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Les Éditions de Minuit and De Bezige Bij

A Comparison of a French and a Dutch Resistance Publishing House during and shortly after World War II, 1941-1946

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Abstract

Not long after the start of the Second World War, the Nazis began to homogenize cultural institutions everywhere in Europe. Publishing houses were considered to be important instruments for the dispersion of political propaganda, by the Nazis but also by underground organizations. In this article, the process by which acts of censorship originating in Berlin gave rise to illegal publishing houses in France and the Netherlands is analyzed on the basis of the history of Les Éditions de Minuit and De Bezige Bij. We also show how these publishing houses carried on their work as legal businesses after the liberation in 1945.

Keywords

publishing – Second World War – Resistance – Minuit – De Bezige Bij

De Bezige Bij

In the autumn of 1944, De Bezige Bij published a simple and carefully designed book, sixty pages long: *De stilte der zee* (The Silence of the Sea) by Vercors (the

* Translation Kate Eaton.

pseudonym of Jean Bruller), translated by Amy van Marken, who concealed her identity on that occasion behind the pseudonym A. Wijkmark. Vercors's novella, published in Paris as *Le Silence de la mer* by Les Éditions de Minuit in February 1942 (according to the colophon, already produced in October 1941), was in more than one respect a symbolic publication by De Bezige Bij. This Resistance publishing house had existed since the spring of 1943, its first publication being the poem *De achttien dooden* (The eighteen dead), by Jan Campert.¹ But Vercors's novella was the first publication after the official notarial deed establishing the 'Coöperatie De Bezige Bij' had been passed. Strictly speaking, *De stilte der zee* was a second printing of the Dutch translation, after the Gestapo had confiscated the first. Printers G.J. Willemse and J. Zuiderdorp were executed in connection with this confiscation.² *De stilte der zee* not only represented a new beginning, it was also very significant ideologically, because in this novella a dilemma about politics and humanity is presented in which humanity prevails. The same message was proclaimed in another translation published by De Bezige Bij in 1945, *Over Duitschland* (Réflexions sur l'Allemagne), by André Gide, because in this text, which appeared for the first time in 1919, an appeal is also made for humanity and reconciliation with the former enemy Germany.

Le Silence de la mer was also the first publication of Les Éditions de Minuit, a Resistance publishing house comparable to De Bezige Bij. In May 1946, Dutch author Adriaan Morriën devoted attention to Vercors and Minuit in the first issue of *Uit de korf*, the in-house periodical of De Bezige Bij. In this piece, he made clear that he was well informed about the history of the publishing house during the period of the Resistance. He was probably familiar with the historical sketch of Minuit by Jacques Debû-Bridel that had been published a year earlier.³ The association made between Minuit and De Bezige Bij in Morriën's brief article was undoubtedly deliberate. There are very good reasons to compare Minuit and its Dutch counterpart.

1 Hans Renders, *Wie weet slaag ik in de dood. Biografie van Jan Campert* (Amsterdam 2004).

2 This information was found in the colophon of the relevant publication. There are only a few known examples of Dutch books confiscated by German military organizations in the Netherlands. On 15 June 1944, *De vliegenvanger*, a translation of John Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, also published by De Bezige Bij, was confiscated by the *Sichterheidsdienst* (SD), as the result of a coincidence: an SD officer travelling on the train from Amersfoort to Amsterdam was curious about the reading material of another passenger. Letter of 'Der Befehlshaber der Sichterheitspolizei' (Commander of the Security Police), 'Herausgabe deutsch-feindliche Lektüre', 16 June 1944 (NIOD HSSPF 61Ac).

3 Jacques Debû-Bridel, *Les Éditions de Minuit. Historique et bibliographie* (Paris 1945). See also Vincent Duclert, *Minuit. La Résistance littéraire en France 1940-1944* (1985).



FIGURE 1 *Front cover of the Dutch edition of Le Silence de la mer, translated by A. Wijkmark (pseudonym of Amy van Marken), Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij. This is the second edition, printed by Drukkerij D.A.V.I.D., Amsterdam, Autumn 1944.*
ARCHIVE DE BEZIGE BIJ, AMSTERDAM

De Bezige Bij had come into existence in 1942 for idealistic reasons.⁴ In the middle of that year, the 'Kindercomité' (Children's Committee) was founded in Utrecht, a Resistance group that had emerged from student circles with the specific goal of helping Jewish children survive the war. Late in 1942, Geertjan Lubberhuizen was drawn into the group to help collect funds for the Kindercomité.⁵ Lubberhuizen was an editor of the Utrecht University student periodical *Vox studiosorum* and had literary ambitions. He showed himself to have a talent for acquiring financial support and was occasionally able to locate hiding places for children, but he also devoted himself to the organization of forged personal identity papers and registration cards. Lubberhuizen did more still. He was involved in setting fire to the university's student card file to prevent students from being sent to Germany as forced labourers. An unintended result of that act was that students in Utrecht in 1943 were easily able to resist signing a loyalty pledge when they were later asked to do so. Everyone knew that following the fire, those refusing to cooperate could not be identified.

Eventually, begging for money began to bother Lubberhuizen. So he came up with a plan for offering donors something in return for their gifts, a 'kind of receipt for supporting the Resistance', as he described it in 1952 during a radio programme. The Kindercomité printed an illustrated broadsheet (*rijmprent*) of the poem *De achttien dooden* by Jan Campert.⁶ The news was circulating that the poet had recently died in the concentration camp Neuengamme, near Hamburg. Campert's poem had already been published in February 1943 in the underground periodicals *Het Parool* and *Vrij Nederland*. The occasion for the poem was the execution of eighteen Resistance fighters on 13 March 1941. Campert did not know any of them personally, but he was moved by an announcement of the execution in *Het Parool*. Fifteen of the eighteen killed were members of 'de Geuzen', the Resistance group that was responsible for the first illegal newspaper, the *Geuzenbericht*. This handwritten pamphlet was started immediately after the capitulation of the Netherlands. That Campert's poem was political in nature was clear from both the occasion of the poem and its content.

4 For De Bezige Bij during the war, see Hans Renders, *Gevaarlijk drukwerk. Een vrije uitgeverij in oorlogstijd* (Amsterdam 2004). Also Hans Renders, 'De Bezige Bij. Resistance and Bibliography', *Quaerendo*, 40 (2010), pp. 365-84.

