

## Objectivity and Emotion, the Challenge of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*: Albert Kuyle As a Test Case

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*Abstract:* In 1930 the critic Victor van Vriesland commented on the school of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* as follows: “It was up to literature to fully obscure and confuse a notion which was originally clear and well defined.” [Het bleef [...] voor de letterkunde weggelegd, de volle maat tot de verdoezeling en verwarring van een oorspronkelijk klaar omschrijfbaar denkbeeld bij te dragen. (1954:72-73)]. More than eighty years later there still isn’t much clarity about the definition of the literary movement *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*. Dissension exists with regards to the point whether *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* should rather be regarded as a reaction to effusive expressionism (Anten, Becker) or as a continuation of expressionism (Goedegebuure). Neither is it clear if this designation mainly concerns phenomena of content or style, nor if it has a normative poetical purport or a literary historical and descriptive meaning. The names of the authors quoted as typical examples of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* even complicate matters. For one Willem Elsschot is the “indisputable champion of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* in Dutch Literature” [de onbetwistbare kampioen van de *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* in de Nederlandse literatuur” (Schampaert 1985:130)]. Yet *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* is only applicable to Elsschot in a restricted sense, referring to his sober style (Van Boven&Kemperink). While Hans Anten rates Ferdinand Bordewijk among the expressionist generation and contests the inclusion of his novels in the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* (1982:113-114), Jaap Goedegebuure considers Bordewijk’s novels *Blokken*, *Knorrende beesten* and *Bint* as “the crown” of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* (1992:105).<sup>1</sup>

Besides disagreement on the representatives of this literary movement, there is also disparity on the criteria determining a literary work to be ‘zakelijk’ or not. Some authors, like Goedegebuure (1992) and Anten (1982), discern a thematic dimension (a preference for modern technical developments and social issues, regardless of whether it is linked up with critical engagement), from a stylistic and formal one (a sober style, cinematic influence, simultaneity). More relevant than this question however, is the question how a key notion like *objectivity* – as a potential counterpart of engagement – manifests itself in the formal and narratological characteristics of these novels, in particular in the use of narrator types, narrator comment and focalisation.

One of the most intricate obscurities in defining *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* is the paradox in the author's attitude towards social reality. On the one hand these authors are presumed to favour a form of social realism, which suggests a critical disposition towards social problems and a certain partiality in rendering reality. On the other hand it is generally assumed that they aim for objectivity and detached observation.

### What does objectivity mean?

This contribution aims at clarifying this ambiguity by investigating the nature of *narrative objectivity* in a few *nieuw zakelijke* texts. With the notion of objectivity I do not refer to objective perception of reality in an epistemological sense, the fundamental impossibility of objective perceiving and rendering, as was reflected upon by postmodernism and poststructuralism. Such considerations were not under discussion amongst the *nieuw zakelijke* authors from the thirties. Yet time and again it becomes clear that they attached great importance to make the impression of striving for objectivity. They tried to arouse a notion for the reader that all facts and events were described and narrated in a most impersonal way.

To a large extent this claim to objectivity laid by *nieuw zakelijke* authors can be traced back as a reaction against former literary trends, such as late romanticism, idealism and expressionism, thus being a counter-positioning. This negative reaction can easily be made more explicit: it implies distaste for pathetic descriptions, compassion or other empathic feelings from the narrator for his characters. But this pursuit of an effect of objectivity can also be expressed in a positive way. By the imitation of film and reportage *nieuw zakelijke* authors tried to obtain a mode of rendering a story without appreciative, depreciatory or commenting interferences from the narrator.

Before analysing a concrete example, I will take a look at what contemporary literary critics and later literary historians have said about *objectivity*. When in 1932 Hendrik Marsman tried to characterize modern readership and modern literature, he appreciated the phenomenon of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* as an indication of resistance to psychological analyses and a rejection of "hollow phrases, frills, forgery, literature and romanticism" [frase, franje, vervalsing, litteratuur en romantiek (Marsman 1979: 409)]. The contemporary way of writing was, according to Marsman's assessment, supply meeting the demand of the modern reader:

He [the modern reader] wants the modern world and the modern individual, the outer and inner reality rendered accurately, harshly, perspicuously, seen with cool, clear eyes, recapitulated briefly. [...] He asks for its objective, impersonal, *zakelijk* account, by reporters and makers of documentary films – and in literature especially by the novelist.

[Hij [de moderne lezer] wil de moderne wereld en den modernen mens, de uiterlijke en de innerlijke werkelijkheid exact, nuchter, klaar, gezien door koele, zuivere oogen en bondig samengevat. [...] Hij vraagt haar weergave, objectief, onpersoonlijk, zakelijk, van den reporter en van de makers der documentaire films – en in de litteratuur vooral van den romancier (Marsman 1979: 407).]

Methodologically translated, his commentary implies that the *nieuw zakelijke* novelist should behave like a reporter:

We require from the reporter that he does not slip in between the reader and his object, that he gives a true-to-life rendering and lets the theme speak for itself; that he describes what he sees and hears, accurately and synthetically, briefly and precisely.

[Van den verslaggever moet men eisen dat hij zichzelf niet tussen den lezer schuift en het object, dat hij het gegeven natuurgetrouw afbeeldt en spreken laat voor zichzelf; dat hij weergeeft wat hij ziet en beluistert, exact en synthetisch, beknopt en precies (Marsman 1979: 407-408).]

By this Marsman largely endorsed what Constant van Wessem had written in *De Vrije Bladen* in 1929 about modern prose. Taking up an objective position was a matter of distancing oneself from one's own feelings<sup>2</sup>, so as not to intrude between the reader and the described, but as to depict reality in a sober and impersonal way. Marsman however, did not conceive of such prose as real art because it ignores the essence of art: magic and imagination.

Menno ter Braak saw a clear manifestation of clinical observation in the filmic character of modern novels, a dimension he also considered typical of the admirers of Ilja Ehrenburg's *10 PK. Het leven der auto's*. Ter Braak was of the opinion that the literary variant of that kind of observation could be found in a combination of the rejection of psychology (already mentioned by Marsman) and observation from the outside: "the multitude of characters these authors work with, is exclusively presented from the filmic outside [...] full tilt, under various exposures, from the bottom, from above,

from behind and in front” [het heirleger van personages, waarmee deze auteurs werken, [is] uitsluitend van de filmische buitenkant [genomen], in vliegende vaart, met verschillende belichtingen, van onder, van boven, achter en voor elkaar (1949:141)]. Typical authors practicing this mode of external observation were, in the eyes of Ter Braak, Albert Kuyle and Jef Last. They belonged to those “novelist-journalists, who have missed a filmic career” [roman-journalisten, die de film hebben misgelopen (1949:144)]. Anyway, it is remarkable that this orientation towards the external was criticised both by Marsman and Ter Braak as a defect of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*. Ter Braak seems to have reinforced his dislike of this style with every *nieuw zakelijke* novel that was published. His wish to react against his competitor, the critic Victor van Vriesland, who had spoken highly of the work of Revis, might have influenced Ter Braak’s attitude (Beekman and Grüttemeier 2009). It was still more striking that even a hard-core *nieuw zakelijk* author like Ben Stroman (1935) took the view that this exclusive attention for the outside was at the expense of depth.

