

# Biography Institute

Annual Report Biography Institute 2019

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Annual Report 2019



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Annual Report Biography Institute  
University of Groningen, The Netherlands  
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## **Preface**

Since its foundation in 2004 the objective of the Biography Institute is two-fold. On the one hand, it offers an infrastructure and substantive support to academics who are engaged in a biographical research. On the other, it stimulates and develops the theoretical foundation of biography as a scientific genre. With the establishment of a chair in biography on 1 March 2017, followed by the foundation of the Department of History and Theory of Biography on 1 March 2012, the Biography Institute was allowed to carry out PhD projects. These projects were very popular: until now, 20 theses were completed, for the greatest part biographies. Until now, each of these biographies was published by a commercial publishing house.

This high production of the Biography Institute will be continued in the future. Hans Renders, professor in History and Theory of Biography, now supervises one internal PhD-student and ten external students. All these research projects are part of the Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture, and are partly funded by non-academic parties.

The research into the biographical genre in Groningen is not only characterized by a strong theoretical framework, but also by a multidisciplinary approach. Articles in peer reviewed journals and the series *Biography Studies*, published by Brill, are witnesses of this. Next to the regular courses at the history department, the Biography Institute also supervises bachelor-, master and PhD-students who want to have a sound knowledge of the history and theory of biography. This knowledge is provided by teaching a master's course in Biography and History, but also by supervising bachelor's and master's theses. Students are learning for example about the state of the art in current biographical research. Also master students who are not writing a biography are following this class with great interest.

## **1.1 Employees**

- Prof. J.W. Renders, director, manages the institute.
- I.L. Hengeveld, coordinator, is responsible for the coordination of the institute.

## **1.2 PhD Researchers**

In 2017 the Biography Institute guided ten PhDs in total. One of these PhDs was an employee of the institute, nine were external PhD researchers.

- David Veltman writes the biography of Felix de Boeck; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders, Prof. J. Tollebeek, drs. S.A.J. van Faassen and S. Servellón, MA.

### **External PhD Researchers**

- Roelie Zwikker is writing the biography of Vincent Willem van Gogh; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and dr. Peter de Ruiter.
- Gerben Wynia is writing the biography of C.O. Jellema; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. G.J. Dorleijn and Prof. J.W. Renders.
- Co Strootman is writing the biography of P.J. Bouman; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. K. van Berkel and Prof. J.W. Renders.
- Chris Gevers is writing the biography of Petrus Tammens; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and Prof. D.F.J. Bosscher.
- Coen Brummer is writing the biography of Samuel van Houten; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and Prof. G. Voerman.
- Jacqueline van Paaschen is writing the biography of Marie Tak van Poortvliet; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and dr. Peter de Ruiter.
- Antoon Ott is writing the biography of Nanne Ottema; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and Prof. G. Jensma.
- John A. Farrell is writing the biography of Edward Kennedy; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and Prof. Doeko Bosscher.



- Jelle Horjus is writing the biography of Jannes Reiling; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. J.W. Renders and Prof. Yme Kuiper.
- Hans van der Jagt is writing the biography of Alexander Idenburg; Doctoral Guidance Committee: Prof. G. Harinck (VU) and Prof. J.W. Renders.



On 5 December, Jonne Harmsma was invited by Prime Minister Mark Rutte to his office together with other political biographers. Harmsma got his PhD in 2018 at the Biography Institute on a biography of Prime Minister Jelle Zilstra

### 1.3 Finance

In terms of its finance the Biography Institute is, according to the Faculty Board within the University of Groningen, regarded as a project. This entails that external financial resources are acquired to cover the costs of conferences, symposia and edited volumes. The existence of the institute itself was supported by the Democracy & Media Foundation and by the Research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG).

Other projects were financially supported by the funding bodies mentioned below.

## **1.4 Funding**

The funding bodies mentioned below financially supported projects within the Biography Institute in 2019:

Graduate School for the Humanities, RUG, Stichting Felix De Boeck (biografie Felix de Boeck);

Democracy & Media Foundation (SDM), Fonds 21 (previously SNS Reaal Fonds), Municipality of Rotterdam, NPO/ NOS and VARA (biography André van der Louw);

De Nederlandsche Bank (The Dutch Bank) and the dr. Abraham Kuyperfonds (biography Jelle Zijlstra).

## **1.5 Website and Newsletter**

The Biography Institute has a bilingual website (Dutch and English): [www.rug.nl/BiografieInstituut](http://www.rug.nl/BiografieInstituut), also accessible via [www.BiografieInstituut.nl](http://www.BiografieInstituut.nl).

On this website, visitors can access information concerning the objectives and the topics of research of the institute, as well as information on ongoing projects and conferences. The site features a news section which is updated continuously.

The website also includes files made accessible by the institute through digitalization. Additionally, the Biography Institute has published online a database with pseudonyms, the National Archives of Pseudonyms. Furthermore the website contains an extensive list of related website links on biography, and it is possible to contact the institute and its members via the website.

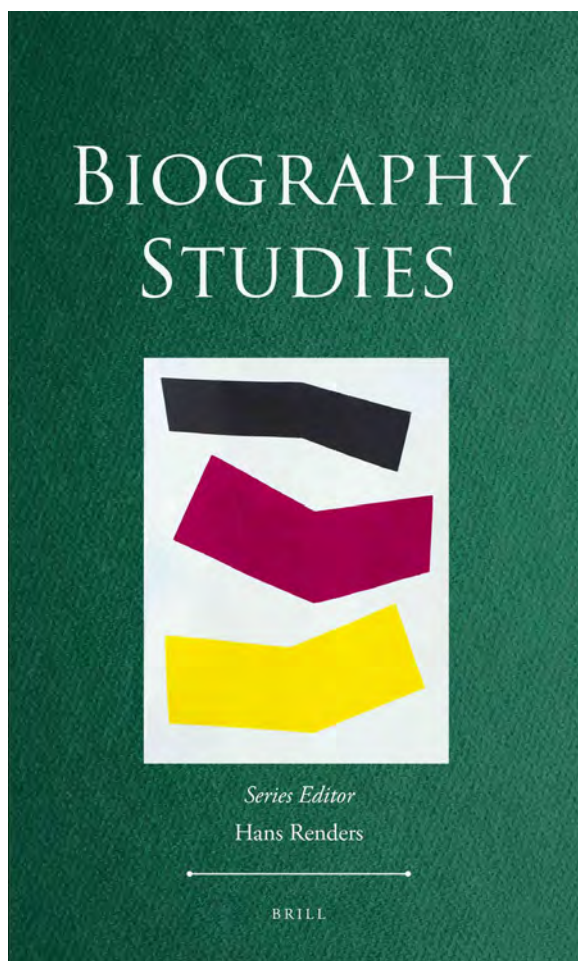
The website of the Biography Institute has been the most visited website of all the research websites of the Faculty of Arts since it was established. The annual number of visitors this year is more than 31.000.

Those who are interested can be kept informed about activities of the institute through a newsletter, which is distributed by email. Currently, more than 800 people are receiving the newsletter. During this year, four newsletters have been distributed.

## **1.6 Biography Studies (Brill)**

Under auspices of the Biography Institute, a new series Biography Studies was established, which will be published by Brill, with Hans Renders as Series Editor. In this series, the following volumes will appear:

- *Profiles in Power: Personality, Persona, and the U.S. President*, edited by Jelte Olthof and Maarten Zwieters;
- *Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, edited by Hans Renders and David Veltman;
- Arthur Eaton, *History Telling: The Rise and Fall of Psychobiography*.



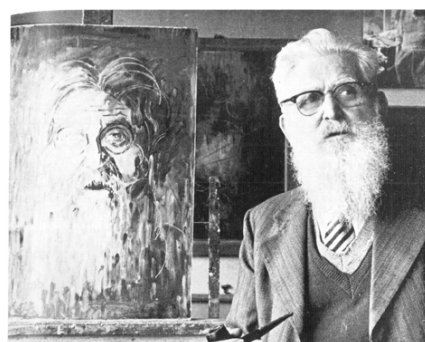
## Projects

### 2.1 Biography projects

One of the main goals of the Biography Institute, giving guidance to biographers, was accomplished this year by guiding, among others, the following biographers: Coen Brummer (Samuel van Houten), Chris Gevers (Petrus Tammens), Chris Hietland (André van der Louw), Co Strootman (P.J. Bouman), David Veltman (Felix de Boeck) en Gerben Wynia (C.O. Jellema).

