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***Special issue***

**Seventy-five years after the end of World War II:  
Looking back, being in the pandemic present**

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF NETHERLANDIC STUDIES  
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Cover photo: War memorial *De verwoeste stad* ('The Destroyed City') (c. 1947-51) in Rotterdam, Netherlands, by sculptor Ossip Zadkine (1890-1967). Photograph and copyright by Vincent Mentzel. Reproduced with permission.

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## From the editor

*Krystyna Henke*

This special issue of *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies/Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises* focuses on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War and includes a number of associated themes. For many in the Netherlands, this past year's Liberation Day on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May and the National Commemoration Day on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August were of particular significance. Unfortunately, the pandemic forced yet another reckoning, despite the prospect of a vaccine, holding society in a chokehold in which the enemy, although not a military force, presented nonetheless a mortal threat. Planned events for 2020 were mostly cancelled due to Covid-19 mitigation measures. Adapted activities took their place.

This issue contains five original articles and a series of book reviews written by scholars from various countries. To begin with, the article by Theo Boer about ethical considerations concerning Covid-19 care in the Netherlands points to emerging issues, such as age discrimination, in the face of scarce medical resources. Jennifer Foray applies the notion of liminality in her discussion of the pandemic-imposed difficulties of commemorative ceremonies and the implications of the end of the Japanese occupation in what at the time were the Netherlands Indies. Based on Beb Vuyk's stories, Paul Doolan illuminates the colonial and postcolonial existence, as well as the fact that the end of World War Two was actually the beginning of the colonial war in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Bettine Siertsema's article looks at Dutch fiction that incorporates the hiding experience during the war years. Finally, Jurjen Zeilstra writes about a secret wartime communication route, the Swiss Road, which was led by W.A. Visser 't Hooft on behalf of the Dutch government in exile in London.

This issue also presents various book reviews that include relevant titles about fascism, the hiding experience, or even monuments. The cover photo of this issue was taken by the Dutch photographer Vincent Mentzel of the commemorative monument *The Destroyed City ('De verwoeste stad')*, which is located in Rotterdam and was created by sculptor Ossip Zadkine. With arms stretched out to the heavens, the bronze figure symbolizes the obliteration of Rotterdam after the

city's aerial bombing by the German *Luftwaffe* ('air force') in 1940 that led to the surrender of the Netherlands.

I am much obliged to Vincent Mentzel for his permission to use his photograph. A journal clearly does not get put together by itself. Thus, I would like to express my immense gratitude to Inge Genee and Daniel Henke Tarnow for creating the layout and the page proofs. Similarly, I am beholden to Tanja Collet for the French translations. My thanks also go to the authors and reviewers, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers. Without their efforts this issue would not have materialized. I hope the resulting content will not only substantially contribute to discussions about war, peace, the Holocaust, authoritarianism, colonialism, imperialism, independence and resistance, but also add to considerations concerning the historiography of the Second World War and what it actually means to commemorate its end after three quarters of a century. I think about the words of Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer (2000) who emphasized that the suffering and the existence of a single individual must not get lost and be ignored in the abstract knowledge of the annihilation of millions of people and that it was up to historians to address this dichotomy, this dual perspective of what he called, "the unfathomable abstraction of the millions of dead and the tragedy of individual life and death in the time of extermination" (14). This issue attempts to heed his call.

Toronto, December 2020

## Reference

Friedländer, Saul. 2000. History, memory, and the historian: Dilemmas and responsibilities. *New German Critique* 80: 3-15. doi:10.2307/488629.

## De la part de la rédaction

*Krystyna Henke*

Ce numéro spécial de la Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises/Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies est entièrement dédié au 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale ainsi qu'à un certain nombre de sujets connexes. Pour beaucoup de gens aux Pays-Bas, cette année, le Jour de la libération, célébré le 5 mai, et le Jour national du souvenir, célébré le 15 août, revêtaient une importance particulière. Malheureusement, cependant, nous nous sommes trouvés aux prises avec un nouvel ennemi, non militaire cette fois-ci, à savoir la pandémie de la COVID-19 qui, malgré l'espoir d'un vaccin, tenait tout de même la société en otage tout en la menaçant d'un danger mortel. Bon nombre des événements déjà planifiés pour 2020 ont dû être annulés à cause des mesures prises contre la crise sanitaire. Ils ont souvent été remplacés par des activités adaptées aux nouvelles circonstances.

Ce numéro renferme cinq contributions originales ainsi qu'une série de comptes-rendus soumis par des chercheurs de divers pays. Il y a tout d'abord l'article de Theo Boer concernant les considérations éthiques sous-tendant les soins de santé prodigués aux patients souffrant de la COVID-19 aux Pays-Bas et la problématique, par exemple, de la discrimination liée à l'âge qui se pose dans le contexte d'un manque de ressources médicales. Jennifer Foray utilise le concept de liminalité dans son examen des difficultés posées par les célébrations commémoratives en pleine pandémie, d'une part, et des implications de la fin de l'occupation japonaise des anciennes Indes Orientales Néerlandaises, de l'autre. À l'aide des récits de Beb Vuyk, Paul Doolan évoque l'existence coloniale et post-coloniale, et souligne tout particulièrement que la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale marqua, en fait, le début de la guerre coloniale en Indonésie. Bettine Siertsema, quant à elle, se livre à une analyse des textes néerlandais de fiction qui se penchent sur la thématique de l'hébergement clandestin des Juifs durant les années de guerre. L'article de Jurjen Zeilstra, enfin, traite d'un canal de communication secret, la Route suisse, qui avait été établi, durant la guerre, par W. A. Visser 't Hooft à la demande du gouvernement néerlandais en exil à Londres.

Ce numéro compte également plusieurs comptes-rendus de livres examinant des sujets connexes, allant du fascisme à l'expérience des Juifs cachés, et traitant même de monuments. La photo de couverture de ce numéro a été prise

par le photographe néerlandais, Vincent Mentzel, et représente le monument commémoratif *La ville détruite* ('De verwoeste stad'), qui se trouve à Rotterdam et a été créé par le sculpteur, Ossip Zadkine. Les bras tendus au ciel, la figure en bronze symbolise la destruction de la ville de Rotterdam par la Luftwaffe ('force aérienne') allemande en 1940, bombardement aérien qui mena à la capitulation des Pays-Bas.

Je suis très reconnaissante à Vincent Mentzel d'avoir permis à la RCÉN de reproduire sa photo. Publier une revue ne se fait évidemment pas tout seul. Je tiens à remercier vivement Inge Genee et Daniel Henke Tarnow qui se sont chargés de la mise en page et des épreuves. À Tanja Collet, qui a effectué les traductions françaises, j'offre également ma profonde gratitude. Je suis, de plus, infiniment reconnaissante envers les auteurs des articles et des comptes-rendus ainsi qu'envers les évaluateurs anonymes, car sans leurs efforts, ce numéro n'aurait pas vu le jour. J'ose espérer que ce numéro enrichira non seulement les réflexions sur les thèmes de la guerre, la paix, l'Holocauste, les pratiques autoritaires, le colonialisme, l'impérialisme, l'indépendance et la résistance, mais contribuera aussi aux discussions concernant l'historiographie de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et ce que cela signifie au juste de commémorer la fin de cette guerre après trois quarts de siècle. Je pense ici aux paroles de Saul Friedländer (2000), historien de la Shoah, qui souligne que la souffrance et l'existence d'un seul individu ne peuvent être oubliées ni ignorées dans le cadre du savoir abstrait de l'extermination de millions de personnes et qu'il revient aux historiens de surmonter la problématique posée par cette dichotomie : la double perspective émanant de ce qu'il appelait « *the unfathomable abstraction of the millions of dead and the tragedy of individual life and death in the time of extermination* » ('l'abstraction insondable des millions de morts et la tragédie de la vie et de la mort d'un seul individu au temps du génocide') (14). Ce numéro tente de répondre à cet appel.

Toronto, décembre 2020

## Référence

Friedländer, Saul. 2000. History, memory, and the historian: Dilemmas and responsibilities. *New German Critique* 80: 3-15. doi:10.2307/488629.

## Van de redactie

*Krystyna Henke*

Dit speciale nummer van *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies/Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises* richt zich op de 75-jarige herdenking van het einde van de Tweede Wereldoorlog en een aantal daarmee samenhangende thema's. Voor velen in Nederland was zowel de Bevrijdingsdag op 5 mei alsook de Nationale Herdenking op 15 augustus dit afgelopen jaar van bijzondere betekenis. Maar helaas werd men ook geconfronteerd met de pandemie, waardoor ondanks het vooruitzicht op een vaccin, de maatschappij opnieuw in een wurggreep werd gehouden waarbij de vijand weliswaar geen militaire macht was, doch evenzeer met de dood dreigde. Geplande evenementen in 2020 werden grotendeels afgelast vanwege de nodige coronamaatregelen. Aangepaste activiteiten kwamen daarvoor in de plaats.

Deze uitgave bevat een vijftal originele artikelen en een reeks boekrecensies geschreven door wetenschappers uit diverse landen. Om te beginnen is er het artikel van Theo Boer over de ethische overwegingen in verband met de coronaviruzorg in Nederland en de problematiek die naar voren treedt, zoals leeftijdsdiscriminatie, bij een tekort aan voldoende medische middelen. Jennifer Foray past het idee van liminaliteit toe bij haar bespreking over de complicaties van een herdenking tijdens de pandemie, alsook de implicaties betreffende het einde van de Japanse bezetting in het toenmalige Nederlands-Indië. Aan de hand van de verhalen van Beb Vuyk belicht Paul Doolan het koloniale en postkoloniale bestaan en het feit dat het einde van de Tweede Wereldoorlog juist het begin was van de koloniale oorlog in Indonesië. Het artikel van Bettine Siertsema bespreekt de Nederlandse fictionele literatuur die de ervaringen van het onderduiken tijdens de oorlogsjaren als thema heeft. Tenslotte schrijft Jurjen Zeilstra over de onderleiding van W.A. Visser 't Hooft staande geheime communicatieroute, de Zwitserse Weg, ten behoeve van de tijdens de oorlog naar Londen uitgeweken Nederlandse regering.

Verder biedt dit nummer een verscheidenheid aan relevante boekrecensies. Er zijn besprekingen over boeken die het fascisme behandelen, maar ook die over onderduiken of zelfs standbeelden gaan. De omslagfoto van dit nummer is afkomstig van de Nederlandse fotograaf Vincent Mentzel en is van het herdenkingsmonument *De verwoeste stad* dat in Rotterdam staat en door de

beeldhouwer Ossip Zadkine is gemaakt. Dit bronzen beeld van een figuur met naar de hemel uitgestrekte armen herinnert aan het bombardement op Rotterdam en diens vernietiging door de Duitse *Luftwaffe* ('luchtmacht') in 1940, hetgeen de Nederlandse overgave ten gevolge had.

Ik ben Vincent Mentzel enorm erkentelijk voor de toestemming die hij heeft verleend om zijn foto te kunnen gebruiken. Een blad wordt duidelijk niet zomaar in elkaar gezet. Daarom zou ik ook Inge Genee en Daniel Henke Tarnow van harte willen bedanken voor het verzorgen van de layout en de proefdrukken. Voor de Franse vertalingen ben ik Tanja Collet zeer dankbaar. Ook aan de schrijvers van de artikelen en de recensenten, alsook de anonieme peer-reviewers wil ik hierbij mijn dank betuigen. Zonder hun inzet zou dit nummer niet zijn gerealiseerd. Ik hoop dat de inhoud van het gebodene niet alleen een inspirerende bijdrage zal leveren aan de discussies over oorlog, vrede, de Holocaust, autoritaire praktijken, kolonialisme, imperialisme, onafhankelijkheid en verzet, maar dat het ook leidt tot verdere overwegingen omtrent de historiografie van de Tweede Wereldoorlog en wat het nu eigenlijk betekent om na driekwart eeuw het einde ervan te herdenken. Ik denk hierbij aan de woorden van Holocaust geschiedkundige Saul Friedländer (2000) die benadrukte dat het lijden en bestaan van een enkel individu niet genegeerd moet worden, noch verloren mag gaan in de abstracte kennis van de uitroeiing van miljoenen mensen en dat het de taak was van historici om deze dichotomie te verhelpen, een tweedeling bestaande uit wat hij noemde, "*the unfathomable abstraction of the millions of dead and the tragedy of individual life and death in the time of extermination*" ('de onmetelijke abstractie van miljoenen doden en de tragedie van het leven en de dood van een individu ten tijde van de vernietiging') (14). Dit nummer tracht hieraan gehoor te geven.

Toronto, december 2020

### **Bronvermelding**

Friedländer, Saul. 2000. History, memory, and the historian: Dilemmas and responsibilities. *New German Critique* 80: 3-15. doi:10.2307/488629.

## **Covid-19 and the Dutch context: Some ethical comments**

*Theo Boer*

The Covid-19 pandemic has unknown political, economic, cultural, and ethical ramifications. Even with the hope for an effective vaccine soon being realized, countries will continue to experience the pandemic's impact for years to come. The most important ethical problems can be described in terms of finding a balance between opposite concerns: keeping the economy going versus protecting vulnerable people; individual freedom versus governmental regulations; protecting the elderly in nursing homes versus providing companionship; and privacy versus monitoring public health.

Many of these problems will be found in any country that is seriously affected by Covid-19. Without pretending to be exhaustive, this article looks at some ethical issues that are specific to the Netherlands. Although it seems to have weathered the pandemic reasonably well, there are at least four developments that are cause for concern in the Netherlands: (1) arguments for using age as a criterion in the event of insufficient availability of intensive care beds may undermine the sense of self-worth of the elderly; (2) such age-discrimination brought on by scarce Covid-19 care resources may be connected to initiatives to offer senior citizens assistance with suicide; (3) the temporary suspension of euthanasia in Covid-19 times may be indicative of the limited urgency of euthanasia; (4) financial support for Dutch businesses suffering from economic damage is in contrast with the position of the Netherlands regarding the European Union's attempts to be in solidarity with heavily stricken countries.

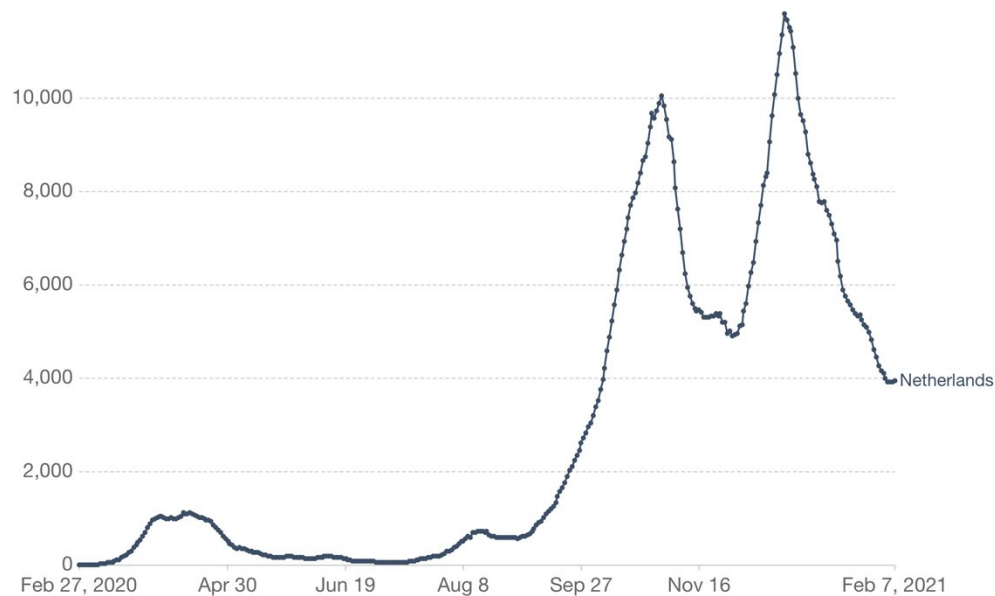
Key terms: euthanasia; MAiD; assisted dying; assisted suicide; Covid-19; coronavirus; pandemic; Netherlands; ethics; elderly people; age discrimination.

## 1. Introduction

In the spring of 2020, the Netherlands went into what nationally became known as an “intelligent lockdown,” combining strict guidelines about hygiene and social distancing with a minimum of state-enforced rules. Although there was an appeal to behave responsibly and to stay at home, people did not need special permission to leave their homes or to travel. Public events and most air traffic were cancelled, train frequencies reduced, schools and public buildings closed. Thanks to a highly developed digital network – the Netherlands ranked number three worldwide in digitalization in 2018 (Kepinski 2018) – digital meetings and classrooms could be joined from almost any household in the country. The initial exponential increase of infections in March 2020 was followed by a decrease in the months to follow. After many of the public health measures were reversed in June, the country saw an increase in infection rates that culminated in a second wave in the fall of 2020, as can be seen in Figure 1. (Some of the high numbers in the fall of 2020 compared to those in the spring can be explained by the limited testing capacity in the early months, causing many Covid-19 cases to go unreported. See the ICU admissions in Figure 2.)

### Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data – Last updated 8 February, 09:02 (London time)

CC BY

Figure 1. Number of new Covid-19 infections. [ourworldindata.org](https://ourworldindata.org).



## 2. Ethical aspects

Ethical dilemmas connected to the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to be found in other affected countries as well. They can be described in terms of finding a balance between:

- keeping the economy going and protecting vulnerable people;
- individual freedom and government regulations;
- protecting elderly people in nursing homes from becoming infected, and providing them companionship and care;
- privacy and monitoring public health.

During the pandemic's early months, the United States' federal government chose to emphasize the first part of the balance, reflecting a concern with individual rights: the economy, individual freedom, and privacy. Italy, Spain, France, and Belgium chose to highlight the second part of the balance, the more community-centred elements, whereas countries such as Sweden, and the Netherlands with its "intelligent lockdown," along with Germany, are somewhere in the middle. Making an ethical, cultural, and socioeconomic appraisal at the end of 2020 is premature; the vaccine remains a promise, we are still knee-deep in the pandemic, its long-term effects are unknown, nor is there empirical certainty about how all these factors are connected to ethics, anthropology, and politics.

This article has therefore an explorative character. I will limit myself to four ethical themes that have prompted discussion in the Netherlands: access of elderly patients to an intensive care unit (ICU), discussions about euthanasia for healthy persons aged seventy-five or older, suspension of the access to euthanasia, and international solidarity. Given how current the topic is, most of my sources are taken from media reports.

### 2.1. Access of elderly patients to the ICU

In March 2020, the number of hospitalized patients and patients admitted to intensive care units rose rapidly. The Netherlands has a relatively low number of IC beds *per capita*: whereas the average is 10 beds per 100,000 inhabitants in the European Union (EU) and 30 in Germany, the Netherlands has only 6 beds (1,500 beds for 17 million inhabitants). By the end of March, Dr. Gommers, chairman of the Dutch Association of Intensivists, predicted that the need could climb as high as 2,500 beds within a week, which was about 40% higher than the ICU's maximum capacity at the time (Nieuwsuur 2020a; NOS 2020a). Part of the reason for the exponential surge was not only the increase of Covid-19 patients, but also the fact that these patients were found to require a much longer stay. Efforts were made

to reach a level of 2,400 units, and neighbouring Germany admitted dozens of Dutch patients to their ICUs. The fear was that in the event of a continuing increase even all those measures would be nowhere nearly enough to accommodate need. Discussions began about the “black scenario” of having to turn patients away. In an op-ed in *De Volkskrant*, ethicists Marcel Verweij and Ronald Pierik defended the prioritization of younger patients (Verweij & Pierik 2020). Apart from a medical argument – younger and fitter patients have better chances of recovery than elderly people; prioritizing them is a more efficient use of scarce medical care resources – they invoked a “fair share” principle: “for [people in their twenties] dying is a much more serious loss than for people of fifty years and older: they have had fewer opportunities to live their lives.”

The authors received much criticism on social media. Ethicists Fleur Jongepier and Karin Jongsma wrote a more thorough critique (Jongepier & Jongsma 2020). The prioritization of younger patients, they argued, can never be seen in terms of a *bona fide* moral argument. Triage is and remains a tragedy; prioritizing younger and fitter patients may at best be “the best of two indescribable moral evils.” Verweij and Pierik’s piece suggests that it is “acceptable” to sacrifice the elderly to save younger people. Seventy-five years after the end of World War II, triage was back on the national agenda.

In the months that followed, the worst-case scenario did not materialize. The increase of IC admissions levelled off and top-occupancy was reached on April 7, with 1,311 Covid-19 patients occupying most of the beds in the ICUs. Whereas this stabilization can no doubt be explained by the measures taken to contain the virus, two other factors may also have been relevant. First, following the discussions and fuelled by images from ICUs in Italy, there was increased public awareness of the miseries of an ICU stay and of the high mortality rate among elderly people and persons with comorbidity (Van de Wier 2020). In addition, there was an associated need for extensive, long term and expensive recovery. In a radio discussion, the 66-year-old retired intensivist Paul Lieverse indicated that he would decline admission to an ICU since he would likely come out “as a wreck” (NPO1 2020). Lieverse named another argument that came closer to Verweij and Pierik’s article: “Do I want to take the place of a young person who has a much better chance of surviving and getting out of it?” Although he added that this was his personal preference, his line of reasoning and those of others may have led to people refraining from seeking admission to the ICU (Boer & Lieverse 2020).

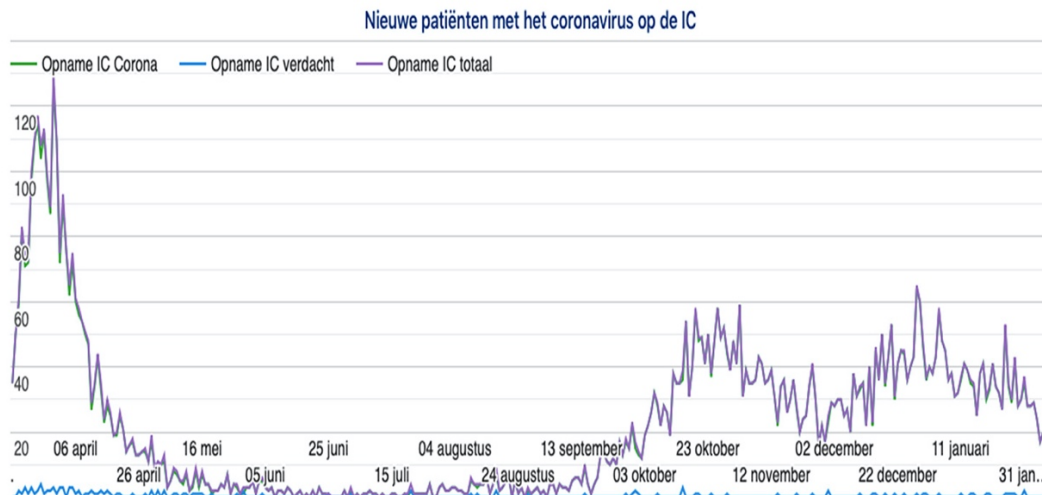


Figure 2. New patients infected with coronavirus in the ICU.

<https://allecijfers.nl/nieuws/statistieken-over-het-corona-virus-en-covid19/>

Although the number of ICU admissions continued to drop (see Figure 2), discussions about the plausibility of using age-related criteria continued, partly in anticipation of the expected second wave later in 2020. In a discussion broadcast on radio, journalist and influencer Jort Kelder was the first to be openly critical of attempts to save elderly people: “We are now rescuing people over eighty who are overweight and who are smokers. That sounds harsh, but statistically this is what is going on” (Mediacourant 2020). Two weeks later, columnist Marianne Zwagerman advocated a rationing of scarce health care resources based on age (Zwagerman 2020). Her argument was that Covid-19 is primarily an “old-age disease” and old people are, as a matter of course, supposed to die. Zwagerman used the term “dead wood” for elderly people and added, “Do you know what is worse? That people die as a juicy twig.” She faced enormous criticism, while the hashtag #doodhout (‘dead wood’) trended for some time. Despite the public outcry, age continued to be debated as a decision criterion under conditions of extreme resource scarcity. In June 2020, the Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) propagated it in a protocol for prioritization on ICUs in case of a second wave. The position is that in the event of resource scarcity, medical professionals and younger people should be prioritized (KNMG & Federatie Medisch Specialisten 2020). The Dutch minister of health Martin van Rijn responded that he could not support the passage about age prioritization (Van den Dool 2020), but on July 25, Dr. Gommers repeated his claim that age selection is what doctors will and should do: “In the ICU, we would really rather choose a 16- than a 70-year-old” (Nieuwsuur 2020b).

Notwithstanding new insights regarding how to effectively treat Covid-19 patients, the second wave in the fall of 2020 once again led to large numbers of hospital admissions and ICU admissions. Anything is possible: in the end, perhaps the dreaded black scenario will become a reality. I therefore choose to insert a normative-ethical remark here. As Jongepier and Jongsma argue, triage is never unproblematic, and one can only sympathize with doctors who insist that physicians in an ICU face dire circumstances and that ethicists and politicians should allow them some leeway to make their own decisions. Nevertheless, I would argue that age is unfit as a decision criterion, since it involves an element of “desert”: people other than the patients make a normative assessment about who “deserves” a chance to live more than others. When it comes to less consequential choices, desert may have to play a role, but when it comes to life and death, the risk (or for that matter the appearance) of “playing God” is too close for comfort.

There are other criteria that can guide us; there, age plays a more modest role: the criterion of medical success will favour younger patients, since they will normally have the best chances of recovery. But this should suffice: a “fair share” criterion brings unwarranted value judgments into the discussion. Furthermore, such evaluative judgments are questionable for practical purposes: who is to decide that Mr. Smith at age 74 has had a fairer share of life than Mr. Jones at 37 years of age? What if Mr. Smith, after a life of bad luck, unemployment and grief, has recently found the love of his life? What if young Mr. Jones has always been the fortunate one, travelling around the world, lucky with women, but never counting his blessings?

In order to avoid any appearance of partiality, the medical chances of success should be at the centre. In the unlikely event of a choice between patients with identical medical prospects, rolling the dice will probably be the morally most modest alternative.

## *2.2. Discussions about euthanasia for any elderly person*

Demearing remarks heard in the Netherlands about elderly people stand in sharp contrast to practices found in Mediterranean countries, in which the oldest generations often form the heart of a family. Images from hospitals in Northern Italy contributed to the impression that in some countries anything will be done to rescue a Covid-19 patient, irrespective of age. It is noteworthy that in Italy a patient’s right to refuse treatment was legalized as late as 2017 (Povoledo 2017). By contrast, a similar right has existed in the Netherlands for decades and can be overruled only if the patient is incompetent.

Non-treatment decisions have since long formed a key element in the fabric of Dutch thinking. It started in 1969 with the pamphlet *Medical power and medical ethics* by the Leiden psychiatrist Jan Hendrik van den Berg (Van den Berg 1969). With the help of photos of patients who were enduring heartbreaking suffering, Van den Berg argued that advances in medical technology have led to more and better treatment options but also to much suffering. His thinking was that doctors should not only practice restraint in treating patients with a poor prognosis, but they should also have the courage to actively end a patient's life. Van den Berg, a liberal Christian, published his book through an orthodox Christian publisher, and his view was not only adopted by the general public, but even by the Protestant Church in the Netherlands in 1972, little short of the nation's state church at the time (Boer & Groenewoud forthcoming). The book saw at least twenty reprints.

In the decades that followed, the view that physicians may have to end the lives of their patients, at their request, became one of the most well-known features in Dutch politics. It led from a Ministerial Agreement in 1985 to not prosecute euthanizing doctors if they had fulfilled a number of criteria via a makeshift law in 1994, to a fully-fledged euthanasia law in 2002. This Euthanasia Act, the first of its kind in the world, was followed by Belgium, Colombia, and Canada. Unlike in Canada, the Dutch Act does not contain the criterion that an unavoidable natural death must be reasonably foreseeable. The years after 2002 saw a tripling of the numbers and an expansion of the pathologies underlying a euthanasia request, so as to include early-stage dementia, advanced-stage dementia, psychiatric illnesses, and various disabilities (Boer 2020).

From the outset, one particular group of citizens felt ignored by the medical focus of the Euthanasia Act. In 1991, former vice-chairman of the Supreme Court Huib Drion published an opinion article in a leading newspaper, entitled, "The self-desired end of elderly people" (Drion 1991). Drion suggested that the availability of a suicide pill would be a relief for many elderly people filled with horror at the prospect of an endless old age. But the times were not ripe; not even traditional euthanasia had been legalized. Once that happened ten years later, the minister of health, Els Borst, put as a new point on the horizon the legalization of euthanasia for "tiredness of life," later referred to as "completed life" (Oostveen 2001). The increase of public support for the idea resulted in a "Completed life-petition" in 2010. It petitioned the Dutch parliament to legalize assisted dying on the basis of a life that is considered completed. A governmental committee advised in 2016 against such a law, arguing that it could carry unwanted side effects, such as a message sent to the elderly that society can do without them (Adviescommissie voltooid leven 2016). A separate law was deemed redundant: not only is the demand probably small, but also most of those who

consider their lives completed suffer from one or more medical conditions that would make them eligible for euthanasia under existing law. Governmental plans to proceed towards a Completed Life Act were put on hold after a government coalition change in 2017, in which two Christian-democratic and two liberal parties joined hands. Another research report, published in early 2020 and focusing more intensely on the precise demand for euthanasia in patients with a completed life, draws similar conclusions as the 2016 study (Commissie Van Wijngaarden 2020).

The liberal coalition partner D66 nevertheless announced that it would soon present an initiative bill. It was expected in March 2020 (NOS 2020b). With some months' delay due to Covid-19, D66 spokesperson Pia Dijkstra announced a draft-bill giving any Dutch citizen of 75 and older a state-facilitated and conditioned right to assistance in suicide (Bremmer 2020). Many reactions to the law's proposal were emotional and parallels were drawn to how elderly people are affected disproportionately by the Covid-19 pandemic. Publicist Tonnie van der Honnekreek sees continuity between what she considers the government's failure to protect elderly people in nursing homes from the virus, and the Completed Life Act: "Under the watchful eye of the Minister of Health, the virus was allowed to take its course among the frail elderly" (Van der Tonnekreek 2020). She calls the proposed law "yet another attack on the 70-plus generation."

Arguments for state-facilitated assisted suicide for any elderly person thus form a red thread in Dutch discussions over the past three decades. In my view, they have had an enormous impact, even without a law being passed.<sup>1</sup> The fact that in the past mainstream political parties such as Prime Minister Mark Rutte's liberal VVD, Dijkstra's D66, as well as the Social democrats and most of the members of the Green Party have supported the idea, may have impacted the self-understanding of many elderly people and undermined their self-esteem. In the Netherlands, a person reaches retirement at the age of 67 and can expect some eight years in relative health and prosperity. When a healthy person of, say, 70 years of age has a serious death wish, they are referred to the suicide prevention hotline "113" and are offered social and psychiatric help. Should the government, when that same person is five years older, offer to facilitate their suicide wish? Despite the compassion of the initiators of the law for the suffering of elderly people, I am afraid of considerable collateral damage. If the law is accepted in parliament, society in effect sends a message to anyone over 75 that

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<sup>1</sup> Personally, I think the law's high-water mark occurred in 2016; since that year, voices from all sides – not only religious, but also including secular, Humanist, and liberal people – have unanimously criticized the idea. It is my impression that the odds that a Completed Life Act will be supported by a parliamentary majority in the Netherlands are low.

they are no longer worth fighting for and that it can be rational to kill yourself. From that age on forward, society can do without them.

The acceptance of the high Covid-19 mortality rate in nursing homes, together with the arguments to use age as a criterion to allocate scarce resources on ICUs, may have a link with the anthropology that lies behind plans to facilitate a suicide pill for persons 75 years of age and older. Both come dangerously close to contempt for the intrinsic value of elderly people.

### *2.3. Suspension of euthanasia*

The following discussion of two other ethical issues connected to Covid-19 in the Netherlands will focus on the suspension of euthanasia services by some caregivers and the role of the Dutch in a European context.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, in the Netherlands the only dedicated clinic providing euthanasia and assisted suicide, the Euthanasia Expert-Centre (formerly known as the End of Life Clinic), suspended all euthanasia procedures in mid-March 2020. The Centre's website indicated that existing procedures had been put on hold and new patients were no longer being admitted. The Centre, which in 2019 alone provided euthanasia to 898 patients suffering from cancers, psychiatric problems, early-onset dementia, and accumulated age-related complaints, made an exception only for those expected to die soon and those who might soon lose their capacity for decision making, and for patients to whom euthanasia had already been promised (and only in the presence of a very limited group of family members). "Special circumstances force us to take these inevitable steps," an announcement on the Centre's website read. The Centre wanted to protect its workers, many of whom are retired physicians, from being infected (Expertisecentrum Euthanasie 2020a, 2020b). Its statement concluded: "However bitter, euthanasia care cannot be identified as a top priority in healthcare."<sup>3</sup> Although no numbers are available yet, there are signs that even euthanasia provided by regular physicians has decreased in frequency.

The assertion that euthanasia is not a priority health care issue is an unusual and, in my view, painful admission.<sup>4</sup> Euthanasia is generally believed to be

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<sup>2</sup> The Expert Centre's suspension of euthanasia services in the Netherlands, as well as similar developments in Canada, are discussed in Boer and Yuill (Forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> In Canada, health authorities said that MAiD (Medical Aid in Dying) is being cut back along with other "elective services." Two areas in Ontario suspended the provision of assisted dying for the same reasons. British Columbia and Nova Scotia temporarily amended some of their MAiD rules in a bid to expose fewer health-care professionals to the risk of becoming infected with the coronavirus (Grant 2020).

<sup>4</sup> In fact, it is so extraordinary that the Centre has deleted its earlier webpage: in a later version the reference to euthanasia not being a top priority is absent.

necessary as a last resort to prevent unbearable suffering. To suspend this because of the danger of infection means that those who perform euthanasia no longer believe their service is that necessary; otherwise, why not brave the risk and despatch suffering patients? Steven Pleiter, the director of the Centre, stated earlier that “if the situation is unbearable and there is no prospect of improvement, and euthanasia is an option, it would be almost unethical [for a doctor] not to help that person” (De Bellaigue 2019). In Canada, Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) is even deemed a human right. This suspension thus is in stark contrast to other forms of essential health care. Cancer treatment, for example, continued to receive the highest possible priority and was not suspended. Furthermore, hospice services continued their vital service to the dying despite the higher risks of contagion for care personnel than those performing euthanasia. It is true that the use of palliative care declined: at the peak of the first Covid-19 wave, the use of palliative beds had dropped by about 12% (Eijrond 2020). But this is not due to a reduced supply of palliative beds, but rather because patients and their relatives preferred palliative care at home where there are fewer limitations to visiting them. There are no reports of hospice closures in the Netherlands.

It may be too early at this point to come to any solid conclusions, but responses to the Covid-19 pandemic suggest that the need for assisted dying may be abstract rather than practical, and ideological rather than medical. In early discussions on the topic, euthanasia started out as an ultimate solution to an unavoidable horrible death. In present times, with high level palliative care available in both the Netherlands and Canada, assisted dying is less about preventing a terrible death – most people die peaceful deaths through the assistance of palliative staff – than about preventing a dreaded life. People may fear a loss of control and find the prospect of others caring for them, or living with intense feelings of loneliness and alienation, terrifying. The Euthanasia Expert Centre’s remark that “euthanasia-care is not a top priority in health care” suggests that there may be other solutions to unbearable suffering, rather than death.

Through the media, the Covid-19 pandemic brings the reality of death, the necessity of caring for others and being cared for by others into our living rooms, making the preciousness of all lives and the tragedy of all deaths real. We see the humanity of the elderly and frail; no longer are they burdens to be eliminated from this world but victims of a horrifying disease against which all of us are enlisted. This awareness may have formed the background for Dutch columnist Maxim Februari’s criticism of the decision of the Supreme Court to acquit a physician who euthanized a patient with advanced dementia: “[N]ow I suddenly understand why I think it is an unwise decision: it expresses a pre-corona view of life” (Februari 2020).



#### 2.4. *International solidarity*

Covid-19 has also played an important role in relations within the European Union. Prior to the pandemic, the Netherlands had a comfortable surplus concerning both the trade balance and the national budget. In 2019, the national debt as a percentage of the GDP was, for the first time since 2008, below 50% (whereas Italy had a percentage of 138%) and a further decrease was expected in 2020 (Business Insider 2020). At the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020, Minister of Finance Wopke Hoekstra announced a large-scale financial support program for businesses: “Our pockets are truly very deep and I am willing to empty them entirely” (De Witt Wijnen 2020). In 2020 alone, the Dutch government is poised to have subsidized the economy with close to 100 billion Euros without getting into dire straits.

Yet, the way the Netherlands is acting on the European stage reveals a completely different attitude from this national solidarity displayed at home. Several European countries that were hit hard by the first Covid-19 wave, notably Italy and Spain, were already experiencing considerable budgetary problems. At the July 2020 EU-summit in Brussels, under the presidency of Germany, the most important point on the agenda was the proposal of the European Commission to establish a 750-billion-euro fund, to be distributed among the countries and sectors most impacted by the pandemic and taking the form of grants and loans. Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte led the so called “frugal four,” consisting of Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden, later joined by Finland. These countries expressed their objections to helping countries that in their eyes exercised insufficient budgetary discipline. Whereas in recent years Germany and the Netherlands were in close agreement about budgetary requirements, Germany now took a different path and advocated a more generous, “motherly” approach.<sup>5</sup> The marathon summit held over four days yielded a compromise in which the loans part was increased, while the grants part reduced. Moreover, individual countries were granted the right to veto Europe’s payments if a receiving country failed to implement the conditions.

The approach of Rutte and his four colleagues can be understood for a number of reasons. Financial donations from countries that have a strict budgetary discipline (the Netherlands has raised the retirement age to 67 years and three months) are difficult to justify if the receiving countries fail to adhere to the same (France has a retirement age of 62-64, Italy of 66). Moreover, the United Kingdom, once a powerful ally against European federalism, was no longer there to support the case and Rutte may have felt committed to take over this role. Last

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<sup>5</sup> In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel is often referred to as *Mutti* (‘mother’).

but not least, several heads of government, amongst whom Rutte himself, have to deal with increasingly influential anti-European critics (Engelbart 2020). The more willing the Dutch government is to support ailing European economies, the greater the damage in the upcoming 2021 elections may become.

Still, as a consequence of Covid-19 the Dutch reputation in Europe has suffered major damage. The country could have expressed more awareness of the fact that by being so massively dependent on trade it benefits more than many others from the European project. By playing hard ball it may have lost much of the goodwill it may need on other occasions, for example, when it comes to securing fishing rights. And last but not least, the European project is not only about rules, but also about solidarity. Finger pointing at countries that find themselves in unprecedented economic, political, and health troubles by a country that is doing relatively well may not be an expression of the European idea that is needed right now. Rutte may have saved his credibility nationally, but he has lost much of it internationally.

### 3. Conclusion

Up to now, the Netherlands seems to have done relatively well in fighting the novel coronavirus pandemic. During regular press conferences Prime Minister Mark Rutte, assisted by officials of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment RIVM, and when needed in the presence of the ministers of health and justice, has demonstrated remarkably clear leadership from early March 2020 on and well into the fall. Governmental regulations and appeals to individual freedom and responsibility proved to be a workable combination. Although we do not know if and when a third wave will come, governmental and societal responses to the corona crisis are encouraging.

Despite all this, the article explored areas that I think the global public health crisis has shown to be problematic aspects of Dutch culture. At the end of the day, has the country treated its elderly citizens with proper respect? And has the Netherlands generated sufficient solidarity with countries that have less prosperous household budgets?

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### **La Covid-19 et le contexte néerlandais : quelques enjeux éthiques**

La pandémie de Covid-19 entraîne des retombées dans les domaines politique, économique, culturel et éthique, qui demeurent inconnues pour l'instant. Même si l'espoir de trouver un vaccin efficace se concrétise, les pays continueront à éprouver à long terme les conséquences de la pandémie. Les problèmes éthiques les plus importants posés par la pandémie concernent souvent la recherche d'un équilibre entre deux pôles opposés : faire rouler l'économie tout en protégeant les personnes vulnérables, respecter la liberté de l'individu tout en imposant des mesures gouvernementales, protéger les personnes âgées, particulièrement dans les maisons de retraite, tout en reconnaissant l'importance du contact humain, et protéger la vie privée tout en surveillant de près la santé publique.

Tout pays qui est gravement touché par la Covid-19 doit faire face à ces problèmes. Sans vouloir être exhaustif, j'examinerai dans cette contribution quelques défis éthiques qui sont spécifiques aux Pays-Bas. Bien que le pays résiste relativement bien à la pandémie, au moins quatre développements sont préoccupants : (1) les plaidoyers pour le recours à l'âge comme un critère de sélection dans le cas d'un éventuel manque de lits aux soins intensifs risquent de miner l'estime de soi des personnes âgées, (2) une telle discrimination fondée sur l'âge en cas de pénurie des soins de santé liés à la Covid-19 pourrait se rapporter à des initiatives qui visent à offrir aux personnes âgées l'aide médicale à mourir ou le suicide assisté, (3) la suspension temporaire de l'euthanasie en ces temps de pandémie permettrait éventuellement de conclure que l'euthanasie n'est pas toujours urgente, (4) la solidarité nationale avec les entreprises qui souffrent à cause de la pandémie contraste grandement avec le rôle et la réputation des Pays-Bas au sein de l'Union européenne.

### **Covid-19 en de Nederlandse context: Enige ethische beschouwingen**

De Covid-19-pandemie heeft onbekende politieke, economische, culturele en ethische gevolgen. Ook als er op korte termijn een effectief vaccin gevonden is, zullen veel landen de impact ervan nog lang ervaren. De belangrijkste ethische problemen die zich hier voordoen zijn het vinden van een evenwicht tussen het draaiende houden van de economie en het beschermen van kwetsbare mensen, tussen individuele vrijheid en overheidsvoorschriften, tussen het beschermen van ouderen en het hun gezelschap bieden, en tussen privacy en toezicht op de volksgezondheid.

Veel van deze problemen doen zich voor in elk land dat ernstig wordt getroffen door Covid-19. Zonder volledig te kunnen zijn, bekijken we in deze bijdrage enkele ethische vraagstukken die specifiek zijn voor Nederland. Hoewel het land de pandemie redelijk lijkt te doorstaan, geven ten minste vier ontwikkelingen reden tot bezorgdheid: (1) pleidooien om leeftijd als criterium te gebruiken bij een tekort aan intensive care bedden kunnen bij ouderen gevoelens van uitsluiting oproepen; (2) leeftijdsdiscriminatie bij schaarse Covid-19-zorg kan verband houden met initiatieven om ouderen hulp bij zelfdoding te bieden; (3) de tijdelijke opschorting van euthanasie in Covid-19-tijden kan een aanwijzing zijn dat euthanasie niet altijd even urgent is; (4) nationale solidariteit met bedrijven die economische schade lijden, contrasteert met de rol en de reputatie van Nederland in Europees verband.

## **The liminal spaces of liberation: Remembering 1945 in pandemic times**

*Jennifer L. Foray*

Positing the year 1945 as a liminal moment in time and space, this article examines the end of the Second World War as experienced by contemporaries in the newly liberated Netherlands. Rather than serving as an unequivocally joyous moment for celebration or a “Zero Hour” signaling the dawn of a new day, 1945 constituted a transitory, fluid period, filled with uncertainty, destruction, confusion, and sadness alongside hope, optimism, and the promise of rebuilding. In the Netherlands, as in many other European nations, the year 2020 was supposed to be filled with commemorative events marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of war’s end, that is, until the COVID-19 pandemic brought daily life to a standstill in March of that year. This article argues that 2020 constitutes another liminal space, albeit for starkly different reasons than those seen in 1945. It examines a number of commemorative events able to proceed in the weeks and months before the global spread of COVID-19, focusing particular attention on the National Holocaust Commemoration held in Amsterdam in January 2020, and King Willem-Alexander’s historic visit to Indonesia two months later. In these events, I argue, we can discern motion and activity, an attempt to craft an honest appraisal of past events, informed as much by evidence and scholarship as by a sense of shared humanity and compassion. On the other hand, we can discern a powerful undercurrent of resistance and dogged pushback, marked by an unwillingness to consider alternate perspectives and contemporary realities. Taken together, these events reflect both the complex, evolutionary nature of memorial culture in the Netherlands and our current uncertainty, anxiety, and isolation engendered by the ongoing pandemic.

Key terms: Netherlands; commemoration; liberation; monuments; Second World War; Indonesia; decolonization; COVID-19; holocaust; liminality.

The year 2020 was supposed to be filled with commemorative events, whether joyous liberation festivals celebrating the end of the Second World War in Europe or solemn remembrance ceremonies honouring the millions who lost their lives during the war. Importantly, these might have been the last commemorative events to include those individuals with direct experiences of the war, as the youngest of them are now octogenarians. Like every year, the Netherlands' "commemorative season" in early May would serve as the focal point for such events, but in 2020 both large national ceremonies and modestly scaled neighborhood gatherings were expected to be bigger, more frequent, and more well-funded than in a typical year. In May of 2019, the Dutch cabinet announced that, on top of the 9 million euros already designated, it had approved an additional 15 million euros for the following year's festivities, which would bring people together to celebrate that "we live in freedom" and to commemorate the war's victims. As noted in the official press release, the country's celebration of "75 years of freedom" would begin on August 31, 2019, with the commemoration of the critical Battle of the Scheldt, which helped clear a path for the Allied liberation of the occupied Netherlands, and conclude on October 24, 2020, when the Netherlands, one of the organization's founding member states, would celebrate United Nations Day (Nationale Comité 4 en 5 mei 2019; Rijksoverheid 2019).

Instead, most of these long-planned events would fail to materialize, since, beginning in March 2020, the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, brought daily life in the Netherlands to a standstill, just as it did it throughout Europe and indeed much of the world. Large commemorative events scheduled through the late spring and summer months of 2020, as well as those planned for the fall, were cancelled, modified, or moved online. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of war's end, then, has been marked by uncertainty and disappointment, to be sure, but so too can we witness creativity, flexibility, and resilience in action. This, I would argue, is oddly fitting, especially if we consider the year 1945 as a liminal moment in time and space, neither a strictly joyous moment for celebration nor a "Zero Hour" signaling the dawn of a new era. Rather, it constituted a transitory, fluid period, filled with uncertainty, destruction, confusion and sadness alongside optimism and hope. This particular war had ended, to be sure, but the period now known as the "post-war" had begun. As such, the year 1945 constituted "neither here nor there," a liminal space and moment in time, holding out both unlimited possibilities for change and profound anxiety concerning both the present and the future (Ashcroft et al. 2000, 130-131; Bhabha 1994, 3-4; Tames 2016).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ismee Tames' work applies the concept of liminality to World War Two-era resistance activities, drawing primarily from seminal studies in both political science and anthropology. It is worth



The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in the Netherlands also had to acknowledge that 1945 signified the end of one war but witnessed the onset of yet another one. After August 1945, when Indonesian nationalist leaders proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia independent from both their Japanese wartime occupiers and Dutch colonial authorities, members of the Netherlands' newly installed provisional government prepared to send forces to restore "law and order" in the colony. Four years of military conflict interspersed with mediated negotiations and tentative agreements followed in short order. In some respects, then, and as historians such as Peter Romijn have recently argued, the Netherlands remained in a state of war for nine long years (Romijn 2017; Romijn 2020; Salm 2020).

This article examines the formative year of 1945, as viewed through the lens of our current global pandemic, which has forced a rethinking of how and why we remember this past. Focusing on a number of commemorative and memorial events that occurred both before and after the spread of COVID-19, I argue that, in 2020, we occupy a similarly liminal space as that of 1945. Our present circumstances are marked by uncertainty, confusion, ever-changing medical directives, and, increasingly, public protests against the implementation of public health measures such as mask-wearing and business closures. Meanwhile, the global death toll shows no sign of slowing in certain areas, and this as Europe and North America prepare for subsequent waves of infection lasting through the winter months and beyond.

In the weeks and months before the global spread of COVID-19, some 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary events were able to proceed in the Netherlands. But these, too, reveal the year 2020 as a kind of liminal space, with the legacies of 1945 still discussed, debated, and contested. On the one hand, we can discern motion and activity, an attempt to craft an honest appraisal of past events, informed as much by evidence and scholarship as by a sense of shared humanity and compassion. On the other hand, we can discern a powerful undercurrent of resistance and dogged pushback, marked by an unwillingness to consider alternate perspectives and contemporary realities. These two trajectories – occasionally intersecting, but often divergent or oppositional – were on display earlier this past year: first, in January 2020, during the National Holocaust Commemoration marking 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz, and then, two months later in March 2020, during King Willem-Alexander's historic visit to Indonesia. Taken together, these events reflect both

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noting, however, that postcolonial theorists and literary scholars such as Homi Bhabha employ a similar but not entirely identical understanding of the term.

the complex, evolutionary nature of memorial culture in the Netherlands and our current uncertainty, anxiety, and isolation engendered by the ongoing pandemic.

### **The promises, and problems, of 1945 for the Netherlands and its empire**

A return to “normality” remained elusive in the newly liberated Netherlands of 1945, even if some would have preferred that life resume where it left off in May 1940, when the Germans invaded and subsequently occupied the country. Nor did the events of May 1945 demarcate a clear boundary between war and peace, life and death, then and now (Lagrou 2000, 306). For one, thousands of men, women, and children who had been deported from the country languished and continued to die in German concentration and labor camps, factories, and displaced persons centers long after the formal surrender. To the east of its national borders, millions of people remained on the move, although the Netherlands did not directly experience the massive “population transfers” observed in other recently liberated and war-torn countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. The physical destruction experienced in the Netherlands was not as extensive as that seen in these eastern territories or in vast swathes of France. Such comparative observations, however, would have served as small consolation to those surveying the tremendous damage done to the country’s infrastructure, institutions, and civil society. The German surrender of May 1945 signaled the official end of military engagement in Europe, with the daunting task of rebuilding on the immediate horizon. Massive amounts of money, resources, and energy would need to be mobilized to these ends.

As an Allied nation, the Netherlands obviously did not number among the defeated, but the sheer scope of destruction reveals the tremendous price paid by the war’s winners and losers alike. Bridges, railroad tracks, schools, businesses, and hospitals had been laid to waste, while hundreds of thousands of homes had been destroyed or otherwise deemed uninhabitable. During the final months of the war, German military forces intentionally flooded Dutch land, which made approximately 11% of farms unworkable and prompted the evacuation of 200,000 civilians from these inundated areas (De Jong 1982, 1385-1390; Lagrou 2000, 101). In 1945, imports to the Netherlands – like those to the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and neighboring Belgium – stood at about half of their pre-war volume, although, as foreign aid arrived on the continent and European imperial metropolises resumed trade with their overseas colonies, this number soon rose dramatically with each passing year. Inflation, however, remained a problem: at war’s end, wholesale prices in the Netherlands stood at 150% of their pre-war level, with these prices continuing to rise to about 250% percent over the course of the next few years (United Nations Department of Economic Affairs 1948, 162,

171). Western Europe's "economic miracle" would soon bring nearly unprecedented development and prosperity to the Netherlands and other countries, but, for now, uncertainty, privation, inflation, and instability dominated everyday life. This was particularly the case for those major metropolitan areas located in the northwestern parts of the country, which had been subjected to the worst privations seen during the devastating "Hunger Winter" of 1944-1945 (De Zwarte 2019; De Zwarte 2020).

Significant as they were, these economic figures can only hint towards the tremendous sense of loss experienced by vast segments of the population at war's end. By May 1945, daily life bore little resemblance to that seen five years prior, when German forces invaded and subsequently occupied the Netherlands. As was the case elsewhere in Europe, the demographic shifts caused by war and occupation were massive. In 1945, nearly two million Dutch men, women, and children – civilians and soldiers alike, in both Europe and the Dutch East Indies colony – awaited repatriation after having been forcible relocated or evacuated, detained, or deported (De Jong 1978, 118-121, 843-844; De Jong 1982, 1392; Lagrou 1997, 206; Lagrou 2000, 101; NIOD 2020). Those able to return to the Netherlands from Germany and other destinations spoke of a chaotic and unorganized repatriation process, with Dutch agencies, officials, and infrastructure apparently unable to handle the sheer scope of this massive relief effort (Lagrou 1997, 206-208; Lagrou 2000, 92, 96-104).

With limited housing stock and supplies, returnees and repatriates occupied a liminal space, too. They were "liberated" and "freed," to be sure, but hardly reintegrated into Dutch society or able to resume what now passed for "normal" daily life. This was especially the case for those who, having survived the Germans' attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe, returned to find that their extended families, their religious communities and institutions, sometimes even their entire neighborhoods, no longer existed (Hondius 2003, 47-48; and, for Europe more broadly, Cohen 2011; Grossman 2007; Stone 2015). Of the approximately 107,000 Jewish men, women, and children who had been deported from the Netherlands to concentration camps and extermination centers located in Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, no more than 5,500 survived. An additional 16,000-17,000 survived the war in hiding in the Netherlands—and this out of a pre-war Jewish population of 140,000 (Brasz 1995, 17; Moore 1997, 146-147, 260).

