



# Meet a local

Pilgrimage in the  
Yorkshire  
Peat District  
&  
South-East Drenthe  
The Netherlands

Gerard Stout

## Meet a Local

This is an eclectic pilgrimage of curiosities. Joseph Nieters tries to find traces of Drenthe peat diggers in Yorkshire. Around 1900 his ancestors went to Thorne and Cambusnethan to extract peat for the Griendtsveen Moss Litter Company, the same company that extracted peat from the moors of South-East Drenthe (NL). His journey takes him to Thorne, where he meets Eyoun, a black it. It accompanies the hero of our time in the Yorkshire Peat District.

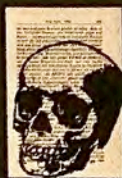
*Meet a local* is not an ordinary novel with a beginning and an end. The events don't always seem to be connected, just like life itself.

In this novel you find information about peat extraction, Dutch diggers and engineers in Yorkshire, reflections on Drenthe literature and so-called identity, and you meet writers from Birmingham with roots in the pit.

There are bizarre stories about life after peat. In short: Meet a local.







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Ter Verpoozing, Peize

[www.nedersaksisch.org](http://www.nedersaksisch.org)

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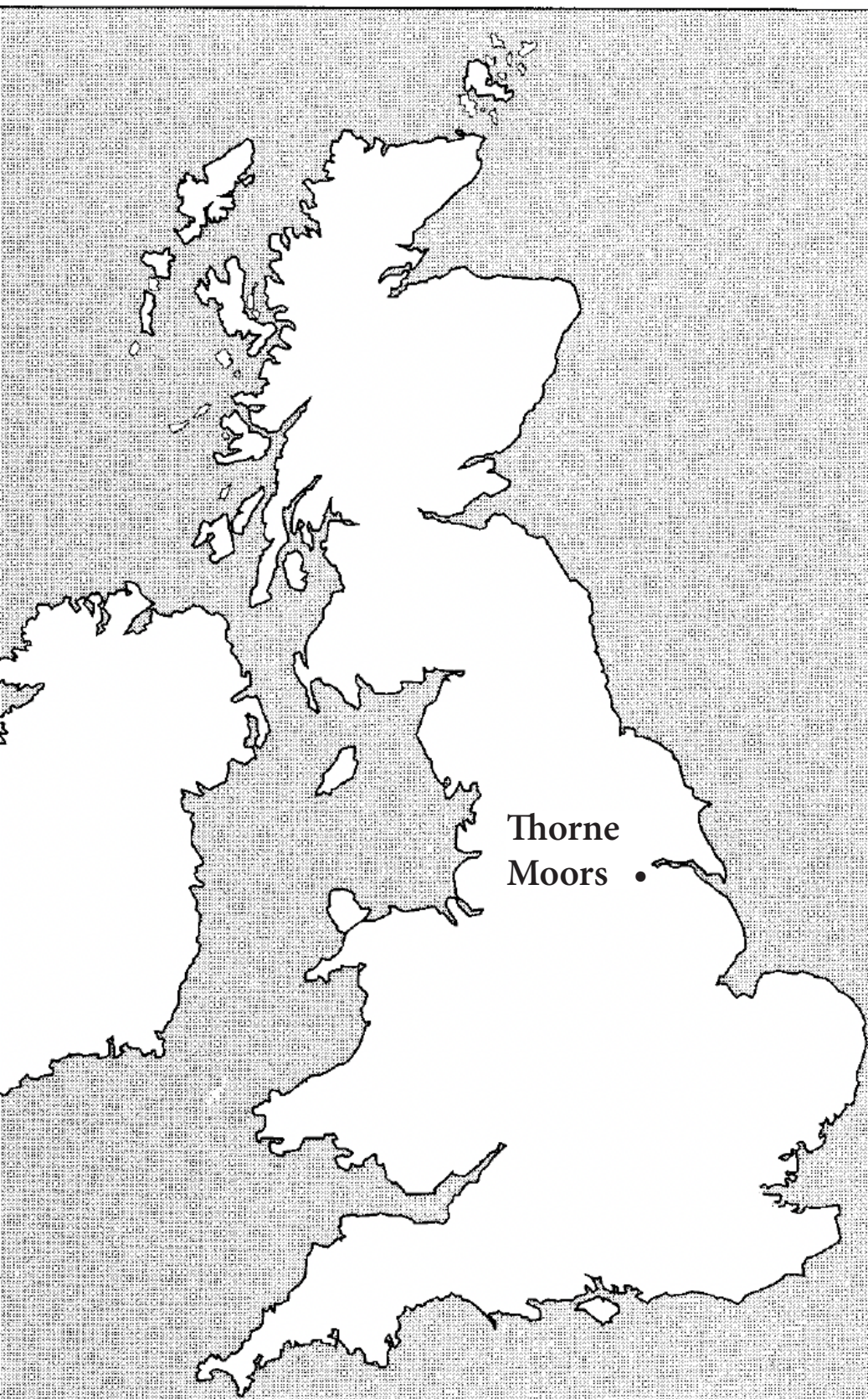
# Meet a local

Pilgrimage in Yorkshire Peat District  
&  
South-East Drenthe (NL)

Gerard Stout



Ter Verpoozing



Thorne  
Moors •

## Preface

Thorne in Yorkshire is the centre of the world, as Erica in South-East Drenthe is the heart of existence. Just as every individual is a pivot in the centre of the universe. Thorne and Erica have a number of things in common. In both Yorkshire and Drenthe there has been a constant clash of cultures. The Normans invaded England at the same time as they were conquering the Lower Saxon lands. The consequences of various wars and friendly trade visits can be seen in the similar languages and customs. The patron saint of Drenthe, Willehad, came from Northumberland to christen the heathen people. He succeeded in converting the few inhabitants of Drenthe: (Anglo) Saxons.

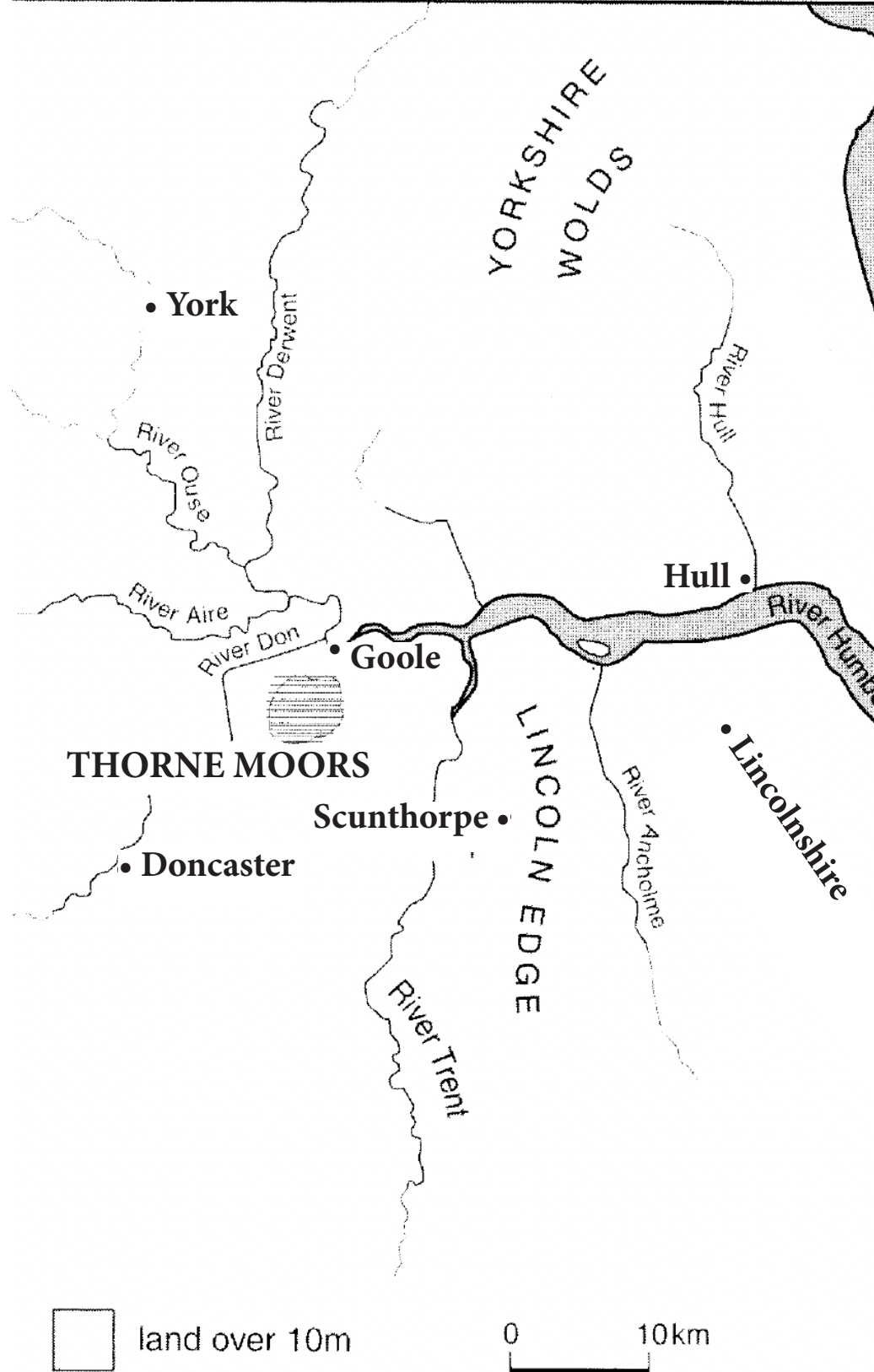
Around 1900, several hundred peat diggers from the region of South-East Drenthe came to Thorne Waste. They worked for Griendtsveen Litter Company. An enrichment of cultures.

Joseph Nieters from Erica is on a quest. He wants an answer to the Roman Catholic question from his childhood: Who am I? Who were my ancestors? What made me who I think I am?

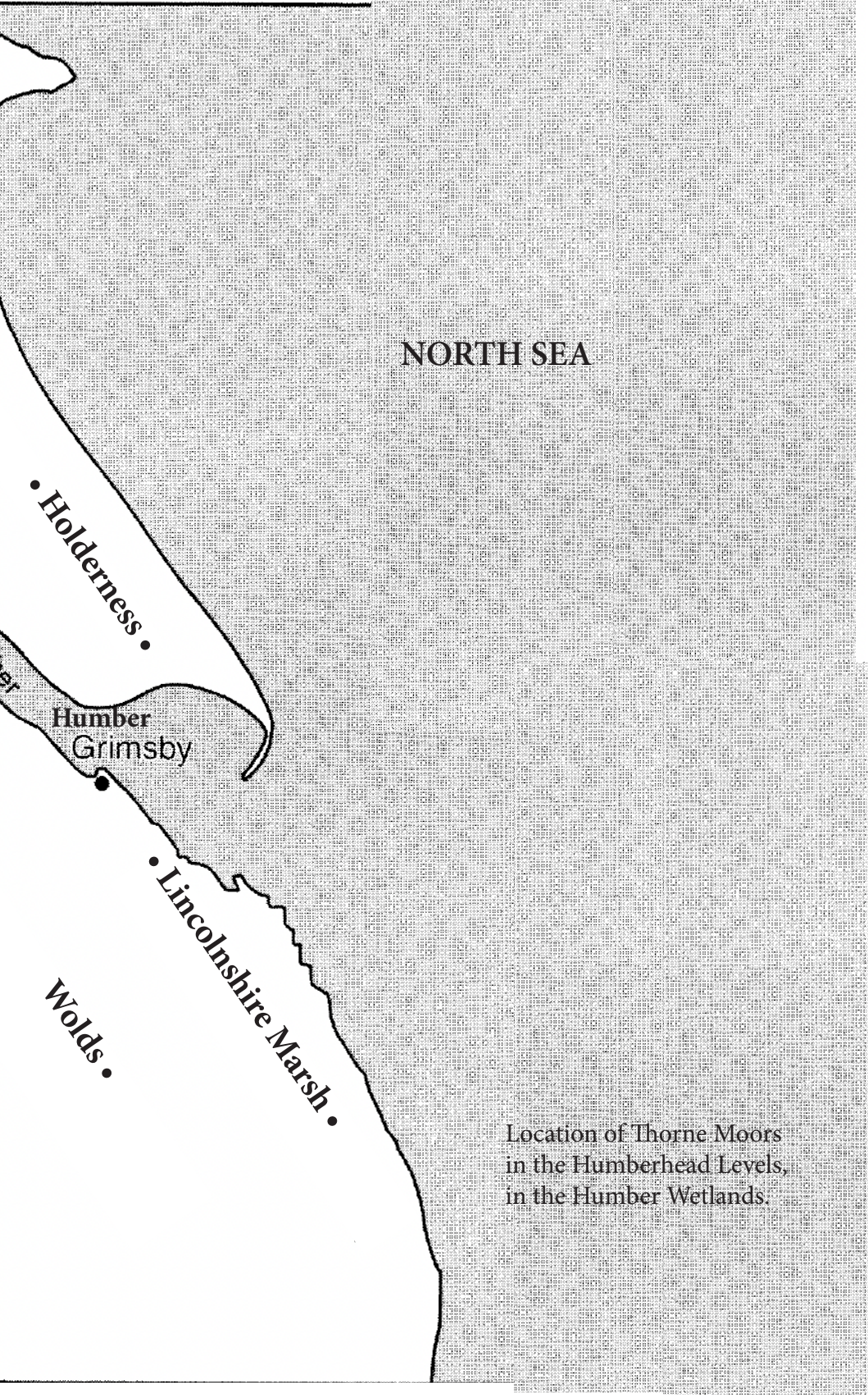
Born on the edge of Bourtanger Moor, he follows the trail back. In the year that slavery was abolished and Erica was founded, 1863, the first people set foot on the moors of South-East Drenthe. The migrants came from all directions. Roman Catholic Hanoverians from Kingdom Hanover and from Twente. Reformed peat diggers came from Friesland, Protestant farmers from Groningen and pagans from Drenthe, met in Erica. The village was the epicentre of a clash of cultures, more so than other peat villages.

Joseph Nieters is on his way to MEET A LOCAL, trying to drain the swamp. His report is an embroidery in a postmodern setting. The natural alternates with the bizarre. His cicerone is the black transgender Eyoum. It tries to keep Joseph Nieters on the track in the moorlands of Yorkshire. Try to follow their marshy paths.









NORTH SEA

• Holderness •

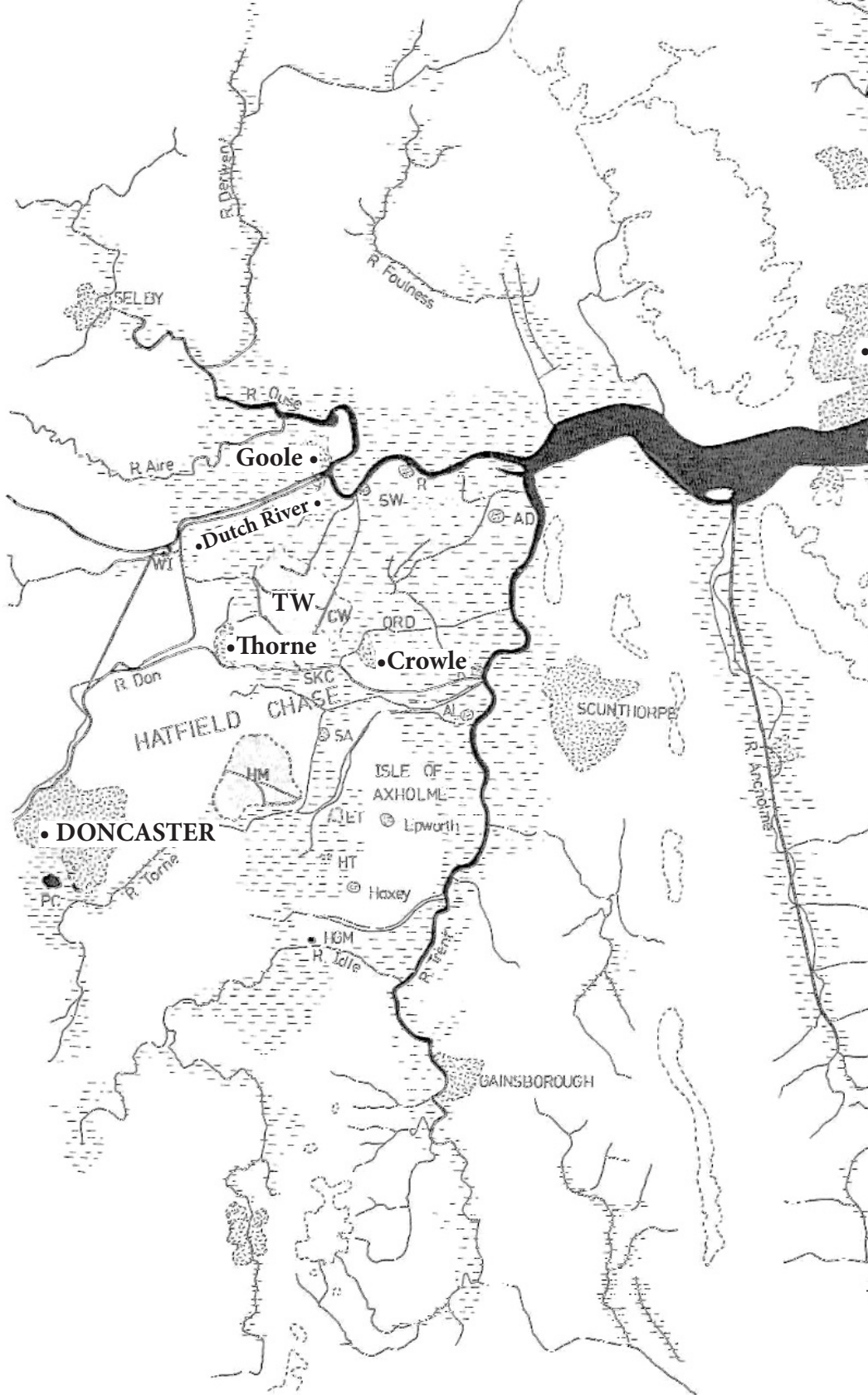
Humber  
Grimsby

• Lincolnshire Marsh •

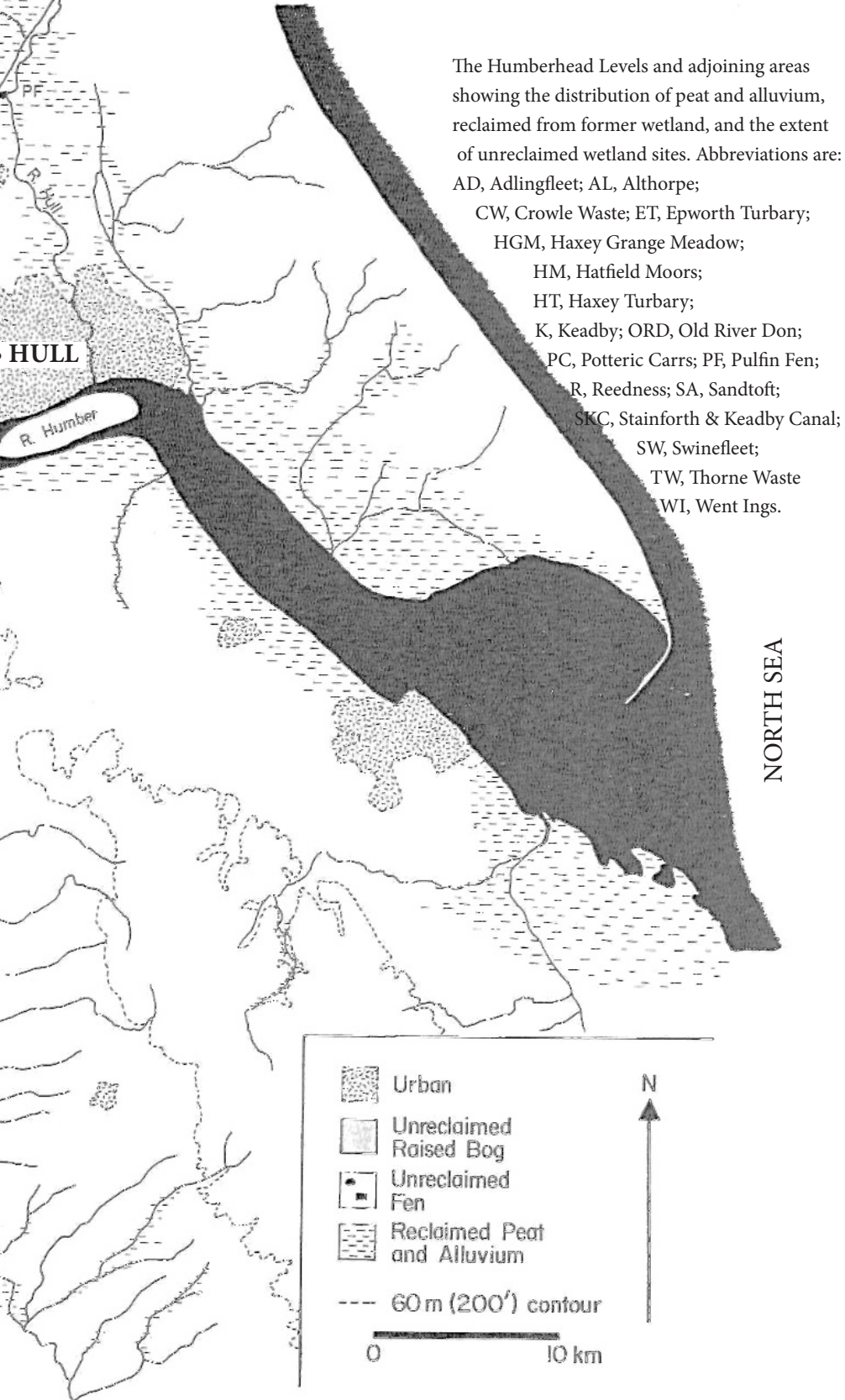
Wolds •

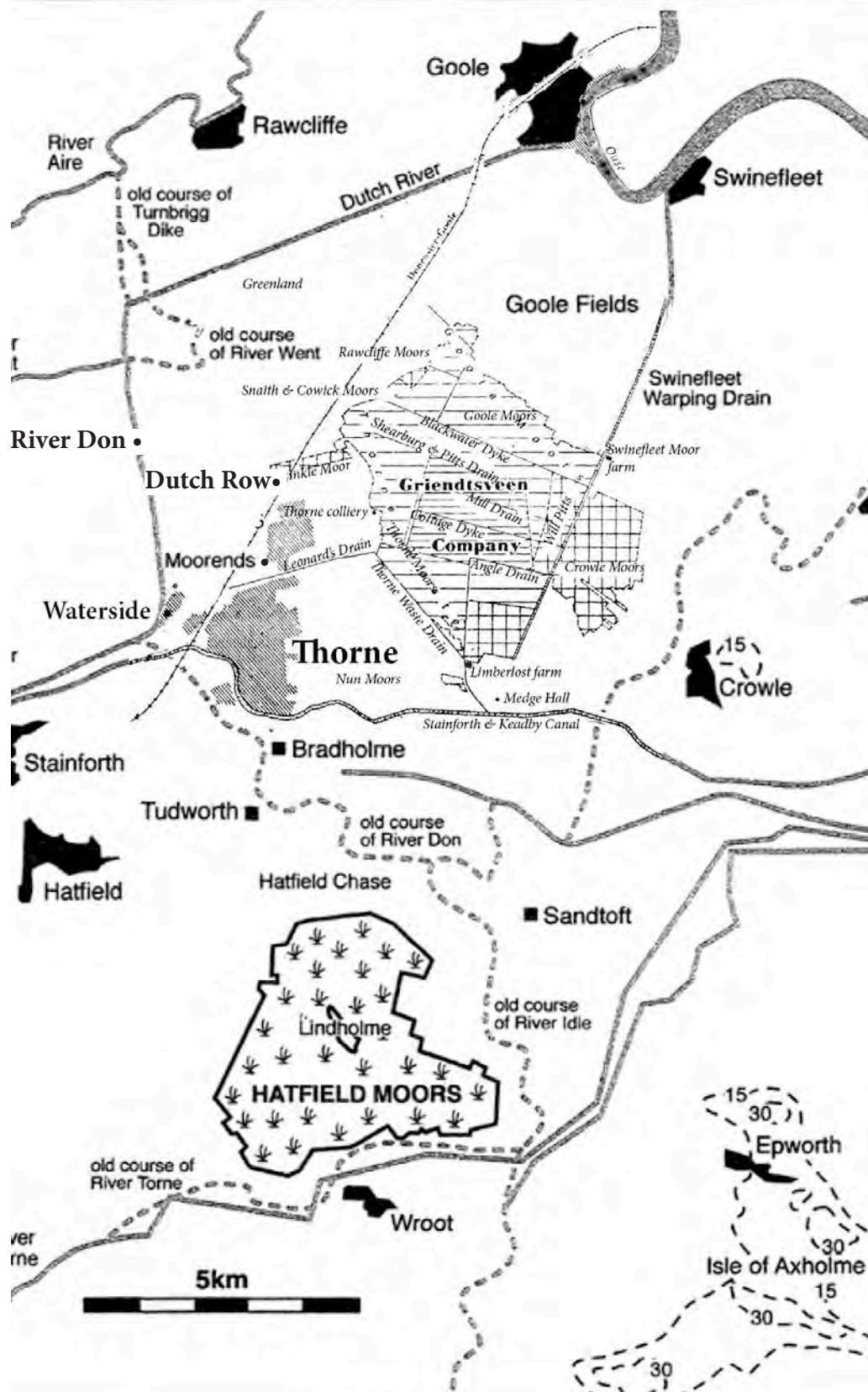
Location of Thorne Moors  
in the Humberhead Levels,  
in the Humber Wetlands.











# Yorkshire



11.900 km<sup>2</sup>. Population 5,4 million. County in Northern England and the largest by area size in the United Kingdom. Yorkshire has been nicknamed “God’s Own Country” by its people.

The emblem of Yorkshire is the White Rose of the English royal House of York, flag of Yorkshire is the white rose on a blue field. Yorkshire Day, held annually on 1 August, is a celebration of the general culture of Yorkshire, ranging from its history to its dialect.

## Etymology

Yorkshire was so named as it is the shire (administrative area or county) of the city of York, or York’s Shire. “York” comes from the Viking name for the city, Jórvík. The word ‘shire’ is either from the Old Norse word *skyr* or from Old English *scir* meaning share, care, or official charge.

## Language

English is the main language of 94.1% of Yorkshire residents.

English 94.1%; Polish 15.2%; Panjabi 14.4%; Urdu 12,5%

## Religion

Christianity is the largest religion in Yorkshire and the Humber.

The 2011 census indicated that 59.5% of the population reported they were Christian, no religion (25.4%) and Muslims (6.2%), Hindu (0.5%), Sikh (0.4%), Buddhist (0.3%) and Jewish (0.2%). A further 7.5% another religion.

## Ethnicity

Full table listing ethnicity in Yorkshire and the Humber 2011:

White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British 85.8%

Asian / Asian British: Pakistani 4.3%; White: Other White 2.5%

Asian / Asian British: Indian 1.3%; Black / African / Caribbean / Black

British: African 0.9%; Asian / Asian British: Other Asian 0.8%

Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Group: White and Black Caribbean 0.6%

Asian / Asian British: Chinese 0.5% White: Irish 0.5%

Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Group: White and Asian 0.5%



# NEDERLAND

Schaal van 1:400 000

1921

Drenthe



# Drenthe



Drenthe 2.680 km<sup>2</sup>. Population 0,5 million in 2023. Emblem: Mother Mary. Flag: six red stars (six kerspel) and a black tower (Castle Coevorden) on white field. There is no Drenthe Day. Yes there is Culture. Drenthe has been nicknamed “Oes laand” by its people.

## Etymologie Drenthe

From Old Dutch Thrianta (also Old Dutch Threant), from \*thrie (“three”) + \*hant- (possibly community or part of the area where a people live.). If so that would mean that Drenthe originally consisted of just three dingspelen/kerspel (“judicial areas”) rather than the six it has had since our earliest records. Compare Twente (Two).

## Language

Dutch, Drenthe, Veenkoloniaal Gronings, Malay (Moluccan), 1 in 10 speaks a regional language. Low Saxon (5 percent). Low Saxon is used at home by 31 percent in Drenthe. In Flevoland, North and South Holland, more than 10 percent mainly speak another language at home, such as English, Turkish, Moroccan/Arabic and Polish. This is least the case in Drenthe at 3 percent.

## Religion

61.9% Not religious; 23.8% Protestant; 9.3% Catholic; 0.9% Muslims 3.6% Other denominations (2015).

## Ethnicity

Migration backgrounds: Western (29,022 inhabitants) and Other (17,917 inhabitants). Western 53.4%; Morocco 3.0%; Antilles 3.0%; Suriname 3.7%; Turkey 3.9%; Other 33% (2022).

Highest point (Vamberg; former rubbish depot) 63 m NAP; Lowest point (Meppel) -2.5 m NAP; Number of sheep herds 11; Food banks (NL 171) Drenthe 4; Number of dolmens 52. Literary writers in dialect 3. Yearly number of novels in dialect 2. Literary magazine 1 (2023).

<https://allefigures.nl/provincie/drenthe/>









# GROENINGE



Dollaert

## AMPTEN

## PARIS

## WOLDT

Bourtange

Bourtanger Fort

een groote

MON

moerasige

TERIEN

heyde

EPIS

Bourtangh, desertum, ob paludes  
et aquas inaccessum.

PAT

P.A.R.

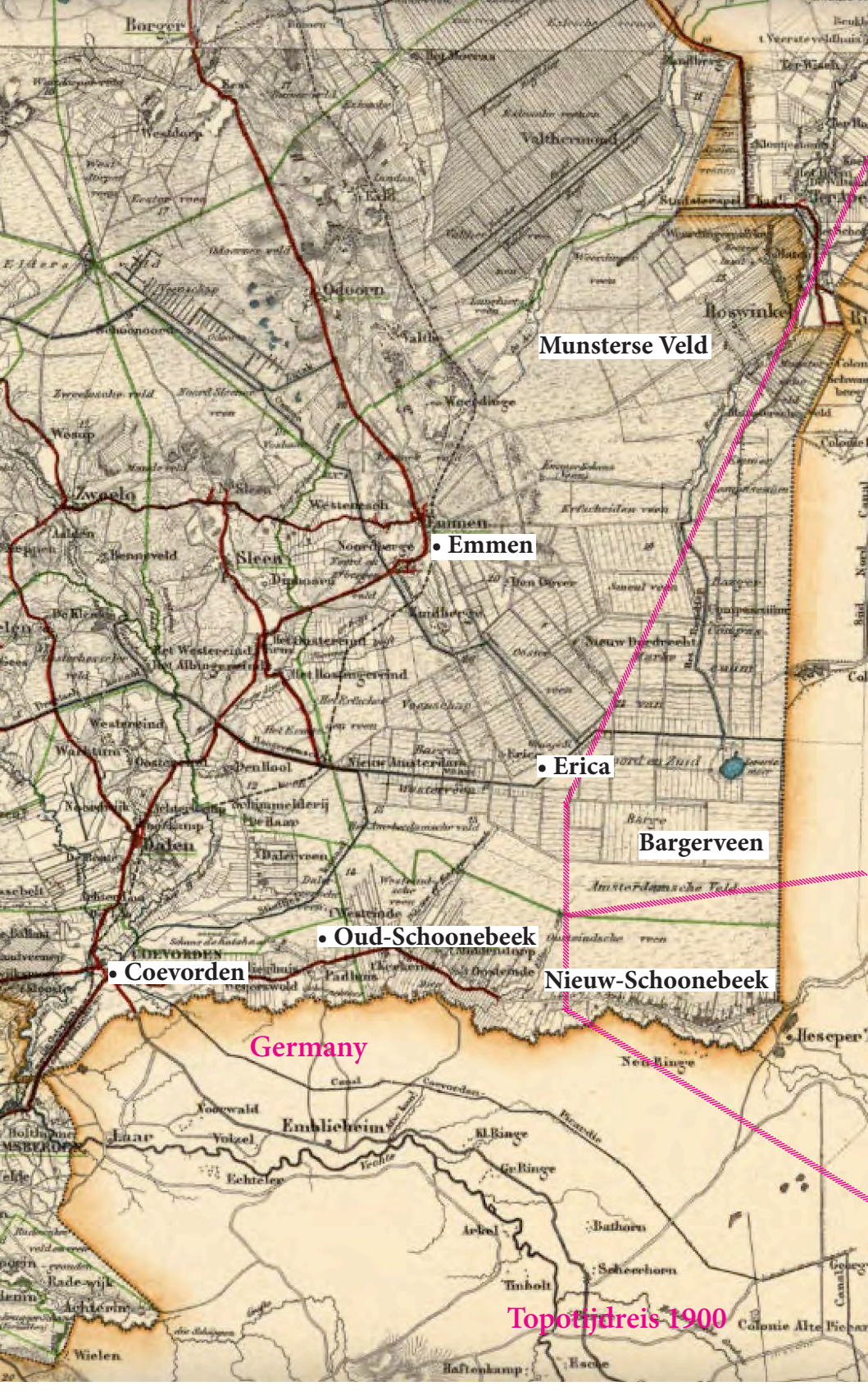
## BEETHESJS



CONSTATOS PARS.

Hardenberg  
Prostant Amstelodami apud  
R. & J. OTTENS.





Barger

Munsterse Veld

• Emmen

• Erica

Bargerveen

• Oud-Schoonebeek

• Coevorden

Nieuw-Schoonebeek

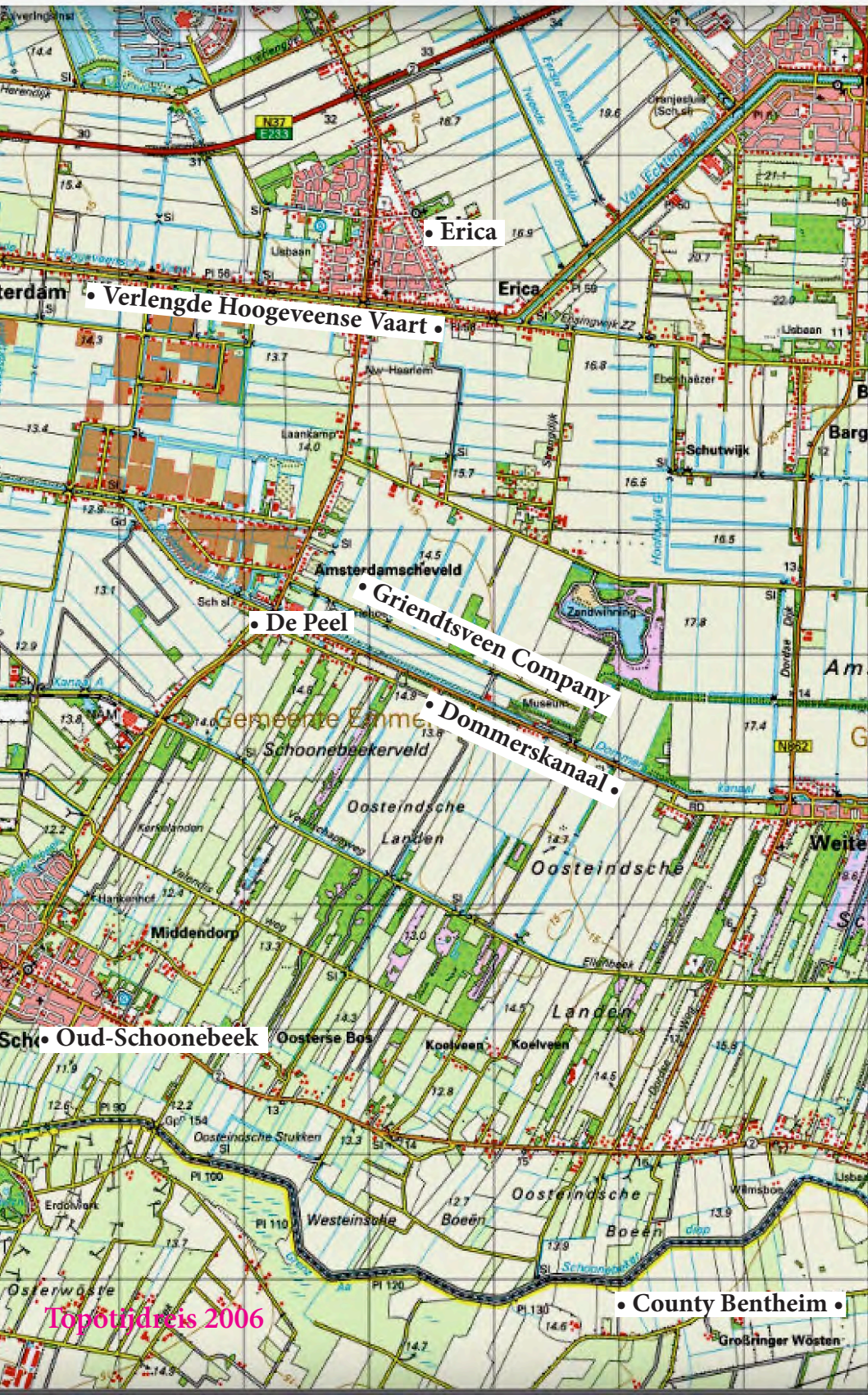
Germany

Topotijdreis 1900









• Verlangde Hoogeveense Vaart •

• Erica •

• De Peel •

• Griendtsveen Company •

• Dommerskanaal •

• Oud-Schoonebeek •

• County Bentheim •

Topothes 2006



• Klazienaveen

• Zwartemeer

• Germany •

• Bargerveen

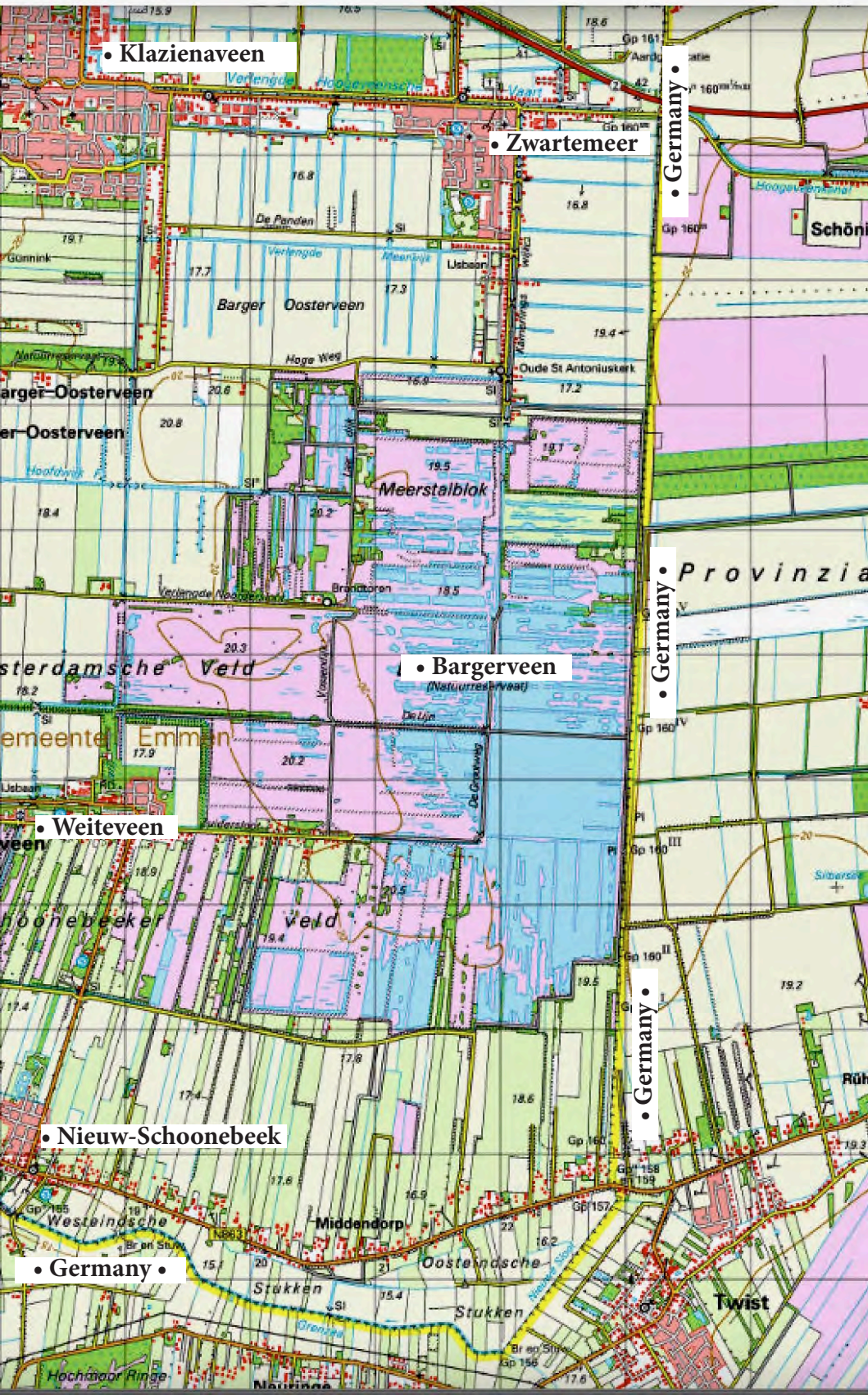
• Germany •

• Weiteveen

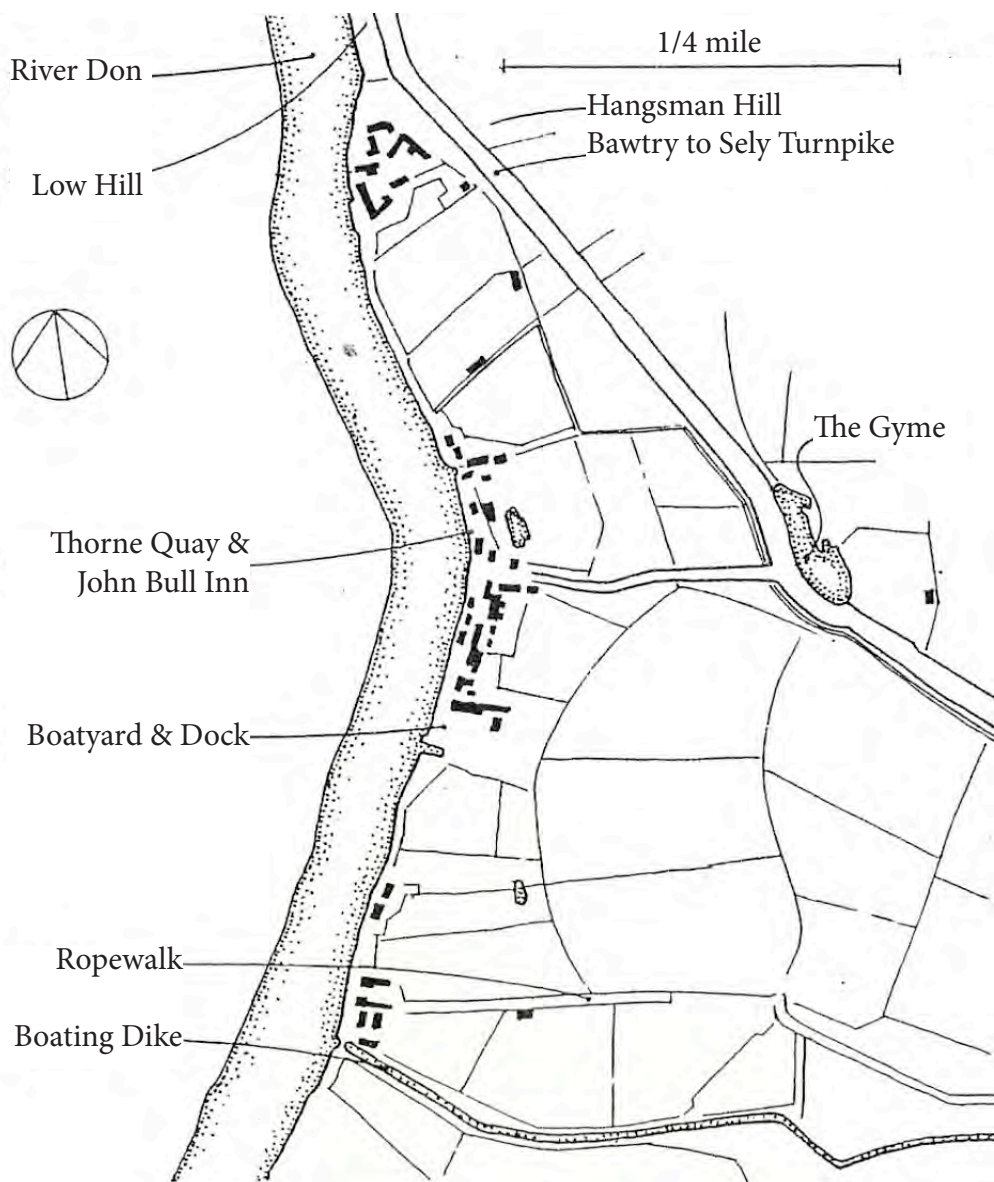
• Germany •

• Nieuw-Schoonebeek

• Germany •



## Waterside



**The drainage in 1825**



I spend my days behind the bar of the John Bull Inn. Together with Willy I determine the course of events in the pub. We live together in the same house on Waterside Road, separately. I could tell you how we got to this place by the river Don, but I might not be telling you our background at all. My life cannot be summed up in an easily readable novel. Some people grow old with only one variant. I live many possibilities simultaneously and interchangeably.

I could try to tell all the stories of my life at once in a Babylonian epic; a hopeless undertaking. That would be too much and it might not be that interesting. What a listener hears and what a reader finds in a book is not the same as what the narrator tells. My associative mind is not equipped to sort out all the misunderstandings it will cause. I jump from heel to branch. Linearity and straightforwardness are not for me. Not every story I tell has a beginning, sometimes it lacks an outcome. My story is nothing more than an integral average conversation. Often there is some unexpected or bizarre twist. I follow street musicians• and have no need of a conductor. I often miss the point. So every day is a surprise to me. For every fart that bothers me, I look for a way out. Along the way, I borrow insights from everyone who crosses my path or travels with me. I let the burdens that weigh on my shoulders, that is, on my neck, slide away with my stories. Goethe himself said:

*Geschichte schreiben ist eine Art, sich das Vergangene vom Halse zu schaffen. •*

I keep a low profile, even when the spotlight is shining on me. Over the years I have learned to be unobtrusively absent when I am present. When I announce a singer for karaoke on stage in the banquet hall, I smile and gesture to the audience. I often sing the first line of a song. Black is black, I want my baby back• is my favourite. I receive enthusiastic applause for my performance, not for the quality of my singing, but for my body, my head, my red lips, my colourful dress and

my personality. My head has already left the inn during the applause. I am absent in my omnipresence. In the outdoors, my mind is my shelter. Singing other peoples' songs just doesn't suit me. I sing - in harmony with the birds - the way I like to sing. I have beautiful ivory teeth.

With the microphone in my hand and the sound of the audience in my ears, I am already walking behind the dyke along Waterside Road, strolling along the banks of the Don, flowing between rustling reeds. From the riverside, over the low sand banks, I can just barely read the name of the inn on the top facade. John Bull Inn, with a weathered emblem, a faded caricature of a portly Englishman wearing a shirt with the Union Jack printed on the cotton under his jacket. The pub is for Joe Average, the everyday man and woman. A place for cheerful gatherings and for sober farewells.

Waterside Road is on the edge of Thorne, a county town in South Yorkshire. Everything on Waterside Road is still as it once was. In this insignificant area of some twenty houses in small varieties, the past has continued into the present. This traditional hamlet on the banks of the river Don, like me, has a rich history. My life, too, is, in slight variations, a series of evolving repetitions. Since I've known that nothing is new under the sun, a peaceful serenity - as they call it - has come over me.

I entered my working life as a carpenter. I can't remember how old I was. Young, still a teenager. I was a quiet one. Stupidity was not excluded by the outside world. I mean, the people around me thought that I was a stupid girl, as withdrawn as I was, with no past, no present and no future. My evaluators just didn't know any better; they had not yet learned to think for themselves. Self-knowledge was not yet a school or church subject. I still didn't know the difference between intelligent and stupid. I often still do not know, although I now know that stupidity is not one of my strong points. If you are not in the loop and do not show what you are all about, you are often regarded as retarded. Unjustly. Everyone has their own cleverness. The variations in skills and knowledge are endless. This holds for crafts and social skills. It certainly applies to scientific knowledge and proper manners.

Whatever it may be, I have learned to carpenter, to saw, to sand and to precisely cut straight and other angles. I cut 45-degree angles for doors and window frames visually. Without a protractor or compass, I moulded the slats for an octagonal frame. Always correct. I have a very keen eye and a steady hand. Not that I was proud of my skills; I just could do things.

I worked as a construction worker for small contractors. It took a while before I could get started. I was a short black woman with a long fuse and a short saw. I was put aside in a derogatory kind of sense, I remember that. I couldn't really grasp the negative reactions at that time. I was discriminated against, but I never experienced it that way. 'Hey Blacky, give me your hammer. Hey Fatty, do you have any nails for me?' Fatty was a reference to my fat ass. The language used on the construction site fell into the realm of general crude language. I hadn't taken it personally. Not yet. It was a language that everyone talked. I made jokes with the redheads and said: 'Hey redhead, can I have your folding ruler?' There were a lots of red-haired Scotchmen on the site. I responded to this teasing with a gentle touch on my breasts and behind, followed by a firm grip on the other guy's crotch. The groping was over quickly.

Now that I think back to that time, I hear a different language from a different time. Dirty songs like 'In the Sahara between two camels / Kasavoo boe played with his penis', that stuff. And 'Better to cut off your saw than to cut off your cock'. Cutting the saw meant sharpening the saw teeth with a file. The expression was meant to make contact. I had a saw. I had short fingers. I had no cock. The wolfish cry of an older colleague, when not a word had been exchanged on the scaffolding for half an hour or more, was also merely an attempt to make contact: I exist. The howling was a Munchian cry - just like Edvard Munch's painting - for attention. Later I started my own coffin workshop. My finest hour. Lively business. New poetry like:

*It's not the cough that carries you off.  
It's the coffin they carry you off in.*



As I think further, I'm sure I will find more expressions that now have outmoded and distasteful connotations. People very seldom address me as 'she's black', even though I am one of the few peat-coloured residents of Waterside Road.

In the pub, I never get the question: who are you? A lost tourist, John Bull Inn is not on the route, sometimes asks indirectly if I am from here. I won't say more. I say no more. I do not feel awkward. I leave the awkwardness to the questioner.

As a hobby I have delved into the history of this Negorij. • I think Negorij is a nice word for a run-down hamlet, especially because I know that the word, like Neger, Neglect and GrunNeger, has nothing to do with Negroes or Negro villages. A hamlet, like Waterside Road, is a village; a hamlet like the hundreds in Indonesia. Negorij comes from Malay and is a corruption of Nagara: a respectable town. The contempt came later. More often than not, meanings become their opposites. Black was an insult in my teenage years. Negro was a neutral description, as was Blanke - white person. Witte - white person - carried disapproval. Nowadays Nagara is an insignificant village. I like my Negorij.

When I tell stories, I often take detours to get the message across. You better get used to it, try to love that.

John Bull Inn has been around for close to two centuries. The pub is named after the first steamboat to operate the ferry service between Thorne and Hull via Goole. Long before the steamboat provided transport, the Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden, then called Dietse, arrived in the early 17th century. In 1626 he was commissioned by King Charles I to reclaim the marshy fields of Yorkshire - Thorne Waste, Hatfield Chase, Goole Moors. Vermuyden designed drainage plans. He provided locks, known as *sassen* • on the maps, and built dikes and embankments on both sides of the river Don. The Dutch River - a canalisation of existing streams in 1620/1635 - between the Don and the Ouse at Goole provided drainage. Shipping became possible. In Thorne, on the Waterside site, there was commercial activity on the riverbank: a shipyard, ropemakers, sailmakers and block moulders for pulleys. A ferry service to Hull was launched with

three sailings a week. The passengers came up the Don in horse-drawn chariots from Sheffield and from Doncaster to the south. Houses and cafes appeared behind the embankments. The view of the river was no longer possible. The John Bull Inn was one of four pubs, now the only one left in Waterside.

The arrival of the railway from Doncaster to the north in the mid 19th century brought an end to the regular ferry service. Activity declined at Waterside. This led to the houses falling into decline and becoming deserted.

It was at this time that Thomas Crapper, a ferry captain's son, left Waterside for London as an eleven-year young boy in 1847. He trained as an engineer. It is thanks to this Waterside resident that the modern flushing toilet was developed. It was not until 1914 that Waterside was connected to the sewage and water supply system. Until that year, the Don functioned as a source of drinking water and as a sewer for domestic wastewater. It is more common for discoverers to benefit from their discoveries much later. Fortunately, every village has a village idiot and a local celebrity who changes history. Funny how Crapper means shit and asshole.

In its heyday, around 1820, Waterside had about 50 houses. By the end of the 19th century the condition of the houses had seriously dwindled. Read the description in *Wrigley's Almanac* of 1884•

Anyone having visited Thorne Waterside about the year 1820 and again in 1884, would scarcely recognise it as the same place. Then it was a scene of life and activity, now it is simply a deserted village. Four public houses and two 'jerry shops' were much patronised; now only two, (the Ship and John Bull) get a very little custom now and then. The cottages were crowded with occupants, now scores of houses are unoccupied, all the glass in the windows is broken, and in many cases, boards occupy the places where doors and windows formerly were; visitors may pass rows of houses facing the river, where, out of a dozen or more, only one shows any signs of life; the rest are desolate looking indeed.

Doorsteps are grass grown, rank vegetation fills up the spouts, and tufts of grass appear on the window sills. Large warehouses standing

on the bank of the river and on the quay, are gradually falling into ruin and decay.

The landing stage, which formerly used to present a busy scene on the arrival of the stagecoach from Sheffield and the departure of the packet for Hull, is now grass grown and desolate like the rest of this once thriving village. The rope manufactory, where from twelve to fifteen men and boys used to work, is given up in solitude; the rope shed, warehouses, etc., now lies a confused mass of broken rafters, bricks, mortar, wheels and other machinery connected with the manufacture of ropes. The river Don itself seems as if it, too, shared in the same fate as the Quay; very rare indeed is a vessel of any description seen on its waters, and then only a keel or canal boat; and year by year it appears to have become narrower and narrower, until at the present time it is little more than half its original width opposite this once flourishing, but now 'deserted village'.

In these days of decline, Drenthe peat diggers came to Thorne to dig the raw material for peat litter - the Litter - from the Moor. The immigrant workers and seasonal workers found shelter in the dilapidated Waterside.

In the early period, in 1894, the Dutch were housed in a row of rental houses which were rented by the Griendtsveen Moss Litter. These houses were located on the Waterside. Hygiene was far from ideal at first, and was often reported in the local newspaper: the *Doncaster Gazette* or the *Goole Times*.

In 1894 the newspapers reported on the lack of sewerage or at least proper drains and the unsanitary conditions in the houses.

On September 27, 1895, it was reported in the *Goole Times* that an inspection had taken place by the municipal health department. The inspector found sick children suffering from diarrhoea. People even feared cholera. Something had to be done. During a public meeting it was suggested that the houses be closed. The Griendtsveen Moss Litter had also been informed several times, but without result. The local doctor thought that women should come to keep things clean, but they were not there and 'they cannot be found for this purpose,' one of those present jokingly replied.



In the autumn of 1898, a row of houses was built on behalf of de Griendtsveen, just outside Thorne near the village of Moorends. This also housed a bakery and a shop. It was run by the Peters family, among others.

The place on the edge of the hamlet of Moorends where these houses stood was named Dutch Row.

In 1898 there were more than 150 Dutch people, including women and children. They did not all live in Thorne or in the new houses in Moorends, but also in Goole, a village further away where the Dutch had rented accommodation.

Among the Dutch were: Frisians. Drenthe, Overijssel residents and Brabant residents. These all came from the Dutch raised bog areas. •

Later, a relatively large number of Dutch people worked in the peat bogs in England and Scotland and also settled there. In 1905, the Dutch colony in Thorne was estimated at a hundred men and their families. By the end of World War I, this number had shrunk to almost zero. The peat workers had returned to the Netherlands, because good money could be made in the peat there during the war. The relationship with the English population was not always good. After a row of houses was built near the factory in Moorends, especially for a number of the Dutch workers, this improved the peace in Thorne. The *Goole Times* of March 3, 1899 reported: ‘The removal of these Hollanders from the town of Thorne, it may be incidentally mentioned, has resulted in diminishing the scenes of disorder which marked their first introduction into the neighbourhood.’ •

I didn't find any names of the Dutch peat diggers among the residents in Waterside of 1928.

# Quay Road

## QUAY ROAD

No 2 – Harry Chester

2A – Arthur Hanby

3 – William Patrick

6 – Henry Sargeson

## WATERSIDE

No 1 – Joseph Davey

2 – George Wood

3 – Thomas Shipley

4 – Albert Walker

5 – John J Hackney

6 – John W Hutchinson

7 – Penelope Skinn

8 – Laura Cresswell

9 – Jarvis Reed

10 – Fred Crowcroft

11 – Robert Hackney

12 – Annie Reed

13 – Anthony Airey

14 – Alonza Sperry

15 – Harry Crowcroft

16A – Herbert M Miller

18A – William C Bailey

19 – Thomas C Phillipson

20 – Ernest Reed

21 – George Reed

22 – Herbert White

23 – William Beardshaw

24 – Amos Squires

25 – John Clarke

26 – Robert Dawson

John Thornhill, John Bull Cots

William Finch, John Bull Inn

## QUAY SIDE

No 12 – Fred Steers

15 – David Finch

16 – David Johnson

20 – John Hepworth

22 – Thomas Hepworth

24 – Lister Hepworth

26 – Thomas Crowcroft

Another list, written down by a former resident, records the 1930 population – and these additional names –

Quay Rd: 4A James Wilson, 7 George Blanshard, 8 Tommy White

Quayside: 16A Joe Lister, 18 Jack Ward, 24 Georgina Jackson, 26 Tom Phillipson, 28 Jim Whaley

Waterside (The Row): 1 Arthur Martin, 2 John Ashurst, 3 William Richards, 8 Alfred Elden, 17 Thomas Bradley, 19 Frank Rodway, 20 Stephen Howe, 21 George Carter, 22 Fred Jackson, 23 John Sutton, 26 Charlie Jones. •

# Dutch peat diggers in England / Scotland

Albert Metselaar geb. (born) 11-2-1870 H.g.v (= Hoogeveen•) X Hendrikje Schonewille geb. 16-2-1876 H.g.v \* levenloos kind (still born child) 1898 Thorne  
\* Marrigje geb. 21- 11-1899 Thorne

Hendrik Benjamins geb. 15-11-1874 H.g.v X Jantje van Nuil geb. 27-7-1872 H.g.v \* Jantje geb. 14- 11-1896 H.g.v

Berend Profijt geb. 2-11-1874 H.g.v X Geesje Boertien geb. 3-4-1884 H.g.v  
\* Jantje geb. 23-10-1902 Thorne

Lambert Bouwmeester geb. 4-1-1859 H.g.v X Metje van Dalen geb. 18-1-1857 H.g.v \*Jan geb. 20-10-1884

Jacob Klunder geb. 26-1-1879 H.g.v X Hendrikje Kroezen geh. 3-11-1882 H.g.v  
\* Berend geb. 11-9-1903 Medge Hall \* Arend geb. 21-8-1904 Thorne

Hendrik Schonewille geb. 6-12-1881 X Annigje Schoonewille geb. 18-2-1888  
\* Harm geb. 8-6-1904 Thorne \* Klaas geb. 4-10-1905 Thorne \* Hendrikje geb. 18-12-1906 Thorne \* Hendrika geb. 28-12-1908 H.g.v

Otto Okken geb. 21-1-1878 H.g.v X Lucia Mol geb. 4-2-1874 H.g.v  
\* Janke geb. 23- 11-1898 Thorne \* Jan Otto geb. 23-10-1900 Thorne

Freek Hooge geb. 29-8-1869 Beilen X Grietje ten Caat geh. 13-11-1865 H.g.v  
\* Jan Huigen geb. 7-2-1888 Deurne \* Jan geb. 10-6-1894 \* Annigje geb. 15-1- 1898

Siemen Mol geb. 13-12-1883 H.g.v X Geertien Benjamins geb. 6-5-1887 H.g.v

Hendrik Doldersum geb. 16-3-1864 H.g.v X Geertje Stoffers geb. 15-12-1870 H.g.v \* Egbert geb. 30-5-1898 H.g.v \* Geesje geb. 25- 10-1899 H.g.v  
\* Trijntje geb. 17-2-1901 Thorne \* Hendrik geb. 29-7-1904 Hornich



Jan Moman geb. 1-2-1867 X Jantje Kleine geb. 4-4-1873 Zuidwolde \* Jan geb.  
10-3-1896 Thorne

Bruin Pol geb. 27-4-1874 Beilen X Jantje van Zwol geb. 26-7-1880  
\* Geesje geb. 27-3-1903 Thorne

Hendrik Kleine geh. 24-9-1869 H.g.v \* Hillegonda geb. 28-6-1913 Thorne

Jan van der Sleen geh. 7-5-1877 H.g.v X Annigje van der Weide geh. 11-1-1876  
H.g.v \* Jan geb. 28-1-1901 Thorne \* Anna geb. 13-10-1903 Thorne

Fake Faken geb. 6-8-1864 H.g. v X Hendrikje Hoogeveen geb. 21-2-1872 H.g.v  
\* Jan geb. 1-4-1899 Thorne

Lambert Benjamins geb. 9-8-1874 Coevorden X Zwaantje Dekker geb. 7-7-1874  
H.g.v \* Peter geb. 28-4-1904 Thorne

Lucas Zwigelaar geb. 11-9-1867 H.g.v X Trijntje Metselaar geh. 30-8-1879 H.g.v  
\* Berend geb. 10-4-1906 Springfield Gretna \* Albert geb. 28-7-1907 Springfield  
Gretna \* Janje geb. 4-5-1909 Cilchet Lancaster \* Berend Dirk geb. 24-5-1911  
H.g. v \* Lucas geb. 17-10-1913 H.g.v

Hendrik Schonewille geh. 25-6-1871 H.g. v X Albertje Metselaar geh. 6-9-1878  
H.g.v \* Harm geb. 8-12-1901 Thorne \* Arend geb. 31-5-1903 Thorne  
\* Catharina geb. 4-6-1905 Longtown \* Johannes geb. 28-6-1907 Schotland  
\* Hendrik geb. 16-3-1909 Schotland

Aaldert Okken geb. 6-7-1882 H.g.v X Hermanna Lichtendonk geb. 23-3-1889  
H.g.v \* Janke geb. 4-8-1903 H.g.v \* Harm geb. 10-1-1906 H.g.v  
\* Warner geb. 17-5-1908 Thorne

Berend Schonewille geb. 25-2-1890 H.g.v X Johanna Benjamins geb. 27-9-1893  
H.g.v \* Geert geb. 20-7-1915 Bathgate \* Alberdina geb. 25-7-1917 Lombridge  
\* Margje geb. 27-11-1918 Lombridge

Klaas Schonewille geb. 18-3-1860 G'hergen X Hendrikje ten Caat geb. 27-9-1861  
H.g.v \* Stoffer geb. 1-11-1883 H.g.v \* Annigje geb. 18-2-1887 H.g.v \* Anna geb.

23-1-1893 Deurne \* Harm geb. 22-1-1895 Deurne \* Hendrica geb. 29-4-1898  
Deurne \* Berendina geb. 8-3-1901 Thorne

Hendrik Pol geb. 25-3-1860 H.g.v X Trijntje Profijt geh. 24-11-1858 H.g.v  
\* Albert geb. 24-3- 1890 Westerbork

Harm Boertien geh. 1-4-1884 H.g.v X Anna Schonewille geb. 23-1-1893 Deurne  
\* Stoffer geb. Schotland \* Martinus geb. Schotland

Geert Schonewille geb. 10-9-1872 H.g.v X Pietertje Botter geb. 11-9-1878 H.g.v  
\* Hendrika geb. 19-1-1897 Horst \* Geesje geb. 27-3-1899 Thorne

Pieter Dekker geh. 2-5-1871 H.g.v X Wietske jager geb. 3-9-1869 Beilen  
\* Jan geb. 12-2-1893 Westerbork \* Hendrik geb. 10-9-1891 W'bork

Jan Schonewille geb. 8-5-1877 H.g.v X Johanna Berends geb. ?

Berend Kuiper geb. 16-7-1875 H.g.v X Klaasje Vos geb. 8-3-1875 H.g.v  
\* Jan geb. 19-2-1899 H.g.v \* Geesje geb. 19-2-1901 Goole

Egbert van Nuil geb. 24-12-1864 H.g. v X Jantje Emmelo geb. 1-12-1870  
Zuidwolde \* Lucas geb. 1891 Emmen \* Cornelius geb. 21-5-1897 Duitsland  
\* Margje geb. 21-9-1898 Emmen \* Jan geb. 28-6-1901 Thorne  
\* Bernard geb. 6-8-1902 Thorne \* Willem geb. 4-5-1905 Thorne  
\* Egbert geb. 8-3-1908 Thorne \* Geziena geb. 19-1-1911 Thorne  
\* Hendrika geb. 7-5-1914 Thorne

Geert Hendrik Rohling geb. 19-4-1840 Slagharen X Antonetha Hendriks  
Aardewinkel geb. 26-9-1845 \* Johanna Maria geb. 12-10-1869 Zuidwolde  
\* Klazina Anthonetha geb. 22-3-1874 Gramsbergen \* Johannes Bernardus geb.  
25-1-1877 Emmen \* Bernardus H.Johannes geb. 24-1-1879 Emmen

Aaldert Bremer geb. 13-3-1869 H.g.v X Antje Prijs \* geh. 25-10-1878  
Hardenberg \* Elsje geb. 1-9-1895 Deurne \* Johanna geb. 19-3-1897 Deurne  
\* Hendrika geb. 28-2-1898 Thorne \* Jantje geb. 5-10-1900 Thorne

Johannes Prijs geb. 25-4-1851 H.g.v X Elsje Profijt geb. 16-11-1851 H.g.v  
\* Aaldert geb. 1-2-1888 H.g.v \* Jan geb. 28-3-1891 Horst \* Jansie geb. 9-9-1893  
Horst \* Eibert geb. 22-2-1895 Horst \* Elsje geb. 11-8-1897 Horst

## Peat diggers from Hoogeveen and surrounding areas without a family in England

Pieter Benjamins geb. 1877 Coevorden  
Harm Benjamins geb.  
Berend Blokzijl geb. 1886 W'bork (Westerbork)  
Dirk Boertien geb. 20-5-1873 H.g.v  
Hendrik Boertien geb.  
Jan Booy geb.  
Albert Booy geb. 27-8-1875 H.g.v  
Hendrik Booy geb.  
Hendrik Kuik geb.  
Hendrik Lip geb.  
Jacob Lichtendonk geb. 5-5-1875 Oosterhesselen  
Wolter Mager geb. 24-8-1873 H.g.v  
Klaas Martinus geb. 22-3-1875 W'bork  
Hendrik Mol geb. 6-9-1873 H.g.v  
Geert Mol geb. 16-5-1868 H.g.v  
Jan Mol geb.  
Jan ten Brink geb. 14-3-1867 H.g.v  
Albert Otten geb. 27-12-1877 H.g.v overleden (died) 1-12-1913 Schotland  
Hendrik Bijl geb.  
Hendrik Deuten geb.  
Egbert Otten geb.  
Lambert Doldersom geb. 13-1 -1872 W' bork  
Hendrik Overdijk geb.  
Martinus Doldersom gcb. 23-5-1880 W' bork  
Willem Pastoor geb. 27-10-1 874 H.g.v  
Berend Duinkerken geb. 29-8-1874 H.g.v  
Hendrik Pieters geb.  
Geert Duinkerken geb. 30-3-2858 H.g. v  
Sake Pol Lzn geb. 18-4-1 875 H.g.v  
Johannes Duinkerken geb.



