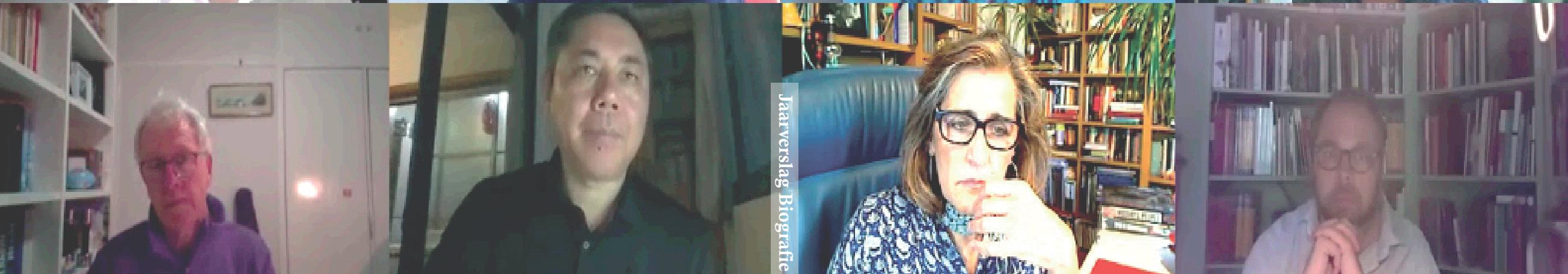
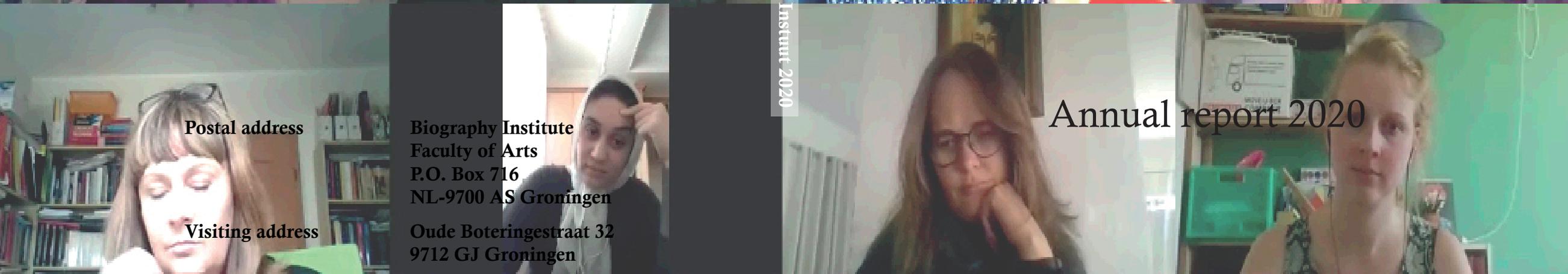




# Biography Institute



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Annual report 2020

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Annual Report Biography Institute  
University of Groningen, The Netherlands  
2020

GRONINGEN UNIVERSITY PRESS



*Met toestemming van de Plaatselijke Autoriteiten.*

# Ned.-Ind. Biograph Compagnie.

**De grootste Maatschappij in Ned.-Indië  
LEVENDE SPREKENDE SCHILDERIJEN.**

De Laatste Uitvinding op dit gebied.  
Het grootste wonder der 20ste eeuw.  
Het trillen der beelden is door eene nieuwe uitvinding geheel opgeheven.  
Alles geschiedt electricisch met eigen machines.

Te SEMARANG & SOERABAYA met enorm succes vertoond.

*De groote Opening Voorstelling zal nader worden aangekondigd.*

**A. C. WARDEN,**  
*Manager.*

7378



<b>Preface</b>	6
<b>Biography Institute</b>	
1.1 Employees	7
1.2 PhD positions	7
1.3 Finance	8
1.4 Funding	8
1.5 Website and Newsletter	8
1.7 Biography Studies	9
<b>Projects</b>	
2.1 Biography projects	11
2.2 Completed projects	20
2.3 Digitization projects	33
2.4 Publications	34
Scientific publications	34
Professional publications	35
Lectures and scientific activities	37
<b>Education and partnerships</b>	
3.1 Education	42
3.2 Dutch Biography Portal	42
3.3 Frisian Biography Institute	42

## **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 2020 the Biography Institute guided fourteen PhDs in total. One of these PhDs was an employee of the institute.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Dik Verkuil is writing the biography of Frits Bolkestein; Doctoral Guidance Committee: prof.dr. G. Voerman en prof.dr. J.W. Renders.
- Niels Mathijssen is writing the biography of Poncke Princen;

- Doctoral Guidance Committee: prof.dr. J.W. Renders.
- Pepijn Reeser is writing the biography of Lodewijk Napoleon; Doctoral Guidance Committee: prof.dr. J.W. Renders en dr. J. Rosendaal (Radboud Universiteit).

The image shows a job advertisement for a promotion in the Biography Institute at the University of Groningen. The advertisement is on a piece of paper with a red header and footer. The header contains the University of Groningen logo and the text 'rijksuniversiteit groningen'. The footer contains the website 'www.rug.nl/work-with-us'. The main text of the advertisement is in Dutch and describes the position and the institute's work.

