

ERASMUS
2016
PERASMUS

Annual Report Erasmus Prize A. S. Byatt



Annual Report Erasmus Prize 2016

Life Writing

A.S. Byatt



Colophon

Annual Report Erasmus Prize

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Preface

The theme of the 2016 Erasmus Prize was 'Life Writing', a broad concept that encompasses biographies, autobiographies and historical novels. The British writer Dame Antonia Susan Byatt occupies the very centre of this field. Since first gaining recognition with her novel *Possession* in 1990, she has written dozens of novels, biographies, short stories and critical essays. A hallmark of her writing is its great erudition and power of imagination. A 'born storyteller', A.S. Byatt plunges the reader into the history of European thinking, taking major questions about scholarship, history and identity as the starting point for her books. Moreover, she has a deep affinity with visual art, a passion that permeates her life and work. Her enthusiastic personality and extensive body of work has been extensively celebrated over this past year.

A.S. Byatt's numerous interests were reflected in a wide-ranging programme of activities devoted to her work. From lectures, congresses, public interviews and book presentations, to publications and a nationwide writing competition. This annual report contains a short account of these activities. In organizing these events, we found committed partners in the British Embassy, De Balie, De Bezige Bij, De Gids, De Groene Amsterdammer, De Nederlandse Boekengids, Erasmus Festival Brabant, Huizinga Instituut, Humanity in Action, Museum Meermanno, the Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies, Paradiso, SLAA, the Universities of Amsterdam, Utrecht and Maastricht, VPRO and Writers Unlimited.

The highlight of the year was the Erasmus Prize award ceremony on 8 December 2016. During a festive event held at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, His Majesty the King presented the Erasmus Prize to A.S. Byatt in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen and Her Majesty Princess Beatrix. We are grateful for the hospitality shown to us by the Royal Family.

In addition to the Erasmus Prize, the Foundation presented its annual Research Prizes to five young doctoral students. This year's joyful ceremony took place again at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Besides all the festivities, we suffered a great loss in 2016. Max Sparreboom, former director of the Foundation, fell ill shortly after his retirement in January, and passed away on 30 August 2016 at the age of 65. For sixteen years he led the Foundation in an extremely responsible manner. The Foundation remembers him with great respect and esteem.

Finally, the 2016 Erasmus Prize was the final award made under the chairmanship of Martijn Sanders. In his ten years as chairman of the Foundation, he committed himself to the Erasmus Prize with great dedication. The board is extremely grateful to him for all his work.

Ernst Hirsch Ballin, *chairman*
Shanti van Dam, *director*



Citation

Article 2 of the Constitution of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation reads as follows:

“Within the context of the cultural traditions of Europe in general and the ideas of Erasmus in particular, the aim of the Foundation is to enhance the position of the humanities, the social sciences and the arts. The emphasis lies on tolerance, cultural diversity and non-dogmatic, critical thinking. The Foundation tries to achieve this aim by awarding prizes and by other means. A cash prize is awarded under the name of ‘Erasmus Prize’.”

In accordance with this article, the Board of the Foundation has decided to award the Erasmus Prize 2016 to the British writer Dame Antonia Susan Byatt.

The prize is awarded to A.S. Byatt on the following grounds:

- Her work crosses boundaries in style and content. It covers an enormous range of genres, literary forms and subjects. She immerses the reader in the history of European thinking, taking the big questions about science, history and identity as her starting point.
- In her wide-ranging body of work she unites great intellectual force with unbridled imaginative power.
- Central to her work is a reinvention of ‘old tales in new forms’. In revisiting myths and fairy tales, she turns them into a lasting reflection on the European history of ideas in narrative form.
- Among her recurring themes are the influence of art on life, magic and realism, and the conflict between ambition and family.

- The jury describes A.S. Byatt as a born storyteller with a keen eye for relationships in public and private life.
- Many of her novels and her critical work explore the act of writing biography or conducting research. In the process, A.S. Byatt has reshaped the genre of life writing in her own unique way.

In her wide-ranging body of work she unites great intellectual force with unbridled imaginative power.



Director Shanti van Dam presents the citation during the Erasmus Prize Award Ceremony on 8 December, Royal Palace Amsterdam.



Erasmus Prize Award Ceremony 2016, Royal Palace Amsterdam. Photos by Jeroen van der Meyde.

Laudatio

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Erasmus Prize was instated in a time of great optimism about a new Europe. What is left of this idea of Europe today? Where can we find a shared past to build on and find inspiration to create our future? Our laureate today is a prominent participant in the current debate. Not as a politician, nor an activist. But by passionately cultivating the life of the mind through writing. She writes, narrates and conjures up stories about European lives and European ideas, and she shows us how they live on.

