

Quality NON-FICTION

from Holland

Jona Lendering

Fik Meijer

René van Stipriaan

Maarten Doorman

Mirjam Bolle

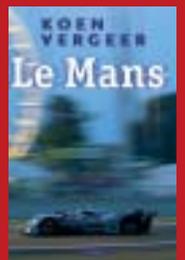
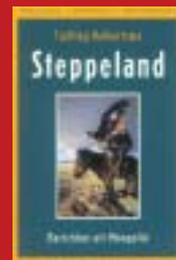
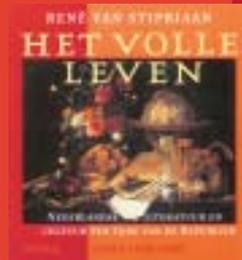
Geert Mak

Frank Westerman

Mineke Schipper

Tjalling Halbertsma

Koen Vergeer



The fall of the Persian Empire, 340-320

Jona Lendering

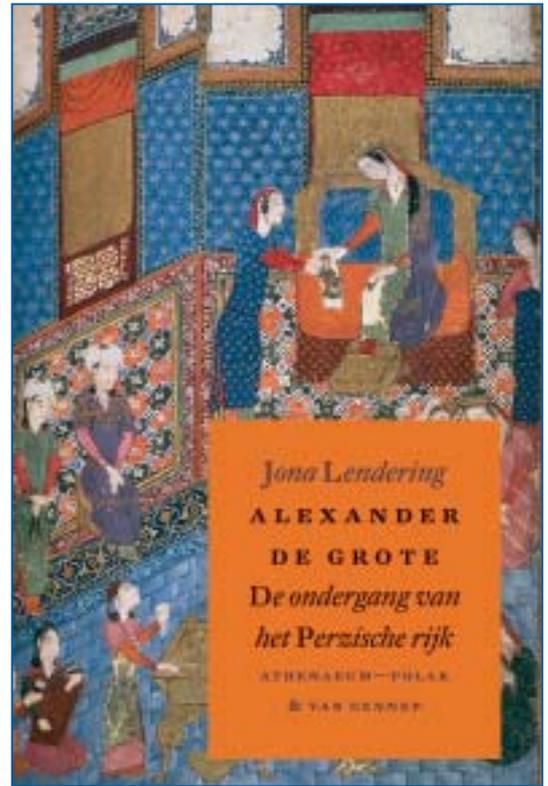
Alexander the Great

WITH THE WORLD'S military and political leaders currently focused on Mesopotamia and the surrounding region, from Turkey to Pakistan, Jona Lendering provides a fascinating new study of the Macedonian campaign of conquest in the fourth century BC. Leading what was both a punitive expedition and a pre-emptive attack, the ambitious young warlord Alexander marched eastwards to annihilate the army of the King of Asia, Darius II. He succeeded, but the guerrilla war that followed and efforts to capture the 'hearts and minds' of the populace demanded greater patience and sacrifice than the military operation itself.

In retelling this ancient story of military tactics, geopolitics, complex marital alliances and administrative reform, Lendering relies not only on Quintus Curtius Rufus, Arrian, Cleitarchus and Plutarch but on the latest translations of Babylonian sources, recent archaeological findings, aerial photographs, and even an account by a Chinese traveller of the early Christian era. An expert on the ancient world, he paints an engrossing portrait of a reckless yet cunning ruffian who crushed all opposition, whether external or from within his own ranks.

Eventually Alexander even became King of Asia, but while we know him as 'the Great', to Iranians he is 'the Cursed' and the Farsi book *Arda Wiraz* calls him a 'criminal' and 'that damned westerner'. Lendering tells both sides of the story. He shows how Alexander destroyed the autonomy of the Greek city states and blames him for reducing Persepolis to ashes, but credits his military genius and exemplary leadership qualities. And Alexander proved that his tutor Aristotle was wrong to claim Persians were slaves by nature. Although he violated all the rules of warfare, Alexander treated the defeated King's family with courtesy, married Darius' daughter Barsine, and adopted many of his customs. He appointed Persians to important posts in the imperial government and even incorporated them into his army, provoking a Macedonian mutiny.

An unintended product of Alexander's campaigns and incursions was the concept of the world citizen who, whatever his ethnic origins, exchanged his city state (polis) for the wider world (cosmopolis). The paradox of a plundering warlord paving the way for the new humanism charges Lendering's book with an irresistible tension.



Jona Lendering is an expert on Antiquity and lectures in Mediterranean history at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. His earlier work includes *An Interim Manager in the Roman Empire: Pliny in Bithynia*, the highly acclaimed *The Edges of the World: The Romans between the Schelde and Eems rivers*, and *City in Marble: a guide to Ancient Rome by contemporaries*.

THE PRESS ON *CITY IN MARBLE*:

Lendering has an admirable knowledge of a broad range of sources. He writes attractively and provides masses of surprising and anecdotal fragments that are shown to full advantage due to the topographical-historical focus.

DE MORGEN

The many pages on the Colosseum and the gruesome games and murders are absolutely brilliant. The section on the gladiators is the climax.