#### *Felix de Boeck*

The artist Felix de Boeck (1898-1995) lived and worked all of his life on his farm at Drogenbos, near Brussels. He wanted to be seen as the artist who had to earn his living as a farmer, and dismissed the Romantic image of a painting farmer. Therefore, he could only work on his paintings on Sundays. In egodocuments, contributions to periodicals and interviews he used to present himself as the loner, who did not belong to an artist's group or movement, and wanted to present his work preferably in solo-exhibitions.



During his life, De Boeck's work developed in the direction of greater abstraction. At the beginning of his artistic career, he was greatly influenced by movements such as fauvism, cubism and futurism. But in this early work also a religious factor and an interest in nature's treasures was already an essential feature. He did not only choose a physical distance between the metropolitan art centres – Paris, Antwerp – of his time. He also tried to give a new interpretation to modernism itself, with its rejection of the 'natural' or the use of religious themes in art.

In this biography attention will be given to the tensions arising in culture and society after De Boeck's decision to live his life as a farmer. How did he join the artist's debate on modernism and the Flemish activism? How was his opinion on this art influenced by World War I and II? How could

he be influenced by Van Gogh? Which position did he have in the group surrounding the art periodicals *7 Arts* and *Het Overzicht*? And how did he live during his self-chosen retreat from public life after the death of his parents, brother and children? How did this life as a hermit contribute to the mythologization of De Boeck's person?

The research is of importance for the knowledge of the history of modernistic art in Belgium. Did this art develop only in the metropolitan cities, in which many of the avant-garde groups searched for renewal of the arts, or is there something like an 'arcadian modernism' in Belgian 20th century art?

### *P.J. Bouman*

At the age of thirty Pieter Jan Bouman (1902-1977) took a task upon himself: 'to be a spiritual leader in a dislocated time'. To this end he wrote several books, which made him the most famous and widely read historian in the 1950's. In Bouman's books the point of focus are his fellow creatures with their personal fortunes and perception of history. His *Revolution of the lonely* (1953) became a best-seller with thirty-four print and translated into eight languages.



Bouman, from 1946 professor of sociology in Groningen, was often asked as a speaker and had an extensive network: journalists, university colleagues at home and abroad, entrepreneurs, ministers and members of the Royal family.

Historians were unhappy with the work of Bouman. His so-called 'free books' were firmly criticized and vilified. The publications were said to be unscientific and shoddy works. Bouman was convinced, however, that his 'free books' should not be assessed scientific but still could meet the highest standards.

Within the sociological world Bouman with his socio-cultural attitudes found himself in an equally awkward position. When starting in Groningen he brought his own manual of sociology. Many generations of sociology

students were trained this way. But when in the early 1950's the so-called 'modern' sociology became dominant, attitudes such as Bouman's classic socio-cultural concept were seen as irrelevant.

Bouman harboured a distrust of science and preferred not to use the title of professor. At his retirement in 1968 he refused to be portrayed in cap and gown. Twenty years later the university restored this omission. It symbolizes the struggle with science Bouman engaged in virtually all his life. In the domain of science he didn't want to feel at home, it was the perfect place for him to be out of place..

Never before have Bouman's fight with science and cause of his popularity been examined in a full biographical approach. The biography reveals an almost unknown Bouman: the obsessive labour on his project of life and his underlying motives, his simultaneous fight against and service to science. The biography shows Bouman as a self-appointed culture carrier who sometimes took a wrong turn, but above all gained success and fame.

### *Vincent Willem van Gogh*

The leading emphasis of the extensive research that takes place at the Van Gogh Museum is on the artist Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries. Until now, a more specific focus on his nephew, the founder of the Van Gogh Museum who died in 1978, has remained in the background. The planned biography will establish a picture of the life and career of this man, who was determined to preserve the collection of Vincent and Theo van Gogh and to open it up to the public.



Vincent Willem Van Gogh was born in Paris on 31 January 1890, the son of Theo Van Gogh (1857-1891) and Jo Bongers (1862-1925). They named their only child after Theo's brother, the artist Vincent Willem Van Gogh (1853-1890). After Theo's untimely death in 1891, Van Gogh's collection of drawings, paintings and letters, as well as Vincent and Theo's collection of the works of contemporaries, went to Jo. When she died in 1925, her son inherited the collection.

Van Gogh was a versatile and enterprising person. From 1907-1914 he studied mechanical engineering at the University of Delft. After marrying Josina Wibaut in January 1915, he lived and worked as an engineer in France, the United States and Japan. In the early 1920s, the couple returned to the Netherlands. Together with a fellow student from his university days, Ernst Hijmans, Van Gogh founded an organisation consultancy firm in Amsterdam, one of the first in The Netherlands.

After 1945, he turned more and more to studying and publicizing the work of his famous uncle. He thought it was important for the collection to remain intact after his death and so, in 1962, at the suggestion of the national government, he placed it with the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, which was established specifically for the purpose. On 3 June 1973, the Vincent van Gogh Museum opened its doors to the public. Van Gogh was in the museum virtually every day until shortly before his death on 28 January 1978 and he devoted his energies to everything related to Vincent, Theo and the museum.

### *C.O. Jellema*

C.O. Jellema (1936-2003) studied theology and German language and literature and taught German literature at Groningen University. He was a well-respected poet: his work has been translated into English, German and



French. Jellema participated in Poetry International, was a member of literary juries and committees and reviewed literature for several newspapers for many years. He was also an essayist and a translator. In this research project there are two main angles: the struggle to maintain literary autonomy and the role of homosexuality in the construction of Jellema's personal and poetic identity.

The autonomy issue will be explored using a set of cohering questions. For example, how did Jellema achieve his hard-won literary recognition? Jellema's work and poetic principles showed little, if any, resemblance to the views of the then-dominant poets and critics. That is why it is interesting to explore the development of his literary work and his views on

literature. His interest in the work of the German mystics, which he also translated, is of special importance in this matter. As early as in his 1961 debut a religious theme can be observed in Jellema's work. What did this thematic interest signify during a time in which it was unusual to address religious and metaphysical issues?

In the second half of the Twentieth century homosexuality underwent an important transformation, from a taboo subject to being socially accepted. Important questions are: how did Jellema's acceptance of his own homosexuality develop? In what way did his encounter with a German soldier as a six-year-old, an early initiation into homo-eroticism, influence his life and work? To what extent is the eroticism in his work homo-erotic? How do these things all relate to the characteristics of the lives and works of other authors from this period, during which homosexuality and homosexual emancipation received a lot of attention.

For Jellema writing was a quest for identity, an affirmation of self-worth. Key factors in this are the one-and-a-half-year period during which he underwent tuberculosis treatment as a young boy, his struggle with his homosexuality, being raised with a strong class-consciousness, and his aborted theology studies. The chosen research method makes it possible to explore these and other factors and expand their implications beyond the particular, creating insight into the literary and socio-cultural climate in which Jellema worked.

### *Petrus Tammens*

Petrus Tammens was 'by far the least popular mayor of Groningen', wrote town historian Beno Hofman in his book about the men who have headed the municipal offices of the city Groningen until today. Tammens was probably also the one who had least hoped that he once would fulfill the office, which he did from 1943 to 1945. After the German occupiers removed prewar mayor P.W.J.H. Cort van der Linden from office, the Dutch collaborationist National Socialist Movement (NSB) searched for a suitable successor for a long time. Several candidates dropped out, mostly because they accepted another post. Finally, the choice was made for the farmer Tammens from





the Groningen agrarian village Ruigezand. Until then, he held various managerial positions in agricultural organizations and assisted as administrative council member the commissioner of the province, his party colleague C.F. Staargaard. In first instance, Tammens refused to accept the position. However, there were not many suitable candidates for the NSB, and Tammens yielded to the pressure exerted on him personally by the national NSB -leader Anton Mussert. In the beginning of 1943, the inauguration took place, with much national-socialist display of power.

