10 Books from Holland

London Book Fair Issue

Nederlands letterenfonds
dutch foundation for literature

Spring 2014
The Dutch Foundation for Literature / Nederlands Letterenfonds supports writers, translators and Dutch literature in translation

Information
The Foundation’s advisors on literary fiction, quality non-fiction, poetry and children’s and youth literature are present each year at prominent book fairs, including Frankfurt, London, Beijing and Bologna. Books from Holland, Quality Non-Fiction from Holland and Children’s Books from Holland recommend highlights from each category’s selection.

Translation Grants
Foreign publishers wishing to publish a translation of Dutch or Frisian literature may apply for a subsidy towards the translation costs. Having acquired the rights, the publisher’s application must be accompanied by a copy of the contract with the rights owner and a copy of the contract with the translator. Application forms are available from the Foundation’s website. Subsidies are paid after receipt of complimentary copies, with printed acknowledgement of the Foundation’s support. A sample translation may be required and evaluated by our external advisors. Applications for translations that have already been published cannot be taken into consideration. Publishers looking for a qualified translator can request a list of endorsed translators for their language area.

Illustrated Books
In the case of illustrated children’s books and/or graphic novels, foreign publishers can apply for assistance to cover a portion of the production costs. Subsidies are jointly funded by the Mondriaan Fund and the Dutch Foundation for Literature.

Promotional Travel
The Foundation is able to support a publisher wishing to invite an author for interviews or public appearances. Literary festivals are likewise eligible for support. Additionally, the Foundation organizes international literary events in co-operation with local publishers, festivals and book fairs.

Writers-in-Residence
The Foundation coordinates writer-in-residence programmes together with foreign universities and institutions. International authors are invited to spend time working in Amsterdam. They may stay one or two months at the writers’ lodgings above the Athenaeum Bookshop on the Spui (in co-operation with the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts).

International Visitors Programme
The visitors programme and the annual Amsterdam Fellowship offer publishers and editors the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the publishing business and the literary infrastructure of the Netherlands.

Translators’ House
The Translators’ House offers translators the opportunity to live and work in Amsterdam for a period of time. It is involved with numerous activities assisting and advancing translators’ skills. Each year the Literary Translation Days are held for those translating into and from Dutch.

Schowb: Discovering International Classic Works of Fiction
Schowb draws attention to and supports authors and works of translated classics of world literature. Each month the editors select new titles on www.schowb.nl.

Background
The Dutch Foundation for Literature, created in 2010 as the result of the merger between the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature (NLPTV) and the Foundation for Literature (FvD.L.), is an independent organization financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Policies and projects are carried out in co-operation with the Flemish Literature Foundation.

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Toine Heijmans

A beautifully composed novel about the conflict between the rules and the reality of asylum policy

In this intricately structured novel, Heijmans delivers a compelling examination of the relative nature of our roots and the loneliness of the asylum seeker, for whom home has become an abstract concept. He contrasts this with the rigidity of a clinical system that masquerades as humane.

Albert Drilling, a special government officer of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is a diligent technocrat and a man with a mission: to personally ensure that asylum seekers return to their homeland once their legal avenues have been exhausted, ideally with a minimum of embarrassment to the relevant government minister. This mission takes him to an island off the north coast of Holland to track down an asylum seeker who has stayed behind as an illegal alien following the closure of the local detention centre. All he has to go on is her name.

Irin Past – she bears a name dreamt up by her father – feels at one with the islanders and they have taken her to their hearts. She has struck up friendships with the ferry captain, the mayor and the island’s most successful entrepreneur. Her exemplary integration into Dutch society leaves Albert underwhelmed. However, professional pride dictates that he must find a safe and familiar environment for asylum seekers in their country of origin.

What form might that take for Irin? She believes her roots lie in Egypt, but this too is the product of her father’s imagination. Albert heads to Cairo to find the house where she was born. There he wades his way through the uprisings of the Arab Spring, detached yet unable to escape entirely unscathed. An ironic thread is that Irin seems to be welcomed by her surroundings, while Albert is forced to grapple with a recalcitrant and hostile reality – from riots on the streets of Cairo to the treacherous wetlands of a Dutch island.