Dame Antonia Susan Byatt once described how she became European: through literature. Asthmatic as a child, she was often confined to her bed. So she read voraciously. A wide-ranging literary palette was central to her education, and from an early age her conceptual world included the Iliad and the Odyssey, the Arthurian legends, the Norse and Icelandic sagas. She read Cicero and Livy alongside Kleist and Virgil, and Racine alongside Thomas Mann. At university she not only mastered foreign languages, but also studied literature through those languages. During an extended stay in the United States, Byatt steeped herself in American literature, striving to pinpoint exactly what it means to be American, and how that identity influences one's writing. It was during this period that she first became conscious of the fact that she herself was a European. Although she was fascinated by American literature, the authors she studied never became part of her own literary consciousness, as was the case with Balzac, Racine and Thomas Mann. Her personal myths were Scandinavian, Germanic, European, and their names were Ragnarök, Faust and *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Indeed, Proust's ruminations on artistic awakening and life experience have been influential in paving the way for what we now call 'Life Writing'.

For 'Life Writing', ladies and gentlemen, is the theme of this year's Erasmus Prize. A relatively new term, it denotes a literary genre that encompasses autobiography, biography, the so-called 'ego document', and the historical novel. Both the general public and academic world share an interest in 'Life Writing' as a means of reflecting on one's own life through insight into the lives of others, a means of studying the complex process of identity formation.

Our laureate, A.S. Byatt, lives in the heart of the genre. In her multifaceted and highly diverse oeuvre, comprising dozens of novels, short stories, critical essays and works of non-fiction, reflections on biography and portraiture are never far away.

Searching, investigating and digging through documents from the past - it is the academic pursuit of the two protagonists in her most famous and much beloved novel *Possession: A Romance*, published in 1990. Inquisitive and obsessed by their subject matter, like Byatt herself, the researchers become entangled in a web of mysteries garnished by an exquisite pastiche of genres and literary fireworks. Seemingly effortlessly, the author seams together diary entries, 20th-century dialogue and 19th-century poetry. Readers are startled once they discover that the Victorian poetry which seduced them so thoroughly in this romantic story was in fact crafted from beginning to end by the author Byatt herself. Seldom has a novel illustrated so beautifully how reality and literature can become enmeshed, how thin the mirrored wall between reality and the imagination can become.

"Whether you are reading or writing a novel," she once told me in an interview, "in both cases you are trying to fundamentally understand something or someone."

Her book *The Biographer's Tale*, about the complex relationship between the biographer and the object of his or her study, was written purposefully as an answer to *Possession*, to function as its counter-voice. In this investigation into the pains and difficulties of the work of the biographer, the clever 'Droste effect' or *mise en abyme*, so masterfully drawn by Byatt, is a means to an end, showing how biographical work is full of pitfalls and complexities, in which the end result tells us so much about the biographer himself, and conveys so little about the one who is portrayed. Being in conversation with and in contradiction to each other, *Possession* and *The Biographer's Tale* in the end convey the same message, as Byatt herself has stated. "It is impossible to truly know 'the other', maybe especially the object of your admiration and affection."

While these novels explore the relationship between biography and identity, a preoccupation in much of her work has always been how to shape life through art.

In *Peacock & Vine*, her most recent essay, she brings together two artists, William Morris and Mariano Fortuny, crafting their designs the way she herself crafts her own books. In this way the book could be considered a self-portrait in disguise. What is it that fascinates Byatt here? Work, research, passion. “Life is about change and curiosity,” she once observed. *Peacock & Vine* is an ode to research, to creativity and the power of creation – it is, in fact, the core of Byatt’s oeuvre.

Intrigued as she is by portraiture and storytelling, A.S. Byatt is also highly articulate in underlining that people’s lives can perhaps only be captured through fiction. It is through artistic expression that Byatt’s protagonists achieve their best chance of happiness, and it would be hard not to suppose that the same applies to the creator of these stories herself.

Like her protagonists, A.S. Byatt devotes herself to her art. To her, being a writer trumps everything, and all her activities serve that one cause. She also had an academic career even though she never considered herself a real academic. The same holds true for her critical essays: “I think of my criticism as being ‘writer’s criticism’” she once said.

But whoever thinks that her intellectual force in the traditional sense stands in the way of a keen eye for contemporary culture and language would be sorely mistaken. Whoever meets her is impressed by her dignity, her sharp mind, her scientific interests, her erudition. Not to mention her exquisite wit. When recently asked whether the Facebook/Twitter idiom of, say, her own grandchildren was foreign to her, or whether it upsets her that modern language is constantly changing, she replied: “I enjoy listening to them immensely...Of course you must never let them know that you were listening. You must assume the role of the grandmother.” “You see,” she continued, “you must like what you see, because it is what there is.”

Dame Antonia, with your fundamental artistic curiosity and your open and critical attitude, you embody in exemplary fashion the values of Erasmus that this Foundation cherishes so dearly.