Peter Romijn made a distinction between two types of NSB-mayors in his study *Burgemeesters in oorlogstijd* [Mayors in wartime]. The first group of mayors aimed to prove that nazis could be good mayors. Some of them even managed to gain a certain popularity in their community. The other group of mayors consisted of convinced national-socialists who seized the public office to achieve a political goal. This group mostly consisted of hawks. This biography will demonstrate that Tammens belonged to the second category. Furthermore, Tammens also is a type of individual that has not been studied in a Dutch biography before: a combination of governor, farmer and NSB-politician.

### *Nanne Ottema*

The wealthy notary Nanne Ottema, collector, art historian, publicist, director, politician, campaigner for natural and cultural heritage, museum founder and philanthropist, was an important figure for both Friesland and the Netherlands as a whole, particularly with regard to cultural heritage and architecture. He assembled a large art collection of some 30,000 objects, including in particular many examples of the art and craft of Friesland and of Asia, with a particular focus on Chinese porcelain. In 1943, informed by his own collection, he published his book *Chinese Ceramics*, a volume renowned by connoisseurs the world over. He also assembled a large library of outstanding quality. Part of his collection was incorporated into the museum, *Keramiekmuseum Prinsessehof*, which he founded in 1917,



and on his death he left the collection, together with his other possessions, to the Ottema-Kingma Foundation.

Today Nanne Ottema is something of an unknown figure, somebody whose name is only recognised by specialists in the field, and then principally in connection with the Keramiekmuseum Princessehof. Most of what has been written about Ottema can be traced back to a somewhat moralistic and unbalanced 1957 biography by J.J. Kalma. Leaving aside the question of whether the negative tone of that biography was justified, it is striking that it consigns Ottema's undoubted merits and achievements to the background and makes virtually no mention of many of his diverse activities.

In terms of his standing in society, Ottema certainly prospered, yet he had left school without any qualifications, and in the field of art he was a true autodidact. This biography examines Ottema's anxiety that he might be seen as a dilettante, and his attempts to avoid such a label. From a consideration of the scope of Ottema's collecting activities, together with his many publications, it is clearly evident that he had enormous ambition. Is this proof enough that he was more than an amateur who merely dabbled in art?

### *Edward Kennedy*

Edward Moore Kennedy (1932-2009) was the youngest of three brothers who played instrumental roles in the landmark movements for social justice and the struggle for progressive, active government which transfused American politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Edward inherited the mission from John and Robert Kennedy, who were murdered within a span of five years in the tumultuous 1960s. In four decades as a U.S. senator, liberal advocate and periodic presidential candidate he advanced the development of a more just and generous state, a characteristic of the Western democracies in the decades that followed World War II.

He contributed to the two great victories for black Americans – the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 – which were passed in a



time of mourning and tribute to his assassinated brother, President John F. Kennedy. Barely in his thirties, Edward had a meaningful role in the crafting of the immigration act of 1965 – the basis of a color-blind system which still operates today – opening the U.S. to millions of Asians, Latinos and southern Europeans and thus, literally, changing the complexion of his country. He began a lifelong crusade to bring affordable health care to all Americans.

Kennedy is as known for his faults as well as his strengths. His back was broken in the 1964 crash of a small twin-engine plane, in which the pilot and a fellow passenger died. The lingering physical pain of his injuries, and grief from his brothers' deaths, fed a lifelong proclivity for drinking and the womanizing of which he had been taught, by his father and brothers, that Kennedy men were entitled.

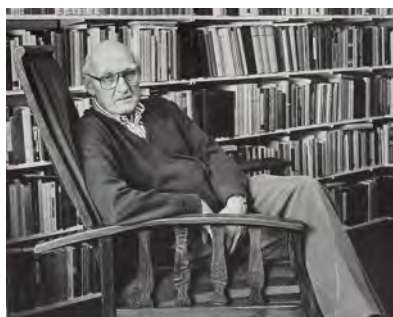
In 1969, after a day of sailing and too much to drink, he drove off a crude wooden bridge on Chappaquiddick island, off the coast of Massachusetts. His car came to rest, upside down, in nine feet of water. His companion that night, a young woman named Mary Jo Kopechne, drowned. He did not notify the authorities until ten hours had passed, the life was gone from the young woman and traces of liquor had faded from his bloodstream. He was convicted of leaving the scene of a harmful accident and sentenced to two months in jail. Given his standing, the jail sentence was suspended. He made a televised explanation and appeal to the voters of Massachusetts and was reelected by comfortable margins in 1970, 1976, 1982, 1988, 1994, 2000 and 2006.

The guilt he bore from the island, mixing with other griefs, turned Kennedy to a life of frenetic activity, some of which led to the bottom of a glass, a comely companion and a tabloid roasting, and some to his restless, ceaseless pursuit of legislative accomplishment.

### *Jannes Reiling*

The theologian Jannes Reiling was the most important church leader of the Union of Baptist Churches in The Netherlands in the twentieth century. His significance lies in the contribution he made to the emancipation of this small Protestant denomination. Reiling regarded Dutch baptists as narrow-minded and outdated and wanted to open the windows for new ideas in

order to bring them up to date. By greater social involvement, participation in interdenominational life and a broadening of the theological vision, he hoped baptists would become more relevant in society. He therefore led Dutch baptists in the direction of ecumenism, the university, female ordination and the acceptance of homosexual believers. Interestingly, this growing awareness and liberation in a religious sense was accompanied by a personal lifestyle that was also different and emancipated, in relation to the isolated baptist church life. For example, in the fifties Reiling appeared as a national expert in the 'philosophy of camping' and was even involved in a legislative process on the national level. In the seventies he became



director of a psychiatric care institution and successfully completed this task for twenty years. However, the emancipation that Reiling envisaged in his denomination succeeded only partially. In 1987 he was deposed as rector of the Dutch baptist seminary, the institution which he himself had set up thirty years before.

### *Alexander Idenburg*

Hans van der Jagt writes his PhD-thesis on Alexander Idenburg (1861-1935), a Dutch statesman who was responsible for the Dutch colonial policy between 1900 and 1925. Idenburg tried to introduce a development policy in the Dutch colonies. He had to deal with salafism, a fundamentalist movement in Islam. Around 1900, Holland had about 35 million Islamic inhabitants in the Dutch East Indies. In the Netherlands, people feared that anti-Western propaganda from the Arabic world would be introduced in the colonies. One of Idenburgs plans was to plead for a hold on migration by Arabic muslims to the Dutch East Indies.



## 2.2 Completed projects

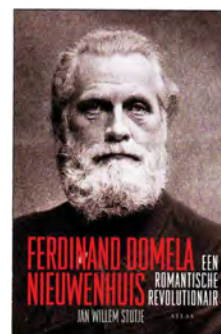
### *J.C. Bloem*

Bart Slijper wrote the biography of Bloem entitled *Van alle dingen los. Het leven van J.C. Bloem*, which was published by Uitgeverij De Arbeiderpers in May 2007. A reprint appeared in the same year. Bart Slijper obtained his doctorate on 10 May 2007.



### *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*

The project Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846–1919) is made possible by a so-called Vidi-subsidy from The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Een romantische revolutionair* was first published May 2012 by publisher Atlas. In 2012 the biography was short-listed for the Libris History Prize and in 2013 for the Gouden Boekenuil.



### *Henk Feldmeijer*

Johannes Hendrik (Henk) Feldmeijer was the 'Foreman' of the Dutch SS. As such, he was one of Heinrich Himmler's most valuable pawns in the occupied Netherlands. Feldmeijer radicalized rapidly. Because of this Feldmeijer in 1937 clashed with NSB-leader Mussert. In 1939 he established a new militia that was modelled after the German SS: the 'Mussert-Guard'. After the occupation of the Netherlands in 1940 Feldmeijer was made responsible for building up the Dutch SS.



Bas Kromhout obtained his doctorate on his thesis on 6 June 2012. The commercial edition, entitled *De Voorman. Henk Feldmeijer en de Nederlandse SS*, is published by Contact.

