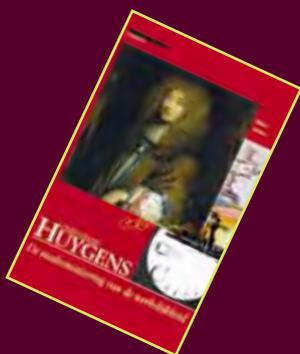
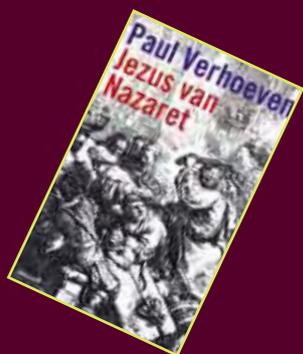


NO. 14 AUTUMN 2009



Quality Non-Fiction From Holland



Foundation for the
Production and
Translation of
Dutch Literature

Luuk van Middelaar

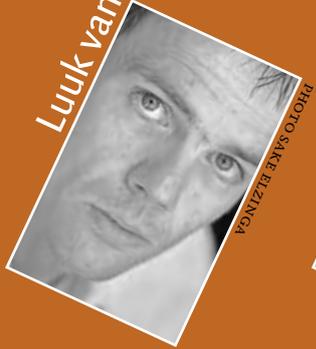


PHOTO SAKÉ ELZINGA

Jona Lendering



Peyman Jafari

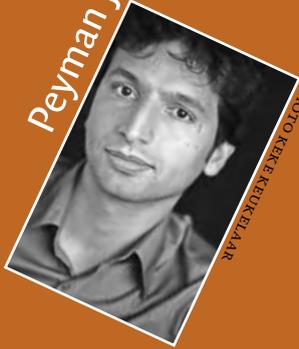


PHOTO KEEK EUGELIAR

Kester Freriks

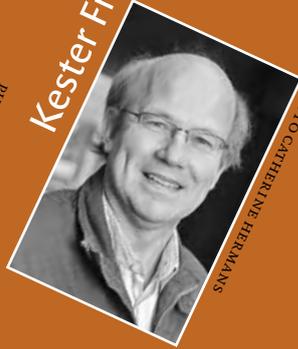


PHOTO CATHERINE HERMANS

Steven Adolf



PHOTO BOB BRONSHOFF



PHOTO ROYTEE

Paul Verhoeven



Rienk Vermij



Rik Smits



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Nicolaas Matsier

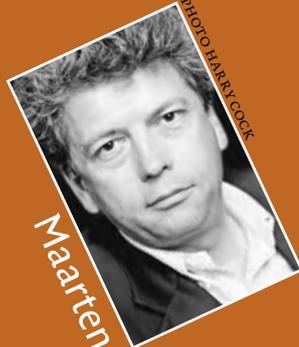


PHOTO HARRY COCK

Maarten Asscher

Luuk van Middelaar is a philosopher and historian who studied at Groningen University and at the Centre Raymond Aron of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Since his debut with *Politicide* (1999), which won him the prestigious Prix de Paris, he has become an influential voice in public debates. For the past ten years Van Middelaar has familiarized himself with the political worlds of Brussels and The Hague from the inside as a political adviser.

★

Luuk van Middelaar cannot be praised highly enough for writing a book about Europe that captivates from beginning to end, is completely free of technical jargon and prompts further reflection.

DE VOLKSKRANT

Van Middelaar has a great facility for combining historical narrative, political essay writing, philosophical speculation and legal exegesis. A wholly new angle on the European process.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

A candid history of an unprecedented historical experiment: the creation of the European Union. A pioneering study, brisk, sober and penetrating at the same time. A formidable achievement.

GEERT MAK, AUTHOR OF *IN EUROPE*

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De passage naar Europa. Geschiedenis van een begin (2009)

528 pp (180,000 words)

With notes and references

4,000 copies sold

★

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Luuk van Middelaar

The Passage to Europe

History of a beginning

In *The Passage to Europe* Luuk van Middelaar makes a highly original connection between the world of European power politics since 1500 and the Brussels institutions of our own day: Europe as reflected in its Union. No dry cataloguing of treaties and organizations here but the untold story of the politicians responsible for creating and leading Europe, from Spaak to Sarkozy, Thatcher to Merkel.

Time and again major events have forced Europe to find a role for itself on the world stage: the Suez Crisis, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the attacks of 11 September. Amid the tumult of current affairs, politicians have succeeded in linking past and future, creating a passage to Europe out of the events of the moment. This is the essence of politics, splendidly illustrated by the unfinished story of Europe.

In the Dutch tradition of Johan Huizinga, Van Middelaar combines testimony, stories

and contrasting interpretations from different European countries into a single history of Europe. Using plain language he shakes off the platitudes and clichés of existing literature about the EU. He disentangles the complex origins of Europe by focusing on unique events and pregnant details: an empty chair; a single word in a treaty. Van Middelaar does for Europe what the brilliant American historian Joseph Ellis did for the American Republic in *Founding Brothers*.

