

NLPVF

Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature

7th International Non-Fiction Conference

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**Specialist expertise in an accessible form:
how to present an academic author to a broad audience**

Participants

Catherine Clarke, literary agent (UK)
Floris Cohen, Dutch author
Jennifer Crewe, Columbia University Press (USA)
Douwe Draaisma, Dutch author
Patrick Everard, Historische Uitgeverij (The Netherlands)
Detlef Felken, C.H. Beck Verlag (Germany)
Erhan Gürer, translator Dutch-Turkish
Frédéric Joly, Flammarion (France)
Christine de Jong, Erasmus Bookshop
Verena Kiefer, translator Dutch-German
Haye Koningsveld, Ambo (The Netherlands)
Salomon Kroonenberg, Dutch author
Giuseppe Laterza, Laterza (Italy)
Ian Malcolm, Princeton UP (UK)
Frits van der Meij, Athenaeum, Polak & Van Genneep (The Netherlands)
Jessica Nash, Atlas (The Netherlands)
Annika Olsson, Historiska Media (Sweden)
Floor Oosting, Bezige Bij (The Netherlands)
Arlette Ounanian, translator Dutch-French
Claudia di Palermo, Prometheus / Bert Bakker (The Netherlands)
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Alan Thomas, The University of Chicago Press (USA)
Diane Webb, translator Dutch-English
Ingrid Wikén Bonde, translator Dutch-Swedish
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Maarten Asscher, moderator
Liz Waters, minutes

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Maarten Valken

Friday 14 November 2008

Maarten Valken: Welcome. It's a great pleasure to welcome you here to the seventh Non-Fiction Conference that we've organized over the past eleven years. Seven already. This means that we've come to see them as an important part of our work. Important as meeting places of ideas and more concretely for intensifying contacts, not only between publishers who just have time to meet for half an hour in Frankfurt and in London but also between publishers and authors and translators, and between translators from different countries. These are all meetings that hardly ever occur and, as we have seen during previous conferences, they can have extremely fruitful results. I have no doubt that will prove true this time also.

It is no accident that a conference like this is taking place in the Netherlands. We are a small nation, as the Dutch expression says, 'with a lot of foreign country'. So we speak at least a few languages and travel a lot. Traditionally we are open-minded towards the outside world; we adopt whatever is useful. As you can see and hear in the streets of Amsterdam, it's a city of many different cultures. Over the centuries many writers and intellectuals from other countries have come to live here. Our Foundation in a way continues this by inviting translators to our Translators' House, writers to our Writers' House, publishers in a yearly programme to meet Dutch publishers, and by organizing these conferences.

Of course they are also meant to promote Dutch non-fiction. The amount of subsidy for translations of Dutch non-fiction has doubled in the past few years, which is not surprising given the number of interesting and original books that appear in the Netherlands every year. But some fifteen years ago it was quite different. Before I started working at the Foundation I was an editor at a publishing house which mainly published narrative history for a broad audience. Ninety per cent of those books were translated, even the ones about Dutch history, because at that time it was difficult to find Dutch historians who could, or who wanted to write like Simon Schama, Georges Duby or Carlo Ginzburg.

All that has changed. Fortunately for me in my present work, we now have a considerable number of excellent narrative historians as well as philosophers, biologists and psychologists who write for a broad audience. Most of their works you can find on the book table in the other room. What all these non-fiction writers have in common I think is a mixture of curiosity and adventure, typical for a small nation

in which people were always influenced by foreign ideas but at the same time had little respect for authority and fixed opinions. You could draw a line from let's say Erasmus or Spinoza, continuing through writers like Mandeville up to, half a century ago, Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, which is now being republished and retranslated in many countries.

At this conference we're fortunate to have three authors, each of whom continues this tradition in his own way. Floris Cohen, who is the perfect example of an academic able to make complicated ideas clear to the lay reader; Salomon Kroonenberg, the outsider-scientist who uses his own research experience to back up his polemical views; and Douwe Draaisma, the undisputed master of the scientific essay in the Netherlands at this moment.

The same spirit of curiosity is present in our Foundation. We don't just want to be an exporter of literature but an importer too, a bridge between different cultures. We aim to build upon this aspect of our work in the future by introducing to the Netherlands important works of fiction and non-fiction that have not yet been translated. Henk Pröpper, director of our foundation, who is sitting over there, is the driving force behind this project.

The answers to the survey we sent you will help us in this respect, especially the first two questions. But of course it was meant above all to stimulate discussion on the theme of the conference before it actually began. If you didn't get a copy yesterday, there are copies here.

So now here we are at the real start. I know there's no better person than our moderator for today and tomorrow to make sure that the conversation will be continuous. He combines all the necessary experience for this role: a former publisher at Meulenhoff, an author, director of the best bookshop in Amsterdam, Athenaeum. I don't know if he was also a translator but I'm sure...

Maarten Asscher: Just poetry. [laughter]

Maarten Valken: Maarten Asscher, please.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much Maarten. I think I have three roles as your moderator today and tomorrow. The first task I have is to look at the clock once in a while to guarantee that we have our breaks for coffee, lunch and eventually – if we do our best – for dinner in the evening, so that we will not starve in our intellectuality. We were supposed to be starting at ten this morning, so we are well on schedule. The second task I think is to ensure that everybody gets his fair share of the discussion

both in an active and a passive way, so I will see to it that these microphones here are used by you in the audience if you want to ask a question or to intervene in the discussion. Please, for Liz Waters who will draw up the report of this conference over there to my right, will you when you make an intervention or ask a question please mention your name before you start off with your contribution. That's my second task. My third task is the most difficult one, and that is to organize sufficient disagreement during this conference. Because in the nature of the subject at hand lies a certain built-in agreement, since what we all want is to combine in our professional roles the highest quality and the highest accessibility. The highest quality means that the best academic research and the ripest fruits of intellectual curiosity are being harvested by our acquiring editors and our publishers, and the highest accessibility means that publishing houses have a possibility to earn money with these wonderful books, which is our commercial drive. That is what we all want and why should we disagree about that?

Still, looking back over the previous six non-fiction conferences, I think this conference is perhaps the most crucial one. Looking at this theme, 'Specialist expertise in an accessible form: how to present an academic author to a broad audience', a lot of aspects come together that concern how we exercise our profession, what readers demand from us, what role translators play in bridging the gap between the world of academe and the world of the cultural public, what we ask from editors, and what the role of agents can be. I think in these sometimes conflicting roles there is sufficient room, sufficient ground for disagreement and I will gladly play the role of provoking you on those aspects.

I don't think there are any further household matters to discuss. I hope this is all audible to everybody. So with your permission I would like to start our day's work, which will also be our day's pleasure, I trust, by giving the microphone to Salomon Kroonenberg. There is a slight change in our schedule this morning because Detlef Felken to my right has to leave at a quarter to twelve to go back to Germany to award a 50,000 euro prize for the best German philosophers, and if you know anything about Germany then you will realize that there are hundreds and hundreds of nominees for this prize. [laughter] So he has to be there in time. We will have a coffee break after Salomon Kroonenberg and Patrick Everard to my far left have held their presentations, then Detlef Felken will have his turn. I will immediately thereafter have an interview with him, with your participation I hope, then Detlef has to leave and we

will conclude this morning's session with a semi-plenary discussion with my two neighbours on my left, again with your help.

So now it's Salomon Kroonenberg's turn. I won't spend too many words on introducing him because I think in his presentation he has the best possible introduction of himself as an academic, as a scholar and also as a writer. As Maarten Valken mentioned, Salomon Kroonenberg is in a way the ideal outsider for the general cultural public, and you will see that this is the case when you realize that he has worked as a professor of geology and mineralogy at the Agricultural University of Wageningen and as a professor of applied geology at the Technical University of Delft, but at the same time his book *The Human Scale* was a substantial bestseller in the Netherlands. *Het Nederlands Dagblad*, which has a very thorough tradition of book reviewing, even compared it to a thriller, and I think that's quite a compliment for a book on geology. Salomon Kroonenberg, please.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Ladies and gentlemen. Maybe it's useful for you to know how I, as a scientist, came to write a book for a non-specialist. I'd sent a collection of columns I had written in various local media to the publishing house Meulenhoff in Amsterdam. I got back a letter dated May 6 1996 which read: 'I have enjoyed your columns very much. They are varied, amusing, provocative, and they bear their erudition lightly. But they are not a book. Why don't you first write a whole book, attract readers in such a way and publish your columns in the wake of that?' The letter was signed by Maarten Asscher, publisher. [laughter] Now I'm happy that Maarten is here again and I can tell him what has happened with his suggestion, because his encouragement has been more important than he might have realized, even though my book was eventually published elsewhere. But let me first start by saying how important encouragement has been as a whole.

I never intended to be a writer at all. I had two cravings as a youngster: geology and languages. I was attracted to rocks and minerals. I had a small chemistry lab in the cellar of our home. Not to make the explosions my parents feared most, but just to make beautiful crystals of cadmium iodide, thallium sulphate and uranium salts and other highly poisonous stuff that at that time you could buy at any well-stocked drug store. But at the same time I loved language, not so much literature as the grammar, the vocabulary, the music of language, and the idea that you could use it to communicate all over the world. At secondary school I studied ten languages at the same time. My so-called *gymnasium* offered regular courses in Latin and Greek.

Dutch, English, German and French were compulsory, but I also took optional Italian and Hebrew. In the evenings I took lessons in Russian and at the weekends in Finnish.

So when I had to select a career I hesitated between geology and languages. The geology won in the end, but at one point, when I got bored with geology, I switched to the Italian language in my second year. That lasted only three days because then my parents said: 'Don't do it, you're throwing away your career.' And I'd have had to go into military service. I really didn't want to do that. So in three days I was back in geology, or rather physical geography, but even now when I look at my bookshelves and I see all those old grammars it still keeps gnawing at my soul.

Nevertheless, my later career in geology, which included living for ten years in South America and many trips to all parts of the world, has given me more opportunities to learn languages than if I had been a linguist. It never occurred to me at that time that I could combine those two things in one career. The profession of science journalism didn't exist then; it might not have been a bad choice for me. Within my geological career I switched subjects a good deal more than most other earth scientists. I haven't shown much academic stamina, for that matter, and maybe that's an underlying pattern more common in journalists than in scientists. At a certain moment in the eighties, when I was employed as a professor of geology at Wageningen University, I got upset because of certain bureaucratic upheavals in the organization and started to write letters to the editors of the internal university journal. Many people complimented me. They encouraged me to write more, and when I became chairman of the Dutch Geological and Mining Society I started to publish a monthly column in its newsletter, with more enthusiasm and encouragement from the readers.

So, I thought: people apparently like what I write. That's why I eventually approached Maarten Asscher to publish my columns. They were published in the end by a small publisher specializing in earth sciences, but that didn't have any impact at all. Maarten was right at that point. Meanwhile I kept dreaming of something bigger, but my job in Delft didn't give me enough time to concentrate seriously on it. Science first. I was a columnist for various media such as the weeklies *Intermediair* and *Delta* and the monthly *Natuur en Techniek*, and that was useful to sharpen my pen and develop a better eye for actuality. But that was all usually written on Sunday mornings, and I didn't want the writing to interfere with my university obligations. Only when the public discussion on climate change started to heat up did I feel it was

my time. Why? Well, as a geologist I have always felt that in the light of the immensity of geological time, humankind plays only a very minor role in the earth. ‘We might lose the earth,’ squeaks Al Gore in his movie. Well, the earth is not ours. It was there all the time before we were there, and it has lived through many catastrophes much bigger than man can even imagine. In the past, greenhouse gases were twenty times more abundant in the atmosphere than now. There were periods without any ice caps at all, anywhere in the world, but also with ice caps reaching almost from pole to pole. We have had sea levels two hundred metres above the present and a hundred and twenty metres below the present, and now we are scared of a little bit of warming, which moreover stopped already ten years ago.

All that was business as usual for the earth; only we humans, we think it’s the first time, because we look only at the time-scale of mankind, not at the time-scale of the earth itself. We say we are afraid for the earth, but in reality we are just afraid for ourselves. We see the earth as nothing more than a resource, a supermarket that’s there only to fulfil humankind’s needs. I was so happy when I looked at the German translation of my book and saw this word, not supermarket but *grabbelton* [lucky dip] in Dutch, had been translated as: the earth is not a *Selbstbedienungsladen* [self-service store]. [laughter] So beautiful. I really appreciate this; it was Thomas Charpey and Monica Barendrecht, and since then I’ve always used this *Selbstbedienungsladen*.

An anthropocentric image of the world, that’s what you have now. ‘People, planet, profit,’ say the companies. But the planet in that triangle is not the earth, it’s again people, ourselves, just our needs. That’s the central theme of my book. I took half a year’s sabbatical in Bologna in Italy to write it. I had no previous agreement with a publisher at all. Maarten Asscher had already left Meulenhoff. I sent two chapters unsuccessfully to Contact. But then Frank Westerman, a well-known literary non-fiction author who had been a student of mine in Wageningen, introduced me at his publishing house, Atlas. My editor Jessica Nash is present here, I’m really happy she’s here, and I was really happy that Emile Brugman accepted my book for publication. It has been a huge success, to my own astonishment. It sold over 25,000 copies in Holland. The German translation appeared this year – 2,000 copies sold so far – and a Turkish edition appears to be forthcoming. No English one unfortunately. Many people keep asking me for that, but who knows what will happen? It gave me a lot of publicity on TV and radio, and interviews in all the major newspapers and

weeklies. I have given over a hundred lectures on the book in Dutch, English, German and Russian.

Why is it so popular? Basically I think that to everybody who is afraid that the earth is suffering from terminal cancer, I am ready to give a second opinion. People like that. I'm calming down the turmoil and the scare, and that helps them to form their own opinion on the subject. Not necessarily mine, sharing mine, but at least one that's better informed. Yet there's nothing new in my book on the science side. It's not a book on the discovery of fascinating new facts or theories. There's very little about our own research, which is ongoing in the Caspian Sea. It serves more to show how trends in sea level can suddenly turn into their opposite, just as in the stock market, than to show what we discovered there. In the book I show different geological phenomena in different time-scales, always starting with the small time-scales, the human time-scales, and then increasing the scale to events so devastating but also so rare that they have never occurred so far in the time mankind has been writing up its history.

I start with earthquakes, then volcanic eruptions, followed by climate, sea level, river behaviour and eventually evolution – actually the same order of subjects as you would find in any regular geology textbook. But it differs in at least three respects from a regular geology textbook. In the first place it's not a systematic treatment of subjects students should learn, but the result of cherry-picking of those features that best illustrate my point. And that brings me to the second difference. My book is a book with a message. The message is that nature is always on the move. There's no escaping from it. So we'd better adapt to changes, whether natural or man-made, instead of our present futile attempt to control nature. We can't do that. We shouldn't behave like the sorcerer's apprentice. This message has not developed overnight, it has grown over the years through having to deal every day of my professional life with long time-scales. Many colleagues in geology think similarly on this subject. *Geologen ticken anders* was the heading of a review in the online version of the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: geologists tick differently. They have a different sense of time.

The third point to distinguish it from my first book is that it portrays a lot of my personal experience: as a child, as a student, as a professional geologist during forty years in the field, especially focusing on moments of insight. These personal notes are strewn throughout the text. For a science journalist that's the most difficult

part to recreate. Maybe that's also the factor that brings my book closest to literary non-fiction. So, after all, science and language have come together, quite unexpectedly, stimulated by those like Maarten Asscher and Frank Westerman who believed in my writing.

Now I'm heading for early retirement, not in order to retire but to write another book on another subject that's been lingering in my mind for a long time, about the subsurface, meaning tunnels and underground parking lots and oil and gas resources, but also hell, and paradise, and the only existing history book of the earth, and the only trip Jules Verne predicted but which was never realized – to the centre of the earth. My favourite rock now is a rock called graphic granite, or *schriftsgraniet* in Dutch. It has the writing and it has the geology. It consists of large feldspars with peculiar quartz crystals, shaped like hieroglyphs or Hebrew letters. Russians call it *Yevreyski granit*, Jewish granite. Maybe that's a tribute to my grandfather, who was the first to put me on the track of language. Not a bad choice for a tombstone, anyway. Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much for that narrative presentation. You talked about the importance of encouragement. You could say you mentioned two kinds of encouragement, although you didn't describe them that way: there is a push encouragement and a pull encouragement. The push encouragement comes from a publisher and the pull encouragement comes from your readers. Which encouragement is most important for you as a scholar?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well I think I would never have had the confidence to publish a book like this if I hadn't been encouraged, pushed, by you and by others, to go on with it. Because now it is more pull, but it started with the push, I think, because, well, I'm a stranger to publishing and to translating and I had no idea what the requirements were for a book to get published. I notice that Mr Felken wrote that it's absolutely necessary to make a scheme in advance and that the publisher makes a scheme and agrees upon what to do. I have broken all those rules. I just started and it was only because people believed in me that I thought: I can do this. At the start, that is. Now of course the readership is there and people invite me to conferences and all kinds of different things, so now they are pulling my career maybe in that direction, and I don't know where I will get to eventually.

Maarten Asscher: But then there is human encouragement, you might say encouragement on a human scale, from readers and publishers, and there is also, on a

somewhat larger scale, the momentum. You mentioned two opportunities where you felt sort of provoked as a scholar to write for a non-scholarly audience. In the first instance there was turmoil at the university, often not of an academic kind but probably financial or organizational or managerial, and then secondly there was the momentum of the big climate discussion. Isn't that more important than human encouragement? Because there is an element of response to such occurrences.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, it's a good question. I think indeed when I saw that, especially let's say the first point, I was still without any intention to write anything more than my comments on the bureaucratic problems that we had at the university. So this desire to do something more only developed after that. But the second point, when this climate discussion came up, then I really felt: I have to tell them something. I have to tell them that they should look in a different way at how nature works, and so on. So I think that was a very deep desire to let people know that you could look differently, and many people said to me when I gave lectures: 'This is really an eye-opener; so you can also look in this way at the climate issue.' So really, that's maybe an internal push which is coming from, say, from the incentive from outside, but which...

Maarten Asscher: Sort of a responsibility that comes up.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I don't want... That's maybe too big a word. It's something I... Because...

Maarten Asscher: Opportunity knocks.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes, that's more what it is, yes. Because really, responsibility, that feels again as if I'm responsible for people thinking in one way or another and I merely want to show. I want to give them a perspective and they themselves should know what to do with it. But my ideas about deep time were there when I started as a professor in Wageningen in 1982. I gave an inaugural address, and when I look back I see that I made exactly the same points, and so actually this book has been maturing in my mind for twenty-five years or more. The subject was there already for a long time but it had to germinate and to really find the opportunity, the right moment. Because as I told you, I said: right, now I'm going to take a sabbatical, now I really have to write this up, otherwise I will never do it. And then came Al Gore and he was the one who best promoted the book. I was helped of course by the film by Al Gore. Everybody asked my opinion, asked what I thought about it, and then

came the next report from the IPCC. So it was a fortunate moment. I didn't know that while I was writing it, of course. It has helped me a lot.

Maarten Asscher: Frits van der Meij.

Frits van der Meij: Were you able to talk about the subject to your own students?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Oh yes, very much so. Not only to students. The nicest moment is when every year the first-year students invite their parents for a day. For the last two years I've given a talk about my thoughts about the book to the parents of the students, and that has been enormously stimulating. And another thing. I was just in Moscow, where I received an honorary professorship from Moscow State University, and I was asked to give a lecture to the first-year students there. After the lecture a first-year student came to me and said, 'Such a wonderful lecture. My father is a journalist at *Argumente e Fakte*, one of the major leading Russian weeklies, and he wants to interview you.' So this week, in the international edition, you can find my interview in *Argumente e Fakte*. So it really turns them on.

Frits van der Meij: And did you use your experience as a teacher in writing that book? Was it important?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Maybe I did. It's a good question, because when I write a speech, somehow it resounds in my head and I try to hear whether it sounds good. I hope that the whole book can be pronounced in such a way that it's also aurally understandable. So I think that's what you learn by teaching, by putting things in a simple way. Sometimes that's one of the nice things about teaching, when I start explaining something on the blackboard and I start explaining it to myself and think: Oh, but that's how it is. Just because you have to reduce it to essentials you discover things yourself. That's a really gratifying experience.

Maarten Asscher: Good. Floris Cohen.

Floris Cohen: Salomon, I'm very much interested in the response of your colleagues. The impression I get from your talk is that you have been facing more or less a consensus among geologists about all this hullabaloo about the climate. Maybe that's a misunderstanding, but in any case, how did they respond to your book?

Salomon Kroonenberg: That's a nice question, because from no side has there been more silence than from my colleagues. [laughter] Everybody else is enthusiastic and I'm not sure whether they don't agree or whether they are jealous. I'm not sure what it is. The colleagues who most appreciate it have no inhibitions and they say, 'What a wonderful book.' Both in Holland and in Belgium. In Belgium it's been quite well

publicized as well recently. But many of them didn't react at all. One of the leading scientists looked it through and when he saw a graph he said, 'Well, I can give you a better picture.' So I'm afraid there's a bit of envy involved. Also, some of them are very deeply involved in this climate change issue; they are researching it themselves. Some of them are concerned and are getting research money to investigate why this is all happening and what has happened in the past. So it is a bit unsettling, because it's a bit of a threat to them, since the book might be an incentive for politicians to give less money to climate science. That's all. But usually they're silent. The response comes from the students, from the audience. I feel maybe it is the old point that once you start writing non-fiction for a non-specialist you are no longer one of the crowd who is involved in science. Maybe it's a step that you shouldn't take as a scientist. Nobody told me so, but maybe there's something like that, maybe you are too high up in their ivory tower to go down and tell something to people who are not specialists in your field. I cannot prove this, though.

Maarten Asscher: I'm sure that's a point we will return to later, because it holds true in many academic disciplines and it's also an interesting factor when it comes to encouragement or discouragement. I think we should temporarily leave this discussion as it stands. We will as I say return to these questions and points of discussion later, but I would now, after having thanked Salomon Kroonenberg for his presentation, like to continue with Patrick Everard, who is the publisher at Historische Uitgeverij, Historical Publishing House, a most wonderful imprint, very ambitious, very successful, and at the same time I believe quite small and fiercely independent, publishing authors like Douwe Draaisma, who will speak later, and Frank Ankersmit, but also real classics like Aristotle and Quintilian. Patrick Everard, please.

Patrick Everard: Ladies and gentlemen, some twenty-five years ago the English language was adopted by Dutch universities as the official medium of scientific communication. Shortly afterwards, a peer system was also introduced which was intended to control the quality of scientific or scholarly output. As an unintended side-effect, both these internal academic changes produced a watershed in the transfer of knowledge to a wider audience, or to any audience at all. Communication between academics and their natural allies – secondary school teachers, higher education or college students and teachers, the mass of the sincerely interested professional or lay public – was severed. One of the immediate effects of this gradual but painful divorce was that most academic scientists were sent into the wasteland of global science. On

the other hand, teachers, students and the rest of the potentially wide audience felt as if they had been left alone. Especially for teachers it was made difficult, not to say impossible, to keep pace with current developments in their disciplines.

The subsequent scientific deprivation of most teachers produced an acute educational demoralization from which they have not yet fully recovered. The scientific supplements, or science sections if you like, of the daily newspapers in particular, but also some publishers of quality non-fiction, gained in that same period an effective and ever growing share of the market. Both have since been able to strengthen and expand their position as intermediaries between scholarship, science, and an eager audience. In our day, it's widely proclaimed that science is 'hot', or even 'sexy', but if it's true that science is now so popular, we owe this for the greater part to these supplements, and to scientific journalists and the occasional publisher, not to the university or to the university presses. You wanted some disagreement? [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Yes, yes. Duly noted.

Patrick Everard: The popularity of philosophy, which can be high quality non-fiction, has also been realized outside the university. Popular magazines, first and foremost the Dutch *Filosofie Magazine*, have fostered over the last fifteen or twenty years an immense interest in all kinds and varieties of philosophy. And in the wake of this youthful enthusiasm, some publishers have been able to benefit from this mostly well-educated and always curious and creative community. Hesitantly, the academic philosophers follow on the waves of this still growing public interest in philosophy. For example, after the publication of a new translation of Aristotle's *Ethics*, it was hailed in *Filosofie Magazine* by the assembled academic philosophers as the best book of philosophy of all time. Since then we've sold more than 25,000 copies of this archetypal quality non-fiction book. [laughter]

With the exception of history, which seems to be fully captured by a kind of governmentally-steered recivilization process, the humanities, especially academic literary or literature studies, have completely withdrawn from the public field. The humanities seem to have lost their traditional public, and there isn't yet a young or new public to revive them, or even to cheer them up. In the meantime, they lecture on how to get a book published by Oxford University Press.

It's ominous that recently Dutch academic historians have converted themselves to English as their scientific language. This attempt at status-seeking globalisation will estrange them even more from the professional teachers who are left

behind at the mercy of educational publishers and Xerox shops. It's totally unclear whether the adoption of English as the language of communication has increased the international authority of Dutch-based science or scholarship, whether it is greater now than before, when Dutch was the official scientific language at the universities.

In the Netherlands there are a few solid scientific presses, like Brill in Leiden and Elsevier in Amsterdam. They are respected publishers, commercially successful and proud to act traditionally as the printers of science. We revere these machines of scholarship powered by peers. It's by no means coincidental that they were the very first to exploit the digital revolution. Up to now it is they who have profited most from the controlled circulation and distribution of scientific knowledge, but these companies are more or less science-to-science dealers, not the kind of trade publishers we try to be.

The world wide web is an obvious and cheap alternative for the unrestrained distribution of academic output. The rhetoric of the world wide web is already helpful. It's worldwide. The readership is nearly infinite and when you have finished your digital manuscript, your digiscript, it's published within a split second. That's what I would call fast publishing. One response of the humanities to the absence of their communication with an audience is the embrace of the universal library of Google. In Holland we have a look-alike in the Digital Library of Dutch Literature. This university-based project republishes on the internet the complete national history, Dutch literature from the thirteenth century on, the history of science, and as many secondary scholarly writings as they can scan. Because they were published on paper before.

That's what we call open access. This term, open access, constitutes of course a false contrast with texts which are under copyright. As if until now these were not accessible. And open access will ultimately turn out to be a false term itself, because for example in acquiring digital rights from an academic author who hasn't been dead for more than seventy years, the open accessionists have definitely entered the commercial market. Needless to say, the ambition to build a worldwide library is a replica of that naive scientific ideal of a catalogue or encyclopaedia of nearly everything. And worst of all, this digitalization of science takes place without any serious peer review. So from the publisher's point of view, controlled circulation and open access are one double-faced, short-sighted head.

If most academics would like to see a publisher as a mere printer, the publisher should make the difference. If there isn't a word for it yet, I would name it by contrasting it with the earlier fast publishing tendency: slow publishing. Normally a publisher receives an academic manuscript at the end of the process, just before the author would like to have it printed. We prefer to be involved from the very outset in the author's plans, in his intentions and in his choice of style. We try to convince him that the union of scholarship and literature will not harm his status as an academic. In an early phase, the author is involved in the marketing strategy and in the organizing of a lecture tour through the country. The possibility of selling international rights also forms part of this strategy. It's a widening of his potential readership. The work in progress is intensively coached by nearly everyone in or around the publishing house: the editor, the translator if needed, the designer, the topographer, the sales representative, the rights manager, the photographer, not to mention the marketing department. They all take part in the whole project; they all collaborate and participate in producing the optimal achievement. Together they create an atmosphere around the author, or around the translator, in which the idea for the project will flourish. If necessary, the author presents his work-in-progress to the assembled staff of the publishing house. If necessary, the text will be stripped of all kinds of worn peer-groups sops. Sometimes the authority and reliability of the text have to be put back where they belong, in the immediate communication between reader and writer. Good writing is everything, and if it's not well written or translated it has to be redone. Accessibility is the key word.

Accessibility is also helped by a deliberate distribution and styling of the indispensable scholarly information. As far as possible, the needs of the various readers have to be met. The styling of the book, the literary appearance, has to be a true reproduction of the intentions of the individual author. The design of the jacket should keep his scholarly authority intact. Subsequently the author is sent into the public arena, just like a fiction writer. Again he has to be coached a little. First of all to become at ease with newspapers, radio and television. He has to be introduced to an audience which is quite the opposite of his peers, his colleagues or students. He sets out on a *Lesereise*, a lecturing tour around bookshops, public libraries, museums, municipalities, all kinds of local cultural and professional societies. These new audiences are sometimes as critical as his peers, but they are eager to learn, they listen, they ask questions, they discuss, they understand, and most of all they buy his

books. At all these places the academic author will easily transfer his scholarship through his passion, his enthusiasm or engagement with his subject. We've heard about that from you, Salomon. A short rhetorical course on how to steer and hold an audience can be useful. To make the audience receptive to authentic scholarship or the passion of the academic is not very difficult. The public has an insatiable thirst for knowledge, has great trust in the author's authority and is eager to hear him lecture and to experience his passion or mission. It's like a warm bath.

Not very long ago it was felt a deadly sin amongst academics to go public. The fear of peers was nearly as great as a wide audience was terrifying. But eventually the loneliness of the English-writing unread academic has become unbearable. [laughter] Since the publisher has put his trust in him, inspired him, he is able to escape the closed world of controlled circulation and the void of open access. Writing in his native language enables him to communicate with the nearly exhausted group of professionals and teachers and to meet the growing interest outside the academy. At last a real-time connection is realized between his audience and his passion and fascination. Finally it's clear that an academic mind-change is happening. The clear and evident successes in sales and in public attention of academically inspired, literary, quality non-fiction are tempting enough for authors to leave this academic ivory tower. Even the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences has taken the lead in promoting the return of the Dutch scientist to his Dutch readership. The Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature has become the great source of inspiration for the internationalization of Dutch literary quality non-fiction. Thanks to the Foundation, publishers and authors have gained the confidence to penetrate foreign markets in their own right, with Dutch quality non-fiction. For the opening up of this perspective and for the organizing of such unique conferences with natural partners as gathered here, Maarten Valken and his staff deserve the utmost praise. Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Patrick, thank you very much. If I were to call the Historische Uitgeverij a small university press, would that appeal to you or not?

Patrick Everard: No, it's not a university press as such.

Maarten Asscher: Why not?

Patrick Everard: We don't publish what the scholars produce from their jobs. So we are always trying to change what they want. [laughter] No, it's not a university press. No, it's not a university press. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: But university presses, as we will learn later on during this conference, are of course more than Oxford University Press used to be fifty years ago. University presses are not just printers to the university any more, giving the products of scholarly minds to the world. University presses also publish trade books. They also publish popular science, as it is sometimes mistakenly called. So what's wrong with the idea of a modern-day university press?

Patrick Everard: There's nothing wrong with the idea of a modern university press, but most modern university presses don't sell trade books, they don't make trade books, they haven't an organization to make trade books, to sell trade books to the libraries, to the people. It's not ready yet. They are not ready yet. And if they wanted... I don't know.

Maarten Asscher: But is there in your view an inherent contradiction between trade publishing as commercial publishing and university press publishing as a sort of ideological publishing. Is that the idea? That these cannot be combined?

Patrick Everard: They should be combined, because the university presses aren't doing very well and a trade book sells better, so if there is a commercial incentive for the university presses they should take it, they should respond to it. But the trouble is they don't have ideas, so they don't go back to authors, they don't have communication with authors, they don't know their public outside the academic community.

Maarten Asscher: Please?

Detlef Felken: I basically agree with this, but I think it's a little bit a too harsh a judgement. If you look at the American university presses they generally can say something about it. Of course some of them have tried to move in the direction of a trade publisher, because of the reasons you mentioned before, but it's pretty difficult for them. I don't think it's that they don't reflect about their audiences, but they are in competition with well-established American trade publishers and they have to do some service to the expectations of the universities, so they are in a very difficult situation. I wouldn't say that they have no ideas. I think it's very difficult for them, even for a university press like Harvard. If you look at what they did over the past ten or fifteen years, you can clearly see that they tried to move in the direction of a trade publisher, but as soon as they have a well-established author, Knopf or Norton or whoever shows up and picks him up for a fortune and then the author's gone. Just to take this one example, it's pretty difficult for them.

Patrick Everard: It's pretty difficult, I agree. But it's not impossible. They have a great group of potential authors, with whom they have to communicate to get other titles, other plans, other books out of them. Then they are basically producing at their academic competence level.

Maarten Asscher: How do you find your authors?

Patrick Everard: How do I find them?

Maarten Asscher: Yes.

Douwe Draaisma: They find him. [laughter]

Patrick Everard: Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Because university presses have peer review as their way of maintaining quality but also as a way of finding new authors.

Patrick Everard: I visit the universities. I visit them all. I just talk to anyone who could be of interest and I don't ask for the main theme that they are publishing already, I ask for their hidden fantasies, their hidden fascinations. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Their dream books.

Patrick Everard: Their dream books, yes. And then you have a plan, before the well-established book arrives that you have to cope with.

Maarten Asscher: Anyone from the audience. Yes, please.

Alan Thomas: Thank you for that talk. I thought that your comments about the move towards English as a lingua franca in the sciences and increasingly in the humanities was contrarian, obviously, but also very persuasive as driving a wedge between, particularly in the Dutch case, between scholars and their audience. But I do think your description of university presses is a caricature. And I can't speak for university presses in Europe, but in the United States all of the university presses from the mid-size range on up are publishing trade books quite successfully, as you can see from the catalogues here for Princeton, Chicago and Columbia. I think actually the anecdote about Harvard – and we've experienced the same thing, our trade authors being picked off by Knopf and so on – I think that's in fact a measure of our success as trade publishers. It's a difficulty, but it's something we take pride in. When we have published a trade author successfully, those authors move on to get agents, often after selling five or ten thousand copies of a book, so I guess I would urge a reconsideration of that point. [laughter]

Douwe Draaisma: I'd like to follow up on this matter. I think the problem is not that the university presses don't put out trade books, I think the problem is that they treat

trade books with an infrastructure which is still connected to the traditional scholarly book. As an author you find that university presses are huge organizations. So at first you deal for a while with a copy editor, first a commissioning editor then a copy editor, and then it moves on to a different level which has to do with marketing etc. And this all works by e-mail, perhaps brief telephone conversations, but not with actual meetings. So university presses tend to send out author questionnaires. But a lot of what you have experienced with your own book in the Dutch situation and the knowledge of your readership and the kind of comments you get in newspapers, you can't very well put into author questionnaires. So there is a difference, I think, in the way you are treated by your own publisher in the Netherlands, with a small team and with a lot of actual meetings, and the way this is handled by university presses.