She writes, narrates and conjures up stories about European lives and European ideas, and she shows us how they live on.



Board Member Margot Dijkgraaf reciting the laudatio.



Performance by soprano Rosemary Joshua and the musicians of 'De Bezetting Speelt'. Photos by Jeroen van der Meyde.

Acceptance Speech A.S. Byatt

Your Majesties, your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, distinguished members of the Erasmus Prize foundation, friends and family,

It is hard – indeed not really possible – to say how surprised and delighted I was to be told, completely unexpectedly, that I had won the Erasmus Prize. Erasmus is of course one of my heroes – a European who was a great writer, a great humanist, and a great scholar. The Erasmus Prize is given not for fiction nor for literature but for contributions to culture, society and social thought.

When I looked through the previous winners I found many of my heroes, those who have profoundly changed the ways in which I think and work. There are the great painters Marc Chagall, Oskar Kokoschka, Sigmar Polke, the thinkers Claude Levi-Strauss, Claudio Magris, Ernst Gombrich, Simon Schaffer, Gabriel Marcel, and Isaiah Berlin. There are, I have to say, few women, but one of them is the Belgian-born novelist Marguerite Yourcenar, in whose company I am honoured to find myself. These are only a few of the powerful people on the prize list. It is indeed a shock – of an entirely splendid kind – to find that I have moved from being a reader, student and admirer to being in some way a companion. It is one of the happiest events of my life.

Since this is not a literary prize I thought I would talk for a moment or two about the art of writing fiction. Storytelling is part of most people's lives, almost from the moment we can understand language at all. Family tales, fairy stories, popular history, news and gossip are integral parts of human life. When I taught literature at University College in London University I was lucky enough to be invited to sit in the Senior Common Room Bar with the artists from the Slade School of Art. I started to think about the fact that they worked with concrete materials – clay, stone, paint, film – whereas what I work with is the language we also use to conduct our daily lives. Whilst I have been in Amsterdam I have had the great pleasure of talking with Edmund de Waal about how – and how early in his life – he understood that clay was what he would work with.

Why do some of us need to make works of art? How do we choose what we work with? What effect does the shift from dailiness to art have on us as writers and readers?

Erasmus is of course one of my heroes – a European who was a great writer, a great humanist, and a great scholar.

I remember – I am sure most of us remember – first noticing that the written word had a form that needed to be understood and thought about. Many of my generation of British children will have grown up with the series of school reading books, *The Radiant Way*, in which there was/is the unforgettable sequence of words:- “Pat can sing. Pat sing to Mother. Sing to Mother Pat. Mother sing to Pat.” And so on. We discover the “th”, the “ng” which are not part of the sounded out phrases we are first taught. We discover the written word as opposed to the spoken word. I think some writers become writers because they need stories, characters, other worlds. But there are those – and I have very slowly come to see that I am one of them – who think about words as painters think about paint. (Most writers have elements of both of course.) And yet, words retain their doubleness – their dailiness, their utilitarian ordinariness, and their work in poems and other works of art.

It is interesting to read what writers have written about the inability to write. One of the most startling and imaginative descriptions of this state is Hugo von Hofmannsthal's story, *The Letter from Lord Chandos*, written in 1902. In this story the imaginary Lord Chandos writes to his friend Francis Bacon to say that he has completely lost the ability to put ideas into written language. Chandos tells Bacon that he can no longer grasp the ideas of a tract he wrote at the age of twenty-three “as a familiar image made up of connected words, but now I can comprehend it only word by word...” Nevertheless he is able to tell Bacon of his experience of having given orders for rat poison to be strewn in the

milk cellar of one of his farms. He is able to describe the “sharp sweet smell” of the poison, the screams and struggles of the rats, when he has lost the capacity to generalise – he does not use this word or write of it in this way. It is an extraordinary essay, making its readers rethink the very nature of the relation between language and the world of things.

Ernst Gombrich, in his essay on Image and Word in Twentieth-Century Art touches on the gap between words and things from a different angle. He writes of paintings and sculptures where the artist has deliberately made a distance between words and things – Magritte, for instance, in *The Key of Dreams*, captioning a handbag as “le ciel”, a leaf as “la table” a pocket-knife as “l’oiseau” and then as Gombrich points out, dismissing us with laughter by simply calling a sponge a sponge. We can and do think without language – with simple or tough images or with feelings and passions – but the normal run of our consciousness is linguistic, and we almost automatically translate passion into words.