With a keen sense of irony the author describes how European politicians are constantly searching for a European audience that will applaud their decisions. They have tried subsidies, rights, a parliament, a flag and lessons about our shared history. To little effect. 'Should the citizens of the old continent, almost all of whom are now members of the Union, ever start to feel they are Europeans, it will be not least because world history has driven them into each other's arms.'

Van Middelaar spent five years working behind the scenes in European and national politics. In Brussels he witnessed the negotiations over a European constitution and in The Hague the Dutch 'No' campaign against it. He binds together these personal experiences with the erudition of a historian, the intellect of a political philosopher and the narrative instincts of a novelist, creating a unique account of the birth of Europe.

- ★ Rare in combining the insights of a political philosopher with many years of personal experience of the political game in Brussels
- ★ Looks at dynamic post-1989 Europe, the continent of a new generation
- ★ A story written with gusto and an eye for piquant details, without EU jargon, mandarinisms or acronyms



Jona Lendering lectures in Mediterranean history at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. His earlier work includes *An Interim Manager in the Roman Empire: Pliny in Bithynia* (1999), *The Edges of the World: The Romans between the Schelde and Eems rivers* (2000), *City in Marble: a guide to Ancient Rome by contemporaries* (2002) and *Alexander the Great. The fall of the Persian Empire, 340-320* (2004). He maintains the world's largest ancient history website: www.livius.org.

★

The myth of a unique, democratic and proto-European Greek culture is demonstrably false, Lendering argues, raising an extremely important point of discussion.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

In this pleasantly written, against-the-grain book, Lendering undermines many assumptions, replacing them with a story that is much more absorbing, rich and multi-facetted.

DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Vergeten Erfenis. Oosterse wortels van de westerse cultuur (2009)
196 pp (58,000 words)
With illustrations in black-and-white, notes and references

★

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★

For other translated titles by this author see our website www.nlpvf.nl

Jona Lendering

Forgotten Heritage

Eastern roots of Western culture

Modern Europe is in many respects indebted to Eastern traditions, not least those of the Islamic world. The Arabs endowed Europe with experimental science, for example, and the notion of equality before the law. We should not underestimate the importance of either, says Jona Lendering. Nor of the implications of his findings for today's worldwide debate about the supposed 'clash of civilizations' between East and West.

In a compelling argument constructed page by page, Lendering gradually convinces his readers that modern Europe is closer to the world of Mediaeval Islam than to classical Athens. The contribution of the classics to the Western world view, he believes, has in any case been overstated by education in the Prussian mould. Take the alphabet, originally a Phoenician invention. Or the setting down of laws: an initiative of the Babylonians, who discov-

ered Pythagoras' theorem long before the Greek philosopher was born.

Lendering does not confine himself to Eastern models for Western science, mathematics and medicine, which other authors have charted before him; he also looks at ideas in the fields of law and politics. One of his more astonishing claims is that the origin of the European university lies in the madrasa, a type of Islamic school that developed in the high Middle Ages. Both are autonomous, non-feudal institutions that originally emphasized the study of law; both have their own systems of degrees and doctorates that are strictly independent of religious and secular powers. Lendering writes that such parallels are too far-reaching to be ignored or dismissed as coincidental.

In current political debates the madrasa serves to symbolize all the violent, irrational and 'backward' features of the Islamic world. Fine, says Lendering, as long as we also recognize that in many ways Islamic thought was once the engine of progress in Western society. Because the truth, he writes in conclusion to his fascinating book, must be the guiding principle for all education. The West owes its Eastern precursors that much at least.

- * Long overdue reconsideration of nineteenth-century Greek-centred assumptions in higher education
- * A strongly opinionated contribution to contemporary debates about the place of the humanities in our universities



Peyman Jafari was born in Iran and has lived in the Netherlands for twenty years. A political scientist affiliated to the International Institute for Social History, he is writing his doctoral thesis on the relationship between political change and Iran's socio-economic fabric.

★

Jafari offers a clear insight into the forces that make Iran what it is, and what it will hopefully become.

DE VOLKSKRANT

Peyman Jafari lets his country's history speak. A valuable book.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

An impressive analysis of Iranian history.

KADER ABDOLAH, AUTHOR OF *THE HOUSE OF THE MOSQUE*

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Het andere Iran. Van de revolutie tot vandaag (2009)

216 pp (56,000 words)

With notes and references

3,000 copies sold

★

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Peyman Jafari

The Other Iran

From the revolution to the present day

Peyman Jafari is Dutch, although Iranian by birth, so he knows exactly what he can add to his Western readers' standard image of a radical Islamic state. In *The Other Iran* he delves into a much more complex reality, offering insights that are genuinely new.

Conspiracy theories, for example, dusted off once more by the country's rulers after the elections of 2009, seem rather more plausible in the light of interference in Iranian politics by Russia, Britain and the US over past centuries as described by Jafari. But his book concentrates mainly on the revolution of 1978-1979 and the decades since. With extensive and thorough research of his own, Jafari adds to what others have written about the country. He shows that while the revolution of 1979 is usually attributed to protests by religious leaders and left-wing intellectuals, in fact economic decline, rioting in the slums, and

strikes and arson attacks on factories, including General Motors, were no less influential.

