

A Ball for the Refused: Struggle over Literary Freedom within the Dutch Literary Field

Marit van de Warenburg
and Thomas van Gaalen

Abstract

Although Bourdieuan scholars have analyzed the literary field's participation in social struggles, few studies have sought to chart the dynamics of protest and clash that occur within the field. This article aims to provide a first step in doing so through a discourse analysis of the 2002 schism between the *Boekenbal* ("Book Ball"), a high-profile Dutch literary festival, and its symbolic rival, the *Bal der Geweigerden* ("Ball of the

Refused"), which was announced in response to the Boekenbal's perceived neglect of literature in favor of commerce. The article shows that the BdG's inconsistent re-use of dominant narratives and ideas regarding literature and its place in society added to an already growing insecurity about long-held literary values, and might have contributed to the bankruptcy of several of these values throughout the 2000s.

Introduction

Since 1947, the *Stichting Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek* (CPNB, “Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book”), an organization aimed at promoting Dutch literature and the Dutch literary industry, has held an annual *Boekenbal* (“Book Ball”) as part of their yearly celebratory *Boekenweek* (“Week of Books”). The *Boekenbal*, which has often taken place at high-profile performing arts venues such as the Concertgebouw and the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam, has cultivated a notorious reputation in Dutch public media for its long celebrity guest lists, its wild, eccentric atmosphere and its history of artistic, symbolic and political stunts (Weijermars 11-2, 115).¹ Over time, the extravagant event has come to be considered as an emblematic—albeit over the top—public representation of the Dutch literary scene (NOS).

However, the *Boekenbal*’s synonymy with the Dutch literary field has also been contested, and not in the least by actors from the field itself (Weijermars 111-4). Although nearly every aspect of the *Boekenbal*—from its decorations and its general themes to its guest lists and line-up—has, at one point, elicited criticism from writers and commentators, a particularly high-profile contestation of the *Boekenbal*’s dominant position in the Dutch literary field occurred in 2002 (Weijermars 115). After authors and commentators in the Dutch press persistently criticized the *Boekenbal* for catering to business people, sponsors and celebrities rather than writers, a number of literary actors organized the *Bal der Geweigerden* (“Ball of the Refused”), a rival protest ball that aimed to counter the *Boekenbal*’s perceived neglect of literary values by allowing more room for opposition and artistic endeavor (Weijermars 111). Organizers included author Carel Helder, editor of student magazine *Propria Cures*, author Peter Smit, and visual artist Herman Geurts (111). The rival ball was publicly backed by its venue,

¹ Examples include the 1948 boycott of the *Boekenbal* after writer Jan Slauerhoff’s opening ode to colonial general Jan Pietersz. Coen was deemed too controversial in light of the decolonization of the Dutch East Indies; the protests against minister of culture Brinkman at the 1985 *Boekenbal* after Brinkman’s refusal to award controversial commentator and writer Hugo Brandt Corstius was deemed as an attack of the state on the literary world; and, in 2019, the interruption of the opening program by comedian Freek de Jonge, who intended to make a statement against the growing far-right party *Forum voor Democratie* (Giphart, Weijermars 95, Huisman).

concert hall and cultural center Paradiso (a former church turned squatting site turned influential concert venue during the 1960s), as well as prominent writers and cultural figures including Youp van 't Hek, Gerrit Komrij and Arnon Grunberg—most of whom had been regular visitors and acts at the Boekenbal prior to 2002 (111).

The rival ball's announcement made headlines in the Dutch press, and sparked a public discussion about the literary field's supposed values, as well as its supposed relation to the market. Since, according to Bourdieuan scholars, the literary field operates on an inherent drive towards literary freedom and autonomy (Sapiro 441-2), it was not entirely surprising that the allegedly excessive influence of the market on the Boekenbal was considered as a threat.² Whereas Bourdieuan scholars have addressed how the literary field has historically engaged in protest and activism against such threats because of its inherent drive (or its "field effects") (Sapiro 441), few academics have sought to understand how different microcosms develop, interact, and clash over the principles of autonomy and freedom *within* the literary field itself. The rivalry between the two Dutch balls, and the public debate that ensued, showcases that processes of contestation and activism within the literary field play a considerable part in problematizing and establishing its general socio-cultural-economic positioning, and its role in societal and political shifts.

