In this book, Rudolf Dekker presents the diary of Constantijn Huygens Jr (1628-97), secretary to Stadholder-King William (III). Dekker wants to rehabilitate Huygens, who was maligned by nineteenth-century historians after the publication of the diary in *Bijdragen van het Historisch Genootschap* in 1876-77. Dekker has known Huygens Jr's diary for over twenty years. He thinks it should receive at least as much attention as the famous diary of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703). In his *Introduction* (p. 2), Dekker calls Huygens' diary 'one of the most important egodocuments of seventeenth-century Europe and a missing link in the development of the modern diary'. Of course, Huygens' diary deserves attention, but it is questionable whether Dekker in this publication makes it plausible that it does deserve the qualifications 'most important' and 'missing link'.

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Constantijn Huygens Jr was the eldest son of Constantijn Huygens Sr (1596-1687) and Susanna van Baerle (1599-1637). Together with his brother Christiaan, who was born a year later, he received an education that had to lead to an official or diplomatic career. Constantijn Sr more or less passed on his own education to his children. Like him, they learned foreign languages, drawing and music, and were enrolled at Leiden University as law students. Constantijn Jr’s brother Christiaan preferred lectures in mathematics and grew up to be the most important scientist of the Republic. He became the best-known member of the Huygens family by far. Constantijn Jr, who shared Christiaan’s interest in mathematics and physics and supported his brother throughout his life, became his father’s assistant at Stadholder Frederik Hendrik’s secretariat. Frederik Hendrik died in 1647, and it was only in 1672, when William III appointed him secretary, that Constantijn Jr regained an office at the Orange court. It was in this position that Huygens started the diary that is the subject of Dekker’s study.

Dekker discusses Huygens and his diary in thirteen illustrated chapters. The first two (1 Constantijn Huygens Jr and 2 Diary-Writing and Time-Keeping) are introductory. They are followed by two ‘political’ chapters (3 The Glorious Revolution of 1688 and 4 The Nine Years’ War). These are in turn followed by a general chapter (5 Dutchmen and Englishmen) and three that shed light on the most important characters in the diary: the Stadholder-King (6 The Many Faces of William of Orange) and Constantijn Huygens Jr (7 Connoisseur of Art and 8 The Bibliotheca Zuylichemiana). Then follow three chapters on social issues in the diary (9 Quacks and Witches, 10 Gossip and Sex and 11 Servants and Maids). Chapter 12 is devoted to Tien (short for Constantijn), Constantijn Jr’s only child (The Last Generation). The last chapter (13 The Court as a Microcosm) more or less forms the conclusion and places Huygens’ diary in the context of other courtiers’ diaries. The book ends with a bibliography and two indexes.

As in earlier publications, Dekker has chosen in this book for an ‘episodic treatment’. The chapters are essays in themselves, and Dekker is a true causeur. At the beginning of a chapter, he presents his readers with an anecdote (for instance chapter 10 Gossip and Sex), and then systematically discusses different forms of sexual behaviour. He embellishes his short history of sex in the Golden Age with quotes from the diary where Huygens gossips about sex. In this way, the book is a nice introduction to the diary of Huygens Jr. The reader gets precisely what the title promises, viz. essays on Family, Culture and Society.

There is a disadvantage to this thematic treatment, though: the reader does not get a coherent overview of Huygens’ diary, his life, or the most important events of the time. The diary itself, the physical resource, is introduced too superficially. The book’s title and the first page of the Introduction suggest that