Daniël Pol geb. 31-5-1 877 H.g.v  
 Evert Everts geb.  
 Adam Prins geb.  
 Jan Otto Faken geb.  
 Berend Prijs geb. 3-8- I 875 H.g. v  
 Jacob Frijlink geb.  
 Harm Prijs geb. 5-12- 1876 H.g.v  
 Hendrik Geerts geb.  
 Derk Profijt geb. 27-10-1868 H.g.v  
 Koert Gcerits geb. Jan Profijt geb.  
 Arend Goedkoop geb.  
 Leendert Schonewille geb. 5-7-1877 H.g.v  
 Berend Hoogeveen geb.  
 Pieter Schonewille geb. 20-10-1876 H.g. v  
 Jan Oelen 'de lange' geb.  
 Geert Schonewille geb. 6-9-1891 H.g.v  
 Jan de Jong geb. 12-8-1873 H.g.v  
 Berend v.d Sleen geb. 25-6- 1881 H.g.v  
 Jan Karstenberg geb. 16-6-1869 H.g.v  
 Pieter Snippe geb. 21-2-1871 H.g.v  
 Geert ten Kate geb.  
 Dirk Stevens geb. 15-4-1888 W'bork  
 Hendrik Kikkert geb. 18-2-1880  
 Roelof W. Stevens geb. 1-4-1864 W'bork  
 Jan Kist geb.  
 Hendrik Tichelaar geb.  
 Harm Kleine geb.  
 Hendrik Thalen geb.  
 Thomas Klunder geb.  
 Hendrikus Vlietstra geb. 20-11- 1871 H.g.v  
 Jan Knecht geb.  
 Jan Vos geb.  
 Roelof Knecht geb. 25-6- I 881 H.g. v  
 Thijs Vos geb. 13-9-1889 H.g.v  
 Albert Krikken geb.  
 Hilbert v.d Weide geb. 3-7-1883 H.g.v  
 Hilbert Krikken geb.

Hendrik v.d. Weide geb.

Jan Kroezen geb.

Klaas Kroezen geb.

### Peat diggers from the peat bogs of De Krim/Dedemsvaart

Jan Waninge

Johannes Martinus Dopmeyer

Berend Stoel

Egbert Elderhuis

Frederik Kerssies

Daniël Olthof

Gerhardus de Munnik met Gerritdina van Dam

Harm Schonewille met Klaasje Sok

Gosen Waning

Harm Michel

Klaas Stoel

Bernardus Elderhuis

Harm Pilage

Hendrik Langemaat

Everhardus Pool

Jan Michel met Jentje Schreur

Albertus Hofstede met Hendrikje Hoogeveen

### Brabant / Limburg peat diggers

Anthonius v.d Kerkhof

Cornelis v.d Kerkhof

Frans Smits

Lambertus v.d. Akker

Martinus v.d Kerkhof

Norbert van Engelen

Gordina v.d Kerkhof

Harry van Doorn

Henricus v.d Kerkhof en Elisabeth v.d Kerkhof

Henricus Hendriks

Herman van Gerven

Hubertus Verhees

Jan Baken den Raat

Cornelis van Heugten

Driek v.d Linden

Geert van Heugten

Marinus Kievits

Nat Maas

Peer v.d Linden

Hannes Koppens

Hendrik Jansen

Henry Peters

Herman van Lierop

Jan Arntz

Jan Hobben

Jan Verspeek  
Johannes v.d Heide  
Johannes van Lierop  
Peter Limbeek  
Piet Derks  
Piet Zegveldt  
Sjang Veldham  
Willem Bladder en Johanna Maas  
Willem Geurts

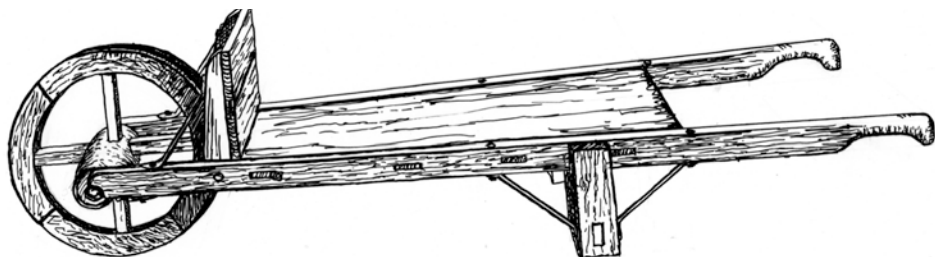
### Frisian peat diggers

Arend de Graaf  
Gerard Kolkman  
Hendrik van Dam  
Iebel de Jong  
Jelle van Dam  
Lambertus v.d Akker

Jan Wiegenburg  
Johannes van Engelen  
Peter Delissen  
Peter van Lierop  
Piet van Schaik  
Reinier van Eyk  
Tinus Buckens

Willem van Lierop

Berend de Jong  
Harm van der Wal  
Herman de Vries  
Jan de Groot  
Koene Knol  
Sytse de Jong







Willy, my partner, was born in Thorne. When he reached the age of reason - his words - he wanted to get out and explore the world. Any place was good, as long as it weren't Thorne. He enlisted in the British Army. The Royal British Army took him everywhere he hadn't wanted to be. When we met abroad, he still had both legs. Shortly after the physical initiation, the sealing of our covenant, he lost his left leg. My love for him was blind, as all love is. I followed him to his birthplace, Waterside Road. The Royal British Army more than made up for the lost leg. We bought that John Bull Inn for the price of his left leg and a dozen rebels he had killed in a far-off land. His comrade in good times and in bad, his rifle, hangs on the wall above the mantelpiece. The small red brick house next to the inn was part of the sale. I live on the left side of the building, and Willy on the right. We live together, colloquially known as living apart. That expression has disappeared now that almost everyone lives separately, even if the bed is under the same roof.

From my front room I have a view of the sand embankment, which is several metres high. I just can't see the River Don when I look outside. Various varieties of trees, hawthorn, alder, spruce and shrubs such as honeysuckle and broom, also obstruct my view. However, I'm quite happy with it. I have planters in the front garden, behind the dividing wall with the tarmacked road. Sometimes I grow Irish potatoes and leeks. I often forget to water them on time. On the frontage is a wooden birdhouse, handmade and painted. Rarely do birds nest in the nesting box. Perhaps the hole is too small or too large; this hole has to be just right. Maybe I painted the birdhouse too colourful, or perhaps it is too hot inside on a sunny summer's day, and like my neighbours down the row, I smell the fuchsias and geraniums in hanging baskets on the front facade. If you are to participate, if you want to be in the community, you must not stray too far from tradition. I needn't keep up with the pace of change. Willy moves with the times. His wooden leg carries him everywhere. In fact, a one-legged man is more easily accepted into a community than a black person with an ivory smile.

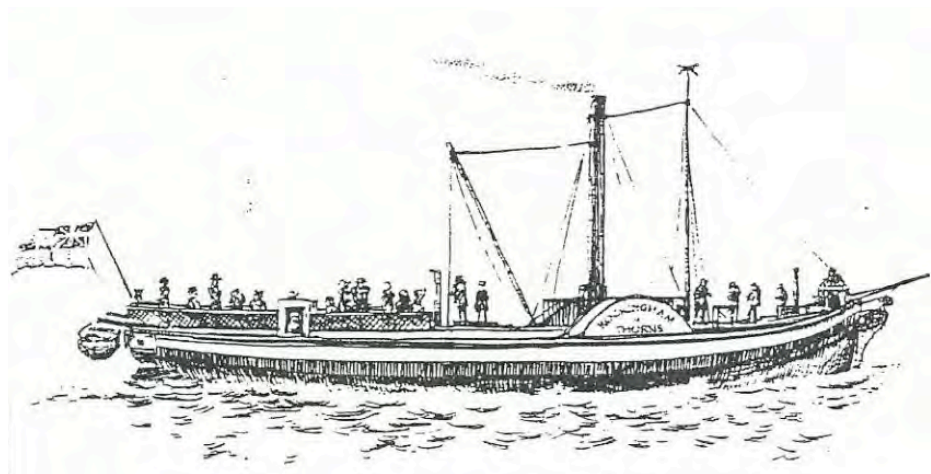
After arriving in Thorne, I quickly found work at a carpentry business. After decorating shops, I started interior finishing work in pubs. I personally built the bar in John Bull. If you take a close and careful look, you can see the basic pattern of coffins in the storage cupboards. With the same effort, I wanted to change the traditional dark brown panelling in the bar. Willy thought that was unnecessary. The people of the Waterside Road would not appreciate such modern antics, he thought. I made no protest. I like unusual things, mainly because I can't recognise them.

After a job as a boat carpenter, after making the cabin and the forecastle, after the installation of the bathrooms and so on, I quit carpentry, and I had my breasts removed. Strange as it may sound, I was relieved. Without breasts I felt more human, to put it therapeutically. I had never felt 100 per cent female. I was a carpenter, not a man-carpenter. After the operation and the last job in the cabin, I was no longer a woman carpenter. It was the year that great tits nested in the birdhouse for the first time. Willy and I slept separately. And our bodies pampered each other now and then. We both had our moments. Still.

At a birthday party, after Saturday evening's karaoke, after singing Black is Black, the guests gave me a box of charcoal and a drawing pad. Perhaps there was no intention behind the gift and it was nothing more than charcoal and a drawing pad. My developed suspicion, soupçon, as the French say, and Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche are known as 'maîtres du soupçon' told me that I should no longer open the song and music evening. I was pleasantly surprised by the change in tradition. The pianist played Ebony and Ivory, black and white. Willy, my pirate, and the crew took care of the activities in the pub. I participated when I felt the need. - Being master of ceremonies at a condolence event suited me perfectly. - I would rather walk along the Don. The river is nothing special, a wide canal that has already seen all the glories of the past floods. Everything in the landscape has been touched by people more than once, not always with better results. The high skies, the panoramic views, the wind and the rain. I became passionate about it.

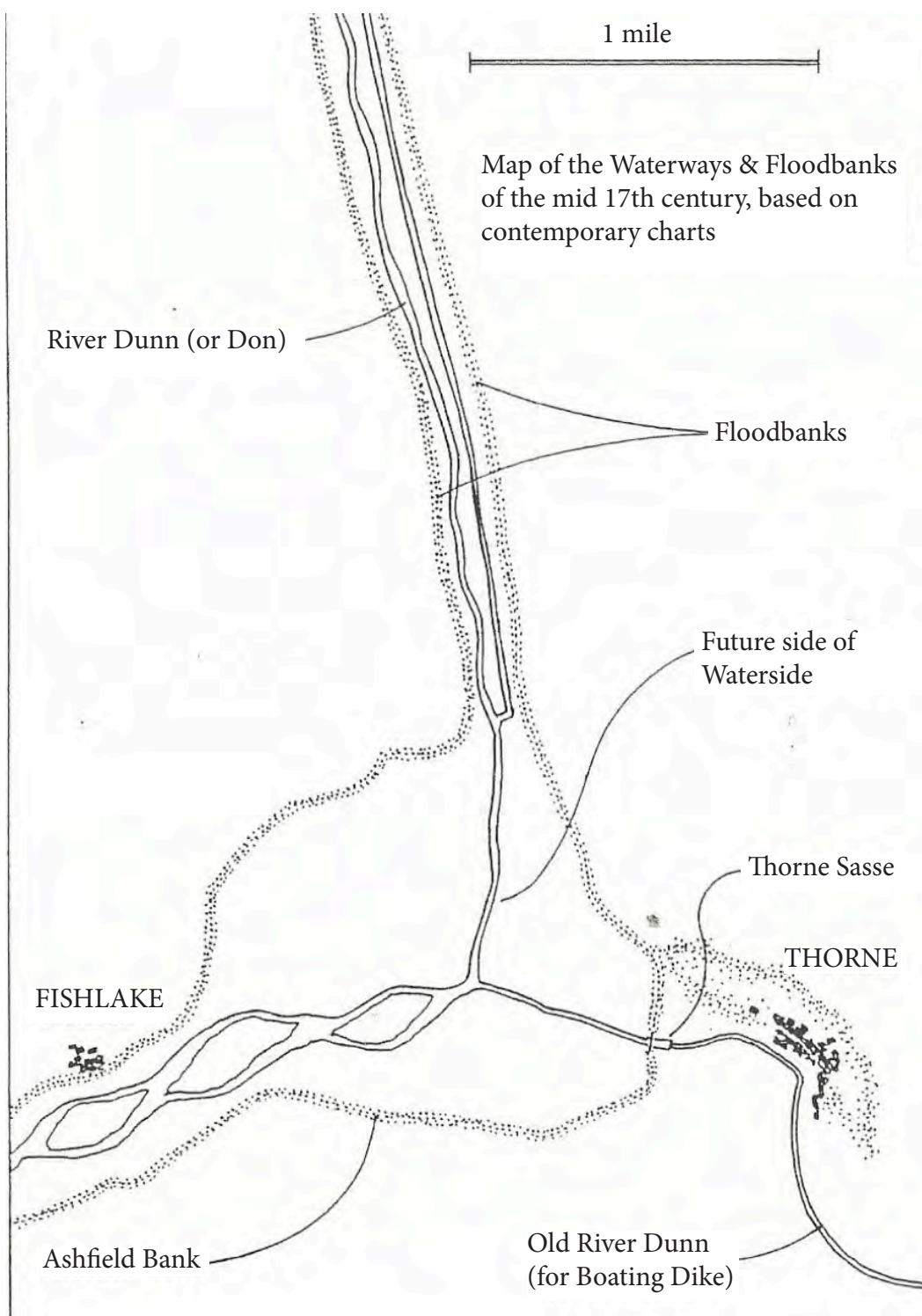
I studied the former ferry services. The steamboats with their simple construction. Huge paddle wheels, a steam boiler, a passenger deck and





a windowless lounge. In the Docks Museum in Hull I saw oil paintings of boats manufactured at Thorne.

An oil painting of the Rockingham in the Town Docks Museum, Hull, gives an idea of the layout. Over the heavy boiler, placed centrally in the hull for stability, the tall tubular stack rises vertically. The wheel boxes rise well above the bulwarks, themselves high enough to afford weather protection to the passengers. Seats for the hardy are placed on top of the saloon, and the top of the companion way down into the saloon can be seen. No windows are visible on the saloons in the painting. Upright pipes above them may well be stove chimneys. The foresail, the only one possible given the position of the boiler stack, is shown lowered. At the top of the mast is a vane in the form of a racehorse, possibly the famous Darley Arabian, sent to England from the Middle East in 1704 by Thomas Darley. To the rear of the boiler is a derrick for hoisting cargo, while the coggie-boat is suspended out of the water from the stern. •



## Wild side of river Don

## Joseph Nieters arrives

‘How are you?’

‘I’m fine. How are you?’

‘Thank you.’

‘My name is Joseph.’

‘You can call me Sara.’

The Drentsman sat under the parasol in the car park behind John Bull Inn. From a distance came the hum of passing cars on the M18. Visitors are rarely seen outside the pub for a drink or a meal. The worn tarmac and dirty, dilapidated walls surrounding the pub are not an inviting environment for a tea break and good conversation. The cyclist, some twenty years my elder, possibly a pensioner, asked for coffee. I went inside and returned with two coffees, milk, sugar, Devon cream and homemade cranberry orange scones on a tray.

‘Mind if I join you?’ I set his cup on the table in front of him. I pointed to the scones and said, ‘Help yourself.’

Joseph did not object to having my company. He stirred his coffee for a long time. I fiddled with my cup and waited.

It took him a long time to start talking, as if he was exhausted after cycling along heavy traffic and poorly maintained local roads. His bike seemed overloaded with luggage, bags on either side of each wheel. A paper map in a see-through plastic sleeve on the handlebars told him where to go. Perhaps he was waiting for me to ask: where are you from? I waited. It is one of the many questions I no longer ask.

‘I left Doncaster this morning,’ Joseph took a scone. ‘I passed Stainfield, Fishlake, Moorends and now here I am.’

After a bite, he dipped the scone into Devon cream and ate it all the way down to the last crumb. He must have been hungry. He wiped his greasy lips with the back of his hand and washed down the remnants of the scone with a sip of coffee. He seemed very comfortable. He asked for another coffee.

When I returned with the fresh coffee, he had finished all the scones.

‘I saw a leaflet mentioning a bed and breakfast nearby,’ he said. ‘That might be a good place to spend the night.’



I guessed he meant the Workman's Lodging, less than 500 metres away on Quay Road. It had closed years ago.

'Let me find out,' I said. 'No problem. You have a bed for the night.' He seemed relieved.

'Thanks for the scones, Sara. You're a skilled baker,' he complimented. 'Real craftsmanship.' He added, 'Scones have Dutch roots. The word 'scone' comes from 'schoon brood'; beautiful, pure white bread.' He repeated: 'Pure white bread made out of white flour.'

I sipped my coffee and smiled so he could admire my white teeth, which contrast with my black skin. Joseph reciprocated my smile and showed his own tawny teeth. This cyclist was no John Bull, no Joe Average.

The parasol rustled quietly in the wind. We sipped Guinness Stout. One for the road ahead. Ashurst, who lives in the last house on Waterside Road, drove by in a van towing a horse trailer. Joseph's eyes lingered on the horse trailer. The horse whinnied; she knew she would soon be out of the trailer. I was silent.

'Where I live,' Joseph pointed over his shoulder with a thumb, 'I was a child.' He hesitated, as if he could not find the words to make himself clear. He started again.

'My childhood lies just a little behind the Dommerskanaal, an old canal dug more than a century ago to transport peat from the Amsterdam Field, a now exhausted peat excavation area. There was a stud farm across the canal where I often went as a boy.'

Joseph smiled, his eyes searching mine. He seemed to sense that he was about to make a confession, revealing memories of a past that had never really left him.

'A mare gave birth to a foal.' He hesitated.

'That is what mares do,' I said after a short pause. 'Give birth.' I nodded. My eyes wide open. My hand fumbled aimlessly with the stem of the goblet.

'The foal died,' he said. 'The foal died. I saw the foal meeting its end.' He sighed.

I nodded again. My teeth nibbled gently at the end of my tongue.

'In my youth, death was a companion. I had seen a dead rabbit, a dead hare, a dead mouse,' he carried on. 'I had seen a pig slaughtered.'

Zwien op ledde,’• he said, while his eyes seemed to seek something in the sky. ‘When I was a child, there were no vegetarians. We killed our chickens, cattle and pigs to eat the meat. The sweet taste of the meat of horses was no stranger to us. This habit may disgust you.’• I paused.

I hesitated. Why should I tell about my former profession, where death played a key role? Why should I talk about an infinite number of coffins I made for an infinite number of corpses? Not infinite, of course, but quite a lot. My carpentry was at the very edge of eternity. Infinity. Those were my best working years. Custom-made coffins made of oak, pine, plywood. Small coffins for short people. Poplar coffins for little children, coffins like huge clogs for stillborn babies. Giant coffins for fat people. Coffins with wooden and brass handles. Coffin lids with a window and a hatch, coffins with a slot for postcards, letters and telegrams. Coffins with jig sawed butterflies – *wood white* as my favourite - and birds - sparrows - on top. When there is silence, when there is the smell of sawdust, I feel infinity. Death makes me comfortable. Since the day I carried my father’s body down the stairs on my shoulder, death has been a constant companion in the workshop’s artisan silence. The spiral stairway to the first floor was too small for the coffin. I lowered his body into the pine-wood coffin that was waiting in the hall behind the front door. His coffin, simple as it was, was my masterpiece. I had decorated it with artistic carvings of Irish potato tubers. My father loved Irish potatoes. As I lowered his head onto his last pillow, I heard my father gurgling, ‘Thank you, dear.’•

‘I once shot a bird with an air rifle,’ Joseph said after a long silence. ‘A sparrow. An innocent sparrow.’ There was some regret in his voice, maybe I heard guilt. ‘Killing is the ultimate sin.’

If I had been a priest, I would have offered absolution and solace. I am not a priest, and regret is a meaningless emotion. Yet Joseph touched my secret desire - I still do not know the source of this desire - to commit the ultimate sin. Possibly I wanted revenge on the terrorist who planted the roadside bomb and blew off the leg of Willy, who is currently cleaning the coffee machine and sweeping the floor. Maybe it is revenge because I am black and not white. Maybe a thousand motives fuelled my desire to execute the ultimate sin - end a life. But

maybe all these explanations are just rational excuses for an immanent, genetically determined primal urge. Killing to survive. Yet I know I can live without killing. I am only at the beginning of self-knowledge.

I got up from my chair, walked around the table, grabbed his neck and said:

‘Joseph. How about a walk along the wild side of the Don?’ He agreed. ‘First let’s say hello to Willy, my sweet.’ Joseph walked towards the John Bull Inn.

From the far end of Waterside Road I heard the mare.

We walk upstream along the placid Don. There is hardly any movement in the water. Ducks hide in the reeds, snipes swim to the opposite bank. Cormorants take a dive. High above, on the far side of the river, I see storks floating towards Fishlake on the rising currents of warm air.

My walking companion is more than a head taller than I am.

‘I travel around to see if there are people who have memories of Dutch peat diggers,’ says Joseph. ‘Around 1900, hundreds of my countrymen tried to make a better living by digging peat in the Thorne and Goole areas. I know that many compatriots lived in the houses on the Waterside Road. From what I have seen so far, the landscape and history of South-East Drenthe, the Bourtanger Moor and the Thorne Waste have a lot in common. There are striking similarities in the histories and transformations of these regions. After the industrial processing of peat, after the marketing of peat litter to stables, chicken farms, garden centres and the military, the reclaimed land was taken over by farmers and, with much perseverance, large areas were transformed into artificial, man-made nature reserves. Perhaps I will find buildings or traces in the landscape as witnesses of the short-term migration of peat diggers from Drenthe.’

‘You certainly know how to swim,’ I say. ‘At least you know how to float. Besides, the river is not deep.’

Joseph bows his head. He looks at his ageing body. His stare is focused on the water in front of him. He wears a loose-fitting polo shirt and loose, body-hugging shorts. He seems hesitant. Joseph bows his head again, his thoughts apparently wandering in a mixture of relevance and irrelevance.



Without much fanfare, I drop my handbag on the grass. The movement of my head backward is universal. Come on!

I kick off my shoes. I cross my arms, grab the edge of my shirt and pull it up over my head. I unbutton my skirt. In a split second, I find myself naked and unadorned on the banks of the Don.

‘The water is not cold,’ I say. The toes of my right foot touch the edge of the water.

Joseph slowly takes off his clothes, his eyes fixed on me.

‘You know how to swim.’ I just repeated what I had said, where I swallowed, ‘I know what a naked man looks like. There’s no need to be ashamed of your imperfections.’ After a moment’s silence, I continued: ‘Feel free to disrobe.’

I admit that his clumsiness gives me some satisfaction. It looks like I am upsetting my walking pal’s sense of equilibrium and creating discomfort. It gives me a pleasant feeling of superiority, which at the same time is tinged with disgust.

I am wading in familiar waters. It’s not the first time I’ve swum here. It’s the first time in company. Even my one-legged Willy didn’t share this spot with me. The bed of the shallow river is sandy and sloping. I turn when the water reaches my knees. My body loves the sun and the water. I winked. Joseph was following me. I held out my arm to Joseph. He grasped my hand.

‘You can talk,’ I say. A heron leaves the reeds. ‘Words can ease discomfort.’ I nonchalantly scratch my right armpit with my left hand. ‘Feel free to express yourself.’

Joseph hesitates. ‘Describe what you see,’ I say. ‘Look at me. Describe me and my naked body.’

I see his adam’s apple move. He swallows. Joseph clears his throat. I recognise that it can be difficult to describe what one has never seen before. A petite black woman without breasts, shamelessly nude, asking you to come and have a bath under a clear blue sky over Yorkshire, surrounded by the scent of centuries-old peat and still water. I turn around. I slowly bend my knees and lower myself into the water. I spread and shut my legs and arms in a soothing rhythm. I am halfway across the river. My head and shoulders are only just above the surface. Come on! I nod.

I wrap my arms around his body. His bald head is level with my frizzy hair.

‘I, I,’ says Joseph.

I press my lips to his and take him beneath the surface. He surrenders. Slowly we surface. I shake my head. The water droplets spread, as if in a baptism, in a delicate rain. Joseph smiles. He seems to relax.

‘You, you,’ I say, ‘you and I.’ And immediately I regret ‘you and I’. We are not a couple, we are not one and the same.

‘You,’ I correct, ‘just you.’

‘You,’ says Joseph with water-filled, dreamy child’s eyes. ‘You with your frizzy hair, your glowing skin, your harmonious buttocks, your lips that saved me from drowning, your beautiful scars on your chest. You, you, you are a poem. You are a hermetic poem.’

I smiled, what could I say.

‘Sara,’ Joseph mumbled, ‘Sara, tell me, where are you from?’

Geest van vermorzel-  
ling des harten, van  
belofte, van vernieu-  
wing en heiligma-  
king, ontferm U on-  
zer.

Geest van leven, ge-  
duld, onthouding en  
zedigheid.\*

Geest van  
naden.

Wees g  
ons, H

Wees g  
ons,

\* ontferm



Dat Gij ons gebed wilt

\* wij bidden U, verhoor ons.

Vanden geest der dwa-  
ling, verlos ons, H.  
Geest,

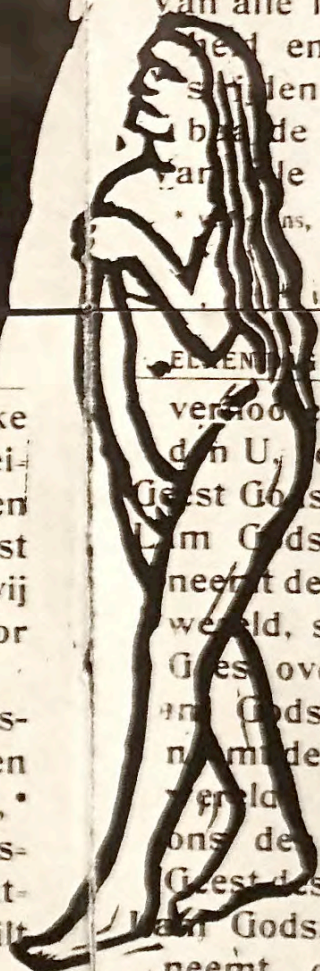
Van den geest der on-  
kuischheid,\*

Van den geest der gods-  
lastering,

Van de verhardheid in  
de zonde en van ver-  
twijfeling,

Van alle laatzinnig-  
heid en van het be-  
strijden der geopen-  
baarde waarheden,  
van alle boosaardig-

\* verlos ons, H. Geest.



verlooven, wij bid-  
den U, verhoor ons.

Geest Gods,\*

Om Gods, dat weg-  
neemt de zonden der  
wereld, stort uw H.  
Geest over ons uit.

Om Gods, dat weg-  
neemt de zonden der  
wereld, zend over  
ons den beloofden  
Geest des Vaders.

Om Gods, dat weg-  
neemt de zonden  
der wereld, geef ons

\* wij bidden U, verhoor ons.



The two of us walk towards the Thorne town centre. A small footpath at the end of Quay Road, a side road of Waterside Road, leads to the junction of the M18. We continue along Selby Road, seeing the Doncaster trains slowly passing overhead as we walk along Field Side and King Street. At the end of King Street we turn left into Church Street. We walk along the wild side of Thorne.

‘These houses were peat diggers’ accommodation,’ Joseph gestures with his hand. ‘I recognise these houses from old photographs. My ancestors definitely lived here.’

I can see how excited Joseph is to find traces of the past. He reaches for his camera. After taking a few shots of a modern shopping street with many empty shops, he asks me to take a snap of him standing in front of the former lodge, which is in urgent need of a skilled carpenter and a neat painter. I do as he asks. I make his day. We are on our way to Autism Plus, a home for people with mental and physical disabilities. We are not taking the shortest route. Joseph wants to see the interior and exterior of St Nicholas Church and the old churchyard adjoining it. He still thinks he will find some names of peat diggers on the headstones.

The church doors were closed during the week. There are more days of fervent devotion to come for the dwindling number of faithful. On the other side of Church Balk is a small park and hill. The Peel Hill.

‘Remnants of De Peel,’ says Joseph. ‘De Peel near Erica where I was born.’

‘I’m sorry to disturb your dreams,’ I say. ‘Peel’ comes from the Latin *locus paludosus*, a reference to marshes and bogs. Peel Hill is what is left of a motte, the remains of a defensive structure. Do not climb Peel Hill, or if you do, don’t slide down the slope of the monument as you could be fined.’

‘I am no longer a child who needs to play slippery games,’ says Joseph. ‘I respect the law in every regard.’

‘Of course you do,’ I say.

There are few tombstones left in the cemetery. The inscriptions are worn. Stuck in the present and longing for the future, there are no

names to read and no numbers to decipher, the centuries of laughter, love, leisure and slavery are over.

We follow St Nicholas Road to the north. A few hundred metres to the left is Autism Plus, located in a park next to a sanctuary where people who need it can receive guidance and care 24 hours a day. We walk to the characteristic three-storey mansion.

Thorne House is a grand 18 bed residential home divided into five apartments. Thorne House is suitable for either a male or female with a diagnosis of Autism, learning disability and/or additional complex needs. Says the website. Moreover: As well as having access to the residential home's communal areas and extensive grounds, the individual could also benefit from elements of specialist support from our wider team, including but not limited to: Speech and Language Therapist (SALT), Occupational Therapist, Positive Behaviour Support and Clinical Care. •

The Thorne House has an inscription dated 1899 near the grey slate roof at the top of the front wall. There are several bay windows and a half tower protruding from the front wall.

There is garden furniture on the lawn and a double swing for the youngsters. At the base of the beeches around the lawn I noticed huge grey-brown mushrooms whose names I still didn't know. There were empty shells around the beech. Squirrels must have eaten all the seeds. Further in the park I see some sweet chestnuts. Autumn is coming. Joseph went over the grass. He picked a few chestnuts from the chestnut husks.

'Maybe Dutch peat diggers lived here,' says Joseph, pointing to the year Thorne House was founded. He is holding the shiny chestnuts in his hand.

'I don't think so,' I say. 'This was not a working poor house.' After the bell, a Sikh • opens the door.

'Welcome to Thorne House,' he says. 'We've been expecting you.' After a pause he smiles: 'Mrs Sara Eyoum, I presume.'

'Mr Bandaranaike, it's a pleasure to meet you,' I reply.

The Sikh bows slightly. I reciprocate with a bow and fold my hands

under my chin. When I look aside and make eye contact, Joseph mirrors the gesture.

I phoned for this interview a few days ago. Out of the blue I remembered the name of Daniël Olthof, better known as Daniël the Dutchman, as one of the trouble-seeking Dutch peat diggers who had been convicted of pulling a knife and public drunkenness. He was a regular at John Bull Inn. On several occasions his name was mentioned in the editorials of both the *Goole Times* and the *Doncaster Gazette*. At the pub he is portrayed in a century-old photographic record, surrounded by his fellow peat cutters. According to some sources, he died in 1942 at Thorne, Lock Cottage. I nod to my right and say, 'Mr Joseph Nieters from Drenthe. He is looking for ancestors of Dutch immigrants from the late 19th century.'

'It would be nice to find ancestors of former peat diggers from my hometown,' Joseph says. 'Maybe Thorne House is a good start for my inquiries.'

Mr Bandaranaike, fully dressed as a Sikh, including a decorative knife, brings milky tea - English melange - while we wait in the lobby. Nurses are still preparing Daniël Olthof to make the old man presentable for our visit.

Bandaranaike stands next to our chairs, one hand on his stomach and the other on his kirpānan. Without looking at us, he says into the void:

'We're very proud that 100% of our services are rated as Good by the CQC! We are delighted the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated Autism Plus Thorne House as Outstanding in Responsive and Good for effective, caring and well-led with an overall rating of Good. Inspectors visited the service in October 2019 and highlighted in the report: 'The provider – we – continued to ensure people received care and support that was exceptionally personalised, very well planned and particularly responsive to their needs. The way people were supported really helped them to grow in confidence, maturity and skills. Staff very successfully promoted people's independence and as a result, some people had become much more independent and had much richer lives. Comments from relatives confirmed the service continued to be outstandingly responsive, providing



exceptionally positive outcomes and a significantly improved quality of life for people.’•

‘You can be very proud,’ says Joseph, ‘to have earned such good qualifications for your efforts to improve the quality of life of disabled and unadapted people.’

Mr Bandaranaike ignores the double Dutch• compliment.

I drink my tea and wait for the signal to visit Daniël Olthof. I’ve not seen him before. In my search for Dutch in Thorne to please Joseph, I thought Thorne House would make a good start. Perhaps besides Thorne House, cemeteries and our heads, there are still more places where we can delve into history to illuminate present and future life.

Daniël Olthof lives in the ground floor. He is a venerable old man and, exceptionally, was given a room of one’s own• in the protruding half-tower, a former office, with no steps to hinder him. The building has no elevator. At the rear, he can leave the building in his wheelchair without assistance. The front door is for the able-bodied.

Mr Bandaranaike calls a nurse. A label on her uniform tells us she is Theresa. Physically, as far as her body is concerned, it is clear that she is a woman. Her face has masculine features. Her hairstyle follows a boyish pattern; a rathead style. Knowing my anomaly, I pay attention to gender expressions because I have decided that neither a woman nor a man suits me best. Neither do I fall in between. Nevertheless, I’m still looking for an animal for my mental identification; whether warm-blooded or cold-blooded, it makes no difference.

‘Mr Olthof is unpredictable,’ Theresa says in a low voice. ‘It is better to keep some distance.’ I see her hesitation to say more about the man in her care.

‘I will bring tea,’ she says. She does not move.

‘Where were you?’ Mr Olthof yells when he sees Joseph. ‘Where have you been all these years?’ His tanned face turns pink.

Mr Olthof is seated in an armchair by the window. From where he is sitting he can see the swing and some chestnut trees at the end of the lawn. He must have seen us coming, unless the nurse was busy washing, powdering and dressing him.

The modest living room, about four by six metres, was needlessly packed with unnecessary peat-making gear such as an oplegger, a stikker and a kruiwagen (wheelbarrow) used as an ancillary table. There was a single bed, neatly covered with a bedspread. At the foot of the bed was a wheelbarrow with a tray for plates and cups. The surface of the tray bore the marks of a moistened dishcloth. Two oil paintings decorate the wall alongside the bed. To the left of a bedside lamp is a landscape with heathland, sheep and a sod hut. To the right, closer to the window, a sepia photo of a dozen workers on the moors.

Olthof saw me looking at the picture I knew from the pub.

‘There I am, at the front, third from the left.’ His eyes sparkled.

The old man, he must have been over a hundred years old, pointed his walking cane at me, turned his head to Joseph and said, ‘And who is that Blacky?’ He repeated: ‘Who is that Blacky? She is wearing a skirt, she has no tits. Is it a man or a woman? Who is that black thing?’ I waited for the moment he would call me an animal. Maybe he would call me a black panther.

Olthof did not wait for Joseph to speak. I just stayed calm and smiled. He pointed his cane at Joseph and asked, ‘Who are you? Where in Paradise Lost, for God’s sake, did you find the Black Mamba devil?’•

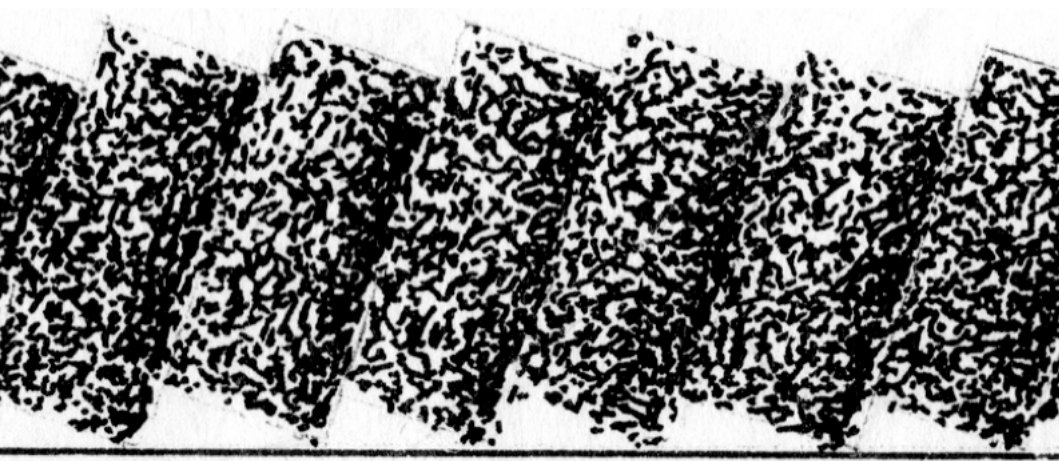
Theresa, who had been waiting, said in a clear voice, ‘I will bring you some tea.’ Seeing no immediate danger, she turned and closed the door. I heard her laughter echoing in the corridor.

Joseph and I took our seats. We looked at each other and were silent.

‘Give me a neck shot,’ Olthof said. ‘Over and out. The gun is in the bottom drawer.’ Olthof pointed to a cabinet with a marble top. There was a crack in the marble slab.

‘My name is Sara,’ I said. ‘I live on Waterside Road.’

‘The John Bull Inn,’ Olthof said. ‘Are you from The Bull?’ His eyes



seemed to twinkle. He said, 'I really don't know you. I know all the innkeepers in The Bull. They know me. I am Daniël Olthof. You must know me. You are called Sara. Sara Eyoum, right?'

I nodded.

'I brought you a present,' said Joseph, in an attempt to change the topic of conversation. 'You may like it. Joseph opened a paper bag and handed him a Drents dried sausage.

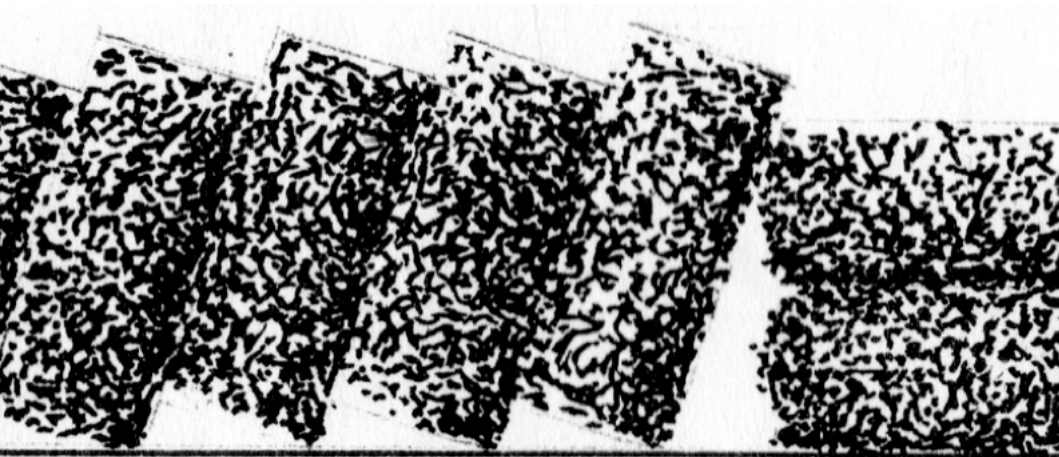
'Dreuge worst, man. A dried sausage, kerel nog an toe.' He tried to break the dreuge worst with his hands and mouth. His teeth were missing. 'Been a long time. Long time no food.' He was powerless to bite a piece of the dreuge worst. 'Give me a knife,' yelled Olthof. 'A knife. Cut my throat.'

I heard a chain rattle. A cuckoo popped out of the cuckoo clock three times.

'Schiet hum dood,' yelled Olthof. 'Kill the cuckoo. The gun is in the bottom drawer. Get me a knife. Give me a neck shot. Get me a Guinness. Get me a stout. Slit my throat.'

After a knock, Theresa came in.

'Crucify him, crucify them,' she said with a smile on her face, followed by: 'Tea, tea is famous in the whole wide world.'•







## Riffie Rohling meets Dirk Veltrop

My mother kept no secrets from me. I was her best friend. Not that she would have preferred a girl, she was very happy that I was a boy. I asked my father if he would have liked me to be a girl. A son was fine, he said. I'd overheard people asking questions, so I knew how to ask mum and dad about their preferences. I like to know a lot. Everything, if possible. I often keep questions to myself because I often just don't understand the answers I get. My mum says I don't know how to ask questions. And she's right.

'Don't ask why,' my mother said. 'Ask what?'

'Why?' I asked.

My mother laughed. She kissed me on my forehead. I still wasn't getting an answer.

When my father was away, my mother became really talkative, as if she had never said anything. My mother had a pleasant voice. I liked listening to her, even if I couldn't understand what she meant. My father said, 'You can love a woman even if you don't quite understand her.' I nodded, I had no idea what my father was saying. I still don't know what love is.

I was sixteen. My mother helped me with my schoolwork. I could count, but I had no idea how to do sums.

'I have my period,' my mother told me. 'If I act a bit brusque, it's because of my hormones.'

I certainly looked at my mother with a questioning gaze. To me, her words were part of the school physician's diagnosis. The paper said: Riffie has problems with abstract concepts. I wasn't taking any pills.

'Period?' I asked.

My mother stood up, which means she rose. She pulled up her skirt. She had buttons on her nylon stockings and had tied them to a garter belt. Above the dark edge of the stockings her legs were very pale. She held her skirt up by pressing her elbows to her sides. I could see the shiny lining of the skirt. She drew her knickers downwards with both

hands. I saw sticky grey hair. I noticed brown and red flecks near the crotch of her underwear lining. I once bought monthly pads for my mother, not knowing which month to choose.

‘Monthly bleeding,’ my mother said. ‘Girls, young women bleed once a month.’

I looked.

‘Between my legs,’ my mother said. ‘From down here,’ she clarified.

I knew that girls and women did not have spouts like a teapot; that was the difference between the genders. I knew that girls initially didn’t have breasts, and then they did.

‘I hate bleeding,’ my mother said. ‘That’s a woman’s cross.’ She pulled a clean bandage out of the box. It did not look like a cross.●

‘Bleeding is part of it. A natural part of being a girl or a woman. It’s good that you know that.’

I wanted to ask why bleeding is for girls and not for boys. I was never a girl. I wanted to know why I needed to know about monthly periods. I just had trouble finding any words for the questions I had to ask.

That same afternoon, my father brought me the guitar. A Spanish guitar. I had a friend. My guitar made a bleeding sound.

My father took me to Bargerveen.

‘This is raised moorland,’ my father said.

‘I don’t see a mountain anywhere,’ I said. My father smiled.

‘Where is the lowered moor?’ I asked.

There was no lowered moor. I took my guitar out of its case. I played as I looked over heather, bushes and birches.

‘A pheasant,’ my father said.

I strummed my response to the pheasants call on my guitar. The pheasant answered. I gave a riff. The pheasant walked - flew away from us. A little further on, the pheasant landed as if its take-off had made a false start. He called to me.

‘A rooster,’ father said, ‘a multicoloured pheasant cock. Hens are brown, they have no colour.’

‘Brown is also a colour,’ my guitar said.

‘Your ancestors dug peat here,’ father said. ‘Your great-grandfather, your grandfather’s father on your mothers side, one day left for

England. Great-grandfather Dirk Veltrop left his wife Catrien and their three children in a sod hut.'

I wanted to ask what a sod hut was. I wanted to ask why my maternal great-grandfather had run away. I strummed the questions to Dirk Veltrop on the nylon strings, a cascade of high notes.

'Next month I'll go to Hull. I'm taking the train to Thorne and Moorends. Great-grandfather is buried at Thorne. I plan to visit his grave.'

I strummed low notes. Basses match grief and death, I learned. High notes also match sadness. I am never sad. Sometimes I feel angry.

'Will you come with me?' my father asked. I saw him staring at the pheasant rooster. 'Sail to England, just the two of us?'

I strummed the melody of those lines.

'Will you tell Grandpa that Mum died too?' I asked. My fingers strummed: Bloody, bloody Mama.

A week later I took my moped to Bargerveen. Elselien on the back. She had breasts and she had my guitar on her back. We got off at the place of the pheasant. I played: Sail to England, just the two of us?

The sun was shining. Elselien rolled up her skirt like a belt. The skirt was too short to hold her elbows. She pulled down her red briefs. She had brown legs. Dark curls. No stains at the crotch.

'Are you bleeding?' I asked.

Elselien shook her head.

I played the Pheasants Rooster riff. She threw her underpants at my guitar. She pulled down her skirt. I played: No blood today. No blood in the turf. Maybe later.

I stuck her knickers in the guitar, I liked her being there. I thought it was funny, her knickers behind the strings. I wondered: Is that love?

Blackwater Dyke, Rawcliffe Moors, Snaith & Cowick Moors, Shearburg & Pitts Drain, Mill Drain, Angle Drain, Crowle Moors, Thorne Waste Drain, Limberlost Farm, Inkie Moor, Leonards Drain, Nun Moors, Cottage Dyke, Swinefleet Warping Drain, Dutch Row. We walk in Moorends. My father shows me all the places between Thorne and Goole; former peat extraction area of the Griendtsveen Moss Litter

Company. My father shows me the places on the map and in the field.

‘Bargerveen,’ I say. I strum the song of the pheasant cock.

‘Yes,’ my father says. ‘That looks just like Bargerveen. Great-grandfather Dirk Veltrop was here.’

I strum the pheasant song again. I close my eyes. I smell the peat, the turf, the wind. I smell Elselien. She didn’t wear a garter. She didn’t bleed.

I am a boy. I didn’t bleed. I played the riff: The Bloody Pheasant Rooster. After the music, I passed her panties back. A Spanish string snapped.

The cemetery in Thorne looks more like a meadow than a burial ground. A few rows of upright stones, a handful of gravestones scattered in the grass.

‘Where is Mum’s grandfather?’ I ask.

We walk past the headstones. Not a stone with his name in it. There are old, dilapidated graves all round St Nicholas Church. The church is a grey building with a square tower. The tower has a flat roof with peaks at the corners.

My father reads the information:

*Until the 14th century the parish church serving Thorne was across a stretch of water at nearby Hatfield. In 1326 a funeral party was lost when a boat capsized, casting the corpse and several mourners into the water. About a dozen bodies were recovered some days later and as a result of the tragedy the Abbot of St. Mary’s in York agreed to the Norman church at Thorne being rebuilt and made a parish church so that the dead could be buried nearby.●*

My English is not good enough to understand everything.

Why is that so? I want to ask. I strum my guitar: What, what, what...?

‘There’s a village in the province of Groningen called Doodstil,’ my father says. ‘Very few people live in Doodstil.’

‘And pheasants?’ I ask.



'And very few pheasants,' my father says.

He looks at my hands. I hold them still, my fingers spread over the opening of the guitar.

'The name is Doods-til,' he says. Til means bridge in the Groninger dialect. A til is a bridge. The Til in Doodstil was the bridge to the cemetery on the other side of a ditch. Once a body fell into the water on the way to the grave.'

'Drowned,' I say.

'No,' said my father, 'the body was already lifeless.'

After the accident with the corpse, the hamlet near the bridge changed the name to Doodstil. A Dead Bridge; to prevent a recurrence. In Thorne, a church was built after mourners drowned. The corpse was already dead.

I play a riff: Lively waters for the mourners.

;This is the spot,' I say. I play the high tones first. 'Here it is for sure.' Low tones.

'You found me,' echoes from the earth. 'Good to see both of you.'

My great-grandfather cannot see me. I play Deadly Water.

'I hear music. Who did you bring along?' Dirk Veltrop asks from the grave.'

I play: Just the two of us in the turf.

I can hear a muffled voice from beneath the gravestone: 'I had grown tired of my wife. I longed for a new life. So that's how I ended up in Moorends. I found a house on the Dutch Row.'

I strum: Looking for a future on Death Row.

Dirk Veltrop pants, he didn't say anything for too long: 'Peat Moss Terrace, there it is. The people here still dislike the Dutch. We worked too hard.'

'So why did Dirk Veltrop leave his first wife and three children?' I ask.

'Why? What do you mean?' says the dead man from his grave. 'Catrien didn't know how to cook. I was weary of her,' says Dirk Veltrop.

'Was she bleeding too?' I ask. 'Between her legs.' I want to know everything.

'Mary Redmond made me bleed,' says Dirk Veltrop, 'but my English wife was a great cook.'

I look at my father. My father is silent. My father no longer wants to dig into the past.

'Feed the brute, my Mary said as she put the food on the table. I couldn't speak her language. I heard her words without understanding what she meant.'

Did great-grandfather love his English wife?' I want to know.

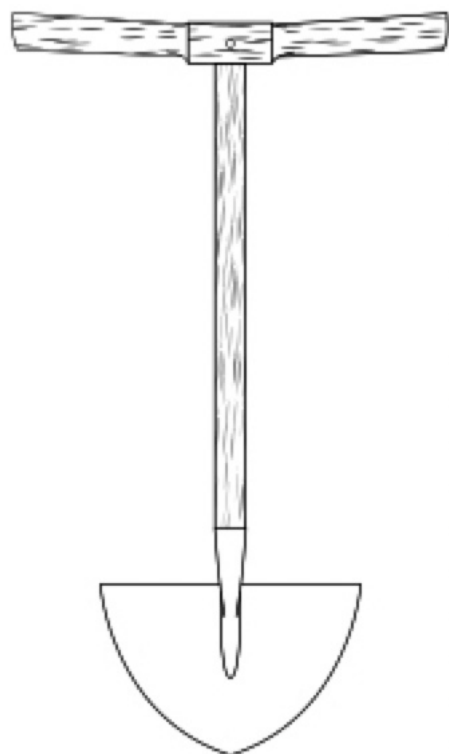
'Why? Why bother?' I hear from under the gravestone, 'What is the point of such a question?' I hear a deep sigh.

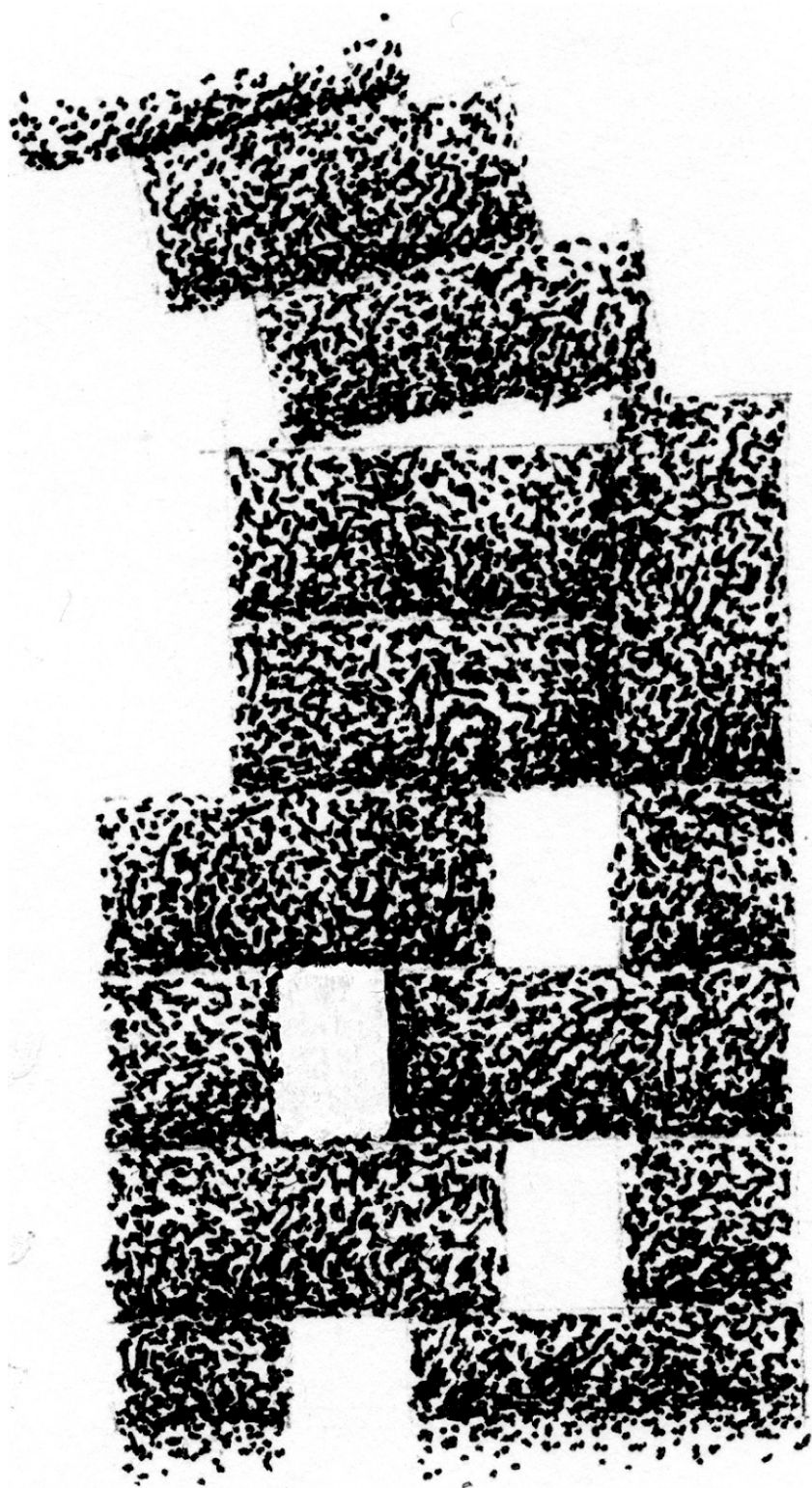
'Mary lies beside me. Forever.' He says.

That's love, I thought. I wasn't sure.

I tune my guitar and play the riff: Why? What's the point of this question? Love? What's love?

'My mother is dead,' I say. 'She is a corpse.'







Joseph Nieters walks along Orchard Street towards Memorial Park. It is another clear day. The weather forecast promised *skiftende skydekke*,• as the Norwegians say. The footpath follows the Stainforth & Keadby Canal. The canal is about twice as broad as the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart in Erica and over three times as wide as the Dommerskanaal in De Peel. Along the canal side there are less than a dozen boats, barges with low decks that can easily pass under bridges, seemingly waiting to float away to somewhere unknown. The barges may have been used to transport turf to the Moss Litter Mill, Medge Hall and further until the railway made these boats obsolete.

The first boat in the row has a Billy Turf jigsaw panel on the deck and the name Puffing Billy painted on the bow, just above the surface of the canal. Inside the boat is a gallery. Joseph knows Billy Turf. In his youth he identified with the boy from the comic strip in *Ons Noorden*, a local Roman Catholic newspaper that ceased publication shortly before the contraceptive pill became common practice. Billy Turf had a barrel-shaped body and his pants were held in place by suspenders, known as *hulpzelen*. In today's world, his unconventional behaviour would be diagnosed as phantasmagoria, adhd or autism. The fat boy of Josephs' youth has morphed into a decent, colourful young man, holding up an artists' brush to paint cumulus faces and fairy tale animals against a blue sky. The flat puzzle figure on deck is as thin as Van Gogh, who, despite his mental illness, or probably thanks to his well-known abnormality, became famous in the Drenthe moors in 1883 after a less than three-month stay.

Joseph gets into the boat. There was no one there. In the background a church choir sings *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. There are five small rectangular windows on either side of the soft green metal superstructure of the flat-bottomed boat. In the cabin, to the right of the first window, is a circular porthole. The bottom of the vessel is covered with unplanned planks that follow the length of the boat, apparently planks from the peat quarries. As Joseph steps forward, he hears a low murmur over the creaking of

the floor. Three baskets hang from the ceiling on ropes aligned with the axis of the ship. Red, white and blue bedding drapes over the edge of the cots. When a yacht passes, the cradles move, or more accurately, the ship sways and the wicker baskets stay in place. - As usual, the brain is betrayed by nature. - The babies must be under a year old.

‘They are a triplet,’ she says, ‘identical threes.’

The woman rests her left hand on Joseph’s arm and moves the first cradle with her right hand.

‘Please don’t be afraid,’ she says. ‘I’m not dangerous. I will not harm you. Do not worry.’ She had noticed the withdrawal of Joseph. Not that he’s untouchable, but he dislikes being touched without permission, without warning.

‘Her name is XX,’ the woman says as she takes the first toddler out of the red cradle.

‘Please hold it if you can. In this art gallery, touching and feeling art is allowed and encouraged. A new born child is the ultimate art, next to dried black curves.’

The woman doesn’t wait for an answer. Joseph is holding a little girl in his arms. She has the weight of eight soaking wet black curves.

‘That is XY,’ the woman says. She smiles and hesitates, as if she has said this before: ‘For all we know, it is still a boy. She gestures Joseph to a stool in the middle of the boat, between the windows overlooking the water. With his head just above the level of the canal, he can see snipes swimming by, one after another. From this position, so close to the water and at this angle, it is not possible to see what is happening below the surface. From where he sits and watches, all the light from the depths that hits the surface from below is internally reflected and not refracted. The light from below won’t reach the air. The laws of physics and the critical angle of 49 degrees for seeing into deep waters limit observations and explanations of the surrounding world. Now biological laws also seem to come into play, adding to the confusion when it comes to pondering human reproduction.

The woman takes the third child out of its cradle.

‘Maybe ZZ is a boy,’ she says, ‘maybe it is a girl. Maybe it is it and nothing more; it.’ She sits down with Joseph. Her words broaden the meaning of conventional language as they relate to the triplet he/she/it.

‘Billy Turf,’ says Joseph. He is stunned, cradling a white baby boy and a black baby girl, sitting next to a red-haired woman carrying a yellowish baby of unknown gender. Identical triplets, so different, why? In the background a church choir sings *Credo in unum Deo*.

‘Billy Turf was my great-grandfather’s nickname,’ says the woman, who apparently finds nothing unusual about multi-coloured triplets, Puffing Billy Turf and modern art. She adds: ‘Some people know him as Puffing Billy because my great-grandfather smoked like the Puffing Billy steam locomotive which hauled peat between Swinefield and Thorne Waste Moors. My Billy Turf was a Dutch peat digger from De Peel, not a character in a newspaper cartoon.’ She takes the ZZ baby. ‘Drenthe, I have never been there.’

‘You needn’t go there,’ says Joseph, after the woman’s moment of silence, ‘De Peel and the surrounding areas are almost identical in landscape to Thorne Moors.’ Swaying the babies on his lap, Joseph adds: ‘The people of De Peel and Thorne may be similar. I will find out. If I can.’ The woman seems to have lost interest and lets the yellow baby suck on her little finger.

In the silence, only punctuated by the smell of triplet babies, Joseph looks around the emptiness of the hold. In the centre of the hold he sees a baptismal font decorated with biblical tableaux, the outlines of which are carved into the weathered sandstone. The walls in the hold are decorated with patterns of all shapes and sizes. Black dots and lines on a white background form turf like squares and rectangles.

‘What you get is also what you see,’ the woman continues. She halts and, after licking her little finger, which satisfied ZZ’s need to suck, asks, ‘What do you see?’ Her free hand slowly moves to Joseph’s shoulder.

The babies in his arms render him powerless to her touch. He can’t escape. Joseph can barely find the words to answer the question and wants to scream: ‘Noli me tangere.’ – ‘Do not touch me’.

‘I really don’t want to cause you any discomfort,’ says the woman. ‘I will return Jesus to his crib.’ She rose. After cradling ZZ, she says, ‘And let me free you from the Holy Father.’ She takes XY back into the white crib. ‘And the Holy Spirit,’ she says, and puts XX back into the blue one. The woman swings the cradles in harmony.

The Trinity was not perturbed by the artistic interruption. The smell of the babies in the hold of the boat faded, as did the sound of murmuring.

‘Billy Turf was a fervent Roman Catholic,’ she says, ‘and this exhibition - in his honour - is dedicated to Turf, Faith and Metamorphosis.’• She dips her hand into the baptismal font and touches the dark brown water. ‘Everyone in this corner of Yorkshire was born from mud and bathed in peat water.’ The woman smiles as she makes the sign of the cross and sprinkles a few drops towards Joseph as if it were holy water. She moves to the end of the boat’s hold. Joseph sees screens in the wall that he didn’t notice before.

The redhead glances at Joseph. ‘I wasn’t going to have an exhibition showing peat, gin, suspicion, moss, tools, kruiwagens, ashes, daggers, photographs, whatever. The past cannot be properly understood by showing paraphernalia, though it may be helpful in pleasing the mind by providing a confidential guide for thoughts. Bygone eras need abstraction and deregulation before reflection can find its way into the hearts and souls of descendants. The past needs surprise to make the present a stoic experience. A *Gelassenheitserfahrung*, as the Germans say. To show and recall what happened in and around Thorne Moors, on Dutch Row, on Waterside Road, a metaphysical approach is crucial, in line with basic questions that define human existence.’

‘Why am I here?’ Joseph recalls an old question. He is baffled by the artistic nonsensical stream of pseudo-intellectual explanations - art inspired by nature, the cosmos and life - that he knows well from art reviews and museum catalogues.

‘You are asking the right question,’ she says, resting her hand on Joseph’s arm. He no longer withdrew as he became more familiar with this enigmatic Mary. He even started to like her touch.

Mary steps forward and presses a button on the wall. Three videos start up simultaneously on different screens. A humming background noise fills the gallery, as if angels sing *Tantum ergo*.

‘You hear the babies,’ says Mary. ‘A compilation of their intimate conversations, day and night. A cosmic background voice. You are not hearing what you’re hearing. Real metaphysics. Do you get it?’



She turns her head towards the cradles. XX, XY and ZZ are asleep. Mary gets a stool for Joseph so he can sit at the front of the leftmost screen. Accompanied by a gurgling sound, the babies fill their nappies.

‘Sit down,’ Mary says. She slips a headset over his ears.

She holds his left ear free for a moment and adds, ‘You are welcome to join us in prayer if you wish. Quietly or loudly.’ Mary puts the headphones back on.

Joseph sees an abstract dance of stylish peat dots and stripes moving across the screen like rippled water. A familiar prayer echoes in his mind. A man is reciting a rosary in a dark, monotonic voice. Our Father, who art in heaven...

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen

Each time the screen shows a new, slow-moving peat abstraction of dots and stripes, as if each prayer is unfolded again and again in the peaty cosmos. Each new Our Father, Who art in Heaven, continues the mantra. Even when Joseph closes his eyes, he sees the turves moving through space.

It feels like ages have passed when Mary touches his shoulder. She passes him a cup of tea - English blend.

The second video features piles of drying peat, again in dots and stripes. The voice-over prays an intercessory prayer:

Let us pray for all unbelievers, that they may persist in thinking for themselves. To all who are sad, give comfort, O Lord. Let us pray for all smokers, O Lord, give them tobacco. Let us pray for all the peat diggers; give them bread and bacon and warm and tender women in their beds. Give all young women a child, may it be XX, XY or ZZ. For all pastors: give them a handful of faithful followers and don't let the children come to them. Let us pray for all the straight, non-straight and homosexual people, Holy Father, give them love and a homo ludens. Give all the bakers flour. Let us pray for all murderers, give them a dagger and a corpse, O Lord. Let us pray for all the merry and dutiful whores: O Lord, give them lube and paying clients. O Lord, let us pray for all the true intellectuals, and even for the self-proclaimed intellectuals, give them a difficult book to read. O Allah, let us pray very loudly for all Muslims, give them the Qur'an and a Billy Turf comic book. Let us pray for all white, black, yellow, brown and colourless people, give them the sun and sunscreen during the day and after sun and moon at night, O Lord. Let us pray for all those who are cold: Lord, give them turf and firelighters. Grant healing water to all alcoholics, O Lord. Let us pray for all fish: O Neptune, give them salty, sweet or muddy water. Give fresh fish a frying pan and a bed of hot, sizzling butter. Let us pray for all impotent men, O Lord, let it be so. Give them a Puffin Billy Turf comic book. Let us pray for all horses in stables. O Lord, provide them with sphagnum moss. Oh, let's pray for the little ones. O Lord, give them handkerchiefs. Let us pray for all politicians, give them a parliament, a platform and a horn. Let us pray for all the seekers in the darkness. O Lord, give them a flashlight with rechargeable battery. Let us pray long and hard for all unsuccessful writers. O Lord, bless them with generous publishers and, above all, grant them devoted, ignorant readers. Let us pray tenderly for all babies and give them loving guardians. Let us pray for all the dying, O Lord, give them their final breath and take them home quickly. For all those with dementia, Let's pray. O Lord, let them forget that they no longer know what is hidden under the hat and the brim. Let us pray for non-believers. O Lord, plunge their heads into the peaty water of baptism. Let us pray for meat chickens destined to grace our tables as curry: O Lord, grant them their chosen lot. Let us pray

for suicide lovers who are tired of life: O Lord, give them a tree tall enough and a rope strong enough. Let us pray for the rich and wealthy, that they may prosper and become richer, O Lord. And let's pray for the boozers. O Lord, give them irrelevant fun series to keep them distracted from the irrelevancies of everyday life. Let us pray for those who are heartless: O Lord, give them a heart. We pray for people with failing kidneys. O Lord, give them a donor kidney, if necessary from sheep, pigs or a drowned seeker of fortune. Please pray for all frigid women with cervical prolapse. O Lord, grant them a hot stove and a lift. Let us pray for all lovers of self-satisfaction. O Lord, give them a self.

Prayer for the Day  
Tuesday, 26 September 2023

Lord of creation,  
whose glory is around and within us:  
open our eyes to your wonders,  
that we may serve you with reverence  
and know your peace at our lives' end,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity (Trinity Sunday after Pentecost)  
[www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org) 'Generated by ChatGPT.'

The third film is devoted to St Mary. Songs dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. The same male narrator, with a voice like burnt heather, sings several songs asking for help in difficult times. The film does not show abstract turf drawings, but flowers in a garden. Joseph recites the final prayer aloud before lifting the headphones.

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
The Lord is with you.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners now  
and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.

‘Amen,’ Mary says, looking at Joseph.

At the entrance, the exit, of the nave is a small altar with a bowl of white sourdough scones and a chalice of elderberry juice. Under the porthole on the left is a confessional with a stool for the priest on one side of the screen and a bench on the right for people to kneel and confess all their sins.

‘If you need it,’ says Mary, watching the way Joseph looks at the confessional.

Joseph smiles. He has a load of confessions to make. He takes a scone from the altar, breaks the sourdough bread in half, hands half to Mary and, after taking a goblet of elderberry juice, sits down on the stool, nodding to Mary and to the bench. Angels sing *Confiteor*.

