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Claire Polders

Eternal Fairground

Original title: *Eeuwige kermis*

NOVEL

Novel about the decline of a typically Dutch village.

About the author

Claire Polders studied humanities and philosophy at Tilburg University and at the Sorbonne in Paris. She made her debut in 2005 with the novel *The Infallible*. Then, in 2006, *The Disappearance of Eva Zomers* appeared. De Geus published the novel *Salto Mortale* in 2008. Claire lives and works in Paris.



About the book

After leaving secondary school, Julia Hollander turns her back on family and friends. She wants to be free to travel and make documentaries. Her terminally ill father and his decision to commit suicide on a set date force Julia to return.

To her disgust, the ‘lowest lying village in the Netherlands’ of her youth is undergoing a metamorphosis. It threatens to become a banal mix between open-air museum and amusement park. Julia manages to get the villagers to support a plan to save what is dear to them. In doing so, she gets to know both herself and her father, whom she has failed to understand until now.

Claire Polders, *Eeuwige kermis*
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The press

On *Salto Mortale*:

‘After a few pages it is already obvious that the five women are being observed by a very gifted and accurate writer. [...] What an elegantly written novel.’ – *nu.nl*

‘Fascinating novel about mothers and daughters and how to deal with freedom and anxiety.’ – *Margriet*

‘****’ – *Opzij*

‘Intriguing novel with in depth analysis of women and their group behavior.’ – *De Standaard*

On *The Infallible*:

‘Once I picked up *The Infallible* I couldn’t put it down. I read it in one breath. Why was it so enthralling? Two incredible main characters-both mysterious, yet with a strange familiarity.’ – *Henk Pröpfer*, director of the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature

‘*The Infallible* is an admirable achievement. Claire Polders’ first novel is an intriguing, serious and ambitious work... everything a great debut is supposed to be!’ – *Leidsch & Haarlems Dagblad*

‘*The Infallible* captures the heart and mind! A stirring story with a philosophical edge. A very strong debut. I would be astonished if Claire Polders disappears into oblivion.’ – *Metro*

‘Her fashionable début is a story for all times.’ – *GPD-newspapers*

‘Polders knows how to kidnap the reader’s attention!’ – *NBD/Biblion*

‘*The Infallible* is an intelligent novel about morphing identities and people who are not what they think or pretend to be.’ – *SP!TS*

On *The Disappearance of Eva Zomers*:

‘She clearly shows that she has storytelling abilities which she combines in an – for the young generation of Dutch writers – exceptional way with philosophical wisdom and a talent for depicting characters. So go and read this!’ – *ELLE*

‘A mysterious and beautifully constructed coming-of-age novel about writing, friendship, imagination & reality.’ – *Brabants Dagblad*

‘She wrote a novel that keeps me thinking.’ – *De Groene Amsterdammer*

‘Fascinating content [...] a beautiful story [...] a worthwhile read.’ – *BLVD*

‘Once again an ambitious novel, once again the urge to ask philosophical questions and once again she is not embarrassed to show she has knowledge of Camus and other existentialists.’
– *Leidsch Dagblad*

‘Polders has planned her idea thoroughly: she quotes from the work of a fictitious author, designs a website to suggest the author’s real existence and refers to the fake writers literary production in the bibliography in the back of the book. No coincidence, because the imagination is one of the novel’s main themes.’ – *de Volkskrant*

Excerpt from the book

Before Julia Hollander left Paradijssel, she had never taken clock time seriously, as was normal in her family. The village church clock had been broken all her life and the bells were only rung to announce Sunday mass and to spread the news about weddings and births. The beginning or end of something was never decided beforehand. A concert would burst into tune once the room was full, ending when the musicians had had enough. It was the same with Mr Leeghwater’s lessons, a conversation in grocer’s shop De Wit or a village meeting. For the villagers, it went against the grain to go to bed at a set time; and having sex at a specific time was completely absurd according to them. Those who had had no lustful feelings, or had had their hands full with their children’s grazed legs at the weekend, were not in the least bit concerned if they made love to their sweetheart on Monday morning instead. Even if it meant that customers or colleagues would have to wait a little.

On the other hand, villagers who too often put their own interests first (selfishly taking up the time of others) were called to order. That was the corrective effect of the principle of reciprocity. Those who depended on each other’s services always took the other person into consideration.

Town’s people thought it barbaric there were no set meal times in Paradijssel and that shops opened and closed at what seemed like random points in time. A civilised society required regularity in order to protect people from idleness. However, the inhabitants of Paradijssel worked until the work was finished and some days this took longer than others. No lack of work ethic there. The villagers worked so completely according to a natural rhythm that everyone was tuned to everyone else. The school children trickled into school at a different time each morning, yet they did not have to wait long for each other because they were used to getting up when the dogs barked, and the dogs started up when paperboys pushed the morning newspaper through the letterbox. Any variation in this moment was therefore entirely due to the amount of news: the more there was to report, the later the newspaper rolled off the press and the later school began.

Nevertheless, no one was naive enough to think they could get time to stand still by disregarding it – the hours passed whether counted or not – but their existence without clocks gave them the ability to live at their own pace.

Some inhabitants smuggled in watches and wore them because to do so was *en vogue*. Julia had only started to conform when she left the village. Anyone wanting to function in the outside world had no choice. And although she looked at a dial only when she had appointments, even *she* could not escape a certain amount of agitation. It was the oblivion to

time she had known in her youth that Julia had missed the most over the last few years. Nowhere else was the silence of the clock so silent as at home.

Translated by Christine Davies
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