

HANS RENDERS

Art, ideology and Americanization in post-war Dutch *Mandril*. Journalistic innovation of a conservative kind

In his study *Discovering the News* Michael Schudson came to the conclusion that journalists try to objectify their standards and values by stressing the importance of 'facts'. Gaye Tuchman says it perhaps more concisely: 'the word "objectivity" is fraught with meaning'.¹ To talk of journalism is to talk of ideology. Let us interpret ideology in the sense given to it by the French philosopher Jean-François Revel in his book *La Connaissance Inutile* (1988): a mixture of strong emotions and simple ideas which is expressed in a form of behaviour.² It is a rather negative definition of ideology, which stems from Revel's principle that ideological thought comes prior to the examination and argumentation of facts.

You can examine ideology by looking for the hidden and unconscious motives behind openly expressed convictions. In press history studies the emphasis is almost always on the political culture of the medium under examination. Such studies rarely devote much attention to art, even though that constitutes a substantial part of a newspaper or magazine.³ Though we happily leave the art section and the art information on news pages as a historical source for art historians and literary experts, they often show little interest in journalism in return. They look to reviews of books or exhibitions in order to discover more about the reception of an artist or movement. And yet from a journalistic point of view there is much that is worthy of mention about art in the newspaper.

While it would be absurd to question how far political coverage is about politics, you may well wonder to what extent art coverage is about art. Elaborating further on this theme, this article will proceed to discuss hidden ideologies in art coverage as part of a particular journalistic culture in the Netherlands shortly after the Second World War. Because such a subject is too wide to be treated in a general way, I shall focus on the news magazine *Mandril* from several angles; what follows should be seen as a case study of the relationship between art and politics in the context of journalistic innovation. To what extent was the attention given to art in *Mandril* fuelled by hidden ideologies, not only in factual reporting but also in the way in which art was written about?

¹ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York 1978); Gaye Tuchman, 'Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity', in: Howard Tumber, *News: A Reader* (New York 1999), p. 297.

² Jean-François Revel, *La Connaissance inutile* (Paris 1988), p. 164. The passage reads as follows: 'l'idéologie est un mélange d'émotions fortes et d'idées simples accordées à un comportement.'

³ In *Lées die krant! Geschiedenis van het naoorlogse Parool 1945-1970* (Amsterdam 1996) Gerard Mulder and Paul Koedijk occasionally make exceptions to this rule, as on pp. 379-82 where they write about the relationship between *Het Parool* and *Tirade*. By contrast they say nothing whatever about the interrelationship between *Het Parool* and *Mandril*.

Mandril did not stand alone as a renascent medium. In the wake of the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool*, which had its origins in the resistance, the late nineteen-forties saw the appearance of several journalistic weeklies and monthlies which gave paramount importance to breaking the still rigid patterns within the pillarized society of the immediate post-war years. Since the middle of the nineteenth-century Dutch society had been divided into ideological pillars. This meant that Catholics, Protestants and socialists (as well as the ‘residual pillar’ of the liberals) had their own schools, societies and even their own press. Needless to say, this rigidly enforced segmentation and segregation entailed a close relationship with political and artistic institutions. The result of this socially and ideologically fragmented system was that people from the same pillar did not criticize each other, and events seen as the domain of another pillar were rarely the subject of serious attention.⁴

Mandril is an example of the post-war endeavour to found a non-pillarized press by avoiding party politics and by abolishing the taboo on humour and independent thought which was still prevalent in both Catholic and Protestant newspapers. *Mandril* also shows that there was a need to cover art with the same topicality as politics. *Mandril* gave a lot of attention to new art forms from America: not just film and jazz but American journalistic trends too were given more space than previously: commentaries, columns and cartoons for example. It was an American novelty to let the honest man in the street have his say now and then.

Although rationality was regarded as a prerequisite for liberalism, the name of the magazine referred to a West African species of ape also known as the ‘devil of the forest’. (Rationalism can also be depicted mockingly, as in the mandrill presenting its buttocks to spectators.) The *Mandril* editors made no secret of the fact that they were aiming at a Dutch equivalent of the American weekly *The New Yorker*. Feature formats were simply borrowed.⁵ For example the introductory feature ‘On dit . . . on dat’, generally written by Eduard Elias, was a blatant copy of the *New Yorker*’s ‘Talk of the Town’. A first glance at the cartoons in *Mandril* leaves little doubt that Dutch cartoonists were sometimes extremely directly inspired by their American counterparts.⁶ (Illus. 1, 2 & 3.)

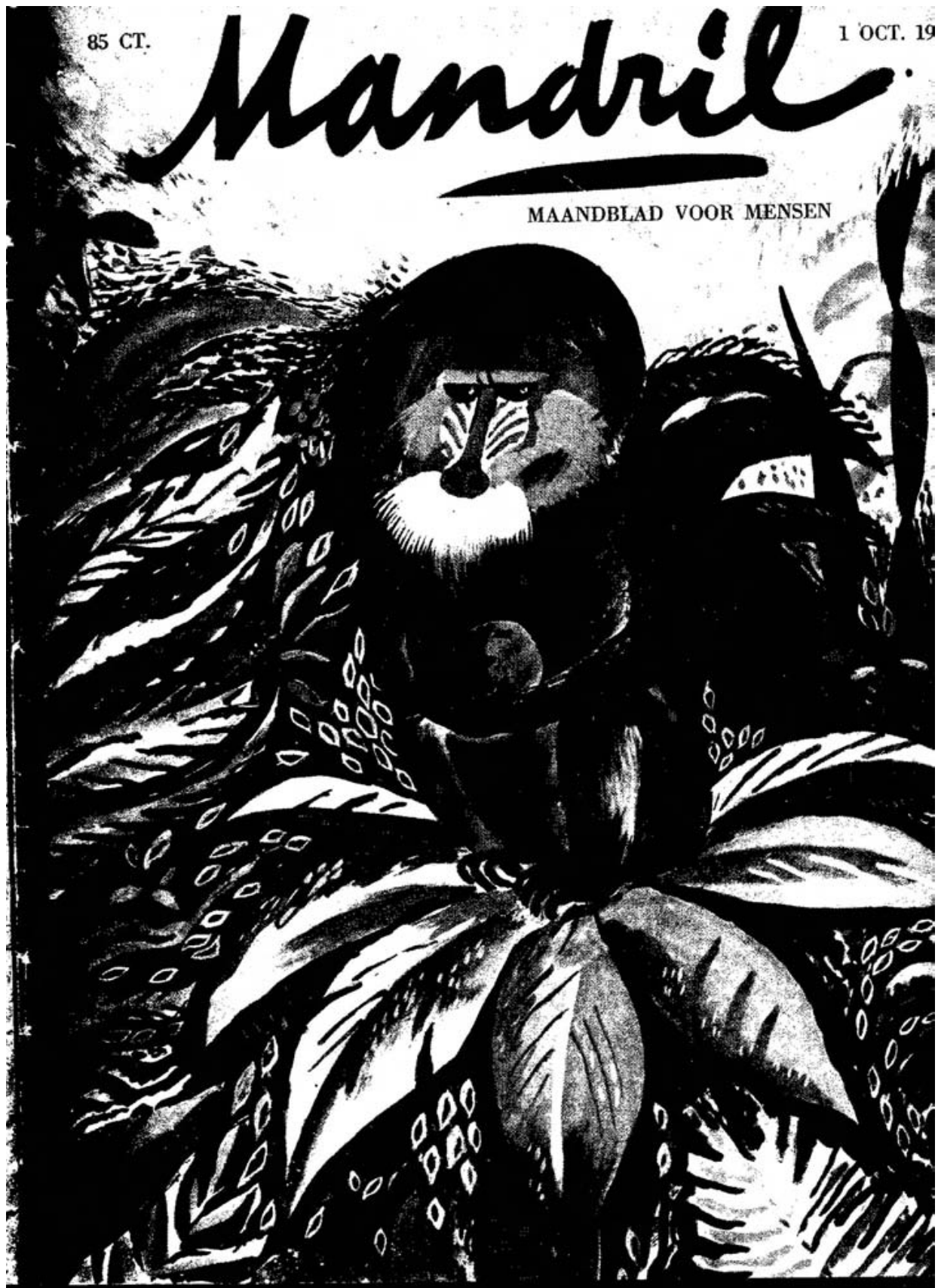
⁴ Arend Lijphart, *The politics of Accommodation: pluralism and democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley & Los Angeles 1968), *passim*. Lijphart speaks about ‘blocs’ instead of ‘pillars’, which is more familiar in the Dutch equivalent ‘verzuiling’.