What goes on in our minds when we think about using language? When we use language to write? I find I increasingly notice the language I am using as well as what I am trying to say or describe – Iris Murdoch in a different context spoke of the space between looking out of a window at the sky and the light and looking, at the same time, at the window itself, glass, dust, frame. When writing I switch from the emotion of the imagined world – curiosity, smells and sounds, spaces – to the forms of the words themselves. As a child, like many of my generation of British children, I read Beatrix Potter after having had her tales read to me. The stories were full of life – the puddle duck looking for somewhere to lay her eggs, the badger snoring and pretending to sleep, the little dog unintentionally ingesting a pie made of mouse. My agent Sam Edenborough doesn’t like these tales and it may be that they are now out of date. When I looked up Potter on Google I found, somewhat to my bemusement, a series of letters condemning her for cruelty and unpleasantness – as a child, and as a parent, I found her matter of fact sense of how things are, pain and difficulty and fear as well as satisfaction, both exciting and satisfying. I was a child in a war, in a world of danger and death, but Potter’s stories revealed cruelty and fear in a storytelling context. One of the glories of reading Potter – of having Potter read to me – was the discovering of unexpected and unknown words. I think my favourite was and is “soporific” from *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* – in which the author informs the reader that lettuce is soporific. Anyone who will want to be a writer will be

excited by the juxtaposition of the words soporific and flopsy. There were sentences like “Mr Drake Puddleduck advanced in a slow sideways manner and picked up the various articles” or “I am affronted” said Mrs Tabitha Twitchett. “Affronted” is a wonderful word to learn. I think that the shift in my childish attention from the story to the language may have been a beginning of my need to be a writer. Though that may be a story I retrospectively tell myself.

As I have suggested writers may come only gradually and slowly to think about the medium in which they work. Words and language are the medium of our daily communication. Perhaps fortunately I only came gradually to be aware of, and to think about, the difficulty and the glory of the gap between words and things, the shifts we have to make as readers and writers between thinking about things, thinking about words and things, taking pleasure in the gap between words and things.

What goes on in our minds when we think about using language? When we use language to write?

I want to end with Shakespeare. He was a poet and much of what modern dramatists would now convey purely with movement and expressions he conveyed with words, as though he was an epic poet. (I am for that reason distressed when modern actors swallow his words for dramatic effect.) In the unforgettable scene in *Macbeth* where Macbeth and his wife meet after their murder of Duncan most of what they say to each other is practical and terrible. Their hands are bloody, there is a knocking at the gate. Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth to “get on thy night gown” and look as though he has come from bed. Macbeth meditates on murder and produces one of the great metaphors in the English language, calling in the ocean to the bloody bedroom.

*“Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine
Making the green one red.”*

This shows one of the glories and beauties of the English language – the juxtaposition of Latin and English words. “Multitudinous” and “incarnadine” are pure Latin and Shakespeare’s audience and readers I imagine almost all take a sensuous pleasure in their sound and rhythm,

rather than “seeing” anything. “The green one red” is anglo-saxon, and appeals to the visual imagination inside our heads. We “see” green and red, all of us differently, more or less vividly, all of us more intensely because of the preceding ‘multitudinous’ and ‘incarnadine.’ We hear the music of the terrible words.

I should like to end by thanking the Royal Family, the members of the Erasmus Prize foundation and the jury for the enormous honour you have done me by giving me this prize. I am also very happy to thank my publishers, agents, friends and family for being here with me on this special day.

It is a prize for “life-writing” – a new and intriguing word for categorizing books and literature. As I have tried to say, the two - life and writing - are intricately entwined and yet also always distinguishable from each other. Here they come together – and thanks to your generosity my life and my writing have also come together, to my great delight. Thank you.



A.S. Byatt speaking with His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen before the Erasmus Prize Award Ceremony 2016.



Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix and A.S. Byatt at the Erasmus Prize Award Ceremony 2016. Photos by Jeroen van der Meyde.



Biography A.S. Byatt

Dame Antonia Susan Byatt (1936) is the author of an extensive body of work that includes dozens of (historical) novels, biographies, short stories and critical essays. She made her name with the novel 'Possession', in which she describes how the paths followed by two young academics merge with those of the (fictional) nineteenth-century poets they are researching. In her work Byatt unites great erudition with remarkable imaginative power. Her writing is influenced by Marcel Proust and George Eliot, among others. Writing, for Byatt, is a "lifeline". She calls it "one of life's essentials, just like breathing".

Byatt has a deep fondness for art. A central theme in many of her works is the way artists live life through their artistic expression. She focuses on the creative process itself, which fascinates her greatly. Byatt explores a range of genres, literary forms and subjects to immerse the reader in the history of European thinking, taking the big questions of science, history and identity as her starting point.

Among her recurring themes are the influence of art on life, magic and reality, and the conflict between ambition and family. Her works bring together not only artists and academics, but also fairy tales and myths. Many of her novels, including 'The Biographer's Tale' and 'Possession', explore the act of writing biography or conducting research. They have enabled her to reshape the genre of life writing in her own, original way. Among her best-known works are 'Possession', collections of short stories like 'Sugar and other Stories', and the novel 'The Children's Book'. Her most recent book (2016) 'Peacock and Vine', examines the work and life of visual artists William Morris in London and Mariano Fortuny in Venice.