The Islamic Republic established in Iran after 1979 is a constitutionally complex blend of democratic and theocratic principles. Jafari looks at the long factional struggle between religious leaders over the extent to which Islam and the state are inseparable, but he also pays close attention to social change and to new social movements that have made Iran the most dynamic country in the region. He paints a convincing portrait of a youth culture that adopts elements from the West while at the same time expressing trenchant criticism. The band 127, for instance, sings with typical irony about the Western image of Iranians: 'I'm a suicidal bomb, be careful, I might go off at the end of this song.'

All too often we look at Iran purely from a political standpoint, disregarding income inequality and youth unemployment, which have at least as much influence on people's daily lives and therefore on their voting habits. It was his promise to fight poverty that made Ahmadinejad the winner of the 2005 presidential elections. Whether he also received the most votes in this year's elections is for future historians to say.

- ★ A critical contribution to the debate about Islam and democracy
- ★ Goes beyond the cliché's about 'mad mullahs' and 'Gucci-wearing youth'
- ★ An image of the Iranian people as a source of change, rather than as victims of those in power at home and abroad



Kester Freriks is the author of NRC Handelsblad's much-praised feature 'Birdwatching' and its series 'Scenes from Nature', as well as fiction, poems and essays. His novel *Hölderlin's Tower* (1981) was awarded the Van der Hoogt Prize, and his other books include the biography *Secret East Indies. The life of Maria Dermoût 1888-1962* (2000) and the novel *Dahlias and Snow* (2008). His work has been translated into German and English.

★

A magnificent book, a standard work in the field.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

I really like the opening scene of discovery and enchantment, the cut-away to White, by which Freriks manages his own transformation from owner or healer, to obsessive.

ROBERT MACFARLANE, AUTHOR OF *THE WILD*

PLACES

What makes *The Falcon* such a remarkable book is that it so smoothly unites different elements. It is both a novel and non-fiction, encompassing three thousand years of cultural history in prose fragments, poetry and illustrations. It touches upon all manner of things: the falconry tradition, court customs, the ecology of the wild bird, and all in chiselled prose.

JAN SIEBELINK, AUTHOR OF *KNEELING ON A*

BED OF VIOLETS

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De valk. Over valkerij en wilde vogels (2008)

223 pp (77,000 words)

With illustrations in colour and references

4,000 copies sold

★

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★

For other translated titles by this author see our website www.nlpvf.nl

Kester Freriks

The Falcon

On falconry and wild birds

At seventeen Kester Freriks, a passionate birdwatcher, found a peregrine falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, in the peatland of the eastern Netherlands. The bird of prey had missed its quarry in the air and incurred minor injuries as a result. Freriks took it home and put it in a cardboard box. Then he bought everything the secondhand bookseller in his village could come up with on the subject. He wanted to know what to feed his peregrine.

So began Freriks' fascination with falconry, born out of the close affinity he already had for wild birds. Thirty-six years later he has united his two passions in a unique book, which combines every facet of the cultural history of falconry with observations on how falcons live in the wild. His account is gripping, indeed magnetic, with a poignant ending.



For anyone interested in falconry, *The Falcon* is a gift from heaven, just as that original bird had been for the author. Freriks expertly considers the emergence, rise and decline of falconry in Europe, especially Italy, Britain, Germany, France, Iceland, Sweden and the Netherlands. He writes warmly of Frederik II of Hohens- taufen of southern Italy, a thirteenth- century hands-on falconer and the author of *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* (The Art of Hunting with Birds), 'unsurpassed as a manual and study of the training of hunting falcons', in which he recommends weighing the bird every morning. If she is too light (they are always females, being larger than the male) she will not be powerful enough to hunt. Too heavy and her appetite for hunting will weaken and she may fly away.

The falcon, the fastest bird in the world, capable of reaching speeds of three hundred kilometres an hour, is an unparalleled hunter. Falconers have a deep bond with their raptors, which they repeatedly allow to fly free. A bird returning from high in the sky to its master's hand is a unique spectacle, described lovingly here by Freriks. Clearly he felt liberated at being able to express his lifelong passion for this 'beauty on the fist' so infectiously, and with such verve and wisdom.

- ★ Brings together the world of tame falcons with that of wild birds of prey
- ★ Describes different methods of catching falcons: the Scots take young birds from the nest, while the Dutch catch adult birds
- ★ First ever account of the hazardous and thrilling seventeenth-century 'falcon trips' to Iceland by Dutch ships

Steven Adolf is a correspondent in Spain, Portugal and Morocco for *NRC Handelsblad*, *Elsevier* and *De Standaard* and for various radio and television companies. He is the author of the bestselling *Behind the Scenes in Spain* (2001) and *Behind the Scenes in Morocco* (2005).

★

The story of the giant tuna illustrates the breathtaking underwater decline taking place all over the world. Adolf dishes it up with great versatility. With the help of excellent sources and agreeably intractable interviewees he has brought many captivating facts to the surface.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Giant Tuna is an indictment of mankind's inability to know when to stop.