‘Feel free,’ Joseph says, not to anyone in particular, ‘confess yourself.’

Joseph is taking a walk in Memorial Park. There is a miniature railway, as there are hundreds of narrow-gauge tracks in the country. Thorne Waste and Goole Moors were familiar with tramways for transporting peat to the mills. The Dutch diggers used their own, more efficient ‘waterway’ method to get the peat to the mill. Dutch diggers dug deeper.

Next to the pond is a war memorial with lists of the names of soldiers who did not return from wars abroad. Mews and ducks guard the monument with their poop. In the pond, carp defend their underwater domain. A main meal and a pudding - all including custard or cream - local delivery Thorne & Moorends direct to your door, hot or cold, whatever you prefer.

The Park Café website shows an overstuffed plate of food for the peat workers; at least five large boiled Irish potatoes, numerous Brussels sprouts, sliced boiled carrot, cabbage, four fried pieces of beef, all covered in a deep peaty brown gravy. Just the sight is enough to ensure that Joseph will never be hungry again.



A foot bridge crosses the Stainfort & Keadby Canal to a public footpath along the south side of the canal. A memorial stone reminds pedestrians and dismounted cyclists that the late Princess Royal once walked here. Years ago. You never walk alone.

It is not far to Lock Hill, where Mary's great-grandfather spent his last years as a lock-keeper. On the left of the footpath, just beyond the ditch, is Toll Bar Leisure Park. There are large bales of hay on the lawn. Two teams are competing on the football pitch, there are no onlookers, they may be playing a practice game. Joseph turns his head to look at Puffing Billy Turf on the other side. He waves his hand. There is no wave back. He smiles at the unexpected confession of Mary an hour ago, after his confession of childhood and adult primal sins from his Roman Catholic past in the peat bog of South-East Drenthe, she had confessed: 'I love you,' which had sounded like the venial sin of an adolescent girl who had kissed with open lips for the first time. Joseph had forgiven Mary as if he were a priest with a direct channel to God. 'Love is in the air,' he had said in a sonorous voice. 'Let it be, let it be. Let it disappear with the wind.' For Joseph, love is no longer a burning thing, an all-consuming desire• he daren't say it out loud, but he thinks love is a fart in a fishing net.

The lock is a familiar one, Joseph knows dozens of such locks in his home country, designed to regulate the water level and allow boats to pass. Even the one in Erica is similar to the one in Lock Hill, although the difference in levels on either side of the lock gates in Erica is much greater. He stands on the adjacent bridge and spits at his reflection in the water, as he used to do. His wavy face in the depths looks very familiar to him. He waits for the concentric circles to fade and his face to return. He spits twice in quick succession to see the interference pattern of the circles. He spits again and again to see the interference patterns that hide his searching gaze. From his place on the bridge, he sees the floodgates beneath the water. He sees small fish on the surface. The angle of view from this position is good. At this point, the world has no secrets for Joseph. In ten minutes, Eyoum will arrive at the Old Lockside Tearoom.

No, Eyoum will not say he is late. She won't ask: 'Did you get lost? Nice to see you,' she smiles. 'Were you able to find the teahouse?'

Of course Joseph managed to find the Old Lockside Tearoom. After all, he is here. •

‘You look a little surprised, aren’t you?’ She offers him her hand.

Joseph actually looked a bit surprised. He was surprised by Eyoum’s obligatory and confusing questions, which seemed to require no answer and which led him astray. He was also surprised by the tearoom in some other way. As he stood outside the Old Lockside Tearoom, he wondered if he had found the right place. A freshly mown lawn with a homemade wooden picnic table, a small round metal table and two metal chairs with plastic rattan seats in the parking area. Next to the entrance was a stand selling birdhouses, also homemade, it seemed. Joseph saw a green-grey shed with orange roof tiles that did not look like a teahouse. He was wrong. In the barn he found a Brave New World that could be described in one word: cosy.

All kinds of furniture, wooden chairs, sofas, rattan tables and chairs, screens to hide behind or to keep rubbish out of sight, a pergola in a lush green garden, the beams of the canopy covered with wisteria and vines, with small rectangular British flags and triangular flags made from a Scottish quilt on a clothesline, and an abundance of fragrant flowers, including, inevitably, fuchsias and geraniums in hanging baskets. In a large pot some tropical evergreens, perhaps ferns, a *fatsia japonica* (finger plant, after the ancient Japanese for 8, also fatsi) and a palm tree.

On a side table is a big glazed flowerpot in the shape of a boat. The barge, Lucy-Ann, held dead orange narcissi. There was a dried-up primrose in an orange plastic pot. An empty shiny brown ceramic boot and a lidless white teapot were waiting for cut flowers. On top of an old barrel, under the roof of the extension, were flower pots and miniature figures such as turtles and wood mice. Next to the barrel stood a chamber pot filled with water on the sandy floor, apparently to comfort dogs.

‘Cosy,’ Eyoum says, making a modest gesture with her hand. ‘We call this cosy.’

‘Gezellig,’ says Joseph, ‘at home we call it gezellig.’ After a short pause he says: ‘Some people, most people, like gezelligheid.’

‘We are not in the tea room to enjoy this kind of John Bull gezelligheid,’ Eyoum says. She watches as Joseph reads a sign taped to a cabinet: Warning: Due to ammunition price increase, do not expect to be shot!

‘That’s a pistol,’ Joseph says, pointing to the drawing, ‘not a revolver.’ The lower part of the cupboard is filled with empty egg trays. Eggs must be really fresh in this tearoom.

Eyoum points to the top of the cupboard and reads out loud: ‘Don’t take life too seriously, nobody gets out alive anyway.’

There is not much poetry in the line. There are too many words in the wrong order. Joseph tries to correct the line.

The useless conversation and unnecessary literary exercise is interrupted by the waitress. To Joseph’s delight, the woman in Dickens’s modest but colourful dress does not ask: ‘May I serve you something to drink?’, nor does she ask: ‘Where are you from?’

‘Welcome,’ she says. ‘I hope you will enjoy your visit to our Lockside Tearoom.’ She hands out the menu and continues: ‘I will be back to listen to your wishes. Take your time to make up your mind. Welcome again to our cosy tearoom.’

Before the waitress turns away, Eyoum says: ‘Could you bring us a pot of tea, Ceylon mélange, if you have it?’

Joseph is silent. He is allowing himself time to observe their new surroundings. As if he were organising his new impressions. After the tea is served, he says: ‘Earlier today I attended a special service on a boat in the Stainfort & Keadby Canal. Quite an event.’

‘Wonderful smelling tea,’ says Eyoum. She takes a sip. ‘Excellent taste.’ She makes eye contact with Joseph and continues. ‘Everything starts with an event. That is the first letter E that describes your church service.’

‘Maybe it was not really a service, but that’s how I experienced the event.’ Joseph takes a careful sip of the hot tea.

‘That is your feeling, your experience. Experience produces the second letter E.’ Eyoum opens the menu.

‘Puffing Billy Turf is an art gallery on board a ship, dedicated in a very special way to peat extraction, the importance of peat extraction and how peat digging and migration affected the lives of Drenthe immigrants, not to mention peat litter. It was almost as if peat was an afterthought in their lives. In fact, the exhibition, the service, was not about peat, but about the development of a Roman Catholic migrant in Thorne Waste. Waste also means useless and unnecessary.

The essence of man is not found in his actions, but in his experience.' Joseph pauses, seemingly lost in his flow of words. He continues: 'The exhibition was not about the Drenthe peat diggers, the exhibition and the art installations were about me. I saw parts of my development artistically portrayed in a cross. Very confrontational.'

'What you are saying now are your thoughts, the rational expression of your experience. Expression of your thoughts, that is the third letter E. Your life as an old-fashioned Roman Catholic service. You met your ancestors, watching the crucifixion,•' says Eyoum. 'Let us pray and choose from the menu. What would you have liked to use during the service? Sourdough bread, palm vinegar, manna, miraculously multiplied fish and scones, or choose from the wide selection at Old Lockside?'

When Joseph looks at her questioningly, she continues: 'After the three letters E comes the fourth letter E. After the event, your experience and your expression, your behaviour follows as a result of the three E's. What behaviour will you show? What are you going to choose from the menu of life? What are you going to Eat? That's the fourth letter 'E.'

The choice - as in life - is overwhelming. Ham and eggs, black pudding, sausages, beans in tomato sauce, fried bacon, fried egg, poached egg, fried mushrooms, chops, a variety of sandwiches, brown and white sandwiches with cheese, with salad and egg, toast with butter, cornbread, rolls, scones with marmalade, apple pie with cream, ice or custard, all kinds of sweets, savoury quiches, French fries with peas, gherkins and pearl onions.

When Joseph remains silent and runs his index finger over the menu, Eyoum continues: 'The fifth and last letter E describes the effect of this set. The first three E's are more or less established and universally accepted. I borrowed these insights from German philosophers who sought to understand life. They came up with: *Erleben*, *Ausdruck* and *Verstehen*, the first letters E. These words describe your autopilot. Your life and your cultural behaviour can be understood as a series of events consisting of *Erleben*, *Ausdruck* and *Verstehen*. Reflection is the methodical elaboration of the latter: the so-called '*Verstehensoperation*',• it means understanding the expressions of life. You need reflection to find some form of



coherent life. You can understand this connection by confronting yourself with your own form of experience. The fourth letter, E, lets you choose, and if you're not paying attention, that choice also goes on autopilot; you follow tradition. Look at the menu and make a choice you haven't thought about before. Another effect follows. You surprise yourself,' Eyoum says after a pause, 'surprise me.'

'How about roasted grasshopper, marinated mealworm, teff bread, sheep's eye, cassava porridge, nshima, palm wine, roasted snake, fried sweet potato, long beans, muriwo, pigweed, couscous, almonds, mango and papaya,' says Joseph.

'Is that really a question?' Eyoum asks.

'I prefer scones and a plate of various cheeses, such as Cheddar, Stilton, Cheshire, Applewood, Double Gloucester, Red Leicester, Yorkshire Wensleydale, Oxford Blue, Devon Blue, Shropshire Blue, Stinking Bishop, Derby, Cotswold, Abbot's Gold, Coverdale, Swaledale, Little Ryding and so on.'

'I see, you understand,' says Eyoum, 'life is quantum mechanics. All forms and ingredients are possible. What you get is what you see• the constant exercise in life is learning to see.'

The waitress arrives to hear the choices.

'My guest would like scones and a choice of local cheeses, accompanied by locally grown vegetables, raw or cooked. You can serve local drinks. Later we will choose sweets to finish.' Eyoum waits until the waitress has written down the requests, then adds. 'I would like bacon, sausage, white beans in tomato sauce, mashed potatoes, peas and a mixed salad. Thank you so for now.'

'I'm coming,' says the waitress. She then turns and goes into the kitchen. Joseph raises his eyebrows. 'She leaves and says: 'I'm coming?''

'Since you came here, Willy wants me to come over to his side of the hall. He wants to sleep with me,' says Eyoum. 'We haven't slept in the same bed for years. It's been that way since I was no longer a woman, a man, or an ape. I still have vagina monologues.'

Joseph puts a slice of mango on his fork. He hesitates, not knowing what to say. Is Eyoum asking a question? And if it is a question, what is it? Or is it a statement like: 'Your country needs you'?

'I'm not saying you should leave,' Eyoum says, 'I find you pleasant

company, a gezellige man, even if I don't always understand you. It is precisely because you are unexpected and mysterious that I like having you around. You're like the triplets: different colours, a trinity with the same spirit.'

Eyoun sees the questioning look on Joseph's face. 'Stop calling it love,' she says, 'love is a word that makes many people deeply unhappy.'

Joseph breathes freely again. He was already afraid that Eyoun would love him. He wasn't looking forward to that, although he has no idea what he's waiting for. Perhaps he isn't waiting for Godot, for anyone else or for anything. Possibly he longs to not being. The longing he feels while writing his diary. Dear diary, once again it's me. •

'You quote James Joyce,' Joseph says. 'Have you read *Ulysses*?

Eyoun ignores Joseph's question and continues: 'Willy feels that I tolerate him,' that's what he said. 'A man with a disability, a man with a missing leg, can easily feel redundant and tolerated; not complete as a human being, not fitting into the accepted average. There is no reason for Willy to feel useless; he killed more than thirty men.' Eyoun holds out her arms, as if holding the rifle that drapes over the mantelpiece, 'so that we could live. That's why our master was killed, isn't it, so that we could continue to do good and evil?' She sighs. 'And you? And what about your crucifixion?' Joseph hears angels sing *In Paradisum*.

Joseph is confused. Eyoun had given him the shotgun so he could feel its heft. She knew how to shoot, Eyoun had said. Willy had taught her. Joseph had shot a sparrow, a venial sin he had never confessed, but which had now expired. Killing was no longer on his list. Now he was old enough to be a vegetarian.

'Willy is no Joe Average,' says Joseph, dodging Eyoun's question and looking for an explanation; Explanation, the sixth letter E. He knows that feeling, being redundant and tolerated, even if he hasn't got a lost leg. Joseph doesn't know what he is missing. What he is missing is invisible, not only to the outside world, but also within himself.

The mango slice slips from his fork. A yellow stain appears on his shirt. Eyoun dips a napkin into the glass of water and dabs the stain on Joseph's shirt.

'Don't rub,' Eyoun says, 'rubbing increases all discomfort.' She smiles and shows her ivory teeth, as if to kiss with opened lips. Quod non.

Joseph understands that she is slurring her words to confuse him. There is more to Eyoum's rubbing and dabbing than the mango stain on his shirt; it is a thing called love.

As she leans back in her chair and folds the napkin, she says, 'Your loneliness will not disappear as long as you keep looking for others to fill the void in you.' Eyoum rises and goes to Joseph. She presses her open lips to the back of his head and says: 'Maybe, if you can't stop thinking, you can stop seeking.'

'May I have the bill, please,' Joseph says to the waitress. 'The dish was excellent.' Gezellig catches in his throat.

They walk down Union Street and take the footpath along the north side of the Stainfort & Keadby Canal. There seems to be little left to say, even though the evening could be used for many conversations. No boats pass by. No pedestrians strolling by. No dogs are barking to the moon. A pleasant scent of peaty baby rises from the canal. There are a few houses along the waterfront, with fragrant flowers and sweet-smelling trees. Eyoum puts her arm behind Joseph's, as if they were a couple walking on the water.

Where the pavement meets Orchard Street, the dock is empty. All boats have sailed.





‘It is not my intention to make a scientific argument about silt, mire or peat, or to delve into the complex historical and contemporary aspects of peat formation,’ says Ernest Gambard. •

Joseph found himself in the company of this expert on Thorne Waste and peat extraction by the Drenthe peat diggers. The two men were sitting next to an information centre in Moorends, under a clear blue Yorkshire sky, with a sturdy picnic table, a thermos of hot coffee, scones, butter and cheese from a local organic farm specialising in sustainable agriculture. The weather was fine and the temperature - whether measured in Fahrenheit, Celsius or Réamur - just right to keep those pesky flies at bay. Both were in good spirits. Although Gambard had no desire to teach as if he were addressing a university lecture theatre, his passion for the subject could not be contained.

‘Etymologically, the term mire conjures up images of moss, and perhaps it shares linguistic affinities with moor and mud. Moor may resonate with you, as you were born on the edge of Bourtanger Moor,’ Gambard began.

Joseph took a scone and, with a clumsy movement of his hand holding his penknife, spread butter on the halves and on his hands.

‘Scone, interestingly enough, has Dutch roots, coming from *schoon brood*,’ Joseph adds, pouring black coffee from the thermos into cups. He rubs his greasy hands on his trousers, just as he did in his youth.

Gambard sips his coffee. He pays no attention to Joseph’s comment and continues his lecture.

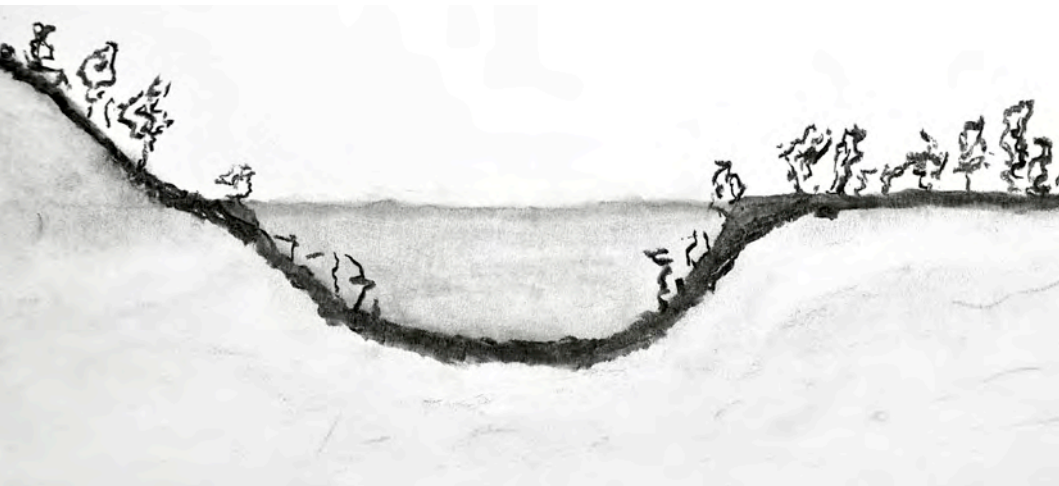
‘The growth of peat can be researched in numerous online resources,’ he says in a slightly raised voice. ‘I won’t go into detail, but to understand today’s landscape and vegetation, some basic knowledge of peat formation is essential before delving into the history of Dutch peat extraction for fuel and litter production at Thorne Waste.’

Joseph is silent. He knows there is no point in interrupting Gambard, who has started his ride on his hobby horse. Joseph is familiar with his own untamed hobby horses. He hardly knows how to control and direct his passions. Perhaps this excursion to Thorne Waste will

give him some tools to control his free ride into his ancestral past to illuminate the present state of his mind.

‘To start at a more or less abstract level,’ says Gambard after taking another sip of his coffee, ‘different environmental conditions have determined the development of different types of peatlands. Topography plays a crucial role in the formation of fen bogs (laagveen), while excessive precipitation is the key factor in the formation of raised bogs (hoogveen). These different approaches resulted in two types of vegetation that are essential for peat deposition - *topogenic* fens and *ombrogenic* raised mires.’ Gambard spills the last of his cup of coffee on the lawn. Bending over to his bag, he takes out a notebook and a pencil. He sketches the two conditions for peat formation and adds a third: the lesser known highland blanket peat.

Joseph changes and rearranges the facts in Gambard’s lecture to make them fit his birthplace. *Topogenic*: his birthplace, Erica, in South-East Drenthe, on the border between sand and peat. *Ombrogenic*: all the stuff that fell on him from the heavens to decipher parts of the genetic code into poorly understood relevant and irrelevant expressions, and to transform him into a reasonably functioning human being in a sometimes-hostile society with an overdose of frustratingly persistent traditions, e.g. Roman Catholic popular devotional misunderstandings and archaic anti-social and identity-based cultural manners, simmering under a blanket of white peat.



‘Topogenic peat is formed in the wet lowlands. Plants such as reeds, sedges, floating and underwater flora, and also alder and willow forests flourished here. These wetlands were teeming with diverse animal species, including dragonflies, butterflies, frogs, protozoa, insects, spiders and small crabs.’ Gambard cannot read the diverging thoughts of Joseph.

Joseph takes a scone and waits. He is not acquainted with insects and cold-blooded animals in the wet lowlands. He is not hot tempered, most of the time. The lecturer continues his explanation.

‘As the dead plants sank to the depths of ponds and bodies of water, their incomplete decomposition due to lack of oxygen - especially in winter - led to their transformation into peat by chemical-microbial processes - a process known as *carburisation*. Forget the name,’ says Gambard. The scholar does not hesitate to rush forward to demonstrate his knowledge of peat, although he seems to recognise his overwhelming eagerness when he says: ‘Stop me if I get lost in unnecessary details, especially as you may have known all these details for years.’ After enjoying a scone, he continues as if unaware of the cynical and belittling undertone of his words, perhaps the result of years of teaching at university. Gambard doesn’t seem to understand the emotional and psychological impact of his words as he rambles on.

‘Over time, this peat layer became thicker and thicker, culminating in a peat bog. As this process continued, the pond disappeared as the peat layer met the level of the surrounding land. Under favourable climatic conditions, this continued terrestrial evolution culminated in the formation of raised bogs, mainly made up of numerous species of



*Sphagnum* moss. It is important to note that peat tends to have a pH above 7.' Gambard looks at Joseph and asks, 'Do you know what pH means?'

Joseph nods. 'I used to be a chemist,' he says matter-of-factly, as if he were saying it for the nineteenth time.

'Chemists have solutions, caustic and acidic solutions,' Gambard laughs as he turns a new page in his notebook. 'In these illustrations you can see the whole process of peat formation.' Gambard is making a charcoal drawing of cross-sections of a pond and peat formation over time.

Joseph remains stuck in a myriad of chemical and non-chemical solutions that he was unable to find in his lifetime.

'Because of its high nutrient content, fen peat has traditionally been valued for agriculture, but with a few exceptions, it is no longer a prominent feature of the contemporary landscape,' says Gambard, and goes on to explain another aspect: 'Burnt peat from fen peatlands is known for its high ash content, so to speak: fertiliser, sometimes as high as 8%, in contrast to burnt peat from raised bogs, which usually contains only a few percent of ash, the known valuable nutrients.'

Joseph remembers the hot, dusty ashtrey from the peat stove in the living room. His job was to empty the ashtrey and fill the basket next to the stove with black peat. He learnt to cover his mouth and nose so as not to inhale the dusty atmosphere that prevented him from breathing freely.





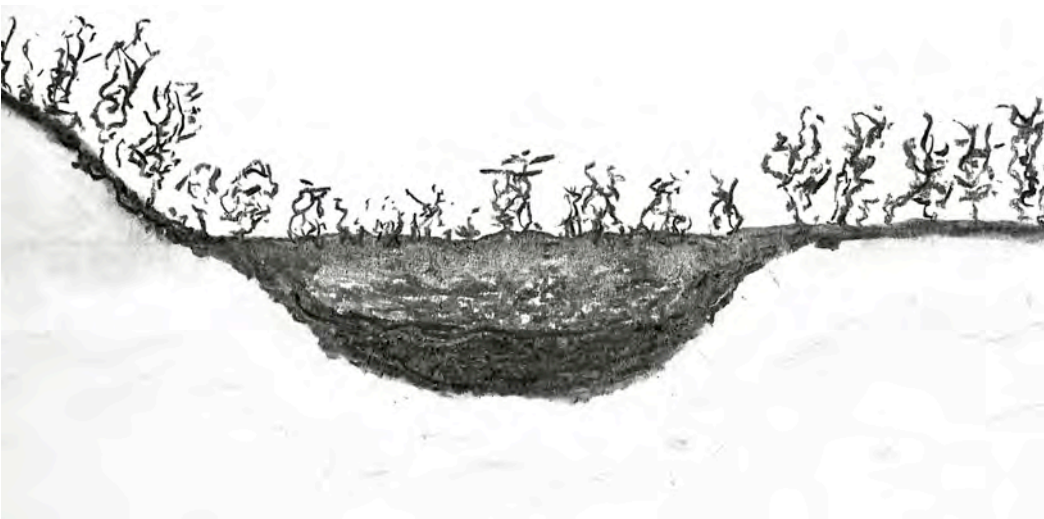
Gambard pushes his cup towards Joseph. A sign for more coffee. After gazing up at the sky, as if words were floating in the air, Gambard points to the charcoal drawings and says: 'Ombrogenic bogs, on the other hand, arch above the surface and resemble a lens-shaped glass clock, as I said, a so-called raised bog. This characteristic feature of raised bogs is now absent from our contemporary landscape. Unlike fens, raised bogs are not dependent on groundwater. Peat moss (*Sphagnum*) uses rainwater to grow. This means that more precipitation must fall than can evaporate or seep away.' He rotates the sketch to give Joseph a better idea of the peat-forming processes before continuing with his scientific sermon.

'Water-impermeable layers of rock trap excess water, creating very wet conditions that are only good for plant species that can survive on the few minerals washed out of the air.'

Ammonia and nitrates from the air, salt from the nearby sea, iodine from rotting seaweed, air pollution from industries near and far, from traffic and intensive agriculture. Joseph remains silent. Why add details that Gambard already knows?

'This raised bog plant community consists mainly of peat moss (*Sphagnum*), which has no roots and a single shoot, along with cotton grass, heather and other hardy plants,' says Gambard.

'We call cotton grass *wollegras*,' says Joseph. 'The Germans say *Baumwolle*, which includes cotton and wool in the name.' Gambard did not hear what Joseph said.



The expert continues: 'Remarkably, peat mosses have the capacity to store up to 25 times their dry weight in water in specialised storage cells. While peat mosses can grow up to 20 centimetres a year, the bog typically accumulates only about 1 millimetre of peat a year. Raised bogs can develop on fens that extend beyond the groundwater catchment area or on mineral soils, the latter being called *native raised bogs*, related to blanket mires.' Gambard draws a mountainside and says: 'Blanket mire is often forgotten. It is the relatively thin layer of peat, rarely more than a metre thick, on uplands and hillsides. You'll find blanket bog in Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and in Norway on the Hardanger Vida.'

Joseph remembers his holidays on Hardanger vida. It was here that he learned to love solitude. No one in sight, no crowd noise, just the rugged and empty moorland, without knowing the names of plants or birds at that moment. In his rucksack was a novel by Willem Frederik Hermans. *Never Sleep Again* was the title of the novel, referring to the midsummer night when daylight had driven out the darkness. The main character's fellow traveller died after a fall in a ravine• never to sleep again. Hermans, the author who did not win the Nobel Prize for Literature, had inspired Joseph to devote his soul to literature and to write short stories and novels himself, although Joseph did not aim for bestsellers or literary prizes.

Gambard continues his explanation of peat formation. Joseph loses interest. He doesn't need any more facts about growth and decline when he's wondering about his own growth and decline. Joseph turns

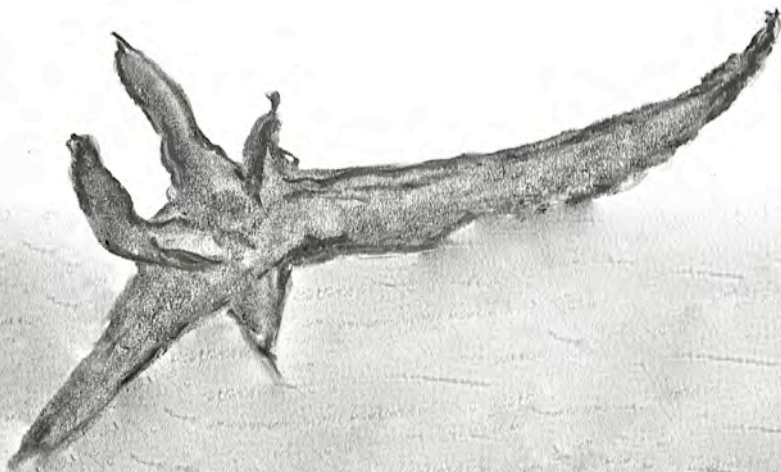


his mug upside down and pours the cold coffee onto the grass. He pours fresh hot coffee from the thermos flask. Joseph is too polite to stop Gambard to explain processes in the natural world and tries to make eye contact to show his non-verbal message: let's go for a walk in the moor.

Gambard is still on autopilot. Once he has started his story, he has to finish it to the last drop.

'The peat in raised bogs is very acidic, with a pH below 7, thanks to the acid ions released into the peat water by the sphagnum moss,' Gambard says, repeating himself. 'As a chemist, you know that this acidic environment limits the microbial degradation of the peat substance. In this dome you can find paludified wood. That is what you call kienhout.' And with a sarcastic smile: 'That is why peat bodies like the Lindow man• have survived.' Gambard does not wait for an answer from Joseph. It seems that the scholar is telling himself a bad joke or is trying to hide a disturbing secret. He continues: 'The result is that dead peat moss does not decompose completely, but undergoes a process called peat formation. Peat formation is characterised by the gradual decomposition of peat plants under certain conditions. The resulting white peat can absorb up to twelve times its own weight in water.'

'*Witveen*,' says Joseph, 'is not white at all. White peat is not as white as black peat is black. Besides, these words have taken on a pejorative connotation over time.' Joseph hesitates. He wants to talk about Zwarte Piet - Black Pete - and the black peat that was used from his



youth to heat the family home and cook the daily dinner, but he is not sure if Gambard is the right person to talk about the grey ash that blocked his nervous system, to talk about his youth and his changing attitude towards his fellow man, which he increasingly experiences as a frightening threat to his well-being.

‘Nowadays, areas with a peat layer of more than 30 cm are classified as fen, blanket bog or raised bog, even if they have been drained. Thinner layers of peat are called moory soils,’ says Gambard. ‘Just a few moor things,’ he adds, ‘and then it’s time for a walk on the wild side.’

Gambard seems to sense the end of Joseph’s attention span. In general, there should be a lull in conversation every seven minutes. More than seven minutes of monologue have passed. Gambard summarises his unintentional lecture: ‘In raised bogs we find two fundamentally different types of peat: the light, moderately decomposed white peat, also known as grey peat, and the dark, highly decomposed black peat. Black peat predominated for millennia after the formation of raised bogs around 5500 BC, until changes in climate, particularly a significant drop in average temperatures, led to the emergence of white peat around 500 BC. The different characteristics of these two types of peat can be attributed to their respective degrees of decomposition. Both types can be used as raw material for peat burning. White is for litter.’

White is Litter, echoes in Joseph, followed by Black is Black by Eyoum and its song Nights in White Satin. • No, he didn’t feel like moss litter, yes, he slept in a bed with white sheets. No, he didn’t sleep with Eyoum, at least not physically.

Gambard rises, puts the notebook in his rucksack and points his arm in the direction of the footpath to the Thorne Waste. Joseph follows and hears his guide say: ‘The history of the Thorne Moors has been this: peat developed below the average water table, with the water level fluctuating due to rainfall and the influence of the North Sea tides on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. High tides from the North Sea entered the River Ouse, disrupting the flow of water from land to sea.’ The university researcher, apparently trying to clear his encyclopaedia-filled head, picks up the pace: ‘Thorne Moors is only a few metres



above sea level and the raised bog grew cyclically in a lenticular pattern. During dry periods the peat would sink, but would rise again after heavy rainfall.' Gambards turns to Joseph, looks at his feet and says: 'These boots are made for walkin', And that's just what they'll do.'•

It seemed to Joseph that this was the first time Gambards had noticed his presence.



# Dutch in Yorkshire

By ANGUS TOWNLEY

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HOLLAND IN YORKSHIRE. The first of a series of instructive articles on 'Interesting Communities in Britain.'

By T. W. WILKINSON.

*Between Doncaster and Goole lies a considerable stretch of country which in unbroken monotony, uniform flatness, and general characteristics, is as Dutch as Groningen or Oversell. The tiled houses and farmsteads; the canals with their sluggish, square-rigged barges; the dykes and drains and sluices—all combined make a picture which is peculiarly Dutch. And when the stranger comes across a low – browed, short – statured, stolid figure plodding along in sabots,• he is prone to imagine that he has been miraculously transported of a sudden to Holland.*

Mynheer Jan• belongs to a colony which is exactly suited to the physical features of the district—the Isle of Axholme and the area which formerly comprised the royal chase of Hatfield. He is one of the band who took part in the second Dutch invasion of Yorkshire.

The first descent made by his compatriots the great northern heart of England dates back to the seventeenth century, when the famous Dutch engineer, Vermuyden, brought about two hundred Hollanders into it, and converted more than 70,000 acres of bog land into rich virgin soil. Years rolled on, and history repeated itself in a measure. One morning in 1887 Thorne woke to find in her quiet streets a small army of foreigners habited in blue three-quarter smocks, wide pantaloons, and wooden shoes, and attended by their stodgy 'vrows' and a numerous progeny. Again Dutch peat cutters had been imported to work in the Yorkshire Holland, not only because of their cheapness and diligence, but because they possessed the requisite skill, which they had acquired in their own country.

### **Racial prejudice**

The principal colony of the Hollanders who came to England in these circumstances is situated at Moorends, about three miles from Thorne, and is as distinct a feature of the village as the Chinese quarter is of San Francisco. When the Dutch were first imported, they pitched their tents in Thorne itself; but for various reasons it was deemed politic to isolate them. Their introduction into the district, for instance, was strongly resented by the local labourers, and as a result quarrels were frequent, and the knife more than once came into play. Though racial prejudice has now almost died away, it still breaks out occasionally.

One night not long since an Englishman was found near Thorne Church with his throat cut, and next morning a board shaped like a butcher's cleaver was picked up on the spot. The injured villager stated that he had been attacked by one of the Dutch peat workers, and some of those aliens were arrested and charged with the offence. But, although the guilty person was probably among them, it was impossible to bring the deed home, and consequently the prisoners were discharged. All the same, the sufferer merits no pity. From the finding of the bit of flooring and from other circumstances it is clear that he and others lay in wait for some of the Dutchmen for the purpose of giving them a hiding as they returned home, and that in the melee he got the worst of it.

### **Moss Terrace**

In consequence of the strained relations which formerly existed between the Dutch and the villagers, a row of cottages was built for the immigrants at Moorends, and there the largest contingent of them now reside. This settlement, known as 'Moss Terrace' consists of a number of redbrick houses, and at first glance, when all the inhabitants are indoors, there is nothing Dutch about it except the name on a signboard which is displayed over the door of a shop — the only shop in the colony. Plain, ugly cottages of the strictly utilitarian type — that is all. The patronymic above the entrance to the little store, however, strikes the right note.

This establishment belongs to a Dutchman who has an English 'vrow'. During the late war her patriotism was superior to business

considerations, and not content with hoping for the success of her country's cause, she openly rejoiced at the victories of our troops, and, what is more, lectured her neighbours on the enormities of Kruger's Government. • Naturally, this roused the ire of the Dutchmen, who retaliated by severely boycotting the shop. The 'vrow' and her spouse, however, rose to the occasion. By a little diplomacy, coupled with selling goods slightly under market price, they very soon brought about a reconciliation.

### **Simple and thrifty people**

Very interesting is the social life of the Dutch community at Moorends. They are a simple and thrifty people. Usually the furniture in the 'living' room consists of little beyond a table and a few chairs, and the food is plain, if abundant. In general, the wife, if Dutch, still clings to her wooden shoes, and her children also wear sabots, as well as the roomy, picturesque saque blouses which are so common in Holland. A quaint sight the youngsters make as they trudge away to school. Formerly the women did not put off their heavy shoes even when they went into Thorne, but now they go to market in velvet slippers.

### **Feed the brute**

When the housewife is English — as at the shop — the domestic economy, clothing, etc., necessarily approximate more closely to our own standard. There has been some intermarrying between the invaders and the natives, mainly, if local report may be trusted, because of the superior culinary acquirements of the Yorkshire lasses. 'Feed the brute' was the advice which a fond mother gave to her newly-married daughter. It is a thousand pities, but there is something in it.

A good many weddings in which one or both of the contracting parties have been Dutch have taken place since the second invasion of the district. The first interesting event of this kind created quite a sensation, and all Thorne turned out to look at the happy couple as they walked home from church. But now the novelty of the thing has worn off.



### **Card playing**

The amusements of the Dutchmen are mostly confined to card-playing, of which they never tire. Some of them extract weird music from an accordion, but the principal recreation of the workers as a class is cards. Once a year, however, they have a long holiday. By the exercise of the greatest frugality, they save about half their wages, and at Christmas take a trip to their native country, where they stay for six weeks.

### **Little colonies**

Besides the Dutch who live at Moorends, there are a good many at Medge Hall, the seat of the peat moss cutting industry. Here then is a vast stretch of brown-black moor, studded with huge stacks of peat and moss litter, some coffee-coloured, some dark as ebony by long exposure to the sun's rays. Scattered over the plain, too, are little cottages inhabited by Dutch workers. They form, with the grinding sheds round which they are clustered as if for warmth, little colonies which are often many miles apart, and connected by nothing save the railroad along which the moss litter blocks are transported.

### **Peat digging Dutch**

To see the Dutchmen at work, to follow the peat from the time it is cut and thrown out on the moor in sodden clods till it is a marketable commodity, would take too long. Briefly, the Hollander, armed with an implement called the graver, slices out the spongy substance in bricks about sixteen inches in length and throws these chunks on a wooden stretcher, which, when full, is carried to the drying grounds. There the lumps of peat are stacked in such a way that a current of air can pass through them; so that in a few months, under the combined influence of the wind and the sun, they become as dry as a bone. Then they are removed to the sheds and converted into litter.

The work seems simple enough: but as a fact it calls for a good deal of skill. It is not everybody, for instance, who can stack the peat properly. Owing to the large quantity of water that the bricks contain, they have to be built up in a certain manner, or they would remain as soft as a sponge for a whole year. It is said, indeed, that the reason why the Dutchmen were imported into this out-of-the way

spot was that the Yorkshire labourers were unequal to requirements. They knew absolutely nothing of the conditions under which the peat is harvested and dealt with by the company, whereas the Dutch immigrants were perfectly familiar with them, having worked under such conditions in Holland.

Many are the uses to which the dried peat can be put. It can be manufactured into articles so diverse as flannels, surgical wool, charcoal, and a woven material for felt and under carpeting. Ground up, it will take the place of sawdust in fruit packing, and is, indeed, said to be superior to that form of 'waste' in that it imparts no taste. Compressed, it makes admirable flower pots, while it can be formed into blocks so solid that these can be turned in a lathe — only the finest tools, however, will cut them — and then polished till they become, in the opinion of some experts, more beautiful than many rare and costly woods. Also, everybody knows that peat can be, and is, used as a fuel, one of its merits as which is that it acts as a germicide. Its odour, it is true, is objectionable to most people, and clings to food and clothing with a tenacity that neither water nor wind can disturb. There is no washing it out, and all the breezes of heaven seem powerless to bear it away into the zenith.

### **Chat Moss**

Of late a number of the Dutch workers have migrated from the Thorne district to Chat Moss, near Manchester. A great deal of peat lies between Cottonopolis and Liverpool, as many railway travellers between those cities cannot fail to have observed, and some of it is being cut and prepared for the market by much the same methods as are followed at Medge Hall.

As a consequence, a Dutch colony has sprung up on Chat Moss in connection with the industry. One of its members recently brought this settlement — the existence of which had been unknown to many Mancunians — under the notice of the general public by making an involuntary appearance before a local bench. This was not an unprecedented occurrence.

While Briton and Boer were at daggers drawn, the arguments waged in the Thorne district occasionally ended in the police court, and some of Mr. Kruger's compatriots were fined accordingly. Assaults,

too, have led to the arraignment of a few of the Hollanders before the local justices in other cases besides the one I have given.

### **Court case**

On this occasion there was a dash of the comic in the proceedings. A Dutch swain, charged with having threatened to kill another Hollander — a woman — took the magistrate into his confidence, and explained, in broken English, that he wanted the prosecutrix to elope, and that he was angry because she refused.

‘Have you anything more to say?’ quoth the presiding magistrate.

‘Ya -(yes),’ the man ingenuously replied, ‘but you had better keep me quiet.’

And when a fine was imposed, he convulsed the court by artlessly remarking, ‘I don’t want to pay that.’

Our Dutch invaders, however, give very little trouble to anybody, and even when they do they are in general, by common consent, not altogether to blame. Quiet, inoffensive-, industrious, they are peaceable enough if treated properly, and will by-and-by merge into the life of the Thorne district without any revolution or disturbance. What with the matrimonial alliances between Dutch and British, and what with the practice of sending the youthful Hollanders to the local schools, where they necessarily imbibe English ideas, there is a good deal of social intercourse between the two races, and not many years hence there will be very little to distinguish some, at least, of the invaders from those born and bred on the soil.

*[The illustrations accompanying this article are from photographs  
by C. F. Constable Esq M.A.] (not found)  
<https://crowle.org/?p=141>*









## Mysterious mishaps    George (Ernest) Gambard

George Gambard and the hero of our time,• Joseph Nieters, start their walk in Moorends Recreation Ground at the former colliery, the one that was hardly a success due to seepage and fatal accidents.

Coal was finally reached in August 1924 at a depth of 921.5 yards (842.6 m) and was worked from January 1925. The sinking of the second pit shaft was then completed the following year which was claimed to be the deepest pit in South Yorkshire.

On 15 March 1926 however, shortly before the completion of shaft number 2, six men fell to their deaths when the Capstan engine controlling the scaffolding upon which they were working malfunctioned. It was described in local papers with headlines such as ‘Mysterious Mishap’, as the full cause of the tragedy was unknown. It was not the first loss of life at the pit but was to be ultimately the most costly. The incident was the largest loss of life in a mine in the United Kingdom in 1926. The six men who lost their lives are as follows;

Edmund Thorley, age 33 – 1st Chargeman sinker,  
John Hansbury, age 34 – 2nd Chargeman sinker,  
John William Barley, age 51 – Sinker,  
Ernest H. Walton, aged 33 – Sinker,  
Ernest Clark, aged 26 – Sinker,  
John A. Reed, aged 21 – Sinker.

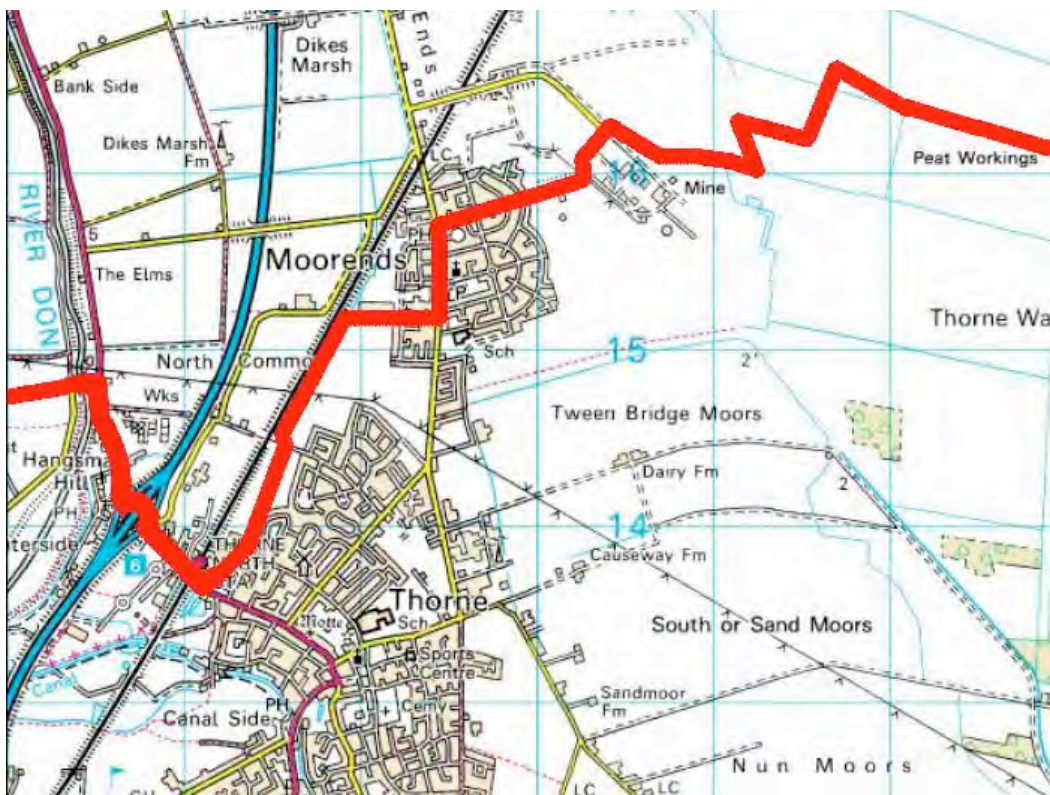
The seam was part of the coal deposit that developed in Sheffield, where people could dig coal in their back gardens.

Joseph remembers the last part of the peat deposit in his birthplace in the field behind the Roman Church cemetery in Erica, on the other side of the Kerkweg, more or less the backyard of his natal home. A few times a year, in the autumn, Joseph and his father used a horse and cart, and later a McCormick tractor and farm wagon, to haul peat for heating home. It was a hard and dusty job. Driving the tractor

home the last bit of the Kerkweg was his reward for helping. He still remembers the blue smoke from the exhaust and the repetitive sound of the shroud vibrating on the exhaust pipe at the top of the bonnet.

Those were the last days of peat as a fuel. Before Joseph was 10, there was a new stove in the living room that burned coal - anthracite and egg coal - from the State Mines in Limburg, a province that did not really belong to the nation. A stove that five years later was replaced by a central heating system powered by natural gas from the Groningen gas field. The exploitation of this gas caused small and large earthquakes. The Groningen field is now closed. According to the energy transition programme, sustainable energy from solar panels and wind turbines will eventually provide all homes with electric heating.

The walkers cross a footbridge onto the moor. Chicken wire on the floor of the bridge prevents falls on the slippery surface. The Humberhead Levels Green Tourism Forum warns walkers, cyclists and horse riders to stay on the path. Re-wetted peat extraction sites and deep drains are dangerous. The lakes are deep and may contain submerged objects and Second World War aircraft wrecks, so swimming is not allowed. Adders can bite dogs.



Joseph really doesn't like dogs. He has a cynophobia. He would rather be an adder in this lost paradise. •

‘There is a straight path through the mire,’ Gambard says, pointing west, ‘but it is often inundated. So we turn left and cross that footbridge. We have time enough to reach Crowle before the end of the day.’

Joseph is silent. He is in fairly robust physical condition. Cycling and walking are his favourite activities, together with the three R's: reading, writing and arithmetic.

‘This path used to be a narrow-gauge tramway and the track was also used by horses to tow square-rigged barges full of peat to the Mill. Once used by horses and later by small trains pulling wagons loaded with peat. The Dutch Moss Litter Company used a network of canals to haul peat to a mill near Moorends. The Dutch peat diggers preferred barges to tramcars,’ Gambard adds. ‘You can walk safely here. The track occasionally has a solid foundation of abandoned narrow-gauge rails. On top of the embankments are remnants of limestone, clinker and clay that were used to make the tram accessible. Any biologist can tell you about the vegetation.’



‘The plants along the track prefer nutrient-rich calcareous soil with a pH > 7. Compare them with the plants along the shell paths and in the dunes near the North Sea beach.’ Gambard turns to Joseph and says with a grin: ‘You can easily find the places where Dutch peat diggers worked. The growth of nettles reveals their pee spots.’ Gambard laughs. He likes his own jokes above all. He collects himself. ‘On the left is the former Sheaburn & Pitts Drain. Further north is Blackwater Dyke.’

Dyke and dike have different meanings in English and Dutch. The Dutch translation would be ditch or small canal. The Dutch *dijk* is an artificial dam to prevent water from entering the surrounding land. The English dyke is also used as a derogatory term for a lesbian.

Before drainage and peat extraction, the moor formed a raised bog. The aim of conservation management for the site is to retain suitable conditions for the development of raised bog and its vegetation. To maintain a high water table, drainage channels from the old peat extraction sites have been blocked with peat dams. Water is also pumped into some of the recently worked cuttings. On Crowle Moor, substantial areas have been cleared of invasive birch bushes and are now grazed by the The Trust’s flock of Hebridean sheep. These have also been moved to Hatfield Moors in 2004. •

The landscape is comparable to Bargerveen, the remains of raised bogs in South-East Drenthe on the German border. Unless Gambard asks a question, Joseph is reluctant to share what he knows. He keeps the questions to himself until there is time to meet his needs. Joseph wonders what drives this scholar to combine scientific explanations about landscape and vegetation with banal chatter. Gambard must feel comfortable in his company if he does not limit his language to decent talk.

‘The checkerboard appearance of the cuts and bars can still be seen to this day. However, this manual digging was done on a small scale so that wild animals and plants could survive in the intervening areas. And the depth was such that the peat moss could regenerate.’

Gambard whips out his smartphone. 'On Google Earth you can see what the landscape looks like from above,' he says. 'If you look closely, you can see the baulks and the ditches. They vary in width. The places closest to the mill are the most exploited. Further on, towards Crowle, you can see different patterns in the vegetation from a birds-eye view.'

Joseph takes his smartphone out of his pocket and shows the topography of Bargerveen. The patterns of Thorne Moors and Bargerveen are similar, but there are differences.

'In the 19th century, and even earlier,' says Gambard, 'landowners became owners of the land under the peat as they removed the peat. This resulted in small, long stretches of land - called cables - to the east, similar to the pattern in Bargerveen, especially north of Oud- and Nieuw-Schoonebeek. Common land became private property. I will not bother you with the procedures and legislation.'

Joseph Nieters and George Gambard were seated on a bench looking south. Joseph identified many grasses and plants in sight, *Typha latifolia* L., better known as Grote lisdodde and as cigars or toezebol in his vernacular.

Gambard passed Joseph a booklet with a brief history of the Thorne Waste drainage.

'Rather than bore you with my lectures, take the time to read this booklet with some highlights of Thorne Waste drainage. It's more than you need to know. I'll go for a walk and do a little birdwatching. I won't be long.'







Verlengde Meerwijk

Molenwijk

Camping Veenweide

Natuurgebied Bargerveen

Hoofdwijk F

basisschool Bargerveen

Welteveen

Bargerveen

NEDERLAND





Moors N

• Dutch Row

comforts

• Thorne  
colliery

Recreation  
Ground

Moorends

Tween Bridge  
Wind Farm, Goole

Yorkshire Puddings

Trinity Academy, Thorne



BPAW Fen and  
Nature Reserve



• Blackwater Dyke •

• Shearburn & Pitts Drain •

• Will Pits



Thorne Moors -  
National Nature Reserve







## Drainage Events on Thorne Waste

In 1824 the moorland still covered c. 3,400ha, and peat extending to a depth of 6m.

The pits of Thorne Moors, generally surrounded by small trees, and resort for wild fowl, were deemed by the superstitious to be bottomless. They are certainly most treacherous, for the *Sphagnum* has so encompassed the margin that, unless the stranger is very wary, he may find himself submerged. The floating mass of moss and other fibrous vegetation have accumulated to a considerable thickness, extending partly across the water, and in several instances, entirely over it. Blackwater: now called wild Pitts.

Although widely subject to invasive peat winning and reclamation, gradually encroaching inwards from the edges, Thorne Moors was seemingly crossed by only one major waterway at the beginning of the 19th century. This was Blackwater Dyke, dividing the peat resources belonging to the medieval centres of Thorne and Snaith respectively. This, the oldest man made feature surviving on the moorland, once demarcated the NE edge of Hatfield Chase, and still marks one side of Thorne parish. As a chase boundary, the dyke must predate dischasing of the area in the 17th century. The virgin peat of Thorne Waste was not otherwise affected by direct endeavour until the beginning of the 19th century. The earlier boating Dyke and Top Boating Dyke, along which peat turves for the fuel trade were transported from the SW edge of Thorne Waste, flowed from the River Don to the peat. Thus, as with other drains around the moor, they had little direct influence beyond the moorlands margins in their vicinity.

The aquatic link was impaired twice around the turn of the 19th century. First, it was cut in two in the 1790's when the Stainforth and Keadby Canal and its attendant soak drains were excavated. For some years there were no replacement waterways, with peat carriage

requiring at least some haulage by land. Then, in 1806, the sluice by which the boating dykes communicated with the River Don at Thorne Waterside was taken up, ending the viability of both dykes. Being disused, they shrank and became stagnant.

The earliest notable drainage project in the 19th century on Thorne Waste was the cutting in 1815 of Thorne Waste Drain, also initially known as New drain. It was dug along the SW edge of the moorland, from Pighill Moor to the North Soak Drain of the Canal. An embankment was constructed on its Thorne side to protect the adjacent drained lands from flooding. Initially, the drain was also intended for peat conveyance, thus its water level had to be deliberately kept high for the boats. However, with the decline of the peat trade, boating ceased c.1830, allowing water levels to be lowered. This led to more efficient water removal from that part of the moorland and adjoining areas, via the drain to the North Soak Drain.

The land extending from Thorne itself towards the moorland was divided into a multitude of thin strips – known locally as ‘cables’ – each identically aligned and bounded by dykes. These were the results of plots of land at the edge of Thorne being gradually extended over many decades, thrusting eastwards in ever lengthening ribbons as the peat was removed and the ground beneath cultivated. Thus the edge of the moorland was continually, but fitfully, receding from the town. The digging of Thorne Waste Drain in 1815 created, in effect, a barrier to further cable reclamation, with the peat to the west rendered relatively inaccessible. Thus, the strip reclamation never meaningfully extended further than its 1815 limit. This curtailment was reinforced by a growing view that perhaps the entire area of peat remaining in the parish could be subjected to advancing reclamation technology. It was envisaged that this particularly achieved through warping (q.v.), to create new land relatively quickly, on a far greater scale, and much less laboriously, than along the cables. The later were becoming outdated and uneconomic: perhaps the initial willingness to undertake the creation of Thorne Waste Drain was a symptom of this changing attitude.

## Warping

A crucial element in the peripheral reclamation of Thorne Moors was warping. There were two types. Flood warping involved the deposition of water – borne silt and clay (i.e. warp) via specially dug warping drains connected to suitable stretches of warp – laden tidal river. The water was carried on the rising tide into embanked compartments of moor or other poor lands. Having deposited its load, it was allowed to ebb away at low tide. In this way, a laminated deposit was built up gradually, converting unfarmed land into a valuable agricultural area. The land to be improved had to be below the level of the highest tides, and for a worthwhile deposit, much lower. Some of the lowest reaches of peat moorland were accessible for treatment in this way, commencing in 1814, using massive warping drains. Two of these affected Thorne Waste. Although warping drains were intended to facilitate the reclamation of adjoining marshy areas and the lowest peat, they were of sufficiently wide importance when acting as drains to influence areas which ultimately escaped reclamation. The second method of warping was dry or cart warping, whereby the warp was conveyed from a suitable source by cart or narrow gauge railway laid for the purpose. Around Thorne Moors, the latter method was only limited impact, despite ambitious intentions.

The two warping drains relevant to Thorne Waste were *Swinefleet Warping Drain* and *Durham's Warping Drain*. The former was opened in 1821, being dug from the river Ouse along a ribbon enclosure on the eastern side of Goole parish. By 1826, the drain had been cut 4.5km southwards from the River Ouse to what became Swinfleet Moor Farm. By 1845, it had been extended over 7.5km eastwards, to Fockerby Common. Around the turn of the century, the original southerly course of the drain was lengthened a further 4.5km: this was the section that directly affected Thorne Waste. Durham's Warping Drain, cut from the River Don eastwards as far as the road running north from Thorne was opened in 1856, and much former wetland had been raised in height by at least 1m and had been turned into farmland of the highest quality. However, the warping was hindered by the opening of the Thorne-Goole railway in 1869, and by problems with silting in the River Don. Despite

this, Durham's Warping Drain was eventually extended further east, after which it was taken southwards to warp ground in the area later occupied by Thorne Colliery, this latter being ploughed for the first time in 1896.

### **Participant right**

Inextricably bound up with realised warping were further efforts to drain, hence to lower and thus eventually to facilitate the intended flood warping of the more central part of the peat dome. Even those parts which ultimately escaped warping did not evade preliminary preparations for reclamation in this way. The entire surface of Thorne Waste was progressively modified by drains dug in the 1860's. This action originated in the 1840's, although the proposed reclamation of Thorne Waste was initially obstructed by the 'Participant' right to cut peat from 405 ha (i.e. 100 acres) on the eastern side of Thorne Waste. The original 'Participants' had been involved with the regional drainage scheme of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden. Virtually all were Dutch or Flemish, and their adventure capital was secured against land allocations on Hatfield Chase. They had also been provided with turbary rights, in specified areas, including the Thorne Waste allotment *antea*. The later occupiers of the Participant land still held the turbary rights, which had, in event, been rarely exercised.

The following was noted by Hatfield (1866): 'An act was obtained in 1861 for the reallotment of the peat moors within the parish of Thorne, and for their warping by a railway (i.e. by dry warping), for they are much above the level of spring tides within the rivers. It is proposed to deposit warp upon the low lands, and from thence to convey it on the adjacent peat moors.

### **Agrarian depression**

Interest in the Thorne peat was revived and redirected in the 1880's, with the national growth of the peat litter industry. At this time, when the reclamation of new land had already ceased to be profitable, much of the region's warpland had been put on the market. This was in response to both poor, wet seasons in the 1870's, and, more fundamentally, falling agricultural profits in the gathering agrarian

depression. Further large scale warping of the peat was thus most unlikely. Instead, peat came to be viewed once again as a valuable resource, not as a hindrance to improvement.

### **Litter companies –Griendtsveen**

In the 1880's/90's, several litter companies became established on Thorne Moors. Each of them, not all of which were contemporaneous, leased a part of the moorland, from where they removed their peat for processing, usually via a muscle-powered tramway network. The ability to lay workable tramways demonstrates the degree to which moorland drainage was by then advancing. One of the companies, the Dutchbased Griendtsveen Moss Litter Company, became established at Thorne in 1894. This, and the other surviving companies, amalgamated their interests in 1896 to form the British Moss Litter Company. In their brief period of direct involvement, Griendtsveen established – as in the Netherlands – a series of parallel canals on their part of Thorne Waste. These subsequently remained in use with the British Moss Litter Company until 1922, when they became disused. The canal system, for the conveyance of cut peat to the company's mill, was quite separate from the older watercourses on the moorland, and the main canal traversed the existing Durham's Warping Drain via a purposebuilt *aqueduct*. The canals were never fully operational, with only the southernmost certainly exploited and used, and at least some of the others never proceeded with, beyond being marked out on the surface.

### **Drainage management**

The projected total length of the canals was over 22km, but the percentage actually boated on was appreciably less, perhaps no more than 50%. An associated drainage network was excavated into the same region of peat ground, but quite separate from the canals, being linked instead to the preexisting drains. The drainage had to attempt the difficult balance of drying the immediate area sufficiently to achieve effective peat winning and localised wheelbarrow transportation, yet keeping the water levels in the canals sufficiently high to allow the passage of barges. There was, nevertheless, a severe water shortage in the canals at times, and silting was a problem. A



wind-pump was erected to move some water into the southern canals from a neighbouring drain. In a further effort to retain water, clay was deposited in the canals in places, but probably neither efficiently nor effectively. In addition to the localised effects of the Dutch canals, the litter industry also required widescale drainage of the areas of active peat workings (the 'flats'). These minor drains and cuttings were linked with the established moorland drains. The scale of the industry by the turn of the century was obviously large, the extent of the peat workings affecting a large percentage possibly as high as 40% - of the moor surface at any given time. This heightened level of activity on the moorland demanded and allowed drainage improvements, and dictated that all relevant water courses should be periodically maintained. The method of peat cutting, and the requirement to blend different types of peat at the mills, did not necessitate that the peat resource of any given workings had to be continuously dug until the soil beneath was reached. The employed method was to take cuts into a flat at intervals, removing the peat in measured and relatively shallow layers. Thus the entire moorland surface was differentially, but progressively, lowered. This process of vertical phasing not only facilitated moorland transportation, but also eased nascent drainage problems. The decline of the litter industry in the years following the First World War required less intense exploitation, and this situation remained until the 1960's when Fisons took over the ailing British Moss Company. They projected the moorland into the growing horticultural peat market, concentrating on what had previously only been a minor use of the peat.

### **The Effects of Drainage**

Until the middle of the 19th Century, the surface of the mire was still active and developing, notwithstanding peat removal and drainage work. Although encroached on at the rim, the surviving naturally domed surface, albeit checked, continued to grow upwards. Hatfield (1866), in referring to the Thorne botanist Robert Harrison, stated that in 1831 the latter had remarked: 'When he went to live at Thorne, he could stand on his own threshold and see Crowle Church across the Moors, but such had been the rapid rise of the surface in a comparatively short period, that the sacred edifice had become obscured from view.'

In the early 1870's, the mire surface was still domed, with much of the surviving peat at least 2m above the limit for flood warping, although obviously not beyond the reach of determined dry warping. The maximum peat depth at this time was 6.26m. By the beginning of the present century, the entire peat surface had been brought below a feasible flood warping height, by both consolidation and peat removal. However, by this time, economic circumstances were much less favourable to extensive warping schemes.

### **Inefficient drainage network**

The new drainage network on the moorland was seemingly inefficient at times, its results were, to a superficial degree, reversible, and ultimately its effects were not as positive as earlier expected. It relied heavily on dry weather, favourable terrain, and on the right human aspirations and circumstances to promote and carry out the innovations required. Woodruffe Peacock (1920-21) wrote that in 1874, when he first knew Thorne Moors well, the site was still a quaking bog in places. When impacted, the surface could be seen 'trembling in waves', the undulations being lost 'in the distance', or suggestively, 'at the edge of the nearest ditch'. This description is, nevertheless, misleading. Sledge (1941) was able to depict the Spectacles Well area as late as the 1940's thus: 'One could hardly conceive of the locality being any wetter a century ago than it is today, and the conditions in this respect are not unlike those prevailing at the Rannoch Moor station for *Scheuchzeria*.'

### **Tremble in waves**

Even in the 1970's, limited sections of the moor could be made to 'tremble in waves', though the areas in question had clearly been cut for peat, probably on more than one occasion. Davis and Lees' (1878) remark that the moorland was 'intersected by numerous dykes of almost stagnant water' suggests at least a seasonally inefficient drainage system.

The development of the moss litter industry from the 1880's was the most vital factor in both maintaining the moorland drainage and by definition, significantly destroying and removing the peat. Woodruffe-Peacock (1920-21) observed that he did not experience

‘liquidity in the upper layers of this hag’ after 1891, although this comment obviously precluded the continuation of very wet areas in neglected dykes, derelict peat cuttings, turbary pits, surviving wells and odd corners. Some individual species of mire plants remained in these, and sometimes in more disturbed areas, the latter arising from the need to work the peat sequentially and in discrete units. Thus the surface was never entirely cut over; indeed, at least 60% of it was probably vegetated at any one time, though the exact parts varied temporarily. Some vegetational regeneration was possible between successive cuts of peat, an occurrence underpinned by the locally deteriorating state of the drainage until further exploitation required improvements to be made.

Nevertheless, the scale of the new peat industry was sufficient to promulgate noticeable changes. Parsons (1877), writing of the peat of Thorne Moors in that year, observed: It is said that points in the landscape are now visible across the moor which formerly were hidden, owing to the shrinkage of the drained (peat) land.

### **Close of the century**

At the close of the century, Bunker (1898) remarked that formerly only a part of the spire of Goole church was visible across the moors from Medge Hall, but that by the late 1890’s, the entire spire and a part of the tower beneath were easily seen, a phenomenon he ascribed to drainage and associated consolidation. It therefore seems paradoxical that Bunker, in his 1898 paper, and in an earlier manuscript version of it (Limbert 1989), should remark: ‘The growth of peat ... is still going on, though in consequence of a system of drainage well carried out, the moor is getting more solid, and is gradually sinking’. It seems certain that the ‘growth of peat’ referred to was simply that of *Sphagnum* moss exhibiting localised colonisation in suitable niches as they became available. This happened, for example, with *S. fimbriatum* Wils. In the Dutch peat canals following their abandonment in 1922, and by *Sphagnum* species in duck decoys when they became redundant. Anon. (1899) similarly remarked on the lowering of the entire moorland:

‘The trenches from which the peat has been cut have so effectually drained the land there has been a subsidence on the Goole and Crowle Moors of nearly twelve feet (c. 3.7m); a subsidence so definite that whereas before the moors were worked on their present extensive scale, a person standing at Crowle and looking in a bee-line across the moors could only see the top of Goole church spire, a view of the whole of the steeple can now be obtained’. The latest contemporary reference to these changes was that from Stephenson (1912), who noted that Thorne Moors had been, ‘till recently’, regarded as a ‘dangerous swamp’. He added that ‘Deep ditches have been cut through it and the water drained off, and it is now comparatively sound’.

*The Drainage of Thorne Waste in the Nineteenth Century* By Martin  
Limbert Thorne Local History Society  
Occasional Paper No. 5. 1990



BPAW Fen and  
Moors Nature Reserve



• Mill Drain

• Will Pits



Thorne Moors -  
National Nature Reserve

• Swinefleet Warping Drain •

Crowle Moors

MEDGE HALL

A18

Goole

*History is the most dangerous creation ever produced by the chemistry of the human intellect. It causes dreams, blurs men's mind, saddles them with false memories... makes their old wounds fester, haunts them when they are awake, and drives them into megalomania and persecution.*

Paul Valéry

Joseph Nieters read the booklet on the drainage of Thorne Waste. Slowly, he begins to believe that he knows enough about the history of the peat around Thorne. When Gambard returns from birdwatching, Joseph says:

'Now I know Thorne Waste like the contents of my pockets.' He rests his hands on his thighs. 'But,' Nieters continues, not noticing what he is saying, 'now I know the place and the peat, but I still don't know any of your personal background.'

'Excuse me?' Gambard replies. He seems surprised and baffled.

Joseph cannot help but pursue this path of psychological analysis. There is perhaps a faint tinge of regret in his voice, but more than that there is an undertone of understanding the embarrassment of Gambard.

'I told you about my love of literature,' says Joseph. 'I told you about my favourite authors, like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who opens his bizarre novel *One Hundred Years of Loneliness* with the main character waiting for his death, I told you about *A Legacy of Confession* by Marcellus Emants, who confesses to killing his wife. In the novella *Apport*, *Kasper Apport* by Gerard Stout, the narrator confesses to having killed his three sisters - Faith, Hope and Love - and I forgot to tell you about the dead Japanese soldier who fought on without being aware that he was dead. • A dead man walking. In short, I spoke about my state of mind using my literary preferences. And what about you?' And after a sort of silence, Joseph adds: 'No more peat for the moment.'

‘Perhaps,’ says Gambard, ‘you would like to know more about the birds I spotted while you were reading.’ He spoke in a lower voice than during his lecture. He seemed relieved. After a pause, he says: ‘I must confess that I appreciate the directness of your speech and your questions.’ Gambard is behind the bench. He is looking south, the same direction as Joseph. Geese fly by, communicating with each other. Perhaps the birds have a message for the men at the former tramway. The message could be: Feel free, open yourself up.

Joseph turns his head and points to a lone birch tree on the rim of Will Pits. While Gambard was birdwatching - peeing - Joseph had noticed a dilapidated birdhouse. The roof of the nest box had fallen off. The case of the nest box had faded colours. Joseph had seen pink and moss-green, which must have been very red and green, perhaps with shades of orange, blue, yellow and white. A whiter shade of pale. • The bird nest box had reminded him of the one in the front of Eyoum’s house.

Gambard seemed surprised by Joseph’s observation. The birdhouse was on the other side of the trunk. Gambard seemed a little uncomfortable, but that could have been due to the occasional wet spots on his pants.

‘Indeed,’ says Gambard after regaining his composure. The peat expert rubs his crotch. ‘Eyoum made the bird box years ago. It is a good professional. It really is an outstanding carpenter. Years in the open in Thorn Waste has its price,’ he adds, nodding in the direction of the birch tree. ‘It’s high noon • to replace this nest box with a new one.’