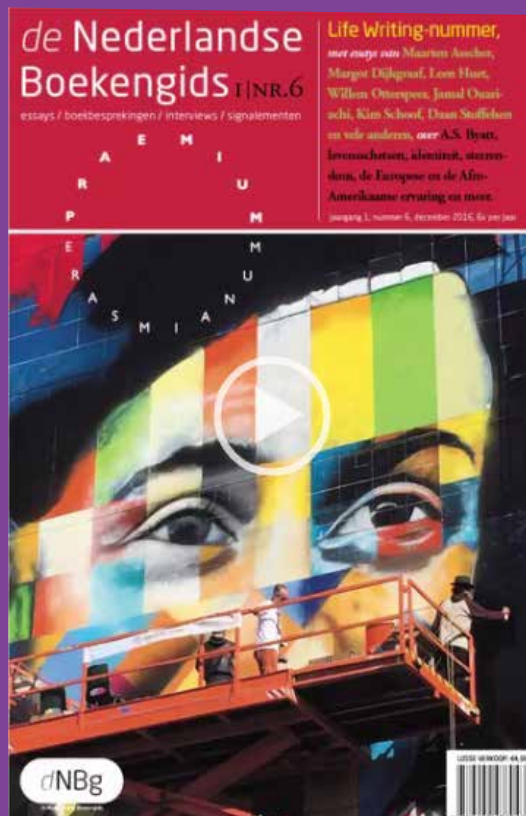
A.S. Byatt has received numerous honorary degrees, including one from Leiden University (2010). She has also won literary accolades around the world, among them the Booker Prize in 1990 for 'Possession'. In her native country she was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1999, and in France she was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2003.

Publications

In 2016 the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation cooperated with *De Nederlandse Boekengids* en *De Gids* to produce two special edition publications with the theme Life Writing. *De Nederlandse Boekengids* ('The Dutch Review of Books') published a special issue devoted to Life Writing in non-fiction. It included an extensive article by Margot Dijkgraaf about the prizewinner A.S. Byatt. In addition to this review, literary magazine *De Gids* took as the theme of its December issue the Erasmus Prize subject of Life Writing. A wide-ranging section of the magazine focused mainly on Life Writing in fiction. Both publications offered a rich overview of the various aspects of the theme.

De Nederlandse Boekengids

The December edition of this bimonthly magazine about non-fiction was devoted to Life Writing. It featured articles and essays by Dutch and Flemish authors such as Willem Otterspeer, Harold Polis, Leen Huet, Maarten Asscher and Margot Dijkgraaf.



De Gids

The literary magazine *De Gids* released a special issue on the topic of Life Writing, with essays, stories and poems by, among others, Adriaan van Dis, Marja Pruis, Dirk van Weelden, Adriaan van Veldhuizen and Fiep van Bodegom.



Activities

'Life through Art'

A conversation between A.S. Byatt and Edmund de Waal

13 November, Paradiso, Amsterdam

A conversation between A.S. Byatt and Edmund de Waal (ceramist and writer, known for his bestseller 'The Hare with Amber Eyes') about literature and visual art. How do these writers view the art around them? How do they experience life through art? Moderated by Lennart Booij. With an introduction by Ann Demeester, director Frans Hals Museum. In collaboration with Paradiso and SLAA.

Refugee Narratives in Life Writing

15 November, De Balie, Amsterdam

An evening devoted to giving voice to stories of escape, the power of writing when you cannot talk, and describing personal experiences, fear and hope. With performances by debutants and experienced writers such as Babah Tarawally. Music by Marikit Saturay and Lamin Kuyateh and moderated by Bahram Sadeghi. In collaboration with Humanity in Action and De Balie

Academic conference

'Life Writing and European Identities'

16 November, Paushuize, Utrecht

What role do life writing and biographies play in European literature and in the representation of European history? How do they contribute to the forging of a European identity? In the presence of A.S. Byatt, various international scholars consider this question. Amongst those were Ann Rigney, Utrecht University; Max Saunders, King's College London; Léon Hanssen, Tilburg University; Gabriele Linke, Universität Rostock; Odile Heynders, Tilburg University; Anna Poletti, Utrecht University; and Elisabeth Bekers, University of Brussels. In collaboration with Huizinga Instituut, Onderzoekschool Literatuurwetenschap, University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University.

Book launch 'Pauw en Wijnrank'

17 November, Residence British ambassador, The Hague

Book launch of the Dutch translation of A.S. Byatt's 'Peacock and Vine'. Nelleke Noordervliet interviews A.S. Byatt on her latest book. In collaboration with the British Embassy, De Bezige Bij publishers, and Museum Meermanno

Symposium 'Lifes-work'

Alternative forms of life writing

17 November, Soiron Building, Maastricht

Describing and rewriting a life story can take many different forms apart from a novel or biography. This symposium showcases unusual and unexpected forms of life writing, such as performance art, biographical films and blogs. Speakers included Leni van Goidsenhoven, Louis van den Hengel, Sandra Kisters, Codruta Pohrib, Aagje Swinnen, Christophe Van Eecke (Research Prize winner 2016), Lies Wesseling and Maaïke Meijer.