NRC Handelsblad 12-12-20

rijksuniversiteit groningen

De Faculteit Rechtsgeleerdheid, het Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen en het Biografie Instituut van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen zoeken een

## Promovendus: Biografie P.J. Oud

1.0 fte | VACATURENUMMER 220417

In combinatie met de te volgen onderzoeksopleiding dient dit onderzoeksproject over Pieter Jacobus Oud (1886-1968) te leiden tot een promotie. Pieter Jacobus Oud was Tweede Kamerlid voor de Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond, minister van Financiën in het tweede en derde kabinet-Colijn, burgemeester van Rotterdam, medeoprichter en fractievoorzitter van de VVD in de Tweede Kamer en eminent staatsrechtgeleerde. De biografie van Oud zal bijdragen aan onze kennis van de politieke geschiedenis van de 20ste eeuw en het Nederlandse liberalisme, en van de geschiedenis van Rotterdam en de evolutie van het stedelijk bestuur.

Het Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen verzamelt (digitaal) materiaal van alle Nederlandse politieke partijen, en doet onderzoek naar deze partijen.

Het Biografie Instituut verzorgt onderwijs in de Geschiedenis en Theorie van de Biografie.

Acquisitie wordt niet op prijs gesteld.

Voor het uitgebreide profiel kunt u terecht op:

[www.rug.nl/work-with-us](http://www.rug.nl/work-with-us)

### 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);  
NWO (biografie C.O. Jellema).

#### **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 34.000.

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.

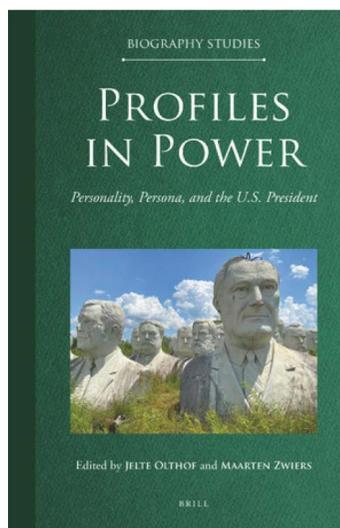
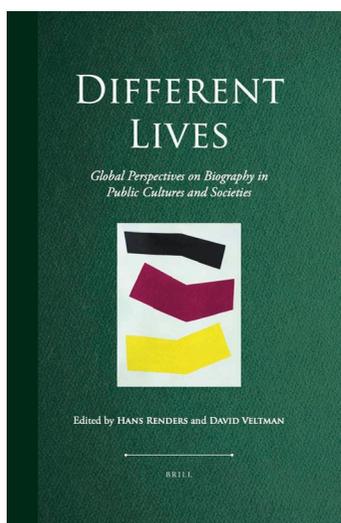
#### **1.6 Biography Studies (Brill)**

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 appeared:

- *Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, edited by Hans Renders and David Veltman;
- *Profiles in Power: Personality, Persona, and the U.S. President*, edited by Jelte Olthof and Maarten Zwieters;

This year, these volumes will be published:

- Arthur Eaton, *History Telling: The Rise and Fall of Psychobiography*.
- *Fear of theory* [working title], edited by Hans Renders en David Veltman.



## Projects

### 2.1 Biography projects

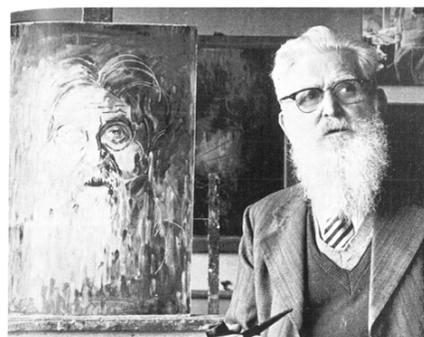
One of the main goals of the Biography Institute, giving guidance to biographers, was accomplished this year by guiding, among others, the following biographers: Coen Brummer (Samuel van Houten), John A. Farrell (Edward Kennedy), Jelle Horjus (Jannes Reiling), Antoon Ott (Nanne Ottema), David Veltman (Felix de Boeck), Gerben Wynia (C.O.

Jellema), Roelie Zwikker (Vincent Willem van Gogh) en Jacqueline van Paaschen (Marie Tak van Poortvliet).

### *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?

### *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 Bonger (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 and the young Vincent. After his mother's death in 1925, Vincent assumed full responsibility for the estate.

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 promoting the work of his famous uncle. He thought it was important for the collection to remain intact after his death and struck a deal with the Dutch State. In 1962 he sold the estate to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, which he had founded in 1960. The government provided the necessary funding and undertook to build a museum. The City of Amsterdam supplied a plot of land in the museum quarter. 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.

The biography will concentrate on the different areas in which Van Gogh was active, and the interaction between them. His background and motives will play a central role, as well his vision of organisational consultancy, his activities relating to the collection, and the establishment of the Van Gogh Museum. This study will draw on a range of sources, including diaries, memorandums, annual reports, letters and family documents. It will contribute to our understanding of organisational consultancy in the Netherlands, the history of the museum sector (and in particular the history of the Van Gogh Museum), and the popularity of the art of Vincent van Gogh.

### *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.

### *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 Princessehof, 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.

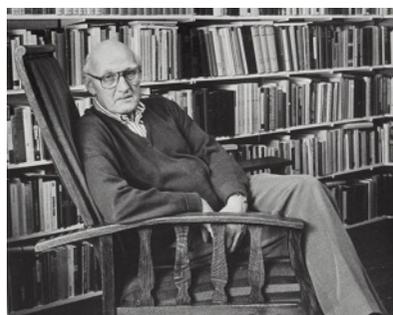


Kennedy is as known for his faults as well as his strengths. His back was broken in the 1964 crash of a small twin-engine plane, in which the pilot and a fellow passenger died. The lingering physical pain of his injuries, and grief from his brothers' deaths, fed a lifelong proclivity for drinking and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

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 Idenburg's plans was to plead for a hold on migration by Arabic Muslims to the Dutch East Indies.



