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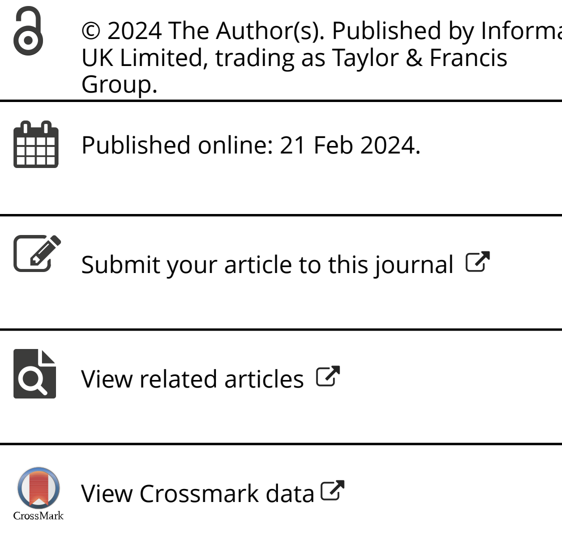

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Sunken Red: Inscribing the Pacific War as a Cultural Trauma into Dutch Cultural Memory

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ABSTRACT

Bezonken Rood, a novel by the Dutch author Jeroen Brouwers published in 1981 and translated as *Sunken Red* in 1988, has long been the subject of a fierce debate regarding the Pacific War in the former Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). The novel, a work of autofiction, aimed to bring the Pacific War, which was considered 'an omitted war' at the time, into the public eye. Despite the novel's claim to be true to life, critics identified upon its publication numerous historical inaccuracies, with the most significant critique being that the Pacific War was erroneously depicted as equivalent to the Holocaust. I will study both the novel and debate: I will examine the ways in which the Pacific War is represented and remediated in the novel; and I will analyse the ways in which the novel has contributed to the inscription of the Pacific War as a cultural trauma into Dutch cultural memory. Throughout my analysis, I will draw on concepts derived from the fields of autobiographical writing, critical trauma studies, cultural memory studies, and cultural trauma studies.

KEYWORDS

Modern Dutch literature; postcolonial literature; Dutch east indies; Pacific war; cultural memory; cultural trauma

Introduction

In 1981 *Bezonken Rood* (*Sunken Red*, translated 1988) was published, a novel by Jeroen Brouwers (1940–2022) on his internment by the Imperial Japanese Army in the former Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia) during the Pacific War (1941–45).

The novel received great literary acclaim, but shortly after its authenticity became questioned, because many former internees did not recognize their experiences in the way they were portrayed by Brouwers. The publication of *Sunken Red* sparked a public debate on whether what was written in the novel on the Pacific War was 'true' or not. Some felt that Brouwers had exactly shown the lived reality of the internment camps, others thought that he had grossly overstated his case 'for literary effect'. It was presumably the strongest debate that a Dutch novel had brought about at that time and showed according to literary historian Hugo Brems: 'how sensitive this period [the Second World War] in the eighties still

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was, and how here, as with the problem of collaboration with the Nazi's and persecution of the Jews, literature and social debates merge'.[1]

In this contribution, I will study both the novel and debate, using a narratological as well as social approach. In the first part, I will examine the ways in which the Pacific War is represented and remediated in the novel. In the second part, I will analyse the ways in which the novel has contributed to the inscription of the Pacific War as a cultural trauma into Dutch cultural memory. Throughout my analysis, I will draw on concepts derived from the fields of autobiographical writing, critical trauma studies, cultural memory studies, and cultural trauma studies. But before doing so, I will provide some background information on the Pacific War in the Dutch East Indies as well as on Brouwers as an author of Dutch literature, and more specifically, as a writer of so-called Indies camp literature.

The Pacific War in the Dutch East Indies

On 7 December 1941, the Imperial Japanese Army attacked the strategically located Hawaiian naval base Pearl Harbor, which annihilated the American Pacific Fleet, in hopes to gain free rein in the Pacific Ocean.[2] Although the attack came as a surprise, it was not entirely unexpected. Japan had previously shown imperial expansionism and had won the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), resulting in it gaining control of parts of Russia. Japan had also successfully conquered parts of China, including Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910), and was responsible for the Nanjing Massacre (1937), the mass murder of Chinese civilians after the capture of the Republic's former capital.[3] In response to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States declared war on Japan on 8 December 1941. As an American ally, the Netherlands did the same. The Royal Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL) was mobilized but proved no match for the Imperial Japanese Army. During the Battle of the Java Sea on 27 February 1942, the Allied fleet was destroyed and on 8 March 1942, the colony was forced to surrender, leading to the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies.[4]

About 300.000 colonial Dutch consequently witnessed the Pacific War in the Dutch East Indies. Many were interned in so-called 'Jappenkampen'. Among them were approximately 100.000 civilians (of whom 16.800 or 1 in 6 died). The colonial Dutch formed as many as 80% of the total number of civilians interned during the Pacific War. In no other colony in the region that number was surpassed. In addition, 42.233 men were interned as prisoner of war (of whom 8.200 or 1 in 5 lost their lives).[5] Conditions among internment camps varied extensively: in some life went on relatively normal, in other hunger, disease, and violence was the order of the day. Men often had to perform forced labour on so-called 'death railways', including the Burma Railway; women were at risk of being forced into prostitution as 'comfort women' for the Imperial Japanese Army. *Sunken Red* is set against the backdrop of internment camp Tjideng (Cideng), which was a bolted-up neighbourhood of Batavia (present-day Jakarta).[6]

Immediately after the Pacific War, Indonesia became embroiled in a revolution for independence (1945–49).[7] The Netherlands started to 'repatriate' (re-patria: to return home) their citizens from the colony, even though many were born and raised in the Dutch East Indies and had never been to the homeland before. Most colonial Dutch therefore arrived as immigrants. They became the first large migrant group in Dutch

modern society.[8] The Second World War (1940–45) had left the country in ruins: the domestic Dutch were processing their own wartime experiences; therefore, they proved to be little sensitive to the trials and tribulations of the overseas victims.[9] In the meantime, the Netherlands fought to restore control over their former colony, which resulted in a dirty war, including the now infamous ‘police actions’, in which they soon found themselves on the wrong side of history.[10] The Dutch East Indies consequently became a taboo subject, that was rather collectively forgotten than discussed. It took until the (late) 1970s and 1980s before this attitude finally started to change.[11]

Jeroen Brouwers on the Pacific War

Brouwers was born in Batavia on 30 April 1940, and is considered a well-known and acclaimed Dutch author.[12] *Sunken Red* is part of a trilogy, in which he examines the ways in which his colonial and wartime childhood hold influence over his life.[13] During the Pacific War, his father was taken as a prisoner of war to Japan. Brouwers spent most of the war together with his grandmother, mother, and sister, at Tjideng, an internment camp for women and children under 10.[14] The camp became known for its dire conditions. It was severely overcrowded: originally it housed about 2.500 women and children, in the end there were > 10.000 internees. Sometimes up to 120 people lived in a house with only four or five rooms. Meanwhile hunger and disease spread, and atrocities increased after the infamous Japanese Kenichi Sonei (1909–46) took command of Tjideng.[15] After the war, the Brouwers family briefly relocated to Borneo, before repatriating to the Netherlands, where Brouwers spent his teenage years at Roman Catholic boarding schools, which he has often stated he found worse than internment, before becoming a writer.[16]

Brouwers was not the first (nor the last) author to write about the Pacific War. A number of writers preceded him: Willem Brandt published on his internment *De gele terreur* (prose) and *Binnen Japans prikkeldraad* (poetry) in 1946; Jo Manders wrote about her internment in *Over de gloeiende sintels* (1971), whilst advocating for (more) awareness for victims of the Pacific War; Paula Gomes reported about her wartime experiences (both inside and outside internment) in the autobiographical novel *Sudah, laat maar* (1975); Margaretha Ferguson published her wartime diary *Mammie ik ga dood* (1976); Rob Nieuwenhuys wrote *Een beetje oorlog* (1979) on his life as a soldier and prisoner of war.[17] Furthermore, Wim Kan released *Er leven haast geen mensen meer . . .* (1971), a song about victims of the Burma Railway (of which he was one). He also strongly protested a state visit of Japan to the Netherlands in 1971, in which he tried to offer in vain his Burma-diary to emperor Hirohito (1901–89) who had remained in power after the war.[18]