Irin’s origins lie in the Kosovar capital Pristina, of which her name is an anagram. For Albert, this is sufficient grounds to insist that she be sent back there. Irin and her friends abandon their attempts at resistance. Or could governmental rules and regulations offer an escape route after all?

Pristina
Toine Heijmans
(At Sea, 2011)

Toine Heijmans
(b. 1989) is a journalist for de Volkskrant. After writing the non-fiction book La Vie Vîner (2007), he made his mark with his debut novel Op Zee (At Sea, 2011). The book was lauded by reviewers and booksellers alike, and has been translated into German, French, Danish and Hungarian. The French translation was honoured with the Prix Médicis étranger.

The great merit of Pristina is that Heijmans has cast a major socio-political issue in the form of a well-written novel.” – de Volkskrant

‘Pristina is polished to perfection. A rich book.’ – NRC Handelsblad

Publishing details
Pristina (2014)
347 pp., 90,261 words

Rights
Shared Stories
Elaine Michon, elaine@sharedstories.nl
Uta Matten, uta@sharedstories.nl
www.sharedstories.nl

Translated titles
En mer (Op zee), Christian Bourgois, 2013. Also in German (Arche, 2012), Danish (Turbine, 2013) and Hungarian (Gondolat, 2013).

Publisher
Atlas Contact

Rights sold
France (Christian Bourgois)

Translated titles
La Vie Vinex

Picture credits
Photo: Merlijn Doomernik

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Photo: Merlijn Doomernik
Wytks Versteeg

Boy

A gripping novel about parenthood and loss, bullying and revenge.

Boy grows up as the only child of his adoptive parents. Chubby and dark-skinned, he is ruthlessly bullied at school, but at home he says nothing about what he is going through, only that he has pains in his stomach. After a class outing to the beach, he does not return. His lifeless body is later discovered washed up on the sand.

‘A major new talent.’ That was how NRC Handelsblad described Wytks Versteeg on the evidence of her debut novel. In Boy, her second book and winner of the BNG Literatuurprijs, the young writer confirms her status as a bold and highly individual voice. Her protagonist, Boy’s mother, is not immediately overcome by grief in the aftermath of her son’s death but is determined to find out exactly what happened. How did Boy die? Was he murdered? Did he take his own life? The police believe his death was suicide but his mother is not so sure. Every little detail of the story seems to crowd in on the mother. She homes in on the every aspect of how her son’s body was crowd in on the mother. She mulls over not so sure.

His lifeless body is later discovered about what he is going through, only that school, but at home he says nothing skinned, he is ruthlessly bullied at school, but at home he says nothing.

Tuning into details seems to offer her a news and the ‘jarring tone’ of her voice. As soon as she arrives at her destination, her efforts to unravel the course of events lead her to an unsettling confrontation with the class bully and expose her to a torrent of abuse from a girl from the same class. Eventually she sets her sights on the drama teacher, who was preparing her pupils for a performance of Richard III at the time of Boy’s death. This somehow appears to have triggered the fateful events at the beach, but no one is able or willing to fill in the details. Hannah, the drama teacher, has left the teaching profession and moved to a remote village in Bulgaria. Boy’s mother follows her there; she poses as a voluntary worker who can help with the gardening but her true purpose is revenge. Yet as soon as she arrives at her destination, her resolve crumbles. Although Hannah leaves her stranded for hours, she cannot feel angry. In the end there is no violence, just the dark and harrowing story of a woman who sought to steer the group dynamics of her class and instead precipitated a tragedy.

