ACTUAL FICTIONS

Literary Representation and Character Network Analysis

Roel Smeets
Radboud University
Actual Fictions

Literary Representation and Character Network Analysis

Elements in Digital Literary Studies

DOI: 10.1017/9781009180788
First published online: July 2022

Roel Smeets
Radboud University

Author for correspondence: Roel Smeets, roel.smeets@ru.nl

Abstract: This Element sheds new light on the ubiquitous yet complex notion of mimesis. By systematically comparing the social dynamics of the Dutch population at a given time with the social dynamics of characters in Dutch literary fiction published in the same period, it aims to pinpoint the ways and the extent to which literary fiction either mirrors or shapes the societal context from which it emerged. While close-reading-based scholarship on this topic has been limited to qualitative interpretations of allegedly exemplary works, the present study uses the data-driven tools of social network analysis to systematically determine the imitative elements of the social dynamics of characters within larger-scale, representative collections of books of literary fiction.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/smeets

Keywords: Dutch literature, character network analysis, mimesis, digital humanities, social network analysis

© Roel Smeets 2022

ISBNs: 9781009180795 (PB), 9781009180788 (OC)
ISSNs: 2633-4399 (online), 2633-4380 (print)
## Contents

1. Introduction 1
2. Novel Divides: Characters and People 12
3. Novel Connectivity: Female Characters and Women’s Emancipation 33
4. Conclusion 59

References 64