5 Bert Jan Flim, *Saving the Children. History of the Organized Effort to Rescue Jewish Children in the Netherlands 1942-1945* (Bethesda, Maryland 2005), pp. 111-25.

6 Here we use the Dutch word 'rijmprent' as in: Anna E.C. Simoni, *Publish and be Free. A catalogue of clandestine books printed in the Netherlands 1940-1945* (London/The Hague 1975), p. 40.

De achttien dooden and *De Bezige Bij* came to have a major symbolic function for the Resistance. This was not merely the result of the political character of the poem. Campert's death in a concentration camp also contributed to its status. Thousands of copies of the illustrated poem appeared as broadsides and thousands more reprints were printed. *De Bezige Bij* was not the only underground publishing house to take a clear stance by means of a publication. Already in December 1940, *De Blauwe Schuit* in Groningen had reissued the poem *Het jaar 1572*, by Martinus Nijhoff, as an illustrated broadside poem, and there had been other publishing houses during the war that had implicitly expressed their opinions on the present time by referring to historical events.⁷ Most clandestine publishing houses did not venture to express themselves concerning current events, such as the one on which Campert's *De achttien dooden* was based. *De Blauwe Schuit* proclaimed its faith similarly, if less fiercely, by anonymously publishing the poem *De doode zwanen* by Simon Vestdijk in May 1944. Vestdijk wrote his poem in response to the execution of a number of hostages in Sint Michielsgestel. A.A.M. Stols, who had been active as a publisher before the war, claimed after the war that he had produced a total of 70 underground publications, but only about five of them could be considered illegal and a response to a current event.⁸ By contrast with *De achttien dooden*, the publications of *De Blauwe Schuit* and Stols were not intended to generate funds for the benefit of the Resistance. This idealistic goal, which was pursued largely by students at the risk of losing their lives, also contributed to the rejuvenating character of the *De Bezige Bij*. It has to be said, however, that not many colleagues in the Resistance took the idealistic and political motives of the *De Bezige Bij* very seriously. During the war, journalist and author H.M. van Randwijk, writing in the Resistance periodical *Vrij Nederland*, dismissed the majority of the clandestinely published books and broadsheets that did not explicitly call for resistance as 'aesthetic coquetry'.⁹

The more ambitious political intentions of *De Bezige Bij* were perhaps most clearly expressed in the less well-known publication *De schuld* (probably in

7 *Schepelingen van De Blauwe Schuit. Brieven van Bertus Aafjes, K. Heeroma, M. Nijhoff, S. Vestdijk en Hendrik de Vries aan F.R.A. Henkels, 1940-1946*, eds. Gillis Dorleijn, Sjoerd van Faassen and Ageeth Heising (Amsterdam [2003]).

8 See Sjoerd van Faassen & Selma Chen, 'A.A.M. Stols. "Wij zijn geen collaborateurs"', in: *Inktpatronen. De Tweede Wereldoorlog en het boekbedrijf in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, eds. Hans Renders, Lisa Kuitert & Ernst Bruinsma (Amsterdam 2006), pp. 268-9. See also: Sjoerd van Faassen & Salma Chen, 'A.A.M. Stols, Publisher: "We are not collaborators"', *Quaerendo*, 40 (2010), pp. 326-63.

9 Henk van Randwijk in the Christmas 1944 issue of *Vrij Nederland*.



DE ACHTTIEN DOODEN

Een cel is maar twee meter lang
 en nauw twee meter breed,
 wel kleiner nog is het stuk grond
 dat ik nu nog niet weet,
 maar waar ik naamloos rusten zal,
 mijn makkers bovendien,
 wij waren achttien in getal,
 geen zal den avond zien.

O lieflijkheid van lucht en land
 van Hollands vrije kust -
 ééns door den vijand overmand,
 vond ik geen uur meer rust;
 wat kan een man, oprecht en trouw,
 nog doen in zulk een tijd?
 Hij kust zijn kind, hij kust zijn vrouw
 en strijdt den ijdel strijd.

Ik wist de taak die ik begon
 een taak van moeiten zwaar,
 maar 't hart dat het niet laten kon
 schuwte nimmer het gevaar;
 het weet hoe eenmaal in dit land
 de vrijheid werd geëerd,
 voordat een vloek'bre schennershand
 het anders heeft begeerd,

voordat die eeden breekt en bralt
 het misselijk stuk bestond
 en Hollands landen binnenvalt
 en brandschat zijnen grond,
 voordat die aanspraak maakt op eer
 en zulk germaansch geroef,
 een land dwong onder zijn beheer
 en plunderde als een dief.

De rattenvanger van Berlijn
 piijpt nu zijn melodie;
 zoo waar als ik straks dood zal zijn,
 de liefste niet meer zie
 en niet meer breken zal het brood
 noch slapen mag met haar -
 verwerp al wat hij biedt of bood,
 de sluwe vogelaar.

Gedenkt, die deze woorden leest,
 mijn makkers in den nood
 en die hen nastaan 't allermeest
 in hunnen rampspoed groot,
 zooals ook wij hebben gedacht
 aan eigen land en volk,
 er komt een dag na elke nacht,
 voorbij trekt ied're wolk.

Ik zie hoe 't eerste morgenlicht
 door 't hooge venster draalt -
 mijn God, maak mij het sterven licht,
 en zoo ik heb gefaald,
 gelijk een elk wel falen kan,
 schenk mij dan Uw gena,
 opdat ik heenga als een man
 als ik voor de loopen sta.

JAN CAMPERT †



FIGURE 2 'De achttien dooden,' *De Bezige Bij*, Spring 1943. Illustration by Coen van Hart (pseudonym of Fedde Weidema). Printed by Jan Hendriks. This is the first edition without misprints, in fact the fourth edition being distributed.

ARCHIVE DE BEZIGE BIJ, AMSTERDAM

The Eighteen Dead by Jan Campert

A cell is just two meters long,
And just two meters wide,
But smaller is the little space
In which I shall be laid.
Though I have not yet seen it.
There, nameless I shall lie,
And eighteen more beside me.
Tomorrow all will die.

Oh, fair and fertile meadows,
No more be bound in chains,
My lovely, lowland country,
Find peace, repose again.
What other can a plain man do,
But kiss his wife and son,
And leave to fight a battle
That is lost, but will be won?

A bitter task I undertook,
But had no other choice.
The heart will dare, and will succeed,
Freedom will raise her voice.
Then honor will the spirit know,
And triumph be the crown,
For at the feet of conquerors
This land will not bow down.

