigen shows in *De weg naar Monomotapa (The Road to Monomotapa)* the possibility of empirical testing plays an important role in travel literature:

The representations claim to correspond with empirical reality and if successful they are seen as factual descriptions of reality. This means that the recipient of the representation believes that they are true to reality. [...] Precisely because the representations appear to describe an existing reality they are open to criticism. Under certain conditions the ‘effet de réel’ can be the reason, that which is represented as reality, is open to investigation. Thus it is possible that a passenger comes to the conclusion that his experiences do not correspond to the accepted representation of the actual reality in which he travels.¹¹

According to Huigen, three variables should be taken into consideration: the power of the representation, the extent to which the representation consists of empirically refutable components and the desire for factual knowledge by the one that represents (the narrator). The influence of these variables can lead to the confirmation or adjustment of certain representations.¹² This also applies to contemporary fiction concerning the Dutch Indies.¹³ Indies belles-lettres reflects *and* constructs the Dutch self-image as a colonial nation and refers directly to colonial reality. Literature on the Dutch Indies reveals how colonial reality was represented, seen, experienced, justified and disputed. In turn, these texts have also influenced the shaping of colonial reality.¹⁴ Contemporary fiction about the passage by ship from the Netherlands, via the Cape of Good Hope, to the Dutch East Indies and vice versa in the period 1863–1891 also serves another purpose than the transferring of travel experiences, viz., as mentioned above, these novels also give a representation of a colony society.

Accounts of travels have played a crucial role in the Western construction of the colonial world.¹⁵ They profess to accurately portray the colonial reality. These realistic pretences implied a controllable reproduction of the experienced reality, or the intimation of one.

Gender

In virtually all cultures, differences in position of power between men and women are legitimized through religion. In Western civilization, the idea of masculine superiority is supported by the Christian faith. One can find many instances in the Bible where it is suggested that women are inferior to men. Several statements of this nature can be found in the book of *Genesis* alone.¹⁶ In 1871, Darwin reaches a similar conclusion in *The Descent of Man* based on his theory of evolution:

It is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore, of a past and lower state of civilization.

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than woman can attain – whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses or hands.¹⁷

With this, the inequality between men and women in the Western world gains a scientific foundation drawn from one of the most important scientists of the nineteenth century. Darwin's statement also offers a view into the mechanism that Western man uses to convert differences in relation to other ethnicities, cultures, sex and sexual inclination in a natural-seeming binary opposition of inferiority and superiority. Mary Louise Pratt calls this 'looking through imperial eyes'.¹⁸ The white male view categorizes the 'others'. This is also the basis for the man's right and duty to dominate the Other. That means that women also are 'othered'. The differences between men and women, however, are not merely biological. The production and reproduction of the male and female identity are, for a large part, determined culturally and socioeconomically.¹⁹ 'Sex' in this case signifies biological differences and 'gender' signifies the sociocultural aspects of being male or female.

The Christian and Darwinist views on gender determine ideas about social relationships in the nineteenth century and for women they limit the socioeconomic scope to develop themselves. At this juncture in time, they often had no other choice than to live according to these views.²⁰ In her study on governesses in the Netherlands, Greddy Huisman shows that public life was controlled by men and the institutions that were represented by men, such as politics, the economy, and education. Young ladies from the upper- and middle-class in the nineteenth century were not encouraged to undertake any physical or intellectual endeavours.²¹ Marriage was their destiny. Women had to find a husband. Considering the 'surplus of women' in those days, this was not easy: it was often a case of 'to marry or to starve' for the ladies from the upper- and middle-class. Some women were unable to find a suitable match before they had reached the critical age of 30 and were left over becoming a burden and a disgrace to their families. This rather uninviting

prospect was a woman's greatest fear and it led to a true 'husband hunt'.²² Some women even went as far as to try their luck in the colonies, because of the serious shortage of European women there.