As if these losses alone were not sufficiently horrifying, Jewish survivors in the Netherlands experienced both overt and covert forms of anti-Semitism as they attempted to return to the homes, neighborhoods, and jobs they had lost during the course of the war. Former colleagues and friends refused to relinquish the real estate and physical property, ranging from valuable works of art and furniture to

more mundane but no less precious family keepsakes, which they had once promised to protect. The Dutch government officially refused to acknowledge different categories of wartime victims, since, by singling out particular groups for special recognition, the state would leave itself open to seemingly limitless financial claims that would deplete the national budget at this most critical point. Postwar authorities also may have wished to avoid the appearance of re-inscribing Nazi racial policies that had differentiated between Jews and non-Jewish “Aryans” (Gans 2014, 77-81; De Haan 1997, 61-77; De Haan 1998, 204-205; Hondius 2003). These painful homecomings appear all the more so when seen against the laudatory and even preferential treatment accorded to other groups, particularly those who had belonged to the anti-Nazi resistance. Jewish survivors, then, were caught between these two realities: persecuted on account of their religious status, they could not seek redress on account of this same status. In this sense, the thousands of Jewish survivors who returned to the Netherlands or came out of hiding after “liberation” occupied a uniquely tenuous position within post-war Dutch society.

As in other formerly German-occupied countries, years would pass before semi-official death counts and rosters of wartime victims were available in the Netherlands. In the meantime, death notices and requests for further information about deported and imprisoned family members continued to appear in both national and local newspapers. Still others may have been physically present in postwar society but remained excluded from the body politic for much different reasons. Tens of thousands of former Dutch Nazis and volunteers who fought with various German military units awaited trial and punishment on account of their wartime activities. Those found guilty were typically shorn of their civil rights, passports, and access to certain professions and institutions, but they remained physically present in society even if marginalized by the taint of collaboration. The trials of wartime collaborators, which commenced with liberation and continued for the next few years, became a regular feature of post-war life and society, as did disinterment and reburial ceremonies honoring resisters and victims of German reprisal actions who had been executed and buried in shallow, unmarked graves. The war, put simply, remained a constant presence for years after liberation, just as the reconstruction and rebuilding efforts would continue for years to come.

Not only did the specter of the Second World War loom large, but the Netherlands soon embarked on another war, this time against the Indonesian nationalists who had declared their independence two days after the Japanese surrender. After May 1945, as Dutch authorities in Europe planned and initiated the formidable task of reconstruction, they also sought to return to the Netherlands’ prized East Indies colony, which had spent the last three years under

Japanese occupation. However, on August 17, 1945, a group of Indonesian nationalists led by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta declared the existence of a Republic of Indonesia independent of both its wartime occupiers and its longtime colonial rulers. Lawmakers in The Hague refused to recognize this new political entity – let alone Sukarno’s personal authority – as legitimate, and, instead, proceeded to implement their wartime plans to reestablish Dutch political, military, and economic control throughout the archipelago. For the next four years, the Netherlands remained at war with the Republic, even as Dutch political and military leaders tried to pursue a negotiated solution with their Indonesian counterparts. Over the course of this conflict, approximately 150,000 Dutch soldiers would be deployed to Indonesia, most of them conscripts. Of this number, approximately 5,000 would die in battle or as a result of illnesses and injuries sustained during the conflict. For good reason, then, as historian Peter Romijn has recently argued, “the long Second World War” came to an end only in late December 1949, when the Queen and her government formally signed the transfer of power agreement by which the Netherlands handed off political sovereignty of the archipelago to Sukarno’s Indonesian government (Salm 2020). The year 1945, then, served as the starting point for a brutal colonial war that would ultimately result in both the transformation of the Dutch empire and international recognition for the independent nation of Indonesia.

### **The 2020 commemorative season, abridged and interrupted**

If 1945 served as a liminal moment in the Netherlands, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations planned for 2020 occurred in a uniquely uncertain moment, coming between expected “waves” of COVID-19, mandatory lockdowns and travel bans, and voluntary quarantines. In spite of these conditions, however, the ubiquity of Internet-based technologies has allowed many of this past year’s scheduled memorialization events to proceed, albeit in modified form, with viewers able to watch from a safe distance on their computers, smartphones, and television screens. The National Remembrance Ceremony, held annually on May 4th’s *Nationale dodenherdenking* (‘National day of mourning for the dead’), usually consists of a service with readings and music, held in Amsterdam’s *Nieuwe Kerk* (‘new church’), and is followed by a procession to Dam Square, where representatives of the Royal Family, political parties, government agencies, organizations, and foreign governments lay wreaths and flowers at the National Monument. The portion of the ceremony held in the church is closed to the public, but the open-air ceremony outside at the National Monument typically draws an audience of thousands who, crowding into nearby side streets and alleys, observe a moment of silence along with the official participants. This year, the speeches,

readings, and music were delivered as planned, albeit in front of empty chairs in the church and in front of a nearly deserted Dam Square. Every year, the entire event is broadcast live, so that, in theory, anyone with access to a television or internet can participate. To someone watching from, say, the more remote province of Drenthe in the northeast, this year's ceremony might have looked very similar to those of years past, whereas those who planned to attend, whether in an official capacity or as members of the public, would have had an entirely different experience than expected (Nationale Comité 4 en 5 mei 2020). This National Remembrance Ceremony, then, can best be described as simply modified and adapted to public health measures, such as social distancing, with speakers and other participants calling attention to the current circumstances necessitating this altered format. The delivery medium, however, remained the same: it was an event staged without members of the public physically present, but televised as if it occurred under normal conditions.

By contrast, other scheduled events experienced a more profound transformation as organizers changed venues, cancelled planned speakers and solicited new ones, and transitioned to a virtual platform. *Open Joodse Huizen/Huizen van Verzet* ('Open Jewish Homes/Homes of Resistance,' or *OJH*) constitutes one such example: now in its ninth iteration, this program offers small-scale commemorative events held in intimate settings, such as private homes, throughout the country. Although primarily focused on "Jewish life in these houses before, during and immediately after the war," the initiative also stages such gatherings at sites of resistance and underground activity, showcasing the locations of hiding places and clandestine printing press operations, for example. According to organizers, the 2020 program was expected to be "the most extensive to date, with 27 locales and 164 addresses participating." However, with the spread of COVID-19 and the ensuing regulations meant to curb its spread, these small indoor gatherings, sometimes packing a few dozen people into a living room in order to hear accounts from now-elderly eyewitnesses, simply could not proceed as planned. Instead, *OJH* offered twelve different "stories," livestreamed from locations in seven cities and subsequently made available via the organization's Facebook page. These were accompanied by additional readings, podcasts, and videos. With this new format, a usually hyper-local event became more inclusive and accessible. In previous years, those who wished to attend these events had to carefully plot an itinerary allowing for travel time between locations. Simultaneously offered events, sometimes located in completely opposite parts of a city, ensured that participants could only attend a small sampling of the diverse events on offer, with some sites wholly or partly inaccessible to those with limited mobility. In 2020, *OJH* may have lost its intimate, neighborhood feel, but it gained a potentially much wider audience extending well beyond the selected cities. Indeed, as organizers

noted in their 2020 retrospective report, viewers tuned in from all across the country as well as from more distant locales. As such, it became a more global event than would have been possible had it been held “live” (Open Jewish Homes 2020; Open Joodse Huizen Facebook page 2020). At the same time, organizers expect that, in 2021 or 2022, *OJH* will return to the format established in pre-pandemic years: hyper-local, space-specific, and physically intimate.

A number of events that had been planned for early 2020 – that is, before the Netherlands’ “high commemorative season” in springtime – could proceed as planned, however. In late January, as the news coming out of Wuhan, China, adopted an increasingly dire and alarming tone, COVID-19 still appeared to be a regional problem, and Dutch authorities and members of the public adopted a “wait and see” approach.<sup>2</sup> In this environment, the National Holocaust Commemoration in Amsterdam was held on Sunday, January 26. Although an annual event for the last twenty-five-plus years, this year’s iteration would mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allies’ liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp and extermination center. As such, it featured an expanded guest list and program, including speeches delivered by Prime Minister Mark Rutte; Femke Halsema, the mayor of Amsterdam; and Jacques Grishaver, the chairman of the *Nederlands Auschwitz Comité* (‘Dutch Auschwitz Committee’), which has organized this annual commemorative event at this particular location since 1993.

Of these, Prime Minister Rutte’s remarks garnered the most attention. Against those who would argue that the Netherlands was a nation of valiant resisters, Rutte emphasized that, over the course of the German occupation, Dutch individuals and institutions also played a part in the murder of the country’s Jewish men, women, and children. There had been resistance, certainly, but much too little. Far too many people had remained indifferent to the suffering of others, failing to extend protection, help, and recognition to those who needed it. Still others had betrayed their fellow citizens to the German occupiers for financial incentive or looted the houses of those who had been deported to their deaths. To these ends, Prime Minister Rutte offered his official apologies for the Dutch government’s role in the Holocaust. This was a historic admission of guilt, with

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<sup>2</sup> I was in Amsterdam at the time, since I was participating in the “Welke ‘VOC-mentaliteit’? Over koloniale ideeën, toen en nu” (‘Which “East Indies Company mentality”? About colonial ideas, then and now’) event hosted by the Spui 25 cultural and educational forum at the University of Amsterdam on January 27. The day before this event, I attended the National Holocaust Commemoration ceremony, where I heard Rutte’s historic speech. I departed for the United States on February 1, and at Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport, I noticed some, but hardly a majority of international travelers, wearing protective face coverings. Four weeks later, local officials in the Midwest – where I am located – began cancelling all large gatherings and prohibiting all non-essential travel.

Rutte drawing attention not only to the government's cooperation with the German occupiers during the period 1940-1945 but the poor treatment accorded to those Jewish survivors who returned to the Netherlands after the war (Nederlands Auschwitz Comité 2020; Rijksoverheid 2020).

Nearly immediately after the speech, Dutch journalists, historians, and other observers described Rutte's words as "historic," while representatives from survivors' organizations and Jewish community groups hailed it as an important, if long-delayed, gesture towards those remaining survivors still struggling to process their trauma (Hulsman 2020; Muller 2020; Pen & Soest 2020; Pinedo & Musch 2020; Van Walsum 2020; and, for a more cynical assessment, Holman 2020). In one of his many post-ceremony interviews, Grishaver, the chairman of the *Nederlands Auschwitz Comité* and a Holocaust survivor, reacted to Rutte's apology with both enthusiasm and appreciation: "[It's] Fantastic. Here we've waited seventy-five years for this. And the fact that he said it today is truly something fantastic" (Nederlands Auschwitz Comité 2020). And, yet, I argue, even as we recognize the historic nature of Rutte's speech, we can also acknowledge that it does not constitute the final word on the subject. It is not simply the coda in a long history but, rather, the start of something new. Zoni Weisz, a Holocaust survivor and prominent member of the Netherlands' Sinti and Roma communities, implied as much during a conversation with reporters from the daily newspaper *Het Parool* after the event: "Can we close the book now? No. But apologies can help you process something that you've carried with you your entire life" (Weisz cited in Pinedo & Musch 2020). The official apology, obviously, cannot undo the past, but it might still set a course for the future, Weisz' words remind us.

Rutte's acknowledgement came after years' worth of plans, meetings, debates, and discussions – some quite heated, and some still ongoing – concerning various Holocaust memorials and commemorative sites in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, and even with COVID-19-necessitated safety measures in place, construction on a number of these memorials and sites continues apace. In the area of the city now known as the Jewish Cultural Quarter (*Joods Cultureel Kwartier*), the long-planned permanent National Holocaust Museum is slated to open in 2022. A few streets away, on the busy Weesperstraat, the Holocaust Names Memorial (*Nationaal Holocaust Namenmonument*) first conceived by leaders of the *Nederlands Auschwitz Comité* in 2006 has begun to take physical form. Designed by Daniel Libeskind, the famed architect of such buildings as the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the new World Trade Center complex in New York, this labyrinth-style memorial will consist of bricks bearing the names of those 102,000 Dutch Jewish, Sinti, and Roma victims killed during the Holocaust (Contreras 2020, 59-86). On June 19, Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema joined Jacques Grishaver of the *Nederlands Auschwitz Comité* to break ground for the



construction of this Names Memorial. A small group of invited guests, mostly Holocaust survivors, looked on; the much larger ceremony originally planned to mark the occasion had to be cancelled (Holocaust Namenmonument Nederland 2020). Construction on the Names Memorial is scheduled to last until mid-2021. Whether it will be opened to the public at this time remains to be seen and will depend in large part upon the “second wave” of COVID-19 infections in late 2020 and early 2021.

### **Decolonization as contested memory: Commemorating Indonesian independence**

Even if still debated on account of their location or their artistic merit, remembrance ceremonies and sites focused on the Holocaust now constitute an integral part of the country’s commemorative landscape. By contrast, the history of Dutch imperialism and decolonization, and, particularly, the Netherlands’ relationship with Indonesia occupies a far more complicated and certainly more controversial position. To date, politicians and journalists, academics and scholars, military veterans, and former residents of the Dutch East Indies colony contest both the meaning and legacies of this colonial past. Within these very-much-ongoing debates and discussions, the significance of the year 1945 figures prominently. Every year, on August 17, the Indonesians celebrate Independence Day, since it was on this day in 1945 that Sukarno declared the independent Republic of Indonesia to be free of both Japanese and Dutch rule. However, nearly seventy years later, the Dutch government in The Hague continues to recognize December 27, 1949 as the official date of Indonesian independence, since this is when representatives from both nations signed the formal transfer of sovereignty that ended four and a half centuries of Dutch colonial rule.

For decades, the Dutch government has continued to emphasize the signal importance of 1949 over 1945, although fifteen years ago, some believed a change in position to be imminent when the Netherlands’ Minister of Foreign Affairs Ben Bot visited Indonesia. On the occasion of his August 2005 visit to Jakarta, Minister Bot declared that the Netherlands “stood on the wrong side of history” when, instead of recognizing Indonesian independence, it deployed military forces to fight the Indonesian nationalist government. With both his presence at the August 17 Independence Day celebrations and his delivery of a highly personal address recounting his own childhood in the then-colony, Bot articulated a new stance: he, and by extension, the Netherlands accepted the August 17 date in both a “political and moral sense” (Van Leeuwen 2008, 302-309; Het NOVA Archief 2005). But, as Dutch journalist Michel Maas expertly explained in a 2013 analysis, Bot had conferred *de facto* but not *de jure* recognition on the August 17 date, and

authorities in The Hague contested the meaning and implications of Bot's words long after his return home. Thus, his recognition remained strictly symbolic (Maas 2013; NOS Nieuws 2013). In the years since then, repeated petition campaigns and other advocacy efforts have urged successive Dutch governments to acknowledge, publicly and in no uncertain terms, that Indonesia's independence dates to August 17, 1945, but to no avail (Indonesië werd onafhankelijk in 1945: Erken dit 2009; Pondaag 2019). The Hague's official policy has remained firm and consistent: Indonesia became independent in late 1949, once Queen Juliana signed the official transfer-of-power agreement in an official public ceremony.

And, yet, earlier this year, the Dutch government marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1945 with an official royal visit to Indonesia. In early December 2019, the Royal Family announced that, at the invitation of President Joko Widodo, King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima would visit Indonesia in March 2020. The official press release issued in February 2020 explained that the three-day visit would affirm "the close, wide-ranging relationship between the two countries and will be geared towards future cooperation," with an itinerary focused on "the economy, nature conservation, culture, science, and the many ties that exist between the peoples of Indonesia and the Netherlands, based in part on their shared history." The king and queen would spend their first full day, March 10, in the capital city of Jakarta, where their activities included wreath-laying visits to two cemeteries: Kalibata Heroes Cemetery, the final resting place for thousands of Indonesian soldiers who died during the 1945-1949 war against the Dutch, and Menteng Pulo Cemetery, which contains the remains of approximately 4,300 Dutch victims of the Japanese occupation as well as Dutch casualties of the 1945-1949 war (Het Koninklijk Huis 2020; Oorlogsgravenstichting 2020).

During the months separating the announcement and the royal couple's departure in mid-March, historians, journalists, and activists speculated about both the timing and the significance of this official visit. Writing in an especially nuanced and detailed assessment published in the daily newspaper *Trouw*, journalist Wendelmoet Boersema remained skeptical that the king would, in fact, apologize for the government's actions during the colonial period in the way that Prime Minister Rutte had apologized for the government's role in the Holocaust in late January 2020 (Boersema 2020). Others remained hopeful that the king might publicly recognize the significance of the August 17, 1945 date for Indonesian independence, thereby granting *de jure* recognition to Minister Bot's *de facto* recognition fifteen years ago. After all, this 75<sup>th</sup> year anniversary seemed to present the perfect opportunity to do so. Still, as numerous commentators pointed out, the king's visit was scheduled for March, whereas Bot's trip in 2005 had intentionally coincided with the celebration of Indonesian Independence Day in August. Alternately, King Willem-Alexander could elect to avoid these "sensitive

matters” entirely, instead opting to focus his efforts solely on the various economic partnerships, scientific projects, and cultural programs connecting the two countries (Frakking & Hoek 2020; Salm 2019). Some commentators remained skeptical about the visit itself, with one especially vocal Dutch critic calling the king a “wolf in sheep’s clothing,” since he was merely pretending to be interested in Indonesia while refusing to take responsibility for centuries’ worth of exploitation and violence. The Netherlands, according to the critic, continues to reproduce colonial attitudes and practices of old with its failure to recognize and make reparations for the damages wrought by centuries of colonial rule (Van Pagee 2020).

Admittedly, the king faced a fairly low bar for success with this particular visit, not only because he was tasked with promoting existing partnerships, but because Queen Beatrix’s 1995 visit – which included the then-twenty-eight-year-old crown prince Willem-Alexander – has been described as “one of her least successful state visits” and certainly “one of the most painful moments in the Dutch-Indonesian post-war relationship.” Among other uncomfortable incidents, Queen Beatrix spoke of generic “scars” left by past (Dutch-inflicted) acts of violence, while singling out contemporary human rights abuses in Suharto’s Indonesia (Boersema 2020; Frakking & Hoek 2020). But much has happened in the past fifteen years since Minister Bot’s historic admission, let alone in the twenty-five years since the king’s mother’s disastrous visit. Most obviously, and as critics of the royal visit have noted, Indonesian victims of war crimes committed by Dutch forces during the period of 1945 to 1949 have brought numerous – and successful – lawsuits before Dutch courts in search of financial compensation, public apologies, and other forms of redress, as have the surviving relatives of those killed by Dutch forces (Immler & Scagliola 2020; McGregor 2014). For the past decade, Dutch international human rights lawyers Liesbeth Zegveld and Brechtje Vossenbergh of the Prakken d’Oliveira Human Rights Lawyers group in Amsterdam have represented the various Indonesian plaintiffs. Meanwhile, the Committee of Dutch Debts of Honour (*Komite Utang Kehormatan Belanda*, or *K.U.K.B*), founded by Dutch-Indonesian activist Jeffrey Pondaag in 2007, ensures that Indonesian victims and their respective claims against the Dutch government continue to receive media attention, regardless of their legal outcomes (De Volder & De Brouwer 2019). Even as King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima embarked upon their state visit this past spring, a number of these cases continued to work their way through the Dutch court system (Prakken d’Oliveira Human Rights Lawyers 2020).

In the fall of 2016, and partly in response to the success of these lawsuits, the Dutch government agreed to fund a multi-year, multi-institution research project entitled “Independence, Decolonization, Violence and War in Indonesia,

1945-1950” (De Volder & De Brouwer 2019, 60-63). Its specific research design and organizational structure have evolved somewhat since its public unveiling four years ago, but as currently described on its website, the project “aims to provide academically substantiated answers to questions pertaining to the nature, scope, causes and impact of the violence used by the Netherlands as viewed in a broad political, social and international context.” Now, in late 2020, the teams of expert researchers directing the eight subprojects are writing the results of their investigations, with final reports expected in late 2021, or such was the projected timeline established before the pandemic (Independence, Decolonization, Violence and War in Indonesia, 1945-1950, 2020). Since its inception, the project has prompted and, at times, actively solicited public debate and criticism (Dekolonisatie of rekolonisatie? 2018). Especially vocal opposition and pointed criticisms have come from members of the *Histori Bersama* (‘Shared History’) organization, which although primarily focused on producing quality translations of “recent publications from Dutch and Indonesian media that refer to the colonial past and the Indonesian independence war (1945-1949),” has served as a touchpoint for critical discussions concerning Dutch imperialism and decolonization writ large (Histori Bersama 2017; Histori Bersama 2020). Together with the researchers associated with the multi-year Independence and Decolonization Project, those scholars and activists associated with *Histori Bersama* have ensured that these subjects remain in the news. Perhaps more so than ever before, members of the general public remain aware, and involved, in this process of reckoning with a complex, violent past, with discussions focusing on an array of subjects, whether the Netherlands’ refusal to recognize Indonesian independence until 1949 or Dutch involvement in the centuries’ old global slave trade.

In recent years, the academic study of these subjects has undergone a sea change of sorts, too. Writing in a seminal piece published in 2013, historian Remco Raben called upon his colleagues to work towards the creation of a new Dutch imperial history incorporating larger themes, comparative analyses, theoretical approaches, and the perspectives of non-European peoples (Raben 2013). Since then, a number of new historical studies have refocused attention on long-dominant narratives popular in both the public and academic domains, including the claim that the early modern and modern Dutch empires were unique or exceptional. Unlike the British or French empires, or so proclaims this well-entrenched narrative, the Dutch imperial project remained rooted in strictly commercial endeavors and, at the same time, highly responsive to and respectful of local Indonesian cultures and practices. Extended into the post-1945 period, this narrative acknowledges the Dutch and Indonesian casualties incurred during the decolonization process but also judges this same decolonization process to be far less violent than that seen in other European empires (Frakking & Hoek 2020;

Koekkoek et al. 2019; Welke ‘VOC-mentaliteit’? Over koloniale ideeën, toen en nu 2020). Historical analyses intended for both academic and popular audiences have increasingly refused such claims. So, for instance, writing in advance of the royal family’s March 2020 visit, Wendelmoet Boersema reaffirms that, in its difficulty confronting the colonial past, the Netherlands hardly stands alone. Rather, she argues, all other former Europe imperial powers – Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, and Germany – have struggled to recognize, apologize, and somehow make amends for their violent history; for all of them, this process remains incomplete but ongoing (Boersema 2020).

With these public discussions and academic interventions in the background, the royal couple embarked on their visit to Indonesia as planned for March 2020, albeit with certain precautions necessitated by the global spread of COVID-19. On March 10, King Willem-Alexander delivered his opening remarks, in English, to those present at the official welcome ceremony hosted at the presidential palace in the Javanese city of Bogor. Here, the king lauded the “wonderful, future-oriented” focus of his visit but also recognized the historic bonds connecting the two countries. He acknowledged the significance of the year 2020, noting that on August 17, “it will be 75 years since Indonesia issued its *Proklamsi* [Declaration of Indonesian independence] claiming its place among independent and free states.” Then, in a nod to Minister Bot’s 2005 speech, he stated that “the Dutch government explicitly acknowledged this fact, politically and morally, 15 years ago,” and he offered his congratulations to the people of Indonesia as they celebrated 75 years of independence. At the same time, he explained, “the past cannot be erased, and will have to be acknowledged by every generation in turn.” In particular, he described the violence that followed the Indonesian *Proklamsi* as “a painful separation that cost many lives.” To these ends, the king expressed his regrets and apologized “for excessive violence on the part of the Dutch in those years” (Royal House of the Netherlands 2020).

Here, then, King Willem-Alexander publicly acknowledged the significance of the August 17 declaration for the Indonesians, but, like Bot, stopped short of granting *de facto* recognition to this date. Both before and after this speech, the Dutch government’s official stance has remained consistent and clear: Indonesia became independent in late December 1949, when Dutch authorities signed the formal transfer of sovereignty agreement. Nor did the king apologize for the long, violent history of Dutch colonial rule, as some had hoped he might. Rather, he acknowledged the “excessive violence” seen during the decolonization conflict of 1945-1949.

As could be expected, this apology – qualified and partial, certainly, but an apology nonetheless – engendered a range of responses in both the Netherlands and Indonesia. For some, including Indonesian survivors and family members of

those killed during such acts of “excessive violence,” the king’s words rang hollow, particularly since they were unaccompanied by actual recompense, whether in the form of reparations, lost wages and pensions earned from years of colonial service, or compensation for pain and suffering. Nor has the Dutch government offered to repay the money paid by Indonesia as a condition for its independence in 1949; these extended payments were intended to compensate the Netherlands for debts it had incurred in Indonesia and for the loss of future colonial revenue (Indrawan 2020; Wijaya 2020). Still others have classified the speech as an important step towards the creation, and popular acceptance of, a more critical perspective concerning the Netherlands’ colonial history (Hoek 2020).

The king’s speech, then, seems to occupy its own liminal space: a partial recognition, neither here nor there. At present, we cannot know whether the speech will bear the same weight as did Prime Minister Bot’s in 2005, and whether it will pave the way for a more expansive discussion of Dutch colonialism, including and especially its most violence aspects. We may need to wait until the government-funded “Independence, Decolonization, Violence and War in Indonesia, 1945-1950” research project issues its final reports in late 2021 or 2022. Perhaps the project’s findings will prompt the Dutch government to grant official *de jure* recognition to the August 17, 1945 date, after years of activism to these ends. Regardless of this particular outcome, however, we can be sure of one thing: these reports will hardly constitute the final word on the subject.

## Conclusion

Seventy-five years ago, the Second World War came to an end, and we are right to celebrate this moment for what it signified to those who had survived the carnage, in both Europe and elsewhere. At least on paper and in name, the guns were put down, the camps were liberated, and Europeans could begin to reassemble their lives. Allied nations worked to actualize the various arrangements they had devised during the wartime years, and, after months of preparatory meetings and plans, the United Nations called itself into being. But this moment also constituted a liminal moment, with Europeans confronting an uncertain future, filled not only with the daunting task of physical reconstruction but the prospects of continued death and destruction, whether in the form of massive dislocations and migrations, the life-long illnesses caused by imprisonment and malnutrition, and, in the Dutch case, a colonial war in Indonesia. The year 1945 brought triumphant “liberation” but so too did it bring chaos, uncertainty, and trauma. The war was over, in other words, but what exactly did this mean in this environment? What did the future hold?

The year 2020 constitutes yet another liminal moment, albeit for very different reasons and under starkly different conditions. COVID-19 has claimed more than 2.3 million deaths worldwide, and both infection rates and death tolls continue to rise in certain parts of the world, such as North America and Europe. Nor can the pandemic's toll be measured solely in terms of its horrifying death toll. The lockdowns and restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the disease have caused tremendous economic hardship, ranging from job loss to housing evictions, as well as a profound sense of physical and emotional isolation. Medical systems and social services have struggled to meet the demand for routine care while reporting a marked increase in mental illness, including and especially anxiety, depression, and suicide. It is hardly surprising, then, that the events planned to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War bear little resemblance to those planned before the global spread of COVID-19. Much work remains to be done, both in curbing the spread and lethality of this disease and in confronting a complicated past. In today's environment, the unfinished business of 1945 remains as pressing and as timely as ever.

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### **La Libération comme espace liminal : commémorer les événements de 1945 lors de la pandémie de Covid-19**

Considérant l'année 1945 comme un entre-deux ou un espace-temps liminal, cet article s'intéresse à la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et examine plus particulièrement comment cette période a été vécue dans les Pays-Bas nouvellement libérés. En effet, la victoire de 1945 ne peut être réduite à un moment de joie univoque que l'on célèbre, ni à un événement de type « heure zéro » qui inaugure une ère nouvelle. La Libération de 1945 représente bien plutôt une période de transition plutôt instable remplie d'incertitude, de destruction, de confusion et de tristesse, mais faisant de la place également à l'espoir et à l'optimisme, et portant la promesse de la reconstruction. Aux Pays-Bas, comme en beaucoup d'autres pays européens, on avait prévu d'organiser de nombreuses célébrations commémoratives en 2020 afin de marquer le 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la fin de la guerre, mais la pandémie de Covid-19 en décida autrement quand elle mit brusquement la vie à l'arrêt au mois de mars. Cet article estime que l'année 2020 constitue un autre espace liminal, mais pour des raisons tout autres que celles qui s'appliquent aux événements de 1945. L'article se penche sur quelques événements commémoratifs qui se sont déroulés dans les semaines et les mois précédant la propagation à l'échelle planétaire du coronavirus, notamment la Commémoration nationale de l'Holocauste tenue à Amsterdam en janvier ainsi que la visite officielle d'une importance historique du roi Willem-Alexander à l'Indonésie deux mois plus tard. L'article juge que l'on peut discerner dans ces événements une certaine activité et mouvement. En effet, d'une part, on peut y voir une tentative d'en arriver à une interprétation honnête des événements du passé, fondée sur des preuves documentaires et de la recherche scientifique et ancrée dans un sentiment profond d'empathie et de solidarité avec l'humanité. Cependant, de l'autre, l'on constate la présence d'un puissant courant sous-jacent de résistance et d'opposition qui se traduit par un refus obstiné de prendre en considération de nouveaux points de vue ainsi que la réalité actuelle. Pris ensemble, ces développements démontrent non seulement le caractère compliqué et changeant de la culture commémorative aux Pays-Bas, mais aussi l'incertitude, l'anxiété et l'isolement que nous vivons en ce moment à cause de la pandémie qui perdure.

### **Bevrijding als liminale ruimte: Herinnering aan 1945 tijdens de coronavirus pandemie**

Dit artikel beschouwt het jaar 1945 als een liminaal moment in tijd en ruimte. Het doet onderzoek naar het einde van de Tweede Wereldoorlog

en hoe dit is ervaren door de generatie mensen in het pas bevrijde Nederland. In plaats van een eenduidig vreugdevol moment om te vieren of een 'nul uur' dat het aanbreken van een nieuwe dag voorstelt, stelde 1945 een veranderlijke overgangperiode voor vol twijfel, verwoesting, ver-warring, en verdriet, alsook hoop, optimisme, en de belofte van weder-opbouw. In Nederland, zoals in vele andere Europese landen, was het de bedoeling dat het jaar 2020 gekenmerkt zou worden door herdenkings-evenementen naar aanleiding van het 75-jarige jubileum van het einde van de oorlog, dat wil zeggen, totdat in maart de COVID-19-pandemie het dagelijkse leven tot stilstand bracht. Dit artikel stelt dat het jaar 2020 ook een liminaale plaats vertegenwoordigt, zij het om zeer verschillende redenen dan die in 1945. Het beschouwt een aantal herdenkings-evenementen die plaatsvonden in de weken en maanden vóór de wereld-wijde verspreiding van COVID-19 en legt bijzondere nadruk op de Nationale Holocaust Herdenking gehouden in januari in Amsterdam, alsmede het historisch staatsbezoek aan Indonesië door Koning Willem-Alexander twee maanden later. Ik stel dat wij in deze evenementen beweging en bedrijvigheid kunnen constateren. Het is een poging om een oprechte inschatting te maken van vroegere gebeurtenissen, beïnvloed zowel door bewijsmateriaal en wetenschappelijk onderzoek als door een gevoel van medeleven en verbondenheid met het mensdom. Anderzijds kunnen wij constateren dat er een krachtige onderstroming van weerstand en verbeterde oppositie te herkennen is die aangegeven wordt door een onwilligheid om alternatieve zienswijzen en de huidige werkelijkheid te beschouwen. Samengenomen tonen deze gebeurtenissen zowel de gecompliceerde, veranderlijke aard aan van een herdenkingscultuur in Nederland alsook onze huidige onzekerheid, angst, en ons isolement in verband met de lopende pandemie.

## **Reservoirs of violence: Beb Vuyk's postcolonial stories**

*Paul Doolan*

The year 1945 marked the end of two occupations in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The first occurred with the German surrender in May. The second came about with the sudden surrender of Japan in August. The ending of World War Two in Asia left the Dutch East Indies in a volatile and complex situation. The “liberated” Dutch found themselves surrounded by hostile nationalist forces loyal to the newly founded Republic of Indonesia. Years of violence and a full-scale war ensued, with the Dutch reluctantly ceding sovereignty to the new republic in 1949. This study briefly looks at the situation that unfolded in late 1945 Indonesia and attempts to explain why the Dutch found the new situation hard to comprehend and to accept. I suggest that the short stories of Beb Vuyk offer unique insights into the reservoir of violence that had been expanding prior to 1945, the shift in violence between 1945 and 1949 and the violence as it was experienced by Asians and Europeans alike. Accepting that Vuyk's position within the colonial complex was that of a colonial before the war, I maintain that Vuyk challenges colonial narratives by drawing out some of the pathologies engendered by colonial intimacies. By reclaiming local, native and particular histories, her stories written between the late 1940s and late 1960s reflect a variety of experiences and do not privilege the experiences of European victims over Indonesians.

Key terms: Beb Vuyk, Dutch East Indies, postcolonialism, decolonisation, *Indisch* literature, Indonesia, colonialism.

### **Introduction: Liberation without liberation**

It is clear that the year 1945 marked a watershed in world history. The defeat of Nazism and fascism in Europe and the ending of Japanese militarism in Asia meant the liberation of millions. But in Asia, it was a strange type of liberation. As Ian Buruma (2013) pointed out: “Liberation is perhaps not the right word to describe the end of war in colonial societies” (111). For nationalists in colonial societies like

British Malaya, French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, liberation would prove meaningless if the defeat of the Japanese would lead to a reconquest and reoccupation by their European colonial masters. Thus, just two days after the Japanese surrender, on August 17, 1945, the Indonesian nationalists Sukarno and Hatta declared the independence of the Republic of Indonesia (De Graaf 1959, 305-327).<sup>1</sup> In effect, they declared the Dutch East Indies to be obsolete and there would be no return to the pre-war colonial status quo.

Furthermore, “liberation” does not accurately describe the situation of the Dutch who previously had been held in Japanese camps in Indonesia for the duration of the war. While their compatriots in Europe may have enjoyed liberation from the Germans in May 1945, their own liberation from the Japanese in August 1945 meant that they quickly became the target of nationalist Indonesian violence. They now found themselves taking shelter in their former prison camps, under the protection of their former Japanese prison guards. Some remained in camps for years. As Sander van Walsum noted in an article in the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* on August 15, 2020, the Dutch in the East Indies found themselves “liberated from the Japanese, besieged by Indonesians.”

On the first anniversary of the ending of World War Two in Europe, Dutch historian Jan Romein (1946) published a journal article, “The Spirit of the Dutch people during the occupation.” Note the singular form – “occupation”. However, while the European metropole had endured a German occupation, in the Dutch East Indies, hundreds of thousands of Dutch citizens, and millions of Indonesians, had suffered a harsh Japanese occupation. Romein seemed unaware of the inaccuracy in his title. His only mention of the Dutch East Indies was to confirm that they “had shared the same fate” as the metropole (Romein 1946, 179). This blindness was an early indication of a collective memory of 1945 that came to dominate Dutch culture, in which the Asian occupation and so-called liberation came to be all but unremembered, which is to say that they were knowingly not included in remembrance. Even today, the Royal Family joins the entire population in happily celebrating Liberation Day on May 5, despite the fact that in 1945 hundreds of thousands of Dutch remained under Japanese occupation for a further three months. Their attendance on August 15<sup>th</sup> at the annual celebration of the end of the war in Asia is a more subdued affair.

To gain an insight into the complex events around 1945 and immediately after, this article will argue that we can turn to the relatively slender post 1945 oeuvre of Dutch-Indonesian author Beb Vuyk and in particular her short stories of the 1950s and 1960s. Vuyk was born in Rotterdam in 1905. Her father had been

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<sup>1</sup> H.J. de Graaf was the first Dutch historian to offer a detailed account of what happened on that day.

born to an Indonesian mother (Vuyk 1981, 425). Due to her dark skin, she had sometimes been the target of racial slurs during her childhood in Holland (Vuyk 1981, 432). She published a handful of short stories by her mid-twenties, but then decided to move to the colony of the Dutch East Indies. On the journey, she met the man who would become her husband, a man born of a Dutch father and Ambonese mother (Nieuwenhuys 1982, 273). By the outbreak of World War Two she had published two full-length books and was working on a third which, partly written in a Japanese internment camp, was published in 1947 (Nieuwenhuys 1982, 273-274). By then the Indonesian Revolution had become a war. Vuyk chose to take the Indonesian nationality and worked in post-independent Indonesia as a journalist until she fell foul of the increasingly authoritarian government of Sukarno. In 1958, she was forced into exile and returned to the Netherlands, living on a houseboat, as seen in Figure 1, and retaining her Indonesian nationality.



*Figure 1. Beb Vuyk and her husband, Fernand de Willigen, on the deck of their houseboat "Almayer's Folly" in Loenen aan de Vecht. From the photo collection of the Letterkundig Museum, The Hague. Reproduced with permission.*

A postcolonial reading of Vuyk's post-1945 works offers a multifaceted viewpoint, reflecting the motivations of a variety of actors, not just Dutch colonialists. Her short stories offer a vivid and complex representation of the meaning of 1945. They illustrate the motives that caused the shift in violence between 1945 and 1949 and offer insight into the turbulent events and consequences of violence.

However, before offering an analysis of Vuyk's work, I will provide an outline of the situation in the Dutch East Indies in late 1945. This will be followed by an explanation for why the Dutch were taken by surprise by the course of events and why a coherent interpretation of the events of 1945 remained lacking for many years. Only then shall we turn to the works of Beb Vuyk.

### **The Dutch East Indies/Indonesia in 1945**

The circumstances in the Dutch East Indies or Indonesia in August 1945 were complex. The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9 had brought about the sudden surrender of the Japanese. The war ended on August 15. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of armed Japanese soldiers still occupied most of the thousands of islands of the Indonesian archipelago, with hardly an Allied soldier in sight. In 1942, the Japanese had placed Dutch military personnel in prisoner of war camps in South East Asia. The entire white Dutch population (known as *totoks*), as well as many Eurasian Dutch (known as *Indos*), were interned in hundreds of detention camps throughout Indonesia. After the Japanese surrender, no army of liberation arrived at these camps to inform the inmates that they were free, simply because there was no Allied army nearby. Decades later, former prisoners would still complain that no Dutch officials were there to declare them liberated (Kristel 2002, 8). Hence the title of Rudy Verheem's (1979) memoir, *Bevrijding zonder bevrijders* ('Liberation without liberators'). Furthermore, Sukarno and Hatta's Declaration of Independence on August 17 meant that the Dutch in the liberated Japanese camps were now the potential enemies of the newly declared state. Those who ventured out of the camps found themselves entering a hostile environment where anyone and anything associated with European colonial rule could become the target of nationalist aggression. Verheem remembered: "In the Netherlands people danced on the days of liberation, in Asia there was little reason to dance" (Verheem 1979, 73). No doubt, many Asians did feel like dancing. What he meant was that there was little reason for Europeans to dance.

The liberation without liberators wasn't even a liberation in the true sense of the word. The Dutch were free to leave their former prisons, but quickly discovered that the safest place for them was to remain inside the camps, in a self-imposed lockdown, with their former Japanese guards now ordered by the Allies to become their protectors (Hollander 2008, 189). As Lin Scholte put it: "The war was over, supposedly, but the war had only started" (Scholte 2007, 353).

By September 1945, *Indos* who had not been imprisoned by the Japanese, as well as minorities like the Chinese, who were seen as pro-Dutch, found that life outside the camps was more dangerous than life inside the camps. Easy targets,



some were set upon by nationalist youths known as *pemudas*. With British troops landing on Java in September 1945, followed by Dutch forces in October, the situation quickly deteriorated. In the last months of 1945, thousands of Europeans, Eurasians, Japanese and Chinese were killed by Indonesian nationalists during the so-called *bersiap* period (Van den Doel 2001, 99; Limpach 2016, 133). In the city of Surabaya, nationalists massacred hundreds of British-Indian soldiers and the British responded with air, naval and land forces killing thousands of Indonesians (Van den Doel 2001, 113-115). In 1946, Dutch Special Forces carried out summary executions and massacres across the region of South Sulawesi, claiming the lives of thousands of victims (IJzereef 1984, 109-127, 141). By 1947, the situation had developed into a full-scale war with the Dutch unleashing two major attempts at reconquest, the euphemistically named "Police Actions." Despite mobilising a new army of 150,000 conscripts (Van Doorn and Hendrix 2012, 295), the Dutch were forced to admit defeat, but only after inflicting losses of well in excess of 100,000 dead among Indonesian nationalists. Most estimates of the number of Indonesians killed by the Dutch army during the Indonesian War of Independence are guesswork and vary enormously. It was not until 2017 that three Dutch historians were able to provide a first evidence-based estimate (Harinck, Van Horn & Lutikhuis 2017). They gave the number of 97,421, with the caveat that this was a low estimate. The real number of dead is likely far in excess of this. The Swiss-Dutch historian Rémy Limpach has persuasively argued that Dutch forces engaged in systematic mass violence that was both structural and widespread (Limpach 2016, 738-739). In early 1949, a United Nations resolution called for peace talks that would lead to Indonesian independence by at least July 1950 (De Jong 2011, 370-371). In December 1949, the Dutch queen transferred sovereignty to the new Republic of Indonesia, with Sukarno as president and Hatta as vice president.

By that time, hundreds of thousands of Dutch citizens had been "repatriated" to the Netherlands. They received what many would remember as a cold welcome (Oostindie 2010, 26). Most had been born in the Dutch East Indies. The majority were of mixed Asian-European heritage (Bosma 2009, 128). They had lost their homeland and now found themselves exiled in the mother country. For these Dutch citizens and their descendants, 1945 does not represent the joyful liberation still celebrated every year on May 5 in the Netherlands. This was a liberation tinged with bitterness, a liberation followed by the trauma of mass violence and the loss of home.

### The shock of 1945

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) argued that a characteristic of every system of political domination is “the tendency to proclaim its own normalcy” (84). Major resistance to colonial domination becomes, for the authorities, unthinkable. When revolution does eventually break out, “Worldview wins over the facts: white hegemony is natural and taken for granted; any alternative is still in the domain of the unthinkable” (Trouillot 1995, 93). The chaotic and tense situation in the Dutch East Indies in 1945, especially the outburst of nationalist violence against colonial rule, came as a shock to the Dutch. The unthinkable had happened and seemed beyond comprehension. It was difficult to explain, and this led to decades of unremembering, a term I use to denote the deliberate intention of not remembering and which I will describe more fully in the next section. Thirty years after the Indonesian War of Independence had ended, historian Henk Wesseling (1980) claimed that Dutch society still suffered from an “imperial hangover” (128). Years later, historian Vincent Houben (1997) argued that open discussion of that war remained “as much taboo today as it was earlier” (64).

Rob Nieuwenhuys pointed out that much Dutch literature from the colonial period -such as the work of Multatuli, Daum, Bas Veth and Walraven - was critical of colonial society and colonial authority (Nieuwenhuys 1978, 15-16). However, this does not suggest that these authors could have imagined an Indonesia independent of Dutch tutelage. Admittedly, E. du Perron's *Land van Herkomst* ('Land of origin') from 1935 was a genuinely anti-colonial novel. However, as Van Neck-Yoder (1986) argues, Du Perron's characterisation of colonialism as a type of fascism “had no precedent” (674).

The work of Dutch poet Willem Brandt (1947) articulated his failure to understand the events of 1945: “That you and I, who once were brothers/ like carnivores prowl around each other/and you don't know why this knife, this blood [...] and I don't know why this fear, this hate” (32).<sup>2</sup> Dutch colonial experts had been equally unprepared for the scenario that confronted them in 1945. In 1942, the minister for foreign affairs of the Dutch government in exile, Eelco van Kleffens (1942), naively remarked that although the Japanese had conquered the colony, the native peoples “remained loyal to the kingdom of which they form a part” (96). Before the Japanese invasion, the Dutch government had initiated a commission under the leadership of Frans Visman to investigate the state of the colony and evaluate the need for constitutional reform. Professor Jan Broek provided a

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<sup>2</sup>These are Brandt's original Dutch words: *'Die u en mij, die eenmaal broeders waren;/ als roofdieren elkaar omsluipen doet;/ en gij weet niet waarom dit mes, dit bloed [...] en ik weet niet waarom die angst, die haat -'* Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Dutch into English in this article are mine.

summary of the colloquially known Visman Report for an international audience.<sup>3</sup> He argued that the long association of the Netherlands and the Indies “has created many spiritual ties” and that all groups shared “the wish not to break the bond which had been forged in the course of centuries” (Broek 1943, 336). Such wishful thinking found an echo in June 1945, when Visman himself optimistically reported that Indonesians were eagerly cooperating with Dutch authorities in the zones already seized from the Japanese (Visman 1945, 184). In November 1945, at the height of the hostilities of the *bersiap* period, Visman continued arguing that his commission had revealed that no nationalist group in Indonesia wanted independence. This proved “that there is no reason to ascribe the present disturbances in the Netherlands Indies to discontent with the past policies of the Netherlands government” (Visman 1945, 6). It was an act of wilful blindness on the part of these enlightened despots. The idea that the Indonesians were willing to fight for their own independence was beyond the bounds of their colonial imaginary.

Dutch newspapers in 1945, like the political leaders, found it difficult to comprehend the unthinkable. With the first Dutch flights over Java since the Japanese surrender, *De Volkskrant* announced on August 23 in its front-page article “*Nederlandse vliegtuigen boven Java en Madoera*” (‘Dutch airplanes over Java and Madura’) that all seemed peaceful and calm in the city of Surabaya. It was not until mid-September that news of anti-colonial commotions began to appear. In “*Ongeregelheden op Java*” (‘Disturbances on Java’) on September 19, *De Volkskrant* reported the situation on Java to be “deplorable,” with the number of mindless violent incidents increasing. *Het Vrije Volk* reported, under the headline “*Guerrilla op Java?*” (‘War on Java?’) on September 21, that nationalists in Batavia had pulled Japanese officers from their cars and murdered them and had attacked Europeans and Indonesian leaders who were loyal to the Dutch. In a front-page article on September 24, “*Betoging in Batavia*” (‘Demonstration in Batavia’), *Het Vrije Volk* reported that Sukarno had addressed a huge crowd in Batavia at an illegal demonstration. The following day, in “*Verwarde toestand op Java*” (‘Confused situation on Java’), *Het Vrije Volk* reported that since the arrival of Allied troops in Batavia a few days earlier, five Japanese soldiers and one Eurasian had been killed. By early October the situation had worsened. Newspapers reported that the situation was tense, but that the arrival of Dutch forces would calm things down. In an article on October 10, “*Soekarno's werkelijke aanhang niet meer dan 5 procent*” (‘Soekarno’s actual following no more than 5 percent’), *De Volkskrant* reported that Sukarno’s support among the people was

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<sup>3</sup> Officially it was titled *Verslag van de Commissie tot Bestudeering van Staatsrechtelijke Hervormingen*.

negligible. In a further article of the same day, "*Overschat de incidenten in Indië niet*" ('Do not overestimate incidents in Indies'), *De Volkskrant* optimistically reported a claim that nationalist violence did not deserve all the attention it was getting. What most Indonesians wanted, *De Volkskrant* reported, was the safety and security of Dutch rule. Thus, national media coverage reflected the views of the politicians.

On the day this optimistic article appeared, *pemuda* units raided the homes of many Dutch (*totoks* and *Indos*) and within days scores of abducted Dutch citizens had been tortured and murdered. What followed in the next few weeks was a bloodbath, with thousands of Indonesians, British-Indian and Dutch killed (Van den Doel 2001, 111-116). Similarly, just days after *De Volkskrant* had publicized its optimism, a Muslim leader in Aceh on the island of Sumatra, Teungku Daud Beureu'eh, declared that the nationalist struggle was a *jihad* ('holy war') and called on all Muslims to wage war against those who cooperated with the Dutch. Within a few months, many local leaders loyal to the Dutch throughout Indonesia were killed or dismissed from their posts by republicans. On Sumatra itself, nearly all sultans and their family members were massacred (Chandler, Cribb & Narangoa 2016, 254-255, 262-263). Thus, on the eve of the onslaught of popular violence, we find that the Dutch media seemed to be as misinformed as the politicians. That anti-colonial mass violence was about to erupt was still beyond their colonial imaginary. Oblivious to the revolutionary potential, they viewed the situation in Indonesia within the horizon of safety and security.

### Colonial explanations

How to explain this genuine sense of shock? Jacques de Kadt argued that Dutch colonialists were unprepared for the events of 1945 because they lived in a sort of smug expatriate bubble, separated from local life, and could only imagine Indonesia becoming independent in the far distant future (De Kadt 1949, 24-26). Few Dutch colonials could imagine that Indonesians wished to end Dutch rule entirely. During the 1930s, the Dutch political police or *Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst* ('Political Intelligence Department') ran a new system of repression (Van Doorn & Hendrix 2012, 21-32). This had all but silenced revolutionary opposition, but Bouman (1949) argued that the forceful repression of Indonesian nationalists had led the pre-war colonial authorities to the false impression that they had wiped out Indonesian nationalism (32-33). Writing with the gift of hindsight, former colonial official Louis G.M Jaquet admitted that the authorities had vastly underestimated the power of Indonesian nationalism in 1945 (Jaquet 1978, 24-28).

Syed Hussein Alatas (1977) argued that European colonisers in Asia constructed the myth of the passive or lazy native, and then produced an ideology in which the native needed the rule of enlightened Europeans in order to develop (13-14). James Baldwin (1962) made the case that any sudden revolt by the oppressed actually attacks the social reality that the oppressor has constructed, and this is particularly terrifying for the latter. The colonised function as a fixed star in the symbolic universe of the coloniser (for instance, as passive or lazy natives), but once the colonised move out of their designated places, “heaven and earth are shaken to the core” (9). The sudden outburst of popular violence that targeted everyone associated with Dutch rule destroyed the myth of the passive, lazy natives. The Dutch, persuaded that the natives still needed their enlightened rule, suddenly found heaven and earth shaken to the core, and the consequence was a collective trauma.

This traumatic shock of 1945 translated into a period of cultural unremembering that lasted for decades. Numerous scholars use the term “forgetting” when analysing the construction of national collective memories (Ricoeur 2004; Connerton 2009; Assmann 2012; Rieff 2017). However, “forgetting” does not adequately describe this process. Individuals who experienced events remember and transmit these memories to a second generation, usually within the family. I use the term “unremembering” not as a synonym for forgetting, but as a term to describe a collective refusal to remember, a process of concealment that opposes the work of national remembering. Socially traumatic events or the sudden eruption of the unthinkable into reality – for instance the violent outbreak of revolution followed by brutal war and the loss of empire – are not forgotten, but they come to be unremembered. The process of unremembering is at work in many quarters, but especially in the work of politicians, scholars, and writers.

Dutch historians of colonialism, for the most part, contributed greatly to unremembering, studiously ignoring for decades the controversial topic of decolonization. There were a few exceptions. Jan Hendrik Pluvier demonstrated that the roots of the Indonesian Revolution of 1945 were to be found in the manner in which the increasingly intolerant colonial government had tried to repress all Indonesian nationalist aspirations. Long before the Japanese occupation, Indonesian nationalists, according to Pluvier, had lost faith in Dutch rule (Pluvier 1953, 167-204). Hermanus J. de Graaf penned an article in 1959 that was the first attempt to analyse in detail the events of August 1945, especially the lead-up to Sukarno and Hatta's Declaration of Independence (De Graaf 1959). It was all but ignored by the members of the Dutch guild of historians.

Meanwhile, former colonials and conservative politicians quickly perpetrated the narrative that the Dutch had been dispossessed of their rightful colony by Japanese collaborators (Sukarno and Hatta), aided by the ignorant interference

of outsiders. Early in 1946, the conservative historian Carel Gerretson mourned the “deep pain” of 1945, in which the work of three centuries had been undone within three months. He blamed the Dutch colonial authorities for the debacle, but he argued that the explosion of Javanese violence in 1945 had been spurred on by the Japanese, and this had been compounded by the mistakes of the Americans and, above all, the British (Gerretson 1946, 7-8). Former Lieutenant Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies Hubertus van Mook, a man of progressive views (albeit, *colonial* progressive views), claimed that had the British quickly disarmed the Japanese in 1945 most of the bloodshed that followed would have been avoided (Van Mook 1949, 77). The former conservative Dutch prime minister Piet Gerbrandy argued that Dutch benevolent rule in Indonesia had been near perfect and the ingenious Dutch had created a situation in the tropics resembling “the Garden of Eden before the Fall” (Gerbrandy 1950, 40). He mourned the fact that the Dutch had been wrongly driven from this ideal colony “under the pressure exercised by Britain, the United States and U.N.O.” (Gerbrandy 1950, 11).

These explanations are linked by the assumption that Dutch colonial rule was exceptionally benign. The colonial experts assumed that the old order could be revived without bloodshed. They could not countenance that for millions of people, the entire edifice of European colonialism needed to be destroyed in the speediest possible manner. This unremembering prevented the Dutch from coming to terms with their history. It foreclosed any real engagement with the events of 1945. In a similar vein, Baldwin (1962) argued that the greatest crime of White Americans was not that they had destroyed hundreds of thousands of Black lives, but the fact that they “do not want to know it [...] It is the innocence which constitutes the crime” (5-6). The shock that the Dutch felt at the revolt of the Indonesians, and their attempts to explain events by blaming everyone else, was a desperate flight towards innocence, much like Gloria Wekker’s (2016) *White innocence*. Only recently is the process of unremembering being undone through the publication of historical works like those of Gert Oostindie (2015) and Rémy Limpach (2016), as well as literary works like Alfred Birney’s (2016) prize-winning novel about a violent colonial past.