Sunken Red is therefore not one of its kind but can be considered part of a body of literature (including novels, poetry, songs, diaries, and other ego documents) on internment, which can be referred to as ‘Indies camp literature’.[19] When the novel was first published however, nationwide recognition for victims of the Pacific War was by no means a foregone conclusion. These victims had moreover turned into a group of postcolonial migrants as a result of Indonesia’s decolonization. For postcolonial migrants, such as Brouwers, literature has been a proven means of bringing their perspectives and experiences to the attention of a wider audience.[20] *Sunken Red* served

as a key moment in raising public awareness for survivors of the Pacific War. Next, I will examine the ways in which Brouwers portrays internment (and the consequences for its survivors) through literature. Then, I will analyse the public discussion that arose upon the publication of *Sunken Red* and the ways in which literature has contributed to raising public awareness for victims of the Pacific War in light of processes of cultural trauma and cultural memory.

Part I: A Narratological Approach to *Sunken Red*

Whether one reads *Sunken Red* as an artwork (autonomous interpretation) or as the truthful representation of historical events (mimetic interpretation), it explicitly appeals to an extra-literary reality, in which it emphatically seeks to bring about a change. In an interview in a leading news magazine, published on the eve of publication, Brouwers noted that the Pacific War could be considered 'an omitted war', and listed several reasons for this: 'Because: the Netherlands itself suffered from a terrible war. Because: tens of thousands of Dutch have been transported to Nazi concentration camps. Because: there was no room for more suffering'.[21] Brouwers wanted to draw attention to this 'omission', as horrendous things had happened during internment, which until then had hardly been addressed, and which in its turn he considered a shame. He claimed that *Sunken Red* was 'a realistic representation of what really was going on',[22] and that 'those who do not care about novels, can read it as history, as a documentary. About the Nazi camps everything is known. About the Japanese camps nothing. This novel *had* to be written'.[23]

Autofiction and Trauma Narratives

Brouwers has always stressed the authenticity of his writings and his work is considered a form of autofiction (autobiographical writing that straddles fact and fiction, consequently prompting both autobiographical and fictional readings).[24] Memories and remembering are at the heart of autofictional writings, which in Brouwers' case appear at the service of a critical self-examination.[25] In *Sunken Red* he examines the ways in which his wartime childhood affects his life as an adult. It is narrated from a contemporary point of view and consists of three subplots, in which the protagonist tries to reconstruct his memories of internment. The first subplot is about the death of his mother, which inspires him to write about his childhood; the second is about the difficult relationship he has with women in his present life, which he blames on his wartime experiences; and the third is about his internment at Tjideng.

Autobiographical narratives (including autofiction) typically present themselves in fragmented and nonchronological way, as Lut Missinne argues, because straightforward linear biographical accounts would be considered 'unconvincing'. Authors try to imitate the elusiveness of memory by means of a discontinuous and fragmentary presentation in hopes of achieving an 'authentic' effect.[26] From a narratological point of view, the author, narrator, and protagonist of a story are not to be confused. In case of autofiction however, such differences are not as sharply defined: the author, narrator, and protagonist often coincide, while the narrated events are presented as historically truthful accounts.[27] *Sunken Red* is narrated in the first person, its author and protagonist share

the same name and background, which blur the lines between the biographical and fictional Brouwers, eliciting autobiographical as well as fictional readings and contributing to the dispute over the historical authenticity of the novel.

Trauma narratives present themselves in a similar manner, although for a different reason. In critical trauma studies, trauma is understood as 'the collapse of understanding', caused by the experience of an event so bewildering that it fragments one's consciousness as something too shattering and overwhelming to process and comprehend at the moment of occurrence.[28] Trauma severs the referential relationship between the event and memory thereof, because it denies immediate access to memory due to its lack of integration into consciousness.[29] As a result, trauma prevents direct communication and representation, yet it imposes itself in belated and nonlinear ways on its victim who continues to live its aftermath.[30] There is no indissoluble link between trauma and event however, as Lucy Bond and Stef Craps argue:

> One can live through what is held to be a traumatising event without being traumatised, and one can be traumatised (manifest post-traumatic symptoms) without living through such an event. The specificity of trauma resides, rather, in the fact that it is not assimilated by consciousness, not fully experienced as it occurs, which is why it returns to haunt the survivor later on, possessing them instead of being possessed by them as an 'ordinary' memory.[31]

According to Cathy Caruth literary works also engage with trauma in indirect and belated ways. By their refusal of traditional frameworks of understanding and through their disruption of conventional modes of representation, they are particularly suited to bear witness to trauma.[32] By means of fragmentation, repetition, and intertextuality, for example, they attempt to ascribe meaning to experiences of events that otherwise remain 'indescribable' and hence 'incomprehensible'. Literary trauma narratives are typically shaped by a so-called 'double telling': they oscillate between 'the story of the unbearable nature of an event' and 'the story of the unbearable nature of its survival'.[33]

Sunken Red is shaped by such a double telling. The trauma, brought about by internment, seeps into all aspects of the narrator's life, and is expressed in the story's notion of 'octavity' (which is translated, among other things, as 'musical pitch' or 'same story, in a different key'). It describes memories, or fragments of them, from the protagonist's wartime childhood that recur in different ways in his adult life (as nightmares, flashbacks, and ghost images for example). Octavity also plays a key role in the portrayal of the protagonist's relationship with his mother. Although she is still his mother after the war, their relationship has irrevocably altered: they are permanently 'misconnected', as is reflected in the many calls his mother makes to him, in which she invariably claims 'wrong connection' upon answering; they are unable to (re)connect and communicate, which appears the primary cause of their troubled post-war relationship. Finally, octavity is expressed in the novel's leitmotiv, 'nothing exists that does not touch something else'. What has happened during the Pacific War continues to haunt its survivors for the rest of their lives.

Sunken Red is an account of personal trauma but could also be read as a claim to cultural trauma. Jeffrey C. Alexander understands cultural trauma as a trauma that emerges on a collective level, which may come into being 'when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves

indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways'.[34] Cultural traumas are not inherent to events but are social constructions: they are the result of a social process, in which the traumatic status of an event is 'negotiated' between survivors and society at large.[35] For a cultural trauma to emerge, a trauma process needs to be initiated by a trauma claim. Brouwers starts his novel by claiming that it will reveal what in prevailing literature on internment was either concealed or condoned with a sense of 'tenderness' or even 'nostalgia', that has consequently put the Pacific War – least his version of Tjideng – at risk of being written out of history:

> The history of these Japanese camps threatens to be forgotten, because those who were there have kept silent about them and those who have broken the silence have done so too late, after their indignation and their hate had softened or faded [. . .] and that may have contributed to the impression outsiders have that 'it could not have been all that bad'. The existing literature about the Japanese camps is scant and consists mainly of understatements.[36]

In the novel, the opposite is narrated: life was extremely hard on those in internment and akin to life in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps.

Claiming a trauma is not sufficient for a cultural trauma to emerge, however. Brouwers, as a self-professed spokesperson for former internees, needs a clear-cut story – which may appear, but is not necessarily, contradictory to the notion that trauma narratives only address trauma in indirect ways. He needs to construct, what Alexander calls, a 'master trauma narrative' in his novel, in which he clearly identifies a. what happened, b. who suffered from it, c. who caused the suffering, and d. the relation of the victim to the audience.[37] In other words, Brouwers needs to write an 'apologia', in which he clearly defines protagonists, antagonists, and their acts, that justify his claim to trauma. In addition, a syntagmatic organization of the narrative (not only what happened to or because of whom, but also why protagonists and antagonists act the way they do) should be strong. When characters and their acts are strongly motivated by means of syntagmatic contiguous relations, in which motivation presumably takes precedence over historical truthfulness, Brouwers' justification for the trauma claim – his apologia – will come off very convincingly.