‘Strange place for a birdhouse,’ says Joseph. ‘It must have some particular meaning. As if it commemorates a very special event.’ Perhaps, Joseph thought, Eyoum was more than just an acquaintance of Gambard’s.

‘Let’s continue our walk,’ says Gambard. ‘Beware of snakes in this paradise regained.’



lumbering bees of a darker colour than the rest, will, it is true, wander aimlessly about the hive, and wait for the others to feed them and house them; but these are the drones, or male bees (3, Fig. 54), who never do any work except during one or two days in their whole lives. But the smaller working bees (1, Fig. 54) begin to be busy at once. Some fly off in search of

Fig. 54.



1. Worker bee. 2. Queen-bee. 3. Drone or male bee.

honey. Others walk carefully all round the inside of the hive to see if there are any cracks in it; and if there are, they go off to the horse-chestnut trees, poplars, hollyhocks, or other plants which have sticky juice, and gather a kind of gum called "propolis;" with which they cement the cracks, and make them air-tight. They again cluster round the entrance (2, Fig. 54) blacker than the others, and have longer and shorter wings; for this is the queen, the mother of the hive, and she must be watched and fed.

But the largest number begin to fly out from the roof just as they did from the hole of the apple tree. What are they doing there? Watch for a little while and you will soon see one bee come out



## MÄNNER UND HELDEN

I. Es ist die innigste Freude, Menschen, zu bewundern, wem kann; nichts hebt ihn — wäre es auch nur auf Augenblicke — über seine Kleinlichkeit. Einsenkungen schmeißen aus, wie wahre Bewunderung.

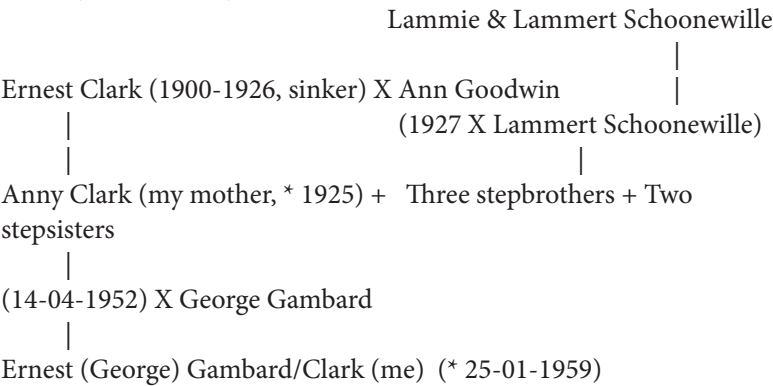
Alle Menschen, besonders Frauen, sind gewissermaßen „Anbeter“ und beten das, was nur einigermaßen möglich ist. Es ist möglich, ein Etwas, was auch nur ein kleines, anzubeten; aber nicht möglich ist dies mit einem reinen aufplärrenden Nichts!

II. Ich glaube, daß die Menschenerehrung in jeder verschiedenen Epoche der Welt auf andere Weise geschieht, daß die Seele aller sozialen Verhältnisse unter den Menschen ist, und daß die Tugend und Weise, wie sie gut oder übel statuiert, einen genauen Maßstab für den Grad von der Übelbefinden abgibt, welcher in den Verhältnissen der Welt obwaltet.

Der Reichtum der Welt steht eben in der Menschlichkeit. Du siehst es und

# George Gambard / Ernest Clark explores Drenthe

I've been cooped up all my life. Thank God I'm not claustrophobic. Maybe I inherited it from my grandfather, no genes for claustrophobia. Ernest Clark was a pitman at the Thorne mine. He died aged 26 when scaffolding collapsed in the second shaft - deep down the mine - on his birthday, 15 March 1926. My mother, his first born, was one year old at the time. Baby Anny had taken her first steps at his hands that morning. Within a year of her husband's death, my grandmother had remarried Lammert Schoonewille, a peat digger from the province of Drenthe. She gave birth to three younger stepbrothers and two stepsisters. My mother took her stepfather's surname, Schoonewille, until my mother married on 14 April 1952. After my mother's marriage to George Gambard, my father, she used Clark as her surname, not Schoonewille, not Gambard, but Clark, to ensure her independence. At my mother's insistence, I was christened Ernest on 25 January 1959, in memory of my grandfather. My father called me Jordy. My mother preferred Ernest, but to keep the peace in the family she called me George. Very confusing. There was not a single photograph of my grandfather Ernest Clark in the house. It seemed to me later that there was an underlying struggle between my mother and my stepfather that subconsciously undermined my sense of security in the family.



My stepfather's parents - my stepgrandparents Lammie and Lammert Schoonewille - were still alive when I was in my teens. I saw them often without realising that my grandmother Ann had also existed. I never met my grandmother Ann. My grandmother was never mentioned. Probably because I rarely saw my mother's stepbrothers and stepsisters. Who knows? They didn't seem to get on well. The 1930s were years of economic depression, poverty, the threat of war and uncertainty. My grandmother, Ann Clark, needed a husband who would provide at least some support to bring up her daughter Anny. After the mine disaster, my grandmother Ann Clark remarried for practical reasons. She took Schoonewille as her family name. The five children who followed me were the price my grandmother paid for a new husband and regular care and income. My mother Ann did not learn to walk until she was two years old, the effects of the mine accident must have been quite severe, although she could only have experienced her father's death through her mother's grief. In any case. Love was not the first thing on anyone's mind in times of economic and mental crisis.

When I was a baby my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, that was what it looked like at first. Later it was diagnosed as nervous exhaustion, or something like that, maybe hysteria. Whatever it was, she couldn't feed me. There were feeding bottles with a teat to give lukewarm cow's milk, but it was not as good as mother's milk. Our neighbours at the time were a black couple who had a stillborn baby. That's why Babs breastfed me. I'm still allergic to cow's milk, but I'm not sure if it's psychosomatic.

Years later my father ran off with black Babs - wearing Clarks, the story goes - and a year after that my mother committed suicide, but that's another story.

I must have been in my first year at Goole grammar school in 1978 when I heard about the 1926 Thorne mine disaster and my grandfather's death. In Goole, as in the whole of Yorkshire, there was very little local history in the curriculum, and very little attention paid to the local language and literature. It was at Goole Grammar School that I first met William VanDam. William's grandfather, Ernest Walton, had died in the same mine accident. The widow, Carol Lougher, didn't remarry.

Ernest Walton (sinker, 1896 - 1926) X Carol Lougher (1892 - 1968)

|  
Caroline Walton (\* 1924) x Egbert VanDam

|  
Ernest William/Willy VanDam/Walton (1959)

There was an instant connection between us, the boys. We had the same names and both had a grandfather Ernest who had died in the pit. William's mother had married Egbert VanDam, born in Vroomshoop and a descendant of a peat digger who had worked in The Black Hole, a Griendtsveen site. Drenthe peat was the next link between sharpshooter William/Willy (Ernest Walton - VanDam) and me George (Ernest Clark - Gambard).

I'm skipping over a large part of my life story. There is no need to reveal events that are only a slight variation on ordinary life. The first trip out of the village, the first fight with Mum, the first time Dad hit me, the first bicycle (second hand), the first kale meal, the first stout, the first day of school and the first last day of school. The first burst of hormones, the first conflict about attending Holy Mass, and the first doubts about God and myself. The first vote for the Whigs (wrong), the first vote for the Tories (wrong), the first open-lipped kiss (wrong), the first anything (bad). I realise that I have largely forgotten most of the firsts (good). Now I know that there are new firsts every instant. My first walk with Joseph Nieters in Thorne Waste (excellent).

My first friend was Ernest Walton, who called himself William, after William the Conqueror. I called myself George Clark, Geordie, after the many famous and violent kings. We became friends, not close friends, just casual friends who shared a minimum of secrets. Although, after reading *Old Shatterhand and Winnetou*,• we cut our forearms and became blood brothers. We never shared girls to kiss with open lips, which I still regret. When I look back, I am amazed to see that even then I was cooped up in my own safe cage.

*Next pages: Roman Catholic Church Mary Immaculate in Erica.*









Our paths took different turns. Willy joined the SAS• He became a sniper, who served humanity in what he called 'killing fields'.

I went to Hull University to read English. This gave me enough time to bunbury• from society. Literature was my excuse, my pretext for not getting involved in social interactions. No, I wasn't shy. I was most comfortable when I was alone. When I received an invitation, I used a book - *Ulysses* - that I had to read as an excuse not to attend the party. A book is a man's best friend. My research took me to Drenthe, to De Peel (NL), the birthplace of my step-great-grandmother and step-great-grandfather Lammie and Lammert Schoonewille. Although not in my bloodline, I became interested in life and living conditions in South-East Drenthe. Since their son had been naturalised,• we were more or less compatriots.

In the third year of my studies I took the ferry from Hull to Hoek van Holland. After a day's journey I found myself at Pension Veltrop, situated near the peat extraction area of Maatschappij Griendtsveen, the same company that was involved in peat extraction in Thorne Waste around 1890.

Pension Veltrop was located in a former bakery on the Dommerskanaal, a canal dug to transport peat and moss from the nearby Amsterdamsche Veld. - The owners of the peat bog were investors from Amsterdam. - I was given a room of my own• in the guesthouse, next to the room of Floriske van de Pot, a teacher of Dutch who had recently qualified (PhD) at the University of Groningen. She was my age, beautiful breasts,• white, and far more intellectual than I. She could have been a self-confident sand dancer• from the peat. Being an intellectual in De Peel, in South-East Drenthe, was her biggest problem, she said. She considered her brains to be her biggest asset, and her biggest challenge, among people with a low level of education, averse to philosophy and reflection, who hardly read a book, let alone literature, let alone regional novels and poetry.

We had many interesting discussions about regional literature. Floriske - her name was a feminine version of Floris - had made comparisons between Drenthe and Sri Lankan literature in her thesis.• In the past, the Dutch ruled Ceylon until the English took over in 1795. She said

that according to regional and missionary literature, boys who were given a black woman to nurse later in life preferred black women as marriage partners, or at least as bed partners. I was more or less stunned. Floriske made clear to me what had been going on in my head since I had read *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *Notes of a Native Son* by James Baldwin, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *Babs* written by Gerard Stout, *The Autograph Man* by Zadie Smith - much later I read *White Teeth* by her - and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Floriske also made me understand what I later experienced when William/Willy Walton brought his black wife to Waterside. I felt jealous and longed to snatch Eyoum from my one-legged former blood brother and classmate. I felt like enslaving her.

*J'ai froid*, Floriske said, when a woman said it, meant she wanted to make love. At that time I only knew the meaning of 'I'm hot' or 'I'm in heat'. I never really thought about black women, honeysuckle and love. Literature and language were my kindergarten, my playground, my first love and my partner in bed.

We regularly cooked Chicken Curry Madras. • The dish reminded her of her trip to Sri Lanka and Mr Singh, a former worker on her father's chicken farm. This dish now became part of the traditional cuisine of South-East Drenthe. In this region, after five years, almost anything becomes a tradition. The conservative population was deeply attached to Easter bonfires and carbide shooting. Carbide shooting on New Years Eve was done by placing a bean-sized piece of calcium carbide ( $\text{CaC}_2$ ) in a can with a lid and a hole in the bottom. After spitting on the carbide, the lid was closed and the tin placed under the shoe. After a short time, a burning match next to the hole in the bottom ignited the mixture of ethylene ( $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2$ ) and air. The explosion blew the lid of the can off. In modern versions, a battery of used milk containers (over 40 litres) was used to drive away evil spirits and immigrants, with footballs being shot into the air in the place of the lid. Spitting was replaced by urinating on the carbide or throwing a glass of beer into the container. The local council tried in vain to regulate this antiquated tradition, read stop.



## Das Periodensystem der Elemente

Ordnungszahl																	
Masse (u)																	
Symbol																	
Vorkommen																	
<div> <div> <div>○ natürlich</div> <div>⦿ nat. radioaktiv</div> <div>⦿ synthetisch</div> </div> <div> <div>— fest</div> <div>- - flüssig</div> <div>.... gasförmig</div> </div> </div>																	
Serie																	
<div> <div>•••• Alkalimetall</div> <div>•••• Erdalkalimetall</div> <div>•••• Übergangsmetall</div> <div>•••• Lanthanoid</div> <div>•••• Actinoid</div> <div>•••• Metall</div> <div>•••• Halbmetall</div> <div>•••• Nichtmetall</div> <div>•••• Halogen</div> <div>•••• Edelgas</div> </div>																	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 H 1.0079	2 He 4.0026	3 Li 6.941	4 Be 9.0122	5 B 10.811	6 C 12.011	7 N 14.007	8 O 15.999	9 F 18.998	10 Ne 20.18	11 Na 22.99	12 Mg 24.305	13 Al 26.982	14 Si 28.086	15 P 30.974	16 S 32.065	17 Cl 35.453	18 Ar 39.948
19 K 39.098	20 Ca 40.078	21 Sc 44.956	22 Ti 47.867	23 V 50.942	24 Cr 51.996	25 Mn 54.938	26 Fe 55.845	27 Co 58.933	28 Ni 58.693	29 Cu 63.546	30 Zn 65.38	31 Ga 69.723	32 Ge 72.64	33 As 74.922	34 Se 78.96	35 Br 79.904	36 Kr 83.798
37 Rb 85.468	38 Sr 87.62	39 Y 88.906	40 Zr 91.224	41 Nb 92.906	42 Mo 95.94	43 Tc 97.907	44 Ru 101.07	45 Rh 102.91	46 Pd 106.42	47 Ag 107.87	48 Cd 112.41	49 In 114.82	50 Sn 118.71	51 Sb 121.76	52 Te 127.6	53 I 126.9	54 Xe 131.29
55 Cs 132.91	56 Ba 137.33	57 La 138.91	58 Ce 140.12	59 Pr 140.91	60 Nd 144.24	61 Pm 144.91	62 Sm 150.36	63 Eu 151.96	64 Gd 157.25	65 Tb 158.93	66 Dy 162.5	67 Ho 164.93	68 Er 167.26	69 Tm 168.93	70 Yb 173.05	71 Lu 174.97	72 Hf 178.49
87 Fr 223.0	88 Ra 226.0	89 Ac 227.0	90 Th 232.04	91 Pa 231.04	92 U 238.03	93 Np 237.0	94 Pu 244.0	95 Am 243.0	96 Cm 247.0	97 Bk 247.0	98 Cf 251.0	99 Es 252.0	100 Fm 257.0	101 Md 258.0	102 No 259.0	103 Lr 262.0	104 Rf 261.1
Innere Übergangsmetalle (Lanthanoide und Actinoide)																	
57 La 138.91	58 Ce 140.12	59 Pr 140.91	60 Nd 144.24	61 Pm 144.91	62 Sm 150.36	63 Eu 151.96	64 Gd 157.25	65 Tb 158.93	66 Dy 162.5	67 Ho 164.93	68 Er 167.26	69 Tm 168.93	70 Yb 173.05	71 Lu 174.97	72 Hf 178.49	73 Ta 180.95	74 W 183.84
89 Ac 227.0	90 Th 232.04	91 Pa 231.04	92 U 238.03	93 Np 237.0	94 Pu 244.0	95 Am 243.0	96 Cm 247.0	97 Bk 247.0	98 Cf 251.0	99 Es 252.0	100 Fm 257.0	101 Md 258.0	102 No 259.0	103 Lr 262.0	104 Rf 261.1	105 Db 262.1	106 Sg 266.1

Floriske seemed to be an expert in didactics. She had a brilliant way of imparting knowledge. Several times she used the Periodic Table of the Elements, Mendeleev's scheme for organising atoms into atomic masses and properties. She asked me to find a word related to peat, starting with a symbol from the periodic table.

Easiest of course was to use P (phosphorus) for peat, followed by D (deuterium) for drainage. Mo (molybdenum) moss or peat. Th (thorium) Thorne. Cr (chromium) Crowle, He (helium) heather, etc. In another setting, the exercise was to find authors or book titles to replace the names of the elements.

Br (bromine) Walter Brierly; S (sulphur) Shakespeare; W (tungsten) Alfred North Whitehead, and so on. F (fluorine) Floriske had got these tools from the teacher of her secondary school Chemistry class in Emmen; Gerard Op de Weegh, whose name contained several elements.

More than once we have cycled around the area. Floriske showed me the graves of her father and mother. They were buried in a cemetery behind the Mary Immaculate church in Erica, a quiet place in a small forest. Not in the same grave, but their bones separated by the main path to an open-air chapel. (P. 130) Floriske said she was not going to bombard me with details about her family. Her father - chicken farmer, alcoholic, heavy smoker, partly illiterate, wheelchair user - and her mother - unacknowledged hypersensitive intellect, hot and cool woman, suicide by Virginia Woolf method• - lived separately at the same chicken farm, in the same double bed. Floriske did not feel the need to continue with these trivial events. My cicerone emphasised what she called the importance of being Eernsachtig.•

At the foot of the altar in the open-air chapel were three names of Roman Catholics with connections to Erica who died in the second World War. Jantinus Hermanus Vinke died in Rinsumageest, Friesland, and Jozef Frederik Anton van de Griendt, born in Rotterdam, connected with the Griendtsveen company, died in Leiden. Harmannus Henderikus Bontjer died in London while on guard duty at Queen Wilhelmina's residence in Maidenhead. No one knew any more details about these deaths.• A shame, Floriske said. There may be more war victims from Erica, Floriske said, but she did not know other names. She never visited the public Protestant cemetery a kilometre to the west in Erica. In the whole of Drenthe there is not a single memorial park.

In South-East Drenthe, the Second World War was not often mentioned, although the older generation knew perfectly well who had collaborated with the occupying forces. Of course, she said, I must mention *Reis door de nacht* - Journey through the Night - written in Dutch with Drents dialogues by *Bartje* author Anne de Vries. The Second World War hardly existed in the regional dialect. Floriske only had a single story that explicitly dealt with betrayal and reconciliation. She translated *Stoffel Stoffelmans* into English. It wasn't really a shocking story at the time. In later years I realised that there seemed to be a predictive message in this chapter of the *Anyas, de Vrolijk saga*.•

The village Erica was a melting pot of immigrant farmers and peat



STICHTING DE OORZAKEN EN HET LIDEN

JANTINUS  
HERMANUS VINKE  
GEB. 2 SEPT. 1923  
OVERL. 1944



HARMANNUS  
HENDERIKUS BONTJER  
GEB. 3 AUG. 1915  
OVERL. 1944

JOZEF FREDERIK ANTON VAN DE GRIENDT  
GEB. 24 DECEMBER 1922  
OVERL. 15 MAART 1945





diggers from all over the place, German, Friesian, Twente, Groningen, a blend of Christian religions and pagan beliefs. Some of the peat diggers, the most enterprising, worked part of the year in Thorne Waste and in Cambusnethan, Scotland, she said. Until the 1960s, the village was a sectarian area. The Kerkweg and Kerklaan were 100% Roman Catholic. Bakers and butchers had their own clientele based on religion. Sports clubs had members who shared the same faith. Only after secularisation in the seventies did the clubs merge. When asked who they belong to, every member of the old guard knows the answer. The surname indicates the religious background of the Drent. Floriske loved shoes and bought a new pair for every special occasion. She used to shop at the Rolink shoe store in Erica. The business had recently closed, followed shortly after by a massage parlor called Happy Ending. In the shoe shop window was a black and white photo of Gerard Rolink, the family son, playing his Gibson ES 335 guitar and singing the popular single of that time: The Silly One, by his band Human Orchestra. The song was about all the misfits in and surrounding Erica, possibly half the population. There was no Animal Orchestra in Erica to listen to.

Floriske showed me half a library stuffed with a variety of books written in local dialects. • The province had at least seven different Lower Saxon dialects. The first serious literature dates from 1850. Novels first began to be serialised in regular newspapers. These stories portrayed village life in the so-called Olde Laandschop. Regional novels, primarily dealing with the problems resulting from marriages between the lower and upper classes, between farmhands and daughters or sons of landowners and civil servants. The highest level of education led to a job as a primary school teacher. In addition to alcohol abuse and gossip, there are many deaths, including suicide, in these regional novels, as well as upheavals over the inheritance of land. Occasionally there is a marriage between cousins, which was not uncommon in Britain as well.

Dr Henk Nijkeuter • has published two books about authors from Drenthe. Whoever in Drenthe wrote a sentence like: *Ik bid niet veur brune bonen* - I won't pray for brown beans - a quote from the famous



*Bartje*, a novel by Anne de Vries about a young man by the name of Bartje who was kicked out by his parents because the boy refused to pray for the food served, boiled brown beans. Bartje was in a TV series. The boy is still a folk hero in Drenthe, in competition with singer/songwriter Daniël Lohues, whose *Op fietse* is now the regional anthem. The song reminds of: *Op een olde fietse moet ie het leren*, meaning: you learn cycling at an old bike, meaning the *Mama Italia*• method; choose an older woman if you want to learn how to fuck. Only one Roman Catholic writer lived in the east of the province. Gerhard Heinrich Vocks wrote *Little Hein*, a true peat novel.

The Second World War is hardly mentioned in poems and novels with regional dialects. Until the 1960s, there were no black protagonists in literature in Drenthe. Coming of age and personal struggles were the preferred themes. From the 70s, a few books featured practising homosexuals by the late Gerard Nijenhuis and the late Roel Reyntjes, famous for his erotic poems praising young boys. There are a few exceptions, says Floriske, but the mainstream of dialect literature in Drenthe can be ignored. The content of novels and poetry in the Low Saxon language and literature has a lightness that is not disturbed by gravity, black holes and black matter.

I have learned a lot about the local language. I had a steep learning curve, as scientists say. To foreigners, the local language can seem rude and wild. When a Drent from the South-East talks about a beautiful woman, and this does not necessarily mean physical beauty, he might say: 'I would rather lie on top of her than on a bed of nails'. Or: 'I would eat a bucket of that girl's poo.' If a man says to a boy in his company: 'I'm going for a walk with the dog,' or 'I'm going bird-watching', he meant: 'I'm going to pee outside. Join me.' That was the adagium: *Een goede Drent pist nooit allent*. - A real Drent never pisses alone. - If someone raises an eyebrow at the sound of a fart, you can expect: 'Better in open space than in a narrow hole'. Perhaps, says Floriske, this way of speaking is not restricted to Drenthe. Linguists also found these rude manners in De Peel in North Brabant, the birthplace of the Griendtsveen company. To this day, teachers in dialect-rich regions in the East report banality and profanity in their schools. The speakers themselves don't notice, they are used to it.

John and Dorothy Keur, two American anthropologists, interviewed all 365 people in the village of Anderen in Drenthe in 1953. In their report, *The Deeply Rooted*, they described people who took off their clothes and undressed in their company without a second thought. One morning Floriske knocked on my door at the Veltrop Pension to wake me up for a cycling trip. She was clad only in her panties, burgundy red, I remember. She certainly had beautiful breasts. There was no connotation of shame or any sign of sexual invitation. She was on her way to the loo at the bottom of the stairs. Unshaven. Whatever. Love was not the first thing on her mind in times of economic and mental crisis. Toedeloo.

### Autism

Floriske took me to many places in Drenthe. Sometimes she translated the Drenthe dialect, sometimes I just didn't need any translation. I could recognise words, I grasped the meaning of what people were saying. I grew accustomed to the bluntness and sense of humour of the people I met. People like to hear jokes, Floriske said. She told the following anecdote about the farmer who built a toilet over a leftover oil well near Schoonebeek, where oil was pumped from under the peat to the surface using a so-called 'yes-nodder'.•

The day after the farmer went to his newly built toilet, he was found dead sitting on the loo. This man had a habit of holding his breath until he heard his own stool fall. The hole was too deep, it took too long for him to breathe again.

This joke, told over and over again, combined the love of poo and piss with what I might call the autistic side of the character. Practical answers to practical questions. Metaphors, proverbs and allegories are poorly understood. Trivial introductions to start conversations are not always appropriate. 'Nice shoes you have', an ice-breaking remark, may be met with an eyebrow-raising look. What about my shoes? Something wrong with my shoes?

A Drent sees a friend arrive in a brand-new car. The latter touches the bonnet of his car and says: 'I won a prize in the lottery'. De Drent asks: 'How much money did you have won?' The driver has not won a prize. He was joking.



There are few authors who write explicitly about sex. A reader who is not familiar with this type of writing may feel embarrassed and overcome with anger and disgust. An autistic Drent - there are many on such a spectrum - can remain indifferent, just as he is indifferent when a bull and a cow mate. It is God-given nature. Why bother? Farmers smoke a cigarette during intercourse. - They were joking: Do you smoke after intercourse with your wife? I have never noticed steam coming out of her crotch afterwards. • - It is rare to find a story or a poem where a genuine connection is found on a authentic - you could call it religious - level.

In regional literature, stories seem to be witty and humorous in their description of events. This is not funny for a Peat-Drent. That's just reality, full of eernsachtigheid.

Floriske translated a typical example of such a story - found in her thesis - told by the known Joseph Nieters.

My decisiveness, speed, insight and drive often have an impressive and chilling effect. My terminology and directness cause disgust, shock and fear, although I am completely unaware of the impact. Some say they are afraid of me.

I am not careful, while I am sincere; in my opinion. An anecdote: if someone indicates that they are tired of life, I will not mention the advantages of living on. I ask if they want me to go with them to the coffin shop, to the hospice, to the euthanasia doctor or to the noose shop. I ask what is preferred: a cremation, a resomation, a pit with or without a cellar, a place under an oak tree with your dog, or the corpse as a donation to medical science. Say it.

It is not essential to live. Death is not imperative either. I respect the response. 'If you want something, what would make you change your mind?' And only when the other person digs in his or her heels • to resist, will I wonder in confusion how serious that death wish was: 'Oh, you mean something else? Say it!'

I very rarely notice the absurd. Or better: what I find normal, others seem to find absurd.

And in dialogue:

'The label, give me the label so I can orient myself further in

your instructions for cosy company. Your psychologist cicerone mentioned the diagnosis.’ She becomes impatient.

‘No,’ says Joseph. ‘I’m not sticking a medical label on my forehead.’ He shakes his head.

‘If you prefer to remain silent about your nature, about your being, your blue-print, if you prefer to disappear into your isolation, Floriske’s book *Chicken Curry Madras* may provide a solution with more space, clarity and enlightenment,’ she says. ‘I also read - not surprisingly - baroque, bizarre, absurd, for some readers banal and tasteless language with unprecedented directness when it comes to sex, religion, irony, love, life, death and stupidity. Alongside Tranströmer’s poetry, Valéry’s psychology and complex reflections, *Chicken Curry Madras* may provide more answers than I can get from you in our conversation.’

‘With a slight literary distance from actual events, it is very pleasant to communicate with an autistic person about the world between dream and deed,’• says Joseph. ‘Understand that the inner and outer world of an autistic person can be very different from your own. Words and sentences have a different charge and meaning. Read again what Floriske said in *Chicken Curry Madras* about language and meaning. You never read the same story.’

‘I am intrigued,’ she says, ‘to discover what we will learn about Floriske’s brothers Bennie and Leo from this approach. And about you. Joseph, I do hope you don’t get overwhelmed by the myriad of impressions.’•

I nodded and Floriske gave me a chapter from her book, her novel, which was also her dissertation. In the chapter entitled *Winterkraai* - *Winter Crow*, after seven peat diggers who all drowned in the peat during a storm at the end of the 19th century• - she enters the building in Weiteveen where the hospice is housed. After more than forty years, she meets her brother Leo (Lion), five years her junior, at the bed where he is destined to die. You will now read a typical representation of a dialogue and a description of the situation as it is experienced by an autistic person. This may seem funny to readers unfamiliar with autism, as Floriske said, but you should not forget how important it is to be earnest. •





The hospice was not in the Veltman Foundation or in the nun's house next door, but in the former vicarage on the east side of the small church. The front door was locked. I didn't ring the bell. The back door was always open, as usual. • Entering without knocking was not just for the Grim Reaper.

To the right of the door were two rooms. Above the doors were iron crosses, without the suffering and dying Saviour. Pure. The naked cross. • On the first door hung a lacquered wooden shield, a slender section of oak, with bark above and below, with the inscription SUNDEW, after the carnivorous plant *Sundew*, related in function to a sarcophagus; flesh-eater. The second door had a WINTER CROW • sign on it, as if the last station was a conference centre. The first door on the left was open. A sign: KITCHEN left nothing to the imagination. The second door on the left hid the toilet at THE END OF THE CORRIDOR • and not, as I expected, the corpse storage area. I washed my hands. I looked briefly in the mirror.

*I see my own face. Often in these lost days I look at this face. I don't understand this face at all.*

*Disgust, J.P. Sartre p. 34.*

*If you look in the mirror too long, you end up seeing a monkey.*

*La Nausea, J.P. Sartre p. 35.*

In the kitchen, overlooking the garden - rhododendrons, hydrangeas - I found a tray on the counter with two cups, a bottle of coffee milk, sugar cubes on a saucer and sweets - aspartame - in a shaker. I also saw a saucer of Sprits and Krakelingen - sandy biscuits and candied pretzels. My arrival had been anticipated. I tapped two cups of coffee from a Senseo. I grunted along with the coffee machine. Holding the tray in one hand, I made my way to the WINTER CROW, undoubtedly my brother's home and residence.

'Long time no see,' I said, saying exactly what I didn't want to say.

‘Moi,’ Leo said. ‘Come in, can you look out.’ As if he had made a mistake in the greeting, he continued: ‘Lang leden. Ie bint niks veraanderd.’• Nothing had changed with the excavations in the bog. The peat was gone; the ritual platitudes remained. I couldn’t tell if Leo had changed over the decades. I hadn’t seen him since he was a teenager. Leo was a cliché of an old man with the end in sight; tawny skin, thin straight hair, sour body odour, appropriate mourning edges on his fingernails, age spots and skin cancers on his head and neck, a pimple next to his nose with a few rebellious hairs, just like his unruly nose hairs and the hairs in his ears. He had hearing aids in both ears. His eyes had a clear and, I would almost say, cheerful laconic look - almost autistic dementia - perhaps that look was characteristic of mortals with proof of final surrender in their pockets, a ticket for the last ferry to cross the Styx.

Leo was wearing a thin, light blue V-neck jumper (Zeeman). He wore a rosary (Beeldenjans•) around his neck. The crucifix was hidden under the edge of a frequently washed T-shirt (Hema). I shook his hand (Floriske). He stretched out his hand as if surprised. Shaking hands didn’t seem to be part of his standard repertoire. My gaze moved from his eyes, down his clean-shaven chin to an inscription on his sweater.

In gold embroidery I read:

I CAN DO EVERYTHING MYSELF, INCLUDING DYING,  
DON’T HELP ME

In smaller letters, followed by:

UNLESS I ASK

The words were partly obscured by the lilac suspenders.

*-- You can hardly see the lilac suspenders, they don’t stand out at all, they blend in with the blue, but that’s false modesty: in reality you can’t miss them, they annoy me with their shy stubbornness. It’s as if they were well on their way to becoming purple, but got stuck halfway without giving up their pretensions. You’re tempted to say:*

*'Just go purple, then we won't talk about it anymore'. But no, they keep hesitating and trying. Sometimes they are overwhelmed by the blue that lies on all sides and they are hidden for a moment.*

*J.P. Sartre, Disgust, p. 39.*

Leo gestured to a kitchen chair at a small, semi-circular table by the windowsill. I put the tray down and sat down. Leo sat in the other chair. We had a view of the back garden through the lace.

'Daor zitten we dan,' - Now we're sitting - Leo said. He was scratching at the scab on his knee that was sticking out of his shorts. All I could do was grab the cups from the tray and nod my head in agreement. The questions and stories I had rehearsed on the way had not come.

'Laot de koffie niet kold worden.' Leo commented, hating cold coffee, and brought the cup to his mouth with a vibrating motion. 'Of hold ie van kolde koffie?' He didn't spill any coffee. I copied his manners, without the shaking.

I could have made a few obligatory comments about the coffee, the Spritsen, the Krakelingen. I could have talked about my bike ride, about the peeing man on the way to Leo's at the former Griendtsveen peat mill, and about the fact that in prehistoric times, when Neanderthals lived in the wild, territory marking with gezeik - peeing + moaning - was very common, just as it is today. I could have talked about the golf course and the resort, about the width and depth of the Dommerskanaal and Kanaal A, about my moped trips to Neuenhaus, about women's laugh buttons - hidden in their panties - and French kisses, about my Dutch lessons at grammar school in Emmen and my didactic readings at university in Groningen. I could have talked about Tony Roosken's bicycles and Van Veenen's apple pies - appelcarrés. I could have talked to Leo about the tomatoes and cucumbers from Jan Warmoes' greenhouse, about the past tense of cucumber salad - comcombarsilid. I could have explained to Leo the benefits and pleasures of the elemental Period System, especially in relation to the composition of ashes, to which we will return. I could have asked Leo questions.

I said nothing. I didn't ask anything. I emptied my cup, put the net curtains aside, killed a panicky fly with my thumb and let go of the lace.



'Ik wul nog een koffie,' Leo said and ordered another cup of coffee. 'Neem zölf ok iene.' He invited me to have another coffee. He pointed to a trolley hidden behind the door. 'Take this trolley tray; mien piccolo,' Leo said. 'So comfortable. Kiek uut veur de drempel.' Pointing to the door sill.

When I drove back with two cups of coffee, Leo was in bed. His trousers and lilac suspenders were at the foot of the bed, along with the blue jumper with the writing on it. The rosary crucifix was pinned to his off-white T-shirt. Next to the bed was a pair of grey underpants with yellow and brown stains, waiting for enzymes and bleach.

'Schoef the houseboy maor naost 't bere. Kan'k der beter bij.' I parked the trolley beside his bed, within reach. With my foot I pushed the underpants out of sight. What I don't see isn't there.

'Ik wul nog een krakeling,' Leo said. 'Neem zölf ok iene.'

I took the plate from the half-round table and moved the kitchen chair to the side of the bed. Above the bed, almost to the end, hung a television. The sound was off. Leo followed my gaze.

'Everything,' Leo said, 'Geleuf het of niet. Alles komp in herhaling, ok as *live* in de bovenhoek stiet. Ik ok. Ik kom ok in herhaling; believe it or not. Ik ok.'• Leo pointed to the monitor that said *live* in the top corner. I drank my coffee before it got cold. Before I could ask about life after death, Buddhism, reincarnation, eternal life, confessions, holy oil, purgatory, prehensions, metaphysics, parallel universes and aliens, Leo brought me down with both feet on the wooden floor of the death house.

'Brand joe de mond niet,' Leo said, warning me not to burn my tongue and lips.

I nodded. On the screen a ibex leapt over a snowy Himalayan mountain, pursued by a Bengal tiger(?). I felt the Sprits disintegrate between my fingers. Sand biscuits were not my favourite. I put the cups and plates on the trolley and went into my legs. I rose.

A busy café appeared on the screen. The camera zoomed in on a jukebox.

'Nog hiel even en dan begunt de negerin te zingen' - In a moment, and then the black woman starts to sing.- Leo scratched behind his ear. He heard the sound of the television in his hearing aids. I felt superfluous, and I was. Everyone can die for themselves. Leo had not yet asked me a question.

‘Wu’j iens kieken of Ellenbeek wat veur mij is? Ik bin niet Rooms meer, al geleuf ik het wel’. I told him about the public cemetery in Ellenbeek, since he was no longer a Roman Catholic. Leo groaned and began to pull gently on the rosary. ‘Ik huuf niet bij het tabernakel in de grond.’

Leo was referring to the location of the stolen tabernacle.

In 1925, the stolen tabernacle was found buried in the moor a few days after it was taken from the church in Weiteveen on the first Sunday in May. National attention to the ‘miracle of recovery’ and to poverty had led to collections and prayers for the buckwheat colony. Together, the money and prayers went towards building the sisters’ house as a bulwark against the approaching fiends (orthodox reformed; *fienen*• believers as good as baby poop) from the Bible Belt. The Roman cemetery of Our Lady Queen of Peace next to the sheepfold was built on the site of the tabernacle; by now populated by sisters with the inscription on their gravestones:

HERE RESTS ... WAITING FOR THE RESURRECTION

In Ellenbeek was the public cemetery, close to the main road from Klazienaveen to Nieuw-Schoonebeek. There were far less than 40 people waiting for their turn at the graveyard in Ellenbroek.

I took the cups to the kitchen and washed them. I wheeled the trolley back to Leo’s room. He had his headphones on and seemed to be listening to the film about the café with his eyes closed.

‘Nog hiel even en dan begunt de negerin te zingen,’ Leo smiled and said, ‘Schiere muziek; everybody hörts.’• Obviously he had heard me coming.

‘Oens Bennie mag ok kommen,’ Leo invited his brother after my question. ‘As e der aordigheid an hef. Hij moet wel opschieten. Ik heb de langste tied had.’ Bennie had to hurry, Leo’s time was short. It was the first and it turned out to be the last hint of his approaching death.

Leo pulled back the sheet. He lay naked on the mattress - in zien blote kont. Between his bare bottom and the mattress I saw a brown rubber sheet.

‘Ik zit vanneis in de luiers,’ Leo said, showing his nappies. ‘Zo blief ik dreuge,’ - That’s how I stay dry, - he gnashed, ‘achter mien oren.’•

Behind my ears.- - Leo arranged his evenoude - same-old / penis- - and continued, 'met grup'.

Leo was referring to the 'pee ditch' in the incontinence nappy for dying seniors. He seemed to be trying to upgrade his discomfort. I didn't need to know the details of his demise, but apparently some insight into his final course was inevitable.

Leo lifted his left knee and farted like his late father in the wheelchair. Live, I thought. Live in replay.

Leo put the sheet back.

'Nog hiel even en dan begunt de negerin te zingen,' he said.

'Moi,' I said, the latch in my hand. 'Tot kiek.' I didn't wait for his answer and closed the door of the WINTER CROW. I wouldn't see him alive again.







## Warum ich so klug bin.

— Warum ich klug bin? Ihr weißt? Warum ich überhaupt so klug bin? Ich habe nie über Fragen nachgedacht, die keine sind. — Ich habe mich nicht verschwendet. — Eigentliche Schwierigkeiten zum Beispiel kenne ich nicht an. Es ist mir gänzlich entgangen, inwiefern ich „klug“ sein sollte. Insgleichen fehlt mir ein zuverlässiges Kriterium dafür, was ein Gewissensbiß ist: nach dem, was man darüber hört, scheint mir ein Gewissensbiß gar nicht existierendes ... Ich möchte nicht eine Handlung hinter mich in Stich lassen, ich würde vorziehen, den schlimmen Ausgang, die Folgen grundsätzlich aus der Werthfrage wegzulassen. Man verliert beim schlimmen Ausgang gar nicht den richtigen Blick für Das, was man that. Ein Gewissensbiß scheint mir eine Art „böser Blick“ zu sein, das festschlägt, um so mehr bei sich in Ewigkeit zu sein, weil es fehlschlug — das gehört eher schon zum „Moral.“ — „Gott“, „Unsterblichkeit der Seele“, „Ereigniß“, „Jenseits“ lauter Begriffe, denen ich keine Aufmerksamkeit, auch keine Zeit geschenkt habe. Ich habe mich nicht, — ich war vielleicht nie, — „geklug“? Ich kenne den Atheismus durchsichtig nicht an. Es ist mir weniger als Ereigniß: er steht sich bei mir nicht an. Ich bin ein neugieriger Mensch, ich bin klug, um

## Religion in Drenthe

Religion has a rich history in the province of Drenthe. Before the Christian religion took hold of the hearts and souls of the people of Friesland (Now Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe), many lives were sacrificed. Between 650-800 AD, the people changed from what was called paganism to faith in the Saviour. Missionaries came from Britain, Anglo-Saxons such as Wilfred, Bishop of York, Wicbert, Willebrordus (690-696) and Willehad from Northumberland (778-779). Willehad baptised Drenten and later became Bishop of Bremen. Bonifatius, who was murdered near Dokkum in 753, moved to what is now Fryslân, Groningen and Drenthe. They spoke a related Low Saxon language. The population was probably very sparse; perhaps a few thousand hunters, farmers and fishermen lived in the lowlands, forests and heathlands near the North Sea, where there were no dikes to protect people and livestock.

New missionaries were still arriving. Sometimes God helped a little. Instead of going to war, two men, a Christian and a pagan, stood opposite each other, each on one leg.

### **Standing on one leg**

As a logical consequence of his misfortunes, King Radboud II was forced to evacuate his kingdom and surrender it to his conqueror. Some people still believe in the Frisian myth that Charlemagne acquired their kingdom as a result of a trick he allegedly used when the mutual delegates of the two kings agreed to settle the disputes between them by a divine judgement (*ordalium*), namely the judgement of the cross (*ordalium crucis*), in which the person who could stand on one leg in front of and near an erected cross for the longest time was awarded.

This is how Christianity came to Friesland. Pagans were given the choice of conversion or decapitation.

Several Roman Catholic churches were built from 800 onwards. Drenthe belonged to the bishop of Utrecht. The rulers used Drenthe as their private hunting grounds, such as Hatfield Chase.

In 1517 Luther started his religious reformation. It was not until 1598 that Drenthe became Protestant by order of the governor. This was during the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), mainly between Protestants and Catholics, disguised as a political war. Roman Catholic priests were exiled. All churches became Protestant. During the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619), the situation worsened. The Drenthe were strict in the Reformed doctrine. In the centuries that followed, the strict rules of the church were softened until the fanatics wanted a stricter interpretation of biblical truth. So Protestant and Reformed Christians increasingly harassed each other. Jews were not welcome and left for the neighbouring province of Groningen.

### **Batavian Republic 1795-1813**

The Batavian Republic began in 1795 and the country came under the influence of France. One of the consequences was the separation of church and state. The head of state was no longer the head of the church. There was freedom of religion.

Napoleon changed all that around 1800. The emperor allowed Jews to live wherever they wanted and Roman Catholics were free to follow the Pope.

In 1813 Napoleon lost the decisive battle of Leipzig and French rule ended. King William I arrived from England. In 1815 he proclaimed himself King of the Netherlands. The birth of the modern Netherlands.

### **Hendrik de Cock 1831-1837**

Differences over the interpretation of the Synod of Dordrecht continued, and after 1831 Hendrik de Cock of Ulrum in the province of Groningen initiated an ecclesiastical schism. The schism lasted for several years, and in 1840 a new movement emerged: the Christian Reformed Church. (Fienen)•.

The Protestant Church failed to return the churches to their original owners. The newly established Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815) provided the Catholic Church with small churches, known as Waterstaatskerken.

Almost all R.C. churches are located in the east of the province, thanks to R.C. German immigrants who came to work the peat of the Bourtanger bog. After 2020, more and more churches are for sale.



# b. HET KONINKRIJK DER NEDERLANDEN

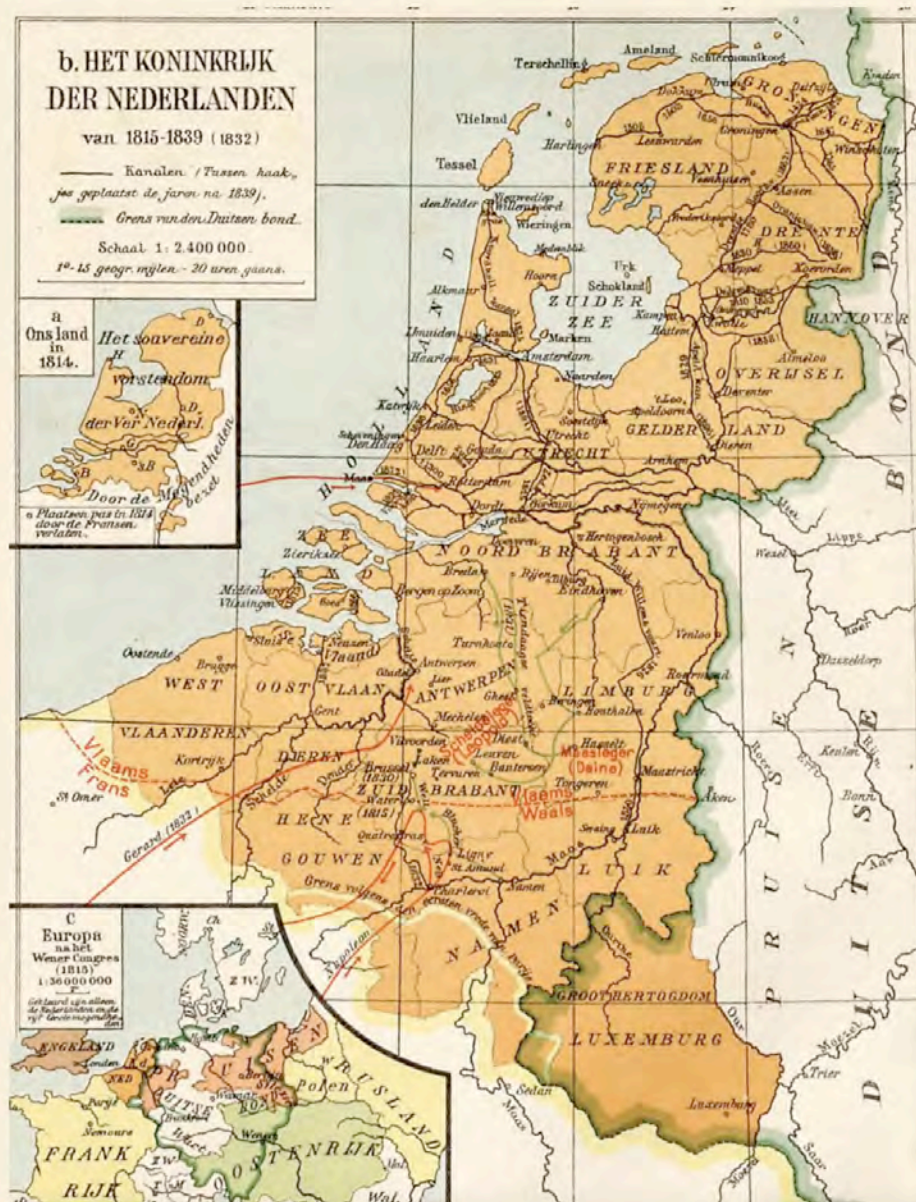
van 1815-1839 (1832)

Kanalen (Tussen haakjes geplaatst de jaren na 1839).

Grens rindert Duitien bond.

Schaal 1: 2.400 000.

10-15 geogr. mijlen - 20 uren gaans.





It was not until 1853 that the bishop received permission to re-establish his diocese. In Drenthe, the Protestants wrote to King William II to keep the Catholics out. In vain.

Jews were tolerated. A number of regional novels contain passages about stealing and bribing Jews.

### 1853 Agreement with the Pope

In 1853, an agreement was reached with the Pope that restored the episcopal hierarchy in the Netherlands. Dioceses were created again. And after the dioceses came the parishes. Until 1850, Catholics made up a very small part of the population in Drenthe, but this changed as a result of peat cutting in the Smilde area and, more importantly, the exploitation of the peat bogs in South-East Drenthe. The reclamation of the Bourtangere peat bog caused numerous migrations. Catholic farmers and peat workers came from Germany and Twente. Villages such as Emmer-Compascuum, Barger-Compascuum, Weiteveen, Klazienaveen and part of Erica were populated by Catholics from Germany, at that time still the kingdom of Hannover in Munsterland.

Many villages on the eastern border of Drenthe were founded after 1860. On the other side of the border, Bismarck was busy merging the Bundeslander into Germany. This happened during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).

### Jews

In the early days, no more than three Israelites with their families were allowed in each of the six Kerspels ('districts') in Drenthe where they wished to settle: a butcher, a merchant and a filch.

The latter always had to live at the end of the village or hamlet, as he was not allowed to run his business elsewhere. This was probably decided as a health measure to prevent the spread of contagious animal diseases and unhealthy and unpleasant air for humans. It seems that all this was tacitly accepted as the rule in the kerspels and hamlets



concerned, except where it was expressly laid down for each kerspel by local decrees, the so-called Boer-Willekeuren.

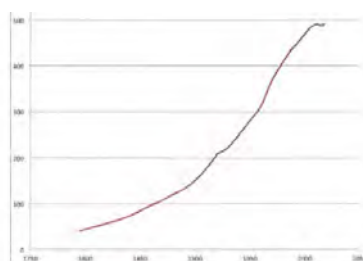
In some kerspels, however, this rule seems to have been ignored, and it can be deduced from various circumstances that the Drenthe Provincial Council was not particularly sympathetic to their settlement in Drenthe, although it tacitly tolerated it here and there, neither encouraging nor benefiting from it. However, the documents that do exist suggest that this was less a matter of religious difference than a fear that many poor Jews would become a burden on the public purse. Before the establishment of Jewish communities in Drenthe, the poor Jews who lived in the various churches were distributed on an equal footing with the Christians from the regular funds of the Reformed Diaconates.

For a long time the number of Jews who settled in this region remained relatively small, and when the number of Israelites increased here and there, the Diet of 19 March 1782 decreed, in accordance with the custom that existed almost everywhere, that the Ridderschap en Eigenerfden (Knights & Landowners) should apply:

- \* dat in alle kerspellen, waar geen willekeuren op het inwonen der Joden bestonden, aan slechts drie israëlitische huisgezinnen verlof tot inwoning zou mogen worden verleend, en
- \* dat in die plaatsen, waar meer dan drie belijders der Mozaïsche leer en hunne huishoudingen werden gevonden, ingeval zij door sterven, verhuizing of anderszins waren verminderd, dat getal niet weder zou mogen worden overschreden.

\* That in all the Kerspels where there were no regulations concerning the residence of Jews, only three Israelite families should be permitted to live there; and

\* That in those places where more than three followers of the teaching of Moses and their households were found, if they had been diminished by death, removal or otherwise, that number should not be exceeded.



*Number of Drents 1795-2018 (x 1000)*

### **Low population figures**

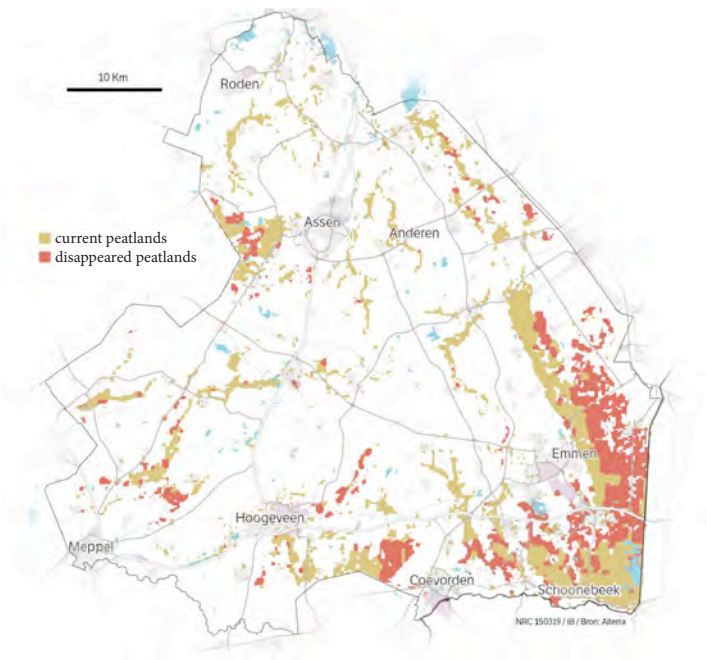
In the early period, the number of people living in Drenthe was relatively small. At the time of Boniface, there were probably less than 10,000 people living in the northern area called Frisia, which is now the provinces of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe. The population has been recorded since the Batavian Republic.

In 1800, Drenthe had a population of around 35,000, and by 1853 this figure had risen to 85,000. In 2024 it will be half a million.

### **Reborn Geordie**

I must admit that I felt very comfortable during my stay in South-East Drenthe at the Pension Veltrop. Away from Thorne, away from Hull, away from the other students, away from my inner voice, albeit unconscious, telling me how to act and how to behave. My inner voice was constantly reminding me of social conventions. Not every step in Drenthe was different from a step in Yorkshire. I was polite and friendly, I made idiotic and sensible comments, I fulfilled my obligations, but somehow I felt freer to move and think in harmony with my unfolding authentic individuality. I was befriending my inner drive, my not yet fully crystallised self. Talking to Floriske was not a struggle at all - I didn't have to worry about my words - but at the same time the different first language forced me to ask my trivial and burning questions in a simple and direct way. I took time to formulate my questions so that I was confident that there were only minor differences between what I said and what she heard and understood. I didn't feel any desire to share a bed with her, even though we were on the same wavelength. The lack of such physical desire was a relief

in itself. I could concentrate on something higher, the name of which I did not yet know. It could be something spiritual or metaphysical, it could be something religious. It was something to be discovered. My journey of discovery began in De Peel, it was as if, I hesitate to say, I was reborn in Drenthe. I was a reborn Geordie.







Bargerveen

NEDERLAND  
DUITSCHLAND

I was not capable of speaking when I was alive. Now that I am dead, of which more later, I claim my place in history. I speak the language of those above me, and I do not say this as a joke to indicate that I'm underground. I have a good relationship with the volunteers who keep the cemetery in order – *Ordnung Muss Sein* –. The volunteers and the warden are quiet types; like me. I feel at home here at the cemetery in Weiteveen. For the first time I feel at home. *He has finally come home*, would fit perfectly on the funeral card or in the advertisement of *De Emmer Courant*. The news of my death was never in an advertisement. No one made a funeral card or prayer card for me. I was mentioned in the newspaper next to an advertisement for lingerie, next to a *Bekanntmachung*. I was the *Bekanntmachung*. Dead, missing. I was not a man to commemorate. Stoffel Stoffelmans, traitor dead in the turf. *Zurück in die Heimat. Verdammt noch mal!*

*Meine Heimat. Meine Heimat. Ach was soll das?* My grandfather, also a Stoffel, my father, also a Stoffel. Catholic generations of farmers from Münsterland. Bismarck, then you know. My ancestors came from far away, from over the *grup*. – The German border is called manure gutter. – My ancestors had not wanted to fight the French, nobody did. My father lived in Barger-Compascuum. During the Great War, he did not want to be part of the politicians' *Strapatzen*. Our new homeland remained neutral. We got the cold shoulder. *Was sich liebt das neckt sich*, not at all. *Unsere Deutsche Nacken*.

I was twenty years at the time. I went to Dedemsvaart. In Balkbrug I met Trui Wellink. We were both searching. We didn't chase each other, unfocused, like animals, not like beasts, like farm livestock, we were both looking for another animal to mate with. We got married in Weiteveen, halfway between Balkbrug and Barger-Compascuum. Peat digging in the Amsterdamseveld. Griendtsveen. Digging, setting down, digging, tipping wagons on the narrow-gauge track. Dirty work. I poached game. I shot. I set nooses. I developed my talents

in the field. Nobody took me *eernsachtig*. No one did. I was proud of myself and of Trui.

Trui and I had children, one dead child after another. Then Anna came, after how many stillborn births I don't know. Anna survived. That was something good. I hadn't lost my fear. But for how long? For how long? How long will she survive? And will I have a son?

I did have a son, but he was dead. I stopped drinking. I smoked. Every peat digger smoked. I smoked and I poached.

I took Trui by force. My cowardice. She made no resistance. She had never done that to me before. I raped my Trui. Anna entered the bedroom all of a sudden. I had gone mad. I had lost my senses. I only had my dick. I had no need to guide my rod. My cock showed me the way. I told Anna to stay. *Anna seh mal an wie ich deine Mutti ficke*. I fucked a warm living corpse. Trui. I fucked a corpse. Love; I did not know.

It wasn't my fault that the Germans invaded. I hadn't asked for Krieg. I wanted a son. I did not get a son. I was beaten and mocked by society. That time with Anna at the foot of the bed and the Alsatian beside me was the last time *die letzte Mal...* Trui no longer wanted me. I will stab you, Trui told me, if you touch me again then I will kill you. I stopped touching Trui. I stayed away from Anna. I never touched her. Anna. No. What the sexton told you about me is a bunch of lies. *Lüge*. My whole existence is made up of lies, not just my own.

If it were not for the war, nothing would have happened to me. The war is not my fault. The pastor told me to behave. I replied: 'Don't give me orders. I don't must do anything. •

Trui washed my uniform and underwear. Anna ironed my pants. Anna polished my boots. I looked like an officer. I had a gun and a rifle. I was given a licence to kill. I asked for nothing. The double barrel was between Trui and me. I had one hand on the trigger and the other... I never revealed my identity. I hadn't made myself known in bed. *Verdammt noch Mal*.

On Sunday I stood in the rear of the Church, in the empty space under the tower. Anna wouldn't kneel beside me. She didn't want to stand close to me. I stood in the back, under the tower. First in my Sunday clothes, later in my black uniform. I listened to the Father. I agreed with him. Love, and the greatest of the three; Love. I believed in Hitler. I hoped for a better life. The pastor told me to stay away. He said it bluntly. 'Bid ie maor buten.' - 'Just pray outside.' -

I said, 'Be careful, man. Be very careful.'

I stayed away from the Mass. That same evening I caught my first people in hiding. The following Saturday I made confession. I asked for absolution. I received no blessing, no absolution, no penance, no forgiveness from the pastor or from God himself. Now I have caught you, I thought. Now I have got you. I had done nothing wrong. Befehl ist Befehl.

After the first capture came the second, and after the second the third. People were afraid of me. They all kept away from me. Trui stayed. Anna stayed. To prove my loyalty to the Führer, the local *Ortskommandant* asked me to shoot my dog. I took Hektor with me into the moor. At the border marker, which was no longer a border marker, I shot Hektor in the neck. A dog. My dog. I knew an address on the Kamerlingswieke. I bought a young dog, an Alsatian. I called him Siegfried. Victory over peace. The farmer refused to accept money for the dog.

'Be careful, man. Be very careful,' I said. I paid double. I had done the wrong thing far too often. I saw no way back. I was blind.

I met Gertrude in Wesuwe, 5 km across the grup. Her Heinrich was at the Eastern Front. Every month I went to see Gertrude. No one would miss me in the moor. I milked cows. I brought in hay. I hammered poles in the field. I drank beer and schnapps at the neighbours'. Everyone was tired of the war. We simply didn't say anything. We didn't speak of anything. If you know nothin', you can say nothin'.

On the Amsterdamseveld I did what I had to do. I was on patrol with my new dog. Siegfried. The dog did what a dog is expected to do. When I was going out in the evening, Trui said she wanted me in bed.



When I came back late at night, I wanted to sleep in her bed, my bed. She would not want me when I came back from work. The double barrel between us. All the time. I had Gertrude in Wesuwe. A warm woman.

Six pounds. My son in Wesuwe actually weighed six pounds. His name was Heinrich. I stayed in Wesuwe for six weeks.

There were people hiding in the peat north of the Dommerskanaal. 'Jeuden. Ik gao hen het Dommerskanaal,' I said to Trui. 'I'm gonna catch them tonight.' Anna was warming goat's milk on the stove. A good hunter gives his game a chance.

*Gien jeude te vinden.* The German soldiers seemed not to bother. They just fulfilled their duty. As if the war was nothing to worry about. The next day I went to Wesuwe, to Gertrude. To Heinrich. He was still breathing, my sweet boy. I wanted another son. Gertrude refused and left me alone. Her Heinrich sent letters from the Ostfront. He had *Heimweh*. I had *Fernweh*. I didn't know which side of the grup my *Heimat* was on.

The enemy, who may have been a friend in disguise, was invading Normandy. From the first news I knew that I and Hitler would lose this war. Stalin in the East, Americans, British, Poles, French, Africans, Arabs advancing from the South and the West.

*'An de Noordersloot wordt een zwien slacht,'*• I said. *'Ik gao der op of.'*

Trui cooked black pudding. Anna stared out of her window. Anna and Trui wanted to get rid of me. My child wanted me to go to hell.

That night in the moor behind the Noordersloot I shot two times in the air. Not a single swine in sight.

Gertrude said: *'Ich trage dein Kind unter meinem Herzen.'* I fed the swine. I fed the cows with grass and hay. I kissed Gertrude on her mouth. *'Leck mich am Arsch,'*• she said. Before I crossed the grup she spread her legs.

In Weiteveen there was chowder on the stove. Bacon, chowder, stew. The enemy was in Brabant.

'Broer,' said Anna. 'Broer saw me home.'

Anna had gone dancing at Van Dijk's in Klazienaveen. He had accompanied her home during Sperrzeit. All 7 km to Weiteveen.

Trui made a plate full of chowder and bacon. Rye bread. I looked at the boy. I looked at Anna.

Anna was a woman. I realised she had met her husband. Anna had become a woman.

I knew what Broer Vrolijk was up to. I certainly wasn't an idiot. I knew everyone in the neighbourhood. Everyone. I knew all the people who were in hiding, all the pilots, all the swine.

I went to Wesuwe. I went to Gertrude. She said her Heinrich was on his way. He was on his way back from the front, missing his right arm. Gertrude had her hands on her lap. I hadn't expected to see my second child. My second child with Gertrude and also my first child, my Heinrich, had a new Vati. Gertrude didn't say so, but I knew I was not to come again. '*Leck mich am Arsch*,' she said. Before I crossed the grup, she spread her legs. Faith, hope and love; none of those three.

In the confessional I put my double barrel in the corner. I bowed. I knelt down. Everything was dark. Everything was black. I was in uniform. I say what I want to say.

'Good and evil,' said the Father. 'Good and evil is a matter for Our Lord. Good and evil is a matter for the living.'

'And forgiveness?' I ask.

'There is no need for forgiveness in death,' the pastor said. 'In death there is no distinction between good and evil.'

'And forgiveness?' I repeat.

From beyond the mesh separating me from the priest, I hear a paternoster. Perhaps the Father had forgiven me in the name of the Father and of the Son. I do not know. May be the priest let me go without forgiveness, in the Name of the Holy Ghost.

Anna said she was pregnant. She did not say what the name of the baby would be. I can't remember if I congratulated her. I think I didn't

say anything. Anna asked if I would like to come hunting with Broer; in Bargerveen. I knew what Anna asked. I needn't have pondered on an answer. It was the week before Easter.

We walked in silence. I knew the way. I knew Bargerveen. Large parts had been excavated. Maatschappij Klazienaveen was creating a new landscape. Griendtsveen removed the turf and peat. A small part, the worst part of the raised bog, remained. Bumpy raised bog. Damp. A birch here and there. Peat moss, round sundew, some reddish-brown heather.

At first the sky was grey. Gradually it cleared, as if I could look through a hole into the heavens. In the distance lay my other home. Gertrude lived there together with her Heinrich and my Heinrich, and maybe another little boy. Or a little girl, Hilde. Heinrich vom Ostfront. War does not make a man better. The eastern wind rustled the grass. Above me great shrikes, swallows and maybe a lark. I know all the birds by name. Shrikes, swallows. Low over the peat a great spotted woodpecker with a black hat. Hey, hey, hey. I knew what his screech meant.

I felt light, almost weightless. I knew my destination. Not for a moment did I doubt my destiny. The double barrel bended over my back. Behind me I heard his steps on the moor, my future son-in-law. The father of my future grandchild. Broer. Broer Vrolijk. I felt sorry for him.

I glanced at the sun.

'Lunch time,' I say. 'Feed the brute.' I nod to a bentepol. • I take the shotgun off my back.

'One o'clock,' Broer says. 'One o'clock. He looks at the sun in the sky over Weiteveen.

I take buckwheat and bacon pancakes out of my knapsack. I put the pancakes on a piece of paper.

'Would you like some of this?' I say. I see my son-in-law, the father of my yet-to-be-born grandchild, raising his eyebrows. He was quiet. I nod my head a little. I lower myself onto another bentepol.

The boy glances up. Lancasters in formation. I don't count them. A real pleasure. The planes fly during the day. The end is near.

I took another pancake.

‘Good and evil,’ I say. ‘Death does not distinguish between good and evil.’ As long as I have known him, as many times as he walked our floor, I have never said so many words to him in a row. When I was through talking, I picked up my weapon.

‘Here,’ I say. He puts the rifle on his thigh.

Lancasters fly overhead again, from west to east.

‘Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen,’ I say. I stretch out my straight right arm in the direction of the bombers. With a piece of pancake between my fingers and the index finger of my left hand, I pretend to pull the trigger of my Flak Flak. Forget it. I suffered from the war I lost.

‘I got a Heinrich,’ I say. ‘Over there.’ I turn my head towards the grup. ‘I have a son in Wesuwe. A Drents boy.’ I wait. I see eyebrows moving over wide eyes in a pale face. Broer stops chewing. I see his lips curl in a tight mouth.

‘No one will profit from knowing that,’ I say, ‘Gieniend will benefit from knowing that. Not even Heinrich. My son.’

Broer nods as if to say: I have seen nothing and heard nothing.

I lay down with my back to the heath. The sun is in my face. I put my hands under my head.

‘Have you ever used a rifle?’ I asked.

Broer had never used a rifle, not even a double barrel.

‘Watch the recoil,’ I say. ‘You’ll feel a big punch on that shoulder. Press the rifle butt firmly against your shoulder. If you dont, the butt could hit you right in the head.’

We stand with our backs to each other. We piss on the moor.

I take the rifle. I put two shots in the rifle. I close the rifle.

‘If you pull the trigger, it will fire,’ I say. I give the double barrel to my son-in-law. I walk east to Wiederop. Wiederop is an old border line with a P sign. This is the beginning of Prussia.

‘Just a few more steps,’ I say. ‘We are more or less where we want to be.’

The sun is sinking over the Noordersloot. In the distance you can see



the spire of Erica's church. Each of us knows what we are waiting for.

I turn around. Behind me the sun. Behind me a black water peat pit. In front of me Broer, five metre away, my son-in-law, my daughter Anna's darling.

'I know why you are here,' I say. I just waited. Broer is gripping the rifle. He points the barrel at the ground.

'Hey, hey,' the black hat screams.

'I know why you brought me here,' I say. Broer raised the gun. I nod my head back.

'We, we, we are here for the same thing,' I say.









We walked along the Mills Drainage and reached Will Pits, a large fen, almost half way to Crowle. In the distance we could see the spire of Goole. Nieters was silent, as if inviting me to carry on. Ahead lay the deep black waters of Will Pits, where, according to local lore, evil spirits lived. Perhaps these spirits were similar to the Witte Wieven in the province of Drenthe. They were particularly visible in the early morning and late evening, when a layer of mist hung over the heaths and moors. These witches in white veils were truly mischievous and seductive gods.

'I wasn't sure whether to tell you more about my adventurous tour of South-East Drenthe,' I said.

'What about your arrival in Yorkshire after your stay in De Peel?' Nieters asked. 'Did your experience in my homeland change your thoughts and attitudes? How have your eyes been opened in terms of your everyday beliefs and behaviours? Has South-East Drenthe changed you, or better still, have you got to know yourself in a different light?'

I saw geese flying by. The V-shape of their flight changed frequently as the geese changed position, moving from the rear to the front, and the lead goose took a position behind. Nieters had followed my gaze.

'We cycled to the gymnasium,' Nieters said. 'Taking turns in the lead so we could cycle against the wind and rain coming from the front.'

His comment gave me time to find a preliminary answer to his query, which in the end was just one question: who are you?