Although adequately mapping the internal dynamics of contestation and activism in the literary field in general would require a transnational range of accumulative and comparative case studies, we aim to provide a first step in addressing these dynamics through a

² In his later work (and especially the 1996 book *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*), Pierre Bourdieu aimed to concretize his theoretical notion of the "field" —a social space in which actors with a shared interest in the accumulation of economic, cultural and social capital protect and solidify these interests—through the application of field theory to the concrete case of the "literary field." Bourdieu, and, to a larger extent, his protégé Gisele Sapiro, characterized this field as the sum of writers, publishers, bookstores and poets that shared the fundamental common interest of literary autonomy (Bourdieu 1996, 50-53; Sapiro 441-2). According to Sapiro, this fundamental principle of autonomy steers the literary field's "field effects," or, in other words, its patterns of interaction with other fields. In her work on the literary field, Sapiro charts its relation to two other fields: the state and the market (442). Both have posed historical threats to literary autonomy—but both have also proved indispensable in protecting the literary field from the excessive influence of the other (442). For the work of other prominent Bourdieuan literary field theorists, see: McDonald 2002; Casanova 2004; Boschetti 2012; Hockx 2019.

discourse analysis of the schism between the Boekenbal and the Bal der Geweigerden (from now on: BdG). This case fits the purpose of such an initial study for numerous reasons. Firstly, the rivalry between the two balls took place in a period that saw major shifts in the Dutch cultural field: the 2000s saw a development from generous subsidies for the arts under several progressive Dutch cabinets to a pressing emphasis on cultural entrepreneurship and the free market under the right-wing Rutte cabinets (van Meerkerk and van den Hoogen 31-5). Throughout the 2000s, the narratives employed by the Dutch literary field (and the cultural field in general) grew inconsistent and out of touch with new policies regarding the arts, eventually culminating in a significant backlash on the arts' self-legitimation after failed protest actions in 2010 and 2011 (Ham 43-5, van Meerkerk and van den Hoogen 30-5, van de Warenburg and van Gaalen). Our case study captures the Dutch literary scene at the start of this tumultuous transition. Secondly, the explicit opposition between the two balls allows us to trace the dynamics of rivalry and contestation in a concrete way; the broad public discussion that erupted around the rivalry presents explicit insight into the reasons and ideas that incited the clash. Finally, the Dutch tradition of twentieth century literary activism is, in spite of its specifics, adequately comparable to that of other Western European countries. There are, of course, various developments particular to Dutch cultural policy that made the Dutch literary field what it is today—one can think of the allocation of subsidies on a four-year basis, rather than the UK's one-year arts subsidy system, and the legally fixed book price (Minnaert 70-2). However, the field's roots in a tradition of bohemian values (such as an appreciation of creativity, newness, nonconformity, and unbridled, free expression) that are actively juxtaposed to a bourgeois mainstream, the general artistic traditions that have permeated the field since at least the nineteenth century, and the general shifts in policy that affected the field throughout the twentieth century mostly correspond to the literary fields in surrounding countries such as Belgium, the United Kingdom

and France (Seigel 11-6, Minnaert 70-3).³ As such, this case study allows for insights into dynamics of contestation within the literary field that could have a relevance beyond the Dutch national framework (Frijhoff and Spies 299-300).

In the following, we outline how literary actors on both sides of the Boekenbal-conflict linked their own approaches to broader narratives and ideas regarding the literary field's supposed values, after which we trace how these narratives and ideas are embedded in longer, historical discussions on the relation between the literary field and society in a broader sense. Furthermore, the article charts how the literary actors involved in the rivalry between the two balls reuse and reformulate existing ideas about the literary field's values to push the field in new directions. In doing so, we aim to illuminate that, aside from a history of entanglement with socio-political protest and activism, the dynamics of contestation, protest and clash *within* the field are also essential in the field's drive towards literary autonomy.

Literature and the Market: Friends or Foes?

"A silly business party," so deemed comedian and writer Youp van 't Hek the Boekenbal during his act at the BdG (Weijermars 112).⁴ His characterization emblemizes the issues that the Dutch press highlighted as the spark for organizing the BdG. The Boekenbal, so the popular complaint of the BdG's proponents ran, extended too many invitations to commercial figures—cast as "gas station owners who happen to sell books" and hedonistic Dutch celebrities—thereby neglecting the bulk of people who had actually written books (Maas). In his opening speech at the BdG, author Gerrit Komrij sarcastically addressed the commercial

³ As in most Western European nations, the Dutch government has, according to sociologists Harry Hillman and Claire McCaughey, mostly functioned as something between a "patron state" that funds the arts "at arm's length" through councils, and an "architect state" that promotes community standards and funds the arts' social welfare through "ministries or departments of culture" (qtd in Minnaert 72)—although many Western European countries, including the Netherlands, have, since the advent of New Public Management and a turn towards the free market, moved increasingly towards the outsourcing of cultural means of production (73).