⁵ Hans Mulder, ‘De mislukte poging om in Nederland de humor van The New Yorker te introduceren: Mandril, maandblad voor mensen, 1948-1953’, in: *Vrij Nederland*, 9 June 1979. Even before the first issue appeared, Frits van der Molen wrote in a letter to Jan Greshoff of 22 July 1948: ‘For a long time now I have been working on putting together a magazine like the New Yorker to suit Dutch tastes’ (*Al heel lang ben ik bezig een blad als de New Yorker in Nederlandse trant in elkaar te zetten.*), Letterkundig Museum [Museum of Dutch Literature], The Hague.

⁶ *The Complete Book of Covers from The New Yorker 1925-1989*, with a foreword by John Updike (New York 1989).



1. Cartoon from *Mandril*.



2. Front cover of first issue, October 1948.

The founders of *Mandril* had learned to smile again in those first years of liberation, liberally assisted by such American delights as cartoons, Coca Cola, chewing gum and paperback books. They were not the only ones who were open to entertainment from the new world: volumes such as *Keep on Smiling* and *America's Favorite Jokes*, which appeared in 1947 and 1948, were only two of many titles in this genre. There were many best-selling humorous books in the Prisma and Zwarte Beertjes [Little Black Bears] paperback series. Prisma even used the advertising slogan 'Fight the cold war with good humour and amusement.'⁷ The first issue of *Mandril* was a success, the 5,000 printed copies selling out within two days, so that an extra 5,000 had to be printed.⁸ This was a large run by Dutch standards.

The editors of *Mandril* were experienced journalists who advocated a lifestyle without manifest political preferences. Eduard Elias and Henri Knap took the lead, the former writing for the conservative weekly *Elseviers Weekblad*. Knap worked for *Het Parool*, to which he contributed a celebrated feature under the name of Dagboekancier [Day-buccaneer]. Charles Boost was film editor of the Catholic daily *De Tijd* and Frits van der Molen worked for *Elseviers Weekblad*. In their magazine-format journal the editors liked to give the impression of being above politics by discussing the lighter side of life in a deadly serious manner. An exposé on the etiquette of giving tips fitted in well with this approach. In the editorial at the end of the first year it even appeared in so many words: the 'mandrilleurs' were only interested in making a magazine for fun. Just as big brother *The New Yorker* had so often declared, *Mandril* was not trying to prove anything. There is no idealism, let alone political idealism, to be found in *Mandril*. And yet in the 'On dit . . . on dat' column, which often had a tone of editorial comment, it was often remarked that *Mandril's* political opinion ought to be taken seriously, all the more so since that opinion had neither authority nor influence. Thus, observations about politics were made, but it is difficult to find a straightforward political conviction explicitly expressed in *Mandril*. Why? Not having to express political desires is often the privilege of the established order whose wishes have already been fulfilled. And as Herbert Altschull has already shown so convincingly in *From Milton to McLuhan*: so-called objectivity about political writing leads to the endorsement of mainstream political views, which in turn gives rise to political smugness, as the history of *Mandril* would also demonstrate.⁹

⁷ Lisa Kuitert, *Het uiterlijk behang: reeksen in de Nederlandse literatuur 1945-1996*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam 1997), p. 119. *Het Nieuwsblad voor de boekhandel* makes reference to the slogan in 1951. The 'Mandrilleurs' E. Elias and A. Duif compiled the anthology *Lachen is Leven: een bloemlezing in woord en beeld van Nederlandse humor van 1883 tot 1958* (Utrecht 1958).

⁸ Letter from Frits van der Molen to Jan Greshoff, 29 October 1948, Letterkundig Museum, The Hague.

⁹ Herbert J. Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan: The Ideas behind American Journalism* (New York/London 1990); in the context, chapter 2 'Ideology and the Missing Theory of News' and chapter



DR Jekyll EN MR HYDE

Mandril's editors had found the ideal publisher in Jules Perel. He specialized in magazines which did well to keep politics at a distance, such as *Hilton Holland Magazine* and *Ideaal Wonen* [Ideal Living]. He was also responsible for *Elegance*, which he began publishing in 1937.¹⁰ Several advertisers in this glossy for the elegant woman also managed to find their way to *Mandril*.

Perel also managed to secure advertisements from hotels and the manufacturers of Coca Cola, nylons and spirits. Advertisers need to be handled carefully. So when Elias made critical remarks in an article about the Doelen Hotel in Amsterdam, Perel intervened personally and published his only contribution ever to *Mandril*, in which he stated that Elias had been 'most unreasonable' in his criticism. The hotel and restaurant trade continued to advertise, but this was not enough to compensate Perel for the shortage of subscribers. The anticipated flood of new advertisers did not materialize; even the contributions of the famous copywriter Karel Sartory (at the time a well-known Dutch copy writer), who wrote pieces for *Mandril*, did not change matters. In the spring of 1953, after 44 issues, Perel called it a day.¹¹

Looking at the editorial pages of *Mandril* it is obvious that Elias and Knap did not mince their words. In the very first issue, someone who had criticized the coupon distribution system was baldly compared to the Nazi Reichsminister and field marshall Hermann Göring, who was supposed to have said once that the Dutch didn't need many coupons as they did everything on the black market anyway. On the same page sympathy is shown for the Indonesians who were fighting for self-government. The Netherlands was at that time involved in a colonial struggle against the independence of the Dutch East Indies. The hostilities against the Indonesian nationalists were euphemistically called 'police operations', which could not disguise the fact that it was chiefly the Dutch left-wing which supported the struggle for independence.

But total independence, that was going a bit far for *Mandril*. The Indonesian question was initially viewed objectively. In the first issue of the second year (October 1949) there was a bantering piece about Frans Goedhart, involved in

3 'Philosophy and Some Fundamental Questions' are particularly instructive. Matthew Arnold called *journalism* 'literature in a hurry', cited in: T.S. Matthews, *The Sugar Pill. An Essay on Newspapers* (London 1958), p. 11.

10 Ton Zeelenberg, 'Het mysterie Elegance: Was zij werkelijk een ondergeschoven oorlogskind?', in: *Elegance*, 50/12 (1993), pp. 46-64; Hans Renders, 'Minstens vijftig jaar Elegance', in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 19 November 1993; Joan Hemels & Renée Vegt, *Het Geïllustreerde Tijdschrift in Nederland: Bron van kennis en vermaak, lust voor het oog, Bibliografie*, vol. 2: 1945-1995 (Amsterdam 1997), pp. 452-8.