Two novels in, we can safely conclude that estrangement between family members is a theme that Versteeg favours. In Boy she once again demonstrates a meticulous eye for the fine detail of human relationships. – Trouw

In fewer than 200 pages - and against the backdrop of Shakespeare’s Richard III - Versteeg raises profound questions which give Boy a timeless character, while doubts about background and origin, innocence and betrayal, love and self-interest take on an original and contemporary form in her narrative. – Jury report for the BNG Literatuurprijs

With his coming-of-age novel Joe Speedboat (2005), translated into 15 languages, Tommy Wieringa (b. 1967) entered the pantheon of modern Dutch literature. The book’s romantic vision combined with Wieringa’s gift for storytelling and his vibrant prose style to secure his breakthrough. His love of exotic locations, eccentric characters and boy’s-own adventure also feature in his travel stories (Ik was nooit in Isfahān (I Never Went to Isfahan, 2006) and in his novels Caesarion (2009, translated into German, French and English) and Dit zijn de namen (These Are the Names, 2012, translated into five languages). For this last novel, Wieringa was awarded the Libris Literatuurprijs.

A man brought to ruin by his marriage and his fear of decline.

A Beautiful Young Woman

One of the most important Dutch writers of the last decade took on the challenge of writing the novella that would form the centrepiece for the annual Book Week. The result is an exquisite tragedy fuelled by an age gap and irrevocable differences, which has garnered five-star critical acclaim.

For Edward, a virologist in his mid-forties and the protagonist of A Beautiful Young Woman, decline and deterioration have become an obsession. In Buddhism, a keen awareness of decay is seen as one of the principal sources of suffering. For that reason alone he regards his relationship with a woman fifteen years his junior as a stroke of fortune: Ruth is not only beautiful, intelligent and down to earth, but she seems to have given him a new lease of life.

Edward and Ruth’s roles reverse, however: ‘He did not grow younger thanks to his father didn’t want him and she throws him out), and when their baby son is finally born, he won’t stop crying. Bruised by fatigue, Ruth starts to think her child is crying because he senses that his father didn’t want him and she throws him out of their home. By this stage he has long been involved in an extra-marital affair, which will bring him even less happiness.

Edward is a modern-day Job, and Wieringa describes his ordeal in fast-paced, lyrical prose that taps into rich seams of humour and depths of emotion. Edward largely brings his downfall upon himself, through his insecurities and his negative thinking. His fate is even prefigured – in a dream he has halfway through the narrative: ‘This is what he has made of his life, a wasteland that stretches off in every direction, and of all the feelings he ever possessed, only fear and confusion remain.’

‘A masterly portrait of a faltering marriage.’ – de Volkskrant

‘The work of a wizard.’ – De Morgen

About Caesarion: ‘The only writers who have successfully pursued this Holy Grail of the complete novel in recent years (the list is perhaps not exhaustive) are Roberto Bolaño in his The Savage Detectives, W.G. Sebald in Austerlitz, J.M. Coetzee in Disgrace and Phillip Roth in My Life as a Man. From now on, however, to that list must be added the name of Tommy Wieringa.’ – Le Figaro

Publishing details

Boy

2010

189 pp., 62,900 words

Publisher

Prometheus

Sara van der Plouw

www.uitgeverijprometheus.nl

Rights

Sebes & Van Gelderen

Literary Agency

Willems Bisseling

bisseling@sebes.nl

Rights sold

Turkey (Kahve Yayınları)

Rights holders

De Bezige Bij

Marijke Nagtegaal

m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl

De Morgen

Sample translation available

Photo: Elke Spak

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A Beautiful Young Woman

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Publishing details

A mooie jonge vrouw

2014

94 pp., 28,000 words

700,000 copies distributed

Publisher

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Rights

De Bezige Bij

Marijke Nagtegaal

m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl

De Morgen

Sample translation available

Photo: Johan Jacobs
Mano Bouzamour

The Promise of Pisa

A vibrant coming-of-age novel about growing up in the gap between two cultures

Mano Bouzamour’s debut novel has been a runaway success, catapulting its young author into the media spotlight. As he was appearing on talk shows, he became the target of a backlash among the Dutch-Moroccan community. In this sparkling and controversial novel, the author makes it painfully clear that assimilation is the beginning, not the end, of your troubles.

The novel’s narrator is Sam Zafar, a boy growing up in Amsterdam’s Diamantbuurt, a neighbourhood that is home to many deprived Moroccan families and where youth crime is rife. Bouzamour gives a voice to this boy who is caught between two cultures. His illiterate parents speak no Dutch and are dutiful followers of Islam, a sharp contrast to the life Sam experiences at school and on the streets.