## 2.2 Completed projects

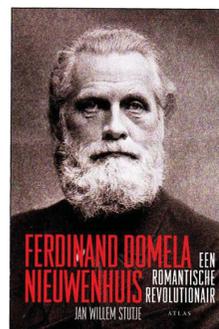
### *J.C. Bloem*

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



### *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*

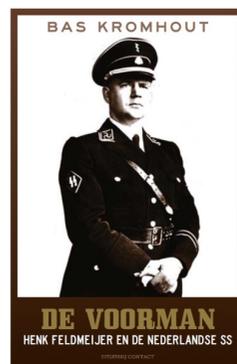
The project Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846–1919) is made possible by a so-called Vidi-subsidy from The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Een romantische revolutionair* was first published May 2012 by publisher Atlas.



### *Henk Feldmeijer*

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 clashed in 1937 with NSB-leader Mussert. In 1939 he established a new militia that was modelled after the German SS: the 'Mussert- Guard'.

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*

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*. Van Heuven Goedhart edited *Het Parool* from 1942 until mid-1944, when he had to flee to London, where he became Minister of Justice in the government in exile.

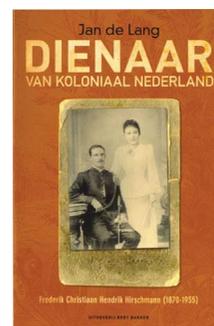


After its liberation, he became editor-in-chief of *Het Parool*, on 1 January 1951 he was named High Commissioner for Refugees of the UNHCR. He continued to occupy this position until his death on 8 July 1956. Jeroen Corduwener obtained his doctorate on 28 February 2011.

### *Frederik Christiaan Hendrik Hirschmann*

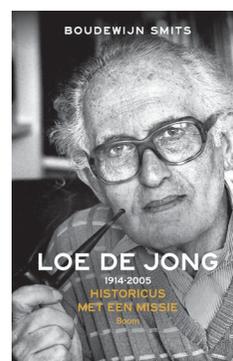
Hirschmann was a Dutch officer of the KNIL trained at the Royal Military Academy in Breda in three decades around 1900.

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 center 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.



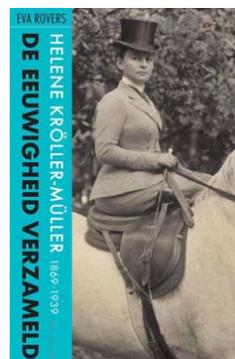
This biography, defended as PhD thesis by Smits on April 24, 2014, will make a meaningful contribution to the history of public opinion and the

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. In 1911, she decided to build a museum for her collection in order to establish a ‘monument of culture’.

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). Yet, her work was also dismissed as sentimental, doggerel verse, or ‘Gartenlaube poetry’. Manu van der Aa wrote her biography. 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.

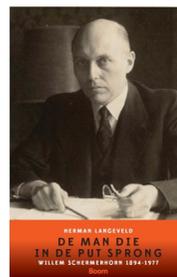


den Doolaard and Herman de Man, and journalists like Henk van den Broek and Loe de Jong, taking up the cause and fighting the Germans through their spirited talks.

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.

### *Willem Schermerhorn*

When he was aged 31, Willem Schermerhorn had been appointed as professor at Delft University of Technology. At the end of the thirties he became politically involved when he became the president of Unity through Democracy, a movement that 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. 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 mostly 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. 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, and an enormous estate named De Hoge Veluwe.

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*

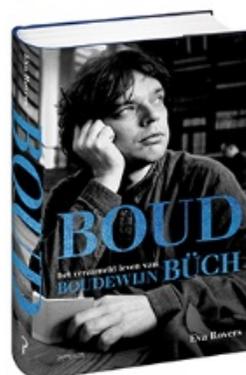
After the death of writer Boudewijn Büch in 2002 many have tried to capture the life of this striking personality. Countless books, newspaper articles, and television programs have been dedicated to bibliophile Boudewijn, the poet Boudewijn, collector Boudewijn, Boudewijn who grew up in Wassenaar, Boudewijn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

*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 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.

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.

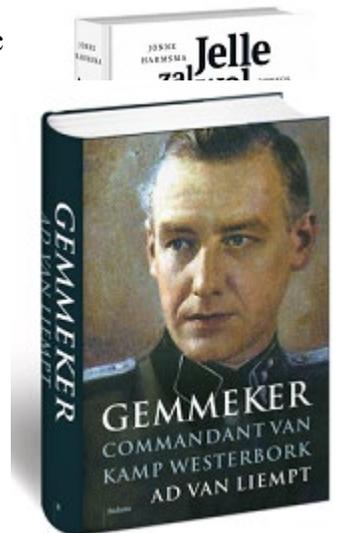
On 20 September 2018, Nick Weber defended his thesis *Piet Mondrian's early Years: The winding path to straight abstraction*.

### *Jelle Zijlstra*

During Jelle Zijlstra's (1918-2001) career the Frisian economist acted as minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, senator, prime minister and 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.

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.

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*

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.