DE VOLKSKRANT

PUBLISHING DETAILS

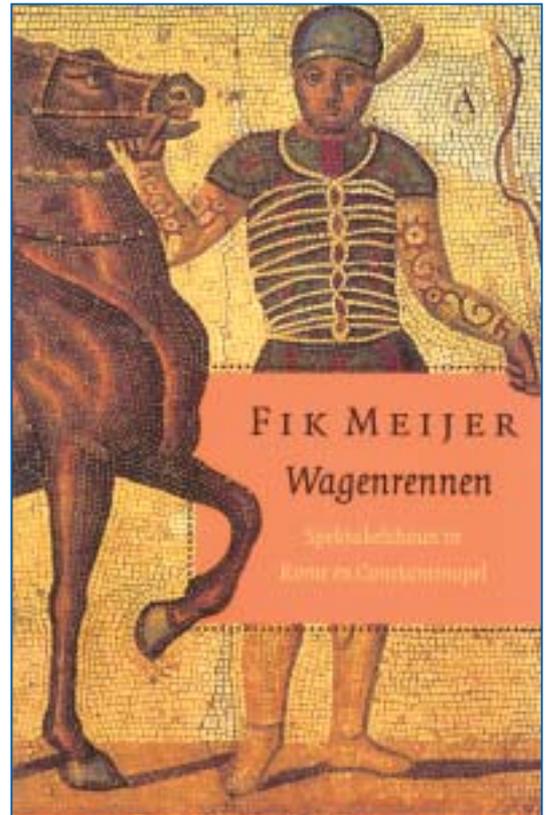
Alexander de Grote. De ondergang van het Perzische rijk, 340-320 (2004)
350 pp, with illustrations, maps, notes and references

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Spectacles at Rome and Constantinople

Fik Meijer Chariot Racing



AT THE BEGINNING of the imperial age, the minimum annual income of a Roman citizen was between 100 and 125 sesterces. A common foot soldier earned around 1,000 sesterces a year; successful artisans twice that amount. In a single race at the Circus Maximus, however, a good chariot racer could win 50,000 sesterces. Calpurnianus, the Johan Cruyff of Roman chariot-driving, won a total of 1.2 million sesterces in first prizes alone, which constituted only a portion of his lifelong income. The professional contender Diocles actually raked in the astronomical sum of 36 million sesterces during his career.

In *Chariot Racing*, Fik Meijer presents the chariot racers as the soccer stars of the ancient world. The comparison applies not only to their incomes, but also to their popularity and usually humble origins. Such analogies are typical of the refreshing, down-to-earth way Meijer writes on his favourite topics. The subject of chariot races, the main act of Roman public life, also seemed an important companion to his previous book *Gladiators*. And because historians have until now tended to focus on the ‘bread’ of Juvenal’s ‘bread and circuses’, Meijer’s book explores previously uncovered ground.

Meijer has made thorough use of scarce – and sometimes obscure – sources in his lively narrative. He provides a wealth of statistics – the number of victories for the competing stables (the Whites, Blues, Reds and Greens), the prize money, the number of races held on a single day – and does not shy away from drawing conclusions, even on the basis of information found only in carefully preserved mediaeval manuscripts. Meijer sees the contests not so much as an opium for the people, but as a political barometer; the Circus Maximus was the only place in the autocratically ruled empire where the supreme leader, the Caesar, was confronted with the people’s approval or disapproval.

And fortunately, Meijer is truly interested in the sport itself. Who were the superstars? What did an exciting race look like? Why did they race round pillars? Why did they use such small horses? Why did the Reds win so often? How long was the track, what were the risks, the techniques, the training methods, the dirty tricks? This host of detail bears witness to Meijer’s contagious enthusiasm for all things related to daily life in ancient Rome.

Fik Meijer is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Amsterdam, a translator and writer. He is also the author of *A Sideways Look at Antiquity*, *St. Paul’s Voyage to Rome*, *Emperors Don’t Die in Bed* and *Gladiators*.

THE PRESS ON *GLADIATORS*:

Fik Meijer conveys just about every aspect of the gladiator fights in his thrilling, fast-paced book.
NRC HANDELSBLAD

Meijer’s pen succeeds in evoking the woeful stench of blood.

TROUW

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Wagenrennen. Spektakelshows in Rome and Constantinopel (2004)
233 pp, with illustrations, maps, notes and references

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TRANSLATED TITLES

Emperors Don’t Die in Bed. London / New York: Routledge, 2004. Also in German (Primus, 2003).
Gladiators. Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2004. Also in English (Souvenir, in preparation) and Italian (Laterza, in preparation).

*Dutch literature and culture in the time of
the Republic (circa 1550-1800)*

René van Stipriaan

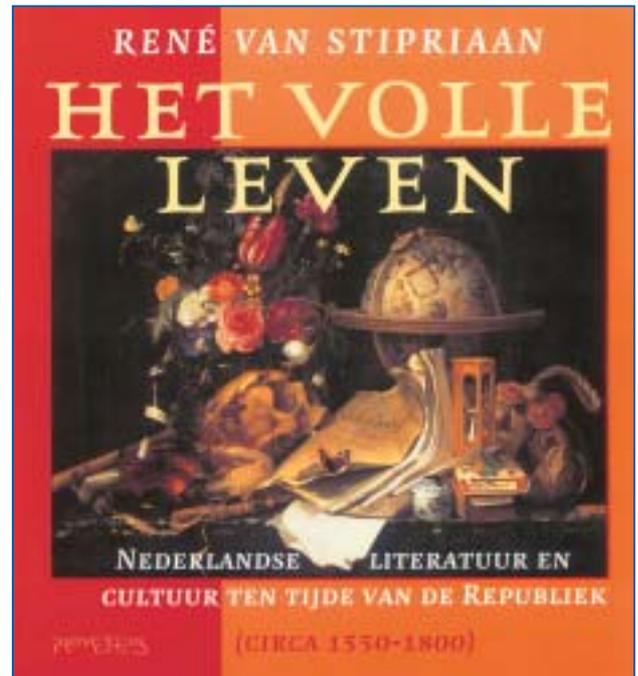
The Full Life

THE STORY OF 17TH-CENTURY HOLLAND was fascinating even to contemporaries, and Europe looked on with admiration, envy, and sometimes downright astonishment. The 'Golden Century' later proved such a rich field of study that many historians have been able to surprise their readers with fresh interpretations. Now historian René van Stipriaan brings Holland's golden era excitingly to life through the literature of the period.