'Floriske,' I said, 'read me a passage from a travel book written by three Podagrists. These men walked from Bad Bentheim in the county of Hannover to Assen, the capital of Drenthe. When they crossed the German-Dutch border, they wrote:

### **Drenthe**

't Is vreemd; maar van welken kant men Drenthe ook binnentrekke,



steeds dunkt het ons, alsof eene bedelende vrouw ons hare hand toereikt om eene aalmoes, en met de stilzwijgende bede op de lippen, dat men haar hare armoede niet euvel duide.

‘t Was ons nogtans wel om ‘t harte, dat wij den vaderlandschen bodem weder betraden. Hoe droevig ook de ontvangst zij, die de natuur den bezoeker van Drenthe hier schijnt voor te bereiden, waren wij echter hoogst tevreden over ‘t onthaal, dat de gepoederde kasteleinesse in de Koppel-paarden ons bezorgde. Geen schrik voor geroodrokte landdragonders zou ons uit den slaap houden. Wij ademden weder in den dampkring des altijd dierbaren Vaderlands.

*Van der Scheer, Boom en Lesturgeon. Drenthe in vluchtige en losse omtrekken geschetst door drie Podagrissen. 1843. Ter Verpoozing.*•

### Drenthe

It is strange, but no matter from which side one enters Drenthe, it always seems as if a begging woman is stretching out her hand for alms, with a silent prayer on her lips that her poverty will not be misunderstood.

Nevertheless, we were relieved to be back in our own country. However sad the reception that nature seems to prepare for the visitor to Drenthe, we were delighted by the welcome that the powdered hostess in the Koppelpaarden gave us. There is no fear of red-coated dragoons keeping us awake. We breathed again in the atmosphere of our ever-loving fatherland.

Having summed up the feelings of the arthritic podagrists on their return to Drenthe, I set about answering Nieters’ question.

‘Still waters run deep,’ I said. I pointed again to the Will Pits. ‘I still wonder why, after meeting Floriske and exploring her birthplace, I haven’t applied the new insights I gained in Drenthe to my daily life. In retrospect, it seems to me that I continued to behave and speak as I had always done. I carried on with my tradition, as if the new impressions I had received in South-East Drenthe had not mattered, as if I had learned not a thing, as if my mind was deeply rooted.’• in Yorkshire’

Nieters stepped forward cautiously, as if he wanted to peer into the

deep water. I touched him lightly on his shoulder to stop him.

‘It’s dangerous to come any closer,’ I said. ‘Plants float on water. They can sink suddenly. You won’t be the first to drown in these bottomless waters.’

I walked on to the Warping Swinefleet Drain. I wanted to leave this place where I had not been for years. It was my guilty landscape. This guilty spot in the peat was touched by the story Floriske read about Stoffel Stoffelmans at the side of Bargerveen. Nieters followed me.

‘I did a degree in English Language and Literature,’ I said. ‘I met a local girl. I still don’t know why I married her. Years passed. For some inexplicable reason, I slowly but surely came to hate her. I also began to hate myself, for some obscure reason, my life in a dark pit, without scaffolding, without any means of escape. I moved to Dutch Row in Moorends. You know the place, perhaps not as an eyewitness, but at least from literature and the street scene on Street View. I took her to Thorne Waste. I did not try to hold her back when she wanted to pick toezebollen• for a vase. There was sea-coal• in the pockets of her coat. She would pick whatever she found on her way, as if she never had enough. Willy – my brother in arms, my blood brother Ernest Walton – was waiting at the end of Will Pits. I wasn’t going to stop her from reaching into the water. Willy was still an excellent rifleman.’

Nieters looked at me. Maybe he just didn’t know what to say. Maybe he knew what to say. He was silent.

‘Only geese and deer and vipers in this godforsaken paradise. I never heard a shot.’ I continued. ‘No one may wait around to say, as Louis McNeice wrote in a poem. I guessed as much.’ Gambard sighted. ‘Her body was dredged up from the deepest waters. Willy had an alibi. He had been serving at John Bull just before the karaoke started. There was no 6.5mm Mannlicher Carcan rifle• hanging over the fireplace. I don’t know how, I don’t know why. What I did was seen and did not go unnoticed. In court I invoked my right to remain silent.’

‘Do you have anything to say?’ the presiding judge asked.

‘Yes,’ I replied ingenuously, ‘but you’d better keep me quiet.’

I was imprisoned for seven years. I was locked up in H.M. Prison near the Doncaster to Thorne railway line. I could hear the trains go by. I

knew the timetable. When I looked out, the bars gave me a feeling of protection. It seemed to me that I had found my destiny: a room of one's own, food and care, a good conversation now and then, and enough learned books to study and read for my self satisfaction.

In prison I studied the history of Thorne Waste, of peat extraction, of the Dutch diggers who dug deeper. I learned all the dazzling details.'

We crossed the Swinefleet Warping Drain and turned right.

'I think,' I said, 'you know the expression 'pulled from the turf' to describe the birth and development of a man or woman, or an it, from early childhood to full adulthood.'

Nieters knew.

'Carved from clay, drawn from peat, sculpted from sand, forged from water, found in a forest, plucked from kale, delivered by storks, left by a white witch,' Nieters said. He knew that it took half a lifetime to correct the mistakes made in bringing up a child by parents who did not know how to bring up a child. He knew the myth of normal behaviour.●

We walked on towards Crowle. The landscape changed into a neat copy of the peat colonies in Munsterse Veld, Emmer-Compascuum, Roswinkel, Zandberg.

'Do you need details?' I asked Nieters. 'Is there anything you want to know about how I killed my past?'

Nieters shook his head. Nothing left. He knew that past never dies.

'She and I, we walked the same path,' I said. 'She brought scones and hot coffee in a bottle wrapped in a *Goole Times* and a *Doncaster Gazette* to keep the coffee warm. We sat down on a soft rush, a bentepol, a pitrus (*Juncus inflexus*). It wasn't a picnic. I told her, 'I know why I'm here. I'm earnest,' I said. She turned the coffee cup upside down. 'We know why we are here,' she said. 'It is important to be earnest. We are here for the same thing.' She touched her coat and the lumps of coal in her pockets that she had collected from the site of the former mine near Dutch Row, known to the locals as Death Row. Before she left the bottle on the soft rushes and made her way for Will Pits she turned to me and said: 'Love, love that's why we're here.'

I made no attempt to stop her. I never heard the sniper's shot. There was no plunge. I took another coffee, looked at the spire of Goole, ate half the scone she had left and read *Goole Times*.●

‘So, did you have an interesting day?’ Eyoum asks. In Crowle, Joseph and Gambard had refreshed themselves at the Red Lion, an exquisite restaurant serving delicious food with a continental approach, no greasy sausages with bacon and greasy chips, but Chicken Curry Madras, haddock, sirloin steak, mashed potatoes, large potato wedges, salads, broccoli, a dish with vegetarian Brussels sprouts for the gourmet, in a well-lit and clean room with decent furniture. Eyoum picked Joseph at Crowle to drive him to Waterside. Gambard preferred to stay in the Red Lion. He said he was going to call a taxi.

Joseph looks at Eyoum. It laughs. He mirrors the expression on Eyoum’s face, searching for words he can’t find.

‘Perhaps you have experienced too many impressions during your walk with Ernest Clark,’ says Eyoum. It turns the Aston Martin around from the forecourt and together they leave Crowle, a small and isolated village with a familiar appearance to Joseph. Crowle has two primary schools, a government school and a Roman Catholic one. There is a market place surrounded by a few shops. There is a sports field. Just like at home, there are different-coloured bins for kitchen and garden waste, paper and rubbish. Crowle, like Weiteveen or Nieuw-Schoonebeek, is surrounded by open fields for potatoes, sugar beets and wheat. Crowle is surrounded by emptiness. The landscape reminded Joseph of a Groningen farmer who asked a tourist about his visit. ‘Why are you here? There’s nothing to see in this godforsaken place.’ The farmer failed to understand why the tourist wanted to be in a place that seemed deserted precisely because of its very emptiness. Moreover, an empty place is a good environment for discovery, there are fewer objects to distract the mind. Emptiness is a guide to the essence. The Groningen farmer did not recount his encounter with God. God said: ‘I created the world and this’, God pointed to the empty land, ‘this is your land.’ The Groningen farmer said: ‘Get off my land.’

‘We eat out in Goole,’ says Eyoum. ‘If we can find a restaurant like the Red Lion, but maybe we will find what we are looking for at the point of



departure.' It was clear to Joseph that Eyoum was referring to the novel *The Chemist* by Paul Coelho. Perhaps Eyoum was referring to his own quest, one that had brought him from Erica to Thorne and Crowle.

It drives north. The hamlet of Eastoft seems small, tidy and prosperous. A few houses, a decent tavern and lodge, River Don - referring to the old flow of the Don before Vermuyden intervened - a post office and Church of England primary school next to a church and cemetery. Volunteers remove leaves that have fallen on the paths and graves. There are lots of trees around the village; oaks, willows and pine trees. Eastoft is a wealthy part of the historic West Riding of Yorkshire.

Field Road to Goole could have been any road in the Peat Colonies on the German border between Nieuw-Schoonebeek, Klazienaveen and Ter Apel, including windmills. Some sheep feed on the remains of the harvest. Even the Grimme potato harvester is on its way. There is hardly any traffic.

Whins Gate, Sandhill Road and Kings Causeway lead to Swinefleet. A long cemetery runs along the right-hand side of the road, ending at St Margaret's Church in The Marshlands Benefice. On a grassy patch on the way to Goole, old agricultural tools are a reminder of times gone by. Many children are on the road and a mother is pushing a pram. New potatoes are on sale. Occasionally, solar panels on the roofs of brand-new houses contribute to sustainability. Tetley bitters are served at The Ship Inn on a terrace overlooking the Ouse. A sign at the door reads: Bruce Kelly is licensed to sell intoxicating liquor for consumption on or off the premises. Behind the pub, in the car park, there are steps to cross the embankment to the Ouse.

Joseph shakes his head. No halt here. After an intensely busy day, he longs for a quiet place. Eyoum stops the Aston Martin at the end of the village to add a few more impressions to Joseph's overcrowded brain. There is a war monument with more than a dozen names on the pedestal and a statue on top: a soldier with a rifle and a bayonet. Joseph gets out of the car to take a quick picture. Later, he goes online to look up the names of the soldiers.

Less than a kilometre later, Eyoum parks the car again. They leave the car.

'This is the Warpingrain Bridge,' says Eyoum. 'At this point the silt-laden waters of the Ouse found their way into Thorne Waste.'

‘Wet warping,’ says Joseph.

The ditch is no longer in use. The barrier is closed. Plants cover the water.

‘At Vroomshoop,’ says Joseph, ‘forty kilometres south of Schoonebeek, dry warping took place for about ten years from 1871/1872. The so-called veen-dam-culture was practised in places where the peat was not deep. A 10 cm layer of sand from the ditch excavation was poured onto the peat. This created banks between the trenches. At the end of 1881, more than 100 hectares were cultivated using this method. Fertilisers were used to improve the soil. This method was discarded after 1883 because of flooding.’

After passing through Old Goole, announced by a white-plastered half-timbered house, Eyoom slows down as they cross the Dutch River. To distract himself, Joseph checks his smartphone to see if there is a Red Lion or another wildlife inn serving dinner. He is unable to find one. They head for Rawcliff where they cross the Dutch River again. Moorends is coming closer. Eyoom stops in front of twenty red-brick houses.

‘Your ancestors lived here,’ it says; ‘I don’t know any of the people who live here. If you want, you can ring the bell to get acquainted.’ It laughs. ‘I’m kidding,’ it adds. ‘It’s time for dinner.’

Joseph closes his eyes. He’s taking a nap. When he awakes, he recognizes the Red Lion.

‘I’m sorry,’ Eyoom says. ‘It’s the only decent restaurant I know in the area. I’m sorry that British cuisine hasn’t taken a step back and made way for healthier food and less of the overload of meat, sauce and potatoes served in most places.’

Ernest Clark had ordered a taxi to take him home.

Once Joseph had freshened up, he looked across the table to where Eyoom was sitting. Behind Eyoom, a painted lion stood panting at the wall. Below it is a REX BESTIARY.●

‘The lion is an it,’ Eyoom says when it sees Joseph looking at the lion. ‘It is missing an essential part.’ It grins. ‘Not the quintessence?’

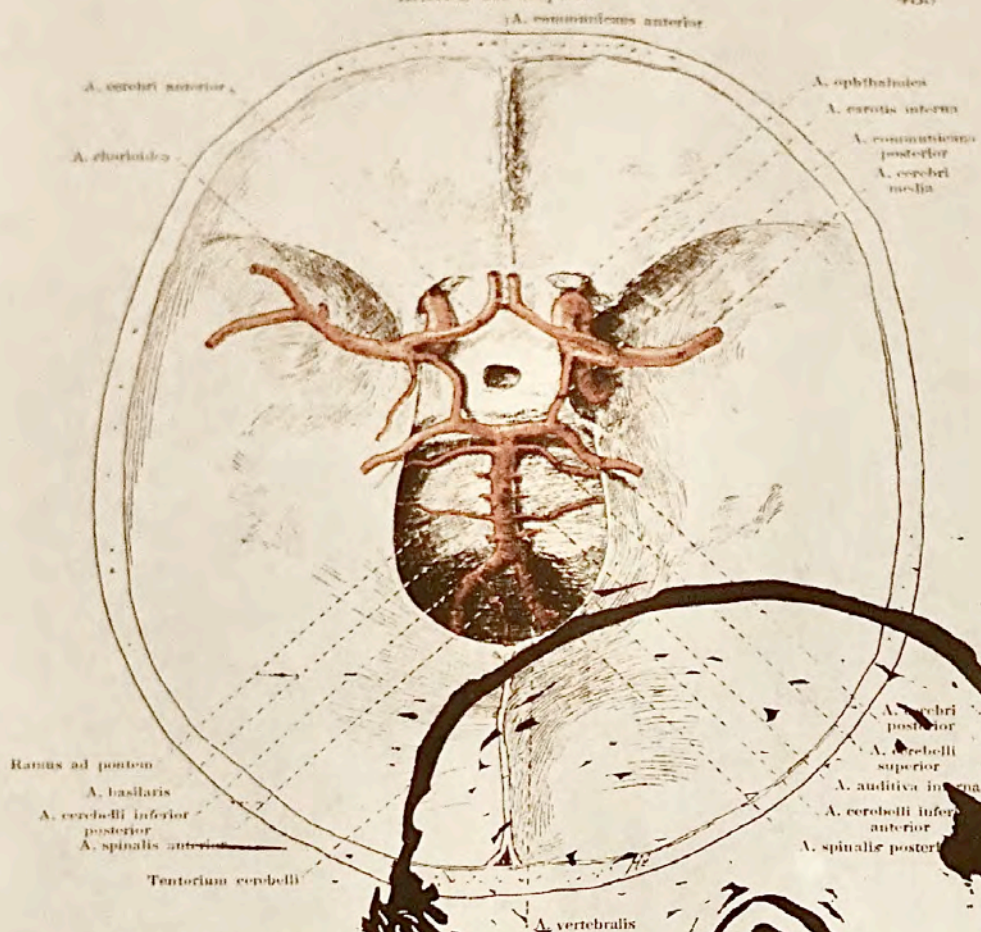
‘Ernest Gambard,’ says Joseph without thinking. ‘Ernest Clark.’

The waiter brings two Tetley bitters for the road. They both ordered Chicken Curry Madras.

‘Ernest must have confessed to you everything he did to deserve H.M. Prison,’ Eyoum says. ‘I know the story perfectly well.’ It laughs. ‘You could call me guilty by association. Yes, that’s possible.’

Joseph takes a sip. Yes, he is thirsty.

‘It is not clear whether Ernest is guilty of murder,’ Eyoum continues. ‘I know your head is brimming with questions and assumptions. As far as I have come to know you, you live primarily in your head and you have not learned to listen to your feelings. Who knows, one day, after your ramble around Yorkshire, you might be able to turn your head out, if only temporarily. Not only is it beneficial for your head, but also for your taste experience.’ Eyoum pointed to the Chicken Curry Madras that had been served. ‘After your trip to Wisham and Cambusnethan, where you wil meet Gerard Rolink, grandson of the Drents peat digger that found the bog man, we will talk about what happened in the moor. In the mean time I’ll ask Willy – Ernest Walton to write his life history. Better to hear from Ernest first, so you know both sides of what happened before we drain the swamp.• At the end of your pilgrimage, answers to your questions will be provided temporarily. Don’t forget the literary law that prohibits going after all the details.’



## 571. Lage der großen Gehirnarterien im Schädel

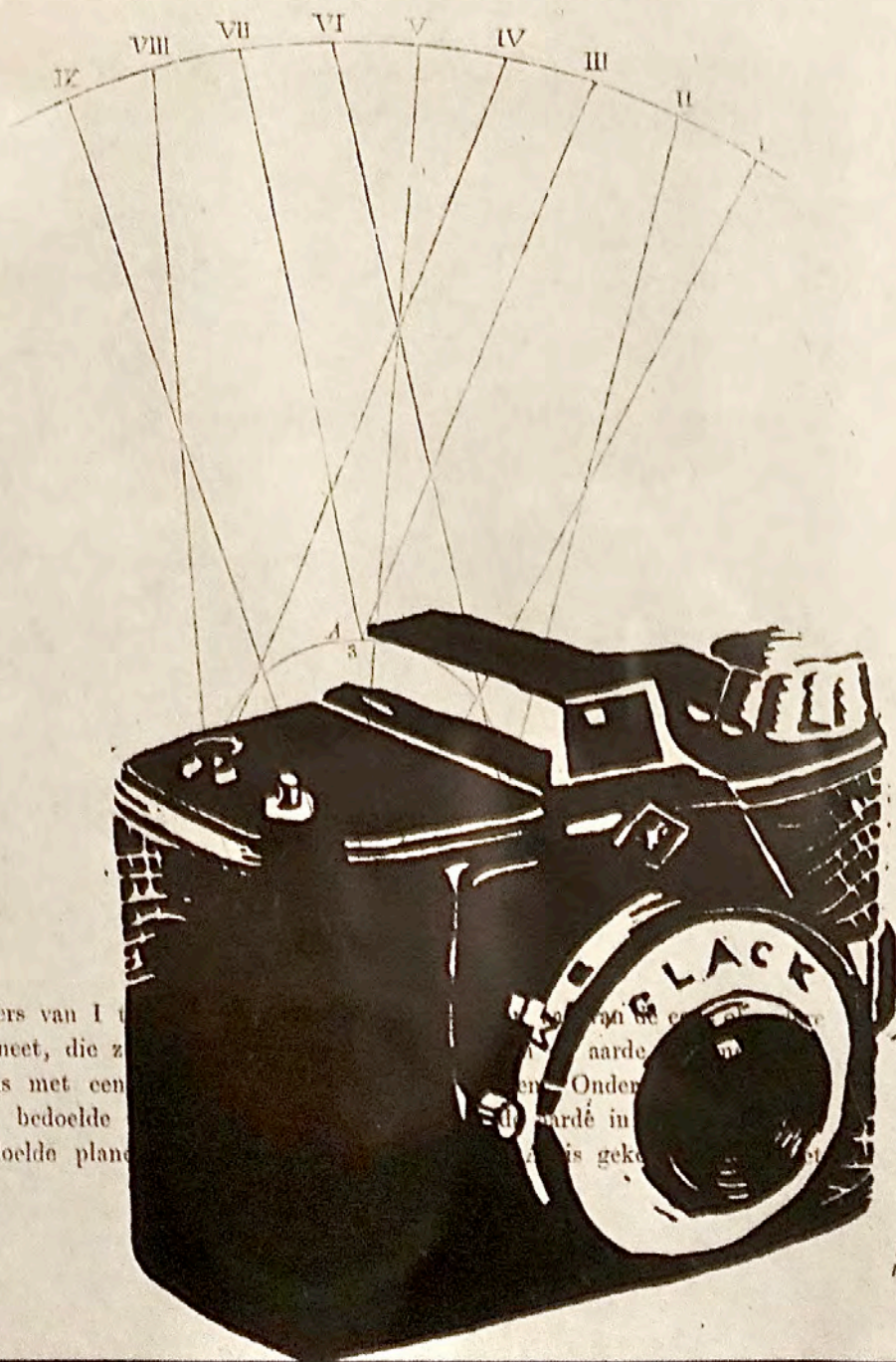
nach Entfernung des Gehirns; von oben.

(Rechterseits ist die *a. carotis interna* in ihrem Verlauf im Sinus cavernosus freigelegt.)

1. ***A. vertebralis*** (Fortsetzung (s. auch Figg. 567, 569); (Zweige innerhalb der *dura mater*):
  - e) *A. spinalis posterior*, dünn, verläuft am lateralen Rand der *nuchella obliqua* und läuft, mit derjenigen der anderen Seite anastomosierend, im Sinus transversus posterior des Rückenmarkes, vor und lateral von den hinteren Wurzeln, nach abwärts; sie vereinigt sich mit einigen Zweigen der *rami spiniales* der *a. vertebralis*, *aa. intercostales*, *lumbales* und *sacrales laterales* und versorgt das Rückenmark und seine Häute.
  - d) *A. spinalis anterior*, dünn, vereinigt sich mit dem gleichnamigen Gefäß der anderen Seite am oberen Ende des Rückenmarkes und läuft teilweise ober, teilweise geflechtartig aus 1–4 länglichen Maschen bestehend, der *fissura longitudinalis anterior* bis zum hinteren terminale abwärts; sie nimmt dabei, je nach einer wechselnden Anzahl von Zweigen der *rami spiniales* auf und versorgt das Rückenmark und seine Häute.
  - e) *A. cerebelli inferior posterior* wendet sich nach unten zum hinteren Abschnitt der unteren Kleinhirnlfläche, sie gibt Äste zum *plexus endothelialis ventriculi quarti*.



in ongeveer drie maanden tijds een vierde gedeelte van de ecliptica doorloopt, zoo kunnen die vier punten ook vier standen der aarde aanwijzen, telkens met tusschenruimte van drie maanden, zoodat de aarde ondersteld kan worden den 1 Januari van elk jaar in  $A_1$  te zijn, den 1 April in  $A_2$ , den 1 Juli in  $A_3$  en den 1 October in  $A_4$ . De Romeinsche



cijfers van I tot  
planeet, die z  
kens met een  
dat bedoelde  
bedoelde plane

van de e  
aarde  
en Onder  
de aarde in  
A is geke

## Willy Walton      The importance of being Ernest

It is better to tell the story of my life myself and not leave it to the author of this novel. I am not a philosopher, I am not a chemist, I am not a writer, I have stopped being a functioning husband since Eyoum has defined **it** as such, and above all, I have not been a husband since Nieters, the traveller, showed up. Now I'm a bartender at John Bull Inn, with one leg tucked under my butt and the other split into hundreds of pieces, somewhere in the sand along a dirt road in a faraway place, as if I were a sand dancer. I am a good cook. I am an honest card player. I know how to play snooker. I am a serious sniper. I know how to kill. Since I lost my leg, I know how to live.

My mother wanted me to be a priest. The fact that her son would become a priest would be a comfort for her. Her father - my grandfather - Ernest Walton was born in 1893. He died - the same age as Jesus - in the pit at Moorends. He was a sinking miner, a miner who dug and extracted stone, sand and clay to reach a coal seam 10 feet (3 metres) in thickness at a depth of 921.5 feet (842.2 metres) My mother Caroline was born prematurely on the day my grandfather's body was recovered from the shaft on March 25, 1926. That day, nine months before Christmas, is the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. My grandmother Carol never got married again. My mother Caroline remained her only child. My mother was 33 years old when I was born on 25 December 1959. So my conception was around Immaculate Mary. I was my mother's first and last born. I hardly got to know my father, as he was too busy with chicken husbandry.

Ernest Walton (sinker, 1893 - 1926) X Carol Lougher (1892 - 1968)

    |  
Caroline Walton (\* 1926) x Egbert VanDam

    |  
Ernest William/Willy VanDam/Walton (1959)

Any occupation was good for me, except miner or sinker in the mine. My mother sat on me like a hen on her chick, as if she were a breeding chicken. I was her project. My mother had high expectations, so she could only be disappointed. I was her consolation. I was her failure. Those who climb high can sink deep. Her dad Ernest was a sinker.

I must have been 12, maybe 13. I had left Moorends' primary school and was going to secondary school in Goole. We had a chicken farm where we kept breeding hens. The priest of the Roman Church came to talk to my parents about a calling. God needed me to christen black children in Africa.

I had never seen a black child. I had just discovered my own two-legged body. Maybe you know the song. The lyrics go something like this. *When I was a little boy, my mother showed me a cute magic toy*, and each day after school I played with my woken up cute magic toy in the chicken coop. God knew and saw everything, so He must have known that I was masturbating among the hens. The chickens around my feet pecked the seed and enjoyed my company. In the chicken coop I did not hear the call of the Father of Jesus. I had my freedom.

My mother always stressed the importance of being earnest, and the Missionary agreed fully. They talked about different things. My mother wanted me to be a worthy replacement for her father, whom she never knew. The priest in his white gown wanted me to become a slave in the service of God and his earthly rulers. I decided to remain earnest and honest. I changed my name from Ernest to William, after William the Conqueror.

After graduating, I joined the army. It was the camaraderie of the SAS that attracted me; one of the boys, and later one of the boys and girls. I had a steady hand and perfect eyesight. I could see clearly into the distance without glasses. I had no irregularities like cylinders or prisms in my eyes. I trained as a marksman. Every shot was a partridge,• as my late father used to say. All the breeding poultry were killed after my father died. I had a precision rifle, designed to kill at a range of three miles. I keep the trophies and medals in the cupboard under my boxer shorts. Pride? Am I still proud of having killed terrorists? That is a matter for philosophy. But I am not a philosopher.

A faraway country; it was there that I met Eyoum. It was love at first sight, although I wouldn't call it love these days. My mind had not yet settled. I had no idea about love, intimate contact, devotion, surrender and authenticity. I had no ideas anyway. My gun was my sweet magic toy. My body, I still had two legs to support me, took control. I was enjoying a completely new, addictive experience that far surpassed the pleasure I had had in the chicken coop. I wanted to marry Eyoum. She asked if I really meant it. The importance of being earnest cannot be overestimated, she said. At that moment I felt my heart pounding. I heard my mother's voice• at that moment. I felt closer to my dead grandfather; I felt like I was getting a pat on the back from him. It was a metaphysical experience. I am not an expert on the metaphysical.

I asked permission for a weekend off. Eyoum and I took a tent, an air mattress and the necessary supplies for a weekend at the river. I brought my knife and my 6.5mm Mannlicher Carcano regular shotgun.• We camped near the river. We caught a fish, I shot a buck,• we grilled food. In the tent we were one in good and in bad times. I howled like a wolf. Eyoum howled at the moon with me. In the morning she sang *Cry Me a River* and *Ebony and Ivory*.•

The next week I killed nine terrorists. Nine bullets between nine pairs of eyes. I started to look forward to the weekend. The weekend came. The Friday before, I lost my leg. While I was being treated, Eyoum went to the side of the road where I had made the mistake of stepping. She liked sand dancing. She found my big toe. My big toe is in strong water - formalin - on my bedside table. But I'm not a chemist.

It took me three months to recover. Before I was sent home, I killed a few more terrorists, which brought my total to 33. My age at the time. My military service was over. We moved to Waterside. Just in time for my Mum's funeral. She had her eyes closed beneath her tattooed eyebrows the last time I saw her. It was her body I saw. Not my mother. She was not sleeping, she was dead. I lifted my head to the heavens and thanked Mum for all the cute and magic toys. I thanked Mum for the black woman who had been baptised.

Eyoum and I purchased John Bull Inn. It was a way of returning home. With one leg missing, I had excuses for everything I wasn't



willing to do. Bunburying as Oscar Wilde said. No more cycling, no more rambling, no membership of the rifle club, no hunting hare, deer and fox at Hatfield Chase. I served drinks. I played snooker. I talked when I wanted to talk. I was silent when I wanted to be. Eyoum and I united when we felt like it. We started to live apart. It was the time Ernest Clark – George Gambard – started visiting us. I had not seen my blood brother for years. Ernest Clark was very on friendly terms with Eyoum. I noticed a kind of eagerness in his behaviour. That was because he had been breastfed by a black nanny, Ernest said when I told him what I had noticed. I needn't be afraid, Ernest added.

All Waterside, even all Thorne, knew that Eyoum was an *it* and no longer a *she*. No one cared. Most people had enough grief to keep them going. Others had an abundance of private joy to distract them from the world around them. Even at John Bull's inn, guests hardly come to talk and communicate; they are there to eat, drink and tell what they want to tell. To listen is a verb that is hardly known. I don't mind. I listen to trivial gossip and serve stout on tap. An innkeeper is not expected to pass on any news. Stout on tap, along with karaoke and singing other people's songs, is the best way to forget your daily worries.

Since Eyoum is an *it*, there is a persistent group of women who want to seduce me, seduce is not a good description. These women flatly ask me to go to bed with them, whether in my bed or in their bed, whether in a hotel for a few hours or in Thorne Waste when there are no mosquitoes. For divergence, to spend the day or the night. Let's spend the night together, London boys• yes. After a few mistakes, this is what I call this fornicating in retrospect, I discovered that these women wanted to make love - as they called it - because I was missing a leg. I got more open-lipped kisses on the stump of my leg than on my lips and my cock. I was just another item on their list. It is what it was. Everyone is entitled to a bucket list. Sleep with a Chinese, a black, an Alsatian, a Muslim, an agnostic, a man or woman with one leg, or even a man or woman, a person, without legs or arms. Besides my missing leg, they wanted to hear about my trophies. Only once did I get out of bed to fetch my marksmanship awards. I was a popular lover, and sleeping with a killer is often on the bucket list of women

who have nothing to do. I found that I dislike lovers who focus on my skills. I have no objections to someone who does nothing. I often say: if you have nothing to do, don't do it here. And: If tha knows nowt, say nowt an appen nobdy 'll notice. •

Eyoum tried to clarify my mental and physical state. I asked her to stop pretending to be a psychologist. I am not a thinker. I am not a philosopher. I am a one-legged innkeeper who doesn't likes cosiness. Mostly I prefer a Zen state of non-being. Clapping with one hand, walking with one leg.

I no longer have a license to kill. I'm no longer 007. Killing makes a man a hero when it is done in the military. When done without a licence, killing makes a killer a murderer. It is very difficult to see the distinction. For five years, maybe longer, I read in the *Doncaster Gazette*, or possibly the *Goole Times*, about Ernest Clark - George Gambard -, my childhood blood brother, killing his wife. We were Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. • They all knew, but nobody cared. It could have happened to any of us; to kill or not to be killed, just as I have killed 33 freedom fighters. Clark is free now. He has been using his time in H.M. Prison to study the Thorne Waste and Hatfield Chase peat. I have not yet read his thesis. I have never read that he regrets the murder. Regret is a meaningless emotion, he said when I asked him. We are on speaking terms. We are not close friends. Until now we didn't share women that we kissed with open lips. When necessary, we help each other in good and bad times. I have absolutely no regrets about doing him a favour. Willy comes often in for a draught stout. We never spoke of that afternoon at Will Pits. Both we're earnest.

Eyoum sent Ernest Gambard/Clark to its new venture: Joseph Nieters. The Dutch descendants of those peat diggers around 1900 were given a voice, Gambard's voice. No, Gambard has no Dutch blood. Gambard is the grandson of Ernest Clark, one of the other diggers who found their Waterloo deep in the Moorends pit. If you dig a hole for someone else, you are bound to fall into it yourself. Proverbs are not my forte. It's better to fettle an shaht abaht it nor nivver fettle at all. •

What I do know is that history and ancestors leave their mark on

the lives of their offspring. Just like that. In a way, Gambard and I are blood brothers,• stepbrothers in arms, maybe we are cunt brothers-in-law.•

In Memorial Park there is a monument with the names of Thorne soldiers who died in wars. These men paid for our freedom with their lives. These are the men we must remember. No Dutch peat diggers among them.

I know of no monument to the Moorends sinkers. No one to commemorate. When I cannot sleep, which is more often since Nieters arrived, I wonder if there are any memorials to the freedom fighters that I've killed. I have been given my medals, which I keep under my underwear, while the dead were given a grave and sometimes a monument or a slab with inscriptions calling them heroes. Eyoun says I am a philosopher. I do not wish to be a philosopher. Instead, I am an innkeeper at John Bull Inn, and I serve stout.

#### The War Memorial

The memorial commemorates the war heroes who gave their lives in different wars throughout time to help protect the country.

J. Bartlett	A.W. Marshall
A. Bingley	T.W. Martindale
R. Boakes	D. Milnes
F.R. Brown	E.F. Muller
C. Burrows	K. Nelson
N. Cairns	H. Nichol
H. Cartlidge	J.C. Page
T.H. Chapman	H. Plows
I.W. Cockin	J.T. Plotts
T.H. Cross	A. Ramsden
L.P. Davidson	L.G. Robinson
N. Dixon	C.W. Robinson
J.H. Gambles	G.W. Rowney
J. Grainger	S.R. Skeels
H. Gretton	J.T. Smith
H. Hanson	L. Smith

D. Hargreaves	I.J. Snook
C. Harlington	R. Storr
J.W. Harper (Victoria Cross)	R.S. Stuart
J. Harris	G.E. Taylor
P.W. Harris	W. Wainwright
A.T. Horsefield	F. Walton
C.L. Ingram	H.J. Wass
R.I. Knox	F. Whitehead
A. Lawrence	

I went there with Eyoun. She identified only the surname: Whitehead, possibly son of Alfred North Whitehead, a philosopher and mathematician. The father switched from mathematics to philosophy after his son, a fighter pilot, was killed in the Great War. Eyoun bought a book of quotations of Alfred North Whitehead (Ramsgate, 1861). He is the founder of process philosophy.

It (Eyoun) quoted from *Process & Reality* and his other books on metaphysics and process philosophy. •

\*

Whitehead's metaphysical objective is a general characterization of the universe, capable of making every type of experience intelligible. Metaphysics is the philosophical investigation of the nature, constitution and structure of reality. It is nothing but the description of the generalities which apply to all the details of practice.

Metaphysics is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general items, in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. But dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly.

\*

The key characteristic of the divine is love. Through prayer and meditation, each of us can prepare ourselves to receive divine grace, to feel, however dimly, the ultimate reality. We are constantly receiving lures from the divine. The divine is always present as our tenderly loving companion. As we perish, we are immortal, a key thought of *Proces & Reality*.



\*

Every entity which is prehended as a unity is an actual entity. God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space (ANW).

\*

The ultimate metaphysical principle is *creativity*. It characterizes ultimate matter of fact and is the principle of novelty. Creativity is that eternal aspect of the universe by reason of which there is an endless becoming of factual entities, i.e. drops of experience, complex and interdependent. It generates the transition of time and the extensive relationships of time. It manifests itself in the becoming of all actual entities, the ‘atomic’ facts of life which perpetually perish as novel events and perpetually emerge within the continuous but discrete flux of being. An actual entity is an abstraction from the totality of the continuously flowing process of reality (J. Klose).

\*

Physical and mental issues are universal features of whatever is actual.

\*

The philosophy of organism, as defined by Whitehead, interprets experience as meaning the ‘self-enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many’.

\*

Philosophical discussion is an examination and generalization of experiences. Apart from the experience of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness. Whitehead is citing a poem of Wordsworth here:

*The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.*

\*

God is an everlasting series of temporal occasions of divine experience, each of which has a physical and a mental pole.

\*

Interconnectedness is a fundamental fact in particle interaction. If two particles form a quantum state, they remain in this state even though separated by an indefinite distance (entanglement). The empirical fact is that the world is nonlocal: events in a certain spacetime region can indeed affect those in another space-time region. Interconnectedness is also a fundamental concept of process thinking. Interconnectedness is such that if one particle is measured, the original particle 'knows' or 'prehends' the measurement and changes itself accordingly. Relativity is not violated by interconnections since no information or energy is transferred.

\*

All general truths condition each other. The limits of their application cannot be adequately defined apart from their correlation by yet wider generalities.  
Independent existence is a myth.

\*

Prehensions (or feelings), are the way that what is there becomes something here. The concreting actuality 'feels' its data, the various elements of the universe out of which it arises.

Every actual occasion prehends the previous events. 'Prehends' has an active meaning: 'to grasp or to incorporate'. Prehension describes the connection between past and present events, no matter how elementary.

There are two different types of prehensions: (1) physical prehensions, determined by the previous physical world, and (2) mental prehensions, determined by the previous idealistic possibilities. Both lead to satisfaction, i.e. the ultimate enjoyment of being actual. (J.A. Jungerman, 2000)

\*

God is the absolute and eternal creative potentiality for the concrete manifestation of actuality. God is the *élan vital* that shapes, invigorates, and directs the life course of all finite creatures.

\*

Whitehead's thought, for all its excursions into the realms of intuitive experience and Godconsciousness remains, in the end, a worldview and metaphysics within the limits of reason, a scientific metaphysics, and thus, a rational system of thought. God does not create the world, he saves it. God can be conceived basically in the language of Care. God's nature is consequent upon the creative advance of the world. He is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of a universal harmony inherent in truth, beauty, peace and goodness. God is the soul of the world. The mental route of experiences is called the soul, the (largely) material route is called the body. God's wisdom determines all forms of order. Whitehead's doctrine of immortality in God gives permanent meaning to the tragedy of his son's death in the first world war. As we perish, we are immortal. Whitehead affirmed only a *metaphysical immortality*. It is not a person but a fact.

\*

I tried to understand what Whitehead meant. Not so much to become a philosopher, but to find a new connection with Eyoun. After her coming out being it, I did not know how to speak its language, maybe I never understood it. I just never understood it, even while it was she. When a chap's nowt else to do he falls i love, an if he falls deep enuff, he'll finnd wark enuff to fit him for t'rest of his days. •

As my SAS comrades said: You are a fully-fledged man, which meant I was 100% a man, since all men were men and all women were women. There were two flavours, although I soon discovered that some of my comrades indulged in same-sex activities in the absence of women. I joined in a few times. I didn't like what took place. I preferred the chicken coop. Murder, I never confessed, is a form of masturbation. With the terrorist in my sights, I felt an erection as I waited anxiously for the moment to blast off. If I were still a practicing Catholic, I might have confessed what I felt when I pulled the trigger.

I asked Eyoun to have sex with me. 'Not yet,' it said. 'Ernest, do not worry. You won't have to become jealous of Nieters.'

I really didn't feel jealous of the peat digger. I just felt that I wanted to feel the body of Eyoun. I wanted it to feel my body next to its body,

even though it had changed into it. We were on the same footing; I missed my leg. Eyoum missed its sex, though, without breasts it still had its vagina.

‘Nieters sleeps with me,’ she said, ‘but there is no sexual activity. He is impotent and I, you know what I am.’ It smiled as it said this. ‘He needs a mother. I’m earnest. Let it be.●’

I paused and it continued. ‘In this respect, Ernest, Nieters is no different from most men I have known. I’m earnest. All feel the desperate need to ‘go back inside the womb.’

Again it used language I did not understand. How could a man long to return to the womb?

‘Ernest, that is a metaphor,’ Eyoum had seen the surprise on my face. ‘It is a craving for care and protection, for childish ignorance.’

It coined the word **non-being**. That was the word I understood. That was the word I needed.

‘Whitehead argues that once one is born there’s nothing to worry over. As we perish, we are immortal,’ Eyoum said. ‘You live, and once you die, you live forever.’

I couldn’t understand what it meant. I repeated my request.

‘Can it sleep with me one night? So I can return to the womb and learn to die,●’ I said.

When I woke up the very next morning, I realised that Eyoum had repeatedly called me Ernest. I knew then and there that I was not the only one with that name. The Importance of Being Ernest. I went into the living room, made myself a pot of tea - Ceylon mélange - sliced a lemon and added slices to the tea. I rested my elbows at the table and stared at the 6.5mm Mannlicher Carcano above the fireplace, trying hard to not take life all too serious. I tenderly caressed the curve of the remainder of my leg, which Eyoum had kissed with open lips. I realised that the more of my body I lost, not just my leg, but bones, nerves, muscles and organs that showed signs of decline, the more of a philosopher I became. To philosophise is to learn how to die, Eyoum had said, quoting Michel de Montaigne. Growing old means stepping back from the outside world. I’m not ready for that yet. There is no need to drain the swamp. Although it seems that I am no longer the one who makes that decision.





Newmains

Asda Newmains Superstore

CAMBUSNETHAN

Cambusnethan St  
Auld Hoose

WISHAW

GREENHEAD

Greenhead Moss Nature Reserve

Monument •

WATERLOO

Overtown

WATERLOO

Law

Google

Not all Drenthe peat diggers stayed in Thorne. Some found work in Cambusnethan (Lancashire, Scotland) at the Benhar Moss Litter Company.

23rd March 1932 Drenthe peat digger Gerard Rolink was digging peat near Wishaw, south of Cambusnethan. He hit wood. Under five silver birch poles lay the battered body of a soldier in an almost undamaged uniform. Some of his bones and hair were still intact after 250 years in the peat. His skull was crushed and his femur was broken. The soldier was slain. Gerard Rolink reported his find to the police in nearby Newmains. For a day, the Drenthe peat digger became famous in Wishaw and the surrounding area. Almost 100 years later, his great-grandchild makes an entrance when Joseph Nieters encounters him.

**Notes on the discovery of a body in a peat moss at  
Cambusnethan. By Ludovi McL. Mann,**

With reports on the Osseous Remains by Prof. John Graham, m.b.,  
ch.b., f.r.f.p.s.g.

The Clothes and Dyes, by Robert G. Eskdale. The shoes, by  
William Martin.

*Read to the Society on Thursday, 16th February 1933.*

Towards four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, 23rd March, 1932, Mr. Gerard Rolink, employed by the Benhar Moss Litter Company, was digging peat at Greenhead Moss, half a mile south-east of Old-Cambusnethan Church and one mile east of Wishaw, Lancashire, when his operations were suddenly interrupted by a remarkable discovery.

To Mr. Rolink's surprise – for seldom indeed had he encountered any extraneous or unusual matter during the course of his many year's work at the Moss – his spade struck a piece of wood about two and a half feet below the surface.

Immediately other similar pieces of wood were disclosed, and on lifting these he exposed the body of a man fully clothed.

The place is at the centre of a large, flat stretch of peat and marsh, treeless and without dwellings. Deep open drains well filled with water cut across the moor in various directions, and a century or two ago the area must have been wetter and less accessible than it now is. After lifting and throwing aside hurriedly a small fragment of the clothing, the sole and heel of one of the shoes and a bone, Mr. Rolink set off to the Police Office at Newmains and reported the matter. Superintendent Aitken of Bellshill and his assistant, with Mr. Rolink, then visited the place and in the most careful manner removed the remains to Newmains, retaining all the relics in their original positions – the items mentioned as having at first been thrown aside being recovered a few weeks later.

Amateur archaeologist McLellan Mann arrived the next day to investigate the bog man, who met his fate between 1680 and 1690. Several publications followed: who was this soldier? Did he fight as a soldier of the Scottish Presbyterians or was he in the army of King Charles I? Did the Bog Man fight for the King's recognition as head of the Church of England?

*– Since Henry VIII's divorce, the British monarch, and with him his subjects, had recognised that the Anglican Church had renounced papal authority in 1534 when Henry VIII failed to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled by the Pope. –*

THE NATIONAL COVENANT, signed in 1638, and the SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT in 1643 set in motion the persecution of those who refused to conform to Charles I's favoured episcopacy. THE NATIONAL COVENANT provided the 'vehicle to confront Royal authority' of Charles I, King of Scotland and England, and consolidated opposition in Scottish society against arbitrary rule. The SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT that followed intended to bind other Britons to Presbyterianism. After the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, Charles II's moves to restore episcopacy compelled a large group of Presbyterian ministers to preach at banned 'conventicles'



and provoked Covenanters into violent resistance. The defeat of the Bothwell Rising in June 1679 - when 400 were killed and 1,200 taken prisoner - marked the opening of an era of brutal suppression. The battle itself was a reaction to government strategy, but also an 'ideological showdown between nonconforming Presbyterians'. The parish of Cambusnethan, located around 12 miles from Bothwell, hosted rebel groups prior to the defeat of the Covenanting forces.

### Killing Times

The persecution that followed is commonly known as the 'Killing Times', principally led by Captain John Graham of Claverhouse who became known as 'Bluidy Clavers'. Indeed, the Royal Regiment of North British Dragoons were formed in 1678 to suppress Covenanters. They became known as the 'Scots Greys' and although the origins of the term are contested, it is possible this was due to the jacket made from cloth (sometimes known as 'Galashiels Grey') which was imported by General Dalzell and Claverhouse in the early 1680s. However, like other aspects of this story, these events have become embellished. Indeed, Claverhouse was subsequently involved in three executions at most.

In the immediate aftermath of the Bothwell Rising, Claverhouse's dragoons were said to have summarily executed individuals near Cambusnethan.



The Covenanters were a group of seventeenth-century Scottish Presbyterians who were both 'political extremists and martyrs for the cause of religious liberty'. The Covenanters did not recognize the king as head of the church. The Presbyterians followed their priests and elders and recognized no central authority. So the civil war was about the right religion and about royal authority.

So within a few days, Mann came to early conclusions:

It would be dangerous to suggest that he – the bog man – was an unknown soldier sent to harass the Covenanters during the thirty turbulent years towards the end of the seventeenth century. The buttons of his clothing seemed to have a design which, if cleaned,



might throw light on whether he was a farmer, tinker or other traveler, or a Royalist soldier; the latter suggestion seems most likely.

Assessing the impact of popular historical works and literature is an impossible task although there are more tangible reminders of the supposed Covenanter. The modern redevelopment of Greenhead Moss meant the tale of the bog body is now disseminated to new audiences on a daily basis. In 1989, the park was designated a Local Nature Reserve by the then Motherwell District Council which prevented any development on the area. It is now known as Greenhead Moss Community Nature Park, a 100-hectare site with woodlands and walkways around the remnants of a raised peat bog. In 1997 a monumental cairn was erected.

Joseph Nieters takes the bus from Wishaw railway station to Cambusnethan Street to meet a great-grandson of the Drenthe turf digger who found the bog man. On a foggy day, Nieters stands on the pavement outside the Auld Hoose waiting for Gerard Rolink. Something seems to have gone wrong. The pub has a permanently closed sign in the window. The innkeeper must have retired. The website still has pictures of a 65th birthday party and two men playing music, guitar and banjo.

‘Joseph Nieters, I presume,’ says a man in jeans and a bomber jacket. The presumed pilot is at least 20 years younger than Joseph. ‘I am Gerard Rolink.’

They shake hands.

‘Moi,’ says Joseph Nieters, looking at the newcomer’s old-fashioned shoes and then raising his head to the bright eyes beneath a knitted greenish wool beret that seems to hide a hairless skull, ‘at least I found you.’

Nieters knew another man with a name exactly like Wishaw’s newly discovered peat ancestor, who wore fashionable shoes, had long hair before he became bold, and never wore a tasselled cap. Gerard Rolink was his classmate at primary school and son of the owner of the only shoe store in Erica. • In his teens, his classmate was a popular musician. Gerard Rolink from Erica played guitar in several bands: The Fellows, Human Orchestra, Lap Dog Tally, Nothing But Problems, Riptide,

Shadows Revival Band, Blues Selected and many others. They had one hit: The Silly One, inspired by the local idiot in a time and place where compassion for deviant people was a bridge too far on the other side of the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart. Joseph's classmate was one of those musicians who cherished a glorious past and an average life. And he had that in common with many countryside writers and peat-bred artists.

'Moi', says Gerard Rolink, 'my great-grandfather always said 'moi' when I came to visit him'. After a brief pause, he continues: 'It's been a long time since I heard that word. I always thought it was a corruption of 'moorn', of 'good morning'. Rolink tries to open the door of the Auld Hoose. The name of the café could be derived from the Drenthe dialect - Aold Huus - and after reading the notice of its permanent closure he says: 'What a waste, I used to play my guitar in this pub. It was a good place for toe-tap dancing. He leaves the door handle and says: 'Further on at the bus stop is The Horse & Anchor. We can start our acquaintance in that pub.'

The pub is situated in a block of houses that looks like a former residential house, just like cafés in Drenthe were once situated in the front room of a farm. The exterior has a grey plaster wall. Inside the well-known traditional interior. Benches lining the wall, plastic flowers - daffodils - at wooden tables surrounded by kitchen chairs, a dart board, a drinking bowl for dogs, a snooker billiard, a bar and a few beers on tap. A menu with limited choice. Tea, coffee, apple pie and lemonade.

'Our walk won't be long,' says Gerard Rolink, 'but you might fancy a light bite. Some time must have passed since you left Thorne'.

'At my age,' says Joseph Nieters, 'there is less need for a heavy meal. I prefer a light midday meal'.

'A children's haggis',• says the innkeeper, turning his head to the handwritten - chalk on slate - menus above the bar, 'and a kid's portion of French fries and salad. That's what I can offer you, unless you prefer toast with cheese and pickles.'

'Haggis are Scotland's favourite food. You have to taste it, unless you are a vegetarian,' says Gerard Rolink, who orders a Stout. The innkeeper understands the wink and gesture of Rolink's hand.

Joseph Nieters nods. Whatever is served. The slogan in Erica was: eat what is served, and: burnt or undercooked, shut your mouth and eat; The Drenthe version of *Feed the brute*. He orders a bitter lemon juice and a glass of water. When the owner has gone to the kitchen, Gerard Rolink says: 'Wishaw is a suburb of Glasgow. The village is in transition from the old to the new era. You may have noticed it from the bus: the run-down shops, the lowered shutters, the barely painted houses and stores – nail salons, hair studio's, tattoo parlours, Adam & Eve massage with happy ending selling Easy Toys• – where you don't want to buy anything. Gradually, some shops and houses have been demolished. More will follow. If you weren't familiar with the place, you might think that poverty or crime or both were everywhere. At the same time, there are new houses in the suburb. Even close to this public house, on Moss Road, there are brand new, comfortable homes. In Waterloo, built after the raised bog was finished, there are lovely houses you would like to live in – close to Greenhead Moss Nature Reserve. After lunch we'll walk along the quiet side of Perchy Pond of Wishaw. I think you'll like it.'

'Toedeloe,' says Joseph Nieters, meaning goodbye, saying that he has no intention of settling in Wishaw.

'Thank you,' says Gerard Rolink. 'I had forgotten that word. My great-grandfather invented the term *Toedeloe*. He meant he had to go to the toilet. Before my great-grandfather died, he confessed his favourite: Two to the loo. *Two toedeloo*. It was his way of inviting my great-grandmother, they were not yet a couple, to leave the pub, wave goodbye to everyone and just the two of them, to take a walk.'

'On the wild side,' says Joseph, as if out of control.

'You can bet on that,' says Gerard Rolink toe-tapping. 'That is where I came from.'

'Make my day,' says Gerard Rolink. Joseph's guide in Wishaw points to the sun, which makes grey life brighter. The men take the footpath at the end of Eastgate. Memorial Park is on the right. They turn to the right and face the cemetery.

'Over there is a memorial for soldiers,' says Gerard Rolink. 'Further down there is a cemetery for Muslims.'

'In Erica, people refused to carry an old woman to her grave,' says Joseph. As he brings up the story, he immediately repents his words.

'Why was this?' asks Rolink.

Joseph feels uncomfortable. 'Forget about it,' he says. 'Never mind.'

'Why?!' Rolink insists.

'She wasn't dead,' says Joseph reluctantly.

'I can still hear my great-grandfather talking,' Rolink continues. He had enough of these now outdated drolleries.

They turn to the left, left again and then right. They follow the footpath that runs through a digging field. Joseph is familiar with the pattern. Baulks and ditches in brown, black and alternately green and yellow due to vegetation. Cattails on the edge.

'The general opinion is that peat digging was dirty and uncomfortable,' says Rolink, 'but that was not always the case. Especially if there were women and children working, it could be erg gezellig,• as my great-grandfather coined.

'Hard work never killed anyone, these pits were not killing fields,' says Joseph. He hears his father talking in his voice. And then he adds: 'During the Killing Times (1670-1680) this place could have been a killing field.' Gerard Rolink ignores the remark. They leave the remains of the peat fields behind and move on to the Bog Burial Location.

... I (McLellan Mann) also visited the grave and plotted its bearings on the Ordnance Survey Sheet and noted the soil layers. The body had been laid in a very shallow grave, the digging of which could not have occupied more than a few minutes, and was outstretched on its back with the head to the west.

The peat growth had continued to develop since the period of the interment. Immediately beneath the grass and surface vegetation was a layer, six inches in thickness, of light brown peat.

Just beneath this deposit and easily discernible from it, was an unbroken layer of darker decayed peat vegetation three to four inches in thickness. This layer overlay a deposit of dark fibrous peat right down a depth of twenty-two inches, where the body lay.

Clearly it had originally a most shallow covering of soil.

Carefully placed just above the body were five light pieces of wood,



of silver birch, set about 6 in. apart, and all parallel with the body. The centre piece, fairly well dressed, is 3 ft. long. In cross section it is rectangular and measures 2,25 in. by 1,5 in. The other pieces, laid two on either side of the centre piece, were roughly cut branches about 2 in. in diameter, and ranging in length from 3 ft. 5,5 in. to 2 ft. 2 in. All the wood is well preserved.

These may have been used to carry the body to its strange, isolated burial-place in the great moss. If so, two of the small branches may have been used crosswise in the carrying. At least four persons would be required.

And Stephen Mullen writes:

The environment at the approximate date of discovery can be identified using modern technology. The National Record of the Historic Environment of Scotland website, Canmore, provides the National Grid reference NS 8143 5467 revealing the find was inside Greenhead Moss, just south of Cambusnethan Kirk. The location of the burial was verified by a local architect, Mr J. Craig, in 1953. Cross-referencing the grid number with the National Library of Scotland's digital maps – especially the Roy. Military Survey of Lowland Scotland, 1747-1755 – reveals the body was buried in an isolated rural area just off Watling Street (originally a Roman road) near the marketplace of Overtown. The small village of Waterloo near the Moss today had not yet built up. In the mid eighteenth century there was already a substantial peat bog and if the geo-reference is accurate, the body was buried at its very edge: a liminal space between earth and water, on unconsecrated ground just next to Cambusnethan Kirk.

The parish of Cambusnethan – near Wishaw – was historically a centre of ecclesiastical affairs. As early as the twelfth century, a private chapel dedicated to St Michael (near modern Carbars) was noted which developed into a more regular place of worship for the community. By 1628, the 'auld kirk' was abandoned and a new church erected a few miles away in Greenhead: though a Protestant place of worship, coming after the Scottish Reformation.

There is no sign at the grave. There is only a gently sloping field with

birch trees in the background. Gerard Rolink takes off his beret. The sun warms his bald head. Joseph's cicerone takes off his leather shoes and takes turns balancing on both feet. He puts his knitted woolen socks on top of the old unpolished shoes, turns with a big smile, bows slightly to Joseph and says:

'Excuse me for a moment,' while he walks to the trees. "Toedeloe."

Joseph turns when he realises that Gerard Rolink is going to relieve himself in the bush.

'Netty,' Gerard Rolink says after a few minutes, when he is back from peeing. He puts on his socks and shoes. 'Howay.' Gerard Rolink explains: 'Netty is Geordie dialect for *Loo* and *Howay* means: *Forward, go ahead*.'

Less than 300 metres away Nieters sees the small monument. In 1997, a cairn was erected by Wishaw Community Council dedicated to the body found in the bog. The inscription reads:

Experts have ascertained that at the time of discovery the body had been buried for over two hundred years. There are two opinions as to the origin of the body discovered. The first is that the body is that of a Royalist soldier or Bounty Hunter employed to hunt down Covenanters. The second, supported by experts, is that it was the body of a Covenanter who had been carried by at least four friends to his shallow grave on Greenhead Moss, which at the time had been the scene of many skirmishes between Covenanters and their persecutors.

'The text clearly states that the man's identity is still disputed,' says Gerard Rolink.

There are stone benches on each side of the cairn. The sun has warmed the resting place. Joseph sits down. Gerard Rolink stands in front. He looks at the cairn.

'I actually baptised the bog man,' says Gerard Rolink. 'I gave him a name.'

'Did you find out?' Joseph asks.

"Yes, I found out," says Gerard Rolink. His name was Hinne Geordie

and he came from Durham near Newcastle on Tyne.

“Well, tell me,” says Joseph.

‘You will hear details about him sooner or later. Let me sing you a song about his life before he was caught up in the war between the Covenanters and the Dragoons of King Charles I’.

Gerard Rolink unzips his bomber jacket and takes a sip from his flask. When Joseph raises his hand to indicate that he has a question, Gerard Rolink shakes his head. The tassel of his cap waves.

‘Haad yer gob,’ Rolink steps back, pulls off his beret and sings softly in a voice that betrays frequent practice.

Joseph doesn’t need a translation. *Hold joen kop*, that’s what it says.

The melody sounds familiar. (Air (or Teun) – ‘*My Darling Nellie Grey*’)

**Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny**

Wor Geordey an’ Bob Jonsin byeth lay i’ one bed,  
Iv a little lodgjin hoose that’s doon the shore,  
Before Bob had been an’ oor asleep, a kick frae Geordey’s fut  
Myed him wakin up to roar instead o’ snore.

**KORUS**

*Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny, let’s be happy for the neet,  
For aw maynt be se happy throo the day.  
So give us that bit cumfort, --keep yor feet still, Geordey lad,  
An’ dinnet send maw bonny dreams away!’*

Aw dreamt thor was a dancin held, an’ Mary Clark wes there;  
An’ aw thowt we tript it leetly on the floor,  
An’ aw prest her heevin breest te mine when walsin roond the room,  
That’s mair than aw dor ivor de before.

**KORUS--** *Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny, let’s be happy for the  
neet, &c*

Ye’ll knaw the lad that she gans with, they call him Jimmy Green,

Aw thowt he tried te spoil us i' wor fun,  
But aw dreamt aw nail'd him heavy, an' blackt the big feul's eyes;  
If aw'd slept it's hard to tell what aw wad deun.

*KORUS-- Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny, let's be happy for the  
neet, &c*

Aw thowt aw set her hyem that neet, content we went alang.  
Aw kiss'd her lips a hundred times or mair,  
An' aw wish'd the road wad nivor end, se happy like wes aw,  
Aw cud waak'd a thoosind miles wi' Mary there!

*KORUS-- Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny, let's be happy for the  
neet, &c*

Aw dremt Jim Green had left the toon an' left his luv te me,  
An' aw thowt the hoose wis furnish'd wi' the best,  
An' aw dreamt aw just had left the church wi' Mary be me side,  
When yor clumsy feet completely spoil'd the rest.'a

*KORUS—Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny, let's be happy for the  
neet, &c*

Although the ballad is in the local dialect, Joseph has no problem understanding the content of the song. A number of words are more or less comparable to the dialect of Drenthe. Even the pronunciation is the same. No wonder, after all it was people from Norway, Denmark and Lower Saxony who invaded the British Isles centuries ago. Hinny means honey, darling. Hinne or Henny is not an uncommon name in Drenthe, even Minne would fit, akin to *Minnaar*; lover.

'I wish our local singer/songwriter• sang such beautiful ballads. No more songs about nostalgia and sadness, no more lyrics about lost love would help the Drenthe community,' says Joseph. 'It's time to start laughing about the peat past.' He continues with a mock sad undertone: 'I have little hope in that regard.'

Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny' is a famous Geordie comic



song written in the 19th century by Joe Wilson, At the time, many working men, particularly in the building and civil engineering trades, worked away from home. These were the labourers and navvies who built the railways and canals. They arranged for 'digs' wherever the work was, and in most cases, because of the costs and savings available, they slept two or more to a bed. This song features two such Geordies who share a bed in a lodging house. One, Bob Johnson, is very unhappy with his mate Geordie for waking him up when in the middle of a dream about an elusive young maiden from back home, of whom he has high hopes. His dreams are disrupted at the end of each verse by the fidgeting 'Geordie'. •

'Of course,' says Gerard Rolink, 'I'm not sure of Hinny Geordie's true position in history. I searched the internet for background information. Maybe he was a soldier, maybe he was a head-hunter, a silly one, maybe he was Robin Hood in disguise. I think he was a victim of religious and political quarrels. My Hinny Geordie was an ordinary man who had choice to die for one leader or fight himself to death for another zealot. That is what everyday life is, the daily reality of life. The location of your crib largely determines the events of life. As for my Hinny,' he says, 'your bed partner can disturb your dreams. I tell my story as many times as anyone will listen, and I sing my ballad every chance I get. This makes me believe my own stories, my own truth. Life has too many open ends, too many uncertainties. I regain my own paradise lost where life is structured and filled with gezelligheid.'

'You tend to believe your own phantasmagoric lies,' says Joseph Nieters, not aware of the bluntness of his words, not aware that Gerard Rolink is not talking about the Bog Man, but about his own life. But his walking companion doesn't seem to be bothered by Joseph's answer.

'If you ask people, both laymen and scholars, and if you read newspapers, magazines, scientific research articles and learned books,' Gerard Rolink continues, 'you will find that most people in Scotland want Hinny Geordie to be a Covenanter who defended the traditional Presbyterian faith and did not accept the rule of Charles I, even though most of the evidence suggests that Hinny Geordie was a royalist dragoon or a head-hunter down on his luck. People are more likely to stick to their beliefs no matter what.'

‘Common sense,’ says Joseph, ‘is rarely a way of providing appropriate solutions to complex problems.’

‘It seems to me that you are a philosopher,’ says Gerard Rolink as a smile appears on his lips. They walk towards Perchy Pond. It seems to be time for walking with the dog. Not all dogs are on a leash.

‘Maybe I’m a philosopher,’ says Joseph. ‘Everyone is a philosopher. I’m a cynophobe, I know that.’ Having mentioned his fear that he doesn’t like dogs – although dogs seem to like him – settles Joseph down. There is no longer any need to hide his fear.

‘I used to have a dog,’ says Gerard Rolink, ‘after my wife ran away, I got me a dog, a Drentsche patrijs (Dutch Partridge Dog), epileptic just like my ex wife. Rolink turns to Joseph with a grin on his face that can express both shame and love, he continues. ‘The dog slept at the end of the bed. After five years, the bitch suffered a broken hind leg. The vet also diagnosed that she had a stomach ulcer. The bill would be £1200. You can probably guess my decision.’ Gerard Rolink waves his hand as if he was holding a sword. ‘For better or for worse.’

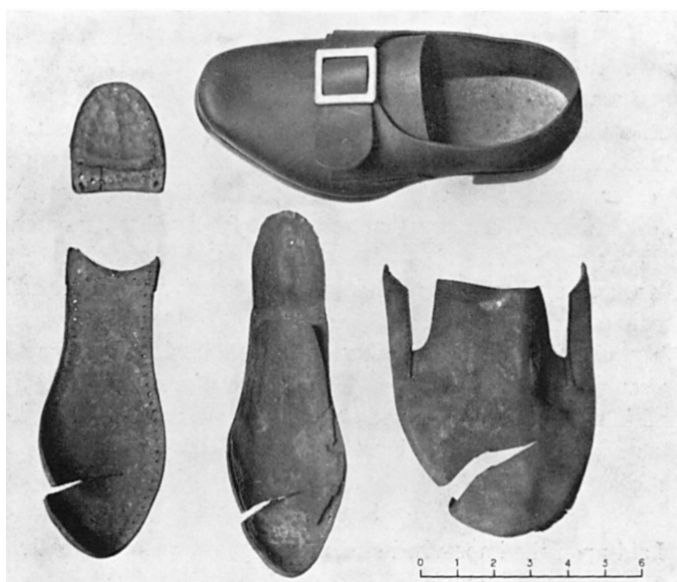
Joseph is silent. He wondered what he would do if he broke his leg, damaged his skull as a bog man, contracted cancer or a breakdown of essential nerves.

‘I buried my dog,’ Gerard Rolink extends his arm. He holds the cap in his hand while pointing across the pond to where they had walked earlier. ‘I buried Hanny on the bog man’s spot near the silver birch trees. The funeral of my bitch took thirteen minutes.’ Gerard Rolink places both hands on the railing that separates the walkway from the pond. ‘At the foot of the silver birch where she used to pee.’ He flexes his arms, leans forward and spits into the water.

Joseph counts the number of interfering circles.

### **Shoes**

The leather work which covered the front part of the right foot bears an ancient oblique gash as if from the thrust of a sword which severed the upper leather and the sole and doubtless caused a serious wound. The leather of the soles and heels is of vegetable (probably oak bark) tanned ox-hide. The upper leather is made from cow or heifer hide, similarly tanned and thereafter dressed with dubbin to lubricate the fibre. Science has greatly changed the method of tanning and



dressing upper leathers for shoes, but there is still manufactured in Great Britain a limited quantity of what is known as vegetable-tanned shoe hide.

The Cambusnethan shoes are of a type long out of fashion. The fore part of the shoes is cut in one piece, while the back portion is cut in long strips in two pieces sewn up the back. The upper leather in either case consists of three pieces once fastened with a buckle in front of the shoe. The shoes did not require laces and were adjustable to the length of the foot. The sewing of these pieces was cleverly done. The tab was stitched through to join the front with the back portions for a length of about an inch; from there to the waist the edges are brought flush together with overlapping. The craftsman used an awl with a bend in it and made the seam tight, passing the awl from one piece over to the other, sewing it closely and tightly. This style of work is almost out of fashion. Wooden pegs were used to fix together the outer, upper and inner-soles.



### Cap

His cap was of closely-knit wool, something like the now-fashionable beret, but more ample at the peak, which had a tassel stump, while the cap was close fitting round the sides. The peak was loose, and it seemed to have been worn hanging to one side. The cap broadened at each ear, and measured 27 inches round the base. It was dyed green, except near the rim, and the apex was also of natural brown colouring, except in lozenge-shaped patches similarly dyed. There is a short, sharply cut opening across the cap where it covered the middle part of the back of the neck; which may have been caused by a sword thrust. 1933

‘The way you talk about your visit to Wishaw reminds me of a literary genre called *placewriting*,’ Eyoum says. ‘It is a way of describing events that seem to be vanishing or overlooked by the general public. Details of past events, battles, religious wars, dying minority languages find a place in stories that focus on a particular region.’

‘Nostalgic, you suggest?’ says Joseph.

From his trip to Glasgow and Wishaw, he took Eyoum a chocolate bar, not knowing what to give it as a gesture of affection, in appreciation of its company and its intellectual contribution to offering a metaphysical framework and interpretation to his daily experiences, as if it were a psychologist. After saying goodbye to Gerard Rolink, Joseph walked all the way back to the station. He had stopped at the University Hospital Wishaw for coffee, scones and 'Netty'. He had not found a bookshop on the way to Wishaw station, so he had not discovered any local literature. Love for books and regional culture did not differ from Erica. Eyoum had said it appreciated the present, although it preferred the black chocolate to the white. It would be better, it had said, to bring it a book it had not yet read if the opportunity arised again.

'You can call place writing nostalgic,' Eyoum replies to his question, 'but it is not a sentimental sort of nostalgia. I prefer an in-depth knowledge of convictions, history, dialect and traditions, but I abhor false romance. No mugs, tea towels, key holders, tattoos with dialect features for me. I hate that sort of meddling with traditional culture and language. The novel *Eyoum – Chicken Curry Madras* by a well-known Drenthe author is a fair example of *placewriting*.'•

'And written dialect in public spaces?' asks Joseph, who knew the author of the regional novel as his pocket.