11 The final two issues of *Mandril* were unnumbered and undated. This explains why some publications give conflicting information about the total number of issues and when the curtain finally came down. Henk van Gelder, for example, writes that there were a total of 48 issues: 'Mandril zat langs de kant en bekeek het goede', in: *De Tijd*, 7 August 1987, pp. 18-21. By contrast Erik Slagter, in his *Tekst en Beeld: Cobra en Vijftig, een bibliografie* (Tiel 1986), p. 34, writes that the last issue of *Mandril* was published in 1952.

politics through *Het Parool*, who had raised questions in the Parliament about Dutch atrocities in Indonesia.¹² *Mandril*'s editors had also seen photographs of atrocities committed by the Indonesians. 'Why, we wondered, doesn't Mr Frank Goedhart raise questions about that as well? We don't want to shield cruel Dutchmen. We consider cruel Dutchmen just as revolting as cruel Indonesians. But why, we kept thinking, does the left-wing fraternity see only Dutch atrocities and the right-wing fraternity only Indonesian cruelty?' (Illus. 4 & 5.)

Reports on the then recently begun arms race between East and West were printed next to an editorial declaration of principle which promised that *Mandril* would publish only original cartoons by Dutch artists and, still on the same page, a passage printed in Chinese-looking characters and thus completely unintelligible, under which the editors had written 'these are the imputations of the sender, whose indignation the attentive reader of the above will wholeheartedly share'. The 'Chinese' text was reprinted now and then in subsequent issues, always with a new editorial comment underneath, beginning along the lines of: as the reader himself can read . . . *Mandril* wanted to be a satirical magazine, after all. The 'On dit . . . on dat' column was full of little contributions like this, followed up as likely as not by articles written under a pseudonym, liberally furnished with vignettes, cartoons and even photographic collages. Some contributors specialized in one area, Ellen Waller, for example, who reviewed films, and Hans van Derksen who always wrote about Paris.¹³ Mathieu Smedts, correspondent on the Catholic daily *De Volkskrant*, wrote about London under the droll byline 'Big Pennevruchten' [Big Penmanship], while others produced short stories, often absurdist in tone and theme. Henri Knap and Eduard Elias commented on current affairs. It is the contributions in this last category that generally exude a liberal, not to say libertine, atmosphere as long as the subject is politics. Heedless of public opinion Elias and Knap gave their views of the world around them, concluding with great regularity that it was the Netherlands' bourgeois mentality that was its downfall. The word bourgeois as a negative qualification was so popular in those days that it makes you wonder where the actual members of the bourgeoisie were hiding out.

Mandril was a critical magazine, but most of the articles were optimistic in tone, especially when dealing with subjects from modern life. In a long article

¹² For Frans Goedhart and his political career in relation to *Het Parool*, see: Gerard Mulder & Paul Koedijk, *Léés die krant! Geschiedenis van het naoorlogse Parool 1945-1970* (Amsterdam 1996), esp. chapter 3 'Politieke vernieuwing'.

¹³ In Sandra van Beek's biography of Ellen Waller, *De grote illusie: Leven en liefde van Ellen en Gerry Waller* (Breda 2000), there is no mention of her work for *Mandril*. One of the many authors who wrote for the magazine under a pseudonym was Wilhelmina J.T. van Aggelen. As 'Ch. de Vos' she published a short story in the December issue of 1949 (letter from 'Ch. de Vos' to C. Boost dated 16 January 1950 and letter from C. Boost to 'Ch. de Vos' dated 24 January 1950, Letterkundig Museum, The Hague).



FILM IN FOCUS

HET hart vergeet vaak snel, maar nooit zo snel als het oog, dat in het duister van een bioscoopzaal onze gids moet zijn. Drie figuren uit nieuwe films hebben ons oog getroffen en zijn dan, rechtstreeks, ons hart binnengewandeld: Ditte, ongewenste dochter van een waardeloze vrouw; Philip, neurotisch jongetje in een verlaten, Londens herenhuis; en Paolo, een Italiaanse handelsreiziger in snoepartikelen. Misschien hebben zij daar geen blijvende plaats (dat is een groot woord!) maar dan toch zeker een voorlopige woning gevonden. Huur op minu of meer lange termijn — een week, een maand, een jaar, wie zal 't zeggen? — langer in elk geval dan hun vluchtig verschijnen op ons netvlies tijdens het poppenspel van licht en donker, dat „filmvertoning” heet. Zij hebben niets met elkaar gemeen, Ditte, Philip en Paolo; niets dan het wonder, dat hun optreden een menselijke, een persoonlijke ontmoeting te weegbrengt tussen filmbeeld en toeschouwer. De kennismaking is niet conventioneel; en daarom vergeet men haar niet in de hal, of onder de straatlantaarn.

DITTE en Philip zijn boeken-kinderen. De eerste: het meisje uit een beroemde roman van de arbeiderschrijver Martin Andersen Nexø. De tweede: het jongetje uit een, vrij onbekende, novelle van de Engelse auteur Graham Greene. Slechts Paolo dankt zijn bestaan uitsluitend aan de film, het Italiaanse comédietje „Vier stappen in de wolken”*, waarin hij leeft, ten voeten uit een tragi-komische held van het dagelijks leven. Met een minimum aan handeling tovert deze Italiaanse film een onwezenlijk sprookje midden in het eentonige bestaan van de altijd opgejaagde handelsreiziger, die nog geen bonbon uit zijn monsterkoffer kan missen voor zijn kinderen; die zijn spoorabonnement moet verliezen, om van het trieste rythme van zijn reis-rooster te worden verlost; die niet „neen” kan zeggen, en daarom, goede lobbes met een zorgvuldig snorretje en een bijna-bezadigd confectiepak, als „echtgenoot” gaat poseren voor de keurige familie van een bedrogen meisje-van-buiten, een volslagen onbekende vóór de onderbroken reis. Uit een penibele situatie hebben de Italianen hier een zwevende

kleine comédie opgebouwd, zó vriendelijk en uitbundig, dat zij onweersstaanbaar is, bij alle onwaarschijnlijkheid. Onwaarschijnlijk of niet: de portretten in deze fantasie zijn echt, alle reizigers op de stampvolle trein, alle passagiers van een krankzinnig-geworden autobus, alle bewoners van de boerenhoeve, waar Paolo een onvergetelijke dag-op-het-land beleeft, dankzij een onbezonnen weldaad. Onvergetelijk: grootvadertje, die gaat dammen met de bonbons uit de monsterkoffer. Onvergetelijk: de bescheiden warmte van een tederheid zonder hartstocht. Onontkoombaar: de terugkeer, na het intermezzo, naar huis en haard, tegelijk met de melkboer, die het leven van alle dag weer inluidt als de Aurora der kleine luiden.

DITTE** ziet ons aan met ernstiger ogen. Het realisme staat hier niet in het teken van een blijmoedige comédie, het is zwaarmoediger gekleurd door de stemming van een „document humain”, dat geen enkele concessie wil doen om zijn onderwerp te verfraaien. Toch is „Ditte” een bevrijdend schouwspel, door de zeldzame zuiverheid van de Deense filmmakers. Geen détail is hun te ontuchtend, te lijfelijk of te schamel geweest; met een rijkdom aan tekenen der armoede hebben zij Ditte's

„doeningen, die dr. Samuels zegt eveneens te kunnen genezen: Geneezing werd echter niet bereikt.

„Bij 30 patiënten, lijdende aan kwaadaardige en goedaardige gezwellen, werd in geen enkel geval geneezing bereikt. In één van deze gevallen is de ziekteverloop, te kort om een oordeel over het uiteindelijke resultaat van de behandeling uit te spreken. In de andere 29 gevallen heeft de behandeling definitief gefaald.