Sam’s big brother is serving a six-year jail term for armed robbery, yet he was always one of the few people to understand his little brother, and Sam feels his absence keenly. On the eve of his incarceration, he holds Sam to a promise, made at Pisa, the local ice-cream parlour: don’t screw up his life. Bouzamour holds Sam to a promise, made at Pisa, the local ice-cream parlour: don’t screw up his life. Bouzamour believes in Sam’s promise, but his life turns out to be a ruthless domain with young readers.’

‘Mano knows what it is to grow up as the son of Moroccan parents in the notorious Diamantbuurt and has a fantastic talent for bringing that world to life. When I met him, I thought, if he can get this down on paper, it’ll be a book that everyone should read. And now here it is, on paper.’

— Joris Luyendijk

His language crackles with sparkling, coarse, sometimes clinical formulations, portraying a teenage life that illustrates the multicultural problem in a way that is both light-hearted and subtle. This admirable debut, pulsing with energy, snappy dialogue and urban slang, is sure to hit the spot with young readers.’

— NRC Handelsblad (****)

‘Bouzamour is full of bravura, with a charm that’s hard to resist, in person and on paper.’

— Trouw

Since the publication of The Promise of Pisa, Mano Bouzamour (b. 1991) has been the subject of reviews, interviews and feature-length articles in the national press. This high media profile has provoked a storm of criticism from the Moroccan community.

Meanwhile, the film rights have been sold.

Ivan, an exile from the former Yugoslavia, performs an escapology act in bars and at festivals in the Netherlands. At the age of 42, this modern-day Houdini discovers that he has a ten-year-old son and feels a powerful urge to build a relationship with the boy. It is a decision that will have far-reaching consequences for his freewheeling lifestyle.

The Last Escape is narrated by a close friend of Ivan’s, a man who is also father to a ten-year-old son and who sees Ivan and his devil-may-care attitude as something to aspire to. The narrator is a crossroads in his life; he has lost his job and is bailing out of his relationship with his girlfriend. The only passionate connection he feels is with his son Ruben. This reinforces his bond with Ivan, who is overwhelmed by paternal feelings upon seeing his own son Deedee for the first time — if only because the boy bears a striking resemblance to his dead brother.

The two fathers and two sons spend much of their time together and, when Ivan is invited to perform his most spectacular escapology trick on the Côte d’Azur, all four of them fly down to the south of France. The trick involves Ivan being tied to a chair and attempting to free himself while flames lick at his clothes. But by this time Ivan has more on his mind than his act; especially when a deeply traumatic event from his past comes back to haunt him.

Jan van Mersbergen’s style — sparse in dialogue, rich in indirect discourse — conjures up associations with Hemingway. It is the ideal medium in which to tell an emotional tale of diamonds in the rough; of a man torn between domesticity and the wild side of life; of the rootlessness of the modern migrant; of young boys who are wiser than their parents; and ultimately of what it takes to be a good father. The Last Escape echoes the themes of Van Mersbergen’s earlier novels, but expresses them more powerfully and succinctly than ever before. This, his seventh novel, may well be his best yet.
Arie Storm
Listening to Houses Breathe

An exhilarating mix of media satire and autobiographical fiction in the tradition of Philip Roth

‘The past, what was all that about?’
Welcome to Arie Storm’s seventh novel. In Listening to Houses Breathe, Storm’s alter ego, August Voois, is plunged into a deep crisis and comes face to face with a distant past with which he has yet to make peace.

Like his creator, August Voois is a writer, an academic and a book reviewer for a newspaper and a radio show. Yet he increasingly finds himself questioning the meaning of virtually everything he does. In his eyes the world is falling prey to stupidity and infantilism, while the serious appreciation of literature has become the domain of a paltry few. And as if that were not enough, his state of mind is being rattled by strange sighs that seem to be coming from the wormhole with Voois, his relationship with Elsa, the love of his life, comes to a violent end, the nameless protagonist of Tenderness falls into despondency. He finds a job as a postal worker for a magazine publisher and lives life according to a fixed pattern: every Saturday he hits the bars with two bachelor buddies and every Sunday his mother comes to call.