DE VOLKSKRANT

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Reuzentonijn. Opkomst en ondergang van een wereldvis (2009)

272 pp (75,000 words)

With illustrations in black-and-white and references

★

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Steven Adolf

Giant Tuna

Rise and fall of a global fish

***Giant Tuna* tells the dramatic story of the rise and fall of one of the world's most remarkable fish, which first put its stamp on Western civilization in ancient times.**

The bluefin tuna is a living myth, a metallic-looking torpedo that can grow to over three meters and weigh hundreds of kilos. It is one of the fastest fishes on earth. After travelling thousands of kilometres across the oceans, great shoals arrive in the Straits of Gibraltar every spring to reproduce in the warm waters of the Mediterranean. People have awaited its arrival since prehistoric times, to catch it for its juicy red flesh. Centuries ago a Spanish monk warned that overfishing would bring about the tuna's demise and ever since the end of the twentieth century, when the Japanese discovered the bluefin tuna as the ultimate ingredient for their sushi, his sombre prediction has seemed to be coming true. In a collective act of plunder, the world

population of giant tuna has been all but wiped out in less than ten years.

Steven Adolf looks at the significance of giant tuna across the centuries, from Phoenician rule in the western Mediterranean, the Roman tuna industry and the Spanish 'tuna aristocracy' of the beaches around Gibraltar to its mysterious disappearance from the North Sea. Now the bluefin tuna is playing a tragic key role one last time, by symbolizing the destruction of the marine environment. A high-tech fishing fleet, mostly of European manufacture, is fishing tuna out of the Mediterranean with lethal efficiency. Trade on the Japanese market, worth hundreds of millions of euro, has become a race to catch as much tuna as possible as quickly as possible. The hunt for the last of the tuna amounts to the looting of our biological and cultural heritage, complete with fraud and a flourishing black market, which Europe has shown little willingness to combat.

Giant Tuna combines the little known story of a global fish with a gripping documentary about the dramatic consequences of the globalisation of fisheries. The first generation to become familiar with the underwater environment, through documentaries by Jacques Cousteau, is now watching its irreplaceable riches run out. A victim of our inability to manage the seas sustainably, the bluefin tuna threatens to disappear for ever from our waters, our nets and our kitchens.

- ★ Cultural-historical, biological and economic biography of a fish in the tradition of Mark Kurlansky's *Cod*
- ★ The black market in tuna explained, from the tuna mafia to tuna spies and tuna police
- ★ An indictment of short-term thinking by fishermen and fishmongers, politicians, governments and Japanese conglomerates, in the style of the film *The End of the Line*



Paul Verhoeven is the director of hit films including *Robocop* (1987), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Starship Troopers* (1997) and *Black Book* (2006). Aside from the cinema he has another lifelong fascination: Jesus. After leaving the Netherlands he applied to join the 'Jesus Seminar' in California, a prominent association of liberal theologians who address the question of what Jesus the historical figure actually said and did. *Jesus of Nazareth* is based on papers Verhoeven wrote for the Seminar.

★

An unexpectedly good book, and soundly based too, a pleasant excursion for both laymen and experts. Verhoeven brings his instinct for drama and realism to the subject with excellent effect.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

A book about Jesus that swings like no other.

DE VOLKSKRANT

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Jesus van Nazaret (2008)

288 pp (110,000 words)

With notes and references

21,000 copies sold

★

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★

RIGHTS SOLD

Pendo (Germany), 2009; Seven Stories

(USA); Marsilio (Italy); Guerra e Paz

(Portugal) and Bestun (Korea).

Paul Verhoeven

Jesus of Nazareth

Paul Verhoeven, free spirit and director of such films as *Robocop* and *Basic Instinct*, which brim with sex and violence, used to be a member of the Pentecostal Church and has been fascinated by the life of Jesus since childhood. He once asked his father whether Jesus felt pain when he was crucified. Couldn't God do anything about that? Receiving no answer, Verhoeven continued searching. In his films he explores the outer limits of acceptability, and he does so again in this his first book, defending positions that certainly do not square with the official teachings of the Church.

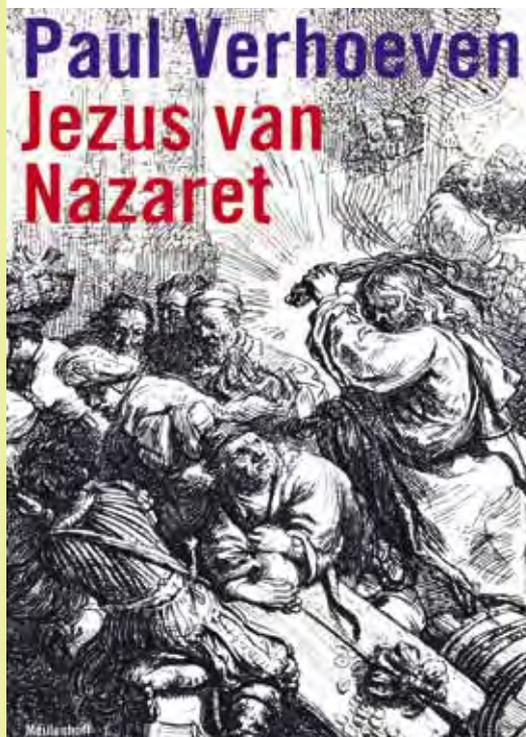
Most importantly Verhoeven asks who Jesus of Nazareth really was. How did he live? What did he stand for? For two thousand years appraisals of his character have been coloured by articles of faith, such as miracles and the resurrection, and iconic images of a skinny man on a cross