By force and by deception
A country is enslaved,
Imposed on by a brigand law,
The nation torn, dissolved.
But German aspirations to

The land it overran
Are fruitless. We, defiant still,
Will fight till all is won.

The vermin-catcher of Berlin
Piping his evil tune,
Hunts down a generation free,
Till all of us are gone.
No more I'll see my loved one,
Or break with her my bread,
Why then the race for glory.
And who deceives the dead?

O you who read, remember them,
My comrades, how they stood,
Faced death without dishonor,
As every proud heart should,
How, for their land and nation,
Their lives they paid in fee.
And remember, after darkness
Comes the light. We shall be free.

I watch the early morning light
Creep through the window high.
Dear Lord, now let thy will be done,
May death come easily.
And if it be that I have sinned,
Forgive me, as I pray
To face, nor flinch, the firing-squad
Which ends my life this day.

Written by Jan Campert, after the execution, on March 13, 1941, of fifteen members of the Dutch resistance group, De Geuzen (named after the resistance groups that fought against Spanish oppression in the sixteenth century) and three activists who had participated in the February strike. These executions shocked the Dutch population. The poem became the anthem of the Dutch resistance, and the money collected from the sale of copies of the poem was transferred to the resistance.

The poet Jan Campert, who was also involved in the rescue of Jews, perished in Neuengamme concentration camp on January 12, 1943.

FIGURE 9

*De Achttien Dooden ("The Eighteen Dead"),
a Dutch resistance poem by Mr. Jan Campert*

English translation by Mrs. Rena Minkoff

FIGURE 3 *'The Eighteen Dead', Bert Jan Flim, Saving the Children. History of the Organized Effort to Rescue Jewish Children in the Netherlands 1942-1945 (Bethesda, Maryland 2005), p. 120.*

1944). It is concerned with a sketch of the way public life in the Netherlands should be organized after the war. The complete manuscript was intended for post-war publication, but it never appeared; still, it is also clear from the abbreviated edition published by De Bezige Bij in a mimeographed version during the war that the anonymous writer(s) wished to put an end to a denominationalized or 'pillarized' Netherlands.¹⁰ Up until the Second World War, Dutch society had been heavily segregated into 'pillars': Catholics, socialists and Protestants had their own institutions, like libraries, schools, publishing houses and building societies.¹¹ During the occupation, intellectuals and politicians from the various segregated pillars took the initiative to achieve a so-called broad Nederlandse Volksbeweging (NVB) (Dutch Popular Movement). Although this initiative was idealistically and enthusiastically undertaken – consider the fact that the first post-war prime minister (Willem Schermerhorn) described himself as 'party-less' – the old institutions and pre-war parties were re-established soon after the liberation and continued to function much as they had before they had ceased to exist five years earlier.

Les Éditions de Minuit

De Bezige Bij and Les Éditions de Minuit had both come into existence during the occupation as underground businesses opposing the Nazis. In addition to political texts, both brought strictly literary publications onto the market. From 27 August 1940 on, the 'Liste Bernard' was distributed by the German *Propaganda-Abteilung*, a list with 143 politically suspicious books that were banned in France from that time on.¹² More than 20,000 copies of banned books were removed from the Parisian bookshops during a raid, including titles from Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Louis Aragon and André Malraux. At the end of September 1940, a critical commentary appeared in *L'Université libre*, one of the very first illegal French periodicals, on a list of books forbidden by the occupiers that had become known as the 'Liste Otto', after the German ambassador in

¹⁰ Renders, op. cit. (n. 4: 2004), p. 240.

¹¹ Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley, California 1968).

¹² Robert O. Paxton, Olivier Corpet, Claire Paulhan, *Archives de la vie littéraire sous l'Occupation. À travers le désastre* (Paris 2009), p. 108.

Paris, Otto Abetz.¹³ It was a twelve-page summary of 1,060 banned books under the title *Ouvrages retirés de la vente par les éditeurs ou interdits par les autorités allemandes*, composed by Henri Filipacchi, chief of the booksellers chain Hachette, in collaboration with *Le Syndicat des éditeurs français et les maisons d'édition*. In June and July 1941, the list was refined with the additional regulation that all Marxist titles and American and English books published after 1870 were forbidden. The logic behind the forbidden titles cannot always be retrieved. On the first 'Liste Otto', even the French translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was forbidden. That must have been a mistake. In July 1942 the second 'Liste Otto' appeared, listing 1,170 banned books. And in May 1943 a third 'Liste Otto' containing 739 forbidden titles was published, banning all Jewish writers, including those who wrote in French. In contrast to their actions in the Netherlands, the Nazis in France did not concern themselves directly with the production of books, and certainly not at the level of individual authors.

The oversight for publishing policy in France was in the hands of the Propaganda-Abteilung (Department of Propaganda) and the Militärbefehlshaber in France, which was headed by Heinz Schmidtke and to which the Propaganda-Abteilung was answerable. Just like the *Nederlandse Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten* (Dutch Department of Public Information and the Arts), the French department was organized on the model of the old guilds. One of those guilds was the *Gruppe Schrifttum*, under the leadership of Friedhelm Kaiser, later succeeded by Gerhard Heller. The German embassy in France became increasingly important in issuing regulations governing publishing houses. The Department of Propaganda's most important instrument of coercion was its power to distribute, or not distribute, paper to publishing houses. The 'Liste Bernard' and its successors provided the guiding principle in the sense that authors on the list were forbidden. Beyond that, there was no direct 'Nazification' of the book market. That the regime was less severe in this respect than it was in the Netherlands can be explained by two factors. First, France – just like Belgium – had a so-called 'Militär Verwaltung' (Military Administration) that did not exert its influence directly on lower bureaucratic levels, but promulgated all of its measures from the German embassy in Paris. From roughly the summer of 1943 on, the embassy had taken over the actual power of the *Gruppe Schrifttum*. In the Netherlands, by contrast, a 'Zivil Verwaltung' (Civil Administration) was active, which imposed the Nazi ideology at all organizational levels, not only by German administrators, but also