⁴ Strikingly, van 't Hek presented himself as a leading voice in the critique of the Boekenbal—even though he had been a regular guest at the traditional Boekenbal prior to 2002.

nature of the Boekenbal: “If only I were across the street [where the Boekenbal was being held]. There you can move forward in this world, there you can put your diplomatic smirk to use” (qtd. in Meijer).

This critical stance against the ball’s perceived commercialization stands in line with Bourdieu’s and Sapiro’s understanding of the literary field’s pull towards autonomy and freedom (Sapiro 441). However, actors from the field were divided in their view of the role the market should play at the Boekenbal. Whereas proponents of the BdG decried the excessive influence of the market, the organizer of the Boekenbal—organization CPNB—positioned itself as aiming to “enrich people’s lives by having them read more books” *with* the help of the free market by launching marketing campaigns, securing corporate sponsorships and hosting public events (CPNB).

Although the literary field’s drive towards autonomy has often pitted it against the market, the CPNB’s adherence to a free market system is not a surprising move either. To secure its independence, the literary field often requires and seeks protection or support from other fields (Sapiro 442). After the Boekenbal—which originated in 1947 and had died down in the 1970s—was revived in the 1980s, the Dutch cultural field was subjected to large subsidy cuts when the center-right Lubbers administration made a move towards decentralization and privatization (Weijermars 92; van Meerkerk and van den Hoogen 32). Subsequently, the revived Boekenbal—and the Dutch literary field in general—was increasingly forced to make ends meet via the free market and became more reliant on sponsors and publicity campaigns (Weijermars 99, 108).

During the early 2000s, however, Dutch cultural policy took a new turn. Although it still, and increasingly, stressed the importance of the market—now by emphasizing “cultural entrepreneurship”—it also strongly increased arts subsidies to transform Dutch cities into internationally attractive metropolises (Hesmondhalgh 1; van Meerkerk and van den Hoogen 26-8). The Boekenbal’s overt reliance on non-literary business partners and corporate sponsorships looked out of place by the early 2000s; the ball’s commercialization, its critics argued, was unnecessary and destructive (Weijermars 111-3).

In response, the BdG decided to emphasize openness. The BdG would be a “different kind of evening,” meant for writers, poets, artists and musicians who had “lingered in the margins” (Weijermars 112). Helder told *De Volkskrant*: “Everyone who reads or writes is welcome” (Boerstra). The evening’s program provided a prominent role for literature itself: throughout the evening, writers would read from their own work (Weijermars 112, see fig. 1). Moreover, the BdG had invited many debutantes and young authors who were still working on their first books: “This way we want to distinguish ourselves from the real Boekenbal”, Helder argued (Boerstra).

	Boekenbal	Bal der Geweigerden
Organizers /sponsors	CPNB; sponsored by <i>Dutch Railways</i>	Foundation <i>De Koperen Ploert</i> and student magazine <i>Propria Cures</i>
Theme	<i>Boekenbal d'Amour</i>	<i>Niet Liefde</i> (“Not Love”)
Location	Stadsschouwburg, Amsterdam	Paradiso, Amsterdam
Gift	A heart shaped light and a poetry booklet written by Marek van der Jagt (pseudonym of Arnon Grunberg)	Essay booklet titled “Geweigerde Liefde” (“Refused Love”), by Arnon Grunberg
Program	<p>21:00. Opening show with presentation by comedian Dolf Jansen and acts by singer Jan Rot, comedian and writer Hans Dorrestein, and visual artist Titi Zaadnoordijk</p> <p>22:00. Champagne and ball; DJ set by writer Joost Zwagerman, and DJ set by publisher Vic van de Reijt</p> <p>00:00. Official opening of the 67th Boekenweek; guests allowed on stage</p> <p>Continuation of champagne and ball until 02:00</p>	<p>21:00. Opening talk by Gerrit Komrij; moderation by television presenter Beau van Erven Dorens</p> <p>Talks by filmmaker Theo van Gogh, comedian Youp van ‘t Hek and comedian Hans Teeuwen; musical acts by Jeroen van Merwijk, Maarten van Roozendaal and Huub van der Lubben, planned throughout the evening</p> <p>“Hit-and-run program” with five minute slots featuring up-and-coming writers in Paradiso’s upper rooms, planned throughout the evening</p>

Figure 1. Details and programs of the 2002 Boekenbal and the 2002 Bal der Geweigerden.⁵

⁵ Reconstructed on the basis of Weijermars, Moll and press reports of the evening.