Into the Writer's brain

18 November, Central Library, The Hague

What happens in the brain of a writer during the writing? On Friday 18 November moderator Bas Heijne facilitated a conversation between A.S. Byatt and Morten Kringelbach to discuss this question. Morten Kringelbach is a Professor of Neuroscience at Oxford University and author of The Pleasure Center. In collaboration with Writers Unlimited.

VPRO BOEKEN

4 December, NPO 1

Televised interview with A.S. Byatt by Jeroen van Kan. The interview is available on: <http://www.vpro.nl/boeken/programmas/boeken/2016/4-december.html>

'Zes zinnen zelfportret' Writing Competition

The Praemium Erasmianum Foundation together with Schrijvenonline organized a Writing Competition inspired by Ernest Hemingway's Six Word Story. The more than 760 submissions for the Writing Competition exceeded the jury's expectations. All the submissions were judged by a jury of experts consisting of Nelleke Noordervliet (author), Désanne van Brederode (author) and Shanti van Dam (Director of Praemium Erasmianum Foundation). Jury secretary was Toon van de Put.



Life through Art with A.S. Byatt and Edmund de Waal. Moderator Lennart Booij.



Into the Writer's Brain with A.S. Byatt, Prof. Morten Kringelbach and moderator Bas Heijne. Photos by Ineke Oostveen.

Activities



Televised interview of A.S. Byatt by Jeroen Kan for the TV show VPRO boeken.



Question from the audience for Babah Tarawally at Refugee Narratives in de Balie.



Moderator Bahram Sadeghi and Babah Tarawally at Regugeee Narratives in de Balie.



A. S. Byatt present at the conferen on Life Writing and European Identities at Utrecht University. Photo's by Ineke Oostveen.

Research Prizes 2016

Since 1988, the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation awards annual Research Prizes. Five prizes of € 3,000 each are awarded to young academic researchers in the humanities and social sciences, who have written a PhD dissertation of outstanding quality at a university in the Netherlands. Important criteria for the award are the broad, case transcending treatment of the subject and the wider relevance of the book for other disciplines. This year's selection committee was formed by Dr. Shanti van Dam, Dr. Maxim Drenth, Prof.dr. Naomi Ellemers, Prof. dr. Maria Grever, Prof.dr. Bas ter Haar Romeny en Prof.dr. Rick Lawson. For some dissertations the jury consulted experts outside the commission.

The Research Prizes award ceremony took place on Monday 9 May 2016 at 16:00 at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam.

The winning dissertations of 2016 are:

Cornelis J.W. Baaij

Legal Integration and Language Diversity. The case for source oriented EU translation.

Anna Dlabačová

Literatuur en observantie. De Spieghel der volcomenheit van Hendrik Herp en de dynamiek van laatmiddeleeuwse tekstverspreiding.

Christophe C.J. Van Eecke

Pandaemonium: Ken Russell's Artist Biographies as Baroque Performance.

Fernando Nieto Morales

The Control Imperative: studies on reorganization in the public and private sectors.

Litska Strikwerda

Virtual Acts, Real Crimes? A Legal-Philosophical Analysis of Virtual Cybercrime.



Standing (f.l.t.r.)
Anna Dlabacova,
Fernando Nieto Morales,
Shanti van Dam,
Christophe Van Eecke
and Litska Strikwerda.
Photo Ineke Oostveen.



The covers of the winning Dissertations

Cornelis J.W. Baaij
Legal Integration and Language Diversity.
The case for source oriented EU translation.

Supervisor Prof.dr. M.W. Hesselink
Co-supervisor Dr.A.E. Oderkerk
Nomination University of Amsterdam,
Faculty of Law

Biography

Jaap Baaij is a J.S.D. candidate at Yale Law School, where he obtained a LL.M. degree in 2015. His current research will culminate in three articles in the area of international commercial arbitration, focusing on the relevance of the legal enforceability of arbitration decisions and of the decisive role of national judges in the development of transnational contract law. Prior to that he was an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Amsterdam, where he taught contract law, contract law theory, and national and international civil procedure. Jaap Baaij also obtained his PhD with distinction from the University of Amsterdam on the harmonization of law in the European Union with its 24 languages, with part of the research carried out as a Fulbright Scholar at Columbia Law School. He has published on such subjects as the legal integration of contract law, the influence of legal translation on comparative legal research, and philosophical issues in cross-cultural legal research. He has been a guest lecturer at various universities in Europe and the United States, and provided training courses at institutions of the European Union on the issue of translation methods in the European legal process. Jaap Baaij graduated in both Law and Philosophy.