Alan Thomas: Well we should be clear what we're talking about when we talk about university presses. Oxford and Cambridge are each ten times the size of the largest American university press. So at Chicago we publish about 250 new books a year; Oxford and Cambridge each publish over two thousand. So these are completely different models of publishing. In the university press community in the United States, the backbone is much smaller presses, publishing anywhere from seventy to a hundred books a year and these are small presses – really cottage-type presses – who have very much the same relationship with authors that you're describing, and much of what they do in trade publishing is regional publishing.

Two more points on the question of university presses. We have to recognize that much of the larger culture is housed in universities and our poets, our fiction writers, many of our journalists come through the universities, and have their work fostered by the universities, and that is part of the basis of the relationships that they have with the university presses. Another point I would make is that the most academic, thoroughly academic publishing houses now, without any pretence of trade publishing, are the commercial academic presses: Wiley, Blackwell, Springer. Not the university presses.

Patrick Everard: That's what I would call academic presses and there is a difference...

Maarten Asscher: A final comment from Patrick and then we have to close this session. Please.

Patrick Everard: There is a great difference between American university presses and Cambridge and Oxford university presses. One difference is that Oxford and

Cambridge publish European authors and the American university presses don't, or hardly ever. It's terribly difficult to get at an American university press with a Dutch author. It's easier to be published in China than in America, as a Dutch author. And I agree, the American university presses are far away, so we haven't had much experience with them. We've had the most experience with Cambridge University Press, that's a fact, and with Oxford University Press. So I agree on the difference in the scale of the publishing houses.

Maarten Asscher: Okay, we will carry this point forward to our plenary session later on. Let me add one point. It is rather difficult to talk about 'American university presses'. I believe the Association of American University Presses has about 130 members, so we are talking about a huge sector of publishing, huge in Dutch terms at least, and these are widely divergent types of publishing houses that have certain traits in common but also show enormous differences amongst themselves. I think this can be tackled later on with concrete examples and experiences, and I look forward to that part of our discussion as well. For the time being, Patrick, thank you very much for your presentation and Alan Thomas also for your contribution. We will have a twenty-minute coffee break now and then we will continue our session with my right-hand neighbour. Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much for being so punctual in returning to our hall. You will be rewarded for your punctuality later with a free lunch. But before we come to that we have two more sessions to go, first a session with Detlef Felken and afterwards our plenary discussion with the two other speakers. But first I would like to give the microphone to Detlef Felken, who is an historian, a Germanologist, if that's the phrase for someone who has done German studies, perhaps not, and a philosopher who since the year 2000 has worked for C.H. Beck, a renowned publishing house in Germany that has been in existence since 1763. So, Detlef Felken, please.

Detlef Felken: Yes, thank you. Actually I've worked a bit longer for the company than that, but anyhow. I think everything has been said already by Salomon Kroonenberg and Patrick Everard, and in particular Patrick Everard in his wonderful survey perfectly summarized the editor's view. So I can only add a few footnotes to

all this, and listening to what Alan Thomas said I wonder if we all share the same definition of a trade book. Maybe later on we will have to discuss what a trade book really is. The company I work for, C.H. Beck, calls itself in its self-description a *wissenschaftlicher Publikumsverlag*, which is a contradiction in itself. It's a scientific or academic trade publisher, which gives me the opportunity to say, since it sounded a bit like this this morning: academic is not a bad word. I mean, being an academic publisher is perfectly fine, it's just that it's not the same thing as being a trade publisher, so I don't think that you have to feel inferior when you're just an academic publisher not a trade publisher.

About seventy or eighty per cent of our authors are scholars, many of them with a distinguished reputation in their field. However, most of these authors have at least one other publishing house and actually we encourage them in having one. While this other publishing house is usually a straight academic publisher, what we call in Germany a *Fachverlag*, and takes care of their scholarly hardcore publications, we usually enter at the stage when the author has the intention, and an appropriate subject, to address himself to a larger audience.

Of course it's only natural that many scholars won't clearly see the difference between subjects which are too narrow even for an academic trade publisher such as we are and those subjects which are broad and general enough to attract a larger readership. Many authors say: 'Why do you think you can't sell five thousand copies? It's such a wonderful and important subject.' And we have to explain somehow that, well, it's fascinating to you but it might not be exactly as fascinating for a larger readership. I think it's an important task of the editor to help define the subject or to come up with their own suggestions, and as well to define the language in which the author will address himself to a general readership. I wouldn't go as far as in these propositions here, which have been edited somehow to sharpen the argument. I wouldn't say that it's absolutely indispensable, certainly not, but it might be useful to discuss it with the editor at the beginning if you want to reach a rather larger readership.

In one word, the first task I think in presenting an academic author to a broad audience is to find the right book for him to write, and in many cases it's not the author who comes up with the ideas but the publisher, or more his agent. I mentioned in my propositions some of the demands for a book which comes from a scholar who wants to be read outside of the academic field, and one of them is – everybody says it

here and Giuseppe later on will make this point too – the book shall be written in an accessible and if possible I would say narrative style. I think you have the two main avenues, storytelling and theory, and although theory is closer to our idea of science, storytelling is closer to commercial success. Of course you can't tell, let's say, Noam Chomsky's theory of grammar or the economic statistics as you can tell, say, the rise and fall of Napoleon or the history of the crusades, but when you try to reach a larger readership you can try to organize the stuff in a way which makes it an adventurous read. And again I would like to repeat: it's not a must, not every scholar has to write every important book about the subjects in his field in this fashion. What I'm trying to say is that the audience or public is not everything. Science is important too, and I think it would be misleading to think that only those scholars who address themselves to a larger readership are good scholars. As I will say later on, there is a certain division between those who are able to address themselves to a broad public and those who are not, but that doesn't mean those who don't do so are not good scholars.

Another point is that I believe the dramaturgy of an intellectual trade book has to follow literary rules rather than those of the science or methodology of their subject, and you have to think how to organize your text in order to reach a general readership. The book should present the view from the top. The burden of climbing upwards has to be paid by the author and not the reader. In other words, even difficult matters should be presented with the greatest possible clarity, and all the sweat of labour and all the noise of woodcutting and all the smallest coins of academic currency should be avoided in a book in which you are addressing a general readership. That doesn't mean that in a scholarly book you have to avoid these things, but when you address the general readership you are the scholar, not the reader.

Finally I think a strong thesis as well as some catchphrases always help. You and the publisher should make sure that people understand your author's point. Of course one has to be realistic about the talents of an author. There are first-rate scholars who will never be able to climb somewhat down the ladder and reach out their hands to the non-specialist and, as I said, that's okay, that's fine from the point of view of science. It's not fine from the point of view of a trade publisher, but it's not a must. There are some very good scholars who to be honest will never be good writers. They can try to improve, but it's a gift. If you're not a talented writer you will never be a brilliant writer. You can try to improve on it, but I think it's more or less a gift you have or you don't have. Sometimes the reputation of a scholar in his field is

so strong that you can sell him to a certain degree outside of the academic area even though his works contain almost no compromise from an academic point of view, but these in my experience are exceptions. In general there is a kind of scholar who has a natural inclination towards going public, a desire to have a larger readership, to find ways and means of preparing the subject in an accessible style and even give it a certain element of drama in order to make it more attractive, as Salomon Kroonenberg, if I've got it right, tried to do with his subject.

Once you have a scholar who is willing and gifted enough to become an ambassador of his discipline, I think it's the responsibility of the publisher to support this development with all the means and powers of a good publishing house, and finally I'll try to give some examples again. I think it's very useful if the author engages himself in public debates, writes articles or columns for newspapers and/or gives interviews. This should not necessarily be limited to his field of expertise. On the contrary, I think every democratic society needs some intellectuals who bring in arguments and, by taking controversial positions in public and debating the pros and cons of these subjects, help their co-citizens to develop their personal opinions. We at least always encourage our authors to make themselves visible outside the academic field and to speak up in public when they have something to say. And it doesn't mean they have to say things only about their field of expertise. I mean, as a citizen and as an intellectual, teaching at the university or wherever, they are entitled to speak out as I have said before on those subjects on which they just have a good argument. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, for example, one of Germany's most distinguished historians, wrote some years ago a very polemical article in the weekly *Die Zeit*, arguing against the membership of Turkey in the European Union, and actually he put the whole question on the public agenda in Germany. For weeks Germany discussed the question: do we really want to have Turkey inside the European Union or are we against it? And he did this without being an expert on Turkey at all. He is a pre-eminent historian and a public citizen, but not an expert on Turkey. I think it's a good thing to do. As I've said, we encourage authors to go in that direction. It is my experience that those academic authors who become public intellectuals usually learn a lot about communication. They start to think more about the way a book should be written and how its arguments can be marketed. Unfortunately, I have to say, some of them are somewhat lost to the media then. They don't write important books any more because they indulge in being public figures, which is of course a seductive thing to be. But

others live two intellectual lives. They are scholars *and* qualified citizens, if I may say so.

Once an academic author turns into a public intellectual – of course only a few of them will be able to do this – the mission of the publisher is almost completed. Let's say Umberto Eco, Ralf Dahrendorf, Fritz Stern, Eric Hobsbawm, these are good examples of European intellectuals in a certain way, and at the same time they are serious scholars, no one would say they are just media figures. You take them seriously as scholars but at the same time they are public European intellectuals. I think from the publisher's point of view an efficient press department or public relations department is decisive. Let's be realistic. At least in Germany, where reviews still play a very important role for sales. Generally speaking the publisher must create, as Patrick said, inside and outside of his list, the context of public relevance for an author. And in Germany at least it's almost useless to present an academic author to a broader audience if the publisher has neither the tools of a press department, with its connections and power, nor a list which is considered as upmarket trade. It will be very difficult for a straight academic publisher in Germany to market a trade book. I mean they can say 'this is a trade book', but they simply don't have the tools, and if they don't have the tools it's not going to work. In other words it's extremely difficult if not impossible to be an upmarket trade publisher and a straight academic publisher at the same time.

This is our experience and in a way I disagree with what Alan said, or I don't really believe it. We are more in the direction of a trade publisher, but we have a strong academic background and it's a contradiction which makes it more difficult for us to publish, let's say, highly successful trade books, because we have this row of academic books and we don't want to skip them. We want to keep them on the list, but it makes it more difficult for the booksellers and for others to believe that we are really able to generate a very successful trade book like a straight trade publisher, who does nothing else besides pushing certain books to the limit. So it's a difficult thing to be both at the same time. You only get the credit, again in Germany, if you continue to publish and promote upmarket trade books. And the author needs the credit of the label in order to be noticed. As a publisher I think you have to decide which way to go: trade or academic. If you want to sell an academic author to a broader audience, you should move him in the direction of a trade publisher. If you're an academic publisher you will always be in this difficult situation that I have described.

Finally I must say that a strong charismatic personality and good looks won't hurt. [laughter] You can't buy it, I mean charisma; it's there or it's not there, and people prefer being fascinated to being bored. Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much, Detlef Felken. It's clear from your description of C.H. Beck that this academic trade publisher, which your house seems to be, contains elements of both types of publisher. Could you describe your editorial process? In what respect does it mirror the academic side, with its tradition of peer review and the quality guarantee from other academics, and in what ways does it reflect the more individual-style trade publishing tradition?

Detlef Felken: Well as I said, most of our authors are scholars and we see ourselves clearly as an upmarket publisher and want to stay that way. And then of course you need scholars as authors, because outside the academic community you won't have so many of these highly qualified authors. In this sense certainly we are an academic publisher or similar to a university press, but we wouldn't publish books which have extremely narrow subjects. Then we would say no. In terms of numbers, German numbers, if it's below 2,000 copies, or below 3,000, it doesn't make sense for us to do it. We would say: please go to a straight academic publisher. But if we are very close to the author and he wouldn't understand such a response, we would probably publish it nevertheless. I mean we'd see we were making a mistake but we couldn't escape it, in a way. So we would do it.

On the other hand we are a trade publisher because we have the costs of a trade publisher. I always say: we have a press department with five people with five salaries; they're not there in order to promote books with 800 copies. I mean a *Fachverlag* in Germany usually doesn't have a press department at all and that makes a huge difference, as I said before. It's very important for a trade publisher to have this tool but it costs money and therefore on the other hand we need trade books, and that's where both ends meet. That's why we try to encourage our authors, indeed as Patrick described and Salomon Kroonenberg said, to write more trade books.

Maarten Asscher: But do authors more often than not come to you, or do you approach authors who publish with a *Fachverlag* because you recognize the potential for a different kind of book from their hands? Or do you use literary agents a lot?

Detlef Felken: On an international level certainly we work with literary agents. It would be impossible to work without them. On the national level it's a network thing. We're very well connected. I mean, we publish 250 books a year and have many,

many authors. On the other hand of course it's part of the job responsibility of the editorial staff to look out for younger scholars who are promising and so on. All of these things. I think all the publishers here do it more or less the same way.

Something I haven't mentioned is that journalists are more and more taking over this field of expertise. I think the true rivalry of the future, at least in Germany, is that journalists will take over the field of competence of the scholars. More and more of the successful non-fiction books in Germany are written by qualified journalists, because they have seen this opportunity and of course they know the techniques of how to present their material in an accessible way. That is getting more and more important, and on our list too we have more and more. They're very good authors, they're qualified, but they're not scholars, they're not professors.

Maarten Asscher: If you get a manuscript from a young geologist, after having noticed for yourself that it's very well written and that you would like to publish it, do you send it out to two or three well-known, experienced geologists for an opinion on the academic soundness?

Detlef Felken: Yes, in this case yes, because we wouldn't have an expert on geology on our editorial staff, but if it's a history book, usually we make the decision on our own, or if I feel strongly and confident enough to make this decision. But if we don't understand a lot about the subject then we are going to ask for reports, yes.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please.

Annette Wunschel: I would like to ask does Beck Verlag, for example, exploit the higher backlist qualities of academic authors? There should be a higher backlist quality. I have the impression that German publishing houses neglect the backlist in a way.

Detlef Felken: Yes that might be true, but actually the backlist is the rock on which our church is built. It's a very important part of our income, but one has to say for structural reasons the backlist is declining in Germany more and more. But that doesn't have anything to do with the publishing house and it's influence, it has to do with the structure of the bookstore chains and the way service is done, because the books we publish usually need a bit more advice by the qualified booksellers and this kind of advice doesn't exist in the mega-chainstores, so the book is there and the book is very, very alone. And after six months it's going to be returned. If you don't come in and say 'I want to have this book', then there is no backlist any more.

Annette Wunschel: I just wanted to mention this because it is an absolutely unnatural environment for academic books.

Detlef Felken: It's a serious and dangerous problem for a qualified, upmarket publisher.

Maarten Asscher: Could you pass the mike to Floris Cohen please?

Floris Cohen: I have a question for Detlef and a remark to both Detlef and Patrick, if I may. The question is about this adjective 'qualified' for a journalist. Qualified in what sense? I have at the back of my mind some experience of my own. I once specialized in a hyper-academic specialty and several books were published on that general subject which I found very poor, which were done by journalists. I realized we academics should have done it ourselves, or at least tried to, but I have to be convinced of the qualification of a journalist before I would even look. So my question is: what do you mean by qualified? Also, another point, particularly from what Patrick said but also a little bit from what Detlef said, regarding the capacities of academics for communication, since we seem from what I've heard you say almost crippled there. Don't forget that we are also teachers, and we have the obligation, and most of us happily have the obligation, to try to sell our stuff to students who are very easily bored, who might prefer to zap us away. We have to prevent them from doing that. So all of us have at least some experience with communicating the basics of what we have learned as academics. Not the highly specialist stuff, just the basics. So I think in principle academics can do that and I know there are some poor teachers but the average can do that.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you. What are qualified journalists?

Detlef Felken: Well, firstly of course I agree with you on that and I tried to make this point, that you have scholars who I think are able to communicate their stuff rather well and you have – I think it's a few more than just exceptions – those who can't very well. I mean, you have simply boring teachers at the university. I had some terrible teachers, I must say, and as an editor you are trained to see the difference, that's what I'm trying to say. You have of course very, very qualified scholars and you can always see who is an expert, it's just that the stuff is so boring and others simply know how to present a book. That's what I was trying to say, but it was not a general statement.

Qualified journalist, that depends of course always on the individual. In Germany we have some journalists who I would say could very well be professors at the university,

it's just that they are better writers, and you have those who are rather superficial but know how to organize their stuff and they're successful too. They have the instruments of the media and the cleverness in a way. They're cleverer I'd like to say than most scholars are, and I see they are more and more taking pieces of the cake in Germany. For example, we had a debate two or three years ago about the fact that German society is getting older and older; the thing about old people and all this geriatric discussion and how we can pay for this in the future and the health system and so on and so on. We had several books by experts in the field, professors, and they were well reviewed and they sold well and I would say they were trade books. But then the publisher of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Frank Schirrmacher, wrote a book called *Das Methusalem-Komplott* and it became a major, major, major bestseller. It was *the* book on the subject, with four or five hundred thousand copies sold, and that shows you the difference. That would not have happened let's say twenty years ago. A journalist would not have had the courage to say: 'I'm the expert on the subject. I'm going to define it,' and so on. He would have said: 'This is for the scholars and I support the process of public debate.' There is a certain change.

Maarten Asscher: Detlef, you said that academic authors are climbing down the ladder a few steps to reach out towards a general audience. This is a problematic notion of course, because no one likes to climb down. Journalists like to rise to the occasion and climb the few steps up to become almost professors, but professors do not like to climb down to, well, sort of become journalists. Is that perhaps the reason for the jealousy that has been referred to among scholars, that when someone climbs down and writes a bestseller he or she isn't taken too seriously any longer in his or her own professional academic circle? Is that a phenomenon in Germany, or is public success sort of a crown for any type of excellence?

Detlef Felken: Well, I think jealousy is a worldwide phenomenon and not only limited to Germany, but it's true that commercial success certainly is something which in the German scholarly community is, it's, I don't know, it's strange. I mean, it's even more terrible when there's a huge commercial success with a very good scholarly book. I mean that definitely shouldn't happen. If some professor or other writes a book for the public, a popular book and it's a success, the typical German would probably say something like: 'Well, this is trivial stuff.' But if it's a serious, very good book and highly successful, yes, I think that creates a certain degree of jealousy. It's human.

Maarten Asscher: Is Peter Sloterdijk considered to be less of an important philosopher because he's translated worldwide and has become a successful public intellectual?

Detlef Felken: Yes, that's a good example. I mean, he is a professor of philosophy and I know that many Germans don't take him seriously, but you can't argue with the fact that he's a public intellectual in Germany. He's very much on the map. He's stimulating and original and they have to live with it. I don't know how in 100 years people will judge the works of Peter Sloterdijk, but right now he definitely is one of the most influential German philosophers, nobody can escape that.

Maarten Asscher: As a matter of fact I think Peter Sloterdijk is a much better example of a public intellectual, or rather a scholarly academic turned public intellectual, than Umberto Eco, one of your other examples, because he became a public figure as a very, very successful novelist, and not so much as a semiologist, his original academic discipline.

Detlef Felken: I agree, but – and Giuseppe might know better – if I'm well informed he still writes a weekly column for *L'Espresso*.

Giuseppe Laterza: He just stopped.

Detlef Felken: Just stopped, but he did for quite a while and he treated every kind of subject with the eyes of a semiologist or a public intellectual or whatever. He did just the thing that I think scholars should do if they're able to.

Maarten Asscher: Last chance to ask questions to Detlef Felken.

Floor Oosting: I wanted to make a remark. I worked for Springer for seven years before I started to work for De Bezige Bij and it has been mentioned now but I would like to emphasise that they are indeed two different worlds, general publishing or core, straight, academic publishing. Within Springer I was responsible for the philosophy programme. I had no ambition to publish books or journals for the trade market. It was straight academic publishing. It served its own purpose; we were publishing books and journals for an academic audience. I could do print-runs as low as 300. The books were very expensive, sold to libraries and put online and distributed widely to an academic audience. So I wanted to mention that.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you. Diane Webb.

Diane Webb: Please excuse this question from a non-scholar, but how can peer review be trusted with all this jealousy among scholars? [laughter] On some very specialized subject there may be only three people who know anything about it, and

then one of them is also writing a very interesting book, and he gives a bad review to that one because some of those ideas are his as well. I don't know how it could possibly be trusted completely, this peer review system.

Detlef Felken: Yes, it's true in a way. I mean, usually we wouldn't publish a book where there are only three experts in the world, but it's true. We have authors where you know them and you have an idea about their personality and in some cases you know that they're not exactly honest, but you have of course authors with whom you have friendships and you work together with them for a very long time, you just trust them, you know that they're straight-talking, and if you ask them what they think about anything they'll tell you and you have to believe it. It might be that in some cases they are misleading you, but I wouldn't say that this happens very often. You know your people and you trust them, you have to. I mean this is not politics, it's just publishing.

Maarten Asscher: Anyone else? Haye Koningsveld.

Haye Koningsveld: Detlef, people from the American university presses were talking about losing authors to bigger trade publishing houses like Knopf and agents playing a role in that. Being so close to the academic world as you are, do you come across that? Does that happen to your authors, that they go to bigger trade publishers? And do agents play a role in that?

Detlef Felken: Yes, I must say the agent system is not well established in Germany. On the international level certainly it's true. On the international level we very often lose books in auctions against German trade publishers who simply have more money or act more aggressively. And that's okay, that's just the risk you have to take. In some cases it's a pity, because they are really very good scholars. For example, on the Wylie list you see it, wonderful authors but other German publishers pay fortunes in order to have them on their list. They gamble more than we do. We're pretty conservative and that's maybe why we've existed for 250 years. [laughter] It's true in a way, but the reputation of the company in the field of history is so well established that usually a German scholar more or less desires to be a Beck author. Desires may be an exaggeration but he feels fine about being one and if we treat him well, and that's what we try to do, he usually stays. It might happen that a Bertelsmann publisher comes with a big cheque and then he's gone. It might happen, but that doesn't happen very often. I think in America it happens more often than in Germany. In Germany there's still an element of loyalty. If you publish three or four or five

books with an editor and you like the editor and you like the publishing house that is always engaged for you, well, you know that it's kind of weird to go away just for the sake of money. I mean if the difference is not too big. I can understand an author if we offer ten thousand and another company offers fifty thousand.

Maarten Asscher: You change jobs once in a while don't you, in your career? So an author might also go for another position elsewhere.

Detlef Felken: Yes, I mean it's true. I don't say that it's a sin.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. Detlef Felken, thank you very much, God-speed on your trip back to Germany, good luck with your philosophy prize and thank you very much for your presence here and your contribution.

Detlef Felken: Thank you very much, it was a pleasure. I'm sorry that I have to leave.

Maarten Asscher: Now I have a big problem with my two left-hand neighbours, and that is that they have, or especially Patrick has sort of given as his credo that he looks for an author's dream book. That is not the book that an author is researching and writing in his primary field of expertise but something that lies next to that, something else. But as a reader I would be very interested in a book by an academic scholar that is right at the core of the expertise of that scholar. I don't want something next to that. It might also be entertaining and interesting, but from a geologist I want the book about geology that sums up all the expertise of that scholar for a general reader. So with your philosophy are you paying academic knowledge a service by diverting scholars to other subjects?

Patrick Everard: Yes. There are two sides to a possible academic author. He is able to write this book you want him to write as a reader, but in most cases that is not the most interesting book. It is his regular work to write on that subject and it doesn't have a principal interest for a general readership. You want to read it, but I don't think many other people would want to read it. If you take his dream book you are using his passion, I hope. So Salomon, the book you suggested, the book you're dreaming of, everything under the earth, I think it's very much more attractive than the geology book. He was already passionate when he talked about little things, and I think you just have to meet him, at home or at his academy or wherever you would work, to get this passion for a subject he has invented himself next to his professional work. You might say if I'm right or not.

Maarten Asscher: Salomon.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes, when I was writing my presentation I actually realized that there are two kinds of books you can write as an academic. One is about your own achievements, about the things that you do in science, and then you try to translate for the general audience what your own research is doing and so on, and well, I never really considered doing that; I did it in small articles on the subject. We do a lot on sea-level change in the Caspian Sea, but I never thought I had to write a book for the general audience on that subject because I think it's too small, even though it has some ramifications for larger issues. What is deeper in me is, say, less a subject of research than a way of looking at society and the way that mankind is looking at nature around it. That's the subject of time, that time is so vast, and that is something which is not my basic research topic. So the book actually has very little of my own research. It is things that you notice when you do one little thing here, one other thing there, and suddenly you see a pattern and you see things coming up, and there I get my inspiration. I feel for me it would be difficult to write a book for a general reader just about the small things I do. I have been a member of the jury for the Eureka Prize, which is for the best Dutch-language non-fiction or science book for a general reader...

Maarten Asscher: There are two winners here.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes, Floris won the prize this year, I had it last year and before that I was on the jury. You see forty or fifty books coming around and you see the books of those people who are just working on their own set subject, they have discovered some kind of new mechanism in a brain cell and they can write very enthusiastically, but it is still a very small subject and I think it remains a small audience even if you make a larger book about it.

Maarten Asscher: But your book and Floris Cohen's book are very much in both your proper academic fields. It is not a sort of sideways dream book in either of your cases.

Salomon Kroonenberg: In my case I think it is a sideways dream book, because I have never published in the serious scientific press anything about geological time as the central point of a scientific paper. That's what I told Jessica also, as my editor: a book like this doesn't exist. Nobody has ever done this in such a way. But I would have difficulty if somebody should say to me: why don't you write a paper about this in *Science* or *Nature*? Because it's not of that nature, it's more a perspective.

Maarten Asscher: But I still want to insist: is the sideways character of your book not more in the style than in the subject-matter?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, if I look at the reaction of the audience of ordinary people at lectures and so on, it is not really geology they ask me about. They ask me about how to understand their own perspective and so I believe that when time is the subject then it goes far beyond the fact that deep time is of interest to geologists. It means that we have to revise our own concept, revise how we deal with nature. Many people think that nature was all the same and was in equilibrium until mankind started to fiddle with it, and they don't understand that nature has been changing all the time. Now that's something that appeals to everybody. So I get questions from people, for instance an environmental professional, saying: 'What do we have to do? Do we have to make larger sewerage pipes now than in the past because the climate is changing?' The question would not have occurred to me at all, but the issue is more general than just the scientific issues that I'm dealing with in my daily scientific life. So I feel really that this is in some way my dream book and it goes beyond questions about geological time as a professional subject. Maybe that is my professional deformation, that I see it as broader, while you see it as just limited to my own profession.

Maarten Asscher: Okay.

Patrick Everard: What is your position, Mr Cohen?

Floris Cohen: Well, as I will explain in slightly more detail this afternoon, this book is just simply derivative from a lengthier English-language book that I wrote on exactly the same subject – the same argument, only presented in Dutch and for a larger audience. But it is true that for the average academic my research specialty, which is how modern science originated, is a fairly broad subject, and not for nothing have I already spent some thirty years thinking about it. So that's what it came down to. But yes, this is not a dream book in the sense you define it. It's not a side issue; it's at the heart of my scholarship more or less from the minute I became a scholar.

Patrick Everard: And your next book?

Maarten Asscher: The moderator doesn't allow other people to take over the questioning. [laughter]

Patrick Everard: Okay.

Maarten Asscher: We'll do that over lunch. Frits van der Meij.

Frits van der Meij: I think the key word in this discussion is the word Patrick mentioned, which is passion. I think good scholars have passion for the subject

they're studying and if someone is able to write a passionate book about it then I think you have probably the best book you can get. So whether your passion is in your dream book or in the core business of your subject, that's not important. The important thing is passion. Because that's the only way to get your message to a broader audience.

Maarten Asscher: Perhaps the difference is between daydreams and night dreams. Please.

Goedele de Sterck: Thank you. I fully agree with the former speaker. I also think that a good trade book implicates head and heart and also communication. It's already been said, but I think there's a third aspect, and that's also to do with a broad interest. Because I've just read the book by Salomon Kroonenberg, *The Human Scale*, and I think I was really, really impressed because on one side it's a very specific book on geology, but on the other there's an integration of personal views and also cultural aspects, and I sometimes had the impression: oh now it's getting really very scientific, a lot of graphs and so on. But just at that moment there was a cultural aspect or a personal view, and I think the timing is really perfect, because otherwise, if it was a really geological book and very specific, I think normal people, normal people like me...

Maarten Asscher: Normal non-geologists.

Goedele de Sterck: ... wouldn't have read the book until the last page. So I think it's not only a scholarly book, no, it's something very big, a holistic view of a lot of things, and I think that's very important too. So there are three aspects here.

Maarten Asscher: I agree very much with you. It's also very much a question of style. There is a chapter halfway through the book that begins with the sentence, 'Have you noticed anything peculiar in our story so far?' Question mark. That wakes up the reader in a tremendous way. But I'm sad that you say that a book about sea-level change in the Caspian Sea is too small a subject, because what is wrong with the inductive method of taking a very specific subject as a starting point for a book about the whole world? Tijs Goldschmidt wrote a marvellous book about a fish in Lake Victoria. That is an even smaller subject than the Caspian Sea.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well there's a chapter on the Caspian Sea of course in the book, so there you can see how I think about it. I tried to integrate the three aspects that Goedele just mentioned into that story. But then I wouldn't hesitate as to whether I should write a book for a general audience or a book for the specialist, because there

are so many scientific data, which have never been taken together, have never been reviewed in a coherent way. That would be difficult for me to do for a general reader, I think, and I still think the Caspian Sea for me is an example of something broader, because in the twentieth century we have seen that sea levels suddenly rose and then suddenly fell and then rose again and then stabilized. So what you see is that man is always surprised by sudden change like he is surprised by changes in the stock market, and we always think: if it grows then it will continue growing. That's actually why I used this as an example, rather than showing what the Caspian Sea rise is about in itself. But there is a big story in it and you can see that there are parts that could be elements of a whole book, which are already in that chapter, so maybe I need encouragement to do that. [laughter] That's why I'm going to retire next year, because I really want to go on writing.

Maarten Asscher: That's another point that might lead to pessimism, the fact that you only get to write your dream book once you retire, whereas we readers would like to see the fruits of academic research and excellence in the most vital stages of an academic's career.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Maybe that's the trade-off. Maybe I feel that I cannot say to my colleagues at the university: now I will use all my time to write a book for the general audience. I feel I have my obligations towards science. Every five years we get a peer review: What did you publish in the international journals? How many projects did you get in? How many hours did you teach lectures to the students and what is the evaluation of the students? I find I cannot detract from my normal university obligations, which are to science and to teaching, by writing this book. That's why I took a sabbatical to write a book and I feel that if I did this in normal university time, then my normal tasks would suffer for it and I feel I can't do that. It goes against my own feelings of responsibility towards the university.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. Patrick Everard, you publish academic authors who sometimes have full tenure at universities. Are you able to encourage them not only in an editorial way but also with the kind of encouragement that leads to these people being able to organize more time for writing? You have a clear interest in your writers having a six-month or twelve-month sabbatical. Are you able to help them? Is this an issue for you?

Patrick Everard: We are not able to help him to get a sabbatical of a year or half a year, but I think the encouragement will be helpful for younger academics too, if they

know and accept that there is a rival audience that is really interested in what they are doing. You could still go the other way, and it's honourable how you feel about your responsibility to the academic community, but there is a much wider community to which you have, if only as a taxpayer, to serve your civil... How do you say that?

Maarten Asscher: An obligation to society at large.

Patrick Everard: Yes. So why would you start at sixty or fifty-eight or whatever?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Sixty-one. [laughter]

Patrick Everard: Sixty-one. And I agree with Maarten that we like to have them younger still. [laughter]

Salomon Kroonenberg: So this is age discrimination!

Patrick Everard: Well, you have good looks. It's not a full argument when you say the university wants all my time, wants everything I do. There is time to be made.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I see your point.

Patrick Everard: I can encourage you. [laughter]

Salomon Kroonenberg: I see your point but maybe it's different in the humanities than in hard science, in the natural sciences let's say, because we are expected to publish in the international journals and that's a lot of work. We're also supposed to attract money for secondary sources, to have PhD students and so on. In spite of the obligations that you mention, that's the main thing that is expected from you when you're in that position. Otherwise they will say: 'Instead of doing his job he is writing for the audience.' I don't want to have such a reproach.

Patrick Everard: It's a reproach.

Salomon Kroonenberg: It's a reproach and I feel it that way. What I've been doing much longer than I've been writing this book is writing short articles in the popular scientific journals about our work, about the Caspian Sea, about the Volga river, and also about larger subjects. You can do that because it doesn't take so much time, but to write a book you really have to be free of other obligations, because you want to go to bed with it and to wake up in the same subject and not be bothered by meetings and students coming to your office to arrange things and so on. And I want to be there for my students. I can't say to the students, 'I'm busy writing a book for other people and you'll have to wait.' I can't do that.

Maarten Asscher: Douwe Draaisma?

Douwe Draaisma: A remark to Salomon. You say I'm supposed to do this and I'm supposed to do that, but the heart of the matter is: do you dream of the fact that it's expected that you should do it?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Oh yes I do, I think it is important for myself as well as for the university that we are visible scientifically, to the international scientific world, in what we are doing. It's part of the reputation of the university as well. They couldn't care less whether I've written a book for a general audience or not. It doesn't make any impact, it hasn't any influence on the academic standard of our group in the university. Maybe it's different in your field, but it is some kind of underflow. Students are proud that their professor has written such and such book. You feel it is there but it's not the heart of the matter. Internationally they say 'that's nice', but it's not recognised in scientific circles.