When in 1935 the critic C. Tazelaar described various subgenres of this new phenomenon (the report novel, the filmic novel, the simultaneous novel, the confession novel, the vitalistic novel and the *vie romancée*), he considered the “optical aspect” a typical characteristic of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*. “The impression that a character gets of something is not described, but is suggested in this way to the reader. He can see it by optical means, just like the character himself has seen it.” [De indruk, dien een boekfiguur krijgt uit het een of ander, wordt niet beschreven, maar precies zoo den lezer gesuggereerd. Langs den optischen weg ziet de lezer het, zooals de boekfiguur het zag (Tazelaar 1935: 12)]. Another way of saying the same thing was for Tazelaar to talk about “the pursuit of optical diction” [het streven naar optische zegging (Tazelaar 1935: 13)], something he came across both in the filmic as well as in the report novel. For him, this “optical” aspect comes down to an attempt for the narrator to convey immediately to the reader that which has been seen, to show the reader something in such a way as the narrator or his character has seen himself. For that purpose a range of typographic forms can be used, e.g. a different font, italics or bold, as Tazelaar illustrates with regard to the novel *Stad*, written by Ben Stroman. This book contains a passage, in which the narrator reports without further introduction or explanation that a character takes the tram, “chooses a seat. NO SMOKING” [kiest een zitplaats. VERBODEN TE ROKEN].

The marking by the use of capital letters indicates that this is the text on a sign in the tram. Further, an italicized passage suggests shreds from a radio program. This procedure, which has often been used by Stroman and could be called *mimetic*, is an important characteristic of the report novel according to Tazelaar. Other report novelists Tazelaar (1935: 16-17) mentions are young authors like Albert Kuyle, Albert Helman and A. den Doolaard.

When scrutinizing the filmic novel in his next chapter, Tazelaar points to still another characteristic of *optical diction*: the omission of continuity in the narrative:

Instead of continuity and sequential coherence we now have the scenic, instead of motivations by reasoning we now have explications by observation, instead of the image through words we now have the image through graphics. The optical diction I have spoken about is the main point, and the narrative, that indeed entails a certain continuity, is to be found in the repeated appearance of the same characters and an already familiar scenery.

[Voor de continuïteit, het in volgorde samenhangende, is het tafreelmatige in de plaats gekomen, voor het motiveerende door beredeneering het verklarende door aanschouwing, voor het beeld-in-woorden het beeld-in-lijnen. De optische zeggings, waarover ik sprak, is hier hoofdzaak, en het verhalende, dat uiteraard zekere continuïteit meebrengt, wordt gevonden in het telkens doen terugkeeren van dezelfde personen en een te voren al aanschouwde omgeving. (Tazelaar 1935: 28-29).]

For Tazelaar a filmic novel achieves narrative continuity by repeatedly presenting the same characters in the same scene, not by telling a coherent story about those characters. Tazelaar not only defines this *optical diction* in rather specific terms, namely as a technical narrative device, he also interrelates the claim for objectivity with emotional distance. Van Vriesland likewise saw a connection between emotional distance and filmic techniques. He stated that *zakelijkheid* aims at reality as such, like in a good film: “As is the case in a good modern film, attention is not so much drawn to affects as to the objects themselves.” [Evenals in de goede moderne film, richt de aandacht zich niet zozeer direct op de affecten, maar eerder op de voorwerpen (Van Vriesland 1958:76).].

Both contemporary discourses of the thirties and later literary studies often use all kinds of medical metaphors to describe this unemotional detached attitude. Thus Tazelaar, imitating Van Wessem,

compared *nieuw zakelijke* novels to “literary X-ray-photography burning instantly through all covering and catching the skeleton. It is surgery on life, opening, exposing: sharply, shortly. Therefore Marsman called one of his essay collections ‘De Anatomische les.’” [literaire röntgenfotografie, die door alle omkleeding meteen heenbrandt en de skeletdelen grijpt. Het is ‘operatieve chirurgie van het leven’, openleggen, blootleggen: fel, kort. Marsman noemde daarom een van zijn opstellenbundels ‘De Anatomische les’ (Tazelaar 1935:10).] It also was this “lack of sentimentality” of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*, about which F. Schmalenbach said in 1940: “[p]erhaps its innermost kernel may be found in a radical rejection of all emotional bias, a deliberately cultivated lack of sentimentality, so to speak”.<sup>3</sup> Later Subiotto (1973) would speak about the “cold clinical eye”<sup>4</sup> and Becker describes a *nieuw zakelijk* author as the “>Vivisekteur< der Zeit” (Becker 1995: 10).

In his study *Van realisme naar zakelijkheid* Hans Anten (1982: 123-124) links the pursuit of objectivity directly to stylistic devices: synthetic, austere and tense writing, omitting details, sober and functional language. If one highlights these formal characteristics, one can on the one hand sustain the view of R. Meijer and argue that Bordewijk is *nieuw zakelijk* and belongs to “the best representatives [...] of the Neue Sachlichkeit”. If one on the other hand favors the dimension of content, one has to conclude that Bordewijk has nothing to do with *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* (Anten 1982:83). However, in his conclusion Anten points out that

this pretended and assumed objectivity should be put into perspective. Selection, arrangement and presentation of ‘real facts’ can reduce this objectivity and are often used with a certain intention.

[door sommige gepretendeerde en veronderstelde objectiviteit gerelativeerd [dient] te worden. Selectie, arrangement en presentatie van de ‘feiten der realiteit’ doen er afbreuk aan, staan dikwijls in dienst van een bepaalde tendens (Anten 1982: 125).]

Repetitions, comparisons and metaphors can also subvert an objective, impersonal attitude and add irony to what is told. He concludes:

When, however, the narrating instance gives no direct comment and the protagonists are mainly characterized by their actions, utterances and thoughts in ways that the narrative perspective lies more with the protagonists – which was supported by Van Wessem, then objectivity is done justice to.

[Wanneer echter direct commentaar van de vertellende instantie achterwege blijft en, wat Van Wessem voorstond, de personages vooral worden getekend door hun handelen, spreken en denken, zodat het standpunt van waaruit verteld wordt meer bij die personages komt te liggen, dan wordt aan de objectiviteit eerder recht gedaan (Anten 1982:125-126).]

What the claim for objectivity implies for the narrating instance and focalisation is not easy to define: both a 'filmic' perspective or in narratological terms *external focalization*, meaning that characters are only shown from the outside, and *internal focalization*, meaning that the described is seen from the perspective of a character in the narrative (*intradiegetic*) seem to be possible interpretations of the concept of *objectivity*. Anten may rightly put this objectivity into perspective. Yet, he still considers the suggestion of objectivity as a litmus test for an author to be *nieuw zakelijk* or not. In a comparison between Revis and Bordewijk he points to a number of differences and similarities. According to him, the most important difference rests on a notion of objectivity that emanates from the work of Revis and of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*:

In other words: the full lack of any suggestion of objectivity in Bordewijk's fiction is why I don't typify his novels as *nieuw zakelijk*.