with resignation in his eyes. That is not how Verhoeven sees him: 'I look at Jesus as a person, I don't think of him as the son of God. That's a mythological Jesus, born out of our desire to see an image of God in a human being.'

Verhoeven casts his eye over some of the less attractive features of Jesus the man without intending to desanctify him. He believes greater realism in tracing Jesus' life will further our understanding and sense of identification. Verhoeven has an understandable preference for Mark's gospel, since it is full of the kind of engaging details he can use to create a captivating portrait of Jesus as a brilliant and passionate wordsmith, a rebel and provocateur, a bundle of contradictions.

Verhoeven, film director that he is, presents ideas on how to make the ultimate film of the life of Christ. What would be the best opening shot? This makes the book highly personal, a quest by a man determined to leave no stone unturned, guided by personal associations, writing more as an essayist than as a biographer. This freethinking approach prompts questions. Did Jesus choose his own twelve disciples? Did he really believe he had to die? What exactly happened to the body? Verhoeven's answers make *Jesus of Nazareth* a provocative and resolutely original book.

- ★ An engrossing book by a filmmaker fascinated by encounters with metaphysics as well as raw reality
- ★ Intriguing insights from a director and dramatist in response to biblical texts
- ★ A new angle on Jesus as an exorcist, utopian and revolutionary



Rienk Vermij gained his doctorate from the Institute for the History of the Natural Sciences at the University of Utrecht and now works at the Department of the History of Science, University of Oklahoma (USA). He has a great many publications to his name on the subject of the history of science, including *The Scientific Revolution* (1999) and *The Calvinist Copernicans* (2002).

★

Outstanding. The best overview yet of Christiaan Huygens' life and work.

FLORIS COHEN IN *ACADEMISCHE BOEKEN GIDS*

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Christiaan Huygens. De mathematisering van de werkelijkheid (2004)

160 pp (18,000 words)

With illustrations in colour and black-and-white, and references
3,000 copies sold

★

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Rienk Vermij

Christiaan Huygens

The mathematization of reality

As a mathematician and physicist of the second half of the seventeenth century, Christiaan Huygens is regarded as second only to Isaac Newton. He was a central figure in the transformation of physics in that period. He followed in the footsteps of pioneers like Galileo and Descartes in attempting to understand the world purely through mathematical study and carried out pioneering theoretical research in many fields, including mathematics, mechanics, optics and astronomy. He deduced the laws of collision and was active in the fields of probability and light theory. He discovered the rings of Saturn and established that it also had a moon.

But theory alone was not enough for Huygens. He was convinced that the world operated according to the laws of reason and therefore that mathematical understanding would inevitably lead to practical improvements. He experimented with

lenses and developed better versions of ingenious devices including the telescope, the magic lantern, the air pump, the harpsichord and carriage suspension. He became famous for the invention of the pendulum clock, making reliable timekeeping possible for the first time.

Rienk Vermij's biography is not simply an overview of Huygens' discoveries, since it aims to demonstrate a relationship between his career and the culture in which he lived. The Dutch Republic led seventeenth-century Europe in painting (Rembrandt), philosophy (Spinoza) and in the investigation of natural phenomena. Huygens, the product of an aristocratic and erudite family, was financially independent and able to devote himself entirely to research, even though at the time there was no automatic assumption that work such as his would prove useful.

When the Académie Royale des Sciences was founded in Paris in 1666, Huygens became its first foreign member, which enabled him to play a major role on the European scientific stage for many years. He was a member of the Royal Society of London and corresponded with the most important scholars of his time, including Pascal, Newton and Leibniz. The latter was also a friend.

Huygens' manuscripts and correspondence have already been published, but until now there has been no readily accessible account of his life. Vermij offers enjoyable insights into Huygens' life and work while at the same time outlining the development of the natural sciences in early-modern Europe, throwing light on a lesser known but crucial chapter in the history of science.

- ★ Accessible biography of one of Europe's first modern scholars
- ★ Explores a vital episode in the 'scientific revolution'



Rik Smits is a philologist, a science journalist and the author of books on a wide range of subjects, including *The Left-Handed Picador. On left- and right-handedness: facts and fabrications* (1993; translated into German) and (with Liesbeth Koenen) the *Handbook of Dutch* (2004).

★

Smits chronicles the genesis of language with relish and at an enjoyable pace. He launches an original, personal theory about the history of man the conversationalist.

DE VOLKSKRANT

A richly informative and powerfully articulate book.