Van Stipriaan draws on a wealth of material to illustrate literature's decisive role in the spectacular developments that rapidly turned a province in revolt against its Spanish masters into a world power, economically and politically, transforming a land of peasant farmers into an affluent trading nation with a sophisticated culture. Literature was not a tranquil realm of fine writing, in fact the power of the printed word was a crucial aspect of the social upheaval of the time.

Literature was central to 'the full life' and a party to all social, cultural and scientific controversies, reporting Holland's greatest undertakings. Sometimes words themselves became weapons: poets were the intellectual force behind the battle songs people sang all over the country during the struggle for independence from Spain, an early example of successful literary propaganda. Writers sailed with the ships of the East India Company and the travel journals the trade ships brought back were among their most popular wares. When increasing wealth produced a new youth culture, poets and their 'kiss poems' took a leading role.

Van Stipriaan has collected hundreds of instances like these to create a fresh portrait of the times, engagingly written, vividly depicting the important events of the period. As well as covering more than two and a half centuries of literary life, *The Full Life* describes the publishing trade that flourished for so long in The Netherlands in a period of unprecedented civic and press freedom. In such a multiplicity of stories every reader will encounter something new.



René van Stipriaan is a historian specializing in Dutch history and a freelance journalist and commentator. He holds a doctorate on the subject of Dutch seventeenth-century theatre and edited the anthologies *Eyewitnesses to World History* (with Geert Mak) and *Eyewitnesses to the Golden Century*.

It is not often that a book carries you along to such an extent that it becomes impossible to put down. What a terrific book! Irresistibly told, brilliant, with unexpected and striking illustrations and including the most bizarre characters and circumstances.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

The book is full to overflowing, and infectious so. It is a long time since I have read such a good and sound popular history.

DE VOLKSKRANT

Far and away the most interesting and entertaining literary history of the Republic ever published.

SPIEGHEL HISTORIAEL

PUBLISHING DETAILS

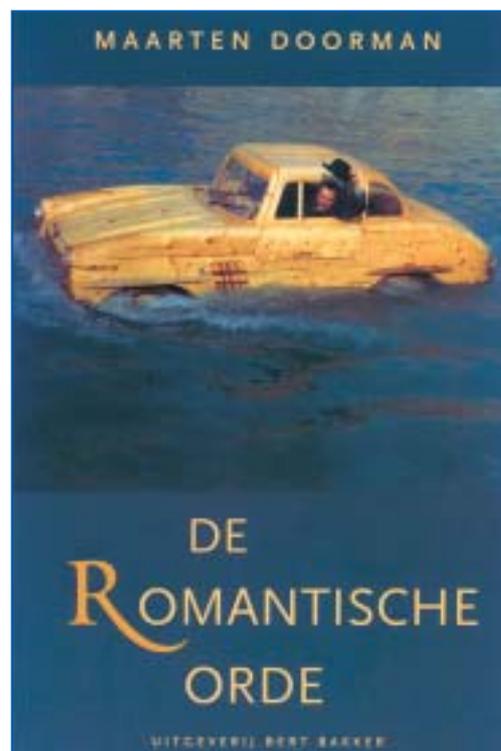
Het volle leven. Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur ten tijde van de Republiek (circa 1550-1800) (2002)
352 pp, with illustrations and references

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*How the Romantic ideal has become entangled
in its own paradoxes*

Maarten Doorman The Romantic Imperative



MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM are the pivotal concepts that Western man uses in his attempts to come to grips with his situation in the early years of this new millennium. But in *The Romantic Imperative*, philosopher and poet Maarten Doorman shows us that our contemporary way of life is actually influenced more than we may realise by the Romantic revolution of the early nineteenth century. For it was then that people began seeing themselves not as creatures who existed, but as creatures who became, who were in possession of an authentic 'I' that was more than the sum of their strict societal roles, and who had received the calling to be creative.

Two centuries later, that call is still heard clearly, even in the remotest corners of our culture. In the panorama Doorman presents to his readers, the modern world appears as a bundle of contradictions that can only be understood when seen in the light of their common Romantic background. With an easy and natural erudition, he shows us how the Romantic ideal has become entangled in its own paradoxes: the belief in an authentic 'I' led to the discovery of the subconscious; the imperative of self-realization led to the awareness of alienation; the glorification of the imagination resulted in a banal culture of self-gratification. Although the artist has been elevated to the status of genius, this has also caused the work of art itself to gradually fade into the background. And those who have heeded the Romantic summons to be aware of national identities have, finally, also been unable to resist the temptation of creating for themselves a largely fictitious, and preferably illustrious, past.

The Romantic Imperative is a lucid look at a culture in a state of crisis, prompted by its failure to understand its own motivating forces. Doorman clearly shows us not only the roots of this confusion, but also the challenge it poses for such diverse fields of endeavour as history, the arts and the body of thought concerning nations and democracy.