What Happened?

To motivate a trauma claim, the exact nature of the pain must be identified. The narrative clearly needs to describe what has happened to explain to the audience from what the victims have suffered.[38] Although the narrator reconstructs experiences of internment from memories of the time he was a toddler, for both the biographical and fictional Brouwers was two years old when he entered Tjideng and five when he came out, he appears to be meticulously detailed and straightforward. He does not remember mere impressions or vague images of internment, but highly narrativized memories that often come with exact dates and times of day, while he describes vividly and with a great understanding of what he has witnessed. He remembers exactly what his mother looked like, for example, when he was temporarily taken from her during 'periodic but always unexpected raids':

> I still see her standing there with that fellow [a Japanese guard] beside her, his bayoneted weapon pointed at her; she is so thin she looks like a skeleton covered with skin – in 1945 she weighed less than 90 pounds – she is wearing a torn dress and a flower-printed scarf around her head, out of shame, to hide the fact that her hair had been shorn by the guards.[39]

It is hard to believe that a toddler remembers that his mother weighed less than 90 pounds, and that she wore scarf around her head out of shame. Those are belated reflections by the narrator that are used to motivate the novel's claim to trauma, to wit that towards the end of the war women increasingly suffered from starvation and were humiliated and terrified by the Imperial Japanese Army, who allegedly sheared their heads and randomly took away their children at gunpoint.

The internees are punished for things that happen inside and outside Tjideng by standing naked at gunpoint up to 24 hours on end or by the denial of food and water to all. Meanwhile, hunger, disease, pests, and death spread among the women and children. All kinds of beatings, torturing and rape are described in meticulous detail. The protagonist witnesses innumerable women getting kicked 'between the legs' by Japanese guards, the brutal rape of his playmate's mother – to which the narrator adds: 'in the course of my camp years I shall see it several more times in various ways' – and the brutal beating of his own mother by camp commander Sonei.[40] Detailed descriptions of the merciless treatment of the interned women fill many pages of the novel, for instance:

> One woman has her hands tied behind her back, and then is hanged from a gallows by her wrists so that her arms are pulled out of their sockets upside down, back to front, inside out, or in still other ways. She dangles in a strange curl above the ground, turning on her axis; they let her dry out and shrivel up in the scorching sun – the sun is the cruelest [sic] instrument of torture the Japanese have at their disposal [...]. When the woman loses consciousness, she is beaten until she comes round again, because she must endure her humiliating torment in full awareness.[41]

Not only what happened is described meticulously by the narrator, but he also interprets the alleged motives and strategies of the Japanese guards for torturing internees, as is reflected in wordings like: 'she must endure her humiliating torment in full awareness' and 'the sun is the cruellest instrument of torture'. It is hard to imagine that a toddler comes to these conclusions at the sight of the dangling woman. These are mere 'interpretations' of what the protagonist has witnessed, which are used to portray the Japanese as ruthless perpetrators.

The reader is persuaded to believe that all these things took place exactly the way they are narrated by comments that run throughout the novel, such as: 'I personally witnessed it', 'I saw it just as it was, in order to remember it' or 'one day I would write down that I walked there, in that camp under my hat, and that I saw things there which are indescribable but which I would nevertheless have to describe'.[42] However, what is narrated is no raw material, but an interpretation of what the narrator allegedly witnessed as a toddler, a reconstruction of childhood memories, that supports the novel's trauma claim. Furthermore, the act of writing is a way of educating others about what happened as well as a form of trauma processing for the protagonist: 'What I have written I need no longer remember. It may now move in the conscious and subconscious thoughts of others' (this transmission of trauma to others, particularly the readers or society at large, is further discussed below).[43]

Who Suffered from It?

Another key aspect of the trauma narrative is the nature of the victim.[44] From a narratological point of view Brouwers needs to identify beyond doubt who the protagonists and antagonists are in his story. A clear-cut distinction needs to be made between both, leaving no room for nuances or, for example, 'victimising' perpetrators. The internees are depicted as the victims of the trauma narrative, and their acts (even 'immoral' ones, such as stealing or prostituting themselves for food) are motivated by syntagmatic contiguous relations of 'survival' (they had no choice but to feed their starving children). Focalization is used as a narratological instrument to create empathy among the readers for the internees. The protagonist focalizes predominantly, as the novel has a first-person narrator. However, sometimes focalization shifts to another internee, and what happens to her is again described vividly and in meticulous detail:

> One woman is locked up in what is called 'the oven': a dog kennel of corrugated iron whose roof is the anvil for the sun's hammer, and against whose red-hot walls she cannot lean or she will burn herself and will stick to them with her skin. In the only possible, wretched posture she can adopt inside the oven she is surrounded by crawling and madly fluttering insects. She is stung and sucked by these insects and she cannot chase or kill them without some part of her body touching the roof or the sides of the oven. She is condemned by immobility and patience as she slowly stews. If she does not keep her wits about her she will go mad; she listens to the humming and buzzing of the insects that come to sound like clanging bells or droning organs.[45]

The protagonist cannot possibly have witnessed that. Furthermore, the detailed description of what went on in 'the oven' and the ultimate consequences of getting 'stewed' (going mad) are hardly reflections of a toddler, but belated interpretations by the narrator that contribute to the victimization of the internees.

Since only the protagonist's mother, grandmother and his playmate's mother are identified, the interned women are predominantly represented as a collective. In the numerous beatings, torturing, and rapes, that are meticulously described, the person who undergoes them is hardly pictured and usually anonymously indicated as 'one woman' or 'one naked woman'. The women are interchangeable, and all appear to be traumatized in the same ways, thereby they are all portrayed as victims. Their actions are motivated by survival. They do whatever it takes to keep themselves and their children alive, even if that means performing humiliating rituals on roll calls, destroying food from the Red Cross by order of the camp commander, and getting beaten, tortured, or raped. They are represented as a homogeneous group that endured unbearable suffering at the brutal hands of Imperial Japanese Army.

Furthermore, the women are regularly compared to goats and lambs in the novel. The protagonist's mother is compared to a goat, when she drags her own mother to a roll call on an ironing board on roller skates 'that was soon named the "goat cart", later shortened to "the goat". [...] My sister and I had to steady the cart on either side to stop it from tilting, and my mother pulled it along by a string, like a goat'.[46] This image is evoked again when the protagonist describes his mother pulling an incoming food cart through the camp gates together with other women.[47] Liza, the protagonist's lover in his present life, is continuously compared to a lamb of whom the protagonist has intrusive fantasies of torturing.[48] These are not random images,

but metaphors by which women are represented as innocent (prey) animals, whereas the Japanese are portrayed as ruthless predators (which I will discuss below).

The protagonist, too, is depicted as a victim. Although he did not suffer in a physical sense, as he claims to have never been tortured and his mother saw to it that he did not suffer from want, he does feel traumatized by what he has witnessed at Tjideng. He gets overwhelmed by sudden fears for which he is prescribed anti-psychotics, while he also suffers from numerous nightmares and flashbacks which he attributes to his wartime childhood experiences: 'Sometimes I am seized with panic: sometimes I am back in that camp'.[49] These flashbacks are not ones in a strict narratological sense, but memories that are well-embedded in the narrative and that are always introduced or explained afterwards. For example, when the main character shoots at a target with a picture of a naked woman at a party, he remembers:

> But at the moment that the bullet leaves the gun with a plop and hits the target almost simultaneously with tenfold magnified sound, I remember, some time before, elsewhere, somewhere in my life, seeing a naked woman standing in a beam of sharp searchlight while both the woman and I knew that in the surrounding darkness guns were aimed at her.[50]

These memories can be understood as emerging memory (memories that are being suppressed, because they do not fit into the prevailing master narrative, but nevertheless persist). Paul Bijl uses emerging memory in connection with processes of cultural memory.[51] In the novel, it involves a personal process of memory suppression, however the principle remains the same: the protagonist has repressed his wartime memories for a long time – yet they impose themselves on him in belated and nonlinear ways – because they do not fit in with the prevailing public opinion 'that it could not have been all that bad', which is reinforced by former internees, who speak about their internment with a sense of 'tenderness' or even 'nostalgia' (a narrative the novel empathically tries to refute). These emerging memories are used to establish a syntagmatic contiguous relation between internment and the protagonist's miserable present life, in which fears, nightmares, and flashbacks demonstrate the ways in which he is traumatized by what he has witnessed at Tjideng; thereby portraying him as a victim whose suffering goes on to this day.