„Met deze uitkomst is de bewering van dr. Samuels, dat hij de gezwellen - waartoe ook kanker behoort - geneest, weerlegd.

„Het onderzoek ontleent zijn bewijskracht aan het feit dat:

„1e, het ziekteverloop werd nagegaan van alle patiënten, over wie inlichtingen konden worden verkregen en die 4 maanden of langer behandeld werden;

„2e, in het onderzoek alle patiënten werden betrokken, over wie inlichtingen konden worden verkregen en van wie dr. Samuels heeft beweerd dat zij genezen zijn;

„3e, geen enkele patiënt bij wie de diagnose kanker met voldoende zekerheid is gesteld, door zijn methode is genezen.

Hoe reageert dr. Samuels hierop?

Hij heeft tegen dr. Brutel de la Rivière een eis ingediend tot schadevergoeding van f 100.000, op grond van de conclusie van het rapport, dat hij geen kanker kan genezen.

Dit rapport maakt in zijn begin melding van de briefwisseling, voorafgegaan aan dr. Samuels' weigering tot medewerking aan het onderzoek. In Samuels' „Witboek" vinden wij een groot deel

van die briefwisseling in extenso terug. Wie zich daardoorheen heeft geworsteld, kan slechts eerbiedige bewondering hebben voor het lankmoedige flegma, waarmee de voorzitter van de Gezondheidsraad deze lawine van vooroordelen, pretenties, voorwaarden, beperkingen en overdreven eisen over zich heen heeft laten rollen. Een antwoord op dit alles vat dr. Brutel nogal puntig samen in de volgende zinsneden van een brief van 9 Januari 1948:

„In Uw brief van 7 Januari 1948, B. Gt, stelt U de voorwaarde, dat U een afschrift moet krijgen van alle inkomende en uitgaande stukken. Dit is een illustratie van Uw, ook op vele andere plaatsen in Uw brieven blijvende, opvatting, dat het onderzoek naar de waarde van Uw methode slechts dient plaats te vinden met Uw toestemming en op door U te stellen voorwaarden. Deze opvatting is niet juist. Er wordt een onderzoek ingesteld omdat de minister dat nodig acht in het belang van de volksgezondheid."

In het licht van dit voorspel komt ons de conclusie van het rapport ontrent een lacune in het medische tuchtrecht bijzonder begrijpelijk voor. Daar wordt nl. betoogd, dat bij een onderzoek naar de waarde van een behandelingsmethode, op grond van ernstig vermoeden dat het algemeen belang wordt geschaad, de betrokkene verplicht moet kunnen worden inlichtingen te verstrekken.

Niet zonder terughouding oppert het rapport-Brutel de mogelijkheid, dat de persoonlijkheid van dr. Samuels een suggestieve werking op zijn patiënten uitoefent.

Dit was voor ons een aanleiding te meer om de dokter te bezoeken. Hij ontving ons in een, door ruimtegebrek, ietwat rommelig-overladen spreekkamer. Zijn bureau met stoel stond in een cirkelvormig soort kiosk van lood of zink, waarvan de voor- en achterkant waren geopend, maar die geheel kan worden afgesloten. Dit is nodig, zo legde hij ons uit, om bij een ingeschakeld bestralingsapparaat beschermd te zijn tegen de werking van „vagebonderende stralen", die zeer schadelijk kunnen zijn.

DR. Samuels is een omvangrijk man van circa zestig jaar. Grote, vlezige neus, grote oren, onbestemde ogen achter dikke, in hoorn gevatte brillenglazen. Zijn stem is luid en slaat af en toe over. Zijn woordenvloed is vrijwel niet te stuiten. Ondanks de manier die voor ons als leek bijna op vervolgswaan lijkt - waarop hij over zijn bestrijders praat als over vijanden, die hem persoonlijk willen vernietigen, heeft hij iets imposants.

„De advocaat van de kankerlijder" noemt hij zich, zodra het rapport ter sprake komt. „Sommelweis hebben ze gek kunnen maken, maar dat zal bij mij niet lukken," zo profeteert hij.

Juist door dit rapport, zo meent de dokter, kan hij in het openbaar zijn belagers vernietigen. „Zij hebben al hun kruis verschoten, maar wij hebben het onze droog gehouden!"

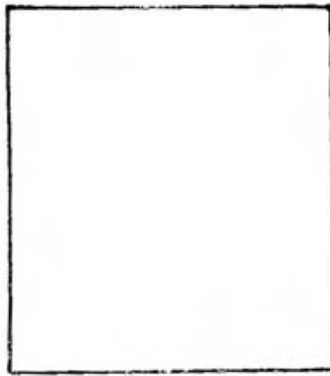
Men wil zijn levenswerk vernietigen en de kankerlijder wordt de dupe. Dat is de litanie, die hij uitentouren herhaalt, want . . . „Nu ben ik een klein mannetje, maar als men mij erkerkt" onthoog schiet de stem . . . „dan ben ik de gróóste op aarde!"

De grootste advocaat voor de kankerlijder?? J. P. CALFF

'T IS GRUIS!



Neger in tunnel



Sneeuw in sneeuw

Sneeuw in tunnel en neger in tunnel in sneeuw

R.d

on the future of television it was concluded with a certain alacrity that ‘something of the American television fever’ would spread all over the world.¹⁴

There are a few constants in the 44 issues of *Mandril* that were published. The magazine was, as we have seen, liberal in character, and the editors did not balk at airing widely differing opinions on political matters. Furthermore, moralism and moral decline were ironically treated. In 1987 Charles Boost remarked in an interview that the magazine had a dubious reputation in conservative circles. And the Catholic *Volkskrant* even refused to place advertisements for *Mandril*.¹⁵ Political opinions in the magazine were more often of a progressive than of a conservative hue. Communism remains the exception. You couldn’t campaign strongly enough against that. The communists had played an important part in resisting the German occupying forces, admittedly, but *Mandril* was just as anti-communist as the newspaper *Het Parool*, which had its origins in the Resistance. (Illus. 6.)

To summarize, it can be observed that *Mandril* made an important contribution in many ways to the modernization of formats in journalism. Explicit attention was given to the cartoon, in the editors’ own words, as the telling of a topical anecdote in a single picture, the column, the introduction of features about ordinary people – a good butcher, for example – and, following the lead of *The New Yorker*, the inclusion of short stories too. That’s how Henry James and James Thurber achieved fame.¹⁶ But in Dutch journalism, even a well researched story about which cafés to visit or an account of the nightlife round Amsterdam’s Leidseplein, and all the other stories about modern pleasure-seeking people, could be regarded as revolutionary. And perhaps most important of all was the cleverly chosen mix of politics and culture which made the magazine both interesting and innovatory, and above all the satirical tone in which this was all committed to paper.¹⁷

As innovatory as *Mandril* may have been from a journalistic viewpoint, it was all the more conservative from an artistic point of view. So it appears on closer inspection.

It is striking that in articles about literature and the visual arts, which constituted a considerable proportion of the copy, aesthetic criteria seldom if ever played a role. Interest or lack of interest in books or exhibitions which had been

¹⁴ *Mandril*, 1/1 (October 1948), pp. 22-4.

¹⁵ Charles Boost in ‘Mandril zat langs de kant en bekeek het gedoe’, *De Tijd*, 7 August 1987.

¹⁶ Brendan Gill, *Here at the New Yorker* (London 1990; 1st edn. 1975).