INTERMEDIAIR

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Dageraad. Hoe taal de mens maakte (2009)

272 pp (78,000 words)

With illustrations in black-and-white and references

4,000 copies sold

★

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★

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Rik Smits

Dawn

How language made man

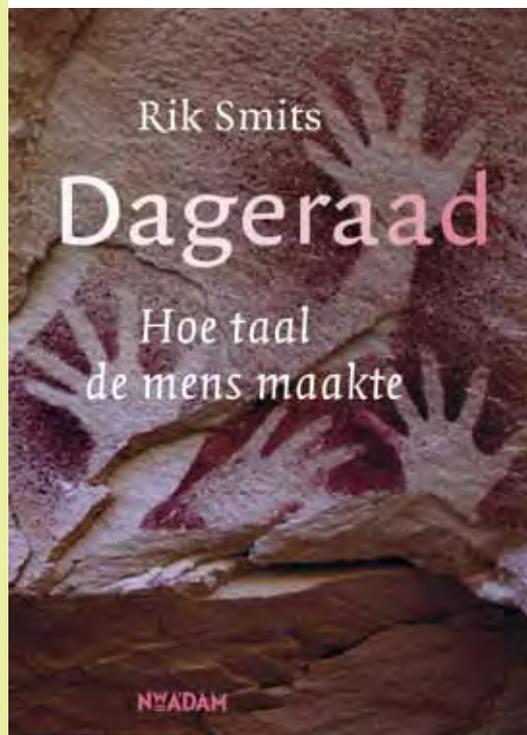
How did the human ability to communicate through language arise? Unlike insects and animals we all command one or more unique tongues, each with its own variants, adding up to billions of words worldwide. In Dawn Rik Smits presents a challenging vision of a subject that has not yet been fully researched.

Smits' view is that language cannot initially have arisen as a system of communication. Indeed, from an evolutionary perspective, everything suggests otherwise. Language, he claims, is a product of the integration of capacities each of which evolved for its own reasons. Man is one of nature's most vulnerable creatures, and the only substitute for strength is wisdom. We are unique in being able to aim and throw accurately. Our skills at calculation and estimation developed until they were sufficient to accommodate a system as complex as grammar.

Only after our linguistic ability emerged could we think logically and share our reasoning with others, at which point almost everything we now call culture took off at a great rate. Smits concludes that language cannot have long predated the invention of agriculture in the Middle East, some 14,000 years ago. This huge advance in civilization made abstract powers of reasoning indispensable for the first time, along with highly developed concepts of identity, past, present and future, all of which rely upon language.

Smits' explanation of the origins of language throws new light on cave paintings by Cro-Magnon man, whose masterpieces of 40,000 to 15,000 years ago have been found at Altamira, Lascaux and elsewhere. Anatomically Cro-Magnons were modern humans, but they had no language in the modern sense. Their minds were so fundamentally different from ours that we would have had difficulty making ourselves understood to them. They certainly could not have conversed with us; they had no gods or religion comparable to ours and probably no real sense of eroticism. These things dawned later, as a result of the wonderful, accidental by-product of evolution known as language.

- ★ Why language has nothing in common with systems of communication between animals
- ★ What phantom limbs tell us about how our brains work
- ★ Why prehistoric Venus figurines have no erotic significance



Nicolaas Matsier studied classical languages and philosophy and is the author of children's books, story collections, essays, and the novels *Closed House* (1994; translated into French and German) and *The Forty-Eighth Hour* (2005). He has also translated work by authors including Lewis Carroll, Stefan Themerson and Xenofon.



Matsier's book is a wonderful guide.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Extremely informative cultural-historical glimpses.

VRIJ NEDERLAND

A brilliant book. With great affection and sound documentation, Matsier describes numerous trompe l'oeils.

HET PAROOL

The Eye Deceived is a splendid piece of work, the product of a lifelong passion.

NIEUWSBLAD VAN HET NOORDEN



PUBLISHING DETAILS

Het bedrogen oog. De kunst van de trompe-l'oeil (2009)

255 pp (65,000 words)

With illustrations in colour and black-and-white, and references



RIGHTS

De Harmonie

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Nicolaas Matsier

The Eye Deceived

The art of the trompe l'oeil

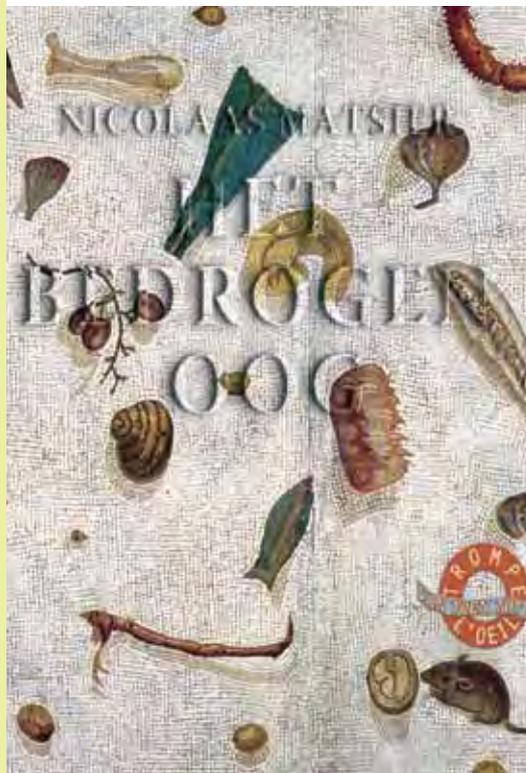
A trompe l'oeil is an artwork that tries not to look like an artwork, a deceptive, realistically painted representation designed to fool the observer. So for best effect a trompe l'oeil is not hung in a frame but discreetly positioned where it will merge with its surroundings. Remarkably, given the prolific production of pictorial practical jokes in the Low Countries, Nicolaas Matsier is the first person to write a Dutch monograph about this maverick genre of European painting.