Douwe Draaisma: But maybe that is what's wrong.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I don't see why this is wrong. I think this is how the scientific culture at present works.

Douwe Draaisma: I disagree. Yes, that is how it works now, but the question is: should it work like this? I think the criteria for these peer reviews should be such that a fair amount of time is reserved for serving a wider audience. Then you can't say: I'm not supposed to do it. We should have a discussion about whether these criteria are fair.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, not one thing without the other. I think it should not replace the scientific output.

Douwe Draaisma: No, no.

Salomon Kroonenberg: If you can do it additionally. Like Floris did. He wrote a scientific book in English and he wrote a Dutch synthesis for a broader audience. That's a nice way to do it, of course. But if he had just been writing that book for the Dutch audience all the time, maybe they'd say: 'What are you doing for the university?' I'm not sure how this works, but at least in our subject it's very clear. If you have a whole institute where they do not do anything else but count publications by people and compile their citation index and so on, if there's a new professor, the first thing they look at is: How many articles has he published? What is the impact of the journals in which he has published? That's how the scientific world is structured, and you may not agree with that, but you have no alternative to going on with it. A

book such as I wrote has no real impact among the scientists themselves, only beyond science.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please.

Ian Malcolm: Just a quick note to say that you may be in an unhappy position as a scientist because the cutting-edge work for scientists is very technical and is done in journals and if done well is probably of necessity going to be inaccessible to a broad audience. That's not the case in every field. A professor of English, for example, might be doing his cutting-edge work with a biography of Shakespeare and that is a book for a broad audience, so I think it's important not to generalize about authors but to treat them differently depending on the sort of work they do, because some sorts of work are by nature accessible.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I fully agree. That's the point.

Maarten Asscher: Floris Cohen.

Floris Cohen: There's a big problem with books particularly and this also goes for the humanities, at least in this country. The writing of books as such is implicitly discouraged. That's why I find it disturbing. I'll just give you one example that Frits van Oostrom once told me. He wrote a book that sold very well, *Maerlant's wereld* [*The World of Maerlant*]. It became a great bestseller. He won a prize for it and he told me that at some point he was at some university committee that had to do a peer review and they spent I think about a morning deciding whether this book, which had sold 10,000 copies and was many hundreds of pages long, was worth two or three or four journal articles. Generously, after a morning of deliberation, they offered him I think five journal articles. I mean, the writing of books as such is being discouraged by the peer review system and that goes for the humanities as well. I'm quite prepared to join your sentiment there; I'm just against it.

The humanities may be lucky. There is now a formal commission, again led by Van Oostrom and a couple of others, reporting on the humanities, and we all hope – and Van Oostrom has suggested as much – that there will be a recommendation to the Minister of Education to change this kind of peer review taken from the sciences as if that could apply on the same footing for the humanities. And of course the same goes in the social sciences, or at least part of the social sciences, even those that do not wish to imitate the natural sciences. So maybe in this country the system will change, but right now I would very much hesitate to recommend to the kind of youthful authors you are looking for that they write the books you want. I would guess that,

well, we are not the youngest people around, we could afford to do it. We have already established a reputation in our own fields. But I would not recommend the writing of a book of this kind to a person who is, say, five or ten years or so into his career. He first has to establish a reputation and then maybe you can risk it. This is how things stand now. I find it very sad, I'm sorry, but realistically that is what I would recommend to a young person just approached by Patrick Everard with his invitation.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I think it's even worse. Reading books is discouraged. [laughter] If I walk around in my department, it rarely happens that I see somebody reading a book. They will read it in their spare time and I must admit, I almost feel guilty when I find myself reading a book in office time. Because shouldn't he be doing something instead of reading a book? Most of the reading I do at home. So books are at this moment a bit disqualified from the scientific procedure. I would not rightly recommend my PhD students to write a book on their work, but I do stimulate, encourage them and help them to write in the popular science journals. Short articles. They can do that; it doesn't take so much time and they still get some of the exposure that they need. Maybe if they really like it then later they will themselves think: now I should write a popular book about this.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. Frits van der Meij.

Frits van der Meij: It's becoming a Dutch discussion. Is this a Dutch problem or is this an international problem?

Maarten Asscher: Would you like to comment on that, or do you have a different issue?

Verena Kiefer: No, a different issue.

Maarten Asscher: Then we will remember your question of course.

Verena Kiefer: Now I have a problem with the fact that you say you're responsible for your students but you don't want to dedicate yourself to writing different books, because I think that students need different books. So I think it's very important that you as a scholar write books that encourage students to read another view of how you could approach your science and not to be, as we say in German, a *Fachidiot*.

Salomon Kroonenberg: We say the same thing in Dutch.

Verena Kiefer: So why shouldn't it be possible, as Douwe said, to change things from the way they are now, just change them to create a new kind of scientist who is broader and wider in his thinking?

Salomon Kroonenberg: They read it anyway.

Catherine Clarke: I wanted to pick up on that. One thing that's happening – and to answer your question Frits – I think in the UK in the university sector what I'm seeing as someone representing a number of academics, particularly historians and philosophers writing for the general market, is that in fact if their books are perceived as very successful as trade books they are attracting students to their courses, undergraduates and MA students, because of what they have achieved and what their perception is. So I think the universities are taking a slightly more flexible view of what advantage there is in people projecting their expertise in books that reach a very wide market. And it goes down to that level of attracting new students.

Maarten Asscher: That's probably more true in the humanities than in the hard science field.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I'm not sure. We also see student enrolment increasing in our group. You never know why a student has come, because you get very diffuse answers when you ask that question, but I think it helps. Nevertheless, universities do not really encourage their scientific staff to write books outside their scientific work, because they have a huge apparatus which is called a communication and marketing department, and that has as an everyday task to put the name of the university in the journals. I don't know what our communication and marketing group thinks about my book but I personally think that my book has been much more effective in promoting the name of the university than a lot of the daily work that they are doing.

Maarten Asscher: Could you give the microphone to Alan Thomas please, because I would like to ask him, from the perspective of a university press, how do you look upon the planning of scholarly careers and the question of how to find the time for writing different kinds of books, less the hardcore science books, academic books, and more books for a general readership? How do American academics organize that in their careers?

Alan Thomas: Well, it varies broadly by field. In the humanities and the softer social sciences, you have to publish books in order to advance your academic career and generally in order to get tenure. Seven years or so after initially being hired in a tenure-track job, you need to have had a book accepted and ideally published, and even better to be on the way to a second book. It's in the nature of the thing that that first book will be monographic, it will be fairly specialized. I'm struck that in this conversation the real culprit that everyone I think has in mind is this very quantitative

approach to scholarly output, and it's also a big problem in the UK with the research assessment exercise. What's really happening here is that the universities are in the grip of a certain kind of new breed of administrator, people often with business degrees whose only way of assessing the value of a department's work is through a sort of bean-counting: how many articles did you produce and so on and so forth. That I think is something we probably would all deplore. But I think Ian made a very good point that certain kinds of work just have different protocols, and to defend Salomon Kroonenberg's basic point, I think what you're saying is that you also have an obligation to the advancement of scientific knowledge, which is a fundamentally different thing from the kind of synthetic work you've done in *The Human Scale*. These are just different things, different kinds of work, and in your field, science has advanced incrementally and cumulatively through scientific articles and a certain kind of research that by its nature is not going to appeal to a large audience.

Maarten Asscher: And the whole notion of academic authors having an obligation towards society as a whole to publish books for a general readership – is that something that appeals?

Alan Thomas: I think in American universities, particularly in the humanities and the softer social sciences, say anthropology, history, political science, they understand the importance of that. It varies by university. There are some universities that don't encourage it in younger scholars but will very often hire senior scholars on the basis of their public visibility.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes I worked for almost twenty years with Russian universities and I see that the culture there is quite different, because there it is really very important that you write books. With my Russian colleagues, what is important for them is to have written books, Russian books of course, to have published in the Russian journals, and the international journals come third. They rarely even refer to their own journal articles published in the international press. They usually refer only to their Russian-language pieces in the Russian journals, so the isolation in which they have lived in the Soviet period has still not really changed. So it is to some extent a cultural matter in the Western world, more than in other countries which have had a different scientific tradition. That's not to say those books are all books for a general audience, but I have maybe twenty metres of Russian books on my bookshelves, mostly given by the authors themselves, because they wanted to show that they have published books.

Alan Thomas: By the way Maarten, one issue we might come back to later is peer review and its role in this and in publishing. It's complicated and it pushes in both directions, but it's a big topic, probably for later.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, we will come to that certainly when we put the publisher central to our discussion, so thank you for reminding me. I'm still pondering the notion of the academic author climbing down the ladder to address a general readership. It's a pity that Detlef had to leave, because it was his phrase and somehow it isn't easy to combine that notion with the idea of having a higher obligation to society as a whole. Does anyone from the perspective of a university press or as an author or in another way have an experience with this problem? Yes, please.

Ingrid Wikén Bonde: In Sweden you have three tasks as an academic. You have to teach, but if you make an application for some professorship, in general the committee doesn't care about you being a good teacher. Your task is to do research and then it is recommended that you write this in English, not in Swedish, which creates difficulties for the language departments, for example. At the Dutch department we want to write in Dutch, of course, and at the Swedish department in Swedish and so on. And then the third task is communicating what you have found to the surrounding world, but in the committee that was looking at applications there was a lady who wanted to be a professor of Polish and she had contributed to the National Encyclopaedia on Polish literature. But the members of the committee did not take this into account. They didn't think it was important. So there are rules. You have to deal with three things and the fact that you also do a lot of administration is not mentioned. If you are at the top of the department you can write that, and if you have been administrating studies you can mention it, but in general they only take into account the articles you have published. Generally you will have written a doctorate and then you have to write another book to be what we call a *docent*, which is not *docent* in Dutch but a higher form of doctorate, so you have written two books but they are scientific, they are research books. And a third task is mentioned but isn't taken seriously, in fact.

Maarten Asscher: Okay, thank you. Would you like to respond?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Maybe one source of new authors could be to look at the careers of certain scientific people in the universities. As one of the major Dutch writers Gerrit Komrij said: a career starts as a tiger but it ends as a carpet. [laughter] What you see sometimes is that people start really ambitiously with science, and when

they get a bit older they more and more become administrators and managers and so on, because either they get bored with their science or they cannot add anything new to it and have to leave it to the youngsters. I think with those people you see that they become a rector of a university, or a dean or something like that, or take up a post in the trade union, that happens as well. Apparently they need some kind of new subject to work on. I was always a lousy administrator and I think I'm happy that I found writing as a way out. Not that I'm less enthusiastic about the science, but I feel there is more potential there for people who are of an older age, not the younger ones. They might want to write more books on their science at a general level, but if you do this when you're a youngster you will never become a professor. If I had written this book instead of the scientific articles that I wrote I would never have...

Patrick Everard: Then you'd be a journalist.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes. I would have never have got a professorship. And now they are hiring my successor and I'm sure that despite the fact that I agree with you when you say that actually you should have another kind of mentality, not the bean-counter's mentality and so on, nevertheless I see the system works that way and my successor will be somebody who has written a lot in the international literature. There is no candidate yet, but writing a book like this will not help you to become a professor. That's exactly the same point as Mrs Wikén Bonde was making.

Maarten Asscher: Salomon, will you be writing your next book directly in English?

Salomon Kroonenberg: No. Dutch is my sharpest pen. That's my argument. I have thought about it, because I also have some experience of what can happen. A friend of mine, a geologist, Peter Westbroek, wrote a marvellous book in English called *Life as a Geological Force*. It was published in America by Van Nostrand Reinhold, I believe. That was fifteen years ago or so. It didn't sell very well, but he was an excellent writer in English. After that it was translated into Dutch, called *De dynamiek van de aarde*, 'The Dynamics of the Earth', a horrible title because it doesn't bring you anywhere, but it didn't get anywhere and I again thought: I'd better write in my own language, because I know more nuances, more *sfumature*, more details of how to write in my own language. I hope it will be translated, but I think the book would not have been so well received if I hadn't first conquered my own Dutch audience. From there, I hope, of course, it will go wider.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please.

Giuseppe Laterza: I wanted to reply to the question of whether this is a purely Dutch discussion. No, it's very similar to what happens and what's being discussed in Italy. For one reason or another, I don't know, it seems to me that the basic model of acquiring knowledge and research in university, also in the human sciences, is the scientific model. When you go into research, your main goal is to add a little bit to the mountain of knowledge that will then be used. How and by whom is still to be discussed, but there's a mountain of knowledge built through the centuries and you're there to add your little bit. That's your main goal.

There's another possible goal that as a publisher I would see as crucial, which is to share knowledge, generation after generation, because each generation loses knowledge, so you have just to rebuild the knowledge. Things that we think are clear and obvious are not at all obvious, not only in the sense that there's what in Italy we call *analfabetismo di ritorno*: after five years people lose their knowledge. I mean when you see what a scholar's level is, that's a false level. After five years, if I don't put it into practice, I lose my knowledge. But also in a broader sense, when we use words like democracy, liberty, freedom, we think everybody knows what they are. That's absolutely false. Each generation reshapes. So in this sense somebody who's in the university doesn't feel, in Italy, that the goal is to share his knowledge. He thinks, even in the humanities – which is much more controversial I think than in physics or geology – that his task is to add a little grain of a new original. And I think this very much has to do with what we're talking about and with the mission of the publisher and the relationship of the publisher with the research world.

Floor: Bravo.

Maarten Asscher: This is a silent applause. There's time for one last intervention before we go into lunch.

Diane Webb: Can I intervene?

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please.

Diane Webb: This might lead you into the discussion this afternoon. I welcome every little grain of knowledge that's added to this big mound of knowledge and I like any book, I'm interested to know about almost any subject you put in front of me, but what good is any of it and what good are any of these books if they're too expensive for normal people to afford? That's a serious question, because I'm thinking about what Patrick said, about a very well-respected Dutch academic publisher who's existed for centuries, and he said they were commercially successful. Well, I won't

mention any names, but the only reason they can be commercially successful is because they spend no money whatsoever on producing their books. They have no copy editors. They take the translator's files and put them in proofs. There's no intervening stage, they have no real house style, they let people use whatever spelling they want as long as it's consistent, they don't spend any money on them, their books are way too expensive. It's very frustrating. I spent last year translating a very difficult book and this year another very large book and my book for next year will be very fat and difficult as well. They take a lot of time to translate and I know that no one is going to read them. It's very sad, spending all that time for nothing. But there must be also... Oh well, never mind.

Maarten Asscher: Perhaps one last word of comment on the point of quality standards in publishing from an author's point of view and Patrick from your rogue independent point of view.

Patrick Everard: Quality of what?

Maarten Asscher: Well, we are having this session with the author as the central perspective. Is there a difference in, say, publishing culture, in publishing quality between the academic publishing world and the trade publishing world?

Patrick Everard: Yes, it's like she said.

Maarten Asscher: But in trade publishing is it so much better?

Patrick Everard: It should be better and it is mostly better I think, yes.

Maarten Asscher: You think so?

Patrick Everard: Yes. You don't think so? [laughter]

Diane Webb: I would like to add one thing, and that is that the best experience I ever had with a publisher, who was far and away better than any other publisher I've ever worked with, was Columbia University Press. So I wasn't talking about the American universities.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. And Salomon Kroonenberg, in conclusion, if you compare your experiences with English-language learned journals for which you have written articles and the trade publishers who are now doing your human scale book, are these two different worlds in this respect?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well this is just the experience of one, but my editor, my publisher hasn't made any changes or any comments specifically on how to change the book or whatever. They took it as it was and I was maybe surprised, but still I believe they did a good job on it. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: But suppose they had...

Salomon Kroonenberg: Jessica, do you want to add something to that?

Jessica Nash: We did have a copy editor.

Maarten Asscher: But suppose they had sent it out to two of your enemies in geology for peer review.

Salomon Kroonenberg: They didn't. But maybe the most important point I should add is that it was read beforehand by Frank Westerman; he's a very experienced writer and he knows the subject and he has given very important suggestions on how to change it. He himself offered to do that and he did that before the book was given to the publisher. So maybe that was the final step.

Maarten Asscher: You organized your own peer review.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes, but he made some very substantial comments and the book substantially improved as a result of his recommendations, so if the publisher took it as it was, it is because Frank had gone over it and had a lot of confidence in it. So had I.

Maarten Asscher: A last comment from Tiziano Perez please.

Tiziano Perez: Just a question because you've obviously presented a rather alternative view on climate change and the causes of it, and I've heard that many scientists who are presenting these alternative views have great difficulties getting them published, for instance by peer-reviewed international magazines and so on. Do you think it would have been more difficult to have your work published, the human scale book I mean, by a publishing house that relies more heavily on peer review than for instance Atlas, a trade publisher, would do.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, I don't think so. I haven't had that experience, but many people have said: 'You are just a lone voice calling in the desert.' Because everybody goes in one direction on climate change, but when I get questions from the media in interviews and that kind of thing, people like to have different opinions about the same subject before they make up their own mind about it, so I can't really look into the heart of the publisher as to whether this was a point they considered when they decided to publish it, but I always get the feeling that people like to have the opposite view, to be able to have their own position, and a good publisher I think is aware of that and says: well, this is a new sound. 'Such a refreshing sound,' was one of the first comments that came from the reviewers in various publications. People liked that, so I think the audience is much more objective and wants to hear

the broader story than politicians who just seem to think the CO² thing is not a scientific fact, it's only a political fact. [laughter] I do hear that from other scientist friends like Fred Singer, who are real climate sceptics, but I don't consider myself a sceptic. I'm on the sidelines. I shout out something, people do what they want with it. But they say that they have had problems. I have had no problems in publishing, in getting my own articles published in the popular press. I've had no problems scientifically either, because it's not my field. I'm not a climate scientist, I'm just a geologist who's used to looking at long time-scales, so I have written no professional scientific papers on 'this is wrong in climate science', because it's not my subject. I have nothing to add to the facts that have been made known, so maybe that gives me some kind of independence that other people who are working in the same field, and having to get money for their projects, cannot have. I'm not disappointed by doors closing in publishing houses or the media or wherever.

Maarten Asscher: Good, thank you very much Salomon Kroonenberg, thank you Patrick Everard, our human time-scale now points to lunch and we expect you back here at 2 o'clock please, for a session where the publishing perspective and the agent's perspective will be central to our discussion. Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Good, will the authors please break up. Good. Welcome again. After a delightful lunch, now comes the difficult part, the so-called PDD, if you know what that means. The post-dinner dip. So the organizers have thought about this beforehand, of course, and have assembled three splendid people behind this table to make our post-lunch session as lively and as inspiring as possible. And for reasons of continuity, although we will be talking about the publishers' and the agents' perspective, it is wonderful to have author Floris Cohen behind this table so that we can also continue some of the subjects that we tackled this morning. A very warm word of welcome to Catherine Clarke and our first post-lunch speaker Jennifer Crewe, who is associate director and editorial director at Columbia University Press in New York. She has a long tradition of working there, over twenty years, and she will enlighten us about the world of the university press and Columbia in particular. Please.

Jennifer Crewe: Well, I thought I would give a little background to the university press situation in America. University presses in the United States began to be established about 125 years ago, in order to publish the work of American scholars, work that was generally deemed to be unprofitable and that therefore would not be considered publishable by a commercial house. To this day the majority of the books we publish must be written by scholars, as opposed to journalists or creative writers, and must be considered significant contributions to scholarship. So for Columbia, and I think it's true of a number of other university presses as well, at least twenty-five or thirty per cent of the books we publish are purely monographic in nature. They might be revised dissertations, or they might be narrow books by senior scholars.

In the past ten years or so, many people have noticed that the university presses have turned away somewhat from that original mandate and that they are in some ways becoming more like trade houses. To a certain extent this is true, because university presses publish more trade books than they ever have. We are more concerned now about the title and the jacket and the writing style and the argument of these books, and how to publicize and promote them and get their authors on the public stage, than we are about our monographs. I would guess the discussions that we're now having around our conference-room tables are quite similar to the discussions that are happening around the tables of our colleagues in the trade publishing business.

Until, I'd say, the late 1980s early 1990s, however, most university presses published primarily scholarly monographs and gave trade discounts on only a handful of their most important books, the ones they thought were accessible to a broad audience. But then the market for the scholarly monograph, which had been declining throughout the 1980s really began to plummet, and part of this is that libraries began to diverge an already reduced monograph budget to pay for electronic resources and develop the digital library. Also, the scientific journals, a lot of them published here, were becoming so expensive that they took money away from the monograph budget. So as a result the university presses experienced a sharp decline in the sales of their books to this particular channel, to the point where now we sell only about 175 copies of a narrowly-focused scholarly book to libraries. This is down from when I first started at Columbia, when we were selling more like close to a thousand of any very narrow monograph, and I think to the libraries it was more like four or five hundred. Part of this is also the sophistication of inter-library loan in the United States, so that one

library among five or six might buy the book and they can get it to a patron in another library in a day.

So during this same period commercial trade publishers were consolidating to manage costs and to create a kind of critical mass in their programmes, and with the escalating importance of the chain bookstores in the US and the diminishing influence of the independents, in the early 1990s there were about 4,800 bookstores in the United States, whereas now the total is about 1,300. We have these mega Barnes & Nobles and Borders, but a lot of the independents are gone. So because of this, trade editors were being pressured by their new corporate owners to seek out more bestsellers and avoid books that would not sell a minimum of ten thousand, I've even heard the number twenty thousand copies. Given the overheads of the large publishers, a book that sells ten thousand copies really wasn't economically viable. So many of the books that excellent trade houses would have been publishing in earlier years became part of the university press list, or the list of small independent publishers like Greywolf, for example, where the editors were happy to seek them out and publish them. These books generally sold more copies than the monographs did, and they provided an opportunity for the presses to establish their names and that of their universities as disseminators of the ideas of public intellectuals, in addition to the research they were already publishing by scholars who were speaking more or less to their own colleagues in their own fields.

The trade books we published usually, though not always, helped replace the income that we were losing by declining sales of the monograph. But we had to navigate some perilous shoals as we learned to cope with the far higher rate of returns on those trade titles and the deeper discounts that we were required to offer booksellers, and the higher cost of promotion for these titles meant that we had to sell, and sell through, many more copies to make a profit or at least to break even. We learned the hard way that just putting a trade discount on a title and putting it in the front of our catalogue didn't necessarily make it a trade book. But today some university presses, I'm thinking of Yale, for example, devote quite a high percentage of their list to trade books, and others of us devote about twenty-five or thirty per cent of our list to this type of publishing. I should note here that even though the university presses publish more trade books now than previously, many faculty members who sit on the approval boards of the university presses have a more conservative notion of what a university press should publish, and many academics feel that university presses

should exist solely to publish rather esoteric scholarship and so they are therefore rather suspicious of anything that seems synthetic or popular. Sometimes there's a kind of schizophrenia that happens round the table in our offices. We're all excited about a book that we think is going to reach general readers and will be a good seller and then the faculty board is less than enthusiastic, because it's popularising or it's journalistic, which is a word I hear sometimes from them. So we try to educate them and change their minds and say a good trade book or a good textbook will of course help pay the bills for a good monograph. We also stress that well-written accessible books can reach many people, can have a much more profound effect on the culture than a more densely written tome that would scare off some general readers.

But I don't want to give the impression that university presses are becoming small trade publishers. While we publish more trade books than we used to, important differences remain between trade houses and university presses, particularly in their method of selecting books for publication. University press editors, I think, broadly speaking, are specialists. A few university presses now, a couple that I can think of, have editors-at-large who publish across many fields, but this is a pretty recent development. Most university press editors acquire in just two scholarly fields, and they have developed expertise in the areas they handle. They may have a PhD or have done graduate work in those areas, or one of those areas, or they've learned on the job by reading the specialized journals, attending the relevant academic conferences and developing a wide network of acquaintances among scholars in the fields they handle. They select books based on the academic reputation of the author, the book's contribution to scholarship and the manner in which they feel the book will be received by scholars in the field. By contrast most editors at trade houses in the US select their books from a wide variety of topics, or different topic areas. They often publish both fiction and non-fiction, and they may or may not have any expertise in many of these areas. They select books that their instinct and their experience tell them will sell many copies to general readers, who also may not have any particular expertise in the area. But university press editors who go to these conferences, and call on scholars in their offices on campus, are acquiring their books primarily through relationships with the scholar-writers themselves.

So we traditionally have very few dealings with agents, but lately, as we've published more trade books, we find ourselves dealing with more agents. In the late 1980s I would say a university press might have published only one or two books a year that

were handled by agents. Now that number is higher, but it varies according to publisher. I did a quick check of 150 new books we published in 2008: twelve were agented, although only four of these in that year were actually brought to us by an agent, who was actually introducing the book and possibly the author to the editor for the first time. Others were books we knew about through contact with the author or an advisor and only learned of the agent later on in the process. The most frequent scenario with agented books published by a university press is that the editor has found the author through reading or academic contacts, or has published the author previously. The editor then considers the proposal, has a peer review, and he takes it through the various approval stages we have, takes it to the faculty board. Once the book has been approved the author then tells the agent that he wants to be published with that press and the editor then makes the offer through the agent. I'm not sure why this happens, but probably the author has engaged the agent primarily for help with contractual issues and not for help in seeking a publisher, or the other scenario may be more likely, which is that the agent's told the author that the book really isn't appropriate for a trade house and so it's best that the author submits it to a university press himself.

There are of course cases where the agent approaches the editor first and this does happen more frequently today, but often the university press editors find that books sent to us directly by agents are ones that have obviously been rejected by trade houses and aren't necessarily written by scholars or don't necessarily help build the list the editor is really working on. Also they are often books that would not pass the rigorous peer review process that every book must go through before being accepted by a university press. I've never worked at a trade house, but I did work at Scribner's in the college department, which was a tiny department within a big trade house, and I have friends who work in trade houses, and they have confirmed my guess that about eighty-five per cent of the books that they publish are handled by agents and the editor's primary contact is with that agent. The trade editors cultivate relationships with agents the way university press editors cultivate relationships with scholars. But as the acquisitions landscape in the US is changing, I think if university press editors hope to publish serious trade non-fiction that is represented by agents, we need to seek them out, seek out agents who are interested in the kind of work we want to publish and keep them informed about our list and what we want. And most importantly we need to make it clear that the editors would like to be in the running

for the major books that are also being submitted to commercial houses, major books by scholars that fit their lists.

However, I really don't think it would be healthy for a university press to cede too much of the acquisitions work to agents, as university presses are essentially specialist publishers, not generalist publishers as trade houses are. We develop strong lists in certain areas, and our editors' main job is to define those lists and seek out the best work in those fields, directly commissioning some books and being aware always of their own list's overall impact on the field. Much of what comes to us via agents we consider as one-off trade books, and they may or may not help build a specific list we're working on. Aside from the university press editors' twenty-five or thirty per cent, whatever it is, of the list that's made up of trade books, the rest of the books we publish are not just monographs but upper-level undergraduate course texts and graduate-level texts and sometimes reference books as well. Most of those books tend not to be handled by agents.

Lately I've heard agents say that because of the consolidation in trade publishing, the publishing industry, and instability in that profession, with its rapid turnover of editors, publishers are often less committed now to authors. The allegiance of trade book authors has shifted to agents, and I think agents are now often doing the work that editors used to do on proposals and on manuscripts. That's what they say. And I've been on panels where agents have said, and I have no doubt it's true, that agents really do help authors develop ideas and suggest ideas to them and develop their proposals to reach a larger market than they might otherwise have reached. But frankly, as a university press editor I haven't really experienced it that much myself. Most of my agented authors have strong ties to me and to my press and their agents' involvement in the development of their work seems to me minimal. I often find that proposals and manuscripts that are submitted to us by agents need a lot of work at least for gearing it to our audience and the agent's pitch to me as an editor is sometimes sort of comically brief. It doesn't give a lot of information and it doesn't display an understanding of the press's list, unless the agent has had some university press experience or unless the agent is like a couple I know. There's an agent in New York I work with frequently who represents French books, and he understands what we're doing rather better. I'm sure this is because the agents do not feel that the particular projects they're sending to university presses are really worth that much time and effort, because they know the advances that we'll give these authors are

pretty small. So agents often send us projects that seem to me to have been rejected by commercial houses or projects that have very little potential for high sales. I have the impression that while agents work to edit and refine proposals with high sales potential, they don't do much work on the proposals they send to us, and I don't blame them for that, because it's not worth their time.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that while university presses do not have the deep pockets that commercial publishers have, and most of us are only rarely able to offer large advances, our trade authors have the advantage of being a kind of big fish in a small pond. Their book might be placed first in our catalogue, whereas if it was published by Random House or Little, Brown it might be further back, it might be considered a B book not an A book. The commercial press may not promote the book much until or unless it starts to take off, but we'll promote it pretty heartily as a lead title and stick with it and most of us do a very good job, if not of television, although we just had an author on the *Today* show, that's not all that frequent, but we get a lot of radio and other publicity and certainly review attention. We will really have a lot of people who'll get very excited about those books because they can do things with them with the media. Also, tax laws for non-profit publishers in the United States don't force us to put a book out of print or remainder it or shred it as quickly as a commercial publisher would. We're not taxed on the inventory in the same way and so we can keep them around, and authors are sometimes aware of that and come to us because of it. The prestige of the imprint of a university press can make a difference too, particularly if an author is up for promotion or something like that.

However, one danger for a university press of going too far down that trade road is that they definitely get caught in the trap of labelling a book 'trade' when it really isn't a trade book. Because they're aware that presses cannot sell enough copies of most monographs to earn back their costs, many scholars in the US feel the need to claim that their books are really for general readers and they try to disguise the monograph as a trade book. Agents even sometimes represent dissertations, which then get sold for inflated advances, because the publisher thinks that it might have more sales potential since an agent is handling it, maybe. But when that happens, or if the editor is really not being honest with him or herself about what the market is for that book, when the university press, full of hope, agrees to publish this book as a trade book it's usually a mistake. The book generally sells like a monograph and the

press then loses more money than if they had published it as a monograph, because they've put more into it in terms of promotion and publicity and effort.

So this phenomenon of a scholar trying unsuccessfully to fashion his or her research into a trade book is really I think a reaction to market forces. It's because a lot of university presses are contracting in the monograph area and not publishing as many and so scholars are nervous that they won't get published, and they have to get published to get tenure in the humanities and some of the social sciences. They have to have books. So I think this is a danger, and it can result in maybe a mediocre contribution to the field and maybe even jeopardize the author's career if the tenure committee prefers he published it as a traditional scholarly book.

In short, scholarly publishers need to come to grips with the fact that if a book doesn't have a clear message, one that is immediately understandable and easily pitched in one sentence, it'll have a tough time in the market as a trade book. If the author doesn't have a reputation, a general reputation, if it isn't abundantly clear why this particular author is the best one to write this particular book, it'll be difficult for us to sell it as a trade book. And if the main audience for the book isn't immediately apparent, it will not succeed as a trade book. As the saying goes in the US: if it doesn't walk like a duck and quack like a duck, there isn't anything you can do to convince buyers that it is a duck.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much, Jennifer Crewe. If I may use my advantage as your neighbour to start the discussion with a few questions, I would like to bring up the subject of peer review and ask you, generally speaking, not just for the Columbia University Press, whether in our time peer review is a relic from the past or whether it still serves an essential role in maintaining the character and the success of a university press.

Jennifer Crewe: I think it serves an essential role. I think that it's true, as Diane said, there are certain fields where there are only a handful of qualified scholars to peer review a particular manuscript and then you might have, you know, some sort of infighting and jealousy and that kind of thing, but for most cases when a peer review is done well and carefully, the peer reviewers can save the press and the author from many embarrassing mistakes or just engage in a really interesting, helpful discussion about how to make that book better. I benefit from those peer reviews as much as the author does, because I may have had a hunch about something but I'm not an expert in that field and then when my hunch is confirmed I can guide the author better. Also,

it's essential for our faculty board. Members of our faculty board, and I'm sure this is true of Chicago and everywhere else, pay very close attention to those peer reviews and sometimes they'll even suggest: 'Oh, well you got the wrong reader for x, y and z reasons.' That reader isn't perfect and they'll suggest another one and then we'll go with that. So it's a series of checks, and particularly with scholarly monographs, when you are publishing what you think is going to be a significant lasting contribution, you want to vet it first and make sure that what you think about it is true.

Maarten Asscher: But how does the growing number of trade titles on the list of a university press profit from the function of a peer review committee?

Jennifer Crewe: Well, in our case it's even more essential that we have a peer review to convince our faculty board that it's a worthwhile endeavour, that scholars feel it is furthering a general dissemination of knowledge about that particular field. Just because it's a trade book doesn't mean it isn't also a good scholarly book. This goes back to the climbing down the rungs of the ladder comment that Detlef made. That may be true in science, where you really do have to use a different language when you're writing for general readers, but in the humanities there are plenty of books that are very good sellers, even bestsellers, by historians and people in the field of literature or what have you, that are very important contributions to scholarship and yet they're general books because the author was able to write them for that audience.

Maarten Asscher: But your peers in science or in art will always be more interested in innovations within the field than in opening up the field to outsiders. Salomon Kroonenberg said this morning in his presentation: 'From a scientific point of view there's nothing new in my book.' A peer review committee might say: 'Listen there's nothing new in this book, so it's not our mission as a university press to take this on. Our mission is to further the interests of science.'

Jennifer Crewe: But what the peer review will do in that case, some of them will say: 'This is a synthesis of previous knowledge, but the author is presenting it in a certain way, so that students or general readers can understand it.' And peer review can also catch errors that the author has made.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, Jessica.

Jessica Nash: I was wondering how long this peer reviewing and vetting process takes. Because you say you want to be in competition now for trade books that agents are offering, but an auction can last twenty-four hours.

Jennifer Crewe: Right, well, for example our finance and economics editor has this problem and some of the rest of us do too. We try to get somebody very quickly to read the proposal. Occasionally we do go forward with an offer, getting the chair of our faculty board to agree to it, if he's read the proposal, if we have to, but that kind of book is generally a proposal, which is not as long to read as a 300-page manuscript or something, and in general we've been able to convince people to read it quickly and answer questions, if only verbally.