¹⁷ In *Vrij Nederland* for 9 June 1979 Hans Mulder wrote an article (pp. 3-20) entitled ‘De mislukte poging om in Nederland de humor van The New Yorker te introduceren: Mandril, maandblad voor mensen, 1948-1953’ [The failed attempt to introduce the humour of The New Yorker to the Netherlands: Mandril . . .]. The article contains numerous quotations from which it is clear that even in the eyes of contemporaries, in terms of its journalism *Mandril* was an innovative magazine. For a long time Frits van der Molen toyed with the idea of writing ‘the history of this pioneering age in Dutch journalism’.



6. Front cover, June 1949.

extensively reviewed in other media often had an ideological background. In order to prove such a theory we must not only look at what was printed in *Mandril*, but also at what was not printed. We must also know the 'symbolic value' or reputation of particular persons or subjects described. Let me begin with an innocuous example. Whenever something had been written by Hans Gomperts in *Het Parool*, where he was a journalist, or in the anti-communist periodical *Libertinage*, which he had co-founded, it was always given attention in *Mandril*. Even if there was something in *Libertinage* worthy of criticism, this criticism was accompanied by the emphatic assurance that *Libertinage* was the best Dutch literary periodical. And if in one of his articles Gomperts mentioned the metropolitan artists' cafe Eijlders in Amsterdam: 'Pseudo-artistic meeting places like these', wrote Elias, 'continue to arouse certain people's fury'. All becomes clearer when you know that Eijlders was the place where the communist-oriented Reflex group, later the Cobra group, held their meetings. And malicious little remarks like that also become rather more understandable when you connect *Mandril's* many denigrating comments about subsidized artists with the world from which Elias, Knap, van der Molen and friends came. They were journalists, copywriters, businessmen or travelling salesmen who did art on the side rather than full-time. As soon as they get onto the subject of art, it's like reading a Catholic missionary magazine from the 1920s.

In the third issue of *Mandril*, Joop Hardy wrote that the characteristic aim of art after Cézanne and Van Gogh was to give form to 'one's vision of reality' rather than to 'what is felt or experienced'. Hardy complained that art had turned its back on nature, which 'gives millions of people the impression that a glorious new age of art' has dawned. 'This belief in abstract painting demonstrates rather, to put it mildly, a childlike naïvety.'

Hardy describes art that takes up a position independent of nature as 'bleak and cold' and 'having as little substance or imagination as its abstract name'. In the seventh issue, Hardy says of the French painter André Derain, who had collaborated with the Germans during the Second World War: 'Art and politics, however, are two separate, irreconcilable worlds, and whatever one might think of Derain's political convictions, he remains one of the greatest living painters. His exhibition is an oasis in the desert which the art world has become since the outbreak of the abstract or non-figurative painting epidemic.'

It goes without saying that the alarm is raised in the July issue of 1949 when some 'bourgeois' city councillor or other has a couple of paintings removed from the exhibition of Kees van Dongen, whose work is neither abstract nor experimental. It's a free country, that seems to be *Mandril's* attitude. However, the same freedom does not seem to be granted to Mr Sandberg, director of the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam.

Elias's attack on Sandberg in his 'Noten op mijn zang' [Hard to please] column was still relatively innocuous. In the *Beurs- en Nieuwsberichten* [Stock Exchange

and News Reports] newspaper, published in Willemstad, Elias had read a written account of an interview that Sandberg had given on Antillean radio. It was not so surprising that Elias read *Beurs- en Nieuwsberichten* since he had lived on Curaçao as a journalist and head of the government press office in the late nineteen-thirties and the early years of the war, like *Mandril* co-founder Frits van der Molen, who had been a diplomat there at that time. The latter was co-founder of the periodical *De Stoep* in Willemstad in 1940.

In the interview Sandberg said that he encouraged painters to draw like children: this produced the kind of beautiful art which he was eager to exhibit in the Stedelijk Museum. At the end of the interview he delivered an ironical swipe at 'Old Moaners': through his word play on apes and old moaners who sit scratching away behind glass it was obvious that he was making fun of the Mandril club. And that's also how Elias took it. It had the desired effect, as Elias lost his sense of humour and distinction and ended his column with 'to publicly brand us Old Moaners. How dare they!' The Sandberg question, as we may call it, had a broad political background, of which Sandberg was only the symbol. Elias wrote how dare *they*, not how dare *he*, after all.

During the war Sandberg had been active in an artists' group in the Resistance. And even before liberation it was feared that Sandberg and his group had developed a 'secret strategy', as the Dutch secret service later called it, to reform the Netherlands along communist lines after the war. In order to confirm the existence of such a masterplan, secret service agents were set to work sifting through clandestine and illegal newspapers and magazines. They went through the magazine *De Vrije Kunstenaar* [The Free Artist] with a fine-tooth comb, for example, to see what it had printed during the war, even doing research on variant spelling in order to find out the names of anonymous or pseudonymous contributors.

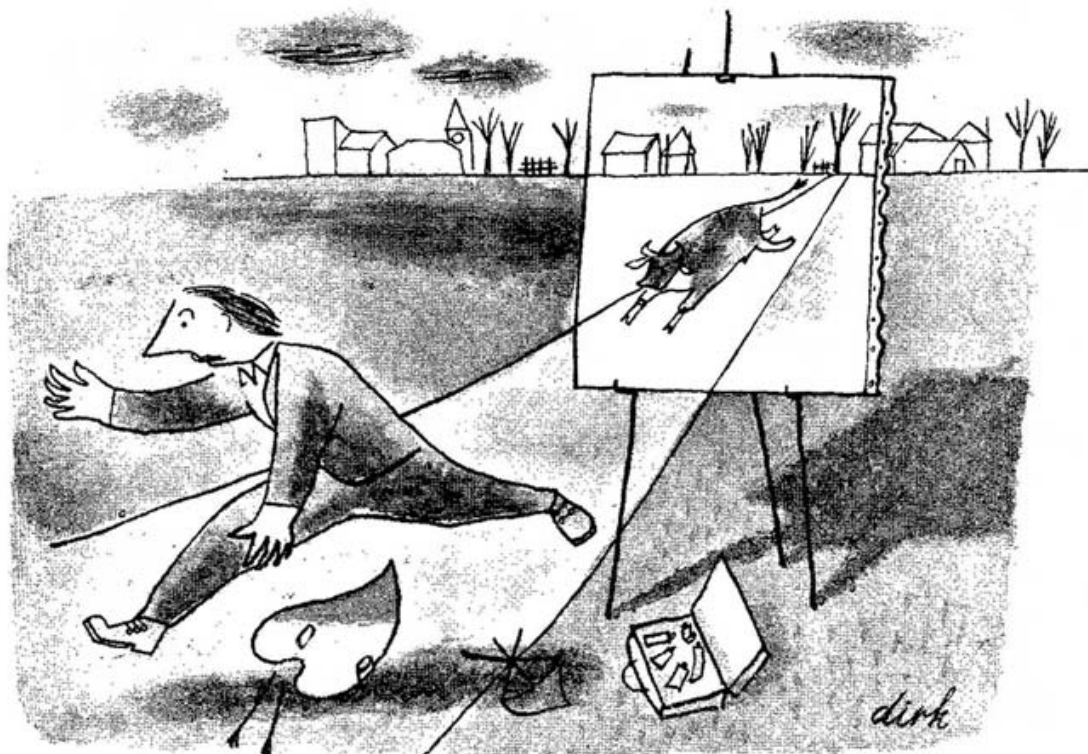
Every remark which could be interpreted as a reference to a potential post-occupation communist state was copied down by the secret service in confidential reports. Articles, posters and interviews which had any connection with the Cobra artists and Sandberg were checked for links with the suspected plot.¹⁸ Sandberg was an object of suspicion in this respect until the late 1950s. His openly practised communist convictions were directly linked with the art which he exhibited in the Stedelijk Museum. Figurative artists felt themselves to have been thrown by Sandberg onto the rubbish heap of history, and compared him to 'a Nazi culture dictator'. Elias and Knap ascribed everything that was squalid and nasty in the visual arts to Sandberg. When the famous Cobra exhibition was held in the Stedelijk in November 1949, *Mandril's* editors declared in a short