Report of the Selection Committee

The author of this dissertation takes a clear stand and argues – in defiance of prevailing opinions – that the EU should choose unreservedly for English as the only authentic language. Baaij arrives at this standpoint and supports it on the basis of insights from language philosophy, translation studies, comparative law, European public and private law, and his own qualitative and quantitative analysis, which he elegantly forges into a powerful and coherent argument. Accordingly, his book is innovative and pioneering. You may agree or disagree with the arguments presented, but you cannot ignore them. In brief: a fresh and contrary dissertation that can in that sense certainly be considered ‘Erasmian’.

Anna Dlabačová

Literatuur en Observantie.

*De Spieghel der Volcomenheit van Hendrik Herp en de
Dynamiek van Laatmiddeleeuwse Tekstverspreiding.*

Supervisor Prof.dr. W. van Anrooij
Co-supervisor Dr. G. Warnar
Nomination Leiden University,
Faculty of Humanities

Biography

Anna Dlabačová studied History at the VU University in Amsterdam and at the Freie Universität Berlin (2001-2007). From 2008 to 2015 she worked at Leiden University, first as a research assistant on a Vidi project from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) entitled 'Men of letters: Medieval Dutch literature and learning', supervised by Dr. Geert Warnar, and after 2009 as a trainee researcher on the NWO Mozaik Project 'Mysticism for a new age. Hendrik Herp's Spieghel der volcomenheit in manuscript and print (c. 1455/60-1552) and the Franciscan observance in the Low Countries'. While working on her PhD, she was a guest researcher at various international institutions, among them the Ruusbroec Institute in Antwerp. As an associate member she took part in the initial training network 'Mobility of Ideas and Transmission of Texts' (Marie Curie Actions, 2010-2013). In addition, she lectured on medieval history at the VU University. In 2014 she obtained her PhD and joined Leiden University as a researcher, and lectured at the University of Utrecht and Leiden University College. Since September 2015 she has been affiliated with the University of Leuven as a postdoctoral researcher, where she is working on her project 'Text and Image on the Printing Press: The Complementarity of the Textual and the Visual in Antwerp's Book Production, 1480-1520'.

Report of the Selection Committee

This work brings together a number of domains and approaches, among them literary history, religious history, history of the book and philosophy, to offer a fresh perspective on developments in religion, literature and intellectual exchange in the Netherlands on the eve of the Reformation. And all of this on the strength of a study of the mystical treatise 'Spiegel der volcomenheit' – from c. 1460 – by the Franciscan Hendrik Erp. The method followed is remarkable. The author combines Frits van Oostrom's model of the three chronological phases of text reception with Daniel Hobbins' concept of 'distribution circles', complemented with information about the origin of a signature or printed manuscript (also referred to as 'Mitüberlieferung'). In the eyes of the jury, the broad cultural-historical perspective, which is also of international significance, and the exciting way it is written make this dissertation worthy of a prize.

Christophe C.J. Van Eecke

Pandaemonium: Ken Russell's Artist Biographies as Baroque Performance.

Supervisors Prof.dr. M. Meijer
Prof.dr. Karel Vanhaesebrouck

Co-supervisor Dr. J. Post

Nomination Maastricht University,
Faculty of Social Sciences

Biography

Christophe Van Eecke (1977) studied philosophy and art history at the University of Leuven and obtained a PhD from Maastricht University with 'Pandaemonium: Ken Russell's Artist Biographies as Baroque Performance' (2015, double doctorate with Université Libre de Bruxelles). Prior to that, he was a critic and essayist, and a philosopher in residence at Lokaal 01 in Breda. He also published *Only Connect: Five Exercises in Aesthetics* (2011). He currently teaches at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Maastricht University, where he is a Fellow at the Centre for Gender and Diversity. His research focuses on life writing and the performance of the self in art, with a special interest in the articulation of homosexual identity in the circles around Oscar Wilde in Victorian England.

Report of the Selection Committee

This dissertation analyzes in striking fashion the autobiographical approach of biographer Ken Russell from the perspective of the filmic genre. The author unravels the tangles in which Russell writes his own life through the lives of others. In terms of strategy and approach, the subject is decidedly unconventional. Van Eecke's analysis of Russell's work evokes a Jeroen Bosch-like quirky and kaleidoscopic world. This concerns 'life writing' – coincidentally also the theme of the 2016 Erasmus Prize – based on audio-visual interpretations. Moreover, the jury was particularly struck by Van Eecke's ability to translate film into writing, using a clear and authoritative style. The unconventional character of the artist Russell, the subject of this study, keeps pace with the extremely original and innovative argument of the dissertation's author.