Australian historian Robert Cribb (2007) argues convincingly that the catalyst for the anti-colonial violence of late 1945 had been the nationalist fear that the return of Dutch power meant that the Indonesian Revolution would be hijacked by a Eurasian or *Indo* elite who would install themselves as the leadership in any new Indonesian state. At a deeper level, the violence of 1945 flowed from what he termed a “reservoir of violence” (I have borrowed this term and used it throughout this essay as well as in the title) that had been shaped and supported by the Dutch colonial authority’s acceptance of organised crime and gang violence

during the pre-war period. Cribb adds that after the Japanese surrender in 1945, thousands of *Indos* tried to turn back the clock and rebuild life as it was prior to 1942. In doing so, they did not bother to hide their deep contempt for the newly declared Indonesian Republic (Cribb 2007, 35-44). The consequence was that the reservoir burst, releasing a wave of violence that consumed thousands of lives. Far from being Gerbrandy's Garden of Eden before the Fall, for many of its inhabitants the Dutch East Indies had been a violent and fairly dangerous place, as well as a society where deeply rooted resentments festered.

### Postcolonialism

Paul Connerton contends that immediately following 1945, a generation of authors invented a new type of literature that offered testimony and bore witness to catastrophic events. These works provide histories that were penned in a spirit of mourning and that attempted to cope with tumultuous loss (Connerton, 2011, 17-30). Most *Indisch* literature written after Indonesian independence falls within this horizon of mourning – it is a nostalgic literature of longing for that which has been irredeemably lost. Beb Vuyk witnessed from up close the catastrophe of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and her post-1945 writings are permeated by her own wartime experiences as well as the experiences of others (Nieuwenhuys, 1982, 272). These stories were written in mourning for the innocence lost when the madness of terrible cruelty was unleashed. However, they form an exception in *Indisch* literature by their lack of nostalgia for the days gone by. Instead, her stories can be read as postcolonial representations of colonial and anti-colonial violence.

Most Dutch literature of the East Indies was written from a colonial perspective, accepting without question the European point of view (Praamstra 2009, 151-152). Writers who are post-colonial, that is writing after decolonization, still maintain the European, colonial perspective. They are post-colonial only to the extent that they are writing in the period of post-empire. Colonial literature, whether written during the time of Empire or during the post-colonial period, is a literature that according to Elleke Boehmer (2005) is “written by and for the colonizing Europeans about the non-European lands dominated by them” and consequently embodies “the imperialist's point of view” (3). In colonial literature, colonised people suffer the violence of invisibility. When they do appear, they are reduced to passive positions of silent humility, or irrational violence. In Dutch colonial and post-colonial novels, natives, when they appear as characters, are usually servants, often lacking a name. They are simply a “supporting cast” or “scenic backdrop” (Stoler & Strassler 2000, 10). Even when we learn a little of their backstory, we seldom gain an insight into their private thoughts. Usually they lack agency, except when they sometimes become the perpetrators of mindless

violence. Their motivations are rarely examined. For instance, Maria Dermoût's novels *Nog pas gisteren* ('Only yesterday') (1951) and *De tienduizend dingen* ('The ten thousand things') (1955), though suffused with tropical landscapes and Asian motifs, reflect the point of view of a privileged European colonial (Doolan 2013, 19-20). This takes nothing away from the literary quality of these works – Beb Vuyk herself considered Dermoût's *De tienduizend dingen* to be “one of the most beautiful books ever written in Dutch” (Vuyk 1983, 39).

Boehmer (2005) maintains that postcolonial literature (without the hyphen), on the other hand, “critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship” and “sets out in one way or another to resist colonist perspectives” (3). The postwar stories of Beb Vuyk, I will argue, complicate the colonial gaze. Vuyk's work contests and subverts Dutch colonial ideologies and representations by reclaiming local, native, and particular histories. She provides an oeuvre of short literary works that offer a point of view that contests the dominant colonial mode. Her post-1945 writings provide a polyphony of voices that include the voices of the oppressed. Almost unique among Dutch letters, her stories make the colonised visible.

### **Beb Vuyk as a colonial writer?**

In 2015, Olf Praamstra (2015a) published a critique of Vuyk's 1939 novel *Het laatste huis van de wereld* ('The last house in the world'), arguing: “Vuyk is no different than other colonial conquerors” (143). The article also appeared in a book collection (Praamstra 2015b). The following year, Praamstra (2016) published a longer indictment of Vuyk's character and position within literature, claiming that Vuyk had had a “chameleon-like attitude” towards the colonial Dutch East Indies and independent Indonesia (45). He opened that article by declaring that Vuyk risks becoming a forgotten author, relegated to the second or third tier of Dutch literature. (Praamstra 2016, 43). To put it mildly, his two articles are unlikely to gain her a new readership. In the Manichean world of postcolonial scholarship, for Vuyk to be considered a colonial author could prove the death knell. Her work will be unremembered. It took Christina Suprihatin (2019) just a handful of pages to endorse Praamstra's verdict: “*Het laatste huis van de wereld* by Beb Vuyk is written from a colonial perspective” (63). Praamstra's 2015 article was concerned with Vuyk's work before the outbreak of World War Two, ignoring her work from the 1950s and 1960s. His 2016 article covered Vuyk's career until her death.

To find that Vuyk's early works reflect a colonial standpoint is akin to kicking open an already open door. When she was in her mid-twenties, Beb Vuyk decided to move to the Dutch East Indies (Praamstra 2016, 45). Europeans who



voluntarily migrate in order to build a career and who enter into the reality of colonialism are, of course, colonial! As one writer explained, innocent Europeans began to lose their innocence once they embarked on the ship in Europe, and upon reaching the colony they disembarked with an inflated sense of themselves. The conversion from modest European to inflated colonial was “a process of oxidation of the soul from which no one escapes,” as Beb Vuyk noted in *Het laatste huis van de wereld* in a passage that neither Praamstra nor Suprihatin seem to have noticed (Vuyk 1981, 179).

It is not remarkable that Vuyk was a colonial. After all, Multatuli arrived in the Dutch East Indies as a colonial careerist, and then he became critical of a certain type of colonialism. Wim Wertheim went to the Dutch East Indies as a servant of colonialism, and then became a radical anti-colonialist. Du Perron lived the life of a spoilt, rich colonial, until he transitioned into being an anti-colonial. What is remarkable is the change from colonial to anti-colonial. Praamstra admits that Vuyk's change began when she met Du Perron in the late thirties, and by the early 1940s, she had been won over to the cause of Indonesian independence (Praamstra 2016, 57-58). In 1945, she openly took the side of the Indonesian Republic and chose for Indonesian nationality. Praamstra maintains that this choice was based on “bitterness” against Dutch governmental discrimination (Praamstra 2016, 57-58). Not a sense of justice, but bitterness! Praamstra also suggests that Vuyk based her choice on “hatred for full blood whites” (Praamstra 2016, 58). Perhaps it was simply that Vuyk was following the example of her friend and hero Du Perron, who in 1940 wrote: “To be convinced that one is standing on the right side, one has to be *Indonesian*” (Du Perron 1959, 127). When Vuyk was forced into exile in the Netherlands in 1958, she kept her Indonesian nationality. Praamstra describes her wish to retain her chosen nationality as “*krampachtig*” or compulsive and small-minded (Praamstra 2016, 64).

Praamstra's account of Vuyk's actions regarding the Moluccan crisis is confusing (Praamstra 2016, 60-63). In 1950, the newly independent Republic of Indonesia was faced with its first big test – an independence movement in the Moluccan islands. Vuyk supported Jakarta's attempt to maintain the unity of the state. Praamstra describes her support as “fanatical” (Praamstra 2016, 60). He does not explain what measurement he used to determine fanaticism. Twice he describes Vuyk's support for maintaining the integrity of the unified Indonesian republic against Moluccan separatists as “neo-colonial” (Praamstra 2016, 59, 76). He criticises Vuyk for maintaining that the Moluccan revolt and the so-called Republic of South Moluccas (RMS) was the creation of a military clique of former soldiers of the Dutch colonial army (Praamstra 2016, 61).

Praamstra never mentions that at the root of Moluccan nationalism, according to Fidus Steijlen (1996), a professor of Moluccan migration and culture,

lies a sense of colonial privilege, combined with an identification with the western colonial elite (59). The idea that Moluccans had always been loyal servants of the colonial authorities originated as pro-Dutch propaganda (Smeets 1995, 7). This led to many Moluccans developing a loyalty to the Dutch Royal Family that one historian describes as “fanatical” (Bartels 1986, 25). Consequently, the Moluccan revolt and the ideology of the RMS was supported in the Netherlands by a wide variety of conservative individuals and organisations that supported empire (Manuhutu 1991, 74-77). Right-wing journalist Jan Fabius wildly compared the treatment of the Moluccans to the treatment of the Jews under the Nazis (Fabius 1954, 122-123). Conservatives like Carl Gerretson and Piet Gerbrandy threw in their lot with the arch-imperialist organisation *Door Eeuwen Trouw* (‘Faithful through centuries’) to campaign for Moluccans’ independence. (Bosma 2009, 23) This was nothing more than an attempt by some Dutch to “preserve influence in the archipelago” (Laarman 2013, 107). Thousands of Moluccan soldiers and their families went into exile in the Netherlands. As the decades slipped by and they remained in exile, leadership and unity was maintained by the ex-military men (a military clique) who, Steijlen tells us, permitted little toleration for opposing views (Steijlen 1996, 82). Bosma agrees that intimidation and social ostracism were used in order to maintain the RMS ideal in exile (Bosma 2009, 53).

Praamstra is surely confused when he berates Vuyk for being “fanatical” and he is incorrect when he labels her “neo-colonial.” The colonials were on the side of the Moluccans! What Praamstra finds most difficult to accept is that Vuyk decided for Indonesian nationality. From the late 1950s onward, Vuyk was an Indonesian author writing about her adopted homeland from a place in exile in the Netherlands. This was a revolutionary act, one that still rankles apparently.

Praamstra rightly takes issue with the fact that Vuyk temporarily supported the dictator General Suharto during the 1970s (Praamstra 2016, 68-72). He is suspicious of her claim that she was the “only one of the *Indisch* authors, who does not write out of nostalgia” (Praamstra 2016, 67). Praamstra calls this a “mantra” that she often repeated, a part of a mythical self-image that she created of being someone not “contaminated by the colonial past” (Praamstra 2016, 67). Praamstra concludes that Vuyk was an embittered outsider who never fitted in and whose life remained dominated by her incapacity to accept her hybrid origins (Praamstra 2016, 76). But she is surely in good company. Tjalie Robinson (2011) saw himself as a Dutchman in exile in Holland (148). Rob Nieuwenhuys (1959) admitted that his cultural vision had always been coloured by his “*tweeslachtigheid*” (‘dichotomy’) or ambivalent origins (226). E. M. Beekman called Nieuwenhuys “intellectually and emotionally a displaced person” (Beekman 1982, xiv). Praamstra seems to find it a character weakness that Vuyk wanted to be a full Indonesian. But Edward Said, while famously pointing out the strength of

hybridity (Said 1994, 317), near the end of his life admitted that he suffered from “an acute memory of the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so on” (Said 2000, 5).

In short, Praamstra's revelation is that Vuyk produced a colonial novel before World War Two. He also wants to convince us that Vuyk projected an incorrect self-image; that in reality she was motivated by bitterness and hate, fanaticism and neo-colonialism. Between the late 1940s and late 1960s she penned a number of short stories, “magnificent but above all [...] harrowing stories” according to Praamstra (2016, 64). Alas, he offers no analysis of them. Perhaps he is content that she is in danger of becoming a forgotten author. In order to counter this unremembering, it is to her stories that we now turn.

### **A polyphony of voices**

In colonial literature, where the so-called native is reduced to passive silence, we don't get to hear about the dreams and motivations of the ruled. In Vuyk's work also, the story is never directly told by an Indonesian. The narrator is usually, like Vuyk herself, an *Indo* woman. However, within the narrative frame of a story told from the privileged European or *Indo* point of view, Vuyk includes multiple perspectives. These perspectives, unlike in more straightforward colonial narratives, offer a glimpse of what it must have meant to be an Indonesian under Dutch rule, under Japanese rule, during the *bersiap* period or during the Indonesian War of Independence. Exceptionally, in some of Vuyk's stories the European narrator does not relay her own experiences only, but basically becomes the mouthpiece or, as Scova Righini (2004) calls it, the “service-hatch” (*‘doorgeef-luik’*) (195), through which an Indonesian gets to tell his story.

Take for instance her 1947 novel *Het hout van Bara* (‘The wood of Bara’). It is set between the years of the Great Depression in the late 1930s and the Japanese invasion in 1942. The novel is about a conflict between a patrician *Indo* family in the Moluccas, the Hilligens – the *totok* Eli and her *Indo* husband Hajo – and Bouts, the tyrannical Dutch administrator on the island. A secondary character is the minor local regent Abdoellah. We learn a lot about Abdoellah's appearance, his background and his dreams. He is a very dark young man who wears a white suit and leather shoes. His Western education was interrupted because of economic hardship. He speaks Dutch with the authorities, Malay with Chinese and Arabs, and Alfur with his own people. His wife and he have only one child. His wife is illiterate, but Abdoellah himself loves reading, though he does not have enough money to buy books. He loves visiting the Hilligens, for conversation and to borrow their books (Vuyk 1981, 278-280). Indeed, ever since being a little boy, he has

greatly admired Hajo and, clearly, he dreams of one day living the life of an upper class European, something he knows to be impossible. This makes him “a lonely man” (Vuyk 1981, 293).

When the Hilligens fall foul of Bouts and a feud ensues, Abdoellah avoids the Hilligens and the reader is offered his motivation – he considers himself a friend of the Hilligens, but he is afraid of Bouts who, as the official colonial authority, has the power to destroy the livelihood of any native (Vuyk 1981, 321). Eventually it is Abdoellah who approaches the Hilligens again, asking for their understanding and forgiveness. He explains his motivations in his own words and the Hilligens are forced to confront the truth that the colonial system itself is unjust since the natives are at the mercy of the arbitrary tyranny of local Dutch rulers (Vuyk 1981, 358-361). Abdoellah is a secondary character, but his is not a one-dimensional profile. He has a personal life, a personal history, and dreams for the future. He takes actions and justifies these actions. Alas, we also see that his options within an unjust colonial system are limited and therefore, despite his compassionate nature, a reservoir of violence is slowly expanding.

“Huize Sonja” (‘House Sonja’) was published in 1966. The protagonist is a *totok* called Etta who is married to Harry, a descendant from a patrician *Indo* family from the Moluccas. In this story, the servants play an important role, especially one houseboy called Simon Arakian, “a Timorese, a big, strong lad with wild eyes and a forest of fizzy hair, so stiff and thickly grown that he could hide his money, cigarettes and his writing materials in it” (Vuyk 1981, 462-463). Simon remains a mystery throughout the story and we never really discover what is going on in his mind. Nevertheless, as Vuyk tells the story of Etta, Simon's profile becomes more definite. He is an active agent who partially shapes his own future. When Etta and Harry decide to move to Java, it is Simon who takes the initiative to offer to go with them, even suggesting that he would like to see more of the world (Vuyk 1981, 469). But there is more to Simon Arakian than first meets the eye. Gradually our suspicion that he has a violent past appears to be confirmed (Vuyk 1981, 483-484). By the end of the story, with the Japanese army approaching, Simon takes some independent actions that seem to reverse the servant-master relationship (Vuyk 1981, 486-488). Simon's character in this story is much more than the decorative servant, he is not a passive or lazy native and he has far more depth than any mindlessly violent native. The fact that we cannot pin down his personal history leaves an uncanny feeling. On the final page of the story Etta's young son tells his mother that one of the servants kept saying “that the Japanese will murder all the Europeans and burn down their houses” (Vuyk 1981, 488). We are left with the strong suspicion that it is not the Japanese, but Indonesians like Simon Arakian, already acquainted with violence and with a

growing resentment against the ruling class, who will burn down the entire edifice of European rule.

Although the narrator of “De laatste waardigheid” (‘The final dignity’) from 1962 is an *Indo* who bears a strong resemblance to Beb Vuyk, the main character is a Sumatran Batak called Doctor Nambela. While in his heart he remains an anti-colonial nationalist, he has been forced to choose for the Dutch side after his wife and daughter were tortured and killed in the most barbaric way by Batak nationalists in 1945. One of the characters comments on the invisible, festering resentments: “I could never have imagined that the revolution that would bring new ways, would bring so much filth and old pain to the surface” (Vuyk 1981, 454). In this story, Vuyk allows the subaltern to speak. For nearly three pages, Vuyk’s narrator is the medium who relays Nambela’s voice to the reader. We hear him tell his story, almost without interruption, explaining the deep humiliation that is integral to the colonial system for natives like himself. He explains why he still remains a nationalist despite the atrocious violence committed against his wife and daughter by fellow Batak nationalists. We can feel his resentment: “It is horrible to be a native, automatically the inferior of any random Dutch person. The feeling burns under your skin, it eats away at you” (Vuyk 1981, 457). We are led to conclude that the root of the mass violence of 1945 was not Japanese propaganda, but the complicated legacy of Dutch colonialism and the deep resentments that colonial inequalities bred.

“Full of sound and the fury” (Vuyk’s title is in English) from 1958, is set in the Indonesian region of Borneo. Rob Nieuwenhuys (1982) acclaimed it as one of her most powerful stories, with its harrowing, dispassionate account of brutality (270-272). Here too, Vuyk’s European narrator becomes the medium through which an Indonesian gets to tell his story. The narrator is a journalist who is travelling through the region as part of an official tour, organised by the new republic’s ministry of information. The narrator is given two native guides, and these are the main characters in the story. We learn that one of them lost his father and older brother when the Japanese murdered the male nobility as well as Indonesian intellectuals (Vuyk 1981, 406-407). Deep in the jungle, they visit longhouses of Dayaks, where they see, hanging like trophies, the skulls of Japanese soldiers who had been captured, tortured and killed. A village elder tells the narrator how the Japanese fought well and endured torture admirably (Vuyk 1981, 412-415). Vuyk’s narrator eventually gives the floor completely to one of the Indonesian characters, Tjondro, who enjoyed recounting his tales of war: “He told them because he had to tell them, to save himself. He needed me to listen to him, to rid himself of them, these terrible and bloody stories, full of sound and fury” (Vuyk 1981, 410). The Dutch narrator listens to Tjondro and becomes the medium through which the Indonesian nationalist gets to tell his side of events.

Eventually his voice fills the final four pages as he relates how he was captured and tortured by the Dutch, how he escaped and eventually used a Japanese sword to decapitate an informant (Vuyk 1981, 416-420).

These four examples suffice to demonstrate that Vuyk's stories offer more than one, colonial, perspective. In two of the stories, even minor Indonesian characters are named and portrayed with richness and depth. They are each in their own right complicated individuals. Within the confines of what is possible in a colonial situation, they each make assessments, make decisions and take actions to better their lives. In the other two stories, the main characters are Indonesians and the narrator in both examples gives these characters the opportunity to speak directly to the reader.

### **A variety of victims**

In *Het hout van Bara*, the chief government authority, Bouts, is ignorant and uncouth, “a little island lord who made life unbearable for Indonesians and Europeans” (Vuyk 1981, 271). He exploits the locals, eventually coming up against the *totok* Eli and her *Indo* husband Hajo. Eli is appalled at how he treats the natives and admits that “you can feel embarrassed at being a European” (Vuyk 1981, 283). During a conversation with a local woman, Eli is made to understand that some form of justice can be achieved by Europeans, but for natives there is no chance of achieving justice through the colonial authorities (Vuyk 1981, 308). Hajo informs Eli that he has complained to the resident in Ambon about Bouts, and the resident agrees to transfer Bouts to another island. But, Eli asks, is this justice? As Europeans, they can get rid of Bouts, but what about the native population – could they have achieved this result too? And what awaits the natives on the island where Bouts will receive his next posting? (Vuyk 1981, 353). Hajo tells people that the colonial administration is just, but Eli asks, “Isn't it time to undo these lies?” (Vuyk 1981, 361). Clearly, Vuyk's novel indicated that in colonial society, there was little chance of due process through legal means against the abuse of power. Furthermore, there was a hierarchy of rectitude. It was the native peoples, consequently, who were most victimised by colonial abuse, not *totoks* or *Indos*.

In Vuyk's work after 1945 there is no clear division between “us” and “them,” as there is in a traditional colonial perspective. Her stories are free from any one-dimensional stereotype of the enemy. All sides are caught up in a surge of cruel violence that is unleashed once the colonial edifice begins to totter. The *Yearbook of the Society of Dutch Literature* described her work as deviating from the norm in Dutch literature because her representation of “this dirty war that was fought by the Netherlands in Indonesia” portrays atrocities but provides “no stereotype image of the enemy” (*Jaarboek* 1993, 181). “Verhaal van een

toeschouwer" ('Story of a spectator') first appeared in 1950. The narrator tells the reader that terrible brutalities had been inflicted by both sides, the Dutch as well as the Indonesians (Vuyk 1981, 374). We learn that Japanese prisoners of the Dutch are promptly shot dead (Vuyk 1981, 368). The main character in the story is Hermans, an *Indo* who has been a prisoner of war of the Japanese, working on the Burma railroad. In 1945, Hermans is liberated. His *Indo* wife had been imprisoned in a camp by the Japanese as well, and in 1945 she too was liberated. However, when she leaves the camp, she is murdered by a band of *pemuda*, one of the first victims of the *bersiap*. And yet, Hermans admits that his sympathies lie with the nationalists, because the war that ended in 1945 only accelerated a process that had been building for decades, namely of Asia liberating herself from colonial rule (Vuyk 1981, 371-372). In other words, the fictional character of Hermans had a better insight into the situation in 1945 than the real-life colonial experts like Visman (1945), who were taken by such surprise. Furthermore, while the violence of the *pemuda* is not justified, the resentment that provokes this violence is acknowledged. Dutch soldiers are seen to be victims, but so too are Indonesian nationalists, Japanese soldiers and *Indisch* civilians.

In "De laatste waardigheid," Vuyk does not dwell upon the suffering of the Europeans, whether *totok* or *Indo*. Instead, she leads us into seeing the effects of terrible violence from the perspective of natives of Sumatra. We learn that 1945 embodied not just a violent upheaval for the Europeans, but that the Declaration of Independence had ignited a social revolution in parts of Eastern Sumatra. Amidst great violence, the old aristocratic authorities and the sultan families became the targets of a cruel reckoning. As Vuyk (1981) writes: "Their palaces were burned down, they themselves, their multiple wives, children and grandchildren and their feudal vassals were murdered. The Chinese met the same fate" (450). The power vacuum that had briefly appeared in 1945 had seen the lid lifted from decades-old resentments. Now, violence and cruelty burst forth. Conflicts were not merely nationalist versus colonialist, but they encompassed a series of tribal and intertribal wars – Batak versus Batak, Batak versus Malay, Bataks and Malays versus Javanese (Vuyk 1981, 448-450).

In "Ngawang," the final work of fiction that Beb Vuyk wrote, published in 1969, the protagonist witnesses a chilling scene (Vuyk 1981, 494-495). A crowd of Indonesians march silently towards a Chinese shop. The Chinese shopkeeper and his pregnant wife are passive onlookers of their own destruction. First, the people in the crowd help themselves to all of the goods in the shop. Then they strip the shop of the furniture, the window blinds are unscrewed and removed, as are the doors. Everything is taken away by the looters. A man deferentially bows towards the Chinese pregnant woman who sits on a stool, and politely apologizes. She stands up and moves to one side, and he walks away with the stool. With the

furniture and fixtures gone, some men and women quietly line up before a ladder and in turn they strip the tiles off the roof. With the shop emptied of its goods, furniture, fixtures and roof tiles, the crowd moves away, towards the next Chinese shop, the next helpless victims. It is a scene that despite its lack of physical violence creates an indelible memory. Most disturbing is the clinical precision of Vuyk's description along with the calm and organized manner in which the scene unfolds. It does not bode well for the future of the Chinese as a minority group who are resented by their Indonesian neighbours for their association with Dutch rule, offering us another glimpse of the reservoir of resentment that will spill over into the mass violence against the Chinese during the *bersiap* of 1945.

The story "All our yesterdays," from 1958, (Vuyk 1981, 391-397) is unique for being the only instance in which Vuyk draws upon her experience as victim. Vuyk spent most of World War Two in Japanese prison camps, including six weeks imprisoned by the *Kempeitai*, the Japanese secret police. During this time, she was tortured and interrogated. In "All our yesterdays" (the title is in English), a European woman is being treated in a hospital, but suffers from disturbing memories of torture. She is interrogated by a Japanese *Kempeitai* captain, remembering him having "a pale face and the unmoving eyes of a reptile" (Vuyk 1981, 392). None of her other stories are based directly on her experience as a prisoner of the Japanese. Perhaps, as a colonial, Vuyk did not want to self-identify primarily as a victim. She had no sympathy for Europeans who focused exclusively on their own suffering in the Japanese camps, describing them as people,

who are still obsessed with their time in the camps, with the suffering and injustice that they experienced [...] with the humiliation, against which they can only offer a small-minded feeling of superiority. The white who has been humiliated by the coloured race, that still eats away at many.<sup>4</sup>

(Vuyk 1981, 368)

One of the factors that distinguishes the colonial mentality from the postcolonial approach is the obsessive focus on one's own, unrecognized suffering. Frantz Fanon maintained that this, and the inability to recognise the suffering of the colonised, is the preeminent characteristic of the mind of the colonialist (Fanon 2004, 15). Thus, within the mindset of a colonialist paradigm, the greatest victims of Dutch colonization were the Europeans – victimized twice over, first by the Japanese in 1942-1945, and then, in 1945, maltreated by the ungrateful Indonesians. Take the poet Willem Brandt, who had been a prisoner of the

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<sup>4</sup> 'die nog steeds geobsedeerd worden door hun kamptijd, door het lijden en het onrecht hun aangedaan [...] door de vernedering, waar zij alleen maar een krampachtige meerwaardigheids-houding tegenover konden stellen. De door een gekleurd ras vernederde blanke, dat vreet nog steeds in velen door.'



Japanese. Liberated in 1945, his 1946 collection of poems dwelt upon the suffering experienced *Binnen Japansh prikkeldraad* ('Behind Japanese barbed wire'). Some of his images evoke the Jewish Holocaust in Europe, as the poem "Europeans-Transport" illustrates: "People and names were called/ there is a number written on my chest/ we were driven like herds along the way/ and pushed together in a cattle-wagon" (Brandt 1946, 15). In the introduction to the collection, Jan H. de Groot wrote: "The whites in the Japanese concentration camps were in a position comparable with the Jews in Westerbork, or even with those in Poland" (De Groot 1946, 5). The suffering experienced in the Japanese camps was immense and a justified argument can be made that this suffering remained underrepresented and unremembered in post-war Dutch society. But to compare the conditions in the Japanese camps with the death camps of Poland is inaccurate, to say the least. Nevertheless, during the following decades a steady stream of publications focused exclusively on the suffering of Europeans in *de Jappenkampen* ('the Japanese camps') and the misery experienced during the months of the *bersiap* period in late 1945. This led essayist Rudy Kousbroek, himself a survivor of Japanese internment, to lock swords multiple times with the likes of Brandt. Kousbroek used the term "East Indies camp syndrome," arguing repeatedly that while the camps in South East Asia were places of harshness, they were not sites of extermination (Kousbroek 2005, 411-414; 433-35; 503).

The true shock of 1945 for Dutch colonialists was that in 1942 they had been defeated, imprisoned and humiliated by an Asian people considered to be inferior in their eyes. Upon "liberation" in 1945, they found themselves to be the targets of an incomprehensible violence. The fact that this mass violence came from another Asian group, but one who they believed shared with them intimate ties stretching back centuries, made it all the more traumatic. In the following decades they coped with their puzzlement through a combination of nostalgic longing for the good old days and by nurturing a resentment towards Dutch politicians, historians and a public, all of whom, they felt, failed to fully acknowledge their suffering. Vuyk's stories embrace the broad perspective that all sorts of peoples suffered from the cruelties that overwhelmed thousands of victims during the final years of the Dutch East Indies. Yet they reflect little sympathy for any Europeans who identified themselves primarily as victims.

### **Colonial relationships and intimacies**

In *Het hout van Bara*, Vuyk provides a number of examples of the sorts of relationships that are never innocent, but rather have been scarred by the intimacy of colonialism. Vuyk's biographer, Bert Scova Righini (2004) praises this work for how it reveals "the deeply contaminating influence that the power of a few white

bureaucrats have on the psyche and inter-relationships among the native elite” (179).

As we have already seen, the chief administrator is an aggressive bully who uses his position to exploit and terrorize the people (Vuyk 1981, 271). The doctor is a Javanese who projects a sense of superiority due to his good Western education and his background in the upper tiers of Javanese society. The police inspector is a European who personifies the force of law, but his dark skin makes him feel inferior to the Javanese doctor. The police inspector is legally the superior, but the Javanese is socially the superior. The two hate each other, and that hatred has been born out of the colonial intimacy that the two share (Vuyk 1981, 271-272). The young regent, Abdoellah, as we have seen, received a Western education, although it was cut short by poverty (Vuyk 1981, 279). He realizes that he can never become a European, whom he considers to be “the master race” (Vuyk 1981, 293). The protagonist Eli's husband, Hajo, comes from an *Indo* family that has been part of the elite on the Moluccas for centuries (Vuyk 1981, 274). All these people are thrown together within an intimate colonial bubble on a little island. Jealousies, resentments and open hatred characterise their relationships as they navigate the complex web of colonial entanglements, with their subtle shades of racial and social superiorities. The entire novel can be read as a slow build-up of a reservoir of violence that is about to burst. The final sentence of the novel is: “A month later the war broke out” (Vuyk 1981, 361).

In “Huize Sonja” Vuyk attacks the entrenched and often articulated colonial idea that the Dutch and Indonesians have “many spiritual ties” (Broek 1943, 336). The actions of the servants in the story reveal that this is a colonial delusion. When Japanese troops land in Indonesia, and with most of the European men gone off to fight the invader (though there won't actually be much fighting), the behaviour of the local people suddenly changes and the protagonist of the story, the *totok* Etta, finds herself estranged “from her children, from herself and from the world that surrounded her” (Vuyk 1981, 487). The once obedient servants become strangers and their behaviour becomes unpredictable (Vuyk 1981, 486-488). The reader never quite learns if the servants are pleased with the coming of the Japanese. What is clear, however, is that for the servants, this is not their war. They have no vested interest in supporting the Japanese nor in defending the Dutch. They do not see the advantage in having the colonial system prolonged. And without the support of their servants, *totoks* like Etta are doomed. All it took was the arrival off the coast of a foreign military power, and the natives, with their resentments rising to the surface, withdrew their participation in a system in which they were exploited.

In his dissection of the complex entanglements and pathological relationships that emerge from colonial intimacies, Frantz Fanon described how his fellow

black West Indians form an attachment to whiteness. They regard themselves as superior to black Africans because of their closer proximity to white culture, being descendants of slaves. Clearly, this is a pathological perspective. Fanon called the futile and misjudged attempt of the colonised person of colour to pass for a white person “lactification” (Fanon 1986, 33-38). No matter how hard they try to collaborate with the imperial power, it is impossible to ever become white. Baldwin (1972) made this point: “Four hundred years in the West had certainly turned me into a Westerner - there was no way around that. But four hundred years in the West had also failed to bleach me - there was no way around *that* either” (42). The attempt of the black to be accepted as a white, like the attempt of the colonised to prove themselves worthy of the coloniser's trust, was not only futile, but misguided. In a warning to his nephew, Baldwin (1962) wrote: “There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that *they* must accept *you* [...]” (italics in original, 8).

But among people of mixed heritage, like the *Indo* in the Dutch East Indies, the colonial situation was even more complicated. As the ultimate in-between, they could find themselves distrusted by both sides, unable to fully gain recognition as an equal among colonised or coloniser. Theirs was the dilemma described by Homi Bhabha (1994) as “the anxiety of the irresolvable, borderline culture of hybridity” (225).

Vuyk herself knew what it was like to be an in-between, a person who always feels out of place. A Dutch-born dark-skinned *Indo*, she had experienced racial abuse while growing up in her native Rotterdam. Having emigrated to the Dutch East Indies, she claims to have encountered real racism in the colony. According to Vuyk, in colonial society, among those of mixed heritage, the presence of native blood “was something that one could not talk about, was something that one particularly did not want to be reminded of” (Vuyk 1981, 432).

Petra Boudewijn (2016) argues that Vuyk's work subverted the relationship between *totok* and *Indo*. Moreover, instead of trying to mimic the norms of Western civilization, the emancipated *Indo* “embraces their otherness and strives towards an own identity and position that is equal to that of the 'white' European in the East Indies” (279). The significance of racial discrimination in the Dutch East Indies is an issue of some discussion among colonial historians (Boudewijn 2016, 18). It is argued that those with dark skin could reach the top levels of government administration and skin colour alone was not decisive, but education, wealth and other factors also played a role (Bosma, Raben & Willems 2006, 155-175). However, in 1949 Wim Wertheim argued that issues like presentation or fluency in language were tools that were used to exclude Indonesians from top positions, with a tiny number of exceptions (Wertheim 1949, 82). Decades later he still

maintained that the Dutch East Indies, like all colonies, had been ruled by a strict "color-code" (Wertheim 1991, 367). In the social world as lived and experienced by individuals, skin colour as a social construct formed the basis for prejudice and discrimination, forming an integral part of public discourse. We find the clearest articulation of this in Vuyk's 1958 story "De jager met zijn schietgeweer" ('The hunter with his shooting gun').

This story offers an example of the pathology of "lactification" in action and the *Indo* obsession with skin colour. The *Indo* narrator and her *Indo* husband spend an evening with a dark-skinned *Indo* captain of a ship. The captain resents the rise of Asian nationalism and claims that the only way to deal with the Indonesian nationalists is to kill them all (Vuyk 1981, 400). Paul van der Veur (1968) argued that the only way for an *Indo* to gain the full prestige as a "European" was "to approximate the model as closely as possible" (201). However, we must bear in mind Bhabha's warning regarding mimicry; in the colonial situation, the Other always remains "subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 1994, 86).

The captain in Vuyk's story, having spent a lifetime mimicking his white colonials, now fully identifies with European, colonial civilization. He cannot imagine life under a government run by natives, finding it hard to believe that the narrator and her husband have chosen for Indonesian citizenship (Vuyk 1981, 402). However, he realizes that he will also never be recognized as fully white; to use Baldwin's words, he will never be bleached enough. Instead of accepting that the attempt to be white is misguided, the captain internalises colonial oppression. In the final scene, in a gesture of pathological self-hatred, he plucks at his own skin and screams, "This black skin, my own skin that I'd like to tear off. It is the Asian in myself that I hate" (Vuyk 1981, 404-405).

Vuyk's story suggests that it was the injustice of colonialism, based partially on skin colour, shaped relationships and intimacies that was pathological. Furthermore, the story illustrates that *Indos* still had a choice. On the one hand, the captain had chosen to mimic the white colonialists, but the blurred and ambivalent self-image that he fashioned involved the denial of a part of himself. The result is parody. However, the narrator and her husband made a different choice, deciding for the Republic of Indonesia. The story can be interpreted in a way that shows that the ambivalence of hybridity can be a strength, allowing one to fashion one's self in different ways.

A great deal of post-war colonial literature focusses on the plight of Europeans inside the Japanese prison camps. This not only excludes the Indonesian experience but also silences the experience of the Dutch outside the camps, that is, the *Indos* outside the camps, the so-called "*buitenkampers*." Vuyk's story "Ngawang" goes against the grain by telling a story of *Indos* outside the

camps. Furthermore, as Pamela Pattynama argues, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many *Indos* found themselves in competition for government jobs with increasing numbers of *totoks* arriving on steam ships from Europe. Consequently, they tried desperately to rid themselves of Asian habits in order to make themselves as European as possible. Pattynama (2014) is correct to point out that “Ngawang” captures the way the Indo community had become “obsessed by the external characteristics of race” (62-64).

The story focuses on two sisters whose mother is a native Javanese. One sister, Ernie, is married to an open-minded *totok*. However, even for him, a native mother-in-law “was a difficult challenge” (Vuyk 1981, 492). When the Japanese invade, the Dutch army collapses in humiliation: “They hadn't even fought and hadn't even seen a Japanese” (Vuyk 1981, 497). Given that her husband is in a prisoner of war camp, Ernie moves in with her mother but her sister, Deetje, remains living in the capital city. Deetje reports that the Europeans have been moved into internment camps and she tries in vain to be interned with them, because “the natives become more brutal by the day” (Vuyk 1981, 506). When she refuses her sister's request to return with her to their hometown because, “no one lives there, only natives,” Ernie replies, “your native mother lives there,” but Deetje is scandalised by the idea, saying, “I am not going to live with my native mother” (Vuyk 1981, 508-09). Near the end of the story a local man attempts, but fails, to break into the house of their native mother. The final sentence of the story is: “That was the New Year's morning of the year 1945” (Vuyk 1981, 519). Thus, the ending, at the dawn of 1945, foreshadows the ending of the war that is rapidly approaching. The protagonists are not aware, but the reader can anticipate the coming storm – the explosion of anti-colonial violence of 1945 will overwhelm everything associated with colonialism. Deetje's attitude of mimicking colonial Europeans and repudiating her Asian roots, including her Javanese mother, will draw down the violence of the nationalists.

## Conclusion

In Vuyk's work, the Japanese are responsible for the greatest acts of atrocity prior to 1945. But, from 1945 onward, all sides engage in a frenzy of cruelty. In the story “All our yesterdays” it is the Japanese *Kempeitai* who torture Dutch civilians (Vuyk 1981, 393-396). In other stories, Dutch soldiers abuse and kill Japanese prisoners (Vuyk 1981, 368) and they torture Indonesian nationalists (Vuyk 1981, 416-17). Tribal groups kill other tribespeople (Vuyk 1981, 412, 448-450), and tribesmen torture and kill Japanese and preserve their skulls (Vuyk 1981, 413-14). Indonesian nationalists murder Indonesian informants (Vuyk 1981, 419-20). We know that for Vuyk personally, the fact that all sides had blood on their hands made a difference.

She tells us that 1945 marked a transition in colonial violence. Before 1945, violence was perpetrated “by strangers and enemies, by Germans and Japanese,” but from 1945 onward “cruelties were ... committed ... by our own people, Dutch and Indonesian (Vuyk 1981, 444).

The meaning of 1945 is clear for the Dutch in Europe – it meant liberation from German occupation. In the Dutch East Indies, the meaning of 1945 is more complex. A collection of international historians recently subtitled their study of the months that followed the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945 as the *100 days in 1945 that changed Asia and the world* (Chandler, Cribb & Narangoa 2016). The year 1945 marks an ending, but it also marks the violent birth pangs of something new: the independence of Asian colonies. For the nationalist Indonesians, 1945 meant a continuation of their struggle for national liberation, but this struggle entered a new, accelerated phase with the declaration of independence. For the Dutch, 1945 remains a tragic year. *Totoks* found themselves freed from Japanese internment but became the target of nationalists until they were finally repatriated. For most *Indos*, 1945 meant an even deeper tragedy – the loss of homeland, forced displacement and exile among strangers by the North Sea.

For Beb Vuyk, 1945 was also a watershed year. Along with two other survivors of the Japanese camps, sociologist Wim Wertheim and politician Jacques de Kadt, she issued a manifesto opposing the policy of Lieutenant Governor-General Van Mook and called for the immediate independence of Indonesia, free from any Dutch domination (Scova Righini 2004, 161-162). This marked a reorientation in her politics in which she chose to identify with Indonesia. Furthermore, 1945 marked a major shift in her literary style. Prior to World War Two she had sought inspiration at the source of ancient literature, the oral story. She tells us that she had consciously developed an epic style (Vuyk 1981, 435-39). After 1945, the romanticism and luminosity of the epic style faded. Her writing became pared-down and spare. She would never return to the romantic, perhaps colonial, epics of life in the tropics that she penned before the war. Beekman (1996) points out that World War Two had ruthlessly and violently “severed a world from its former inhabitants,” what he called “a historical amputation,” and Vuyk changed her style “in order to register it” (470).

Already in *Het hout van Bara* a new incisiveness enters her writing when analysing the pathology of colonial entanglements, with its build-up of a reservoir of violence. Her later work offers multiple perspectives – we hear stories told from the point of view of anti-Indonesian *Indos*, pro-Indonesian *Indos*, *totoks*, Indonesian republican nationalists, as well as a variety of tribal peoples. Only the Japanese are never given the floor. Joop van den Berg noted that

no other author in the Indisch-Dutch literature has given such a complete image of the colonisation and decolonisation of the Dutch East Indies as Beb Vuyk. In no other work are the dominant factors – impotence, ignorance and indifference on the side of those with power, vengeance, distrust and vexation on the side of the oppressed – so convincingly present.<sup>5</sup>  
(Van den Berg 1990, 85)

In Beb Vuyk's stories our faces are closely pressed to a window through which we are forced to glimpse the uncomfortable reality that is the death-throws of a colony and the birth pangs of a new state as experienced by myriad groups of participants. It will be a great loss if, in a process of unremembering, she becomes a forgotten author.

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<sup>5</sup> 'geen ander auteur van de Indisch-Nederlandse letterkunde heeft zo'n compleet beeld gegeven van de kolonisatie en dekolonisatie van Nederlands-Indië als Beb Vuyk. In geen ander werk zijn die dominante factoren – aan de kant van de machthebbers: onmacht, onwetendheid en onwil, en aan de kant van de onderdrukten: wrok, wantrouwen en ergernis – zo overtuigend aanwezig.'

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### Réservoirs de violence : les récits postcoloniaux de Beb Vuyk

L'année 1945 marqua la fin de deux occupations pour le royaume des Pays-Bas. La première occupation se termina en mai après la capitulation allemande, et la deuxième en août après la capitulation soudaine du Japon. La conclusion de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale en Asie, cependant, plongea les Indes Orientales Néerlandaises dans une situation difficile et particulièrement instable. En effet, les Néerlandais nouvellement « libérés » se trouvaient confrontés à des troupes nationalistes et hostiles, loyales à la République d'Indonésie qui venait tout juste d'être créée. Puis, en 1949, après des années de conflits armés voire de guerre totale, les Pays-Bas cédèrent avec beaucoup de réticence leur colonie et reconnurent la souveraineté de la nouvelle république. Cet article examine brièvement les événements qui se produisirent en Indonésie vers la fin de 1945, et cherche à expliquer pourquoi les Néerlandais éprouvaient tant de difficulté à accepter la nouvelle situation. Les récits de Beb Vuyk offrent un regard unique sur la violence qui s'était accumulée avant 1945, sur la façon dont la violence change entre 1945 et 1949, et sur la violence telle qu'elle était vécue tant par les Indonésiens que par les Européens. Comme Vuyk occupait dans le système colonial d'avant la guerre la position de femme colonisatrice, j'estime que ces récits, publiés après la guerre, évoquent d'une manière plus nuancée l'histoire coloniale notamment en soulevant

des questions reliées à quelques-unes des pathologies engendrées par l'intimité du contact colonial, dont la répression et la violence. En intégrant dans ses récits, écrits entre la fin des années quarante et la fin des années soixante, des histoires locales, indigènes et spécifiques, elle évoque, en effet, une variété d'expériences qui se concentrent moins sur le vécu des victimes européennes que sur celui des Indonésiens.

### **Reservoirs van geweld: Beb Vuyks postkoloniale verhalen**

Het jaar 1945 betekende het einde van twee bezettingen in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden. De eerste bezetting eindigde met de Duitse overgave in mei. Aan de tweede bezetting kwam er een eind na de plotselinge capitulatie van Japan in augustus. De beëindiging van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Azië bracht een onstabiele en complexe situatie teweeg betreffende Nederlands-Indië. De 'bevrijde' Nederlanders zagen zich omringd door vijandige, nationalistische troepen die loyaal waren aan de nieuw opgerichte Republiek Indonesië. Er volgden ettelijke jaren van geweld en een grootschalige oorlog voordat Nederland in 1949 schoorvoetend haar kolonie afstond en de soevereiniteit van de nieuwe republiek erkende. In dit artikel wordt kort ingegaan op de situatie die zich eind 1945 in Indonesië voordeed. Er wordt getracht uit te leggen waarom Nederlanders het moeilijk vonden om de nieuwe situatie te accepteren. De verhalen van Beb Vuyk bieden een uniek inzicht in het reservoir van geweld dat zich vóór 1945 had opgebouwd, alsmede de veranderde toon in het soort geweld dat plaatsvond tussen 1945 en 1949, en verder ook het door Aziaten en Europeanen ervaren geweld. Vuyks positie binnen het koloniale bestaan van vóór de oorlog was dat van een koloniaal persoon. Het is echter mijn stelling dat haar naoorlogse verhalen het dominante koloniale narratief enigermate aan de kaak stellen, met name door sommige van de pathologieën, die zijn voortgekomen uit het nauwe koloniale contact, waaronder onderdrukking en geweld, naar voren te brengen. Doordat zij zich richt op bepaalde plaatselijke en inheemse ervaringen, geven haar verhalen die zijn geschreven tussen eind jaren veertig en eind jaren zestig een verscheidenheid aan ondervindingen weer en worden de belevingen van Europese slachtoffers minder centraal gesteld dan die van de Indonesiërs.

# The Dutch hiding experience in fiction

*Bettine Siertsema*

This article discusses fictional literature about the Jewish hiding experience in the Netherlands during the Second World War. A chronological inventory shows three periods: the immediate postwar years, the 1970s and 1980s, and the 2010s.<sup>1</sup> A more detailed thematic exploration analyzes how aid-givers, troublesome people in hiding, religious tensions between hosts and guests, and the child's perspective are represented in fiction. In literary theory, Holocaust fiction has not always been an overall accepted genre, but when compared to historiography and psychological research on after-effects, fiction on hiding presents a remarkably truthful image of the hiding experience. Children's literature, partly, is somewhat of an exception: whereas many children lived under a false identity and thus with relative freedom of movement, children's books are more about children who are literally hidden. At the same time, children's books leave possibly questionable motives of aid-givers out of the picture. Contrary to what one would expect, this is precisely an aspect about which adult novels written shortly after the war are quite open: they do not keep silent about greed and egotism among the rescuers. Thus, from the start, fictional literature called into question the general (self-)image of the Dutch as heroic helpers of their persecuted Jewish fellow citizens, a view inspired by the diary of Anne Frank. In a sense, fiction offers a "truer" picture than the most famous non-fiction work on hiding.

Keywords: Holocaust fiction, the Netherlands, Second World War, hiding, children's literature, autobiography.

Holocaust fiction has long been a contested genre. For decades, it was considered almost a sacrilege to write an imaginary Holocaust story. One of the most prominent opponents of the genre, Elie Wiesel, famously declared that "A novel about Treblinka is either not a novel or not about Treblinka. A novel about Majdanek is about blasphemy. Is blasphemy" (Wiesel 1990, 7). As the Second World War and

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their useful comments. I am also grateful for the linguistic changes in this article suggested by Krystyna Henke.

the Holocaust recede into memory, however, the ban on Holocaust fiction gradually seems to be lifting. Literary critics did not reject Jonathan Littell's (2006) imaginative novel *Les bienveillantes* ('The kindly ones'), which features a Holocaust perpetrator as its first-person narrator. Clearly, it would be difficult to maintain a preference for autobiographical perpetrator texts, as they are very rare. So, this acceptance may pertain to the narrative situation, because there is hardly a non-fiction alternative, in contrast with literature from the victim's perspective. However, the most important factor in this evolving acceptance is, undoubtedly, the passing of time.

Interestingly, there is a marked difference with how fictional tales on hiding are regarded, which is a somewhat less sensitive topic than concentration camp experiences. In the Netherlands, beginning right after the war, fiction about hiding has been an accepted genre. Curiously, public interest in actual diaries by people in hiding did not commence until at least fifty years later, with Anne Frank's diary as the one great exception. Even more puzzling is why the substantial body of literary works on hiding is seldom included in theoretical works on Holocaust literature, as if hiding is not deemed a part of the Holocaust experience, in all its diversity. A threefold reason for the lack of critical published works that address Dutch fiction on hiding can be identified. First, Dutch literature in general has remained underexposed internationally because of the language obstacle. Further, Holocaust fiction has long been considered a "suspect" genre. Finally, the topic of hiding as part of the Holocaust experience has never received much scholarly attention. I will explore how Dutch fictional works on hiding compare with non-fiction and how they can be positioned within the historiography of the Holocaust. Following a section in this article on literary theory of Holocaust literature in general and hiding more specifically, I will offer a chronological overview of the literary works in question and then discuss them more in detail on the basis of the most important themes that emerge in those books. Upon presenting a summary of the historiography of hiding in the Netherlands and psychological approaches to hiding, especially where children are concerned, I draw conclusions about the truthfulness or credibility of Dutch fiction on this topic.

### Literary theory

Holocaust literature did not emerge as an acknowledged literary genre until the 1970s. In fact, the very first theorist that I know of was the Dutchman Sem Dresden, who wrote the essay *De literaire getuige* ('The literary witness') in 1959. This was followed in 1964 by a much shorter article, "The literature of the Holocaust" by Alexander Alvarez. Remarkably, American – and to a lesser degree, British – scholarship dominates the field, which entails the exclusion of many primary works that have not been translated into English. See, for example, Zoë

Waxman (2006), who in *Writing the Holocaust* stresses the wide variety of the authors she discusses, while adding: “The primary focus is on post war English-language materials, readily accessible to the general reader” (2). Obviously, scholars from different nationalities contribute to the field with their own linguistic and literary knowledge, such as Cynthia Haft about French literature, Andrea Reiter, Ernestine Schlant, and Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz about literature in German, and Sem Dresden about Dutch literature. Lawrence Langer (1977) wrote what is considered to be the first standard work: *The Holocaust and the literary imagination*. His focus is not on the genre that became known as documentary or testimonial literature but on the manner in which literature attempts to convey an ineffable reality and the possible conflict between facts and the imaginary world. Literature on hiding, which formally is part of the genre of Holocaust literature, on the whole falls outside his scope and that of many subsequent scholars. Alvin Rosenfeld (1980) includes poetry, Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi (1980) focuses on various kinds of fictionalization, and Zoë Waxman (2006) discusses only testimonial literature about the ghettos and the concentration camps. Frequently, Holocaust literature is divided into subcategories, based on the proximity to the events. This can be seen, for example, in Zoë Waxman’s (2006) *Writing the Holocaust*, and in Elrud Ibsch’s (2013) *Overleven in verhalen: Van ooggetuigen naar ‘jonge wilden’: Joodse schrijvers over de Shoah* (‘Survival in stories: from eyewitnesses to “young savages”: Jewish writers on the Shoah’). Subcategories range from diaries and chronicles written contemporaneously, to memoirs, autobiographical fiction, and finally, writing that is entirely fictional.

James E. Young (1990) refined the debate on fact and fiction in Holocaust literature by pointing out that texts written at the time offer nothing more than a – possibly flawed – interpretation of the facts. For instance, a matter that in hindsight is seen as the cause of a certain development does not reveal itself as such from the start and may be totally ignored by a diarist. Diaries do have the advantage of authenticity, as does testimonial literature, though the passing of time lessens that quality somewhat. Mimetic fiction is another category. It “incorporates the events into the continuum of history and human experience” (Howe 1988, 191). It does not necessarily pretend to be authentic, but it strives after plausibility and verisimilitude. The works discussed here belong to this category. The final category is fiction of a “transhistorical mode” that “transfigures the events into a mythic reality where madness reigns and all historical loci are relinquished” (Howe 1988, 191).<sup>2</sup> There is, as far as I am aware, no Dutch fiction on hiding that belongs to this last category. Berel Lang (2000) conducted an interesting thought experiment on the question of authenticity in the chapter “The

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<sup>2</sup>Irwing Howe here quotes Sidra Ezrahi, who in turn refers to Israeli critic Hannah Yaoz (Howe does not mention details of either source).

facts of fiction” in *Holocaust Representation*. He imagined finding a document with a statement by Primo Levi that his book *If this is a man* was based on experiences and memories that someone else had told him and wondered if it would be less valuable and lose its canonical status then.

From the late 1980s on, the category of second and at present even third generation literature emerged. Naturally, these authors have to resort to fiction too, though their stories are often (partly) founded on the history of their parents, grandparents, or other relatives. The more their work takes an experimental, provocative and transgressive form, and thus can be placed within the trans-historical category, the more interest literary scholars show in the literature of this “postmemory generation,” a phrase coined by Marianne Hirsch (2012). Authors like Jonathan Safran Foer, Edgar Hilsenrath, and Arnon Grunberg are noteworthy representatives of this generation. Elrud Ibsch, late professor of literary theory in Amsterdam, omits diaries as a genre in her overview of international Holocaust literature, but keeps the order mentioned earlier along the lines of proximity of the authors to the events of the Holocaust, and shows a distinct interest in experimental or transgressive fiction, a category to which she devotes four of her ten chapters in *Overleven in verhalen* (Ibsch 2013). Her fourth chapter, on writers who had been in hiding as a child, is especially relevant for this article. She discusses, in addition to Aharon Applefeld and Saul Friedländer, the Dutch authors Marga Minco (who doesn’t really fit in that chapter, since she was born in 1920 – and was thus an adult during the war – but who was in hiding and wrote about that experience), Lisette Lewin, Chaja Polak, and Judith Herzberg. The latter is a poet and playwright, and therefore falls outside the scope of this article. Lisette Lewin and Chaja Polak write more about the aftermath of the war and its effects on the second generation (or the 1.5 generation: those who were little children during the war) than about hiding.

In *Anne Frank and after*, Dick van Galen Last, who at the time of its publication worked at the NIOD, the Dutch Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and Rolf Wolfswinkel from the University of Cape Town, offer a historical overview of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands based on Dutch personal testimonies. However, they address the topic of hiding only briefly, using – apart from Anne Frank – mainly Miep Gies, one of the helpers of the Frank family, Marga Minco and a fragment from a novel by Jan Wolkers that merely fleetingly touches on the subject, zooming in on the sexual relation between a girl in hiding and her aid-giver.