Despite framing the event as a ball for everyone, the BdG's organizers attempted to keep out the visitors that, to them, emblemized the Boekenbal's commercial character. Several organizers particularly intended for the BdG to do away with the "gas station holders," who only sold books on the side, that frequented the regular ball (Boerstra). Others accused the Boekenbal of having turned into a "*braderie*"—a grand, annual street fair often held in towns and villages—for "skybox public" and "provincial clerks" (Maas). In other words, the Boekenbal, which was once intended as a celebration of Dutch literature, was perceived to have become an empty, over-hyped party that had lost sight of its initial principles and now neglected real authors in favor of non-literary and perhaps even uncultured guests. Paradoxically, the BdG's supporters gave their own ball an elitist streak by juxtaposing artists with *braderie*-visitors, even though its intention had been to open up the Boekenbal's exclusivity. On the one hand, the BdG built on the then-popular "democratization of culture"-narrative that stressed the idea that the arts should be accessible to everyone (Hesmondhalgh 19-20). On the other hand, the BdG, in centering literature and a sense of art for art's sake, maintained a hierarchical and classist distinction between cultured audiences and "provincial," uneducated shop clerks and pretentious attendees that did, in their eyes, not possess the proper cultural capital to be allowed entrance to the literary field (Bourdieu 1986, 82).

Bohème versus Bourgeoisie—but who is who?

The adherents of the BdG did not only legitimize their actions by characterizing the Boekenbal as falling prey to the increased influence of the market. According to Helder and Paradiso director Jan-Willem Slighting, the rival ball was also meant as an oppositional gesture that would counter the "institutionalization" of the literary field that was emblemized by the Boekenbal (Kunstredactie *Trouw*). As Slighting stated in an interview with national newspaper *Trouw*: "The Ball is meant as a gesture. In contrast to the regular Boekenbal it should not be an institution" (Kunstredactie *Trouw*).

The BdG's anti-'institutional' stance was closely linked to its venue. Throughout the late twentieth century, Paradiso hosted many countercultural events—including hippie festivals, punk concerts and raves—and played an influential role in advocating the national condonement of soft drugs (Nuijten), cultivating a reputation for cultural progressivism, counterculturalism and innovation along the way. Paradiso featured prominently in the promotional material for the BdG, and the venue's management publicly subscribed to the BdG's aims (*Kunstredactie Trouw*). By associating itself with Paradiso's tradition of resistance, the BdG explicitly juxtaposed itself to the Boekenbal's venue, the Stadsschouwburg, a nineteenth century neoclassicist theater with strong connotations of high culture.

The aura of resistance cultivated by the BdG built upon cultural narratives that date back to at least the early nineteenth century. As cultural historian Jerrold Seigel has argued, the idea of a perpetual tension between the *bourgeoisie* and the *bohème* became a cornerstone of European liberal societies after the French revolution (9-11). Subsequently, opposition to bourgeois norms and tastes including traditional high art, formal dress, and a classical cultural canon became a performative gesture used to signify one's forward-thinking, open-minded and bohemian stance (Seigel 11-3; Gans 7-10).

Building upon this dichotomy between the *bourgeoisie* and the *bohème*, the BdG painted its opponents at the Boekenbal as bourgeois, old-fashioned and overly traditional, framing itself as progressive, young, bohemian and exciting. According to BdG-attendee Gerrit Komrij, the Boekenbal was a sad "Christmas tree", decorated in exactly the same way "year after year" (Meijer). In his act at the BdG, van 't Hek complained about the old, boring and unattractive "birthmark backs" (a description hinting at the age and outdatedness of the Boekenbal's visitors) that could be found drinking champagne at the Stadsschouwburg (Weijermars 112). In contrast, the BdG was, in the words of writer Rinske Wels, an ambitious and "bustling combination of writers, poets, designers, artists and musicians setting out to create a more exciting party than the musty Boekenbal" (Wels). The BdG's attempts to adhere to a tradition of radical and innovative artistry even resonated through

the ball's name: Bal der Geweigerden, so stated its organizers, was a nod to the *Salon des Refusés*, an initiative set up by the nineteenth century French impressionists after they were banned from exhibiting their controversial art in Parisian salons (Wels).

