

Andrew Pettergree and Arthur der Weduwen  
*The Bookshop of the World. Making and Trading  
Books in the Dutch Golden Age*

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As the title indicates, this book addresses the History of the Book. The goal of Pettergree and der Weduwen is to explain how the Dutch Republic became the main European center for book production and distribution. In order to achieve this, the book starts with the 16th century antecedents and shows how the Dutch Republic flooded Europe with its 360 000 editions in several languages during the 17th century.

Pettergree and der Weduwen demonstrate how the medieval tradition of Dutch liberties, associated with the Dutch Revolt and the Eight Years War with Spain, were at the very heart of a Dutch interest in publishing all kinds of knowledge (broader science, literature, religion and politics). Focusing on the history of famous Dutch family editors, the authors trace back this wider plan for book dominance at the arrival of the southern refugees from Antwerp. They also demonstrate how Cornelis Claesz, after opening his bookshop at Amsterdam, created the model that was later followed by other family editors after him. Not only Claesz maintained contacts with the Dutch scientific elite of his time, but he was also the first to publish inventories of books for selling, something that was to be repeated by his followers.

Pettergree and der Weduwen also detail how the Dutch overseas expansion and capitalist mentality forged the most literate society within 17th century Europe. The major competition for publishing books, between towns and Estates inside the Dutch Republic, as well as the dynamics of the Dutch academic world, fuelled the never satisfied Dutch audience. In its turn, this fact explains the extension that reading and collecting books achieved in the Dutch Republic. Analysis on political pamphlets is also made primarily to show how it influenced the political decay of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt or the Dutch contribution to the Spanish Black Legend. The authors detail the emergence of the first Dutch journals in the 1620s in order to show how the Dutch Republic became a rare case, in the 17th century Europe, of informed citizenship.

The book also explains how the Dutch imposed their book trade industry to several markets, by relying on a thriving internal market of scholars and academics, politicians, artisans, religious authorities, collectors, scientists, artists and bourgeois. Starting with huge buys at the Frankfurt market, the Dutch were able to impose their industry of translations, even for the Catholic World, and thus extend their own market to kingdoms as different as France, England, Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltic area. The authors also detail the role played in this process by the religious tolerance policy practised by the Dutch Republic regarding several communities. Such was the clear case of the Jewish communities that had fled from Portugal and Spain, which found their own role within the dynamics of the Dutch Republic. Pettergree and der Weduwen link this Dutch success to the rivalry with France and England and also stress how this influenced the open war phases with these kingdoms in the 17th century. Finally, the authors also stress that the decline of the book industry only took place during the 18th century but in a slow process. As a proof of this, they document how the Dutch still hold strong positions in this market during this century.

This is a remarkable book not only in the field of the History of the Book. Pettergree and der Weduwen succeed fully in explaining how and why the Dutch Republic became the Bookshop of the World in the 17th century. The book can also be considered as a reinterpretation of the history of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century, since the authors base their study on economic, social, political, cultural and scientific backgrounds. In this regard, it is also relevant to stress how the book combines an exceptionally well documented and field research work, alongside with the reproduction of several pamphlets, books and portraits of the time. Thus, the *Bookshop of the World* will certainly remain as reference for many years in the broader field of the History of the Dutch Republic.

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