¹⁸ For this affair and the secret service's file on Sandberg, see: Hans Renders, *Braak, Een kleine mooie revolutie tussen Cobra en Atonaal: Met een facsimile-uitgave van het tijdschrift* (Amsterdam 2000), pp. 38-44 and Hans Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting: Een onderzoek naar de verhouding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930-1945* (Utrecht/Antwerp 1978), pp. 292-303.

article that they wouldn't be going to have a look. (The much-talked-of *Stijl* international exhibition of 1951 didn't even get a mention). *Mandril's* only comment was 'that it was all Appelsauce à la Corneille to us'. In the same issue Henri Knap nevertheless devotes two pages to the Cobra exhibition, apparently without having been there. That was hardly necessary since his conclusions were strictly ideological anyway. According to Knap the Cobra artists had a distinctly nihilistic intellectual life. 'They pollute everything of value which they come across, even Titian reproductions' – a reference to the beard which Cobra poet and collagist Jan Elburg had glued onto Titian's Venus in his entry to the Cobra exhibition. 'When they still can't sublimate their anal eroticism they use words like "shit". . . . It is no coincidence that Gerrit Kouwenaar [one of the Cobra poets, HR] seizes on the Indian and his peace pipe as a symbol: that nihilist Hitler didn't get any further than Karl May's schoolboy tales either'. (Illus. 7.)

But to Knap the worst thing of all was that the city council had afforded Sandberg the opportunity to make this sort of filth public. Knap called unequivocally on the Amsterdam council to take measures. A superfluous demand, since a couple of weeks earlier Elburg's disputed collage (the one with the beard) had been removed from the museum by order of the council's director of culture. When a letter appeared in the next issue complaining that Sandberg had been rudely treated, Knap reacted with the contrived theory: 'What I foretold has now been proved true by this reaction: whoever points a finger at Mr Sandberg and his friends and kindred spirits is lumped by them with the conservatives.' Perhaps in order to even up the score a little, Knap shortly afterwards wrote a strident article in which he argued that it was not nude swimming itself but the ban on it which led to moral decline. It was clear that the editors did not want to be saddled with a conservative image outside the field of art. When a short story by the ancient writer Alexander Cohen was printed, the editors found it necessary to state in a box beside it that they did not share all of his 'convictions'. That was an odd remark, as from the beginning of his journalistic career in the nineteenth century until the present, Cohen had evolved from anarchist to reactionary. In a letter to Boost, Cohen wrote that he had an aversion to 'bestial cannibalistic Communism.'

The editors themselves blamed Sandberg because he exhibited 'false art' in order to foist his depraved ideas on the general public with the aid of state subsidies. In the vanguard of this campaign against Sandberg was J.M. Prange, art editor of *Het Parool*. He is a fine example of someone who linked art with ideology in almost every article. Many of his ideas are almost literally reproduced in *Mandril*. J. Hardy's theory about abstract artists turning their back on nature, for example, was expressed in almost exactly the same words by Prange, first in *Het Parool* and later summarized once more in his polemic pamphlet, published in 1957: *De God Hai-Hai en rabarber; Met het kapmes door de jungle der moderne kunst* [*The God Hai-Hai and rhubarb: with a machete through the jungle of modern art*].



laten wij over iets anders praten." stelde ik voor, daar ik zijn bevangenheid pijnlijk vond. „U kent mij immers nauwelijks."

„Ik ken u heel goed," antwoordde hij. „Denk niet dat ik er een gewoonte van maak, elke vreemdeling die hier komt mijn levensverhaal op te dissen. Ik ben geen curiosité du village. Maar men voelt soms plotseling behoefte in zijn verleden te gaan snuffelen als in een oude kast. Toen u mij vroeg of mijn identiteit klopte met wat u vernomen had, heb ik niet geantwoord. Ik stelde mezelf toen de vraag „Wie ben je? Hoe is je geschiedenis?" en ik had de neiging aan Irène te vragen „Vertel me eens, wie ben ik eigenlijk?" want het kwam me voor dat zij het beter weet dan ik zelf."

Ik ben geboren in St. Petersburg — of Leningrad, zoals u wilt," hij boog en maakte een uitnodigend gebaar met de hand. „Mijn vader was officier in de lijfgarde van de Czaar. Een militair tot in het merg, die van zijn zoon verwachtte dat hij de traditie van het huis zou voortzetten. Nu was mijn merg van andere makelij. Ik voelde niets voor het ambt van wapendrager. Mijn belangstelling ging voornamelijk uit naar muziek en literatuur, een trek die ik met mijn moeder gemeen had. Zij stierf helaas bij de geboorte van mijn zuster en kon dus op mijn vader geen invloed meer laten gelden. Hij stuurde me prompt naar de cadettenschool, waar ik nog was toen de oorlog uitbrak. Ik vocht

aan het front in Galicie, kwam in Duitse krijgsgevangenschap, maar slaagde er in samen met een vriend te ontvluchten. Net bij het uitbreken van de revolutie keerde ik naar St. Petersburg terug. Mijn vader verloor tijdens de woelingen het leven. Ik sloot mij aan bij de resten van zijn garderegiment en leverde strijd met de arbeidersbataljons. Maar ik trok me spoedig terug. Liever hield ik me schuil dan tegen Russen te vechten. Na enkele vergeefse pogingen slaagde ik er in naar Zweden te ontkomen, waar ze me tot de wapenstilstand interncerden. Ik reisde via Nederland en België naar Frankrijk. In Parijs ontmoette ik familieleden en vrienden die alle mogelijke en onmogelijke betrekkingen vervulden. Zelf kreeg ik een baantje als monteur en niet als taxi-chauffeur, zoals u misschien gedacht zult hebben," hij glimlachte en zijn vingers speelden met het lege glas. „Ik had in het leger nogal wat met auto's te maken gehad en wist er dus vrij veel van.

Het leven in Parijs, vooral in de emigrantenkringen, waar men fanatiek bleef geloven in een ommekeer die mij volkomen fictief leek, ging mij echter zó tegenstaan, dat ik na een paar jaar mijn heil meer zuidwaarts zocht. Ik werkte als seizoenarbeider in de Midi en kwam in 1925 hier, min of meer verzoend met een bestaan dat weinig problemen had. Robert Pagès bood me een baantje in zijn cave aan. Ik accepteerde het meteen. En tegen de zomer ging ik, zoals dat hier ge-

bruikelijk is, op de visvangst. Ik doe het nu twee en twintig jaar . . . U drinkt niet. Laat ik u nog eens inschenken," zei hij, eensklaps van toon veranderend.

„Bonjour, monsieur Carrou!" riep hij luid naar de kleine, dikke wijnbouwer die binnenkwam. Hij probeerde de oude kast, zijn verleden, zo vlug mogelijk weer te sluiten. Maar ik kon niet nalaten even mijn hand tussen de deur te houden:

„En hoe is het nu met de muziek en de literatuur?" vroeg ik.