Who Caused the Suffering?

Another key aspect of a trauma narrative is the nature of the perpetrator.[52] From a narratological point of view, Brouwers must identify beyond doubt who the antagonists in his trauma narrative are. The Japanese are portrayed as perpetrators and depicted as a collective as well: they have no names, show no emotions, and none stand out because they treat the women mildly, turn a blind eye occasionally, or appear to be burdened by their conscience. Moreover, they never focalize, therefore the reader gains no insight in their emotions and motivations and will likely not identify with them. They appear to act dutiful in the camp commander's name and are collectively referred to as 'the servants of death' (after Sonei, who throughout the novel is compared to death) or 'the Jap' (a pejorative nickname, like 'Kraut' for Nazi).

The narrator explains in meticulous detail what ‘the Jap’ should be held for, and leaves nothing to the imagination of the reader that might conceal or condone the actions of the Japanese:

> The Jap – this term stood for: short, squat, often puffily over-fed little men in bulging uniforms, with faces like Japanese dogs or Japanese monkeys but above all like Japanese frogs whose penetrating eyes, set by nature in a perpetual glare or leer, pierced tot the marrow. ‘The Jap’: always with fixed bayonet, rifle always at the ready, always the sun on the steel of the bayonet, so blindingly that it seemed to me that not only could I see the sparks of light in the steel, but I could hear them as well: those bayonets *blared*. Often ‘The Jap’ was roaring drunk and tottered on his plump legs as he brandished a sabre, or he held a pistol in his hand with which, to the beat of an unintelligible, ranted song from his fatherland, he fired a shot into the air from time to time.[53]

The Japanese are portrayed as an anonymous category. It does not become clear to the reader for example how many guards there are and how they differ from one another.

The only ‘Jap’ referred to by name is the camp commander, whose actions are motivated by unreasoned aggression caused by the full moon. Sonei allegedly suffers from lunar sickness, which expresses itself in random and violent outbursts, for which he is widely feared among the internees. He is strongly associated with frogs and death throughout the novel. For example, on roll calls he makes the internees do ‘frog-hopping’ while ‘croaking’, during which innumerable women die of exhaustion, including the main character’s grandmother.[54] Whereas the frog is a symbol for fertility and luck in Japan, frogs appear to symbolize death and destruction in the novel, which is reflected in metaphors, such as ‘death is a monumental blood-red frog’ – since the symbol belongs to the cultural realm of the perpetrator and not to that of the victim from whose point of view the story is narrated, its meaning is apparently inverted.[55]

Finally, the novel portrays the Japanese as Nazi soldiers. They are depicted, for example, sporting spurred boots and other Nazi memorabilia (which I will discuss below). In addition, the Japanese are continuously compared to predators. They are depicted as dogs and wolves that hunt down their prey (to wit the goats and lambs represented by the women). They have ‘faces like Japanese dogs’ and the camp commander’s violent outbursts at full moon evoke the intertextual imagery of werewolves. The Japanese soldiers under his command seem to obediently execute their pack leader’s orders. These are not freely picked images of the Japanese, neither are the other animals, such as monkeys and frogs, the Japanese are compared to, but carefully chosen metaphors (motivated relations) which are used to underpin the trauma claim of the novel and to plot the Japanese as the antagonists of the story.

Why Should Others Care?

For the trauma claim to be successful, Brouwers needs to establish a relation of the victim to the audience to make clear why readers (or society at large) should care about survivors of a far-away and long-ago war.[56] Firstly, Brouwers uses *mise en abyme* (‘mirror stories’) to show how the Pacific War is not over for those who live its aftermath and how it still holds power over the present life of the protagonist. Brouwers uses this narratological strategy to motivate a syntagmatic contiguous relation between the past and present. This relation is already reflected in the novel’s title: ‘bezonken’ means

'submerged' or 'sunken in'; the colour red is associated with the sun throughout the story, not only as an instrument of torture, but also as a national symbol on the imperial flag of Japan. The novel is about 'submerged' or 'sunken in' traumatic experiences from the Pacific War, which have profoundly shaped the protagonist, and which continue to haunt him for the rest of his life.

Throughout the two subplots on the protagonist's present life scenes from the subplot on Tjideng are 'mirrored'. As a result of his childhood at Tjideng, for instance, the protagonist sustained the notion that: 'women had to be trashed or tortured or punished in other ways'.[57] He has violent fantasies of torturing women, in which all kinds of torture he has witnessed at Tjideng are reflected. About his lover Liza, who is a teacher at a Roman Catholic school, he fantasizes:

> [She] needed to be punished. There in that square, watched by her pupils, she would have to have her hair shorn and be stripped of her hypocritical Catholic garments; she would have to be kicked between the legs, by me, and lashed with a whip of rosaries. I would wear my blood-red frogmask. [. . .] Her groans and screams for mercy would be drowned by the laughter of the boys in her class.[58]

The brutal rape of his playmate's mother is mirrored in the birth of the protagonist's daughter, which he only witnessed afterwards, while his wife is being sutured by a doctor, because he could not bear the look of childbirth. The birth of his daughter is also mirrored in the brutal beating of his mother by Sonei: after bearing witness of both 'traumatic' events, his wife and mother will never be same to him again and he wants new ones, because the old ones are 'broken' (tarnished, no longer whole, or pure):

> My mother bleeds where I came out of her [. . .] I feel her pain between my own legs, as if I myself had received a bayonet thrust in that place; my mother's wounds will have to be stitched up with a curved needle. [. . .] At that moment I thought: now I want a different mother, because this one is broken. As decades later, standing by the table where they were busy repairing the damage to the body of my beloved, beautiful wife with a sickle-shaped needle, I thought: Now I want a different wife.[59]

The novel contains many more of these *mise en abyme*, which are all expressed through the notion of octavity. They are used to demonstrate that the Pacific War is not an event from the past but still perseveres in the lives of its victims, who suffer and struggle to this day *because* of their wartime experiences. These victims are now part of Dutch society, which is why the audience should care, the novel tries to convey to its readers.

Secondly, Brouwers establishes a relationship between the victims of the Pacific War and a wider audience by appealing to trauma narratives of the Holocaust. *Sunken Red* reimagines Tjideng as an Asian equivalent of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps: it features for example 'watchtowers' with spotlights, it is fenced off with 'rush fencing' and 'barbed wire'; the Japanese guards have 'studded boots' and 'machineguns' (or bayonets); the Dutch women have shorn heads, and it appears that by means of random and excessive violence the Imperial Japanese Army is on to the extermination of the colonial Dutch. Furthermore, the narrator compares emperor Hirohito to 'a war criminal of the stature of Hitler'.[60] Astrid Erll understands these images as 'premediations', representations of events shaped by and remembered through existing, circulating memories.[61] In premediating the Pacific War this way, the novel creates a new frame for understanding internment through the Holocaust.

Notwithstanding the novel's historical incorrectness – there were for instance no watchtowers with spotlights or machineguns and studded boots, neither were the internment camps equipped as extermination camps – the Japanese and Nazi camps are considered one and the same in the story. By referring to the Holocaust, Brouwers links internment to already familiar trauma narratives of the Second World War. By appealing to these, to which the audience is presumably more receptive because the Holocaust is (more) institutionalized within Dutch society as a cultural trauma, he seeks recognition for his own trauma claim. In depicting internment, the ends apparently justify the means, as historical truthfulness appears of minor importance, if that is what it takes to make the audience care about the Pacific War. This strategy has proven to be very effective, because *Sunken Red* sparked a strong social debate, in which many former internees spoke up about their wartime experiences in public for the very first time (as we shall see next).

