

Plagiarism, South Africa, and termites

The Plague

DAVID VAN REYBROUCK

While working on his thesis on prehistoric archaeology, David Van Reybrouck came across the accusation that the Belgian writer and Nobel Prize winner Maurice Maeterlinck had plagiarised from the work of the South African author, journalist and physicist Eugène Marais, in his book 'La vie des termites' (1926).

He decided to investigate the case himself. His quest led him from Maeterlinck's archive in Belgium, via a collector of Maeterlinck paraphernalia, libraries, the internet and mountains of reading material to South Africa itself, where he picked up Marais' trail.

Special and daring

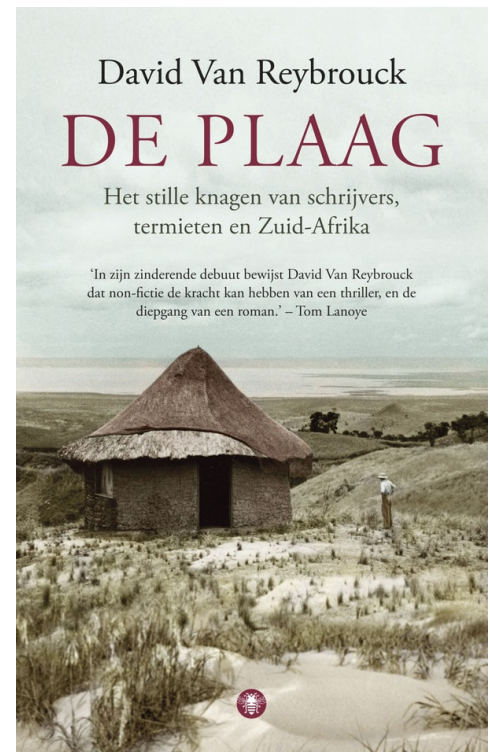
DE VOLKSKRANT

Van Reybrouck immersed himself in the lives of Maeterlinck and Marais, and in contemporary South Africa. 'The Plague' skilfully interweaves his findings with socioeconomic and political information, with details of artistic fashions and the spirit of the time in which the two authors lived, finally placing it all in the context of cultural history and scientific developments.

'The Plague' sweeps the reader along in a thrilling literary adventure, which leaves its image on the mind's eye long after the last page has been turned.

A talented writer, original and funny, who is definitely one to watch

LE MONDE



AUTHOR



David Van Reybrouck (b. 1971) writes literary nonfiction, theatre plays, poetry and prose. He made his debut in 2001 with 'The Plague'. His greatest success is 'Congo, The epic history of a people', for which he received a slew of national and international prizes. 2013 saw the publication of 'Against Elections', an urgent call for the reform of democracy. *Photo © Lenny Oosterwijk*

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