Fernando Nieto Morales

The Control Imperative:

Studies on Reorganization in the Public and Private Sectors

Supervisor Prof.dr. R.P.M. Wittek
Co-Supervisor Dr. L. Heyse
Nomination University of Groningen,
Faculty of Behavioural
and Social Sciences

Biography

Fernando Nieto Morales is hoogleraar Public Administration and Public Policy aan het Center for International Studies van El Colegio de Mexico. Zijn onderzoek richt zich op vraagstukken rond organisatorische veranderingen in de publieke sector, bureaucratisch falen, en een transparante overheid. Zijn interessegebieden omvatten: professionalisering van beleid in Mexico, red tape, politiek vertrouwen binnen bureaucratieën, functioneren en professionaliteit van NGO's, en de relatie tussen het maatschappelijk middenveld en de overheid. Fernando Nieto Morales is geboren in Mexico City in 1984. Hij heeft een BA in Politics and Public Administration (El Colegio de Mexico, 2007), een MSc in Gedrags- en Sociale Wetenschappen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2010) en een PhD in Sociologie (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2015). Fernando Nieto Morales heeft op verschillende internationale conferenties voordrachten gegeven en heeft meermalen als gastdocent opgetreden bij o.a. de Hertie School of Governance (Duitsland), de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, de Public Administration School of the Federal District (Mexico), en het National Institute of Public Administration (Mexico).

Report of the Selection Committee

This dissertation studies the important topic of reorganizations. It aims to understand some of the recent patterns of organizational change in the public and private sectors. It uses unique datasets from observations drawn from a study of private companies and governmental agencies in the Netherlands and Mexico. The results show, among other things, that managers do not necessarily embark on reorganizations because they are “in control”, but probably because they are not. The theoretical analyses by Morales, his use of the complex datasets and his conclusions are not only surprising but also very useful from an international perspective. The jury hopes its outcomes will be taken to heart and inspire managers in the future. I would like to congratulate Fernando on this achievement.

Litska Strikwerda

Virtual Acts, Real Crimes?

A Legal-Philosophical Analysis of Virtual Cybercrime.

Supervisor Prof.dr. P.A.E. Brey
Co-supervisors Dr. J.H. Søraker
Dr. P.J. Nickel
Nomination Twente University,
Faculty of Behavioural,
Management and Social Sciences

Biography

Litska Strikwerda (1983) studied law at Utrecht University, where she obtained both her Bachelor's degree (2005) and Master's degree (2006), specializing in criminal law. As part of an exchange programme, she also spent a semester at Lund University in Sweden. After completing her law degrees, she took a Master's in Applied Ethics at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, where she graduated in 2007. Litska then worked from 2007 to 2010 as Assistant Professor in Criminal Law at Utrecht University. In the years that followed she wrote her doctoral dissertation, entitled 'Virtual Acts, Real Crimes? A legal-philosophical analysis of virtual cybercrime', obtaining her PhD in 2014 from the University of Twente. During her PhD studies Litska worked for three months as a guest researcher at Loyola University in Chicago in the United States. She is currently affiliated to the Open University as a University Lecturer in Interdisciplinary Law. She is also a member of the Ethics Board of Abrona, a care facility for people with intellectual disabilities.

Report of the Selection Committee

This dissertation addresses a genuinely new subject: the criminalization of purely virtual acts, from the theft of items acquired by people during internet games, to virtual child pornography. A highly topical subject unfortunately, where the central question is: why criminalize these acts? Should they cause damage in the 'extra virtual world'? Or is there space for paternalistic considerations? The author tackles the subject in a combative manner, equipped with philosophical and legal tools, and ultimately proposes a balanced framework for criminalization. For instance, she cleverly applies a structure in what is still uncharted territory. And she formulates all this in a style that is crystal clear and legible, even for non-specialists.

Origin and Aim of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation

On 23 June 1958, His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands founded the Praemium Erasmianum. The aim of the organisation, as described in article 2 of its constitution, is to enhance the position of the humanities, the social sciences and the arts and to promote appreciation of these fields within society, within the context of the cultural traditions of Europe in general and the ideas of Erasmus in particular. The emphasis is on tolerance, cultural multiformity and undogmatic critical thinking.

The Erasmus Prize consists of €150,000 and adornments. The Board is composed of leading members of the Dutch cultural, scholarly and business communities.



The adornments are designed by Bruno Ninaber van Eyben. The adornments consist of a harmonica folded ribbon with a titanium plate at both ends. In closed form it is a booklet; when opened a ribbon with a text in Erasmus' handwriting. This text, taken from a letter to Jean de Carondelet (Basel 5 January 1523), is characteristic of Erasmus' thinking:

Diverse are the gifts of men of genius and many are the different kinds of ages. let each one reveal the scope of his competence and let no one be envious of another who in keeping with his own ability and style tries to make a useful contribution to the education of all.

Erasmus to Jean de Carondelet
Basel 5 January 1523

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