13 Pascal Fouché, *L'Édition française sous l'Occupation 1940-1944*, 2 vols. (Paris 1987), vol. 3, pp. 21-40.

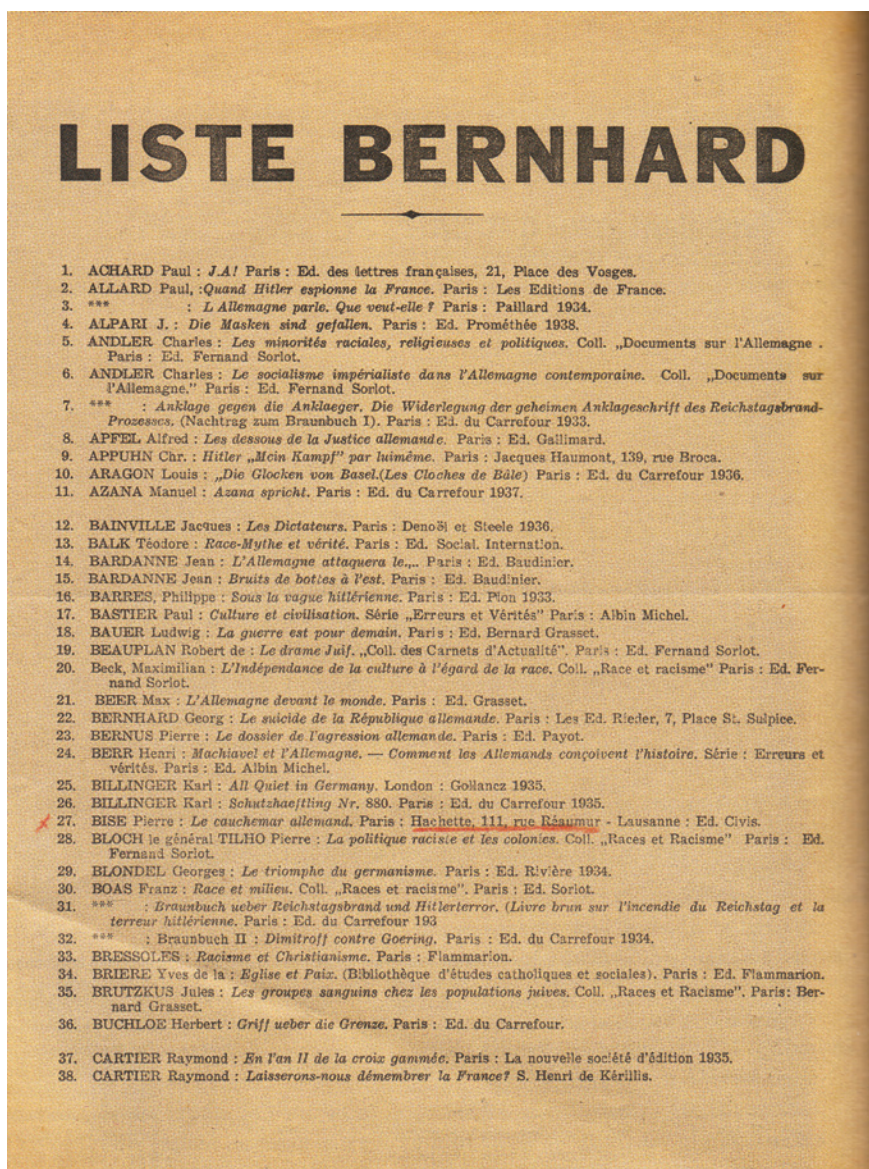


FIGURE 4 *List of prohibited books, August 1940. The list has been prepared in Berlin and Leipzig. It contained 143 titles.*

REPRODUCED IN: PAXTON/CORPET/PAULHAN, *ARCHIVES DE LA VIE LITTÉRAIRE SOUS L'OCCUPATION*, P. 108

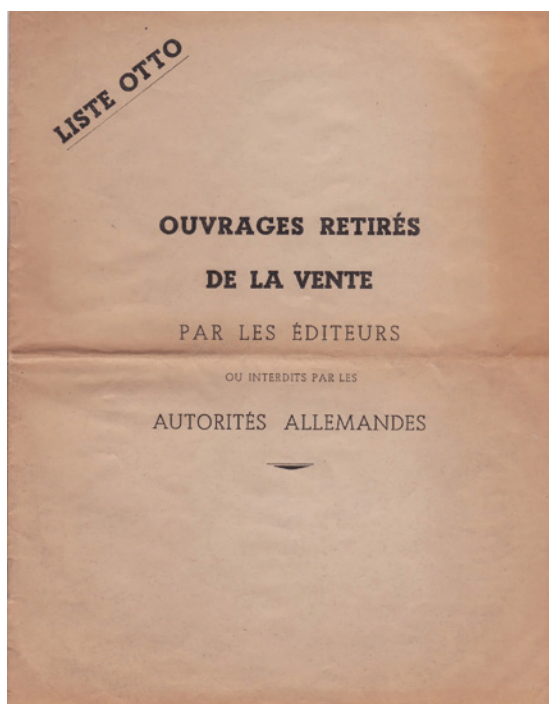


FIGURE 5 *'First' Liste Otto, 4 October 1940. It contained 1,060 titles. Propaganda Staffél de Paris. REPRODUCED IN: PAXTON/CORPET/PAULHAN, ARCHIVES DE LA VIE LITTÉRAIRE SOUS L'OCCUPATION, P. 110*

and especially by 'Deutschfreundliche Nederlanders' (Germanfriendly Dutch people). A second reason for the relatively mild censorship in France was the bureaucratic chaos among the various agencies in Paris that were supposed to carry out the orders of the *Gruppe Schrifttum*; and the complexity of the German embassy, which made it difficult for a clear policy to be established.¹⁴

The Dutch book trade was hit with similar measures, but with greater nuance. The arts sector, broadly defined, was placed on a National Socialist footing by the Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten (DVK) (Department of Public Information and the Arts), 'in such a way that the popular consciousness is strengthened and national character is preserved'.¹⁵

¹⁴ Fouché, op. cit. (n. 13), vol. 2, pp. 63-82.

¹⁵ 'T. Goedewaagen over zijn taak', *De Telegraaf*, 28 November 1940.



FIGURE 6 Lieutenant Gerhard Heller (left) is welcoming French authors returning from Germany: on Heller's right stand Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Gerard Rabuse, Robert Brasillach, Abel Bonnard, André Fraigneau and Karl Heimz Bremer.