The love boat

The way society regarded gender roles, and the thoughts that formed the basis for these views, found their way into literature, which, in its turn, contributed to the spread of this body of ideas.²³ The European views on the relationship between men and women affected nineteenth century Western colonial discourse, which in addition involved racialized concepts.²⁴ Women were hedged in and limited in their everyday life and way of thinking by the prevailing ideology of supposed male superiority. The views on gender are reflected and propagated in fiction about the passage between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies in the period between 1850 and 1895. In all of the researched novels, the superiority of the white Western male is unmistakable and inescapable, even when these texts were written by women. The novels portray the image of a masculine society where women merely play supporting roles. They are wives, mothers, carers, governesses and – in the case of young women – erotic objects.

It becomes clear from many of the researched novels that women within the colonial community – willingly and unwillingly, consciously and unconsciously – usually have only one career perspective: marriage.²⁵ On both sides of the equator the paradigm was: women are there to wed. And this is what most women sailing towards the East Indies are after. It makes no difference whether the novels tell the story of a voyage around the Cape on a sailing ship or through the Suez Canal on a steamship: the vessel was a true marriage snare. On board every ship, as a rule, there would be (young) unmarried men and women. Romances are found in every novel, often ending in engagement or marriage.

In Annie Foore's *de koloniaal en zijn overste* (*The colonial and his superior*), published in 1877, the single women on board the *Elwine* deliberately occupy themselves with the practice of 'husband hunting': 'the hunt for a man in which – alas! – so many of us young girls have to take part, especially because, being unable to support themselves, marriage is their only way to find security'.²⁶ The narrator specifically points out the shortage of men.²⁷

For parents the passage is an excellent opportunity to find husbands for marriageable daughters. In Perelaer's *Naar den Equator* (*To the Equator*), published in 1884, coffee planter Groenewald somewhat dreads the voyage on the frigate *Fernandina Maria Emma*, because he fears one of his daughters, aged 18 and 20, will fall for a military man. He prefers his daughters getting married to private entrepreneurs. Mrs Groenewald, however, sees no problems in having two officers for sons-in-law if this means her daughters will be taken care of.

In Van Nievelt's *Onder zeil* (*Set sail*), published in 1891, the major's two daughters of mixed descent, 18-year old Isabella and 17-year old Mathilde, soon attract the attention of three young civil servants: Jeronimo, Josua and Justus. Jeronimo and Isabella's tender love, however, is nipped in the bud when she laughs at him during the humiliation of the Neptune ritual, the ceremony to commemorate a voyager's first crossing of the Equator. Jeronimo wants nothing to do with her anymore, which causes her great pain. Josua is caught by the major in an intimate embrace with his daughter Mathilde. This is

a violation of the behavioural code. The major is beside himself with rage. By kissing Mathilde, Josua has crossed the Rubicon of love. Lieutenant Wermuth's repeated warnings against 'hasty courtship with the daughters of Insulinde' were to no avail.²⁸ The major and his wife know that they now have a hold on Josua and make sure he gets caught in Mathilde's snare. Once Josua has seen his love and her seductive curves in her sarong and kabaai, which happens when the ship enters tropical waters, his fate is sealed. East Indian girls in traditional East Indian clothing always have an irresistible erotic attraction on men in these novels. Dressed in a sarong and kabaai-top, women become the object of men's lust.

In the Dutch East Indies of the nineteenth century, gender and 'race' go together in a complex manner.²⁹ *De koloniaal en zijn overste* shows that European women are greatly in demand in the Dutch East Indies, much more so than Eurasian or native women. In this novel, private entrepreneur Samuel Bugg has brought his niece Kitty from the Netherlands to find her a husband on board the ship, because he knows the hunt for a partner will begin halfway through the journey. Bugg is crystal clear towards his niece Kitty about the advantages a European woman holds over a mixed-race woman from the Dutch East Indies³⁰:

Naturally there is a lack of well-brought up girls in the East Indies, a severe lack! And there are many gentlemen who would love to get married, but cannot get a European woman. 'Do you think', Mr Bugg asked, becoming ever more heated, 'do you think I would have married an East Indian woman, do you think so many would live with their housekeepers if there were civilized women to choose from? Why do Dutch fathers not educate their children in order to send them to the East Indies? This is where her future lies, where the demand is great and the supply is short, while there is a surplus in Europe!'³¹

When Bugg does not make any headway with his attempts to pair off his niece to one of the single men on board, he is cheered up by the ship's doctor, Van Raven, who tells him that she will not have to wait very long for a suitable match in the colony: 'You know how it nearly always goes in our blessed East Indies with Dutch girls, the rosy cheeks and red lips catch the eyes of men and they will be married before they well and truly realise it'.³² In addition, Van Raven points out to the single men on board, travelling to the Dutch East Indies for the first time, that Kitty is not a bad match at all: 'Keep in mind, when you are at an outpost in the colony, you might not see a European woman for as many as five years'.³³ At his wit's end, Bugg suggests that Kitty might become a governess in the colony. Unfortunately, Kitty speaks neither English nor French. She then comes up with the idea of becoming someone's housekeeper. Bugg is not pleased, because in the colony the concept 'housekeeper' is a euphemism for an indigenous concubine, a so-called *njai*³⁴:

That is out of the question. Housekeepers are only rarely proposed to in the East Indies. You will need two years before you have mastered Malay and know how to associate with the servants – and even then, every woman born in this land could do it more cheaply and better than you. It is a shame you have learnt nothing! Had you known a little music and a few languages, you could have made a fortune in the East Indies. I have seen many a girl, as poor as you, prosper and return to Holland a great lady! [...] You father has been irresponsible, irresponsible, child; he should have taught you so you could have earned your bread, – or should have left you a great sum!³⁵

However, Kitty too finds a husband on board the ship. She eventually discovers true love with the somewhat timid official Altens. They get married on Ceylon and Altens becomes an accountant for Kitty's rich uncle, Bugg who paired them. During the passage, in this one novel the basis is laid for a total of three marriages.

Saltwater love and love affairs

The novel *Onder zeil* provides a clear explanation for the phenomenon called 'saltwater love', which flourished on board the ships making the crossing between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies:

A passenger ship now was a very, very small and very remote village, and the circumstances increased the danger above measure. Living together for such a long, unabridged period of time, eating and passing time together, the sad feeling of homesickness, the fear of being alone and feeling cheerless in the new land, unable to make critical comparisons, and needless to say the heat, the prickling of the sea salt, who knows what else, – these all worked together culminating in rash flirtations and engagements, knots that were tied easily in the heat of the game, but not so easily untied during more earnest times. Boredom is a wicked matchmaker; and life at sea brought fits of boredom, but also of sentimentality and over-excitement, which made seem wise and joyous what was in essence often a unconscious step of desperation.³⁶

These saltwater loves elicit from Captain Tobbe in the same novel the comment that more marriages are performed at sea than in heaven.³⁷

Daum writes about saltwater love in two novels.³⁸ A good example of this is the violent love affair between Kees and Louise in *Hoe hij Raad van Indië werd* (*How he became Councillor of the Indies*), published in 1885. In *Mrs L. van Velton-van der Linden*, published in 1886, the wealthy Van Velton sends his wife, also named Louise, and child to Europe. They travel on the *Tjiliwong*. He waves goodbye to his wife, child (*njootje*) and father-in-law and is happy they are gone. The spouses are permanently at odds with each other and are happy to be rid of one another. Louise is soon paid court by a young naval officer, Van Hoven. The Eurasian Mrs Van Stralen has someone steal his diary from his cabin and it proves that Van Hoven has fallen madly in love with Louise. Mrs Van Stralen decides to inform Louise's father of the fact that Van Hoven is paying court to her. The doctor does not believe that his daughter is in love with Van Hoven. Mrs Van Stralen points the phenomenon of saltwater love out him: 'Long sea voyages are for the merit of young people who are together all day long in such a small space with no other pastime than eating, drinking and sleeping, real traps. Are there not plenty examples? I do not know what it is, but it exists and has nothing in common with regular love'.³⁹ After a conversation with his daughter, in which she indeed admits to be afraid of being susceptible to saltwater love, doctor Van der Linden does not leave her side anymore.