Maarten Asscher: In many cases the decision that has to be made is about the reputation of the author, who is probably known to other specialists in the field.

Jennifer Crewe: Right. Usually that's the case with that kind of book. But the normal process, if everything goes well, you can get a peer review within four weeks or so and present it to the board, if everything goes well. But sometimes the reviewers are slow, or the editor's slow getting it out, so then it's two or three months, but we try to do it quickly, because there is this time pressure.

Maarten Asscher: So if you were required after a certain disaster to reinvent the Columbia University Press under your responsibility, you would again institute a peer review committee in the same way, or are there certain changes that you would like to make if you were allowed to do so?

Jennifer Crewe: I like peer review. [laughter]

Douwe Draaisma: I was surprised to hear that there is a faculty board that has to approve this. Aren't you independent enough as a publisher to publish what you want? What faculty is this and what is its role?

Jennifer Crewe: Well, this is true of almost every university press, I would say, and my colleagues can confirm that. All university presses have some kind of board that approves the contracts we want to offer. In Columbia's case we basically choose those members. The provost appoints them, but we recommend and he usually just appoints the people we want. In some cases the provost, or whoever it is, will just assign people to the press, but we more or less try to represent the fields that we're publishing in, so that we can have one expert to look to if there's a disagreement or something. They read the editor's description of the book, information about the author and the book etc. They read the peer reviews and the author's response, and in our case we give them about twenty pages of the manuscript, then they discuss the books. Once a month we have a meeting. This kind of thing happens at most university presses and the boards are variously comprised. I think some of them are

quite small, some of them are larger, but they have very interesting discussions and we find that the faculty actually like being on that particular committee, because they get to see things in all parts of the university. They get to see what work is being done.

Maarten Asscher: How important are commercial considerations in an individual decision about a certain publishing project?

Jennifer Crewe: The faculty board has nothing to say about the sales or the commercial prospects of it. That we decide in our own editorial committee, where we look at a book and decide whether we can afford to publish it, or if it's a monograph, whether we can get some subvention help or something like that. And if it's a trade book we have a long discussion about whether really it is a trade book and if so how many copies and at what price and that kind of thing.

Maarten Asscher: University presses doing more and more trade books: again, speaking in general, not just for your press, is that just so these trade books can pay the bill for the threatened scholarly monographs, or is there an intellectual, cultural philosophy behind that development?

Jennifer Crewe: Well it's not to pay the bills for the monographs. Maybe I emphasised that too much in my talk. I'd say the textbooks, the books that are course adoption books and the reference books are the ones that actually help to pay those bills, because you don't actually have to put such a deep discount on them and we're not at risk of so many returns. But the trade books of course, when they sell well, can bring in a lot of money. I think that the interest in doing trade books is to spread the word about the press and the university and have more of a public role in public intellectual discourse. That's the appeal of those books for us.

Maarten Asscher: And then of course comes the difficult question: is Barnes & Noble eager to join the public intellectual discourse? How do you fight your way into that very difficult market for trade books? Because there your prestige as an academic press doesn't convince everybody immediately.

Jennifer Crewe: Well, we don't really have to fight our way in. We get heard at those and they do buy. Sometimes Barnes & Noble takes a lot of copies and then we start worrying that they'll have to send them back. But there's very little time that the sales manager has to go and present those books to those people. And they aren't of course in the high bestseller category. But there are buyers in every field and they take copies.

Maarten Asscher: Anyone from the audience. Yes, please.

Alan Thomas: The university presses started to move into trade publishing in a really significant way, I think, before the library market collapsed decisively. It really began in the early eighties and I think it was tied to the consolidation of trade book publishing, limiting the purchasers to some important commercial publishers, by and large conglomerates, and a perception, not always matched by reality, that mid-list non-fiction books would become available to the university presses. But if you look back at the mission statements of university presses in the United States – many of them were founded in the 1890s or the early part of the twentieth century – almost all of those statements do include sentiments about the university press reaching a popular audience and having a larger social and cultural mission. So that was built into what we were supposed to do.

I thought I'd add something on the peer review matter. It's important to understand that the peer review process is not mechanical. University presses use it as a tool and good editors can sometimes get projects accepted by a faculty board even if a reader's report is negative. The response of the author to the readers is at least as important, I think, in most presses, as the reader's reports themselves. The faculty board likes to have a sense that the author has engaged with reports, made a good rebuttal if one is necessary, and will then approve it. But we also know how to find peer reviewers who themselves have published trade books, so it's not as though they're always clueless as to what our ambitions might be for a particular project. We let them know if we're considering something as a trade book, but in cases where readers are pushing the author to make a book more specialized, to emphasise methodology and theory at the expense of narrative, for example, we simply ask the authors to ignore those suggestions and focus on other ones.

Jennifer Crewe: I'd actually like to add another thing about peer review and the importance of peer review particularly in our publishing of translations. We publish quite a few translations from European and Asian languages, and I know Chicago and Princeton do too, and while I can read French, I can't read Dutch or German or Italian and I need peer reviewers to answer my specific questions about what the coverage is in this book and how scholars and students and general readers in the United States would respond to this book, because I can't read it myself. I can glean what I can from what I know of the author's reputation and what's been written about it, if it's been reviewed in the TLS or some other English language publication, but the peer

review, even though the book has been published and successful in its own country, helps us determine what to translate.

Maarten Asscher: Would you like to comment?

Floris Cohen: I have a question about peer review. Chicago made it a pleasant experience in that when the book I wrote was up for being reviewed they asked in advance whether there were certain reviewers I would prefer the editor not to consult or preferably to consult. And that's nothing to do, or not necessarily at least, with personal hostility or whatever, but just with the sense that there are different currents in a certain field, certain ways of thinking which may be very antagonistic and you may suspect them of automatically tearing down, or automatically praising, the book you've written. In any case I very much like that possibility. I've had that experience with Chicago, I just don't know whether it is more or less universal.

Jennifer Crewe: I certainly have that approach.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. As a starter for our later plenary session, one more? Yes, please.

Ian Malcolm: I just wanted to add that there seemed to be an assumption in some of the questions that the peer review process and the editorial board was a noble duty or an impediment to sales, but it's what ultimately makes the imprint a hallmark of quality and in the long term it's actually a boost for sales. When people see the Columbia logo, the Chicago logo, the Princeton logo, they know that what's inside has been vetted and that if it's not authoritative it's at least robustly argued. It means something. So it's a process I think we all buy into for all the good reasons but also for some nice crass reasons as well.

Maarten Asscher: Well, I see your point, but Adelphi in Italy or Suhrkamp in Germany or Farrar, Straus and Giroux in America as far as I am aware have no peer review committees, and still their logo on the spine of their publications carries a similar watermark of quality, so an editorial board with sufficient prestige and education and experience, especially with a list that is becoming more and more a trade list, might fulfil the same role as the academic peer review committee in a fully academic press. That was more or less my point.

Jennifer Crewe: There are a couple of university presses that do not show trade books to their faculty boards. We're not one of them, but there are some who don't want their faculty involved.

Maarten Asscher: Because if you want to reach out to a general readership, and that's the perspective we're talking about, then there is a sort of daring and a sort of commercial inspiration and an entrepreneurship and an uncommon view of matters involved that might not always be shared by committees in general. Committees tend to conform to mainstream notions. Is the committee model sufficiently suited to accommodate really innovative and controversial topics?

Ian Malcolm: I would say that it depends on the committee. As Jennifer said, we select our committee and they're much more flexible than you might imagine. They allow us to publish all sorts of books. They're very clever people, very wide-ranging and open to all sorts of publications and they love the fact that we publish 400-print-run, 200-dollar books about archaeology and they love that we publish 50,000-print-run books about bird-watching.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. Good, thank you very much. Paulien Retèl.

Paulien Retèl: Considering the question that scholars on the board would probably not like to discuss books that are meant for trade, I think that it's also part of the job of scholars that they don't only publish or disseminate their knowledge to their peers and colleagues but also to the rest of the world and the public at large. I would think that trade books that you are considering for publication at a university press should be submitted to your board, so I don't think, in my view, it's a point of discussion.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. We will certainly refer to this later, but for the moment thank you, Jennifer Crewe. We switch now to the agent's perspective, although Catherine Clarke to my left was also for many years publishing director of the trade books department of Oxford University Press. But for the past seven years she's been an agent. Please, Catherine, your view of how to present academic writing to a general readership.

Catherine Clarke: Thank you, Maarten. I've called my very short paper rather capriciously 'The Alchemy of the Text: Writing for the General Reader', and I chose the word alchemy with some sense of irony. In fact it comes from a phrase used in the acknowledgments of a book called *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* by one of my authors, John Dickie, whose Dutch publisher is here in the audience, Heye Koningsveld. He teaches Italian history at University College London and was one of my earliest clients after I became a literary agent in 2001. He called me his alchemical agent, though I've a feeling that has more to do with the money than my editorial advice. In fact his Italian publisher is here with us too, Giuseppe Laterza, so a very

happy concurrence. I mention that book simply as an example of how an academic who's previously only published with university presses and in academic journals, both in Italian and in English, set out to jump that divide, and I think, although there's been a great deal of debate today, that it is a divide, which I'd like to explore a bit here, between writing for one's academic peers and writing for the wider general public via a trade publisher.

So I'd like to put to you a few perhaps slightly provocative statements and questions, more as discussion points than anything else. First of all, storytelling is the most important skill for the serious general non-fiction writer. Together with academic credentials, it's the most important factor for success. Secondly, the art of writing a book proposal is as important as writing the book itself. Third, the literary agent or the publishing editor is crucial in the transition from academic expert to successful general writer. And fourth, do men write better non-fiction than women?

Well, let's look at storytelling first. The Cambridge historian Geoffrey Elton who was in his time a refugee from Germany in the 1930s, once said that history is narrative thickened by analysis. Note that he puts narrative first, narrative being a story or a recital of facts, as the Concise Oxford Dictionary would have it. I don't want to assume that history is the only category in serious general non-fiction; obviously we've been talking about science a great deal today. The same general rules do apply to academics writing in all other disciplines. I'd like to share with you some thoughts and advice that a senior editor at a large London trade house wrote in an e-mail to one of our agency's academic clients a few years back. He was about to write his first trade book. His name is Peter Heather and he was writing a book for Macmillan on the fall of the Roman Empire – not a small subject.

Assuming the target reader is an inquisitive, intelligent person who has forgotten everything they were once taught, the editor sets out his advice under the headings: nothing to prove, make it live, background, momentousness, trajectory and people. He looks at what academic habits the author should leave behind and how he would need to adjust his own mindset to anticipate what his new, non-expert readers would actually want to read. So under 'nothing to prove' that editor reminds the author that his readers will assume he has the expertise. He doesn't need to spell out each point and provide proof for it. On the contrary, all that proof should be left out. Footnotes: sent to the back of the book or omitted altogether. In 'make it live' he dwells on sensual awareness. (Don't forget, this is a history book.) Giving a sense of place and

atmosphere; what the people and the terrain look like. In ‘background’, his next heading: don’t pursue knowledge, he advises, as you might with your own academic peers. The reader will appreciate at least a couple of sentences sketching in some background information. It could also be the opportunity to introduce some of the larger themes of the book, the underlying argument, without being heavy-handed. Under ‘momentousness’ he advises the author to infuse the book with a sense of epic scale and importance. Under ‘trajectory’ he says: ‘Generally people don’t read stories for their own sake, but because they want to reach somewhere a story is taking them.’ And finally, under ‘people’, he writes: ‘People like hearing about other people. Include what we know of the thoughts, the views, the actions, the lies and the feelings of the people who make up this narrative.’

So, armed with that advice, which of course is just from one editor to one author, perhaps we can look at my second point: that the book proposal is as important as writing the book itself. I speak from the point of view of an agent. And I should point out that trade publishers of serious non-fiction, and by that I mean Penguin – we’re talking about the British and American scene – Little, Brown, Simon & Schuster, HarperCollins etc. don’t on the whole like to be sent a finished book. It gives them very little room for manoeuvre, or input for their own imagination. But they do expect a very substantial proposal in order to assess whether this is a book they can invest in and sell. And unlike academic presses, where the decision-making process will include academic vetting by other experts in the subject – and I had fifteen years at Oxford University press, very much involved in that process – the decision-makers at a trade publisher will all be within the publishing house, not only the editor but also the publishing director, the sales director, and the marketing and publicity director. All will see the proposal in advance of an acquisitions meeting, circulated usually by e-mail by the editor, and all will have strong views, usually based on past performance of books in the same category, which will determine whether the publisher makes an offer to publish it.

So what should that proposal include? There are many ways of structuring a proposal. It might begin with an anecdote, or a story, but it should first of all set out the scope and the ambition of the book in a confident and vivid way, giving it a clear trajectory. Nothing should be in note form; it should be written in the same style as the book will be, so that the publisher knows the flavour of the book and how well the author can write. It may include a sample chapter, or sample sections. One of my colleagues at

our agency describes writing a proposal as like taking the reader on a journey. The road is clear ahead and you, the author, are pointing out the features of the landscape on either side. You avoid using the passive, and you avoid all academic jargon at all costs. The word ‘discourse’ should not appear. [laughter] Set out the structure of the book with fully described chapters. The advantage of writing the proposal in this way is that as the author you will have had to think through in some detail what the book entails. And you will also be given an advance, part of which will be paid on signature of contract, so that you have some financial support while you write it. In some cases that gives an academic author the possibility of taking leave in order to write the book.

Third, the role of the agent or the editor in the alchemical transformation. I won’t spend too long here, but just to make one point: it is true, and it’s a point that’s come up already today, that British and American trade publishers largely, in serious non-fiction, prefer to receive proposals from literary agents. For two reasons: the agent will in most cases have already done a substantial amount of work on the proposal with the author before it’s sent to the publisher, in effect acting as a kind of quality control, and second the publisher is more at ease negotiating the terms of contract with an agent than with a novice author. The agent will usually understand the publishing processes and be a go-between if a difficulty arises further on in the relationship. They’re a sort of buffer zone, protecting the author’s interests even if that means giving them bad news. But often the crucial editorial relationship passes from the agent to the editor as the author writes the book. It was certainly John Dickie’s first hands-on editor at his British publisher, Hodder, with his book *Cosa Nostra*, who in fact was a fiction editor, who turned his book from very good to outstanding.

And now let me move very quickly on to that last, deliberately highly provocative point: do men write better non-fiction than women? Of course I don’t believe that for a minute. It’s true that there are far more men than women in senior academic posts, at least in Britain (I don’t know if it’s the same here), in the humanities and even more so in science, and so the number of them making that transition to publishing for the general reader is disproportionately, or proportionately, high. Perhaps more male historians write about military history and the rise and fall of kings and emperors, and more men read them than any other history categories. Perhaps there are more men writing popular science and economics, and more men reading it. And perhaps the

history written by women tends to be more social history, about domestic realities and the daily lives of people, including the queens and duchesses. But the boundaries are definitely blurring. Perhaps we could come back to this later. As it happens, a piece by the journalist Alison Flood in Britain, who writes for the *Guardian*, entitled ‘where are the books by women with big ideas’, appeared just two weeks ago in the *Guardian* newspaper’s books blog, where she looks at what she calls ‘the recent vogue for shrink-wrapped big think books on economics’ – Malcolm Gladwell, the authors of *Freakonomics*, our agency’s own Tim Harford and his *The Undercover Economist* for example – and notes that they are all by men and that perhaps this is a genetic difference, men nailing down ideas and women nailing down stories. There’s something to this, she ends, with tongue partly in cheek. Or maybe that’s just my feminine intuition. Let me leave it there.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much, Catherine. The art of the proposal. I can well see how this is an essential factor in getting a trade author published by a serious publishing house or even a university press, but what is the role of a proposal for a truly academic writer? Does it exist there as a serious phenomenon? I mean, Salomon Kroonenberg wouldn’t have dreamt of writing a proposal for his book *The Human Scale*. He just set to work. Isn’t that the normal pattern for academic writers? Would it be important for them to change their behaviour if they wanted their stuff to come across to a general readership more successfully?

Catherine Clarke: I would certainly advise an academic author to do that if he has the potential and the desire to be published by a trade publisher – I would in fact look at moving backwards if you like and get them to write a proposal for a book that they had already finished – because it would, I know from experience, stand a better chance, at least if I and the author share the view that it’s a book that a trade publisher would want to pursue. That’s for the reasons I gave. I think the trade publisher likes to feel as though there is some possibility of input with that author.

Maarten Asscher: So if we look at the non-trade side of university presses, does the proposal play a role there as well? I mean for example a peer review committee. Will they ever discuss a proposal?

Jennifer Crewe: Yes. This doesn’t happen so much with an author’s first book, because if as often happens they have a revised version of a dissertation then the book’s already finished, but with the author’s second or third book they may seek out a publisher before it’s finished and it’s wise for them to do so for the same reasons

Catherine was speaking about with trade books. The editor wants to have some input, so the proposal is very important and then our faculty board will see the proposal along with the peer reviews of the proposal.

Maarten Asscher: If you want to get subsidies, at least in this country, or bursaries, or fellowships you always have to write a project description, which is a sort of proposal. Many people from the creative professions violently dislike the art of proposal writing, because it limits the journey that you're about to embark on. Could any of the authors comment on the niceties or the horrors of proposal making?
Salomon.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Yes, I have to do so much proposal writing for research funding that I was extremely happy that I could just let my mind run freely and let it grow organically. Of course I had no previous commitment to any publisher beforehand. Maybe that was my freedom and maybe I've lost my innocence in this meeting because I see that you also ask for proposals. But I would hate to have to make a proposal before I started writing, really.

Maarten Asscher: If at age forty you had written a proposal for your book, perhaps that could have bought you an early retirement. Giuseppe Laterza.

Giuseppe Laterza: In Italy it's practically impossible to get proposals from authors. They consider themselves artists. You cannot ask an artist, you cannot ask Picasso to make a proposal for 'Guernica'. I've always admired the Anglo-Saxon author, even if he's a very high level historian or philosopher, because it seems to me that by writing a proposal he accepts that he is a professional, and this is very important. In Italy, all the publishing industry has an ambiguous status. We all think of ourselves as public intellectuals, in a way *au-dessus du marché*. We think that going to the market is something that gets us, as Detlef was saying, up from the hill. And I think proposals are very useful. From my point of view as an Italian publisher, to receive a proposal from Catherine or from another agent or from a publisher is very important, because I can share the nature of the book, I can see exactly, as Catherine would say, the flavour. And I would like to get back to something that Salomon said this morning: you shouldn't be so scared about proposals, I think.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I hate it!

Giuseppe Laterza: But you said this morning something which I thought was very, very nice, you said: 'By teaching I discover new things.' Proposals I think are a way in which the author discovers problems and ways around them. Then the problem is

that after three years the book is completely different from the proposal, which is another problem in itself.

Jennifer Crewe: A proposal for a research grant is not a book proposal. We've all seen them, you know: here's how I got my Guggenheim [Fellowship]. That tells me what you want to research but it doesn't tell me how you're going to put the book together, so we often will tell the author to make changes in it. Because that's written for a little committee of people who are going to give the grant.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Jessica, do I have to write a proposal for my next book?
[laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Catherine, what kind of assistance do you provide for your writers in shaping their projects so that trade publishers become sufficiently enthusiastic about them?

Catherine Clarke: The Norwegians have a great phrase. I don't know if you have an equivalent here or if there are others, called *språkvask*, which means language-laundering, broadly speaking, and that is a process which Norwegian writers will go through, if they're writing in English. There's a whole layer of Norwegian *språkvask* experts who are hired by publishers, or indeed by academics, to convert the proposal or indeed the entire book that they have written in English into idiomatic English. It occurs to me that to some extent, perhaps at a slightly more structural level as well as a linguistic level, that that's what we as agents are doing. We will give some guidance to our authors on what we would like to see in an initial outline. I will suggest sometimes to my authors that they send me three pages, perhaps, on broadly what they would like to cover in their book. Based on that I can see if there are fault lines in it that need addressing at that stage, or if it looks as though it does give a very strong indication of what the strengths of the book are going to be. It also gives me a sense of where they are going to need to expand and explain. So they will go another round and I'll say: okay come back next time with twenty-five pages, thirty pages, something fairly substantial, and these are the sort of things I suggest you draw out in that longer proposal. And that will be the basic document that would be going to the publishers. But I will spend sometimes five or six months going back and forth with an author, because they only get one shot at this. If I submit a proposal that's not as good as it can possibly be, to my normal submission of ten, twelve editors, and they all come back saying: 'Hmm great idea, lots of potential, not quite there yet,' then they're not really going to take it seriously again next time round. So it has to be as

good as it can be. If that takes a lot of time and a lot of help with advising the author so be it. Sometimes it's a very frustrating process for them. They find it really frustrating, but they'll do it if they have that spectre of being turned down if they don't get it absolutely right. Then of course there's a huge element of trust, they need to trust me to know what I'm talking about. And they know the rewards can be great.

Maarten Asscher: Is this what Detlef Felken called 'finding the right book for them to write'?

Catherine Clarke: Yes. I think sometimes the book that they come to you with is not the book that... Especially if it's the first time that they're looking at writing a trade book, and sometimes someone will write to me saying, 'I want to do a study of wigs and witches in the 1670s in Norfolk, and this by the way is my publication CV and what I've done.' My immediate thought is: clearly this is not a book for a general audience. However, the way he's put it to me with such passion and such description suggests to me that if you could stand right back and look at a much broader picture, there may be something that he is actually burning to write but he doesn't know that yet.

Maarten Asscher: Was this always the trade of the literary agent, to go so far in helping to shape a writing and researching project, or is this a development of the past decades in relation to the work of the commissioning editor?

Catherine Clarke: Yes. I'm sure my colleagues would have something to say on that as well. My sense is that it's relatively recent that academics have been writing books that sell in that market, and therefore they're attractive to agents and the agents do play a clear role in that. I think perhaps it's happened in the last twenty years and some agents have been very much in the forefront of it. But I think it goes back to the point that Jennifer mentioned earlier, which is that a lot of trade editors have moved away from the university network and yet the authors that they would like to publish are still in that community, but they don't have access to them. They don't know necessarily how that community has moved on, who's who and who's hot and who's young and upcoming etc. And so they will rely on agents, who do make it their business to have that network, to bring the authors to them. The first two book deals that I did as an agent were both suggestions by trade publishers. One wanted a biography of Chekov, the other wanted a biography of Descartes, and he came to me and said, 'I don't know how to go about finding someone to do this.' And I already had those contacts. So it does happen that way round as well.

Maarten Asscher: Frits.

Frits van der Meij: What I like about proposals, Anglo-Saxon proposals, as an editor is not that I can still be influential on the book, because I can't, because in the end I get an English book and I have to get it translated, but what I like is, for example, I've read ten proposals in the last few years on Pompeii and nine out of ten proposals were exactly the same. There was one outstanding book and it was much easier for me to be able to judge on the basis of a proposal and to pick out this one book than if I'd had to read all those ten books. Now I have the book I want and that's because of those proposals, and I think it's different when you work with your Dutch authors. Then it's a different process. In this country there are some literary agents, but it's not as established as it is in the UK or in the US. So I would say that for translation it is great that proposals exist.

Maarten Asscher: Haye Koningsveld?

Haye Koningsveld: That being true, what Frits just said about there not being many agents in the Netherlands coming with Dutch authors to Dutch publishers, I think proposals can play a role between the publisher and the author. We sometimes ask authors to write a proposal for us to get the backing of the publishing house and to agree upon the project that you're both embarking on. I mean, you're going on a road that is costing money, and you want to make a profit and you want to make a book together, and sometimes just talking about it for an hour or so is not enough. So it works that way too.

Maarten Asscher: What is your experience, Catherine, in the matter of translated academic non-fiction for a general readership? What role, for example, does the proposal play in taking up translations for trade books in OUP presses and their peers?

Catherine Clarke: Do you mean translation into English?

Maarten Asscher: Into English, yes, for example from European languages into English. In what way could we perfect the art of the proposal or the art of our presentations to better accommodate the editorial decision-making process at UK university presses?

Catherine Clarke: Well I have to say with great regret that very few authors are translated into English. This is true, isn't it? Although there's a much stronger tradition of that I think among American university presses than there is in most English university presses. But very few European authors are translated into English, with obviously some exceptions. I think within the context of a university press, if

they are being recommended by UK academics very strongly, who say that this is somebody extraordinarily important in this field, and there is no equivalent person writing this in English, and we strongly recommend that you consider them, in my experience at Oxford University Press, that is a possibility, but it's very rare. It's very rare, regrettably rare. It tends to be much more the other way round.

Maarten Asscher: But for an accessible, high-quality book on geology? What would be the best way? To convince an established OUP author to help? To overcome your resistance and write a proposal after all? Or to have thirty pages in English translation? Or all three?

Catherine Clarke: Perhaps one and three, but I think going back to writing a proposal for a clearly very successful well-established book is unnecessary in that sense. I think recommendation by your academic peers in Britain is a very important part of that, I would think. What would you think, Jennifer?

Jennifer Crewe: Well I would say that we have a very strong translation programme and we do a lot of translations and Chicago does too, and the people we choose to translate tend to be people who are already in the discussion, the academic discussion. People in the academy are already reading them in the original languages and then they would really like to teach them but they're not in English, or you just get a sense from your reading and going to conferences and hearing the work people are talking about, so then we seek out what is the most important book by that author and we try to translate it. No proposal can really do that. It's just learning about who the writers are that people are talking about in the US. But, having said that, I will say that what the Dutch publishers are doing, which is to give a little sample translation, I think that's excellent. Doing a brochure that describes the book in English really helps at the Frankfurt Book Fair, when there are publishers who have an English description and something else that helps you determine what exactly it is. Sometimes you're not choosing the book primarily on the author's reputation in the academic community in the US, but you're choosing it because no American scholar would write that book in that way on that topic, so that's why you're interested in the book. So I think the more information you can give the better. I agree with Catherine that we don't look at proposals for the foreign books because they're there, they exist and we can get reviews of them.

Salomon Kroonenberg: My book was presented at the Frankfurter Buchmesse and the London Book Fair in a special brochure featuring ten top non-fiction books in the

Netherlands. The first chapter has been translated into English. It has been offered and interest has been shown by Harvard University Press, they have asked for peer reviews from four scientists, Dutch scientists of course, because the book was in Dutch, top scientists including Louise Fresco for instance, who is very well known in this country and also internationally, and other ones. But this is more than a year ago. We haven't heard anything since then. [laughter]

Jennifer Crewe: Well I know who you can call.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Would you take a message for me?

Maarten Asscher: When you look at the long term time-scale, I don't think a year is...

Jennifer Crewe: It's deep time, deep time.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Thank you Maarten, thank you very much. That's how you get back at me.

Jennifer Crewe: I may be wrong, but my hunch is that in the sciences we tend to think we're exporting rather than importing, because we can sell our science books in English in Europe, all over the place, so there's sometimes a built-in prejudice against translating a science book. But also the editor is probably on the fence, wondering whether he can make a go of it with an author who's not known, whereas we have a lot of scientists who are writing about climate in the US so that may be part of the problem there. But you should have heard by now.

Maarten Asscher: Does it count in the academic world to be translated into other languages. Floris, could you perhaps give me your impression of that? If you've just published one book that is published as a trade book with a university press, but then if that book is translated into nine languages, is that an academic success? Or is it just a popular success?

Floris Cohen: That's a tough one. My I guess would be that it's similar to the situation with trade books written by academics in general, those that have a kind of general flavour. The system of judging academic performance goes flat against them in a similar manner. It doesn't fit the criteria, which are English-language articles in peer-reviewed journals. Anything that's outside that, and we talked about it this morning, is not judged as being scholarly according to the fitting criteria. So I think it certainly carries a lot of informal prestige, but I doubt whether it gets you anywhere.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Very many Dutch friends, as well as English friends, have asked me: 'When can we expect the English translation of your book?' I tell them the

German translation is there and the Turkish is forthcoming, but no they want the English one. An English translation still gives more prestige than any other language.

Maarten Asscher: Jennifer, what is more important for a peer review committee, when we're talking about trade books? Is it the academic prestige only or does the international readership that has been accumulated also carry weight? What is your experience?

Jennifer Crewe: Well, when you're talking about our faculty committee considering a book, they're pretty much looking at the book and the peer reviews in front of them, but if they know the author has an international reputation, then of course that enters into their thinking about the book. I'd say it's not necessarily a factor that we discuss at the table, but I think if people know someone has an international reputation it's a plus and I would think the authors in the US are thrilled when their books are translated, and they put it on their CV: translated into whichever languages it is.

Maarten Asscher: Right, then I think we should have our tea break and in twenty minutes' time Floris Cohen will take over, from his author's perspective, and we will try to fuse that with publishing and agenting. So thanks again to Catherine Clarke and see you in twenty minutes.

Maarten Asscher: Before we go into the differences between men and women, I have the pleasure of introducing Floris Cohen, [laughter] who will speak to us from his perspective as an author about his academic creativity for a general readership. He is a professor in comparative history of science at the University of Utrecht and you have already heard him speak in our discussion before the intermission, so there you go, Floris, please.

Floris Cohen: Four years ago I fell in love and decided to act upon it. She quickly proved to be no easy catch. I suddenly forgot the meaning of the word 'no'. I took it perhaps to mean 'keep trying', and within a few months I became a very fortunate and indeed happy man. My beloved is also an academic, very much of the humanities, definitely not of the science variety. As courtship turned into a more regular engagement, I told her about this lengthy book of mine on how modern science came into the world and why this major historical turnabout took place in seventeenth-century Europe, not elsewhere. Like two earlier books of mine, this one too is written

in, I hope, clear-cut yet scholarly English, and directed in the first place at my fellow historians of science. It is right now under review with the University of Chicago Press, but at the time of courtship it was only completed in first draft. My beloved quite sensibly told me that she was not going to read it, but why did I not interrupt my ongoing revision of those 600 pages for a while and sit down to write a pop version in Dutch? Far shorter and for a wider audience. To encourage me, she came up with a catchy title and announced her readiness, or rather her insistence, to sit in judgement on the book's accessibility to a general interest kind of readership.

This meant in effect three things. She had meanwhile become well aware of a habit that had gradually crept into my scholarly writing style, to produce overly lengthy sentences, and she reserved the right to cut them without mercy. She would make a mark wherever she might fail to grasp a specific point, which would serve me as an indisputable sign to rewrite the passage. And she would indicate wherever I failed to get sufficiently concrete. She herself, in her writing, is a past master in getting her intentions across by means of a lively, catchy image, and she would encourage me to be constantly on the look-out for nicely concrete examples and metaphors, so as to engage my general reader in the argument and keep him or her so engaged. Finally, she arranged for a meeting with her publisher, a trade publisher to be sure, who offered me a contract and a deadline.

Apart from a failed first attempt at a first chapter, things proceeded according to plan. The argument of my big English book is fairly complex, but of course I had already thought it through from beginning to end. So once I had got hold of the right tone of voice for the pop version, I could write the book quite quickly. In three months altogether, followed by a month for the kind of changes that my beloved suggested, I was able to hand over the final printout to the publisher a week ahead of the deadline. Maarten Valken has told me that my case is unusual. How, he has wanted to know, has writing what for short I have come to dub 'Cohen light' affected the earlier, but now also later, 'Cohen heavy'? As also the other way round. Let me say first of all that writing in my own language turned out to be a wonderful experience. On the subject of how, between Galileo and Newton, the basics of our modern science emerged, I have been writing in English for almost thirty years now, and with pleasure. Even when, under the shower, I'm thinking about the subject, I find myself doing so in English. I have further translated or co-translated several articles and one book by other authors from Dutch into English, an experience I intend to come back

to tomorrow. Even so, and even though from time to time I have written the occasional article in Dutch, this book-length return to my native language proved to be downright exhilarating. Whereas as a rule in English I may think of two or perhaps three different ways to get a certain meaning across, in Dutch some seven or so readily popped up in my head.

Another liberating experience flowed directly from the situation that I have created. Scholars are cautious people, much inclined whenever we dare use a generalization to hedge it in with qualifications and to list as much documentary support for our assertions as we can muster. I share the sentiments that lurk behind the habit. They are at the heart of our prime duty: to make complex issues comprehensible and therefore simpler without, however, over-simplifying them. Even so, in *Cohen heavy* I have already fulfilled my scholarly duty in this regard, with all the ‘however’s and ‘but also’s’ needed to satisfy my scholarly conscience. So I could now go about writing *Cohen light* without the guardian angels of detail and conscientious scholarship sitting upon my shoulder and leering with watchful eyes at every next sentence. Or, to change the image, I turned into my own journalist. I became my own science writer. Here one of my two discussion statements comes in. Writing *Cohen light* was a great pleasure, exhilarating even, yet I also regarded it as fulfilling a duty. Academics live on taxpayers’ money. The taxpayer generously makes it possible for us to devote not just our spare time but our every working day to the task of discovering truths about ourselves and the world we live in. As scholars we feel quite certain that the taxpayer gets something worthwhile in return. Science and scholarship do pay off, be it in terms of economic benefits or of immaterial values. Even so, I’ve always felt that it is incumbent upon scholars to share our major conclusions and achievements with as many generous taxpayers as can responsibly be reached. Ideally, so I believe, every scholar should set a year of his or her scholarly life apart to write a book and inform the widest possible audience of what over the past years or decades he or she has been up to in the field, or the laboratory, or the study room. True, not every scholar may be able to pull off such a feat, even though many may feel that way only for want of trying. But if a scholar definitely cannot do it by himself, the solution is to share the burden with a science writer, to undertake the job together.

In any case, encouraged by my beloved that I could pull off the feat, I wrote *Cohen light* without any support other than from her and from one colleague who helped me avoid the occasional slip of the pen. And it has turned out that there is a market for a

relatively popular book on the subject, far removed indeed from our everyday experience of how modern science came into the world. I believed at the outset that the original print-run of 2,000 copies at a price of thirty euros a piece might get sold out in due time, probably enough to make my publisher break even. I did not expect much more, let alone the 10,000 copies meanwhile sold.