### *Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart*

After studying law at Leiden, Van Heuven Goedhart was employed by the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*, and from 1930 he was editor-in-chief of the paper. In 1933 he became editor of the *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad*. He became involved with the resistance and through it with the illegal newspaper *Het Parool*. Van Heuven Goedhart edited *Het Parool* from 1942 until mid-1944, when he had to flee to London, where he was named Minister of Justice in the government in exile.



After its liberation, he became editor-in-chief of *Het Parool*, on 1 January 1951 he was named High Commissioner for Refugees of the UNHCR. He continued to occupy this position until his death on 8 July 1956. Jeroen Corduwener obtained his doctorate on 28 February 2011.

### *Frederik Christiaan Hendrik Hirschmann*

Hirschmann was a Dutch officer of the KNIL trained at the Royal Military Academy in Breda in three decades around 1900.

Jan de Lang obtained his doctorate on 14 October 2010. The commercial edition of his thesis, entitled *Dienaar van koloniaal Nederland. Biografie van Frederik Christiaan Hendrik Hirschmann (1870-1935)*, was published by Bert Bakker in April 2011.



### *Loe de Jong*

Every public discussion of the Second World War was, since 1945, tied to Loe de Jong in one way or another. When the last, that being the thirteenth, volume of the series was published in 1988, the author had spent nearly half a century in the centre of the collective processing of the war record. De Jong's scientific practice was inextricable bound to his interpretation of democratic citizenship. He therefore tried to direct the undigested past according to his will. As a historian and public persona, who was well known in the



newspapers, on radio, film and television and as the director of the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (National Institute of War documentation, RIOD), he knew how to leave a prominent mark on the collective conceptualization of the Second World War.

This study, defended as PhD thesis by Smits on April 24, 2014, will make a meaningful contribution to the history of public opinion and the social repercussions of journalism in the Netherlands during the second half of the twentieth century. This biography, published by Boom, has been nominated for the Boerhave Biography Prize 2015 of the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities.

### *Helene Kröller-Müller*

Between 1907 and 1938 Helene Kröller- Müller assembled a collection of modern art which was unrivalled in Western Europe. At first she collected out of personal interest, guided and inspired by art teacher H.P. Bremmer. But soon, in 1911, she decided to build a museum for her collection in order to establish a ‘monument of culture’.

Who was this woman, who seemed hardly interested in art until the age of thirty five, and who then suddenly dedicated her life and a considerable part of her family’s fortune to establishing a collection of modern art?



Eva Rovers obtained her doctorate on 15 November 2010. The commercial edition of *De eeuwigheid verzameld. Helene Kröller-Müller 1869-1939* was published by Bert Bakker. In 2012 the thesis was awarded with the Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema Biography Prize and in 2011 with the Jan van Gelderprijs.

### *Alice Nahon*

Apart from Guido Gezelle, no other Flemish poet has sold more copies than Alice Nahon (1896-1933). Her poetry was received with enthusiasm by literary critics in Flanders and the Netherlands. Yet, her work was also dismissed as sentimental, doggerel verse, or



‘Gartenlaube poetry’, as Paul van Ostaijen coined it. Manu van der Aa wrote her biography. He has paid close attention to her role within literary circles, her relation to Flemish nationalism and her unconventional attitude to sexuality and relationships, which was ahead of her time. His research resulted in doctorate on 27 October 2008 and was published entitled: *‘Ik heb de liefde liefgehad’*. *Het leven van Alice Nahon* (‘I loved love itself’. The life of Alice Nahon), Lannoo, Tiel 2008.

### *Radio Orange*

At the outbreak of the Second World War, radio was considered the fourth fighting arm, as important as the army, the navy and the air force. Many celebrities, including the German writer Thomas Mann and the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, supported the allied war effort and broadcasted to their compatriots in the occupied territories. The Dutch language radio stations saw many well-known writers like A. den Doolaard and Herman de Man, and journalists like Henk van den Broek and Loe de Jong, taking up the cause and fighting the Germans through their spirited talks. As a government broadcaster Radio Orange had a authority that other Dutch radio stations such as the Dutch division of the BBC or WRUL station from Boston lacked.



Onno Sinke obtained his doctorate on 20 April 2009 and his thesis entitled *Verzet vanuit de verte. De behoedzame koers van Radio Oranje* was published by publisher Augustus. He was nominated by the University of Groningen for the Praemium Erasmianum 2008/2009.

### *Willem Schermerhorn*

When he was aged 31, Willem Schermerhorn had been appointed as professor at Delft University of Technology. As a pioneer of air cartography he became internationally recognized. However, at the end of the thirties he became politically involved when he became the president of Unity through Democracy, a movement hat tried to end the emergence of the Dutch Fascist Party (NSB). Because of his leadership of this movement, Schermerhorn was imprisoned together





with a number of other prominent Dutch political leaders, in the internment camp in Sint Michielsgestel. Here, Schermerhorn became a leader among the prisoners: he was seen as a suitable person who should become Prime Minister after the war, to guide the Netherlands into an era of political renewal. *De man die de put in sprong. Willem Schermerhorn 1894-1977* was published in 2014 by Boom Publishers.

### *Jan Wier*

The physician Jan Wier is known as the first serious opponent of the witch persecution. In his view, the witch trials were unlawful because they dealt with non-existing offences and because suspects were tortured.

Because Jan Wier described some witches as mentally ill, he can be regarded as a founder of modern psychiatry. Vera Hoorens obtained her doctorate on 6 June 2011. The commercial edition of her thesis *Een ketterse arts voor de heksen. Jan Wier (1515-1588)* was published by Bert Bakker.



### *Considering Biography*

Which theoretical-critical approaches have shaped the international reflection on biography in the twentieth century and what have been the consequences of this reflection on the interpretation of biography as a form of historiography? This is the main topic of the PhD-thesis *Van kroon tot bastaard: Biografie en het individuele perspectief in de geschiedschrijving* [From prince to pauper. Biography and the individual perspective in history].



In the twentieth century, biography at large, and as a form of historiographical research, has been neglected in respect to critical investigation. Finally, biography was even considered more as a literary form than as a component of historical science. Several objections have been raised against biography as a method being part of historiography. Because biography focuses on one individual only, we may not call it 'full' historiography. Furthermore, biographers would have put biography

outside the fences of academic historiography by using too liberally ‘literary’ narrative techniques, and by not being transparent about their research criteria, as a result of which biographers fail to use new insights that have emerged in academic research.

These and other questions that are raised by a reflection on biography, have been the subject of study for small groups of social scientists around the world, who worked in the previous decades on the margins of the academia to assess the merits of biography. This study will not only provide an overview of the academic visions on biography developed in the twentieth century, but also offer an interpretational framework for the questions which have been asked over time in considering biography. Binne de Haan obtained his doctorate on May 28, 2015.

### *Anton Kröller*

Anton Kröller is known to most of the public only due to his wife, Helene Kröller-Müller, who used her husband’s money to create a world-famous art collection. Yet this Rotterdam entrepreneur was one of the richest, most powerful and most controversial figures in the Netherlands during the first half of the twentieth century. Before the First World War, Kröller was a successful business man. During the war he and a small group of business leaders determined the Netherlands’ foreign and economic policy. This earned him the nickname ‘the uncrowned king of the Netherlands’.

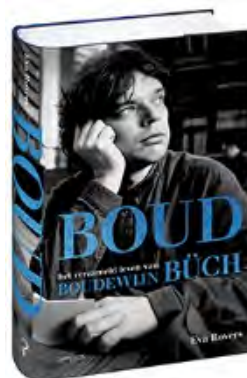


He continued to do justice to this reputation throughout the 1920’s thanks to the global company Müller & Co, a great number of commissions, involvement in the establishment of Hoogovens and KLM, an enormous estate named De Hoge Veluwe, a warm friendship with the German Prince Henry and his wife’s internationally acclaimed art collection.

On June 2, 2015, Ariëtte Dekker obtained her doctorate for the biography *Leven op krediet. Anton Kröller (1862-1941)* [Indebted Life. Anton Kröller 1862-1941]. The commercial edition has been published by Prometheus/Bert Bakker.