His weekly grind is disrupted when he finds a basket of kittens near his office one day. He decides to keep one, christens it one day. He decides to keep one, christens it Tenderness and finds a job as a postal worker for a publisher and lives life according to a fixed pattern: every Saturday he hits the bars with two bachelor buddies and every Sunday his mother comes to call.

This kaleidoscopic narrative is shot through with the unease of its thirty-something protagonist, tormented by the emptiness of his existence and prone to violent outbursts directed at his girl-friends. At the same time it is a compelling and darkly humorous exploration of the male condition, complete with its own twisted take on couples therapy.

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Storm’s novel contains subtle references to Alice in Wonderland, is far from a series of absurd adventures. Listening to Houses Breathe begins as a cynical yet upbeat satire on the literary world, but goes on to develop into a thoughtful reflection on the workings of nostalgia and the pain hidden away behind some of our childhood memories. When the time comes for the reader to emerge from the wormhole with Voois, he cannot help but feel an abiding fondness for the man.

‘A slim yet splendid novel about an author who is wrestling with his past and about the importance of literature.’
— de Volkskrant

‘He gives an almost mystical charge to the everyday [in] one of the most extraordinary novels published in the Netherlands this year.’
— De Groene Amsterdammer

‘A book that is constantly on the move.’
— NRC Handelsblad

Librarian critic, translator and biographer Arie Storm (b. 1963) grew up in The Hague, studied Dutch and made his literary debut at the age of 31 with Hémans duik (Hémans Dives), a novel that playfully manipulates the relationship between autobiography and fiction. In the six novels that followed, Storm has continued in the tradition of his literary heroes Vladimir Nabokov and Philip Roth. Two of his novels — Afgunst (Envy) and Gavoel (Feeling) — have been nominated for the Netherlands’ most distinguished literary awards.

Jamal Ouariachi
Tenderness

A hard-hitting psychological novel that takes the reader deep into the mind of a narcissist

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Pauline Genee
Duel with Horse

An elegant historical novel with a starring role for an arithmetical wonder horse

The scene is Berlin, 1904. Former teacher Wilhelm von Osten is the proud owner and trainer of Clever Hans the wonder horse. By stamping his hoof, Hans can solve all manner of arithmetical puzzles, from fractions to square roots. Public speculation is rife. Is Von Osten a con artist? A dabbler in the occult? Is he resorting to electrical trickery? Defy weaving historical fact and fictional narrative, Genee reconstructs the reasons why Von Osten’s horse never became a household name to rival Pavlov’s dog.

Von Osten’s love for his horse and his faith in science help him forget the cruelty he endured as a boy whose father beat him mercilessly. He teaches his horse arithmetic for hours on end and their demonstrations draw huge crowds. But Von Osten has loftier ambitions. He hopes to gain official recognition for his pedagogical achievement and his discovery that animals are capable of independent achievement and his discovery that animals are capable of independent reasoning. He likens himself to Mendel, the scientist whose genetics research, he claims, is about to be realized and is already enduring as a boy whose father beat him mercilessly. He teaches his horse arithmetical wonder horse.

With the arrival of wayward Italian painter Emilio Rendich, scientific recognition seems closer than ever. Rendich has noticed that Hans is in a fault line. The fact that it is way, she paints a glorious portrait of a period in which the scientific world found itself on a fault line. The protagonist of In de straten van Tepalka (In the Streets of Tepalka, 1967) relives his experiences in fantasies and nightmares as he lies on his deathbed in a hospital.

In Marugg’s most important novel, The Roar of Morning (1988), a man sits on his doorstep, armed with a bottle of whisky, waiting for daybreak. He observes nature, thinking about Kierkegaard, his childhood in Venezuela, and his life on Curacao, where he feels out of place as a white Antillean, and he has feverish dreams about women. The novel contains one of the most beautiful scenes in world literature, in which the narrator watches scores of birds in flight crashing into a steep rock face and dying, a daily event. The passage is unforgetable.