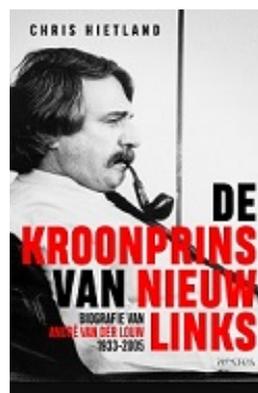
During the research for Gemmeker's biography Ad van Liempt shows that this impression is quite disputable. He could be cold and relentless, obeyed his superiors in the most extreme way, and didn't hesitate to send ill and crippled people on a three-day trip to the camps in wagons meant for cattle.

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 prosecutor 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.

### *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.



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.

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. 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 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.



### *P.J. Bouman*

Pieter Jan Bouman (1902–1977) called himself a double-natured man. He was a founder of Dutch sociology, the historian with the most sold historical books of the twentieth century and a capable Director of the University of Groningen. But he was not beyond reproach and his books were characterized as ‘unscientific’.

As a 14-year-old boy, Bouman was transferred from the paradise like Dutch East Indies to the modern day harbour city of Rotterdam. The Netherlands turned out to be exactly the country he did not want to be in. He was constantly looking for a grip on life and a position in Dutch society. He decided to ‘read his way up’ to give spiritual guidance in disrupted times and stop the increasing dominance of the masses. But in his first publications Bouman mistook the wrong way for the right.

Bouman became a respected professor of sociology whose handbook, *Sociology, concepts and problems* trained many generations of sociology students. He also wrote the bestselling *Revolution of the Lonely*.

The public defense of the thesis by Co Strootman took place on January 23, 2020. The biography was published by Van Gorcum.



### *Petrus Tammens*

Petrus Tammens was ‘by far the least popular mayor of Groningen’. 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 National Socialist Movement (NSB) searched for a suitable successor. 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.

Gevers defended his thesis Boer Tammens Houzee in the Academy Building on May 7, 2020. The biography was published by Bornmeer.



*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).

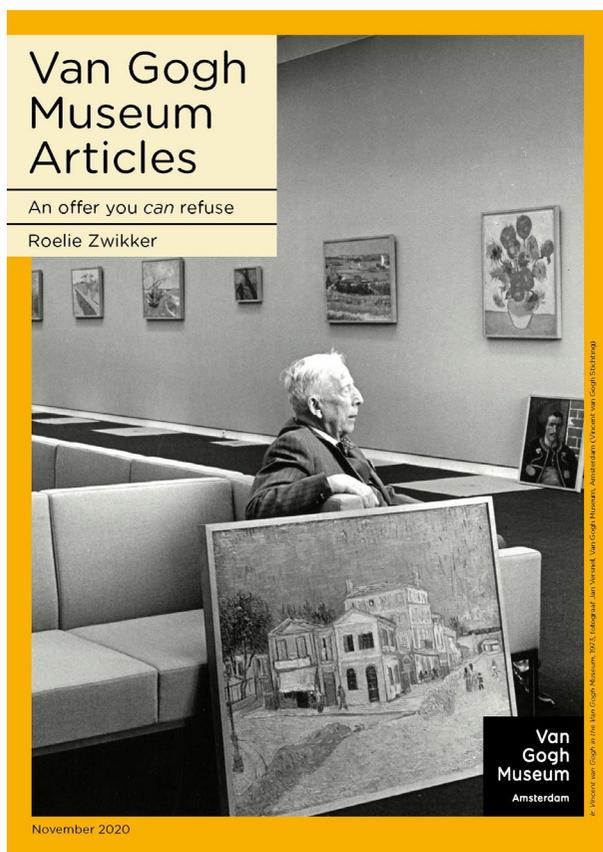
This includes the project ‘Book Production 1940-1945’. The total [Dutch] book production between May 1940 and May 1945 has been mapped out and made digitally searchable for online research. Brinkman’s catalogus van boeken en tijdschriften forms the basis of this project.

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: <https://tinyurl.com/y66vkvv7>

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).



## 2.4 Publications

### *Scientific publications*

Chris Gevers, *Boer Tammens Houzee. Groningen en zijn NSB-burgemeester*, Noordboek, Gorredijk 2020 [reeks: *Over leven*].

Chris Gevers, ‘Herman Colleniusstraat 72. Een Gronings huis en zijn bewoners in de oorlog’, in: *Stad en Lande* 29(2020)1, p. 10-15.

Jacqueline van Paaschen, ‘Dunes near Domburg (Dune V)’ in: *First Look, then see – Essays on Mondrian*, afscheidsbundel Hans Janssen, Kunstmuseum Den Haag (edited by Sjoerd van Faassen, Wietse Coppes en Benno Tempel);

Jacqueline van Paaschen, ‘Eine Totenlitanei – die Segelboote’, in: catalogus *Jacoba van Heemskerck uit de collectie Kunstmuseum Den Haag*, bij de tentoonstelling in Kunsthalle Bielefeld en Kunsthaus Stade (30 januari – 2 mei 2021; oktober 2021 – januari 2022).

Hans Renders, ‘Different Lives in a Global World’, in: *Different Lives. Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*. Edited by Hans Renders and David Veltman, Brill, Leiden Boston 2020, p. 3-11.

Hans Renders, ‘Nelly van Doesburg, het ‘onmisbare, dadaïstische muziekinstrument van Europa’, in: *Zacht Lawijd* 19(2020)4, p. 22-45.

