



## Jury Report Digital History Thesis Award 2022

RMA thesis Edo Storm: "Onze Westerse Beschaving": A Conceptual History of the Idea of the West in the Netherlands, 1875-1994

This is a highly original and ambitious thesis, both in terms of research question and of methodology. This history of the concept of the West in Dutch discourse in the twentieth century is partly based on the computational study of massive sets of Dutch newspapers and partly on the close reading of Johan Huizinga's book *Geschonden wereld* (1945). By combining both (opposite) methods, this thesis not only studies a relevant and timely research question, but also explores the interconnection of two very different methodologies.

The result is a mature narrative, in which Edo succeeds in convincingly combining existing literature (GoGwilt, Bonnett) with relevant theory (metageography, Orientalism) to add his own perspective to the state-of-the-art. He has worked systematically and in a structured way and has done an impressive amount of work. This is true for his detailed and original take on *Geschonden Wereld* as much as for his quantitative computational work. The coding skills Edo used to do this work are, particularly, impressive for a History student. He has generated n-grams and word embeddings and he has calculated cosine similarities to trace the semantic resemblance of (groups of) words over time.

What makes his narrative all the more convincing, however, is that he did not just use his machine learning pipeline to obtain results, but that he contrasted it with his close reading chapter to evaluate his results (and his narrative) on a more fundamental level. Edo, thus, was able to demonstrate how the concept of the West in Dutch public discourse from the start of the Cold War shifted from a cultural concept to a political one, when liberal democracy became to be the defining feature of Western civilization.

It is, in sum, more than justified to grant the 2022 Digital History Thesis Award to this impressive Master research.

*Utrecht, March 2023*

Joris van Eijnatten (Chair)  
Selin Dilli  
Pim Huijnen  
Ortal-Paz Saar



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## Over de *digital history thesis award*

Het Departement Geschiedenis en Kunstgeschiedenis rijkt jaarlijks prijzen uit voor de beste bachelor-, master- en research masterscriptie die met succes digitale methoden of technieken toepassen.

De jury hanteert vijf criteria om de scripties te beoordelen:

- Het wetenschappelijk niveau van de scriptie
- Originaliteit en belang van het thema en de probleemstelling
- Originaliteit en innovativiteit van de gevolgde digitale methodiek
- Kritische benadering van zowel data als digitale methodiek
- Evenwichtige opbouw, helderheid van stijl en taalvaardigheid

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## About the *digital history thesis award*

The Department of History and Art History annually rewards bachelor, master, and research master theses with a digital history thesis award that most convincingly use digital analytical methods and techniques.

The jury uses five criteria to evaluate competing theses:

- The scholarly quality of the thesis
- Originality and relevance of the topic and research question
- Originality and innovativeness of the use digital methods and techniques
- Critical approach of data and methods/techniques
- Balanced structure, clarity of writing, linguistic competence