Part II: A Social Approach to *Sunken Red*

Sunken Red was part of an international awakening to the suffering of the Second World War (including the Pacific War). From the late 1970s onwards, the international public became prone to narratives of wartime suffering. Holocaust narratives surfaced, such as the critically acclaimed *Holocaust miniseries* (1978) created by Gerald Green and *Shoah*, a nine-hour interview series with Holocaust survivors by Claude Lanzmann (1985). Furthermore, stories of the Pacific War arose, such as *Empire of the Sun* (1984), an autobiographical novel by J.G. Ballard on his internment as a young boy in Shanghai, which was soon adapted into a major movie production by Steven Spielberg; or the memoirs of a former soldier by the pen name of Seiji Yoshida on his life in the Imperial Japanese Army and its actions against comfort women (consecutively published in 1977 and 1983). *Sunken Red* contributed as such to an international trauma process to raise public awareness for victims of the Second World War in both Europe and Southeast Asia.

Cultural Memory and Cultural Trauma

The public discussion of the novel is frequently mentioned in texts on Brouwers, however it has never been systematically analysed from a theoretical perspective, such as cultural memory or cultural trauma studies.[62] In these fields of study, the dynamics of remembrance are conceptualized as a continuous process of remembering and forgetting, in which memories are constantly renegotiated and remediated as people redefine their relationship to the past. These dynamics are closely related to notions of collective identity because they shape patterns of inclusion and exclusion (who is remembered, what is considered worth remembering and whose histories and memories become forgotten or even suppressed by the collective). Collective memories are crucial to the formation of group identities and contribute to what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined communities' (a sense of community among people who do not all know one another personally, yet who feel interconnected because of their shared socio-cultural contexts).[63] Traumatic events typically profoundly shape the memories and identities of survivors and the imagined communities they belong to.[64]

The concept of collective memory goes back to Maurice Halbwachs, who considers collective memory to be formed by the interaction between individual memories and shared social frameworks.[65] Jan and Aleida Assmann, have elaborated on his concept, by emphasizing the cultural dimension of memory. They further distinguish communicative and cultural memory as modes of collective memory: the first relates to the direct exchange of memories between individuals in their daily lives and encompasses three to four generations (survivors can tell up to their great-grandchildren about their experiences); the second describes the interplay between past and present in socio-cultural contexts and includes institutionalized forms of memory that are expressed through a symbolic dimension (rituals, monuments, artefacts, etc.) that allows for the intergenerational transfer of memories.[66] Brouwers feared that, without (his) intervention, memories of the Pacific War would fail to transmit from communicative to cultural memory and would hence become inaccessible to future generations.

Memories can evolve into a collective and cultural phenomenon when they are shared through symbolic artefacts. These artefacts, such as literature, act as intermediaries between individuals, fostering a sense of community that spans across space and time.[67] Ann Rigney considers literary works ‘portable monuments’ and discusses the ways in which they engage the past and contribute to processes of cultural memory.[68] She argues, for example, that novels may: a. serve as ‘relay stations’, if they transmit and reinforce existing memories; b. function as ‘catalysts’, if they stimulate social discussion by drawing attention to suppressed or neglected aspects of history; c. act as ‘calibrator’, if they encourage readers to question existing historical narratives and elicit critical revisions of history.[69] *Sunken Red* has served as both catalyst and calibrator in its attempt to stimulate social discussion and to form a counter memory to inscribe the Pacific War as a cultural trauma into Dutch cultural memory (both will be discussed below).

The emergence of a cultural trauma cannot be attributed to the publication of one literary work of course. *Sunken Red* did not stand alone but was (as previously mentioned) part of an increasingly prevalent international trend to voice the suffering of the Second World War, as much as it was part of a growing body of Indies camp literature. At the time of its publication however, still no public recognition for the wartime suffering of the colonial Dutch existed. Most domestic Dutch did not even consider them part of their imagined community. They were for example not perceived as war victims in the same way the domestic Dutch regarded themselves, as they did not first-hand experience the aggression of the Nazis nor the hardships of the Hunger Winter. For decades after the war, according to Brems, ‘an unspoken hierarchy of suffering existed, in which the colonial Dutch were at the bottom, barely above the children of Nazi collaborators’.[70]

In addition, following the conclusion of the Second World War, the international discourse on colonialism shifted. While the Netherlands sought to bring Indonesia back under its control, other countries in the region achieved independence from their colonial powers, such as Vietnam (1945), India (1947), the Philippines (1947), and Myanmar (1948). The Dutch ‘police actions’ against Indonesia were heavily criticized by the international community, ultimately leading to Indonesia’s independence on 27 December 1949. The loss of the colony was experienced as traumatic by Dutch society, resulting in a process of suppression that turned the Dutch East Indies and Indonesia into taboo subjects.[71] Moreover, from a post-colonial perspective, the colonial Dutch became looked upon as aggressors, who had oppressed and exploited the people of Indonesia to

their own benefit and who had now come to the homeland, much to public dismay, as penniless refugees in search of support.[72] Until the 1980s, according to historian Wim Willems, Dutch society was characterized by an explicit 'anti-colonial attitude'.[73]

For society at large to become persuaded that they, too, have been traumatized by the Pacific War, victims and their advocates must agree on a master trauma narrative: a coherent narrative of social suffering, in which they identify (as aforementioned) a. what happened, b. who suffered from it, c. who caused the suffering, and d. the relation of the victim to the audience.[74] Whereas Brouwers was clear about his 'miniature' master trauma narrative, others could not agree on two aspects thereof: what happened and who suffered from it, or even if there had been any suffering at all, which made it hard to establish a relation between survivors and society at large to create momentum for a cultural trauma to come into being. Brouwers, as a self-proclaimed advocate for former internees, received media (dis)approval from Margaretha Ferguson, H.J.M. Joosten, Rudy Kousbroek, Fred Lanzing, Etty Mulder, Cyrille Offermans, Corine Spoor, Hans Vervoort, Mischa de Vreede, and H.L. Zwitser (among others). Some of them were also former internees; others were literary critics with no personal connection to the former colony.

Sunken Red as Catalyst

In the early 1980s, the (ongoing) suffering caused by internment was still considered a social crisis of a specific group within Dutch society and not a cultural crisis that put the identity of the collective at stake. In response to the international awakening to wartime suffering however, social attitudes towards the Pacific War began to change. Alexander argues that all cultural traumas start out as social crises that turn into cultural crises through a process of negotiation: by accepting a social crisis of a specific group as their own, societies expand the boundaries of their sense of self; by refusing, they limit solidarity and the crisis remains a social one that does not compromise collective identity.[75] To initiate such negotiation, which is called a trauma process, a trauma claim must be made by agents (who represent the group traumatized) and supported by carrier groups (those to whom the trauma claim applies).[76] Brouwers acted as an agent of former internees, however his trauma claim was not readily accepted by carrier groups.