David Veltman, ‘L’ amitié entre Felix De Boeck et Maurice Carême sous le signe de la grâce et la mort’. In: *Les-Plats-Pays.com* (online).

David Veltman, ‘‘La Pauvre Belgique.’ How a Debate over the Repression after the Second World War Informed a Biographical Tradition in Belgium’, in: *Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, Edited by Hans Renders and David Veltman, Brill, Leiden Boston 2020, p. 57-68.

Roelie Zwikker, ‘An offer you can refuse’, in: *Van Gogh Museum Articles* [online: <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/about/knowledge-and-research/academy/van-gogh-museum-articles/an-offer-you-can-refuse>].

### *Professional publications*

Chris Gevers, 'Burgemeester in Oorlogstijd', in: *Blad voor Noord-Groningen* (2020), nr. 14 (maart/ april).

Hans Renders, review Ben MacIntyre, *De spion en de Verrader*, in: *Het Parool* 25-1-2020.

Hans Renders, review Nico Keuning, *Een ongeneeslijke heimwee. Leven en werk van Willem Brakman*, in: *Het Parool* 29-2-2020.

Hans Renders (together with Sjoerd van Faassen) (ed.), inleiding 'Multatuli leeft', Themanummer Multatuli *Zacht Lawijd* 19(2020)1, p. 4-5.

Hans Renders, 'Klaas van Berkel', in Liber Amicorum *Hier sta ik, ik kan niet(s) anders. Wetenschappers aan het woord over roeping en beroep*, samenstelling en redactie Renate Huttinga en Annelies Noordhof-Hoorn, Groningen 5 maart 2020, p. 136-137.

Hans Renders, review Laura Starink, *Post uit Rusland 1972-2020*, in: *Het Parool* 21-3-2020.

Hans Renders, review Kate Kirkpatrick, *Simone de Beauvoir. Een leven*, in: *Het Parool* 25-4-2020.

Hans Renders, review Pauline Broekema, *Tekenares van Montparnasse*, in: *Het Parool* 23-5-2020.

Hans Renders, review Frits de Vries, *Dubbellevens. Ward Ruyslinck*, in: *Het Parool* 27-6-2020.

Hans Renders, 'Zomerboek' *Liever dier dan mens*, door Pieter van Os, in: *Het Parool* 4-7-2020.

Hans Renders, review Henry Hemming, *Onze man in New York. Hoe nepnieuws Amerika de Tweede wereldoorlog in trok*, in: *Het Parool* 1-8-2020.

Hans Renders, review Jonathan Lopez, *De laatste Vermeer. Han van Meegeren, vervalser en verrader*, in: *Het Parool* 29 augustus 2020.

Hans Renders, review Sally Bedell Smith, *Koningin Elizabeth II – De Biografie*, in: *Het Parool* 3-10- 2020.

Hans Renders, review Ann Heberlein, *Hannah Arendt, over liefde en kwaad. De biografie*, in: *Het Parool* 24-10-2020.

Hans Renders, review Heather Clark, *Rode Komeet. Het korte leven en de vlamme kunst van Sylvia Plath*, in: *Het Parool* 14-11-2020.

Hans Renders, review Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*, in: *Australian Journal of Biography and History* (2020)5, p. 211-215.

Hans Renders, review Hugh Aldersey Williams, *Een eeuw van licht. Het leven van Christiaan Huygens*, in: *Het Parool* 19-12-2020.

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

Chris Gevers, 12 February, lecture ‘Groningse suiker en Brabants bloed’, Groninger Archieven.

Chris Gevers, 18 November, lecture ‘P.F. Tammens. Herenboer en NSB-burgemeester’, Groninger Archieven.

Antoon Ott, 12 March, lecture on Nanne Ottema, opening conference Fries Biografie Instituut

Jacqueline van Paaschen, Director in Residence Museum Veere and organizer exhibition *Ode aan Alma – herontdekking collectie Museum Veere* (28 November until 30 May 2021)

Hans Renders, 22 January., Lecture. First copy of *Magma* by Ernst Timmer (Prometheus, Amsterdam) presented to me. Novel in which one of the characters is a biographer.

Hans Renders, 23 January, Promotie Co Strootman, biografie P.J. Bouman. Medepromotor

Hans Renders, Joined the board of the Australian peer reviewed journal *Biography and History*.

Hans Renders, 12 March, co-organiser opening conference Fries Biografie Instituut (FBI).

Hans Renders, Preselection best history book 2019, Libris prize 2020.

Hans Renders, 7 May, defense Chris Gevers, thesis biography Tammes, promotor.

Hans Renders, copromotor Johan Willem van der Jagt, *Engel van Europa. Nederland en het ethisch-imperialisme van A.W.F. Idenburg, 1900-1935*, thesis Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Hans Renders, Editor-in-Chief of the series *Biography Studies*, Brill, Leiden Boston.

Hans Renders (together with David Veltman), *Biography Studies*, (co)editor Volume 1, *Different Lives. Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, Brill, Leiden Boston 2020, 292 p.

Hans Renders, editor-in-chief *Profiles in Power Personality, Persona, and the U.S. President* Edited by Jelte Olthof Maarten Zwiers. *Biography Studies* Editor-in-Chief Hans Renders (University of Groningen), Brill, Leiden Boston 2020, 232 p.

Hans Renders (together with Sjoerd van Faassen) (ed.), ‘Multatuli leeft’, Themanummer Multatuli *Zacht Lawijd* 19(2020)1, 96 p.