[Anders geformuleerd: het geheel en al ontbreken van de objectiviteitssuggestie in de fictie van Bordewijk is voor mij reden zijn eerste romans niet als nieuw-zakelijk te karakteriseren. (1996:88)]

In his study *Hybride Welten* (1995) Ralf Grüttemeier also draws attention to the pursuit of objectivity of *nieuw zakelijke* authors and illustrates how they realize this objectivity in a very particular way. First of all, documentary data is used to create an authentic sphere with authentic details. Furthermore, this documentary evidence also serves to express a specific *Weltsicht*. Through their specific way of staging their data *nieuw zakelijke* authors confront different views and thus present a *Stimmenvielfalt* [multiplicity of voices], that can be understood as a particular interpretation of objectivity. How this mechanism works Grüttemeier shows in detail in the work by Jef Last and M. Revis. According to Grüttemeier Revis does not even aim at an objective depiction of reality:

at second view in the author demonstrates that he does not strive for objective rendering after all but for a stylization of a particular register

of language, a particular worldview and eventually a dialogue between the different voices.

[weiß auf den zweiten Blick zu verdeutlichen, daß es ihm letzten Endes nicht um objektive Wiedergabe geht, sondern um die Stilisierung eines bestimmten Sprachregisters, einer bestimmten Weltsicht und letztlich um den dialogischen Bezug verschiedener Stimmen aufeinander (Grüttemeier 1995: 194).]

Revis' poetics is much more a matter of objective rendering than believing in it („ein Bekenntnis zu ihr“, Grüttemeier 1995: 194).

Jaap Goedegebuure (1992) differentiates the term objectivity in a similar manner. In the second chapter of his book entitled “objective, but not impartial” [objectief, maar niet onpartijdig], he asks what the requirement of objectivity, plainness, etc. implies for the social commitment of authors. In other words: do these novels tend to preserve the social status quo, when they do not openly criticise society? According to Jost Hermand and Helmuth Lethen the answer was clear: they reproached *neusachliche* authors for an alleged lack of social commitment. Goedegebuure however, just like Anten and Grüttemeier, tries to investigate how authors manage to have their texts simultaneously evoke an impression of objectivity and a clear personal viewpoint. This simultaneity is possible by ingeniously arranging contrasting facts or by mixing up unlike categories – examples from Ehrenburg and Revis illustrate this – so that the reader experiences a kind of critical awareness. Such strategies serve to express a point of view in a very sophisticated manner.

## Objectivity in narratological terms

This brings us to the question how objectivity can be translated into formal narrative techniques and devices, in other words: what does the pursuit of objectivity narratologically mean for the organization of the narrative?

A first and rather obvious interpretation of the concept *objectivity* is that an objective text is a text whose content is presented “ideologically impartial”, so that no explicit message is passed on to the reader, and that no preferences for specific worldviews, values or convictions are expressed. This means that no explicit ideological points of views come up. That formal textual characteristics can



convey certain ideological positions in an implicit way has been illustrated by the studies of Philippe Hamon and Vincent Jouve.

The appearance of the narrator in the story must be mentioned here too. An objective narrator then is a narrator who does not comment, does not intrude between the reader and the story (Marsman), but still confines himself to descriptions, rendering his impersonal and objective perception: a narrator as a “beobachtender Berichterstatter“ (Becker 1995:12). Essentially this objectivity is possible both with a visible and an invisible (dramatized or nondramatized) narrator, and also with a present or absent (overt or covert) narrator. After all, the presence or visibility of a narrator does not by definition necessarily hinder an objective effect. The essential point is the way in which the narrator renders the story. In addition, a similar construction could exactly be used to evoke the suggestion of objectivity and authenticity, in the sense that the one who has observed everything can be heard by the reader in his unmediated, direct report. As a consequence a narrator in a *nieuw zakelijke* novel will rather acquire his authority by a mimetic mode,<sup>5</sup> than by a diegetic narrative mode. No introduction, no psychological or other explanations: “the reader sees things, just like the protagonist has seen them” [de lezer [ziet] het, zoals de boekfiguur het zag (Tazelaar 1935:12)].

With respect to the objectivity claim, we could also formulate some narratological expectations on focalisation: both an extradiegetic (“as the narrator has seen it himself”) and an intradiegetic focalisation (“as the character has seen it”) are possible. Other than Luc Hermans & Bart Vervaeck (2001) in their *Handbook of narrative Analysis* I do not use the term ‘external focalisation’ for focalisation from the outside of the fictional universe, but ‘extradiegetic focalisation’ instead, with analogy to the extradiegetic narrator. What is called internal focalisation by Hermans & Vervaeck, I call – with analogy to the intradiegetic narrator – an ‘intradiegetic focalisation’. Internal focalisation in the way I use this term, refers to the perceived object, namely, is at work when a scene is seen through the eyes of a character, so that the reader knows his or her feelings and thoughts, contrary to external focalisation, where the characters are only perceived from the outside. What objectivity implies for the focalized object (mostly the characters) is not so easy to determine. Becker (1995:13) thinks that a typically *nieuw zakelijke* narrative mode is linked to the conscience of the characters, and therefore uses internal

focalisation. Also Anten, following Van Wessem, takes the view that objectivity is attained when the protagonists are mainly characterized by their actions, speech and thoughts, “so that the viewpoint from which the story is told lies more with the characters” [zodat het standpunt van waaruit verteld wordt meer bij die personages komt te liggen” (Anten 1982: 125-126)]. Despite the fact that focalisation and narration are mixed up here, implications are that *nieuw zakelijke* authors show a preference for internal focalisation (with rendering of the conscience, thinking and feeling of the characters). Bearing this observation in mind, it is remarkable that at the time, Marsman and Ter Braak criticised the *nieuw zakelijke* authors for being “too exclusively turned to outward appearances, and too little – whatever they may pretend – on the heart of men.” [De neiging, de richting der zakelijkheid is te uitsluitend gericht op de omringende uiterlijkheid, te weinig – wat zij ook moge beweren – op het hart van den mens.” (Marsman1979: 409)]

### **Anton Kuyle, the story ‘Werkverschaffing’**

I would now like to illustrate the approach to objectivity by way of two texts by Albert Kuyle, an author who does not belong to the core of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* (like Revis, Wagener, Stroman), but whose name is often mentioned together with Stroman, Wagener, Last and Vestdijk in about one fifth of publications on *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* (Grüttemeier 1995:17).

The first text is the short story ‘Werkverschaffing’ (Kuyle s.d.) that was first published in the catholic journal *De Gemeenschap* in 1931 and later as the opening story in Kuyle’s volume *Harmonika* (1939). The second text is the novel *Harten en brood*, published in 1933, a typical crisis novel, that was rated among the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* because of its subject matter and its filmic character, although it was often commented that Kuyle wrote with too much “larmoyante sentimentaliteit” (Ter Braak 1949:141).