### *Boudewijn Büch*

After the death of writer Boudewijn Büch in 2002 many have tried to capture the life of this striking personality. Countless books, newspaper articles, and television programs have been dedicated to bibliophile Boudewijn, the poet Boudewijn, collector Boudewijn, Boudewijn who grew up in Wassenaar, Boudewijn the Goethe devotee, the fallen communist, the gay who was straight, the friend of... Most attention by far was paid to Boudewijn Büch the master of deceit, the man who needed more than reality alone and who therefore created a parallel universe.



After Büch's death however, hardly any attention was paid to the role he had played within the Dutch cultural field the previous twenty years. The literary establishment considered him little more than a rascal who read a book or two. However, in retrospect he proves to be exemplary for the changing beliefs regarding taste in the last quarter of the twentieth century. He was a cultural omnivore, who started his career as a poet and wound up to be a television personality. In the period between he worked as passionately on columns for Playboy and Nieuwe Revue as he did on articles on Rimbaud for a quality newspaper as NRC Handelsblad. The one day he would write about major authors in literary journal Maatstaf, the next he would throw new publications he disliked around the studio of his television program Büch's books. At least as poignant was the contrast between the introspection of his own novels and the philosophical thoroughness of Goethe's work, whom he greatly admired. *BOUD* was published on 13 november 2016 by Prometheus Publishers.

### *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

Although many biographies have been written about Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), they have largely ignored or dismissed his command of all U.S. Armed Forces throughout the global conflict we call the Second World War.

Since the role of Commander in Chief in peace and war is one of the essential tasks of a U.S. President – mandated by its Constitution – and

since that role has been exercised with both success and failure over the past seventy years of American global hegemony since his death, this dearth is a surprising gap in our biographical understanding and knowledge. Was America's military victory in World War II only attributable to its generals and admirals – men like Marshall, MacArthur, Leahy, Arnold, King, Nimitz, Eisenhower, Patton and Bradley? Was Churchill really the architect and strategic mastermind behind the Allied winning of the war – as Churchill painted his own performance in his great six-volume memoir, *The Second World War*, which helped win him the Nobel Prize for Literature after the war?

Clearly, the death of Franklin Roosevelt from a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945, several weeks before the fall of Adolf Hitler, was a calamity for his biography as

the dominant military leader of the western Allies, for the President had fully intended to write his war memoirs, and had already begun assembling the materials. He had, after all, rallied his country after defeat at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and had been the



ultimate figure responsible for turning that misfortune into military victory – victory that then permitted the United States to become the world's foremost postwar superpower, for good and ill.

This biography seeks to re-examine and more deeply research the character, *modus operandi*, decisions, relationships and true role of Franklin Delano Roosevelt – who often called himself an ‘obstinate old Dutchman’ – as U.S. Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States in World War II.

On 28 April 2016, Hamilton defended his thesis *Commander in Chief. FDR's battle with Churchill, 1943*. The trade edition was published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The board of the Nicolaas Mulerius Fund has awarded the annual Wierenga-Rengerink prize to Nigel Hamilton for his dissertation.

## *Piet Mondriaan*

Mondrian grew up in a religious family in Amersfoort and Winterswijk; his arch-Calvinist father, a schoolmaster, espoused views that eventually became seminal to America's Religious Right. He moved to Amsterdam to study at the Rijksacademie and, although purportedly a traditional academic painter, showed his independence and intensity from the start. He soon became a pioneering modernist, breaking the boundaries of color and composition. In 1912, he moved to Paris, where he painted his own version of Cubism. During the First World War, back in the Netherlands, he began to paint more abstractly, became friendly with the artists who developed De Stijl, and became a serious ballroom dancer. In 1919, Mondrian returned to Paris, never again to go back to the Netherlands.



Who was this unique individual who seemed to live only to paint and write in order to promulgate pure abstraction as the salvation for humankind? This detailed overview of the years from Mondrian's birth until the artist's return to Paris after the first world war will explore the human relationships, including a broken engagement to marry, and shed new light on his everyday life. It also pays a new level of attention to Mondrian's writing, most especially a play he wrote for three characters, to increase our understanding of the rare homogeneity and cohesiveness of the artist's deliberate solitude, his artwork, and the personal philosophy he developed and then applied to an exceptional extent to every aspect of his existence.

Many books about Piet Mondrian have been published since the artist's death in 1944. Yet there is still a lacuna. Weber's dissertation, thoroughly researched through letters, interviews, and the archives about Mondrian in various countries, deliberately avoids a single doctrine or opinion but, rather, provides copious new insights at the same time that it acknowledges the mysteries Mondrian carefully guarded.

On 20 September 2018, Nick Weber defended his thesis *Piet Mondrian's early Years: The winding path to straight abstraction*.

## *Jelle Zijlstra*

During Jelle Zijlstra's (1918-2001) career the Frisian economist acted as minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, senator, prime minister and finally became president of the De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB). Even though Zijlstra was active in politics for over fifteen years between 1952 and 1967, he never regarded himself as a politician. Zijlstra labeled the academic world of the Vrije Universiteit as his 'paradise lost' and only when he became president of De Nederlandsche Bank he felt in place. In his memoirs Zijlstra pointed out that the reason for this was he had never been a *homo politicus* and had always remained a *homo economicus*.



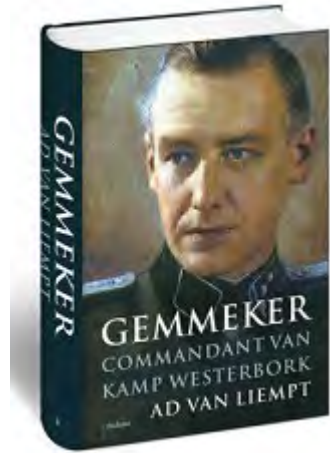
Trained as an economist, Zijlstra distanced himself from political routines and preferred a professional, businesslike style, favoring consensus and the long term above devout phrases and idealism. On the level of both national and party politics Zijlstra represented pragmatism, earning him popularity as well as fierce criticism. Zijlstra held a prominent role within the modernization of the ARP and the rapidly changing landscape of Dutch politics in general; where the importance of national reconstruction and governing on a broad basis began to fade.

This research aims at the life and work of Jelle Zijlstra in which the following questions play a significant role: What was the influence of the crisis and the Second World War on the development of Zijlstra as a person, politician and economist? What was Zijlstra's role within the Antirevolutionary Party and Dutch politics? This research will contribute to the historiography of Dutch post-war politics, balancing between reconstruction, social engineering and fiscal policy.

Harmsma defended his thesis *Jelle zal wel zien. Jelle Zijlstra, een eigenzinnig leven tussen politiek en economie* on 29 November 2018. The biography was published by Prometheus.

### *Albert Gemmeker*

He was in charge of the rather smooth deportation of 80.000 jews from the Netherlands during World War II; after the war he was sentenced to ten years in jail; he was already released after six years and from 1951 he lived as a free man in his hometown Düsseldorf in Germany: Albert Konrad Gemmeker, the commander of the transition camp for jews near the Dutch village of Westerbork, deserved this rather mild punishment thanks to the fact that he denied any knowledge of the fate of the jews in the camps in Poland they were sent to. And also thanks to the impression he made as a camp commander: he didn't beat up prisoners, he didn't curse, he acted as a correct person.



During the research for Gemmekers biography Ad van Liempt found out that this impression is quite disputable. He could be cold and relentless, obeyed his superiors in the most extreme way, and didn't hesitate to sent ill and crippled people on a three day trip to the camps in wagons meant for cattle.

After his release Gemmeker lived 31 more years, but the research brought up that he didn't enjoy this period quite undisturbedly. From the year 1959 German justice authorities tried seriously to correct the Dutch verdict. The Special Court of Assen had convicted him in 1949 for unlawful detention of the arrested jews, not for the complicity of the committed genocide. The German public persecutor did try the last, even twice. The investigations procedures lasted altogether about seventeen years.