‘With fading recognition I look at the familiar things around me: the wardrobe full of clothes, most of which I have never worn; the big curtain over the window, lined with thick material to keep out the light when I sleep all morning; the small, colourful vase that I have been looking at for twenty years and which every Wednesday I am afraid the cleaning woman will smash, as she has done with most of the glassware; the orange rug next to my bed, on which I sometimes let one of the dogs spend the night when it is ill or sad. The feeling of oneness with these things has vanished; it must have taken in fantasies and nightmares as he lies on his deathbed in a hospital.

‘The pleasure the writer must have taken in rendering the lines and colours of Berlin 1904 radiates from every page [...] she weaves an intriguing plot.’ – NRC Handelsblad

‘A wonderfully detailed portrait of a bygone age, drawn with flair and irony. [...] The colourful characters and Genee’s assured and sparkling narrative style lend unique colour to an unknown world.’ – Trouw

‘The chapters are short and simply fly by. Soon only one question remains: how will it end? Will Genee bow to historical fact? Will Von Osten’s dream be shattered? Anyone who starts reading this story will find out before long – that’s how unputdownable this book is.’ – Nederlands Dagblad

Tip Marugg
The Roar of Morning

The Roar of Morning is a triumph for the eye of the artist. As an ode to wilfulness.

Tip Marugg was the hermit of Curacao, an island in the Netherlands Antilles, and the author of a small body of exceptionally fine literary work. His novels show the touch of a master stylist who transforms their themes – death, night, the grim fate of the alcoholic, and loneliness – into unparalleled literature.

In Weekend Pilgrimage (1957) the first-person narrator veers on to the road’s shoulder while drunk and reflects back on his life in a one long interior monologue. The protagonist of In de straten van Tepalka (In the Streets of Tepalka, 1967) relives his experiences in fantasies and nightmares as he lies on his deathbed in a hospital.

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‘Every detail, every digression is purposeful, the subject matter significant, the style perfect. I would like to quote as much of this novel as I possibly can, to read it over and over again right away. Such a novel deserves a magnificent reception.’ – Vrij Nederland

‘The final chapter brings an uncommon climax: the apocalyptic, apocalyptic images in which Marugg describes the swirling roar of the morning are breathtaking – I would describe this, without hesitation, as one of the most gripping chapters in all Dutch literature.’ – De Groene Amsterdammer
Esther Verhoef
Close to the Cradle
A deeply disturbed, murderous nurse threatens the fragile happiness of young parents

Not only is the nurse an impostor – her qualifications are fabricated, her work experience a pack of lies – but she is also a sadist with her mind set on a single purpose: to inflict endless suffering on both mother and child. She takes subtle advantage of hard-working Oscar’s reluctance to accept his role as a father and of Didi’s distress in the face of her physical incapacity.

Miriam conducts her investigation on her own time, knowing that she faces summary dismissal if her bosses ever find out what she’s up to. Despite the risks, she vigorously pursues her inquiries and little by little begins to uncover the past that Hennquin has gone to such pains to conceal. She discovers the maternity nurse’s true identity and brings her quarry into sharper focus by questioning former teachers, guardians and institutional directors. Eventually Miriam manages to contact Hennquin’s father, who refuses point-blank to cooperate with the one-woman investigation.

In this claustrophobic thriller, Esther Verhoef demonstrates her complete mastery of the genre, steering her plot expertly towards its unexpected climax without ever giving away more than is strictly necessary.

‘The stories of the three female protagonists are ingeniously woven together. Verhoef effectively packages her tightly plotted narrative in concise sentences and compact chapters, liberally sprinkled with gripping cliffhangers.’
— NRC Handelsblad

‘A true page-turner with a masterful plot twist.’
— de Volkskrant

‘Full of nail-biting suspense.’
— Algemeen Dagblad

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Rights
Esther Verhoef
elaine@sharedstories.nl
www.estherverhoef.nl

Translated Titles
Tagenicht: Germany: ttb
Rendez-Vous: Germany: ttb, UK.
Quercus: Russia: Mir Knigi
Close-up: Germany: ttb, UK
Quercus: Denmark: JP Politik
France: Denoêl, Russia: Mir Knigi
Spanje: Circulo de lectores
Diplà iu: Germany: ttb
Alles te verliezen: Germany: ttb

Robert van Raffe
Unfiltered

A brilliant graphic novel about a young artist’s identity crisis

James Joyce’s Ulysses as the basis for a comic book: it takes a dandy like Robert van Raffe to come up with something quite this bold. Modesty is for the mediocre! In Unfiltered, a vagabond comics artist drifts through the streets of a university town in search of insight and distraction. He knocks back the booze, he chews the fat, he suffers. Along the way he weaves a wondrous visual narrative.