When considering the hiding experience in literature, the very first story that comes to mind is, of course, the one by Anne Frank. The most translated and widely read book in all of Dutch literature, her diary has been so thoroughly investigated and analyzed that I cannot even begin to give an overview of all the



valuable insights that the literary and historical research has rendered.<sup>3</sup> The diary, for which her father, Otto Frank, initially could not even find a publisher, gained popularity first in the United States and then the Netherlands (strange order, but that is how it happened), and then the rest of the world, thanks in part to theatrical and film adaptations (Prose 2009, part III). Perhaps that success is the reason why the theme of hiding remained rather underexposed for a long time: at the outset, the standard was set so high that other writers must have been reluctant to come forward. However, another explanation is also possible: not only in the years immediately after the war, but even now, people who were in hiding during the war feel that their experience pales in comparison to what concentration camp survivors endured and so, they often prefer to remain silent. Beginning in 1991, when the first “Hidden children” conference was organized in New York, followed by one specifically for Dutch hidden children in Amsterdam in 1992, this sentiment gradually began to change. Yet, the relative silence in view of the “hierarchy of grief” may explain why memoirs about the time in hiding are rather scarce. Nevertheless, there are some. Probably one of the earliest and most widely read such memoirs in the Netherlands is by an aid-giver: *Een Groninger pastorie in de storm* (‘A vicarage in Groningen in the storm’) by Johanna Ader-Appels, the widow of a vicar who was executed in 1944 for his help to hundreds of Jewish people in hiding. It was published in Amsterdam as early as 1945 and was reprinted at least twelve times. One of the Jewish individuals whom this vicar helped was Johanna-Ruth Dobschiner (1969), who also wrote a memoir. First written in English, Dobschiner’s *Selected to live* was translated into Dutch and published in 1974 as *Te mogen léven: Een Nederlandse Jodin vertelt haar geschiedenis* (‘To be allowed to live: A Dutch Jewish woman relates her history’), enjoying several reprints. In addition, it was translated into German, Finnish, French, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. Both these books are heavily Christian in tone and intent.

It practically goes without saying that many diaries were written in hiding. It was, after all, a good pastime activity, given that other possibilities for work and recreation were rather limited. But most of them were never published. (Currently, the Dutch Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies is in the process of digitizing the hundreds of wartime diaries in its archives and making them available to the public.) Those that did reach a wider readership were only published very late, roughly in the past twenty years. Although fiction is generally not considered a reliable historical source, the novels about hiding that appeared over the years do depict the experience faithfully, from several angles. As the majority of these novels draw on autobiographical elements, this may not come

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<sup>3</sup> A new collection of articles, edited by Frank van Vree and Martin van Gelderen, and containing an essay by the author, is forthcoming: *Anne Frank: Achtergronden, receptie en herinneringscultuur*.

as a surprise. True to their nature, children's stories paint a somewhat rosier picture than adult literature, but without lapsing into falsehood.

### Chronological overview

#### *First period: 1945-1947*

In terms of the timeline, fictional works about hiding offer a completely different picture than do diaries. As early as 1945, Willy Corsari, who was an immensely popular author at the time, published a substantial novel, *Die van ons* ('Ours'). In 1946 it was followed by Maurits Dekker's *Jozef duikt* ('Jozef goes into hiding') and Maurice Coutinho's *De stille strijd* ('The silent struggle'), written in hiding during the last year of the war (with a reprint in 1989). There was also a lengthy novel about the time of the occupation as a whole, *Verduisterde jaren* ('Eclipsed years') by Salomon de Vries Jr. (1894-1974).<sup>4</sup> The author was a journalist for the socialist newspaper *Het Volk* and a prolific writer and director of radio plays of which he wrote more than 75 (Joosten 2013). In *Verduisterde jaren* he paints a broad picture of the Netherlands, especially of Amsterdam, during the war. He was Jewish and survived the war in hiding. While in the novel the author figures under his own nickname Es, the emphasis is on the resistance fighter Wouter. As a result, the novel sketches a somewhat more positive picture than corresponds with reality. Betrayal and collaboration are not omitted, but the emphasis is on the attitude of the "good" Dutchman – the supposed majority of the population – even if that attitude did not lead to actual resistance. Humorous instances of witty and insolent responses to Germans create a tone of bravado. Humor is also present in incidents like those involving a small dog named Flappie, who barks ferociously when German soldiers try to break down the door; they are prepared for a vicious attack, but upon cautiously entering, Flappie sits up like a good dog, offering one of its paws as a begging gesture. The perspective of the person in hiding is presented in six long letters written by Es. He elaborates on the unceasing fear, a sense of a never-ending crisis, the lack of perspective and the internal tensions in the shelter. Lastly, in this postwar period, the novella *Comedie in mineur* ('Comedy in a minor key') by Hans Keilson (1947b) appeared in 1947.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Publishing of the novel started in 1945, but due to the shortage of paper in the postwar period, the publisher was not able to complete the publication of the entire book. The last thirty pages were added later. It still shows in inserted grey pages in which the publisher makes this announcement.

<sup>5</sup> This novella was written in German first and was published by the Amsterdam publisher Querido in 1947 (Keilson 1947a). The authorized Dutch translation by H. Sanders appeared in that same year as *Comedie in mineur* with Uitgeverij Phoenix in Bussum. In 2010, Frank Schuitemaker revised the translation, upon which it was published by Van Genneep in Amsterdam. That same year the

### *Second Period, 1969-1986*

After a twenty-year lull following the initial postwar period, a second wave evolved around the 1970s, starting with Andreas Burnier's (1969) *Het jongensuur* ('The boys' hour'). I include Corrie ten Boom's *The hiding place* and Johanna Reiss' *The upstairs room* in this phase, even though both were written in English. However, they are set in the Netherlands and are clearly autobiographical. Remarkably, both were translated into Dutch with the same title: *De schuilplaats* ('The hiding place'). Corrie ten Boom's story about being an aid-provider was written by John and Elizabeth Sherill, although Ten Boom had shown herself an accomplished writer with her memoirs in Dutch shortly after the war. That book, *Gevangene en toch...* ('Prisoner and yet...'), however, was mainly about her experiences in the camps Vught and Ravensbrück.

Like Corrie ten Boom, Johanna Reiss, born as Annie de Leeuw, immigrated to the United States after the war; she wrote her children's book in English. Els Pelgrom (1977) received the *Gouden Griffel* ('Golden stylus'), the highest Dutch award in children's literature, for *De kinderen van het achtste woud* ('The children of the eighth forest'). In addition, the book was awarded the German Gustav Heinemann Friedenspreis for promoting world peace, tolerance, and human rights through children's literature and was reprinted many times. Its English translation is titled *The winter when time was frozen* and was published in New York in 1980. It was further translated into French, Spanish, Catalan and Japanese. Ida Vos, too, wrote several children's books about her hiding experience. These were published in the 1980s and the early 1990s. There was *Wie niet weg is wordt gezien* ('Hide and seek'), *Anna is er nog* ('Anna is still there'), which dealt mostly with the immediate postwar period, and *Witte zwanen, zwarte zwanen* ('White swans, black swans'), which was predominantly about the years preceding the period in hiding. *De sleutel is gebroken* ('The key is broken') came out in 1996.<sup>6</sup>

This second wave also includes Marga Minco's novella *De glazen brug* ('The glass bridge'), written as the celebrated annual gift from bookshops ('*boekeweekgeschenk*') to their customers. Earlier, Marga Minco had become renowned for her debut with *Het bittere kruid* ('Bitter herbs') in 1957, a collection of connected short stories about the wartime experiences of the first-person narra-

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English translation by Damion Searls was published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in New York. The novella was translated into 12 other languages as well. Undoubtedly, a review by Francine Prose in the *New York Times* in August 2010 that called the work a masterpiece and Keilson a genius was key to this general appreciation.

<sup>6</sup> All of Ida Vos's books are published by Leopold in The Hague. Some are available in English translations by Terese Edelstein and Inez Smidt and are published in the U.S. They include *Hide and seek* as well as *Anna is still there* and *The key is lost*. These titles also have been translated into German, while *Wie niet weg is, wordt gezien* has been translated into Hebrew.

tor and her family. The book was very popular, not least because many high school students put it on their reading list, as the Second World War is a favorite topic and the book is pleasantly slim. In 2000, it saw its 42<sup>nd</sup> print. Only five of the twenty-two stories contained in *Het bittere kruid* are about Minco's hiding experiences, showing the frequent changes of addresses and the feeling of being at the mercy of other people's decisions. Almost thirty years later, in 1986, *De glazen brug* was published. It depicts the hiding experiences of a young woman and her search, twenty years after the war, for the woman whose name was on her forged identity paper. The novella is characterized by the constant interruption of the chronology, and a sober, non-dramatic style that leaves most of the emotions implicit. Abel Herzberg's 1975 novella *Drie rode rozen* ('Three red roses') is the only book on hiding from this period that is not based on personal experiences.

### *Third period, 2000-present*

In the most recent period two remarkable novels appeared, both in 2010: *Parnassia* by Josha Zwaan and *Homo submersus* by historian Jacques Presser. The first title is not autobiographical. It was reprinted eighteen times in a span of four years but was largely ignored by literary critics. Jacques Presser (1899-1970) had actually already written this work between 1943 and 1944, during his time in hiding, but it was published posthumously. It is based, unmistakably, on his own experiences, without being entirely autobiographical and it includes numerous stories that the first-person narrator's host, Wim, passes on about other people in hiding, along with all kinds of problems and events related to his activities as leader of his underground network. These stories and quotes from various letters present a wide range of hiding experiences.

The publishing of diaries about hiding is a rather recent phenomenon. I mention here only three of them. First, there is the diary of Carry Ulreich (2016), who was soon nicknamed the Anne Frank of Rotterdam: *'s Nachts droom ik van vrede. Oorlogsdagboek 1941-1945* ('At night I dream of peace. War diary 1940-1945'). Then there is the diary of the poet Hanny Michaelis, one so lengthy that it was published in two volumes of more than a thousand pages each, with a subsequent abridged version (Michaelis 2016, 2017, 2019). Third, there is Edith Velmans-van Hessen's diary, which was published a little earlier (Velmans-van Hessen 1997). Translated into English as *Edith's book*, later also as *Edith's story*, it was translated into German, French, Spanish, and Japanese. It is a mixture of her diary in hiding and memories and comments added later. In this article, the diaries are only touched upon briefly, as I focus here on so-called hiding novels, even though most of them are autobiographically inspired. However, in a chapter in a forthcoming book on the background of Anne Frank's diary, I will be discussing all the Dutch diaries written in hiding more extensively (Van Vree & Van Gelderen

forthcoming). A thematic approach seems more suitable for this rather large number of novels than a one by one, separate discussion. Inevitably, some books will figure in more than one subsection.

### **Thematic overview**

#### *The aid-givers*

The people who provide a hiding place play a significant role in almost every novel about hiding, but they occupy a particularly high degree of importance in the novels by Jacques Presser, Hans Keilson, and of course Corrie ten Boom with the aid-giver being the first-person narrator. Ten Boom depicts the aid-givers as unequivocally good and likable, especially her father and sister. Her father is an icon of piety and wisdom and her sister Betsy is the embodiment of womanly virtues and faith. Corrie herself is sketched as inelegant and untidy in her clothes and countenance, which strikes me as a literary trick to give herself some negative characteristics in order to make herself more recognizably human.

In Willy Corsari's novel *Ours*, the science student Wouter is the protagonist. One day, he fails to warn his Jewish housemate Simon when he knows the German police are looking for him. Later he hears that Simon was captured and deported, perishing in Mauthausen. He tries not to give in to his feelings of guilt, but at the same time he acknowledges that he may harbor anti-Semitic feelings because his Jewish stepmother and brother used to belittle him and come between him and his father. He decides to help Simon's mother and sister by persuading them to go into hiding and he becomes more and more involved in the underground resistance movement. *Ours* offers a kaleidoscopic picture of people who, deliberately or reluctantly, get caught up in the resistance. Their motivation lies in their past, which is made very explicit – perhaps too much so for modern tastes. From the start, the persecution of Jews is highlighted as the main reason for resistance (which is historically doubtful),<sup>7</sup> and as the cause for the characterization of the Nazis as evil. As for the picture of life in hiding, the novel stresses the often extraordinarily difficult circumstances and the psychological pressures of having to live together with people not of one's own choosing. Practical matters like the financial arrangements or the provision of rationing vouchers are less prominent, as are the usually frequent changes of address,

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<sup>7</sup> Naturally, at first the resistance was provoked by the foreign occupation as such and aimed at collecting information about military movements and depots and sending this information to London where the Dutch government in exile resided. In 1943, the L.O., *de Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers* ('National Organization for Support to People in Hiding'), was initially set up to help Dutch men who were called up for labour service in Germany. In her radio speeches from London, Queen Wilhelmina hardly ever called on the Dutch population to help the Jews.

necessitated by all kinds of causes, such as the danger of being betrayed. The presence of raiders and collaborators, also among so-called aid-providers, is not ignored, but they appear mainly as a backdrop.

The children's books by Els Pelgrom, Ida Vos, and Johanna Reiss paint a rather unambiguously positive picture of the aid-givers. They are all well-meaning characters, though sometimes fearful themselves, or just not particularly nice. In *De kinderen van het achtste woud*, Els Pelgrom recounts the adventures of Noortje, who temporarily lives with her father on a farm after their evacuation from Arnhem in 1944. One adventure involves caring for a Jewish family, who is hiding in the woods, but the episode is not told in a conspicuous, overly dramatic way. The mother of the hidden family has a baby, which poses an obvious risk because it cries when hungry, and the farmer's family takes the little girl into their own home, with Noortje as her special caretaker. One day, when they are about to bring food to the hiding place, they find it empty and turned upside down: apparently, the family was discovered and captured. After the liberation, a brother of the mother comes to collect the baby, much to Noortje's regret. The Red Cross had informed the man that the family along with two young sons was deported and gassed. The story is told from Noortje's perspective, and for her the hiding history is just one of the many things that happen on the farm, just like the billeting of German soldiers and the bomb that is dropped nearby. The unsentimental tone, the partial lack of a happy ending (Noortje and her father and baby Sarah do survive the war, but the hidden family does not) and the reticence in the account of dramatic events make this book a convincing depiction of the war through a child's eyes.

In some of the adult novels the portrait of the aid-givers is much more negative. Maurits Dekker (1896-1962) was a Jewish author and self-made journalist, and one of the first Dutch anti-fascist agitators. In *Jozef duikt*, he offers a dark picture of aid-givers who act only out of self-interest. His narrator, Joseph, works as a manservant in a boarding house and is ruthlessly exploited and humiliated by his hosts, who take this chance to economize on other employees. However, they also try to squeeze their non-Jewish paying guests dry, so their depiction is more about greed than anti-Semitism. The same goes for an aid-giver in *De stille strijd* by Maurice Coutinho (1913-1992). The aid-giver is a former military man from the East-Indies who offers lodgings to his Jewish guest not for humanitarian reasons, but purely out of greed, yet his own wife is no less a victim of his appalling selfishness. It is a remarkable phenomenon that such very unpleasant "aid-givers" appear in Dutch literature so soon after the war, when a heroic and not always veracious image of the resistance and that of a supposedly helpful attitude of the Dutch population towards Jews prevailed.

The other novels show a more mixed picture. Jacques Presser (1965), who was to become the most important historian of the Holocaust in the Netherlands with his book *Ondergang: De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse jodendom, 1940 - 1945* ('Demise: The persecution and annihilation of Dutch Jewry, 1940-1945'), is assumed to have written his thinly veiled novel *Homo submersus* as a diary based on his real-life experiences of going underground during the German occupation. Yet it also includes the aid-giver's perspective: Presser starts his novel with the fake frame story ('*mystificatie*') of gathering material for a friend's dissertation on the help given to people who go into hiding, which enables him to include the tales of his host about meetings and actions of the resistance. The novel thereby offers moments in which we get a kind of inside view of the aid-giver, Wim. To the reader, Wim becomes slowly less and less likeable. His activities in the resistance, as praiseworthy as they are, appear to be primarily a way to escape his dreary existence as headmaster of a rural school, and a so-so marriage. He demonstrates that he is not averse to pursuing extramarital adventures, and he enjoys the thrill and the status that come with his central position in the local resistance. At times, he expresses anti-Semitic prejudices, holds the local population in contempt, and is hypocritical in religious matters. Even so, he is always willing to help all those in need of finding a place to hide, while in tough situations he is resourceful and creative, albeit unorthodox, in his ability to find a way out. Wim's portrait strongly reminds us of the diary of Arnold Douwes, who rescued hundreds of Jews by securing hiding places for them, mainly in the province of Drenthe, though it is highly unlikely that Presser knew either the man or his diary at the time of writing (Houwink ten Cate & Moore 2018). Without detracting anything from the nobler motives, it is fair to assume that the quest for thrill and adventure was a common feature in many resistance fighters, particularly the younger ones.

Wim's bragging and recklessness begin to pose a danger, and finally the first-person narrator deems the danger so bad that he decides to accept an offer to flee to Spain (which was actually not the case with Jacques Presser: he just went into hiding somewhere else). Wim's wife Rika, apparently more realistic than her husband, is sometimes afraid; she is trustworthy and means well, but she is also religiously rigid, unimaginative, and humorless. An overly zealous housewife, she starts her noisy scrubbing at 6 a.m., a schedule clearly not appreciated by her intellectual guest. Presser, too, points at financial exploitation: a Jewish man works hard as a farmhand, but nevertheless has to pay 500 guilders every three months; the farmer wants to continue this arrangement, but Wim puts a stop to it. *Homo submersus* stands out for its light tone. Although tragic events occur, such as people getting caught, suicides and betrayal, the first-person narrator repeatedly tries to give a humorous account of the situation and prefers to have an ironic

outlook on the way things are. He mildly mocks the religious habits and the piety of the Protestant housewife at the temporary home that is his place of hiding, but he also pokes fun at religion in general.

Hans Keilson (1909-2011) was a student of medicine in Germany when he immigrated to the Netherlands in 1936. During the occupation he went into hiding, but he participated in the resistance as well. Using well-forged identity papers, he was able to travel around and to visit and help children in hiding who showed troubled behavior. After the war he became a physician, specializing in psychiatry and continuing his work with traumatized Jewish children. He published his dissertation on sequential traumatization with children in 1979. During his time in hiding, he kept a diary, publishing a German novella about life in hiding, *Komödie in Moll*, in 1947. An authorized Dutch translation appeared that same year as *Comedie in mineur*. In 2010, a revised Dutch translation was published in Amsterdam. That same year, an English translation was published in New York. Since then, the novella has been translated into twelve other languages.

Like Presser, Keilson presents both perspectives; of Nico, the person in hiding, and of his hosts, in alternating chapters. They do not know anything about each other's backgrounds and ideas, and it is touching how everyone tries to respect the privacy and the otherness of the other party, in spite of the resentment each of them also feels from time to time. Nico resents their being able to live their normal lives (a resentment that is directed at a vase they seem to value very much, as he feels tempted to smash the object to pieces, but without actually doing so). Meanwhile the hosts, just as understandably, resent the intrusion on their quiet, unadventurous lives, realizing full well that Nico has no other choice. Keilson employs an omniscient narrator and often uses free indirect speech to represent the thoughts of the characters, which augments the reader's involvement with them. Thus, he achieves a subtle psychological portrait of both sides. He does not need to include sensational elements like adultery, treachery, rows, abuse or exploitation (none of these are unknown in the history of hiding in general) to express how both parties are weighed down by the hiding experience, host as well as guest. These well-behaved, charitable, empathetic people, who tend to believe in the good of humanity more readily than in its counterpart of evil, are depicted as people whose goodness is nevertheless fragile during these exceptional circumstances. In his posthumously published diary, which also appeared in English as *1944 diary*, Keilson (2014) articulates his suspicion that class differences may be at the root of the lack of empathy he perceives in his hostess (82). Without a doubt, the increasing scarcity of food does little to alleviate the tensions, as another person in hiding in the diary observes (Keilson 2014, 117).



In the end, Nico dies of natural causes, withering away from loneliness and lack of zest for life. They dispose of the corpse in a nearby park (an incident like this really happened in Keilson's circle, according to his diary), forgetting to cut off the laundry mark that can identify them. When they discover their mistake, they go into hiding themselves. It then becomes clear to them how difficult living in hiding is, and how severe tensions and irritations can grow even in a moderately good marriage. After they learn that the police officer who discovered the body was a "good" one and had swiftly removed the laundry mark, they return to their home, sadder and wiser, or as Keilson (2010) puts it, "ashamed and lonesome" (126).<sup>8</sup>

In Abel Herzberg's novella *Drie rode rozen* a similar event occurs. Salomon Zeitchek and his wife are in hiding. The couple's two eldest children were among the first to be called to report for supposed work in Germany, which they did. When Salomon and his wife find out that their youngest daughter was captured at her hiding place, the wife takes her own life. Her death presents a great problem for the hosts – what to do with the corpse? – and they blame Salomon for it, calling him and his wife ungrateful and asocial. Their anti-Semitism emerges: "There you are, doing everything for the Jews, and then they play you a trick like this. I am beginning to understand Hitler" (Abel Herzberg 1975, 24).<sup>9</sup> Finally, they decide to just lay the body somewhere in the street. The hosting couple is willing to extend the arrangement with Zeitchek, provided he continues to pay for two, because the hosts do not want to be worse off.

Marga Minco shows another kind of exploitation in *De glazen brug*: a theme that stands out in that novella is the unwanted sexual advances by Stella's male contact from the underground movement. She is able to fight him off. In the last chapter, when she is looking for information on the deceased woman whose name she used while in hiding, she finds herself in a similar situation with an impertinent guest in the village hotel. However, she is less vulnerable now; not only older but, more importantly, no longer dependent on him or on any other man.

### *Troublesome guests*

Jacques Presser's novel *Homo submersus* presents the death of a person in hiding less as a tragic event than as a troublesome problem to be solved by the aid-giver. As a historian, Presser (1965) addresses this problem, as well as many other issues with persons in hiding in *Ondergang*.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Ze voelden zich wat beschaamd en eenzaam [...].'

<sup>9</sup> 'Daar doe je alles voor de joden en dan lappen ze je dat! Ik begin die Hitler te begrijpen.'

Readers will be inclined to sympathize with the person in hiding; persecuted and hunted, often alone and worrying about the whereabouts of loved ones, or mourning them, always wary of possible betrayal, perennially cautious not to give offense to one's rescuers, feeling chronically insecure, not being master of one's time or activities, bored and losing a sense of self – the list of afflictions and anguishes is endless. However, some novels do not gloss over the fact that those in hiding could be quite troublesome, annoying, and even dangerous to the household where they found shelter. Jacques Presser does not turn a blind eye to the harmful behavior of some of the Jews who are given shelter: their demanding attitudes, the danger they pose by their risky actions, and their threats of exposing their helpers if things go differently than they wish. Presser would later mention these elements in his historiography as well. One of the characters in his novel is nicknamed "*de Brilslang*" ('cobra', literally: 'the spectacle snake'). She is an unpleasant, egotistical woman, who demands that Wim runs all kinds of errands for her, like retrieving unnecessary items from her previous home. She also threatens to inform on the other people in hiding and the entire organization. It happens more than once and she is not the only one in hiding to demonstrate a sense of entitlement that poses a risk to others: "She expressed the same threat as the *Brilslang*: if they would be caught, we [the aid givers] would go as well" (Presser 2010, 237).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, those in the underground sometimes have to take harsh measures: they fake a raid and let the bothersome guest escape, after which he or she has to fend for him or herself. Another solution is holding a child of a cumbersome family hostage to prevent them from informing on the others and their hosts. Wim and his colleagues even consider killing people who make too much trouble, but in this novel it doesn't come to that. In reality such killings did sometimes occur, however. A well-known case is the murder of the German-Jewish man Walter Oettinger by his host, filmmaker Louis van Gasteren, as researched and told by Eric Slot (2015).

Corrie ten Boom relates how irresponsibly people in hiding could behave, but in her book presents it as being more unintentional than Presser does. Her character, Mrs. De Boer, hosts 18 Jews, mostly young adults. One day, restless and noisy, eight of them go out for a walk, are captured, and while pressured, reveal the hiding address, whereupon the others and Mrs. De Boer are arrested too, never to be seen again.

Erotic issues pose trouble of a different nature, though in a few cases they touch on death and threats of a possible intent to inform. Obviously, when people are locked in together, they may fall in love (or experience strong physical attraction without love), especially when there is no way to spend their energy else-

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<sup>10</sup> '[...] kwam ze met hetzelfde dreigement als de brilslang: als zij gepakt werden, gingen wij ook.'

where. The resulting pregnancies and babies present an extra burden for the aid-givers: providing hospitality to adults is hard enough, but having a crying baby around, with nappies to be laundered and special food requirements, takes the effort to another level. Apart from those practical matters, the psychological dimension causes its own problems. Jacques Presser's novel is the most elaborate on this topic. In the hiding network that Wim controls, relationships, rivalries, and pregnancies repeatedly cause problems. Presser keeps the subject light. For that matter, his tone is light throughout the book. Still, he makes it clear that the bottled-up sexuality of those in hiding is a serious issue. He mentions this in his historiography as well. The first-person narrator in his novel displays signs of this, too. He flirts with Truus, who is in hiding with him, but she wants to remain faithful to her deported fiancé. His female friend Loes receives an indecent proposal from a non-Jewish man in hiding, while another girl, eighteen years old, can't escape watching a threesome at her hiding address, and a relationship of three women and one man falls apart because two of the women become pregnant by the man, while the third one is just as much in love with him as the others, and subsequently tries to kill herself. Another suicide that Presser discloses is that of a Jewish woman in a mixed marriage, who discovers that her husband has an affair while she is in hiding. Eventually, the first-person narrator falls in love with a 15-year-old girl whom he clandestinely teaches and in whom we detect an implied portrait of Presser's real wife Deborah Appel, who was a former pupil of his.

There is a parallel here with Keilson's diary and his love for Hannah, fifteen years his junior, for whom he wrote his "Sonnets for Hanna," published as part of his diary. Yet he has a wife (though they are not officially married) and a daughter elsewhere, about whom he feels protective too. His inner struggle with this situation and the dilemma it poses, his self-criticism, and his oscillating feelings of love for the two women, take center stage in his diary. In his novella, however, the erotic issue is not present. In Willy Corsari's novel it is there, but only as a minor theme. The main character, Wouter, has to go into hiding himself and gets very overwrought by the crowdedness and the dirty mess in this house and rapes a woman from the underground when she visits him. Instantly, he is deeply sorry for what he did. Meanwhile, the woman, who is secretly in love with him, at first does not mind very much, until she discovers that it was not love for her specifically, but that any woman would have sufficed. Later on they are reunited and even become a couple.

Andreas Burnier, the pseudonym of Catharina Irma Dessaur (1931-2002), was a professor of criminology. During the war, she found herself in sixteen different hiding places (Lockhorn 2015, 43-60). In her autobiographical novel *Het jongensuur* only four are mentioned. The main character's gender, including her sexuality, is one of the main topics, and each of the six chapters contains a gender-

related incident, though not always of a sexual nature. Young teenager Simone, who is ten at the outbreak of the war, does not feel at ease with her girl's body and is attracted to other girls. The title refers to a time slot during which the local swimming pool is open only for boys; Simone is denied entrance, however hard she had tried through thought exercises to become a boy. The development of the sexual identity of the first-person narrator in this coming-of-age novel underlies the whole story. The hiding history is the main theme only in appearance, as the book is structured around a number of hiding addresses in reverse chronological order from 1945 to 1940. Simone has to hide in a double sense; as a Jew and as a lesbian (had she lived today she may have adopted a transgender identity). In the chapter on the liberation, "Zanddorp 1944," she witnesses the head shaving of a woman accused of having been a German's girlfriend, and asks herself: what if she just fell in love? She concludes: "Women and Jews, it is almost the same, I thought. They can't do anything, they are always guilty" (Burnier 1969, 38).<sup>11</sup> In the liberation chapter, two Canadian soldiers sexually assault her. Unexpectedly, she enjoys the feeling of them stroking her breasts, but does not want to go any further. When she fights them, they let her go without raping her. Unlike sexual elements in other literature on hiding, the sexual tension in *Het jongensuur* emerges more within the character herself, than in the relations with others.

### *Religion*

In Corrie ten Boom's story, the acts of resistance and the efforts to help Jews clearly stem from her Christian faith. Though Jesus is central to her belief, she never thinks of Judaism as superseded or valueless. For her and her family, the Jews are and remain the chosen people, the apple of God's eye. Even so, her book clearly has a missionary Christian purpose. Her belief that God will take care of her is "proven" correct by more or less miraculous incidents, such as a piece of shrapnel from aerial combat landing on her empty bed in the middle of the night, the bed that she had just left because she heard her sister Betsie in the kitchen, thus escaping injury and possibly death. Inadvertently, she reveals the negative side of having a strong faith, as well: during a raid of her house, her sister Nollie (upon German request) identifies a blonde woman with well-forged papers as being Jewish. The woman is arrested. Corrie reproaches her sister for not lying to the Germans, but Nollie replies that the woman will be quite safe in God's hands, because Nollie just adhered to his commandments. After a few days they learn that the Hollandsche Schouwburg, which is the theater that functioned as the main assembly place in Amsterdam before people were deported, was raided by

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<sup>11</sup> 'Vrouwen en joden, dat is bijna hetzelfde, dacht ik. Ze kunnen niets terug doen, ze zijn altijd schuldig.'

the resistance, resulting in a group of forty Jews, including the woman, being liberated. In the historiography of the Hollandsche Schouwburg such a raid is not mentioned (Van Vree, Berg & Duindam 2013), and it would be rather improbable that, had it ever occurred, only forty people would be freed, since the theater was always packed with many hundreds of captured Jews. Ten Boom's account of her concentration camp experience offers additional instances of divine interference.

Concerning their view of religion, the novels by Jacques Presser and Andreas Burnier are almost the exact opposite of Ten Boom's position. Although they recognize that the efforts to help Jews are often at least partly motivated by the Christian faith of the foster families, their perceived rigidity and intellectual backwardness is ridiculed in both books. Presser's narrator is helped by the fact that Wim, his host, is not a fervent believer himself, to put it mildly, and looks down on the uneducated and rural Christian population that provides the hiding places.

In the third chapter of Andreas Burnier's novel, Ronnie (the hiding name of Simone, the then 13-year-old first-person narrator) is in hiding in a place called Veendorp ('Moor village') with the extremely poor and Christian Reformed family of a plumber.<sup>12</sup> She appreciates – but not so much at the time itself – that her foster parents do not receive any money for sheltering her and act purely out of a sense of Christian duty:

They risked their lives, with nothing in return, certainly not money, because it was unthinkable that they would do otherwise than sharing their poverty with me. My understanding and gratefulness, if present at all, were mixed with contempt and abhorrence. (Burnier 1969, 101, my translation)<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, she feels deep disdain for their strict and inflexible faith. The concept of sin, which plays such an important role in their lives, is incomprehensible to her:

It was cold in Veendorp. Most people here belonged to one of the three reformed churches, and that meant contempt for anything vibrant or even

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<sup>12</sup> In her biography of Andreas Burnier, Elisabeth Lockhorn reveals that the village was Slagharen and that in real life her foster father, Geert Migchels, was not a plumber but had a bicycle repair shop. He was deeply involved in the underground. In August 1944, German soldiers and Dutch collaborators raided his house. Ronnie, as Andreas Burnier was called, managed to escape on a bicycle. Geert Migchels perished in May 1945 in a German concentration camp; his wife did not receive confirmation of his death until 1993. In 1983, Andreas Burnier successfully requested a Yad Vashem award for Geert and Annigje Migchels as "righteous among the nations" (Lockhorn 2015, 43-60).

<sup>13</sup> *'Ze riskeerden hun leven, voor niets, en zeker niet voor geld, want het was ondenkbaar dat ze iets anders zouden doen dan hun armoede met mij delen. Mijn begrip en dankbaarheid, voor zover aanwezig, was gemengd met verachting en afschuw.'*

warm. They despised each other and themselves for their innate sinfulness. They hated the human element in their children, who they conceived after brief thrusts and a grumpy 'good night'.

(Burnier 1969, 102, my translation)<sup>14</sup>

She engages her foster father in animated discussions, trying to convince him of the irrationality of his beliefs, and with some success, it seems, at least to her. In Burnier's description the strong faith of the foster family goes hand in hand with their lack of education and poor intellectual capacity, reflected in the absence of books in the household, except for the Bible, of course.

Abel Herzberg's main character in *Drie rode rozen*, Salomon Zeitcheck, is a tailor and avid reader of literature and philosophy. As mentioned, he was in hiding with his wife, but it was not a happy marriage. The few pages that describe their years in hiding are among the saddest ever written on the subject. The total boredom, the irritation turning into hatred, the determination to make the best of it, yet soon slipping back into silence and hostility — the novella presents a depressing and haunting reading experience. However, the hiding period takes up only the first 30 pages of the book, as the novella is set in the period after the war and a religious question is its primary theme. Salomon Zeitcheck is in a constant dialogue with himself, calling the two voices within himself Salomon and Zeitcheck. His entire family has been murdered; all that has been left to him is one niece, who lives on a kibbutz in Israel. Now he wants to hold God to account. He thinks of "my friend Job [...], not the Job who endured, but Job who rebelled" (Abel Herzberg 1975, 79),<sup>15</sup> and wants to continue the lawsuit against God that Job started. In response to God's tremendous creative accomplishments that seem to be the answer in the Bible's book of Job, he poses a counter question:

Who killed the little children? What is the use of creating the earth, determining its dimensions, lowering its pillars and laying its cornerstone, and then making it a valley of tears? [...] Is it true that the wicked are shaken off the face of the earth? Isn't it much truer that the lust for murder creeps around and hatred determines our lives? Which is being rewarded, virtue or sin?

(Abel Herzberg 1975, 79-80)<sup>16</sup>

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14 'In Veendorp was het koud. De meeste mensen hier behoorden tot een van de drie soorten gereformeerde kerken, en dat betekende verachting en haat voor alles wat vitaal of zelfs maar warm was. Ze verachtten elkaar en zichzelf om hun ingekankerde zondigheid. Ze haatten het menselijke in hun kinderen, die ze verwekten na een kort gestoot en een knorrig "welterusten".'

15 'Job is mijn vriend. Neen, niet Job de Dulder, Job de rebel!'

16 'Mijn antwoord, een tegenvraag: wie heeft de kleine kinderen gedood? Wat baat het de aarde te scheppen, haar afmetingen te bepalen, haar pijlers neer te laten en haar hoeksteen te leggen en haar dan tot een dal van tranen te maken? [...] is het dan waar dat de goddelozen van de aard-

Of course, Salomon Zeitscheck sees quite well that the Shoah incarnates evil that people have committed, and that God is not the perpetrator, but he responds with the accusing question: "Who created man, and why so that he can sin?" (Abel Herzberg 1975, 61).<sup>17</sup> The charge, then, boils down to the accusation that God created man as a free being. The solution that Salomon Zeitscheck ultimately embraces, falls in the same realm. It is to let go of the idea of God's omnipotence and his responsibility for human suffering, whereby the recipient of the accusation becomes humankind itself. Although Abel Herzberg's text is poetic and engaging, the outcome is ultimately somewhat disappointing. The question is not where God was in Auschwitz, but where man was. Within a legal metaphor one could say that the outcome of the proceedings amounts to a declaration of inadmissibility of the charge, but in fact the entire process is a failure from the start. There is no jury. For this role, he had the inhabitants of his niece's kibbutz in mind, but they all excused themselves. Interestingly, Abel Herzberg was a lawyer in real life. It is remarkable that he would want a jury in his novella, as jury courts do not exist under Dutch law.

The author was never in hiding himself. He and his wife survived Bergen-Belsen, if only barely. His three children were able to escape when the family was about to be imprisoned in Camp Westerbork. After the war, he spoke with great appreciation about the Protestant farmer's family where his daughter Esther found shelter; at the beginning of her stay, the foster father selected the Book of Isaiah's consolation prophecy in chapter 40 for the daily reading from the Bible, thus comforting her and honoring her Judaism (Kuiper 1997, 225-226).

Religion as an important theme, though not the main one like in Herzberg's novella, also figures in *Parnassia* by Josha Zwaan, and will be discussed in the next section.

### *The child's perspective*

Children's hiding experiences differ in many respects from adult ones. On the one hand, there is the pain of the separation from the parents (Anne Frank's situation of being together as a family was highly exceptional). On the other hand, children often had more freedom to move around. When they were provided with false identities and posed as distant relatives or orphans from bombed-out Rotterdam, for example, children could move about freely. But this was not necessarily the case, as exemplified in the children's book by Ida Vos and Johanna Reiss. Without a doubt, hiding histories offer great material for children's books: the thrill of

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*bodem worden afgeschud? Is het niet veel méér waar, dat de moordlust rondkruipt en de haat ons leven bepaalt? Wat wordt er beloond, de deugd of de zonde?*

<sup>17</sup> 'Ik, een gespletene, vraag: wie heeft de mens geschapen, en waarom zo dat hij zondigen kan?'

possible raids, the sadness of being separated from parents, evil enemies, and the reunion with parents who return from their own hiding locations as a happy ending. This is more or less the case with the books by Johanna Reiss and Ida Vos. Both speak from their own experience and both stress how difficult it is for a child to have to stay inside for months, even years on end, and to be as quiet as possible all the time. Ida Vos demonstrates one of the aftereffects of having been in hiding when she shows in *Anna is er nog* how after the reunion her father takes little Anna to the beach to teach her how to scream, hoping to help her to regain her normal speaking voice again after years of having muted it. Johanna Reiss illustrates how her main character, Annie (her own name by birth), is pressed by her older sister to do physical exercises every day, to offset the deformities she has developed due to a lack of moving her body. Boredom and frequent quarrels between the sisters mark their confinement. The one notable deviation from the common story (though, obviously, each story is unique in its own way), is the picture of her prewar family life, which is not happy at all, because her mother is a sickly and narrow woman who thwarts their early plans to leave the country. She falls severely ill and ends up in hospital; the children go into hiding without a farewell. The mother dies, but it does not cause them great grief when they hear of it.

Ida Vos's children's books are quite traditional in the depiction of family life. Obviously, the autobiographical background will have been decisive here. Her first book, *Wie niet weg is wordt gezien*, offers a soft-focus picture of children in hiding. The theme of religious conflicts is present but is kept low key. The first hiding place is with the girl Rachel's parents at the parsonage of the local priest in Schipluiden. He does not try to convert them in any way, but eight-year-old Rachel, from whose perspective the story is told, is attracted to a statue of Mary. Later on, at another address, she witnesses the anger of a Jewish father when his son says a Catholic prayer, and the relief and emotion when the boy smoothly switches to a Jewish prayer. At the last address, where Rachel finds herself with her younger sister but without their parents, the children express their desire to become Catholic, like their foster parents. The idea of their baptism, for which they should go to church, dressed up and all, strongly appeals to them, but the refusal of their real parents to give their permission puts a stop to the plan, to their deep disappointment. The author openly suggests that the inclination of the girls is more inspired by the chance to get out of the house and have an adventure than by any deep religious conviction.

Adult literature about a child's hiding experience is of a markedly different nature. Abel Herzberg's daughter Judith became a celebrated poet and writer of theater plays. Her best-known play, *Leedvermaak* ('Malicious pleasure') deals with the postwar tensions between foster and real parents of former hidden children,



and the children's inability to form lasting love relationships. It premiered in 1982 and was published as the first part of a trilogy, together with *Rijgdraad* and *Simon* (Judith Herzberg 2002). There is an English translation as well: *The wedding party* (Judith Herzberg 1997a). In 1989, Frans Weisz turned the play into a film.

*Leedvermaak* is set on the wedding day of Lea's second wedding. One of the most moving scenes is a dialogue between Lea and her father in which she reproaches him for having placed her with and essentially given her away to her hiding parents:

If I had a child, I'd take her with me, I'd keep her with me, I'd take her with me whenever and wherever to. I'd reassure her by holding her close to me. I can't imagine it: shall we give our child away to someone else? [...] Who cares how old you may become? Dying is not so bad. Being abandoned, that is bad. (Judith Herzberg 1997b, 72, my translation)<sup>18</sup>

In the previous sections on religion and troublesome guests in this article, Andreas Burnier's novel *Het jongensuur* has already been discussed. There are some similarities with *Parnassia*, the successful debut of Josha Zwaan, who was born in 1963. A comprehensive discussion of both this novel and Burnier's *Het jongensuur* can be found in the essay "Onderduikkinderen: Onvoltooide bevrijding" ('Children in hiding: Unfinished liberation') (Siertsema 2018, 263-278).

Literary critics largely ignored *Parnassia*, yet it had twenty reprints. The novel is not autobiographical, but not entirely fictitious either. The story shows some resemblance to the Dutch *cause célèbre* of Anneke Beekman, a Jewish child born in 1940, over whose custody the Catholic foster parents (actually three sisters) fought a prolonged judicial battle with the Jewish community. The fight over her custody and religious identity came to an end only when she was recognized as an adult in 1961 and came forward as a young woman who had deliberately chosen to be Roman Catholic (Verheij 1991).

*Parnassia's* main character, Rivka, at age four goes into hiding with a Protestant minister and his wife. As they have no children of their own, their motives may just as much stem from the longing for a child as from altruistic considerations, and probably even more so. Rivka comes to love them and feels at ease with their Christianity. After the war, her surviving father and brother come to reclaim her, but she flatly refuses, denies her name is Rivka, and declares that she is and always will be Anneke. In adulthood she marries Joost, initially not knowing he is a Jewish camp survivor. Anneke (or An) maintains her silence

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<sup>18</sup> 'Als ik een kind had dan nam ik het mee, dan hield ik het bij me, dan nam ik het altijd overal mee heen. Dan stelde ik het gerust gewoon door het tegen me aan te houden. Ik kan me dat niet voorstellen: zullen we het kind maar aan iemand anders geven? [...] Wat geeft het hoe oud je wordt? Doodgaan is niet erg – losgelaten worden dat is erg.'

regarding her real background and does not want to listen to his memories either. She ends up neglecting and abusing her children, particularly her eldest daughter, who reminds her of her brother. Joost, traumatized by his camp experience, adds to the abuse in his own way. *Parnassia* is an unusual example of a story in which an abusing parent as main character does not altogether lose the reader's sympathy, which is a rare achievement.

The children are taken from them, and the marriage falls apart. An makes no effort to get in touch with her children. Decades later, after Joost's death, when An is in her seventies, her eldest daughter Sandra asks for a meeting and they start talking once a week at a beach pavilion called Parnassia (hence the title). Gradually and with difficulty at first, she begins to recount her past, because Sandra, who in turn maltreated her baby, wants to understand why things happened as they did. Her open and understanding attitude is perhaps a bit incredible. But she is glad to have found her roots and happily accepts her Jewish background, feeling that she finally belongs somewhere. In the end, An too accepts being Rivka and not An/Anneke. The novel's composition alternates between the present, with the mother-daughter dialogues at Parnassia and the story of An's childhood; these memories are delivered in a third-person narrative, but completely represent her perspective.

The conflict between the foster family's Christianity and the Judaism the child was originally raised with, is more prominent in *Parnassia* than in *Het jongensuur*. Religion likely did not play a crucial part in Andreas Burnier's early life, although her family was shocked to see her say Protestant prayers before and after meals. The two novels also illustrate how the religious conviction of the foster parents hinders the child's intellectual development: in the case of Burnier's Ronnie it is only temporary, because she does not stay with those foster parents for very long, but Anneke's foster parents block the education that she aspires to, considering grammar school unnecessary for a girl, as it is expected that she will end up being a housewife and mother anyway. That is where their relationship starts to unravel. The final break-up between Anneke and her foster parents is caused by her foster father, who feels that her marriage to a Jewish man is a rejection of her Christianity. Yet, Anneke does not really acknowledge her Jewish identity until her conversations with her daughter Sandra.

The contrast between the two religions as painted by Josha Zwaan, is not quite convincing: Judaism as an impetus for inquisitiveness and intellectual development, and Christianity as a barrier to education and independent thinking. The French autobiographical novel *Rue Ordoner, Rue Labat* by philosopher Sarah Kofman (1994) can be considered as a counter argument. Here, it is the Jewish mother who tries to frustrate her daughter's education in every way possible, whereas the foster mother, who is Catholic but adheres to the principles of the

Enlightenment at the same time, encourages her and helps her along. Furthermore, this alleged difference ignores that both in orthodox Judaism and in orthodox Protestantism the position of women is a subordinate one and largely restricts them to household and child raising activities.

In spite of these minor flaws *Parnassia* presents a forceful picture of the damage that survival through the wartime hiding experience can inflict on a child. A sense of uprootedness, being torn by different emotions and attachments, and the impossibility of being able to satisfy the demands of showing loyalty towards two distinct religions add to a trauma whose scope appears to be multi-generational.

### *Hiding in fiction and historiography*

To date there is no monograph or encompassing history on hiding, in spite of an abundance of research that has been conducted concerning various aspects of the phenomenon. For a general picture we can still rely on Loe de Jong in volumes 6 and 7 of *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* ('The Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War') (De Jong 1975, 43-44, 49-52; 1976, 442-462). Help for people in hiding was not centrally organized. The national organization *Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers* ('National organization for support to those in hiding') was created primarily for the support of men who wanted to evade forced labour in Germany, early in 1943, while the deportation of Jewish citizens began in July 1942. The countless small groups that provided support in the form of addresses where people could hide, coupons for food, financial assistance, forged identity papers, and so on, sprang into action whenever and wherever the need arose, without recording their activities. De Jong does not indicate exact numbers, but he estimates that roughly 25,000 Jews went into hiding, of which about 4,000 were children, and he concludes that between 20,000 and 40,000 families acted as hosts for them. Later research does not refute these numbers. The difficulty of pinpointing more precise numbers of those in hiding is confirmed by Holocaust historian Bob Moore (1997) in a paragraph with the telling title "The numbers involved and the problem of sources" (146-149). At first, host families that offered a place to hide came mostly from socialist and communist networks, as is reflected in the discussed fiction. Regardless of the time of writing, the fictional aid-givers are largely depicted as having a simple background without much education. The exceptions are Willy Corsari's Wouter, a student, Jacques Presser's Wim, a headmaster, an academic foster family in Andreas Burnier's novel and the vicar in Josha Zwaan's novel. Later, as Loe de Jong points out, the Christian Reformed community, comprising 8 percent of the population, provided some 25 percent of the hiding places. Many novels, including children's books, have episodes around the theme of the religious

differences between hosts and people in hiding. The hope for religious conversion as one of the motives propelling Christian aid-givers, mentioned by De Jong, is less prominent, except in *Parnassia*.

In general, the early novels on hiding evoke a much more mixed image of the aid-givers than one would expect so soon after the war. Self-interest, greed, and a longing for adventure seem to trump altruism and humanitarianism, the latter which are noble motives that are highlighted in several postwar studies on the rescue of Jews (Moore 1997, 292-293), including in titles like *The altruistic personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (Oliner & Oliner 1988), "The dynamics of decency: Dutch rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust" (Baron 1985), *Their brother's keepers: The Christian heroes and heroines who helped the oppressed escape the Nazi terror* (Friedman 1957), and *Conscience and courage: Rescuers of the Jews during the Holocaust* (Fogelman 1995). The generous and well-meaning, if sometimes naïve help offered by ordinary citizens, who more often than not are simple, working-class people, is present too in each of these early novels by Willy Corsari, Jacques Presser, Hans Keilson, and Salomon de Vries. Maurits Dekker's *Jozef duikt* and Maurice Countinho's *De stille strijd* are the marked exceptions. Loe de Jong mentions in a footnote that 75 guilders per person per month was the regular amount of money paid for "guests" in hiding, but cases where 1,000 guilders were demanded are also known (compare this to the average worker's salary of 150 guilders a month at the time). So, financial exploitation is not absent in his overview either.

De Jong outlines the various types of hiding places, from psychiatric residential homes and other institutions to underground holes and huts in the woods. In a densely populated country like the Netherlands the latter were rare and unsafe. For the most part, those in hiding did so in regular homes and farms, where concealed spaces provided an extra safeguard. This aligns with the portrayal in works of fiction. Unusual in this regard is *Kinderen van het achtste woud* in which a hut in the forest is the hiding place for a Jewish family that ended up being discovered and captured. All other hiding stories are set in regular homes.

It was easier to find hiding places for children than for adults, as De Jong mentions. Some found a stable home, but many had to move frequently from one address to another, as is the case with Andreas Burnier's main character and in some of the children's books.

In the summer of 1942 many Dutch, both Jews and non-Jews, thought the war would be over within a few months. For both parties, the hosts and the people in hiding, the unexpectedly long duration of the war proved an arduous ordeal. Those in hiding found it difficult that they were forced to be idle, leading to a monotony of seemingly endless days that was hard to bear. Deborah Dwork

distinguishes between “visible” and “invisible” people in hiding. The visible ones were living under a false identity (Dwork 1991, 81). They could move around in public, though some were not keen to go outside because of the bad quality of their forged papers. Children tended to belong to that first group and as a consequence generally experienced less boredom. However, in Johanna Reiss’ *The upstairs room* and in Ida Vos’s children’s books the children who were in hiding were mostly part of the “invisible” group, enduring all the negative effects of boredom and lack of exercise – so much so that one of Ida Vos’s characters is ready to convert to Catholicism because of the projected outing of walking to the church in a beautiful dress. Some of the adults in the fictional literature have the same problem, like Hans Keilson’s character in hiding, the *onderduiker* Nico, who languishes in his solitude, and Abel Herzberg’s Salomon Zeitchek. Jacques Presser’s first-person narrator, on the other hand, occupies himself with reading, writing and studying, as he is lucky enough to have someone providing the required books for him. This bears a great similarity to the real Jacques Presser, who worked on an extensive history of the United States while in hiding. For some, the total dependence on other people’s decisions was even worse than the boredom. It is a theme in the novels by Salomon de Vries, Marga Minco, and Jacques Presser. De Jong mentions it too, using the phrase *kwetsende afhankelijkheid* (‘hurtful dependence’). In particular, the adults in hiding, more so than the children, felt this was a difficult issue.

De Jong points out additional complications with which people in hiding had to contend, such as the challenges of adapting to a totally different milieu with uncommon (and possibly lacking) standards of hygiene and neatness, as well as other cultural interests. In fiction we see that this could go both ways: Presser’s first-person narrator is annoyed by the obsessive cleaning habits of his hostess, and Andreas Burnier’s main character notices not only the poverty but also what she perceives as the appalling absence of hygiene in some of her temporary homes, as does Marga Minco’s first-person female narrator in *Het bittere kruid*, who in the chapter *Een ander* (‘Another’) has to sleep in the same bed as her hostess, the latter boasting about not ever needing to wash herself, as she claims not to be dirty and changes clothes every week.

Among the many practical problems that hosts of “invisible” people in hiding had to overcome, Loe de Jong points to medical and dental care and the issue of how to dispose of the corpse when someone had died in hiding. Remarkably, the first, which was a more common problem, does not present itself very often in Dutch fiction, whereas the latter does, as in the novellas by Keilson and Herzberg.

In the children’s books of the 1970s and 1980s the authors transform their childhood experiences into children’s stories that certainly do not keep silent

about the negative aspects of life in hiding. But these are for the most part intrinsically connected to the material situation, whereas the adult literature of this period, notably by Abel Herzberg and Judith Herzberg, focuses more on the human factor of egotism and lack of empathy of the aid-providers. By contrast, the evangelizing story of Corrie ten Boom sketches an exceptionally positive picture.

Being confined to a small space with a random set of people clearly led to irritations and suppressed aggression that could easily turn into hysteria. De Jong does not sugarcoat that people in hiding could be uncongenial or posed an extra risk because of their reckless behavior, sometimes even threatening to denounce their hosts if they did not get their way. The section named “Troublesome guests” in this article shows that some fiction honestly captures that reality.

In *Victims and survivors* British historian Bob Moore arrives at roughly the same conclusion as Loe de Jong (Moore 1997, 146-160). However, he pays more attention to the various reasons for not going into hiding, highlighting especially the deference to authority, a common trait in Dutch society and therefore also among the Dutch Jews, who were, after all, for the most part well integrated in the Netherlands. Fictional works attest to this reluctance to go into hiding, too. Examples are Countinho’s *De stille strijd*, Marga Minco’s *Het bittere kruid* and *De glazen brug*, and Johanna Reiss’s children’s book *The upstairs room*, where the mother obstructs her family’s efforts to find a hiding place. Yet, the reasons in these fictional instances differ from the one in Bob Moore’s analysis: here it is more disbelief that matters in society will turn out badly, along with a – very understandable – attachment to the comfort of one’s own home, as well as the unwillingness to take a leap into the unknown, especially when the hiding place was not with family or friends but was provided by the underground movement.

#### *Hiding in fiction and psychology*

Loe de Jong stated that children between the ages of one and six suffered the most from the consequences of going into hiding and that only babies were not negatively affected (provided of course that they had a loving foster family). Now, some fifty years after he wrote this, we know that his comments about infants not suffering adverse effects have been proven wrong. The “First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II” in 1991 led to scholarly attention for the aftereffects of the trauma of the hiding experience on children. Psychologists such as Eva Fogelman (1993) point to the separation from the parents and in many cases later again from the foster parents, the identity confusion, sometimes focused on the issue of religion, the constant fear of discovery and distrust of the outside world, and the need to be as unobtrusive as possible, as the main traumatizing factors of the years in hiding. Josha Zwaan’s

novel *Parnassia*, Judith Herzberg's play *Leedvermaak*, and for the most part implicitly also Marga Minco's *De glazen brug* are the only works discussed here that address the issue of the aftereffects of hiding. Although Fogelman (1993) states: "What we learn from hidden children is that abuse does not have to breed abuse in future generations" (306), that obviously does not go for *Parnassia's* main character, though she is not abused herself. Other observations by Fogelman are echoed in the novel's plot: the feeling of being torn between the Christian faith of the foster parents and the Jewish tradition of the biological parents, but also the healing force of sharing one's hiding past with one's children.