Sunken Red was mostly well received upon its publication by the literary press: critics praised its style and recognized its autobiographical character, but they did not question its accuracy.[77] A debate on its historical authenticity soon developed thereafter, starring well-known author and former internee Rudy Kousbroek as Brouwers' strongest opponent. In a feature piece in a leading newspaper, Kousbroek enumerated a long list of historical errors, consisting mostly of elements borrowed from the Holocaust, and pointed out the Nazi and Japanese camps were incomparable; yet he observed a tendency in former internees, like Brouwers, to do so anyway: 'Why are internment camps in the Dutch East Indies consequently represented as worse than they were? Why is repeatedly suggested that these camps were extermination camps, like those of the Nazis in which they imprisoned the Jews?'[78] He understood this tendency as a misguided attempt at victimization, which he called the 'Dutch East Indies camp syndrome' and considered 'the holding on to a myth and the refusal to research how it really was'.[79]

Kousbroek's response prompted a public discussion of the novel, which developed against the backdrop of an emerging trauma process of victims of the Pacific War.[80] The

debate soon focused on the first aspect ('what happened') of the master trauma narrative under negotiation. In another feature piece, Fred Lanzing, a former internee of Tjideng, sided with Kousbroek and deemed what Brouwers had written about internment 'nonsense, and not so much settled [bezonken] or sunken in [verzonken], but mostly made up [verzonnen]'.[81] Lanzing critiqued the Holocaust elements as well and added that instead of watchtowers and barbed wire, there was just a woven bamboo fence; camp security was a joke, because they were severely understaffed; food and clothing were sufficient until the last months of the war; no routine torture or beating happened; and roll calls could be skipped, as they were never correct anyway. He emphasized that Tjideng was 'no fun' but certainly no 'death camp'.[82]

Sunken Red was also discussed by Corinna Engelbrecht and Margaretha Ferguson, both former internees of Tjideng, on national radio. They contested its historical truthfulness. Engelbrecht stated that some of the torturing described by Brouwers did not happen at all; some did occur, however rarely; and other did, yet not in the camps.[83] After contending with experiences of the Holocaust and Hunger Winter for decades, her main objection to the novel was, that 'people could now *completely* think that it was not that bad there'.[84] Mischa de Vreede, also a former internee of a civilian camp, accused Brouwers in a national weekly of compelling her to downplay her experiences:

> I simply feel betrayed because I am forced again, by hands of a fellow internee no less, to refute, to weaken, and to say that it was not that awful. Shortly after the war, I had to compete with the suffering of the Holocaust, now Brouwers forces me to speak apologetically about my past again.[85]

Sunken Red received approval from H.J.M. Joosten, a former internee of Tjideng. He wrote to a news magazine to criticize Kousbroek for 'condoning everything about the camp years', because 'it was exactly as Brouwers depicted, and often even much worse'. [86] He had lost his wife to a camp syndrome, for 'the distress from internment was indelible'.[87]

H.L. Zwitser, a camp survivor and historian on the subject, accused Kousbroek of using the novel to promote his version of camp syndrome, thereby ridiculing an otherwise legitimate medical condition. He argued moreover that 'apart from the question whether Brouwers spoke the truth or not, there is really something to say on the behaviour of the Japanese'.[88] Kousbroek had previously written that Tjideng, which was nicknamed 'Asia's Bergen-Belsen', could hardly compare to its Nazi counterpart, since 70% of Bergen-Belsen's population died, whereas at Tjideng allegedly 'only' 6% did.[89] Zwitser turned this argument around by pointing out that in other respects the Pacific War claimed far more lives than the Holocaust did. He concluded by saying that if something did not occur in Kousbroek's camp, it did not mean that it had not happened in another camp.[90]

A second aspect of the master trauma narrative ('who suffered') was also strongly debated. Some former internees resisted victimization, as it did not correspond to their personal experiences. Kousbroek considered internment for example a 'holiday camp' in comparison to the boarding schools he attended post war.[91] Lanzing claimed that life was better inside than outside, since Indonesians would sneak into the camp looking for food to keep from starving.[92] They both reinforced the prevailing notion that 'it could not have been that bad'. Others recognized that survivors had very different experiences. Ferguson

did not consider herself traumatized, because she was never beaten or tortured, but she 'would never dare to hold that as evidence against others'.[93] She moreover stressed that many internees died under '*unknown* circumstances'.[94] Hans Vervoort, another author and survivor, called for more compassion: 'as the exaggeration of Brouwers bothers me, so does the inclination of Kousbroek to resent the victims who still grapple with those camp years'.[95]

Despite the controversy, most survivors who participated in the public debate, supported the novel's trauma claim. They either felt traumatized by what they had experienced or could imagine how internment would have scarred others for life. However, many rejected the way in which the 'traumatic' event (internment) was represented by Brouwers, particularly the comparison to the Holocaust. For Kousbroek and Lanzing, it was reason to reject the trauma claim altogether. For others, it was reason to reject the novel but not its claim to trauma. Engelbrecht and De Vreede were in support of the claimed trauma but feared that its historically inaccurate representation would undermine the trauma process. These responses stem from the twofold reading autofiction elicits: most former internees had read *Sunken Red* as a historically truthful account, thus producing mimetic interpretations, which then proved to be at odds with aspects of historical reality resulting in readers reconsidering the novel and its trauma claim.

In contrast, most literary critics read *Sunken Red* as an autonomous work of art. According to Corine Spoor, historical authenticity and the historical setting of a story world were two different things: 'a writer creates in the process of writing a reality of his own, but that does not mean that the truth is being tampered with or violated'.[96] Others had reservations about the way Brouwers had addressed the historical context of his novel. Etty Mulder wondered whether 'a trauma that touches upon so much more than just an authorship should be sold this way' and worried that readers unfamiliar with the Pacific War might not know when 'historical facts' were being used for 'literary effect'.[97] Cyrille Offermans considered the novel 'sentimental' and 'pathetic'. He felt that Brouwers had misused wartime experiences to narrate a 'private history' about the difficult relationship of the author/protagonist with women, thereby reframing the novel as personal instead of cultural claim to trauma.[98]

Brouwers had been contradictory whether *Sunken Red* should be considered a literary or a historical (re)construction: on the one hand, he maintained that the novel was a truthful historical account that could be read mimetically as a 'documentary' or 'autobiographical essay'; on the other, when confronted with its historical inconsistencies, he referred to the novel as a literary work that called for an autonomous reading.[99] He insisted however to have written about internment to draw attention to this 'forgotten' chapter of history and to create public awareness for victims of the Pacific War. In a response to the fierce public debate of his novel, he therefore irritably remarked:

> Books have been written about [internment], but it has never captured the imagination of the Dutch. Now I offer the opportunity, with a blow as it were, to start the discussion. And what do people do? People do not enter the discussion about the camps, but they wonder whether it is true what Brouwers writes in a novel? I did not lie; I wrote a novel.[100]

Whether or not readers agreed with the trauma narrative presented in *Sunken Red*, from personal experience or otherwise, Brouwers acted as an agent in the emerging trauma process of former internees. The fact that his representation of internment was heavily

debated in public is precisely why the novel has functioned as a catalyst in the larger process of inscribing the Pacific War as a cultural trauma into Dutch cultural memory.

Sunken Red as Calibrator

Sunken Red was thus part of a larger trauma process to draw attention to the Pacific War and its public reception demonstrated the sensitivity and discord within society thereof. In this trauma process, the novel also functioned as a calibrator: it has challenged society, together with other symbolic artefacts and interest groups, to critically revise the history of the Second World War to include the suffering of the Pacific War. A trauma process is not completed with the construction of a master trauma narrative, which still must be integrated into institutional arenas. By means of these arenas, whether they be political, legal, medical, aesthetic, or academic, the master trauma narrative is mediated to the public and disseminated across society. If successful, society starts to perceive the claimed trauma as part of its collective identity. The 'traumatic' event will then be inscribed as a cultural trauma into cultural memory, resulting in identity revision and new forms of remembrance culture.[101]

Starting from the 1970s, a socio-political climate emerged in the Netherlands, allowing for a culture to develop that acknowledges collective suffering stemming from events of the Second World War. Dutch Parliament passed for example numerous laws benefiting survivors and Centrum '45, a tax-funded psychiatric clinic, was opened to support war victims. Although not explicitly aimed at survivors of the Pacific War, they could make use of them as victims of the Second World War.[102] Moreover, 'camp syndrome' became internationally recognized by the medical community as a traumatic stress disorder caused by internment.[103] The colonial Dutch increasingly began to identify themselves as war victims, seeking formal recognition for their suffering, which resulted in the formation of interest groups, such as the Association of Former Internees and Repatriates from Overseas (1970) and Foundation of Japanese Honorary Debts (1990), advocating for themselves in the Dutch political arena and filing lawsuits against Japan for final reparations.[104]