Hans Renders, monthly feature, ‘Leven in Letters’ at radio program *Met het Oog op Morgen*, each third Sunday of the month.

Hans Renders, Peer review at *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises*.

Hans Renders, Member of the editorial board of the Book Series

Microhistories, published by Routledge. The 11<sup>th</sup> Volume *The Exorcist of Sombor. The Mentality of an Eighteenth-Century Franciscan Friar*, By

Dániel Bárh is published in July 2020. Editors: Sigurður Gylfi

Magnússon, István M. Szijártó (Routledge). Editorial Board: Andrew

Bergerson, Simona Cerutti, Chuanfei Chin, Dagmar Freist, Carlo Ginzburg,

Binne de Haan, Karl Jacoby, Giovanni Levi, Edward Muir, Matti Peltonen,

Hans Renders, Jacques Revel, and Dana Sajdi.

David Veltman (together with Hans Renders), Biography Studies, (co)editor Volume 1, *Different Lives. Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*, Brill, Leiden Boston 2020, 292 p.

David Veltman, 25 June, organizer online presentation edited volume *Different Lives*, invited speaker: Nigel Hamilton;

David Veltman, 19 November, organizer online workshop prof. Hubert van den Berg (Palacky university, Olomouc, Czech Republic).

**Online book presentation of**

*Different Lives. Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*

June 25, 2020 01:00-01:40 PM (CET)

on Zoom

**Program:**

- Introduction, by Hans Renders
- A book on *Different Lives?* by David Veltman
- *What defines biography in America nowadays?* by Nigel Hamilton
- *Plenary session*, lead by Hans Renders.

What is your opinion about the thesis:

*No democracy can do without biography*

## 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.

**OVER ■**  
**■ LEVEN**



Jacoba van Heemskerck, 'Eine Totenlitanei – die Segelboote', afbeelding afkomstig uit de bijdrage van Jacqueline van Paaschen in de catalogus *Jacoba van Heemskerck*, Kunstmuseum Den Haag,

# 8) 75 jaar vrij

## De vergeten NSB-burgemeester

Petrus Tammens  
was van 1943 tot 1945  
NSB-burgemeester  
van Groningen.  
FOTO DV/SB

Niemand voelde er eind 1942 voor om burgemeester van Groningen te worden. Nadat de Duitse bezetters burgervader Cort van der Linden hadden weggevoerd, zocht de NSB maandenlang naar een opvolger. Mogelijke kandidaten die werden gepolst, bedankten voor de eer. De enige belangstellende die zelf solliciteerde, een melk-boer uit Veendam, werd snel afgeserveerd.

Uiteindelijk viel de keuze op de 44-jarige graanboer Petrus Fokk o Tammens uit Ruigezand, een gehucht in het noorden van het Westerkwartier. Hij werd op 26 januari 1943 benoemd en begon aan zijn nieuwe baan op 2 februari. Uitgerekend de dag dat er na maanden een einde kwam aan de bloedige slag bij Stalingrad, waar-voor het Duitse leger in de Sovjet-Unie zich nooit meer zou herstellen. Het was een belangrijk keerpunt in de oorlog.

Wat dreef de als slim omschreven Groninger om zijn toekomst te verbinden aan de gehate bezetter van ons land? Wie was deze vrijwel onbekende burgemeester van de grootste stad van Noord-Nederland? De Groninger publicist Christiaan Gevers (54) zocht het uit. Hij promoveert op 7 mei aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen op *Boer Tammens Houzee. Groningen en zijn NSB-burgemeester*.

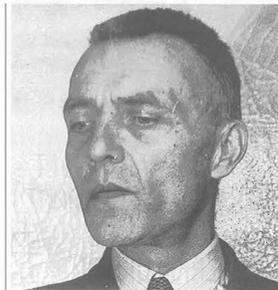
### DIKKE BOER

Tammens was een zogeheten dikke boer. Dat wil zeggen een herenboer, die minstens 40 hectare land bezat. Het waren vaak akkerbouwers uit de kleistreken, die ook een rol speelden in het lokale bestuur. Het was, in de woorden van Gevers, de landelijke aristocratie, de bovenklasse van de provincie.

De latere burgemeester van Groningen werd geboren op 8 april 1898. Hij had een broer, Peterus Jan, die twee jaar jonger was. Hun vader Fokko was een niet onbemiddelde boer uit Grijssloot, een buurtschap ten noorden van Leens, die het belangrijk vond dat zijn zonen een goede opleiding kregen. De jongens verhuisden daarvoor naar Groningen, waar ze beiden de Mulo (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs) volgden.

Tammens, die goed kon leren, ging vervolgens naar de Rijks Middelbare Landbouwschool in de stad. In die tijd was dat na de Landbouwhogeschool in Wageningen de hoogst haalbare agrarische opleiding. Hij was bij zijn eindexamen in 1917 de beste leerling van het jaar en kreeg daarvoor een prijs, die bestond uit een gouden medaille en een oorkonde.

Een jaar later moest de jonge Groninger onder de wapenen. Nederland was neutraal in de Eerste Wereldoorlog, maar de grenzen dienden natuurlijk wel bewaakt te worden. Hij was in Den Haag gelegerd en maakte deel uit van een compagnie grenadiers. De soldaten moesten daar regeringsgebouwen, paleizen en spoorbaanvakken beveiligen.