Some fifteen years after Fogelman's work, Diane Wolf (2007) published a comprehensive study of Dutch hidden children in *Beyond Anne Frank*. She describes how for many hidden children the liberation was the start of an even more painful time than the war years. The separation from foster parents and the reunion with surviving parents, who were often traumatized by their own hiding or camp experience, rarely translated into a happy ending. Surviving parents paid scant attention to their children's troubles, and when only one parent had returned and remarried, the relationship with the stepparent was not always a loving or even an appreciative one. The tensions between hidden children and surviving parents, the difficulty in forming stable relationships, and the struggle to find one's own identity appear repeatedly in the work of authors from the postmemory generation, such as Lisette Lewin and Chaja Polak (the term postmemory is a bit misleading, since they were born before the war and do have their own memories of the war, however not of the concentration camps, which was the original point of reference). They were hidden children themselves but in their literary work they do not focus on the hiding experience itself; therefore, I left them out of my thematic overview. After all, the literature of the postmemory generation is quite a notable category of its own.

The extensive research that has been conducted on the aftereffects of hiding on children does not, to my knowledge, exist concerning the trauma of adults who were in hiding. The topic appears indirectly only in Herzberg's novella through the main character's solitude, which he defies with inner dialogue.

We can conclude that all authors of fiction on hiding had hiding experiences themselves, with the exception of Willy Corsari, Abel Herzberg and Josha Zwaan. Generally speaking, their novels sketch a truthful picture, consistent with historiography. Children's books tend to leave out or soften the at times egotistical motives of aid-givers. However, the most recent novel, Josha Zwaan's, starkly presents the negative psychological effects and their transference to the next generations. Physical abuse of formerly hidden children is not reported, at least not as a common feature.

It goes without saying that in spite of its reliance on a truthful reality, fiction will not be a credible source for historiography. Nevertheless, it can and should be taken into consideration as a reflection of what society was ready to see and accept at the time of publishing. In this regard, it is remarkable that the first period under discussion shows a critical image of aid-givers, offering a nuanced view of the otherwise somewhat one-sided heroic image that soon dominated the common view of the attitude of the Dutch population during the war. At the other end, in the third period of 21<sup>st</sup> century fiction on the topic, *Parnassia* creates empathy for the child who is the object of the postwar struggle over the guardianship of former hidden children, at the same time refuting the inadvertent sanctification of child survivors of this (or any other) painful history. To some extent, *Parnassia* shows the same themes as Judith Herzberg's theater play *Leedvermaak*: the tension between real and foster parents, the troubles of a former hidden child in coming to terms with her past and the competing loyalties that accompany it. *Parnassia* appeared almost three decades later, and that may account for two features that are not, or hardly, to be found in *Leedvermaak*: the transference of the hiding trauma to the next generation, and the struggle of finding one's own identity. That last challenge could well be a reflection of the zeitgeist of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and its preoccupation with group identity. Even so, the postwar fight over Jewish orphans in Christian foster families as such clearly underlies the incorporation of the theme in literary fiction.

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### L'expérience des Juifs cachés aux Pays-Bas selon les textes de fiction

On peut distinguer dans les textes de fiction touchant à l'hébergement clandestin des Juifs aux Pays-Bas trois périodes : les textes publiés durant la période d'après-guerre, ceux parus pendant les années 1970 et 1980, et ceux, finalement, publiés depuis les années 2010. L'article dresse d'abord un inventaire de tous les romans et courts récits portant sur ce sujet et examine ensuite de manière plus détaillée quelques thèmes communs à cette littérature, thèmes qui se chevauchent d'ailleurs partiellement, à savoir la personnalité de ceux qui hébergent des Juifs et ce qui les motive,

les problèmes posés par le comportement des Juifs clandestins, les tensions religieuses entre les clandestins et leurs hôtes, et enfin les enfants juifs cachés et la relation avec leurs vrais parents et les parents « adoptifs » qui les hébergent. Bien que la théorie littéraire ait longtemps adoptée une attitude quelque peu réservée envers la littérature de l’holocauste, l’analyse présentée dans cet article montre que cette littérature – souvent écrite d’ailleurs par des auteurs qui ont eux-mêmes été cachés – dresse un tableau de l’hébergement clandestin des Juifs qui correspond grandement à celui dressé par des études historiques et psychologiques du phénomène. On peut en conclure que ces textes de fiction reflètent la réalité vécue par les Juifs clandestins sans être bien sûr tout à fait factuels. Les romans jeunesse constituent, cependant, dans une certaine mesure, une exception. En effet, ils tendent à réduire l’expérience vécue par l’enfant caché à celle de l’enfant qui doit demeurer caché en tout temps, alors que l’enfant, vivant sous une fausse identité, pouvait souvent se déplacer plus ou moins librement. Ils brossent, par ailleurs, un portrait souvent trop favorable de ceux qui hébergeaient l’enfant. Il est, d’ailleurs, frappant que ce sont justement les textes publiés dans l’immédiat après-guerre et s’adressant à un lectorat adulte qui ne passent aucunement sous silence les motivations parfois douteuses de ceux qui venaient en aide aux Juifs, telles que la cupidité et l’égoïsme. Bref, ces textes introduisent tout de suite des nuances dans l’image que les Pays-Bas se sont donnés et qui est demeurée longtemps dominante grâce entre autres à la popularité du journal d’Anne Frank, l’image notamment de sauveteurs nobles qui seraient venus à la rescousse de leurs concitoyens juifs persécutés comme de véritables héros.

### **De Joodse onderduik in Nederland in de fictionele literatuur**

In de fictionele literatuur die is gepubliceerd over de Joodse onderduik in Nederland tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog zijn drie periodes te onderscheiden. Na een inventarisatie van alle romans en novellen over dit onderwerp volgt een meer gedetailleerde beschrijving van enkele veel voorkomende thema’s, die elkaar deels overlappen: karakter en motieven van de onderduikgevers, problematisch gedrag van de onderduikers, religieuze spanningen tussen onderduikgevers en onderduikers, en ondergedoken kinderen en de verhouding tot hun echte en hun onderduikouders. Terwijl de literatuurwetenschap lange tijd tamelijk gereserveerd stond tegenover Holocaust fictie blijkt uit deze analyse dat fictie over de onderduik – overigens grotendeels van schrijvers die zelf onderduikervaring hadden – een beeld geeft dat sterk overeenkomt met de geschiedschrijving en inzichten uit de psychologie, en in die zin als waarheidsgetrouw beschouwd kan worden, zonder dat het om feitelijke juistheid gaat. Kinderboeken vormen enigszins een uitzondering op die bevinding, daar zij een wat eenzijdig

beeld geven, namelijk vooral van onderduik als een zich verborgen moeten houden, terwijl kinderen zich vaak onder valse identiteit vrijelijk konden bewegen. Tegelijk worden de onderduikgevers wat rooskleurig voorgesteld. Verrassend is dat juist in volwassen fictie van kort na de oorlog de negatieve kanten van onderduikgevers, zoals hebzucht en egoïsme, bepaald niet verdonkeremaand worden. Daarmee werd al meteen een nuancering aangebracht in het beeld van nobele redders die heldhaftig hun bedreigde Joodse landgenoten te hulp schoten, het (zelf)beeld van Nederland dat mede door de populariteit van het dagboek van Anne Frank lang dominant geweest is.



## **Geen doorgeefluik: Visser 't Hooft en de Zwitserse Weg, 1942-1944**

*Jurjen Zeilstra*

De Nederlandse regering, die bij de Duitse bezetting in 1940 naar Londen was gevlucht, verkeerde daar tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een relatief geïsoleerde situatie. Men was doorgaans slecht geïnformeerd over de gebeurtenissen in Nederland en slaagde er maar matig in de Nederlanders met actuele berichtgeving en aansprekende boodschappen, via schriftelijke weg of de radio, te bereiken. Eén van de initiatieven in die toestand verbetering te brengen, was 'de Zwitserse Weg'. Deze succesvolle communicatieroute, die ongeveer twee jaar heeft bestaan, werd in de zomer van 1942, in opdracht van de regering, opgezet onder leiding van de secretaris van de Wereldraad van Kerken in oprichting, de Nederlander Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (1900-1985). Deze was in 1924 vanuit Nederland naar Genève verhuisd en aanvankelijk gaan werken voor de Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), later voor de World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). Toen Nederland werd bezet, was Visser 't Hooft meteen al begonnen zich in Genève in te zetten voor communicatie tussen Nederlanders in het vaderland en daarbuiten, met name waar het geestelijke zaken betrof. Hij noemde dit: Geestelijk Contact. Terwijl Visser 't Hooft en zijn connecties graag stukken uitwisselden met inhoudelijk diepgravende presentaties en een grote rol voor de kerken in het naoorlogse Nederland in gedachten hadden, stelden de bijdragen vanuit de regering vaak teleur. Het Nederlandse verzet was ondertussen zeer verdeeld. Met name de tegenstelling tussen het militaire verzet, dat zijn oorsprong in de mobilisatie had, en het burgerlijke verzet, was groot. Velen voelden zich van regeringswege in de steek gelaten. Hoewel Visser 't Hooft zelf ook al lang niet meer in Nederland woonde, heeft hij zich in de periode 1942-1944 in toenemende mate opgesteld als bron van kennis over Nederland en coach van de regering, en in zekere mate was hij dat ook wel. Visser 't Hooft zag de oorlog als een geestelijke strijd. Maar waar het ging om Jodenvervolging, het Duitse verzet en de aanwijzing van een Nederlandse overgangsregering bestaande uit burgers, heeft hij echter geen gehoor gevonden.

Kernwoorden: W.A. Visser 't Hooft; Tweede Wereldoorlog; communicatie via Genève; Zwitserse Weg; kerkelijk spreken; regering in ballingschap; Nederlands verzet; Radio Oranje; Jodenvervolging; overgangsregering.

## Inleiding

Terwijl Nederland in de meidagen van 1940 door de Duitsers werd bezet, vluchtten koningin en regering naar Londen. Het besluit dit te doen, werd door lang niet iedereen met instemming vernomen. Sommigen voelden zich in de steek gelaten, of erger, verraden. De regering onder leiding van D.J. de Geer maakte een zwakke, zo niet defaitistische, indruk en de minister-president moest in augustus 1940 aftreden. Zijn opvolger, de Antirevolutionair P.S. Gerbrandy (1885-1961), beseftte dat men aan de Nederlanders die leefden in bezet gebied zou moeten laten zien en horen dat de regering wel degelijk bleef strijden voor de bevrijding van het vaderland. Maar de middelen waren beperkt. Veel mogelijkheden vorm te geven aan de strijd waren er niet. Bovendien werd de regering in ballingschap belemmerd door een groot gebrek aan informatie over de actuele situatie in Nederland. Een adequate informatiedienst was er niet en moest van de grond af worden opgebouwd. Vaak moest men zich behelpen met wat men aan feiten uit de Duitse propagandaberichten kon filteren. Er ontstonden in de loop van de oorlog verschillende illegale informatiekkanalen. Een daarvan was 'de Zweedse Weg'. Deze route functioneerde van juni 1942 tot juli 1943 met matig succes (De Jong 1979, 897-899). Een andere en belangrijker mogelijkheid was 'de Zwitserse Weg'. Twee jaar lang, vanaf de zomer van 1942 tot halverwege 1944, bestond er een redelijk betrouwbare verbinding tussen bezet Nederland en de Nederlandse regering in Londen die via Genève liep (De Jong 1979, 900-907).

In die stad was het de secretaris-generaal van de Wereldraad van Kerken in oprichting, de Nederlander Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft (1900-1985), die als een spin in het web zat. Sommigen hielden hem voor een doorgeefluik of een postbode. Hij zelf zag dat heel anders en groeide uit tot een al dan niet gewaardeerd adviseur van de regering. Hoe is dit zo gekomen en hoe heeft deze route in de praktijk gefunctioneerd? Waar ging het inhoudelijk over? En wat is het beeld waar het gaat om de samenwerking tussen regering en verzet, of het gebrek daaraan, dat opkomt wanneer men zich op dit stuk communicatie in oorlogstijd concentreert? Welke rol heeft Visser 't Hooft daarin gespeeld? Dit artikel kan geen omvattend beeld geven van communicatie in oorlogstijd. Het steunt op de biografie die de auteur reeds eerder schreef over het leven van Visser 't Hooft (Zeilstra 2018, 2020), maar zoekt het beeld dat daar gegeven wordt te verbreden en verdiepen.



## De strategische positie van Visser 't Hooft

Bij het uitbreken van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in september 1939 woonde Visser 't Hooft al vijftien jaar in Genève. Hij werd geboren in Haarlem en kwam als student theologie, via de Nederlandse Christen Studenten Vereniging (NCSV), terecht in het internationale christelijke jeugd- en studentenwerk. In 1924 kreeg hij een functie bij de Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) als internationaal secretaris voor het werk onder schooljongens en verhuisde hij, samen met zijn vrouw Jetty Visser 't Hooft-Boddaert (1899-1968), naar Genève. Rond 1930 ging hij over naar de World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), waarvan hij een succesvol secretaris werd. In 1938 werd hij in Utrecht aangewezen als secretaris-generaal van een nieuw op te richten World Council of Churches (WCC), voorlopig nog *in process of formation*.

Visser 't Hooft zat in Genève in het neutrale Zwitserland op een strategische positie. In vrijwel alle oorlogvoerende landen had hij door zijn werk voor de jeugdbeweging contacten. Samen met slechts enkele medewerkers wist hij, juist in deze moeilijke tijd, het oecumenisch netwerk verder uit te bouwen. Tegelijk voelde hij zich geroepen ook de Nederlandse zaak te dienen. Samenwerken met het Nederlandse verzet tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog was echter geen gemakkelijke opdracht. Wie dacht dat de strijd tegen de vijand een sterk verenigend effect had vergist zich. Het verzet was bij tijden hopeloos verdeeld en de ideeën over wat men zich voorstelde betreffende de gang van zaken na de bevrijding liepen ver uiteen. Visser 't Hooft heeft in dat veld duidelijk partij gekozen en dat heeft tot botsingen geleid.

Zelf zag Visser 't Hooft de oorlog principieel als een geestelijke strijd. De gevechtshandelingen en het geweld waarmee bezette landen werden onderdrukt, maakten op hem grote indruk, maar hij weigerde daarin de essentie van het conflict te zien. In beginsel zag hij de omstandigheden als een uitdaging. Juist als voorvechter van kerkelijke eenheid mocht van hem, vond hij zelf, persoonlijk engagement worden verwacht. Zijn actieve bijdrage voor een betere communicatie tussen Nederlanders binnen en buiten Nederland, vloeiden omdat de vraag zich aandiende als vanzelf voort uit deze motivatie (vgl. Visser 't Hooft 1973).

## Communicatie met bezet Nederland

De eerste berichten die Visser 't Hooft in het voorjaar van 1940 in Genève ontving over de bezetting van Nederland waren niet altijd even accuraat, maar schokten hem zeer. Visser 't Hooft stelde zich voor dat verbijstering, ongeloof en zelfverwijt zich van de Nederlanders meester maakten (Visser 't Hooft aan Beste Vrienden, mei 1940, YDS-12, 17). Waren ze niet te zelfverzekerd geweest? Was ook het Nederlandse christendom niet een wel heel erg veilige en naar binnen gekeerde

vorm van christendom? Visser 't Hooft was in mei 1940 niet de enige die op een bijbels-profetische toon probeerde betekenis te geven aan de bezetting als een 'oordeel Gods' (Vgl. Touw 1946,194-221). Nu kwam het erop aan, schreef hij, niet lijdzaam af te wachten, maar geestelijke weerbaarheid te ontwikkelen. Actief verzet tegen demonische krachten was nodig. Dit was ten diepste een spiritueel conflict. Nederlanders in Nederlands-Indië zochten via hem contacten met hun familie in bezet Nederland en hij begon mogelijkheden te zien. Hij riep Nederlandse vrienden op tot 'geestelijk contact' met het doel om elkaar te helpen en te sterken en vervreemding te voorkomen. Hij vroeg om informatie over het geestelijk leven in Nederland en stelde voor dat hij te Genève als verzamelaar zou optreden.

Zijn oproep vond weerklank. In de zomer van 1940 kwam er spontaan een stroom van berichten op gang. Het ging om kerkelijke oproepen, uitspraken, overdenkingen, preken, commentaren en artikelen in de christelijke pers over de bezetting en de toekomst. Er was materiaal bij van kerkleiders en theologen, zoals Oepke Noordmans en Jan Buskes, maar ook van politici, zoals oud-premier Hendrikus Colijn. De meeste correspondenten waren vrienden van Visser 't Hooft uit de NCSV, zoals Gerard H. Slotemaker de Bruïne, Nico Stufkens en Conny Patijn. Selecties uit de hem toegezonden stukken werden door Visser 't Hooft gebundeld en onder de titel *Stemmen uit Nederland* als gestencild periodiek vanaf juni 1940 verzonden naar Nederlanders in Zwitserland en Nederlands-Indië, maar al gauw in allerlei landen. Via J.J. Bosch van Rosenthal, de Nederlandse gezant te Bern, kwamen de *Stemmen* ook bij de Nederlandse regering in Londen terecht. Het ging Visser 't Hooft niet alleen om kerkelijk betrokkenen, maar daar lag wel het accent. (Vgl. Bank 2017 en ook Van Beijnum & Spruyt 1995) Op het eerste nummer van de *Stemmen*, dat in het archief van de Wereldraad wordt bewaard, heeft hij zelf later geschreven: 'this was the beginning in 1940-1941 of what later became the Swiss Road' (World War II era records of the WCC Ongedateerd, YDS-12).

In de rondzendbrief aan zijn Nederlandse vrienden van 22 mei stelde Visser 't Hooft de vraag naar het waarom van de ramp van de bezetting. Valse zekerheden zouden moeten worden afgeleerd bij een kruis dat midden in de wereld stond.

Zou het misschien zoo zijn, dat God eerst dan den grooten druk van ons land wegnemen zal, wanneer het zijn les geleerd heeft? Dan gaat het er nu om die les met kracht in ons op te nemen. We weten nog niets van wat er nu innerlijk in Holland gebeurt. Maar men mag wel gelooven en verwachten, dat er onder Christenen om de vraag naar den zin van deze beproeving geworsteld wordt en dat er een groot zuiveringsproces aan de gang is, waarbij veel oppervlakkige, veel kleinzielige en veel bekrompen elementen in ons Hollandsche leven uitgewied worden, en er een nieuw besef voor de hoogte en diepte en breedte van het Evangelie ontstaat.

(Visser 't Hooft aan Beste Vrienden, 22 mei 1940, YDS-12, 17)

Visser 't Hooft had een remonstrantse achtergrond, maar was in zijn studententijd beïnvloed door de geloofspraktijk in de NCSV en door de dialectische theologie van Karl Barth, die de bijbel onverkort als Woord van God beschouwde. In de loop van de tijd was hij veel kerkelijker gaan denken, internationaler en meer oecumenisch, dat wil zeggen met oog voor het belang van de wereldwijde eenheid van de kerk, en hij was hervormd geworden. Als het juiste antwoord op de ramp van de oorlog die door God over Nederland was toegelaten zag hij nu de vernieuwing van kerken. In het feit dat juist de lang zo verdeelde Nederlandse Hervormde kerk tijdens het eerste bezettingsjaar met duidelijke verklaringen naar buiten trad, vond Visser 't Hooft een indrukwekkende bevestiging van zijn stelling. In de twee kanselboodschappen van 27 oktober 1940 over schuld en roeping der kerk en over de anti-Joodse maatregelen (Touw 1946, 17-18) hoorde hij een duidelijk woord over spirituele vrijheid en christelijke opvoeding en een veroordeling van de manier waarop de Joden door de bezetter werden geïsoleerd. Op deze wijze was de Hervormde kerk in zijn ogen bezig een strijdende kerk, een *ecclesia militans*, te worden. De visie van de theoloog K.H. Miskotte (1894-1976) speelde in dit opzicht een belangrijke rol. In 1939 had deze zijn boek *Thora en Edda* gepubliceerd, waarin hij het Nazisme als nieuwe vorm van heidendom had geanalyseerd. Visser 't Hooft wees ook op het artikel over Romeinen 9-11 van zijn vriend, de zendingstheoloog Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965). De oorlog leek kerken en christenen in Nederland wakker te hebben geschud en deed een nieuw urgentiebesef ontwakken (Visser 't Hooft aan A.B.C. Dudok de Wit, 4 november 1941, WCC YDS-12, 59).

Hij vroeg zich af of hij zelf niet meer zou kunnen doen voor de nu van het vaderland geïsoleerde Nederlandse regering in Londen. Zijn beste contact daar was de jurist en econoom, Aat A. van Rhijn (1892-1986). Vlak voor de Duitse inval was deze als minister van landbouw en visserij benoemd, wat hij tot mei 1941 zou blijven. In feite was er op zijn vakgebied niet zoveel te doen en Van Rhijn functioneerde in zijn eentje als Algemene Rekenkamer van de Nederlandse regering in ballingschap. Na meer dan een jaar de *Stemmen* te hebben gestuurd, die door van Rhijn naar eigen inzicht aan belangstellenden werden doorgegeven, zond Visser 't Hooft in november 1941 voor het eerst en uit eigen beweging een aantal documenten van meer algemene aard direct aan minister-president Gerbrandy persoonlijk, in wie hij een geestverwant zag.

### **Radio Oranje: 'ophitserij'**

Sinds 28 juli 1940 was er dagelijks in Nederland om 20.15 uur een kwartier Nederlandse uitzending vanuit Londen via de BBC te ontvangen. De Engelsen gaven de Nederlanders binnen bepaalde marges een redelijk grote speelruimte, meer dan aan andere nationaliteiten in Londen, maar die werd sterk beperkt door gebrek aan actuele informatie over de situatie in Nederland en gebrek aan erva-

ring bij de medewerkers van de nieuwe regeringsomroep. Bovendien wilden de ministers de inhoud van de uitzendingen, die zij vooral aanvankelijk als regeringsboodschappen beschouwden, controleren, wat veel tijd kostte en de teksten aan scherpste deed inboeten. Doel was het bestrijden van de Duitse propaganda, het vertrouwen in de komende bevrijding van Nederland voeden en verslag doen van belangrijke gebeurtenissen buiten Nederland, niet in de laatste plaats waar het ging om de bijdragen van de Nederlandse regering. Vooral in 1942 echter en in 1943 was er veel kritiek bij de luisteraars. Men leek in Londen niet goed te weten of te begrijpen wat er in Nederland gebeurde. Vaak waren de radioteksten te bevoogdend en voorzichtig en vol gemeenplaatsen. En wanneer concrete adviezen aan burgers en instructies aan ambtenaren werden gegeven, sloeg men in de oren van velen regelmatig de plank mis (Sinke 2009).

Terwijl de radiotoespraken van de gereformeerde Gerbrandy Visser 't Hooft wel bevielen, omdat daarin, zoals hij zei, steeds 'de geestelijke achtergrond van den huidige strijd zo duidelijk geteekend wordt', kon hij dat niet zeggen van Radio Oranje in het algemeen: noch de radiozender, noch het in Londen uitgegeven *Vrij Nederland* slaagden erin diepte te bereiken in de boodschappen of duidelijk te maken wat de kerken voor de Nederlanders in deze tijd betekenden (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 18 november 1941, NIOD 186g-1). Zijns inziens was dit een teken dat de betekenis van juist de geestelijke strijd achter de schermen van de zichtbare oorlog in Londen zwaar werd onderschat. Een voorbeeld van hoe het wel moest, was voor Visser 't Hooft de illegaal uitgegeven brochure *Wat wij wel en wat wij niet gelooven* die de hervormde predikant Jan Koopmans (1905-1945) in 1941 anoniem liet verschijnen als een waardevolle aanmoediging aan zijn landgenoten (Touw 1946, 227-231).

### Jodenvervolging

Waar het ging om de vervolging en uitroeiing van de Joden, bevond Visser 't Hooft zich in Genève met zijn informatienetwerk op een vooruitgeschoven positie. Reeds in het voorjaar van 1941 had hij betrouwbare aanwijzingen dat Hitler bezig was op systematische en grootschalige wijze zijn in *Mein Kampf* aangekondigde programma de Joden te vermoorden, daadwerkelijk uit te voeren (Hoffmann 1941). Velen in Europa hebben lange tijd óf geen geloof gehecht aan dergelijke berichten óf aangenomen dat het lijden van de Joden deel was van het lijden in het algemeen aan de oorlog verbonden. Ook in regeringskring in Londen waren er die zelf niet vrij waren van antisemitische gevoelens (Sinke 2009, 99-105, 185-191).

Voor Visser 't Hooft was het een principezaak. Aan vice-president van de Raad van State en vertrouwensman van koningin Wilhelmina, Gerard Beelaerts van Blokland in Londen schreef hij op 3 april 1941:

Wat de Joden betreft – het gaat er niet om, of ze aangename of onaangename mensen zijn; het gaat om een principe, dat onafscheidelijk verbonden is aan ons geloof en onze traditie. Ik ben er dankbaar voor en eigenlijk trotsch op, dat twee Universiteiten in Nederland [Leiden en Delft] op *dit punt* den strijd aangeboden hebben en de kerk op dit punt een ‘non possumus’ uitgesproken heeft. Ik ben geen Jodenminnaar, maar geloof met velen in Holland, dat de vraag van onze houding tegenover het antisemitisme een *test* geworden is, waar wij eigenlijk thuis hooren.

(Visser 't Hooft aan Gerard Beelaerts van Blokland, 3 april 1941, WCC, YDS-12, 56)

Juist in dit opzicht liet de kerk, zo vond Visser 't Hooft, geen onzeker geluid horen.

Uit de *Stemmen* zul je gezien hebben dat velen in de kerk zich ervan bewust zijn, dat de kerk geen politiek centrum mag worden. Maar zij zien ook, dat de kerk van Calvijn en Marnix niet kan zwijgen wanneer het gaat om zijn of niet-zijn van die vrijheid, die in het christelijke geloof verankerd ligt. Een kerk, die op zulk een moment zwijgt, zou precies doen, wat Goebbels wil, wanneer hij zegt; ‘aan ons de aarde, aan de kerk de hemel’ Ik weet wel, dat jij *dat* niet bedoelt, maar wilde toch even onderstrepen, dat de kerk in Holland nu een nieuw bijzondere taak heeft, die ze manmoedig aanpakken moet en gelukkig ook aanpakt.

(Visser 't Hooft aan Gerard Beelaerts van Blokland, 3 april 1941, WCC, YDS-12, 56)

Toch bleef de Jodenvernietiging moeilijk te bewijzen en duurde het nog tot juli 1942 voordat de Wereldraad van Kerken met duidelijke oproepen en waarschuwingen naar buiten begon te treden, in toenemende mate in samenwerking met het World Jewish Congress en het Rode Kruis. Het was tevergeefs. Noch kerken, noch overheden, noch internationale organisaties, noch koningin Wilhelmina en Radio Oranje hebben adequaat gereageerd, deels uit voorzichtigheid, deels uit ongelooft, deels omdat de oorlogsinspanningen voor alles gingen, deels uit onverschilligheid, deels uit onmacht. Nog bij de herdenking van de Kristallnacht op 8 november 2020 beleed de Protestantse kerk in Nederland schuld voor falend optreden en het onvoldoende bieden van hulp aan Joden tijdens de oorlog. Dit was omstreden. Lang niet iedereen vond in 2020 dat de kerken het met betrekking tot de Joden werkelijk hadden laten afweten of dat schuld belijden nog zin had, anderen juist wel (*NOS Nieuws* 2020a, 2020b). Hoewel Visser 't Hooft voor zijn inspanningen zelfs een eredoctoraat van de Hebreeuwse Universiteit van Jeruzalem ontving, heeft hij zichzelf achteraf verweten niet genoeg te hebben gedaan.

### Geestelijke strijd

Het mocht dan een 'geestelijke strijd' zijn die hij wilde strijden, Visser 't Hooft schuwde het streven naar politieke invloed niet. Steeds meer is hij zich in de jaren 1942-1944 gaan opwerpen als adviseur van de Nederlandse regering in ballingschap. Zo beschreef hij in november 1941 voor Gerbrandy verschillende gezaghebbende groepen in de Nederlandse samenleving die zich voorbereidden op de bevrijding. Terwijl de ene groep te weinig betekenis had en de andere volgens Visser 't Hooft te autoritair was, moest de groep waarmee professor Paul Scholten, voorzitter van het Convent van Kerken, verbonden was beslist serieus worden genomen (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 12 november 1941, NIOD 186g-1). Voor de vernieuwende kerken was volgens Visser 't Hooft in dit tijdsgericht een sleutelrol weggelegd (Visser 't Hooft aan P. S. Gerbrandy, 15 december 1941, NIOD 186g-1).

Zonder concreet te worden meldde hij dat zijn zegslieden pleitten voor grondige sociale en politieke hervormingen, en de democratie wilden handhaven en zich dus verzetten tegen een vorm van autoritair bestuur. Hoe de vrede eruit zou moeten zien, hing volgens Visser 't Hooft af van het antwoord op een tweetal hoofdvragen. Zou een naoorlogs Duitsland van een andere gezindheid blijken? En zouden de overwinnende landen genoeg verantwoordelijkheidsbesef hebben om hun macht op de juiste wijze te gebruiken? Bij de herbouw van het nieuwe Europa had Nederland naar zijn inzicht een belangrijke rol te spelen.

Wat de internationale politiek betreft, zoo meent men dat het volk, ook al is het daar op het oogenblik wellicht nog niet toe bereid, in zal zien, dat een zuivere wraak-politiek, die Duitsland geheel kapot zou maken, slechts tot verdere ontwrichting van Europa zou kunnen leiden. Men is bereid tot een federatieve opbouw van de Europeesche gemeenschap. In dit verband meent men ook, dat er een werkelijk gevaar is, dat wanneer er een breakdown in Duitsland komt en de nieuwe situatie niet onmiddellijk op positieve wijze opgevangen wordt, de extremistische kringen in het land zich met communistische en bolsjewistische elementen zouden kunnen verbinden. Hier kan alleen een positieve politiek van opbouw helpen. Ook daarom moet, indien dat eenigszins kan, een algemeen bloedbad op het moment van ommekeer vermeden worden.

(Visser 't Hooft aan P. Gerbrandy, 15 december 1941, NIOD 186g-1)

Op dat moment kon de Nederlandse regering te Londen niet veel meer doen dan het verzet tegen Duitsland aan te moedigen, de vrije gebieden onder Nederlands gezag te besturen en zich zo goed en zo kwaad als het ging voor te bereiden op de bevrijding. Wetgeving bleef bij ontbreken van een parlement bij het afkondigen

van Koninklijke Besluiten, waarbij Wilhelmina zich actief met het bestuur bemoeide.

Maar Visser 't Hooft vond dat er meer mogelijk was. De verlamming van de regering werd vergroot doordat men in Londen slecht op de hoogte was van wat er in Nederland speelde (Visser 't Hooft aan A.A. van Rhijn, 20 januari 1942, NIOD 186g-5). Daar had hij, zeker tot in de zomer van 1943, gelijk in (De Jong 1979, 929-935). Voor Visser 't Hooft was dit ook de belangrijkste verklaring dat veel uitzendingen van Radio Oranje niet veel verder kwamen dan obligate berichtgeving en schelden op de bezetter of een 'ophitserij', waaraan velen in Nederland zich ergerden.

Het werd mij eenige malen letterlijk zoo gezegd: 'Laat men toch niet denken in Londen, dat het Nederlandsche volk opgehitst moet worden, want voor dat ophitsen zorgen de Duitschers zelf wel. Wij willen van onze menschen een geheel andere toon hooren, die juist duidelijk maakt, dat wij niet op het niveau leven van de Nazi's. Wij willen veel meer rustige beschouwingen hebben, die ons een duidelijk beeld geven van de situatie en ons voorbereiden op de groote beslissingen, die ons volk in de toekomst zal moeten nemen. Men mist ook zeer sterk een duidelijk geestelijk geluid, waaruit blijkt, dat in Londen begrepen wordt, dat er op het oogenblik ook een geestelijke herleving door ons volk gaat.'

(Visser 't Hooft aan B. Bierens de Haan, 16 december 1941, WCC YDS-12, 56)

Niet iedereen zal dit zo hebben beleefd (Vgl. Sinke 2009, 78-79, 122). Maar Visser 't Hooft was ervan overtuigd. Hier moest echt iets aan gebeuren. Het eenvoudigweg kapotmaken van Duitsland kon geen respectabel oorlogsdoel zijn. Omwille van een duurzame vrede, zou Duitsland in het nieuwe Europa van de toekomst zeker een plaats moeten hebben. Wat in zijn optiek nodig was betrof het opbouwen van de morele kracht van het Nederlandse volk. Hier faalde de regering. De enige die, naar zijn overtuiging in deze tijd, te Londen de juiste toon aansloeg was de koningin. Wilhelmina identificeerde in haar ongeveer vijftig radiotoespraken tijdens de bezetting een aantal keer de Nederlandse nationale zaak zonder enig voorbehoud met die van God. Deze ongenueanceerde toon werd door Visser 't Hooft gehoord als precies het goede geluid.

Het is merkwaardig, dat Zij intuïtief schijnt te voelen wat Haar volk nodig heeft. Ik heb tenminste nog geen andere toespraken uit London gehoord, die in dit opzicht met de Hare vergeleken kunnen worden. Het is moeilijk te beschrijven waar hem dat in zit. Er zit iets radicaals in Haar oproepen, dat men bij de anderen mist. Wanneer Zij spreekt wordt het duidelijk, dat wij niet maar in een politieke strijd zitten, maar in een geestelijke strijd op

leven en dood, en het groote is, dat Zij tegelijk echt christelijk spreekt en op geenerlei wijze sentimenteel wordt.

(Visser 't Hooft aan B. Bierens de Haan, 16 december 1941, WCC YDS-12, 56)

### Een profetisch geluid

Visser 't Hooft was ervan overtuigd dat hij niet toevallig in Genève zat, op deze plaats, in deze tijd, met alle connecties die hij tijdens het interbellum had opgebouwd. Er was een opdracht van Godswegen aan deze situatie verbonden. Juist vanwege de crisis van de oorlog kwamen in zijn beleving alle lijnen bijeen. Jarenlang had hij zich ingezet voor het internationale werk van de YMCA, voor de NCSV, de WSCF en de WCC in oprichting. Nu ging het om het profetische geluid. Na enige aarzeling, was hij, daartoe gestimuleerd door Karl Barth, zelf steeds meer geneigd bij te dragen aan een duidelijk kerkelijk spreken in het openbaar. Een adequaat antwoord moest worden gegeven op het oordeel Gods dat schuilging in de ineenstorting van de beschavingsorde van Europa. Ook Nederland zou in het naoorlogs Europa zich moeten inspannen tot een constructieve bijdrage in een Europese federatie waarin menselijke waarden werkelijk geborgd konden worden.

Eind 1941 leefde bij velen de hoop dat de ineenstorting van Duitsland aanstaande was. Met de plotselinge aanval op de Sovjet-Unie leek Hitler zich in een niet te winnen oorlog te hebben gestort. Door de Japanse aanval op Pearl Harbor van 7 december 1941 waren de Verenigde Staten in de oorlog betrokken. Toen op 11 december Duitsland en Italië zich aan de zijde van Japan schaarden en eveneens de VS de oorlog verklaarden, werd dit door velen als het begin van het einde van Hitler beschouwd.

Visser 't Hooft was in zijn functie als secretaris-generaal van de Wereldraad van Kerken in oprichting een exponent van een internationale christelijke elite actief betrokken in de oecumenische beweging, die zich geroepen voelde om ook buiten de kerk in deze cruciale periode een rol van betekenis te spelen. Kerken en christenen moesten worden aangespoord om de schroom te laten varen en in de context van de oorlog verstaanbare en relevante geloofsuitspraken te doen en daarnaar te handelen. In dit opzicht boden de aanknopingspunten van Visser 't Hooft bij de Nederlandse regering in Londen hem een bijzondere kans die hij heeft willen benutten (Visser 't Hooft aan A.A. van Rhijn, 20 januari 1942, NIOD 186g-5). Wat Visser 't Hooft bedoelde met 'geestelijk' als het ging om de strijd die gestreden moest worden, blijkt uit een van zijn bijdragen aan het blad van de WSCF, *The Student World*, in 1942 (Visser 't Hooft 1942b). Vanaf Homerus zag hij hoe bij de oude Grieken autonomie het menselijke streven was geweest. Het was herkenbaar in, zowel hun omgang met de staat, als met de godenwereld. Dit streven was zonder tegenwicht volgens Visser 't Hooft gedoemd te eindigen in het



dienen van de macht van het kwaad. Het dienen van God door Christus, daarentegen, betekende volgens hem in wezen een dienen van het hoogste goed. In de herontdekking van de kerk zag de organisatie van het grote tegenwicht (Visser 't Hooft 1942b, 254-260).

In het voorjaar van 1942 hoorde Visser 't Hooft opnieuw van veel landgenoten dat zij in de uitzendingen van Radio Oranje 'het ontbreken van een duidelijk godsdienstig geluid' betreurden. Hij meldde dit Gerbrandy en stelde dat het echt niet zo was dat men in Nederland 'een N.C.R.V.' van Radio Oranje wilde maken, maar dat men behoefte had aan inspirerende leiding vanuit Londen. De vraag kwam, zo verzekerde Visser 't Hooft Gerbrandy op 17 maart 1942, echt niet alleen uit de kringen, die vóór 10 mei 1940 'christelijk' heetten: 'Ons geheele volk, de socialisten inclusief, is bezig zich ervan bewust te worden, dat het in laatste instanties om geestelijke waarden gaat' (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy 17 maart 1942, NIOD 186g-1). Radio Oranje en het Londense *Vrij Nederland* (niet te verwarren met het in Nederland clandestien verschijnende blad met dezelfde naam) zouden er volgens Visser 't Hooft goed aan doen de propagandatoon helemaal los te laten, en te trachten voortaan de oorlog met diepgang te behandelen. Hij begreep wel dat dit niet gemakkelijk was. Maar Hitler was een instrument in Gods hand:

De groote vraag is toch wel deze, of men begrepen heeft, dat Hitler werkelijk een gesel Gods is, een demonisch instrument, dat God gebruikt om on-eindig veel trots op te ruimen. Het Nationaal-Socialisme heeft niet de geringste positieve beteekenis, het is volslagen non-creatief, en de nieuwe orde bestaat niet. Maar het heeft wel een heel groote negatieve beteekenis. (Visser 't Hooft aan A.A. van Rhijn, 17 maart 1942, NIOD 186g-5)

### **De toekomst van Duitsland in Europa**

Visser 't Hooft hoopte op een naoorlogse hervorming van Europa in een federale vorm, waarbij rol van de soevereiniteit van de vele nationale staten gerelativeerd zou worden (Zeilstra 1995). Dit zou, naar hij stellig meende, een beschaafd alternatief zijn voor een zuiver gewelddadige geallieerde overwinning. Zijn contacten in het Duitse verzet, zoals Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) en Adam von Trott zu Solz (1909-1944) verzekerden hem dat een Duitsland geleid door een alternatieve regering daarin een vredelievende plaats zou innemen. Zoals men nu bezig was zouden de geallieerden de oorlog vast wel winnen. Maar zou dat ook zicht op een duurzame vrede betekenen? De regeringen van geallieerde landen moesten tot groter probleembewustzijn worden gebracht. Waarom ontwikkelde de Nederlandse regering hier geen eigen visie op? In zijn brieven aan regeringsleden heeft Visser 't Hooft hier vaak op aangedrongen. Het antwoord van de minister-presi-

dent aan Visser 't Hooft, gedateerd januari 1942, moet voor hem zeer teleurstellend zijn geweest:

Wat de in Uw brieven geprojecteerde houding ten aanzien van Duitschland betreft, zij strookt niet geheel met de opvattingen der Regeering. Deze is van meening, dat er voorloopig iets anders te doen is dan te spreken over 'gelijkwaardigheid' voor het Duitsche volk, dat zich met lijf en ziel aan het nazidom heeft overgeleverd. Er begint zich wederom een strooming te uiten, die de Duitsche propaganda om, als zij een nederlaag mogelijk acht, reeds thans 'the poor darlings theory' te verkondigen, maar het zou onzerzijds niet van veel inzicht getuigen te vergeten, dat het pan-germanisme een gevaar is, dat niet van gisteren dateert en dat het nazi-dom niets anders is dan de politieke verwerkelijking van de gedachten van de 'All Deutscher Bund', die al uit de vorige eeuw dateert. De Regeering acht het zoo niet onjuist, dan toch wel praematuur, nu al weer een scheiding te maken tusschen 'het verarmde mishandelde Duitsche volk' en zijn booze leiding.

(P.S. Gerbrandy aan Visser 't Hooft, 14 januari 1942, NIOD 186g-1)

Gerbrandy liet Visser 't Hooft dus weten dat de regering weliswaar de opvatting van Visser 't Hooft deelde dat Nederland met betrekking tot het nieuwe Europa een voortrekkersrol op zich moest nemen, maar nu ging het om een oorlog die gewonnen moest worden. Gerbrandy zegde toe dat er op de inhoud van Radio Oranje gelet zou worden, maar verdedigde de noodzaak van een strijdbare radio in oorlogstijd. Dat de Nederlandse regering geen oppergezag in bezet Nederland aanwees om bij de bevrijding 'aan het hoofd der zaak' te gaan staan was opzettelijk. De regering hoopte immers zelf direct na de bevrijding zo spoedig mogelijk terug te keren. Iedere andere oplossing moest als 'hoogst gevaarlijk' worden afgewezen.

Visser 't Hooft was teleurgesteld, maar geenszins van plan de moed op te geven, zoals blijkt uit zijn brief aan een van zijn contacten in Nederland:

Het is nodig dat we alles doen om de menschen daar [in London] op de hoogte te houden van wat er bij de besten thuis omgaat. Ik heb vooral ammunitie nodig om het vader Piet [Gerbrandy] duidelijk te maken, dat men er niet komt met globale veroordeling van geheele volken. En verder ook om te laten zien op welke concrete punten de toekomst van het verleden ingrijpend zal moeten verschillen. Blijf me dus op dit gebied alles sturen, wat je kunt. 't Wordt goed gebruikt. Ik moet in dezen aan kunnen toonen, dat ik niet in eigen naam alleen, ook niet alleen namens enkele geïsoleerde idealisten, doch werkelijk namens een verantwoordelijke groep geestelijke leiders spreek. Wonderlijk is, dat degenen die niet in het vuur staan, dikwijls meer die-hard zijn, dan degenen, die dag in dag uit strijden.

(Visser 't Hooft aan Ph. Idenburg, 27 februari 1942, NIOD 186-5)

Gerbrandy's gebruik van het woord 'lievigheid' ten aanzien van de houding van zijn Duitse zegslieden achtte Visser 't Hooft geheel misplaatst (Visser 't Hooft aan F.M. van Asbeck, 27 februari 1942, NIOD 186g-5). Op 17 maart 1942 liet hij de minister-president weten dat hij vond dat het onjuist was om het verzet tegen Hitler, 'deze mannen, die dag in dag uit op de bres staan en stuk voor stuk zeer groote risico's op zich genomen hebben, van "lievigheid" in hun houding ten opzichte van Duitschland te verdenken' (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 17 maart 1942. NIOD 186g-1). Belangrijke oecumenische leiders in Engeland en de Verenigde Staten deelden zijn opvatting. Dat gold echter niet voor de meeste politici. Gerbrandy was het niet met Visser 't Hooft eens, maar hij waardeerde zijn eerlijkheid en inspanningen. Daarom nodigde hij Visser 't Hooft uit om zelf naar Londen te komen voor overleg. Daar voelde Visser 't Hooft wel voor.

### **Bezoek aan Londen 1942**

Met een diplomatiek paspoort op zak begon Visser 't Hooft op 27 april 1942 als vertegenwoordiger van het Rode Kruis en de Ecumenical Commission for the Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War, zijn reis via het niet bezette deel van Frankrijk en Portugal, met de KLM naar Bristol. In Londen nam hij zijn intrek in het Brown's Hotel waar ook Gerbrandy verbleef. Samen met diens secretaris, de rooms-katholiek Pieter Kasteel, hadden de gereformeerde Gerbrandy en de hervormde Visser 't Hooft lange gesprekken, over de meest uiteenlopende onderwerpen, niet in de laatste plaats de theologie, in het bijzonder die van Karl Barth (1886-1968).

Gerbrandy vroeg Visser 't Hooft om samen met A.H.J. (Tony) Lovink (1902-1995) een plan op te stellen om het contact met Nederland te verbeteren. Lovink was kort daarvoor als secretaris van het Departement van Oorlog benoemd en voor Visser 't Hooft een oude bekende uit zijn studietijd te Leiden. Dit lukte en Visser 't Hooft ontving van de minister-president zelf de opdracht om een en ander in Zwitserland te gaan organiseren. De belangrijkste punten van het plan waar Lovink en Visser 't Hooft mee kwamen, waren de volgende: 1) Versterking van het geestelijk contact Nederland-Londen; 2) Het bekendmaken aan vooraanstaande personen in Nederland van plannen der regering; 3) Samenwerking van het contactcentrum onder leiding van Visser 't Hooft met het Gezantschap te Bern, waar het ging om: a. 'Het verzamelen en verwerken van gegevens over de geestelijke stroomingen in ons volk, de weerstand tegen het nationaal socialisme, de strijd op kerkelijk- en schoolgebied, de gedachtewisseling over de groote lijnen van de politieke en maatschappelijke orde na den oorlog, [de] principieele houding ten opzichte van Duitschland; b. Het doorzenden van in Nederland verschenen boeken, tijdschriften en samenvattingen; c. Het doorgeven naar Nederland van gegevens over de regeeringspolitiek over heden en toekomst;' 4) Het

contactcentrum in Zwitserland zou onder leiding en verantwoording van het Departement van Oorlog komen te staan. Verder voorzag het plan in een krediet en bepaalde het voorts dat het centrum zich niet zou bemoeien met de berichtgeving over militaire en technisch-politieke zaken. Dit contact Londen-Nederland zou worden aangeduid met de eerder door Visser 't Hooft voor zijn eigen contactennetwerk gemunte codenaam GC, 'Geestelijk Contact'. De meest gebruikte aanduiding werd echter: 'de Zwitserse Weg' (*Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945* 1950, 197-198; Handschrift Visser 't Hooft 1942, NIOD 186g-5).

Tijdens zijn verblijf in Londen probeerde Visser 't Hooft opnieuw de minister-president te winnen voor zijn eigen standpunt de oorlog vooral te zien als een geestelijke en niet primair nationalistische strijd (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 7 mei 1942, NIOD 186g-5). Hoewel Gerbrandy zich niet echt liet overtuigen en altijd kritisch zou blijven op de visie van Visser 't Hooft, bleef de sfeer tussen beiden goed. Op Tweede Pinksterdag 1942 werd er vanuit Londen een preek van Visser 't Hooft over de radio uitgezonden, die de minister-president zeer kon waarderen. Visser 't Hooft bleef in Gerbrandy de krachtige houding waarderen die hij bij andere ministers miste: 'Pieter is heel wat beter dan zijn brieven. Al is het geen man van zeer groot formaat, het is toch een flinke kerel, die zichzelf niet zoekt' (Visser 't Hooft aan F.M. van Asbeck, 2 juli 1942, NIOD 186g-5).

Waar het ging om het verzet, zag Visser 't Hooft dus twee motieven: het nationale en het ideologische. Steeds hoopte hij dat het universeel ideologische bij de bevrijding de boventoon zou hebben, dus verzet tegen tirannie en niet de nationalistische sentimenten. In de brief van 7 mei aan Gerbrandy, schreef hij:

Ik zou dit [laatste] betreuren, maar ontveins mij niet, dat de volkpsychologie in die bruisende dagen de kansen hierop groter zou maken dan in overeenstemming zou zijn met de werkelijke volksmeening. [...] na de oorlog zal het voor ons in de eerste plaats gaan om de heroriëntering van ons eigen sociale en politieke leven. Daarvoor is meer noodig dan 'nationaal' te voelen.

(Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 7 mei 1942, NIOD 186g-5)

Het is enigszins paradoxaal dat in het verzet tegelijk een vaderlands nationalistisch motief en een internationalistisch naar een duurzame Europese vrede hunkerend motief opbloeden. In Visser 't Hooft zijn beide herkenbaar, maar het oecumenisch ideaal omspande beide motieven. In de redactie en de lezerskring van *Vrij Nederland* leefde de wens tot voortzetting van het blad na de oorlog (Van Namen & Winkel 1970). Het slecht geïnformeerde Londense *Vrij Nederland* daarentegen zou moeten stoppen en men stelde zich bij het Nederlandse *Vrij Nederland* voor na de oorlog als weekblad met een 'volkspaedagogische inslag' in het bijzonder door te geven wat de reformatorische kerken tot de wereld te zeggen hadden.

De ontmoeting die Visser 't Hooft had met koningin Wilhelmina maakte grote indruk op hem. Hij heeft de strijdvaardigheid van Wilhelmina steeds krachtig in herinnering gehouden en met velen gedeeld:

Zij leeft met haar hele wezen en gedachten bij haar familieleden. Het is indrukwekkend te merken, dat zij meer dan wie ook in haar omgeving intuïtief aanvoelt wat er bij de haren omgaat. Zij heeft mij uit zitten vragen als bij een examen. Laat niemand zeggen dat zij oud en krakerig wordt. Haar energie is bewonderenswaardig en zij domineert nu meer dan ooit de familie situatie. Dat blijkt op allerlei wijzen. Geen der ooms [ministers] kan geestelijk in haar schaduw staan en zoo geeft zij op menig gebied den toon aan. Er steekt eenige waarheid in een ietwat naieve opmerking die haar schoonzoon tegen mij maakte toen hij over een van de ooms zeide: "die is goed, want hij doet precies wat moeder zegt". Wel is te merken, dat zij veel doorgemaakt heeft, maar zij heeft het blijkbaar innerlijk verwerkt. Wij spraken ook over geestelijke dingen, en het is merkwaardig te zien, hoe persoonlijk en krachtig haar overtuigingen op dit gebied zijn. Zij heeft blijkbaar vroeger erg geleden onder de kerkelijke twisten en zich daarom teruggetrokken op een Bijbelsch christendom buiten de kerk om.

(Visser 't Hooft aan F.M. van Asbeck, 2 juli 1942, NIOD 186g-5)

Ook ontmoette hij enkele malen prins Bernhard. Over hem schreef hij: 'Blijft een gezellige man, maar er zit toch wel wat meer bij dan alleen maar gezelligheid. Hij hoort in ieder geval heelemaal bij de familie en is vol energie, die niet altijd gemakkelijk in constructieve banen is te leiden' (Visser 't Hooft aan F.M. van Asbeck, 2 juli 1942, NIOD 186g-5).

### **Organisatie van de Zwitserse Weg**

Nadat hij in juni 1942 in Genève was teruggekeerd, ging Visser 't Hooft meteen aan de slag. Hij vond een medewerker in Joop Bartels, een Nederlandse student geneeskunde en lid van de NCSV. Deze was in Nederland betrokken geweest bij het kerkelijk verzet van de 'Lunterse Kring'. In november 1941 werd hij te Davos opgenomen vanwege tuberculose en hij bood toen al aan Visser 't Hooft aan iets te willen doen voor het contact met Nederland. Nu vroeg Visser 't Hooft aan Bartels om een breed netwerk op te bouwen, ook buiten de protestantse zuil, bijvoorbeeld onder rooms-katholieken en socialisten, want schreef hij op 7 juli aan Bartels: 'Londen moet niet de indruk krijgen dat ik maar een klein segment aan het woord laat' (Visser 't Hooft aan J. Bartels, 7 juli 1942, NIOD 186g-5).

Het kwam erop aan zoveel mogelijk Nederlands materiaal te genereren. In de zomer van 1942, na zijn bezoek aan Londen, schreef hij aan zijn Nederlandse contacten:

Men weet in London heel wat af van wat er in ons land gebeurt, maar het blijft een uiterlijk weten. Men heeft veel feiten materiaal, maar men weet maar zeer weinig van wat er in ons volk omgaat, wat er geestelijk leeft, hoe men er lijdt en wat men er hoopt. Daarom slaat radio Oranje er zoo dikwijls naast en worden de uitzendingen in Holland zoo kritisch beoordeeld. Daarom ook stelt de toon van vele toespraken uit London de menschen in ons land teleur. (Visser 't Hooft ongedateerd, WCC YDS-12, 20)

Visser 't Hooft deed een hartstochtelijke oproep aan zijn vrienden de regering 'op alle mogelijke wijze' te helpen. Een van de grote problemen in Nederland die Visser 't Hooft in 1942 onder de aandacht van de regering wilde brengen was het lot van de dwangarbeiders. Bij duizenden werden zij naar Duitsland gestuurd om daar, zo begreep Visser 't Hooft, 'slavenwerk' te verrichten. Deze mensen voelden zich, volgens Visser 't Hooft, in de steek gelaten en verdienden een bemoedigend woord van minister-president of koningin. Enig paternalisme was hem in dat verband niet vreemd en het is de vraag of hij niet allerlei verschillende situaties zonder veel kennis over één kam schoor, maar het past wel in de stijl van de tijd en misschien voelde Visser 't Hooft het volgende wel goed aan: 'Ook de beste regeeringsverklaring kan in zulk een tijd niet opwegen tegen een persoonlijk vaderlijk woord' (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 10 juli 1942, NIOD 186g-1).