„Oööööö, monsieur, dat zijn laden die ik nooit meer opentrek," zei hij en zijn lange, rozige vingers draaiden nerveus een sigaret. „Ik ben er te moe voor. Het gebeurt soms, dat ik me brokstukken van een gedicht van Poesjkin herinner. Maar verder dan een paar regels kom ik zelden. De taal is mij gedeeltelijk ook ontschoten. Het komt er niet op aan. Ik voel me goed zo."

Hij riep de zwaarmoedige waardin, rekende af en knoopte zorgvuldig het visgraatje dicht. Aan de mouwen was het rafelig. „We zien elkaar morgen weer, monsieur. Bonne nuit." Lachend liep hij naar buiten.

Toen ik een kwartier later langs de baai in de richting van het monument van Maillol liep, zag ik hem, tegen de stam van een dwergpalm geleund, uitkijken over de donkere zee, waarop het baken van Cap d'Orne van tijd tot tijd een witte lichtkegel afschoot.

BERT VOETEN

On the very first page of this rabble-rousing lament Prange says that for him contemporary visual art has become ‘the Hiroshima of art’. What he finds particularly objectionable is what he names the Cézanne complex: ‘the terror of missing the boat and not recognizing or even completely overlooking a movement in art or a particular artist.’ This terror leads to the favouring of ‘the new’ at the expense of originality and genius. And where that newness led had been aired often enough in the popular newspaper *De Telegraaf*. Prange quotes with alacrity from an article there which made it clear that was not only the enemies and despisers of abstract art who could not recognize the genius of the new: in Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum a painting by Paul Klee had been hung upside down by mistake. Prange ended by printing a picture by a three-year-old boy next to a drawing by Piet Ouborg. His caption can be imagined.

Prange had such a loathing of modern abstract art because in its nature is eliminated, the negative comes to the fore, with the result that the moderns take the road of ‘a meaningless esthetic and decorative playing with materials, colours and shapes, which no longer form a means but an end in themselves’. Art must choose a higher moral aim, is the implication here.

Prange calls modern art ‘smutty’: ‘We sought Beauty – they showed us a distorted illusion: we sought Art and they offered us manifestos; we sought Truth and found lies and treachery.’ A few lines further he claims: ‘We are the avant-garde, for we have liberated ourselves from the bigoted abstract academicism of the museums and of official art: modernism.’

The fact that Prange never voiced his opinions in *Mandril* himself is due to the explicit anti-communist remarks (‘Moscow-controlled abstract artists’) which studded his *Parool* articles, and from which the *Mandril* editors wished to be exempt.¹⁹

In July 1950 Henri Knap arrived at a couple of enlightening pronouncements in a long article in *Mandril* about the intelligibility of art. The middle class, even its non-bourgeois members, and the artist are alienated from each other because they no longer recognize each other’s view of reality. For that reason Knap was against taking schoolchildren on tours of museums where unintelligible art was on show. The inexplicable should not be explained away, for that only leads impressionable young people into the wrong paths, ‘and tempts them via artistic nihilism to do away with moral values’. Art is not about the difference between realism and surrealism but between *inspired* and *premeditated* art. Knap had a concrete example of the latter. In 1950 Piet Ouborg was awarded the Jacob Maris Prize for his abstract drawing ‘Father and Son’, which according

¹⁹ On the political significance of Prange in *Het Parool*, see: William Rothuizen, ‘J.M. Prange in de jungle der moderne kunst’, in: *Het Orgasme van Lorre: Nieuwe verhalen, gedichten en artikelen*, comp. M. van Amerongen & R.O. van Gennep (Amsterdam 1983), pp. 199-210 and Gerard Mulder & Paul Koedijk, op. cit. (n. 12), pp. 382-5.

to Knap had a decadent nihilistic atmosphere. Prange had said the same thing earlier in *Het Parool*, a fact that Knap omitted to mention. Bien étonné de se trouver ensemble, the art critics of the communist paper *De Waarheid* frequently hit the roof whenever yet another example of ‘artistic nihilism’ was sighted.²⁰

As regards literature, only conservative observations are to be found in *Mandril*, at least where Dutch literature is concerned. In connection with literary criticism, for example, it is scornfully remarked that this only extends praise to experimental writers. ‘The “story with a beginning, a middle and an end” counts for nothing here.’ Several storytellers were named as examples of those who were regarded as too superficial by the ‘literary brigade’. In the last issue of the first year Elias took up the cudgels for the storytellers of literature, such as Jan de Hartog.²¹ Because they are widely read, the critics will consider them worthless, he sneered. ‘The others resort to a pretentious intellectuality which is simply unreadable.’

In November 1949 (the month in which the Cobra exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam opened) Henri Knap sounded a clarion call to authors bidding them to write ‘an honest work of hand and brain [. . .] for us idiots’, instead of burdening the world with books which enlarge on life in the ‘gutter’ or novels describing lesbian love affairs. It brought Knap to the conclusion that art ought to be a craft, exercised by craftsmen – ‘not by self-styled demi-gods’.

If we bring to mind here the definition of ‘ideology’ as expressed by Revel – a mixture of strong emotions and simple ideas which is expressed in a form of behaviour – we cannot do otherwise than conclude that Knap put this definition into practice by presenting himself as a literary critic with all sorts of opinions which had little to do with literature. ‘Give us books in which people come to life, with whom we can identify. [. . .] That is what we ask of you, that is what we demand, we, the customers who are always right.’ Just as with the invective against abstract art, the literary opinions in *Mandril* can be interpreted as a plea for *low culture* for ‘the man in the street’. In a short ‘Editorial Plan’, which was sent to potential contributors just before the appearance of the first issue, the editors stated it loud and clear: ‘The contents will definitely not be aimed exclusively at highbrows.’²² (Illus. 8.)

Mandril’s editors, especially Elias and Knap, were strongly opposed to government subsidization of art, as subsidies went to the wrong artists – and for ‘wrong’ read ‘communist’. Although *Mandril* never spoke of the communist peril,

20 Doris Wintgens, ‘5. Reacties in de kranten op het beleid van het Stedelijk Museum’, in: *De doorbraak van de moderne kunst in Nederland, de jaren 1945-1951*, ed. Willemijn Stokvis (Amsterdam 1984), pp. 93-106.

21 According to a survey carried out in 1951 by NIPO (Nederlands Instituut voor Publieke Opiniepeiling, the Netherlands Institute for Public Opinion Polls), these authors were among the most widely read: Kees Schuyt & Ed Taverne, *1950: Welvaart in zwart-wit* (Den Haag 2000), p. 437.

22 ‘Mandril: Redactionele opzet’, Letterkundig Museum, The Hague.

derwaarts spoedde om het uur en het transport af te spreken.

„Dacht u, dat ik dat voor niks deed?” zei die Amsterdamer, „ik mot er tweehonderd gulden voor hebben.”

Het invalide meisje heeft de gouden koets niet gezien. En wij, die naam en adres van die Amsterdamer hebben, hebben er lang over gedacht om ter plaatse een steen door de spiegelruiten te slingeren. Wij hebben, jammer genoeg, de energie en de moed daarvoor niet opgebracht. Wij beginnen oud te worden.

BALPUNTROOMSOESJE

JA,” zei ons de banketbakker Soetsuyger, C. J., Rokinrak 65 te 's-Gravendam, oud 53 jaar. „ik kwam op de gedachte in Mei 1943, toen ik, stiekum luisterend naar Radio-Boston, vernam, dat de balpuntpen was uitgevonden. Sederdien werkte ik onafgebroken aan mijn balpuntroomsoesje en hier ligt het eerste laboratorium-exemplaar dan voor u. U mag er wel even aan likken.”