Twee jaar zat hij op het pluche aan de Grote Markt, maar NSB-burgemeester Petrus Tammens, de enige boer die ooit de scepter in Groningen zwaaide, is vrijwel vergeten. „Uiteindelijk was hij een boef.”

### KORPORAAL

Op 12 november 1918 verklaarde de leider van de Nederlandse Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij Pieter Jelles Troestra in de Tweede Kamer dat de regering niet langer kon rekenen op de steun van politie en leger. Hij dreigde met een socialistische revolutie en raadde aan de macht over te dragen aan zijn partij. Vervolgens gingen er wilde geruchten door de Hofstad. Koningin Wilhelmina zou de stad ontvluchten.

Het liep uiteindelijk anders. De bevolking schaarde zich achter de vorstin en de zittende regering. Op het Malieveld was op 18 november een grote menigte bijeen. Toen de koets van de koningin verscheen, spanden Tammens en zijn mede-militairen de paarden uit en trokken zelf de koets van Wilhelmina over het drassige veld, dwars door de juichende menigte. In het Haags Archief is een foto bewaard gebleven van de trotse militairen met het ruitje, voor de koninklijke stallen. Helemaal rechts op de plaat ontdekte onderzoeker Gevers Tammens.

Twee weken later werd de Groninger, net als alle andere betrokken grenadiers, tot korporaal bevorderd. Op 1 oktober 1919 kreeg hij groot verlof en verliet het leger.

### VOOR DE WIND

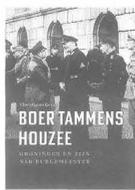
Tammens ging terug naar Groningen. Hij trouwde in 1921 met Aida Wiersma, dochter van een boer in Ruigezand. Het stel nam de boerderij over en kreeg een paar jaar later een zoon (Fokko) en een dochter (Jettie). Het ging Tammens voor de wind. Als 23-jarige had hij al arbeiders in dienst die voor hem zijn 48 hectare land bewerkten. Op de akkers werden aardappelen, suikerbieten, erwten, Waalse bonen, karwij, klaver, vlas en vooral graan verbouwd. Ook wonden er op de hoeve proeven plaats met het veredelen van graan. Voorts had hij een aantal paarden en een bescheiden veestapel van een stuk of acht koeien.

Hij was een van de eerste in de streek die een automobiel kocht, een zwarte Fiat. Daarmee reed hij via Electra en Leens in een mum van tijd naar zijn ouders in Grijssloot. Tammens was inmiddels lid geworden van De Vereniging tot Bevordering van Landbouw en Nijverheid in Leens. Samen met de bekende Groninger boer Herman Derk Louwes uit de Westpoolder ontfemde hij zich over de bibliotheek. Het was de eerste van een flink aantal bestuurlijke functies die Tammens zou bekleden, zowel in de landbouw als in de politiek.

### ONRUST

De jaren twintig en dertig waren een moeilijke periode voor veel boeren. Na de oorlog kelderden de graanprijzen doordat de VS en Canada enorme hoeveelheden goedkoop graan naar Europa exporteerden.

Bovendien was er in delen van Groningen onrust onder arbeiders, die hogere lonen eisten. In Finsterwolde vielen er bij een pro-



Titel Boer Tammens Houzee. Groningen en zijn NSB-burgemeester Auteur Christiaan Gevers Uitgeverij Bornmeer Noordboek Prijs nog niet bekend (344 pagina's)

Announcement of *Boer Tammens Houzee*, the biography by Chris Gevers, in: *Dagblad van het Noorden* 2 May 2020

test een dode en drie gewonden. Tussen boeren en arbeiders bestond vaak een onoverbrugbaar statusverschil. Arbeiders kregen hun loon bij de deur van de koelstalen, want ze mochten niet in de boerderij komen.

Wie naar het oosten keek, werd ook niet vrolijk. In de Sovjet-Unie werden boeren door Stalin massaal over de kling gejaagd. Gevolg was de ineenstorting van de landbouw, met miljoenen hongerdoden tot gevolg. In Rusland hadden de communisten hun eigen landbouw zo verprutst, dat de mensen van pure ellende alleen nog mekaar op konden vreten, viel in een krant te lezen.

Dergelijke berichten versterkten bij Tammsens zijn afkeer van het communisme. Achter veel protest op het platteland bespeurde hij communistische agitatie. De toegenomen spanningen tussen boeren en hun arbeiders leidden er toe dat de mechanisering van de landbouw in Groningen werd versneld. Door hun kosten terug te dringen en efficiënter te werken hoopten boeren het langer uit te zingen, in afwachting op betere tijden.

#### LID VAN DE NSB

In Duitsland leek een gunstige periode voor de boeren aangebroken toen Hitler in 1933 de macht greep. Zijn partij liet niet na te benadrukken hoe belangrijk de boeren waren voor de ontwikkeling van het land. In 1936 bracht Tammsens met een kleine delegatie een bezoek aan een graanmagnaat in Hamburg. Hij was diep onder de indruk van de wijze waarop bij onze oosterburen de landbouw was georganiseerd. Over de schaduwkanten van het nazisme, die steeds zichtbaarder werden, liet hij zich niet uit.

Hoewel hij inmiddels sympathiseerde met de NSB, werd de Groninger herenboer pas in juli 1941 lid van die beweging, een maand nadat Hitler Rusland binnenviel en het pact met de Sovjet-Unie verbrak. Hij kreeg stamnummer 158162. Zijn zoon en dochter werden lid van de Jeugdstorm, de jeugdafdeling van de NSB.