‘Werkverschaffing’ tells the story of the catholic worker couple Veenendaal. Mrs. Veenendaal suffers from tuberculosis with very little prospect of recovery, when the couple cannot afford to buy the milk she needs for her convalescence. Her husband Kees has become unemployed but out of necessity he takes a job in the clay pits of Jipsuma organized by relief works (‘Werkverschaffing’). There he

can earn the money his family needs to stay alive. However he cannot stand the situation and manages to get home, where he finds his wife dying.

With his short stories Kuyle earned an excellent reputation at the beginning of the thirties. Du Perron called him together with Helman “two of the best young prose authors” [twee der beste jongere prozaschrijvers (1955:270)], Anthonie Donker (1932) ranged Kuyle together with Helman among the best short story tellers of the young generation in the Netherlands. According to Goedegebuure (1992:29) ‘Werkverschaffing’ is “an excellent specimen of a text suggesting objectivity and a very strong social commitment” [een uitstekend specimen van een objectiviteit suggererende tekst waaruit een zeer sterk maatschappelijk engagement spreekt]. The story starts with a passage that can be called typically *nieuw zakelijk*:

The milk costs fifteen cent per liter. This is not much, if one considers that champagne costs eight guilders a bottle, and there exist perfumes of which 50 milliliter should bring in forty guilders. Yet is already more if one considers that there are two hundred thousand people unemployed, and it is too much for someone who has, once he has paid his rent, one guilder and a ten-cent piece left to live on with four children.

[De melk kost vijftien cent per liter. Dat is niet veel, als men bedenkt dat champagne acht gulden de flesch kost, en er parfums zijn waarvan een twintigste liter veertig gulden moet opbrengen. Het is al meer als men bedenkt dat er twee honderd duizend werklozen zijn, en te veel voor iemand die als hij zijn huishuur op zij heeft gelegd, nog een gulden en een dubbeltje per dag heeft om met vier kinderen van te leven. (Werkverschaffing, 9)]

The economic crisis, the poverty of the large families and the grinding contrast between the poor and rich, all these topics already come up in these introductory sentences. It looks as if an extradiegetic narrator is speaking and commenting on the milk prices as someone with social commitment, but not at all as an example of distant or objective narration.

There are other passages in this story – not many however – that better fit the characterization *nieuw zakelijk*. One of the most neutrally working, enumerating and documentary descriptions is to be found at the end of the story, at the moment when Kees must go to the ‘Werkverschaffing’.

Jipsuma. 'Improvement of existing streams', the file is called. All sorts of things can be said about it. Cooperation between state and municipalities. Costs of those employed in state working-programs. Employment return. There are two great advantages the working-programs brings along, that is the answer to a question in Parliament.

[Jipsuma. 'Verbetering van bestaande beken', heet het dossier. Er valt van alles over te vertellen. Samenwerking van rijk en gemeente. Kosten van te werk gestelden. Arbeidsrendement. Twee groote voordeelen brengt de werkverschaffing mede, wordt er in de Kamer op een vraag geantwoord (Werkverschaffing 28).]

On the same page Kees arrives at his new workplace:

A trainstop. Claypaths. Hostile farms with snow-white curtains and shining well-fed dogs under the haystack. Report. Place in the shed, a wooden bed, and a compartment in the big cupboard. Take care of your goods, not all of them can be trusted.

[Een halte van de trein. Kleiwegen. Vijandige boerderijen met hagelwitte gordijnen en glanzend-gevreten honden onder de hooiberg. Aanmelden. Plaats in de keet, brits, en vak in de groote kast. Oppassen op je goed, want ze zijn niet allemaal te vertrouwen (Werkverschaffing, 28).]

The short sentences suggest that they are cited directly from the employment file and indicate that the situation is hard and inhuman for Kees. The author uses a documentary style in this scene in order to attain an effect of objectivity. At the end of the story he performs a much more striking intervention to convince the reader of the gravity of this social situation. After a pathetic accusation – reminding of Multatuli's criticism of the exploitation of the Javanese people at the end of *Max Havelaar* (1860) –, following the description of Mrs. Veenendaal's miserable situation, he states: "Twelve thousand marked persons, from a repudiated proletariat. Twelve thousand marked persons, slaughtered because of money. Twelve thousand marked persons, from innocent children murdered in the factory" [Twaalfduizend geteekenden, uit het proletariaat dat verleugend wordt. Twaalfduizend geteekenden, uit die [sic] geslacht werden om het geld. Twaalfduizend geteekenden, uit de onnoozele kinderen die in de fabriek werden vermoord (Werkverschaffing, 34).] Then the narrator directly addresses the reader: "Now it no longer matters what I write. Now the story no longer matters. It is but short anyhow." [Nu komt het er niet langer op aan, wat ik schrijf. Nu komt het verhaal er

niet op aan. Het is trouwens nog maar kort (ibid.)] He breaks through the fictional illusion and forces the reader to face up to the exemplary ‘authenticity’ of the story. Paradoxically enough the narrative ends with a dramatic scene situated within the fictional world, namely a scene around the deathbed of Kees’ wife.

In order to convince the reader of his view, Kuyle periodically uses a documentary style but also employs a pathetic style, in order to appeal immediately to the reader. Seen from the perspective of the claim for objectivity and emotional distance these are the two extremities of the spectrum.

The use of very diverse techniques, including rapid transitions and changes, also on the level of narrating and focalising characterise the whole novel. The first pages can illustrate this very well. After the passage on the milk price quoted above in which the narrator conveys his sympathy with the poor by an enumerative description of goods and prices, the visible I-narrator immediately disassociates from his characters and takes a position outside the fictional space, from which he comments: “Mrs. Veenendaal has never calculated as precisely as I do now, that she has but 11 ten-cent pieces.” [Vrouw Veenendaal heeft nooit zoo precies uitgerekend als ik nu doe, dat ze maar 11 dubbeltjes heeft...(Werkverschaffing, 9).] In the same sentence the narrator then again evokes the impression that he is close with this family and adopts the popular language register in the description of their situation “to get by on it with the boys and her husband” [om met de jongens en *d’r* man [my italics] rond te komen (ibid.)]. Further the narrator converses with the reader behind the character’s back – a conversational situation that is simulated by the many rhetorical questions and a repetitive “stel je voor” [imagine].

Imagine her asking why she was called Mrs. [vrouw] Veenendaal by everyone, and Miss [juffrouw] Veenendaal by the messenger of the burial society, and why all women from the other street, where rent was three guilders more, were called Ladies [mevrouw]? [...] Could not she then have formulated a question like ... why is Mrs. Jansen with her double thick red ribbon sitting in the first rows of the congregation and I with my greasy blew lace only on the last bench?

[Stel je voor dat ze vroeg waarom ze vrouw Veenendaal genoemd werd door iedereen, en Juffrouw Veenendaal door de bode van het begrafenisfonds, en waarom alle vrouwen uit de andere straat, waar de huur drie gulden hooger was, mevrouw werden genoemd? [...] Zou ze dan niet een vraag hebben kunnen formuleren als volgt... Waarom

zit mevrouw Jansen met een dubbel dik rood lint om vooraan in de congregatie en ik met een vette blauwe veter om mijn hals in de achterste bank (Werkverschaffing, 9-10)?]