'Take a bite,' says Eyoum. She holds the chocolate bar in front of Joseph's mouth. The intermission gave Eyoum time to think about an answer.

'I do not have any objections to dialect words in public spaces,' it says, 'as long as there is no implicit message; look how beautiful this vernacular word is, or a hidden way to propagate dialect. The use of regional and local words must be natural.'

'Whatever 'natural' means,' says Joseph.

### **Placewriting**

In recent years sociolinguists have been examining the consequences of 'late-' or 'post-modernity'. These phrases identify a related set of conditions, largely contingent on unprecedented global flows of people, capital, goods, and services. The speed and intensity of these flows means that the current epoch is characterized by the transgression and blurring of various kinds of borders, the fluidity



of institutions and social categories, the ‘flexibility’ of labour, mass consumerism and individualism. In terms of language use, the influence of late modernity is evident in phenomena such as codeswitching, borrowing, second language acquisition and multilingualism. Of more central concern in the context of the research presented here is the fact that mobilities can contribute to the reduction of linguistic difference through levelling, supra-localization and dialect erosion. It appears that levelling – ‘the loss of localised features ... to be replaced with features found over a wider region’ – is occurring in many parts of the world. But the conditions which reduce linguistic differences are also those which, somewhat paradoxically, ‘foster dialect and language awareness’. Where there is fear that a distinctive sense of place is being eroded, interest in those aspects of the local perceived to be under threat often grows.

– *One recent manifestation of this has been the re-invigoration of a literary genre sometimes called ‘placewriting’. Representative authors in this field include Philip Marsden and Rob Cowen. Growing public interest in local and family history might also be seen as a symptom of these changes.* –

This can lead to an increase in the amount of popular attention paid to issues of linguistic variation. Evidence for this lies, for example, in the commodification of dialect. In the UK & Drenthe, mugs, tea towels, greetings cards and shop signs can be found which employ dialect features; also, there has been a proliferation of popular books purporting to teach a range of dialects. Additional evidence lies with metalinguistic activities – such as online discussions on social network sites – which emphasize dialectal difference and distinctiveness. •

‘Of course, nostalgia without emphasising identity, without implicit messages that say: we are different, you are not one of us,’ says Eyoun.

‘You’re not a Geordie,’ provokes Joseph.

‘You are not a Drenthe partridge. That’s what I mean,’ it teases. ‘I loved the theatrical performance of Gerard Rolink, who paid tribute to the bog man by reincarnating the slain soldier in his - female - dog.’

'The bitch,' Joseph grins.

'The dog deserved better,' says Eyoum, 'than the sword.'

Joseph prepares a Marguarita pizza. He adds a variety of exotic cheeses. Eyoum adjusts the oven temperature.

'In the Newcastle area, as elsewhere, the focus is on identity. Mackem; Geordie; Smoggie; Sand Dancer; Monkey Hanger; Pit Yacker. Everyone seems to know who is who, just by their birthplace. At least people are willing to laugh about their differences.'

'I'm from Drenthe,' says Joseph, 'if you consider my place of birth.'

'Erica,' says Eyoum as it puts the pizza in the oven. 'Erica, waer besto bleven?'•

'During my studies at the university of Groningen, I considered myself a Groninger,' says Joseph. 'Drent by birth, Groninger by desire.'

'And a Dutch citizen?' asks Eyoum. 'Were you Dutch? Are you still Dutch?'

'I don't know if I can answer that question,' Joseph says. 'The question seems irrelevant to me. I could be German, call me a Poep having ancestors from all across the grup• in Hannover.'

'So you have British ancestors,' says Eyoum, 'since King George IV – not a Geordie – ruled the Kingdom of Hannover in the 18th century.'•

'Maybe I'm English, maybe I'm a Scotsman. Maybe I'm a Geordie.'

'I think you're a half sole,'• says Eyoum. 'Where's your sword? Cut the pizza. Kill Marguarita.'







The *Geordie Shore* star Vicky Pattison, introduces herself and the other female participants in the show:•

The definition of a Geordie is someone who lives three miles from the bank of the River Tyne, and that's me. Charlotte Crosby is from Sunderland so she's a Mackem; Holly Hagan is a Smoggie, someone from Middlesbrough; and Sophie Kasaei is a Sanddancer, someone from South Shields. They're not Geordies in the slightest ...

*Geordie Shore is an MTV programme, first broadcast in 2011 and now in its ninth series. It is a 'structured reality' show in which, according to Charlie Brooker, 'a gaggle of unbelievable idiots are stuck in a fancy house and intermittently hosed down with alcohol'.*

The title of another spin-off book from the series, *Not Quite a Geordie – The Autobiography of Geordie Shore's Holly Hagan* (2014) is indicative of the complexity of the ethnonymic field. In her account of her arrival in the *Geordie Shore* house, Hagan describes the response she receives to the revelation that she is from Middlesbrough, not Newcastle-upon-Tyne:

*The group looked at me in shock. I could feel their stares boring into me and my face instantly reddened; it was like I'd just said I hailed from the depths of hell.*

*'You're a Smoggy?' James asked in disbelief.*

*'Yeah, but I act like a Geordie in every way,' I replied and took a large gulp of my drink, embarrassed to look them all in the eye. (Hagan 2014, 109)*

These passages are interesting for a number of reasons. As we shall see, the association Pattison makes between *Geordie* and the River Tyne is often found in folk-descriptions, as is the willingness to offer precise psychogeographical boundaries for the range of an ethnonym. While Pattison's definitions are couched in relatively neutral terms, her insistence that her housemates from Sunderland, Middlesbrough



and South Shields ‘are not Geordies in the slightest’ hints at the potency of these terms as markers of socio-spatial territories. For Pattison, the boundaries are self-evident, sharply defined and not open to discussion; whereas for Hagan, ethnonyms and the identities they index are more nuanced. Although Hagan accepts the label ‘Smoggy’, she implicitly claims for herself a ‘Geordie’ identity by associating certain modes of behaviour with being ‘Geordie-like’. She does this at the same time as showing an awareness that for many people, ‘a *Geordie* is someone born in Newcastle, not Middlesbrough, Sunderland, or anywhere else in the north-east’ and that ‘thoroughbred Geordies get a bee in their bonnets if you claim to be one of them when you’re not’. The fact that Pattison and Hagan feel the need to discuss these terms in their celebrity autobiographies reflects their popular significance as powerful and complex symbols of identity.



Map of ethnonyms (data ©2015 Google).

Red = Mackem; Blue = Geordie;  
 Yellow = Smoggy; Green = Sand Dancer;  
 Turquoise = Monkey Hanger;  
 Brown = Pit Yacker.

### Nicknames in Drenthe

In Drenthe there are very few psychogeographical borders for a variety of nicknames (ethnonyms). In the East of Drenthe, which borders the German Emsland, some villages change name during Catholic carnival. This is the area of Veen-Drenthe (Peat-Drenthe). The central part is called Zand-Drenthe (Sand-Drenthe), mainly inhabited by protestants and areligious people. Before 1800 Drenthe wasn't gifted

with a dense population. Approximately 35,000 inhabitants in 1800. There were a few religious conflicts in earlier times. Most people believed in nature and in themselves. However, there were also some Zelots. Before 1600 all of Drenthe was Roman Catholic, after 1600 everyone was protestant, grace to Luther.

In the 19th century, German immigrants (mainly Roman Catholic) crossed the border to work in the peat bogs and agricultural fields. Some started stores like C&A and V&D. The immigrants were known as Poepen. Poep can also mean poop.

The neighbouring inhabitants of Groningen are called Stadgers – townspeople – without any derogatory meaning. Frisians are sometimes called Deep Freezians to refer to their hot/cold blooded character. In Drenthe, people are known as folk of dubbelties and kwarties, diminutive terms for small coin money. Dimes and cents. Diminutives are frequently used in the Drenthe dialect. E.g. huusie (small house/toilet); wichie (maiden); appeltie (apple); kindtie (child).

In the 19th century, all waiters were called Jan. The citizens of Zwolle were called blauwvingers - ‘blue fingers’ - for counting thousands of penny coins. The football players of SVBO – F.C. in Barger-Oosterveld – were called Stieren (Bulls) Van (of) Barger-Oosterveld. Hardly anyone will be able to mention geographical nicknames. Older generations still know fienen (fine) to point to the Dutch Reformed.

The dialect of Drenthe, and possibly other Lower Saxon varieties, can be rough, rude and direct in intonation. Jan Lul (fool) changed to Jan with short surname. *Lul* is derogatory term for penis. – There is a lull in the conversation. – Highly recommended for academic research. In Drents there exists patjakker.

– *Patjakker. (often in connection with dirty) scoundrel, villain, unreliable, bad guy who knows his way around in a clever way. Since about 1896. Corruption of the Javanese badjag (pirate). The Dutch variant of the patjakker is the patjepeeër. –*

looven in een „held”, wien de taak, de romantische taak, zou zijn opgelegd, de realiteit te overwinnen door zwakzinnige, onnoozele argeloosheid, — op het moment echter, dat moest worden aangetoond dat zulks niet alleen in het sprookjesrijk geschiedt, heeft de schrijver zelf voor romantische deus-ex-machina gefungeerd en medegedeeld, dat het Thijs nu plotseling door zijn volharding (d.w.z. domme eigenzinnigheid) voor den wind ging.

Zoowel wil als lot, begrepen als krachten welke het menschenleven wederzijds bepalen en waarbij de eerste in de tweede verondersteld is, ontbreken in dit boek, dat in zijn verteltoon veel van zijn ongeloofwaardigheid weet te bezweren. Walschap suggereert er een onverantwoordelijke voorstelling in van menscheijk lot en leven in hun samenhang; het verhaal is zonder waarachtige tragiek, zonder het pessimistisch inzicht, dat ondanks alle heilig streven en ondanks allen goeden wil, het leven zelve het lot is, en dus de sterkste in den strijd tusschen het leven der werkelijkheid en de beperkende en richtende functies van geest en wil. Als deze wil dan wel goed maar niet sterk is, kan lotsaanvaarding een teeken van wijsheid en inzicht, doch slechts van sukkelijkheid zijn.

Het lot van Walschap heeft op deze wijze, door zijn afwijken van een romantisch-drakerig karakter gekregen; het valt uiteen in twee delen, waarvan er één Thijs' Brussel-scherp en treffend, met een psychische analyse, zooals wij die uit ander werk kennen, den moord van Rosa op haar man behandelt. Het andere deel, dat op vele bladzijden, waarin de schrijver zijn oude epische en zielekundige kracht en stijl terugvindt en, vooral hier, weer geheel over het vermogen beschikt, om de dreiging, de onrust, de gekweldheid van den angst en de gedrevenheid van een door waanzin verscheurd mensch met onheilspellende zekerheid uit te drukken. Daarnaast verslapt de gewoonlijk zoo korzelige en gespannen stijl van Walschap echter tot een verteltrant, die nog wel altijd zijn charme bezit maar, breeder en gemoedelijker geworden, veel van zijn oorspronkelijke intelligente spitsheid en ironie heeft ingeboet.

‘We now turn to literature,’ says Eyoum. ‘You have had difficulty, perhaps I am exaggerating, in finding answers to your questions about social behaviour and the emergence of another type of civilisation. Am I formulating your search correctly?’

Joseph is silent. He is a quick thinker, but slow to find the proper answers. Initially, he had chosen to rely on oral history. There were some interesting insights to distill, but he was missing a quintessence. There should be more to discover.

‘I have a novel by Walter Brierley from 1937,’ says Eyoum. Handing him a book with a red cover and Walter Brierley in gold lettering. ‘He was a miner, a pit man, who worked in a coal mine. The main character, Arthur Gardner, in *Sandwichman* is his alter ego. This is an autobiography, an autobiografaction where fiction meets fact. I think you’re going to like it.’ Joseph opens the book and looks at the pages, which have turned yellow to reflect the time that has passed.

‘I suggest,’ Eyoum continues, ‘that you begin by reading the novel. Once you have formed a first impression, you can study the comments of Robin Christopher Harriott in *The Birmingham Group: Reading the Second City in the 1930s* about the Birmingham Five. This dissertation examines five writers, including Walter Brierley, who were rooted in the proletarian strata of society. The main question Harriott seeks to answer is: is this possible, and with a positive answer, that a pitman, a manual worker, can escape work by becoming a writer? Is a pitman still a member of his social class after the publication of a novel?’

Joseph seems confused. Too many questions in his head. The Birmingham Five? He only knew about the Birmingham Six, six Irishmen who were wrongly accused and later wrongly convicted of bombing pubs in Birmingham.

‘And,’ Eyoum continues, ‘another question that might interest you: does literature from the countryside and from proletarian writers far from the mainstream have any significance for contemporary readers and scholars? Does regional fiction contribute to a better understanding of contemporary society?’



Joseph nods to let Eyoum know that it can continue to pose questions that may be answered soon, as Paul Valéry said: 'We are only inclined to ask questions when the answers are close at hand.'

'When you met the locals,' it continues, 'more than one of them reminded you of vulgar language, jokes about women, hardly any jokes about black people, because in your youth there were no black people, jokes about gypsies, jokes about shit and piss, in order to strengthen the community feeling and the shared identity. Schadenfreude to unite whatever is necessary to feel safe and to keep apart whatever is a threat to life, or at least suspected of being hostile. Bad jokes about sex and women.' It smiles: 'Transgenders to mock didn't exist yet.'

Joseph nods. He hesitates to repeat the joke from his youth. - How can a girl become a virgin again after she lost her virginity? Pour milk into the cunt that is raised to the heavens and wait until the milk turns sour and a sheet appears. - Joseph shakes his head. No, he is not going to say out loud exactly what's on his mind. This childhood vulgarity and banality has found its way into politics, all the way to parliament, where personal attacks on politicians dominate discussions about issues and long-term planning. Few seemed bothered by climate change, sustainability, war and peace, religious and political tolerance, LGBTQ+, gender identity, NH<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, CaC<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> or truthfulness when it comes to animals and plants. The fate of the next generation was not on any bucket list.

'Maybe,' says Eyoum, 'you can find the answers that you're looking for in a closer reading of *Sandwichman*. The author, Walter Brierley, grew up near Birmingham, not in the Peat District, but his experiences are comparable: he knew poverty, hard work in the pits and the negative, condescending and conservative attitudes of those around him. You are familiar with close reading of Low Saxon literature of that period,' it said, 'so it won't be too difficult for you to give it a try.'

Joseph Nieters had examined several regional novels from the 19th and 20th centuries. His focus was on communication in these novels. Who spoke to whom? He had discovered that a man mainly talked to another man and a woman to another woman. Lovers talked to each other, but never on a reflective level. A rare kiss was a mechanical exercise. Grannies gave young people advice about marriage. Fathers and grandfathers warned them how to behave and to keep to tradition.



In these novels there was no reflection on the nature of the relationship. There was hardly any attention to the young people own struggles. It was clear that psychology had not crossed the minds of these writers, as they had limited themselves to rural facts and peasant life. An intellectual rarely appears in these regional novels. No surprise, since no one from the rural areas went to university. None of the regional language Lower Saxon writers had a university education, they could not narrate their experiences from first hand. Becoming a primary school School Teacher was the highest a young person from the peat area could achieve. And once in that position, he, first and foremost a he, would lose touch with the community and elevate himself above the working class.

‘You could focus on the social relationships described in *Sandwichman*,’ Eyoun continues. The content of the novel is clear from Philip Gorki’s summary. This novel is, at first glance, one of thirteen in a dozen. The main theme is not the story in and above the pit. More interesting is the struggle of Arthur Gardner between his loving mother and his harsh stepfather, between the unlettered pitmen and the academics, between illiteracy and university, between part time students and full time students, between his future bride Nancy and her desire for physical contact and his intellectual thoughts about a better future, moreover between his head and his feelings. And if you want, and if you can, you can think about the limits of free will and free choice in a person’s life.’ It smiles and says: ‘You could read *Sandwichman* and write your commentary on what you are reading, on the differences and similarities in Lower Saxon literature, and beyond that, on the extent to which you are recognising your own life narrative. Your life experiences, your reading list, your knowledge of developments in psychology and sociology, your reflections on your youth in Erica can help you to better understand the world, your origins and yourself. Moreover, you can feel the depth, and extract the answer from your own stories. Read again *Present Past Continuous*, and ask Brierley for comment.’

Eyoun leaves Joseph Nieters alone. It feels that he needs time to sort out his thoughts. In a while it will bring tea and some biscuits to drip into the tea.



# Verenigd Koninkrijk

Isle of Man

North Pennines AONB

Lake District National Park

North York Moors National Park

Eryri National Park (Snowdonia)

ENGLAND

WALES

Google

Joseph Nieters reads Philip Gorski's introduction. *Sandwichman* portrays Arthur Gardner as squeezed between family, working-class traditions and an academic career, between vernacular - in dialogues - and civilised language, between women and men, between love and hate, between a yearning for connection and the need to retain authenticity.

In *Sandwichman* Arthur Gardner is studying part-time for entrance to 'Trentingham University College'.• The introspection and even self-centredness that this requires from Arthur creates a rift between him and his family (especially his step-father), his workmates, and the woman he is to marry - Nancy. The resulting tension in turn affects Arthur's studies, and culminates in a fight between him and his step-father on the night before an exam, which seriously affects his performance. Arthur is sacked from his job after being blamed for a pit accident, supposedly caused by his habit of revising from a notebook during quiet intervals at work. (The real cause was his lapse of attention after being jeered by workmates - 'Go on, you bloody college swank; thinks tha'rt iverybody cos tha goos ta-')• Meanwhile, Nancy's increasing frustration with Arthur's educational ambitions leads her into a brief relationship with another youth. She becomes pregnant, and she and Arthur separate.

For all his qualifications, and despite a course at a national unemployment centre, the only job Arthur can find is a humiliating day as a sandwich-board man. Ultimately, he fails the means test.• His failures, and the months of family strife, have taken their toll on his mother, who dies shortly after the visit of the means test investigator. Arthur consequently leaves home and goes off to tramp the streets.

Arthur Gardner is sandwiched between society and authenticity. The following excerpts illustrate the style Walter Brierley uses to portray the young man's struggle.

**Arthur Gardner loves his mother, but does not know how to  
express his feelings**

Immediately she had removed the empty plates and set pudding before the three (husband and two sons), Mrs Shirley (mother of Arthur) went into the middle room, where Arthur was pulling on his shoes. Already he had been upstairs and changed into a navyblue suit.

‘What time are you going?’ she asked.

‘Oh, about the same time. Sixish.’

She went into the kitchen again, and filled the sink for her husband to wash himself, then came back, but her son was not there. She walked into the front room overlooking the street; he was at the small table under the window, and she stood at his side while he wrote the title of his essay across the top of a sheet of foolscap.

‘I hope to get Alpha plus for this,’ he said humorously, as he felt her body pressing lightly against him. ‘The Scotch tutor’s never given it any one yet.’

She put her hand to the side of his head, pressed it gently to her body. He did not respond with any physical movement, except to bring his teeth together more firmly. A spiritual hunger swelled about him, paining him; it had its point in the woman at his side, not as a woman, not as a mother, it was some kind of thankfulness, gratefulness for love expressed, demonstrated. He was incapable of more outward show than that he was thrust into in the moment before his brain controlled rushing emotion. He was too self-critical; he felt a fool if some one, in greeting him, held his hand for a moment after the mutual grip. He had wanted to embrace his mother many times, to hold her and let her know how much he loved her, how they were bound together wholly not only to resist that which each knew beat against them, but in the simple resting of love. But he couldn’t, he knew he couldn’t - he wouldn’t if she were ill. And the idea of kissing her shuddered him. It was different with Nancy, though even

with her he was restrained. But his mother understood. He wished he wasn't like this. She stood beside him now, pressing his head to her, and he wanted to put his hand on hers. He couldn't; he would start thinking what he was doing. Many a time in the loneliness of fields, he had repeated aloud, over and over again,

‘But I have that within which passeth show’,•

but he found no relief from the emotion pressing outwards, straining to escape through the physical. He felt it now, in his chest, his throat; one could measure it if one marked the pressed mouth-line, the pained eyes.

‘I must get on,’ he said. ‘Half to-night, half tomorrow. Hope I get this question in the exam.’

She withdrew her hand and left him. He sat for a few moments with empty eyes, then shook himself angrily and gave himself to his task.

p. 7-8.

Joseph Nieters was not used to crying or tears. After reading about Arthur's struggle to connect with his mother, who used body language to come in touch with her son, Joseph felt “water in his eyes”. Joseph recognised the event because he lives mostly in his head and can barely respond to physical contact. No kisses, no hugs, no body warmth to express his feelings to others. He knows what he is missing, but at his age he sees no way of gaining these skills, which are best developed in childhood. – He wished he wasn't like this. – And yet Joseph is touched by the struggles of Arthur. Arthur Gardner, like Joseph Nieters, is a child of his time and his upbringing by parents, teachers and village. No one is responsible for these shortcomings. Gabor Maté, a Canadian pediatrician, describes these situations in his book *The Myth of Normal*• as a result of trauma with a small t. as a lack of responsiveness to a basic needs of a child. The subtitle of the book is *Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture*. One of the often unintended results of child-rearing is an insecure family situation. There may be love, but often love ends where the child chooses a different path in life.

Joseph Nieters had not come across such paragraphs describing the struggle for attachment and love in Lower Saxon regional novels.



Judging from the literary world, warmth, passion, love and tenderness do not seem to be present in the Drenthe countryside. For Nieters, this missing link seemed to be a clear example of intergenerational inheritance. Qualities that seemed unfamiliar were absent. Contact with other cultures was necessary in order to find and develop new ways of relating to each other.

He recalled a book by Lynn Pan, *When True Love Came to China*.• Until the early twentieth century, family relationships in China, and not only in China, were regarded as business arrangements. Passion was not essential for marriage. If there was a romantic relationship, it was usually with a mistress. Even women paid prostitutes after their husbands had enjoyed their sexual services. This was not uncommon in royal families. Such marriages were a way of maintaining power and keeping property within the family. In the centre of Drenthe, called Sand-Drenthe, marriages were more or less arranged. A farmer's daughter was allowed to kiss a farmhand, but marriage to a farmer's son was arranged, preferably to a farmer with a barn with more windows, and therefore more cows in the cowshed.

The peat diggers were not rich, so the poor peat diggers married each other. These patterns did not change until the 1960s. Nieters remembers the upheaval when a niece decided to marry a black man. She was one of the first in a province where no coloured people lived.

The description of family relations in *Sandwichman* is still appropriate and helpful. The change to warmer relationships is slow.

**Arthur's first sexual experience and: being in love is a disease**

'Do you want to go to the pictures?' Arthur asked her, when she came to him at the top of King Street across from the Hippodrome. 'I've been stuck at my books all day, and a walk would do me good.' 'I don't want to walk about in the dark three or four hours,' she said definitely. 'Besides, there's a good picture on here.'

'All right,' he replied, and they went in. 'I'll walk down with you after.'

'Are you coming to-morrow?' she asked, when they were down Nessfield Hill. 'If you've been working all to-day, I should think you could do with a break.'

'No, I shan't come. No.' He was silent for a while. 'I've had to go in the garden every night this week, and I'm behind. I've done no Roman history at all this week.'

'*Had* to go in the garden,' she repeated. 'Who made you? You're old enough to please yourself, aren't you?'

He was silent again, not knowing what to say. It would mean bringing his mother into it, her helpless misery, if he said his step-father made him go in the garden. Nancy would say, 'You're not afraid of him, are you?' He wasn't afraid of him, but the girl would want to know why, then, he went in the garden at his bidding. Oh, he didn't know what to say.

'Well, we all have to take our whack,' he said, at length. 'More in, sooner the thing's finished.' He felt ashamed somehow of this utterance. Both thoughts were mere echoes of what had been said to him. 'But when we have a holiday on a Wednesday, I shall come. I told you so, you know.' Silence again. 'We might have one next Wednesday. Did you go out in the week?'

'No. I didn't. Fanny came up on Wednesday, but we stayed in. I thought you might come.'

'If I do come on Wednesdays and Sundays, Nancy, I shan't get through.' He blurted the words uncontrolledly.

‘Don’t come, then, you silly,’ she told him, evenly. I’m all right. I shall be here when you do.’

‘Good. I like you for saying that. I’ll love you a lot down the fields.’ She laughed and he was glad. He pulled her to him and kissed her impulsively. In the fields he held her close, silent, richly soothed. She was not content with his resting.

‘I thought you were going to love me a lot,’ she whispered.

‘I am doing, really.’

‘Well, I’m not enjoying it.’

Her body movements made him daring. He was weaker than usual and she was easy in helping. When he was leaving her she clung for a moment.

‘Couldn’t you come to-morrow?’

He was angry at himself and did not answer.

‘Never mind,’ she continued, with brave consideration. ‘I know you would if you could.’ She laughed at her words. ‘I shall manage a week, now.’ She kissed him fiercely. ‘That is, if you love me like that again.’

He went after he had forced himself to return her kiss.

‘Good night, dear,’ he said, but was still angry, even though he spoke gently.

He sat in the bus wondering at his new experience. It kept him alone over the fields from Pirley to Peathill and along the hard highway to Wingrove. Fear sprang to his throat at intervals, and he attempted to get rid of it with a slight turn of his lip and a shrug. He tried to be as he usually was, walking home, concentrating on some likely question in the examination; but it was hopeless to-night, bigger things surged, surging and drowning the dry lines of thought.

p. 40-42.

In Lower Saxon regional novels, love is rarely a burning thing and never an all-consuming desire. Descriptions of young people in love are limited to holding hands while walking in the fields. Kissing takes place in the dark behind the farmhouse or on the stairs to the cellar while reaching for salted pork chops, but not too often. Clothes always stay on. The novels of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century give a more or less mechanical description of young people

and relationships. Their minds have not yet settled. The conversation is limited to family problems, class differences, levels of education, inheritances, wedding planning, all without any reflection. As they say, conversations have the depth of a soup dish. Hardly any lovers show their passion. Sexual intercourse is never mentioned.

Nancy is more self assured. – ‘Who made you? You’re old enough to please yourself, aren’t you?’ – Her longing for Arthur needs no more than a few lines. For a reader, that’s all it takes. Descriptions of sex rarely draw a reader into a story. Besides, descriptions of kissing and intercourse can be disgusting.

Later, in Latin class, Arthur is aroused by watching one of his female classmates. He more or less strips the young woman with his eyes. Then he thinks of Nancy and his past experience. And that’s that.

Joseph Nieters had the experience of falling in love. Not often, maybe just one time too many. He learned to regard falling in love afterwards as an infectious disease that blocks all rational thought. This experience increased his aversion to intimate relationships. It made him suspicious and watchful. - His novels and short stories testify to this acquired attitude. - But perhaps he never intended to surrender to love. Surrender is the greatest victory. He knew the expression, but stayed far away from its application. The Beatles sang Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds (LSD drug) to let one know the pleasure of losing one’s mind. Not for Arthur and not for Joseph. Like Arthur, Joseph Nieters thought about trivial matters and scientific problems while kissing, et&. As the philosopher Spinoza taught Joseph: Reason can overcome passion by turning reason into passion. It was an approach that suited Joseph Nieters very well.

The only Catholic novel of the 19th century, *Kleine Hein*, ends when the protagonist, Hein, reaches an age at which he could fall in love. The reader will miss that part of life of *Kleine Hein*. One of the novel’s climaxes is the day when the priest’s little dog is bitten to death by an Alsatian. The priest forgives *Kleine Hein*, who, together with his friends, had turned the Alsatian into a killer dog.

At the end of the 20th century, a few Lower Saxon erotic novels, mainly parodic, and poems, not at all erotic, appeared in print. Lack of reflection on relations, on whatever, is a constant in Lower Saxon literature. There are few exemptions to this rule.

# Trentingham College

## Portrait of a pitman as a young man

### CHAPTER III

It was twenty minutes to eight on a Monday morning in late May. Arthur Gardner picked up the small attaché case he had packed with books the night before, and stood ready to go. His mother was bent to the fire, the sun shooting narrowly through the small south window glinted her hair, and he marked the grey streaks along the straight hair drawn from her forehead, winding among the 'bun' at the nape of her neck. The tone of his mood fell suddenly, heavy thoughts rolled through him, damping the wide, cheerful air which was his usual emotional atmosphere on the mornings when he was setting out for Trentingham, pressing the quick cheerfulness into a painful anger. Many centres shot into the embracing ugliness holding him, and he flashed from one to the other - his mother was one, his stepfather, Nancy, the pit - and each particularly, all generally, were pulling at him, pulling back as he strained forward towards a smooth level of content. His anger was not fastened on to any of these centres; he was merely impatient of the pit and his stepfather; he loved his mother and Nancy, but it was the obstructing emotions which he was compelled to experience because they were all important streams washing through him. All that the greyness in his mother's hair implied shot anger through him, his helplessness before them pained him.

'I'm going, then, mum,' he said abruptly. She looked up. 'Back about seven. 'Morning.'

'Morning,' she replied, and looked him up and down quickly. 'Your shoes aren't extra clean.'

'They'll do,' he gave back, and went.

He walked down the empty, silent village, in and out of the rosy flood of sunlight splashing between houses, up the slow slope to Hillcross where he would wait for the bus from Pirley and Condor. He faced the sun all the way. He stood across from the hundred years' old church,



glancing occasionally up Condor Hill for the bus. It came, and when the conductor had collected his fare, he opened his case and took out a book. Invariably he read parts of a history or literary history book during the hour's jolting ride to Trentingham. But this morning he let the book rest idly in his hands. He couldn't read, couldn't think straight. Everything seemed to be attacking him at once. A month in the garden, almost every evening for a month. He'd jibbed once or twice, and there'd been a row between him and his step-father. Yet it was his mother who seemed to feel the worst effects of it. He couldn't study when she was suffering. Still, the garden was finished, now; that was one thing out of the way. But Nancy. He glanced through the window. They were running down from Reanor into the valley of dirty rows of houses. Up, now, to Eastwood. The bus stopped in the marketplace. Arthur looked through a gap in the buildings, down a steep hill opening into the wide valley of woods and fields of *Sons and Lovers*.• The bus moved on. He glanced down the street where Lawrence was born; a shabby street with flat-faced houses and a grimy chapel. All the adult students in his group at Trentingham were crazy over Lawrence. Nancy was like some of the women in his books - well, she had been lately - sex-driven out of all balance. She could think of nothing but the pictures on Saturday evenings at one time. Now he couldn't get her near, except about once a month. They must go and lie in the fields, or prop themselves up against stiles and fences. And last Saturday she had asked him to tea, and her father and mother had gone out at six o'clock. It would have to stop. He'd stand no earthly chance of passing the exam, feeling as he did. What with that and the heavy work at the pit and his late studying at night.

They ran on towards Kimberley. On the right, the 'Rainbow' country spread in flats and ugly lumps up to Ilkeston on the hill. Lawrence doubtless roamed about here, feeling penned-in by his existence as a student and teacher, driven or pulled to another expression, the real expression of himself. He felt the same about his pit life: it was an obstruction to his real self. He must get free, must get to a satisfying level of all books and continuous teaching. He had to be aware of the other side of it, for Nancy's sake - the security, the raised social tone; but that didn't matter, really. He was no snob; he seemed to realise even as he thought, and was content to know, that, however

far he reached from the practical atmosphere of his class, he would still be one of them, no better than the miner conscious of life. He didn't want to be, either. Examples of climbing deputies and under-managers shot to his mind and shuddered him.

The bus ran into the city, he changed over to a tram, and in ten minutes was at the college gates. Quarter past nine rung from the thin tower as he passed from the sun-glowing drive into the chill shadow of the building, then down the steps into the cloakroom and the thick warmth of the men's common-room. It was long and narrow, overlooking the lake and the boulevard. Two doors let into it, each immediately by the short wall of the room. Arthur went through the first he came to, and walked close by the wall to the window where a group of young and middle-aged men sat about a small table. The rest of the long stretch gowned youths filled, moving about, sitting awkwardly without thought of resting, books in their hands or on the table near, laughing, talking. The men Arthur approached seemed less alive.

'Morning, Gardner,' some of them greeted, the others were engrossed in conversation, some talking politics, some about the day's lectures. 'Morning. Hello, Dave,' he said, to a stocky Welshman who sat with his back to him and had not seen him come up. 'Still harping on going to the barricades?'

'Morning, Arthur. You'd be a damn sight more help if you'd more fire in you,' he laughed. 'No, I'm not on about the barricades, but they're the only things that'll put us where we belong. I was just telling Bob, here, a thing or two about Matric. He takes it in June, and thinks he'll walk through.'

'It's not so easy,' Arthur commented.

'I've learned three hundred French words this weekend,' Bob said. He was swarthy, had a fine mop of hair, and a hanging under lip. 'Logic's only common sense; I'm not frightened of that.'

'You'll not find your common sense carry you far if it's a paper like I had,' Arthur said. 'It's all memory stuff.'

'Coming, Arthur?' David Neil said, as he left his chair. 'It's time. What's yours-Latin?' Gardner nodded. 'Mine's Economie History.' They dimbed the stairs to B corridor. Bob Peel was behind, loud with an idea important to himself.

‘If I get through Matric, I reckon it wouldn’t be a bad idea to get on the dole for a year and sock at Inter. • Then I could come here full time, and soon have my degree.’

‘Oh, give it a rest, Bob,’ Neil said, turning his head. ‘Get through Matric first.’ He was continuing up the next flight to C level. Gardner’s room was on B.

‘See you at eleven, then, Gardner.’

Arthur turned with others into the Latin lecture room, and there was a scramble for the back row of chairs. He never dashed about; he felt faintly out of it among these young, soft-skinned youths and maidens who seemed always to be laughing and playing. Yet they came to the lectures with easy, intelligent discussion and plainly pertinent difficulties to be solved. He had watched some of them in the library and he liked them better there, their young faces composed and alone, beautiful they all were in study. There was pain in his studying, always something waiting on the fringes of his mind to disturb him. Most of these would move easily through Inter, through Finals. He was backing his way, every step, but he neither felt nor saw nothing heroic in it; he was moving towards his satisfaction. There was a sort of gladness, though, in the reaching forward. To have mastered a phase of Logic - this week he had stuck at the chapter on Causation and could think intelligently about it - was to have given his being a good, sound meal, and to be conscious of it as a strengthening of his growth. But he would be glad when all the examinations he had to take were over, and he could take off the blinkers which forced his attention to set things. Then -

‘Good morning, Mr. Gardner.’

A girl was in the chair next, and she was smiling when Arthur looked up. She was a doctor’s daughter, a settled type of girl, not a ‘swot’, but one who seemed to be unable to loose herself from a certain quiet dignity. She was not handsome, but in her eyes and mouth was that incomprehensible attraction of the essential woman; in others the physical allurements must have fallen away before such could shine from them. In her it was there at once, always; people fused with her immediately or not at all. Arthur liked her; she did not disturb as did the others with their boisterousness, though he liked them, too, and joked with them. He was the only one of the male adult group who

did mix with some sort of freedom among the full-time students. The rest kept to their corner in the common-room, apparently not heeding the younger members of the college, but there was a feeling of antagonism pricking each individually. It pained one so badly on a certain afternoon, that he complained to the others about it, and there was a common, secret crying. In the discussion class on Tuesday afternoon they poured out the bitterness to the head of their department, bringing a concern to his face - rather a sad concern. Not on account of the circumstance that the college youths and girls 'cold-shouldered' them, and would not 'mix' he dismissed the thought at once, knowing it to be utterly false - but that the men, the working men from the pit and factory, whom he was attempting to help to deserved higher levels of life, were moving upwards with their brains only; the realness of them was holding back in awkwardness and suspicion. He told them plainly and at once they were mistaken; they themselves were holding away from the younger students, perhaps. Arthur had said he could not imagine them thinking such things, and the head seemed glad of his support. But the adult group kept to themselves, kept to their corner in the common-room, clung together round a couple of tables in the refectory at lunch-time, or walked in a bunch to the public-house in Dunchurch.

'You'd a rare neck telling the head that, I must say,' Arthur laughed to some of the others when the meeting broke up. 'The three women looked flabbergasted. And he didn't know what to say, either.'

'It's true, whether he didn't know what to say or not, ' a thin, croaky-voiced man said. 'They looked sideways at us sittin' in that corner. When they run into you they apologise as if it was a stranger.'

'Nay, Tom. You think that,' David Neil said. 'Head was right, it's we who hold away from them. Still, we've all got a touch of the inferiority in us. We're frightened of them.'

'They're more afraid of you, of us,' Arthur broke in. 'Besides, most of 'em think us marvellous slagging in the pit all day and then swotting for the same exams as them.'

'They all call us 'Mister'; they don't think of us as being the same as them. We're away from 'em, I tell you - we're dirty colliers.' This was Green croaking again.

'That's all rubbish,' Arthur butted in impatiently. 'You're the snob.'

I get on all right with them, both sexes. And they call me 'Mister'.'  
- He laughed.

It was Miss Fleming saying, 'Good morning, Mr. Gardner', which had flashed these remembrances through his mind. His smile responding to her's was rather more humorous than he was want to greet with; the 'Mister' seemed to tickle him slightly.

'Good morning.' The silver-haired professor was swishing through the door and on to the dais. 'Hope you've got the next hundred lines off. It'll be sure to be our turn to construe this morning.' He nodded towards the old man arranging his books and opening the register. 'He ticks them off in the register as they construe. Only about four of us left.'

She laughed, and turned her face forward, waiting for her name to be called.

'*Adsum*,' she cried softly, then turned to Arthur again. 'I hope he doesn't call on me. I've skipped my Latin this week.'

'Mr. Gardner.'

'*Adsum*.'

'Mr. Williams.'

'*Adsum*.'

The tutor closed the register and rustled open his Virgil. The students in the chairs below rattled theirs on to the desks.

'Let me see. Line four hundred and two, I think. Yes. Would you begin, Miss Plant?'

Arthur followed the text for a few lines as the girl jerked it into 'crib' English, revealing how Cornebus, seeing Cassandra taken, rushed at the foe and died. Then he glanced sideways at Miss Fleming, marked the quiet repose of her mouth and understanding eyes bent down to her book. She had taken off her gown; it hung over the back of her chair. Her red knitted jumper clung to the curves of her back and breast, the tweed skirt shaped her smoothly. Arthur suddenly saw the naked body pressing outward into the clothes, and life leapt through him vividly. Then he jerked away his eyes angrily, ashamed. He glanced about the room, at the other girls. He strained with himself to see them in true perspective, but he could not tone down the emphasis his eyes carried to his mind. He had to mark the postures, the dignified which needed breaking, the careless, inviting. All the



phrases of the worst kind of 'pit-talk' flooded swiftly through him and he felt sick. He was a fool, this new experience with Nancy had unbalanced him, the obstructionist attitude of his stepfather, his mother's frightened eyes and tense mouth. He'd have to pull himself together or -

'Mr. Gardner, would you continue, please?'

He swept his eyes to the open book before him, but there seemed a haze clotting the characters of each word. He blinked strongly twice, and got purpose in his gaze.

'What line is it?' he muttered, to the girl beside him.

'Four-three-one.'

His glance ran down the page where the morning work had begun. He felt a warmth thicken his flesh as he fumbled to turn over.

'O Ilian ashes, and funeral fires of my kin ...'

Arthur knew the text almost by heart, and translated easily. But his tone was hurried, nervous, the splendid and affecting rhetoric of Aeneas was almost galloped. He was glad when the quiet 'Thank you' came from the dais, though it gave leave for the burning confusion, the shame, the anger to flush him again. He was full of bitterness, self-condemnation. Nothing had ever been allowed to intrude into his periods of study, whether at home or college; no hour spent with Nancy had been stolen from his mapped-out syllabus. But everything seemed to be going wrong. Still, it was his own fault. There was his individual line stretching ahead through life, and if he didn't keep strongly to it, he'd have to suffer, and that was all there was to it. But it was agonising to think away his contacts, Nancy, his mother ....

The low time-buzzer on the wall bored into his mind; books closing brought him back to his own. He took it up and waited for the usual Roman history question to be given.

'Write a short account of Jugurtha and Roman politics, and hand it in next Monday. Thank you.'

The professor collected his books and left the room, the students crowding after him. Arthur went along to the top corridor where the Logic lecture would begin in ten minutes. He was glad to find some of the adult students there. They had just finished a first-year Logic lecture, and would be leaving in a few minutes.

'Hello, Gardner. Come and give us a few hints. What are these Laws

of Thought?’ A man of forty had looked up from a note-book with a puzzled expression to ask the question.

‘Why, they’re easy,’ Bob Peel broke in confidently, his under lip hanging when he had spoken. ‘A cannot be both X and not X. That’s the Law of-of-See?’ The others burst into laughter as he fumbled in the pages of his notes.

‘Have three tries, Bob,’ Arthur said. ‘You’re bound to be right.’

Four full-time students came into the room, two of each sex, free, laughing easily.

p. 47-56.

Arthur Gardner knows his classics, such as D.H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* (1913)• this novel traces the emotional conflicts of the protagonist, Paul Morel, and his suffocating relationships with a demanding mother and two very different lovers, which have complex influences on the development of his manhood.

In 1928, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was published in a limited edition for subscribers. An affair between a workman and a lady in a book that was banned and therefore all the more attractive and prestigious. The book was less about sex than about mind and body. But in college, and at that age, almost all young men and women seemed less preoccupied with mind and body than with their bodies and their sexual possibilities.

–The contrast between mind and body can be seen in the dissatisfaction each character experiences in their previous relationships, such as Constance’s (Lady Chatterley) lack of intimacy with her husband, who is “all mind”, and Mellors’s (gamekeeper) choice to live apart from his wife because of her “brutish” sexual nature. The dissatisfactions lead them into a relationship that develops very slowly and is based upon tenderness, physical passion, and mutual respect. As the relationship between Lady Chatterley and Mellors builds, they learn more about the interrelation of the mind and the body. She learns that sex is more than a shameful and disappointing act, and he learns about the spiritual challenges that come from physical love. • –

Nancy acted like Mellor's wife in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* – her “brutish” sexual nature – and some of the women in the books Arthur read.

– All the adult students in his group at Trentingham were crazy over Lawrence. Nancy was like some of the women in his books - well, she had been lately - sex-driven out of all balance. She could think of nothing but the pictures on Saturday evenings at one time. Now he couldn't get her near, except about once a month. They must go and lie in the fields, or prop themselves up against stiles and fences. –

Arthur knows that this kind of love is not what he wants. What he wants seems out of reach. The woman he wants need not be beautiful, beauty is not a matter of great importance. What she should have is that incomprehensible attraction of essential women. The girl sitting next to Arthur in the lecture hall is a doctor's daughter. He can forget her. She belongs to another class, an unattainable category.

– A girl was in the chair next, and she was smiling when Arthur looked up. She was a doctor's daughter, a settled type of girl, not a 'swot', but one who seemed to be unable to loose herself from a certain quiet dignity. She was not handsome, but in her eyes and mouth was that incomprehensible attraction of the essential woman; in others the physical allurements must have fallen away before such could shine from them. In her it was there at once, always; people fused with her immediately or not at all. Arthur liked her; she did not disturb as did the others with their boisterousness, though he liked them, too, and joked with them. –

Almost half a century later, in the 1970s, Joseph found himself in a similar situation during his early years at university. A brave new world was opening up for him. He did not know how to bridge the gap between himself and young women who had clearly grown up in a different, higher social class. Although perhaps somewhat reluctantly and not in line with current parental and societal expectations, he admits that his awkwardness with women in his student days had more to do with a lack of interest on his part. During those years at university, he never met a Nancy willing to help him undress. Looking

back, there had been a few who wanted to, but the younger version of himself didn't understand the signals of wandering hands and swaying hips.

For many years Joseph chalked up his clumsiness to his conservative Roman Catholic boyhood in the Peat District of South-East Drenthe. He needed a scapegoat to evade his own responsibility and his own ill-understood authenticity. If only he had read *Sons and Lovers* or *Lady Chatterley's Lover* next to *Bartje*, if only he had understood literature as a friend and guide in those years, he might have found a companion for life. Tant pis, as the French say.

The escape from the pit, and anyone could read: escape from the moor – draining the swamp – is a constant in *Sandwichman*. The word *suspicion* reminds Joseph of a general description of the inhabitants of Drenthe: Uit turf, genever and achterdocht is de Drent gewrocht. – From peat, gin and suspicion the Drent was wrought. – This suspicion sleeps in the same crib as a certain feeling of inferiority, which can often appear as a noisy superiority.

Stilll, we've all got a touch of the inferiority in us.

Not on account of the circumstance that the college youths and girls 'cold-shouldered' them, and would not 'mix' he dismissed the thought at once, knowing it to be utterly false - but that the men, the working men from the pit and factory, whom he was attempting to help to deserved higher levels of life, were moving upwards with their brains only; the realness of them was holding back in awkwardness and suspicion.

Joseph realises that the struggle between connection and authenticity is to be found everywhere. Time to question Robin Christopher Harriott about his findings after rereading the Birmingham Five by exploring his thesis (2021) *The Birmingham Group: Reading the Second City in the 1930s*.



②

Zerachstout



**Robin Christopher Harriott in *The Birmingham Group*:  
Reading the Second City in the 1930s**

‘It is good to focus on literature,’ says Eyoun. ‘Writers really are underestimated as a source of knowledge about society and personal growth, which is a shame. More than other artists, writers of regional literature know how to describe, condense and give meaning to events in the region. Reading novels by regional writers is an excellent way of meeting a local and befriending yourself.’

‘Just like I met Brierley,’ says Joseph. ‘Just like I met Brierley and made him part of myself.’

‘Indeed, you can come to know similarities and differences between John Bull, Jochie Berends, Joopie Einhaus, and Johan Kölker, between Mary Redmond, Marietje Vinke, Marietje Moorman and Marietje Kloppenburg you can look for universal patterns in social behaviour - weddings, funerals, birthday parties, incest, divorces - in social evolution - education, lgbth+ - in human relationships - fight, flight or invisible harmony - and regional developments in culture - Black Pete, carbide, bonfire - and psychology - autism, schizophrenia, necrophilia, adhd, ptss -. Nieters, you - the peatman - met him, Brierley - the pitman,’ it says.

‘I met a local,’ Joseph replies. ‘One of a kind. As if I were at home. Tell me more.’

‘I read Robin Christopher Harriott’s thesis,’ it says. ‘I think it’s a he, but Robin could be a she.’

‘And an it,’ says Joseph.

‘Robin Harriott read everything he could by writers from the 1930s, the years of economic depression and mass unemployment.’ It ignores Joseph’s interjection.

‘The years when the Emmen council chased out nearly ten thousand capable unemployed young men and forced them to leave South-East Drenthe to find work elsewhere, in the mines of Limburg and in Eindhoven a real brain drain,’ Joseph says.

### 8800 sent away

In the period before the Second World War, starting around 1926, the number of unemployed in Emmen was at least 5,000. However, the demand for labour increased in some industrial areas of our country and many peat and agricultural workers decided to leave their place of birth and move to Enschede, Hengelo or Eindhoven. – They would receive no financial support if they stayed. – They arrived in such large numbers that so-called ‘Drenthe villages’ developed in these industrial centres.

In Eindhoven, for example, there is still a large part of the city where almost exclusively Drenthe families live. That is why, during school holidays or summer holidays, you can still see buses arriving in Erica from the above-mentioned industrial regions with former Erica residents, who either cannot quite forget where they were born or who want to use the opportunity to strengthen their ties with family and friends. I don’t want to mention names here, but everyone knows them.

In a very short time, 8,800 people out of a population of around 40,000 left the municipality of Emmen, more than a fifth. And they haven’t returned, at least not for good.

*Poze* no. 15 from *100 jaar Erica*, Van Heesewijk 1963.

Eyoum sticks to literature. Everything is equally important. Choices have to be made.

‘Harriott talked at length about five working-class writers who lived in and around Birmingham. I’ll give you their names.’

1. John Hampson (1901 – 1955) was the first of their number to experience a degree of literary renown. Published by the Woolf’s Hogarth Press in 1931, *Saturday Night at The Greyhound* brought him overnight success.

2. Walter Allen (1911 -1995) born in Aston, Birmingham, he won a place at King Edward VI Grammar school, following which he gained an open scholarship to study English at the University of Birmingham. Here he made the acquaintance of Louis MacNeice, currently teaching classics. His first two published novels: *Innocence*

is *Drowned* and *Blind Man's Ditch* had appeared, with each drawing upon its author's experience of working-class life in Birmingham.

3. Leslie Halward (1905-1976) was, for a brief period during the thirties, 'greatly admired [...] his talent unrivalled'. Respectively, amateur boxer, dance-band drummer, engineering apprentice, plasterer, short-story writer, laureate of working-class romance and latterly radio playwright. In *Let Me Tell You*, Halward records his birth 'over a pork butchers shop in what was then known as High Street, Selly Oak, Birmingham'.

4. Walter Brierley (1900-1972) became a beneficiary of both Hampson and Walter Allen's literary largesse. Prior to meeting the Birmingham writers, Brierley had completed the manuscript of a second novel, *The Bare Heath*, in the style of Thomas Hardy. As he recalled '[I] was not cut out for a miner. And because maybe [sic] of an imagination more alive than that of the average miner, I was more scared than the average'. In 1917 Brierley attended Heanor Grammar school one evening each week to learn French. However, his introduction to the world of 'culture' exacerbated his dissatisfaction with colliery work 'this reading fed a sense in me that there was something better in life than the pit'.

Brierley's subsequent struggle with the dispiriting and psychologically debilitating strictures of the Means Test• and his academic aspiration and self-cultivation are vividly set out in the novels *Means Test Man* and *Sandwichman*. Despite his reluctance to become one of Orwell's 'grimy caryatids', Brierley's perspective as a miner-writer widened the scope of Birmingham Group narratives by revealing how the lives of workers beyond the urban proletariat were managing to endure the devastating effects of the interwar slump.

5. In terms of detailed biographical information Peter Chamberlain (1903 – ?) remains problematic. His whereabouts beyond 1955 when he was editor of a Motor-Cycle magazine, have proven difficult to ascertain. Unlike his fellow Birmingham group writers, Chamberlain's family owned a foundry manufacturing bedsteads and were relatively prosperous.

'I mention the names,' says Eyoum, 'so that you can try to find their works and read these mostly unknown authors. There are more locals to meet. Let them join your family.'

'It sounds a bit like homework,' says Joseph. 'Reading should remain a pleasure, even if it requires a certain commitment.' After a pause, he continues. 'I will mention a larger number of Drenthe authors, regional novelists, who might be of interest to you. I understand that my choice is very limited and very personal. I have allowed myself a larger number than Harriott mentioned. This book is not a dissertation, but an intimate introduction to Drenthe.'

At the end of the 19th and into the 20th century, far fewer people lived in Drenthe than in and around Birmingham and Yorkshire. The literary quality of the works is variable. I will not take into account the abundance of Drenthe poets'. Joseph Nieters smiles and adds: 'For obvious reasons.'

1. Harm Tiesing (Borger 1853 - Borger 1936), farmer and writer, grew up in poor circumstances. Hired himself out as a day labourer and gradually worked his way up to become a small farmer. Achieved considerable development through self-education.

Started writing for newspapers because of lack of money. Every winter he wrote a series, first for the *Nieuwe Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant*, then for the *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant*. Three (almost) entirely Drenthe-language serials in particular became widely known because they were published posthumously in book form: *Marthao Ledeng, de Bloem van 't Daarp* (1943), *Over de Hunse* a narration veur 't Drèènsche volk (1944) and *Zien broed verleuren* (1943).

2. Jo Bergmans-Beins (Borger 1879 - Bussum 1948) published poems, stories and essays about old Drenthe customs in numerous magazines. Although she was a prolific writer, she only wrote one novel, entitled *The blood crawls where it should not go*. A story from Drenthe peasant life (1933). In the same year the collection *Drentsche Legenden* was published. Collected and retold by J.H. Bergmans-Beins, which was reprinted in an expanded edition in 1945. She also wrote a number of plays. A light-hearted play about the life of the Drents farmer. Her

stage works never appeared in print. She was a member of the Drenthe Parliament and helped organise a competition for a Drenthe national anthem• she also played a role in the Drenthe literary fringe.

3. Albert Dening (Sleen 1873 - Amsterdam 1949) He worked as a farmhand in his father's company until he was 24. He then worked in the customs service until he retired. After his career as a civil servant ended in 1934, he began to write. Two dialect series he wrote for the *Agrarisch Nieuwsblad* were published in book form: *Um d'olde Toren* was published in 1944 and *Oet 't olde darp* appeared three years later. Shortly after his death, a collection of short dialect sketches was published under the title *Oet oes eigen Drenthe*. A collection of short stories from the land of heather and bushes.

4. Jans Pol (1842-1892) was born on 28 February 1842 in Westerbork. His parents owned a small farm. Jans lacked the use of one hand, probably his left, judging by the handwriting in the original manuscripts. This handicap made him less suitable for farm work. On 1 June 1864 he was appointed a primary school teacher. Exactly two years later (1.6.1866) he was appointed headmaster of the primary school in colony 2 in Wilhelminaoord by the Benevolent Society in Frederiksoord. (Now UNESCO HERITAGE) Pol took the job of headmaster very seriously. He made a major contribution to the festivities for the opening of the G.A. van Swietenschool (Horticultural School) in Frederiksoord on 19 May 1885.

Jans Pol was married twice. In 1867 he married Maria Abels (born 6.6.1842 in Norg). She came from Diever to Frederiksoord on 8 April 1867, where she died on 17 February 1871. Pol remarried in 1874 to Aaltje Ruurds Beima (born 16.3.1846 in Noordwolde in the municipality of Weststellingwerf). She came to Frederiksoord on 17-11-1874, where she died on 6-4-1887. Jans Pol died on 9-11-1892 at the age of fifty. He left a daughter (Fettje Pol) who lived in Arnhem and remained unmarried.

Jans Pol's stories are mainly about village life in Drenthe. The difference in status between people is a recurring theme. A working class son falls in love with a gentleman farmer's daughter. In another story, the girl's background prevents her from marrying.



Pol allows some of his social criticism to shine through in his stories. In the end, the lovers get together and live happily ever after, although it takes until Hendrikje's deathbed for her to find Jannes. Religion sometimes plays a small role in the background. Faith is most evident in the story *Two Lazybones*. The policeman Hendrik Berend talks to Jan a lot, which means that Jan is under the influence of "the devil". Pol's sympathies, however, are clearly on the side of Jan and the policeman.

Pol is always on the side of those who want to break free from the yoke of authority, faith and tradition. Even if he always does so hesitantly.

5. Martin Koster (Avereest 1950) Rebel with a cause, driving force, pioneer, columnist, poet; positive names for Martin Koster's literary and writing career. Together with Ton Kolkman, he founded the literary magazine *Roet* (Soot, a weed, window, rhomb) as a counter-movement to the dull and archaic dialect literature in Drenthe. It took a few years to find a form. In a statement of principles in the book *Old Zeer*, (Old pains) the first editors describe the developments of the first five years. Away with the old folklore and *verdan* (forward) with contemporary ways of life and interactions in regional language literature.

*Old Zeer* contains most of the editors' contributions, under various pseudonyms, on lesbian relationships, murder, Freitot (suicide), settlements. *Roet* catches up with the form and content of Drenthe writing.

Rancune is an important aspect of his prose and columns. This resentment also gives way to reflections on the landscape, Drenthe, travel and literature. His world. Anyone who deals with Martin and does not understand his manners will sooner or later end up in the enemy camp. Columns are used to settle accounts, often in a hidden way, but clearly visible to those close to him.

Ancestry and cultural background are also revealed. *Oostwaartsch* (To the east! – Germany) He wonders: "What have we been talking about at the kitchen table? What does it take to transcend the environment? Is it even possible to turn a dubbeltie in een kwartie (dime into a dollar)? And if so, what is needed to transcend the birth family and what instruments are available for this?"

The HBS in Zwolle encouraged his resistance; for him, high school was not always a breeding ground for cultural advancement. At the University of Groningen, Martin became a socialist within a month, although he thought he was a right-wing liberal (*Zölfportrait met Sparzegelties*). Change was possible. The way to individuality was open. To what extent do old reflexes play a role in personality formation?

Martin Koster has won several prizes. *Roet* was also allowed to receive laurels under his direction, and if it was not *Roet*, then the writers who started their literary careers at *Roet* were the regular prize winners. Without the work of the *Roet*-schrievers, without the relentless thuggery of Martin Koster, the coffers of Het Drentse Boek - and thus its very existence - would have been much smaller. •

6. Jan Veenstra (Noordscheschut 1951) Almost all his work is set against the backdrop of Drenthe. The landscape around Noordscheschut (Hoogeveen), the peat (excavation), the space and the silence are part of the background. The city of Groningen can be seen in *Zangeres van Zulver*, as well as in *Here weg*. The rural characters are often modelled on archetypal Drenthe people from the second half of the last century. The sixties and seventies are a source of inspiration in the various descriptions. Striking peripheral elements are (pop) music, cigars, drinks and ‘stupidity’.

The Reformed faith, education in the shadow of pastors, elders and the Bible, is prominent in all his work. Reformed education is perhaps the most important source of his prose.

The villagers are often poor in spirit, tied to the region and ignorant of the outside world. A black man causes an uproar because of his unfamiliar colour. Ambonese are part of the village, but no one takes the trouble to get to know the other. Interaction remains on the surface. Everyone may have their own thoughts, but the reader does not get to know them. Exactly like Keur & Keur in *The Deeply Rooted*; simple people with little reflection.

In all of Jan Veenstra’s works one ‘stumbles’ over breasts, nipples, buttocks, bottoms. Teenage boys seem to care little about anything other than the primary and secondary physical characteristics of girls and women.

This, call it superficial, approach to gender relations is perhaps not an exclusive Drenthe characteristic. In a few sentences, Jan Veenstra encourages reflection and deepening; often these seem to be isolated messages. These reflections in communication with another (novel) character are seldom found.

7. Erik Harteveld (Assen 1955) actor, writer (Dutch and Drents), director, musician. Special kind of humour to keep people at bay. He seems to forget that the whole world is a stage when he is playing a role day and night. No biography yet. Never won a (cultural) prize. That's a real shame. He learnt Russian during his military service so that he could interrogate Russian prisoners of war. His work: many books, films, theatre roles, etc. See page 245 for a short story.

8. Gerard Stout (Erica 1950) Writer, chemist, teacher at a vocational high school - now NHL/Stenden University -, publisher Ter Verpoozing, wrote novels, short stories, compiled books about Drenthe heritage, et&. Received the Great Cultural Prize of Drenthe.

9. Anne Doornbos (Erica 1948) Writer of short stories, poetry, theatre, detective stories. For years chairman of the Huus van de Taol, to propagate folklore use of the Drents dialect.

10. Harm Soegies (Peest 1946) wanted to be a farmer, but turned out to be a primary school teacher. He breeds hornless sheep - Schoonebeeker schaopen. He wrote hundreds of columns for a local newspaper. A great source of rural life. Humorous.

11. Dea Krans (Assen 1942) Anna (Dea) was born in 1942, the year of the war, into a working-class family in Drenthe. Her parents, bound together by circumstance, live like cats and dogs. Anna grows up as an insecure, obedient child who wants to please her parents. As a teenager, she makes a decision whose consequences will follow her for the rest of her life. The names of Anna and the people around her are almost entirely fictional. The events leading up to her disastrous decision are taken from reality.

*Mam, er staat geen onkruid.* (Mum there are no weeds) Ignorance, incompetence and unease lead to a lack of openness and involvement. This novel gives a penetrating and shocking picture of rural life during and after the Second World War. - Her father was a collaborator. - With a free pen, Dea Krans shows that solidarity, neighbourly assistance and mutual respect were not self-evident. Anyone who did not conform to the mores of the environment was left out. Her story reads like the drama of a gifted child. The first regional novel about a lesbian coming out.

12. Klaas Kleine (Kolderveen 1940 - Diever 2000) settled in Diever in 1966 as a blacksmith. He was also a violin maker and breeder of the Drenthe Landgoat. He held various positions in the Reformed Church. As a late bloomer in the 1980s, he wrote for *Roet*.

His first collection of poetry, *Iezerstark, Verhalen uut de smederij* (1986), was published in 1986. *Dryloek* publishes once a year - three times a year. He wrote columns for the *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* and the monthly magazine *Drenthe*. He wrote texts for radio plays for RTV-Drenthe. Kleine tried to translate *De Vos Reinarde* into Drenthe, but this work remained unfinished. He was a member of the Drentse Schrieverskring for a long time, including a period (1989-1993) as chairman. In 1996 he was awarded the Simon van Wattum Prize, a prize for special services to the regional language. Kleine was a colourful figure in Drenthe culture, a non-conformist.

13. Gerhard Heinrich Vocks (Barger-Compascuum in the municipality of Emmen 1886 - Zwolle 1969) wrote *Kleine Hein tusschen turfbulten en zandheuvels* (Little Hein between peat mounds and sand hills), 1946 and *Kleine Hein onder vreemd volk* (Little Hein among foreign people), 1947. Both novels, which are highly autobiographical, are mainly set in South-East Drenthe and the German border region. The novels have a strong Roman Catholic character. Vocks is the only regional Roman Catholic writer in Drenthe.

His family moved to neighbouring Barger-Oosterveld in 1895. Hein Vocks started working in Germany as a cowherd at the age of eight; he then worked at Scholten's moss litter factory in Klazienaveen. In 1908 he became a postman in Emmen. Through self-education

he became a civil servant in the postal service. In 1914 he was transferred to Den Helder.

From 1924 he lived in Zwolle, where he married the daughter of a toy shop owner in October 1928. Vocks gave up his job and took over the business from his parents-in-law. He was also active in local politics for a long time as a municipal councillor, and for a time he was a civil registrar, i.e. authorised to solemnize marriages.

‘There will be more locals who want to tell their stories. I have only mentioned the writers who seem somewhat familiar to me.’

‘Keep going,’ says Eyoum, ‘regional talent needs a platform so that the world can get to know these still anonymous local writers.’

‘Even if they never become famous,’ says Joseph. ‘Klaas Koops, Chris Canter, Gerrit Boer, let’s give them a try.’ He doesn’t know whether to smile or grin. Every description of society has its own value.

‘Let me quote Harriott again,’ says Eyoum.

The fictions of the Birmingham group retain an enduring significance as both imaginative literary works and social documents.

‘Of course, a lot of nonsense has been written - and continues to be written - which, in retrospect, is given credit it doesn’t deserve. Especially fanatics who try to keep minority languages alive tend to praise every novel and poem written in dialect,’ says Joseph. ‘These zealots fail to see that the effect is the opposite of what they are after.’

...caution that ‘any work which professes recuperative intentions risks making inflated claims about the reflected brilliance of the age – no doubt there were plenty of wretched novels produced in this period (as in any other) that have been deservedly forgotten’.

‘I agree,’ he says, ‘the quality of the writing is not always recognised. At low tide, regional literature seems to become a folklore. The emphasis is on subsidies, on pleasing the majority and on chasing intellectuals into oblivion. Highly educated people do not want to be associated with this - often identity-based - approach to their most precious possession: their mother tongue. Harriott again.’



Alan Sillitoe writes: The common man, so called, is rarely able to tell his own story, each person has one, but any attempt to tell it, at least in writing, is likely to result in the distortion of the tale and the impatience of the reader[...] even though he may once have been a common man himself, he needs more than the emotional sympathy and dash of sociological reality which is often regarded as sufficient basis for such novels. Inspiration, imagination, and a certain distance are necessary to turn the material into a story which may be read with complete faith in its veracity. Many people may be writers, but few are artists.

For sure that 'the regional novel expresses a belief that the ordinary man and woman are interesting and worth depicting.'

'Both sides,' says Joseph. 'I am not saying either this folklore or that scholarly approach. Both can exist side by side. What I'm missing is the scientific approach.'

The difference between science and art is, not that they deal with different objects, but that they deal with the same objects in different ways. Science gives us a conceptual knowledge of a situation; art gives us the experience of that situation.

'Again, I agree,' says Joseph. 'The literary sky would be overcrowded if everyone who could write a paragraph of fiction became a literary phenomenon. Although it takes a lot of writers before talent emerges from the soup of Joe Averages.' He sighs. 'As for the preservation of dialect. It would be better to anchor local languages in the local culture. That local culture includes history and geography. The focus should not just be on the language.'

'Meet a local in the peat bogs,' says Eyoum.

'Exactly,' smiles Joseph. 'In South-East Drenthe, all schools should pay a lot of attention to the local environment, to the landscape, to migration, to the different cultures that enrich life.'

'Just like Thorne, which welcomes Dutch excavators, just like Birmingham, famous for its humour and self-deprecation,' says Eyoum. 'Brummies like parody and irony. Let me quote Harriott again.'

Phlegmatic as they are and well-schooled in the art of self-deprecation, Birmingham's citizens have long-since become inured to the city fathers' more eclectic planning decisions or, for that matter, the critical estimations of outsiders. What might be urged however, if one were to define a particular Birmingham sensibility or outlook, would be the seemingly paradoxical values of individualism and co-operation, the combination of independence and self-belief that have come to characterise both people and place, and which in turn derive from a combination of earlier Chartist and Non-Conformist involvement and the influx of peoples from many nationalities who have over the years settled in the city and made it their home.

'I see some differences between the urban Brummies and the rural Drent,' says Joseph. The sense of humour is not the same. Self-deprecation has not developed in Drenthe.'

'These differences between Brummies and Drent can be shown in a novel,' says Eyoom. 'The social reality seems the same, but a closer look reveals the differences. Harriott quotes several authors in his thesis.'

As Raymond Williams indicates 'the simplest descriptive novel about working-class life is already, by being written, a significant and positive cultural intervention. For it is not, even yet, what a novel is supposed to be, even as one kind among others'. Support for the value of unalloyed description may be found in the following observations of Salman Rushdie:

[D]escription is itself a political act. The black American writer Richard Wright once wrote that black and white Americans were engaged in a war over the nature of reality. Their descriptions were incompatible. So it is clear that re-describing the world is a necessary first step to changing it... The novel is one way of denying the official, political version of events.

'What regional writers in Drenthe need,' says Joseph, 'are examples to follow. They need a Birmingham Group or a D.H. Lawrence.'

As a competent literary practitioner in his own right, the Birmingham group member most indebted to Lawrence was Walter Brierley. The following extract from 'Transition', in which the story's narrator describes an anxious mother's thoughts following her son's first day at the pit, offers a flavour of his writing. Answering the door to a friend who has arranged to call for her son following his first day at the pit, the boy's mother explains:

*"E's asleep Joe. Not washed or changed. I'll tell 'im you've been." She came back into the room with tense lips.*

*"E'll be t'same as t'rest. Lozzin about in 'is pit-muck till bedtime." She glanced at the boy, saw the pain of weariness in his features, and her mouth softened. "I wish wi'all my 'eart 'ed been a gel."*

The mother wanted her son to be a girl. She did not want him to work in the mine.

Brierley moves beyond the purely autobiographical toward a mode more usually encountered in novelistic discourse. This is illustrated below where snatches of entreaty alternate with first-person narrative to foreground the speaker's thought processes:

It follows of course that family life is made more difficult, testiness creeps in and often condemnation of a system is transferred illogically to the irksome limitations of the married state.