Furthermore, the Dutch East Indies went from being a taboo subject to becoming a topic of aesthetic and academic interest once again.[105] From the 1970s onwards, a post-colonial revival of Indies literature began, resulting in the publication of numerous literary works on the Pacific War and Indonesia's decolonization, including the Indies camp literature by the aforementioned authors in the introduction, but also second-generation literature by authors such as Alfred Birney, Marion Bloem, Adriaan van Dis, Ernst Jansz, and Jill Stolk. Similarly, an increasing number of academic studies were published, including several volumes on the Pacific War (11a-c) by historian Loe de Jong in his nationally renowned series on the Netherlands in the Second World War (1984–86). These volumes, while not without controversy, contributed to an ever-growing body of research on the Pacific War, Indonesia's decolonization, and post-colonial aftermath, including its literary and cultural processing.[106]

Ultimately, the Pacific War became institutionalized through a monument, commemoration, and memorial day. In 1970, the first national commemoration ceremony was held, which became an annual event attended by government officials from the 1980s onwards. In 1988, a national monument for victims of the Pacific War, called the Indies Monument, was created in The Hague, and an Indies memorial centre was

later nearby established with financial support from the government. Additionally, August 15 was formalized as a memorial day in 1999, marking the end of the Second World War in the Netherlands alongside May 4 and 5.[107] On this day, flags across the country are lowered to half-mast on public buildings and a now state-sanctioned commemoration takes place at the Indies Monument. This commemoration is broadcasted live on national television and has a similar format to the one on National Memorial Day at the Dam Monument in Amsterdam. Just like the Holocaust, to paraphrase Willems, the Pacific War has become an integral part of Second World War remembrance culture in the Netherlands.[108]

Lest We Forget

Cultural memories are not just a reflection of the past, but also a product of the present, representing what society deems important to remember. They are inextricably linked to the sense of collective identity of our imagined communities. Literature engages in processes of cultural memory and trauma, by mediating past traumatic events, in an effort of making them accessible and relatable to the (reading) public. *Sunken Red* could be considered a portable monument for all former internees. Brouwers seeks through techniques of autofictional writing, *mise en abyme* and premediations to mediate the suffering of the Pacific War to society at large. In the short term, the novel has acted as a catalyst that stimulated social discussion by giving voice to the underrepresented perspectives of survivors. In the long term, it has functioned as a calibrator that contributed to a critical revision of dominant historical narratives of the Second World War in society. After a trauma process that spanned decades, the Pacific War became eventually incorporated in Dutch cultural memory as a cultural trauma. In turn, *Sunken Red* was inscribed in school curricula and is one of the most widely read Dutch novels on the Pacific War today.

Notes

1. My translation, original in Brems, *Altijd weer vogels*, 86: 'hoe gevoelig die periode in de jaren tachtig nog altijd lag, en hoe hier, net als in verband met het probleem van collaboratie en jodenvervolging, literatuur en maatschappelijke debatten in elkaar overliepen.'
2. Prange, Goldstein, Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept*, 1–8; De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 11a, 702–711.
3. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 56–59 (Taiwan), 78–94 (Russia), 86–90 (Korea), 203 (China, Nanjing).
4. De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 11a, 723–726, 895–914; De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 11b, 1029.
5. These numbers are sourced from the website of NIOD, Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies: https://www.niod.nl/en/frequently-asked-questions/japanese-occupation-and-pacific-war-figures# (accessed on February 5, 2024). NIOD relies on figures from De Jong, found in volume(s) 11(a-c) on the Dutch East Indies of his extensive study on the Netherlands during the Second World War, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. See also Locher-Scholten, 'De verre oorlog,' 55–56.
6. Beekhuis, *Japanse burgerkampen*, I.1, 18–19; Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting*, 9–29.
7. De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 11b, 1004–1018; Ricklefs, *History of Modern Indonesia*, 248–270.

8. Bosma, Raben and Willems, *Geschiedenis Indische Nederlanders*, 191.
9. Bosma, Raben and Willems, *Geschiedenis Indische Nederlanders*, 54; Brems, *Altijd weer vogels*, 85.
10. Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 17–20.
11. Termorshuizen, 'Altijd weer aan denken,' 162; Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië*, 138.
12. Brouwers has an extensive oeuvre that includes novels, essays, plays, (auto)biographies, translations, letters, and polemics. He received many literary prizes, including the prestigious Belgian-Dutch *Prijs der Nederlandse Letteren*, which he famously refused. He has been included in the canon of Dutch literature (2002) and *Sunken Red* made the top-10 in the recently revised and updated canon (2022). See for a biography and bibliography Vandenbroucke, *Jeroen Brouwers.*
13. Op de Beek, 'Ik was er gelukkig,' 399–401. The other parts of the trilogy are titled *Het verzonkene* (1980) and *De zondvloed* (1988). Op de Beek analyses the trilogy from a postcolonial perspective, studying colonial stereotypes and practices in the Indies novels of Brouwers. *Sunken Red* only has a minor role in this analysis, as the colonial discourse has been pushed into the background by its war setting.
14. Vandenbroucke, *Jeroen Brouwers*, 14–18.
15. Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting*, 10–12, 29; Van Velden, *De Japanse interneringskampen*, 532. Exact numbers are difficult to determine. Kemperman speaks of 10.300 and Van Velden of 10.500 internees at Tjideng at the end of the war.
16. Vandenbroucke, *Jeroen Brouwers*, 23–31.
17. Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische spiegel*, 429–445; Termorshuizen, '19 december 1948,' 717–720.
18. Locher-Scholten, 'De verre oorlog,' 63–64.
19. Termorshuizen, '19 december 1948,' 717–719.
20. Boudewijn, *Warm bloed*, 355–357.
21. My translation, original: 'Het is een overgeslagen oorlog. Omdat: Nederland zelf zijn verschrikkelijke oorlog heeft gehad. Omdat: tienduizenden Nederlanders naar Duitse concentratiekampen zijn gebracht. Omdat: er geen plaats was voor nòg meer leed' (Brouwers in *Haagse Post*, November 7, 1981).
22. My translation, original: 'een realistisch beeld van wat er werkelijk aan de gang is geweest' (Spoor in *De Tijd*, January 15, 1982).
23. My translation, original: 'Mensen die niet van romannen houden kunnen het als geschiedschrijving lezen; als een documentaire. Over de Duitse kampen is alles bekend. Over de Jappenkampen niets. Dit boek moest geschreven worden' (Brouwers in *Haagse Post*, November 7, 1981).
24. Missinne, *Oprecht gelogen*, 44–47.
25. Missinne, *Oprecht gelogen*, 198; Verduin, *Jeroen Brouwers*, 409–410.
26. Missinne, *Oprecht gelogen*, 198.
27. Missinne, *Oprecht gelogen*, 47.
28. Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, 4–5.
29. Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, 56.
30. Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, 58.
31. Bond and Craps, *Trauma*, 57.
32. Caruth, *Trauma*, 151–153.
33. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 7–8.
34. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 3.
35. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 8–10.
36. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 26–27.
37. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 12–15.
38. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 13.
39. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 31.
40. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 55, 58, 119–120.
41. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 57.

42. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 18, 50, 119.
43. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 76.
44. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 13–14.
45. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 56–57.
46. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 79–80.
47. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 116–117.
48. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 70–71.
49. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 54.
50. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 61.
51. Bijl, *Emerging Memory*, 13.
52. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 15.
53. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 77.
54. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 88.
55. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 99.
56. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 14–15.
57. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 78.
58. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 71.
59. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 121–122.
60. Brouwers, *Sunken Red*, 52.
61. Erll, 'Mediality of Cultural Memory,' 392.
62. Others usually provide no more than a summary of the various points of view, see for example Keuning, *Met scherpe pen*, 111–119; Op de Beek, 'Ik was er gelukkig,' 397–398; De Vos, 'Waar of niet waar'.
63. Cf. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
64. According to Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, events that often cause a cultural trauma are large-scale, disruptive events that shatter the taken-for-granted assumptions and symbols of a society. These events typically involve extreme violence, social upheaval, or collective suffering. Examples of such events can include wars, genocides, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other major crises that profoundly impact a society's collective identity and sense of security.
65. Cf. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.
66. Assmann, 'Collective Memory,' 212–213.
67. Erll and Rigney, 'Dynamics of Cultural Memory,' 2.
68. Rigney, 'Portable Monuments,' 383.
69. Rigney, 'Dynamics of Remembrance,' 350–352.
70. My translation, original in Brems, *Altijd weer vogels*, 85: 'Er bestond in Nederland tot decennia na de bevrijding een onuitgesproken hiërarchie van het leed, waarin de teruggekeerde kolonialen onderin zaten, nog net boven de kinderen van NSB'ers.'
71. Termorshuizen, '19 december 1948,' 717.
72. Bosma, Raben and Willems, *Geschiedenis Indische Nederlanders*, 54; Boudewijn, *Warm bloed*, 298–299; Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië*, 330.
73. Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië*, 339.
74. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 12–15.
75. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 1–2, 10.
76. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 11.
77. Brouwers was already an established author when *Sunken Red* was published, therefore the novel was discussed in all Dutch dailies and weeklies. See for example Pouw (*NRC Handelsblad*, November 13, 1981); De Moor (*De Tijd*, November 20, 1981); Peeters (*Vrij Nederland*, November 21, 1981); Sanders (*Het Parool*, November 27, 1981); Van Dijl (*Het Vrije Volk*, January 9, 1982). Of all those critics, only Mulder (*De Volkskrant*, December 4, 1981) and Offermans (*De Groene Amsterdammer*, January 1, 1982) reviewed the novel negatively shortly after its publication.
78. My translation, original: 'Wat is de reden dat telkens opnieuw geprobeerd wordt de Japanse burgerkampen in Indië als erger voor te stellen dan zij waren? [. . .] [Waarom] wordt steeds

weer geprobeerd te suggereren dat de Indische kampen vernietigingskampen waren, zoals die waarin de Duitsers de joden opsloten[?]' (Kousbroek in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 8, 1982).

79. My translation, original: 'het Indisch kampsyndroom – daarmee bedoel ik dus het vasthouden aan een mythe en de weigering te onderzoeken hoe het werkelijk was' (Idem).
80. Cf. Locher-Scholten, 'De verre oorlog', 64–66.
81. My translation, original: 'Je boek gaat over [. . .] het Japanse interneringskamp Tjideng in het toenmalige Batavia. Jeroen, wat je daarover schrijft is echt onzin en niet zozeer bezonken of verzonken, maar vooral verzonnen' (Lanzing in *De Tijd*, January 29, 1982)
82. My translation, original: 'Ik zal niet zeggen dat het er leuk was, [. . .] maar Jeroen, het waren geen concentratiekampen' (Idem).
83. Engelbrecht, cited in De Vos, 'Waar of niet waar,' 153.
84. My translation, Engelbrecht cited in Idem: '[dat] de mensen nu helemaal kunnen gaan denken dat het daar niet zo erg is geweest'.
85. My translation, original: 'ik [voel] me als "Indisch kampkind" van toen gewoon verraden [. . .] omdat ik opnieuw, door toedoen van een lotgenoot nota bene!, gedwongen word te ontzenuwen, af te zwakken en te zeggen dat het zo erg toch niet was. Vlak na de oorlog moest ik tegen de "ergheid" van de kampen in Duitsland opboksen, nu flikt Brouwers het me dat ik opnieuw vergoelijkend over mijn verleden moet spreken' (De Vreede in *De Tijd*, January 15, 1982).
86. My translation, original: 'alles te vergoelijken van de Indische kampjaren en dat gaat me te ver. [. . .] Het was precies zoals Jeroen Brouwers schreef en vaak nog veel erger' (Joosten in *De Tijd*, January 29, 1982).
87. My translation, original: 'Aan deze schrikbeelden [uit Tjideng] hield mijn vrouw een kampsyndroom over, waar ze ten slotte drie jaar geleden aan overleed. De ellende van de Jappentijd was niet te vergeten' (Idem).
88. My translation, original: 'Los van de vraag of Brouwers de waarheid heeft gesproken of niet, over de gedragingen van de Japanners valt echt wel wat te vertellen' (Zwitser in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 22, 1982).
89. According to Van Velden, detailed numbers are mostly unavailable, with the data for Java being especially scarce. The number of casualties at Tjideng is unknown. Van Velden assumes a 13% death rate among all interned civilians (*De Japanse interneringskampen*, 368, note 1). De Jong uses a percentage of 17%, based on the death toll provided by the Japanese to the International Red Cross during the war (*Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 11b, 753–754). It is unclear what sources Kousbroek relies on, when he claims that 'only' 6% of the interned civilians at Tjideng have died. See NIOD (accessed on February 5, 2024). https://www.niod.nl/en/frequently-asked-questions/japanese-occupation-and-pacific-war-figures#.
90. Kousbroek in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 8, 1982, and Zwitser in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 22, 1982.
91. Kousbroek, cited by both Joosten (*De Tijd*, January 29, 1982) and Ferguson (*NRC Handelsblad*, January 22, 1982).
92. Lanzing in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 8, 1982.
93. My translation, original: 'Dat ik persoonlijk het er levend en zonder martelingen en pakken slaag heb afgebracht zou ik nooit wagen te gebruiken als bewijs dat dat voor ons allen heeft gegolden' (Ferguson in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 22, 1982).
94. My translation, original: 'En dan zijn er nog de vele tienduizenden die het niet meer kunnen navertellen, o.m. ook uit het Tjidengkamp, van wie een groot aantal onder *onbekende* omstandigheden is gestorven' (Idem).
95. My translation, original: 'Zoals de overdrijving van Brouwers me hindert, zo hindert me ook de genegenheid van Kousbroek om het de slachtoffers kwalijk te nemen dat zij een gezonde rancune aan de kampperiode overhielden' (Vervoort in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 22, 1982).

96. My translation, original: ‘Een schrijver schept al schrijvend zijn eigen werkelijkheid, maar dat betekent nog niet dat de waarheid wordt vervalst of geweld aangedaan’ (Spoor in *De Tijd*, January 15, 1982).
97. My translation(s), original(s): ‘of een trauma dat zoveel meer “aanraakt” dan slechts een schrijverschap, wel op een dergelijke manier “verkocht” mag worden’ and ‘waar de historische feiten omwille van een “literair effect” worden gebruikt’ (Mulder in *De Volkskrant*, December 4, 1981).
98. Offermans in *De Groene Amsterdammer*, January 1, 1982.
99. See for example Brouwers in *Haagse Post*, November 7, 1981; and January 16, 1982.
100. My translation, original: ‘Er zijn wel boeken overgeschreven maar in de beleving van het Nederlandse volk heeft het nooit geleefd [. . .] Nu bied ik de kans, met een vuistslag als het ware, om de discussie te beginnen. En wat doet men? Men gaat de discussie over de kampen niet aan, maar vraagt zich af of het wáár is wat Brouwers in een roman schrijft? [. . .] Ik heb niet gelogen, ik heb een roman geschreven’ (Brouwers in *Haagse Post*, January 16, 1982).
101. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, 15–21.
102. Locher-Scholten, ‘De verre oorlog,’ 61–63.
103. Withuis and Mooij, *Politics of War Trauma*, 211.
104. Locher-Scholten, ‘De verre oorlog,’ 64, 66–67.
105. Van Leeuwen, *Ons Indisch erfgoed*, 101.
106. See for example Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië*; Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting*; Van Leeuwen, *Ons Indisch erfgoed*; Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*; Boudewijn, *Warm bloed;* Snelders, ‘Hoe Nederland Indië leest’; Van Reybrouck, *Revolusi.*
107. Locher-Scholten, ‘De verre oorlog,’ 66–68.
108. Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië*, 334.

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