REPRODUCED IN: ROGER CHARTIER AND HENRI-JEAN MARTIN, *HISTOIRE DE L'ÉDITION FRANÇAISE*, VOL. 4, *LE LIVRE CONCURRENCÉ, 1900-1950*, PARIS 1991, P. 385

One of the agencies that the department had at its disposal was the *Afdeling Boekwezen* (Department of the Book Trade). In addition to the DVK, the *Departement voor Opvoeding, Wetenschap en Cultuurbescherming* (DOWC) (Department of Education, Science and Cultural Preservation) and the *Departement van Handel, Nijverheid en Scheepvaart* (Department of Trade, Industry and Shipping) were also important for the book trade; and particularly the *Rijksbureau voor Papier, Papierverwerkende en Grafische Industrie* (Government Office for Paper, Paper Processing and Graphic Industry), which was responsible for distributing paper to publishing houses.¹⁶ In order to keep book production under the control of the DVK, the *Afdeling Boekwezen* was given responsibility for implementing the paper distribution regulations of the *Departement van Handel, Nijverheid en Scheepvaart*. Starting on 1 October 1941, for every planned publication, the publishing house had to fill out a detailed questionnaire for the *Afdeling Boekwezen* in connection with the economization of paper. The *Afdeling Boekwezen* determined, on the basis of these forms, whether a book could be published. This advice had to be forwarded to the *Rijksbureau* (Government Office), which informed the publishing house that had submitted the request of the decision that had been made. Printing could only be done after permission had been granted. This same circuitous path also had to be followed for reprints. Literary life in the Netherlands, therefore, was hindered by the Nazis to a somewhat greater extent than in France.

Pierre Lescure and Jean Bruller, then, established publishing house Les Éditions de Minuit less out of frustration about book censorship and more out of a general political frustration, while Geert Lubberhuizen *cum suis* set up De Bezige Bij in order to accumulate money by means of finely printed limited editions to finance the concealment of Jewish children.¹⁷

The distinction between clandestine (outside of the law) and illegal (inciting resistance) publications that was already made in the Netherlands during the occupation was not made in France, in any case not to the same extent. Les Éditions de Minuit was much more political and ideological than De Bezige Bij. In scholarly studies it is often designated as a 'maison d'édition clandestine'. If De Bezige Bij came into being in order to acquire money in the cause of concealing Jewish children, Minuit was formed from the beginning as a protest against the violation of literary freedom. It bothered Lescure, for example, that as a result of the German regulations his publication list would be devoid

16 Hans Renders, 'Book Production and its Regulation during the German Occupation of the Netherlands', *Quaerendo*, 40 (2010), pp. 241-55.

17 Anne Simonin, *Les Éditions de Minuit 1942-1955. Le devoir d'insoumission* (Paris 1994); Renders, op. cit. (n. 4: 2004).

of Anglo-Saxon literature. Unlike Lubberhuizen of De Bezige Bij, Bruller had already been active in the book trade for twenty years before writing his *Le Silence de la mer* in 1941. Starting in 1921, he drew cartoons under the pseudonym Joë Mab. He established his own satirical periodical *L'Ingénu* in 1923 and in the 1920s and 1930s he published several books with his own texts and illustrations.¹⁸ During the occupation, he chose the pseudonym 'Vercors', the name of the most impenetrable region of the French Alps, where the most persistent resistance was active.

Similarities and Differences

Pierre Lescure and Jean Bruller had already known each other for twelve years before they started Les Éditions de Minuit. In 1929, Lescure started his periodical *La Quinzaine critique des livres et des revues* and asked Bruller to join him. Bruller then also began to write, contributing a section on bibliophile books and on printing in general. In the 1930s, Lescure managed to get a couple of detectives published by the famous Parisian publishing house Gallimard. In short, the myth that the founders of Les Éditions de Minuit attempted to create for themselves, as adventurers who became writers and publishers during the Resistance, was a fiction. For De Bezige Bij, however, the story has substance. None of the founders of De Bezige Bij had had contact with writers, printers or anyone else in the book trade before the war. Lubberhuizen had published in a student paper, but his first submissions were rejected by the literary periodical *De Gids*. Together with his literary fellows, he stole books that could serve as models for the publications that they were preparing themselves.¹⁹ They were amateurs.

Nevertheless, the similarities between De Bezige Bij and Les Éditions de Minuit are greater than the differences. For both, literary texts played a political role at the beginning of their enterprise: *Le Silence de la mer* for Minuit

18 Simonin, op. cit. (n.17), pp. 21-31; Henri Vignes, *Bibliographie des Éditions de Minuit. Du 'Silence de la mer' à 'L'Anti-Œdipe' (20 février 1942-18 février 1972)* (Paris 2010). See also Nathalie Gibert, 'Jean Bruller face au bouillonnement intellectuel et politique des années 1930', in: Anne Mathieu et François Ouellet, *Journalisme et littérature dans la gauche des années 1930* (Rennes 2014), pp. 65-77.

19 Renders, op. cit. (n. 4: 2004), p. 23. It concerned the bibliophile publications *D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels, par Stendhal (Henri Beyle), 1825*, Aux Éditions A.A.M Stols Maastricht & se vend chez Claude Aveline, 43, rue Madame, Paris M.CM.XXV, and *Bibliographie van het werk van P.C. Boutens, 1894-1924*, collected by A.A.M. Stols (Maastricht, Boosten & Stols, 1925).