At first sight the above seems to render Mrs. Veenendaal's thoughts, but through the way in which the beginning passage is imbedded in the beginning of the story, it is clearly marked for the reader as something of a mental exercise, instigated by the narrator and meaning something like: if Mrs. Veenendaal had been educated, this kind of questions and reflections might have come up in her mind.

Subsequently the text moves on to a genuine free indirect speech, whereby the thoughts of Mrs. Veenendaal sitting in the church, are reproduced: "At last Sjaantje still was a child, although she now took care of the other boys." [Tenslotte was Sjaantje nog maar een kind, al paste ze nou op de andere jongens. (Werkverschaffing, 11)] Yet immediately after this, the narrator steps backwards again and pursues his argumentation: "If Mrs. Veenendaal had been at school, she would have known that it was about the 'idée divine' and the 'idée satanique' [Als vrouw Veenendaal een muloopleiding had gehad, had ze geweten dat het over de idée divine en de idée satanique ging. (ibid.)] In other words it looks as if the narrator continuously wants to disturb the reader's illusion that he is reading the thoughts of the characters. He does so also by inserting narrative comment in the transition from the passage about Mrs. Veenendaal to the one about her husband Kees, a passage that could easily have been presented as a sort of camera turn:

Kees cannot hear her thoughts. He has his own thoughts anyway, and can miss hers. It is a miserable thing, this Roman Catholic Union, Kees thinks. If you ask a plain question, they make a fool of you, as if you are completely mad to ask that.

[Kees kan haar gedachten niet hooren. Hij heeft trouwens zijn eigen gedachten, en kan de hare missen. Het is met die roomsche bond ook geen pest gedaan, denkt Kees. Als je iets gewoons vraagt, zetten ze je even voor piet snot, alsof je hardstikke mesjokke ben om daar mee aan te komen (Werkverschaffing, 12).]

The narrator is quite expressively present with direct comments on the characters and with a critical social point of view, so that one wonders why this text has been called "evoking objectivity".

Sometimes focalisation is also panoramic in what Ter Braak would have called a filmic technique with the result that the actions of

the two main characters performed at two different locations can be described in one and the same sentence: “When Kees is walking up the alley with his fishing rod ahead, his wife takes her Sunday dress from the clothes hanger.” [Als Kees met zijn hengel vooraan in de steeg loopt, haalt zijn vrouw d’r zondagse japon van het houtje (Werkverschaffing, 18).]

On the other hand this novel contains passages that really strike the reader as typically *nieuw zakelijk*. A clear example is the description of Kees’ first day in Jipsuma:

Today Kees starts in Jipsuma. With the spade. The spade is sharp, shining steel. About four seconds are needed to stick the spade into the clay, and to throw a clod of clay over the edge of the ditch. Almost five thousand times a day the spade glides into the clay. One foot steps on the side of the spade. The muscles of the arms harden. The clay flows over the edge.

[Vandaag begint Kees in Jipsuma. Met de spaai. De spaai is scherp, blinkend staal. Zowat vier seconden zijn er nodig om een spaai in de klei te steken, en een kluit kleigrond over de rand van de greppel te gooien. Bijna vijfduizend keer per dag glijdt de spade in de klei. De voet treedt op de zijkant van de spade. De spieren van de armen harden zich. De klei vliegt over de rand (Werkverschaffing, 29).]

The mentioning of numbers and the description of the act as a mechanical one, not executed by humans but by their separate limbs, attain such a sober effect. However in the following passage the style radically changes:

It takes Kees eleven seconds to stick a spade and throw the clay away. It is a motley crew, the sixty diggers. God’s free nature? Did you say that? That nature is to be seen in a park or on a Sunday afternoon walk. But then dinner so pleasantly sinks to your intestines and your little boy talks about the cows. Here God’s free nature is the stubborn layer of clay that must be stabbed out.

[Hij [Kees] doet elf seconden over een spade steken en weggoeien. Het is een raar zoodje, de zestig gravers. God vrije natuur? Zei u dat? Die is te zien in een park of ’s Zondagsmiddags als u wandelen gaat. Maar dan zakt het eten zoo lekker naar uw dikke darm en praat uw kleine jongen over de koeien. Gods vrije natuur is hier de weerbarstige laag klei die afgestoken moet worden (Werkverschaffing, 30).]

Here the narrator even goes so far as to push the reader into the role of the rich, because he wants to emphasize the misery of the clay diggers.

We can see that there is a strong narrator's voice in this text, a clearly present narrator who sympathises with the poor and repeatedly criticises the rich, who immediately appeals to the reader (e.g. with rhetorical questions), anything but "objectiviteits suggererende" devices. Measured by the 'objectivity effect' it really surprises that this text has ever been called *zakelijk*. Apparently some passages with short sentences, a few numbers and the suggestion of a quotation from a newspaper or document suffice to evoke the impression of a *nieuw zakelijke* text. And most probably also the subject matter, the economic crisis, has played a role in the attribution of this qualification.

### *Harten en brood*

Now we come to *Harten en brood* (Kuyle 1933), which is just like 'Werkverschaffing' a story about the crisis in the thirties. At the center is the family Janssen, consisting of rather clichéd characters. Father Jansen and son Peter do manual labor and live under a constant threat of dismissal. Daughter Mary works as a housemaid in a rich bourgeois family and son Willem is the opposite of Peter. Willem is an intellectual who would like to go to college. Literary criticism called this text 'tearful' ['larmoyant'] (Ter Braak 1949: 141) and even referred to it as a collection of "manifests that seem to be copied for convenience's sake from some Roman Catholic nutcracker" [manifesten, die voor 't gemak uit een of andere Roomsche Notenkraker schijnen overgenomen (Coster 1947: 69)]. However, the way in which Kuyle smuggles the narrator's point of view into the narrative is more sophisticated than the reviews might suggest.

This novel also includes some typically *nieuw zakelijke* passages. It is "a filmlike novel, told in a beautiful language and at a pace that nears the speed of the '10 P.K.' by Ehrenburg" [een boek-als-een-film, prachtig van taal en met een tempo, dat de vaart van de "10 P.K." van Ehrenburg bijna nabij komt] was to be read in a catholic literary history book (Van Oldenburg Ermke 1935: 152). Ter Braak even criticised the novel for its 'Ehrenburg-style', when he had read about the nervous atmosphere that marks the company described in it:



This is a threatening beast that nobody has seen. It sneaks from one department to another. It scratches its sharp claws on the heads of those in charge, and puts a shy fear in the eyes of all who see their daily bread endangered.

In Manchester family Smith buys a new carpet, and their radio gets a new pair of bulbs. Late in the evening tired people listen to the dancing music from the Savoy hotel. Sometimes they hear the stock market list, a shrill and inarticulate scorn for the simple outsider.

[Dit is een dreigend beest dat niemand heeft gezien. Het sluipst tusschen de eene afdeeling en de andere. Het trekt zijn scherpe krabben over de koppen van die wat te zeggen hebben, en zet een schuwe angst in de oogen van allen die hun brood in gevaar zien.