A mailboat is an erotic hothouse. In *Vrouwen lief en leed onder de tropen* (*Women joys and sorrows in the tropics*), published in 1892, Nelly van Vloten expresses her surprise at the way in which most female passengers behave on board:

You should know, however, that most ladies on board are very flirtatious and they hang around so many different men that it was very difficult to find out what two people formed a couple. Some sit on deck for hours, laughing and talking. Some play cards and others separate themselves from the group and sit together in a corner of the deck for a cosy private moment.⁴⁰

Even though it is tempting for the men and women travelling between continents to drive away the boredom with a love affair, such a liaison is definitely frowned upon. On board, too, love should be taken seriously. In *De koloniaal en zijn overste*, old-timer Van Berkesteyn claims that love affairs at sea are the result of '[...] the emptiness and the boredom that comes with it, [...] the emptiness that, I believe, should have mentioned first amongst all the causes of the unpleasantness. The boredom which causes the devil to find work for empty hands'.⁴¹ Ship's doctor Van Raven declares that sometimes the sea voyages also brings people together who are destined for one another. The superior states that this may happen, but certainly not very often. When the young lieutenant Kreisfeldt lets slip that beginning a love affair is the best way to make a sea voyage pleasant, the assistant-resident Vuiste immediately corrects him. Love is too serious to simply be a pastime. It is striking that Mr Vuiste considers Bugg to be a privileged man. Not only is he always cheerful and light-hearted, but he has also travelled to Europe twice already – without a wife!

If it actually comes to adultery on board, then the whole ship is in a state of uproar. In Van Nievelt's *Onder zeil*, a novel published in 1891, the blond married Melanie Blaning is travelling without her husband when she is lifted into the air by the wind underneath her dress during a storm. She is only just rescued by a sailor who manages to cut the clothes from her body. She is escorted half-naked to her cabin by the resident Van Mersburg, who is also married. He continues to console her through the night. The next morning, it is discovered that Van Mersburg has spent the night in her cabin, because the sleeve of his jacket is sticking out from underneath the door. The adulterous duo's hedonistic behaviour is seen as a disgrace.

'Glove Girls' and governesses

Women who travel without husbands are often seen by men on board as a possibility to have an erotic adventure free of obligations. In Melati van Java's *Hermelijn*, a novel published in 1885, Hermine van Voorden goes to the Dutch East Indies as what was known as a *handschoentje*, as a 'glove girl', a woman who was married by proxy or 'married by the glove'. She is a young, fresh girl and therefore she is discussed by the men on board with certain eagerness. She is regarded as the only 'flower' on board, who is going to the East Indies to find someone to pick her. They think she is a teacher or a governess. The captain does not believe that it is a good idea for her to the Dutch East Indies, because she has blond hair. According to him, blondes become pale, faded and dull after a year or so, and the man who has brought a beautiful blonde woman to the East Indies will soon feel cheated. It soon becomes general knowledge that Hermine is a glove girl travelling to the Dutch East Indies under the protection of the commander and that she has married one of the coffee lords of Central Java. One of the passengers feels it is a waste to bury such a beautiful creature in the inland of Java. Simons, a government official, is impressed by Hermine and gives his card to her.