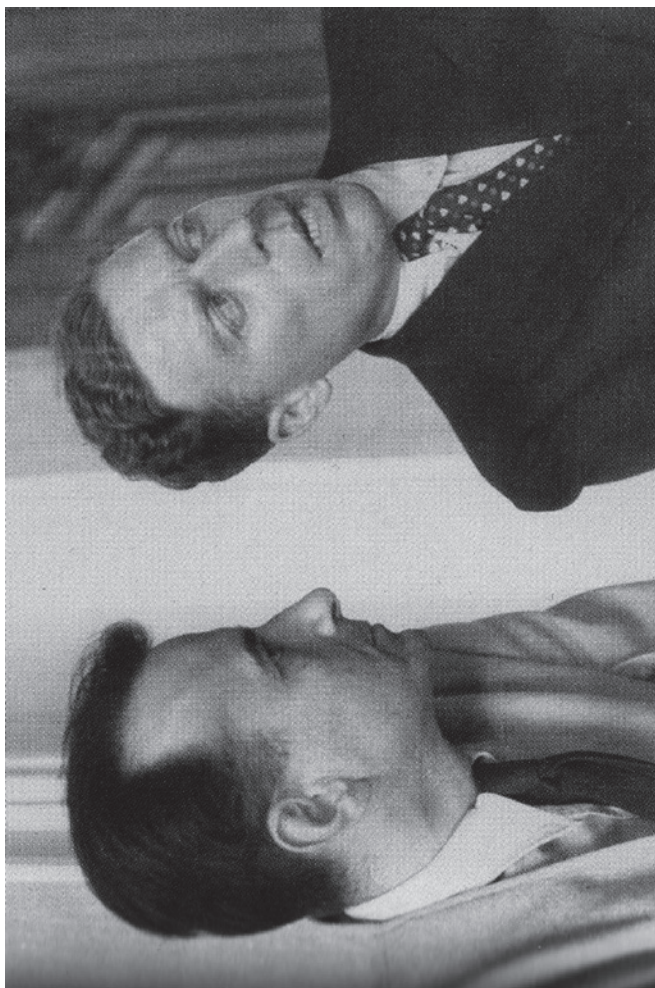


FIGURE 7 *Vercors* (pseudonym of Jean Bruller), here on the right, with Emanuel Mounier, Munich 1948.
REPRODUCED IN: PAXTON/CORPET/PAULHAN, ARCHIVES DE LA VIE LITTÉRAIRE SOUS
L'OCCUPATION, P. 285

and *De achttien dooden* for De Bezige Bij. And when De Bezige Bij brought a translation of Minuit's very first publication onto the market in 1944, it was clearly intended as a salute to their French sister organization. *De stilte der zee* is accompanied by a seven-page introduction by a certain M.D., behind which Maurice Druon was concealed, the chairman of the Comité national des écrivains. Druon might have co-authored the text with his famous uncle and Resistance fighter Joseph Kessel, with whom he had published Resistance songs earlier. He also occasionally published his own material under his uncle's name.²⁰ In his introduction – not in the first edition of *Le Silence de la mer*, but in the English translation that served as the basis of the Dutch translation – he expresses some opinions about Minuit that are also applicable to De Bezige Bij: 'Literary criticism offered many of our leading intellectuals the opportunity to express their anti-German position. Our young poets used the lyric as a means of expression to inspire resistance.' And as if Druon was aware of the Dutch bickering about the difference between clandestine and illegal publications, he wrote: 'I've seen the illegal newspapers that are printed in basements and some of which frequently contain literary sections. But I don't believe that I've found a more gripping example of such literature than *De Stilte der Zee*.' That must have appealed to the management of De Bezige Bij. The introduction by Druon precisely expressed what De Bezige Bij had in mind. No wonder, then, that an explicit reference was made to Minuit in the colophon of *De stilte der zee*.

Lubberhuizen and the others who were involved in De Bezige Bij had no experience in politics; they could better be described as naïve and they were certainly not politically active, but De Bezige Bij acquired a leftist image. Bruller and Lescure were actively involved in the communist Resistance in France. Minuit was decidedly republican, while De Bezige Bij emphatically chose a royalist position. That is evident in, among other things, the *Proclamatie van H.M. Koningin Wilhelmina 10 mei 1940* and the *Vrijheidskalender* from 1944, which was decorated with a portrait of the Dutch queen Wilhelmina. Wilhelmina was considered to be the spiritual mother of the Dutch Resistance. It is striking that both De Bezige Bij and Minuit welcomed writers of all stripes. Protestants, socialists, communists and Roman Catholics were won over by De Bezige Bij. Minuit published a book by Jacques Maritain, who had converted to Roman Catholicism and who was also known in the Netherlands for his publications in the periodical *De gemeenschap*. De Bezige Bij made room for all denominations out of dissatisfaction with pillarization and the hope that a political breakthrough against denominationalization would, once and for all, establish a

²⁰ Obituary in *The Guardian*, 16 April 2009.

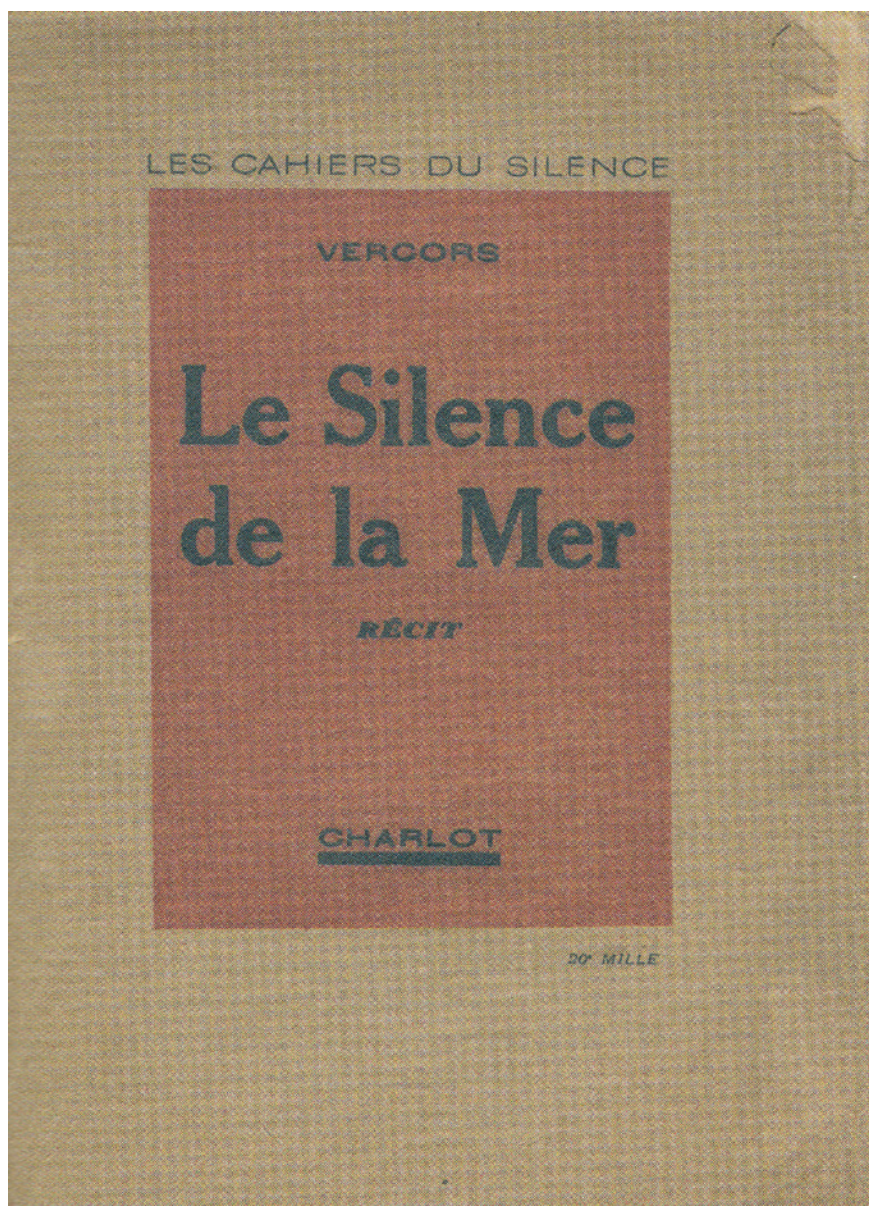


FIGURE 8 *'Les cahiers du silence', édition d'Algérie, April 1944. With the inscription: 'Dédiée aux écrivains, qui, sur le sol de la France prisonnière, livrent le combat de l'esprit.'* (Private collection)