I have been aware all along that the argument that I originally developed in Cohen heavy is fairly complex, and here I was not prepared to loosen things up. In Cohen light I have gone out of my way to present my argument clearly, engagingly, in as lively and concrete a manner as I could muster and as the subject allowed, further shorn of all unnecessary detail and above all shorn of all those nuances and qualifications that rightly adorn its scholarly counterpart. But I have not simplified the argument itself. To bring out the ultimately underlying coherence of a vast mass of confusingly varied historical events and circumstances, to restore coherence at the higher level of complexity, is the principle novelty that I claim to have brought about in Cohen heavy, and I did not wish to give up that core feature of the book in my pop version. As I said in my one-minute speech to the jury that last year awarded me the Eureka Prize – Salomon was part of that jury – I felt gratified above all that the members had selected a book in which, for all my striving for maximal accessibility, I had made no concessions to the complexity of its argument.

Some interaction of a more detailed kind between Cohen heavy and Cohen light has also taken place. For instance, in Cohen heavy, once I reached the turn of the seventeenth century I introduce a fictional observer. I charge that imaginary person with writing a report on the past and present state of scientific endeavour, so as to extrapolate existing trends to the foreseeable future. I used this gimmick to show that what then did happen, in the first decades after 1600, really turned out to be utterly different. That is, the turnabout that actually took place was entirely unpredictable and therefore of a truly revolutionary nature. In my scholarly book I have not literally written such a fake report but just indicated what it might roughly have looked like. But now, in the pop version, I actually did write such a report, in a style intermediate between the flourishes of late-Renaissance rhetoric and the sterile aridities of present-day bureaucracies.

There are also instances of the reverse phenomenon; Cohen heavy has benefited from the writing of Cohen light. At the stage the scholarly typescript had reached when I first set out to write the pop version, I was still wrestling with two structural

problems. There were two indispensable portions of my argument for which I had tried out several ways of making my point and also tried out several chapters into which to fit it. But still it did not feel at all right. The very writing of Cohen light gave me a chance to hit upon the solution in both cases. On its completion I returned to the revision of Cohen heavy, and with a big sigh of relief applied the solutions there, albeit naturally in a different wording. Further, two referees of the big scholarly book pointed out in their otherwise highly favourable reports that the book was too wordy, that many a sentence was too long-winded and too much filled with cumbersome circumlocutions and in short that some revision in this respect was called for. Here again, the experience meanwhile gained with the pop version proved salutary. In revising Cohen heavy, I benefited from my newly regained habit of writing very short, crisp sentences, albeit still in a vein and a tone of voice quite different from the pop version.

To my mind, there's a threefold moral to this story. One is for us scholars. We should at least once in our lifetime communicate our principal results to a wider audience than just our fellow specialists, and if, quite rightly, we want to have it done responsibly, then we must try to do it ourselves, or otherwise in close collaboration. We must not leave it to others entirely. There's also a moral for science policymakers. It is in my second discussion statement, which indeed I have left out of my talk because it leads so easily to pointless nagging and whining. Public outreach for science and scholarship are thriving as never before, yet the drift in what counts for a scholar in terms of academic prestige, grants, and even the very opportunity to do research in the first place, is going in exactly the other direction (we have already discussed this point at several earlier stages). Books are out. Ultraspecialized articles in ultraspecialist journals are what, at an alarming rate, count uppermost in academia. My Cohen light, which seems to me to be hardly less an innovative piece of scholarship than its heavier parent, fails to meet each and every official criterion for a truly scholarly achievement. So my second moral is: change these science policies before scholarship ends up entirely equated with being esoteric, boring, jargon-laden, unadventurous and inaccessible to all but a few self-citing citation in-crowds. And my third moral is: even if you are already in your late fifties, it is never too late to find the love of your life.

Maarten Asscher: Well, that settles the point about men and women I would say. Floris, thank you very much. Cohen heavy and Cohen light. By the way, I would

specifically ask Jennifer and Catherine to join this part of our discussion that we are now commencing. Cohen heavy and Cohen light; why didn't you write Cohen medium right away?

Floris Cohen: Well, the thought of Cohen light evidently did not occur to me but to somebody else. No, I would not have written Cohen heavy in a different way. I wrote it in the first place so that I can convince, to the extent that's possible for me, my fellow historians of science that my way of looking at this, if not right, then at least is a plausible or acceptable one, and one deserving of serious debate and consideration. For that you cannot write a 'medium'. It must have all the scholarly apparatus, the qualifications and so on and so forth. Even so, I start with the Greeks and the Chinese and I end with Newton, so I'm sure that many specialists will have much to complain about. It is a synthetic kind of book. I try to avoid as much jargon as I can, but there are certain things that I'm not going to explain to those readers, because my professional colleagues already know them and would get bored by having rehearsed for the umpteenth time things they already know. So my guess is that there will be more readers who can read that book than just historians of science. It's not an esoteric book, as was an earlier book I wrote on the subject, which is a historiographical book, but this is what in scholarly terms is required.

Maarten Asscher: But instead of writing an English-language 800-page book, aimed at your fellow historians of science, plus a 250-page book for a more popular, more general readership, you could have opted for a 500-page thorough, high-quality non-fiction approach that would satisfy both markets.

Floris Cohen: I don't think that's possible.

Maarten Asscher: Why?

Floris Cohen: Well, I think essentially for the reasons I gave. 500 pages is pretty much for a general audience on that subject, which has relatively little human interest as such. I mean there are some biographical remarks about the heroes of the book; I have an introduction which tries to get the reader to imagine a world where no modern science existed and what life in such a world must have looked like, but for the remainder there is little room, for instance, for biographical pieces, for getting human interest in. That's one of the reasons I'd not expected that the book would sell better than its first print-run of 2,000. It turns out that the subject as such is apparently captivating to a fairly large audience of, I suppose, mostly academically educated readers from other branches. I think that Cohen medium would have missed both

readerships; it would have lost me any possible approval of my fellow historians of science, who would then rightly complain about those qualifications and documentation that would be missing, and not have gained me much in terms of a general readership.

Maarten Asscher: *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, is that not Huizinga medium?

Floris Cohen: Yes, that argument has something to be said for it, and okay, that was apparently not so much of a problem for Huizinga at the time, but mediaeval scholars were not happy with that book when it came out. It came out in the Netherlands of course in the first place, and specialists in mediaeval history had many problems with it. Only later did they really begin to see what it was worth; at first, no. It became more popular with the general audience.

Maarten Asscher: If you look back on the trajectory that led you to write two books, the heavy one and the light one, would you do it the same way if you could make the decision anew?

Floris Cohen: Yes, I think basically, yes. I think it's particularly for this reason. I felt my scholarly conscience had already been fulfilled by writing the scholarly book. I could not do it the other way round, first write a popular version, because I would all the time feel: but I should add that this is also the case and we should not forget that detail so on and so forth. I now feel liberated; I need not do that all over again because it is already in the heavy book. Now I'm free.

Maarten Asscher: But if Catherine Clarke had helped you with a proposal and you'd had access right away to an English-language university press, wouldn't that have been ideal?

Floris Cohen: I don't think so. I think that the scholarly conscience would always remain and I would first feel a need to obey what it has to say.

Maarten Asscher: The heavy version is sort of the 90% of the iceberg under water that you need for the remaining 10% to be visible?

Floris Cohen: I'm not quite sure whether I capture all the implications of an image that you may then later use against me. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Okay, watch out. Don't talk about climate here. Writing in English. You have clearly stated that writing in your native Dutch is exhilarating and allows you a much richer style, but writing directly in English gives you the possibility to be in touch with an English language university press without any interference in between. But though your English is next to perfect, as far as I can

judge, what handicaps have you encountered along the way? Would you be in favour of much more English-language trade book and monograph writing for Dutch scholarly authors? What are the pros and cons as far as you are concerned?

Floris Cohen: Well, just to answer on the personal side, I doubt very much whether I would be able to write a book for a general English-language readership myself in English. Maybe I could, but I doubt it very much. There is a good chance that *De herschepping van de wereld (The Recreation of the World)* will come out, at least there is quite a lot of interest in having it published in English, and it will definitely be done by a translator. I will not make life easy for that translator, but it will be done by somebody else. I'm not sure whether I could do it or not.

Maarten Asscher: But you could rewrite your book in English and then have it looked after by a very good copyeditor?

Floris Cohen: Well it's so much a tone of voice that you have to get and to work into it and I'm not sure. The thing I mentioned, that all these alternative phrases came up in my head. That happens in Dutch and there I had the sense that there's a richness of language in my head and I need only select, I needn't think: oh no, how do you say this in English? Again, it's in the scholarly version that the need for a catchy metaphor, or even the possibility of a catchy metaphor, is much less, as is the need to make it concrete and to capture what possible human interest there is to the story. No, I think that defines the limits of what I could do.

Maarten Asscher: Jennifer, if you had this book on the table as a project, would you rather have the basic translation, say by the author himself in a less than 100% perfect English, or would you rather have the Dutch published book with two expert reader's reports?

Jennifer Crewe: I think the latter. I mean, I've had an experience where I had a French author who spoke English fluently and lived part of the year in the US and wanted to write his next book in English. So I, we, worked on a proposal, figured out what we were going to do and then he wrote it. Then when it came in, it was a very laborious job. We didn't even get to the copyediting stage. Even to get it in shape for review was very difficult. So I think it's an extraordinary person who could do that, who could write a trade book from scratch in another language. So I think I'd rather go the other route, although it is extremely helpful to have a translated portion of it to be able to share with colleagues and have everyone see what the book is going to be like and what the content is. We have had some authors do their own translations of

books and sometimes it works okay but sometimes it doesn't. I don't think those have been trade books.

Maarten Asscher: What is your experience, Catherine, with books that have come for example to your agency or previously to Oxford University Press for translation, where the author is near-perfect in English?

Catherine Clarke: I think I'd echo both Jennifer and Floris's view that it's probably better to have a purely idiomatic English translation, or samples of that, of the original, which can capture the flavour of that original than to have that always just very subtly awkward version. [laughter] Do you know what I mean? I would agree.

Maarten Asscher: Ah, that is a beautifully phrased. Humiliating. We will not discuss this any further.

Catherine Clarke: Well no, it's just...

Maarten Asscher: Okay, okay. Floris, you intimated at least that academics from the field of the humanities are better writers than hard science people, since you have agreed to let the love of your life edit you and sit in judgment over your sentences. Is that a general rule? Is it indeed so, because the humanities are closer to literature, or to fine writing, that there is more style and more richness in style to be had than from hard science academics?

Floris Cohen: I would guess so, to some extent. The job of telling me where I should cut sentences into various fractions could have been done by people from any discipline. But, and here we have the person I'm talking about in mind as well, I know few people in the Netherlands who have so much of a gift of just the lively image, to make you sit upright right from the first sentence and to give this human touch to the things she writes about. Not for nothing does she have a regular column in one of our major newspapers. So I think I've been exceptionally blessed there, to have such a critic. I don't think that says too much about the particular discipline, although in general my guess would be that people from the humanities might be overall, and if you take statistics a bit more on the average, on the alert for that sort of thing. But I think mainly this is just a personal characteristic and I happened to fall in love with just the right woman. My personal editor.

Maarten Asscher: But since we're speaking about bringing academic excellence, the fruits of research, to a general readership, it is perhaps interesting, if that is the case, to note that for some disciplines, from a purely linguistic point of view, the distance to be travelled is much greater.

Floris Cohen: Yes, I think that is true. The sense of language as something you can play with, and that's what we are talking about, I think is more highly developed among the humanities.

Maarten Asscher: In certain areas of the academic world, for example geology, you have data, you have research findings, you have statistics, and that's quite a different thing, when it comes to making them into a story, from the life of Galileo and how he discovered what he discovered. That is already a sort of narrative nucleus that can be enlarged.

Floris Cohen: Sure, and I was able to use parts of it. But I think a case like the one Salomon told us about this morning, of a person who keeps hesitating or vacillating about whether he is going to do languages or geology, I think that is pretty unusual. It's wonderful, but fairly unusual I would guess. And if I may make reference to a subject not so far touched upon, which must have been very important for you and was important for me as well: what to do with the math? I decided that in Cohen heavy I would have to have some geometric figures. No formulae because they didn't exist prior to Newton, or everything was expressed in proportions, but still there are a lot of figures there, and of course they are in the scholarly book. I decided right away not to have them in the Cohen light version.

Maarten Asscher: No formulas.

Floris Cohen: They are there of course but they are expressed in words and a reader from the sciences will recognize them at once, but I do try not to scare off the humanities reader. And okay, there is this well-known idea that every formula in a trade book halves the possible readership. I'm not quite sure whether that is true but I decided I didn't want to take the risk. Everything is just expressed verbally.

Maarten Asscher: What is your experience, Jennifer, with books that have too scientific a look, with formulas and graphs and maths?

Jennifer Crewe: Yes, I think that usually you wouldn't sell those as trade books. They're too difficult. But Ian wants to comment.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, Ian.

Ian Malcolm: We publish a lot of books with math. I think it just depends on the audience. If you're trying to reach a humanities audience on a science subject you will shrink your audience very quickly. But we have some editors who've found there's a very large numerate audience out there. We have a book on trigonometry, for example, that's full of formulas and it's sold about 70,000 copies, and this author and

others like him have found that there's an extremely rich and robust audience for books with lots of numbers in them. So I think you're right that the audience would be shrunk with numbers, but only if you're trying to reach a humanities audience.

Floris Cohen: I tried to reach the humanities audience without necessarily losing a possible science audience. I mean, after all, it's a history of science, so it is both. So I hope to be able to reach people from both sides.

Maarten Asscher: The prize which you both won, the Eureka Prize. How much money does it carry with it? [laughter] No, I'm serious.

Floris Cohen: That's 7,500 euros before taxes, and after taxes a lot less.

Maarten Asscher: Wouldn't it be so much nicer to have the prize in time instead of money? Because if you, Floris, if you say you have a duty towards society, and that although you want to give your peers the results of your academic research you also want to present them to a general readership, then 7,500 euros before tax is nice, and you can go for a weekend to Rome with your beloved, but what you really want is four months off to give a start to a new writing project.

Floris Cohen: Doesn't apply to my personal situation, but in general I think you're quite right. By the way, I'm not entirely free to go with it to Rome or anywhere else. We are supposed to spend this on science outreach, and actually next year I have to report on it. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: That's very Dutch, that's very Dutch.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, I got the prize as well, the 7,500 euros, and fortunately I discovered that I should not receive it myself otherwise I would lose half to taxes, but I kept it in the budget of NWO, our science organization, and I invested it in building a contraption on the coast which is called *Spiegelzee*; that's on the coast in Katwijk and it's a kind of demonstration of what the sea level was in the previous warm period, that's plus six metres, and it uses a lot of mirrors to show how it was at minus 120 metres during the last ice age. That was an idea suggested by two of my PhD students. Actually it was submitted for the academic year prize. It didn't get the 100,000 euros that's awarded, but in the end they did get funding from TNO, from many different organizations, so it was built and my little contribution to that was the money from the Eureka Prize. As I'm employed at the university I get a decent salary, so I don't need it to be able to write another book.

Maarten Asscher: Giuseppe Laterza.

Giuseppe Laterza: May I suggest that what professor Cohen said just before is a very strong political issue and it should be part of the political discourse. When he says: ‘It’s also my duty, it’s not only my pleasure,’ is that a personal statement that we take as just, you know: he’s a wonderful man, exceptional character? Or should that be part of the institutional mission of a university? We now have in Italy a very strong movement of students and professors in university against the government, which has cut public spending for universities. And this is maybe a reproach to Mr Berlusconi, saying that Mr Berlusconi is a tycoon, a self-made man who doesn’t think education is important for success, and he is right in his way. [laughter] I mean, he’s made a lot of money. But I think that people who say this, and you can imagine the owners of a company saying it, I don’t think they tell the whole story. Part of the story is that we’ve left sentences like the one Floris Cohen said to me subjective, and so it’s a process by which Italian universities themselves reduced the role they play in society, and I think what he says goes to the core of the problem we’re discussing in these two days, the relationship between research and publishing, and publishing for a wider audience. At the moment it’s a subjective individual choice of authors. Heroic, you know, against their colleagues. This morning I am pleased to see that what you describe is not only in Italy, because in the corridor your colleague looks at you and says ‘that’s good’ but nothing more. It’s quite absurd that if an Italian historian gets published by Princeton University Press, I’m not speaking about Penguin, I’m not presuming, but Princeton University Press, this has no academic consequence. It’s absurd. I think it should have a strong influence on his position. But all of that I think is a political issue, and part of trying to understand if there is a model of the public university, the state-owned university, European particularly I would stress, which has a mission that has to do with how strong society is. This is the origin of the *università*, we call it like this. It’s a word that has a meaning and we’re getting to the opposite of the *università*. We’ve got what in Italy we call *particolare*. Which is something else. I’m not proposing that we sign a manifesto at the end of this. I’m just saying it should be part of something we discuss publicly in our country, and make part of a public discourse. Because I think it is a question of how the university sees itself in the future, and it’s not a question which should bother only professors and students but all society, and obviously publishers.

Maarten Asscher: Floris.

Floris Cohen: Well I couldn't agree more. There is a curious tension. On the one hand this kind of stuff is clearly appreciated. When I won the Eureka Prize I got a bottle of wine, or actually two bottles, from the university board, and they made it clear in other ways too that they appreciated that sort of thing, and that turns out to be true for other people involved in outreach of science scholarship. But they have all experienced the same tension between what it means in terms of, well, judgement of your achievement on forms, the bean-counting that Alan mentioned, which is in full bloom, and it doesn't count at all. So there is a tension there and I think it's only increasing, because the bean-counting is increasing and it's increasingly at work in the humanities as well, by way of imitation of the one and only way of doing scholarly work, which is to imitate the natural sciences. This prejudice is particularly strong I think in the Netherlands but it's nowhere entirely absent. So there is this tension, a lot of kindness and friendliness and good that's being done in a general sort of way, but in concrete terms it means nothing at all. It is just not scholarly work.

Maarten Asscher: Catherine Clarke, do you experience the same phenomenon in Britain? More specifically are there, because of the decline of the book in academic prestige, because of rating and citation indexes and so on, are there fewer people who come forward with ideas for new books? Fewer who see the publication of a monograph or a scholarly trade book as an important prospect in their career?

Catherine Clarke: No, I would say there's no falling away of people coming forward with ideas for books for a more general audience. On the contrary, I think that a lot of academics are now represented by agents in the UK and in the US. A lot of them have a dream that they will make enough money to leave their academic posts, or at least to negotiate half-time so that they will get rid of all their administrative duties and be left only with the research, some teaching and writing time. And that is a very specific desire in a lot of people who set out to write a trade book.

Maarten Asscher: That's a different story from doing your duty towards society as a whole, but it may go hand in hand with it. Jennifer, what is your experience?

Jennifer Crewe: Well, as you know we have a very strong anti-intellectual strain in US society.

Floor: That's finished, no?

Jennifer Crewe: We're all hoping it's all over now that we have a scholar, a former academic, who'll be in the White House. There is the bean-counting in the United States, although the books are counted as beans in the humanities and social sciences,

not articles as much in the softer social sciences. But I think there is a realization that when scorn is heaped upon academics partly it's their own fault, because they've been writing in a very private language, often they're in ivory towers and they haven't wanted to step into the public arena. I think now, because of a number of factors, people do want to become understood and so they're trying to do what you've done and write the lighter version. But the problem is a lot of them actually can't write in that way, they can't de-complicate their sentences. You know, it's amazing how many people you'll ask, they'll say they want to write for a general audience, and then you'll ask them to tell you in a couple of sentences or an e-mail in a short paragraph what they're writing about and they can't do it, because their head is so filled with the nuances and the complications. Some are trying though.

Floris Cohen: Then again, how are they teaching their students?

Jennifer Crewe: Right.

Frits van der Meij: They need a new wife. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Well, a larger readership can be the love of your life. Alan Thomas.

Alan Thomas: One of the problems in the United States and perhaps this is true in Europe too, I don't know, is that the number of outlets for serious thinkers to enter the public stage has diminished. Such as the book review sections. Book reviewing is one of those things that has really fallen away. That would be one possible platform for scholars to reach a wider audience, to review in the newspapers. But newspapers have cut back on their book review sections and I think we've all had situations as editors in the United States where we have authors who have written op-ed pieces but haven't been able to find a place to publish them. But I also wonder, does anyone here feel that it's possible to go a little far with the social relevance ideal? We have many scholars who are doing important research in fields that simply don't engage a larger public. What if you're a specialist on the Balkans? You know, no one in the United States cares about the Balkans. What if you're a specialist in classical South Asian literatures? Again, it may just not be that you have much to say on topics of broader public interest, but something still to contribute to knowledge within a fairly specialized but still valuable field.

Maarten Asscher: Perhaps a question for Catherine Clarke. How do you deal in a commercial way with very specialized knowledge that authors come up with?

Alan Thomas: Maarten if I could restate that. Why do we feel a compulsion to think of any field in commercial terms? Do we want to keep a preserve in the academy for non-commercial work? For research that simply can't be translated in those terms? As an end in itself. I'm asking whether anyone would like to defend that as an ideal.

Maarten Asscher: I believe that knowledge wants to get out. There is a sort of biological urge by which knowledge is transferred and if you know something you want to tell about it, you want to teach it. Why do we learn Greek? As they say: to be able to teach it to others. There is a sort of transferential drive in any knowledge, both very generic knowledge and very specialist knowledge. If you know everything about wigs and witches in the 1670s in, where was it?

Catherine Clarke: Norfolk.

Maarten Asscher: Norfolk. Then you want to tell your neighbour about it, even though he or she loves gardening. The idea of publishers is to make use of this transferential drive and to earn money with it. That is perhaps not an answer in terms of responsibilities towards society, but that is the market drive that goes along with the knowledge drive.

Alan Thomas: I think that's very well put. I mean I agree entirely about our impulses and imperatives as publishers and I'm assuming that my hypothetical scholar in Sanskrit, say, is teaching students, eager undergraduates, perhaps not in great numbers, but is also performing a social function in that way. But how do we feel about such scholars if they do not take the extra step of writing for a larger popular audience? If they don't really have that opportunity, given the specialization they have chosen, the particular field.

Jennifer Crewe: Well I would say there's a place for the study of Sanskrit or Tamil poetry, but it's not going to be on the bookshelves at Barnes & Noble, mainly because there aren't people who are going to buy that book. I mean that's transmitted to the students and the future graduate students, but we can't find an audience for that, no matter how well written it is.

Alan Thomas: You and I have direct experience...

Jennifer Crewe: We have direct experience. We've done a lot of the Tamil; maybe you've done more Sanskrit.

Alan Thomas: We've done a lot of Sanskrit.

Maarten Asscher: Floris.

Floris Cohen: Well, there's one thing I want to add to the issue of scholars who cannot do that. My suggestion was that if you cannot do it alone, then do it together with a journalist, with a science writer. That's aside from the possible subject. I'm willing for the sake of argument to buy that there might be certain subjects which, however you handle them, will never reach a large enough audience. But actually I guess that any subject can be made interesting.

Maarten Asscher: I think so.

Floris Cohen: Yes. You have to expand it of course and show its more general aspects. But okay, let's drop that for a minute. I think if a scholar can't do it himself, then do it together. But if you don't do it, if no one does it in a certain field, it means the field is left open to others. As I mentioned this morning, I used to be part of a very small group of people who know everything about quantitative musical theory in the seventeenth century, and okay, that's highly specialist stuff, but I have read several books by science writers who wrote about quantitative musical theory, not only in the seventeenth century but other eras as well, and they are damn poor books and at first I was outraged, and then I thought: we have only ourselves to blame. We haven't done it so a journalist steps in and does it. Either we should have done it or we should have done it together with them, instead of just leaving that field open. So I think there are all kinds of intermediate solutions.

Maarten Asscher: Salomon.

Salomon Kroonenberg: I think there's another danger as well. I refer for instance to the book *Noah's Flood* by Ryan and Pitman. They say the Black Sea was once flooded in a couple of years and this was so catastrophic that all civilizations were wiped out and the story was told all around the world and that is why we speak about the deluge. Now, this book has been widely publicized, had a lot of publicity, written by two scientists, oceanographers, but the science is simply not good and now a couple of years later we see that the science is really very shaky. So you get the idea that this book was made to be a good, well-publicized trade book, to enhance their own reputation, while the science behind it was really rotten. I am afraid that we have also to consider that part of it. Maybe that's a question also of peer review. How good are your data? They hadn't published anything before in the scientific journals when they brought this out. We don't see it only in books but also in BBC reports or Discovery reports sometimes, that things are brought out which simply can't

withstand peer review. I am afraid that the urge to publish for a broader audience can have negative results as well.

Maarten Asscher: Well, that's where peer review should be a proper safeguard against sloppy research. Diane, yes.

Diane Webb: I think a place has to remain for pure, undiluted scholarship that simply isn't for everyone, like the study of Sanskrit or the study of Middle-Dutch poetry. You can't bring that to a broad audience without diluting it. You can't take a Beethoven symphony and dumb it down for an audience with a three-minute attention span. Either you like a Beethoven symphony in its entirety or you don't.

Maarten Asscher: Van Oostrom, who's also been mentioned, proves you wrong there, with his mediaeval studies that have reached a large audience.

Diane Webb: Ah, you're talking about the Maerlant book?

Maarten Asscher: Yes, and *Court and Culture* as well.

Diane Webb: Well, I know many people who own those books, but I know only one or two who have actually read them. And the same with Umberto Eco. Everyone has Umberto Eco lying around, but who has actually read the whole book, except for *The Name of the Rose*, who reads the whole book? I mean there are lots of things like this. It's not for everyone, and you shouldn't have to dilute everything and water it down for a general audience or it loses its quality.

Maarten Asscher: You're right.

Diane Webb: Well, I'm right and wrong. It might not be right, it's just my idea.

Maarten Asscher: Annette Wunschel.

Annette Wunschel: I just wanted to say that this seems very important what you say, in times where universities are cutting down their budgets for every kind of specialized research, especially the humanities. So in hard science everything goes well, but in the humanities it's very difficult to do anything specialist and in this way, creating new books, they must be prepared by research. My English gets bad in the afternoon, but I just wanted to say that I don't believe that books should be, or are, about teaching, or that writing is about teaching knowledge. It's about creating knowledge. It creates new objects, it externalises it. Also, that way of thinking which is very, well, *à la mode* at the moment, to say: we must be more didactic, pedagogic. These are parts of academic science which get very much financial help at the moment and so I just wanted to say we should be very precise in saying that

accessibility is not guaranteed by the didactic. It's a different thing. That doesn't make a good book.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you.

Floris Cohen: The notion of dumbing down has crept into the discussion. I don't think that's necessarily the case. As I mentioned, the argument in my scholarly book is complex and it's equally complex in the non-scholarly volume. That's the one thing I want to insist on. I did not want to dumb down. I think dumbing down happens when scholars leave popularising or whatever you want to call it to outside people. To have it done responsibly needs the involvement of the scholar himself. Either he writes it himself or it happens in cooperation. Dumbing down is exactly what we should avoid, and can avoid.

Maarten Asscher: And the notion of diluting?

Floris Cohen: Well, I take that as more or less the same thing. It's not necessary. That was for me the experimental part of what I was doing. If I had noticed halfway that I could not do it, that the book would have oversimplified my original argument, I would have stopped, period. And it turned out more was possible than I was certain at the outset would be the case.

Diane Webb: I think it's fantastic that the Dutch version is more concentrated. It must be like taking something and concentrating it incredibly, but then why is the longer version even necessary? If all the important data is distilled into that two hundred pages.

Floris Cohen: No it's not a matter of importance, it's a matter of...

Diane Webb: What was left out?

Floris Cohen: Well, what was left out is all kinds of qualifications: 'but also this was the case' and 'I've taken care of that' and 'I've thought about such and such'. In the pop version, I am the authority. I make the reader expect: okay, here's a professional trained in the science speaking. I'm presenting myself as the authority. In reality I'm not, of course. I hope that I am and think that I have been able to convince my fellow historians of science that my argument, given all the knowledge they have and the documentation they have, is worth taking seriously, but they would not accept the argument the way I have presented it to the general reader. And right they are. It's not the argument in itself, it's how it's defended and how it takes into consideration all kinds of elements that are of no concern to a general reader but are pretty basic to the people who are really in the know. So I think I would absolutely not have written the

lighter version if I had not known already that the scholarly version was there. I couldn't possibly have done that.

Diane Webb: Maybe the scholarly version was just part of the research any writer should do on any important book.

Floris Cohen: No, I don't think so.

Diane Webb: Well it seems to me like the difference between a dissertation and a trade book, but the dissertation, exactly, has all those qualifications and shows all the train of thought and then you can leave it all out when you present yourself to a general reader. I'm looking forward to reading the short version, not the long one.

Maarten Asscher: I would like to raise one other issue if I may. Some criticism has been heaped on the phenomenon of the brief English-language one-issue article in learned electronic journals, because real academic creativity is much more complex and requires full-length monographs etc. etc. But is this digital exchange of brief one-issue electronic articles not a very interesting help, in the background of trying to present the fruits of academic research to other languages and to a larger readership? Floris Cohen, have you actively participated in this circuit of learned journals in your field and have you any experience in this respect?

Floris Cohen: Not necessarily electronic ones, but yes, I have certainly published in the learned journals, although I think you have two kinds of scholars. You have the good writers and you have the article writers. And although article writers on occasion write books, their books look more like a collection of articles, whereas with a book writer often the articles are derivative from that and I'm definitely of that type. I first think of a book and then once that's published certain articles may come out of it. That's just a personal matter. So I certainly think there is a good reason to have both. They're not mutually exclusive.

Maarten Asscher: Catherine Clarke, is a collection or a pile of English-language articles by a foreign academic writer helpful for presenting such a writer to a serious publisher or to an academic press? Or are these so technical and so specific and so specialist that they had better be left out of the picture?

Catherine Clarke: I think the fact that they have been written and published and demonstrate the scholarly credentials of the author, that's the important factor. I don't think the publisher would actually want to see those articles. If you're using them as background and proof of the scholarly credentials then I think that's important, but I

don't think the articles themselves, except as very specialist academic publications, are going to persuade the publisher.

Maarten Asscher: No, but for Dutch academic authors, for example, it might pave the way towards being accepted by an English-language university press, if one has eleven articles in learned journals that are peer reviewed as well, by editorial boards and committees. Jennifer, from your experience at Columbia, do you take these into account in the case of trade books or do you think they're from a different world?

Jennifer Crewe: No, we certainly take them into account with English-language authors. Where they've published their scholarly work beforehand is a key to their reputation in the field and a key to how they'll be received. For the books that we translate I think we look less to what scholarly articles have been published and more to what the book is. Whether it offers something that is different from what an American scholar could offer, or a British scholar, and what the reputation of that author is in the field. So I think it's a little different. There are cases in the past where we've published collections of articles that are revised into a book. That's less and less possible to do, because even libraries won't buy the book if they already own the pieces in their collection. It doesn't make sense in this era of electronic retrieval of all this material that you just republish it.

Maarten Asscher: Anyone else from the audience? Salomon.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well I wrote my book in Italy in an institute that we had a cooperation with, and I would have been utterly helpless in writing this book if I hadn't had access to the electronic library of this institute, because, well, there is a lot of material, a lot of thoughts and you are not a specialist on all the different subjects that you cover in your book, so you have to have resources, electronic resources. So for me, not being a publisher but a scientist, all this material on the web from the publishers is essential now to writing anything that I would write. I couldn't just rely only on the books I have in my own library or in the library of the university. So for that matter I'm really happy all this electronic material is there.

Maarten Asscher: Making use of a somewhat larger time-scale, say in fifty years' time, will university presses be very much like what trade publishers are nowadays and will the exchange of academic learning be fully digitised? Or is that a caricature?

Jennifer Crewe: Well I think that the scholarly monograph – we were just talking about the study of Tamil literature, where you can really only expect right now to sell about four hundred copies of a book like that – I think that kind of research will and

should be done in electronic form only, so that you have the widest possible dissemination among specialists. Right now what's happening is that scholars, in the States anyway, are supposed to publish books to get promoted and to get tenure, but there's really no audience for some of these books at all and so we're at this point where we have to make a change, and I think that will happen and those will not be books. I think that university presses will still serve as the peer reviewers and the gatekeepers and just disseminate them in electronic form, probably on big platforms. But the books that can reach a wider audience I think will remain. Either in hard copy or on personal readers or something like that, but they'll still survive; we'll still reach that audience.

Maarten Asscher: Is that your view as well, Catherine? Will an academic literary agent in fifty years' time be doing good business with traditional book publishers?

Catherine Clarke: I think in the scale of the current rate of change, fifty years is a very, very long time. I wouldn't even want to predict what was true in ten years' time. I think a very big issue for all publishers is what role they will play between the author and the reader. As time goes by we have Google, we have Amazon already making noises that they will be the purveyors of knowledge and content and possibly by-passing the intermediaries, the publishers. Where the agents fit into that picture is anybody's guess, but the agents are on the side of the authors I guess, and would be negotiating with other bodies who might be bringing the same content. If they're not negotiating that with publishers, they might be in the future possibly be negotiating with Google, Amazon, or other bodies who we have no idea are going to rise from this technological revolution. On the other hand the book has enjoyed 500 years of unparalleled success as an object, as a piece of technology and who's to say that that won't continue for a long time? So I think it is anybody's guess, but it's certainly true that the electronic format and retrieval and dissemination of creative or any kind of writing and knowledge will definitely have an impact. I think perhaps it's already had its major impact, but who's to tell?

Maarten Asscher: Thank you. Floris, you have written your Cohen light for a larger readership and you have written your Cohen heavy for your fellow historians of science?

Floris Cohen: In the first place, yes.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, in the first place. Why seek publication in book form for Cohen heavy? Why not make a wonderful, intricate, dynamic website with

documentary films and sound and movement and the kind of excitement that a contemporary audience likes? Or a database for your fellow historians of science who don't need to own an 800-page hardcover book?