The trompe l'oeil enjoyed its greatest popularity during the Renaissance, but Matsier shows us a wide range of works from all periods, including the twentieth century. He has selected 125 trompe l'oeils from museums worldwide, interrelating facts about the artists and their work with his own personal observations. They include a painting of a book of hours with, or so it seems, a flower pinned to it, a

bookcase that makes you want to pull out a book, a fly you want to bat away from a painted portrait, a notice board covered in letters and bills.

Some artists conjured up whole rooms. Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten painted life-sized pieces of domestic decor, and unsuspecting visitors thought they were looking at rooms and cupboards they could walk straight into. Even more ambitious were the grand interiors leading out onto spacious verandas beyond which stretched arcadian landscapes, or entire towns. Baroque architecture features ceilings on which the heavens stretch away, infinite and glorious.

With their sophisticated trompe l'oeils artists managed to mislead people and even animals. One of the most striking examples is a small masterpiece by the Dutch painter Cornelis Gijsbrechts. It portrays the reverse side of a framed painting. An unsuspecting visitor would pick it up, turn it around and see to his embarrassment that he had been duped. *The Eye Deceived* is a seductive book about that unique instant of artistic pleasure, the instant when you are fooled into reaching for an apple from a painted fruit bowl, waving to a painted figure at a window, or trying to pull aside a curtain made of paint.



- ★ A subject rarely touched on by art historians
- ★ With the eye of a literary author, Matsier makes comparisons across the centuries, connecting Rembrandt and Vermeer with contemporary street artists like Julian Beever or graffiti artist Banksy
- ★ Includes an appendix full of tall stories about deceivers and the deceived

Maarten Asscher, who trained as a lawyer, has worked in publishing and as head of the Arts Department at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. He is currently managing director at Athenaeum Bookshop in Amsterdam. Since 1992 he has published several collections of stories and essays, as well as poetry and a novel (translated into German).

★

Maarten Asscher excels at essays and articles on subjects you didn't know interested you but are tempted into by his enthusiasm, his thirst for historical facts, and his graceful, elegant style.

DE VOLKSKRANT

Sometimes light-footed, sometimes melancholic, but always apposite.

DE MORGEN

It is rare for a writer to be so elegant, sharp and erudite at the same time.

BOEK

★

PUBLISHING DETAILS

H₂Olland. *Op zoek naar de bronnen van Nederland* (2009)

222 pp (55,000 words)

With illustrations in black-and-white and references

3,000 copies sold

★

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★

RIGHTS SOLD

Luchterhand (Germany)

★

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Maarten Asscher

H₂Olland

A history of Dutch water

H₂Olland is the least assertive book ever written about the Netherlands. Here is a Dutchman who confesses to feeling ill at ease with his nationality, who during his life, as he puts it, 'has more often day-dreamed of turning his back on the Netherlands than of crawling deeper into its lap.' That is nevertheless exactly what he does, he crawls into his country's lap and shows it to us at its most intimate level.

Maarten Asscher contemplates his native land by way of its water: the controlled inundation used by the Dutch to defend their country, the effects of water on their urban lives, the flooding disasters they have endured and the flood defences built against them, their canals and land reclamation, their water consumption and love of beaches, their skating mania and polder management, their splendid mills and water-towers, tunnels and bridges, the poetry of their dykes and canal boats, their

painting tradition and their royal family. He touches it all as if with a magic wand.

The intimate feel of the book is heightened by its concentration on a single representative of each phenomenon or theme. The military applications of managed flooding are made tangible in Pampus Island and urban water in The Hague's Hofvijfder (Court Lake), while disasters are epitomized by the horrific floods of 1953 and skating by the Elfstedentocht race. Asscher writes about his own direct connection with each of them. Pampus is where he organized a birthday party for his children, a major tunnel under the North Sea Canal tells his parents' story, the Dutch coast is a walk, the De Valk Mill a home, his wife seems to have made a personal cult out of bottled spring-water and he has some fairly eccentric bathing habits of his own.

Asscher has the eye of a collector, holding up each subject for a moment like a devoted custodian before setting it down in the context where it belongs. The wealth of detail, unusual angles and extraordinary observations, along with some hilarious quantitative data, give H₂Olland a completeness apparently at odds with its lightness. This is an encyclopaedia in miniature, a paper boat for a pleasure trip through Holland.