With true virtuosity, the author shuttles back and forth between the founders of Romanticism (Herder, Schiller, Byron, Novalis, Nietzsche and Rousseau) and their heirs: from Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Koons to Pierre Boulez, Marcel Duchamps and Andy Warhol. In Doorman's view, Woodstock and the events of May 1968 were the culmination of a process that lasted two hundred years, a process which now seems about to collapse under its own contradictions, but one which Western culture is still unable to get along without.

Maarten Doorman is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maastricht, Extraordinary Professor of Art and Culture Criticism at the University of Amsterdam, and a working poet. He has edited the literary journals *Hollands Maandblad* and *Krisis*, and contributed to *NRC Handelsblad*. His earlier work includes *Art in Progress: A philosophical response to the end of the avant-garde*, which was published in 1994.

The Romantic Imperative is extremely well written.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

THE PRESS ON *ART IN PROGRESS*:

An erudite and well-written analysis of an issue that satisfies all the criteria for ongoing discussion.

VRIJ NEDERLAND

A wealth of inspiration.

HET PAROOL

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De romantische orde (2004)
283 pp, with illustrations, notes and references

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TRANSLATED TITLES

Art in Progress: A philosophical response to the end of the avant-garde. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003.

*A journal in letters, from Amsterdam,
Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen*

Mirjam Bolle

Let Me Tell You What a Day Here Is Like

IN 1938, MIRJAM LEVIE'S FIANCÉ, LEO BOLLE, left for Palestine to prepare for the young couple's new life in the Promised Land. Mirjam remained behind in Amsterdam, where she found a job as secretary to the Committee for Jewish Refugees. After May 1940, when the Germans occupied the Netherlands, that organization was incorporated into the Netherlands Jewish Council, set up by the Nazis to intermeditate between the Jewish community and their own authorities.

In 1940, at the age of 23, Mirjam began reporting in her letters to Leo on what was happening to the Jews. Her position on the Jewish Council not only allowed her a good view of events as they happened, but also made it possible for her to protect her family. Her letters, therefore, provide us with a unique picture of the dilemmas of the Jewish elite. At first, that elite had hoped to circumvent the threat of chaos and violence by working with the Nazis. In the course of time, however, it became clear that the most anyone could do was attempt to keep their family, friends and acquaintances off the deportation lists for as long as possible.

In her letters, Mirjam describes the terrible days and nights during which the lists were drawn up, the panic, despair and arguments among members of the Council's staff, the poignant cases of human suffering that underscored the impossibility of their task. Yet those same letters also make clear precisely how natural the urge to survive really was. Throughout it all, her love for Leo in Palestine provided Mirjam with hope for the future, and the determination to save those she loved.

Finally, in 1943, the last members of the Jewish Council's own staff were deported. Mirjam focused all her hope on being added to the 'Palestine List' of Jews eligible for a possible exchange of prisoners. In June 1944 she was actually allowed to leave Bergen-Belsen, as part of the only such exchange ever held with Palestine.

Day by day, Mirjam describes a nerve-racking world, in which the Jews did everything they could to survive. She makes the reader immediate party to the sense of growing danger, the hope, and the issues which divided and subdued the Jewish community. These moving letters are of great historical importance.



Mirjam Bolle was born in Amsterdam in 1917, and from 1947 has lived in Jerusalem, where she worked for successive Dutch ambassadors. In 1943, a friend hid her unsent letters to Leo; she herself took the letters written in Bergen-Belsen to Palestine. Until recently, their existence was known only to Mirjam Bolle's closest friends and family.

The appearance of a book that sheds such original light on the persecution of the Jews almost sixty years after the end of the Second World War is nothing short of a miracle. Here we have a chronicler of great acuity, one with extraordinary empathy with the fates of those around her, and with a movingly realistic view of herself and of the possibilities and impossibilities created by the complexities of the war. Mirjam's letters are phenomenal.

TROUW

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Ik zal je beschrijven hoe een dag er hier uitziet. Dagboekbrieven uit Amsterdam, Westerbork en Bergen-Belsen (2003)
255 pp, with illustrations

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A journey through the twentieth century

Geert Mak In Europe



GEERT MAK SPENT A YEAR criss-crossing the continent, tracing the history of Europe from Verdun to Berlin, Saint Petersburg to Auschwitz, Kiev to Srebrenica. He set off in search of evidence and witnesses, focusing on one question in particular: what was the condition of Europe at the verge of a new millennium?

Mak's rare double talent as a sharp-eyed journalist and a knowledgeable and imaginative historian makes *In Europe* a compelling account of that journey. He speaks to hundreds of eyewitnesses, including prominent figures like Richard von Weizsäcker, Ruud Lubbers and the grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm II as well as unknowns such as Adrinana Warno in Poland, with her holiday job at the gates of the camp at Birkenau, and Monica Angulo in Guernica, who describes the dilemma of the Basque country.

As he travels, Mak reads the evidence of history in diaries, including the dramatic account of Victor Klemperer's life and Count Harry Kessler's worldly entries. He reads about the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900 in newspaper reports that promise their readers a new century of light, and the memoirs of soldiers who served in the trenches of Flanders Fields less than fifteen years later.

But Mak is above all an observer. He describes what he sees at places that have become Europe's well-springs of memory, where history is written into the landscape. At Ypres he hears the blast of munitions from the Great War that are still detonated there twice a day. In Warsaw he finds the point where the tram rails that led to the Jewish ghetto come to a dead end in a city park. And in an abandoned crèche near Chernobyl, where tiny pairs of shoes still stand in neat rows, he is transported back to the moment time stood still in the dying days of the Soviet Union.