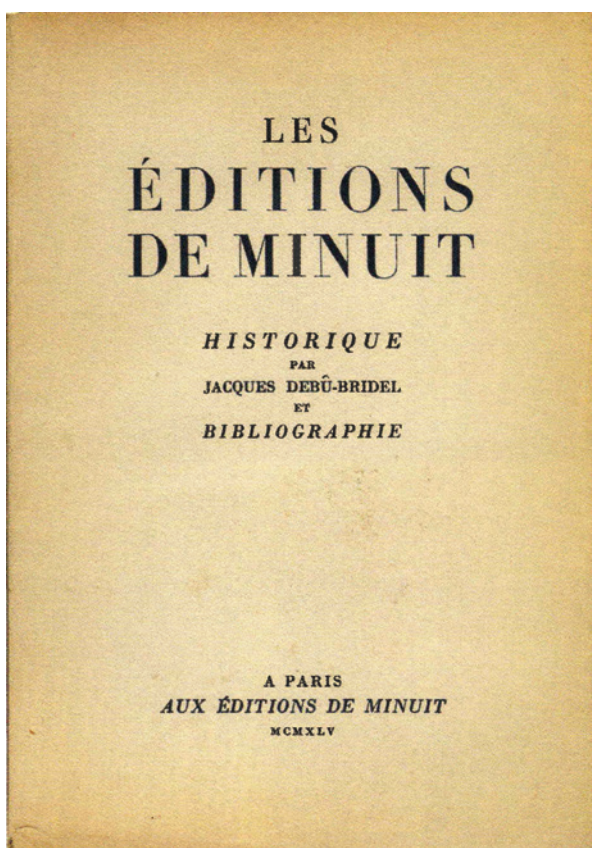


FIGURE 9 *Front cover of the history and bibliography of Les Éditions de Minuit, published 24 April 1945. REPRODUCED IN PAXTON/CORPET/PAULHAN, ARCHIVES DE LA VIE LITTÉRAIRE SOUS L'OCCUPATION, P. 285*

different political culture after the war. This was a problem France did not have. The phenomenon pillarization was unknown in France because the division between church and state had long been firmly established there. The political culture of France was also more inclined to cooperation, as was evident in the pre-war 'people's front politics', in which communists, socialists and other progressive powers worked together, albeit with difficulty. When in 1941 the idea of setting up a publishing house arose, the immediate motivation was the refusal to cooperate with the new National Socialist order. With an eye on the past of Lescure and Bruller, Minuit's ambitions extended further, in any case beyond those of De Bezige Bij at its beginning. But *Le Silence de la mer*

served the same purpose for Minit as *De achttien dooden* did for De Bezige Bij. Minit published 25 titles during the war; De Bezige Bij produced 76 titles.

Recovery Versus Renewal

Post-war developments in the area of economics and politics have obviously had their influence on the climate of Dutch publishing. The euphoria of the liberation, the expectation that there would finally be a breakthrough in the fossilized relations in public life, was quickly nipped in the bud when the pre-war relations had reasserted themselves. The hope for renewal – radical in some cases – that a small portion of the Dutch population cherished was quickly and efficiently dashed by the pre-war institutions, like political parties. The antithesis between recovery and renewal not only played a role in politics, religion and the economy but also in the cultural domain.

Within the Dutch publishing world, too, the antithesis between recovery and renewal played a role. During the war, most publishing houses were able, without much difficulty, to sell their stock to a reading public hungry for books. In part due to the rationing of paper, the production of new titles and reprints fell dramatically in 1944. After the liberation, trade organizations such as the *Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels* (Society for the Advancement of the Interests of the Book Trade) and the *Koninklijke Nederlandsche Uitgeversbond* (Royal Union of Dutch Publishing Houses) immediately tried to get the book trade back under control.²¹ National Socialist publishing houses and booksellers were, mercilessly, deleted from the membership list, but otherwise, the cleansing of the sector proceeded in the same mild manner as it did in the other sections of the business world. People had to have behaved in an extreme fashion during the war for them to be punished.²² It was different, in the beginning, for authors. The cleansing of artists was pursued energetically, which led to numerous exclusions.²³ Publishing houses, however, took little notice of those bans. It is also revealing that the *Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels* did not wish to publish the list of writers banned by the *Ereraad voor Letterkunde*

21 Jan Schilt, *Hier wordt echter het belang van het boek geschaad... Het Nederlandse boekenvak 1933-1948* (Amsterdam 1995), pp. 216-37.

22 Joggli P. Meihuizen, *Noodzakelijk kwaad. De bestraffing van economische collaboratie in Nederland na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam 2003).

23 N.K.C.A. in 't Veld, *De ereraden voor de kunst en de zuivering van de kunstenaars. Een bijdrage tot de geschiedschrijving van de zuivering van het vrije beroep* ('s-Gravenhage 1981).