In Manchester koopt de familie Smith een nieuw vloerkleed, en hun radio krijgt een nieuw stel lampen. Laat in den avond zitten moede menschen met secuur geveegde voeten op het kleed, en ze luisteren naar de dansmuziek uit het Savoy-hotel. Soms komt er een rijtje beurskoersen doorheen, een scherpe en onverstaanbare hoon voor den eenvoudigen buitenstaander. (*Harten*, 66)]

But just like in ‘Werkverschaffing’ the narrator comments explicitly, for instance on the outer appearance of the characters. The company owner is compared to a worker: “The flesh is rosier, not so hard and dense, and under his chin begin the rolls of fat, close together like the rolls of a stage wig.” [Het vleesch is roziger, niet zoo hard en dicht, en onder zijn kin begint de genoegelijke groei van wat spekwalletjes, dicht opeen als de rolletjes van een tooneelpruik (*Harten*, 26)] There is also a dialogue between Janssen and his son Peter, presented scenically, which is rounded off with a narrator’s comment: “This is part of the cheerful conversation between Jansen and Peter.” [Dit is een gedeelte uit het opwekkende gesprek van Jansen en Peter (*Harten*, 16).]

And in the same way as in ‘Werkverschaffing’ contrasts convey a critical viewpoint. *Harten en brood* opens with a description of nature, dew and mist, and is interrupted after a few sentences by a narrator’s comment, wondering if it is still worthwhile to write a novel, now that life is feverishly hurrying on and newspapers reveal all the facts of life. Next the author uses his typical contrastive technique and brings into relief the romantic dew with all that morning dew can mean for poor people: “Dew, dew, dew, dew belongs to roses and to roses belong happy people. But when dew drops over the tramp lying in the verge, the dew has become a moist misery, and when getting up the man looks for a place the dew cannot reach.” [Dauw, dauw, bij dauw hooren rozen en bij rozen gelukkige

menschen. Maar als de dauw over de zwerver valt die aan de wegberm ligt, is de dauw een natte ellende geworden, en opstaand, ziet de man rond naar een plaats waar de dauw niet komen kan (*Harten*, 8).]

However, there are many passages in which the narrator smuggles his vision into the text in a more indirect and subtle way, e.g. in descriptions. Breakfast of the working father and son is described as follows: “Nice sandwiches, with no filling” [Fijne boterhammen met niks (*Harten*, 16)], before they resume work in their “fine factory” [fijne fabriek (*Harten*, 17)]. The point of view revealed by the descriptions is not always ironic or critical, but can also betray empathy for the characters, when they are poor people: When Jansen undresses before going to bed he is described as “a little factory worker, who doesn’t look rude and crude anymore. An old child in a sleeping suit, completely tired out.” [een fabrieksmannetje, dat heelemaal niet ruw en onbehouwen meer lijkt. Een oud kind in een hansop, dat zich veel te moe heeft gemaakt (*Harten*, 13).]

In addition, a biased organization of the story material betrays a specific point of view e.g. in the following enumeration of all the activities that the rich lady Willy has in front of her:

At eleven she is at the breakfast table, and then there is no spare half hour any more. She must go to the hairdresser or she must go shopping. She must have lunch at home or somewhere else. She must drink tea at home or somewhere else. She must play tennis and ride horseback twice a week.

[Om elf uur zit ze aan het ontbijt, en dan heeft ze verder geen half uurtje meer vrij. Ze moet naar de kapper of ze moet boodschappen gaan doen. Ze moet thuis of ergens anders gaan lunchen. Ze moet thuis of ergens anders thee drinken. Ze moet tennissen en tweemaal in de week paardrijden. (*Harten*, 125)]

Also bringing out the contrast between the rich and the poor, a device Goedegebuure (1992: 30ff) already pointed at, is often used in this novel to express the narrator’s viewpoint. A good example is the following scene in the graveyard:

The graveyard is so mild as life has never been, and it is so sadly sincere in its way of commemorating. The rich lie under their heavy stone. [...] And the poor, they lie on the edge of the field, where the streamlets carry off their secrets to the ditch.

[Het kerkhof is zoo mild als het leven nooit was, en het is zoo droevig eerlijk in zijn manier van gedenken. De rijken liggen onder hun zware

steen. [...] En de armen, zij liggen aan de rand van den akker, waar de kleine waterloopen hun geheimen wegdraven naar de sloot (*Harten*, 61).]

Another subtle way of presenting the narrator's view is by way of irony: irony slips into passages that render thoughts or memories of the characters. Mr. Van Duin, so the reader is told, has difficulties to remember what "a colossally great amount" [een allemachtige hoop] of money eight hundred guilders formerly actually was:

Except when he sees children. When he sees children play or meets them in the street with their mothers. Because of his childhood, which is still clear to him. The terrible sorrow that some children had a real leather horse bridle with bells, and that he always had to knit one on a reel.

[Behalve als hij kinderen ziet. Als hij kinderen ziet spelen of met hun moeders in de straat tegenkomt. Want zijn kindertijd, die is nog helder voor hem. Het schrikkelijke verdriet, dat er kinderen waren met een echt paardentoom van leer met bellen, en dat hij er altijd een moest breien op een klosje (*Harten*, 59).]

Even when a character comes to speak in direct speech, it is not always rendered in a neutral way. The credibility of his or her words is undermined, because through the text and context the reader has become acquainted with the disapproval of the narrator. In the following example Van Duin says:

Well, gentlemen. Of course we can discuss this topic with satisfaction, but our conversation does not show many prospects. This does not concern an accelerated speed or shrinking of activities. It is simply a matter of new machines. Of better machines that are so bloody well constructed that we can safely miss half of our hands.

[Tja, heeren. We kunnen er natuurlijk met genoeg over praten, maar er zit niet veel perspectief in ons gesprek. Het betreft hier immers geen kwestie van versneld tempo, of van inkrimping van de werkzaamheid. Het is een doodgewone zaak van nieuwe machines. Van betere machines, die zoo verduiveld goed in elkaar zitten dat we er veilig de helft van het personeel bij kunnen missen (*Harten*, 117).]

Van Duin's direct utterances are ridiculed by the context in which they are situated. When his sister dies, Van Duin says: "Time cures all things", at first sight a neutral utterance in this context. This proverb is used again twice in the narrator's text, each time as the introduction to a new paragraph. By the third time it has shifted into a cynical

comment by the narrator: “Time heals all things. If not with lovingness and compassion, then with callosity and money”. [De tijd heelt alle wonden. Is het niet met teederheid en mededoogen, dan is het met eelt en geld (*Harten*, 59).]

### Free indirect speech

The most complex mixing up of narrator’s and character’s text and viewpoint occurs in passages with free indirect speech. This is by definition a narrative mode in which the boundary between narrator and character is blurred. Kuyle’s narrator uses this camouflage area to hide his personal interventions.