Van Liempt defended his thesis *Gemmeker. Commandant van kamp Westerbork* on 9 May 2019. The biography was published by Balans. Against this thesis, an official complaint was lodged at the Committee for Scientific Integrity (CWI) of the University of Groningen. After thorough research, this committee came to the conclusion that Ad van Liempt could not be charged with a violation of the scientific integrity.

## *André van der Louw*

André van der Louw (1933-2005) had a versatile career. He was a journalist, a social democratic politician and a chairman of several public organizations. As a journalist he worked for the social democratic broadcasting association *vara* and the cultural youth magazines *Twen/Taboe* and *Hitweek*. In the late sixties, Van der Louw became widely known as a leading member of *Nieuw Links*, a movement that strived for change within the social democratic party. He was chosen in the central committee of the PvdA in 1967, and became the party's chairman four years later. From a rebellious party member, he turned into a professional politician. Van der Louw was sworn into office as mayor of Rotterdam in 1974. He seemed to be in his element in Rotterdam. Even so, he became Minister of Culture, Recreation and Social Work in the second Van Agt government in 1981. After the rapid fall of this unsuccessful cabinet, Van der Louw appeared to be in the running to become Den Uyl's successor as PvdA leader. Instead, he disappeared from the political scene in The Hague. He became, among other things, chairman of the Dutch football association *knvb* (1986-1989) and chairman of the national broadcasting organization *nos* (1994-1997). In the early nineties, twenty years after *Nieuw Links* dissolved, Van der Louw campaigned once again in order to chart a new political course for the PvdA. With little effect this time.



This biographical research aims to show the connection between Van der Louw's personal background and his public activities, and it will put it into a historical context. Four research subjects are of central importance: Van der Louw's journalistic and cultural activities, his position within the PvdA, his political style and his (self)representation. This research will contribute to the historiography of postwar Dutch social democracy and political culture in general.

Hietland defense of his thesis *De kroonprins van Nieuw Links. Biografie van André van der Louw* took place on 23 April 2019. The biography was published by Prometheus.



## Joseph Kotalla

A 'human devil', he was called by the former resistance newspaper *Het Parool* shortly after the war. The paper reported on excavating the victims of Joseph Kotalla in the vicinity of the German concentration camp Amersfoort in November 1945. As a deputy camp commander, the small SS member was extremely cruel and led several firing squads during the war years. The newspaper stated that Kotalla 'found his greatest pleasure in looking at tormented bodies and watching the pain and agony in the eyes of the dying'.



This study gives a detailed outline of Kotalla's problematic youth in Upper Silesia, a region that was dominated by ethnic conflicts. His career in the German army during the war will be described in detail.

After a brief period at the Eastern Front, he was transferred to the Netherlands. His work in concentration camp Amersfoort is an important part of this research. It answers the question whether Kotalla with his cruel actions was an exception compared to the other guards in the camp. Studying the deputy commander gives the perspective of a participant (or agency perspective) on the notorious camp Amersfoort that has never been used before, namely that of 'perpetrators'. On the basis of unique sources and eyewitnesses accounts it becomes clear what Kotalla thought of himself.

Hitherto the study's concerning the postwar trial of Joseph Kotalla and the lingering debate on his parole are dominated by the political and public discussion on how to deal with war criminals. This study, however, focuses primarily on Kotalla's motives and interpretations.

Hoving defended his thesis *De beul van Amersfoort. De biografie van Josef Kotalla* on 24 October 2019. The biography was published by Prometheus.



*Edited volumes published under auspices of the Biography Institute.*

### **2.3 Digitization projects**

In order to facilitate faster and easier access to biographical research materials and to open up new opportunities for research, biographical research materials are being made available digitally via the website [biografieinstituut.ub.rug.nl](http://biografieinstituut.ub.rug.nl).

This includes the project ‘Book Production 1940-1945’. The total [Dutch] book production between May 1940 and May 1945 has been mapped out and made digitally searchable for online research. Brinkman’s catalogus van boeken en tijdschriften forms the basis of this project.

The family archive of Van Calker-Clemens Schöner is being digitized by the Groningen Archives for the intended research project ‘Connoisseurs and trendsetters. Bourgeois culture in Groningen between nationalism and cosmopolitanism (1870-1970)’. This rich archive is freely accessible through Groningen Archives.

With our digitized documents, we also contributed to the content of the Dutch Biography Portal ([www.biografischportaal.nl](http://www.biografischportaal.nl)). As of October 20, 2014, Hans Renders has taken over as chairman of the Foundation Biografisch Portaal from previous chairman Hans Blom.

#### **Dutch National Pseudonym Archives (NPA)**

Last year, corrections, additions and technical improvements have been made to the National Pseudonyms Archives, which was established by the Biography Institute in 2010. The National Pseudonyms Archives is an online searchable database of pseudonyms and corresponding civilian name, which can be searched at pseudonym, civilian name, or both. Users can send additions and corrections to us by e-mail. These will be checked before being added to the database. The National Pseudonyms Archives is accessible via [www.biografieinstituut.nl/npa](http://www.biografieinstituut.nl/npa).



Chris Hietland overhandigde op 13 april 2019 het eerste exemplaar van zijn biografie van André van der Louw aan Ahmed Aboutaleb, burgemeester van Rotterdam

## 2.4 Publications

### *Scientific publications*

Horjus, Jelle, 'The Union of Baptist Churches in the Netherlands and the Rise of Nazism', in: *Trajecta* 27(2018 [= 2019])2, p. 353-371.

Renders, Hans (together with David Veltman), 'Mediators as the Subject of Dutch Biography: The Year in the Netherlands', in: *Biography* 42(2019)1, p. 96-102.

Renders, Hans, 'L'éthique et le Vatican. Le Biographie sous serment professionnel', in: *La Vérité d'une vie. Études sur la veridiction en biographie*, edited by Joanny Moulin, Nguyen Phuong Ngoc et Yannick Gouchan, Honoré Champion, Paris 2019, p. 35-44.

Veltman, David (together with Hans Renders), 'Mediators as the Subject of Dutch Biography: The Year in the Netherlands', in: *Biography* 42(2019)1, p. 96-102.

### ***Professional publications***

Brummer, Coen, *Wat is sociaal-liberalisme?*, Mr. Hans van Mierlo Stichting, Den Haag 2019.

Brummer, Coen en Daniel Boomsma (red.), *De Nederlandse Tijger, Vrijzinnig-Democraat Hendrik Pieter Marchant in drie toespraken*, Uitgeverij Verloren, Hilversum 2019.

Brummer, Coen en Daniel Boomsma (red.), *De canon van het sociaal-liberalisme*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam 2019.

Farrell, John A., 'What History Can Teach Democrats About Impeachment', in: *Politico Magazine*, 12 January 2019.

Farrell, John A., 'Watergate Created Roger Stone; Trump Completed Him', in: *Politico Magazine*, 29 January 2019.

Farrell, John A., 'Nixon Almost Survived Watergate. Does Mueller Have a Smoking Gun on Trump?', in: *Politico Magazine*, 24 March 2019.

Farrell, John A., 'House Republicans Want a Watergate Repeat: Don't Count on It', in: *Politico Magazine*, 13 November 2019.

Renders, Hans, review Joseph Roth en Stefan Zweig. *Elke vriendschap met mij is verderfelijk*, in: *Het Parool* 12-1-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Elsbeth Etty, *In de man zit nog een jongen. Willem Wilmink – De Biografie*, in: *Het Parool* 26-1-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Kees Schuyt, *R.P. Cleveringa. Recht, onrecht en de vlam der gerechtigheid*, in: *Het Parool* 9-2-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Dan Jones, *De Tempeliers*, in: *Het Parool* 23-2-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Willem Frederik Hermans, *Volledige Werken deel 18*, in: *Het Parool* 9-3-2019.

Renders, Hans i.s.m. Jeroen Vullings, 'De rebel die geschiedenis leuk maakte. Frans Smits (1958-2017)', in: *Vrij Nederland* maart 2019, p. 74-81.

Renders, Hans, review Beatrice de Graaf, *Tegen de terreur. Hoe Europa veilig werd na Napoleon*, in: *Vrij Nederland* maart 2019, p. 86-87.