(Court of Honour for Literature). In many cases banned writers just continued to publish, even under their own name, and even with leading publishing houses. In France, too, the cleansing was pursued on a large scale. This lasted as late as 1955. But due to anxieties about severely damaging the sector for the future, the penalties were mild.²⁴ Too mild, according to Pierre Assouline, with respect to the entire cleansing process in France.²⁵

Mild or severe, publishing houses and writers could not easily be placed on the 'right' or the 'wrong' side. Jan Gerhard Toonder is an example of the political vagueness in the list of De Bezige Bij. This firm published *De spin in de badkuip* (The Spider in the Bathtub), in which he relates how at the end of the Second World War he was prohibited from publishing by the Eeraad voor Letterkunde; however Toonder was also the author of an illustrated broadsheet published by the underground De Bezige Bij. At the same time he had joined the *Kultuurkamer* (Chamber of Culture) and his brother, the famous cartoonist Marten Toonder, continued to draw a strip cartoon in the mass-circulation daily *De Telegraaf* until 1944. It must be remembered here that the Dutch government in exile had declared 'wrong', that is, pro-German or traitorous, all newspapers that continued to appear legally after 1 January 1943.²⁶

Very quickly after the war, the book trade found itself in a state of crisis. The paper situation was dramatic at the end of the war. Processing and acquisition permits were still required and the regulations instituted by the *Rijksbureau voor Papier, Papierverwerkende en Grafische Industrie* during the war were still in force. Eventually, in 1946, a new set of regulations appeared based on the purchases of paper from 1936 to 1940 and in accordance with new economic and cultural interests. While there were 4,521 new titles and 1,651 reprints in the Netherlands in 1938, in 1950 those numbers would be, respectively, 3,715 and 2,822.

The Publishing Climate in the Post-War Years

After the liberation, Geert Lubberhuizen could have chosen to cease the activities of De Bezige Bij. There was, after all, no longer an enemy that had to be opposed. He chose in favour of making De Bezige Bij a conventional publishing house, albeit in the form of a cooperative. This form of ownership meant that

24 Fouché, op. cit. (n. 13), vol. 4, pp. 260-3.

25 Pierre Assouline, *L'Épuration des intellectuels, 1944-1945* (Brussels 1985).

26 René Vos, *Niet voor publicatie. De legale Nederlandse pers tijdens de Duitse bezetting* (Amsterdam 1988), chapter 10.

the in-house writers were the owners of the business and were also involved in the management of De Bezige Bij's publishing. Initially, this caused a certain tension with the board, consisting of authors on the publisher's list who were of the opinion that the publishing policy was their responsibility, a struggle that Lubberhuizen gloriously won.

De Bezige Bij had to establish itself in a market that was already heated with post-war euphoria, with existing publishing houses wanting to restart their regular pre-war business as quickly as possible. In addition, the publishing houses experienced competition from Flanders, where many editions had been published under license during the war of work by authors who had previously been published by Dutch publishing houses. By means of restrictive measures the Dutch publishing houses successfully limited the import of those works.²⁷

As soon as De Bezige Bij had emerged from its underground existence and had boldly occupied the offices of the National Socialist publishing house Westland on the Herengracht in Amsterdam, the Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels (often simply referred to as the *Vereeniging*) put its foot down. By means of formal objections to the military authorities, the mayor of Amsterdam and other institutions, the Vereeniging attempted to take measures that would thwart De Bezige Bij. The Vereeniging also insisted that new members could only apply for the recognition necessary to carry out regular business activities after a certain period of time had passed. 'General resentment is evident among those present concerning the behaviour of publishing house "De Bezige Bij"', was recorded on 16 May 1945 in the minutes of the emergency board of the Vereeniging, which aimed to gain control over affairs of De Bezige Bij. It was suggested that De Bezige Bij 'could hardly be described as very patriotic', and there were questions concerning the 'financial manipulations that made the establishment of this publishing house possible'.²⁸

The savvy Lubberhuizen adopted a humble tone, probably especially to not risk recognition of De Bezige Bij. In July 1945, he wrote to the *Commissie voor het Handelsverkeer in den Nederlandschen Boekhandel* (Trade Committee in the Dutch Book Trade) that it had come to his attention 'that the somewhat unruly legal origins of our publishing house had caused offense'. He continued: 'I can imagine that people are displeased about certain aspects and admit that it could have been done better. [...] It must be clear to you that the first wild leaps have quieted down in the intervening time and that nothing would

27 Ludo Simons, *Het boek in Vlaanderen sinds 1800. Een cultuurgeschiedenis* (Tielt 2013), pp. 440-1.

28 Cited by Schilt, op. cit. (n. 22), pp. 225-6. There too, on pp. 226-7, details concerning the handling of the request for the recognition of De Bezige Bij.

please us more than to become a regular publishing house, among other businesses that have been in existence much longer.²⁹

Once the start-up problems had been overcome, De Bezige Bij managed to catch the mood of the time by constantly creating the impression that it was at the cutting edge of every new development. The same can be said about Les Éditions de Minuit, although they were more belligerent. Immediately after the liberation, Minuit opened a fierce competitive battle with influential publishing houses such as Gallimard and Grasset, and did not hesitate to point at the compromising and collaborating publishing policies of those competitors during the war in this battle.³⁰ Vercors left his business in 1948 and was succeeded by Jérôme Lindon, who had joined Minuit as head of the production department two years earlier. He took over the duties of Vercors and stayed on as director of this flourishing publishing house for over half a century. Minuit was not a cooperative, like De Bezige Bij, but neither did it have a traditional business plan. Lindon was an idealistic man who kept the business going during the first years following his appointment by putting a great deal of his family's money into it. After his death in 2001, his daughter, Irène Lindon, took his place as director of the board.

Minuit has continued to be a vigorous publishing house up to the present day, one which, like De Bezige Bij, has stood at the forefront of a great variety of literary innovations (for example, the 'Nouveau Roman') and at the same time has done justice to tradition by still introducing each new publication to the market with a cover that is inspired by the first edition of *Le Silence de la mer*. De Bezige Bij, too, continues, until today, to be a flourishing business that boasts a history full of literary innovation and commercial success.

We hope that others will follow this first impulse toward research on comparative international publishing houses. A great deal of national research is being done in various European countries into the book trade in the Second World War. Considering the many regulations that were promulgated from Berlin throughout the occupied territories, there is every reason to give research on publishing houses a more integrated, European form.³¹

29 *Ik heb er slechts één nul af gedaan. Brieven van en aan Geert Lubberhuizen*, ed. Hans Renders (Amsterdam 2004), p. 22.

30 Simonin, op. cit. (n. 17), p. 420; Fouché, op. cit. (n. 13), vol. 2, pp. 228-9; Jérôme Gauthert et Thomas Wieder, 'Carcassonne-des-Près', *Le Monde*, 30 July 2010; Jean-Yves Mollier, 'L'Édition française dans la tourmente de la Seconde Guerre mondiale', *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 4 (2011) 112, pp. 127-38.

31 Hans Renders, 'Hitler's European Publishing Ambitions: A Plea for an International Perspective', *Quaerendo*, 42 (2012), pp. 231-240.