Aanvankelijk was het vooral improviseren. De eerste zending documenten vanuit Londen werd door een Nederlandse verpleegster uit Davos, Emmy ter Haar, met de trein van Genève naar Nederland gesmokkeld. Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne (1899-1976) en Nico Stufkens (1890-1964), beiden goede vrienden van Visser 't Hooft en leidinggevend bij het illegale *Vrij Nederland*, waren bereid aan het Nederlandse eind van de koeriersverbinding op te treden als adressanten, 'politieke commissie', verzamelcentrum en redactie van documentatie. Kort na het vertrek van Emmy ter Haar stond, in juli 1942, Hebe Kohlbrugge (1914-2016) bij Visser 't Hooft in Genève op de stoep van zijn woning, 41 Avenue de Champel. Via allerlei sluiptwegen door België en Frankrijk had zij Zwitserland weten te bereiken. Vanuit de Lunterse Kring, nu samenkomend in Amsterdam, wilde zij aan de calvinistische theoloog Karl Barth, die inmiddels in bezet Nederland bekend stond als een autoriteit op het gebied van christelijk gemotiveerd verzet, een aantal principiële vragen voorleggen. Kohlbrugge was al sinds 1941 betrokken bij *Vrij Nederland*. Voor Visser 't Hooft toonde haar komst naar Zwitserland aan dat een regelmatige illegale route mogelijk was. Maar dat hij geenszins van plan was deze koerierster inhoudelijk bij dit werk te betrekken, schoot bij Kohlbrugge in het verkeerde keelgat. De open brief van Barth 'An meine Freunde in die Niederlanden' werd op microfilm gezet en door Kohlbrugge mee teruggenomen naar Nederland, waar zij op 1 augustus 1942 aankwam. Verpleegster Ter Haar bracht

bij haar terugkeer in Zwitserland in augustus ondertussen veel nieuw materiaal mee, onder andere de laatste twee nummers van *Vrij Nederland*.

Eind augustus 1942 regelden Visser 't Hooft en Bartels praktische zaken als een kantoor voor Bartels om in te werken en de aanstelling van een technicus. In de donkere kamer van de röntgenafdeling van de kliniek heeft chemicus Eise Eisma vele uren besteed aan de microverfilming van de documenten die gesmokkeld moesten worden. Hij ontdekte een methode om microfilms nog verder te verdunnen door de celluloid laag van de negatieven af te weken. Wat overbleef was een flinterdun vliesje. De film kon vervolgens fijn worden opgerold en in een holle tandenborstel worden verstopt. Drie films van veertig opnamen bevatten 240 pagina's informatie en gingen in een vulpotlood. Twee andere medewerkers bij de Zwitserse Weg werden de student bouwkunde en kunstschilder J.H. van Borssum Buisman en diens studievriend Jan Postma, die Visser 't Hooft beiden leerde kennen in het interneringskamp Cossonay. Van Borssum Buisman maakte tussen december 1942 en januari 1943 als koerier ook zelf de reis naar Nederland en terug (Couwenbergh 2000, 66).

Het eerste half jaar werden de berichten meegenomen op de route Nederland-Genève door min of meer toevallige personen als verpleegsters en zakenlieden aan wie het was toegestaan om internationaal te reizen. De jurist W.E.A. de Graaff, die voor Philips werkte, is in totaal tweeëntwintig keer heen en weer gegaan. Langzamerhand kwam er steeds meer regelmaat, vooral nadat Jean H. Weidner (1912-1994) begin 1943 in Frankrijk het deel van de route tussen Genève en België ging organiseren via zijn netwerk 'Dutch-Paris'. Hier ging het in de eerste plaats om het over de grenzen smokkelen door *passeurs* ('gidsen') van personen, maar ook berichten konden langs deze route Genève bereiken of van daaruit naar Nederland worden verstuurd. Megan Koreman (2016) heeft 'Dutch-Paris' beschreven in haar studie *Gewone helden: De Dutch-Paris ontsnappingslijn, 1942-1945* (vgl. Verkijk 1967).

In het Bijbels Museum aan de Heerengracht te Amsterdam verzamelde Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne als leider van de Politieke Commissie de Nederlandse stukken bestemd voor Londen en distribueerde hij het uit Londen afkomstig materiaal. Vanaf maart 1943 werden stukken met een margriet in de rechterbovenhoek gemarkeerd. Net als Visser 't Hooft, beschouwde hij Kohlbrugge louter als koerierster. Deze zag dat zelf heel anders en ging met hulp van Oncko Heldring, een economiestudent aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam, ook zelf materiaal verzamelen om naar Londen te verzenden (vgl. Kohlbrugge 2002). Zij liet het materiaal doorlezen door Van Randwijk, waarna dit door fotograaf W. Prins, die was betrokken bij de Orde Dienst, werd gemicrofilmd. Kohlbrugge zag de Zwitserse Weg als een 'brievenbus' voor post aan Londen gericht en Visser 't Hooft als postbode of doorgeefluik. Dat zag deze op zijn beurt heel anders.

Eensgezindheid tussen de verschillende verzetsgroepen in Nederland was vaak ver te zoeken. *Vrij Nederland* werd georganiseerd door burgers, vooral intellectuelen en politiek betrokken journalisten met vooruitstrevende christelijk-sociale en gematigd liberale sympathieën. Het mentaliteitsverschil met de Orde Dienst (OD) was groot. De laatste organisatie was voortgekomen uit de mobilisatietijd en werd geleid door officieren zoals oprichter reserve luitenant-kolonel J.H. Westerveld (1880-1942) en jonkheer Pieter J. Six (1894-1986), die van mei 1942 tot na de oorlog functioneerde als chef-staf. Gedeelde zorgen over het gebrek aan communicatie door de regering in ballingschap, die de juiste toon maar niet leek te kunnen vinden, brachten de civiele verzetskring rond *Vrij Nederland* en de militaire verzetsmensen van de Orde Dienst voor een tijd nader tot elkaar. Maar de tegenstellingen bleven (vgl. Van Randwijk 1967 en ook Visser 1983).

De Orde Dienst verwachtte direct na de capitulatie van de Duitse troepen in Nederland als een overgangsbewind de orde te zullen handhaven. Maar veel burgerlijke verzetsmensen vonden dit vanwege het autoritaire karakter van de Orde Dienst geen aantrekkelijk perspectief (Corduener 2011; Visser 't Hooft-Lovink correspondentie 1942, NIOD 186g-2). Voor Visser 't Hooft was het duidelijk. In het belang van de kwaliteit van het naoorlogse Nederland moest het civiele verzet ondersteund worden. Keer op keer heeft hij het daarom bij de Nederlandse regering in Londen aanbevolen. Met Lovink aan het Londense uiteinde was het goed samenwerken. Deze stuurde de stukken die vanuit Genève binnenkwamen direct door aan de ministers en aan koningin Wilhelmina. Ook kon hij Visser 't Hooft op 28 juli 1942 melden dat diens kritiek op Radio Oranje in Londen heel serieus werd genomen. Zo schreef Lovink in een brief van 28 juli 1942:

Steeds weer werpt zich de vraag op, wat kan worden gedaan om in onze radiouitzendingen (Radio Oranje, Brandaris) verbetering te brengen. De Minister President is met U en ons allen geheel overtuigd van onze tekortkomingen en slaakt veelal de zucht 'was Visser 't Hoofd [sic] maar gebleven.' Inderdaad, U zoudt die leiding hebben kunnen geven, die zoo broodnodig is. Het gaat niet in eerste instantie om den feitelijke inhoud van hetgeen men zegt. Het is de geest, de toon, de mentaliteit, die wijziging behoeft en daarvoor heeft men andere menschen uit andere kringen noodig die dit kunnen doen. [...] Zoodra wij eenigszins de handen vrijkrijgen, zal het nieuwe departement zich dagelijks met Radio Oranje bemoeien.

(Visser 't Hooft-Lovink correspondentie, juli-augustus 1942, NIOD 186g-2; vgl. Sinke 2009, 139)

Ondanks al zijn waarschuwingen ging Radio Oranje er in de zomer van 1942 in de oren van Visser 't Hooft en zijn vrienden helemaal niet op vooruit. Op 30 juli 1942 meldde hij Lovink:



Wat Radio Oranje betreft, zoo heeft men nu meer dan ooit het gevoel, dat men daar die toon van verbeterd ernst en heroische weerstand, die nu noodige is, nog niet heeft weten te vinden. Het is alles nog te gemoedelijk en het schelden te kwajongensachtig. Men bedenke toch, dat het nu voor ons land om zijn of niet zijn gaat en dat op zulk een moment de eenige stem, die tot ons volk doordringt, iets van de diepte moet hebben, die er zit in uitingen van onze leiders in den tijd van de 80-jarige oorlog.

(Visser 't Hooft-Lovink correspondentie, juli-augustus 1942, NIOD 186g-2)

Toch groeide in deze tijd bij Visser 't Hooft de overtuiging een uiterst belangrijke informant van de Nederlandse regering in ballingschap te zijn, die niet alleen post doorstuurde, maar wiens adviezen in Londen zeer op prijs werden gesteld. Formeel was hij geen regeringsambtenaar en ontving geen salaris, slechts een voorschot van f10.000,- om de onkosten te dekken. In feite leidde hij twee jaar lang te Genève zonder officiële aanstelling een regeringsbureau met betaalde ambtenaren onder zich. In de Parlementaire Enquête die na de oorlog is gehouden werd vastgesteld dat dit een 'enigszins merkwaardige positie' was (*Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945* 1950, 199). Op 2 november 1942 fuseerden Radio Oranje en Brandaris, die oorspronkelijk op zeelui was gericht. Het nieuwe Radio Oranje was professioneler en sterker (Sinke 2009, 142-145).

### **Toenemende spanningen**

Anderhalf jaar functioneerde de Zwitserse Weg naar tevredenheid van alle betrokkenen. Zowel de illegale organisaties als de Grebbecommissie en civiele verzetsgroepen, in het bijzonder *Vrij Nederland*, maakten er gebruik van, alsook de militaire Orde Dienst, zij het in mindere mate. Vele stukken hadden een kerkelijke achtergrond. Deskundigen, redactieleden en redacties van andere illegale bladen schreven artikelen over uiteenlopende onderwerpen als de Nederlandse landbouw, loyaliteitsverklaring van academici en studenten, de houding van ambtenaren, de Amsterdamse beurs, oorlogsschade, registratie van de beschietingen van schepen en treinen, schade aan industrie en woningen, internationale rechtsorde. Ook was de legitimatie van een Joodse staat in Palestina onderwerp van discussie, waarbij men beseftte: 'Onvermijdelijk is dan dat deze jonge joodse staat betrokken wordt in de netelige problemen van het nabije Oosten' (NIOD 187, 41-43). Op de vraag 'Hoe de volkswil in het naoorlogs staatbestel tot uitdrukking te brengen?' die in mei 1943 werd gesteld, antwoordde een anonieme schrijver:

De aanwijzingen, welke autoriteiten in het geval van een vacuüm namens de Regeering het centrale gezag moeten uitoefenen, moeten door de Nederlandsche Regeering op het beslissende oogenblik door de radio gegeven worden. Alleen de Regeering is daartoe bevoegd. Alleen op het

beslissende oogenblik kan dit geschieden. Vóórtijdig aanwijzingen geven, overleg plegen en voorbereidingen treffen leidt naar mijn meening onherroepelijk tot ongelukken. (NIOD 187, 41-48)

Dit zou een groot probleem worden. Andere illegale bladen konden *Vrij Nederland* wel eens benijden om de bevoorrechte positie, omdat men daar vaak als eerste in bezet gebied materiaal uit Londen ter beschikking had. Visser 't Hooft moest erop vertrouwen dat het materiaal te Londen steeds bij de bedoelde mensen terecht kwam. We kunnen het niet controleren, maar dat lijkt in deze tijd meestal wel te zijn gebeurd. Lovink, van wie Visser 't Hooft niets dan complimenten kreeg, schreef op 8 oktober 1942:

Tenslotte kan ik U nog mededeelen, dat Professor Gerbrandy mij verzocht U nog eens nadrukkelijk zijn groote waardering over te brengen over Uw trouw en waardevol werk. Het is hem een groote steun, dat U deze sleutelpositie vervult en hij betuigt U zijn warme vriendschap. Hij herinnert zich Uw preek in Londen nog best. Het werk van Barth heeft zijn geheele hart. (Visser 't Hooft-Lovink correspondentie, juli-augustus 1942, NIOD 186g-2)

Maar in dezelfde brief liet Lovink Visser 't Hooft in vertrouwen weten dat de regering het plan had de terugkeer tot constitutionele verhoudingen in Nederland na de bevrijding te doen voorafgaan door een 'overgangstoestand met krachtig centraal bewind onder leiding van Hare Majesteit de Koningin.' Volledige samenwerking van de civiele verzetsgroepen en de Orde Dienst zou in de vacuümperiode uiterst belangrijk zijn. Maar men verwachtte in Londen dat deze kort zou zijn.

In december 1942 schreef Visser 't Hooft (1942a) de brochure *Die Verkündigung der Kirche in den besetzten Niederlanden* ('De boodschap van de kerk in het bezette Nederland') die ook in Londen terecht kwam. Hij schetste daarin hoe de kerken in oorlogstijd, met een oprechte prediking van oordeel en genade, erin slaagden zich dienstbaar en getuigend op te stellen. Er was kracht in het gebed en echte naastenliefde. Zo ontwikkelde de volkskerk een gewetensfunctie, in de taal van Karl Barth, een *Wächteramt* ('een profetisch duidende, waarschuwende en wegwijzende rol') tegenover de overheid. De verkondiging was zowel troostend als vermanend. Oudtestamentische heilsteksten dienden daarbij niet primair nationalistisch op Nederland betrokken te worden, maar vooral op Israël. Als homiletisch, dus verkondigingsgericht, uitgangspunt voor de prediking nam Visser 't Hooft daarbij Matteüs (hoofdstuk) 10, (vers) 16, waar Jezus zegt: 'Zie, ik zend u als schapen in het midden der wolven: zij dan voorzichtig gelijk de slangen en oprecht gelijk de duiven.' Voor de inhoud van een actuele prediking wees hij op 1 Petrus 5, 6-9 waar gesproken wordt tot de jonge kerk over satan die

rondgaat als een briesende leeuw. Aan de orde dienden volgens Visser 't Hooft voorts te komen: a) de toelating Gods, dat wil zeggen de vraag waarom een almachtig God kwaad en lijden toelaat; b) het regerend beschikken Gods; c) Gods-vertrouwen, waakzaamheid en belijden. In een anoniem document uit Nederland uit deze tijd getiteld 'Kerk en internationale rechtsorde' worden woorden van de apostel Paulus uit 1 Korintiërs 14, 33 geciteerd: 'Want God is geen God van verwarring maar van vrede, gelijk in alle gemeenten der heiligen' (SV) en verder:

[...] de Kerk zal als fundament van den vrede moeten aanwijzen en telkens weer bloot leggen: de verplichting voor regeeringen en volken a) om voor hun onderlinge rechtsgeschillen rechtspraak te erkennen als eenige beslechting; b) voor de regeling hunner onderlinge belangen (dwz. de schepping van nieuw recht) het overleg, zoo noodig onder bovenpartijdige leiding te erkennen als eenige methode; c) hun machtsmiddelen te aanvaarden voor het staatkundig beleid in niet-nationale zaken. De Kerk moet telkens dat fundament aanwijzen en in herinnering brengen; Zij zal zich, als Kerk, onthouden van de aanbeveling van eigen concrete oplossingen van rechtspraak, regeling en beveiliging. En dan haar hoogste taak: de Kerk zal hebben op te roepen tot berouw en bekeering, tot verloochening van den haat, en in het besef harer zendingstaak hebben voor te gaan in gebed en smeeking ut omnes unum sint.

('Kerk en internationale rechtsorde'. NIOD 187-42-NG56B)

Lovink en Visser 't Hooft hadden in mei 1942 duidelijke afspraken gemaakt en daar hielden zij zich aan. Maar toen Lovink in januari 1943 aftrad en Zuid-Frankrijk door de Duitsers werd bezet, werd het voor Visser 't Hooft een stuk ingewikkelder om aan goed materiaal voor Nederland te komen. Vanuit Londen ontving hij nu steeds minder inhoudelijke stukken. In februari 1943 vroeg Visser 't Hooft aan Gerbrandy aan wie hij nu voortaan zou moeten rapporteren. Lovink had voor zijn vertrek gezegd dat dit de diplomaat H.M. van Haersma de With zou zijn, die raadsadviseur was van Gerbrandy. Maar Visser 't Hooft was op de overdracht betreffende het dossier van de Zwitserse Weg niet gerust en bracht op 18 maart 1943 voor de zekerheid nog maar even fijntjes zijn eigen rol bij van Haersma de With onder de aandacht.

Mijn opdracht versta ik als zich uitstreckende over wat men in de wijde zin des woords geestelijk contact tussen ons land en de Regering noemen mag. Ik houd mij daarbij geheel buiten de zuiver militaire aangelegenheden, en tracht vooral er voor te zorgen, dat de Regering op de hoogte blijft van de stemmingen in ons vaderland en van de grote verschuivingen, die er op psychologisch en moreel gebied plaats vinden. Het is onvermijdelijk, dat ik daarbij dikwijls ook het politieke terrein betreed, maar wanneer dat het geval is tracht ik in nauw contact met H.M.'s Gezant te handelen.

(Visser 't Hooft aan H.M. van Haersma de With, 18 maart 1943, NIOD 186g-3)

Terwijl Visser 't Hooft begin 1943 bijna wekelijks voor Londen stukken uit Nederland ontving, moest hij bedelen om bruikbaar materiaal uit Londen, regeringsrapporten of -plannen, kortom 'alles waaruit blijkt dat onze Regering voor een herboren Nederland werkt' (Visser 't Hooft aan H.M. van Haersma de With, 18 maart 1943b, NIOD 186g-3). Maar wat er kwam bleef hem teleurstellen. Aan de oorspronkelijke afspraken van Visser 't Hooft en Lovink werd door de regering in het voorjaar van 1943 nauwelijks nog gevolg gegeven. Visser 't Hooft meldde op 1 augustus aan Londen dat dit voor 'onze mensen in Nederland' echt onder de maat was. Hij voelde zich nu een soort mentor van de Nederlandse regering die hij wilde behoeden voor een steeds verdergaande vervreemding van het bezette vaderland. Dat was een kwetsbare rol (vgl. De Jong 1976).

De verschillende illegale bladen stonden als concurrenten naast elkaar. In januari 1943 vond een afsplitsing van *Vrij Nederland* plaats die leidde tot de oprichting van het blad *Trouw*. Na een ruzie met Henk van Randwijk trad de gereformeerde advocaat Sieuwert Bruins Slot uit de overwegend progressieve redactie, waar men deze actie betreurde als 'oorlogskolder'. De principiële mensen van *Trouw* werd onvoorzichtigheid, 'activiteitsdrang' en onvermogen tot zelfkritiek verweten. Op 19 maart 1943 probeerde Visser 't Hooft de minister-president zelf te verleiden 'te zijner tijd' als medewerker tot *Vrij Nederland* toe te treden. Hij beschreef het doel van het blad als 'op een positief-christelijke basis zonder compromis de vragen van ons volksleven radicaal te belichten' (Visser 't Hooft aan Gerbrandy, 19 maart 1943, NIOD 186g-1). *Vrij Nederland* sprak zeker niet alleen het christelijke volksdeel aan en had een eigen toon ten opzichte van de sociale vragen, aldus Visser 't Hooft. Gerbrandy reageerde positief, maar er kwam niets van terecht. In mei 1943 stuurde Visser 't Hooft aan Londen het commentaar van Lodewijk H.N. Bosch ridder van Rosenthal (1884-1953), voormalig commissaris van de koningin in Utrecht, door op de 'Aanwijzing in geval van een vijandelijken inval'. Die waren in 1937 door de regering toegezonden aan ambtenaren voor het geval dat de neutraliteit geschonden zou worden of het grondgebied zou worden bezet. Bosch van Rosenthal stelde dat Nederland nog steeds in oorlog was. Ambtenaren hadden zich te onthouden van het benadelen van de Duitse oorlogvoering, maar zij mochten deze ook niet bevorderen (NIOD 187-41). Aan arbeidsinzet, Jodenvervolging en het vorderen van goederen en grondstoffen moesten ambtenaren niet meewerken, geen eenvoudige instructie die menig dilemma voor betrokken ambtenaren zal hebben betekend. Gerbrandy reageerde in een radio-uitzending positief op het stuk, maar daar bleef het bij.

Voor studiegroepen van Nederlandse vluchtelingen in Zwitserland stelde Visser 't Hooft in het voorjaar van 1943 tien studievragen op die hij ook aan

Gerbrandy deed toekomen. De vragen zijn niet erg open van karakter en zijn als zodanig eigenlijk meer stellingen.

Terug naar de oude tijd of vernieuwing?  
 Sociale onzekerheid of sociale veiligheid?  
 Partijzucht, autoritarisme of kwalitatieve democratie?  
 Imperium of gemenebest?  
 Nationale soevereiniteit of internationale rechtsorde?  
 Wraakoefening of handhaving der rechtsorde?  
 Het communisme als redder, als spook, of als vraag?  
 Hokjesgeest, uniformiteit of eenheid in verscheidenheid?  
 Lijden, dat ontwortelt, of lijden, dat loutert?  
 Geestelijke anarchie of gemeenschappelijke verantwoording?  
 (Visser 't Hooft aan Gerbrandy, 19 maart 1943, NIOD 186g-1)

Bij iedere vraag werden verschillende subvragen gesteld. Bij de laatste vraag vroeg Visser 't Hooft zich af: 'Moeten wij het rustig aanzien, dat wij als gemeenschap geen krachtig gemeenschappelijk fundament hebben? Of moeten wij ons bewust worden gezamenlijk verantwoording schuldig te zijn aan God?' Er werd in Londen niets mee gedaan.

De redactie van *Vrij Nederland* zag zichzelf als opvoeders: 'Ons volk is te snel geneigd, zodra de terreur van de Duitsers enkele dagen luwt, weer terug te vallen in de gezellige rust van de huiskamer, waar zij zich, althans voor enkele uren of dagen, bevrijd en beschermd voelen tegen het geweld van buiten' (Opmerkingen bestemd voor de overzijde, Redactie Vrij Nederland, ongedateerd, NIOD Zwitserse Weg, 187-40). En dan was er het grote vraagstuk van de naoorlogse zuiveringen. Velen verwachtten na de bevrijding een moment van afrekening, een zogenaamde 'bijltjesdag'. In 1943 verzocht het Nederlandse gezantschap te Bern twaalf in Zwitserland wonende Nederlanders, die allerlei beroepen en levensbeschouwingen vertegenwoordigden, om anoniem hun visie te geven op vragen gesteld in het memorandum 'Straf of wraak?'; Visser 't Hooft was een van hen (Visser 't Hooft 1943). Op de centrale vraag of volksjustitie na de bevrijding gerechtvaardigd zou zijn, was het door het gezantschap samengevatte antwoord van de twaalf: 'Geen wraak, doch straf; en snel recht!' (WCC YDS-4, 98). In zijn beantwoording van de vragenlijst meldde Visser 't Hooft trots te zijn op de typering van het Nederlandse volk als 'vrij, nuchter en rechtvaardig', maar hij voegde eraan toe: 'christelijk'.

Ik bedoel daarmee niet zoetsappig liefhebben van onze vijanden, maar het bezielde zijn van een rechten wensch om volgens christelijke beginselen te streven naar verbetering. Wraak is en blijft onchristelijk en moet als

zoodanig verworpen worden. Straf is noodzakelijk voor hen, die zich niet houden aan de wetten van de Nederlandse volksgemeenschap.

(Visser 't Hooft (Anoniem) 1943, WCC YDS-4, 98)

Hij maakte onderscheid tussen meelopers en echte verraders, tegelijk sprak hij van verzachtende omstandigheden voor hen die een NSB-er, schuldig aan de dood van een familielid, overhoop staken. Officiële berechting op basis van een uitzonderingswet zou echter de gewenste gang van zaken zijn. De doodstraf sloot Visser 't Hooft niet uit. Volksjustitie moest, ten allen tijde, worden voorkomen. Sancties tegen overtreders moesten worden vastgesteld. Hij gaf ter overweging een nieuwe kamer van het Hoog Militair Gerechtshof in te stellen, met naast militaire raadsheren ook burgerlijke rechters. Op de vraag 'wraak of straf?' antwoordde Visser 't Hooft: 'Mij is de wrake', zegt de Heer. Dus niet den menschen. [...] Echter, 'geen slapheid, geen compromis' geen 'vergeten en vergeven' (Visser 't Hooft (Anoniem) 1943, WCC YDS-4, 98). Omwille van de waarden waar Nederland symbool voor stond, was berechting van verraders, hun uitsluiting uit de volksgemeenschap en schadeloosstelling van de slachtoffers noodzakelijk. Lijfstraffen als een pak ransel, spitsroeden lopen, vernederend werk en de schandpaal sloot Visser 't Hooft daarbij niet uit, 'wel te verstaan als straf, niet als wraak.' Met mate toegepast zag Visser 't Hooft deze bestraffingen als 'een uitlaatklep voor den opgekropten wrok des volks, dat er zijn hart aan kan luchten', heilzaam voor de delinquent bovendien. Maar bij dit alles mocht niet vergeten worden dat 'menschelijkheid' de schoonste eigenschap van de mens was.

De koningin kon moedig spreken, maar soms zaaide zij verwarring. Op 24 april 1943 sprak de koningin voor de radio over de noodzaak van een 'staat van beleg' direct na de bevrijding. Wilhelmina leek een open oor te hebben voor allerlei radicale ideeën van Engelandvaarders over een naoorlogs Nederland waarin alles anders zou zijn en een opheffing van de oude politieke partijen werd nagestreefd. Uit haar rede van 2 september maakten velen in Nederland op dat de regering in Londen na de bevrijding een hoofdrol wilde toekennen aan het militair gezag. Dat najaar sprak Bartels in Nederland met Willem Drees (1886-1988) en Lodewijk Bosch van Rosenthal, die hem toevertrouwden dat de spanningen tussen de militaire Orde Dienst en de meer politiek georiënteerde burger verzetgroepen steeds hoger opliepen. Het was een mistroostige tijd. Bosch van Rosenthal meldde in oktober 1943:

De stemming is zeer neerslachtig; uitwendige redenen: De verdubbelde kracht der stoorzenders, het uitblijven der invasie, de spaarzaamheid der R.A.F.actie; de wegvoering van Nederlandse arbeiders op groote schaal; het voortgaan van de Jodendeportaties, waar nu ook Nederlandsche politie

hulpdiensten verleend [sic]; het besef, dat de Russischen weerstand ten slotte òns geen baat brengt binnen afzienbaren tyd.

(L.H.N. Bosch van Rosenthal oktober 1943, NIOD 187-41-35)

Op 20 september publiceerden *Het Parool* en *Vrij Nederland* de illegale 'Nota inzake den bestuurstoestand na de bevrijding van ons land (naar aanleiding van de regeeringspublicaties)', waarin te lezen viel: 'Een Staat van Beleg, waarin, hoe dan ook, de militairen het voor 't zeggen hebben, zal slechts zoolang gewillig aanvaard worden als de strategische situatie dit vereischt, d.w.z. zoolang er op Nederlandsch grondgebied gevochten wordt of zoolang Nederland als etappegebied voor strijdende legers dienst moet doen' (NIOD 187-45). In een niet ondertekende brief aan een van de Engelandvaarders, genaamd Jaap (mogelijk gericht tot Van Heuven Goedhart), gedateerd 24 september 1943, wordt de verontrusting als volgt verwoord:

Er gaat het gerucht, dat een groot aantal Hollanders-in-Engeland (men spreekt van 140!) opgekweekt wordt voor bestuursdienst hier te lande in militair verband. Dit wekt groote ongerustheid; wij hebben geen fiducia op de capaciteit, en zeker niet op de psychologische rijpheid dezer natuur noodwendig van het huidige volksleven vervreemden. Vermoedelijk gaat het om een algemeene geëllieerde maatregel, die voor alle bevrijde gebieden gelden zal, en dan is er uiteraard niet veel ruimte voor eigen beslissingen. Maar fout is het en een antipathieke indruk maakt het, zoodat iedere remming van een gaan in deze richting winst beteekent. Waarom maakt de regeering zoo weinig gebruik van de mogelijkheid, via den Geneefschen weg, in voortdurend contact met de 'getrouwen' te komen? Keer op keer zijn vragen gesteld, waarop boeh noch bah gehoord werd.

(Afzender niet vermeld, 24 september 1943, NIOD 187-45-NG 121)

Lodewijk Bosch van Rosenthal (verzetsnaam Karel) en de jurist G.J. van Heuven Goedhart (1901-1956), dachten in lijnen van geleidelijkheid. Zij zagen direct na de bevrijding een belangrijke taak voor commissarissen en burgemeesters. Bosch van Rosenthal kon het zich niet voorstellen dat het gezag, al was het tijdelijk, in handen van personen zou worden gelegd die jarenlang niet met het Nederlandse volk in contact waren geweest (Dossier 'Karelstukken', L.H.N. Bosch van Rosenthal onge-dateerd, NIOD 187, 76-12).

Maar vanuit de hoek van de Orde Dienst werd in een reactie bestemd voor Londen, hard terug geslagen. 'Landsbestuur in overgangstijd' was een tirade van de Orde Dienst tegen, wat smalend werd genoemd, de 'journalisten-politici', die nog steeds niets hadden geleerd van de ellende van de oorlog en die zich voorbereidden op een hervatting van hun politieke spelletjes van vóór de oorlog. De

rede van de koningin van 2 september werd in de Orde Dienst met instemming ontvangen (Koningin Wilhelmina ongedateerd, NIOD 187-48).

Visser 't Hooft besloot tot zijn eigen 'tegenoffensief' tegen de oprukkende Orde Dienst. In oktober 1943 ging er een stevig telegram naar Londen: 'Wij trachten kloof te overbruggen tussen militaire en civiele groepen, hopen dat U militaire groeperingen er zeer nadrukkelijk op wijst, dat zij civiele groepen en personen met veel grotere politieke ervaring niet tegenwerken doch ernstig nemen' (Bosch van Rosenthal & Visser 't Hooft aan Gerbrandy ongedateerd, NIOD, 186g-1). Krachtig betoogde Visser 't Hooft op 11 november bij Gerbrandy dat de militairen te allen tijde buiten het landsbestuur gehouden moesten worden. Het gevaar was groot dat onervaren avonturiers na de bevrijding ineens in Nederland de baas zouden gaan spelen, terwijl de werkelijke leiders, die op een kleine groep in Londen na, gewoon in het land waren gebleven, zouden worden gepasseerd (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 11 november 1943, NIOD 186g-1). In 1942 had Visser 't Hooft zich door Gerbrandy zelf uitgenodigd gevoeld de Nederlandse regering politieke adviezen te geven. Maar na het vertrek van Lovink was hij zich in de loop van 1943 toch steeds onzekerder gaan voelen over zijn positie. In Londen was het Bureau Inlichtingen, eigenlijk de Nederlandse geheime dienst, onder leiding van luitenant-kolonel Jan M. Somer (1899-1979), steeds belangrijker geworden. Somer had in feite het beste overzicht, terwijl het Nederlandse uiteinde van de Zwitserse Weg in civiel-politieke handen was. Sindsdien waren allerlei misverstanden ontstaan.

Visser 't Hooft vond dat militairen van staatkundige zaken geen verstand hadden en dat voorkomen moest worden dat ze autocratisch zouden gaan optreden. De socialist Koos Vorrink (1891-1955) had in het Grootburgerlijk Comité voor-  
aanstaande leden van voormalige politieke partijen bijeengebracht. De leiding hiervan werd in april 1943 door de Duitsers opgerold, terwijl de invloed van het militaire verzet groeiend was. Herhaaldelijk raadde Visser 't Hooft Gerbrandy aan om de Orde Dienst ondergeschikt te maken aan een hersteld Grootburgerlijk Comité. Aan Van Haersma de With schreef hij op 10 oktober:

[Er] ontstaat een situatie, die niet strookt met de tradities van ons politieke leven en die dan ook niet aanvaard wordt door de illegale civiele organisaties en door de politieke persoonlijkheden, die buiten illegaal verband staan. Hier ligt een probleem, dat niet ernstig genoeg onder ogen gezien kan worden en waar zeer veel van afhangt voor de toekomst van ons land.

(Visser 't Hooft aan H.M. van Haersma de With, 10 oktober 1943, NIOD 186g-3)



### Plannen voor een overgangsregering

Zijn overtuiging dat een burgerlijk bestuur bevorderlijk zou zijn voor de rol van de kerk in het naoorlogse Nederland deed Visser 't Hooft op politiek terrein belanden. Hij raakte in de laatste oorlogsjaren nauw betrokken bij de civiel-politieke plannen voor een overgangsregering. Begin 1944 kwamen er uit Duitsland telkens berichten over een ophanden zijnde staatsgreep. Maar de Nederlandse regering in Londen was niet erg onder de indruk en bleef tegen ieder contact met het Duitse verzet. Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne vroeg Visser 't Hooft voorspraak te doen 'met alle autoriteit, die je ginder hebt' om de naam van Lodewijk Bosch van Rosenthal onder de aandacht van Gerbrandy en de koningin te brengen, mogelijk als formateur of beoogd regeringsleider na de Duitse capitulatie (Van Roon 1999, 131). En dat deed Visser 't Hooft. Op 2 januari 1944 noemde hij hem 'een der meest onmisbare steunpilaren der nationale beweging' vanwege zijn moed, energie en kwaliteiten als staatsman (Visser 't Hooft aan H.M. van Haersma de With, 2 januari 1944, NIOD Z 1 A 37).

Het is de Nederlandse regering nooit gelukt van het verzet een eenheid te maken. De verzekering dat niemand in Londen, inclusief de koningin, een militaire dictatuur beoogde, bracht geen rust. In een ontwerp voor een telegram van 21 maart aan Gerbrandy, waarin hij aandrang op de machtiging van een bepaalde bemiddelingspersoon, streepte Visser 't Hooft deze zin door:

Wanneer hierop niet ingegaan wordt dreigt chaotische situatie te ontstaan daar dan Regering oude partijen verzetsgroepen en volk allen eigen weg laat gaan zodat volkseenheid zeer ernstig in gevaar komt op critiek moment. (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 21 maart 1944, NIOD 186g-1)

Hoewel hij boos was, wilde hij niet gaan dreigen. In maart 1944 werd met de oprichting van het 'Vaderlands Comité' vanuit het tweede Grootburger Comité nog een verzoeningspoging gedaan. Willem Drees werd de voorzitter. Maar het lukte niet om de Orde Dienst, waarin spottend werd gesproken van burgers die 'Van Hogendorpje gingen spelen', erbij te betrekken. (G.K. van Hogendorp was een van de wegbereiders van het herstel van de Nederlandse onafhankelijkheid na de Franse tijd en in 1813 lid van het voorlopig bewind.) Visser 't Hooft moest Gerbrandy er wel bij vertellen dat er naast dit Vaderlands Comité ook nog een 'Nationaal Comité' bestond. Maar zijn oordeel over de laatste groep was vernietigend. De leden hebben, schreef hij 24 maart 1944, 'weinig autoriteit', zijn 'niet representatief' en ze konden niet samenwerken met andere groepen. Lodewijk Bosch van Rosenthal was echt de beste kandidaat regeringsleider, verzekerde Visser 't Hooft Gerbrandy nogmaals op 3 mei 1944. Bosch van Rosenthal zelf liet van zich horen in mei 1943 met zijn commentaar op de

'Aanwijzing, in geval van een vijandelijken inval', vastgesteld door de Raad van Ministers in mei 1937. Zijn opvatting was dat de Nederlandse regering aan haar ambtenaren aanwijzingen kan blijven geven ook al was er een bezetter. Nederland was nog steeds in oorlog met Duitsland. Nederlandse bestuursorganen en ambtenaren hadden zich zijns inziens te onthouden van het benadelen van de Duitse oorlogvoering, maar zij mochten deze ook niet bevorderen. Wat er ook uit Londen kwam, geen duidelijke aanwijzingen. Koningin Wilhelmina persoonlijk was van mening dat Bosch van Rosenthal te veel zijn persoonlijke ambities nastreefde. Op 14 maart 1944 uitte Visser 't Hooft aan de minister-president opnieuw zijn kritiek en ongezouten.

Het wordt bijzonder sterk betreurd, dat de stroom van materiaal, die naar de overkant gaat, slechts beantwoord wordt met een enkel telegram hier en daar. Men is enigszins jaloers op het contact, dat blijkt te bestaan tussen weerstandsbewegingen van andere landen met hun regeringen aan de overkant. (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 14 maart 1944, NIOD 186g-1)

Terwijl de herhaalde pogingen van Visser 't Hooft om een mandaat voor Bosch van Rosenthal te krijgen bleven mislukken, besloot Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, die actief was bij de groep rond het illegale blad *Het Parool*, in 1944 zelf naar Londen te gaan. Met hulp van Visser 't Hooft en Jean Weidner ging hij vanuit Nederland via Spanje en Gibraltar naar Engeland met het doel om van de regering machtigingen los te krijgen om een brede, wat hij noemde, 'Grote Raad van Advies' samen te stellen. Maar hij kwam niet terug. Hij werd zelf in de regering opgenomen.

In diezelfde tijd, op 11 juni 1944, ontving Visser 't Hooft van Gerbrandy de waarschuwing: 'Vanzelfsprekend mag de gebruikte weg de berichten niet veranderen' (Gerbrandy aan Visser 't Hooft ongedateerd, NIOD 186g-1). Er waren aan de zijde van de Orde Dienst verdachtmakingen geuit dat dit wel gebeurde. Daarom besloot stafchef Six een extra beveiliging in te bouwen. Vanaf september 1943 al, werd zonder overleg een kopie gemaakt van de microfiches door fotograaf W. Prins. Dit werd dus gedaan ter controle of er niet iemand stiekem de zendingen censureerde of schiftte. Toen Six het gekopieerde materiaal buiten Genève om naar Londen wilde laten brengen, werd zijn koerier gearresteerd. Daarop zond Six een tweede koerier met hetzelfde materiaal naar Londen. Dat was Hebe Kohlbrugge. Mogelijk zou zij daar eerder arriveren dan Van Heuven Goedhart. Maar voordat zij kon vertrekken op 4 april 1943 werd ook Kohlbrugge gearresteerd door de Duitsers. De gekopieerde microfilm die zij bij zich had viel, via omwegen (zij stopte hem in de zak van een andere passagier), in handen van Jaap le Poole. Dat was toevallig de man die in eerste instantie de originelen van deze stukken zelf, maar dan via Genève, naar Londen had verstuurd. Toen Henk

van Randwijk en Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne dit hoorden voelden zij zich door de Orde Dienst bespioneerd. Ze waren woedend en de sfeer tussen de Orde Dienst en de groep rond *Vrij Nederland* was grondig bedorven. Tevergeefs spanden Bosch van Rosenthal en Drees zich opnieuw in voor verzoenende gesprekken met Six. Visser 't Hooft voelde zich in deze crisis hecht verbonden met *Vrij Nederland* en het Vaderlands Comité en vond het op 3 mei nodig de Nederlandse regering ernstig tegen de Orde Dienst te waarschuwen.

Helaas is de situatie in dit opzicht nog weer moeilijker geworden, daar een ernstig geval bekend geworden is, waarin OD het gehele werk van een der andere groepen liet bespioneren. Het resultaat was, dat alle relaties tussen OD en deze groep, waarmee wij nauw samenwerken, afgebroken worden is [sic].

(Visser 't Hooft aan H.M. van Haersma de With, 3 mei 1944, NIOD 186g-3)

Namens de Nederlandse leiding van de Zwitserse Weg vroeg Visser 't Hooft de regering in Londen opheldering te vragen aan de Orde Dienst. Mocht Hebe Kohlbrugge Londen bereiken dan moest zij worden gewantrouwd als een 'geboren intrigante' (Visser 't Hooft aan H.M. van Haersma de With, 3 mei 1944, NIOD 186g-3). De Nederlandse regering in Londen beseftte heel goed dat niemand zich als representatief voor het hele verzet kon presenteren. Belangrijker was dat men zelf kort na de bevrijding leiding aan het landsbestuur hoopte te geven. Hoewel Visser 't Hooft zichzelf en zijn contacten wel als de belangrijkste en meest representatieve informatiebron van de regering beschouwde en vele honderden stukken naar Londen verzond, wijst Loe de Jong erop dat delen van het verzet zich niet door hem vertegenwoordigd voelden, met name de Orde Dienst (De Jong 1979, 902-903).

Toen er eind 1943 een tweede route via Zwitserland was opgezet om met name het militaire contact tussen Bureau Inlichtingen en de Orde Dienst vorm te geven was Visser 't Hooft daar aanvankelijk tegen. Toch was het tenslotte ook in zijn ogen een verbetering dat generaal-majoor Aleid G. van Tricht, de Nederlandse militaire attaché in Bern, de coördinatie hiervan op zich nam, terwijl Visser 't Hooft de civiele communicatie bleef behartigen. Men noemde de militaire route via Van Tricht in deze fase 'Zwitserse Weg B', terwijl het vertrouwde parcours via Visser 't Hooft nu als 'Weg A' werd aangemerkt. Maar in de zomer van 1944 nam het belang van de Zwitserse Weg snel af. De opmars van de geallieerden na D-Day verstoortte de regelmaat in de koeriersdiensten. In de laatste fase van de Zwitserse Weg droeg de minister van oorlog, Otto C.H. van Lidth de Jeude (1881-1951), de eindverantwoordelijkheid. Maar Somer had ook contact met Gerbrandy en Wilhelmina. Voor Visser 't Hooft was het verwarrend toen ook Somer hem

berichten begon te sturen. Hij besloot zelf te bepalen aan wie hij welke informatie stuurde en schreef op 1 mei aan Gerbrandy:

Men krijgt toch echter de indruk, dat de leider van het Bureau Inlichtingen de actiefste figuur is in de hele situatie, en daardoor steeds meer de dingen in zijn hand krijgt. Wij zullen echter toch de politieke aangelegenheden aan de politiek verantwoordelijke instanties blijven toezenden.

(Visser 't Hooft aan Gerbrandy, 1 mei 1944, geciteerd in Van Roon 1999, 140, noot 71)

Bosch van Rosenthal en zijn geestverwanten uit de Christelijk Historische Unie kwamen in het voorjaar van 1944 met de brochure *De politieke en maatschappelijke opbouw van Nederland*. Hierin werd gepleit voor gematigde vernieuwing en nieuwe partijvorming. In de zomer van 1944 leek het Lodewijk Bosch van Rosenthal heel even eindelijk te gaan lukken om de meeste illegale organisaties op één lijn te krijgen. Van Heuven Goedhart werd in London al gauw in de regering opgenomen. Maar de toenemende invloed van de politieke kring rond Bosch van Rosenthal was een doorn in het oog van het Bureau Inlichtingen. Gerbrandy voelde zich verplicht Visser 't Hooft een standje te geven, omdat de ministerraad had vastgesteld dat hij met zijn actieve redactie buiten zijn opdracht had gehandeld. De minister-president meldde op 19 augustus 1944 aan Visser 't Hooft opnieuw dat hij zich van iedere censuur te onthouden had en dat hij zijn verhouding met de Orde Dienst moest verbeteren. Visser 't Hooft reageerde verontwaardigd op 17 september:

In Uw telegram zegt U ook dat het de bedoeling van de Regering is dat berichten uit Nederland geheel ongecensureerd en zonder schifting doorgegeven worden. U moge mij ten goede houden, dat ik over deze zin enigszins verwonderd ben. Ik meen nl., dat uit het materiaal, dat wij U in de loop der tijden gezonden hebben, wel gebleken is, dat ik generlei censuur toepas.

(Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 17 september 1944, NIOD 186g-1)

Slechts materiaal afkomstig van 'wilde groepen' had Visser 't Hooft niet doorgezonden. Dat was 'onernstig of onverantwoordelijk gepraat' (Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 17 september 1944, NIOD 186g-1). Een voorbeeld van achtergehouden stukken betreft een document waarin de Groot-Nederlandse gedachte (pleitbezorger historicus P.C.A. Geyl) functioneerde als serieus plan voor de reorganisatie van het naoorlogse Nederland en Vlaanderen, waarbij de taal als criterium werd gehanteerd. In het handschrift van Visser 't Hooft staat in potlood op de achterzijde: 'niet verzonden "flauwe kul"' (Document bepleitend de groot-nederlandsche gedachte en de Groot-Nederlandsche Beweging 'welker ideaal is

alle deelen van de Nederlandschen stam in Europa in één verband te vereenigen' (NIOD 187-44-NG 67).

Visser 't Hooft wist dat hij critici had in zowel Nederland als Londen. Maar toen hij in november 1944 de kans kreeg zelf Londen te bezoeken, kreeg hij toch een koude douche. Hij legde uit dat hij sommige brieven en boodschappen wel in een andere vorm had moeten gieten omdat ze anders onbegrijpelijk waren. Om commentaar en advies had Gerbrandy zelf gevraagd. Van de Orde Dienst had hij niet alleen bijna alles doorgezonden, maar hij had deze organisatie ook meerdere malen uitgenodigd vaker van de Zwitserse Weg gebruik te maken. Niet doorgezonden waren alleen kopieën van persoonlijke brieven tussen hemzelf en de leiding in Nederland, met name Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne. Maar in november 1944 was hij er nu klaar mee en hij schreef aan Gerbrandy dat hij ermee wilde stoppen:

Mijn werk is nu ten einde en ik moge U verzoeken mijn hartelijke dankbetuiging in ontvangst te nemen voor de wijze, waarop U mij hebt willen steunen. Ook al is het een teleurstelling, dat in sommige kringen ons werk allerminst gewaardeerd is, zoo is het mij toch een voldoening te weten, dat de stroom van gegevens, die wij uit strijdend Nederland mochten doorgeven, niet zonder invloed gebleven zijn [sic] op de beslissingen, die de Regeering in deze jaren genomen heeft.

(Visser 't Hooft aan P.S. Gerbrandy, 14 november 1944, NIOD 186g-1)

Op 22 november ontving Visser 't Hooft van Gerbrandy een antwoord waarin deze hem hartelijk bedankte voor de aan de regering verleende diensten. De minister-president aanvaardde zijn verdediging en sprak de bereidheid uit Visser 't Hooft bij eventueel toekomstig onderzoek te steunen. Op 12 oktober 1944 sprak Visser 't Hooft een radioboodschap uit voor 'Herrijzend Nederland', waarbij hij de afgunst noemde bij mensen in minder geteisterde landen die naar een land als Nederland keken en zagen 'wat alles in de bezette landen mogelijk blijkt, wat daar uit de verstarring losschiet en wat daar aan nieuwe diepe lagen van kostelijke erts aangeboord wordt' ('Nederland herrijst', Visser 't Hooft, Toespraak voor herrijzend Nederland, 12 oktober 1944, WCC 994.2.10/14). Hij wist wel dat men over deze dingen niet te romantisch moest praten en ook dat alles zomaar weer verloren kon gaan, maar zei ook te weten hoe belangrijk het was om te beseffen 'dat er in en door de verschrikkelijke werkelijkheid van het tastbare leven een andere onaantastbare werkelijkheid op ons toekomt en vernieuwing van het leven brengt' ('Nederland herrijst', Visser 't Hooft, Toespraak voor herrijzend Nederland, 12 oktober 1944, WCC 994.2.10/14). De optimistische Visser 't Hooft verwachtte voor het naoorlogse Nederland een nieuw geestelijk en sociaal besef, mede gedragen door een revival in de kerken. (Vgl. Visser 't Hooft 1944)

De toenaderingspogingen tussen de verschillende verzetsgroepen in de zomer van 1944 mondden uit in de 'Grote Adviescommissie der Illegaliteit'. De regering in Londen wees daarna een 'College van Vertrouwensmannen' aan. Dit college, waarvan Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne optrad als secretaris, en Drees en Bosch van Rosenthal lid waren, was niet expliciet bedoeld als overgangsregering, maar daar leek het wel op. In de laatste oorlogsmaanden onderhandelden de Vertrouwensmannen met de Duitsers over voedseldroppings en wapenstilstand. Als een ministersploeg in spé verdeelden de Vertrouwensmannen in de herfst van 1944 de portefeuilles. Maar toen de oorlog toch nog langer duurde en terwijl West-Nederland de hongerwinter in ging, kreeg de Orde Dienst nu deels in het bevrijde Oisterwijk, bevoegdheden als Militair Gezag. Ontluisterend is het commentaar van Bosch van Rosenthal op 31 maart 1945:

Het is aan den overkant en in het Zuiden, alles ruzie, oneenigheid, moeilijkheid, kwaadspreking, roddelarij, niemand vertrouwt elkaar en ieder poogt aan te toonen, hoe goed hij wel is geweest. Ik wou na dezen tijd het liefste met alles uitscheiden... Het ergste is eerlijk gezegd, de regeering aan den overkant. Deze begrijpt er niets van en stuurt alles wat geregeld is, weer in de war.

(Bosch van Rosenthal, 31 maart 1945, citaat in Van Roon 1999, 165)

De laatste twee zinnen in zijn commentaar verwijzen naar het politiebepsluit van 27 september 1944 waar Bosch van Rosenthal aan denkt. Bij wijzingen in de samenstelling van de regering verloren de Vertrouwensmannen hun belangrijkste steunpilaar in het kabinet. Van Heuven Goedhart moest in februari 1945 aftreden.

Vanuit het Nederlandse burgerlijke verzet werd in maart 1945 nog geklaagd over het structurele gebrek aan adequate reacties van de regering, waardoor een onwerkbaar situatie was ontstaan (Anoniem maart 1945, NIOD 187-76-10). Toen deed ieder wat goed was in zijn eigen ogen. Nadat volgend op de Duitse capitulatie van 4 op 5 mei de Vertrouwensmannen feitelijk gingen regeren, een Staatscourant lieten uitgeven en een proclamatie lieten aanplakken, werd hun die macht meteen op 9 mei weer uit handen genomen door generaal H.J. Kruls, en diens kloek optredend Militair Gezag, waarbij ook OD-leider P.J. Six nauw betrokken was. De Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten, waaronder de OD, kregen een leidende rol. Een aantal besluiten van de Vertrouwensmannen werd op het ultieme moment overbodig geacht en teruggedraaid. Het lang gevreesde machtsvacuüm trad nauwelijks op. Maar de wijze waarop een en ander in zijn werk ging, was voor betrokkenen ontluisterend en pijnlijk. Jarenlang hadden zij zich voorbereid op een rol die zij nauwelijks hebben gespeeld. Toen het stof van de uittocht van de Duitsers en de intocht van de geallieerden was opgetrokken en de bevrijdingsfeesten voorbij waren, leek alles met de terugkomst van de Nederlandse

regering ineens weer heel erg op het oude Nederland van voor de oorlog. Bosch van Rosenthal hervatte na de bevrijding zijn werk als commissaris van de koningin in Utrecht, maar het was hem al gauw te veel. Hij is in 1953 overleden.

Opmerkelijk is dat Gerbrandy zelf in de periode na de bevrijding heel ontevreden is geweest met de wijze waarop zich de democratie in Nederland ontwikkelde en in 1947 naar aanleiding van de Akkoorden van Linggadjati met de Republiek Indonesië zelfs serieus een staatsgreep met behulp van de legertop zou overwegen (De Jong 1988, 790-794). Visser 't Hooft was juist een voorstander van Indonesische onafhankelijkheid. De verschillen in hun visie op het naoorlogse Nederland weerspiegelden zich in de totaal verschillende kijk van beiden op de aanpak van Duitsland.

### **Parlementaire Enquête Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945**

De naoorlogse Parlementaire Enquête Regeringsbeleid over onder andere de verbindingen in oorlogstijd met het bezette Nederland heeft het geheel niet goed kunnen ontwarren. Op 8 december 1948 werd Visser 't Hooft door Subcommissie III verhoord over de Zwitserse Weg, op 9 december 1948 over diplomatieke vertegenwoordiging in Zwitserland en vluchtelingenwerk. Voorzitter was J. Schilt-huis, leden waren C.N. van Dis, S.A. Posthumus en N. Stufkens. Een eerder onderzoek was gedaan door de Commissie Cleveringa. Visser 't Hooft heeft ten overstaan van de naoorlogse verhoren steeds gesteld dat hij op het verkeerde been is gezet, doordat pas na zijn bezoek aan Londen in het voorjaar van 1942, op 28 november het Bureau Inlichtingen werd opgericht. Aan de militaire leiding daarvan was voortaan, zonder dat het aan Visser 't Hooft duidelijk werd gemeld dat dit ook voor hem gold, de coördinatie van alle communicatie met bezet Nederland toevertrouwd. Visser 't Hooft vond het niet op zijn weg liggen de hele vraag van de ingewikkelde verhouding van civiel en militair verzet in oorlogstijd te analyseren. Hij hield het erop dat zijn directe toegang tot de minister-president de ergernis van de militairen had opgeroepen (Visser 't Hooft 1973, 146).

Gerbrandy heeft hem, zoals hij beloofd had, gesteund en gezegd dat het oorspronkelijk ging over geestelijke stromingen in Nederland.