- ★ Explains why Dutch windmills turn anticlockwise, why Dutch people consume considerably less bottled water than other Europeans, and much else about the innate connection between the Netherlands and water
- ★ Combines research, narrative and reportage to offer a unique insight into some characteristic aspects of Dutch culture, landscape and history





Non-Fiction Recent translations

Mirjam Bolle

Let Me Tell You What a Day Here is Like

(Ik zal je beschrijven hoe een dag er hier uitziet)
Published in Finnish by Kirjapaja in 2008. Also in Danish (Høst & Søn), English (Audley Square), French (Denoël), German (Eichborn) and Swedish (Norstedts).



Chris Buskes

Evolutionary Thinking

(Evolutionair denken)
Published in Spanish by Herder in 2009. Also in Chinese (Sichuan), Korean (OpenScience), German (Primus) and Polish (P.I.W.).



Douwe Draaisma

The Nostalgia Factory

(De heimweefabriek)
Published in Italian by Bruno Mondadori in 2009. Also in German (Galiani), Korean (Eco Livres) and Polish (Czarne).

Ger Groot

Two Souls

(Twee zielen)
Published in Spanish by Sequitur in 2008.
Also in Lithuanian (Aidai).



Stine Jensen

Why Women Love Apes

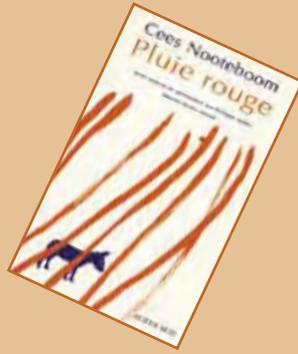
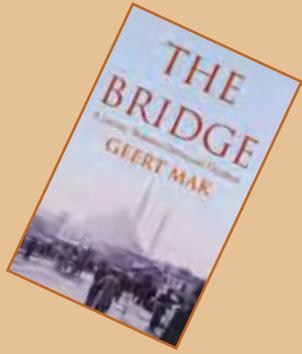
(Waarom vrouwen van apen houden)
Published in Chinese by Flower City Press in 2008.
Also in French (Seuil).



Luuc Kooijmans

The Artist of Death

(De doodskunstenaar)
Published in Russian by Nauka/Kunstkamera in 2008.
Also in English (Brill).



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Geert Mak

The Bridge

(De brug)

Published in English by Harvill Secker in 2008.

Also in German (Siedler) and Greek (Metaichmio).



Fik Meijer

Gladiators

(Gladiatoren)

Published in Finnish by Otava in 2008. Also in Chinese

(Guangxi), Czech (Aurora), English (Souvenir; St Martin's Press), German (Artemis & Winkler), Hungarian (Gondolat), Italian (Laterza), Swedish (Historiska) and Turkish (Homer).



Piet Mondriaan

Neo-Plasticism

(De nieuwe Beelding)

Published in Portuguese by Cosacnaify in 2008.

Cees Nooteboom

Red Rain

(Rode regen)

Published in French by Actes Sud in 2008. Also in

German (Suhrkamp), Polish (W.A.B.), Russian (Text) and Spanish (Siruela).



Willem Otterspeer

Order and Loyalty

(Orde en trouw)

Published in Hungarian by Gondolat in 2008.

Also in Chinese (Flower City Press).



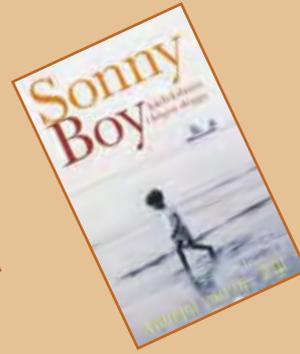
Linda Polman

War Games

(De crisisravanen)

Published in Italian by Bruno Mondadori in 2009.

Also in English (Penguin), Norwegian (Arneberg) and Swedish (Leopard).



Non-Fiction Recent translations

Paul Scheffer

The Unsettled Land

(Het land van aankomst)

Published in German by Hanser in 2008. Also in Danish (Tiderne Skifter), English (Polity) and Polish (Czarne).



Govert Schilling

The Hunt for Planet X

(De jacht op planet X)

Published in English by Copernicus Books in 2008.



Abram de Swaan

Words of the World

(Woorden van de wereld)

Published in Chinese by Flower City Press in 2008. Also in English (Polity) and Hungarian (Typotex).

Roel van der Veen

Africa

(Afrika van de Koude Oorlog naar de 21ste eeuw)

Published in Chinese by Guangdong in 2009. Also in English (KIT).



Henk Wesseling

Europe's Colonial Age

(Europa's koloniale eeuw)

Published in French by Gallimard in 2009. Also in English (Longman) and Swedish (Historiska).



Annejet van der Zijl

Sonny Boy

(Sonny Boy)

Published in Swedish by Lind in 2008. Also in Czech (Barrister & Principal), English (Faber & Faber), German (Kindler), Italian (Marsilio), Japanese (East Press) and Turkish (Alef).

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