Dat deden wij. Het smaakte naar room en plastic, uit welk modern materiaal de huls (het z.g. soesje) wordt gebakken. Deze huls verkoopt de heer Soetsuyger voor de civiele prijs van f 5.—. In het soesje passen de roompatronen, waarvan de uitvinder-fabrikant garandeert, dat zij bij passend gebruik 3 maanden lang roomsmaak leveren.

„Mijn slagzin voor de export naar Amerika is: rolls the cream on DRY,” vertelde ons de heer Soetsuyger, „en het grote voordeel is, dat men het balpuntroomsoesje in alle standen en zelfs 3 meter onder water kan eten. Mijn balpuntroomsoesje lekt zelfs niet op 5600 meter hoogte, dat heeft de heer Viruly voor mij geprobeerd. De roompatronen zullen f 2.50 kosten en zullen over de gehele wereld verkrijgbaar zijn.”

Een moeilijkheid is, dat P.T.T. het gebruik van het soesje aan zijn loketambtenaren heeft verboden. Volgens P.T.T. zou de room niet licht- en watervast zijn. „Volstrekt ongerechtvaardigd,” zei de heer Soetsuyger, „mijn balpuntroom trosteert de ceuwen, wordt niet zuur en verlaat het lichaam onveranderd.”

Enige leden van de Raad van State brachten de hun uitgereikte proefbalpuntroomsoesjes na 3 weken terug: de roompatronen zouden leeg zijn.

„Die heren sabbelen te lang en te hevig,” verklaarde de banketbakker, „Als men er met een speld in prikt



werken zij overigens weer goed.”

Binnenkort zal het balpuntroomsoesje compleet voor f 7.50 in de boekhandel voor een iegelijk verkrijgbaar zijn — tenzij minister Liefstuck de gehele productie zal opgeven voor zijn deviezenpot.

UIT ROTTERDAM

EEN onzer vrienden vond op een tafeltje in een kleine Rotterdamse eetgelegenheden een foldertje, dat reclame maakte voor de keuken met de kreet:

„Werkende mensen, hier eet u nèt als thuis!”

Een onbekende had daar met potlood boven geschreven:

„Ernstige waarschuwing.”

VRAAG

IN de kranten lezen wij, om even te be komen van Berlijn, over lieden, die voorgeven een auto nodig te hebben, van de Rijksverkeersinspectie zo'n voertuig loskrijgen en dit dan ijlings voor enorm veel geld van de hand doen aan lieden, die van de Rijksverkeersinspectie géén auto kunnen krijgen en er dus, naar wij welwillend willen aannemen, geen van node hebben.

Nu willen wij bescheiden opmerken, dat niemand mag autorijden zonder rijvergunning en dat voor de uitreiking van de papierwinkel, die iedere automobilist met moeite in zijn binnenzak kan persen, een flink uit de kluiten gewassen ambtenaren corps dag aan dag in de weer is. Hoe krijgen lieden, die zwart (voor f. 30.000!) een nieuwe

Packard kopen, een rijvergunning voor dat vehikel? Vraagt de Rijksverkeersinspectie dan niet: „Hoe komt U aan die nieuwe wagen?”

Of, als de nieuwe eigenaar rijdt met de oorspronkelijke vergunning, is het dan zo moeilijk te bepalen, dat meneer A. niet mag rijden met de wagen en de vergunning van meneer B.? En als een hard-werkende arts des Zondags met vrouw en kinders niet naar zee mag rijden vanwege de benzinebesparing — waarom ziet men dan in alle steden dag aan dag grote benzineverlinders door winkelstraten toeren en voor taartjes-paradijzen parkeren, waar gezellig-koutende dames in oogverblindende new-looks aan ontstijgen? In de wagen en met de rijvergunning van allerlei heren, die hun werk dag aan dag afdoen op een en dezelfde bureaustoel?

Maatregelen — in hemelsnaam, vooruit dan maar. Maar dan ook controleren — opdat slimmeriken niet achter hun hand grinniken om de wet.

SOLDATEN

PRACHTIGE soldaten hebben die prachtige feestweck door Amsterdam gemarcheerd. Wij zijn er stil van geworden. Zo fel rood en wit en blauw. Die berenmutsen en pickhelmen. De muziek en het rommelen, rommelen van de trommen. Jawel, het hart klopte in onze keel, toen wij voor het vaandel ons hoofd ontblootten. Maar deze diepe eerbied voor de vaandels, symbolen van dit volk van ons en alles waarnaar het streeft, deed aan onze



it seems likely that the magazine introduced not only journalistic innovation but also a surreptitious version of American McCarthyism into the Netherlands.

The preference which *Mandril* displayed for low culture and humorous literature explains the choice of contributors of all genres. The editors conducted a campaign against élitist art. The question of whether this was Catholic, Protestant or something else was of secondary importance. Cutting across these boundaries led to the hitherto undeveloped territory of modern American music, American comics, American films and television.²³ In so doing the editors were swimming against the tide of the prevalent post-war fear of mass culture. Communism and National Socialism had shown what mass culture led to, and so there was a strong need after 1945 for *high culture*, culture with an educational purpose in the fight against the corrupting powers of the political currents which until recently had so disrupted Europe. In this context *Mandril* can be described as a modern medium: the editors propagated light-hearted art, often called *entertainment*, which was regarded as perniciously American and was therefore classed as a danger to the nation's moral standards. In the Editorial Plan 'fine writing' is condemned in favour of 'facts, facts and more facts'. There could be no question, therefore, of moral rearmament. It was the globalizing effect of American mass culture in particular which was seen in pillarized circles as a threat to their own identity. Admittedly, the Americans had liberated Europe from the Nazis, putting the Marshall Plan into action from 1948, from which the Netherlands had derived considerable economic benefit, but their culture was regarded with distrust. In intellectual circles particularly there was great distrust of film and television.²⁴ This distrust was lost on *Mandril*.

In the last issue of *Mandril*'s second year the aim of this 'journal d'esprit' was stated as follows: 'a periodical packed full with writing and drawings by Dutchmen of all persuasions.' Most of *Mandril*'s editors and contributors worked for *Elseviers Weekblad* or *Het Parool*, a remarkable combination: a conservative weekly and an in many ways progressive newspaper. What united them was their aversion to Communism. In *Elseviers Weekblad* and *Het Parool* this aversion was openly referred to: in *Mandril* this political aversion took the form of art criticism.

SUMMARY

In the post-war Netherlands the aim was to restore politics in art criticism. The authoritative US publication *The New Yorker* functioned as a fig leaf. I intend to test whether this aim was achieved by embarking on a case study of *Mandril*, an opinion-shaping monthly magazine that was edited from the Netherlands

²³ Kirk Varnedoe & Adam Gopnik, *High & Low: Modern Art & Popular Culture* (New York 1990); *High Brow meets Low Brow: American Culture as an Intellectual Concern*, ed. Rob Kroes (Amsterdam 1988).

²⁴ Kees Schuyt & Ed Taverne, *1950: Welvaart in zwart-wit* (The Hague 2000), p. 410.

between 1948 and 1953. It was also a lightly satirical publication which renewed journalistic practices. *Mandril* projected a modern transparency in its political commentary. At the same time, however, the editors seemed to reject artistic renewal. Hence, the Cobra artists, e.g. Karel Appel, were discarded as subversive communists. *Mandril* heralded the start of an American press culture in the Netherlands. How and why did they do it? I intend to address such questions by studying *Mandril* because this short-lived publication can shed light on the post-war head-on collision between ideology and journalism for people who are unfamiliar with the Dutch situation.