

Kellendonk, Frans (1951–90), Dutch author. Franciscus Gerardus Petrus Kellendonk was born in Nijmegen into a Catholic family. He studied English at the university in his home town, where leftist and Catholic right battled each other. In 1971 he met his lifelong best friend. He visited Birmingham and London as a student. After he received his MA from Nijmegen, he moved in 1975 to Amsterdam, where he made a living by teaching English and translating novels. In 1977, his first novel, *Bouwval* (*Ruin*), was published. The following year with friends he founded the literary journal *De Revisor*, devoted to an academic kind of literature. The same year *De nietsnut* (*The Good-for-Nothing*)

was published, followed by *Letter en geest* (*Letter and Mind*, 1982) and *Namen en gezichten* (*Names and Faces*, 1983). His major work, *Mystiek lichaam* (*Mystical Body*), appeared in 1986. He continued to translate and wrote several major essays. He taught Dutch for one year in Minneapolis and travelled extensively in the US. His life in Amsterdam was of an astonishing regularity; almost every night at the same hour he visited a certain gay pub to have a drink and some small talk. He died of AIDS, and his burial service was a requiem celebrated by barefoot Carmelite monks.

Mystical Body is a very academic novel about a Dutch family. The father is an avaricious rack-renter. The gay son lives in New York and makes a fortune in the art world. The daughter, whose name indicates stupidity, is coming home from Switzerland to give birth to a baby. She is not married to the father, a Jewish doctor. After the art market has crashed, the lost son also comes home. The family is unhappy together once more. The plot of the novel is a comparison of procreative heterosexuality and barren homosexuality. The world of women and reproduction makes the world proceed, while gay aesthetics are at best a funny side-show. A disease that already killed the lover of the son will also kill him. Stereotypes of straight and gay, the family and the Jew, are played out with great ingenuity. While the daughter bears a baby from an unbeloved father, the gay son is absolutely sterile. Straight equals life; gay equals death. As could be expected, the novel raised a storm of protest in the Netherlands, in particular because it was taken to be anti-Semitic. Something similar could have been said about the gay theme, but the point was not raised, probably because the author was himself gay. In the end, all commotion was suppressed because the novel, it was said, did not support, but played on, racism.

In 1992, the complete works of Kellendonk appeared in one volume. *Mystical*

Body is still the most important AIDS-novel in Dutch, although the name of the disease is not mentioned. It offers an early example of a postmodern perspective turned conservative, that looks, with some ambivalence, for a return to the eternal values of Catholicism.

Jacob Groot (ed.), *Frans Kellendonk 1951–1990*, special issue of *De Revisor*, vol. 18, no. 1/2 (1991).

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