The young artist stands beneath the dome of Rome’s great Classical temple, the Pantheon, as God stares down at him through the oculus. This is the opening gambit of Unfiltered, a devastating graphic novel, in which he himself features as a character. From the cosmic grandeur of this first scene he constructs a layered narrative, which on the surface appears to tell a tale of student life, with its familiar ingredients of wine, women and tedium. Raffe is a Chianti-swilling poseur, who models himself on celebrated dandies such as Oscar Wilde and James Whistler, and sneers at the banality of everyday reality. But beneath this surface, there are deeper, more serious forces at work. The chapter titles in this novel refer directly to Joyce’s Ulysses, which in turn is modelled on Homer’s Odyssey. This is High Culture in comic-book form. Raffe intercuts his portrait of student life with imaginary dialogues in which masters such as Bacon, Warhol and Camus act as his sounding board. It is here that the title of the book begins to resonate: Raffe’s dandyism is not a pose at all but an unfiltered attempt to connect to the fullest with the history of art and literature.

The journey continues and we enter yet another layer: that of Raffe’s own psyche. He is a young student who spends his days and nights in bedsit land, drinking, pining for his lost love Penelope and thinking himself into an early grave: ‘In the darkness, I was drowning in conceit.’ What begins as a flirtation with life as a dandy morphs into an intense identity crisis that takes him to the brink of complete madness.

The true brilliance of Unfiltered is the freewheeling, experimental visual style in which Raffe expresses all of these events and layers. When the mood strikes, his drawings spiral out of control, colours flow over lines and frames dissolve in a maelstrom of psychological turmoil. A book to make your head spin.

‘A masterpiece. World class. Van Raffe has employed entirely different styles to illustrate the various chapters – sketchy, expressive, sensitive, explosive – yet never sacrifices clarity or legibility. He has substantially expanded the comic-book idiom.’
— Joost Swarte

For many years, Esther Verhoef (b. 1968) has been one of the most widely read thriller writers in the Dutch language. Her thrillers have sold over 1.5 million copies and have been translated into Spanish, French, German, English and Russian. Her work has brought her widespread recognition in the form of the NS Publieksprijs. She is the winner of several leading crime fiction awards.

Robert van Raffe (b. 1982) studied Arts, Media & Design at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam and is currently studying philosophy at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He debuted in 2005 in the magazine Zone 5300 with A conversation piece, a dialogue in painted scenes between Oscar Wilde and James Abott McNeill Whistler. Raffe also goes by the name of Dandy Raffe and has published works with titles such as Dandy tegen wit & donk (A Dandy Willy-Nilly) and Dandy op herhaling (Dandy Repeats Himself).

‘A masterwork. World class. Van Raffe has employed entirely different styles to illustrate the various chapters – sketchy, expressive, sensitive, explosive – yet never sacrifices clarity or legibility. He has substantially expanded the comic-book idiom.’
— Joost Swarte
Recent Translations

This is a selection of recently published translations from the Dutch. For more information please go to our online database of translations www.vertalingendatabase.nl.

Abdelkader Benali

My Mother’s Voice

Glas moje majke Translated into Bosnian by Goran Saric for Buysboek, 2013.

Bernlef

Out of Mind

[Chez jinn t sjav] Translated into Hebrew by Ran HaCohen for Am Oved, 2013. Also in: Czech (Zvadek), Chinese (People’s Literature Publishing House), Danish (Høyla), English (Faber and Faber), German (Nagel & Kimche) and many other languages.