"If one were only single, without restraint, limitations."

"If it were not for the child."

These thoughts, sometimes expressed, give, when they do find an outlet in speech, occasion for a warm altercation, the resulting bitterness of which is only erased by periods of unintelligent silence. Here Brierley combines self-awareness with an appropriate grammatical form (the subjunctive) in order to render his inner-feelings. Though clearly unaware of contemporary psychological terminology, in remarking upon such 'periods of unintelligent silence' Brierley's narrator reveals both an emotional intelligence and prescience in identifying the behaviour pattern contemporary psychology describes as 'passive aggressive'. Brierley's 'stylised' account of his circumstances provides a bridge between quantitative, report-based, discourse and imaginative prose fiction.

'In Drenthe,' says Joseph, 'there is no such critical environment. There is no serious critic to be found. Never an article of more than 150 words that critically evaluates old and contemporary Drenthe literature.'

'That's a shame,' it says with a smile. 'It really is.'

'I haven't discovered any intellectual debate about regional culture and provincial literature in the Olde Laanschap,' says Joseph. 'So if you want to grow, you have to go abroad and read, read, read authors from across the literary border.'

'Birmingham,' says Eyoun. 'Birmingham.'

As I have suggested, the work of the Birmingham group has generally been critically received as illustrative of a 'localised,' or 'provincial' writing. The association of these adjectives with the parochial or small-scale has, along with other misconceptions, militated against the wider critical reception of their work. The negative connotations of provincial are far-reaching, though thankfully the term is currently under a good deal of scrutiny – the modifier 'Regional' promising a more equitable assessment of such works. In *Regional Modernisms*, Neal Alexander and James Moran choose it over 'provincial', 'partly because it suffers less from pejorative connotations in ordinary usage, and partly because of its greater purchase as a geographical concept.' K.D.M. Snell welcomes the urban novel into his discussion of the genre: 'The urban regional novel is such a crucial part of the genre that one cannot omit it. Nor does one want to regard cities as any less 'regional' than other areas: without making any value judgements [...] the regional fiction of such areas should be treated accordingly.' Snell attributes the disparagement of regional writing to 1940s and 1950s New Criticism which, along with various other critical 'isms', encouraged the 'retreat from geography and history into a domain of pure 'textuality' in which the principle of indeterminacy smother[ed] the possibility of social or political significance for literature.' In Snell's opinion the term regional: Is open to various understandings, but usually involves belittlement of any form of cultural life other than that supplied by the metropolis. It assumes metropolitan arbitration of taste, the superiority of metropolitan people and expression over those of locality – as though metropolis and locality were mutually exclusive terms.

# Какие приятные вещи вы делаете

## You do such nice things

‘What are you looking at?’ she asks. When I start to turn the screen, she says: ‘No, I don’t need to see what you see. I don’t need to hear what you’re listening to. I just ask: what are you looking at? Give me a name.’•

I look at Neilande. I haven’t been there very often. I didn’t know if I was in the village or on the outskirts. A few farms and a garden centre. That’s all the place is. A tractor drove up and back behind a bank of trees and bushes. I enjoyed the socialist-realist repetition of farm work.

‘Do you know anyone from Nijlande?’ she asks.

I hear coffee cups. The fridge opens and closes. I stutter. Coffee milk allergy.

‘Imagine,’ she says. ‘I haven’t even opened the milk carton.’

Before she can put me in my place, I make her an accomplice in my thoughts. At RTV-Drenthe I see Erik Hartevelt in a white T-shirt ‘*Along my father’s garden path*’ being chased by Sophie Timmer. She says almost nothing. I know how that goes. Say nothing and the other person will tell you everything that’s bothering him. Golden childhood in Neilande.

‘That boy has never been honoured,’ she says. Pretty sad for someone from Nijlande.’

Oh well. The evening gives a prize every day to everyone who survives the day. Sitting on a horse with your brother in Nijlande, what could be better? A beautiful picture of a happy childhood. A goat for a cart.





У меня нет приза

Playing the accordion with dad. A happy childhood can lead to drama, especially for an artist.

‘Harteveld seems to me like a child who has been lifted over a horse,’ she says.

The poet, writer, stage actor, musician, presenter, master of ceremonies, etc., says so himself. He was a child who was constantly praised even before he reached puberty. “You do such nice things”. Such a father. His mother got her pilot’s licence at 20, for gliding.

‘And the hero of our time,’ she asks, ‘what does our Pechorin have a licence for?’

I want to tell her not to whine so much. Harteveld did not choose his father and mother. The fact that he knows he feels misunderstood works in his favour. The fact that he is very happy with himself is fantastic. He cannot be blamed for not being able to find a better way of dealing with others. Addiction to certain behaviour is something most people are familiar with. There is no fire without smoke. No poem without happiness.

‘Pechorin got stuck in his trick. Always the funniest at home. I’ve never heard a serious conversation with him. He doesn’t have to be as honourable and philosophical as you, but playing a little less to ridiculous effect would bring him closer to a cultural prize; just like quitting smoking. *Hoss is Dead* is his best work; the sincere child without, well, you know.’

I’ve found out. In billiards, she plays the balls over the cushion. If it goes wrong, it is neither the cue nor the shot. The band, the other person, makes the witty remark. She thinks I shouldn’t be so funny in the house. The door handle, which gives everyone the same hand, may remain the funniest thing in the house. I don’t want to be a clown, she knows that, it happens to me. Harteveld says proudly that viewers turn off the TV when he appears on the screen. The Russian-speaking man is proud of his CCCP awards. The whole desk is full. Because he

bought it for a handful of roubles on the красная площадь. Proud of the kolkhoz, fond of his father's farm, a realistic socialist.

'What is missing,' she says, 'is honourable criticism in cultural Drenthe. The people of Drenthe are too nice to be honest. To borrow a cliché from the cabinet. As a conscript, our Pechorin learned Russian in the elite troops, with barons in tow, in order to interrogate prisoners of war. As so often happens, soldiers and artists forget to interrogate themselves. If Harteveld had been more sincere in his self-criticism, he could have put all his Drenthe prizes - three for the price of two - next to his Russian medals. He shouldn't have moaned like a Russian.'

Harteveld claps his hands under the cooker hood. He tries to swat away flies. In vain. Pilot's licence of incompetence. Smoking heavily in the kitchen is better for catching flies.

'Harteveld is, if I may be so bold, a cliché in himself,' she says. 'The urge to be assertive has a dark side. He is someone who likes to be at the forefront. He guards his individuality with fire and sword. Usually modest. Always stubborn. He is an eternal actor. He regards bystanders, wherever and whenever, as an audience. The fact that he says he was misunderstood because he was not awarded the Drenthe Cultural Prize is also a lie. Theatre. He has carefully assembled the building blocks of his character. He knows every joint. He is sincere and honest in his own clownish way of being. There's really nothing more to say.'

I wish I had found out for myself what she was telling me.

'Well, my hero, can you say anything about it?' She hands me the coffee.

What is not yet can come. I don't cough.

'You don't want to hear it from me,' she says, 'but I can name ten artists and writers who feel deprived because they are not loved by their father, mother, husband, wife, child, lover or mistress, or who have

not been honoured by the Provincial Government. Harteveld is not one of them.'

Don't mention any names.

'No, I won't mention any names.'



RTV Drenthe. Along my father's garden path (via Broadcast missed).  
<https://www.rtvdrenthe.nl/tv/aflevering/langs-het-tuinpad-van/1B756293D062B6B4C12588D40045ADD4> December 5, 2022

Pechorin is the main character in the novel (actually four novellas, including *The Fatalist*) *A Hero of Our Time* by M. Lermontov.





Silence. It would have been very valuable for Willy Willems to come up with a series of words or signs to represent silence in his writing. This challenge did not come in the middle of a story or at the end of a poem. Silence and serenity were easy to portray once the story was under way, given enough blank lines between paragraphs and the occasional blank page. But at the beginning? How on earth could he depict silence at the beginning of a story or poem? A blank first paragraph would be nothing more than a graphic trick of the average designer. But silence was not.

Willy Willems had started with silence, except for the noise of the heating and a persistent ticking of pipes under the heating or cooling water, just like at home. He knew the pattern at home: thermostat turned up to a higher temperature. Silence, just a thud in the boiler, but he couldn't hear it downstairs in the living room. The sound of gas burning behind the door of the boiler cupboard, but no sound downstairs either. Five quick taps in the radiator at the front, two in the sunken radiator by the large window overlooking the junipers and Drenthe currants, and in concert two more taps in the pipes near the window overlooking the street where the old pine tree cast a late evening shadow on the house. That's how it was at home. But Willy Willems was not at home. He was in Erica, his birthplace, which he left when he was eighteen.

Willy Willems had heard Nette Konings' question.

Willy Willems listened to the silence. Willy Willems heard the sound of the water running in the radiator and, in addition to his sighs, the breathing of the audience in the dimly lit hall. His silence after the question was more than silence. It was a silent protest.

Why are you writing at all?

Willy Willems even held his tongue; yes, yes, yes, he swallowed. He didn't want to start a story with yes, yes, yes. Yes, yes, yes was a trivial expression of meaningless silence.

Why are you writing at all? What kind of question was that? Willy Willems was familiar with this kind of question. It wasn't the first time he'd been asked that question on stage, but he still couldn't think of an answer that suited him. Why does a baker bake bread, and why does a butcher slaughter pigs, calves, chickens, deer, pheasants, ducks? Why does a hunter hunt? No one asks a craftsman these questions, but sooner or later a poet and a novelist will be faced with the axe.

'Why are you writing?' Nette Konings looked at him with a smile, just like a farmer milking a cow by hand, squeezing the tits of an old cow. Her pale blue, almond-shaped eyes were glancing in a round wrinkled face. A disguised grin said: I don't give a fuck about you writing, that's your business.

She was dressed to elicit frank conversations from older men. A flowing dress with a V-neckline that left little to the imagination, falsely closed with a felt scarf with a shimmer of silk. All the flesh around her bones was evident, even the parts that Willy Willems was not eager to see. Nette Konings looked like a woman of the world, and she was. She was a self-made queen of the world of Erica and her immediate surroundings.

The big world of sweeping gestures and wide vistas seemed to her to be of much less importance. Her expertise came from up close, from her fifty years of hands-on experience in and around the excavated peat. Everyone knew Nette Konings, especially people in need of warmth and companionship; the writer couldn't say that he was as famous as she was.

'To pass the time, eh?' she provoked. 'Because that's what time is for, right?' Nette was an expert on killing time and leisure activities.

Her eyes were almost invisible in the bulging curves of her cheeks with short, woman-made blonde hair. 'It shouldn't be too difficult for someone who's written twelve books to come up with an answer.' And she repeated: 'Why are you writing at all?'

Willy Willems looked out at the audience from the slightly raised stage. Around thirty people had come to the performance. Thirty-three men - mostly elderly women - wanted to hear and see him in person. Poet and writer Willy Willems. A fellow villager from abroad, although he lived almost within earshot of his native village. Sixty years ago, less

than sixty years ago, he was born on Erica. In fifty-eight years, his life had moved some sixty kilometres away from his birthplace, less than a slug's pace.

The door-to-door newspaper featured Willy Willems with a shiny skull and a salt-and-pepper moustache that extended over his lower lip. The front page of the *Emmer Courant* featured his head with the poetry collection on page three, next to a report about the renovated bus stop at the bridge over the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart.

Willy Willems preferred to remain invisible, his mouth hidden behind his moustache. But perhaps the audience had come not to hear him, but to attend the monthly church service. Religion wrapped up in a cultural evening in the village café, until the renovation of the liberated Reformed church into a cultural centre for all denominations is completed. The village pump house.

Willy Willems did not suffer from overconfidence, his poetry obviously contributed something to the world, but even without his sonnets, his free verse, even without his short stories, the day slipped into night as if nothing was really happening, as if it had to be that way. And that it had to be that way, he had already discovered as a poet, even though he was a latecomer to the field.

After all, one could only become a poet if one dared to look back with an open mind and, above all, dared to look to the future, where true liberation lay in the grave. He was already working on his thirteenth book, not as many as in the Old Testament.

In the morning Willy Willems had read the book reviews in *De Volkskrant*. He owed it to his class. As a writer from the region, he was allowed to skip the science and business sections, as well as the travel section, which seemed to be all about eating and sleeping - which, of course, meant making love - in Rio de Janeiro, Hanoi, Tokyo, Quebec or Melbourne. Where it always seemed that travellers, with their inalienable habits, would end up somewhere else, preferably at a familiar place on the other side of the equator.

Travelling was coming home by going away. Willy Willems didn't need to leave to get away. He had his books and his pen. A pen in the form of a keyboard, and stories and poems in - for safety's sake and for his fragile peace of mind - files kept in several clouds, next to his

stormy brainwaves. Willy Willems didn't like to lose anything. Not as a poet, not as a teacher, not as a father and husband. Willy Willems liked to add something to himself. If necessary, by giving away what was most precious to him, and if that fertile seed sometimes ended up on or near rocky ground, so be it.

Frits van Oostrom, university professor of Literature, quoted Jan van Boendale from the fourteenth century in *De Volkskrant*: 'Make money, get a wife and become famous. The answer to the question: why do you write? That was in 1330 AD. And how far have we come in evolution? Willy Willems wondered. Killing each other was still not on the list.

Writing as a way of killing time. Willy Willems ignored Nette Konings' sign. If poets were killing housekeepers and landladies - like the famous poet Gerrit Achterberg - then this was the time to kill Nette Konings in the first place. He wouldn't dare, because he was a cowardly hero of his time.

'I don't have to do it for the money,' Willy Willems heard himself say.

'Willy Willems doesn't have to do it for the money,' Nette Konings scoffed. She did what she did for leisure and for the money. 'Then travelling expenses and a bottle of gin will do for tonight.' She burst out laughing and the audience laughed with her, albeit in a subdued way.

Willy Willems looked into the twilight of the hall. At the back of the room, table lamps with yellow parchment shades and 25 Watt bulbs hung in front of dark stable windows. In the centre of the room there were buttresses in front of the hayloft without hay, and at the front table he saw Elske Vaandrager seated in an unoccupied chair. Elske Vaandrager was impossible to ignore, that's why he was a poet. After all, poets and writers had an eye for what the proletariat missed. Especially in a village. Especially Erica.

'There are only a few writers and poets who can make a living from their literary work,' said Willy Willems, 'but I am not one of the fortunate ones.' He hesitated. 'Although I don't know whether I would be happier with a royal reward for my poetry than I am now. Happiness is an awkward word for writers anyway.'

Willy Willems sat up. He had the feeling that he had regained some of the lost terrain.

‘Only famous poets can make a living from their work, and not many of them do. Most have a wife at home with a job.’

‘And your wife?’ asked Nette Konings. She scored in front of an open goal.

‘My wife has a job too,’ said Willy Willems. But he couldn’t get away with saying that.

‘In education,’ said Nette Konings. She had done her research on the Internet.

‘Director,’ Willy Willems admitted. ‘Director of a vocational school.’ He shook his head a few times. ‘But I don’t think we are here to hear about the work of my wife.’ However much he loved his wife, there was no objective measure of love, he preferred to keep his wife out of poetry.

‘Trade school,’ Nette Koning declared. ‘And now the poems.’

Nette Konings, who never left Erica and never had to return to the village of her youth, was ahead in points. Willy Willems still had a whole evening to impress. That wouldn’t work with learned conversation, evasive answers and poems.

Elske Vaandrager nodded from the first table: ‘Put it on!’ Her mute encouragement encouraged him, but at the same time undermined his self-confidence. He saw her, but Willy Willems did not want to look his muse in the eyes himself.

It was nice that Elske Vaandrager was around, but as far as Willy Willems was concerned, preferably in the wings, in the background, in the twilight, in his poems, but not in full light. Not always. Not now.

*Meisterwerke der japanischen Farbholzschnitte*, collected and explained by Franz Winzinger. Willy Willems had only seen the title of the large-format reference work when the woman in a tight blue skirt and white blouse under a red waistcoat had slowly closed the book. *Sugimura Jihei, tätig 1680 -1698. Liebespaar. Um 1685.* was written below the woodblock print in black and white.

The shunga print leaves nothing to be guessed about the bodies. A



couple in black and white, which would undoubtedly be found in full colour later in the book.

‘Beautiful, very beautiful. Do you agree?’

‘Very nice. Very nice,’ Willy Willems had replied. He had felt a slight blush coming on. But his voice hadn’t faltered. Willy Willems had not learned to look at art with an open mind. He had learned a little, but Willy Willems did not know if that was enough to start a conversation with this woman. Not that he was only a man of action, but words often failed him.

This woman - Elske Vaandrager - at least two heads shorter than Willy Willems, with narrow shoulders and a slender waist but wide hips, had no embarrassment, perhaps real embarrassment, but not false embarrassment.

‘I love Japanese culture,’ she said. So pure and unadulterated. A wonderful example of a lifestyle. Pure to be followed. Life as a work of art. And, paying no attention to her listener, she continued: ‘So direct and yet restrained, that passion. So different from here.’

Willy Willems forgot to ask where ‘here’ was.

‘‘Thou are an expert?’’ he asked.

Willy Willems was in his early thirties at that first meeting and had just married. Willy Willems’ life had just begun with marriage and hair loss. He still shaved every day. Willy Willems could be seen, and he wanted people to see him. He read poems for a change, Yeats, Kelly, Shakespeare, Thomas.

It was the first and only time he said ‘Thou’ to Elske Vaandrager. Public library, second floor window. Sanseverias in the corners of the window. Dried out or in winter position. View of Westerhaven with flat-bottomed boats moored alongside.

White condensation from chimneys. Winter landscape in the city. The scene could have been a Breitner painting, except for the plumes of smoke and the boats’ rigging. Except for the cars slowly creeping over the smooth cobblestones into the red light district. And probably there were many other characteristics missing from Breitner’s paintings that Willy Willems could no longer easily name, with Elske Vaandrager on high heels next to him, and *merakel*• nearby.

Medium-long braided locks of black hair, dyed jet black, Japanese dyed and held together with a plastic or ivory comb. Willy Willems was too close to see her body. Willy Willems felt her glow through his dress. Willy Willems did not take a step back. He could not. He couldn't, even if he wanted to. And he didn't want to step back, he wanted to move forward on that winter's day.

Outside there were light snow showers and temperatures around zero. The last burps of winter, although that was never certain in February. Burping is timeless.

And Breitner also painted women in kimonos, indoors, on the couch, with a book on their laps.

'Connoisseur? Connoisseur of shunga?' a smile on her tiny mouth and a short toss of her head. 'What's that? What's hot?'

Elske Vaandrager was seated at the front table, close to the stage. She rested her right forearm on the worn-out plush covering, and her left hand on her knee. Her legs crossed. Thin legs. Narrow calves, narrow thighs, wide hips. Black hair with some grey, now tied up in a short ponytail. A half-moon smile on her narrow mouth. Invisible, in full view of Willy Willems.

How long had he not seen her? What was she doing here? Where had she 'come from'? What had she lost 'here'?

Willy Willems remained silent, as if he had already said too much about what he saw as the mud of the earth. The small farmers of his childhood had never become rich by digging in mud and peat. Only when money was urgently needed, it was discussed. You didn't talk about what you didn't have. And you didn't talk about what you did have. That left little to share.

He understood that to the public his wife and children were important, more important than his literary work. But if they wanted to know his innermost thoughts...

On the other side of the table sat Nette Konings. Literature lover, volunteer with travel expenses and two free drinks. Woman of the village. She was reading Willy Willems' latest collection, half open, in the centre.

Willy Willems knew the girl next door from his youth. The grocer's daughter, with - as it was called back then - a big ass. An ass like a black woman's, but with narrower lips. A fat bottom, on which she could sit, but which she was not happy with, thanks to comments from customers and customers' children. Weighing sugar, flour, currants, sweets, whole and half pounds of these 'loose' foodstuffs in paper bags, turning them upside down, bending over and sensing the eyes of the customers, especially on her undercarriage.

The people had not been sparing with compliments, packaged as undisguised contempt. Being ill had been Nette's only way to temporarily escape this village culture. But father and mother really needed Nette's help in the grocery store, when father delivered groceries and mother tried to keep her younger sister in check. Sister Thea, with an average - if attractive - body, a mental disorder and uninhibited behaviour for which no name had yet been coined in medical textbooks, proved irresistible to the farm boys. And not just for farm boys.

No one ever expected Erica to come up with a name for Thea's phenomenon. Whatever deviated from the average, both physically and mentally, was a source of amusement. And what was the problem? There was nothing to do in the village that disturbed the senses, as far as the villagers were aware of senses beyond the instinct to mate. There was talk in the village, but not spoken, let alone listened to. Many parts, objects and actions did not even have names. Thousands of events passed by in silence, as if it were day and night. The attention was contagious.

'A few possibilities remain,' Willy Willems continued, after a prolonged silence from Nette Konings, who was either naturally gifted or had learnt the techniques of questioning and silence, gently encouraged by some scraping noises from under the low ceiling.

'But perhaps poetry itself should provide the answer to this question.'

As a national monument, the café was exempt from European regulations on ceiling height, making the sound system superfluous. The acoustics in this Lower Saxon farmhouse successfully resisted electronics. The acoustics were not the only winner in this village that

had struggled to leave its past behind. Nette Konings did not agree to his escape.

'I also see the possibilities of becoming famous and conquering hearts.'

Nette Konings had also read Van Oostrum, or the book review in the newspaper that had quoted this very fragment. Nette Konings was getting too close, it seemed.

'Why do I write? Willy Willems dreamily repeated, as he thought a poet should. His resistance was not yet broken.

'What's it called?' Elske Vaandrager had said again, turning with a flexible gesture to page 13 in the book of woodcuts.

'Those lines, those waves, the sober design of the rooms. Pure patterns straight from nature, peonies, bamboo, grasses, rice fields, reeds, swallows, cranes, everything connected in a natural way. That's why I love Japan, Edo, Shunga. In the East, nature is the divine, not as here, where the divine is nature'.

Her slender forefinger with a red-painted nail rested on the buttocks of the temple dancer, just below the fist-thick penis of the Japanese man, his eyes squeezed shut, his face half hidden in the dancer's black hair, as if he did not want to see but only to feel how his swollen member had entered her dark-rimmed temple vagina. Up to half.

Two, three lines, that's all it takes to put words into action. Nothing stands in the way of mating. Just listen. Elske Vaandrager quoted Franz Winzinger's statement: 'But in spite of many interventions by the authorities, it was not possible to stop his overwhelming vitality.' She nodded with a soft grin, as if to emphasise the quote.

'Bubbling life force,' she repeated.

Only then Willy Willems spotted the silk peony she had pinned in her hair above her left ear. This woman was 'from here' her accent was clearly local - she was 'from here'. Willy Willems couldn't say the same of himself. To the question: 'Where are you from?'• he could only remain silent or force 'here' out of his throat with great difficulty. The world was open to him, but all he could see was moorland and scrub. Broom and hawthorn. He saw trees.

Willy Willems repeated: 'Why do I write?'

‘Poetry will soon be able to answer that for itself,’ Nette Konings sighed.

Willy Willems mirrored her nod. There could only be one boss at the table on that stage, and that wasn’t Willy Willems.

Elske Vaandrager, who was sitting at the front table, put her feet together and smiled. Willy Willems saw Elske Vaandrager’s ponytail and she moved her right hand to the silver sword on her pendant. Her left hand rested on her lap, fingers spread. Willy Willems felt a slight humiliation, but he ignored that inheritance. His muse pursed her lips.

Exuberant vitality. Willy Willems rested both hands on the table, next to the pile of fresh verses.

‘Let’s have a look at your context first, if you don’t mind me saying so.’ She smiled, but Willy Willems saw the beginning of a grin. Was there a bill to be paid? And if so, which bill?

‘Context, your background.’ Nette Konings looked across the room.

Of course Nette Konings was allowed to ask about the well-known route. Willy Willems saw that his interrogator had holes in her ears. Not one hole, but a whole row of holes, without decorative buttons and diamonds. Tattoos wouldn’t be far away. The village, the cobbled street, the church, the bridge over the Vaart, the Boerenleenbank, the sheepfold, goats and sheep, the dance lessons and *De Lach*• at hairdresser Görtz with the latest lingerie in pen drawings. Grandpa’s clogs, the neighbourhood, nature. Skipping school and playing hide and seek in the cemetery.

Death was everywhere in the village and it didn’t bother anyone.

The question: ‘What do you want to hear?’ Willy Willems swallowed. That was his professionalism. He too had continued to learn, but he increasingly doubted that all those books he had willingly and reluctantly read had enlightened him. Why bore the audience, half of whom had known him for a lifetime, with the world between the canal, the forest, the meadows, the Sleen spire in the distance and the factory pipes of the Purit?



‘Maybe you can share your early years at the kibbutz.’ Nette Konings had indeed done her homework thoroughly and deemed it necessary to stir up his childhood sins. Although she exaggerated the duration of his pilgrimage.

‘And then, of course, the influence of the Promised Land on your work. Was that the Promised Land?’

Willy Willems had met the ‘villagers’ in Choelda. Far from his parental home, different rules applied. Asses, tits, physicality were not subjects that were of interest to Old Testament scholars, and that was a shame, because in his twenties Willy Willems felt the dominant, if not divine, influence of hormones. But after a day in the fields, after the communal meal, after prayer and singing and dancing, it was time to sleep in spacious dormitories, with the pious eyes of the elders fixed on the wild and boisterous youth in narrow bunk beds.

The kibbutz was a prison with endless discussions about Kropotkin, Trotsky, Dostoyevsky, Marx and Freud, but there was no nurturing or physical intimacy, although the prudish zealots were preaching free love. In Choelda, the divine word more than once stood in the way of human action. The world on the kibbutz was the opposite of the world on Erica, where the meaningless act stood in the way of the personal word.

‘There were green olives and orange oranges, and there was unleavened bread. The Orthodox wore black dresses and black suits and had pigtails. On the Sabbath the lights went out. I haven’t had a pork chop or bacon for six months. I was at the Wailing Wall, but I had nothing to complain about,’ Willy Wilems said.

There was a chuckle from the audience that barely reached the level of laughter. Stip-in-the-pan, - pieces of meat dipped in melted pork fat - that was what most of the audience had grown up with.

Willy Willems did not mention the Jewish boys - not yet twelve years old - who shot sparrows with a pistol. He did not say that the circumcised children threatened him: ‘And when we are many, we will shoot everyone out of this country, everyone who does not belong here’.

Willy Willems had left for his origins on time. Against his will and expectations, Willy Willems was back at square one after his months in the Levant. He was 'here' again. Willy Willems had picked up a few words.

'But my poems don't mention that six months in the desert,' he said. 'I write about nature, and it is much more fascinating here than there.' He pointed to the back of Nette Konings, where pitchforks and scythes hung on the wall; that direction was roughly south-east, where Mecca and Jerusalem were aligned. First Jerusalem, then Mecca.

Nette Konings half turned and glanced back at Willy Willems across the floor of the stage. Nette Konings licked her lips. No, Willy Willems would not kiss the girl from the grocery store after the performance. Not if it were up to him.

'You can recite a poem now,' she said, closing the bundle with his name on the cover.

There was a bundle of haikus on the console of the Volkswagen station wagon. If Willy Willems wanted, he could recite a few haikus while she drove the car out of the underground car park.

Willy Willems refused. Reading in a moving car made him nauseous. And that was not just an affectation. And he understood haikus as well as descriptions of the cryptogram in the Saturday newspaper. In the *NRC* he skipped the science supplement and the puzzles for the really brainy ones.

Willy Willems was content with literature. Just like the Irishman Gerard Donovan with his *Julius Winsome*. Nice title. Good book, five stars. Sometimes you win some, sometimes you lose one. How a dead dog incites the main character to violence. Gerard Donovan makes the dog speak Shakespeare's language, and only Julius Winsome understands what the dog is talking about. Lack of understanding kills, and not just for others.

And then John Williams with *Stoner*, the meaninglessness of existence. Mistaken woman in bed. Who doesn't recognise that? Beautiful theme; man in oblivion. It's a real shame that the story was written a bit crookedly, but that had its charm.

It was strewn everywhere. The streets glittered with fizzy brine in the

full moonlight. Willy Willems and Elske Vaandrager drove past the dark ruins of the sugar factory. *Moon over the ruined castle*, poem by Hakushi Kitahara. Elske Vaandrager knew the verse by heart. In English. Willy Willems fought the impulse as an English teacher to continue the conversation in his second language. Besides this woman, a teacher was unnecessary, even unwanted. And an English teacher also had his limitations, albeit in a different respect than the village poet.

‘I have a large collection of Japanese books, films and music,’ said Elske Vaandrager. ‘Do you know Shichinin no Samurai, the Seven Samurai?’

And before Willy Willems could answer, she continued: ‘The Magnificent Seven, the Western, is based on that film. And many other directors are indebted to Akira Kurosawa.’

Elske Vaandrager knew the seven samurai by name. She had viewed the film innumerable times. The threatened village, the help from outside, the sword fights and the rise of rifles and pistols. The winners, the losers and how, even in times of violence, passion always finds a way. Black and white.

The search for the meaning of life. The heroic sacrifice and the certain end in a senseless battle to save the village, the community. ‘Man does not want to be saved if he cannot save himself,’ Elske had said. ‘We are doomed whether we like it or not,’ she had said. ‘The Japanese know that better than anyone. Like kamikazes.’

No, My Name is Nobody was not based on the Japanese film. Too bad for Willy Willems.

‘I detect homesickness and unfulfilled longing in your poems,’ said Nette Konings, ‘or am I wrong? Maybe I’m wrong? No, am I?’ A sullen laugh did not materialise.

With every nod of her head, she closed her eyes like a toy doll. Nette Konings still had a thrifty mouth, the slit of a piggy bank pig. That had not changed. And Willy Willems could easily look into her nostrils, just like in those days, she didn’t have to tip her head back for that.

Willy Willems hated the veiled way of speaking. Either you have an opinion about something, or you have no idea, and in the latter case

it is better to remain silent. For Willy Willems, silence was a sign of stupidity, in others, not in himself. He didn't grow his moustache for no reason.

'Everyone reads his or her own poem,' said Willy Willems, 'and it may well be a different poem than the one I wrote.' And to reassure the audience, if necessary, he added: 'I have no problem with that at all. Starker. In fact, I applaud it. Everyone has their own poem.'

And before Nette Konings could ask a follow-up question and Willy Willems was forced to kick in even more doors, he intervened: 'I would therefore like to read the title poem. "Solace in the field of snow".'

Even the car park on the municipal border was gritted with salt. Not because traffic was expected, but because anti-skid measures had their limitations and the car park offered sufficient space for the gritter to turn around without reversing and stay within its own domain. And that was in keeping with the habit of rubbing salt in one's own wounds.

The car park looked beautiful at dusk. Snow on bushes, trees, fence, rubbish bin and picnic table. There was not a blemish anywhere. Elske Vaandrager pushed her seat back, reached diagonally to the side and with some effort took the *Meisterwerke* out of a linen bag. The bag, from Antiquariaat Hecht in Leer, Germany, was just big enough. Apparently Elske Vaandrager often shopped across the border.

'I didn't have the *Meisterwerke* yet. The book is no longer available anywhere, not even on the internet,' says Elske Vaandrager, 'and then I am forced to help myself. If you know what I mean.'

Willy Willems understood. Helping oneself is the fate of humanity, of the individuals who make up the community. Willy Willems knew all about that. That's why he was here with Elske Vaandrager and not with his wife and offspring.

'Now I can expand my knowledge and skills without having to extend the loan period every time. I don't like unnecessary extensions.' Elske Vaandrager didn't let a minute of her time be taken away from her. Nothing more to learn, that was the end of the road, she thought. She knew a fair bit about existence.

On page 15, a couple of servants is portrayed. But Hishikawa Moronobu doesn't disclose any details. Everyone in the woodcut is - as far as the essence is concerned - hidden under a cloth or wrapped in clothes. The servant peering from behind a screen is also discreetly dressed. The naked existence remains carefully concealed.

At Nette Konings' own request, three poems from the second section followed: 'Temporary Desires'.

Elske Vaandrager had placed her feet some distance apart. The tight skirt hugged her upper thighs. Still a hand around the sword, still the spread hand on her capital. Two glasses of red wine on the plush table beside her. She tips one of them over. Her skirt and thighs turned red. It was time for Willy Willems to take control. The break would pass quickly. Waiting at home...

'It's still warm in the car,' said Elske Vaandrager. 'We have to hurry.' Willy Willems had never seen a Japanese film yet. Not of Akira Kurosawa, not of anyone, not even of Japan. And Willy Willems knew Hiroshima only from the bomb, not from Masao Ohki's Fifth Symphony.

Elske Vaandrager climbed between the seats to the loading area of the station wagon. The rear seat was folded up and a red-checked blanket lay spread out on the floor. She placed the *Meisterwerke* against the back of the driver's seat. Page 13. Opened, the book was over half a metre high and a metre wide. She had alienated a large book, an open book.

'You know,' Elske Vaandrager commented as she took off her shoes and unbuckled her skirt, 'you know that in almost all shunga drawings the penis rarely penetrates the vagina. I find that fascinating.' The index finger of her left hand made matching movements. Elske Vaandrager glanced at the pictures.

Willy Willems had tied the laces of his walking boots in a knot and was struggling to take his shoes off without loosening the laces. He was in a hurry to get his pants and shorts off.

'And the woodcuts are not pornography,' Elske Vaandrager continued. 'Shungas rarely produce cum. No globs of sperm on thighs, tummy



and pubic hair.’ And if that wasn’t enough: ‘You don’t see sweat and vaginal ooze on seventeenth-century shungas.’

Willy Willems had much less trouble with trousers and other clothing now that the mountain boots had ended up in the box with the jumper cables and tow rope.

The break was over quickly. Willy Willems had left the wine untouched. He was the only one who saw Elske Vaandrager wiggle her shoes on her toes, leaving the heels free. She made funny faces, but only Willy Willems could see that. Red wine, red wine everywhere. The last section of the collection of poems came into the limelight. ‘Life as a work of art.’

The windows of the car were covered in mist now that the blower had stopped.

‘I wasn’t wrong,’ said Elske Vaandrager. ‘You have a sword like a samurai.’ She kissed Willy Willems over his shoulder, on his neck, and drew a trail around his larynx with her tongue in a cutting motion. Her left hand gripped his sword.

‘There,’ said Elske Vaandrager. She pointed with her free hand to the woodcut on page 13. ‘This is how I want you to take me. Like that.’ Elske Vaandrager slid the box of mountain boots, jumper cables and towing cables under her shoulders. Willy Willems put his arm around her neck and buried his head in Elske Vaandrager’s hair. The very truth. Freely adapted from the woodcut. The smell of hairspray and hydrating skin cream mixed with her body scent. The woolen carpet beneath his knees made ripples on the loading floor.

‘Hey, you’re circumcised,’ she yelled. ‘Tasty.’

Willy Willems was circumcised, not because Our Blessed Lord or Holy Virgin Mary wanted it that way, as he could tell us absolutely nothing about the Lord’s and the Virgin’s wishes, but because the foreskin had been too tight around the glans. It was the only imperfection the Creator had made in Willy Willems’ body: the narrow foreskin.

- In the kibbutz this surgery had made his life easier, perhaps the Old Testament YHWH had a finger in Willy Willems’ future pie. -

Willy Willems remained silent, the circumcision was of no

importance to the vagina of Elske Vaandrager, and Willy Willems' exalted penis suffered no disadvantages. On the contrary, he didn't know any other way.

'Half,' said Elske Vaandrager, 'half. The first half in. And as if it weren't clear enough, she said: 'The splinter in the woodcut.'

Willy Willems kept his eyes shut. Elske Vaandrager was his guide.

Elske Vaandrager was his shepherd. Willy Willems was the goat, or

- in this non-verbal expression of village herd behaviour - the ram.

'We used to have a dog,' said Willy Willems. 'And as is well known, the dog is a symbol, and often more than a symbol, of loyalty and affection.' And without Willy Willems wanting it, he felt a flood of words coming out of his throat as he sat opposite Nette Konings with her fat ass and thin lips. Nette Konings, who had failed to find a man for her alone, and who was still struggling with the name of her father, who - it was common knowledge - was not her carnal father.

And loyalty and affection are not among the strengths of the inhabitants of the dug-up peat and poor sand. Here. And Willy Willems continued: 'Let me put it carefully.' Willy Willems hesitated again.

He felt his tongue swell, as if his body wanted to prevent him from speaking. But he kept going. There must be a reckoning at some moment, and perhaps now was the time to say out loud, in Erica, on this stage in this café, what had been eating at him and about which he had not known until Elske Vaandrager, but about which this woman had forced an opening ... an orifice through which he had crawled, an orifice through which Elske Vaandrager ...

'Our dog's name was Fikkie, but I called him Johnny. - I thought Fikkie was too English. Fikkie seems like a corruption of fuck you, but that's irrelevant.

Our dog was actually my dog. Johnny was my best friend. I was, it sometimes seemed, indistinguishable from Fikkie, from Johnny, as one and the same. My father didn't like Johnny at all, it wasn't the dog's fault, it wasn't my fault, it was my father's fault. The dog was cheating on my papa. And that is how it is. With fathers, with false dogs.

Willy Willems stopped talking. Willy Willems no longer had to say that Johnny was his best friend, that father had never read a book, let

alone a poem. Nette Konings remained silent, no further encouragement was necessary, and the audience held its collective breath, as if it had been agreed in a film script. The cliffhanger. This was what people came for, this was better than poetry about nature and marital fidelity, better than hermetic verses about snow in the field.

The radiator ticked three times in quick succession. A door slammed shut. The shrinking had begun.

‘The third section of my poetry collection is about Fikkie, about Johnny. Strange that it all comes to me now, here on this stage.’

And where Willy Willems had discovered a flower in Elske Vaandrager’s hair earlier that afternoon in the library overlooking the red light district, he saw, in the dim light of the luggage compartment of the station wagon, a clipped reading lamp above her left ear. The LED light illuminated a spot he could not see - Elske Vaandrager’s head and hair obstructed his view - but the light shone on a spot he was well aware of. Although aware was probably the wrong word for the feeling in his groin.

The heel of Elske Vaandrager’s left foot stuck violently against his kidney.

‘Eternity and Dogged Loyalty,’ Nette Konings said. ‘That’s the title of your last wreath of sonnets. Loosely translated, I mean.’ She had added the dogged part.

Nette Konings turned to the end of the volume and looked at the audience with a barely concealed grin. At least half of the people present had a dog or cat at home. That had less to do with love of pets than with dead partners. People sometimes just want to have a good chat.

‘Aren’t these typical intelligent poems for people who forget that everyday life is about ordinary everyday things?’ asked Nette Konings.

Willy Willems felt in his capillaries that she deliberately said intelligent where intellectual was appropriate.

This woman knew the venom and knew how to dose it. Nette Konings had taken care of the villagers. At least she made a pretty successful attempt at it.

Willy Willems saw Elske Vaandrager wag her head in his empty chair at the table in the first row. She laughed as if he were a clown. Her smile seemed to say: 'Look. Look. Hopeless.'

She did not let go of the sword. The raised forefinger of her free hand pointed from his clogs under the table to her crotch. Red nail polish.

'Go on,' Elske Vaandrager had said. 'Finish the job.' And in a raised voice. 'Sword unsheathed. Sword in sheath. Come on!'

Elske Vaandrager no longer needed the bookmark reading lamp. She had seen enough. Willy Willems's pumping penis pounding into her eager oozing pussy, to quote Jan van Boendale. She had seen Big Willy come and go, in full and in half. The only thing missing was that Elske Vaandrager had taken a photo of their sensual togetherness. But Elske Vaandrager no longer had to prove herself. She no longer needed to prove her existence on Facebook. She was ready.

Father Willems, whose name, not coincidentally, was Willy, had finished the job and put Fikkie on the fork.

Elske was dressed only in black shoes with block heels, standing in the melting snow next to the car. She was shivering, not only from cold.

'I like this best,' she said. Elske Vaandrager arched her buttocks towards the snowy landscape, where the full moon cast mild shadows over fields, hedges and the car park. Geese flew in a V-shape over the roof of the dilapidated sheepfold, gazing at the moon as it moved past. Willy Willems pulled on his trousers. He stuffed his underpants into his pocket. At home he would put on clean underpants unseen.

'Look,' said Elske Vaandrager. 'Look.'

Elske Vaandrager shone her bookmark reading light on the inside of her thigh. Her black hair cast shadows forward. A sticky trail slid down. Elske Vaandrager ran her index finger through the slow trail.

'As long as she doesn't lick her finger,' Willy Willems had thought.

'As long as she doesn't.'

Elske Vaandrager stood on her toes for a moment, then sank to her haunches and quickly stood straight again. Tits, buttocks, flamoos in the light of the moon. Why was the moon shining? That's why the

moon was shining. It wasn't a woodcut, and it wasn't pornography - the mark on her other thigh - but it was close. Elske Vaandrager stooped and rose again. The snow melted between her feet. The cum of Willy Willems. His seed on frozen soil.

'Johnny's death was no accident,' said Willy Willems. 'It was intended. My father had fooled the dog. My father was false. Not Johnny.' Willy Willems continued the humiliation.

'I knew your father,' said Nette Konings. 'I was a lot younger.' She pointed the tip of her tongue to her pig's snout.

'Now I see that it was Willy Willems' powerlessness and jealousy, but as a child I didn't understand how someone could kill a dog,' Willy Willems stroked his whiskers with his lower lip.

'Zwienhond.'•

Elske Vaandrager started the diesel and set the fan to medium. Slowly the view of the picnic table and the rubbish bin returned. The engine was still warm and idling smoothly, with only a few hiccups. The play hadn't lasted that long.

'And now a haiku,' Elske Vaandrager said.

'Maybe I write to keep the violence within me under control,' said Willy Willems. 'And maybe others will read,' he said, pointing to the ladies and the occasional gentleman under the low headlights. 'Maybe people do read poetry to avoid violence.' Willy Willems overheard the teacher as though he were lecturing a pre-university class. Romanticism - with a tendency towards self-destruction - and reflection are two important pillars of poetry. You might also call it reflection.

Elske Vaandrager laughed from the first table, grinned, stretched her legs wide, put her thumbs in her ears and waved her hands. Her skirts rode up. Willy Willems took his feet out of his clogs. He didn't have sweaty feet.

And after the haiku - how short a poem can be - Elske Vaandrager kissed Willy Willems on the mouth. 'You were my seventh samurai,' she said. 'I'm ready. It is finished.'



As if by habit, Willie Willems opened the glove compartment to tuck the bundle away. Not for a moment had Willy Willems become immersed in Elske Vaandrager, in no other way than in her body. Willy Willems had been mainly concerned with his 'here' and his 'then', with his infinitely continuous past. Willy Willems was busy with his present past continuous, with the grammar of his day-to-day life, which had only just begun with marriage and hair loss. Elske Vaandrager, countrywoman, woman of the world - gheisa in word, image and gesture - Elske Vaandrager was a grammar book for Willy Willems, nothing more than a grammar book with answers to the question: 'How should it be?' She had rocked him in the shadows of the sheepfold, but he didn't know that yet.

In the twilight he saw a revolver fall between his feet.  
'It's nothing,' said Elske Vaandrager. It is nothing. In the light of eternity it is nothing.  
Elske Vaandrager kissed Willy Willems again, supported his crotch with one hand and picked up the revolver from the floor.  
'For my safety,' she said. 'For my ultimate safety.' She slipped the gun into the side pocket of the door.  
Moonlight still swept over the sheepfold and the snow, just as moonlight had shone over the earth and everything that moved there, more or less restlessly, throughout the centuries.

'I went on a quest for justice... only to find out how easily violence can overwhelm a life'. Willy Willems needed his other language to name the atrocities.

Being an English teacher had many advantages. The whole world was within reach, and he could express his origins and struggles with upbringing, history and excursions from 'here' without feeling all the emotions. The second language provided sufficient distance so that he never had to show his passport.

Nette Konings did not work for customs. Nette Konings had no national boundaries.

The newspaper said it was a typical case of suicide. But what was extraordinary was that the car was stuffed with books, pictures, CDs

and DVDs on Japanese culture. The samurai sword had not been used. The woman had shot herself with a revolver. The car park remained closed for a week for judicial investigations.

It didn't say 'shot herself in her head'.

Willy Willems had heard enough.

Rolled up skirt, slender thighs, lustful flame, burgundy and other bodily fluids. Harakiri was to begin in the head, but nothing about the method of execution.

'And,' said Willy Willems, 'I once tried to write a haiku. It was not successful, but it can be done if poetic freedom is allowed.'

'Poetic freedom is always allowed, especially with poets,' Nette Konings says. And almost without a break:

'Let me hear.'

There was undisguised triumph in her voice, a slight grunt. Nette Konings still had a fat ass and a small but sharp mouth, and three children, albeit by three different fathers, and that was more than Willy Willems, who had gone from here to there and *Heim ins Reich*, could say. Although the village had no say in the big world, the local people did not give up.

And history showed - Nette Konings sometimes read a book, too, and it was remarkable how she listened to her regular guests, both literary and less poetic - that the peasants and country folk always triumphed. They were already poor, they didn't get rich. They had nothing to lose and nothing to say. In the village they knew no boundaries. That was the big difference with artists, musicians, writers and poets. If you have nothing, you have nothing to lose.

The reformed church - liberated - may have slowly emptied out, but biblical truths remained valid, especially within the walls of the temple. Outside the temple, the Lord remained a shepherd, even when the sheepfold was repaired with municipal subsidies and there were no sheep to be seen.

Nette Konings had been bullied all her life. She was no longer afraid of anyone. Nette Konings did not write. She didn't have to live by her pen. Her fat ass was her capital. And the whole village - from the young to the old - could come to her for 'loose' groceries to their

mutual satisfaction. They were given the sharp beak, but that had been true in this settlement for centuries. No one was surprised by the scorn and disdain.

The poet had struggled for a lifetime, mastered an exotic language, hired a samurai, but at the end Willy Willems walked back into the café in clogs to prove his progress. The village wanted to know if he was still from 'here'. If he remembered 'where he came from'.

Willy Willems' answer came at the last minute. The thermostat had been turned down half an hour earlier. The radiators still cracked. The whooshing continued.

'I can't let it be heard,' said Willy Willems. He cleared his throat.

'The haiku is about silence.'

His feet found the clogs under the table.

With his head bowed, Willy Willems held up the last page of his book.

If Elske Vaandrager were still alive, she could have read along from the front row, hand on the chain, head on the neck, hips wide on the chair, legs spread and .....

Yeah, yeah, yeah, shhh, shhh.

sssst sssst sssst sssst sssst sssst sssst sssst

shhh shhh yes yes yes.



It was 21 December 1981, just over a month before my 22nd birthday, when I met her in a cafe in Doncaster. It was the same day that an oil platform exploded and caught fire on Hatfield Moor. That month was a busy time for disasters. People were poisoned by cooking oil in Spain, there were blizzards and floods, the Penlee lifeboat disaster• and the 40 inches breasts of Erika Roe.• Only one person was injured in the Hatfield explosion. That wasn't much news, so the well burned, more or less unreported, for 17 days before 'Boots' Hansen arrived from Texas to put it out. His success deserved a few inches in the *Doncaster Gazette*. Then Mark Thatcher got lost in the Sahara and the whole thing was quickly forgotten.•

The red-haired young woman with her wide-open blue eyes smiled as if she sensed my uncertainty and discomfort. I was a bit mopey with the end of year festivities coming up. I hated Christmas and New Year's Eve. It was my first stop at Workman's Grief. I still don't want to say the real name of the cafe out loud. I didn't want to, but I couldn't resist her gaze. I'd been there to drink a stout, to enjoy my spleen and my loneliness, not for company, not for a woman, not for, I can't remember the other.

News of the Hatfield explosion had yet to come. She reminded me of the shortest day and the longest night of the year. And, after mentioning the subject of my studies, she asked if I could explain to her the seasons, the rotation of the earth around the sun and the tilted axis of the rotating earth, and if I knew about the tropics and their names, one being Cancer. No, she was not into astrology, she guessed I was neither, but she still asked the date of my birth. So my astrological sign was Aquarius, with its independence and enigma, its social justice and idealism, and its stubbornness. Most likely that week I would receive a letter in my mailbox, good or bad news and I should take the opportunity if it crossed my path. I felt open lips from that opportunity on my neck. I should have been warned then and there. She offered me a stout and kept asking questions that she already knew the answer to.



Was it the beer, the shortest day of the year, the news of the burning oil rig hitting the pub, the scorching air of the fire or the heat of her body? I don't know. Maybe I was drunk, or maybe I just felt the urgency to lose my virginity when I was halfway through my bachelor's degree in geography. She - the redhead, I forget her name - studied art, Contemporary Modern Art, as the easiest branch. Modern art without history and without any link to ancient art. Every expression had become art. The viewer was left to guess what the message was. All objects and paintings were cryptic shells of an inner life that was not revealed. The struggle was the craft of art making, not the wanderings of the soul that art was supposed to be about. Beauty was not required. Viewers could recognise their own traumas in the abstract works, which were often open to multiple interpretations. Modern art had entered the realm of knowledge. From all dissociative and real cognition, modern art could build a bridge to false and real emotion. A half-empty mug of stout was art when displayed in a museum, as were human faeces in a tin, complete with a poop label, like Andy Warhol's can of Campbell's tomato soup. I told her my father's joke. He once bought a can saying elephant meat inside. The can was empty. It must have been the hole of anus in just that can, my father had said. He seemed to get lucky with the draw. She didn't get the clue. I decided to leave out jokes.

After the oil rig explosion, there was a free drink for everyone in the pub. To douse the raging fire, the bartender continued serving until well after closing time.

She lived nearby, close enough so that she wouldn't catch a cold on the way home to her flat. Outside the pub, she linked her arm with mine in a tight embrace and sang: Let's spend the longest night together. She had a rough, harsh voice. She had probably talked too loud and too much. Maybe she had asked too many pointless questions about geography, cosmology, oil rigs and my love life. The air was filled with soot, scorching smoke and a foul stench of rotten eggs, hydrogensulphide ( $H_2S$ ). Hatfield Chase was near. On her doorstep she kissed my lips, she wanted to know if I was a master of the art of love. Were my tools OK? She touched my thigh and crotch while asking. I'll tell it like it was.

She had a tidy bedroom, clean, colourful Mondriaan sheets. Cushions with Van Gogh's head printed on the cotton. She liked eclecticism. She undressed. I undressed. She had shaved. I hadn't shaved myself over a week. We didn't shower.

We had a shower before dawn. She put clean sheets on the bed. The bedspread appeared to have been painted by Karel Appel, an artist in the Cobra group. On the duvet were seascapes of Turner, storms and ships in distress. Her embroidered self-portraits could be seen on the fresh cushions. She took contraceptives, she told, so I could carelessly carry on for the next few days and nights pleasing her with my unprotected sword. We did. I had a steep learning curve. Her only real complaint was that I had bitten her tongue down to the bone. I was an expert, she said, and I had loved her all the way to the top. Her words weren't a reason to be proud. As my old man used to say: The dumbest farmer knows the trick.

I longed for the 1st of January. That my depression would come to comfort me. I said I wondered if the postman had put a letter in my letterbox. I wanted to go home. She cooked dinner - chicory, stilton cheese, eggs and basmati rice. She was part of the dessert, including the custard sauce.

If that had been all, two weeks of fornication as an expression of contemporary modern art, profound craftsmanship over esoteric spiritual connection, it would have been fine. I think the few friends I had at the time would all be happy to brag about events like mine. – I got to hate this vulgar fornication language. In the 70s and 80s everyone seemed to have read *Lady Chatterley's lover*, over two million copies sold, where fuck (30), cunt (14), balls (13) and prick (4) were mentioned more frequently than ham and eggs. • – I didn't go home. On 2 January I drove her mother in an Austin Morris to the cemetery next to the grave of her husband. The fire at Hatfield was still going on. The father of my redhaired had died over Christmas. Her mother was missing both legs below the knees - sugar - and could not reach the grave on foot. It rained more cats than dogs. No one had seen fit to inform their daughter until the funeral.

At the memorial service, she introduced me to the family and mourners, who chatted and laughed as if it were a New Year's Eve after-party. Some called me Winston, the name of her ex-boyfriend. Everyone seemed happy with me. I was warmly welcomed. Looking back, I don't understand why I didn't run away the day after the funeral. It would have been much better. On my birthday, the 25th of January, early in the morning - her birthday present - we had fucked, don't call it that: made love on a sheet smeared with Willem de Kooning's artwork and an embroidered portrait of me on a pillow, when two policemen knocked on the door. Her mother was found dead in her own bed. Probably a suicide by taking pills, but if that was too confrontational, her death could be attributed to an unintentional overdose of diabetes medication. In the latter case, no police investigation was necessary. My redhead chose the second option. Within a few weeks, I was again at the grave of her father. The headstone had not yet been placed. The Hatfield fire was out. The air was clean again. I stayed. Call it Contemporary Modern Art.

She graduated from art school and started sculpting, modelling and painting. I got a job as a community geographer. The council needed a history book to describe the ancient and modern names of villages and fields. The compilation would be used for planning urban expansions, recreation areas, waterways and highways. There was no urgency. Changes to the landscape always took a long time. I don't know why I took the job.

We bought a house. The front room was renovated into an art gallery, *THE SILLY ONE* was her dearest wish. She did not stop taking the pill. I remembered my father's joke. Newlyweds should put a bean in a bottle for every carnal knowledge - my father chose his words carefully - during the first year of living together. From the second year onwards, they can take a bean out as soon as they join together physically. By the time they die, there will be beans left over. I didn't tell the joke.

Seven years passed. I learnt a lot about the region, about the changing landscape, about migrating people and influences from foreign settlers. Cornelius Vermuyden was not the first nor the last Dutchman to visit

Yorkshire. At the time when Britannia ruled the waves, the waves brought people from all over the world, albeit mainly to the cities and coastal areas. Rural areas have changed little in population terms. Scotts, Irish and Welsh came and went. Names of rivers, fields and villages changed little or were forgotten. Field names were often confined to small parts of the country, names attached to owners or rulers.

In these seven years two books were published. The books, and my head, appeared in the *Doncaster Gazette* and in the *Goole Times*. My father - no matter how often I spoke to him during those days, even though he had long since died - would describe these events by saying: "They drank a glass, they pissed, and everything stayed as it was." The once completely filled jar in the bedroom was still half full of beans.

Overnight, she had some success selling her art. Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery acquired ceramics and several modern paintings. There was no need to describe her art. Her art had its own voice and spoke for itself. There was no need to talk about her work. Her work was not meant for dialogue. It only spoke one way with the voice of *THE SILLY ONE*, that's what I wrote in the press release, quoted unaltered by both *Doncaster Gazette* and *Goole Times*.

I didn't talk one way or the other. When I talked, I talked about my books, the names of the fields, the hamlets, the lost riverbed, the dug peat, the forests given away for industrial estates and roads. I didn't feel the need to talk. I found out that I was more intelligent than she was, and far more fearful of the contemporary modern art of living than she was.

Her success turned out to be like a straw fire. Huge hot flames for a short time. Only a few ashes were left, like burning raised turf. She wanted a child, a little girl, but a little boy would be all right too. Soon she would stop taking contraceptives. I had myself sterilised. I planted some beans in the kitchen garden. I got confused. I knew how to mask my confusion. My third book on field names took all my energy and attention. The first two compilations had won prizes from the local Historical Society.

From the attic I had a relaxing view of the flat countryside. There were once moors, blanket bogs and further north the Hatfield Chase

to the inhospitable Thorne Waste where in bygone ages the nobility had their hunting parties. Even with closing my eyes, I had a clear view of the desolate, God-given countryside. Hardly anyone to be seen. Vultures abounded.

Surrounded by her paintings and sculptures, she could dream of a better world, forget the nonsense packaged as pseudo-intellectual reflections, and drink with potential artists and real craftsmen in the fields of woodcarving, stained glass and felt manufacture, who visited her regularly and discussed art, personal life, which meant medical discomfort, and world events, in that order. I couldn't find a word for her changing conduct and her altered state of mind as she drifted away from the world and from me. We lived together, in the same house, and slept in the same bed most nights. The sheets were still an expression of art and kept her going. Francis Bacon's paintings of the Pope, and also of slaughtered pigs hanging on a ladder, as if - excuse me - women spread their legs, exposing their unsalted flesh and virginal vulnerability. Black and white images by Erwin Olaf, naked black men, well hung, and Manet's impressionist lilies – *Nymphéas* – as a counterpoint. • I still don't understand how and why I managed to live with her all these years.

Sometimes I slept in my sanctum under the roof. I had a couch there and that bottle of shriveled beans. Sometimes I heard her familiar screams from downstairs when she had a lover. It troubled me, but at the same time it didn't bother me. I thought of ways to get contraceptives into her meals. I prayed, pleading that the Lord would not leave me alone with her misery, which became my misery. My escape from my married life was the study of the names of fields and the names of old waterways.

'I want to die,' she told me. 'I don't know how to become the person I am.' We were having coffee in the art gallery. I was her Silly One. Her mother's metal prosthetic legs were on the windowsill, with a bowl of *sansevierias* in a flowerpot on top.

I wasn't surprised. Not at all. After ten years of Contemporary Modern Art, Golgotha had been reached. These four words – 'I want to die.' – replaced 'Good Morning' as a daily mantra. The preparatory work for a contemporary crucifixion could now begin.





I had already begun to hate her for no reason, whereas I could have had any number of reasons. Without reasons, there was no need to argue and think up academic arguments that would never hold up. The barrier to abandoning her became greater every day. I feared her death, I feared my guilt if she took her own life. I read a book on psychology that said hate is the ultimate form of love. In a sense. It said that not all people were susceptible to this fallacy. I was, not knowing the difference between love and hate in contemporary modern life. It took a therapist and a handful of novels to get a grip on my behaviour. It took Eyoun and my blood brother, Ernest (Willy) Walton, to change my life. And hers.

I knew that Willy Ernest Walton had returned from afar. In *Donny Gazette* and *Goole Times* he was portrayed with his black wife Eyoun outside the John Bull Inn on Waterside Road. Ernest had killed 33 rebels with a cause. No, he was not proud of this achievement. His pride and honour was in doing his duty for the Queen Mum. His pride, not his duty, was his wife.

Perhaps I was ashamed of my wife, of my insignificant job writing books about field names and lost rivers. Maybe I was ashamed that I was not proud of my wife. The neon sign outside the art gallery made me sick, even though the word in the middle of *The Silly One* had been out of order for years. Tourist took the art gallery for a church dedicated to *The One*.

'Long time no see,' I said as he – Ernest Walton – got out of the Aston Martin. His wife drove - my redheaded wife had no driving licence - and greeted me. I felt an electric shock in my spine and bowels as Ernest and I shook hands.

Our first meeting after all these years was like a cliché, friendly, seemingly interested in each other's things, sharing positive life stories and telling each other how good our lives were in a world of unequal opportunities. All lucky enough to live in Yorkshire Peat District, our God-given county. My redheaded companion managed to maintain her artistic decency. Whilst starting the day each morning with: "I want to die," or for a change with "Too bad I woke up." She kept quiet and even gave a guided tour inside *The One*. Ernest, who knew nothing of art except the art of shooting, was struck by the prostheses on the

windowsill. The legacy of my mother-in-law changed into Pedestals. His missing leg was the link to this conceptual piece of Contemporary Modern Art.

Eyoum bought both Pedestals, including the Sanseverias. Eyoum did not ask for a friendlier price. My redhead offered to reduce the price by 5%. Eyoum refused and paid extra to the full sum. When they left, after red wine and olives, I felt uncomfortable when Ernest - my blood brother Winnetou - squeezed my hand longer than customary. His wife, Eyoum, probably two heads shorter than me, gave me a big hug. I felt her touch deep in my groin. Suddenly I realised that my body was still functioning in that respect. Despite the shriveled beans, my body hadn't forgotten my black, breastfeeding babysitter.

Of course we promised to meet again soon. Almost a year later, Ernest phoned me. His call was not a reproach for not hearing from me. He just wanted to know how I was. To let me know that he thought of me and my wife regularly. The legs had found a place in the karaoke room, on the sill behind the window overlooking the River Don. He invited me to Thorne Waste for a shooting. It had been weeks since it had rained, so he had no trouble walking on the former tramway tracks in the moor.

We met at his house in Waterside. Eyoum provided coffee and biscuits. She had prepared a simple lunch to take to Thorne Waste; a thermos of coffee, scones, bananas and an apple for the two of us. While Ernest prepared for our departure, Eyoum tended to the birds around the house. She filled one container with monkeynuts and another with sunflower seeds. I was no expert, but I recognised tits, a robin, finches, sparrows and a blackbird. She came back into the house. Ernest was still in the bathroom. 'Toedeloo,' Eyoum said. She revealed that she was a qualified carpenter, specialising in coffins and birdhouses. I had noticed the colourful nesting box next to the entrance.

'I hope your wife is well,' Eyoum said. I didn't know what to say. My redhead, who I refuse to call by her name, had drifted far away from me, and not only from me. She seemed to be drifting away from life at a slow speed, comparable to the speed of the water in the river Don, flowing towards the Dutch Canal, the Ouse, the Humber and

the North Sea. Every day, at high tide, the flow was obstructed, but there was never any doubt that it would reach the North Sea and disappear, mixing, dissolving beyond recognition in the ocean. On her way to dissolution she was warping me with trauma, that's what my psychologist explained when all was over. I felt flooded by silt carrying water when I heard that explanation. I felt consolation and comfort. I felt a beginning of laughter.

Eyoum must have noticed my hesitation when I was searching for an answer to her ordinary question. I did not want to lie, nor to utter any cliché about my redhaired well-being.

Eyoum came over to me. I felt the warmth of its body, I smelled its closeness. It put its hand to the side of my head, pressed it gently to its body. I did not respond with any physical movement, except to bring my teeth together more firmly. A spiritual hunger swelled about me, paining me; it had its point in the person at my side, not as a father, not as a mother, it was some kind of thankfulness, gratefulness for love expressed, demonstrated. I was incapable of more outward show than that I was thrust into in the moment before my brain controlled rushing emotion. I was too self-critical; I felt a fool if some one, in greeting me, held my hand for a moment after the mutual grip. I had wanted to embrace it many times, to hold Eyoum and let it know how much I love it, how we were bound together wholly not only to resist that which each knew beat against them, but in the simple resting of love. But I couldn't. • In the window facing the Don, I saw her frizzy head above mine. The incomplete transparent reflection on the other side of the window pane was outside somewhere on the low stony wall that separated the kitchen garden from the street. I could see potatoes and leeks growing in big boxes under my mirrored chair. My virtual feet seemed to be resting on the ground in the growing box.

'You know,' I said coffin, • 'my wife might need your carpentry skills. One day.'

Just then Ernest entered the room. I recognised the irregularity of his natural and prosthetic steps. The reflection in the window pane showed that he was holding the rifle that had been hanging above the mantelpiece.

'I'm ready to go,' he said. 'And you?'

It was over six months before we met again after the Thorne Waste shoot. I had more or less informed my blood brother about my marital status, about living in *THE SILLY ONE*, about fifteen years of contemporary modern art and five books on field names. Winnetou had looked at me with more or less surprise, and his face showed no sympathy. He didn't say he felt sorry for me. Ernest had killed 33 rebels with a cause. He could not have done that job if compassion had been his bedfellow. He more or less hinted at a solution he had in mind: he raised his rifle and aimed at a great spotted woodpecker in a birch tree. We rested at a bentepol rush near Will Pits. Ernest missed. The bird flew away.

'On purpose,' Ernest had said. 'There's no need to kill a mocking bird. Birds want to live.' And he added, 'Not all people want to live. My motto is: live and let others die.'•

He took a colourful birdhouse from his rucksack. Eyoum's craftsmanship. He asked me to place the birdhouse on the birch tree with the front facing north. So I did.

On the last Saturday of the month we were invited to a karaoke night. Before the singing began, we had dinner at John Bull's Inn. My redhead preferred a vegetarian dish; salad, beans, couscous and an undefined substitute for chicken feet, made from fermented buffalo milk. She didn't say a word, just looked around the pub with her eyes wide open, one blue and the other dark brown through a tinted contact lens.

When I tried to draw her into the conversation, she said. 'Don't worry. I'm practising the song I'm going to sing at the karaoke. I'm fine.'

I had known her long enough. She wasn't fine at all. I started to worry. I satisfied my appetite and had to bring myself to finish the food. I didn't want to disappoint my blood brother and Eyoum with the quality of the dinner.

Eyoum opened the karaoke with Black is Black. Then someone from the audience continued with Grey, grey my life is grey, followed by I'm feeling blue. The next song was applauded from the first line: Red, red, wine... After Nights in white satin and Yellow submarine• there was a break. Until then the evening had been really cosy.



After the second break my redhead came on stage. I wasn't happy that she joined the singing with her rough harsh voice. She was out of control. At least out of my control.

'Suicide is painless,' she sang, 'it brings so many changes. And you can take it or leave it as you like.'• Then the microphone stopped working. Eyoum came on stage and put her finger on the microphone. No sound. Eyoum waved to the audience and took the microphone backstage. From the loudspeakers we heard Help me make it through the night, followed by Stand by your man. My redhead disappeared into the loo. "Toedeloo," I heard in my head.

That was the first and last night we were invited to John Bull's Inn for karaoke. However, my blood brother in arms, Willy Ernest Walton and his bride Eyoum proved to be real friends to me and, given the situation, to my redheaded Silly One too.

One morning, the four of us were trying to discuss a solution to the problem my redhead and I were having. A problem which, when it came down to it, was her problem and not mine. My silly one's wish to die was not the problem, she said, but how to find the final resting place, that was the big question. She was too clumsy, she said, to throw the final switch. At this point she needed assistance. I saw her eyes drift to the rifle on the mantle. My Silly One had consulted the doctor. This "useless" doctor had suggested that she go to the Netherlands where, it seemed, dead was available on prescription. A useless nonsense answer. My silly wife had left one of her oil paintings at the doctor's office. I noticed the painting, dark and menacing like those by Armando and Anselm Kiefer, in the waiting room when I came in for treatment for lues after visiting a prostitute. I suppose the doctor who shows contemporary modern art to sick people didn't want to be associated with the 'accident' that might happen if he ignored the gift of the silly one. But, en avant avec le chèvre, let me get on with the goat• and not detract from the story I have to tell.

On the longest day of the year, I took my blue-eyed friend for a walk on the Thorne Waste moor. Eyoum had picked us up at *THE SILLY ONE*, the neon repaired, and driven us in the Aston Martin to the entrance of the moor at what was to be a recreation area at the spot where my grandfather and the grandfather of Willy Ernest Walton

died deep in the pit. Eyoum handed us a lunch pack for two. There was no thermos flask. The hot coffee was wrapped in yesterday's *Donny Gazette* and *Goole Times*.

It had not rained for weeks. All the tracks were dry and easy to walk on. We turned left and took the longer route so we could enjoy nature as long as possible, although my redhaired had enjoyed nature more than enough. At a bench we gazed at Goole. The spire was clearly visible. The air was clear and bright. Occasionally a cloud drifted by.

I tried to think of a question to ask her. I couldn't even find one.

'Will you miss me?' she asked.