Mak combines the larger story of twentieth-century Europe with details that suddenly give it a face, a taste and a smell. His unique approach makes the reader an eyewitness to his own half-forgotten past, full of unknown peculiarities, sudden insights and touching encounters. *In Europe* helps Europeans discover the past that truly unites them.

Geert Mak is one of The Netherlands' most popular writers. All his previous books became huge bestsellers: *The Angel of Amsterdam*, *Amsterdam: A brief life of the city*, *Jorwerd: The death of the village in late twentieth-century Europe*, and *My Father's Century*.

THE PRESS ON *MY FATHER'S CENTURY*:

Mak has written a book that could be described as popularizing, but only in the most positive sense of the world. It makes history truly accessible, for everyone.

SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

A miracle of narrative art.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

In Europa. Reizen door de twintigste eeuw (2004)
1223 pp,
170,000 copies sold
With references

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TRANSLATED TITLES

In Europe. A journey through the twentieth century. In English (Secker Harvill, in preparation) and in German (Siedler, in preparation).
Amsterdam. A brief life of the city. London: Harvill, 1999 / New York: Harvard University Press, 2000. Also in German (Siedler, 1997), Czech (Cinemax, 1999) and Hungarian (Corvina, 2001).
Jorwerd. The death of the village in late twentieth-century Europe. London: Harvill, 2000. Also in German (Siedler, 1999), French (Autrement, in preparation).
My Father's Century. Berlin: Siedler, 2003. Also in Hungarian (Osiris, 2001).

*On the boundary between civilization
and barbarism*

Frank Westerman

El Negro and Me

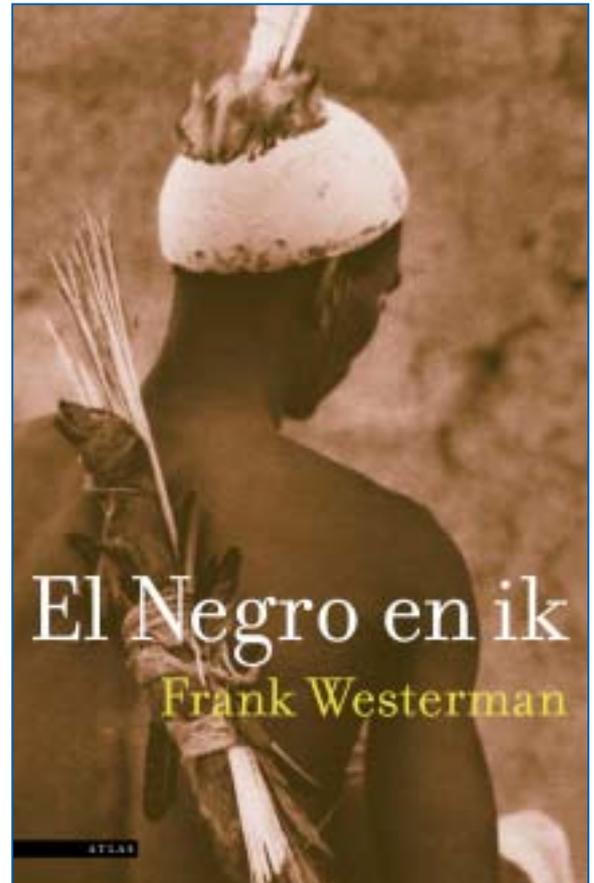
IN DECEMBER 1983, Frank Westerman, a 19-year-old student of tropical agriculture, visited a museum in a small Spanish village and found himself eye to eye with a stuffed black man in a glass display case. It was an experience that would remain with him for ever. Twenty years later, by then a well-known journalist and author, he set out to identify the man known simply as El Negro. The Negro. Who was he? When did he live? Where did he come from?

Westerman's painstaking research yielded answers that encompass more than a century and a half. The first reference to El Negro dates from 1831, when he was exported to Paris from Africa, ready stuffed, part of a shipment of exotic animals and birds. He turns out to have come from South Africa and lived to be 27. But even more fascinating for Westerman were the underlying questions that arose. How did he end up in this part of the world, preserved like a prized animal? And what kind of thinking led to his bizarre fate?

Westerman became captivated by the broader history of colonialism and racism, the story of Europe's imagined superiority to the rest of the world. It was a history in which he would later play a brief role himself, in a more enlightened period, as a young idealist whose dreams were quickly shattered by the realities of aid work in developing countries. The book describes this experience as well, hence the title, *El Negro and Me*; two stories on the same theme, intriguing biography and candid autobiography, travel literature and historiography combined.

The clever way these strands are woven together makes *El Negro and Me* read like a very personal history of the civilization of 'old Europe', answering many old questions while subtly suggesting incisive new ones. Are we really so certain where the boundary lies between civilization and barbarism? Does Europe, in an era of development aid, not continue to place itself above other civilizations?

El Negro's 'life after death' ended in 2000, when 'Europe' tried to do him justice after all by interring him in African soil. Both storylines lead inexorably to post-apartheid South Africa, where the subjects of race relations, culture and civilization are examined in the harsh light of today's reality.



Frank Westerman is the author of *The Bridge over the Tara*, *Srebrenica: The blackest scenario*, *The Republic of Grain* and *Engineers of the Soul*. The last two books were awarded prestigious prizes in The Netherlands and became bestsellers.