Dit werk, aldus de heer *Gerbrandy*, heeft zich tot iets ontwikkeld, dat wel enigermate parallel ging lopen met datgene, wat over het Bureau Inlichtingen liep. Dit alles is echter te goedertrouw gebeurd, terwijl de opzet was gemaakt vóór het instellen van B.I. en het optreden van de heer *Somer*.

(Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, 1950, 197-244, citaat 237)

Visser 't Hooft verzekerde tijdens de Parlementaire Enquête dat 'Elk document [...] ongewijzigd doorgedaan naar Londen' (*Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945*, 1950, 237). Maar tegen de Commissie Cleveringa zei hij, toen hem werd gevraagd of hij wel eens brieven achter had gehouden:

O ja. Je kreeg dikwijls heel wonderlijke zaken. De reputatie van je berichtgeving hing er van af, dat je niet een hoop materiaal doorstuurde, waar niemand wat aan had. Het moest materiaal van enig belang zijn, want anders zou niemand het au sérieux hebben genomen.

(Commissie Cleveringa, 1946-1950 1951, Nationaal Archief, doos 31)

Somer trok zijn beschuldiging van censuur in en Visser 't Hooft gaf toe dat hij op een gegeven moment besloten had het Bureau Inlichtingen te negeren en bevestigde dat hij commentaar had geleverd bij de doorgezonden stukken omdat hij daar juist door Gerbrandy om was gevraagd. Kohlbrugge kreeg ongelijk dat zij in Visser 't Hooft als 'een soort kantoorhouder van een illegale P.T.T.' beschouwde (*Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945*, 1950, 247). In haar conclusie bekritiseerde de Parlementaire Enquêtecommissie de Nederlandse regering in gebreke te zijn gebleven wat betreft coördinatie en vanwege het ten onrechte berispen van Visser 't Hooft op 22 augustus 1944. Voor de uitvoering van de regeringsopdracht, kregen Visser 't Hooft en zijn medewerkers van de Enquêtecommissie tenslotte 'de hoogste lof'.

## Conclusie

Als we ons afvragen hoe de Zwitserse Weg tot stand is gekomen, kunnen we vaststellen dat Visser 't Hooft met zijn contacten een sleutelrol heeft gespeeld met betrekking tot deze effectieve communicatieroute tussen Londen en bezet Nederland vanaf de zomer van 1942 tot in de zomer van 1944. Reeds in 1940 was Visser 't Hooft op eigen initiatief begonnen met wat hij noemde 'Geestelijk Contact'. Hij verwachtte een christelijke revival en een opbloeien van de kerk die zouden leiden tot een kwalitatief sterk herrijzend Nederland, een kostbare bouwsteen voor een vreedzaam Europa. Hoogstaande vormen van verzet door mensen met een elitaire achtergrond die als civiel-politieke leiders met inhoud konden worden beschouwd, moesten waar mogelijk worden gesteund. Waar het inhoudelijk mee begon was zijn visie op de oorlog en de kerk, die hij deelde met zijn oecumenische contacten. Daar kwam op den duur allerlei andere informatie bij, die vanaf juni 1942 steeds systematischer in Nederland verzameld werd door de contacten van Visser 't Hooft. Mede door de oorlogsomstandigheden bleef de toevalsfactor daarbij echter een rol spelen. Omgekeerd werd de informatie die vanuit Londen naar bezet Nederland ging in de ogen van de ontvangers vaak



teleurstellend. De regering slaagde er lang niet altijd in adequaat te reageren op wat er in Nederland gebeurde. Visser 't Hooft eindigde met politieke stellingname en als protagonist van het burgerlijk verzet en is in dit uiterst gecompliceerde informatienetwerk na verloop van tijd op politiek glad ijs terecht gekomen. De achtergrond hierbij was een tot op het bot verdeeld verzet dat er niet in slaagde constructief samen te werken, laat staan een gedeelde toekomstvisie te ontwikkelen.

Hij achtte zichzelf representatief en goed ingelicht en bekwaam om de Nederlandse regering van commentaar op het uit Nederland afkomstige materiaal te voorzien. Of dit altijd zo was, valt te betwijfelen. Visser 't Hooft woonde al sinds 1924 in Genève en kwam uit een geprivilegieerde bovenlaag van de Nederlandse bevolking. Zijn enigszins geromantiseerde beeld van de Nederlandse samenleving klopte niet altijd met de werkelijkheid. Hij had slechts een beperkt zicht op de geallieerde oorlogsstrategie, wat hem met betrekking tot zijn appreciatie van het Duitse verzet verwachtingen deed koesteren die niet realistisch waren. Ook ontsnapte een groot deel van wat zich afspeelde onder de verschillende verzetsgroepen zich aan zijn waarneming, met name waar het ging om meer militaire groepen, zoals de Orde Dienst, die later de Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten zouden vormen. Ondertussen stelde hij zich naar Londen toe wel op als deskundige die goed overzicht had met betrekking tot het geheel. Hij voelde zich geroepen de Nederlandse regering te 'coachen', niet alleen als communicatiedeskundige, maar ook inhoudelijk. Sommige ministers kon hij daarmee tot steun zijn en met name Gerbrandy waardeerde zijn bijdragen, ook al wees hij de lankmoedige benadering van Duitsland door Visser 't Hooft af en deelde hij niet zijn voorkeur voor het burgerlijk verzet.

Gaandeweg begon Visser 't Hooft zich steeds meer te gedragen als degene die de Nederlandse regering probleembewust wilde maken en voor uitglijdende behoeften. Ook verbond hij zich sterk met bepaalde delen van het verzet, ten koste van het vertrouwen bij andere delen, met name de militairen. Een ander had misschien met Genève als standplaats niet anders gedaan dan als een postbode berichten doorzenden. Voor Visser 't Hooft was dit onmogelijk. Hij was geen doorgeefluik. Hij was bezig met een geestelijke strijd.

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Dr. Jurjen Zeilstra is een Nederlandse predikant. In Utrecht studeerde hij vanaf 1979 geschiedenis en vanaf 1983 ook theologie. Na werkzaamheden als docent geschiedenis in het middelbaar onderwijs en als docent kerkgeschiedenis op HBO-niveau, werd hij in 1990 predikant in de Hervormde kerk voor de Protestantse kerk van Austerlitz bij Zeist. In 1993 is hij begonnen als predikant in de toen nog Samen op Weg (hervormd/gereformeerde) gemeente Hilversum. Sinds 2004 is hij predikant in de protestantse gemeente Hilversum, wijkgemeente Regenboogkerk en belast met bovenwijkse werkzaamheden. Zeilstra publiceerde over uiteenlopende onderwerpen, voornamelijk uit de kerkgeschiedenis, de zending en de oecumene. In 1995 promoveerde hij aan de Universiteit Utrecht in de theologie op Europese eenheid in oecumenisch denken. In 2018 promoveerde hij aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam in de geschiedenis op een biografie over W.A. Visser 't Hooft (1900-1985).

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### Visser 't Hooft and the Swiss Road, 1942-1944

At the onset of the German occupation during World War II, the Dutch government fled to London, finding itself in a relatively isolated situation. Poorly informed about events in the Netherlands, the government's posts about current affairs and hopeful messaging through written means or radio broadcasts were only moderately successful in reaching the Dutch population back home. One of the initiatives to improve communications was "The Swiss Road." Establishing it in the summer of 1942 at the behest of the government, the Dutchman Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft (1900-1985), Secretary of the World Council of Churches in formation, ran an effective communications channel that existed for about two years. In 1924, Visser 't Hooft had relocated to Geneva from the Netherlands, initially working for the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and later for the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). Upon the wartime occupation of the Netherlands, Visser 't Hooft, from Geneva, immediately initiated communications between the Dutch residing in the Netherlands and the Dutch abroad. He focused in particular on spiritual matters, calling it

Spiritual Contact. While Visser 't Hooft and his contacts were eager to exchange correspondence about what they considered to be profound topics, envisioning a large role for the churches in the postwar Netherlands, the reports from the government in exile were often deemed a disappointment. Meanwhile, the Dutch resistance was quite divided. Especially the contrast between the military resistance, which had its origin in the mobilisation, and the civil resistance was enormous. Many felt abandoned by the government. Although Visser 't Hooft had not lived in the Netherlands for quite some time, between 1942-1944 he positioned himself increasingly as a knowledgeable source about the Netherlands and as an advisor for the government, which to some degree he was. Visser 't Hooft saw the war as a spiritual conflict. However, concerning the persecution of Jews, the German resistance, and the indication of a Dutch transitional government consisting of citizens, he was not able to make himself heard.

### **Visser 't Hooft et la Route suisse**

Le gouvernement néerlandais, qui s'était exilé à Londres en 1940 à la veille de l'occupation allemande des Pays-Bas, se trouvait dans une situation d'isolement grave au début de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. En effet, le gouvernement était plutôt mal informé des événements se produisant aux Pays-Bas, et éprouvait de la difficulté à entrer en contact avec le peuple néerlandais par le biais de messages, écrits ou radiophoniques, axés sur l'actualité ou visant à remonter le moral de la population. Parmi les initiatives lancées par le gouvernement en exil pour remédier à cette situation déplorable, figure « la Route suisse ». Il s'agit d'un canal de communication plutôt efficace, qui a existé pendant deux ans, et qui avait été établi, durant l'été de 1942, à la demande du gouvernement, par le Néerlandais Dr W. A. Visser 't Hooft (1900-1985), Secrétaire général du Conseil œcuménique des Églises en formation. En 1924, Visser 't Hooft avait quitté les Pays-Bas pour Genève, et y avait d'abord travaillé pour les Unions chrétiennes de jeunes gens (UCJG) et ensuite pour la Fédération universelle des associations chrétiennes d'étudiants (FUACE). Dès l'occupation allemande des Pays-Bas, Visser 't Hooft avait commencé à faciliter, depuis Genève, la communication entre les Néerlandais se trouvant toujours aux Pays-Bas et ceux vivant à l'étranger, en se concentrant dans un premier temps sur des questions d'ordre spirituel. Il appelait ce circuit : Contact spirituel. Tandis que Visser 't Hooft et ses contacts se plaisaient à échanger des pièces sur des thématiques profondes et à envisager un rôle important pour les églises dans les Pays-Bas d'après-guerre, les rapports soumis par le gouvernement s'avéraient souvent décevants. Quant à la résistance néerlandaise, elle était à ce moment très divisée. Le contraste, par exemple,

entre la résistance militaire, qui avait son origine dans la mobilisation, et le mouvement de résistance civil était particulièrement grand. Beaucoup se sentaient, en outre, abandonnés par le gouvernement. De 1942 à 1944, et même s'il faisait longtemps qu'il n'avait vécu aux Pays-Bas, Visser 't Hooft a graduellement assumé le rôle de personne-ressource connaissant bien les Pays-Bas et de conseiller du gouvernement, fonction qu'il a effectivement exercée jusqu'à un certain point. Pour Visser 't Hooft, la guerre représentait un conflit spirituel. Ses avis, cependant, concernant la persécution des Juifs, la résistance allemande et la formation d'un gouvernement néerlandais de transition composé de citoyens n'ont reçu peu ou pas d'appui.





**Review**  
**Peter Fritzsche:**  
***Hitler's first hundred days:***  
***When Germans embraced the Third Reich***  
New York: Basic Books, 2020. 421 p.  
ISBN 9871541697430

*Reviewed by Dietrich Orlow*



Perhaps it is appropriate to start this review by stating what the book is not. It is not a study in “high politics.” There is no discussion of cabinet meetings (which, in spite of the early days of the Third Reich that are described here, did already take place) or the behind the scenes intrigues among Nazi leaders and their Conservative allies. The author is also not interested in the ongoing historiographic controversies about the Nazi regime. And there is nothing factually new in this account of the early Third Reich. These events have been covered before, not least in some of the earlier publications written by Peter Fritzsche, who is a professor of history at the University of Illinois.

Instead, this book is a distinguished, well-written example of *Alltagsgeschichte*, the everyday history of everyday people. The author’s central question is: How did the overwhelming number of Germans turn into Nazis in such a short time, in the proverbial hundred days? Fritzsche’s answer is that the Nazis were able to create a mythical *Volksgemeinschaft*, a people’s community that pitted “us,” the good, the real Germans, against “them,” the aliens, the outsiders, identified primarily as Marxists and Jews. Moreover, as Fritzsche argues, the mythical *Volksgemeinschaft* of 1933 was a recreation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* of 1914 when “we” stood united against “them,” Germany’s foreign enemies.

The Nazis accomplished this feat by a mixture of “positives,” spectacles, rallies, radio broadcasts (the author is particularly good concerning the Nazis’ use of this relatively new form of mass communication), and films. (The career of Emil Jannings takes center stage here.) Equally important were the “negative” aspects of the regime’s activities: The atrocities, torture, and other forms of violence directed at the *Volksgemeinschaft*’s presumed enemies.

The chief villains in this process were, of course, Hitler, although, for the most part, he remains in the background in this account, Joseph Goebbels as the chief architect of the “positive” measures, Hermann Göring, the prime minister of Prussia, who unleashed and encouraged the Stormtroopers’ atrocities, and above all, the Stormtroopers (SA) themselves. They were primarily responsible for the regime’s acts of violence during the first hundred days.

For sources to buttress his argument, Fritzsche relies on a judicious mix of (mostly published) diaries, reminiscences, newspaper accounts, and some reports by French, American, and British diplomats stationed in Germany. The author manages to combine this large variety of sources into a superbly written narrative. His skill as a writer has few equals among his peers.

Is the argument convincing? The author certainly thinks so, but some legitimate questions remain. The “spirit of 1914” is perhaps overdone. More recent research has shown that the national unity in Germany was not nearly as absolute as the government’s propaganda portrayed it. Partly to contrast 1933 with what came before, Fritzsche portrays the Weimar Republic in starkly negative ways, but

it should be remembered that until 1932, Prussia, Germany's largest state, was democratically and politically quite stable. The state's minister of culture, Carl Heinrich Becker, also actively resisted the spreading of antisemitism among Prussia's university students.

As is perhaps inevitable, the author relies more heavily on some sources than on others. The diary of Elisabeth Gebensleben is most frequently cited, in part because her diary reveals that she did indeed become a fervent Nazi supporter during the first one hundred days. There is also the contrast with her daughter, who remained a convinced anti-Nazi and eventually moved to the Netherlands to escape the Nazi tyranny. Fritzsche also makes good use of the voluminous musings of Franz Göll, whose writings the author edited in a previous publication (Fritzsche 2011).

There is some repetition in the account. In narrating the Stormtrooper violence, the author attempts to cover as many parts of Germany as possible, but this results in a somewhat numbing, repetitive story. It turns out that the Stormtroopers were not very original in choosing the ways of torturing and humiliating their victims. Fritzsche portrays the German communists as primary victims of Nazi atrocities in these early days and this is certainly true, but he might have pointed out that the communists inadvertently helped the Nazis in the construction of their mythical *Volksgemeinschaft*. The communists really did think they were about to stage a successful Bolshevik revolution in Germany. (The slogan "After Hitler it's our turn" was used by the communists, not the social democrats.) Fritzsche cannot altogether resist the temptation of historicism. The reader is repeatedly reminded that the Nazis' early atrocities against the Jews were forerunners of the Holocaust. There were certainly links, but the author does not allude to the ongoing historiographic debate about when the decision to launch the actual Holocaust was actually made.

In a nod to comparative history, the author includes accounts of what happened in France and the United States at the same time as Germany was suffering through the one hundred days. The French extreme right was noisy and violent, but ultimately unsuccessful in toppling democracy in France. (This chapter also contains brief references to the Dutch Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging and the Belgian Rexist movement.) Regarding the United States, Fritzsche contrasts the Nazis' tribal *Volksgemeinschaft* that divided "us" and "them" with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's effort to unite the whole nation in the face of the Depression. This is a little Pollyannish. The American national unity was pretty much limited to whites. As a recent work has shown again, despite the entreaties of his wife Eleanor, Roosevelt yielded to the demands of the Southern white elite. For the most part blacks did not benefit from the New Deal reforms (Watts 2020).

The book would have benefitted from one more spellcheck. The name of the Bavarian town is Straubing, not Sträubing, and the SA rank is *Sturmbannführer* not *Sturmbahnführer*. The work's version of the Stormtrooper rank would turn the man into an engineer of a stormy train. But these are minor quibbles. Fritzsche's contribution is a well-written example of *Alltagsgeschichte*. Some of the author's conclusions may be questionable, but the narrative is among the best of the genre.

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## About the reviewer

Dr. Dietrich Orlow is professor emeritus of history at Boston University (Massachusetts, U.S.). He has also been a visiting professor at the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands) and a two-time Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies. He is the author of numerous publications in modern German and comparative European history, including two monographs that deal with Dutch history: *Common destiny: A comparative history of the Dutch, French, and German social democratic parties, 1945-1969* (Berghahn Books, 2000), and *The lure of fascism in Western Europe: German Nazis, Dutch and French fascists, 1933-1939* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009). The eighth edition of Professor Orlow's college textbook *A history of modern Germany, 1871-present* was published by Routledge in 2018.

## Review

### Erik Somers and Laurien Vastenhout: *De Tweede Wereldoorlog in honderd foto's*

Zwolle: WBooks, 2020. 144 p.

ISBN 9789462583672

*Reviewed by Dave Warnier*



On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands during the Second World War, a national project was initiated in which people searched for the most evocative war photographs of the Netherlands and its former colonies in the Dutch East Indies, the Dutch Antilles and Surinam. Archives, organizations, and private individuals sent in massive numbers of pictures, many of which had been unknown up to that point. This book, *De Tweede Wereldoorlog in honderd foto's* ('The Second World War in one hundred pictures'), is the result of a unique participation experiment that eventually led to a large exhibition in the House of Representatives of the Dutch Parliament, which was, unfortunately, thwarted by the coronavirus crisis.

The introduction deals with the importance of imagery in general, especially in modern lore, with all the problems that entails and it recounts the course of the search for the one hundred chosen photographs. The photographs themselves are divided over five logically chosen thematic chapters: military struggle, war violence, and liberation; domination, collaboration, and adaptation; exclusion and persecution; resistance and repression; daily life. Each part is preceded by a brief general introduction. Why some photographs were assigned to a specific chapter, when they might just as well have been featured in another, is open to discussion, but I suspect that an approximately proportional distribution of the number of photographs per chapter (between sixteen to twenty-four each) may have played a role here. What does disturb me personally is the very strict chronological representation of the images. This means that among the photos from the Netherlands there are suddenly emaciated Indonesian forced labourers. A combination in which first the motherland and then the colonies are featured, while then putting the pictures in chronological order, or even in a separate chapter about the colonies, might have been a better choice.

The section on exclusion and persecution surprised me in terms of originality, because it was the first time that I saw photographs depicting the Dutch persecution of Jews that were not exclusively taken in Amsterdam. A number of rather unique images can be found in this section, such as a photo from Albert Gemmeker's personal archive. At the end of the war, this camp commander of Westerbork destroyed as many documents as he could to leave as little evidence as possible, which makes the image of Jews being transported to the death camps in the East special. The portrait of the twenty-two children between the ages of four and seventeen from the Jewish school in Deventer is both moving and shocking when you realize that only one of them survived the Holocaust.

There is also a supporting website, <https://in100fotos.nl/>, where in addition to the one hundred selected photographs, albeit without the contextual explanation offered in the book, one can see the fifty original entries from each of the twelve provinces, as well as the fifty national entries and those from the former

colonies. This demonstrates the impossible task of the jury of having had to reduce some 700 images to 100. In this case, choosing is quite clearly losing. Although the jury relied on the choice of the general public, which had been asked to vote for the local photos, the book clearly states that the public's preference was sometimes ignored when it came to particular images – and rightly so in my opinion. This was true for the difficult to view images of excesses during the liberation, such as the shaving of the so-called “kraut girls” (women who had had a relationship with a German) or the removal of children of collaborators, none of which were selected by the public but made it into the book, after all. Unfortunately, the website is only in Dutch, while English as a modern *lingua franca* was ignored. This is a pity, as pictures of captured or killed Allied aviators, for example, and the liberation in which British Commonwealth troops, such as the Canadians, were heavily involved, are not only of interest to the Dutch general public.

As a non-specialist of Dutch history during the Second World War, I found it a very interesting book. Some of the photographs were new to me. Its main strength lies in the combination of photographs that are accompanied by an informative explanation, providing a necessary context. Even the more well-known photographs benefitted from a detailed description, adding a new dimension of understanding. This is one of the aims of the book: to counterbalance the contemporary flood of images – whether moving or not – on the various (social) media platforms by encouraging viewers to look at them critically and to try to fathom the background and the real meaning of the images. By the way, this is an old gripe: many explanatory texts for well-known photographs from the Second World War contain errors that are passed on from book to book or from website to website. As far as I'm concerned, the judges' comments regarding some of the images are hardly essential, but I can understand that this provides the link with the 21st century and contemporary social media. The book is therefore more a reflection of how people are inclined to look at the Second World War in current times. Nevertheless, it is certainly recommended for anyone interested in the Second World War in the Netherlands and its colonies.

### **About the reviewer**

Dave Warnier is senior captain in the Belgian army, which he joined in 2002. He obtained a master's degree in history at Ghent University (Belgium) in 1999. Upon completion of his officer's training, he served as a platoon commander with the armoured reconnaissance troops of the 1st Regiment *Jagers te Paard* in Leopoldsburg, with which he carried out a NATO operation in Kosovo in 2005. After attending the Centre for Basic Military Training, he became a military

assistant to the Chair of History of the Royal Military Academy in Brussels, where he studied and taught military history. Under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Em. Luc De Vos of the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) and together with Tom Simoens and Franky Bostyn, he coauthored the books *'14-'18: Oorlog in België* (Davidsfonds, 2014), *Waterloo: 1815, de val van Napoleon* (Davidsfonds, 2015), and *39-45: De Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Sterck & De Vreese, 2019). He is currently working on his joint Ph.D. at Ghent University and the Royal Military Academy and is focused on the battlefield performance of the Belgian army during the Eighteen Days' Campaign against the invading German forces in May 1940.



**Review**

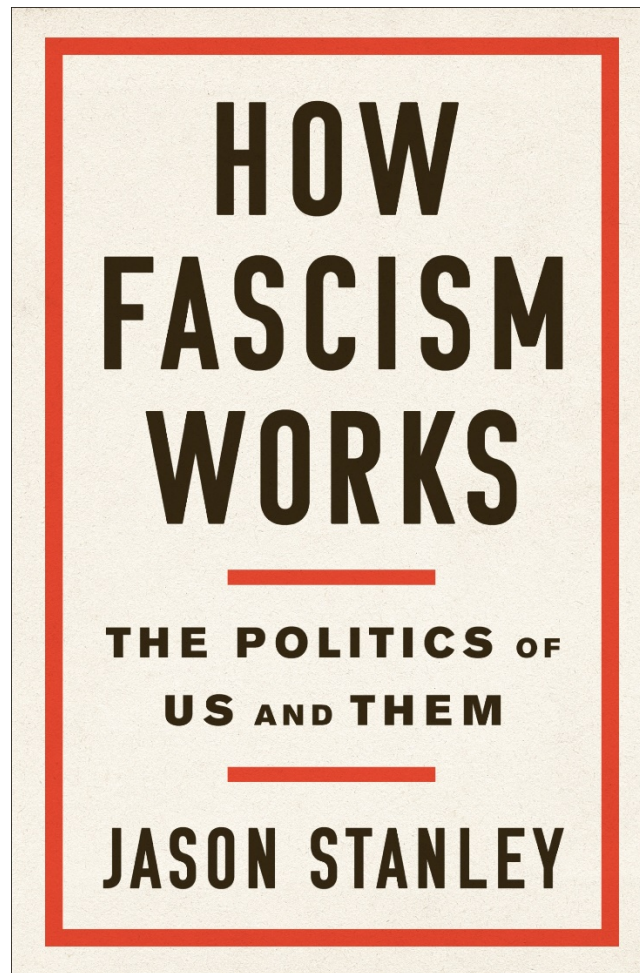
**Jason Stanley:**

***How fascism works: The politics of us and them***

New York: Random House, 2018. 218 p.

LCCN 2018013266 / ISBN 9780525511830

*Reviewed by Remco Ensel*



This book aims to be a warning against current fascism and radical nationalism. It does this by drawing up a list of facets of contemporary politics and grouping them under the heading of fascism. The chapters each deal with one of these facets: myth making, anti-intellectualism, propaganda, sexual anxiety, and so on. This format delivers short, yet penetrating vignettes, such as one on how fascists claim victimhood: “The exploitation of the feeling of victimization by dominant groups at the prospect of sharing citizenship and power with minorities [. . .]” (95). The author identifies as a philosopher and has previously published on propaganda. That is reflected in this book, as the topic recurs regularly, beyond the one chapter on propaganda. Foregrounded, however, is the family background. The author’s parents were both refugees from Nazi Germany, his grandmother is Ilse Stanley, author of the autobiography *The unforgotten* about her childhood in Gleiwitz, Poland, while his stepmother was involved in the American civil rights movement. Both family lines have been brought together in this book and thus shine a light on each other.

It’s hard to read this book as anything other than as a guide to Trump’s terrifying takeover of power. As I write this review, we are faced with many more examples of the politics outlined in *How fascism works*, which in the case of Trump is even more disturbingly focused on consolidating power at all costs. Also, from a European perspective, Trump’s utter disrespect for the basic principles of the democratic system is disturbing. At the same time, this book depends too much on the Trump case without actually analyzing Trumpism. It ignores the broader ideological movement in which Trump is able to thrive and consolidate his power. The book, then, is more about strategy than ideology.

Europe does return regularly in this book. In connection with the aforementioned roots of the writer’s parents, fascist Europe is the ominous inspiration for *How fascism works*. The emphasis is on Nazi Germany. *Mein Kampf* is a recurring source. This is at the expense of fascism in France and Italy and especially the intellectual roots of “classical fascism.” In the chapter on myth formation, for example, the author’s main explanation is that a myth is contrary to the truth (which fits in with the emphasis on “propaganda”). To the fascists, however, a myth was a mobilizing force, an instrument, as explained by Georges Sorel, to bring about action, that is, a myth that would pull nations out of the morass of idleness. A necessary connection with reality was less relevant and the myth was to be seen as “an expression of the determination to act.” Regarding the promise To Make America Great Again, it’s entertaining to ask the question of when America was ever great, but not pertinent. In terms of political strategy, it would be more convincing to oppose the slogan by countering it with an alternative ‘myth’ – or political vision in the form of a narrative. Perhaps it is the ability to present such a good story that makes fascists like Trump so successful, especially

in a society where the electoral system is not the solution, but part of the democratic deficit.

Europe's past does not only serve as a deterrent, but can be taken as an incentive, as is made clear in this book. Europe's present is equally problematic and closely linked to America's. The Netherlands provides an interesting case study: a country with a strong democratic tradition but rooted in a strong elitist paternalism that has, so far, kept women out of the prime minister's office, for example, and appoints mayors outside the electoral system. The Netherlands is also a country that since the 1930s has established a small right-wing tradition (based on a provincial constituency, farmers and the self-employed), with an equally small post-war club of neo-fascists. In recent years, there has been an embrace of political representation through the neo-nationalism of Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet, both with a large and mixed following of variously low-income groups and the low-educated, as well as self-employed and commercial elites. Baudet, in particular, is the best example of the current blending of classical European fascism with American white supremacist thinking. Baudet acts like the French intellectuals of the early 20th century, mourning the demise of the greatest civilization ever and suggesting a resurrection is within reach (if only . . .). He visits Jared Taylor and Jean-Marie Le Pen, using terms such as the migration-induced homeopathic *verdunning* ('dilution') of the Dutch "*volk*" and "*boreal*" to refer to a Northern race and culture. His ideology is mainly adopted from the post-war right and neo-fascism, while he, not surprisingly, identifies with Trump, as he is also known for his misogynistic comments. In fact, the Trump-appointed U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands paid Baudet's party a visit recently. There was and thus still exists a close link between the American and European radical right. At the same time, certain developments are typically American, yet difficult to connect purely to Trump. It reinforces the impression that Stanley is primarily preaching to the choir. This applies, for example, to the policy of incarceration which dates back several decades and is linked in part to deeply rooted institutional racism. Or, with respect to the culture wars, labeling universities as a haven for autonomous research and debate - now challenged by right-wing agitation - ignores the habitually one-sided academic tradition that has been fought against since the 1970s. In fact, the university's self-image as a neutral and authoritative institution is being attacked from various sides, not just the radical right.

*How fascism works* is intended to give readers the means of orientation to interpret contemporary politics. In that regard, it succeeds. Despite its well-defined, even rigid structure of the chapters, each of which examine a crucial fascist strategy, the book gives the impression of being written rather loosely. It was not clear to me to what extent this is based on a given scientific background

(which one?) and who the intended audience is. In the afterword, the author states that this is his first “trade book” for which he hired an agent and worked closely with an editor after submitting a short note. This book was published six versions later. However, it sometimes lapses into repetitions (like on the birther movement and the Protocols of Zion) and the examples sometimes seem rather random. Tighter editing would have been beneficial to the book. In its brevity, it is more than merely interesting to scrutinize and tick off which steps we have already gone through as a society and which may still follow – but not which steps can be taken against this return of fascism in the political center.

### **About the reviewer**

Dr. Remco Ensel teaches cultural history at Radboud University in Nijmegen (Netherlands). He has authored articles and books on 20<sup>th</sup> century visual nationalism, antisemitism and holocaust remembrance. Most recently, he co-edited *Narratives of war: Remembering and chronicling battle in twentieth-century Europe* (Routledge, 2019, with Nancy Adler and Michael Wintle) and *The Holocaust, Israel and ‘the Jew’: Histories of antisemitism in post-war Dutch society* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017, with Evelien Gans). Currently, he is conducting research on post-Holocaust theatre.

**Review**

**Julia Adeney Thomas & Geoff Eley (eds):**

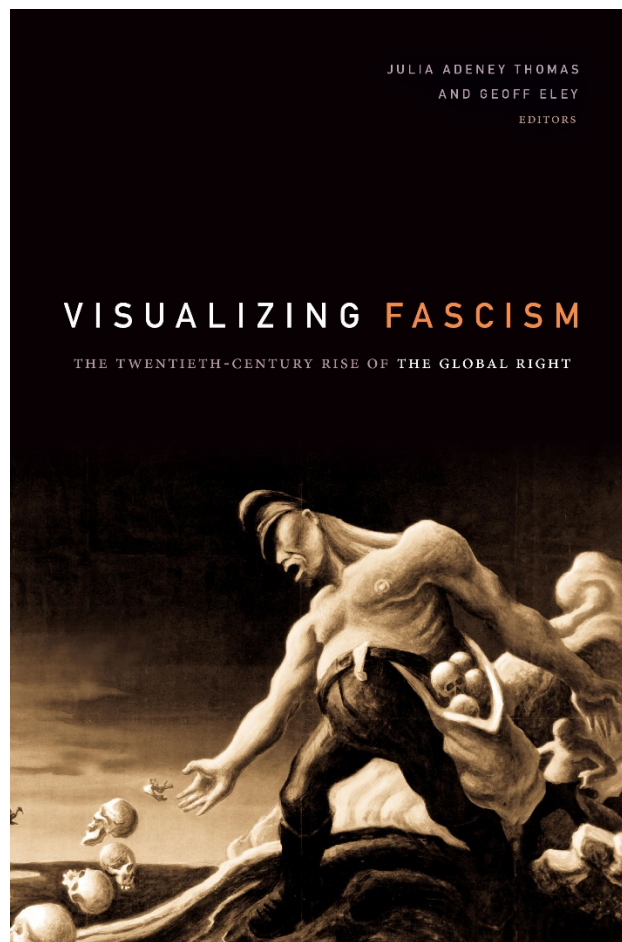
***Visualizing fascism:***

***The twentieth-century rise of the global Right***

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020. 326 p.

ISBN 9781478003762

*Reviewed by Nathaniël D.B. Kunkeler*



*Visualizing fascism* is a timely and effective contribution to the ever-shifting sands of scholarly debate on fascism. As a heavily contested term, in spite of a concerted 21<sup>st</sup>-century effort to generate a consensus, fascism demands a theoretically cogent approach. Julia Adeney Thomas, associate professor at the University of Notre Dame and intellectual historian of Japan, and Geoff Eley, professor of contemporary history at Michigan University and scholar of German history and nazism in particular, are together well-suited to oversee a project with a fresh theoretical perspective and broad purview.

This edited volume seeks to understand fascism as a global phenomenon, as it emerged in the interwar period and during WW II. The key to this global conception is the visuality of the title, the imagery and aesthetics of fascism which allowed it to quickly spread across national borders and attain a foothold everywhere in the world, images that “helped vitally compose the layered ideological corpus that movements and regimes elsewhere would be able to raid” (289). To this end, Thomas and Eley propose a “portable concept” of fascism, that is, one which applies to a wide variety of spaces, both where regimes were established and where movements failed, a concept that is not defined by parties or institutions, but what Thomas a little quaintly terms “ideological energies” (6). If that sounds a touch universalizing, this portable concept is nevertheless tethered to three historicizing factors: capitalism, modern communication, and colonies. It is these which explain the emergence of fascism in the 1920s specifically, and its global reach, though without confining it to a specific “fascist epoch.” A conscious strike against the endemic Eurocentrism of fascism scholars, Thomas and Eley make a compelling argument that fascism “contained multiple centers with multi-directional flows: a globality of rival imperialisms caught in the fallout of a worldwide capitalist downturn” (284). This is demonstrated across eleven chapters, which aside from inevitable traditional fare (Germany, Italy), cover Slovakia, China, Southern Africa, the USA, the Netherlands, Indonesia, and Japan (which features in no less than three chapters). Each chapter deals in some way with visuality and fascism, with considerable variation in how these two terms are wielded and interpreted, and discusses a case study, several of which break out of the national mould.

Overall, the contributors bring out Thomas and Eley’s contentions quite successfully. The global range is powerful and effective, and the visual theme is neatly adapted to the task of presenting histories of fascism unconfined by the usual organizations of state and party that tend to be associated with it. The visual is amorphous and mobile, and thematically helps locate fascism in places where it traditionally is not seen, outside of mass parties, spectacular rallies, totalitarian states, and genocidal warfare. A key point of this volume, which several of the authors do well to highlight, is that there was no coherent fascist aesthetic, no

aesthetic that could be described as definitively fascist through examination of its formal visual properties (54, 70, 112). In fact, it shared much of its visual repertoire with liberal and socialist opponents – for instance, Maggie Clinton, in her essay on fascist media in 1930s China, points out that while magazines produced by the Guomindang’s Blueshirt faction foregrounded issues common to fascist movements globally, they circulated images and aesthetics indistinguishable from those found in popular nonpartisan lifestyle magazines or Left periodicals (30). Instead, as Lutz Koepnick points out, following the historiography of fascist aesthetics since the 1990s, the analysis looks to how visuals were operationalized under fascism, even if those visuals themselves were not unique to fascism, or even totalitarianism and dictatorship (112). Paul Barclay in his highly informative essay on Japan’s *chureito*, loyal-spirit towers, ceremonial ossuaries housing the military dead of the Fifteen-Year War, argues that their fascist visuality was not in their aesthetics, but their operationalization in the service of the military state (45). Taking a different tack, Thomas in her own essay on Japan’s “war without pictures,” shows how post-1937 fascist Japan, rather than seeking to excite and entice through its images in the style of Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany, aimed for stillness and “foreverness” in its tedious war photography, deploying “non-eventfulness” to perform continuity after the revolutionary fascist takeover following the 26 February Incident (167). Here is a focus not on some kind of essence, a presumed definitive fascist visuality, but rather on how it worked, where it operated, how fascism deployed visuality, not what that visuality was. Doubtless this is a step in the right direction, very much in line with current trends in fascism scholarship.

A very different approach to the theme is taken by Ethan Mark, with “Fascisms seen and unseen: The Netherlands, Japan, Indonesia, and the relationships of Imperial crisis.” His vehicle for the study of Dutch fascism in the Netherlands and the Indonesian colony is the monuments built to commemorate Joannes Benedictus van Heutsz (1851-1924), governor general of the East Indies, responsible for the brutal “pacification” of Aceh for the Dutch Empire. Funded through extensive donations, Van Heutsz’s body was re-interred in an enormous mausoleum in Amsterdam in 1927, dominating the centre of the cemetery. The leftover funds were used for the construction of two monuments to Van Heutsz, one in Amsterdam constructed in 1935, (since altered and renamed the *Monument Indië-Nederland*), the other in the colonial capital Batavia (Jakarta), 1932, since destroyed, though it remarkably survived Japanese occupation. While Van Heutsz was in fact widely criticized for his governorship during his life, Mark positions his monumental commemoration in the political scene of the interwar Netherlands at a time of global imperial crisis, where Van Heutsz was reassessed as a strongman who responded forcefully to the responsibilities of empire. Mark

also examines the rise of the small Dutch National Socialist Movement led by Anton Mussert, which, though in 1933-35 growing quickly in the metropole before collapsing again, became in fact the largest party in Indonesia, where Mussert was granted a state reception by Governor-General de Jonge in 1935. "In an increasingly hostile interwar environment that embraced metropole and colony alike," Mark argues, "many Dutch citizens were drawn *not* to Nazism as such but to an essentially native, imperial form of fascism as a vehicle for securing their continued imperial privileges or gaining new ones" (186). Dutch fascism then was rooted in an elite preoccupation with the preservation of empire, and an uncommonly aggressive rejection of compromise with native movements for independence. Yet in his treatment of visuality, Mark diverges here from most contributors. Opening with the governor general's son's letter to the Nazi-appointed mayor of Amsterdam in 1943, which complained that the 1935 monument was weak and decadent, Mark essentially concurs that it indeed lacked a "fascist aesthetic" (183-84), something instead apparent in the mausoleum's "bunker-like entrance [...] flanked by two supremely muscular, larger-than-life Viking warriors" and a massive concrete monumentalism (191-93), rather than "operationalization" it seems.

It is of course natural in an edited volume that the contributing authors should part ways on theoretical points, even key ones, and that variety is in itself desirable. But it is symptomatic of the inevitably variable quality of chapters in such a volume generally, and more specifically here the variation in theoretical cogency between chapters. Some of the authors are well-versed in the theory and historiography of fascism and they provide theoretically advanced discussions that advance the topic as introduced by Thomas, (Geoff Eley's own chapter, "Nazism, everydayness, and spectacle" stands out), while others only engage obliquely with the framework set by the editors, or indeed diverge from it. The concept of a "portable fascism," non-typological, decentred and historically dynamic, is definitely one useful tool for approaching the subject, but it has perhaps left the collection vulnerable to theoretical and semantic slippages: there is particularly a tendency to presume an equation between aggressive nationalism, imperialism, and fascism, which becomes especially problematic when fascism is no longer tethered to a historical-semiotic origin point such as Mussolini's Italian Fascism.

Another concern is the lack of transnationalism in the chapters, a historical approach which is clearly invaluable to a global history of fascism, and which has advanced with leaps and bounds in the past decade. Both Thomas and Eley acknowledge the crucial role of transnational dynamics in the spread of fascism and the developments of its peculiarly ad hoc, ragtag qualities, in visual terms and otherwise, but the essays themselves often leave this out. For example, none of the chapters dealing with the traditional regime cases, Italy and Germany, of



which there are three, take a transnational perspective into account, which could have significantly enriched the volume as a whole. By way of exception, Paul Barclay's fascinating "Carved in stone" focuses particularly on architectural constructions between Manchuria and Japan, highlighting how Japanese fascism was not attached to any particular event or person, and did not radiate outward and downward from Tokyo, but rather across a vast geographic expanse from China to Japan, significantly affecting its character and operationalization (47-48). Last but not least, the volume remarkably lacks any case studies from South America, an area subject to a rich and up to date scholarship on fascism, with significant transnational ties across the globe – an omission sorely felt here, especially among the European case studies.

All the same, this volume provides a fascinating selection, with elucidating global case studies, and generally of a high quality. While many will no doubt hesitate at *Visualizing fascism's* overarching conception of its subject, it should be of great interest and value to any student of fascism.

#### **About the reviewer**

Dr. Nathaniël Kunkeler is an independent historian based in the U.K., studying the radical Right in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. They received their Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge (U.K.) in 2019, with a thesis on the construction of myths in Swedish and Dutch fascism during the 1930s, due to be published as a monograph by Bloomsbury. They have also published articles on aspects of Swedish and Dutch fascism in various journals, including *The Historical Journal* and *Contemporary European History*. They currently work on a research project exploring the transnational experiences and connections of rightist military volunteers in foreign conflicts since the Russian Revolution and supervise undergraduates in modern European history.



**Review**

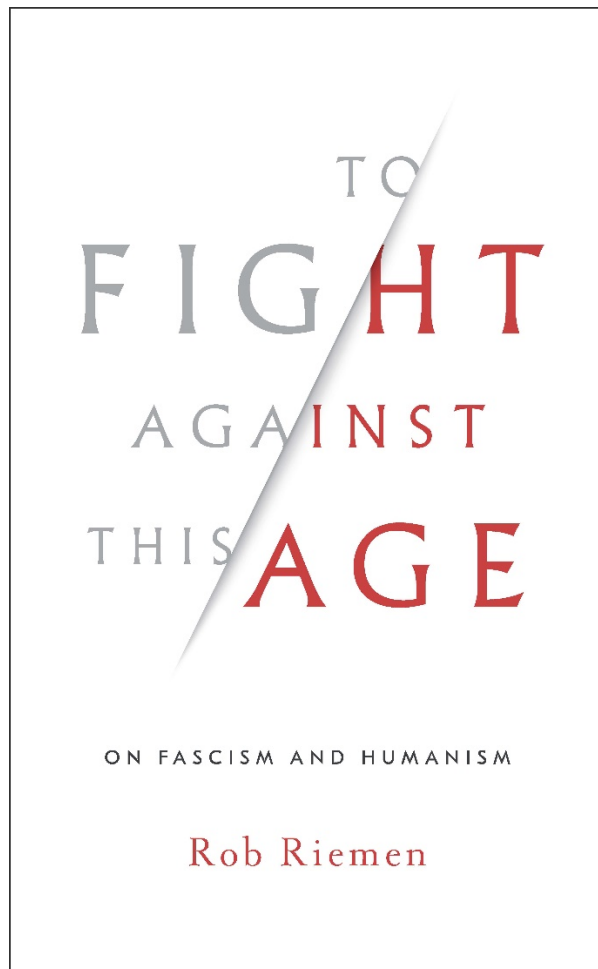
**Rob Riemen:**

***To fight against this age: On fascism and humanism***

New York: W. W. Norton, 2018. 171 p.

ISBN 9780393635867

*Reviewed by Krystyna Henke*



Ten years ago, when cultural philosopher Rob Riemen wrote the original, Dutch language version of “The eternal return of fascism” (*‘De eeuwige terugkeer van het fascisme’*), the first of two essays contained in *To fight against this age: On fascism and humanism*, the criticism of Dutch intellectuals was withering. They asked, how dare he suggest that fascism was on the rise again, and especially in the Netherlands? Ostensibly embodied in Dutch politician Geert Wilders’ *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (‘Party for freedom’), this anti-Islam party was merely populist and, yes, conservative, as Riemen was told in response to his book, but hardly equivalent to Adolf Hitler’s *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (‘National socialist German worker’s party’) or Benito Mussolini’s *Partito Fascista Repubblicano* (‘Republican fascist party’). Riemen points out that Wilders’ party promotes an undercurrent of violence, an element that established scholars of fascism like Payne (1995) and Paxton (2004) describe as an identifying marker. However, this appeared not to be a shared concern among the Dutch elite, who took Riemen to task for his use of the term. Undeterred by the technical quibbles of what the definition of fascism is, Riemen warns that democratic society, and indeed humanity and civilization are at risk of being destroyed by “the deadly bacillus called fascism” (Riemen 2018, 86).

Riemen turns out to be a prescient voice. In 2016, Thierry Baudet’s populist political party *Forum voor democratie* (‘Forum for democracy’) materialized in the Netherlands as a more polished, sophisticated, and dangerous right-wing variety than the one headed by Wilders. Baudet espouses a nation whose so-called former glory will be restored by implementing an ultra-nationalist, xenophobic, racist and misogynistic program. *To fight against this age: On fascism and humanism* is not just a warning of the threat of fascism in the Netherlands. The book can also be applied, for example, as a relevant and apt analysis of the Trump presidency’s authoritarian and fascist tendencies. Tangible fascist threats to democracy have emerged globally, including in Brazil, in Hungary, in Poland, Turkey, and Russia, while in Germany, France, England, and Italy growing far-right political parties and movements like *Alternative für Deutschland* (‘Alternative for Germany’), *Rassemblement national* (‘National rally’), Patriotic Alternative, *Fratelli d’Italia* (‘Brothers of Italy’), *CasaPound Italia* (‘House of Pound Italy’), and *Lega* (‘League’) demonstrate a significant neofascist interest with a socially and politically potentially destabilizing effect in the future.

The cultural critic Henry Giroux (2017) points out that discussions about who is or is not a fascist serve as “a tactical diversion” (260). The real issue, he says, is how to engage in resistance to the growing waves of authoritarianism. Riemen’s strategy is to offer a warning through the first essay in which he bluntly states: “We were supposed to learn the lessons of history” (57). These lessons were not learned, he concludes. Still, the second essay, “The return of Europa: Her tears,

deeds, and dreams,” which is written like a novella with a plot, dialogue, and descriptions of characters and nature, provides hope that through culture and education the soul of Europe can be restored. Thomas Mann, Paul Valéry, and José Ortega y Gasset, whose works Riemen relies on repeatedly, identified “a crisis of civilization caused by the loss of spiritual values” (71). Akin to Nietzsche’s discussion of nihilism, a state brought on by the death of God, political theorist Wendy Brown (2019) similarly ties its role to the rise of antidemocratic politics and neofascism.

Our task, writes Riemen, is to rebuild the lost humanism in a weakened democracy through education, philosophy and the arts, thereby restoring civic values and overcoming what Brown identifies as nihilism’s partnership with neoliberalism, excessive rationality and what Riemen feels is blind reliance on technology. This will remain an ongoing process, one that is never finished, but requires constant care. Instead of being in denial about the re-emergence of the fascist spirit in the mainstream, Riemen encourages awareness among members of the Left that their embrace of Enlightenment values blinds them to “the will to power” (21) and susceptibility to fascist ideology. As part of the refusal to recognize the return of fascism, he also fingers widespread ignorance in a society gripped by fear caused by a “sense of crisis, economic insecurity, and the threat of terror or war” (21). Perhaps the most important tool in surmounting the denial of fascism’s steady gains, according to Riemen, is the embrace of the perspective and understanding that the humanities and the arts bring to a complex society that appears to be attacking itself.

One would like to agree with Riemen that culture is the enlightening antidote to the darkness of a fascist mindset. Nevertheless, poetry and literature, music and all the other arts, philosophy and education, too, can be coopted by fascism. What then? As Riemen suggests through his second essay in *To fight against this age: On fascism and humanism*, the solution may simply lie in the act of dialogue, of listening, and reflecting.

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**About the reviewer**

Krystyna Henke is editor-in-chief of the *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies/Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises*. She has researched the paradoxical roles of cultural activity in Nazi concentration camps and has interviewed Holocaust survivors, including Dutch-born Jewish violinist and trumpeter Louis Bannet, about whom she wrote an article published in 1998 in the *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies/Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises*. She wrote narration and liner notes for the documentary audio book *Nobel voices for disarmament: 1901-2001* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings/United Nations, 2007). A broadcast and print journalist, her work has appeared in Canada on *CBC*, *TVOntario*, *The National Post*, and *Vrij Nederland* in the Netherlands. In 2019, she presented an academic paper at the *International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies* at Stony Brook University (New York, U.S.) on the link between literary journalism and narrative inquiry in qualitative research. Currently, Henke is working on her doctoral degree in the Joint Ph.D. Program in Educational Studies at Brock University (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada) under the supervision of Professor Fiona Blaikie. Her dissertation research will cast a lens on music education in the West Bank in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories. She will focus on children in the refugee camps, framed by approaches to teaching the violin, viola, and 'cello as high art contextualized by the pedagogical canon of music education in the West.

**Review**  
**Pieter van Os:**  
***Liever dier dan mens: Een overlevingsverhaal***  
Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2019. 368 p.  
ISBN 9789044636710

*Reviewed by Krystyna Henke*



Pieter van Os received the 2020 Brusse Award and the 2020 Libris History Prize for writing *Liever dier dan mens: Een overlevingsverhaal* ('I'd rather be an animal than a human: A story of survival'). Honoured as the best Dutch language journalistic book of the year, as well as the best historical book of the year, it is a well-researched and self-reflexive account by the author of the remarkable life journey of Mala Rivka Kizel Shlafer, a Holocaust survivor. Kizel Shlafer, a resident of Amstelveen in the Netherlands since the 1970s, was born in 1926 into a large ultra-orthodox Jewish family in Poland, escaped the Warsaw ghetto and, against all odds, survived the genocide while living among Poles and Nazi Germans under various assumed identities during World War II. Losing her entire family to the Nazis' *Endlösung der Judenfrage* ('final solution of the Jewish question'), she alone remained alive to recall the individual members of her extended Yiddish-speaking Hasidic family and their way of life. Interestingly, because as a child she happened to attend a progressive school in Warsaw that was founded on the principles of respectful multiculturalism, while maintaining her own culture and religion she was exposed to Polish literature and Catholic prayers, learning to speak impeccable Polish, all of which she drew on to evade capture during the Nazi regime. In pivotal situations it became a tool of survival, enabling her to recite from memory Polish poetry and prayers, assuaging any doubts that she wasn't the charming blond and blue-eyed non-Jewish Pole (or German) she claimed to be.

The scale of the Nazi genocidal fixation that snuffed out the lives of millions of European Jews was unprecedented (Hilberg 1961). As shocking as the *shoah* ('total annihilation') was, unfortunately, other mass atrocities and genocides against ethnic minorities have followed suit elsewhere since then (Adelman 2003; Khan 2000; Shelton 2005). In trying to understand the Holocaust, the question of Nazi atrocities as historically unique has been a point of contention among some scholars, as seen in the German *Historikerstreit* ('conflict of historians') in which the Nazi crimes have been variously debated as unique or comparable to other events, even at the risk of trivializing the Holocaust altogether (Rosenberg & Silverman 1992). Providing context to better comprehend how and why the Holocaust happened is a sensitive issue, sometimes representative of a political agenda (sparing German pride and identity), but often a matter of nuance or theoretical positioning. For example, rather than viewing the Nazis as having been unusually cruel, with personalities that lent themselves to the mass murders, as has been Theodor Adorno's (1950) explanation, Zygmunt Bauman (1989) challenged the focus on an authoritarian personality, suggesting also that the emphasis "on the *Germanness* of the crime" (xii, italics in original) lets others off the hook. Instead, Bauman proposed that the favourable conditions for the Holocaust lay in a modernist society with its penchant for rationality, whereby morality could be logically explained away. Noting that Bauman's concern is with



*het systeem* ('the system') (181), Van Os contrasts it with that of Christopher Browning (1992), who insisted on the issue of individual responsibility. As Van Os writes: "*Iedereen kán massamoordenaar worden. Maar niet iedereen wordt het*" ('Everyone can become a mass murderer. But not everyone will') (181). Nevertheless, while it is tempting to think about guilt as the result of individual choice, the role of hegemony in how norms and values are understood by individuals is undeniable. Not wanting the root of the problem to be left unattended for the lingering peril it posed, Bauman aimed to have people remain alert to future dangers, not become complacent that the menace had passed. In that sense, Holocaust memory serves as a continuous warning, containing a message:

about the way we live today – about the quality of the institutions on which we rely for our safety, about the validity of the criteria with which we measure the propriety of our own conduct and of the patterns of interaction we accept and consider normal [...]. (Bauman 1989, xii)

However, Bauman worried that assigning guilt, locating and isolating it, thereby "exonerating everyone else" (xii), and not taking collective responsibility for the breakdown in humanity and civilization would render the message to conduct ongoing checks on the health of society ineffectual.

Van Os, knowing the complexities he is facing in providing interpretive background information against which Kizel Shlafer's story unfolds, generally shies away from providing unilateral answers, asking questions instead. With a nod to subjectivity in memory work, he writes: "*Wat we vertellen over ons eigen verleden zegt veel over het heden*" ('How we narrate our own past says a lot about the present') (348). In a successful attempt at transparency, he deliberately makes himself part of the narrative, telling the reader how he went about researching elements of the biography by digging in archives, by consulting the literature, as well as by interviewing Kizel Shlafer and others, and by reflecting on what he heard and thought. Although not a scholarly work, *Liever dier dan mens* offers a hybrid model of how to investigate and narrate a powerful life experience through the literary journalism genre, using novelistic writing techniques of dialogue and scene setting that help to evoke a spellbinding, yet factual reality flanked by an aesthetic and emotional immediacy of place, time, and subject. At the same time, the book is grounded in a significant amount of pertinent literature, giving the story a universality. Each of its chronologically built twenty chapters – all named after a distinct river or a body of water, as if to suggest, after Heraclitus' *panta rhei* ('everything is in flux'), the meandering, changing force of life – ends with a section that roughly functions as endnotes, providing interested researchers with helpful details on sources. As the author describes his investigative travels through

Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine, meeting people and visiting the places that are part of Kizel Shlafer's tale of survival, he frequently mentions his eagerness to explore what in his own estimation may be considered to be tangents during his search for witnesses, buildings, streets, and other confirmation and enlargement of the particulars in Kizel Shlafer's biography. He is looking to find something beyond what he knows, beyond the obvious, beyond the formulaic, though he is not sure if he is on the right track, and he questions himself as he probes. It is an effective strategy that opens up Kizel Shlafer's chronicle to wider issues, such as the prevalence of hardcore and deadly anti-semitism in Poland, not just over the past century, but today. An accomplished journalist with a political science degree, Van Os provides a historical perspective, explaining that the Jewish presence in Poland initially came about because of the country's highly tolerant stance towards cultural diversity and religious acceptance. As Jews suffered pogroms and deportations elsewhere in Europe, beginning around the year 1000, Jews flocked to "*het joodse paradijs*" ('the Jewish paradise') (231), which is what Poland was called. Several hundred years later, by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, writes Van Os, two-thirds of all Jews in the world lived in Poland. However, in a few decades, as the Polish kingdom would see its demise and its nation would temporarily become part of the empires of Russia, Prussia, and the Habsburg monarchy, Polish leadership had little influence on any attempts to thwart growing attacks on Jews and of sustaining the increasingly fragile ideal of a multicultural society.