Like the glove girl', the governess is a special case on board a ship. The general consensus is that governesses do not necessarily go to the Dutch East Indies to practise their profession, but to quickly find a wealthy husband.⁴² On a ship, these women who are eager to marry find themselves among single men, in a confined space, for a large number of days where excellent opportunities present themselves for finding oneself a

suitor. Single women, in their turn, are often regarded as prey for men, if only for an adventure. The governess is watched, like the glove girl, with hungry eyes. These women are looked at with 'imperial eyes': on board women are seen as objects to project men's desires on, as prey to be captured.⁴³

In *Voor drie jaren naar de Oost* (*For three years to the East Indies*), a novel published in 1890, naval officers hunt for unmarried women on board. The men, in their turn, are eligible marriage candidates as well. At sea, governess Mathilde Bouman falls for naval officer Van Spankeren. From his side, it is more a matter of lust than love and, as a result, their saltwater love later evaporates under the heat of the tropical sun. The relationship between naval officer Van Spankeren and the governess Mathilde Bouman gives us some insight into the troubles of the colonial society. Mathilde spends a passionate night with Van Spankeren. The next day, they get engaged, which makes her lady remark: 'Oh-oh, young lady, you have not been in the East Indies for a day and you are already matched [...].'⁴⁴

This impertinent night with Van Spankeren, however, will cost Mathilde dearly. Her reputation is ruined – the one crucial virtue for a woman living in a century that was riddled with strict thoughts on gender – and she becomes a pariah. In the Dutch East Indies, people talk: gossip travels with the speed of an infectious disease. The scandal costs Mathilde her job as governess on the Molucca Islands: her honour and reputation have been damaged. She loses her next job on Menado as well, when the rumours that she and Van Spankeren shortly lived as husband and wife reach that place. She is regarded as a strumpet and seen as an outcast by the colonial community. Only the old and wise landowner Elmering, who does not care for the small-minded colonial community, will help Mathilde. Van Spankeren eventually calls off the engagement. He will later regret his decision when Mathilde is married to lieutenant Otto Grunfoort. He sees then that he has wronged her and that she would have made an excellent wife.

In *Reisgenooten* (*Travelling companions*), an novel published in 1876, two single gentlemen at sea sing praises of the qualities of governesses Lize Wilson and Laura Greve. However, one of them immediately admits that there are more lovely girls in the Dutch East Indies. In the East Indies, a man has more to choose from. Women have to let a man choose them as partner, it is his privilege. Laura Greve tries to struggle free from her gender role. During a discussion between women on board she says she would have preferred to be a man. Then she would have certainly had a marvelous career. Now she is forced to work as a governess is she wants to go to the East Indies. Marriage is out of the question: '[...] it is like a ball and chain; because all men, without exception, are self-seekers and wealthy men are self-seekers cast in gold, and therefore even uglier than poor men'.⁴⁵

So single women, in general, seek to find an appropriate marriage candidate on board. Laura is the remarkable exception to the rule.

The power of women

The novels show that the society in the Dutch East Indies is a patriarchal society. However, it has an underlying matriarchal structure. In the intimacy of the East Indian family, the woman is in charge; the roles are reversed there. In Daum's *Hoe hij Raad van Indië werd*, the dominant Louise is the driving force when it comes to covering up her and Kees's shameful act – they have run off together while Louise's husband lay dying – and reaching the top levels of government via her new husband later in the story.

In nineteenth century colonial discourse, gender takes precedence over skin colour. Even women from mixed descent with darker skin colours are in charge at home. A good example of this is the Groenewald family in *To the Equator*. The Groenewald family is an Eurasian family in which the father makes all the decision in the eyes of the outside world. However, whenever his Eurasian wife gives him advice, he always follows it meticulously.⁴⁶

Of course there are specific individual tasks for men and women, but in the end the woman decides. Mother's word is law. This makes the Eurasian mother Groenewald the key figure in the family. This is remarkable seeing that in the colonial discourse Eurasian woman has a double problem: she is not a man and she is not white.