When I remained silent, she turned to her rucksack and, after a moment's fumbling among the last of her superfluous things, handed me a piece of bark, varnished on top and bottom. On the board was written in white: *ENJOY THE FOOL'S WISDOM*.

It was the first kiss I had given her in more than ten years. She kept her lips closed. Her eyes remained dry. I felt watery eyes.

'You've been here before,' she said when we continued Mill Drain and reached Will Pits. She pointed to the bird box on the birch. I looked over Will Pits to see if I could see any sign of Ernest Walton. I didn't. I heard a mocking great spotted woodpecker.

'She and I, we walked the same path,' I said. 'She brought scones and hot coffee in a bottle wrapped in a *Goole Times* and a *Doncaster Gazette* to keep the coffee warm. We sat down on a soft rush, a bentepol, a pitrus (*Juncus inflexus*). It wasn't a picnic. I told her, 'I know why I'm here. I'm earnest,' I said. She turned the coffee cup upside down. 'We know why we are here,' she said. 'It is important to be earnest. We are here for the same thing.' She touched her coat and the lumps of coal in her pockets that she had collected from the site of the former mine near Dutch Row, known to the locals as Death Row. Before she left the bottle on the soft rushes and made her way for Will Pits she turned to me and said: 'Love, love that's why we're here.' A final kiss. 'Love is just a contemporary modern art variety of hate.' She smiled. 'I know I never told you that I loved you.'

I made no attempt to stop her. I never heard the sniper's shot. There was no plunge. I took another coffee, looked at the spire of Goole, ate half the scone she had left and read *Goole Times*. •

My walk to Crowle took over an hour. Eyoum and Ernest were waiting for me at the Red Lion. We had a stout and chicken curry madras. On the wall inside the restaurant was a painting of a roaring lion. REX BESTIARY. We didn't say a word. Often a king is a slave.

After dessert I handed them my rucksack, having taken out the varnished plank and read the quotation.

Silence is golden, Eyoum sang.

Eyoum suggested a ride through Eastoft, Swinefleet, Goole, Rawcliff, Dutch Row - I heard Death Row - and Thorne before dropping me off at *THE SILLY ONE* on the outskirts of Donny. I thanked Eyoum and Winnetou for their cooperation, I preferred a taxi, I said, to take me to my destination.

After they had gone, I drank a Tetley bitter. I freshened up in the men's room, ordered another Tetley bitter for the road and paid the bill. I asked the bartender to call the police to arrest a man, Old Shatterhand, who wanted to confess to murdering his wife.

It took over half a year to find her body. According to pages in both *Donny Gazette* and *Goole Times*, The Silly One's body had not been affected by the cold and acidic waters of Will Pits. There were photographs of the black water and a bog man, even references to the soldier found by Gerard Rolink in the peat of Cambusnethan. The guard brought me the newspapers. He thought I might be interested. I was. Spending time in H.M. Prison was not a punishment in any way. I was relieved. I got peace of mind even though I did not feel guilty for her death. I had done a good job in helping her escape from the hell of contemporary modern art. Even in prison, feeling guilty is a useless emotion.

I was offered a job in the prison kitchen. They asked me to peel potatoes. I agreed, there is nothing more relaxing than peeling potatoes, especially when the tuber has deep eyes watching me. I could tell you about life in prison. I won't. I will only talk about one aspect. Eyoum.

Eyoum, Winnetou's wife, as I called her, visited me every two weeks. Ernest (Willy) Walton seldom accompanied her. We played cards, did puzzles, and after a year we began to exchange stories. I never mentioned The Silly One, Eyoum never mentioned Ernest. Again, after a year, Eyoum became a volunteer social worker in the prison to help prisoners reintegrate into society. Being a volunteer gave her privileges. We could spend a morning or afternoon together in my cell without being watched. We did.

Eyoum brought books on peat and peat extraction. - I was tired of field names - we discussed the peat and water history of Thorne Waste, Hatfield Chase, bog man, preservation of bodies in peat, biology, physics and chemistry of turf and litter, immigration and rural community life. We discussed philosophy, literature, social change, growing up in a violent world, in a threatening society. We talked about gender, emancipation, discrimination, religion, chastity and sinning against the Ten Commandments and other trivial rules of life / other rules of trivial life.

Eyoum suggested that I start a dissertation – *Drain the swamp* – and find a professor who would guide me towards a PhD in the field of identity and self-consciousness of immigrants in peat swamps, where the influence of nature, social consciousness, poverty, spleen would be examined along with, incest, feelings of inferiority and superiority, exotic food, people of colour, folklore music, literacy, literature in regional languages, lack of words in the dialect to give compliments, abundance of words to mock and insulting, adultery, calcium carbide ( $\text{CaC}_2$ ), alcohol and drug abuse, euthanasia, *zwien op ledder*, *knupdoekies*,• superstition and normal religion, dried salted ham, fresh eggs and so on. I thought she would be my professor. We loved each other.





‘Questions will be a part of your life,’ says Eyoum. ‘More than the answers you seek. Perhaps you will find a way to love this state of mind you’ve been given. You’re a sensitive thinker and a questioner. You can’t change that. It’s yours, and you have no other.’• She nodded and continued, ‘Love it, embrace it and learn to love what you are.’

‘Drain the swamp,’ says Joseph. The words, they hear rude, come of their own accord. He feels a sense of lightness in his head, perhaps it’s the lightness of being he can bear,• of finding a way out by accepting his perpetual meandering in his own labyrinth. A certain calm had taken over his body, his mind would follow at a slow pace, like River Don, that’s what he sensed, old branches of the river, still recognizable in the landscape, had been disconnected.

Eyoum and Joseph had found a bench on the banks of River Don. It could have been Drentse A, Runde, Hunze, Schoonebeker Diep, Dommerskanaal or even Oranjekanaal near Erica, where Joseph had seen his first body. A drowned man looking down underwater, his jacket filled with air or gases from the decomposing body at his back, keeping the dead man afloat close to the reeds, the toezebollen. The Oranjekanaal, the canal that connected the moor to the rest of the world, was the place where he had seen young people making love on the opposite bank of the stagnant water, half hidden behind flowering bushes and shrubs that had green leaves from early spring.• At least, Joseph had thought, that might be it. Two naked bodies united in physical love. After procreation death was at stake, anytime, anywhere. Life and death live together in perfect harmony.•

Upstream of the Oranjekanaal, near ‘t Haantje, a hamlet named after a little red rooster,• a drilling rig had disappeared into the earth. It must have been in the sixties.• Joseph had just reached the age of a teenager. A company was drilling for oil or gas. At a depth of almost 2000 metres, the natural gas took over. A blow to humanity, drilling, digging, disturbing the serenity of the earth, of creation. Mankind had forgotten, perhaps deliberately, that only harmony could guarantee a

pleasant life. Even if he didn't know the words, even if he couldn't write sentences to express his feelings, somehow and somewhere he experienced a certain universal lightness of being that would guide him in life. His mind had not yet settled to the point where he could express his feelings. More or less he had been an animal, a wild creature, unconsciously waiting for the next day, not even having a sense of time. Tomorrow was too far ahead to grasp. Yesterday had gone. • His childish way of living in the here and now still lingered, though it gradually eroded. There, sitting on the bank of the man-made Oranjekanaal, it could have been any canal, any river, he had woken up to enter the world waiting for him, yet he still felt pain when he saw a farmer ploughing the land, as if a scar had been carved into the earth. A perceptive and sensitive boy he was.

'Perhaps,' Eyoum said, 'Thorne Waste wasn't the best place to dream about your ancestors and the roots of your youth. Thorne and its history of civilised ages further back than the desolate and empty Bourtangier Moor and what is now left of Bargerveen may not provide enough points of attachment to clarify your life. Because that's what you want. Don't you? I am afraid I must disappoint you. The question "Why am I here?" has no answer. Even if you do not want to accept this fact, fate and chance fill the lives of humans as well as the lives of chimpanzees, elephants and crocodiles, to name but a few. If you like, you can add all sorts of plants to this list, so whatever you have in mind, you're not alone.'

In Emmen, in competition with Coevorden, the main town in South-East Drenthe, less than 10 kilometres north of Erica, Joseph's birthplace, there was a zoo in the middle of town; the Noorderdierenpark. He had been there a few times in his childhood. There were polar bears, brown bears, penguins, elephants, a lion, a tiger, giraffes and monkeys (your mother's family, as father used to say). – In a letter to the *Emmer Courant*, a reader complained about monkeys masturbating while watching visitors. Children should be kept away from the monkey house. – All these exotic animals were behind bars. Polar bears paced up and down a 10-metre stretch, bobbing their heads, on the other side of a deep concrete pit against a grey concrete iceberg. Now this constant pacing and swaying is a perfect demonstration of neurotic

behaviour, all animals alike, as a direct result of being crammed into a small space. Only the zoo's donkeys were more or less free animals, trained to give rides to small children.

In recent years, Noorderdierenpark has changed its location. A modern zoo has been built on the Es, the former common land to the west between the Oranjekanaal and the city. There is now a savannah and free-roaming animals. Visitors can go on a safari in an open truck. Care is taken not to stress the animals. Monkeys can roam freely, so there is no need to masturbate. • Apart from education, the main aim is to entertain the visitors and, of course, to get them to spend as much as possible, so that there is less need for subsidies from the city of Emmen. In a way, the change from Noorderdierenpark to Wildlands reflects the transformation of the inhabitants of South-East Drenthe, and perhaps a wider area. Freedom in confinement. Independence made possible by municipal funds and still dissatisfied.

'Not far from the Noorderdierenpark I began to discover the rest of my world at secondary school,' says Joseph. 'The school had some of the same characteristics as the zoo. We could move around freely, but there were rules that had to be obeyed. In the Roaring Sixties, there was resistance to these rules. Students demanded and, after some struggle, won more freedom and a different approach to religion, politics and sexuality. Leadership was no longer taken for granted.'

'And you?' asks Eyoun.

'Those years I couldn't see what I can see now,' says Joseph. 'It is only through time and distance that the waters in which I swim become perceptible. All the clashes of my youth were on a practical level. There were no questions based on an aerial perspective, no helicopter view to identify patterns that help to understand, accept and reject events. What am I seeing? What is happening down there? What is my role in my peat society, however small it may be, in South-East Drenthe? In my family? In my immediate and intimate environment, where I lived with my parents, my brother and sisters, my neighbours? These questions, which could have provided clarification, remained in the background, no one seemed to notice the general pattern, so that each conflict, sometimes after reconciliation and consolation, ended in another conflict, often for the same reasons. In those years, the priest

called for silence, no complaints and obedience. Even at school there were no lessons or discussions about social relations, psychology, so-called deviant behaviour in the sense of human variation in temperament, intelligence, stupidity, the follow-the-leader mentality, naoberhulp, mandieligheid,• gender. There was no teaching about sexuality. The word gender, let alone gender identity, was unknown. The same was true of lesbianism and homosexuality. When I was a teenager, these words were unknown to me.'

'And at university?' Eyoun says.

'Even at university,' says Joseph, 'I did not find any lectures on these interpersonal issues. Perhaps I had not learned to see beyond the length of my nose.• For a short time, I attended meetings on the Catholic religion. This ended when one of the priests who led these discussions approached me about intimate matters.'

'But?' says Eyoun, ignoring the reference to monkey activities.

'But even that priest's sin didn't make me aware of identity and the psychological aspects of relationships. I think there was not enough grounding, everything that happened to me seemed, in a biblical sense, to have fallen like semen on a bare rock and not to bear fruit.'

'God was hiding in the darkness, you were on your own. You are just a victim of your upbringing and your time,' Eyoun teases.

'In the old days, I would have withdrawn and ended this conversation,' says Joseph. 'I wouldn't have realised that your comment wasn't meant to humiliate me and undermine my ideas. Now I can see, taking into account the pitch, timbre and intonation of your voice, your body language, the smile on your face, your whole being, that your remark is an invitation to continue my arguments. I can see your words as a slight provocation – tongue in cheek – to help me put what you are about to say into context. But I'm still vulnerable to that kind of provocation. They can hurt me more than I want them to. That's a vulnerability I have to deal with.'

'May I suggest,' says Eyoun, 'that this school of learning of yours, of being misunderstood, of not being able to clarify your thinking, and as a consequence of a more than often experienced, though unintentional, humiliation of, let us say, your intellect, has made you more or less insensitive to less common aberrations. In your stories you seem to enjoy the absurd and the bizarre. Reading about George

Ernest Gambard leads me to such a conviction. Any reader would exclaim: “Not normal”, but in your eyes and in your mind there is nothing special about a man helping his wife to fulfil her dearest wish.’

‘Normal is a myth,’ says Joseph. ‘In fact, I’m not easily surprised by how life begins and how it ends. The exception is the rule. It’s a way of saying that everyone is a unique person. Monty Python’s notwithstanding: “We are all individuals”, and the answer from a listener in the audience: “Not me”. I like parallels with a twist, like the story of Stoffel Stoffelmans, who was shot in the Bourtanger Moor because of love disguised as hate, like The Silly One, who met her end in Will Pits. Life repeats itself endlessly. So does death. Sometimes in the same area, but in a different setting. The Yorkshire Peat District may seem very different from South-East Drenthe, but an overview, from a helicopter, reveals many similarities that could contribute to mutual understanding and connection. I like these subtle differences very much, they give me peace of mind, often more than less.’

‘This brings me to your love, if I may say so, of quotations. Your list of references seems endless, not just pop songs, but literature, fiction and non-fiction written by others and by yourself. You have found your cicerone,’ smiles Eyoum. ‘Half of this book – *Meet a Local* – you have copied, borrowed from scholars on the subject and twisted the themes. I think they will be grateful to you for rescuing them from oblivion.’ It presses its tongue firmly against its cheek. It continues: ‘Early on in your account – it’s you who tells of the pilgrimage to the moors – you decided that I was a black carpenter, say the non-biological father of Jesus, who decided to have her breasts removed in order to change her sex to an it. It’s not that I don’t like the role,’ says Eyoum, ‘but perhaps you could give me some idea of what made you take that step.’

Joseph scratches his head. He feels the rough rim of his nails on the thin skin of his skull.

‘I have to admit,’ he hesitates. Again he waits, seemingly unwilling to answer. ‘Perhaps it’s not really important that I open my mind to this aspect of the pilgrimage. I suppose you would not have asked about the sex of other characters if you had not been yourself on the pilgrimage. Both Ernests never gave any indication that they discussed being male. In Puffin Billy Turf, where Joseph attends Holy Mass, the cradled Holy Trinity covers an important part of gender identity; it,



she, he. I tried to make you an it without much ado. It is what it is. It needs no emphasis. Moreover, nothing in life needs emphasis, only beauty. And everything you pay attention to becomes beautiful. Yes, I'm quoting. •

'Inter bellum,' says Eyoum.

'In between beauty.' • Joseph nods.

'So there is no need to ask why you made me a black It,' says Eyoum, slowly tapping the black skin of her left hand with the tip of her right index finger. Joseph ignores this teasing body language. • He had left homosexual experiences out of the pilgrimage, and his hetero-activities as well, which is remarkable given his early novels.

'Black is black,' he sings in a low, soft voice. 'You remember the black breast-feeding nanny of Ernest George Gambart. You may remember Ernest Willy Walton's story of white baby boys and black breastfeeding women. These experiences are more or less metaphors for the first events in a life. After all, says Alfred North Whitehead, all events are first events – he calls them *prehensions* – but some leave a deeper mark than others.'

'A deeper scar,' says Eyoum, 'in a toxic culture.'

'I won't bore you with all my first experiences, black or white, homo, hetero or gender neutral, or the first experiences I missed because I wasn't in the right place at the right time,' says Joseph. 'As a chemist, I know solutions, and I also know that the dose determines the toxicity. It may be comforting to know that I don't have a bucket list anymore, just a few aspirations. Perhaps I will get around to it.' Then he says: 'Be aware that experiences in early adolescence are crucial to later life opportunities and resulting behaviour. The scars you mention are known as trauma's with a small t and trauma's with a capital T. In your lifetime you may not realise the roots of your behaviour, partly genetic of course, but certainly your environment, the peat district, the river Don, South-East Drenthe, religion, schools, books, music, meeting the right people at the right time, along with temporarily elevated hormone levels, determine the results. Falling in love...'

'This fatal and contagious disease,' adds Eyoum.

'Falling in love darkens the brain, so there is a lower level of consciousness...'

'To make marriage and procreation possible...'

‘Indeed, and decisions you may regret later. Even though regret is a meaningless emotion.’

Joseph is silent. The sun is setting in the west. There is hardly any movement in the water. Ducks hide in the reeds, snipes swim to the opposite bank. Cormorants take a dive. High above, on the far side of the river, he sees storks floating towards Fishlake on the rising currents of warm air. His eyes follow the ducks on the Don.

‘At the beginning of life, a child’s focus is on communication and authenticity, on being fed and cared for as it is. Later, the child finds that there are restrictions. If it cries for no good reason, as seen by parents or black of white nannies, it is put outside until the crying stops, then it is fed. It learns that if it wants to participate, it has to restrict authentic behaviour.’

‘This is where the trauma begins,’ says Eyoum. ‘Being trapped in social and religious rules. God allows evil to bring about good. Shame it always takes such a miserable comedy to do it. That’s why Ernest Willy Walton got himself a licence to kill. That’s why Ernest George Gambard likes to be imprisoned. That’s why the Silly One... To hold on to authenticity.’

‘You got it,’ says Joseph, ‘but despite my grin, I never forget how important it is to be *eernsachtig*.’

‘That’s why you keep writing,’ Eyoum kisses the author on his courageous head with open lips. ‘To keep your inner scars under the skin. To share and embrace your authenticity. For love.’

‘It, you have got it. For love.’



# Legenda

- p.1 Ningtjen, artist Flip Drukker. 1.50 x 1.00 m. Kind permission from the artist to reproduce his artwork. Background: peat litter.
- p. 8-9 Map: *Thorne Moors: a contested wetland in north-eastern England*. Robert Van de Noort. 2001, In: Coles, B. and Olivier, A. (eds.). 2001. The Heritage Management of Wetlands In Europe. Brussels: EAC. pp.133-140
- p. 11 Web.
- p. 13. Web.
- p. 20 Map: Laure Thorpe.
- p. 21 Follow street musicians: achter de muziek aan. Confused.
- p. 21 Geschichte schreiben. Writing history is a way of getting rid of the past. *100 Jahre Griendtsveen*.
- p. 21 (Black is black / I want my baby back / It's gray, it's gray / Since she left, oh, oh // Oh-oh now, what can I do? / Because I like to sing I-I-I-I-I / I'm feelin' blue. Los Bravos 1966).
- p. 24 Neger is a now forbidden word. N\*. / Negorij (back warded region), the Dutch pronunciation sounds like neger. The dialect Grunneger contains the N\*. Groninger inhabitant Province of Groningen.
- p. 24 Sas: Lock, sluice. E.g. Sas van Gent, Sassenheim; village names).
- p. 25 Waterside History. Laury Thorpe.
- p. 26 Waterside History p. 34- Thorne Local History Society Waterside History & Heritage - Laurie Thorp Thorne and district Local History Association Occasional paper No 20: 1996
- p. 27 Book: *Drentse turfgravers in Engeland*. Jan van der Sleen.
- p. 27 Book: *Griendtsveen 100 jaar*.
- p. 28. Laurie Thorpe
- p. 29 *Drentse turfgravers*. Jan van der Sleen.
- P. 29 H.g.v = Hoogeveen, town in Drenthe. \* means child born (geb. Geboren)
- p. 36 Eyoum, charcoal on paper (author)  
Eyoum and Joseph Nieters are characters in the novel *Eyoum / Chicken Curry Madras 2023* (in Dutch) by Gerard Stout.
- p. 38 Carpenter: in Dutch: timmerman.
- p. 38 Soupçon. dbnl.org Verstehensoperation. dbnl.org Erleben [https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dela012alge01\\_01/dela012alge01\\_01\\_05624.php](https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dela012alge01_01/dela012alge01_01_05624.php)

- p. 38. 'Ebony and Ivory' is a song released in 1982 as a single by Paul McCartney featuring Stevie Wonder. It was released on March 29 of that year as the lead single from McCartney's third solo album, *Tug of War* (1982) Written by McCartney, the song aligns the black and white keys of a piano with the theme of racial harmony.)
- p. 39 Laurie Thorpe.
- p. 42 Foal met its end. From *Eyoum* novel.
- p. 43 Zwien op ledder, a slaughtered swine on a ladder. Slaughtering at the farm.
- p. 43 Eating horse meat is not done.
- p. 43 Thank you dear. (• NRC 12 september 2023. Newspaper. Annemarie Haverkamp.)
- p. 49 & 51 Webinfo Autism plus. Thorne.
- p. 49 Sikh, also featuring in *Eyoum*.
- p. 50 *Drentse turfgravers in Engeland*.
- p. 51 *A room of one's own*: Virginia Woolf.
- p. 51 Dutch compliment, Dubble Dutch (nonsense) = insult
- p. 52 Black devil; nickname of my mother.
- p. 53 Tea: pop song lyrics.
- p. 56 cross and crotch in Dutch both: kruis.
- p. 58 Web info historic Thorne
- p. 61 - 62 illustrations Martin Limbert.
- p. 63 passing clouds / shifting skies
- p. 65 What you see... Quantum mechanics
- p. 66 Turf, Jenever en Achterdocht; description of "The Drent".
- p. 71 Lyrics of pop songs. Johnny Cash.
- p. 72 Descriptions follow information at maps.google
- p. 74 Crucifixion. See page 1.
- p.74 Lockside menu web.
- p. 74 Verstehensoperation. dbnl.org Erleben [https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dela012alge01\\_01/dela012alge01\\_01\\_05624.php](https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dela012alge01_01/dela012alge01_01_05624.php)
- P. 75 What you get is what you see: Quantumphysics.
- p. 75 The Vagina Monologues is an episodic play written in 1996 by Eve Ensler.
- p. 76 Dear diary... Moody Blues.
- p. 79 (line 3) Based on Martin Limbert thesis.
- p. 84 *Nooit meer slapen*, novel W.F. Hermans.
- p. 85 Lindow man, peat body. Lindow Man, also known as Lindow II and as Pete Marsh, is the preserved bog body of a man discovered in a peat bog at Lindow



- Moss near Wilmslow in Cheshire, North West England.
- p. 87 Boots made for walking. Of the 1966 hit song by Nancy Sinatra, produced by Lee Hazlewood and written by Lee Hazlewood. The song is about a girl who is fed up with a cheating boyfriend and his boots.
- p. 89. Sabot: A shoe carved from a piece of wood, traditionally worn in some parts of Europe. A sandal or shoe having a band of leather or other material across the instep.
- p. 89 Mijnheer Jan, Like John Bull. All waiters were called Jan.
- p. 91 Boer War in South Africa.
- p. 93 Mancunian, sometimes shortened to Manc, is the accent and dialect of English spoken in Manchester and some of the wider Greater Manchester area.
- p. 97 *A Hero of Our Time* is a novel by Mikhail Lermontov, written in 1839, published in 1840, and revised in 1841. It is an example of the superfluous man novel. Pechorin.
- p. 97 Mine: Web history Thorne.
- p. 99 *Paradise Lost* is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th-century English poet John Milton.
- p. 100 Hatfield Moors 2004. Web.
- p. 117 Japanese soldier: *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Ruth Benedict.
- p. 118 Whiter shade of pale. rock song A Whiter Shade of Pale, written by Gary Brooker, Keith Reid and Matthew Fisher in 1967.
- p. 118. Movie. High Noon.
- p. 121 14 april 1942 my parents wedding day.
- p. 121 25 april 1949 my stillborn older brother's birthday.
- p. 123 Karl May's book. *Old Shatterhand & Winnetou*.  
 Te laat, te laat zei Winnetoe  
 Het zaad is al naar binnen toe  
 Dat komt, dat komt zei Shatterhand  
 Omdat je geen kapotjes kent.  
 Too late, too late said Winnetoe  
 The seed is already inside  
 That comes, that comes, said Shatterhand  
 Because you don't know condoms (French raincoat).
- p.124 - 125. Interior Mary Immaculate Church. Erica. I changed the Saviour in a black man. 2007 funeral of my Mum.
- p. 126 SAS, special forces British Army.
- p. 126 Bunbury: Oscar Wilde. *The importance of being Earnest*.

- p. 126 See: National Archives. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>
- p. 126 *Room*: Virginia Woolf.
- p. 126 Beautiful breasts: Running gag in *Eyoum, Chicken Curry Madras*.
- p. 126 Sand dancer: nickname in Northumberland.
- p. 126 Thesis: *Eyoum, Chicken Curry Madras*.
- p. 127 Thesis. CCM.
- p. 129 Earnsachtig: earnest, serious.
- p. 129 Virginia Woolf drowned herself. Stones in her pockets.
- p. 129 See Genealogy at the end of this book.
- p. 129 *Anya, de Vrolijk sage*. Novel by Gerard Stout (in Dutch).
- p. 131 People in Drenthe only began to write in dialect towards the end of the nineteenth century. At that time the dialect as a spoken language and the standard Dutch language as a written language coexisted as very separate and completely different entities. Around 1900, only about two or three percent of the Dutch population actually spoke literate Dutch, and these speakers were found only in the higher social classes of the cities in Holland and Utrecht. Dialect was the everyday language for the vast majority of the population. However, back then people were already writing in the standard Dutch language. Toorians & Swanenberg-Dialektliteratuur in Nord Brabant, Laurant Toorians, 2009, Dialektliteratuur heute – regional und international.
- p. 131 Dr. H. Nijkeuter. Two books on Drenthe writers. Pdf on internet.
- p. 132. Mama Italia. Learn to make love, going to an older experienced woman for sexercise.
- p. 133 Yes-nodder: Oil pump machine. Photo.
- p. 134 Smoking crotch: joke of artists Van Kooten en De Bie.
- p. 135 Dream and deed, famous poetry line Elsschot. (droom en daad).
- p. 134 *Eyoum* p. 639-640.
- p. 135 *Eyoum* p. 693-698.
- p. 135 *Winterkraaien*, Aar van de Werfhorst.
- p. 137 Doors at the rear of houses were never locked.
- p. 137 Naked lunch, naked anything.
- p. 137 Crow, Kraai, means a grave digger as well.
- p. 137 The end of the corridor/hallway in Drents means toilet.
- p. 138 niks veranderd: You didn't change.
- p. 138 Beeldenjans; local store for rosary, candles... Jans selling statues.
- p. 139 Cucumber in Dutch: komkommer. Kom = to come. Past tense Kwam = came. Sla = salad. Sla also means to hit. Past tense of sla is sloeg. Komkommersla past tense Kwamkwammersloeg.

- p. 139 Drents. Drink empty. In English: I drank, or I emptied.
- p. 140 Ik ok = me too.
- p. 141 Everybody h r ts. H r ts in German: hears it. Sounds like hurts.
- p. 141 Nat achter de oren (wet behind the eauricles) = still a child, not sensible.
- p. 141, 146 fienen: fine, orthodox reformed.
- p. 142 evenoude = same age = penis. Archaic Dutch.
- p. 142 *Anya, de Vrolijk saga*. Gerard Stout.
- p. 148 Dioceses created 1853. Medal in illustration. From my grammar school history book.
- p. 153. Stoffel Stoffelmans: SS. *Anya, de Vrolijk saga*. Gerard Stout.
- p. 154 A Drent does not receive orders from anyone. Don't use the word: must. The only time there is a must is the time for defaecation.
- p. 156 Zwien: a pig is being slaughtered. Forbidden during WWII.
- p. 156 Leck mich am Arch = Lick my anal opening. 'Kiss my bums'.
- p. 158 Bentepol: rush. Plant
- p. 164 *Podagriscen*. New Edition by Ter Verpoozing in 2021.
- p. 164 *The Deeply Rooted*, John & Dorothy Keur.
- p. 165 Toezebol. Plant. *Typha latifolia L.*
- p. 165 Sea coal found on the beach/ transported by boat.
- p. 165 Greyness is All (1&5)  
 If black were really black not grey  
 It might provide some depth to pray  
 Against and we could hope that white  
 Would reach a corresponding height.  
 .....  
 To black out all the worlds of men  
 and demons too but even then  
 Whether that black will not prove grey  
 No one may wait around to say.  
 Louis McNeice.
- p. 165 Rifle used by assassination JFK.
- p. 165 What ... unnoticed. Famous last line from *The Evenings*. Gerard Reve.
- p. 165 Repeat of lines p. 94
- p. 166 *The Myth of Normal*: Gabor Mat . 2022.
- p. 166 Variant of end of Stoffel Stoffelmans.
- p. 169 *Vroomshoopse geschiedenissen*, C.J. Bos. Oudheidkundige Vereniging Den Ham – Vroomshoop. P. 105/6

p. 169 Rex Crowle.

p. 170 Drain the swamp. *Palgrave Studies in Globalization, Culture and Society* Pamila Gupta, Sarah Nuttall Esther Peeren, Hanneke Stuit Editors Planetary Hinterlands Extraction, Abandonment and Care 9 *Swamp Things: The Wetland Roots of American Authoritarianism* Maarten Zwiers. academia.edu



p. 174 Niet elk schot is een patrijs. Not every shot kills a partridge. You have to try more times before you reach your goal.

p. 175 In hoor mijn moeders' stem: Gerard Reve poem Nader tot U.

p. 175 JFK was killed using such a rifle. p. 183 as well.

p. 175 Lyrics pop songs. Justin Timerlake, 'Ebony and Ivory' is a song that was released in 1982 as a single by Paul McCartney featuring Stevie Wonder.

p. 175 I shot a buck. Ik schoot een bok: I made a serious and stupid mistake.

p. 176 Rolling Stones.

p. 177 <https://www.yorkshiredialectsociety.org.uk/society/>

A rubber apron on t'knee's worth a dozen in t'drawer.

A rubber apron on the knee is worth a dozen in the drawer.

It's better to fettle an shaht abaht it nor nivver to fettle at all.

It's better to do something and shout about it than never to do it at all.

Muck goas to t'middin an it's reight place for it.

Dirt goes to the dunghill and that's the right place for it.

When a chap's nowt else to do he falls i love, an if he falls deep enuff, he'll finnd wark enuff to fit him for t'rest of his days.

When a man has nothing else to do he falls in love, and if he falls deep enough, he'll find enough work to occupy him for the rest of his days.

Yorkshire-dialect.org

If tha knows nowt, say nowt an appen nobdy 'll notice.

p. 178 Cunt brothers-in-law, kutzwagers. Men who slept with same woman.

p. 178 Old Shatterhand is a fictional character in Western novels by German writer Karl May (1842-1912). He is the German friend and blood brother of Winnetou, the fictional chief of the Mescalero tribe of the Apache.

p. 179 *Whiteheadian Metaphysics A Brief Summary* Jan B. F. N. Engberts  
Universal Care Wisdom Nature Spirituality

Ter Verpoozing. ISBN: 978-94-92546-05-0

p. 182 dialect see 177.

p. 183 When I find myself in times of trouble Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

And in my hour of darkness She is standing right in front of me  
 Speaking words of wisdom, let it be  
 Let it be, let it be Let it be, let it be Whisper words of wisdom, let it be  
 Paul McCartney, John Lennon The Beatles 1967-1970 (The Blue Album) : 1973  
 p. 183: Orgasm = little death.  
 p. 188 Gerard Rolink (1950). Playing guitar 1973 in Human Orchestra, blues  
 from Emmen. Later years in Shadows Revival Band. DvhN Wouter Bessels • 3  
 oktober 2021. Gerard Rolink: ‘ I bought my Gibson ES 335 in 1966. I paid 1800  
 guilders for a new one in Amsterdam.’  
 p. 189 Haggis is a savoury pudding containing sheep’s pluck, minced with onion,  
 oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, and cooked while traditionally  
 encased in the animal’s stomach though now an artificial casing is often used instead.  
 p. 190 Easy toys: toys for sexual pleasures.  
 p. 191 Gezelligheid: cosiness.  
 p. 195 Daniël Lohues.  
 p. 196 Geordie, see p. 205  
 p. 200 Placewriting: Pearce 2014.  
 p. 201 Pearce 2014.  
 p. 202 Erica waer besto bleven (short story of Gerard Stout). Variation on oldest  
 Dutch ballad. Egidius waer besto bleven.  
 p. 202 grup = manure gutter = border.  
 p. 202 George IV was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland  
 and King of Hannover from 29 January 1820 until his death in 1830. At the time  
 of his accession to the throne, he was acting as prince regent for his father, George  
 III, having done so since 5 February 1811 during his father’s final mental illness.  
 George IV was the eldest child of King George III and Queen Charlotte. He led an  
 extravagant lifestyle that contributed to the fashions of the Regency era.  
 p. 202 Halve zool = idiot.  
 p. 205 Pearce 2014.  
 p. 213 Nottingham university  
 p. 213 you think that everybody.....cos tha (you) goes (goes) ta- (to?)  
 p.213 Means test: Emerging as a result of the failure and dissolution of  
 Ramsay McDonald’s Labour administration, the United Kingdom’s National  
 Government of 1931 was a hung parliament. Embattled by the pressures of  
 global depression, and lacking an alternative source of revenue, McDonald  
 sought to reduce the treasury’s outgoings by a reduction in the benefit payable  
 to unemployed workers. The introduction of what later became known as ‘The



Means Test' appeared, especially to supporters of the party of labour, as the 'last straw' in a gathering and collective sense of dissatisfaction; viewed as intrusive, intimidating and unwelcome, it rapidly became the most hated government institution between the wars.

p. 215 'But I have that within which passeth show', Shakespeare.

HAMLET ACT 1, SCENE 2, 72–86

p. 215 *Myth of Normal*. Gabor Maté, Daniel Maté.

Illness and trauma are defining how we live. Physician, addiction expert and author Gabor Maté dissects the underlying causes of this malaise - physical and emotional, and connects the dots between our personal suffering and the pressures of modern-day living.

p. 216 by Lynn Pan, *When True Love Came to China*. It argues that China was a stranger to love - or at least to "true love" - until the New Culture and May Fourth movements of the 1910s, when love was imported to China.

p. 221 *Sons and Lovers* is a 1913 novel by the English writer D. H. Lawrence. It traces emotional conflicts through the protagonist, Paul Morel, and his suffocating relationships with a demanding mother and two very different lovers, which exert complex influences on the development of his manhood.

p. 223 Dole = unemployed. Socker at Inter (football)

p. 227 *Sons & Lovers*. See p. 221.

p. 227 *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is the last novel by English author D. H. Lawrence, which was first published privately in 1928, in Italy, and in 1929, in France. An unexpurgated edition was not published openly in the United Kingdom until 1960, when it was the subject of a watershed obscenity trial against the publisher Penguin Books, which won the case and quickly sold three million copies. The book was also banned for obscenity in the United States, Canada, Australia, India and Japan. The book soon became notorious for its story of the physical (and emotional) relationship between a working-class man and an upper-class woman, its explicit descriptions of sex and its use of then-unprintable profane words. The story concerns a young married woman, the former Constance Reid (Lady Chatterley), whose upper-class baronet husband, Sir Clifford Chatterley, described as a handsome, well-built man, is paralysed from the waist down because of a Great War injury. Constance has an affair with the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. The class difference between the couple highlights a major motif of the novel. The central theme is Constance's realisation that she cannot live with the mind alone. That realisation stems from a heightened sexual experience that Constance has felt only with Mellors, suggesting that love requires the elements of both body and mind. (Web).

p. 233 Means Test see p. 213 note.

P. 235 The Drenthe national anthem was written by J.J. Uilenberg. He was 'wrong' during the Second World War. He was on the side of the Germans. This anthem is therefore hardly sung.

p. 237. *Vaart mien busse* (How my buss is riding) is a biography of Martin Koster published by Ter Verpoozing.

p. 245 - Half Dutch, half Drents dialect.

'Waar kijk je naar?' vraagt ze. Als ik aanstalten maak het scherm te draaien zegt ze: 'Nee, ik hoef niet te zien wat jij ziet. Ik hoef niet te horen waar jij naar luistert. Ik vraag enkel: Waar kijk je naar? Noem me een naam.'

\* Ik kiek naor Neilande. Vaker as iens bin ik daor niet west. Ik wus niet of ik in het dorp was of op de es. Een paar boerderijen en een tuuncentrum. Meer was het vlekke niet. Een trekker reed hen en weer achter een holtwal. Ik vernuverde mij met de socialistisch realistische herhaling van boerenwark.

'Ken je iemand uit Nijlande?' vraagt ze.

\*Ik heur koffiekoppies. De koelkast giet lös en weer dichte. Ik proest. Koffiemelkallergie.

'Stel je aan,' zegt ze. 'Ik heb het melkpak nog niet open.'

\* Veur ze mij wieder op mien plek zetten kan maak ik heur medeplichtig an mien gedachten. Ik zie bij RTV-Drenthe Erik Harteveld in een wit T-shirt 'Langs het tuinpad van mijn vader' achtervolgd en opschuund deur Sophie Timmer. Ze zeg zowat niks. Ik weet hoe dat warkt. Zeg niks en de aander vertelt wat hum jeukt. Golden kinderjaoren in Neilande.

'Die jongen heeft nog nooit een prijs gekregen,' zegt ze. 'Eigenlijk best wel sneu voor iemand uit Nijlande.'

\*Ach wat. De aovend gef elke dag een pries an elk die de dag overleeft. In Neilande met joen bruur op een peerd zitten, wat is mooier as dat. Schiere foto van een gelukkige jeugd. Een geit veur een bolderkarre. Met pappe accordeon speulen. Een gelukkige jeugd kan een drama weden, veural veur een kunstenaar. 'Harteveld lijkt mij een kind dat over het paard is getild,' zegt ze.

\* De dichter, schriever, toneelspeuler, muzikant, presentator, ceremoniemeester enz. zeg het zölf. Hij was een kind dat gedurig prezen weur veur e an de puberteit begunde. "Wat doe je toch leuke dingen." Zu'n va. Zien moe haalde het vliegbrevet toen ze 20 was; veur zweefvliegen.

'En de held van onze tijd,' vraagt ze, 'waar heeft onze Pechorin een brevet voor?'

\*Ik wul zeggen dat ze niet zo mut zeuren. Harteveld hef zien va en moe niet uutzöcht. Dat e wet dat hum miskend vuult is in zien veurdiel. Dat e het met

humzölf tröffen hef is merakel. Dat e zien omgang met aander lu niet op een handiger spoor kriegen kan, kuj hum niet anreken. Verslaving is e – net as de meeste lu – vertrouwd met. Gien vuur zunder rook. Zunder geluk gien gedicht. ‘Pechorin is blijven steken in zijn kunstje. Altijd de grappigste thuis. Ik heb nog nooit een serieus gesprek met hem gehoord. Hij hoeft niet zo eernsachtig en filosofisch te zijn als jij bent, maar een beetje minder op ridicuul effect spelen zou een cultuurprijs dichterbij brengen; net as stoppen met roken. Hoss is dood is zijn beste werk; het oprechte kind zonder, ach je weet wel.’

\* Ik heb heur wel deur. Bij biljart speelt ze de ballen over de band. As het verkeerd oflöp lig het niet an de keu en niet an de stoot. De band, de ander, hef de sniedige opmarking maakt. Ze mient dat ik niet zo lolliig doen moet in huus. De deurklink, die zunder onderscheid te maken elk de hand gef, mag van heur de grappigste in huus blieden. Ik begeer gien pias te weden, ze wet dat, het overkomp mij. Harteveld zeg met trots dat lu de tillevisie uutzet as hij in beeld komp. Trots is de man die Russisch preut op zien cccp-onderscheidings. Het hiele bureau lig vol. Veur een hand vol roebels kocht op het красная площадь. Trots op de kolchoz, groots op de boerderij van zien va; as realistische socialist. ‘Waar het aan ontbreekt,’ zegt ze, ‘is aan eernsachtige kritiek in cultureel Drenthe. De Drenten zijn te aardig om eerlijk te zijn. Om maar eens een cliché uit het kabinet te trekken. Als dienstplichtige leerde onze Pechorin bij de elitetroepen, met baronnen in zijn kielzog, de Russische taal om krijgsgeschieden te ondervragen. Zoals vaker gebeurt vergeten soldaten en kunstenaars zichzelf te ondervragen. Als Harteveld meer oprechte zelfkritiek had gekregen, had hij alle prijzen in Drenthe – drie voor de prijs van twee – naast zijn Russische medailles kunnen leggen. Had hij niet hoeven zeuren als een Rus.’

\*Harteveld klapt onder de wasempak in de handen. Hij probeert vliegen dood te meppen. Vergeefs. Vliegenbrevet van onvermogen. Flink deurroken in de keuken helpt beter om vliegen of te vangen.

‘Harteveld is, als ik zo vrij mag zijn,’ zegt ze, ‘een cliché van zichzelf. Geldingsdrang kent duistere kanten. Hij is iemand die graag met de neus vooraan staat. Hij bewaakt zijn eigenheid te vuur en te zwaard. Bescheiden is hij doorgaans. Eigenwijs altijd. Hij is eeuwig toneelspeler. Hij beschouwt omstanders, waar en wanneer dan ook, als publiek. Dat hij zegt miskend te zijn omdat hij de Culturele Prijs van Drenthe niet heeft toegeschoven gekregen is ook nep. Toneel. Hij heeft de bouwstenen van zijn karakter zorgvuldig op elkaar gemetseld. Hij kent elke voeg. Hij is oprecht en goudeerlijk in de koestering van zijn eigen clowneske zijswijze. Meer is er eigenlijk niet over te zeggen.’

\*Ik wol dat ik zölf bedacht had wat ze mij uutstukt.

‘Nou held van mij, zeg je er nog wat van?’ Ze reikt me de koffie.

\* Wat niet is kan nog kommen. Ik proest niet.

‘Je wilt het niet van me horen,’ zegt ze, ‘maar ik kan wel tien kunstenaars en schrijvers noemen die zich tekortgedaan voelen omdat ze niet door hun vader, hun moeder, hun man, hun vrouw, hun kind, hun minnaar of minnares of door de Provincie zijn onderscheiden. Harteveld is niet één van hen.’

\*Nuum gien namen.

‘Nee, ik noem geen namen.’ [I have proposed to the committee that he be rewarded in 2024.]

p. 257 Dutch: *wat heet* means 1. What’s the importance/ underestimating affairs. E.g. “There is a fire.” “Wat heet, the whole city is burning.” 2. How hot (horny).

p. 257. What had she lost here: Why was she here?

p. 270 Zwienhond: ‘Swinedog’. How bad!

p. 275 *New Scientist* 5 Sept. 1985 pp. 36-40. Ted Nield, “Onshore Oil is All Set to Grow”.

p. 275 The Penlee lifeboat disaster occurred on 19 December 1981 off the coast of Cornwall, England. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution lifeboat Solomon Browne, based at the Penlee Lifeboat Station near Mousehole, went to the aid of the vessel *Union Star* after its engines failed in heavy seas. After the lifeboat had rescued four people, both vessels were lost with all hands. Sixteen people died, including eight volunteer lifeboatmen.

p. 275 Erika Roe, also known as the Twickenham Streaker, is a woman remembered for a topless run across the pitch of Twickenham Stadium near London, England, during an England vs. Australia rugby union match on 2 January 1982. It has been described by the BBC as “perhaps the most famous of all streaks.” Roe, who later attributed the inspiration to alcohol, ran onto the field during half time, exposing her 40-inch breasts.

p. 276 (A letter I found in the train.) Dear Simon,  
Many many thanks for the Top Gun day at Lauden!

I haven’t enjoyed a day more this year. It really is a magical spot and the relaxed atmosphere added up to a memorable occasion. Added to which - *I seemed to get lucky with the draw*, never had a thin stand. So, despite the events later in the day, I returned home ‘tired but happy’. We used to get on with this cold cause (although you missed nothing last Saturday, which was freezing xitiless).

Yours always, Ann 4-12-17

p. 277 <https://historianet.nl/cultuur/klassieker-was-too-hot-to-handle> for Lady Chatterley’s lover.

p. 280 Water Lilies (French: Nymphéas) is a series of approximately 250 oil paintings by French Impressionist Claude Monet (1840-1926). The paintings depict his flower garden at his home in Giverny, and were the main focus of his artistic production during the last thirty years of his life.

p. 284 copy of p. 214 Sandwichman.

p. 284 Coffin, referring to page 23.

p. 285 007 and several pop songs.

p. 285 *How to kill a mocking bird*. Harper Lee.

p. 286 Goat: Back to the subject we were talking on.

p. 288 Identical of earlier part. Pag. 166.

p. 289 Zwiën op ladder: slaughtered pig on a ladder. Knupdoekie: head scarf.

p. 291 Novel by Rebecca O'Connor: *He's mine and I have no other*. She inspired me to write a pastiche *Brady's Rosary*.

p. 291 *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is a 1984 novel by Milan Kundera, about two women, two men, a dog, and their lives in the 1968 Prague Spring period of Czechoslovak history. Although written in 1982, the novel was not published until two years later, in a French translation. The same year, it was translated to English from Czech by Michael Henry Heim and excerpts of it were published in *The New Yorker*.

p. 291 Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder. Ebony and Ivory. We all know. That people are the same wherever you go. There's good and bad in everyone. We learn to live when we learn to give each other. What we need to survive. Together alive. Ebony and ivory. Live together in perfect harmony. Side by side on my piano keyboard.

p. 291 The derrick that disappeared into the earth. We go back to 1965. NAM has an extraction well south of the hamlet of 't Haantje, near the Oranjekanaal. The French company Forex started drilling at this location, called Sleen-2, on November 2. After two weeks a depth of 1840 meters is reached. Serious problems arise on December 1. From a depth of about 1,850 meters, the gas unexpectedly and uncontrollably finds its way up. Small mud volcanoes first form, but also large 'craters'. Then things go quickly. A former employee says: "We started evacuating when gas gushed out forty meters away from us. A fountain of up to thirty meters high. Unbelievable, what power. A rocket, it was as if you were standing right next to a jet fighter taking off." Around four o'clock in the afternoon, the almost fifty-meter-high derrick collapses and disappears entirely into the crater with an enormous noise. The tower and the installation, worth four million guilders, are lost forever. <https://www.nam.nl/nieuws/2020/het-verhaal-van-een-dorp-dat-wereldnieuws-werd.html>





p. 291 “Little Red Rooster” is a blues standard credited to arranger and songwriter Willie Dixon. The song was first recorded in 1961 by American blues musician Howlin’ Wolf in the Chicago blues style. His vocal and slide guitar playing are key elements of the song. It is rooted in the Delta blues tradition and the theme is derived from folklore. Musical antecedents to “Little Red Rooster” appear in earlier songs by blues artists Charlie Patton and Memphis Minnie.

I am the little red rooster

Too lazy to crow for day

I am the little red rooster

Too lazy to crow for day

Keep everything in the farm yard upset in every way

The dogs begin to bark and hounds begin to howl

Dogs begin to bark and hounds begin to howl

Watch out strange cat people

Little red rooster’s on the prowl

If you see my little red rooster

Please drive him home

If you see my little red rooster

Please drive him home

I had no peace in the farm yard

Since my little red rooster’s been gone

p. 291 I wrote a short story in dialect *Oranjekanaal*. Same subject.

p. 292 Cupid’s Inspiration are a British pop group, active with various line up changes since 1968 when they had two hit singles. The song Yesterday Has Gone was written by Teddy Randazzo and Victoria Pike and was first released by Anthony and The Imperials in 1967.

Hey, baby, yesterday has just departed. and tomorrow hasn’t started. all what really matters is right now. and you should live a lifetime in each minute. take the sweetness home within it. yesterday has gone without a sound. What’s the good of living in the past. look around your things are changing fast.

p. 293 Which does not fit in the series: ijsberen, bruine beren, masturberen?

Poar bears, brown bears, masturbate? Answer: Polar bears are not Catholic.

p. 293 naoberhulp = helping neighbours, mandielig = common (grounds).

p. 293 proverb: not looking far out. Limited view.

p. 296 Paul Valéry. *Monsieur Teste*.

p. 296 Interbellum; between wars.

p. 296 Body language to point at homosexuality.



# Maps and Literature

- P. 4, 6, 7 From: Thorne Moors: a contested wetland in north-eastern England  
Robert Van de Noort The Heritage Management of Wetlands (via academia.org)  
Location of Thorne Moors in the Humberhead Levels, in the Humber Wetlands.  
P. 8,9 New Phytol. (1986) 104, 731-748  
PLANTS AND PEAT CUTTINGS: HISTORICAL ECOLOGY OF A MUCH  
EXPLOITED PEATLAND - THORNE WASTE, YORKSHIRE, UK  
BY P. J. SMART\*, B. D. WHEELER AND A.J.WILLIS  
Department of Botany, The University, Sheffield S10 2TN, UK  
p. 10 Combination of maps from Martin Limbert and (detail) Drentse  
turfgravers in England  
P. 12 f.f. Topotijdreis.nl (Topographic time journey, maps of NL as early as 1815)  
P. 14, 15 Pynacker 1634.  
P. 16 ff. topotijdreis.nl  
P. 20 Website Thorne history. WATERSIDE History & Heritage Laurie Thorp  
Thorne Local History Society Occasional Paper No 20: 1996  
p. 40 Laurie Thorpe.

## Sources – Web

- The Peatlands Way The Peatlands Way Route was devised by:  
The Humberhead Levels Green Tourism Forum Hale Hill Farm  
Hatfield Woodhouse South Yorkshire. DN7 6PL
- The history of Thorne. Humberhead Peatlands Thorne & Hatfield Moors /  
Picture Gallery.
- Wikipedia  
Thorne Colliery was a large colliery within the Metropolitan Borough of  
Doncaster, South Yorkshire in the South Yorkshire Coalfield. The colliery was  
open between 1925 and 1956; but had operational issues including shaft water,  
war time crises and maintenance trouble, causing the pit to be non-productive  
for much of its lifespan. Production ended in 1958 due to geological problems.  
Unsuccessful proposals to restart production were made in the 1980s and 1990s,  
and in 2004 the pit pumps were turned off and the headgear demolished.
- The Drainage of Thorne Waste in the Nineteenth Century  
By Martin Limbert Thorne Local History Society Occasional Paper No 5 1990

- Thorne-Moorends Council Home Community Heritage Locations. The War Memorial. The memorial commemorates the war heroes who gave their lives in different wars throughout time to help protect the country.

- Famous Sons and Daughters

<https://www.thorne-moorends.gov.uk/community/around-the-town/>

Thorne also has its share of famous sons and daughters to be proud of including:

Lesley Garrett – everyone’s favourite opera singer. Professor George Porter –

Fellow of the Royal Society. Thomas Crapper – inventor of the W. C.

In addition a world class sculptor, Byron Howard, whose studios are in a former school near the Parish Church, welcomes visitors by appointment Tel. (01405)

816299.

- Notes on the discovery of a body in a peat moss at Cambusnethan. By Ludovic McL. Mann, With reports on the Osseous Remains by Prof. John Graham, m.b., ch.b., f.r.f.p.s.g. The Clothes and Dyes, by Robert G. Eskdale. The shoes, by William Martin. Read to the Society on Thursday, 16th February 1933.

- Mullen, S. (2020) Ludovic McLellan Mann and the Cambusnethan bog body. *Scottish Archaeological Journal*, 42(Suppl), pp. 71-84. (doi: 10.3366/saj.2020.0147)

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher’s version if you wish to cite from it. <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/227588/> Deposited on 13 January 2021 Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow

- The Importance of Being Earnest, A Trivial Comedy for Serious People is a play by Oscar Wilde. First performed on 14 February 1895 at the St James’s Theatre in London, it is a farcical comedy in which the protagonists maintain fictitious personae to escape burdensome social obligations. Working within the social conventions of late Victorian London, the play’s major themes are the triviality with which it treats institutions as serious as marriage and the resulting satire of Victorian ways. Some contemporary reviews praised the play’s humour and the culmination of Wilde’s artistic career, while others were cautious about its lack of social messages. Its high farce and witty dialogue have helped make The Importance of Being Earnest an enduringly popular play.

Citations Wilde

The traditional cucumber sandwich is a crustless tea sandwich (or finger sandwich) composed of thin slices of cucumber situated between two thin slices of lightly buttered white bread. The sandwich originated in the United Kingdom, and modern variants, largely of United States origin, introduce cream cheese,

mayonnaise, chopped dill or spices, and salmon, and may substitute brown bread. One specific US variant includes benedictine, a green soft spread made from cucumbers and cream cheese.

Cucumber sandwiches are most often served for a light snack or for afternoon tea, a formal light meal served in the late afternoon, or in the early evening before the main supper. Cucumber sandwiches are also traditionally served in the tea break at club cricket matches in England.

- ‘Not quite a Geordie’: the folk-ethnonyms of north-east England Michael Pearce University of Sunderland

- Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny’ (Roud 6862 [1]) is a famous Geordie comic song written in the 19th century by Joe Wilson, in a style deriving from music hall.[2] Though the words were by Wilson, it is to be sung to the existing tune of ‘Nelly Gray’ (also used for the Liverpool song ‘Maggie May’)

Wikipedia. On YouTube

- Wikipedia. The Drentsche Patrijshond is a versatile spaniel-type hunting dog from the Dutch province of Drenthe. Called the Dutch Partridge Dog in English, approximately 5,000 dogs are registered with the breed club in the Netherlands, and breed clubs operate in Belgium, Denmark, Scandinavia and North America. The Drentsche Patrijshond bears some resemblance to both spaniel and setter types of dog

- Scottish shale. The Scottish Dutchmen Moss Litter works, and moss litter workers, in West Lothian F22004, first published, 14th February 2022 Until late in the 19th century, horses were a vital part of Museum of the Scottish Shale Oil Industry Almond Valley Heritage Trust Millfield, Livingston West Lothian, EH54 7AR

- 2.3 Sand Dancer

At some point in the twentieth century, the citizens of South Shields—a town at the mouth of the Tyne—began to be known as Sand Dancers.

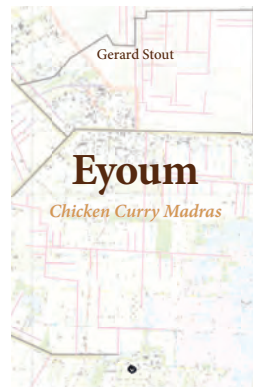
Piecing together the evidence, we might speculate that Sand Dancer first gained currency as a disparaging racial epithet, derived from a metonymic association between Arabs and the desert.<sup>21</sup> It seems likely that it was first directed at the Yemenis themselves (perhaps due to the currency of the phrase in relation to the music hall ‘Sand Dancers’ who were popular at the time).<sup>22</sup> Then people outside South Shields might have used it more generally for the folk of the town, in a similar way to how Mackem (and, as we shall see, Smoggie) were probably first used by outsiders as derogatory terms. As awareness of its racialized origins faded over time (perhaps in part due to the integration of Yemenis into the



wider community), it seems that the people of the town became more willing to adopt Sand Dancer as a positive label (particularly since other, quite plausible folk etymologies to do with sandy beaches began to circulate). Although some informants, aware of its origins, express a dislike of the term, it does now seem to have become widely accepted in South Shields. Pearce 2014

In the mid-nineteenth century in the U.S.A. a style of dance, mainly associated with black and black-face minstrels developed. Known as a 'sand dance', it was a variation of the 'soft-shoe'. The soft shoe was 'a fluid dance, a series of brushing and shuffling steps performed in a casual, nearly languid manner'. These steps 'leant themselves to a variation called the sand dance' in which sand was sprinkled on the floor to enhance 'the brushing sounds of the soft shoe' (Cullen, Hackman, and McNeilly 2007, I, 1054).

- *Anya, de Vrolijk saga* by Gerard Stout. Dutch 2019. Stoffel Stoffelmans.
- *Eyoum – Chicken Curry Madras* by Gerard Stout. In Dutch, 2023. A novel (autobiografiction) describing life in South-East Drenthe.



## Photo's / Illustrations

- p. 1 Ningtien (Nineteen). 110 cm x 165 cm. Art by Flip Drukker (Groningen). A biography of Gerard Stout. The background is turf. The individual parts can be found in this book. FD.
- p. 36 Eyoum, charcoal. Gerard Stout.
- p. 47 FD. Prayer and obsession for black women.
- p. 78. Bongerveen, near Peize (Drenthe).
- p. 80 - Charcoal drawings. Gerard Stout.
- p. 88 Bargerveen, south-east Drenthe.
- p. 95-96 Bargerveen, South-East Drenthe.
- p. 119 FD. p. 120 FD.
- p. 124-125 Roman Catholic church interior, Erica. I made the white saviour brown. Photo: My mother's funeral, she died 21 June 2007.
- p. 130 Cemetery chapel, Erica.
- p. 133 Oil pump in Schoonebeek.
- p. 136 FD. Since I needed a walking stick.
- p. 143 FD. p. 144 FD.
- p. 148 From my history book (I was 13 years old). Medal to commemorate 1853.
- p. 160 Bargerveen, across the German border.
- p. 171 FD. p. 172 FD. I used to take photographs.
- p. 199 I used Photoshop to colour the cap. The stitching disappeared.
- p. 203 I was received into the Roman Catholic Church. At the age of 12?
- p. 204 At university. At the age of 19?
- p. 208 FD. I wrote a biography in Drents dialect *Ningtien*.
- p. 230 Charcoal. Self-portrait.
- p. 246 Video still by Erik Harteveld. Russian: I did not receive a prize.
- p. 249 I replaced Lenin's head with Erik Harteveld's.
- p. 250 Shunga. Oil on board. 170 x 45 cm. Gerard Stout.
- p. 274 70x50 cm. Oil on board. Gerard Stout.
- p. 281 70x50 cm. Oil on board. Gerard Stout.
- p. 290 Me. 120x90 cm. Oil on board. Gerard Stout
- p. 298 Birdbox. Gerard Stout.
- p. 312 My father. 60x40 cm. Oil on board. Gerard Stout.
- p. 322 To measure size of potato tubers 40x50 cm. Oil on panel. Gerard Stout.
- p. 326 Infinity. 70x50 cm. Oil on board. Gerard Stout.

# Genealogy Joseph van de Griendt

**Jan van de Griendt (1804-1884) X Helena Panis (1817-1898)**

Founder of Griendtsveen Company

4 daughters, three sons. **Joseph and Eduard** on Moss Litter. (Turfstrooisel.)

**Joseph van de Griendt 1849-1917      X**

**Anna Francisca van Meeuwen 1855-1935**

1. Helena Maria Catharina van de Griendt 1890-1971
2. Henri Jan van de Griendt 1884-1969 X Georgine Marcelle Barnet y Cleard.  
     Anna Louisa Theresia Maria van de Griendt 1925-1993 X  
     Dr. Jaak van Berckel  
     Son Drs. A. (Guus) H. P. van Berckel (geb. 1955),...
3. Jan Eduard van de Griendt 1886-1886 (died early)
4. Jan Paul van de Griendt 1893-1970 X  
     Cornelia Johanna Antoinette Castendijk. 1901-1993  
     Son: (Niet openbaar) Henk F. 1925-  
     (Niet openbaar) G.J. ?

**Jozef Frederik Anton van de Griendt 1922-1945** Kapel Erica.

5. N.N. van de Griendt 1898-1898 (died early / still born)



# Genealogy Eduard van de Griendt

Edouard Gerard Joseph van de Griendt 1857-1935

X

Catharina Maria van Meeuwen 1862-1915

Kind(eren):

1. Eduard Frans Cornelis van de Griendt 1891-1948 X

Alida Wijnvoord 1891-1980

2. Helena Maria Lambertina van de Griendt 1886-1967 X

Cornelis Henricus Iwes. 1888-1963

(Niet openbaar) (Niet openbaar)

3. Jan Paul Hendrik van de Griendt 1889-1967 X

Lucie Eulalie Elisabeth Maisier 1896-1971.

Offspring three. Jan P.C.E. van de Griendt 1927-

#### 4. Maria Paulina Anna van de Griendt 1887-1932 X

Laurent Joseph Christiaan Thiange.1880-1944

overleden in een concentratiekamp

# Son Frederik Nicolaas Thiange 1915-1944

overleden in een concentratiekamp; overleden te

Hamburg-Neuengamme (Duitsland)

Registration of death of  
Josephus Frederikus Anton  
van de Griendt in  
municipality Emmen.  
(He died in Leiden)

[illegible]

# Genealogy Jantienus Vinke

Household of Bernardus 'Rieks' Vinke 1885-1968

X

Jantje Witvoet 1884-1968

Child(ren):

1. Johannes Hendrikus Vinke 1912-1974
2. Henderikus Vinke 1913-2002
3. (Not public)
4. (Not public)
5. (Not public)
6. Jantje Vinke 1919-1920
7. (Not public)
8. Bernardus Vinke 1922-2005
9. **Jantienus Vinke 1923-1944**
10. (Not public)

R.K. Begraafplaats te  
Erica

Vak/rij/nummer Z L 06





# Genealogy Harmannus Henderikus Bontjer

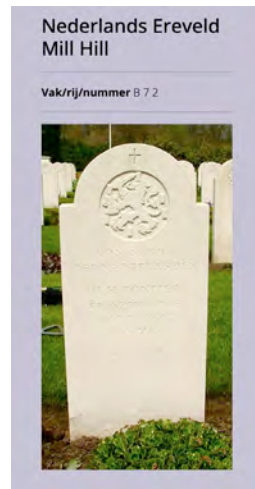
Gezin van Georgius Gerhardus Bontjer 1883-1967

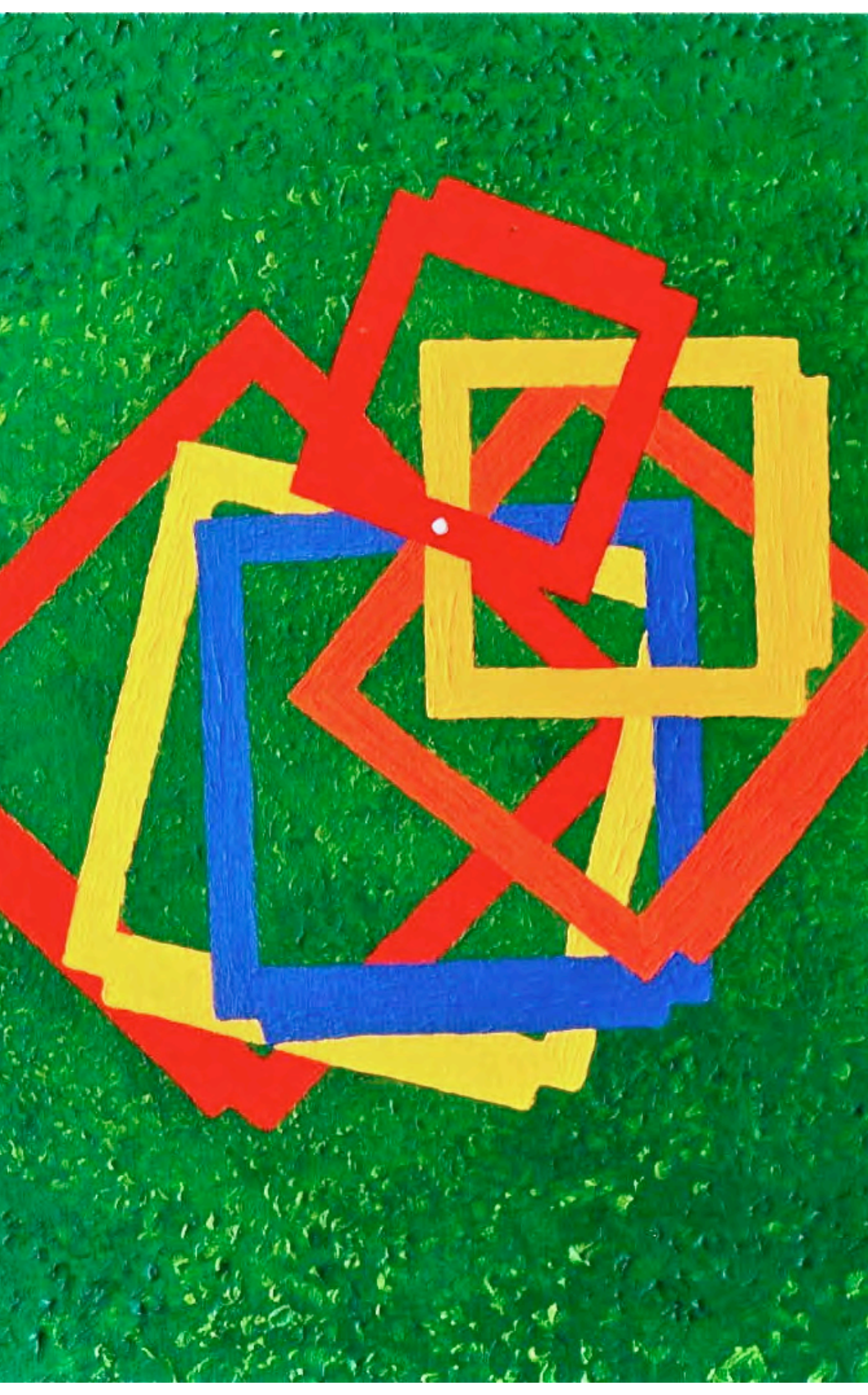
Hij is getrouwd met Maria Catharina Teuben. 1888-1974

Zij zijn getrouwd op 10 mei 1913 te Nieuwe-Pekela, Groningen, Nederland, hij was toen 29 jaar oud. Zij verhuizen 27-5-1913 van Nieuwe-Pekela naar Valthermond; 13-5-1925 naar Erica.

Kind(eren):

1. Margaretha Hillegonda Bontjer 1914-1995
2. **Harmannus Henderikus Bontjer 1915-1944**
3. Bernardus Benedictus Bontjer 1917-1969
4. Helena Henderika Bontjer 1919-2001
5. Hillechina Gerarda Geertruida Bontjer 1921-1998
6. Henderikus Albertus Bontjer 1922-1991
7. Benedictus Bernardus Bontjer 1925-1992
8. Catharina Anna Theresia Bontjer 1927-2013
9. Maria Catharina Johanna Bontjer 1930-2020





## Epilogue

I started writing this book on 1 September 2023. I tried to formulate an answer to the question: how can people meet each other, deepen contact with each other and create mutual understanding? My idea was to place a sign in the garden with an invitation to 'Meet a Local'. Anyone can come in and have a chat about literature, art, nature, philosophy, chemistry, about highlights in life.

I didn't put a sign in the courtyard. I used *Meet a Local* to describe my pilgrimage in Yorkshire to meet up with ancestors. That's how it started.

I used information I found on the internet, in libraries and I used books from Ter Verpoozing, my publishing house.

I started publishing in Drents in 1984, as far as literature is concerned. Later I switched to Dutch, so the time had come to use English as a lingua franca.

I wrote almost all of the texts directly in English. I gave the first draft to [translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com) to correct errors. I passed on the version from [translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com) to the writing assistant at [DeepL.com](https://DeepL.com). I read, changed, improved and edited all drafts several times until I was satisfied with the result. Sometimes I did not change my Dutch-English to preserve the local character of the stories. I didn't consult anyone else.

The last time I visited Britain was back in the 80s. I've never been to Yorkshire nor Scotland. I visited all the places with Streetview.

I borrowed maps and sometimes added street names.

Even though there is no sign in the courtyard. Feel free to visit me.

Peize 31 December 2023

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