

A personal story on a vanishing landscape

This Is My Farm

CHRIS DE STOOP

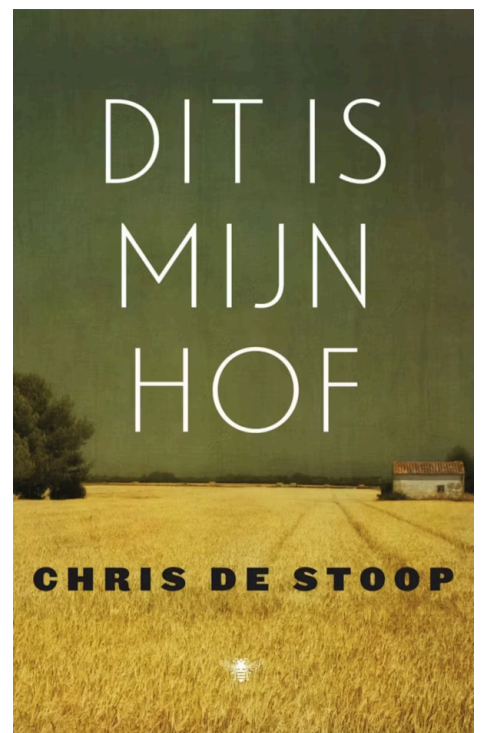
The Hedwige Polder, the most famous stretch of reclaimed land in the Belgian lowlands, is to be flooded again no matter what. It has become symbolic of old farmland forced to make way for new nature reserves. Nothing could touch the local population more deeply.

A disconcerting, important, humble book

DAVID VAN REYBROUCK

Chris De Stoop, himself a farmer's son from the area, returns to his parents' farm, which is suddenly unoccupied. While running the farm, he looks at the changed landscape around him. He is the kind of person who can go into raptures over a comely cow, or wax lyrical about a freshly ploughed field. He looks back at the farming life that made the land what it has been for a thousand years.

The disappearance of the farmer is a Europe-wide phenomenon, but nowhere is it as distressing as it is here. De Stoop watches the bulldozers advance, demolishing centuries-old farmhouses to create 'new nature' as compensation for the expansion of industry.



AUTHOR



Chris De Stoop (b. 1958) is an author and a journalist for the Flemish weekly *Knack*. In 2004 he was awarded the Golden Owl Readers' Prize for 'She Came from the East'. In 2010 he wrote *Peace Be With You, Sister*, about the first Jihadists to leave for Syria and Iraq. With his debut 'They're So Sweet, Sir' he became the first to write the inside story of the international trafficking of women, a bombshell of a book that caused great commotion at home and abroad. *Photo © Lenny Oosterwijk*

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