Even when a wife does not accompany her husband, she still influences her husband's peace of mind and his actions strongly. Samuel Bugg in *De koloniaal en zijn overste* is an exceptionally cheerful man. He owns a large plantation and a young wife, 'but she was a true daughter of the land (every old colonial knows what this means)'.⁴⁷ His Eurasian wife, Dollie, has him under her thumb and he is mortally afraid of her reaction when he arrives in the Dutch East Indies unannounced with his unmarried niece Kitty, a so-called 'totok', an European girl. Also, Dollie might find out – Bugg does not understand how it is possible, but she always finds out – that he has particularly amused himself in Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris by giving in to his male weaknesses. The only thing that could avert this danger for Bugg is finding a husband for Kitty on board. If he could introduce his poor niece to Dollie as the fiancée of some gentleman, then the prospect of the wedding feasts, the new dresses and the delicious quinces that always accompany these celebrations, might reconcile his suspicious and jealous Eurasian Dollie to the arrival of the unexpected guest.

In colonial families, women influence the men's decisions. By pulling the strings in the background, they can exercise power within the masculine colonial community.

Conclusion

An important aspect of nineteenth century colonial discourse is gender. The colonial world was mainly viewed from the perspective of the white Western male. For the views of women (but also non-Western peoples, non-Christians and non-heterosexuals), there was no or hardly any room. Colonial discourse was concerned with maintaining and promoting the privileged position of the white Western male in the tropics.

At the level of family, however, the 18 researched novels paint a different picture: in the mostly patriarchal structured East Indian society the woman functioned as mater-familias: she was the one in control behind the scenes. Within their marriage they had the ability to exercise quite a bit of power. Marriage offered women a career perspective in the colonial community and was therefore an important institution.

In Europe there was a surplus of women and in the Dutch East Indies a shortage of European women. This is why increasingly more women travelled to the Dutch East Indies. This affected the mutual relationships on board the ships that transported passengers between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies. The 'husband hunting' would begin soon after departure. Initially, single men would see women as an erotic prey and only later would they regard them as potential partner and mother. The ships that carried passengers between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies were erotic hunting grounds for young men and love boats for young women.

Notes

1. The main criteria of selection of the novels were that they had to be about the sea voyage, they had to be fiction and had to be contemporary. That only left 18 novels to analyze: Six of them were written by women (Adinda, H. M. Beijerinck, Annie Foore, M. C. Frank, Melati van Java and Cornelia Spieker). Note that the novels are written in 1869–1891 about voyages that took place in 1850–1890.
2. That is – qualitate qua – also true for steam ships that made the voyage through the Suez Canal from 1870. The Suez Canal was opened for ships in 1869. In the years after that new pathway shortened the voyage remarkably. Soon the sailing ship, that still had to travel around the Cape Good Hope, grew redundant.
3. See Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals* for the British equivalent from the Indian perspective, especially 11–13, 32–60.
4. Said, *Orientalism*, 92–93; Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 5 and Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, 123.
5. See Mathijssen *Historiezucht*, 288–289, Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 53; and van Boven, *Bestsellers in Nederland*, 16–21 and 27.
6. Daum's *In en uit 's lands dienst* 1997 contains four novels of which two are used in this essay, viz. de van der *Lindens c. s.* and *Mevrouw L. van Velton-van der Linden*. Although Mathijssen, *Historiezucht*, 288–289, 18 novels are researched, citations are taken out of seven novels only, considering the readability and the consistency of the essay. That does not mean that these works are more representative than the others. The representations that are quoted could be found in the other novels as well.
7. Connell, *Gender*, 7–8.
8. See Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 71–75 and 80.
9. See Connell, *Gender*, 78.
10. On the face of it, some novels (Wilsen, *Naar Europa*; Perelaer *Naar den Equator/Naar den eindpaal eener loopbaan*; van Rees, *Herinneringen uit de loopbaan van een Indisch officier* and van Wijk, *Naar Atjeh en terug*) seem to be non-fiction. However, further examination regarding to elements as structure, fictional names and dialogues makes clear that they unequivocally are fiction indeed. The novels are autobiographical and fiction at the same time. See Missinne, *Oprecht gelogen*, 23–28 and 33–56.
11. Huigen, *de weg naar Monomotapa*, 57–58.
12. *Ibid.*, 58–59.
13. See Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, 11–17; Beekman, *Troubled Pleasures*, 5–9; and Bel, “Losbandigheid geldzucht en goena goena,” 136 and 140.
14. Meijer, *In tekst gevat*, 124.
15. Said, *Orientalism*, 99; and Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 3. This applies to East Indian-Dutch literature in general. See Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, 11–17; Beekman, *Troubled Pleasures*, 5–9; Bel, *Nederlandse literatuur in het fin de siècle*, 305; Coté, “Romancing the Indies,” 133–138; and Bel, *Bloed en rozen*, 264.
16. For example Gen 2:20–21 and Gen 3:16.
17. Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 326–327.
18. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 9.
19. Connell provides the following definition: ‘Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive area, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes’. See Connell, *Gender*, 11.
20. Huisman, *Tussen salon en souterrain*, 19.
21. Greddy Huisman points out that even women were convinced of this idea. According to Huisman women submitted themselves to self-censorship, to an inner intellectual corset. See Huisman, *Tussen salon en souterrain*, 19.
22. Huisman, *Tussen salon en souterrain*, 17–18.
23. Thanks to Petra Boudewijn for letting me use these phrases.