Renders, Hans, review Rogier Verkroost, *Hans Gruijters. Een dwarse democraat*, in: *Vrij Nederland* maart 2019, p. 87-88.

Renders, Hans, review Andrew Roberts, *Churchill. De Biografie*, in: *Het Parool* 30-3-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Maria Stepanova, *Voorbij het geheugen. Een familiegeschiedenis*, in: *Het Parool* 6-4-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler Deel 2: De Jaren van ondergang*, in: *Het Parool* 20-4-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Sjeng Scheijen, *De Avant-Garde – De Russische Revolutie in de kunst 1917-1937*, in: *Het Parool* 4-5-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Joris Verbeurgt, *Weldra zal ik onder de guillotine liggen. Grace Elliott: Ooggetuige van de Franse Revolutie*, in: *Het Parool* 18-5-2019.

Renders, Hans, review George Packer, *Our Man – Richard Holbrooke*, in: *Het Parool* 8-6-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Ad ten Bosch, *De IJssel stroomt feller dan de Amstel*, in: *Het Parool* 22-6-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Owen Matthews, *De onfeilbare spion – Richard Sorge, Stalins geheim agent*, in: *Het Parool* 6-7-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Javier Azpeitia, *De drukker van Venetië*, in: *Het Parool* 20-7-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Robert A. Caro, *Working. Researching, interviewing, writing*, in: *Het Parool* 3-8-2019.

Renders, Hans, review *De correspondentie van Desiderius Erasmus. Brieven 1802-1925, Deel 13*, in: *Het Parool* 17-8-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Enny de Bruin, *De hoeve en het hart — Een boerenfamilie in de gouden eeuw*, in: *Het Parool* 31-8-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Dik Verkuil, *De Gedrevene – Joop den Uyl 1919-1987*, in: *Het Parool* 14-9-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Lev Tolstoj, *Jeugdherinneringen*, in: *Het Parool* 28-9-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Hans Luijten, *Alles voor Vincent — Het leven van Jo van Gogh-Bonger*, in: *Het Parool* 26 oktober 2019.

Renders, Hans, ‘Tien Tips voor een Goede Biografie’, in: *Leeuwarder Courant* 1-11-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Anne J. Kox, *Hendrik Antoon Lorentz. Natuurkundige 1853-1928* en Frits Berends en Dirk van Delft, *Lorentz gevierd fysicus, geboren verzoener*, in: *Het Parool* 30-11-2019.

Renders, Hans, review Philip Mansel, *Lodewijk XIV. Koning van de wereld*, in: *Het Parool* 22-12-2019.

Veltman, David, ‘Dezelfde jongen gebleven, maar nu met een witte baard’: De naoorlogse contacten tussen De Boeck en Alkema’, in: Doeke Sijens and Jorrit Huizinga (eds.), *Nieuwe wegen: De Ploeg en de moderne kunst na de oorlog*. WBOOKS, Zwolle 2019, p. 42-53. [Yearbook Stichting De Ploeg].

Veltman, David, ‘Twee buitenstaanders in de avant-garde van de jaren twintig: Contacten tussen Wobbe Alkema en de Vlaamse schilder Felix de Boeck’, in: *Eigenbouwer. Tijdschrift voor de goede smaak* 6(2019)11, p. 26-43.

### ***Lectures and scientific activities***

Farrell, John A., January-March, serving as ‘American Historian Laureate’, a year-long title which has been awarded in March 2018 by the New-York Historical Society.

Farrell, John A., October, \$3,500 Congressional Research Grant rewarded by the Dirksen Congressional Center.

Farrell, John A., oktober, \$500 research grant rewarded by the Associations of Centers for the Study of Congress.

Farrell, John A., 21 februari 2019, New-York Historical Society, lecture on Richard Nixon in the series 'The Presidents'.

Farrell, John A., 8 mei 2019, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, lecture 'Richard Nixon: An Inevitable Fall'.

Farrell, John A., 16 februari 2019, appearance at Savannah (Georgia) Book Festival, lecture on Nixon.

Farrell, John A., interviewed about Richard Nixon by historian Douglas Brinkley for a special hour-long telecast on New York public broadcasting.

Farrell, John A., moderator of the panel 'Telling Life Stories in These Chaotic Times', Biographers International Organization, New York CUNY 17 and 18 May.

Farrell, John A., 18 May, member of the panel 'Fire Up Your Narrative', Biographers International Organization, New York.

Farrell, John A., guest author and on-air host BIO podcast in Washington, DC.

Hoving, Richard, 3 and 24 november, Stichting Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort. Lectures on *De beul van Amersfoort. Biografie van Josef Kotalla (1908-1979)*.

Renders, Hans, end January-half March, Fellow Australian National University, Canberra.

- Workshop Biography Centre ANU
- Lezing George Rudé Society
- Guest chief editor of the journal *History & Biography*
- Lecture Australian Dictionary of Biography (ANU)

Renders, Hans, supervising Karin Bakker, postdoc Universiteit Utrecht, biography of dr. Joseph Harbauer.

Renders, Hans, member of the evaluation committee and member of the jury senior Institut Universitaire de France (IUF) (final meeting 21 and 22 March 2019, Paris).

Renders, Hans, member of the Jury for senior applicants. 15 researchprojects for a 5 years leave (three days per week) for the IUF.

Renders, Hans, NWO member of the jury for VENI-applications Commission meetings in May (2) and June (2).

Renders, Hans, supervisor (together with Doeko Bosscher) thesis Ad van Liempt, *Gemmaker. Commandant van Kamp Westerbork* (promotion date 9 May).

Renders, Hans, moderator of the panel 'International Identities', Biographers International Organization, New York CUNY 17 and 18 May, member of the panel 'The Study of Biography Today'.

Renders, Hans, 18 May, member of the panel *Biography & Theory*, Biographers International Organization, New York.

Renders, Hans (together with Nigel Hamilton), participation at BIO podcast, New York.

Renders, Hans, peer review for *Quaerendo. Journal devoted to Manuscripts and Printed Books*.

Renders, Hans, 23 August, appearance at *Historicidagen*, panel 'Why Lifewriting is not Biography'. Auto/biografie: levensverhalen over iedereen? Chair: Leonieke Vermeer.

Renders, Hans, 5 October, interviews (together with Martin Sommer) with nominees for the Librisprize for the best history book. Philharmonie Haarlem.

Renders, Hans, supervisor (together with Hinke Piersma) thesis Richard Hoving, *De beul van Amersfoort. Biografie van Josef Kotalla* (promotion date 24 October).



Renders, Hans, (Guest) Editor in Chief of special issue on ‘The theoretical Backside of Biography’ of the peer reviewed magazine *Australian Journal for Biography and History*.

Renders, Hans, every third Sunday of the month ‘Leven in Letters, biografierubriek Hans Renders’, in: *Met het Oog op Morgen*, NPO Radio 1.

Renders, Hans, member of the jury best American Biography, *Plutarch Award* 2019-2020.

Renders, Hans, new biographical series under the name of *Over Leven*, published by Bornmeer. In June, part 1 and 2 appeared: *Mansholt* by Johan Merriënboer and *Domela Nieuwenhuis* by Jan Willem Stutje.

Renders, Hans, cofounder Fries Biografie Instituut (FBI).

Renders, Hans, member of the editorial board ‘De Tweede Wereldoorlog in Groningen in 75 verhalen’.

Renders, Hans, president Stichting Biografisch Portaal van Nederland, ING Huijgens Instituut, The Hague.

Renders, Hans, assessment thesis Jo Egging, *Willem Hendrik Suringar (1790-1972). Een filantroop in Nederland en Europa*, Radboud University.

Renders, Hans, assessment thesis RUG Arnold Carmiggelt, ‘Geheimzinnigheid is zijn fort’. *Assien Bohmers (archeoloog), 1912-1988*. Member of the opposition (promotion date 7 November).

Veltman, David, 3 May, conference *(Un)Like: Life Writing and Portraiture c 1700-the present*, King’s College, Londen. Lezing ‘Portraiture as a mirror: transcending the limits of representativeness in Felix de Boeck’s ‘double’ portraits’.