Floris Cohen: They do, they do. I realize that earlier I did not give a sufficiently satisfactory response about the electronic revolution and the justification for the possible existence of the scholarly book as well. The key is evidence. In the light book the reader has to take me on trust. The evidence is missing. I've left that out. I felt free to leave that out because it's in the scholarly book. You cannot contradict my argument in Cohen light. You are not given the possible grounds for that. You can only say: I take it on trust or I don't take it on trust. But I think it's essential for scholarship that the evidence is there and that the reader can check on what grounds I make my statements, where my generalizations come from, what the evidence is, partly documentary, partly in argument. So it's not a matter of a doctoral dissertation, which certainly in the American tradition has lots of stuff in it that may and should be left out in a book publication. It's just a matter of the necessary evidence that makes it possible for a reader to judge on his own.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, but my point is: why make the evidence available in the form of a huge book?

Floris Cohen: Because in a subject like this there is no alternative to that. I can imagine possible subjects where that would be the case.

Maarten Asscher: Because seeking publication in book form is logical when you want to reach a large audience? But there you already have Cohen light. So why insist on publication in book form for your 90% underwater?

Floris Cohen: As I said, that's a matter of giving the evidence for the reader, so that he can check what the grounds are for my argument and in certain subjects that may probably be done in a more visual manner, but this is documentary written evidence for the largest part, so it has to be done in that form.

Giuseppe Laterza: But why on internet is it not evidence any more? Why can't you give this evidence on internet?

Floris Cohen: Because it's part of the argument.

Giuseppe Laterza: Then give the argument and the evidence.

Floris Cohen: It's not just documents, it's not just a matter of footnotes, look up volume eight of Galileo's works and that's it. No, it's also the documents digested into all kinds of sub-arguments that together add up to the larger argument.

Giuseppe Laterza: But this is very interesting for me, because it happens to me also. We tried from time to time to pursue our authors to put the larger version on internet. Historian Robert Darnton wrote years ago a marvellous article saying you can put on internet not only the documents but a number of things and then have a slim book. But they all say that for a purely academic purpose that doesn't go. And that's very interesting. We are all talking about internet, but when it comes to scientific trust, why isn't it entitled to count towards your scientific career, I mean you the authors, humanistic authors? I'm not speaking about scientists, probably it's different, but historians, philosophers, say it's not. They want the book, which is quite interesting.

Floris Cohen: In one sense I have made a concession in that scholarly book. I think it's very important when I have a lot of quotations, not in English but from other languages, also to have the original language in the footnote, but I have cut them all out and put them together in a document that will only be on the internet. I was not pleased at all to do that; there are so many mistranslations and I would be happy, or unhappy, to come back to that subject tomorrow, but there are so many mistranslations. Entire historic interpretations have been based on mistranslations. So I took half a year to convince myself: okay, since my book is already pretty bulky, I am prepared to have the foreign texts, the original texts, on the internet only, mentioning that in the introduction to my book. But that's as far as I'm prepared to go.

Maarten Asscher: Okay.

Salomon Kroonenberg: But what's the difference between an argument in science and an argument in history, for instance? Because all the scientific articles have all their papers in electronic format. Some arguments, and all the quotations, can be clicked on directly so that people can find the articles to which you are referring. You have an opportunity to have a special section of additional material for all the things that you can't put into the article. I don't see what's so different about history that you can't do it in your science.

Floris Cohen: Okay, well you can visualize that. I have the references to the literature that I've used, I've put this together in short notes, in little essays, in historiographic essays of three to four pages for every chapter. Okay, of course I could put those on the internet. What does that mean? That I would prefer my reader, invite my reader to stop reading for a while and go to his computer and look up my bibliographic essay? For the rest I have hardly anything in my notes but short references to certain

quotations. That's all. That doesn't make any difference. So again, I would not claim that in the humanities generally you do it this way and in the sciences generally you do it that way. That really depends on the way that the entire book is built up and can only be answered from one book to the next.

Jennifer Crewe: I just think a lot of it depends on how willing the audience for that book is to read a lot of text on screen. Because in principle you're right. Why can't you do it in any field? It's just that it's taken root in the sciences more than it has in the humanities. We tried an experimental project, that was funded, to put history books in fields where the audience was very small, revised dissertations, to publish them electronically only, and it turned out that not very many libraries even bought them, because it wasn't a big critical mass, you know, everything you ever wanted to know about mediaeval Spain or something, it was just disparate fields and disparate topics, and Darnton by the way was at the helm of this thing, and now we're printing out these websites. Nobody would accept them in the field. It was difficult for people to get tenure. They wanted to have that physical object, so here we are. They're not even linear narratives, but we're printing them out.

Maarten Asscher: Interesting.

Salomon Kroonenberg: But it's partly a cultural thing.

Jennifer Crewe: Yes. That's what I mean, yes, the field.

Alan Thomas: But it's also economic.

Jennifer Crewe: Right.

Maarten Asscher: Floor Oosting.

Floor Oosting: I wanted to add that at Springer we published everything online, all journal articles, all books. They are published on a platform, and books and journal issues are still available. Printing on demand. Everything can be printed and libraries subscribe to have access to the whole database of journal articles and books. At Springer we did not really see a difference between the book or the printed version and the digital version. It's just different media, and if it's available online and can be available in print for those who want to have it in print, then it can serve a very large audience.

Maarten Asscher: That's only for institutional users, probably.

Floor Oosting: Right. That's true.

Salomon Kroonenberg: They pay one and a half million euros to have access.

[laughter]

Floor Oosting: They pay a lot of money, yes, depending on how large the library is.

Jennifer Crewe: And Springer could do that because they have such a huge amount of content.

Floor Oosting: That's right.

Jennifer Crewe: Whereas a smaller university press really doesn't have enough.

Floor Oosting: Yes, but I've always expected that university presses would do a similar thing together.

Jennifer Crewe: That's what is under discussion. Nothing has been able to be worked out yet, but yes, that's the only way I think it would work.

Maarten Asscher: Paulien Retèl, on the same topic.

Pauline Retèl: Let me just tell you that Amsterdam University Press is actually doing that, working together with five other university presses in Europe, having received European funding for open access for monographs. We have just started the project on September 1st and the project will run for thirteen months, so let's meet after that period and we'll see what happened.

Maarten Asscher: Well, that promises total accessibility. Good. We have to conclude this afternoon's session, with regret, because this has been very lively and inspiring indeed. But fortunately we can carry this forward to drinks and to our dinner. Before there are some household announcements, I would like a warm applause for Jennifer Crewe, Catherine Clarke and Floris Cohen.

Saturday 15 November 2008

Maarten Asscher: Right, dear friends. Yesterday I said ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’ but today I think it’s right to say ‘dear friends’. I must compliment you on being so wonderfully on time this morning, punctual I mean, after Amsterdam by night, or having gone to bed early, whatever it is. Welcome back for our final morning session in our conference and I would like to give the microphone right away to Diane Webb for the first contribution in this session, in which we will put the translator’s perspective at the centre of our discussion. Diane Webb was for many years a flute player in a Dutch symphony orchestra, but she reinvented herself as an expert translator of academic and cultural non-fiction. Diane, please.

Diane Webb: Thank you. I’m using the word ‘he’ to refer to writers in this speech, not the feminist ‘he or she’, but it does so happen that all the writers here are men and all the translators are women. [laughter] So that’s okay, today.

Maarten Asscher: In the previous conference it was the other way round, by the way.

Diane Webb: Okay. But today I’m fine. I’m very sceptical about the tendency to put works of non-fiction into categories such as popular, scholarly, academic and literary. In this I agree wholeheartedly with Mr Laterza’s proposition that clear writing reflects clear thinking, and should therefore be readily understandable, no matter what the subject. To my mind writing is either clear or fuzzy, concise or long-winded, skilful or inept – all of which boils down to good writing and less good writing. You may ask why anyone would want to publish a piece of writing that is less than good, but the reason will be obvious to all of you here: non-fiction publishers seek to inform their readership, and they do so by publishing the work of specialists. These specialists have done some original thinking and have an important message to get across. They are the originators of ideas, but they are not necessarily the best-equipped to convey those ideas. They are authors, but not always writers. And yesterday Detlef said something about this; he said one must be realistic about one’s writers’ capabilities. And while I agree with Douwe Draaisma that authors should give translators all the help they can get, I also think that many authors need all the help they can get from their translators.

I’m certainly not suggesting that authors nowadays generally lack writing skills – far from it. But even assuming an author to be an excellent writer, the fact is that many academics are forced to do the bulk of their writing between lectures,

tutorials, meetings, conferences, and to make matters worse, they're continually exposed to the often appalling writing of their students. It's a miracle they manage to write anything in such circumstances.

Nowadays writing and translating seem to go faster than they used to: with the help of computers, we can churn out words faster than we can think. But the truth is that well-considered prose takes just as long to compose as it ever did. When my authors tell me about their life at their university (not to mention that fact that nowadays professors of both sexes tell me they have to go home to do the ironing), I forgive them for not having the time to do the many rounds of revision necessary to polish up their writing. This forces translators to undertake radical pruning sometimes, or at least some light trimming. Almost always, translation involves editing. Very few writers have the time or the peace of mind to produce a text that is so well thought out that the translator can simply translate it. Of all the articles and books on art history I've translated, and history, only one was so clearly written that it required no editing whatsoever. In such cases, the translator can only hope to do justice to a piece of prose that is so well-considered, and it cannot be a coincidence that this lone book was the product of the pen and not the computer. I don't know what conclusion we should draw from that, but there it is.

When a text is less than perfect, translation is inevitably a continuation of the writing process. In an effort to tighten up the prose, a translator dissects every sentence and in doing so exposes every raw nerve. Even words that seem very precise to a Dutch writer can cause problems to me, because English has such a wealth of words. What appears to be a simple adjective in Dutch may have dozens of possible meanings in English. When my writers permit it, I bombard them with questions. Most of them undergo this onslaught quite cheerfully, because they see how much it benefits the translation. But some writers have no time for this, and are trusting enough to let me decide many things for myself. This, it seems to me, is easier to do in fiction, where the feeling, the atmosphere, the style are all-important. Non-fiction, however, requires greater precision and allows the translator far less poetic licence. A Dutch word with a wide variety of meanings in English will inevitably become more concrete in translation, and if the author cares about every little nuance, he will do well to read the translation very carefully and assist in the translator's fine-tuning. In any case, I could not agree more with Douwe Draaisma: translators deserve all the help their authors can give them. But I would go a step further and say that writers who do not

give their translators such attention are likely to end up with a version of their book that does not always say exactly what they meant to say.

The translation of Dutch non-fiction into English often requires what I call an uplift of register. Scholarly writing in Dutch tends to be much more colloquial than English. Dutch academics often use short, clipped, even incomplete sentences and write in a talkative style that does not always sound sufficiently authoritative when translated literally into English. So I find myself doing a balancing act, trying to elevate the tone ever so slightly, to make it sound more convincing, without making it sound pompous or old-fashioned and completely unlike the original text.

In my experience, the translation of non-fiction always requires a great deal of background reading. The vocabulary needed to translate a book about a mediaeval mystic, for example, or seventeenth-century Dutch art history, cannot be found in bilingual dictionaries. Moreover, the lapse of time between the publication of a book in Dutch and its translation into English means that new books on the subject will have appeared, and it might be important for the author to comment on these in the English version. So a translator sometimes assumes the role of research assistant. Donning the hats of indexer and proof-reader can also prove necessary, and not just when the proofs are outsourced to India and come back looking much the worse for wear, but also when desktop publishers in the Netherlands typeset English texts according to Dutch rules of hyphenation. In one book I translated, one reads about a peripatetic Protestant minister active in Holland in the seventeenth century. Readers who simply skim this chapter (and this often happens with long books of non-fiction, people skim certain chapters, or even the whole book) readers who are skimming will think that his sermons must have been very painful indeed if they simply glance at the sentence that is hyphenated in such a way as to have him pre-aching in village churches. [laughter]

A decade or more ago, when the rise of the internet prompted people to predict the end of book publishing as we know it, I scoffed – as did all book lovers. Now, however, I'm not so sure. The publishers of fiction have nothing to fear, because there is simply no replacement for novels, good or bad; there is no substitute for reading a murder mystery in bed, or immersing yourself in a novel to the extent that those rude people on the train, making endless calls on their mobile phones, simply fade into the void. There's nothing like a good novel for uplift, comfort, diversion, escape. And as

far as I can tell from observing the people around me, the internet has done nothing to stop people from buying fiction, even the worst kind.

But non-fiction is a different matter altogether, and here I think the internet has definitely influenced our book-buying behaviour. I know it has influenced mine, and I can certainly be reckoned among the enthusiastic consumers of non-fiction. If much of the information a book contains can be found on the internet, why should I buy it? If a book is based largely on secondary sources available to me through JSTOR, what can induce me to acquire it? Well, the writing, mainly. I am inclined to buy books that are very well written, just to savour the prose. I stand there in the bookshop, dipping into the first few pages, doing a taste test. Assuming I find the writing delicious, I look for further enticements. Is the book durable? Does it lie open on its own, so that I can pick up my cup of coffee or glass of wine without having the book snap shut? Is the paper a nice creamy colour, not blindingly white? Is the print easy on the eyes? The lines not too close together? And, most importantly, does the book have a good index? Because what good is all that information if you can't find it again after the first reading? If a book falls short in a number of these areas, then I would prefer to read (or consult) an online version that I can click back into the ether, rather than have it take up room on my already overly crowded bookshelves.

I suffer from a phobia that I suspect I share with some of you here: I have a mortal fear of being without a book. Only once have I boarded a plane with a single book in tow, and that was Vikram Seth's 1,500-page *A Suitable Boy*. I recently googled 'fear of being without a book', to find out if my phobia has a name. I came up with only one hit: a certain Mike Lynott wrote that his personal phobia was 'lipobibliophobia, literally the fear of being without a book'. Wonderful, I thought, you can find anything on the internet. But then I went on and read some more of Mike's little blog and I found out that he'd simply made up the term. That is also typical of the internet: people with no expertise whatsoever set themselves up as oracles and make all kinds of absurd pronouncements. The internet is a gold-mine of information, but in trying to plumb its depths, it is easy to drown in drivel while braving the barrage of blah-blah-ing bloggers. It is the frustration of not being able to make order out of this chaos, of not finding the information I want, though I know it must be out there somewhere, that makes me yearn for a book whose author has done all that agonising fact-finding for me. This is why I still embrace works of non-fiction, and I'm probably not alone,

which means that there is still a future for you publishers, and for my own sake, I wish you every success.

Maarten Asscher: Dear Diane, I don't know how well you played the flute, but you are certainly a language artist. Can you perhaps elaborate, even if only for my curiosity, about the difference between British English and American English when it comes to presenting Dutch non-fiction writers to publishers in England and America? Is that a problem, or is it purely theoretical?

Diane Webb: No, I don't think it's such a problem, because the spelling is different, sometimes, but it's not so disturbing for a British person to read American spelling or vice versa. In novels of course it makes a big difference.

Maarten Asscher: Why in novels?

Diane Webb: I don't translate novels, and that's why.

Maarten Asscher: Why in novels more than in non-fiction?

Diane Webb: Well, because there are simply different words for things. I mean you don't say 'pants' when you mean 'knickers' and things like that. There are real words and conversationally necessary words in fiction that are not the same, but in non-fiction it's mainly the spelling, I think. I don't think it's a problem. No, really not.

Maarten Asscher: You said that your role as a translator also entails quite some editing. Can you give examples of the most common editorial things that you have to work on in texts that you translate? What are the most common vices of Dutch academic writers who are being translated for England and America?

Diane Webb: Well the Dutch tend to hedge their bets a lot. Everything is in the conditional: 'This would have been; this might have shown.' I think: well, doesn't it show that? Isn't that what you're asserting? 'Well yes but I...' Well, just say it, you're the expert, just say it that way. Sometimes I have to persuade them to be less hesitant. And repetition. Repetition. A lot of repetition, and things that don't have anything to do with the text. I have to persuade them to cut things out. But this is just writing. This is a phase of the writing they didn't get to yet, because of the deadline.

Maarten Asscher: But is that sloppy writing, or sloppy editing on the part of the Dutch publisher? Or is it a national characteristic, not being bold enough to call a spade a spade?

Diane Webb: I think that part is perhaps Dutch. [laughter] Perhaps. I'm hedging my bets. But no, the repetition and the digression... I recently, well I won't name any names, but I recently translated a book, by Mr A, and he had done huge amounts of

archival research, masses and masses of very important archival research, but he wrote a book for a general public, wanted a rather short book for a general public, and he threw in everything but the kitchen sink. Every bit of information that he'd found was in there somewhere and it was just clogging up his story. And, well, I persuaded him to cut out a lot of it and I had a friend of mine, a very good translator of fiction, edit it and she persuaded me to persuade him to cut out even more. And at the very last read-through I thought: yes, this has turned out nicely, this is really the story, you could buy it, this book, you could buy this book and just read it as a story. It's fantastic, if I do say so myself. But there was one sentence that just kept bothering me and I thought: this doesn't have anything to do with anything. And I phoned this writer up and said, 'This one sentence is still really nagging at me; it doesn't have anything to do with this paragraph, doesn't have anything to do with the whole chapter, and it really has very little to do with the book.' And he said, 'But it was so interesting, it's such an interesting bit of information.' [laughter] And I said, 'I think so too, I think it's fascinating, take it home and put it in your next book.' And he was very sweet. He was very nice to work with because he agreed it needed a lot of editing. He had never written a book like that before, he'd only written pure scholarship that he considered dry and boring and he wanted to try his hand at writing something readable. I have something I wanted to say before I forget it. I woke up in the middle of the night and thought of it, because it had to do with yesterday and publishing dissertations. Has anyone here ever heard of a book called *The Thesis and the Book*? Well, then I should say no more. It's a great book, I think.

Alan Thomas: You know, since you've opened that door I should mention a more recent one. The University of Chicago Press publishes a book by William Germano called *From Dissertation to Book*. That's more recent. And California has a book called *Revising Your Dissertation*. By multiple editors.

Diane Webb: This one I'm talking about is from the University of Toronto Press and it was very concise and very good. I'll have to read yours; maybe it's even better.

Maarten Asscher: Is that a high-level how-to guide on how to get from a dissertation to a publishable trade version of an academic book?

Alan Thomas: Exactly. And the author, Bill Germano, was the publishing director of Routledge in New York, a very, very witty writer, and he has another book called *Getting it Published*, which is a guide for anyone serious about writing serious non-fiction. While I have a microphone, can I add that this business of a little detail that's

been added simply because it's interesting of course plagues writers in any language. There's some editor, I can't remember who, who used to urge his writers to massacre his precious darlings.

Diane Webb: Yes, and here we are. But it's not just for dissertations that such books are good, it can also just be for any old book of non-fiction, reading a book like that. For cutting it down, that's the main thing, this repetition and too much of everything, which distracts from the story, detracts from the argument.

Maarten Asscher: Jessica.

Jessica Nash: Getting back to editing translations, if I can organize my thoughts a little bit, Dutch critics will often skewer a translation from fiction or non-fiction if it differs even slightly from the English, or from the source language. I would almost say: how can you presume to edit a translation? Who asks you to do that? Do you ever encounter problems in the English press or from the English readers? We do not edit translations, but one thing that we will take care of, that we'll try to look for, is that the translator did not try to improve the language and so on. I've had translators call me and say: 'If he'd just say it this way it'd be so much more concise and the way she says "said so-and-so" and "said so-and-so" really annoys me, so can I rephrase that in Dutch?' And I usually say no, because then it's not authentic. It might be better but...

Diane Webb: Are you talking about fiction or non-fiction?

Jessica Nash: Fiction also, this is a fiction case.

Diane Webb: Fiction's a different story altogether. Then one must assume it's a sacred text and the author is a writer, not even a thinker but a writer. Every word is important and every word counts. In that case you just have to translate.

Jessica Nash: But I think the literary non-fiction that the Netherlands is so well known for is similar to fiction in that regard.

Diane Webb: It's still full of repetition and things that don't have anything to do with the story. I would never cut out a sentence without presenting this to the author. Never. Never. And sometimes he'll say, 'No, I really want that in there.' And I'll say, 'Well, alright, fine. It's going back in. Fine, it's your book.' But it's just my vision of it. I mean, when you're sitting there translating you just can't let these things pass if you think: he's just said this five times, in every chapter he's said this and we know this by now and he's treating us like idiots, thinking we can't remember it.

Jessica Nash: Are your books not edited? By an editor? Before you get them?

[laughter] I guess the answer is no.

Diane Webb: There are editors and editors. People who just read it and think: ‘Okay, it sounds okay, the language use is okay, the punctuation’s in the right place.’ But they don’t really pay attention to the words. When you translate it you just expose everything, every weakness, every strength, but everything just gets exposed, laid bare, and you have to think about it in such a much deeper way than just reading through it.

Maarten Asscher: I have a question for Salomon Kroonenberg, if I may. Would you be happy with such an active translator? I mean your book, *The Human Scale*, is perhaps not a sacred text, but it is very thought-out prose. Every sentence has been through the mill of your creative mind and though it is not fiction, would you be open to such far-reaching suggestions to improve the text for a foreign translated edition, after the Dutch version has already been published and established as such?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, I think that as long as I’m being consulted by the translator, what she or he has in mind about why to change it, then I will happily accept those changes, sure. But not without my knowing, and I might want to reject a certain solution because I think it doesn’t fit. But as I told you in my presentation, I was happy with the *Selbstbedienungsladen* of the German translators and I use it. So if it helps... There will be a new Dutch edition and I will even maybe rephrase the Dutch edition when it comes to that. For me this is not my final word. I would be happy with your suggestions when it really comes down to it.

Diane Webb: But the way you phrased that, you’re sort of accusing me of being high-handed even when a book is well written.

Maarten Asscher: No, no, no. I’m just moderating.

Diane Webb: If the book is well written it needs nothing but translation.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Actually I want to say that I regret I never met the translators. They were not at the presentation of the book in Germany, so we have had some e-mail contact but I think I would have appreciated the kind of approach that you have.

Maarten Asscher: Well, I can assure you, I even go as far as to oppose the notion of a sacred text even in fiction. I think even fiction writers benefit from very active and careful and perfectionist translators, and I personally have the experience of having to correct certain things in a novel because my German translator pointed out a few weaknesses or details that were not entirely right. I’m perfectly happy with that and in the next printing of the Dutch edition it is silently corrected.

Diane Webb: I always keep long lists, well, long lists, I always keep a list of all the typos and inconsistencies and wrong dates and misspellings or inconsistent spellings, and when the book comes out in Dutch again they always change them. Sometimes they'll even rephrase things in the Dutch. But this is just a continuation of the writing process. The only reason anything ever gets published is because there's a deadline. Nothing's ever finished is it? Nothing's ever finished.

Maarten Asscher: No. But then if you are an editor and a research assistant and what not, we have to talk about money.

Diane Webb: No! I don't think they want me to.

Maarten Asscher: But I insist on it, because you're paid as a translator and – I know this from many cases of your colleagues working in other languages – translating serious non-fiction, academic books for a general readership, requires a lot of fact-checking and correcting footnotes, updating footnotes. Is a translator's fee by any measure suitable to cover all that work? And if not, what could we do about it?

Diane Webb: Do I really have to answer this?

Maarten Asscher: Yes please, please do.

Diane Webb: Well, until a while ago the NWO, that's the Dutch organization for scientific research – although I think it should be scholarly research, but anyway, they translate it as scientific – used to pay seventeen cents a word for translations of non-fiction, and they would just count up all the words in the whole book, including the bibliography and the footnotes. Now, that's alright. Because that's much better paid than fiction. But you still don't get rich on that money if you see the book through to the very end and read two versions of the proofs and check the pdf files again to make sure they got the last corrections in. I mean, I'm a control freak in case you hadn't noticed. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: I did.

Diane Webb: So I see it through to the very end, but some translators don't read proofs. They hate that, they just don't, they refuse, they just say, 'I've translated the words, my job is done.' Lots of translators just don't. They say, 'They don't pay me for it, they're not willing to pay me for a solid week of ten hour days reading that book again.' Or two weeks sometimes, proofs can take a long time, if you read every word out loud to hear what it sounds like. So lots of translators just don't because they can't afford the time.

Maarten Asscher: But perhaps there could be special, smaller grants towards re-researching a text in the process of translation?

Diane Webb: No, the writers get those grants to research the book.

Maarten Asscher: But if after five years an English translation follows, then certain things have to be re-checked and re-done and that is at least partly the translator's job and it would perhaps make sense to allow a translator to do this.

Diane Webb: It definitely makes sense. If you know of such an institution where I could apply for this grant, please let me know.

Maarten Asscher: Does anyone think this makes sense, or is it absurd?

Diane Webb: But it's better just to pay a decent rate per word, because this stuff is included in a translation. It's too complicated, deciding which books deserve a grant for the translator to research the translation. You just have to do a lot of background reading to do it properly.

Maarten Asscher: But in some cases, for some types of books it would not be necessary to raise the fee per word because there's no such extra work involved, whereas in other cases there's a lot of extra work involved.

Diane Webb: Well, it depends on how much of an expert you are in the subject-matter. I mean, translators aren't experts on the subject-matter, they're just experts on the punctuation and the words, so you always have to put in a certain amount of reading. But if you specialize in one thing as I've done with art history, those texts can be done quite quickly and easily without a lot of research. My house is full of art books, so I can look things up pretty easily. Almost all the sources that are in the footnotes I have in my house, so I can look them up and find out why that funny spelling is in the middle of that quote. I can find the proper spelling, things like that. I don't know about the fee. That of course is shocking to American publishers, to hear seventeen or eighteen cents a word.

Maarten Asscher: Is it?

Diane Webb: Yes, because they pay ten cents a word, and that's American cents. And sometimes you do a book for that anyway because the publishers are very good, I mean Columbia... [laughter] Yes. So these are the decisions you have to make. But it's going to be a problem with non-fiction if the NWO doesn't reinstitute the subsidies. Some professors can siphon off funds from their faculties for translations and then they ask for seventeen, eighteen cents a word and they often get it. So it hasn't been a problem so far. But, I don't know, it's a lot more than fiction translators

get. I mean, translation is notoriously badly paid for the concentration it takes and the dedication. It's very badly paid. In German and Italy much worse than in Holland, I know that from other people.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please, Jennifer Crewe.

Jennifer Crewe: I would agree that translators are never paid really what they should be paid for the work they do, and as for the publishers, our point of view is that we'd like to do the book in translation but it costs a lot more, adds a lot to the costs of the book, if you're paying a translator, even if you do get a grant, and some ministries of culture are more generous with their grants than others. But often university presses are not expecting to sell that many copies, so really it's only if you're sure you can sell a decent number of copies that the cost can be absorbed and you can afford it. So that's why we can't pay that much for a translation. It's very difficult. I also publish translations of Asian fiction and there are some very good programmes in Japan and Korea, for example, where they really just give a great grant to the translator. They pay for the translation and then in addition they sometimes buy copies of the book from the American publisher, so they're in the business of trying to promote their culture around the world. They've just instituted these grants, which really makes a difference because the translator's happy and we're happy. But if we're footing the bill for it, it's very difficult.

Maarten Asscher: Is it easy or difficult for you to find, for example, translators from the Dutch into English. Do you have a choice or is it just one or two people?

Jennifer Crewe: Well, for the Dutch into English there's one person we know so far, but we haven't translated that many books from Dutch. We've done more from French, German and Italian, and there's a group of people we have used. We get word of mouth. There's a French book agency in New York City and they have people they recommend too, but it's kind of word of mouth. Then certain people become known for translating a certain kind of work. For example, Arthur Goldhammer, who translates from the French; he translates history and if you have a history book he's your top choice. Or William Weaver from the Italian, that kind of thing. Howard Goldblatt from Chinese. So there are people you get to know and you try to use them when you can. Saying Howard Goldblatt's name makes me just want to add to the previous point. He translates Chinese fiction; he always edits with the author. He usually knows these authors and he says, 'Wait, this isn't working.' He himself is

almost a co-writer in English, and the authors usually do go along with him and make changes.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you. Shall we leave it at this for the moment?

Giuseppe Laterza: May I say something?

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please.

Giuseppe Laterza: I wonder if anybody has experience of giving royalties to translators.

Jennifer Crewe: Well, I do. I don't know about others, but with Howard Goldblatt we usually do the royalties. It's a normal book contract and he gets either half or a third of the royalties on the English language edition and the author gets the rest.

Maarten Asscher: So the author has to move over to make room for the translator.

Giuseppe Laterza: Because it changes quite a lot in the perception and the role of the translator. If you give a translator a royalty it means you associate him in the project if the book is successful, to add to what is undoubtedly a very low sum that you can give on average to a translator for a book of which you print 3,000 copies. It's practically impossible. You should give up translating. Actually our experience in Italy is that under I would say 8,000 copies at an average price, translation is not viable. If you don't sell at least 8,000 copies, even if we pay translators very badly, under 8,000 copies sold we have no profit at all. And this makes it practically impossible, or it should be impossible, to translate any serious non-fiction with some very, very few exceptions. But if you give a royalty, obviously you're saying: if the book gets to be successful if it happens to be its time, the translator has part of the advantage. But I think very few publishers give royalties.

Maarten Asscher: Would your proposal be to give a royalty instead of a fixed sum?

Giuseppe Laterza: No, no.

Maarten Asscher: Or to consider the fixed sum as an advance on royalties?

Giuseppe Laterza: Exactly. As you do with the authors or with the foreign publishers. Foreign publishers usually get a scale of royalties, with an advance, not a lump sum but an advance on the royalties.

Maarten Asscher: Well that's one solution. The other solution Jennifer Crewe mentioned is to ask the authors to move over a little bit and make room for a proper rewarding of the translator, but that there is a problem I think we should not deny. I believe some 400 translations yearly are being published in America, so not very many. That is not a market for which a whole new generation of translators can be

found. This is not a career, most probably. I mean the name of William Weaver has been around for thirty years and where's the next generation of William Weavers? You can only find them and train them and keep them employed if there is a proper career and reward to be had from such work. Would you like to comment?

Alan Thomas: Yes. There's another model that we ran into recently. Diogenes, the Swiss publisher, was very keen on having Dürrenmatt's work published in English on an adequate scale, and they raised money for translation and themselves commissioned a translation for a three-volume collection of Dürrenmatt's writing from a very good American translator, Joel Agee, and the money was raised from the Swiss cultural foundation, Pro Helvetica I think it is. So that's another option for, say, the Dutch publisher or any European language publisher who has an important property, to actually raise the money, commission the translation only once the translation is underway and paid for, then to seek out an English-language publisher to take on the project.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you. A final word from you Diane?

Diane Webb: I don't really have any more to say.

Maarten Asscher: Okay.

Diane Webb: Maybe later.

Maarten Asscher: It will be edited in your mind while I thank you for your contribution and your presentation and while we go over to our next speaker in our session this morning, Douwe Draaisma, who I think needs very little introduction. You have seen his successes listed in the short biographical notice on the programme. *Why Life Speeds Up as You Get Older* is not only one of the most wonderful book titles ever invented but it is also a wonderful book, and I'm very pleased, Douwe Draaisma, that you are here with us and I gladly invite you to give your presentation.

Douwe Draaisma: Thank you very much, Maarten. I have a few remarks to make first on the theme of 'popular' and after that I'll have a few scattered remarks on the kind of things which were discussed yesterday and after the presentation of Diane. Let me start with my thesis on the term 'popular'. I think this is the kind of misnomer that should be eliminated from all talk on non-fiction books, and this is not because it tends to hurt the feelings of authors but because it may have consequences for matters touching on translation, on publishing, on reviewing, on academic settings in which most non-fiction books are written, as well as for publicity. So what's wrong with 'popular'? First of all it invites associates with (1) commercial interest, (2) large

audiences and (3) popularity in the sense of being well liked. And even if all of these can be the result of a convincing, interesting, well-written non-fiction book, none of these are intrinsically connected with quality non-fiction. Darwin's *Origin of Species* was sold out on the day of its appearance, so it was popular in this particular sense of attracting a wide readership, yet no one would call that book 'popular science'.

Secondly, it invites the idea that books that do find a wider audience, and are popular in that sense of the word, can't by definition be academic or scholarly. And this I think is the fundamental misconception, since thinking along these lines excludes the possibility of books serving both an audience of peers and a larger audience. Some of the best non-fiction books by, say, Stephen Jay Gould or Steven Rose or Oliver Sacks did just that, embracing both colleagues and general readers.

The term we need instead is 'accessibility'. And this is what really separates non-fiction from both sloppy non-fiction and strictly specialist publications. Unlike popularity, accessibility is not a result of good non-fiction but one of its conditions. If an author wants his book to be accessible, this has all manner of implications for his writing. There's not just the obvious point that he should avoid specialist language, which incidentally in my field, psychology, isn't that much of an effort, since many of the specialist terms are really fancy words for what can be said in plain language without any loss of meaning. I may tell you for instance that things learned later may interfere with things learned earlier. I don't need to say that we psychologists call this 'retroactive interference'. But I'm aware that for chemists or geologists or mathematicians or astronomers, avoiding specialist terms may be a bit harder. More importantly, accessibility has to do with the kind of tricks of the trade that make for a good read. It's always better to tell a story than to work off a list of items. You should show instead of define, be graphic, teach but don't lecture. Never in your life will you find a good novel with sentences like: 'First I will discuss,' or: 'Next I will deal with,' so please don't use them in a book of non-fiction. Don't start a new paragraph with a sentence like: 'As Jones argued in his book...' I could go on and on with the dos and don'ts of writing, but you already know what I mean.

What does this have to do with translating? Being a translator is a difficult job. The transition from one language to another is complicated enough as it is. And this is my second thesis. We can't expect translators to do two jobs: the transition from one language to the other and the transition from specialist to accessible. The second transition is the author's responsibility. The author can help his translator by writing

clearly, convincingly, graphically. Often as an author I've found that errors in the translation were due to the fact that the original was unclear. In this sense translation has a correcting effect and I think you have done a wonderful job in pointing this out, that a good translation is also partly copy-editing. In my opinion an author should supervise translations when they are in a language he masters himself. I certainly do. He should respect the autonomy of a translation, but there is so much he can and should do to help his translator. Often he has privileged access to the original quotations. He should provide these to the translator to begin with. But even if the original doesn't have quotations or paraphrases, it may help to send the original texts to give the translator a sense of the atmosphere of the book.