THE PRESS ON *ENGINEERS OF THE SOUL*:

It is cultural history, political history, history of mentality, a travel journal and 'the making of' all in one ... surprising and original, meticulously researched and well written.

DE VOLKSKRANT

A dramaturgic masterpiece.

FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU

The best book I've read in years about Russia.

VLADIMIR KAMINER

PUBLISHING DETAILS

El Negro en ik (2004)
176 pp, with references

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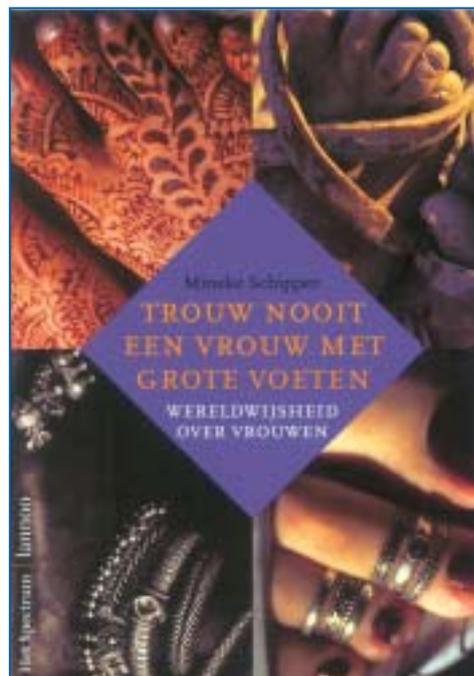
TRANSLATED TITLES

Engineers of the Soul. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2003. Also in French (Christian Bourgois, 2004), English (Secker Harvill, in preparation), Spanish (Siruela, in preparation), and Italian (Feltrinelli, in preparation).

Women in proverbs from around the world

Mineke Schipper

Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet



COUNTLESS IDEAS ABOUT WOMEN have been recorded over the centuries in the most concise of all literary genres, the proverb. Mineke Schipper's impressive study examines more than 15,000 sayings about women, drawn from 150 countries and more than 240 languages. They appear on crockery, tiles and clothing as well as in books, but most are passed on by word of mouth. Schipper arranges them by theme: the female body, the phases of a woman's life as a girl, bride and wife and later as a mother and grandmother, and the joys and sorrows of love, sex and childbearing.

Striking similarities emerge across cultures. Mothers, for example, are praised around the world: 'Mother is God number two' (Malawi) and 'Mother's milk is holy' (Mongolian), whereas wives seem to be a problem: 'Never marry a woman with bigger feet than your own' is advice from Mozambique, but amazingly a Chinese saying contains exactly the same message, and even uses the same metaphor. Those big feet refer to female talents, and all over the world proverbs seem to warn men against marrying women with more talents or education than they have themselves.

Of course sayings about women tell us a lot about men: 'Women and cutlets, the more you hit them the better they'll be' (German). The legacy of humanity's proverbs does not simply describe society, they reflect ethical norms and cultural ideals, particularly those that serve the interests of men. *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet* is revealing in a number of ways. Two contradictory lines of thought emerge. On the one hand men are implacable tyrants and shameless profiteers, but they are also insecure, anxious beings who risk entrapment by women. Women are victims, but their beauty and ability to procreate lend them a great deal of power.

Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet looks into the place and status of women in cultures all over the world from an intriguing new perspective. It also illuminates the function of proverbs. This is a unique, funny, moving and often startling collection, a global cultural history in miniature.

Mineke Schipper is Professor of Intercultural Literary Studies at the University of Leiden. She is the author of numerous books including *Imagining Insiders: Africa and the question of belonging*, and *Unheard Words: Women and literature in Africa, the Arab World, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America*. She has also published two novels.

A fascinating analysis of more than 15,000 proverbs (...) an engrossing book to dip into.

TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

Schipper's prose is light, fast-paced and witty, and her analysis of what lies behind the proverbs is completely gripping.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

A fine contribution to the cosmopolitan conversation that ought to come with globalization.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Generations of feminists will mine this book for epigrams for their own books. Folklorists will borrow its brilliant taxonomies, and no one who casually picks it up will be able to put it down, as gems of inspired sayings, bon mots, zany jokes, and insightful analyses leap out of every page.

WENDY DONIGER, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Trouw nooit een vrouw met grote voeten. Wereldwijsheid over vrouwen (2004)
576 pp, with notes and references

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TITLES IN TRANSLATION

Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004. Also in Spanish (Océano, in preparation).

Notes from Mongolia

Tjalling Halbertsma

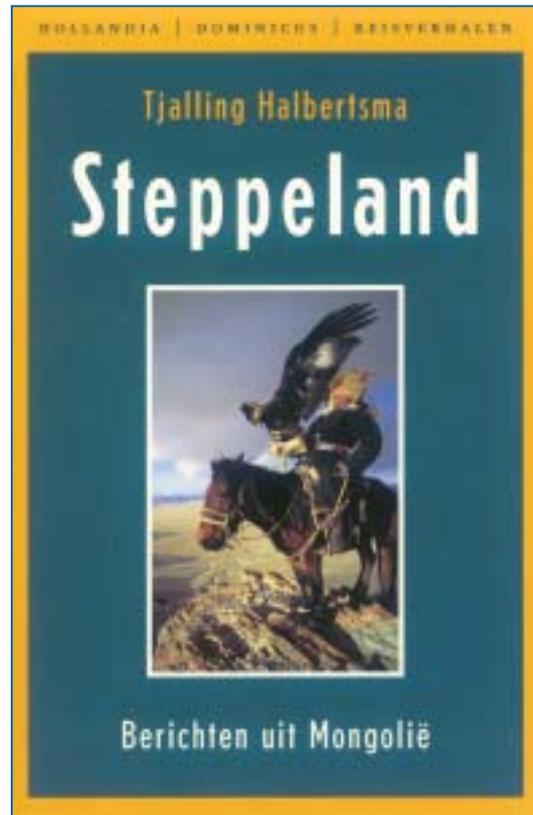
Steppe Country

MONGOLIA: a place you either love or detest. Anthropologist and cultural explorer Tjalling Halbertsma loves this ancient country with its eventful history and remarkable inhabitants, and has committed his fascination for it to paper in a heartfelt declaration of that love: *Steppe Country*.