The novel *Harten en brood* displays the same flexibility of viewpoint and focalisation as the short story. After the explicit comment by the I-narrator: “Nevertheless I will write a novel” [Ik zal toch een roman schrijven (*Harten*, 7)] the visible, extradiegetic narrator introduces the character Jansen, who is sitting on his chair and looking around: “Maybe he looks, but sees something else. Something that is not right. Willem for instance, [...] Yes, Willem knows what he wants. He works wearing a white collar, and, after all, this is something they have never gotten around to. Not he and not Peter.” [Misschien kijkt hij wel, maar ziet hij iets anders. Iets dat niet op het plaatsje is. Willem bijvoorbeeld, [...] Ja, Willem weet wat hij wil. Die werkt met het boord om, en dat is ten slotte toch iets waar zij nooit aan toe gekomen zijn. Hij niet en Peter niet (*Harten*, 9).] It seems that we are dealing here with a transition to internal focalisation, more specifically to a quoted monologue, that continues over more than one page.

That’s impossible, such differences within a family. One worker lives differently from another, and for a gentleman there is no room. For a boy who has his nose so high in the air that he can’t see the ground, and always wants to study further. Headmaster he wants to become, and therefore he constantly works. Not that he [Willem] is indolent to Jansen, but there is no cordiality in his behaviour.

[’t Was niks gedaan, zoo’n verschil in de familie. Een arbeider leeft anders dan een ander, en voor een mijnhéér is er geen plaats. Voor een jongen die het hoog in de bol heeft, en altijd maar dóór wil leeren. Hoofd wil ie worden, en daar werkt hij alsmaar voor. Niet dat hij

tegen Jansen beroerd is, maar er zit geen hartelijkheid in (*Harten*, 10).]

The mentioning of ‘Jansen’ in the last sentence does not fit in a free indirect speech that renders the thoughts of the character Jansen. Therefore what should have been written is: Not that he is indolent to *him* [Niet dat hij tegen *hem* beroerd is]. The just quoted thoughts (and also the rest of this page) however could very well be those of father Jansen. Yet in the sentence “Not that he is indolent to Jansen,…” there is another focalisation at work which seems to appropriate the thoughts and language of Jansen. Where regular free indirect speech renders the thoughts and words of a character in a mixed mode (partly with characteristics of direct, partly of indirect speech), this mixed mode is used here to evoke the impression of touching the thoughts of the protagonist, while in fact it betrays a far reaching empathy by the narrator. At that moment in the story there even is no character present who could serve as a carrier of these thoughts.

Somewhat later these thoughts, represented as those of Jansen - although they cannot be his - pass into thoughts or utterances of Peter. Then we move again to Jansen’s thoughts, and further to the thoughts of the mother:

They still do sleep together, the boys, but Peter is damn well refusing to say goodnight, when Willem doesn’t do so first. [...] So was their relationship more or less. Sometimes things went a little better, but that was because Willem just tried to be cooperative for a while. When they were about to play cards, for a moment arguments were kept off. And when mother had begged and pleaded with them again to preserve peace. That worked for a little while. But more because of mother, than because of them being really peaceful. Since mother was troubled herself because of those differences between her very own children. It stabs you in the heart, if you see one cry who is right anyway, and you can’t admit that he is right. Because Mrs. Jansen also knew that Willem’s good brains were not that brilliant. Really, she was clever enough to know that if Peter had had the chance, he would have done as well at least. But then, they didn’t regard Peter as very talented at school.

[Slapen doen ze nog wel bij mekaar, de jongens, maar Peter verdomd [sic] het wel te rusten te zeggen als Willem het niet eerst zegt. [...] Zo was de verhouding ongeveer. Soms ging het een beetje beter, maar dan was het omdat Willem probeerde mee te doen. Als ze aan het kaarten sloegen, dan was de ruzie even uit de lucht. En als moeder ze weer eens gebid en gesmeekt had om toch de vrede te bewaren. Dat hielp even. Maar meer om moeder, dan omdat er werkelijk vrede was.

Moeder zat er immers zelf óók mee in, met dat verschil tusschen haar bloed-eigen kinderen. Dat doet je immers de doodsteek aan, als je er een ziet huilen die gelijk heeft, en je kan hem geen gelijk geven? Want vrouw Jansen wist ook wel dat die knappigheid van Willem zoo'n vaart niet liep. Ze was heusch slim genoeg om te weten, dat als Peter de kans gekregen had, hij het er zeker zoo goed zou hebben afgebracht. Maar ja, in Peter zagen ze op school nooit veel (*Harten*, 11).]

With a sentence like “Because Mrs. Jansen also knew ...” the stream of the character’s thoughts is interrupted by the narrator’s opinion, but at the same time the mixed narrative mode is maintained, because “knappigheid” (good brains) sounds like an expression coming from the mother.

This remarkable narrative style, introducing a narrator who presents a story as if he gives the floor to a character - using a free indirect speech mode - is also seen in other moments and by way of other techniques. At the beginning there is a passage, in which Peter is speaking: “Much ado about nothing, says Peter. As if these folks cared for the church. It was all about a hot meal, and nothing else, says Peter.” [Kouwe drukte, zegt Peter. Alsof het de lui om de kerk te doen was. 't Ging om bikke-cement, en om niks anders, zegt Peter.] Then follows the sentence: “Peter says everything here in the house. Father and mother and Marie don't say much. And Willem only says that he can't talk to a fool, an idiot.” [Peter zegt hier in huis alles. Vader en moeder en Marie die zeggen niet veel. En Willem zegt alleen dat hij met een gek, met een dolleman niet kan praten (*Harten*, 21).] All characters that are potential speakers or thinkers of the sentence “Peter says everything here in the house” have been mentioned in the preceding scene. Moreover, these sentences come at a moment in the story when there is nobody present who could have said or thought such a sentence. Again, it is the narrator, who so to speak disguises as one of the characters speaking. Again, this effect is created by way of some of the characteristics of free indirect speech used here: the deictic “here” (“Peter says everything *here* [my italics] in the house”), the use of interjections, as is for instance the case in the opening sentence of the third chapter: “Jansen and Peter are standing at their looms. *Well*, they have time to think now.” [Jansen en Peter staan aan hun getouwen. Die hebben *nou* de tijd om na te denken (*Harten*, 22).], the use of typically colloquial repetitions: “Now it looks as if this Frits, *this Mister Frits* [my italics] isn't such a stupid boy at all...”

[Nu lijkt het wel alsof die Frits, *die meneer Frits*, toch niet zoo'n domme jongen is,...” (*Harten*, 25).]

So we can conclude that the novel *Harten en brood* contains two kinds of free indirect speech: (1) the conventional form, rendering a character's thoughts, for example in: “He has always given them what belonged to them, and it is not his fault that that is not much. Otherwise he has always given them freedom. Always.” [Hij heeft ze altijd gegeven wat ze toekwam, en dat dat niet veel is, daar kan hij niks aan doen. Voor de rest heeft hij ze altijd vrij gelaten. Altijd (*Harten*, 23).] These are words of the owner of the Mega-factory who is speaking to his son after a discussion about how the workers are treated. (2) In a second type of free indirect speech, which is characteristic of the very novel by Kuyle, the narrator tells the story in this very same mode, however without having a character stand behind these words. In this way Kuyle evokes someone who is articulating the thoughts of the characters, the voice of a narrator. This also seems to me an explanation for the fact that this novel so intensely uses free indirect speech, much more in fact than there are situations in which characters appear.