Peter Buwalda

Bonita Avenue

Translated into English by Jonathan Reeder for Pushkin Press, 2014. Also in: Czech (Odeon), French (Actes Sud), German (Rowohlt), Greek (Alexandria), Hungarian (Scolar), Icelandic (Forlagid), Italian (Monadoro) and Spanish (Salamandra).

Anna Enquist

The Sedators

Les endormeurs Translated into French by Arlette Ounanian for Actes Sud, 2014. Also in: German (Scherlifft & Co.), Italian (Angeli) and Turkish (Hit Kitap).

Toine Heijmans

At Sea

A tengeren Translated into Hungarian by Veronika Máthé for Gondolat, 2013. Also in: Danish (Turbine), French (Christian Bourgois), German (Anche) and Turkish (Hit Kitap).

Otto de Kat

News from Berlin

Translated into English by Ina Rilke for MacLehose Press, 2014. Also in: German (Schöffling & Co.).

Margriet de Moor

The Painter and the Girl

Maleren og pigen Translated into Danish by Gudrun Gilhuis-Glenthøj and Lise Bøgh-Sørensen for Turbine, 2013. Also in: Czech (Pistorius and Olsanska), Croatian (Fraktura), French (Maren Sell), German (Hanser), Italian (Neri Pozza), Slovenian (Studentki Založba) Turks (Doğan Kitap) and Ukrainian (Folio).

Jan Jacob Slauerhoff

Foam and Ashes

Pena a popol Translated into Slovak by Adam Bzoch for Európa, 2013. Also in: French (Circé), German (Vertaal & Verlaat), Italian (Iperborea) and Spanish (Textofilia).

Esther Gerritsen

Thirst

Porsti Translated into Icelandic by Ragna Sigurðardóttir for Mál og menning, 2013. Also in: Czech (Mál og menning), English (World Editions) and German (Insel Verlag).

Anne-Gine Goemans

Gliding Flight

Svifflug Translated into Icelandic by Ragna Sigurðardóttir for Forlagid, 2013. Also in: Danish (Turbine), English (World Editions), German (Insel) and Italian (Iperborea).

Aron Grunberg

The Man without Illness

Hastalıksız Adam Translated into Turkish by Gül Özlen for Alef Yayinevi, 2013. Also in: Czech (Literatura), Hebrew (Hakibbutz Hameuchad), Italian (Feltrinelli) and Turkish (Hit Kitap).

A.F.Th. van der Heijden

Tonio

[ Tonio] Translated into Chinese by Can Zhai for Flower City Publishing House, 2013. Also in: Czech (Mál og menning), English (Scribe), German (Suhrkamp) and Hungarian (Gondolat) and Italian (Scolar).

Eva Maria Staal

Try the Morgue

Die Waffenhändlerin Translated into German by Iva Braun for Arche, 2013. Also in: English (W.W. Norton & Comp.) and French (éditions du Masque, JC Lattes).

Barbara Stok

Vincent

Translated into English by Laura Watkinson for SelfMadeHero, 2014. Also in: Turkish (Yapi Kredi), Italian (BAQ Publishing), French (Emmanuel Proust), Brazilian (L&PM Editores), Greek (Agora Press), Korean (Open Book) and Spanish (Salamandra Graphic).

Jan Jacob Slauerhoff

Foam and Ashes

Pena a popol Translated into Slovak by Adam Bzoch for Európa, 2013. Also in: French (Circé), German (Vertaal & Verlaat), Italian (Iperborea) and Spanish (Textofilia).

Pieter Webeling

Laughter and Death

Das Lachen und der Tod Translated into German by Christiane Burkhardt for Karl Blessing, 2013. Also in: Danish (Turbine), French (Denoël), Norwegian (Blaze) and Turkish (Neben Kitap).
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Editors
Dick Broer, Barbara den Ouden, Victor Schiferli, Pieter Steinz

Contributions
Dick Broer, Marlies Hoff, Barbara den Ouden, Joost Pollmann, Victor Schiferli, Pieter Steinz

Translation
David Doherty

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Victor Schiferli
www.flickr.com/victorschiferli

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