Let me give an example. In a book presently under translation on a series of neurological disorders, with names attached like Korsakov, Jules de la Tourette, Alzheimer or Asperger, I have a chapter on James Parkinson, who was a London GP working in Hoxton around 1800. In 1817 Parkinson wrote an essay on the shaking palsy, as the disease was called before it was named after Parkinson. I quoted quite a bit from this essay, but I also made sure that my translator had the full essay, since it was important that the choice of words in the parts that were paraphrases rather than quotations were still in agreement with the early nineteenth-century style of this medical treatise. The same goes for secondary sources. If there has been a biography that was particularly useful in documenting your own book, please send it over to the translator. It may help him or her decide on matters of phrasing. Often these sources suggest better ways of starting or ending quotations, and it certainly helps the translators to modulate the tone and atmosphere. And considering this I endorse what Giuseppe suggested. Since so much of translating is recreating, and since the quality of the book in the new language depends on the quality of the translation, I think it's only fair that translators should have a percentage derived from actual sales in addition to the lump sum for the translation.

I have a fourth thesis. University presses should handle trade books like trade books. I do have a caveat after what Alan explained yesterday about Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press being somewhat untypical in being such moloch institutions, and that most university presses are on a somewhat smaller scale and somewhat more like ordinary trade publishing houses. But still I can only go by my own experiences, which are connected with Cambridge UP, and I find that there are huge differences between the way books are handled by my Dutch publisher,

Historische Uitgeverij, and the way Cambridge operates. In particular I think university presses underestimate the eagerness of authors when it comes to helping presses with the marketing of the book. I suppose you all know the famous dictum by our countryman Bernard de Mandeville about private vices and public benefits. I think writing non-fiction is an extreme case of private vices and public benefits. At least in my case this is true. There is a fair amount of vanity in wanting to charm your audience. You want your lines to look sophisticated, spiritual, clever, elegant, and this is because one hopes, I hope, that the reader will think that someone who can write this elegantly and sophisticatedly is probably sophisticated and elegant himself. He's not, of course. You are all insiders, you are aware that meeting an author is often a disappointment, [laughter] but the very ambition to look elegant maybe inspire quality non-fiction.

Considering that this is part of the motivation to write in the first place, university presses should encourage and facilitate the author's participation in publicity and marketing. Don't just send him his five copies when the book is out. Organize a book launch. Arrange for pre-publications in science sections. If at all possible, set up a schedule of lectures in bookshops. Encourage him to do radio interviews. Often they can be done from your own city in local radio stations. Often the author has valuable ideas, based on his experience with the book in the source language. With the kind of readership the book attracts. So ask him. Both the original publisher and the author have had feedback on issues like the cover of the book or the title or the content of the book, and this may be valuable information for the publisher of the translation. UPs shouldn't just send out authors' questionnaires, they should have a talk, both with the author and with his publisher. There's a wealth of information available. And what we don't need is rigidity. It may be a publisher's policy to have a title in hardback for two years and in hardback only, to decide only afterwards on a follow-up as a paperback, but this may be counterproductive when, for some reason, the book attracts the kind of attention that alerts a wider audience. Often this is the kind of audience that will not buy a sixty-pound book but will consider spending twenty pounds. This iron rule of two years should admit exceptions, should circumstances dictate so.

Now I come to the part in which I have to improvise. It's about internationalisation and its consequences for Dutch books. What is internationalisation? Those of you from the English-speaking world don't have to deal with internationalisation at all, because you were born international, but the short answer to 'what is

internationalisation?' is: this is what makes my life terrible these days at university. There's been a Bologna Treaty by many of the European universities in which it was pointed out that there should be more exchange between students, between staff, and in order to facilitate this, much of the education curriculum literature will have to be in English. This means that English at European universities will become something of a lingua franca. And at my university, the University of Groningen, I already suffer the consequences, so to speak, because much of the Master phase is in English and it's only the Bachelor phase in the study which is still in Dutch.

Now, the rhetoric on this internationalisation is intensely cosmopolitanism, it suggests that students will travel to Madrid, perhaps, for three months, and they will travel on to Berlin and perhaps spend half a year in Copenhagen. It's the rhetoric of broadening horizons, the opening up of the world, etc. The actual consequences of this internationalisation are the reverse, in fact. Because the facilitation by the English language means that if you travel to Madrid or you travel to Berlin or to Copenhagen you will not sniff Spanish culture or German culture or Danish culture, you will sniff English literature as prescribed by Spanish teachers, German teachers, Danish teachers. So it's not a matter of broadening horizons, it's a matter of ever-narrowing horizons to English literature.

This may have silly consequences. I only know them from my own university; we have a wonderful philosophy department which of course is cutting-edge and prescribes everything in English and offers English courses, with a fair number of German students, and they read Kant in English. This is a clash with a traditional value in philosophy, namely that you read philosophers in the original text, in the sources. So when these students insisted that they wanted to read *Zum ewigen Frieden* instead of *Perpetual Peace*, they were in trouble, because the papers they had to write had to be in English and so they had to refer to Kant in English. This is intensely silly in my view.

It also means there's a threat that people will start to write English as opposed to writing in their own language and having it translated. Catherine had a wonderful polite characterization yesterday of English written or spoken by Dutch authors, about something being not quite right about the English. I think that this is so true. I'd like to make an exception for the wonderful sonority of Maarten Asscher speaking English, but in general a Dutchman speaking English is best compared to the sound of someone singing when he's wearing headphones. [laughter] It has the added analogy

that for the singer it sounds wonderful. [laughter] This also goes for writing in English. Every once in a while I meet colleagues who notice that I don't write that much directly in English and they say, 'Well, I don't have any trouble whatsoever writing English.' But then when you read what they have written, these are the kinds of articles which start with: 'As Jones has argued,' and: 'First I will discuss this or that.' Indeed there's no trouble in writing English in that way. I like to think of this wonderful remark by Thomas Mann: 'A writer is someone who finds writing a bit harder than other people.' [laughter]

Let me make a few closing remarks on writing in English. In Dutch academic settings the first book that an academic will write, which is often also his final book, is a dissertation. And there's something peculiar about the dissertation. It is at once the easiest book you will ever write and the most difficult book you will ever write. It's the easiest book because there are all kinds of incentives to write it in the first place. People have a salary for three or four years to write the book. They present chapters to colleagues, who comment on them, help them to think of a line in the book etc. So that's the easy part. The difficult part is that no student will ever take leave from the idea that he will have to defend his book in a public ceremony. And this is quite a big deal in the Netherlands. It's done in big halls and you invite your family, you invite your friends, you invite colleagues, you invite your former neighbours, everyone who is important in your life is there, and those are not the kind of circumstances that will make someone feel at ease. And this also is reflected in the way he writes a dissertation. It is a defensive book. It's full of perhapses and the kind of things that Diane dislikes so much. This is why dissertations are often such awful books. And I did note this particular title *From Dissertation to Book*, and I intend to give it to my AIOs as they're called, PhD students, because I think you should write your thesis as if it were a book and it should be provocative and not defensive.

A final remark on universities encouraging writing in English in specialist journals. This is official, so to speak. If you enter a tenure track, you'd better write articles instead of books. On the other hand, those authors that write books that find a wider audience are welcomed in universities. There's an intense ambivalence in the way authorities in universities deal with authors who have found a wider audience. So officially they're discouraged from writing books, but when there is a successful book they will find this author and ask him to be the main speaker at, say, a dinner for alumni or fundraising dinners etc. So you should keep in mind that even if you enter

on a trajectory which may be counterproductive in your career, when you do find a wider audience there may be some rewards as well. Thank you.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much, Douwe Draaisma. Yesterday we discussed with Floris Cohen the heavy version and the light version of his project of writing about how science came into the modern world. If you had to describe your work, your books, for example *Why Life Speeds Up As You Get Older*, in terms of heavy or medium or light, what would you call them?

Douwe Draaisma: I like to think of that book as Draaisma well done. [laughter] Because this is the kind of book that I intended to write for myself in the first place. It's in fact a collection of questions that I would like to have an answer to. Even if these were questions for which I was not certain I could find some definite or exactly answer. So in that sense this was the kind of book that was rather personal, the kind of book that a man in his mid-forties might want to write partly as a relief from normal academic publishing. This is also why I wrote it in the holidays and at weekends. To feel free from the normal obligations and criteria. And, well, the irony of the fact is that when it came out it did appeal both to colleagues and peers as well as a wider audience.

Maarten Asscher: But is there a heavy version lurking behind it?

Douwe Draaisma: No, I couldn't say that. I'd like to think of writing that way as similar to being a guide. As a guide you have seen a lot, you've seen a whole city, and to devise a tour which is worthwhile and on a scale of one hour or two hours, you spend weeks and weeks in devising this particular shorter tour. So I did read a lot on time studies, time experiments and so on, and only a part of that is in the book, of course.

Maarten Asscher: But the subject of memory and autobiography and the combination of the two, autobiographical memory, could also be treated in a very technical, neurological, psychological, jargonistic manner. Have you found that your peers, your academic peers, treat this book as a sufficiently serious work, or is it considered as a book for the general reader and not for them?

Douwe Draaisma: The first option. In fact in the discussion yesterday there was a received idea that an author who does find a wider audience will have to deal with the jealousy of his colleagues and peers etc. I spoke with Floris about that over lunch. Nothing of the kind happened. In fact we both received very warm letters from readers, colleagues and non-colleagues, saying that indeed they liked the book and not

a hint of suggestions, or, well, you know the way academics do that, talking about your book in a diminutive way, calling it a *boekje* [laughter] instead of a *boek*. None of that.

Giuseppe Laterza: What is a *boekje*?

Douwe Draaisma: A little book.

Maarten Asscher: You quote the often quoted advice: show don't tell. But how do you show something that cannot be shown? What has been your trick in specifically this book and also in your other work? Where do you diverge in the stylistic means and in the elements of composition from the habit of solid academic psychological writing?

Douwe Draaisma: Well, sometimes novelists help out. Novelists have of course a seismic sensitivity to what goes on in minds, and often you will find in novels descriptions of introspection which are so much more subtle than anything you can find in psychology that simply quoting or paraphrasing what you find in novels is a much better entrance into a general psychological problem than what you find in psychology. You may work with examples, you may work with personal experiences. We're all aware that the three minutes which passed yesterday between eleven o'clock and three minutes past eleven o'clock are a completely different three minutes than the three minutes you have to wait before your computer starts up. By choosing your examples from experiences which are common for us all, it becomes the kind of work that makes for a good read.

Maarten Asscher: Yes, but do academic writers, do your academic colleagues accept for example the use of novelistic material as academically sound, as sound scholarship?

Douwe Draaisma: Well they like to think of themselves as specialists who write on other subjects, and often they do, they write on the temporal limits of semantic memory, for instance, in the psychology of memory. You must also remember that most of your colleagues are laypersons as regards the topic that you are writing about. So psychologists don't know all that much about memory in general and not about autobiographical memory in particular. Autobiographical memory in a sense is a new kid on the block. Research in autobiographical memory has been around for only fifteen or twenty years, and the rest of the standard textbooks in the psychology of memory are on short-term memory, long-term memory, semantic memory, motor

memory and what have you, but the kind of memory which is memory in the ordinary plain common sense is only there for about twenty years.

Maarten Asscher: Diane, please.

Diane Webb: Are we allowed to ask Douwe his experience with translators?

Maarten Asscher: Yes, certainly. That's next on the agenda.

Diane Webb: Because I know that they're standing in line to translate his books, beating down the doors to be there first.

Maarten Asscher: And from a translator's point of view, why is that?

Diane Webb: Because it's so clearly written. You don't have to edit it. That's why.

Douwe Draaisma: But I would love to have translators, indeed I did have translators who did just that, edit, who did not adhere to the exact length of a sentence in Dutch and copy it in English, because there may be long sentences in Dutch which are perfectly natural sentences.

Diane Webb: That's just part of translation, that's not editing.

Douwe Draaisma: Ah. Okay. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Where does the one stop and the other begin?

Diane Webb: Well...

Maarten Asscher: Cutting long sentences into short sentences is sort of semi-editorial?

Diane Webb: Well, when you put two sentences together sometimes, or when you take a very long sentence in Dutch and it's very unwieldy, you don't know what to do with it, it's very tempting to chop it up into two sentences, but when you do, you automatically give a bias to the text that wasn't there in the beginning. Because then there are two subjects, and those subjects seem equally important, whereas the original sentence had one subject and that was the emphasis. Usually if you work at it long enough you can get it to stay in one long sentence, but sometimes, just sometimes, you have to. You can't make sense of it in any other way. I don't know, one has to, or I have done that, once in a long, long time. It's just such a subjective thing too, translation, and such a personal thing, working alone. I wanted to know his experience with translators, whether he feels they can do justice to his texts.

Douwe Draaisma: I think so. I can only supervise or assist in translations into German and English. My German translator is present here, Verena Kiefer. She already did three books and will do a fourth, probably. And I like to be of assistance just because translation is such a difficult job and because the translator only has the

book, whereas I have the background knowledge which inspired the sentences in the book in the first place, so having this wider view may help get the translator to make a better text. This goes for English as well, and I always hope that a translator will feel at liberty to chop up sentences or combine other sentences, because sometimes sentences are long and unwieldy, but there's no problem in having a long sentence in itself, as long as you can read it and the sentence is clear. But sometimes it's difficult to transpose this sentence into English or German and I feel a translator should have the liberty to write a sentence the way it is natural in the new language.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. Annette Wunschel, please.

Annette Wunschel: I just wanted to say that after the translator comes the editor, and if the translator doesn't edit, the editor will do, so he will start to do exactly what you describe. I work as a translator and an editor, so as a translator I'm used to being already busy editing and I like to hear what you say, that it's okay to edit, because it's not always clear. You know that a German publisher has an interest in publishing a book that sounds as if it was written in German. It should not at all sound translated. So editing is essential, and all the examples...

Diane Webb: Only when it's necessary. You have to know when to leave well alone. If it doesn't need it, then it doesn't need it.

Annette Wunschel: Only when it's necessary, of course. If a book is perfectly done, it doesn't need it. Exactly. I'm grateful. But the biggest problem which I have to deal with is jargon. And that comes together with the other point about writing in American language, and in Germany that's also a big problem, that at the universities it's always more usual to write in the American language. This is a topic for a conference of its own; it's disastrous. So I'll stop here.

Maarten Asscher: Douwe Draaisma, you said something about the way you write your books, with full academic knowledge but in an accessible way. You also mentioned that you want to participate very actively in the promotion and in the marketing. I think that's an interesting point, which probably would not be made by all scholars, but can you realize that ambition in practice? Your book has been published now in ten or twenty languages. The Korean edition will come up soon. Will you be actively participating with your Korean publisher, your Korean translator, and will you go to Pyongyang to read? [laughter]. This sounds like a caricature, but you have your academic work and your students and your colleagues, and while

everybody may wish you well with your success with a general readership, there is a time constraint here.

Douwe Draaisma: Yes, it's limited to either German or English-speaking countries. So I did do two *Lesereise* in Germany when the book was published in Berlin and did have lectures in libraries and bookshops, but obviously when one gets invited to Japan it will either have to be in English or there will be some kind of translation, simultaneous translation.

Maarten Asscher: And it will probably have to be during the holidays, because you cannot interrupt your teaching for a promotional tour to Japan.

Douwe Draaisma: You can schedule these things. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Well, that's a good position to be in. Please.

Ian Malcolm: What control do you as an author have over which publisher picks up the book in a foreign language? Do you just leave that to your agent and/or publisher, whoever controls the rights, or do you get actively involved in the choice of publisher yourself?

Douwe Draaisma: Well, I do have a very active publisher in this respect, and he consults of course in the case that there are several offers, which isn't always the case of course, but which does happen. My publisher is well connected and the work of the Production Foundation is equally important in this respect. So far we don't have an agent. In the Dutch situation this is a rather new development, I think, perhaps of the past few years, and so far the kind of money connected with it isn't all that spectacular either.

Ian Malcolm: I ask partly because you referred to a Cambridge book being priced at sixty pounds and frankly you could go on a six-month author tour of Britain and get on the front cover of every newspaper and still sell five books if it's priced at sixty pounds, so I think it might be useful to do a lot of research before just agreeing to go with any publisher about what that publisher is really going to do with the book, and not sign a contract and then be disappointed afterwards when you discover what their plans are.

Douwe Draaisma: Yes, that's a very instructive remark. I think coming from university one is delighted to be published by Cambridge University Press, of course. It's the oldest press in the world, it's the most prestigious press in the world, but then indeed if you do find a wider audience, other options are there and have to be considered.

Ian Malcolm: It may be that Cambridge also has a spectrum, so I shouldn't suggest that if you go with Cambridge you automatically get a sixty-pound book and no publicity, but it would be nice for authors to know that they're going to be in Cambridge's trade programme, if they have such a thing.

Giuseppe Laterza: If they have.

Ian Malcolm: If they have. I don't want, on the other hand, to praise Cambridge either... [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: Anyone else with direct comments or questions to Douwe Draaisma? Otherwise I suggest we have a coffee break now and in twenty minutes' time we continue our session with Luigi and then our plenary session...

Diane Webb: Giuseppe.

Maarten Asscher: Giuseppe, sorry! [laughter] I always call everybody Luigi.

Maarten Asscher: Right. We are more or less complete again. I have two preliminary remarks to make. First of all, on behalf of Jaja, there are two tables there, one with books, please leave those where they are... [laughter], and the other one with foreign rights catalogues and publishers' catalogues. You are most welcome to take those with you if there are some that catch your interest, because they are expressly put there for your information and documentation. And the second remark is my calling Giuseppe Luigi. Perhaps Douwe Draaisma can explain how this works. [laughter] There is a fellow, an Italian publisher by the name of Luigi Sponzilli, whom – do you know him?

Giuseppe Laterza: No. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: I met him in Jerusalem as part of the Jerusalem International Fellowship network. In the late eighties I was a fellow of the Jerusalem International Book Fair and there was this very nice colleague of mine, an editor at I forget which publishing house, by the name of Luigi Sponzilli. And for some reason or other his name went down into my memory as Giuseppe. So every time I met him in Frankfurt, in Jerusalem again, in London, in Amsterdam, I called him always Giuseppe. And finally he became so mad at me that he said: 'Stop calling me Giuseppe!' So that's why there is a sort of forbidding mechanism in my mind.

Giuseppe Laterza: Dear David, this is not a problem. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: So, there we are with Giuseppe on my right hand and my invitation to him to deliver his presentation. Please.

Giuseppe Laterza: So in ten minutes I'm going to deliver you my special expertise in an accessible form, I hope. Actually on the form we were requested – which is interesting for an Italian because it's very unusual – to be personal and polemical. In Italy it would be to be polite and general, and it's interesting because I totally agree with what has been said, that a personal way to deliver things is the best possible way. I'm not sure I can be so polemical after all the cheese, chocolate and cakes I've eaten in these two days, but I certainly cannot be polemical towards our Dutch friends who really made these two days to be both thought-provoking and friendly. I will not be with you tonight, so I'll profit from this occasion to say thank you, particularly to David [laughter] but to all of you.

When Laterza was founded, it started as a little shop in Bari in the south of Italy which sold paper and notebooks and then later books and then a printing plant that printed labels for oil. You know in the southern part of Italy we have a lot of olives. And then it became a publisher. And it was a big family – as you used to think of Italy in the stereotype, with big families – with five sons, and the company is called Giuseppe Laterza & Figli because Giuseppe, the father, was in wood-working. Particularly the joke in the family was that he worked on coffins, which is not nice to say, and he had nothing to do with publishing, but the sons were too young to give their names to the company, so they called it Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, and as you see my name is Giuseppe. [laughter]

Maarten Asscher: *Capito.*

Giuseppe Laterza: In Italy it goes from one name to another, so Giuseppe and Vito Giuseppe and Vito (my father is Vito) and so on, and the youngest of the five *figli* decided he wanted to be a publisher, so the others looked at him as a foolish man. What's publishing? I mean, you sell things, you produce them. But he was an autodidact and he published three or four books, like a technique to produce glass, poetry from a local poet, and then after four or five books like that he said: 'Well, I need a direction, I cannot just go on publishing whatever happens.' And he went to Naples, which at that time was an important city, the most important city for that area of Italy, and went to meet four or five leading figures of the intellectual scene. One of them was at that time not so famous but quite an important philosopher called Benedetto Croce, and he looked at this young man, he was seventeen or eighteen, and

he said: look, start to publish some books which I'll tell you. I'll never give you my books, that will happen afterwards, but I recommend you publish not poetry, not fiction but what he called *roba grave*, which means heavy objects. So this is the Laterza imprint. The idea is to publish books which contribute to the critical knowledge of an elite, basically, not of everybody.

In that time, 1901, the structure of society was such that this idea meant publishing good books and then these good books would go to the elite and the elite would read them and through word of mouth circulate them. Words like marketing not only didn't exist but were nonsense, because the idea is that if I publish a good book and send it to a hundred persons who count, then they will be my marketing device. I don't need publicity. They will write on the four or five relevant places to write about the book. So it's very interesting to see that nowadays, a century later, everything has changed in Italy as in the other countries and the problems we've discussed in these two days are very similar, I think. In a way this is comforting for a publisher, for me certainly. The way we tackle the problems may be different but the problems are the same.

I've taken note of some key words, which seem to me perhaps interesting to discuss. First key word is the question of time. Time has much to do with the questions we're discussing. It's a big problem between publishers and specialists, universities, people who write. Time can be a question of delivery dates. We all experience this problem, particularly with people who work in universities, because the conception of time of a university professor is very peculiar. Some months ago I called a historian whose colleague told me: 'Look he's doing a major book on modern Italy, he's just finishing it.' So I called him and said, 'Professor So-and-so, I know you're doing a major book on the modern history of Italy and you're just finishing it. Yes, of course, I would like to publish it, send me your material. When were you projecting to end the book?' And he told me well, most probably 2013. [laughter] And I stopped, I mean there were some second of silence. And he said, 'Oh, Dr Laterza. From your silence I gather I've exposed myself. Let's make it 2014.' [laughter] So, the idea of time.

We are there in our publishing house, which is a trade-dependent company. At the end of the year we have to have a balance sheet and even if it's based on family it's not only family-based. We have to make profits and show that we're viable. It's very difficult to combine the two things. Our principle suppliers, which we need in order to get a production chain and marketing going, have this conception of time. It's difficult to work. But also it's a question of the time you devote to the author and that's the

other way round. A lot of the time we know only that we have to publish so many books by the end of the year and create an income. We don't give personal attention to how much time the author needs in his relationship with us. Maybe it's the time of a phone call. Maybe time just to say: 'How things are going, are you writing the book?' It's not good that you make an agreement and then you wait up to two years and the books arrive. That's not a good way to work I think. It's an adventure, surely for the author, and the publisher needs time to publish the book, to edit the book with the author, time to check the translation, work with the translator, the time for marketing, translation.

It makes me think about this Arthur Goldhammer you mentioned. At a certain moment we had a very strong relationship with some French historians and we commissioned a *histoire des femmes*, history of women, from a group of international historians, American, French. It was directed by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, very distinguished historians. And we sold it and we had world rights, we commissioned the book and we sold it in different countries, Harvard University Press in the United States. Then there was a quarrel, because Arthur Goldhammer took these very elaborate and sophisticated phrases by the French authors and decided this was nonsense in English and cut it very deeply and at a certain moment I received a letter from the French authors saying, 'That's disgusting; we will not accept this American way to make the editing.' So here was this poor little Italian publisher trying to get, you know, between the fierce French very strong identity. They said: 'We are French. That's the way we write.' And the Americans said: 'Look, we need to have a way to communicate this text to a reader.' It was very interesting and in the end we combined the two things, thanks to Michelle Perrot, I think, who is a wonderful woman. A time of selling. You know one word which has been mentioned is backlist. Books need time to sell, and books need time to be read. I think one of the reasons why we have difficulty in the book trade is the conception of time we have nowadays, in which we think everything that is short and rapid is good. A book needs attention and so all these questions of time are crucial.

The other word is trust. There's a question of trust from the author to the publisher. I think everything Catherine Clarke said is very interesting from this aspect. The author trusts a publisher. He really thinks that he's the person who will make him be diffused and discussed. But one crucial aspect of our work as publishers is to build the trust of

the public towards the author. Trust needs a combination of competence and what we call *autorevolezza*, I don't know what you would say in English.

Diane Webb: Authoritativeness.

Giuseppe Laterza: Authoritativeness. Which is very interesting because it has to do with an author. It's exactly the same thing. But it's not only this. It's the idea that this particular book is for you. So it's a relationship between the two things and this is a very important part of the work of a publisher.

Then another key word is risk. How much is the publisher going to risk his time and money on the book? The economy of the book is very much an economy of scale. You know this. I mean, after a certain number of copies the book makes a lot of money. Up to that number of copies the fixed costs are very high. So the problem for a publisher is: how much is he willing to risk, to have big money after that number of copies? Which is quite high for serious non-fiction, probably more than 10,000 copies. Above 10,000 copies the publisher knows that unless he has spent an awful amount of money in advance, which can happen, on publicity, he will make a lot of money. But the question of risk is very important. Do publishers risk enough? Do they give the authors an incentive?

The other key word is university. In Italy the incentive has to be so high because the university gives the opposite incentive. The university says to anybody who is not senior, and even to the senior: 'If you write a book you betray your function and your function is to be part of an exclusive community and to write for this exclusive community.' When we say 'specialist expertise in accessible form', accessible to whom? If we think that the accessibility is to the specialist community, it's fine to write in English. Because the international community is made up of people who read English and probably will go to internet I think, more and more. If it's a broad audience, as the title says, how broad is the audience? It's difficult to say. Are we thinking 5,000, 10,000, 15,000, 100,000 people? And what's the difference between writing for 100,000 people and 15,000? There is a difference. There is a difference. I mean if I say 'royalty' I don't need to say the royalty is a percentage of the cover price, I know you know. And in the end I think again it's a question of trust, because it implies the personal relationship between an author and a publisher. My experience is that basically the first person an author, if I'm successful, thinks of is me, or the editor, the person who works with him, if he trusts them. So you have this difficult

role in a way, to keep thinking of yourself as the reader, as the possible reader of the author.

The last key word is a difficult couple, a difficult combination, which is money-ideas. I think the two things can be a wonderful combination. I think my idea of the publisher is somebody whose main goal is to diffuse good ideas by making money. There's a wonderful sentence by Jason Epstein, who used to be a publisher in America for big companies, saying that some publishers think their main goal is to diffuse ideas, others say our main goal is to make money, profit, we're entrepreneurs like any other. And he says: 'Making profits is not a goal for a publisher any more than breathing is a goal for a man in life.' Which I think is a very good way to put it. We need to be profitable and not make losses to keep our work going, but our main purpose I think is to diffuse what we consider, what we hope will be good ideas. And from this point of view there's a work of trust, of selection, of time, which I think is very important, and books I think are still the way in which many of these things can be done better than by other means. For me occasions like this one to share this feeling with you, different people, is precious, so I can go back to my work and have supplementary energy to do it better.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you very much, Giuseppe. How would you describe your publishing house? Would you say it is a *wissenschaftliches Publikumsverlag*, as Detlef Felken said about C.H. Beck? Or would you call it an Italian-style university press? Or is it a trade publisher that also publishes academic books? How are the nuances as far as you are concerned?

Giuseppe Laterza: Ah, it's difficult to say, as I think Diane Webb said at the beginning, you know, when you said it's difficult to define the category.

Diane Webb: Yes, the categories.

Giuseppe Laterza: So we do school books, for high school, many authors that do successful school books are also authors of monographs, because they teach at university. And they also from time to time write essays. Everybody knows that we need categories in order to interpret life, so if I see a Dutchman I think: Aha! And I have all my stereotypes about an Italian. But in fact...

Floris Cohen: Once you know it's a Dutchman.

Giuseppe Laterza: Once you know it's a Dutchman. But in fact, as a recent conference explained in genetics, racism is wrong simply because races don't exist. So I think that a very good monograph is a monograph written in a way that makes it

accessible and interesting. It's difficult for me to give a label. I think that what we say is that we're both trade and academic. When I go to Frankfurt and meet my colleagues for the first time, in American, in English terms I'd say we're both academic and trade. It's difficult to say much more than that.

Maarten Asscher: But if you offer your publications to bookstores, do you expect these stores to stock them? And do you give a discount that allows them to do so? Or do you expect them to sell them if and when they are adopted as obligatory material for students?

Giuseppe Laterza: No, we mainly expect them to sell them in time and stock them if possible. That's more and more difficult in Italy and I think everywhere. And occasionally we also expect them to sell them to students for university. So Laterza started as a company that was non-university, I mean the purpose of our books was to be read by this elite, not a specialist elite. It could be a lawyer, it could be a doctor, it could be somebody who likes to read and to make his culture out of books. This is the way we were. Then recently we have built up in the house a specific university office, because there are things that you have to do to get into the university. Marketing to a university is different than other kinds of marketing. But we still consider that we try to add some sales even to the monograph.

The interesting thing is that at a certain time we thought it would be good to put as a title Laterza Università, to uncouple our collection. And the sales went down dramatically. Not only immediate sales but also over time, which shows that even the sort of monographs that we put in that collection, which we thought were basically university, did have a percentage of sales outside. Obviously if you use the label Laterza Università, then you get only people from university to read it, but if you don't have this label and you put it in a nice cover and you try to make it an object of desire, let's say, something that people of a certain culture will want, then you can have a supplementary readership.

In Italy we have a smaller mass market than you have in other countries. I mean, to the question: 'Do you read at least one book a year?' only 42% of Italians say yes. I think the highest in Europe is Sweden or Norway, they have 75%, and then the average is 55%. I think Holland is about in the average. In Italy it's 42%, together with Greece and Portugal. But inside this smaller mass market we have a quite relevant elite market which is not a niche, it's quite substantial. Together with Detlef we publish this collection called *The Making of Europe*, which has five publishers:

Editions du Seuil, Beck, Crítica, Blackwell and Laterza. It's made up of history essays, directed by Jacques Le Goff. When you saw the sales between the five countries, there was no proportion according to country. The German market is three times the Italian. The French market is two times on the whole. But the sales of that particular book were not in proportion. Italian sales were higher than that, because we have – which is very good for Laterza, obviously – what we call the cultivated layman.

Maarten Asscher: But if you are offered, say, a book by Douwe Draaisma, with a sample chapter and quotes from the international press, even from Korea, will you then send the book out to a committee of psychologists to ascertain the academic quality, or will you, with your commissioning editor, decide for yourself: well, this looks okay to us and we will probably find a good readership for it in Italy?

Giuseppe Laterza: It very much depends on the sort of book. If it's a book which is intended to be read mainly by specialists, I will get it read by a committee. But usually we don't translate those books. Usually we think those books are read in the original language, particularly if they're in English, obviously. As I was saying this morning, we cannot afford to make a translation unless we have a high print-run, so in this case I consider it to be more trade oriented. I think it will also be read by the scientific community, but it's not sufficient. And in this case what I would do is send it to somebody, one person, two persons, one person I really trust, before saying yes. More important is: who does know the author in Italy? Two sides. Does the foreign author have good contacts in Italy? Do Italian scholars know him? For instance: reviews. How easy will it be and how tough will it be to get reviews of that book? And then I read it and that's a problem with Dutch, obviously, that it's difficult for me to form an opinion. It's like in Italian. When I send out a book in Italian it's very difficult, because you need a personal view of the publisher about the language, the style, all the things Diane Webb was saying at the beginning. It's very difficult to tell. So what I do is try to get a sample chapter in English, as you say, and form an opinion on that and then risk making an investment and say: Well, I'll try. But this is more editorial, I would say.

Maarten Asscher: Douwe Draaisma, are you once in a while approached by Dutch publishers to give an opinion on books from elsewhere? Whether they would merit translation?

Douwe Draaisma: It happens perhaps once a year. I think most Dutch publishers want to form their own opinion on accessibility and the level of the book.

Maarten Asscher: Have you sat on peer review committees of journals or university presses.

Douwe Draaisma: Yes. Yes.

Maarten Asscher: And what is your experience?

Douwe Draaisma: Well it depends on the kind of judgement they ask of you. Is it professionally sound? Is it academically sound? But what they really want to know is: Is this a viable book to publish? Can you expect to sell three or four thousand copies or something? So in the way you write your review you also take this into consideration.

Maarten Asscher: But the viability, the prospects for a book, those are more considerations for the professional publisher, really.

Douwe Draaisma: Yes, but sometimes I can see the competition in the field. Other books which are available on the same topic. So in this respect perhaps I can judge whether it is a true contribution to the field.

Maarten Asscher: Okay.

Giuseppe Laterza: One thing which is very interesting in good English proposals or American proposals is that at a certain time the author explains the difference with other books. That's not an easy thing. You're asking somebody to be quite objective and clear in explaining the difference. And I think it's very important, for a publisher it's crucial to know that, as you were saying.

Douwe Draaisma: You also ask him not to be modest, in fact. No, really, if you have to explain what the unique selling points of your book are, you can only do so by contrasting it to other books, and to some people that doesn't come naturally.

Maarten Asscher: You mentioned time as one of your first key words. But time works both ways. On the one hand there are authors who need many years to complete a book. On the other hand I sometimes have the impression from authors I speak to that people would like publishing houses to work much faster and to use commercial opportunity much more quickly instead of taking one and a half years to get to the stage of a galley proof. What is your view on production schedules and what is the Italian image here?

Giuseppe Laterza: Well, I was discussing with Jennifer exactly this subject before. More and more trade authors are concerned about time. In our terms, in terms of our

publishing house, if an author gives us a text today – which is, what is it? The 15th of November – and we accept the book, let's say. I read it overnight and on Monday I say it's okay. [laughter] No no no, he wants me to do this, so he says: look, it's Luigi Banzilli who's waiting.