This fading of a narrator's and character's viewpoint have a counterpart in the seemingly unproblematic fading of the narrator's position outside and inside the fictional universe, a specimen of metalepsis. The narrator in *Harten en brood* directly addresses one of his characters. When Jansen gets fired at the end of the story, the narrator says:

This is not a man anymore. This has become a completely aimless human being. The factory threw him out. He can't go back in that building of fast living.... Run slowly, Jansen, run slowly. You are not in a hurry anymore. Why do you want to get home so fast? You are a drowned man, you have inhaled gas.”

[Dit is geen man meer. Dit is een volkomen doelloos mensch geworden. De fabriek wierp hem uit. Hij mag niet meer terug in dat gebouw van het snelle leven [...] Loop zachtjes, Jansen, loop zachtjes. Je hebt nu geen haast meer. Waarom wil je vlug thuis zijn? Je bent verdronken man, je hebt gas binnen gekregen (*Harten*, 71).]

But at other places the narrator also leaves the fictional universe and directly addresses the reader: “They don't invest in factories and they don't buy shares that can plummet one of these days. Oh no, they contrive it much more shrewdly. You have already run through all

these new estates, at the outskirts of town, haven't you?" [Ze steken hun geld niet in fabrieken en ze koopen er geen papieren voor die vandaag of morgen kelderen en je droog zetten. O neen, die leggen dat véél verstandiger aan. U is toch wel eens door al die nieuwbouw heen gelooopen, aan de rand van de stad (*Harten*, 139)?]

Although Kuyle's novel generally is not counted among the hard-core *nieuw zakelijke* literature, several contemporary reviews often connected him to the lightening example *10 PK. Het leven der auto's* by Ilja Ehrenburg. If we take a short look at such a hard-core *nieuw zakelijk* novel, for instance *8.100.000 m<sup>3</sup> zand* by M. Revis (1932), we see that many of these characteristics, even if not with the same intensity, can be found in that novel too. Revis does not actualise objectivity as the absence of any narrator's comment or by restricting himself to the outer appearance of characters or to external focalisation. Rather Revis's novel also stages an extradiegetic, visible narrator, who comments, directly addresses the reader, and does not take a distanced or detached position. He also makes clear his ironical viewpoint, emphasising social problems, as the following example shows:

Fortunately the Child Protection Law van Houten is not valid yet, so that the children can help, they spud up weed. A cow eats grass. Of course. Shouldn't a cow eat? The children spud up weed. Of course. Aren't children hungry anyway? Hunger is the best sauce, and God blesses the poor; if there is a shortage, he makes it up, if not with bread, then with mercy.

[Gelukkig is de kindernet-van-Houten er nog niet, de kinderen kunnen dus meehelpen, ze wieden gras. Een koe vreet gras. Natuurlijk. Een koe moet toch vreten? De kinderen wieden gras. Natuurlijk. Kinderen hebben toch honger? Honger is de beste saus, en God zegent de armen; als er tekort komt, legt Hij wat bij, is het geen brood, dan toch genade (*Zand*, 11).]

And he does this more often, also by directly addressing the reader, as is illustrated in the next example. At that particular moment the entrepreneur Van Dool has accepted another commission to dig a ditch. The text describes the moment as follows: "Van Dool was elated. In the same year he accepted still another such commission. Profit f 830. Dear reader, this meant that there was one entrepreneur more in The Netherlands." [Van Dool was in de wolken. Hij nam in hetzelfde jaar in Heibroek nòg zulk een sloot aan. Winst f 830.



Waarde lezer, dit betekende, dat er een ondernemer meer was in Nederland (*Zand*, 15).]

The objectivity effect is not reached by narratological devices, aimed at detachment, but the impression of sobriety and cool calculation is rather evoked by mentioning numbers in the text:

Suzanne and Kees van Dool came to love each other, just love, and it was a love for life, that lives so solidly in your heart as your own flesh is your body. More, dear reader, I won't say about this, because the title of this writing is 8.100.000 M<sup>3</sup> of sand.

[Suzanne en Kees van Dool kregen elk ander lief, eenvoudigweg lief, en het was een liefde voor het leven, die zoo hecht woont in je hart als je eigen vleesch je lichaam is. Meer, o lezer, zal ik hierover niet zeggen, want de titel van dit geschrift luidt: 8.100.000 m<sup>3</sup> zand (*Zand*, 18).]

It is striking how the numerical data is introduced just at those moments where the narrator tries to avoid an emotional turn in the story, the cool numbers serve as a contrast to emotive subjects. This contrasting can be considered a literary transposition of film montage. Another example: "Once I have seen the mute, desperate eyes of a horse, when the tram had ruled over its legs above the hoofs. A horse costs f 300 tot f 600." [Ik heb eens de stomme, wanhopige oogen van een paard gezien, toen een tram het de voorpooten boven de hoeven had afgereden. Een paard kost f 300 tot f 600 (*Zand*, 27).] Emotional events are not withheld, but countered by sober announcements in figures.

Also the pure rendering of characters "from the outside" (Ter Braak) is not maintained here. As a reader we do get to know what Kees van Dool thinks and feels and what Suzanne is thinking of when she has seen an artist.

## **Conclusions**

When we look how the pursuit of objectivity in *nieuw zakelijk* prose takes shape on the narratological level, we find this happens in a complex and paradoxical way. Not only comments by a narrator can indeed be found, partly implicit comments in the orchestration of the data, like Goedegebuure observed, but also explicit comments, in

direct forms of address to the reader, in rhetorical questions and by way of irony.

Moreover it also turns out that the requirement that the narrator should not slip in between the reader and the object, a common opinion in the discourse on *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* can hardly be satisfied. The description Marsman gave of *zakelijke* novels, namely that they give an “objective, impersonal, *zakelijk* account, as by a reporter” doesn’t hold up. What Menno Ter Braak found, namely that the ‘epigones of Ehrenburg’ exclusively looked at the “filmic outside” doesn’t seem to have become practice either, not even with someone like M. Revis. And neither can one insist that *Harten en Brood* is completely composed of filmic effects, if this means (as in the article ‘Ehrenburg maakt school’) to render the “filmic outside”. The interpretation of the concept *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* in literature has become more and more complex. A narratological analysis, combining attention to focalisation and to the narrator’s viewpoint can help us to interpret this type of novels in a new way.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Anne Marie Musschoot: “It still remains a controversial point, whether the well-known work from the thirties, the short novels *Blokken*, *Knorrende beesten* and *Bint* are or are not representative of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*.” [Het is nog steeds een omstreden vraag, of het bekende werk uit de jaren dertig, de korte romans *Blokken*, *Knorrende beesten* en *Bint* [...], nu al dan niet representatief is voor de nieuwe zakelijkheid (cit. Grüttemeier 1999: 334).]

<sup>2</sup> See: Constant van Wessem, Het moderne proza III. In *De Vrije Bladen* 6 (1929), 327-328 (cit. Van den Toorn 1987:48).

<sup>3</sup> Cit. Van den Toorn 1987:41.

<sup>4</sup> Cit. Grüttemeier 1995:40.

<sup>5</sup> “gestische, beobachtende Schreibweise” (Becker 1995:21).

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