Previously stationed in Warsaw for four years as an Eastern Europe correspondent for two major Dutch newspapers, Van Os deftly weaves insightful contextual material into the gripping tale of how young Mala manoeuvred through numerous life-threatening situations during Hitler's rule and in the postwar period when Jews were viciously targeted by Poles, hastening their exodus to Palestine and what would eventually be the new state of Israel in 1948. Here, Van Os points out the bitter irony of the persecuted Jews becoming part of the persecuting new settlers in Palestine, noting that ethnic cleansings followed Kizel Shlafer to the Middle East, as her husband Nathan Shlafer, for example, also a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor, is offered a job as a guard of a freshly erected ghetto surrounded by barbed wire and filled with displaced Palestinian locals in the Shlafer's family new hometown of Lod, previously known as *al-Lydd* or Lydda, a city that would forever mark the Israelis as cruel perpetrators. In an all-too-familiar pattern of ethnic cleansing and violent displacement, Van Os discusses how the Israeli army had forced Lydda's original residents, Muslims as well as Christians, out of their homes to make room for the Jewish state. Nathan refuses to become a guard of the ghetto. He has not forgotten his own experiences in the

Nazi-established Łódź ghetto in Poland. In time, when Kizel Shlafer, her husband, and their children have an opportunity to move to the Netherlands, they take it.

Towards the end of the book, Kizel Shlafer reveals that she has often wondered what Jews would have done had the situation been reversed, “*als het omgekeerd was geweest, als de Duitsers alle katholieken hadden willen vermoorden en niet de joden, wat hadden de joden dan gedaan?*” (‘if it had been the other way around, if the Germans had wanted to murder all the Catholics and not the Jews, what would Jews have done in that case?’) (356). Her question not only demonstrates her ability to imagine herself in someone else’s shoes, it also suggests that victims, bystanders, and perpetrators may not be immutable categories, ultimately freeing her from any potential or residual feelings of anger, or of wanting revenge.

Mala (Marilka) Rivka Kizel Shlafer passed away in Amstelveen on November 17, 2020, at the age of 94 and was buried the following day, not far from the freshwater lake IJmeer, in the village of Muiderberg, the site of the oldest and largest Jewish cemetery in the Netherlands.

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## Review

**Eddy de Wind:**

***Last stop Auschwitz:***

***My story of survival from within the camp***

**David Colmer (trans.)**

London: Doubleday, 2020. 261 p.

ISBN 9780857526830b (hb); 9780857526847 (tpb)

**Daphne Geismar:**

***Invisible years: A family's collected account of separation  
and survival during the Holocaust in the Netherlands***

Boston: David R. Godine, 2020. 248 p.

ISBN 9781567926590

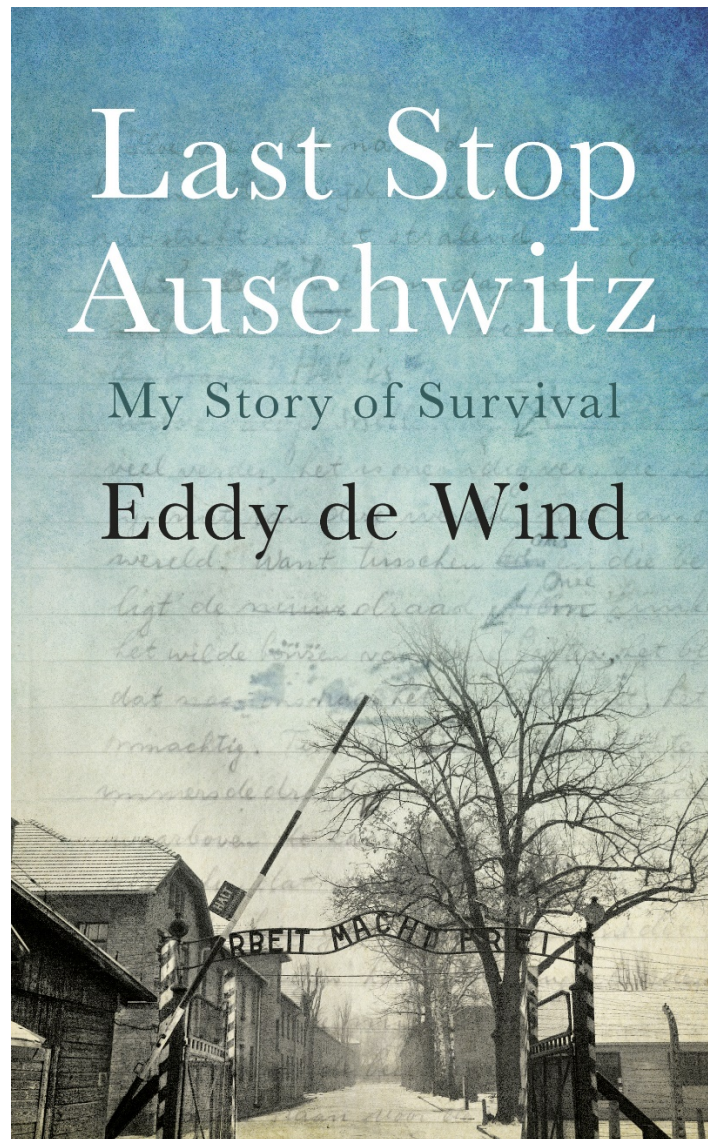
*Reviewed by Michiel Horn*

In a translator's note at the end of *Last stop Auschwitz*, David Colmer, one of the top Dutch-English translators working today, writes "how much of a shame it is that this book wasn't translated thirty or fifty or sixty years ago when the author could have been consulted [...]." Colmer is right. It is a shame for other reasons, too, not the least of which is that if it had been translated soon after World War II, this book probably would have had a large readership in the English-speaking world.

An informative "Note on the author and the text," written by members of Eliazar (Eddy) de Wind's family, describes him as the son of a prosperous, non-observant petit bourgeois family in Den Haag, where he was born in 1916. He was studying medicine at Leiden when the Germans invaded. De Wind was able to complete his studies with the help of his teachers, and he became the last Jewish student to get a medical degree from Leiden during World War II.

He went into hiding in Den Haag in 1942. An attempt to flee to Switzerland with his then fiancée failed, and sometime later in 1942 he volunteered to serve as a physician in Westerbork transit camp, on the understanding that his mother, who was already interned there, would not be deported. In fact, although De Wind

did not yet know this, she had already been sent to Auschwitz, where she was murdered on arrival. Eddy de Wind did his best to make a life of sorts in Westerbork. Having fallen in love with a German Jewish nurse nine years his junior, Frieda (Friedel) Komornik, he broke off his engagement to his fiancée and instead married Frieda in Westerbork. In spite of the assurances he had received from the Jewish Council before he went to Westerbork, he and his wife were deported to Auschwitz in September 1943.



He was still there when SS personnel abandoned the camp in January 1945. He and Friedel had both survived, but she was part of a group of inmates who were taken west in forced marches, away from the advancing Red Army. For the next few months De Wind had no idea what had become of his wife. He looked after the desperately sick people left behind by the guards and recorded his recollections of the harrowing sixteen months he had spent in Auschwitz, shaping them into a novel whose protagonist is a physician named Hans van Dam. Although it lacks the immediacy and barely controlled terror of the diary that David Koker kept in Vught (published in English under the title *At the edge of the abyss*), this novelistic memoir, written while De Wind was still in the camp, comes close. It was not affected by reading the accounts of others, whether in the form of memoirs or histories, which makes it a stunningly direct and effective portrayal of the horrors of Auschwitz. It also testifies to the capacity of people to love each other under the most difficult conditions.

The impact of the book is augmented by the addition of "Confrontation with death," an essay that De Wind wrote in 1949. Appearing in Dutch in that year, it was published in an edited English translation in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* in 1968. It is a key contribution to the study of concentration-camp syndrome. War-related traumas, in fact, were at the centre of De Wind's psychoanalytical practice until his death in 1987.

De Wind returned to the Netherlands in July 1945 and was soon afterwards reunited with his beloved Friedel. However, the traumas from which they were both suffering undermined their marriage and they divorced in 1957. De Wind then married a non-Jewish woman, with whom he had three children (his marriage with Friedel had been childless). Some members of the Jewish community saw his second marriage as a betrayal and, sadly, stopped speaking to him. He continued in his practice, and in time extended it to the children of people suffering from war trauma. He had suffered much, but he was able to help others.

*Last stop Auschwitz* was first published in its original Dutch in early 1946, but because the publisher went bankrupt soon afterward, the book reached merely a small audience. Only in 1980 did the book make a second appearance with the Van Genneep publishing house and although it enjoyed some success, it did not remain in print. The English translation had to wait another forty years.

Unless readers of this book know German, they will need to make frequent use of an eight-page glossary, Colmer having decided it was better on the whole not to translate the German terms De Wind used. The biographical note supplied by members of De Wind's family is very valuable, but readers can safely skip the afterword by the novelist John Boyne, which adds little or nothing to De Wind's story.







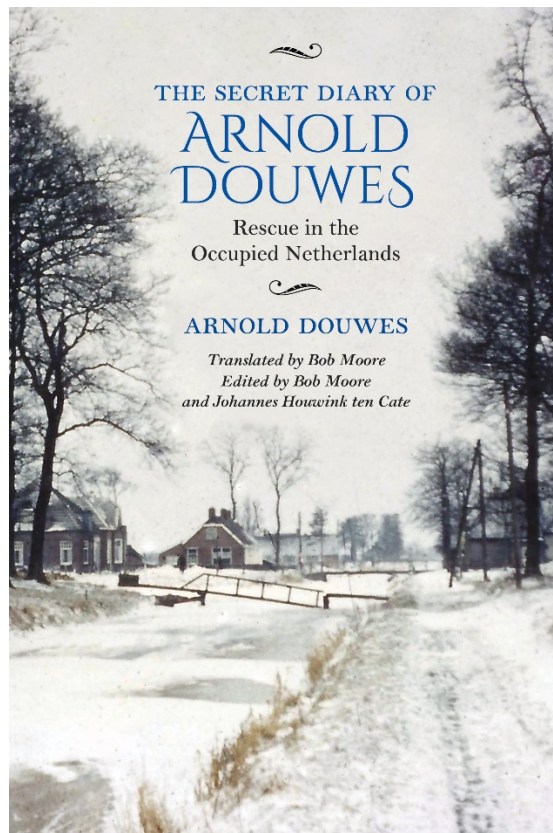
The compiler is the granddaughter of Erwin and Grete Geismar, who had moved to Amsterdam in the 1920s, and Chaim and Fifi de Zoete-Polak. The De Zoete family occupies the largest space in this book, because five of the stories are told by and about them, the parents and their three daughters, Mirjam (Daphne's mother), Judith and Hadassah. Other principals are Erwin Geismar, who was apprehended while in hiding in 1943 and murdered in Auschwitz later that year; his son David, who later married Mirjam; Nathan Cohen, who married Judith; and Zigi Mandel, a Polish Holocaust survivor who married Hadassah in Israel. Some of the material is reproduced from letters and diaries, most notably one that Erwin briefly kept in 1943, but the majority of it is drawn from interviews with the principals and on occasion with fellow survivors or helpers.

After German forces invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, Jews, both Dutch and pre-war refugees from Germany and Austria, were increasingly penalized and isolated from the rest of Dutch society. In April 1942, all Jews over the age of six were ordered to wear a yellow Star of David, and by July successive groups of Jews were required to report for eventual transport to "work camps" in the East, passing through Westerbork. (Newly constructed in early 1943, a concentration camp at Vught had an auxiliary function as a transit camp.) Although it was not yet known what was happening in these eastern camps, and few Netherlands, Jewish or gentile, were as yet able to gauge the full extent of Nazi hatred and depravity, thousands of Jews decided to avoid deportation and sought hiding places, for themselves but even more for their children. After all, what would they do in work camps? They became *onderduikers* ('people in hiding'), that splendidly evocative word for which no English translation really suffices.

The recollections gathered in Geismar's book capture the anguish felt by parents as they parted from their children, not knowing when, if ever, they would see them again. (As a rule, children were hidden separately; the family of Nathan Cohen, who hid with a policeman and his family in a small community in Gelderland, was an exception, as was Anne Frank's family.) It captures even more eloquently the confusion and anxiety felt by children who were separated from their parents, and the difficulties they underwent in hiding. Some of the illegal foster parents were warmly welcoming, others less so. The motives – Christian charity, humanist empathy, common decency (not nearly as common as it should have been), hostility to the occupiers, need for the financial compensation that came with hiding people – varied, as did personalities. And the entire experience played out against a background of the ever-present possibility of capture in a *razzia*, a police raid, or through betrayal, sometimes on ideological grounds, often for financial gain. In order to minimize the danger of detection – fatal to those who were hiding, dangerous to those hiding them – *onderduikers* were moved from refuge to refuge at irregular intervals. This was particularly disturbing to

**Review**  
**Arnold Douwes:**  
***The secret diary of Arnold Douwes:***  
***Rescue in the occupied Netherlands***  
**Bob Moore (trans.)**  
**Bob Moore & Johannes Houwink ten Cate (eds.)**  
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. 339 p.  
ISBN 9780253044181

*Reviewed by Megan Koreman*



Between July 1943 and October 1944, Arnold Douwes led a network of rescuers in and around the village of Nieuwlande in Drenthe, not far from the northeastern border with Germany or the transit camp at Westerbork. During that time he slept in haystacks and holes in the ground, ate what he could scrounge and washed when he could. He also kept a diary that he buried in pieces in jam jars and retrieved after the war.

Bob Moore, a professor at the University of Sheffield and prolific writer on the Dutch resistance, has very ably translated the diary. He and Johannes Houwink ten Cate, a professor at the University of Amsterdam, have contextualized it with maps and photos. The footnotes and glossary alone give us a mini tour of the Netherlands under occupation, including the panoply of German and Dutch armed units menacing the population and the various slang terms used to identify them. The extensive introduction provides a much needed overview of the occupation of the rural Netherlands in English.

The son of a pastor, Douwes lived with an iron conviction of right and wrong that bedeviled his relationships with others but served him well during the Nazi occupation. Douwes never doubted his moral obligation to rescue the persecuted, whether they were Jews, Dutch resisters on the run, Dutchmen hiding from the forced labor draft, or escaped French or Russian POWs. He did, however, find himself unable to trust a deserter from the SS. Douwes expected the same high moral standards from all his neighbors and was not above browbeating them into doing the right thing. More than once he convinced someone to shelter a fugitive for one or two nights and then neglected to take the *onderduiker* ('person in hiding') elsewhere. This led to rather a lot of unpleasantness for Douwes personally as he fielded complaints, but he stuck to his principles.

In addition to reports on his illegal work, Douwes captures a sense of the quotidian under occupation. He describes the excavation and furnishing of hiding places in the woods as well as shortages. Being a church-going man, he also reports on noteworthy sermons and the illegal doings of the local *dominees* ('pastors'). Other resistance activity in the area, especially raids on prisons and ration card offices and the burning of collaborators' farms, get full descriptions. In 1944 Douwes adds reports of Allied aircraft overhead and any crashes in the neighborhood. After he was involved in hiding an American aviator, Douwes kept a pair of coveralls handy. Whenever he saw a parachute or plummeting airplane, Douwes got on his bicycle with the coveralls to see if he could find any aviators in need of a disguise.

Douwes also includes such homely details as birthday parties, the weather, and the progress of a scheme to bake rye bread. Children appear at several times, mostly as Douwes takes them to new hiding places on the back of his bicycle. He was particularly charmed by a five-year-old boy who kept correcting himself when

he called the Germans “*Moffen*” (translated by Moore as ‘Krauts’). Good dinners with bacon and fresh pancakes always merited note in those hungry times.

The entire neighborhood appears to have known what Douwes was doing. He did, after all, ask quite a lot of them to shelter *onderduikers* or to donate to the cause. He loathed asking for money and was much happier selling postcards made by an artistic fugitive living under the floorboards. In the late summer of 1944, they could barely keep up with the demand for their postcards of Queen Wilhelmina. Neighbors regularly stopped Douwes on his bicycle to warn him about check points or raids ahead. Indeed, he felt comfortable enough to file a complaint with the local police regarding the theft of blankets and such from his hiding place in the woods. It turned out that the policeman himself had found them, figured they belonged to Douwes and his colleagues, and took them for safekeeping. But not everyone approved of his rescue work. He received threatening letters telling him to stop bringing danger into the community, apparently from neighbors who were not collaborators but who were not willing to resist.

Douwes prepared his diary for publication twice during his lifetime, both in the Netherlands and in Israel, but without seeing it reach print. At least part of the reason has to be that this is an honest book. Scribbling on scraps in the thick of the war, Douwes understandably spent more ink on venting his frustration at uncooperative *onderduikers* than on the pleasant ones who did all they could to help their hosts and themselves. A handful of Jewish *onderduikers* come up again and again because they alienated yet another host by demanding tea at exactly 3:05, or by sending letters revealing their hosts’ address, or, most outrageously, by consorting with “Krauts.” Such people endangered not only themselves but the entire network of people who would have been safe if they had not opened their homes to strangers. They also caused a great deal of trouble for Douwes, who bitterly regretted the loss of every hiding place. They were always hard to find and increasingly in demand.

Douwes applied the same candor to his gentile neighbors. There were those who did what Douwes needed by opening their homes or sharing their goods. But there were also those who did not. In Douwes’ opinion the majority of the Dutch failed to do their duty through cowardice and moral slackness. He mentions more than once that a *Radio Oranje* broadcast from London sickened him with its lies when it spoke of the “heroic” attitude of the Dutch population. From Douwes’ perspective, there was a distinct lack of self-sacrifice or heroism among the Dutch.

Resisters in the Dutch-Paris network who rescued Jews and others in Belgium and France also had trouble finding hiding places for fugitives and also had to repair the damage done by fugitives who acted selfishly and without any sense of the risks that strangers were taking on their behalf. Douwes was undoubtedly accurate in his portrayal of the shortcomings of some people. But at

the time that he tried to publish his diary, such observations did not meld with the official stories of the war. Jewish survivors, for example, would have found the behavior of the few difficult *onderduikers* to be painfully similar to Nazi stereotypes. Furthermore, the myths of national resistance that legitimized postwar governments did not leave room for unflattering accounts of a population afraid to resist. Douwes chronicles the courage and resourcefulness of an extensive network of men and women, but his complaints give the impression of a country of bystanders. That image clashed with the official Dutch story of a nation divided between “*goed*” and “*fout*” (‘patriotic’ and ‘treasonous’, referring to one’s attitude during the occupation).

The publication of Douwes’ diary in 2019 indicates a welcome turn to a more nuanced attitude toward civilian life during the war. The immediate benefit is to demonstrate just how terribly difficult the occupation was for Dutch civilians and to make that history available to readers of English. From the time the diary begins in July 1943, the Germans and their collaborators rampage through Douwes’ corner of Drenthe. There are raids, shootings, reprisals and thefts of the sort that are commonly thought to have happened only in eastern Europe. Nowhere in France did the population suffer from this much deprivation and fear in 1943, and very few places in France suffered the sort of terror that the Germans and their collaborators inflicted on the civilian population in Drenthe during and immediately after the failed Allied Operation Market Garden centered on Arnhem. The reader is spared the horrors of the last six months of the occupation of the Netherlands above the rivers only because Douwes was arrested in October 1944, before the famine.

*The secret diary of Arnold Douwes* provides a rare portrait of what it meant to resist day in and day out and is as close to a record of the psychology of a resister as one can get. It is an important addition to the few books about the Netherlands during the war available in English. Despite Douwes’ grouching, the remarkable community of rescuers in and around Nieuwlande deserves to be recognized alongside the handful of other resistance communities such as Chambon-sur-Lignon in France.

### **About the reviewer**

Dr. Megan Koreman has taught European history at Texas Tech University (Lubbock, Texas, U.S.) and the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.). She has published two histories of civilians during the Second World War: *The expectation of justice: France 1944-1946* (Duke University Press, 1999) and *The escape line: How the ordinary heroes of Dutch-Paris resisted the Nazi occupation of Western Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2018). *The escape line* appeared in

Dutch as *Gewone helden: de Dutch-Paris ontsnappingslijn* (Boom, 2016). She keeps a blog about resistance at [www.dutchparisblog.com](http://www.dutchparisblog.com).



children, who were apt to think that the family they were leaving behind wanted to be rid of them. (I have spoken with someone who as a teenaged *onderduiker* stayed with several families and found the successive separations very stressful.)

All five members of the De Zoete family survived the war and were reunited; the Cohens survived as well. But David Geismar lost his father, and all of them lost close relatives as well as many friends and acquaintances. One page lists the names of 61 family members who died during the Holocaust, the great majority of them murdered in Auschwitz and Sobibor. The list forms a grim background to the stories of the survivors. Moreover, the anxieties that afflicted the survivors while they were hiding left their mark on post-war lives, variously lived in the Netherlands, Israel, and the United States. Daphne Geismar deserves high praise for putting together this splendid book, so that those of us who have never had to undergo the experiences described can get some sense of what they were like. Together, these two books form a welcome and important addition to our knowledge of the Dutch experience of the Holocaust.

### **About the reviewer**

Michiel Horn is professor emeritus of history at Glendon College, York University (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), and past president of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Netherlandic Studies (CAANS). Among his publications is the translation, with John Irons, of *Dagboek geschreven in Vught* by David Koker. Edited by Robert Jan van Pelt, it appeared in English as *At the edge of the abyss: A concentration camp diary 1943-1944* (Northwestern University Press, 2012).



## Review

**Jeroen De Bruyn & Joop van Wijk:**  
***Anne Frank, the untold story: The hidden truth about Elli***  
***Vossen, the youngest helper of the secret annex***

**Tess Stoop (trans.)**

Laag-Soeren: Bep Voskuyl Producties, 2018. 268 p.

ISBN 9789082901306

*Reviewed by Charlotte Schallié*



This recent publication sets out to retrace the life story of Elisabeth (“Bep”) Voskuijl (1919-1983), one of the four Dutch rescuers who sheltered Anne Frank and seven other persecuted Jews in the rear annex of 263 Prinsengracht in Amsterdam. Whereas Miep Gies, Johannes Kleiman and Victor Kugler (who emigrated to Toronto in 1955) became well-known public figures, Bep Voskuijl kept a low profile for most of her life and only reluctantly agreed to provide eyewitness testimonies. The two authors, Belgian journalist Jeroen De Bruyn and Joop van Wijk (who is Bep Voskuijl’s youngest son) present several narrative threads: Bep’s own modest upbringing, her employment at Opekta, a company which was under the ownership of Otto Frank, her friendship with Anne Frank, her rescue efforts, and her postwar struggle to come to terms with the fact that she was unable to save those who trusted her with their lives. As the subtitle suggests, the book also advances a betrayal narrative that, as it cannot be corroborated by other evidence, remains speculative. It is suggested in the penultimate chapter that Bep largely kept the past to herself because she knew the identity of the Nazi informant who revealed the hiding place to the secret police: according to De Bruyn and Van Wijk, this person was Bep’s own sister Nelly Voskuijl (1923-2001). Ultimately, it will be up to the reader to decide if the weight of evidence pointing at Nelly Voskuijl is substantial enough to render the authors’ claim credible.

Given the voluminous amount of literature and research on Anne Frank, the authors are first and foremost tasked to demonstrate that their publication sheds a new light on the (hi)story of the failed hiding mission. Their focus on Bep Voskuijl accomplishes this objective as it presents the biography of a remarkably courageous rescuer who is undeservedly not widely known. In reconstructing Bep Voskuijl’s life, the authors consult a broad range of primary sources that are available in the collections of the Anne Frank Foundation, the NIOD Institute of War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the National Archives of the Netherlands, the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach* and the *Landgericht Lübeck*, among others. Furthermore, the authors consulted personal documents that remain in the private collection of Joop van Wijk and conducted oral history interviews with family members, such as Bep’s sister Diny Voskuijl (b. 1932), and her former fiancé, Bertus Hulsman. Bep herself officially testified to the authenticity of Anne Frank’s diaries but gave few public interviews and shared her personal memories with only a small number of confidants. (According to Joop van Wijk, his mother corresponded with both Miep Gies and Otto Frank in the early sixties. Yet only very few of her letters to Otto Frank have survived.)

The earlier chapters illustrate how the well-known rescuers (Gies, Kleiman and Kugler) were instrumental in saving Otto Frank’s two companies in 1940. Although Otto Frank had to officially relinquish his companies to Jan Gies (Miep’s boyfriend) and Victor Kugler, the latter agreed that Otto Frank remained in charge

of his business that had been moved to 263 Prinsengracht. These chapters also give an insightful overview of the slew of anti-Jewish measures that were implemented in the wake of the German occupation. In “Our Duty (1940-1942),” the authors elaborate on how the initial plans for hiding were conceived in May and early June of 1942 between Otto Frank, Johannes Kleiman and Victor Kugler. Shortly after, the three men confided in Bep – who was at that time 23 years old – and initiated her into their rescue plans. On July 6<sup>th</sup>, the Frank family moved into the rear annex; the Van Pels family arrived one week later (they were joined by Fritz Pfeffer in November). Starting on July 15<sup>th</sup>, Dutch Jews were being deported to concentration and extermination camps in Germany and German-occupied Poland. What followed were “[t]he twenty-five most radical months in Bep’s life” (52); they are carefully reconstructed in the next four chapters referencing personal letters and eyewitness testimonies. Bep, who was mainly responsible to source and deliver food to the eight people in hiding, also made sure that the hidiers were intellectually stimulated (she signed up a few of them for correspondence courses in stenography and Latin). Bep also supplied the hidiers with small items and artefacts (flowers, postcards, and the like) that provided a link to the outside world. Bep was forced to keep all of her activities a secret that she could only share with close family members. One of her confidants was her father who worked at the warehouse at 263 Prinsengracht and ended up building the bookcase that hid the entrance to the secret annex. Various anecdotes reveal how Bep oftentimes went upstairs, joined the hidiers for lunch, and skillfully mediated disputes. A number of primary sources also suggest that Bep developed a close bond with Anne Frank who confided in her on some occasions (Bep is portrayed under the pseudonym of “Elli Vossen” in Anne Frank’s published diary). The ensuing chapter titled “The defeat (1944)” reconstructs the events on August 4, 1944; it was the day on which the secret annex was exposed. Given the importance of the betrayal narrative espoused in this book, this chapter meticulously details the events unfolding on location. The leader of the raid, Karl Josef Silberbauer, refrained from interrogating Bep (although the authors do not profess to have an answer for this procedural anomaly; it is at a later point insinuated that Bep might have been protected by her sister Nelly who was the alleged Nazi informant).

The rendering of Bep’s postwar life depicts her ongoing struggle with severe PTSD. She built walls of silence around herself that proved to be all-pervasive. In one scene, her son (and co-author of this book) Joop van Wijk recalls how he prevented his mother from overdosing with sleeping pills (139-140). It is a strength of this book that these heartbreaking episodes – including scenes detailing Bep’s marital breakdown – are depicted with deep empathy and integrity, carefully avoiding a sensationalist or melodramatic treatment.

In the later chapters, the authors probe the still unresolved question why some of the rescuers – including Bep – provided contradictory statements recounting the discovery dates of the individual diaries. Yet, the most controversial chapter of this book is “The hidden truth.” Here, the authors put forward the theory that “Nelly could be involved in the betrayal of the hiders in some ways” (239). De Bruyn and Van Wijk also argue that Otto Frank was reluctant to pursue an investigation into the identity of the informant “out of loyalty for Bep” (239). Again, as a line of reasoning, this claim is speculative and cannot be substantiated in this publication. Moreover, the authors imply that letters with incriminating information might have been intentionally destroyed as much of the extensive correspondence between Bep and Otto has gone missing: “It’s not implausible that at least part of the missing correspondence was about Nelly” (240). It is not implausible, one could respond, but it is also not likely. Why would either Otto Frank or Bep Voskuijl have been bent on obliterating such damning evidence? This chapter – and in some ways, the final narrative thread in this multi-layered biography – ends with a more reasoned and balanced version of the initial argument: “Claiming that Nelly was the betrayer is taking it too far” (241). Whether or not Bep had suspected Nelly to be the informant, will remain a matter of conjecture – unless proven otherwise. In the same vein, it is impossible to know the reason for Bep’s reluctance to stay out of the public eye for most of her postwar life. Like many rescuers who ultimately failed to protect the lives of those entrusted to them, Bep Voskuijl may have decided to silence herself as she struggled with immense feelings of guilt.

Finally, placing Anne Frank’s hiding into context, it is estimated that 28,000 Dutch Jews went into hiding. About 13,000 of them were discovered and arrested. Approximately 104,000 Dutch Jews (75% of the Jewish population in Holland) were murdered during the Second World War. Among all the Western European countries occupied by Nazi Germany, the Netherlands had the largest percentage of Jewish victims (Romijn & Boender 2012).

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## About the reviewer

Dr. Charlotte Schallié is professor of Germanic Studies in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada). Her research interests include post-1945 diasporic and transcultural writing/

filmmaking, memory studies, Jewish identity in contemporary cultural discourse, and teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Schallié is the co-editor of *Under Swiss protection: Jewish eyewitness accounts from wartime Budapest* (Ibidem Press, 2017; Kalligram, 2019; Limmat Verlag, 2020). She is also the project lead of the research initiative “Narrative Art and Visual Storytelling in Holocaust and Human Rights Education” that brings together graphic novelists and Holocaust survivors in Canada, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, and the UK.



**Compte rendu**  
**Willem de Vries :**  
***Commando Musik :***  
***Comment les nazis ont spolié l'Europe musicale***  
**Laurent Slaars, trad.**

Paris : Buchet/Chastel, 2019. 412 p.  
ISBN 9782283031988

*Compte rendu par Marie-Hélène Benoit-Otis*



*Commando Musik : Comment les nazis ont spolié l'Europe musicale* est la traduction française d'un ouvrage paru à l'origine en anglais (Amsterdam University Press, 1996), et qui avait déjà fait l'objet d'une traduction allemande (Dittrich Verlag, 1998). S'ils n'étaient pas accessibles en français avant 2019, les travaux de Willem de Vries étaient donc déjà connus des chercheur.e.s qui s'intéressent à la vie musicale sous le Troisième Reich, et nombreuses sont les publications des deux dernières décennies qui y font référence.

La nouvelle traduction réalisée par Laurent Slaars permet d'élargir le lectorat de cet ouvrage qui, au moment de sa parution initiale il y a 25 ans, livrait une étude pionnière sur un sujet alors très peu connu : les spoliations systématiques d'objets musicaux (instruments de musique, partitions, manuscrits, livres sur la musique) opérées par les autorités nazies dans les territoires occupés d'Europe de l'Ouest dès l'été 1940. À partir de sources à l'époque inexplorées, l'auteur reconstitue en détail le *modus operandi* de ces exactions, des débuts de l'Occupation en France, en Belgique et aux Pays-Bas jusqu'aux demandes de restitution effectuées après la fin de la guerre (demandes qui, pour la plupart, sont demeurées lettre morte).

Le livre dévoile ainsi – chiffres à l'appui – l'ampleur effarante des activités du *Sonderstab Musik* (« Commando musique »), organe de l'Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) dirigé par le musicologue Herbert Gerigk, et dont la fonction était de coordonner la sélection, le tri et le transport vers le Reich d'énormes quantités de biens musicaux prélevés aussi bien dans des musées, bibliothèques et fonds d'archives que chez des particuliers (parmi lesquels Darius Milhaud et Wanda Landowska, qui font l'objet des deux études de cas sur lesquelles se termine l'ouvrage). De Vries fait ressortir deux grands volets dans cette vaste entreprise de spoliation culturelle : la recherche systématique de documents considérés comme appartenant de droit à l'Allemagne (manuscrits de compositeurs allemands conservés dans des bibliothèques françaises, par exemple), surtout pratiquée au début de l'Occupation, et la *Möbel-Aktion* (« Opération meubles ») menée entre 1942 et 1944, et qui visait à récupérer les biens – notamment musicaux – « abandonnés » par des Juifs ayant « émigré » (c'est-à-dire ayant été contraints de fuir ou ayant été déportés). Pour mettre en œuvre ces deux branches de son activité, le *Sonderstab Musik* employait de nombreux musicologues, entre autres collaborateurs dont de Vries retrace soigneusement l'identité et la hiérarchie à différents moments de la guerre.

Le sujet est absolument passionnant, et d'autant plus essentiel qu'à l'heure actuelle, la plupart des instruments et documents ainsi spoliés par les autorités nazies demeurent encore introuvables; d'ailleurs, l'auteur a constamment travaillé à en retracer depuis la première publication de son livre, ce qui lui a



permis de restituer des manuscrits ayant appartenu à Milhaud, Landowska et Arthur Rubinstein.

L'ouvrage a par ailleurs eu un impact on ne peut plus concret sur l'un des collaborateurs du *Sonderstab Musik*, le musicologue Wolfgang Boetticher (1914-2002) – qui, au moment de la parution originale du livre en 1996, était encore vivant. Très impliqué dans les activités de spoliation décrites par de Vries, Boetticher n'en avait pas moins poursuivi sa carrière académique sans interruption après la guerre, comme du reste la quasi-totalité des musicologues associés d'une façon ou d'une autre au régime nazi (voir notamment Giannini *et al.* 2014 et Iglesias 2014). Les révélations contenues dans *Commando Musik* ont précipité la fin de ses activités professionnelles, incitant l'Université de Göttingen à lui retirer son titre de professeur émérite à la fin de l'année 1998. C'est là, visiblement, une grande source de fierté pour de Vries, qui consacre plusieurs des ajouts qu'il a effectués dans l'édition française de son livre au récit de la destitution de Boetticher (évoquée dès la préface p. 22, ainsi que dans un « Addenda à l'édition française » p. 314).

Ces ajouts ne constituent pas la seule nouveauté de l'édition française de *Commando Musik* : réalisée en étroite collaboration avec l'auteur, la traduction de Laurent Slaars comporte en effet une dimension de complétion et de mise à jour extrêmement bienvenue. Dans une langue infiniment plus fluide que celle de l'édition originale anglaise (elle-même traduite du néerlandais par une agence de traduction), Slaars a en effet ajouté un grand nombre de notes explicatives très pertinentes, ainsi qu'une « Bibliographie complémentaire » (p. 385-400) qui permet de combler partiellement le fossé entre l'état de la recherche au moment de la rédaction de l'ouvrage (entre 1991 et 1995) et aujourd'hui. La liste de sites Web, en particulier, est d'autant plus utile que cette ressource n'existait pas encore au moment où de Vries a mené ses recherches.

La remarquable qualité linguistique de la traduction ne suffit cependant pas à faire oublier la structure lourde et tortueuse du texte. Pour arriver à formuler une synthèse claire de cet ouvrage construit essentiellement sous forme de listes et par juxtaposition de sections qu'aucune narration d'ensemble ne vient unifier (et où l'on regrette souvent l'absence de transitions), il faut en effet naviguer d'une section ou même d'un chapitre à l'autre, en effectuant moult vérifications et retours en arrière. Par exemple, le projet *Hohe Schule* (une « Haute école » que les nazis prévoient fonder après la fin de la guerre, et dont ils constituaient la bibliothèque au fil de leurs pillages en Europe de l'Ouest) est mentionné à plusieurs reprises sans explication à partir de la page 75, pour être enfin décrit en détail dans une section concluant le chapitre II, p. 120-140. Les cas similaires sont nombreux, et l'index – qui ne contient que les noms propres et une sélection non

exhaustive des organisations mentionnées – ne suffit pas pour s’y retrouver facilement.

Une autre faiblesse importante de l’ouvrage se situe sur le plan méthodologique. L’auteur s’appuie sur de nombreuses sources archivistiques, ce qui lui permet de dévoiler des informations nouvelles (du moins au moment de la publication originale du livre en 1996) ; il aurait fallu cependant citer ces sources de façon plus complète, en indiquant systématiquement non seulement le lieu de conservation (qui n’est mentionné que lorsqu’il ne s’agit pas des archives fédérales allemandes, dont les différentes branches ne sont par ailleurs pas distinguées), mais aussi la nature du document cité, sa datation, son auteur et, le cas échéant, son destinataire. Sans ces informations, il est très difficile de contextualiser les interprétations proposées par l’auteur : les simples cotes de documents indiquées en notes de bas de page ne suffisent pas à bien saisir sur quelles sources il s’appuie, ce qui oblige souvent *de facto* à lui faire confiance aveuglément.

Le traitement des citations – présentées systématiquement en traduction française, sans que l’original soit donné en note – exige une profession de foi similaire. Or, un cas exceptionnel où la citation originale est juxtaposée à la version française soulève un certain doute sur l’exactitude des traductions de l’allemand : dans un passage où il rend compte de sa correspondance avec Boetticher au cours de la préparation de son livre, de Vries traduit l’expression de ce dernier « *durch fremde Hand* » par la formule « main malveillante » (dans l’anglais original « *malicious hand* »), qu’il utilise pour noircir davantage encore le portrait qu’il brosse de Boetticher. Or, « *fremd* » ne signifie pas « malveillant », mais « étranger » ; dans le contexte du passage cité (où Boetticher dit trouver regrettable la possibilité que Milhaud ait pu perdre des documents musicaux à la suite de l’intervention d’une tierce personne), le mot n’a pas les connotations que lui attribue de Vries.

Il s’agit là d’un détail sans grande incidence sur le tableau d’ensemble proposé par de Vries, mais qui trahit une tendance à la spéculation qu’on observe ailleurs dans l’ouvrage : dans la section consacrée au projet *Hohe Schule*, par exemple, l’auteur émet l’hypothèse que l’encyclopédie musicale allemande *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (dont la première édition a été publiée peu après la guerre) serait issue d’un projet de publication associé à la future « Haute école » nazie (p. 133-140). Or, aucune source documentaire ne vient appuyer cette affirmation – qui, dans le cadre de cette nouvelle traduction, aurait gagné à être révisée sur la base des publications récentes consacrées à l’histoire de l’encyclopédie et à son premier éditeur scientifique, Friedrich Blume (voir par exemple Brotbeck 2000, Finscher 2001, Custodis 2012).

Si la nouvelle traduction française de *Commando Musik* permet de mettre en valeur, pour la première fois en français, les découvertes extrêmement importantes effectuées dans les années 1990 par Willem de Vries, elle fait du même coup ressortir l'importance de poursuivre la recherche sur le sujet sur des bases scientifiques solides. On ne peut donc que se réjouir de voir la bibliographie consacrée aux exactions musicales commises par l'Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) continuer à s'enrichir (voir par exemple von Haken 2019), dans un constant dialogue avec le travail pionnier – bien qu'imparfait – réalisé par de Vries.

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## Notice biographique

Marie-Hélène Benoit-Otis est professeure agrégée de musicologie à la Faculté de musique de l'Université de Montréal et titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada en musique et politique. Elle s'intéresse notamment à la vie musicale sous le Troisième Reich ; parmi ses publications récentes, on compte le collectif *Chanter, rire et résister à Ravensbrück : Autour de Germaine Tillion et du Verfügbar aux Enfers* (coédité avec Philippe Despoix, Djemaa Maazouzi et Cécile Quesney, Paris, Seuil, 2018), ainsi que la monographie *Mozart 1941 : La Semaine Mozart du*

*Reich allemand et ses invités français* (coécrite avec Cécile Quesney, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019), qui a obtenu en 2020 le Prix Opus du Conseil québécois de la musique dans la catégorie « Livre de l'année ».

## Review

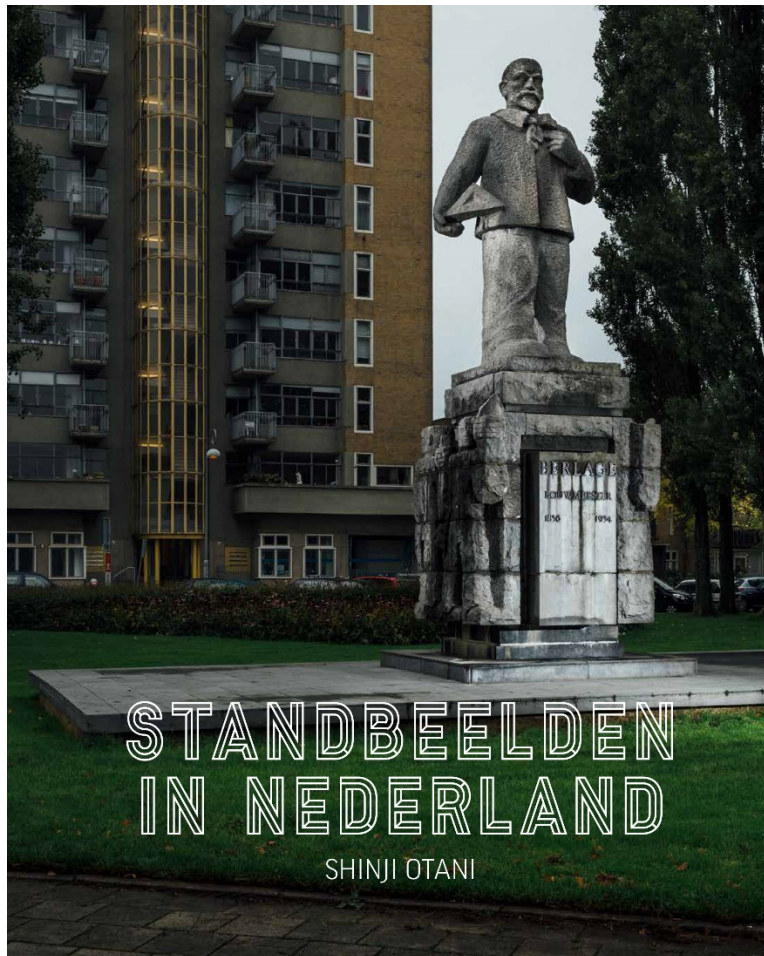
**Shinji Otani (photography), Pepijn Reeser (text):**

### ***Standbeelden in Nederland***

Eindhoven: Lecturis, 2019. 116 p.

ISBN 9789462263062

*Reviewed by Martin Zebracki*



Those in search of a treasure trove of permanent public sculptures that have seen the light of the day in the Dutch public realm since halfway through the 19<sup>th</sup> century may find satisfaction in *Standbeelden in Nederland* ('Sculptures in the Netherlands'). This catalogue was published by the self-named independent publisher of special books Lecturis, in partnership with Vissch+STAM and Harten Fonds. I commend the concerted work carried out by the Amsterdam-based photographer Shinji Otani, of Japanese origin, and Dutch historian Pepijn Reeser. Otani travelled with a camera around the Netherlands to discover and record public sculptures. Reeser has accompanied the ensuing, impressive photographic work with thoughtful, informative textual vignettes. The overall result is a visually appealing, affordable coffee-table book that presents a collection of sculptures of Dutch historic figureheads. It brings out national heroes (depending on one's perspective). Think of Willem van Oranje, who led the Dutch revolt, and the statesman Johan Rudolph Thorbecke, founder of the revised Constitution for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, shifting the power from the king to the State. Other major figures include artists, writers, and philosophers, like Vincent and Theo van Gogh, Multatuli, and Baruch Spinoza.

Reeser, who penned the four-page introduction, admits that what is included as "sculpture" may very well depend on one's point of view. However, this term is left unspecified. For context, the readership of this work may want to explore it in conjunction with academic discussions around the evolution of Dutch public art and the multifaceted relationship between art/sculpture, public space, and public audiences, as profoundly analyzed in Van Winkel (1999), and Boomgaard and Brom (2017), among others.

No definitive number of sculptures in the Dutch public realm is provided, which could run into "the hundreds, perhaps thousands" (2), according to Reeser. Based on the 54 sculptures that can be counted in the photo overview, I see mostly bronze or stone versions of key figures that exhibit Dutch history. These are all non-fictional human figures – with Jan de Baat's sculpture of Groningen's folklore symbol *Peerd van Ome Loeks* ('Uncle Loeks' Horse') as perhaps the odd one out. Also, by and large, the depicted sculptures are situated in prominent city squares rather than in more peripheral urban or rural areas. Temporary sculptures and non-material, performative sculptural types are excluded from the inventory.

What is striking is that the companion text largely tells a *his*-story of Dutch society and arts – which likely reflects androcentric hegemony that has been governing societies more generally. However, the book does offer some vignettes of carvings of powerful leading women in Dutch history, such as the statues of Queens Emma and Wilhelmina of the Dutch House of Orange, and suffragettes Wilhelmina Drucker and Aletta Jacobs, who are both regarded as instigators of the

Dutch women's rights movement. And there is one Dutch sports heroine, athlete Fanny Blankers-Koen.

Reeser makes the point that the Dutch neither have a long-standing nor manifest tradition of public sculpture; sculptures were seen in churches and not so much on the street. However, especially since the secularization of Dutch society, sculptures in Dutch public spaces, usually town squares, have become a significant way to express national and local history, identity, and feelings of community. Reeser indicates that the intended meanings of sculptures have changed correspondingly, from educating the public about shared history and expressing a sense of togetherness to celebrating ordinary but meaningful people (like soccer player Johan Cruyff).

There is little evidence to suggest that such sculptures would strictly embellish the public realm in the eyes of the public, at least not primarily, as we can learn from the featured example of *De verwoeste stad* ('The destroyed city'), which was sculpted by Ossip Zadkine. This is one of the few instances in this book that mark a historic watershed. The statue represents a human figure, screaming of hopelessness, with a hollowed heart, symbolizing the dramatic upshot of the Nazi bombing of Rotterdam. Unveiled in 1953, residents largely perceived this sculpture as too abstract, or even an eyesore initially, but it reportedly conquered the hearts of many soon after its inauguration in 1953, becoming an icon of Rotterdam.

Reeser references the old saying "*wie betaalt, bepaalt*" – translated: "*he who pays the piper calls the tune*" (emphasis added). This particularly applies to the politics around which sculptures are commissioned, by whom, where, and how – and which sculptures may stand the test of time. First and foremost, you need stamina on the part of initiators and a fan base on the receiving end to bring a sculpture to fruition. This is typically done posthumously. One of the vignettes in this book about the statue for the Amsterdam folk singer André Hazes suggests as much. A crowdfunding foundation collected the monies required for the statue that was erected near Hazes' birthplace in De Pijp neighbourhood in Amsterdam, just a year after this singer's death in 2004.

Not only money is crucial in producing statues. Power and symbology play an undeniable part in the representation of culture and society through the lens of public artwork. Reeser argues that "the street has increasingly become the battleground of groups with their own view of society and their own heroes and martyrs" (4, translated from Dutch original). Sometimes this plays itself out competitively in the international arena, too. As Reeser exemplifies, sculptures in one place evoked reactions, or "anti-sculptures," if you will, in another place. As an example, the author hinted at competition between Dutch and Flemish masters. The sculpture of Rubens in Antwerp was responded to by the sculptural

embodiment of Rembrandt in Amsterdam. Reeser furthermore illustrates this point with the example of the memorial of the colonial governor general J. B. van Heutsz, later redubbed *Monument Indië-Nederland* ('Monument [Dutch East] Indies-Netherlands'). This monument met with opposition from Dutch socialists. They, on their part, found their reified soulmate in the statue of the anti-militarist Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the first socialist in the *Tweede Kamer*, the House of Representatives of the Netherlands.

The permanence of sculptures is relative and is, as Reeser indicates, subject to public acceptance; this reveals something about social relations. There is scope to build on this survey book in light of topical global developments around decolonizing thought and minority activism addressing ethnic and gender underrepresentations, or misrepresentations. This has resulted in widespread "updates" of numerous sculptures and major objects of "dissonant" public heritage. In light of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, Confederate statues across the U.S. have been defaced, removed or annotated with anti-racist comments. The statue of colonist and slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol was toppled by BLM protestors in May 2020 and replaced by Marc Quinn's resin-and-steel sculpture of Jen Reid, in honour of this activist who, after the Colston statue was toppled, climbed the empty plinth and raised a Black Power fist salute (Bland 2020). Events like these reinforce the message that public condemnation can boil up and lead to grassroots action. This could subvert imposed decisions about who gets remembered in the public realm through the straitjackets of hegemonic norms, notably white heteropatriarchy (see Zebracki & Luger 2019).

Some critical references to Dutch colonial history are made in this book. For example, the vignette about the statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the Dutch East Indies' governor general, mentions that the interpretative panel on the pedestal was amended. It now simultaneously conveys Coen's merits and wrongdoings – in order to add that his regime had blood on its hands (saliently, the Dutch military conquest of the Banda Islands led by Coen resulted in a massacre in 1621).

Considering the inseparable relationship of Dutch history with colonization and slavery, I would have welcomed stronger visibility of this troubled past in this retrospective overview. The introduction mentions that slavery monuments have been established in Amsterdam, Middelburg, and Rotterdam since the turn of the century. We do not yet see them in this work, although issues concerning historical slavery and racial inequality are particularly imperative in public debates in the Netherlands and beyond at present. In recent years, such issues have been coming to the fore especially around the controversial annual celebration of the white patron saint of children *Sinterklaas* ('Saint Nicholas'), particularly the blackface figure of *Zwarte Piet* ('Black Pete'), the "helper" of *Sinterklaas*, at which anti-racist activists and human rights organizations increasingly take umbrage.



In a photographic compendium, such as *Standbeelden in Nederland*, lies an obviously important role for visual representation. Rather than a reference in the introduction alone, I would have particularly welcomed a photograph supplemented with a self-critical historical account regarding the *National Slavery Monument* in Amsterdam. Besides, this book's focus on human figures seems to carry with it the limitation of the absence of just the few non-figurative public artworks which have unmistakably been of major importance for historically marginalized or discriminated groups, such as migrant communities and LGBTQ+ populations.

A welcome addition in this regard would have been the non-figurative *Monument voor de gastarbeider* ('Monument to the Guest Worker') by Hans van Bentem, which was unveiled in Rotterdam's migrant neighbourhood Afrikaanderwijk in 2003. I think that another key omission is the *Homomonument*, installed in Amsterdam's city centre in 1987, which is the world's first commissioned public artwork dedicated to gay and lesbian people, and by extension the LGBTQ+ community (see Zebracki 2017). Furthermore, controversial sculptures, like Paul McCarthy's statue of the fictional figure *Santa Claus*, heralded in its current location at Eendrachtsplein in Rotterdam's city centre in 2008, may have provided an interesting contemporary contrast with the kind of more traditional sculptures that this compendium showcases. The *Santa Claus* sculpture, known in its local community as the "Butt Plug Gnome," is the artist's incarnation of an indictment of the neoliberal consumer society (see Zebracki 2012).

The geographical coverage of this book is comprehensive. The lion's share stems from the largest Dutch cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. And key sculptures from all Dutch provinces are included. However, there is one exception, as I search in vain for a sculpture from the youngest, human-made province of Flevoland. Its provincial capital, Lelystad, hosts in the heart of this small city a column of thirty metres in height on which sits a sculpture of Cornelis Lely, the Dutch engineer who led the most extensive land reclamation in the world. As the well-trodden adage goes, "God created the earth, but the Dutch created the Netherlands." This landmark statue of Lely, as important image-maker of the Dutch country, is therefore perhaps an absent eyecatcher in this source book.

It has probably not been the aim of the contributors to provide an exhaustive outline, not to mention academic exposition, of the Dutch landscape of public sculpture and its diverse and complex histories and geographies. Nevertheless, the coordinated visual and written efforts make *Standbeelden in Nederland* a highly accessible work for anyone who wishes to gain a bird's-eye view of this landscape. A translation of the book into English, or another major language, would obviously make it available to a far wider readership. In addition, I would have been pleased to learn more about the intentions and thought processes behind the provenance of this retrospective work. And from which

perspectives were the photographs taken, selected, and presented? (in terms of location, theme, and period). I realize that space in a visual anthology like the one at hand is limited. That said, as I have alluded to above, deeper engagement with particularly activist issues around diversity and equal rights would lend some more critical understandings around major visibilisations vs. invisibilisations and rememberings vs. “unrememberings” in Dutch society – as they are told by public sculpture and read by diverse “publics.”

I concur with Reeser’s statement that the landscape of public sculpture will change in both form and interpretation: “if the story of the Dutch statues makes one thing clear, it is that each generation looks at them in a different way” (5, translated from Dutch original). Yet, again, rather than reading this collection as a representative canon of Dutch sculpture, I entertain supplementary perspectives that challenge Dutch history and identity through the image of sculptures that are present – or are (still) deemed missing pieces – on the street. Moreover, I would encourage engagement with the reinforcing role of digital technologies in the making, and re-making, of sculptures – which are curated in public spaces ranging from the street to the tweet, so to speak. This would capture the social interconnectivity of offline and online worlds, as the production of, and debate about, public art is not confined to the street alone (see Zebracki & Luger 2019). Perhaps this book itself could be provided with an online addendum, adopting some of the suggestions above. Dutch public sculpture is in flux. And so, it needs to be constantly reflected upon, and thereby *re-written* and *re-mapped*, according to the changing diversity and social relations and tensions in society.

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