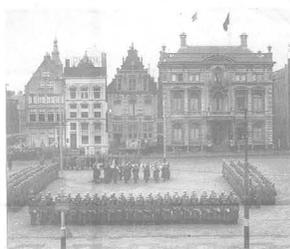
#### VERZOEK

In juli 1942 werd Tammsens als lid van de bestuursraad het hulpe van de toenmalige Groninger commissaris Christiaan Staargaard. Dat zijn ster zijende was bleek ook aan het eind het jaar, toen hij werd gepolst om burgemeester van Groningen te worden. Tammsens weigerde aanvankelijk, totdat NSB-leider Mussert hem in januari 1943 tijdens een bezoek aan Groningen terzijde nam. Een verzoek van de leider kon hij niet weigeren, vond de gehoorzame Tammsens. Later dat jaar werd hij ook begunstigend lid van de SS, zonder dat hij een uniform hoefde te dragen.

Als burgemeester maakte Tammsens weinig indruk. Hij was vaak afwezig en zijn macht was beperkt – uiteindelijk maakten de Duitse bezetters de dienst uit. Toch deed hij dingen die hem na de oorlog zwaar werden aangerekend. Zo stelde hij lijsten samen met daarop namen van Groningers die als gijzelaar voor de Duitsers konden dienen.

Hij had contact met SD'ers zoals de geveerde Robert Lehnhof uit het Scholtenshuis en de beruchte Nederlandse Waffen-SS'er Johannes Feldmeijer.

Hij was verantwoordelijk voor de vernieling van het Israëls-monument in de stad en eiste dat alle Joodse straatnamen verdwenen. Ook wilde hij dat de universiteit alleen nog pro-Duitse hoogleraren aanstelde. Ambtenaren die te weinig doneerden bij NSB-collecties werden daarvoor gestraft.



#### GEEN MEDELEVEN

Hij toonde, zegt publicist Gevers, geen enkel medeleven met de Joodse Groningers. „Hij heeft geen noot uitgestoken om ze te helpen. Van de 2881 Joden die in 1940 stonden geregistreerd in de stad, werd 77 procent vermoord. Dat is het hoogste percentage van de acht grootste Nederlandse steden. Uit onderzoek blijkt ook dat Joden in steden met een rechtlijnige NSB-burgemeester slechter af waren.“

Toen de Canadezen in april 1945 oprukten, bleef Tammsens op zijn post en wachtte lijdzaam af. „Hij bleef zitten, maar kon ook niet anders. In Silezië was een burgemeester voor de Russen gevlucht, gepakt door de SS en wegens lafheid en verraad opgehangen aan een lantaarnpaal. Tammsens dacht in april 1945 ook dat alles verloren was, hij was apathisch“, constateert Gevers.

Meteen na de bevrijding van de stad was de burgemeester één van de eerste collabora-

teurs die werd gearresteerd. Hij zat vervolgens in een groot aantal verschillende kampen vast. In juli 1947 ondertekende Tammsens samen met 24 andere oud-NSB'ers een soort schuldverklaring, zonder overigens excuses aan te bieden. Op 5 juli 1949 stond hij terecht in Groningen. Hij kreeg 7 jaar gevangenisstraf en een boete van 10.000 gulden. Op 15 april 1951 kwam Tammsens vrij. Hij ging in Groningen wonen en leefde tamelijk teruggetrokken. Tammsens stierf 25 mei 1986, vrijwel vergeten.

„Hij is niet zwaar gestraft, zeker als je weet wat de gevolgen waren van de lijsten die hij opstelde. Uiteindelijk was Tammsens een boef. Hij heeft een paar keer een verkeerde keuze gemaakt en daar kwam hij niet op terug. Als een echte boer. Die zait en zit er vervolgens aan vast“, meent Gevers.

#### GEEN BEROUW

„Ik had ook iets van berouw verwacht, maar zie dat niet. Hij draaide en loog ook voor de rechter, bijvoorbeeld over de contacten met Lehnhof. Hij ontkende, maar de afspraak stond gewoon in zijn agenda. De verklaring die hij in 1947 ondertekende was vooral bedoeld om de rechtsgang te beïnvloeden. Die was niet oprecht.“

Zijn broer Petrus Jan koos anders. Die verborg onderduikers in de oorlog. Gevers: „Tammsens had ook de andere kant op kunnen gaan. Er is na de oorlog heel lang geen contact geweest tussen de broers. Ik hoorde dat het pas weer goed kwam toen Petrus Jan vijftig jaar was getrouwd.“

Gevers vond het lastig om een goed beeld van Tammsens te krijgen. Hij deed vanaf 2012 jarenlang grondig archiefonderzoek, maar kreeg van de familie van de gewezen NSB'er geen toegang tot persoonlijke documenten en foto's. Vooral de briefjes die Tammsens schreef toen hij gevangen zat had de onderzoeker graag willen zien. „Dat is allemaal verborgen gebleven.“

„De familie was niet heel blij met mijn onderzoek. Ik ben samen met hoogleraar Hans Renders, een van mijn promotoren, bij zijn dochter en kleindochter in Lemmer op bezoek geweest. Maar ze wilden uiteindelijk niet meewerken. We hebben er geen belang bij, zei zijn kleindochter. Ze bagatelliseerden zijn lidmaatschap van de NSB trouwens ook.“