24. During the first half of the twentieth century, racial views would become increasingly more dominant in colonial discourse. Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben argue that in the nineteenth century class, profession, pedigree, religion and education played just an important part as race in colonial reality when determining the place of the individual. So race was not the dominant factor at that time according to Bosma and Raben. See Bosma and Raben, *de oude Indische wereld*, 35–36.
25. Bosma and Raben, *de oude Indische wereld*, 134.
26. Foore, *de koloniaal en zijn overste*, vol. 1, 87.
27. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 176.
28. van Nievelt, *Onder Zeil*, 245.
29. See note 14 above.
30. About the rivalry between European and mixed-race women in the Dutch East Indies, see Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 41–111; Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State* and Boudewijn, *Warm bloed*, 101–131.
31. Foore, *de koloniaal en zijn overste*, vol. 1, 187.
32. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 163.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 166.
34. See Baay, *de njai*.
35. Foore, *de koloniaal en zijn overste*, vol. 1, 187–188.
36. van Nievelt, *Onder Zeil*, 242–243.
37. *Ibid.*, 242.
38. See for Daum's life and works Termorshuizen, *Journalist en romancier van tempo doeloe*.
39. Daum, *In en uit 's lands dienst*, 256.
40. Adinda, *Vrouwen lief en leed onder de tropen*, 35.
41. Foore, *de koloniaal en zijn overste*, vol. 2, 17.
42. Greddy Huisman points out that the theme of the governess out courting predominantly occurs in the late nineteenth century novels in connection with the colonies. Huisman, *Tussen salon en souterrain*, 71.
43. In the eyes of a man, a woman becomes a lust object at those moments and in that way inferior to him. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, 170–183 and Meijer, *In tekst gevat*, 5–10 and 38–62.
44. Margadant, *Voor drie jaren naar de Oost*, 70.
45. Spieker, *Reisgenooten*, 44.
46. See Perelaer, *Naar den Equator*, 190.
47. Foore, *de koloniaal en zijn overste*, 15.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Coen van't Veer (Zierikzee 1968) is doing research on (post)colonial literature and is writing a dissertation called *de kolonie op drift* (*The colony afloat*) at Leiden University. In this dissertation he describes and analyses representations in contemporary fiction of the travels by mail steamer between The Netherlands and The Dutch-Indies in the period of 1850–1940. The crew and passengers of those mail steamers form a micro colony: a compressed version of the colonial society. Taking the postcolonial theories as a starting point Coen van't Veer works out a new structured method of analyzing fiction to disclose the colonial discourse that lies hidden in it.

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