Mongolia is three times the size of France, but has only 2.6 million inhabitants. Under the heirs of Genghis Khan, this vast expanse was the seat of the greatest empire the world has ever known. Mongolia is hard to get to, hard to travel through and, for spoiled Westerners, the winters with their Siberian temperatures are hard to live through. Yet it is also one of the most fascinating travel destinations imaginable.

During the past four years, Halbertsma served as personal adviser to the prime minister of Mongolia. That enabled him to visit the most remote corners of the country, and meet some very unique characters: the country's supreme Buddhist cleric, a gold seeker, a Mafia-style smuggler, a marmot hunter, General Kosmos (Mongolia's only astronaut), and the hardy nomads of the minuscule Reindeer People, the Dukha, whose existence depends entirely on the fate of that one particular species. Halbertsma also takes us out hunting with a falconer and his eagle, and spends a bizarre night with a cheerful and penniless former NASA scientist, whose preaching of God's word has failed to take root in Mongolia's stony soil.

On the immense steppes of the Gobi, Halbertsma becomes acquainted with the nomads' hospitality, customs and hardships. Their *ger* (felt tents) are always open to those in need of food or a place to sleep. But as Mongolia becomes integrated into the global market, their traditional herding society seems doomed to extinction. *Steppe Country* is therefore also an homage to an ancient society that may soon disappear entirely.



Tjalling Halbertsma holds degrees in law and anthropology. He writes regularly on the subject of East-West encounters for *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw*, *The South China Morning Post* and *Asian Art* magazine. In 2002, he published *The Lost Lotus Crosses* on his specialty: Nestorian stelaes.

Steppe Country is a carefully written and beautifully illustrated book, one which makes the reader pause to think about the advantages and disadvantages of modernisation and globalisation, about the human tendency to create new cares once primary needs such as shelter, warmth and food have been met, and, conversely, about the human ability to pursue cultural activities under even the most hostile conditions.

TROUW

Steppe Country gives us a Mongolia that all those who would like to escape from mental compartmentalisation and rules, from predictability and routine, will feel like leaving for tomorrow.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Steppeland. Berichten uit Mongolië (2003)
256 pp, with illustrations and references

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The history of the queen of car races

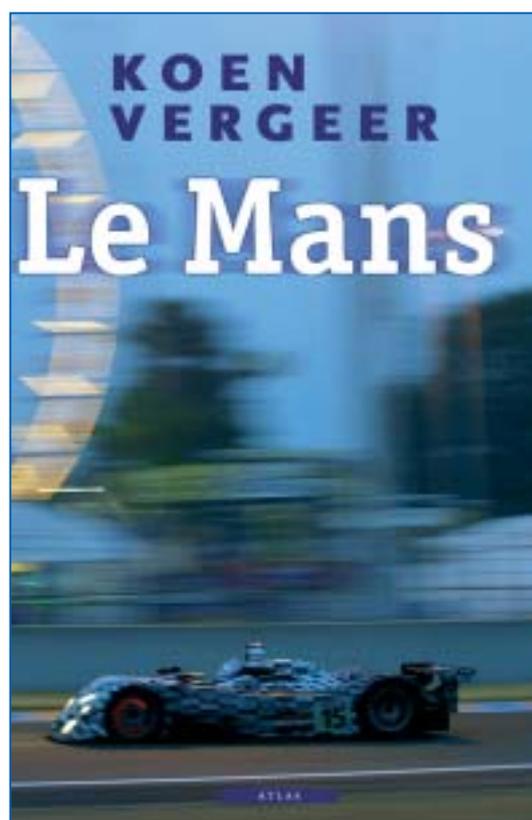
Koen Vergeer

Le Mans

LE MANS' IS, IN EVERY WAY, an exceptional car race. Every second Saturday in June, at exactly four o'clock in the afternoon, more than 90 vehicles set out to make as many laps as possible within the space of 24 hours. The fastest cars are manned by the most experienced drivers, who relieve each other at the wheel every couple of hours. But there are also lighter sports cars, driven by adventurers who have scraped together funding and do their best to complete the gruelling race with only a few friends acting as their mechanics. Therein lies the difference with Formula 1 racing: on the circuit at Le Mans, the love of motorsports still reigns supreme, and runs into far fewer commercial obstacles.

Koen Vergeer has documented the history of the queen of car races from 1923 to the present. *Le Mans* is a book one reads in top gear: in transferring his contagious enthusiasm to the reader, Vergeer's prose is clear and compelling. He succeeds in combining his passion for racing, for the anecdotes and the dramas, with a host of fascinating technical details, and he relates the stories of a number of the most dramatic yearly contests. Special attention is paid to the period 1969-71, when the Porsche 917 (immortalized in the film 'Le Mans' with Steve McQueen) appeared on the scene – in a way that keeps the reader on the edge of his seat.