The popular dichotomy between *bourgeoisie* and *bohème* has not only produced rhetorical tools and tropes through which countercultural movements can challenge the bourgeois mainstream and place themselves into longer bohemian traditions; an emphasis on bohemian, countercultural identity also has the potential to center opposition as a fundamental value in *itself* (Seigel 12-16, Heath 1-2, Frank 5-6). This was certainly the case for the BdG; whereas its proponents initially rallied around the concrete issue of commercialization, the rival ball soon started to oppose the Boekenbal in every way imaginable. It invited controversial political artists such as filmmaker Theo van Gogh—who used the platform to express his heartfelt support for the then-notorious right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, claiming that Fortuyn was a blessing for the country's “boring democracy” (Meijer)—and shock artists from a varied range of disciplines (Boerstra). Moreover, the BdG drew attention to its rivalrous character by hosting its own party across the street from the Stadsschouwburg, thereby creating a tense atmosphere that was greedily picked up by the press (Weijermars 112). Additionally, it blatantly contradicted the Boekenbal's 2002-theme, “love,” by adopting “not love” as its own theme (Wels).

When taken at face value, the oppositional rhetoric used by the BdG would almost overshadow the fact that the Boekenbal and its rival were, in reality, not at all so contradictory; a considerable part of the BdG's line-up, guests and crew—including its presenters, speakers and DJ's—had been regulars at the Boekenbal before 2002 (Wels, Fortuin). Moreover, Arnon Grunberg, the author chosen to write the annual Boekenweek-essay, also wrote the BdG's free literary gift (Wels). The continuity between the two balls became even more clear on the evening the balls were held; the crowds of the Boekenbal and the BdG soon started to mingle, and Van 't Hek, who had finished his speech at the BdG with the promise that he would stay in Paradiso for the rest of the

night, was later spotted at the Boekenbal (Meijer). He was not the only author seen crossing the street (Meijer).

In their public response to the BdG, the Boekenbal's organizers emphasized this continuity in a way that, remarkably, did not go along with the oppositional narrative sketched by the BdG whatsoever. Henk Kraima, director of CPNB, asserted that he had been in contact with the BdG throughout the organizational process to coordinate the two balls, and had allegedly offered to hand out flyers for the BdG towards the end of the Boekenbal (Boerstra). In the press, the organizers of the Boekenbal even expressed their support for the BdG, arguing they appreciated the BdG's statement (Kunstredactie *Trouw*). Kraima claimed he was saddened that the BdG would not return for a second year, stating: "The more people celebrate the opening of the Boekenweek, the better"—a statement perfectly in line with Kraima's characteristic reliance on controversy as free PR for the Boekenbal and Dutch literature in general (Kunstredactie *Trouw*; Weijermars 99). On the one hand, Kraima's comments can be read as a strategic and critical response to the BdG; by refusing to go along with the BdG's narrative of contradiction, the Boekenbal took away the core of the resistant, countercultural narrative the rival ball had tried to cultivate. On the other hand, the support the Boekenbal extended to the BdG had everything to do with the fact that many of the prominent organizers, guests and speakers at both balls were undeniably part of the same national literary field.

Paradoxically, the continuity between the BdG and the Boekenbal also resonated in the bohemian stance of the BdG; the tactics of countercultural opposition used by the BdG built on the Boekenbal's renowned tradition of political stunts, bohemian extravagance, critical symbolic statements and clashes. However, in spite of the clear continuity between the tactics and approaches employed by the two balls, the BdG's use of a bohemian oppositional repertoire did, in the end, have some effect in decentering the self-evidence of the Boekenbal's central and influential position in the literary field. Because of the widespread resonance of the dichotomous model of *bourgeoisie* and *bohème* used by the BdG, the BdG's tactics eventually managed to get to the attendees of the Boekenbal: "The non-refused, sitting in a venue with empty seats,

seemed to feel like uncool dorks,” wrote Boekenbal-attendee Arjen Fortuin in national newspaper *NRC*: “In the days leading up to the ball, their rivals had caught so much of the public’s attention that many guests kept thinking about ‘the other side’ in fear. What if the party was better there?”. Because a *bohème* can only exist on the condition that it opposes a *bourgeoisie*, the guests of the Boekenbal seemed to have found themselves in doubt; if the BdG was the hip new thing, wouldn’t that necessarily make them outdated and bourgeois?

By working with the tactics of the Boekenbal itself, the BdG managed to subversively attract the attention of their opponents within the literary field, thereby attempting to shift the field away from the market and re-emphasize bohemian and countercultural values. However, the Boekenbal simply refused to go along with this narrative, instead framing the BdG as a counterpart to the traditional Boekenbal. The incompatibility between the narratives used by two balls thus seemed to add to an unstable and paradoxical constellation of ideas regarding the position of the Dutch literary field, as exemplified by the confusion of the guests at both celebrations.