Maarten Asscher: Sponzilli!

Giuseppe Laterza: Sorry, Sponzilli then. And on Monday I come back and say: look, it's a wonderful book, I've read it, I want to publish it, then for technical reasons – let's call it technical but it's much more than that: production reasons, editing, three processes of proof correction, which we have in house, the author's corrections and also for marketing, the design of the jacket and so on – the book will come out in the group (we have monthly groups but also for marketing purposes they're together) so it will be now in the beginning of May. People say, May?! I was thinking January. I was thinking just after... May?! May is another geological era! [laughter] What is May? I mean, in May all our life could be different! I'm not joking, this is a perception we all have, no? Catherine, you were saying: 'You ask me what will happen in ten years or fifteen years?' People say nowadays: don't ask what will happen in five months. So this is dramatic, because in a way they're pushing a publisher to become someone completely different, a printer and a marketing man. And I don't think a publisher is the combination of a printer and a marketing man, I think a publisher is someone who works from the beginning with the author and on the book. I think the conception of the book is crucial, all the process of working with the author and thinking about what sort of book he can write, and when it comes to time, this part is very complicated. I was very happy to know from some of our more trade colleagues I esteem very much, like Penguin – Penguin often takes a long time to publish a book – it's not only a problem of the university presses and their bureaucracy and so on, it's a problem of working on the book, of doing our work. Obviously it's getting more and more difficult. People have a sense of time which is – in Italy, I mean, this is my experience – a problem.

Maarten Asscher: Diane.

Diane Webb: If you decide to publish a translation and you engage a translator to translate, what amount of time is a translator generally given for a book, I don't know, take as an example a 250-page book that needs translation?

Giuseppe Laterza: Monday? [laughter]

Diane Webb: That's right. I thought so.

Maarten Asscher: Are you often on unrealistic deadlines?

Diane Webb: No, because I just don't accept them. I just won't do it. You can't promise to do a book in two months, I don't think it's possible.

Maarten Asscher: Does that regularly happen, that you say: 'Well, I would have loved to translate it but sorry on this time schedule I will not accept it?'

Diane Webb: Yes.

Douwe Draaisma: No one messes with Diane. [laughter]

Diane Webb: Oh stop it. But if you try it once, then you realize that it can't be done, and it's your reputation that suffers. You can't *write* a book in two months, can you? Can you?

Douwe Draaisma: Floris did one in three months.

Diane Webb: But that would need editing in translation.

Maarten Asscher: Well, Dutch trade publishers over the past years have adopted a terrible system, especially with non-fiction books, of cutting the book into four pieces and giving it to four different translators to speed up the editorial stage of the production process.

Diane Webb: But also fiction is regularly translated chapter by chapter. Umberto Eco has all of his Dutch translators always do it as a team. Every other chapter is translated by a different person. So that's often done to make things faster.

Maarten Asscher: But probably what you get is an echo.

Diane Webb: An echo of Eco.

Maarten Asscher: Frits.

Frits van der Meij: To defend here the translators of Umberto Eco...

Diane Webb: I didn't say they weren't any good, I just said they worked like that.

Frits van der Meij: With any book they're doing, they do it together because that's the only way they can work. So it's not because the publisher wants them to do that, it's because the translators say: that's the only way we can translate the book.

Diane Webb: Okay. But fiction is often timed to be published simultaneously in different countries, and especially the Dutch want translations very, very fast, so that the book can come out in Dutch at the same time as in English, from a manuscript, so that it comes out simultaneously in both countries, because otherwise Dutch people will just buy the English version and they will have read that before the Dutch comes out and then no one will buy the Dutch.

Frits van der Meij: That's true, but I was only speaking in defence of the translators of Umberto Eco.

Diane Webb: No I didn't say anything about the translations not being any good, they may be very good.

Giuseppe Laterza: May I be polemical?

Maarten Asscher: Yes, please.

Giuseppe Laterza: Would you ever imagine a film in which Dustin Hoffman is dubbed in Italian by five different actors? [laughter]

Frits van der Meij: Well I would say...

Giuseppe Laterza: Even if they gathered before the film and exchanged ideas and said: 'Well, we'll make the pitch a bit higher.'

Diane Webb: Ha, ha. That's very good.

Frits van der Meij: Well, I think it would be a good idea to – maybe not by the Production Foundation but by others – to have a conference on the possibility of doing translations together, because of course when you just have a book commissioned to three translators and say: well, you do the first 150 pages, the next 150 pages are for person B and the third are for the person doing the last 150 pages, then you know it will be no good. But what these translators, some translators do, not only the two of Umberto Eco, what they do, they have a kind of peer review in their translation. So the outcome of what they are doing together is better than what they would be able to do if they did it themselves alone. So that's the reason for them to do it, and it works very well, because the translation of the fiction work of Umberto Eco has been well received, and they always work with Umberto Eco himself and of course it is not to speed up, because it actually takes them longer to do it this way.

Maarten Asscher: As a matter of fact it is a public secret that behind the name of William Weaver is a whole atelier of younger translators. No, really, a whole atelier of younger translators who work with him. That's why he can make this incredible production. So it's not necessarily a disaster, but it has to be for the good reasons.

Frits van der Meij: That's right. If it's only done because you have to speed up, well, there are examples enough in our country where the outcome of such a translation was horrific. That's right.

Maarten Asscher: Any more comments about the point of multiple translators? No? Then I would like to go back to the question of time schedule and I would like to ask Catherine Clarke whether the time-frame of book production, and of proposals to a

publisher, is in your experience an important factor for academic authors. Do they appreciate speed or is that a secondary consideration?

Catherine Clarke: Well, there are two things I wanted to say. I wanted to come back on the reasons apart from production and the sheer length of time it takes to produce a book as being one major factor in why books are published a lot longer after they're delivered than perhaps they used to be, and this is true of trade publishers, so perhaps I could do that first and then come back to the question of proposals. I see across a number of trade publishers, certainly in Britain and to some extent in the United States, that they themselves are very much at the mercy of the booksellers and particular seasonal publication schedules, over which they have less and less control. For instance in Britain, for a non-fiction book, unless it's by a celebrity author, it is the perceived wisdom now that there is no point publishing between September and December in any year because that season is filled with the Christmas books by the Nigella Lawsons or the Jamie Olivers or whoever it may be, the celebrity memoirs, and there is no point trying to launch a book, unless perhaps it's by Simon Schama, in that period. And by the same token perhaps not over the summer. So as a publisher you're in a dilemma. You may be looking at January or February in the following year. It's simply a factor that publishers have to work into the publication schedule, which they have very little control over. So that was one thing. Your question about the timing for authors who perhaps have had a proposal accepted by a trade publisher, usually the delivery time will then be about two years. From acceptance of the proposal to the delivery of the final typescript. To some extent it depends on how much money the publisher is paying them. If they're paying a great deal of money, the quid pro quo for the publisher will be that the author will deliver more quickly. They may be able to negotiate time with their university to devote to the book, because they can afford to take unpaid leave. That sometimes is what happens.

Maarten Asscher: And then the production schedule comes after that? What is the average length of time between delivery date and publication date in your experience in England?

Catherine Clarke: Usually twelve months.

Maarten Asscher: Not more than that?

Catherine Clarke: Twelve to fifteen, but rarely less. For the reasons I was just saying. It's has more to do with the good time of year to publish a book. However, if a publisher feels that a book has to be published more quickly than that, then they will

put it on a crash schedule, which could be three or four months, depending on what they perceive to be the best time to put that book on the market. But normally, if they don't have that time pressure then it will be twelve to fifteen months.

Maarten Asscher: Thank you.

Giuseppe Laterza: What about Holland?

Maarten Asscher: Under the heading of time?

Giuseppe Laterza: What's the average period from delivery and acceptance of the text to publication?

Maarten Asscher: Any of the Dutch publishers who would like to explain how Holland works? Jessica.

Jessica Nash: If it's a Dutch-language manuscript and we've already edited it, the production time is three months, but that's assuming that you've already put it in your catalogue on time, because every now and then you'll get an unexpected delivery from an author and he usually expects a book in four or five months, but if your spring catalogue has just come out you have to wait another four months to put it on your summer catalogue, and so you're automatically looking at a delay of six or seven months from the perspective of the author. The production time is three months and I would say that editing can take anywhere from a month to six months, a year.

Giuseppe Laterza: Anyway it's significantly shorter, more similar to Italy than the Anglo-Saxon world.

Jessica Nash: We cannot postpone as long as they do in England. I remember getting, in fiction anyway, a translatable manuscript a year and a half before the book was scheduled to come out in England. That means the author was not going to change a word for a year and a half, and it was just on ice somewhere and we were able to translate from it. And I found that amazing, that any author would put up with being put off, or with publication being put off that long.

Maarten Asscher: What regularly happens, both in fiction and in non-fiction I believe, is that a finished manuscript is not exactly on ice but that while the translator has already started the translation, corrections come in and parts are reworked and the original publisher is doing another copy edit and then you have to accommodate all these changes.

Jessica Nash: Right, but these are copy editing changes and usually you'll get a list from the publisher, from the first and second pass changes that have been made, but

no substantial rewrites will be made in this period of time. That's what I mean by 'on ice'; the author is not rethinking a chapter.

Diane Webb: I've run into this many times working on catalogues for exhibitions for example that start in New York and end up at the Rijksmuseum, or they start in Los Angeles and end up at the Van Gogh Museum or whatever, and so you have Dutch people and Americans working together. The book is produced, say, in the Washington National Gallery in cooperation with the Mauritshuis and I start getting e-mails from somebody at the Getty or whatever saying, 'Where's the translation of that article?' So I say, 'Where's the article? I don't have the article yet. I can't translate it till I get it.' And I phone the author. 'Where's the article, please? They're clamouring to have the translation.' 'Oh, but they don't need it yet, that exhibition starts next September.' So I say, 'But it's January and they have a five-month production schedule for the catalogue.' Dutch writers often do not take that seriously, because in Holland they can produce a catalogue in a couple of weeks, and they do it regularly and it gets delivered in a little van to the Rijksmuseum while the first people are going in to visit the exhibition. Hot off the press. But in America they just don't like that. It's a very delicate situation sometimes, and the translator finds herself caught in the middle.

Maarten Asscher: We, I think, have all said something during the past one and a half days about the idiocy of forcing academics to write in English, in Euro-English as it is sometimes called, instead of writing in their own language, which as Floris Cohen reminded us is an exhilarating experience. How can we fight this idiocy, this bureaucratic idea that Douwe Draaisma mentioned, of internationalising universities and forcing people to write in a language that is not their own, thereby at least risking a dumbing down of their expressive potential? Anyone? Paulien Retèl.

Paulien Retèl: It's not that I have a solution, only an additional comment to make, and the additional comment is that for the humanities, the field that I work in, it's very difficult to get across that you need the money to express yourself. Because it is only the expression that is the product of your scientific or scholarly work, as opposed to scientific work and scientific academics, who can ask money for, you know, laboratories and a lot of technical stuff and things that you can see and touch and feel, whereas in the humanities the things that you produce are ideas and thoughts, and they're difficult, well, obviously, they tend to be difficult to define and to get money for. That I think is the major problem within the humanities and we're eagerly waiting

for this Cohen Commission to get out its report on the humanities, which will be here in December. Hopefully they will be advocates of getting more money and maybe the result will be, hopefully the result will be, that the NWO, the organization for scientific, scholarly research will take up the idea that they should rethink their decision to stop funding research and publications in the humanities.

Diane Webb: Oh, I would like to say to the Americans and people here who don't know about this NWO thing that they stopped their funding of translations not because it was a lot of money – it was nothing, nothing at all compared to their huge budget they give to people to do research – they stopped these translation subsidies because of all the administrative, bureaucratic red tape. Because every book that was submitted for a translation subsidy was sent to three peers to be reviewed and to see if it merited translation, and this took months and months, and then some secretary had to write up the reports, and then of course the translators make their declarations and want a little bit of money, some every week or month. There was a lot of administration involved, they said. And so they got rid of the subsidies not because they couldn't afford to give them out but because they just didn't feel like it, as far as I could tell. That's what everyone said to me.

Maarten Asscher: Frits, would you like to comment as well?

Frits van der Meij: Well, just one thing. It's maybe too easy a solution, but I would say, take the Kant example you told us about: anyone who teaches Kant in university just should refuse to do so in English. I know that we're all individual persons and in academic fields it's not easy to work together all the time, but everyone knows, and everyone can show to whoever thinks that they should teach in English, that it cannot be done. Because the English of the teachers is not good enough, and the English of the pupils is not good enough, so what kind of scientific work or scholarly work are you doing if there are two people who do not speak the language they're talking in trying to do academic work? I think it's impossible and it's so clear to anyone here. I imagine that it should be clear to anyone else. Well, I know there's a reason why they're doing it and I know this may sound silly, but still, it is the scholars who should stand up and say: we refuse to do this.

Maarten Asscher: Douwe Draaisma?

Douwe Draaisma: Yes, yes. In fact it's...

Diane Webb: No one messes with Douwe. [laughter]

Douwe Draaisma: I've chosen my own path and that's being silently disobedient and rebellious and not wanting to be examined for English fluency etc. Which disqualified me as a teacher in the English courses. But it's not easy to resist these developments, which come top-down, in fact. These are the kinds of decisions that are taken at a level of the cooperating Dutch universities. They select committees and they write the protocols which these committees have to handle and sometimes you're at the mercy of the kind of people who are on the committees. This year we have been very lucky in Groningen, our department of the theory and history of psychology had a committee which was headed by Willem Albert Wagenaar, who is a forensic psychologist, a famous memory psychologist, and he's the kind of man who writes books as well as articles and we did have a very favourable outcome from this particular review committee. But in earlier years we had someone who was an experimentalist, who doesn't read books, and then you would have a completely different outcome. But it's very difficult at the level of staff to be disobedient and refuse to do things.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, half of our Masters students are foreigners from China, from Nigeria, from Iran, so all our Masters courses are in English and we have to do it. I had to pass an exam in English as a foreign language. You get certain marks and if you're below certain marks then you're supposed to follow courses and so on. It's simply compulsory, because of the many foreign students we get in. Our Bachelor programme is still in Dutch, but in aerospace engineering, for instance, they already teach at Bachelor level in English. So I think there is going to be a very big dichotomy between those teachers who still want to reach the Dutch audience by writing in their own language, say the more, no, I can't say popular any more, but, say, for the general public anyway, and those who just want to do something for their students and have a more scientific publication. This dichotomy means really you have to take time out in some way if you want to publish a book in your own language.

Douwe Draaisma: Yes, but this I think is a case of the wrong criteria internalised. You have a feeling that you're not working, you're not doing your proper job when you're writing a book in university. But you are doing your job; it's part of your job.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, I think then the content becomes more important in the teaching than the language in which you do it. But I agree. I remember this saying from Karel van het Reve: 'Writing in English is like pooping through a hole which is made for pissing.'

Maarten Asscher: This should not be in the report. [laughter]

Salomon Kroonenberg: He was a famous Dutch Slavist, one of the people I most admire, so I can afford to say it here.

Giuseppe Laterza: I think we all agree about this, so I'm a little bit preoccupied, because I think if everybody agrees, I think we should be a little bit more hesitant about all the questions. I mean we've been talking in English for two days. In Italy we have had a very strong question about dialects. You know Italy has dialects, which are proper languages, and they're dying. When Italian unification took place, in 1861, two per cent of Italians, so-called Italians, spoke Italian... Knew Italian, not spoke Italian, knew Italian, and of those the majority had Italian as their second language. Our major hero in the Risorgimento, the Count of Cavour, spoke French. He knew Italian but he spoke French, and so the whole matter of dialects has been a big question. You lose your culture. You lose your tradition. I think language is also a means to vehiculate ideas and emotions and so on, so the question will be: how strong in the future will be the ability of the new generation to absorb this? My daughters have read Harry Potter in English, because they couldn't wait for the Italian edition to come out. Which is interesting, this is an experience I've never had, so I wouldn't be so absolutely definite about the fact that it's always bad to express yourself or to write in English. If we acquire in the future a vehicular international language, this will make us more of a community, which I think we need in Europe, because we are still very strong national cultures, and the bestseller lists of each country show that very well.

Maarten Asscher: Floris Cohen, who has written an 800-page book straight into English.

Floris Cohen: And other ones as well. I tend to endorse what Giuseppe has said from a bit of a different direction. I sense much of the revolt that Douwe expresses, but I think there is some sense of the Macdonaldization of the university behind it, of everything turning into something homogeneous, whereas the interesting thing about the world is all the many differences. To that extent I agree; these things should not be compulsory. But I made a conscious choice. When I started writing in English, more than thirty years ago, I think there were five historians of science in the Netherlands. And when they asked me why I was writing in English, I said: if I do it in Dutch it would be easier for me to tell what I want to say over the telephone to those colleagues of mine. What's the point? Also, the interesting things in the history of science were happening in the Anglo-Saxon world. Before the Second World War it

was quite different, it was French and German. So if you wanted to be a part of the world where really interesting things were happening you had to go to the States or at least to attend congresses and so on and so forth, and you had to show that you yourself were writing in English.

So I decided just to try it, and if I'd felt that I was unable to do it and people had more or less politely told me: your English is substandard and please stop it, then okay, I wouldn't have continued writing in English. And as I say, I found it a very nice experience for a change to do a book in Dutch, but that does not mean that I have now decided henceforth to write in Dutch. Maybe I will do it another time, but for me my professional language is and remains English and I feel quite at ease with that. And I think I made the right decision. The problem is that in other situations and in other fields you'd make a different decision. I find it totally ludicrous that people who are writing about Dutch language and literature are supposed to do that in English. My God, what are we doing? The example of Kant is horrible. It so happens that I've looked at several English translations of Kant, I think there are three of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, since I had to check a few passages. They are all three totally different, and I know enough about philosophy to see what difficulties they have with the terminology and I don't think that the very special terminology of Kant gets across very well in English in any case. So what the hell are they doing? I wholeheartedly agree there. The problem is in the generality of this. Of course, bureaucracies tend to homogenize things, that's what we are opposing and rightly so, but there are also individual situations and those should be taken one at a time.

Maarten Asscher: But now comes the difficult point. When you say that writing in your own language is an exhilarating experience for an author, it is probably also an exhilarating experience for a reader to read a text written by an author in his or her own native language, or to read an excellent translation of such a text by a native-speaking translator. Perhaps reading a full-length academic work in the second language of an author is far less exhilarating and you might be doing yourself a disservice, even if your English is 99.5% okay. Please.

Ian Malcolm: I'd like to discourage authors from writing in English. I get many proposals from European authors in English, and they read like memos from Brussels. [laughter] They could be about cauliflower production or something. I'd much rather get a nice proposal for a translation and know that an author has written a very successful book in his or her own language, that's being appreciated for its style and

substance within its own market. That's much more impressive to me than getting something that is in, as Catherine nicely put it, subtly awkward English.

Giuseppe Laterza: But there's a problem there. I mean, again, we have to be polemical. If you get a text in a language you don't know, are you sure that you give it the same chances as you give to the Brussels bureaucratic language that you know? I'm not sure. You have hundreds of things you have to read, little time. Are you so sure that you will give the same chance to an unknown language, sending it to a translator, having the time to get it assessed and so on, as to that bureaucratic language? At least you understand the subject, you understand what he's speaking about. And then you can say: 'Okay, I will check that the language is written well.' I think I agree with what Floris Cohen was saying, about the different ways in which languages are used, and I hope that we will get to a multiple-language world, in which we can choose, but in the end, if you ask me: is it possible that in twenty or thirty years people will know English so well that they can convey emotions and nuances in the language, even if they're French or whatever? It's possible, it's possible a new generation will have a different use of English. Is that a worse world that we'll live in? In part it will lose some knowledge, because knowledge is a process of losing, but in part we will acquire and share something which is very important and crucial. So I don't see it only as a world which gets poorer. I think we're also enriching ourselves. So I will ask you to be patient towards the poor European authors that send you bureaucratic English.

Ian Malcolm: My answer to this is quite easy. I've translated more books from Laterza alone than I have published from Europeans who are writing in English. I do many more translations. I can't think of more than...

Giuseppe Laterza: But we send you proposals in very poor English. When we get to Frankfurt and we have our little bit of material in English, I'm quite conscious that this material is probably not so well written, but I think that an editor like you are, a professional, can see underneath the poor English what is relevant for him.

Maarten Asscher: But then we're talking about two different things. One is the promotional material, a foreign rights catalogue with a sample chapter in translation, and the other is the decision of the publisher to go back to the original text and have it properly translated by a professional.

Giuseppe Laterza: When you say proposal, I don't think you mean that then the author will write that book directly in English. You mean the author is suggesting a book to you through a proposal.

Ian Malcolm: I mean through a catalogue, through reading a catalogue. My basic point is that I'm more likely to be interested in a good book written in its own language than an attempt to write a good book in English.

Maarten Asscher: Okay. Could you pass the mike to Jessica please, and then on to Floris.

Jessica Nash: I'm not as optimistic as Giuseppe that in thirty years most or many Europeans will be speaking really good English. In fact I kind of worry about what's going to happen to the English language in the next few decades. I feel like we're developing two different standards for English. You've got the idiomatic English spoken and written by native speakers and you have the sort of sterile, possibly grammatically correct, but English devoid of all spice and colour that is – and I'm sorry, I don't mean to offend anyone here because we've all been speaking very good English in the past few days...

Maarten Asscher: Point taken. Thank you very much. [laughter]

Jessica Nash: But it misses something, it has that subtle awkwardness that was mentioned yesterday. I mean, when I studied foreign languages in high school, the only way to really learn a language was to be an exchange student, to go and immerse yourself in the native culture, in a family, and I feel that if everyone is learning English from non-native speakers at university, in ten or twenty years from now our political and cultural and literary elites in Europe will be passing on a sort of strange derivative to their students. So I would also encourage all of us to continue to write in our native languages.

Maarten Asscher: Floris, please.

Floris Cohen: Okay. [laughter] Your suggestion that it's better to have written in your native language and then have it translated means that you place your fate in the hands of competent translators. Now you've heard Diane, and I'm absolutely certain that Diane would be an ideal translator.

Diane Webb: Oh.

Floris Cohen: However, let me just give you one experience. I wrote a book on the historiography of the scientific revolution which came out with Chicago fourteen years ago and I had read a lot of books by historians on that subject, in German, in

French, well, foreign languages that I do know, and I decided, of course, to quote certain passages. But given that it's an English book I had to look up the translations, and that was a very interesting experience. Most of those passages turned out to be translated very, very poorly, and that applied to German texts into English, to all sorts. There were exceptions, luckily, but those were exceptions, the rule was that the translations were done very, very poorly. I would hesitate very much, given that I have been encouraged by certain Anglo-Saxons that my English is good enough, and that a desk editor, without going out of his way, can repair what has to be repaired, and evidently things have to be repaired. I would prefer that over, as I said, giving over my academic fate, which in my field was fairly crucial, to a translator where you have to wait and see whether it will be subsidized in the first place and even when a subsidy exists there is a strong preference for articles over books, I happen to be thinking in books not in articles, and then to await whether you have a competent translation or get into endless fights with the translator over how to do it. So it may well be true that there are good reasons for writing in your native language, but I still tend to think that I made the right decision.

Maarten Asscher: The mike to the translator at the back of you, who will put a knife in it now. [laughter]

Verena Kiefer: Yes. Could be. For me as a translator from Dutch to German it would be skipping my profession if all people are going to write a Cohen heavy, because it's English and I'm not translating from English. But after having translated several 'Draaisma well done', I only want to encourage everyone to write in his own language, because it's so eloquent, and you never reach it, I don't think so, in another language. He is an author who fulfils all of Diane's claims, he does everything she wants, so I can speak from this point of view.

Maarten Asscher: You're talking about Douwe?

Verena Kiefer: Yes. And by the way, he does everything he himself said, he does all that with the translator. He gives every bit of help they need and then I think the translation can be quite as good as the original was.

Giuseppe Laterza: But it depends on how you write.

Verena Kiefer: Yes.

Giuseppe Laterza: I mean, in the generation of my father, all the people knew a dialect, knew Italian and a dialect. I don't know a dialect, my generation doesn't speak dialect and this is a loss, a strong loss, but we speak more English. Are we

worse off than the generation of my father? A wonderful dialect, full of idiomatic expression, revealing the spirit of our earth, of our land, our traditions, it's true, that's a loss, but I think we share something more with another community, a wider community, and this is a wonderful thing. Maybe it may prevent some wars. Well, it's not a mere coincidence that the people who make war frequently don't speak the same language, and when the American soldier stops the Iraqi in various places, the fact that they cannot communicate is a big problem. So when you say eloquent, my question is eloquent to whom? The language is a means of communication between two persons and we're speaking English now and we're sharing what we say because we speak English and we're communicating. If we go outside in the street we must pay attention to the question of to whom we're speaking, and then the national language can be the first. But languages are living organisms, language changes. I don't think Catherine Clarke speaks the same English as her mother or father. It's completely different, so it's not only that our English is different from theirs but her English is different from the previous generation's. Language never stops. It's like the earth of Professor Salomon.

Salomon Kroonenberg: Well, I will come a little bit to the defence of Floris, because he did exactly the right thing. He wrote in English something which is for scientific communication, and in my field they are always articles, in his case it happened to be a book, the Cohen heavy, and for the general audience he wrote a book in his own language, in Dutch. So that's exactly what I do. I write scientific communications in English for the general scientific community in my own field and I write in Dutch for those who are outside it. So I don't see the problem.

Maarten Asscher: Diane.

Diane Webb: I just wanted to say that what Giuseppe said about all speaking English and how it's a great enrichment to be able to communicate with everyone, that's very, very, very true and let us all speak and read as many languages as possible, but let us write in the one we write best. I think so. But of course the problem is finding somebody to translate. It's a problem. I wanted to say that in aerospace engineering or whatever, you can well imagine that can be taught in English. That's a lot of formulae, it's not like the humanities. In the humanities the expression of the idea is inherent to the idea, I think. That's a huge difference with the exact sciences, which you can teach with formulae and teach with experiments and things, but the humanities have to be expressed, and then you can't get around the language, part of

the idea is the language of the idea. That's why German is the best language for philosophy. Except the French wouldn't agree, but anyway, that's what I think. I played in a symphony orchestra for years and years. We played Mahler symphonies together, but how many languages are spoken in any given Dutch orchestra? In the Maastricht orchestra half the orchestra doesn't speak any Dutch, they come over the border from Belgium, they speak French to everyone. They never learn a word of Dutch and yet they function in a Dutch orchestra. You can do the same thing in a scientific subject in the international community in English, but in the humanities you have to be able to express it beautifully, or else who wants to hear it?

Salomon Kroonenberg: Do you think they won't read his book because it's not expressed beautifully?

Diane Webb: I don't know, but I'm looking forward to reading Cohen light, I've said so.

Maarten Asscher: Okay, you want to make a last remark?

Verena Kiefer: It's just about being eloquent. I'm not eloquent in English at all and that's the reason why I don't translate from it. I'm not translating from German into Dutch because my Dutch is good, but it's not so good that I'm going to write in Dutch, not anything.

Giuseppe Laterza: Now. Now it's like that.

Verena Kiefer: I'm a different person if I'm in a different language, so I can't imagine it's really possible to express yourself as you are and what you think in a foreign language, because it always stays foreign.

Giuseppe Laterza: Is not that what you're doing now?

Verena Kiefer: Well, exactly.

Diane Webb: Yes, but she's not writing.

Verena Kiefer: If I could do it in German I would do it in quite a different way.

Maarten Asscher: We have the Literary Production and Translation Foundation to protect our native language and to protect the form of the book as a unique expression of academic quality, and it is my role to protect the clock and the hour of lunch that is approaching. I said at the outset of this conference that we had to organize disagreement. I think that has been no problem at all. We could go on about these specific points for longer than the clock permits, but perhaps we can continue this part of our discussion over lunch. I feel I should close the formal setting of this discussion.

I think that without violent disagreements we have been able to recognize sufficiently different approaches in the various subjects on our agenda, depending partly on our various roles as author, editor, translator, publisher or agent, and depending also on which field of science we are talking about, whether that is geology or psychology or the history of science or whatever. But there are I think two basic points that we have been able to agree on. In the first place that a purely academic book for other academics, for peers to read, has a right of existence on its own, the scholarly monograph of which the quality is recognized and guaranteed by peer review, which is intended for the advancement of science and contains maths and graphs and statistics and footnotes and so on. That is at the core of academic knowledge, and while we would love to give as many readers as possible access to such knowledge, this does not detract from the *raison d'être* of pure academic knowledge. The second thing is that many of us have expressed the feeling that there is a certain duty towards society, towards a general readership, to share this academic knowledge in a broader sense. Whether that happens in the form of a light version or whether there are other methods of dissemination, there is a certain parallel with the role of the teacher, not only the teacher to students but also the teacher to the world, that every scholar should also be, in an attempt to share his or her knowledge. Even the notion of taxpayers' money has been expressly mentioned and that connects in some cases wonderfully well with the task of a publisher as a commercial entrepreneur to make money by selling knowledge.

So yes, we want specialist expertise in an accessible form, but what we have discussed I think from many fruitful angles is: How can this tradition be achieved? In addition to various key words that Giuseppe mentioned, I had also noted down as a first key word 'time'. That's an interesting parallel. But I wanted to stress mainly the time needed for writing. Because in a way it is sad that time for writing only comes at the middle stage or even the end of an academic's career. On the other hand, Salomon Kroonenberg has very well set forth that the new generation first has to prove its ability in the academic field, by publishing single-issue articles in learned journals that can circulate through the whole professional community before they have the credentials to write a book that oversteps the boundaries of the academic repertoire, the academic format.

We've also recognized that the book is under threat as a form of expression. Douwe Draaisma has even talked about an academic bias against books. It is clear that we

have a responsibility here. The Foundation has a responsibility to defend the book – especially in the humanities, but I think also in the hard science field where it is the means of communication with a larger audience – against silly attacks on full-length thinking and full-length writing. The style of writing is of supreme importance. Giuseppe mentioned that point and I think Catherine Clarke mentioned it very eloquently by simply saying: you have to tell stories, you cannot just expose facts and present specialist theories, although they may be very important. You have to tell stories. Show don't tell does not count only for fiction, it also counts for scholarly work and especially if it is aimed at a general readership.

Then after time and style the third point we have discussed in the road from specialist expertise to a general readership is the point of subject-matter. Floris Cohen has said, 'I want my light version to have the same complexity as my heavy version.' So the subject-matter should remain the same; you should not compromise, or as Diane Webb put it earlier: don't dilute, make sure that the essential qualities, the essential characteristics are maintained. On the other hand there was Patrick Everard who, well, sort of looks for ideal books in the spaces between specialisms. Just next to where the core business of an academic, a scholar is, he will find a dream book, a possible dream book. Which echoes Salomon Kroonenberg's phrase: 'I kept dreaming of something bigger,' as you said in your presentation. I thought that was a beautiful phrasing.

So perhaps it is possible to write a dream book within the confines of your own academic discipline, and certainly the market wants those dream books. In that respect it is fortunate that even specialist university presses that were originally established to convey the fruits of highly specialized academic research to peers of the author are moving towards more trade publications for a general audience. Although there is still this peer review system that Jennifer Crewe has clearly said she does not want to relinquish, even for books that have a more, well, commercial drive; you still absolutely want to safeguard the academic quality as a watermark of a university press. But is it necessary, we have asked ourselves, to climb a few steps down the ladder? I think I may conclude that it is not necessary as an author to climb a few steps down the ladder. We have even, I think, between the lines, recognized that going to a wider readership may actually be a few steps up the ladder. Because you can grow as an author and, especially if you write in your own language, you can use the full potential of your knowledge, your consciousness, your personality, your cultural

background, to reach out towards – as a teacher slash author – a general readership and eventually perhaps become a public intellectual, which as Detlef Felken said, is the ideal of a publisher: to make an academic writer into a public intellectual. Perhaps that is more a German ideal than an international ideal, but I think it was an interesting notion.

In all this the idea of the proposal has stuck in my mind also, as a metaphor for what authors want and what publishers need and what eventually reaches an audience. Because a proposal is a sort of a sketch of a dream book. It is the book when it does not yet exist but shows its full potential, and it perhaps even makes the book look more interesting than it will ever be able to be. That is exactly why, for a publishing house, circulating a proposal is such an attractive way of in-house selling and then afterwards selling it to other people. Because there's this sort of ideal image of what this beautiful and successful book could become. In a way the programme for a non-fiction conference is a sort of proposal and I don't remember, oh yes, it was Salomon who quoted Gerrit Komrij as saying that a career starts as a tiger and ends like a hearth-rug, or a carpet. I think we, with our programme, with our proposal for this conference, we started with a carpet but you have made it into a tiger, and I want warm applause for Diane Webb and Douwe Draaisma and Giuseppe Laterza, and thank you very much for your attention and your contributions. A final word from Maarten Valken.

Maarten Valken: On behalf of the Foundation I would like to repeat what I said yesterday but in reverse order, that I hope the conference gave you some idea of Dutch non-fiction writers, but more importantly that you got new ideas, new contacts to go home with. We will make a report; everything has been noted down so that the discussion can go on. We will put it on the website, together with any other comments you still want to send us, and the answers to the survey. So in this way we hope we will go on talking about it. I would like to thank once again Jaja and Mireille and John for organizing the conference along with me, Barbara and Suzanne and Saskia for helping us, Maarten of course for keeping order in the polemical statements that we asked from the speakers, keeping some order in it yet still pushing everybody to be as clear in his opinion as possible, but above all, all of you for contributing to it. We were very glad you were here and we hope we still see you at lunch, of course. Some of you might be leaving earlier, so we wish you a good journey, but there are others, hopefully as many of you as possible, who will be there this afternoon also. These are

my practical remarks: there's a lunch until three, then the museum guide will start at three thirty, so I think for the people who are going we should go from here, probably directly by taxi. If you want to walk it will take half an hour, but probably it's safest to go together, and the other people we hope we will see on the boat at five o'clock in front of the museum. I thought it was a very interesting conference. I hope you did too.