Veltman, David, 18 May, member of the panel ‘International Identities’, Biographers International Conference, New York.

Veltman, David, 3 October, Interfacultair Centrum voor Agrarische Geschiedenis, KU Leuven. Lecture ‘Une génération spontanée.’

Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* bezien door de ogen van de Belgische avant-gardist Felix de Boeck (1898-1995).

Veltman, David, 15 oktober, Huizinga Institute, PhD-conference. Lecture 'Felix de Boeck (1898-1995). A transnational biography of an artist who never travelled'.

## Snor, pijp en berendans

Chris van der Heijden

Het duurre geruime tijd tot ik in de gaten kreeg wat me irriteerde aan deze biografie van André van der Louw. Aan de auteur ligt het niet. Hoewel niet spannend heeft Hietland het levensverhaal van de grote man van Nieuw Links adequaat opgeschreven. De volgorde is klassiek maar daarom des te duidelijker: chronologisch. Van der Louw kwam al op jonge leeftijd in de PvdA, maakte daar een vliegende start, bracht het als voorman van de revolutionaire oppositie ('Nieuw Links') tot voorzitter van de partij, werd vervolgens burgemeester van Rotterdam maar raakte daarna, na nog even minister te zijn geweest, in toenemende mate op een dood spoor.

Op de keper beschouwd zijn deze feiten alleen al voldoende voor een spectaculair en dramatisch verhaal. Maar er komt van alles bij: de koerswijziging van de PvdA, van pluche- naar protestpartij; de rivaliteit met Den Uyl; het bestuur van een wereldstad op een keerpunt in zijn geschiedenis; en idem dito van een bestel (Van der Louw was ook voorzitter van de xos). Zo is er meer. Een voorzitterschap van de KSVB bijvoorbeeld, plus van vele andere organisaties. De toeloozing van de Rode familie. De opvolging van Den Uyl. Redenen te over, zou je denken, voor een spetterend levensverhaal. Dat is dit boek niet. Erger nog, er hangt een schaduw overheen, een voortdurende sfeer van verveling, oppervlakkigheid, saaiheid. Zoets. Heel raar.

Vele malen vertelt Hietland in dit boek over Van der Louws kenmerkende stijl. Iedereen die in de jaren zeventig en tachtig een krant las, zal die zich nog wel herinneren. Op mij persoonlijk maakte het ribfluwelen pak indruk. Ik was de details vergeten maar Hietland herinnert me eraan. Hoe Van der Louw in november 1974 als burgemeester van Rotterdam in ribfluweel geïnstalleerd werd. Het was in de polder van strakke pakken met stropdassen een kleine revolutie. 'Magistraat in coltrui' kopte de plaatselijke krant terwijl altijd-in-pak Dries van Agt, vicepremier en minister van Justitie, zijn weezin uitsprak. Het was een signaal van een burgemeesterschap dat anders was, dichter bij de mensen, regelmatig op de fiets, potje zaalvoetbal, gezellig dansen, publieke nieuwjaarsreceptie, een dichtende burgemeester en tijdens de raadsvergaderingen al om elf uur 's ochtends een eerste glaasje whiskey – waarop vele volgden.

Het lijkt weinig twijfel dat Van der Louw door de bevolking op handen werd gedragen, net zoals het weinig twijfel lijkt dat zijn burgemeesterschap het hoogtepunt van zijn carrière was. Maar dat is niet hetzelfde als zeggen dat hij als zodanig verrassend was. Nee, verrassend was Van der Louw vooral (alleen?) wat

betreft stijl. Snor en pijp bijvoorbeeld. Corduroy, houtje-touwtjejas. En natuurlijk de altijd weer genoemde 'berendans'. Toen de congresvoorzitter bij het PvdA-congres van maart 1969 de namen van de gekozen Nieuw Links-bestuursleden bekendmaakte, werd Van der Louw almaar enthousiaster. Uiteindelijk kon hij zich niet meer bedwingen en huppelde juichend rond, handen in de lucht, hé, hé, hé roepend. Het is tot op de dag van vandaag zijn meest genoemde daad. Dat is kenmerkend – en veelzeggend. Zo ook dat Van der Louw zelf de beelden ervan op het omslag van een kort na zijn dood gepubliceerd boek over Nieuw Links plaatste. Het geeft, zoals Hietland schrijft, aan 'dat hij allang niet meer alleen maar baalde van het voortdurend in herinnering roepen van de berendans. Het was, net als de snor en pijp, een soort beeldmerk van hem geworden'.

Beeld. Merk. Het is precies wat me in dit levensverhaal tegen de borst stuit. Ik denk dat ik Van der Louw hiermee als persoon onrecht doe.

Hij was vast aardig en oprecht, een goed bestuurder, een innemende burgervader, een handige organisator. Maar met dit alles vertegenwoordigt hij ook een type. In andere context zou je zo'n type een apparaatsijk noemen, iemand die op elke plek in het systeem past dan wel het overal 'goed' doet. Die 'kracht' e.g. inwisselbaarheid weerspiegelt een zwakte: een gebrek aan eigen ideeën.

Van der Louw wist dit zelf ook. Het kwelde hem zijn leven lang. Vandaar dat hij zich steeds weer omringde met zogenoemde 'adviseurs' – mensen die wél ideeën hadden, in staat waren een probleem te analyseren, stukken lezen, stukken schrijven. Van der Louw deed nooit de moeite. Hietland zegt het

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keer op keer. Dat hij regelmatig ter vergadering verscheen met de stukken in een nog ongeopende enveloppe. Dat hij vervolgens toch het hoogste woord voerde komt doordat hij een verduiveld handige kameleon was. Hij maakte van zijn zwakte een kracht.

Een dergelijke ideeënleegheid is een handicap voor een innemende biografie. Maar het zet de lezer wel op het spoor, denk ik, van een land en een cultuur, van hoe Nederland veranderde in de laatste decennia van de twintigste eeuw. Een land van compromis-

sen, regelaars, adviseurs, vergeders en kwaaksneutels. Zo bezien verbaast het niet dat de carrière van Van der Louw na zijn burgemeesterschap, een sociale functie, vooral mislukkingen kende. Met alleen gezelligheid trek je de kar niet.

Het verrassendste feit uit zijn levensverhaal is dat hij, verstopt pijproker en in 1983 zelfs 'pijproker van het jaar', maar liefst vijf jaar lang voorzitter was van het Astma Fonds. 'Een joppie', zoals hij zei. Ik geloof niet dat hij de vergaderingen pijprokend voorzat. Hoewel... Een avond vergaderen met Van der Louw betekende in elk geval dat, ook als astma dag zelfs de onderbroek stonk. Naar het beeldmerk van de voorzitter. Pijp. ■



CHRIS HIETLAND  
De kroonprins van Nieuw Links: Biografie van André van der Louw, 1933-2005  
Prometheus, 479 blz., € 35,-



## Education and partnerships

### 3.1 Education

The Biography Institute supervises graduate students preparing PhD's, as well as undergraduate students writing master theses or taking part in research classes within the domain of biography. The chair History and Theory of Biography provides courses for both Bachelor and Master students. In the previous academic year the course 'Historical approach to Biography' was developed and lectured for Master students of the Faculty of Arts.

### 3.2 Dutch Biography Portal

The Biography Institute collaborates with a number of other institutions, led by the Institute of Netherlands History (ING), on the project Dutch Biography Portal. This portal ([www.biografischportaal.nl](http://www.biografischportaal.nl)) is designed to promote scientific research by making biographical reference books with biographical information on inhabitants of the Netherlands, from the earliest times to the present, digitally accessible via the internet.

### 3.3 Frisian Biography Institute

Together with Bornmeer-Noordboek publishers, Tresoar and the Historical Center Leeuwarden, Hans Renders founded the Frisian Biography



Institute (FBI). The aim of this organization is to enhance the cooperation between cultural organizations in Friesland, who can provide for the supervision of biographies of Frisian people. Right now, the series *Over leven* is appearing under auspices of the Biography Institute. For this series, which will include the biography of Abe Lenstra by Johann Mast, the Biography Institute is working closely together with Bornmeer-Noordboek publishers.