Conclusion

The dynamics between the BdG and the Boekenbal showcases that contestation and protest *within* the literary field can play a large role in posing serious challenges to, as well as instigating shifts in, the larger field. As the above analysis highlights, the organization of the BdG was based upon a range of oppositional stances: the importance of the market for the literary field was pitted against a traditional *l’art pour l’art*-narrative, the limited guestlist of the Boekenbal was posed against notions of cultural democracy, and the dichotomy between the *bohème* and the *bourgeoise* infused the BdG’s program. In each dichotomous stance, however, upkeeping these binary characteristics proved a difficult task. The BdG—in its centering of the value of art—reiterated a classist, hierarchical distinction between cultured audiences and uncultured attendees that did not befit the literary scene, thereby re-emphasizing the exclusive character of the Boekenbal that the BdG

allegedly tried to challenge itself. Similarly, the focus on bohemian culture proved inconsistent: the Boekenbal did not go along with the *bourgeoisie-bohème*-dichotomy that the BdG tried to evoke, and the guests of both balls did not commit to those assigned roles either. As such, the various dichotomies employed by the BdG mostly led to confusion, rather than widespread support for its critique. Of course, this was something of an unsurprising situation—the clash between the BdG and the Boekenbal was framed as a struggle between collectives with very different stances, despite the fact that they were, after all, part of the same literary field; a social constellation that, in spite of its many different facets, operates on a set of shared fundamentals.

The impact and public resonance of the arguments posed by the BdG—which, in contrast to the organizers' promises, *did* become a recurring counter-event—represented, and added to, an insecurity regarding the self-evidence of the Boekenbal, as well as the validity of the narrative of art for art's sake and the applicability of the dominant liberal cultural diptych of the *bohème* and the *bourgeoisie*. van Meerkerk and van den Hoogen's, as well as Laurens Ham's work on Dutch cultural policy suggests that the narratives as employed by the BdG indeed continued to function as a source of disruption and confusion within the Dutch literary field, thus partly leading to the field's fragmented and divided state by the end of the 2000s (Ham 26-28; van de Warenburg and van Gaalen). In this light, our analysis suggests that internal contestation, by engaging in a paradoxical and unstable reuse of existing narratives, does not always provide a binary counterbalance to a field's dominant values, but can easily weaken the self-evidence of a field's fundamental assumptions.

The fact that the Dutch literary field lacked a stable position that allowed it to secure literary autonomy became clear when the right-wing 'Rutte-I'-cabinet led by the liberal-conservative VVD broke with the previously dominant new labour-type cultural policy by imposing major cuts in Dutch subsidies for the arts (Hendriks 37). The literary field—and the other arts—united in large protest initiatives against the cuts, but the contradictory narratives that were emblemized, as described above, by the BdG came to the surface and made for a messy

and incoherent message (Ham 25-7). The actions received a backlash in the Dutch press, and even public platforms known for supporting the arts derided the protests as unconvincing and contradictory (23-6).

In the long run, the BdG can be read as one of various internal blows that destabilized the dominant narratives that underpinned the literary field—and when the literary field again engaged in coordinated actions in a call for governmental support during the 2020 corona crisis, it had shed many of the ideas and arguments used by the BdG and the Boekenbal some twenty years earlier. The new literary and cultural protests emerged with a consistent and radically different narrative that emphasized the field's broader economic and societal values, and explicitly discarded associations with both canonical high culture and the *bohème* (Burghoorn and Kruijt n.p., Zoet 4). As the clash between the BdG and the Boekenbal showcases, contestation within the literary field can have a considerable influence on contesting the field's dominant socio-cultural positioning. In order to further our understanding of the role that such internal clashes play in establishing *new* positions (such as the economic approach of the literary field in 2020), it is important to engage in accumulative academic work to uncover the varied dynamics of internal contestation and protest within the literary field.⁶

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Biography

Marit van de Warenburg is a Research Master student of Comparative Literary Studies at Utrecht University. She acquired a BA in German and English Language and Culture at the same university. Her current research focuses on the afterlives of protest songs.

Thomas van Gaalen is a Research Master student of History at Utrecht University. He holds a BA in History and an MA in Cultural History. His current research analyzes developments in the cultural protest tools used by protest movements on opposite sides of the social, political and cultural spectrum.