As he shifts back and forth from past to present, Vergeer creates a kaleidoscopic image of the tragedies and triumphs of Le Mans over the years: of mechanics sneaking through the woods along the track to illegally bring a driver tools to fix his own stalled car; of the battles between the various car makes; of the drivers who have caught the Le Mans 'bug' and keep coming back to the race even when they're past it; of the amazing accidents (like those suffered by the Mercedes team in 1999, when, on three separate occasions, their cars suddenly left the ground while travelling at top speed – fortunately injuring no one), and of the legendary victories of Jacky Ickx and Tom Kristensen, both of whom won the 24 hours at Le Mans a total of six times.



Koen Vergeer writes on poetry and motor-racing in various magazines including *Audi Profile* and *Esquire*. In 1999 Vergeer published the highly acclaimed *Formula 1 Fanatic*. He is also the author of two novels, *Sagrada familia* and *Dossier Delvaux*.

Vergeer is one of those sportswriters whose books make the sport itself more exciting, who can turn the magic experienced by insiders and aficionados into enchantment on the part of the public at large. Vergeer's books deserve a place next to those of Nick Hornby and Dino Buzzati. In his literary sub-genre, Koen Vergeer is steadily edging his way towards the international top.

DE MORGEN

THE PRESS ON *FORMULA 1 FANATIC*:

A gripping hymn to downforce.

THE GUARDIAN

This is the story of a true fan (...) a wonderful book.

THE OBSERVER

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Le Mans (2004)
256 pp, with illustrations
and references

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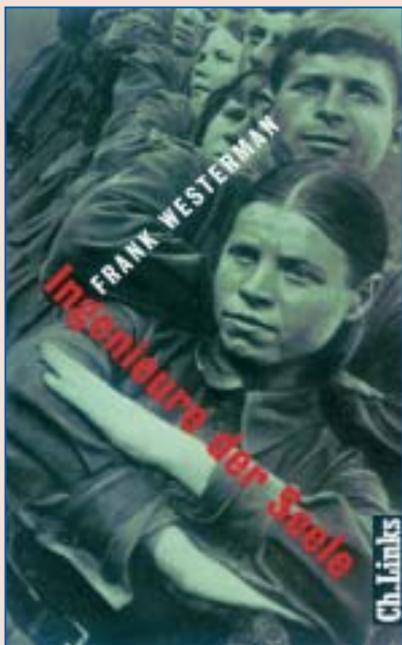
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TRANSLATED TITLES

Formula 1 Fanatic. London: Bloomsbury, 2003. Also in German (Aufbau, 2001).

Recent translations

Frank Westerman Engineers of the Soul



Engineers of the Soul was published by Christoph Links in Germany and Christian Bourgois in France; rights were also sold to England (Secker Harvill), Spain (Siruela) and Italy (Feltrinelli). The *Frankfurter Rundschau* called it 'A dramaturgic masterpiece' and the Russian writer Vladimir Kaminer: 'The best book I've read in years about Russia.'

OTHER STRIKING TRANSLATIONS THAT HAVE APPEARED IN THE PAST YEAR INCLUDE:

Gerard Aalders

Nazi Looting: the plunder of Dutch Jewrey during the Second World War

(Roof)

*Published in English by Berg.
Also in German by Dittrich*

Theo Kars

Philosophie für Nonkonformisten: kleine Anleitung zur Lebenskunst

(Practical Wisdom)

Published in German by C.H. Beck

Matthijs van Boxsel

Enciclopedia de la estupidez

(The Encyclopaedia of Stupidity)

Published in Spanish by Sintesis. Also in English by Reaktion, in German by Eichborn, and in Turkish by Ayrinti. In preparation by Harbin (China), Alexandria (Greece), Aidai (Lithuania), W.A.B. (Poland), Sophia (Rumania) and Calvaria (Ukraina)

Jacqueline van Maarsen

Ich heisse Anne, sagte sie, Anne Frank

(My Name is Anne, She Said, Anne Frank)

Published in German by S.Fischer.

Geert Mak

Das Jahrhundert meines Vaters

(My Father's Century)

*Published in German by Siedler.
Also in Hungarian by Osiris*

Marius Broekmeyer

Stalin, the Russians, and Their War, 1941-1945

(Stalin, de Russen en hun oorlog, 1941-1945)

Published in English by The University of Wisconsin Press

Fik Meijer

Emperors Don't Die in Bed

(Keizers sterven niet in bed)

*Published in English by Routledge.
Also in German by Primus*

Midas Dekkers

Von Larven und Puppen: die Geschichte einer innigen Beziehung

(The Larva)

*Published in German by Karl Blessing.
In preparation by W.A.B. (Poland)*

Fik Meijer

Gladiatoren

(Gladiators)

Published in German by Artemis & Winkler. In preparation by Souvenir (United Kingdom) and Laterza (Italy)

Patrick Faas

Around the Roman Table

(Rond de tafel der Romeinen)

Published in English by Macmillan

Linda Polman

De brazos cruzados

(We Did Nothing: why the truth doesn't always come out when the UN goes in)

Published in Spanish by Debate. Also in English by Penguin, Italian by Sperling & Kupfer and Japanese by Artist House

Most of these books were covered previously in our QNF brochures. For a complete list of translations of Dutch quality non-fiction, please consult our website: www.nlpvf.nl

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