

Nederlands
letterenfonds
dutch foundation
for literature

11 Poets from Holland



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

Information

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

Individual poets from the Netherlands are also featured in separate brochure series: *Contemporary Dutch Poets*, *Zeitgenössische Niederländische Poesie*, and *Great Dutch Poets of the 20th Century*. If you would like to receive more information or brochures from this series, please contact Thomas Möhlmann.

Over eighty interesting Dutch poets are featured at the Dutch domain of Poetry International Web. Please visit www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/country/item/6 for heaps of information and poems in English translation.

Translation Grants

Foreign publishers and magazine editors 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 and logo 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.

Additional support for poetry

Specifically in case of a publication of Dutch poetry in translation, a foreign publisher or magazine editor can also apply for additional financial assistance.

Travel costs support

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.

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 of Dutch literature 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.

Schwob

Schwob draws attention to and supports as-yet undiscovered, untranslated classics of world literature. Each month the editors select new titles on www.schwob.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 (NLPVF) and the Foundation for Literature (FvdL), 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.

Interested in receiving our general newsletter? Send your request to post@letterenfonds.nl or sign up on www.letterenfonds.nl.

Dutch Foundation for Literature

Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89
1018 VR Amsterdam
Tel. +31 20 520 73 00
Fax +31 20 520 73 99
The Netherlands
post@letterenfonds.nl
www.letterenfonds.nl

Advisor Poetry



Thomas Möhlmann
t.moehlmann@letterenfonds.nl

Travel costs support



Maaïke Pereboom
m.pereboom@letterenfonds.nl

Schwob



Alexandra Koch
a.koch@letterenfonds.nl

Ellen Deckwitz

'We need to talk'

Ellen Deckwitz, while only having published two collections of poetry, is already an ubiquitous presence in Dutch poetry. She has been part of the slam poetry circuit since 2000 and won the national Poetry Slam championship in 2009. Nevertheless, it is with her printed work that she reached the larger poetry audience.

Her poems are both energetic and highly imaginative, which certainly makes her one of the most lively poets in the Dutch language.

Strikingly, each of her two collections manage to evoke completely different moods. In her debut, *The Stone Fears Me* (2011) – which won her the Netherlands' most important debut prize for poetry, the C. Buddingh' Prize – feelings of dread dominate, which the poet attempts to allay with 'the bullet of the ballpoint'. Especially

when everyday reality takes hold, dental floss, immigrants, a visit to the Dam in Amsterdam, you can feel the subdued danger. Deckwitz has the gift of being able to describe her experiences in a both mesmerising and lucid way. While this is by no means feel-good poetry, you do notice she is looking for light and liberation: 'The soil is sucking up the worms and I suppose/ that we all want to be/ thought of as sweet.'

Her second volume *Hey Party* (2012) takes a very different tone; it is indeed more of a party. She approaches the macabre with a joke: 'O jeez, if only I were a skeleton. Or even/ skinnier. Then I could finally seep/ through the wall between us.' Fearful or festive, Deckwitz' poetry is explicitly open-natured, without mystification or obscure avant-gardism, but it does offer a cheerful and poignant élan.

*

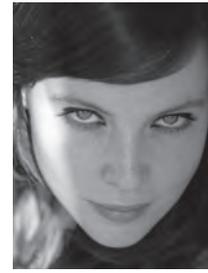
He said we need to talk
and thought to grab my ankle
but my foot slipped out of the mule.

I slid down to the bottom of my bag
where the fish swim. In a previous life
I was one of them, relatively happy

in amongst a jumble I did not have to turn
into anything. Sometimes on the surface we saw the bums
of ducks, which gave some cloud cover.

And now and again from up above a desperate hand
would grope for us, the hand that we called god.

(Translation by Willem Groenewegen)



Rights

Nijgh & Van Ditmar
Singel 262
NL – 1016 AC Amsterdam
t +31 20 551 12 62
t +31 20 620 35 09
rights@singel262.nl
www.nijghenvanditmar.nl

Ellen Deckwitz in Translation

Deckwitz performed on many foreign stages and her poems have been translated and published in English, German, French and Spanish.

Ellen Deckwitz is the best thing to happen to Dutch poetry in recent years.
– Ingmar Heytze

Deckwitz is lord and master of her language from beginning to end. Every image used adds something.
– Jury's of the Buddingh' Prize

Original and sparkling as a narrative, an idiom all her own comprising vivid images. A compelling fantasmagoria.
– De Volkskrant

Photo: Nadine Ancher

Ellen Deckwitz (b. 1982) currently lives in Utrecht and holds an MA in literary and cultural sciences. She performed at Dutch festivals like Lowlands, the Nacht van de Poëzie and Poetry International, but also in Birmingham, Paris and Berlin. She was the Dutch Slam Poetry Champion in 2009, is a member of the rock-poetry formation Asphalt Fairies, and during the European Championship of Football in 2012, she was on national Dutch radio as a football expert.

Ester Naomi Perquin

'Lock your horse'



Perquin's first collection *Napkins at Half* is a series of striking, tasteful images presented in an accessible style. Perquin revealed herself clearly as writing in the tradition of post-war poets of small-scale happiness and small-scale sorrow, like Rutger Kopland and Judith Herzberg, but also showed a more menacing side, for example in the short poem 'At Full Moon', in which a man is shaving and the association with a werewolf pops up: 'and then with a razor/ shaves the wolf from sight.'

In other poems too, she sometimes suddenly throttles the original idea, or has her images transcend what originally prompted them and take on a slightly surrealistic quality. You could characterize her work with the phrase 'polite oddity'. That is certainly true of her last collection, *Cell Inspections*, in which her past as a

prison officer plays a large part. With an open mind, Perquin enters the lives of criminals, losers and lost souls and experiences how multi-faceted life is, even within the confines of a cell: full of dream, love, regret, opportunism.

You could say that with her classical sense of form but fascination with evil, Perquin is pursuing a contemporary version of 'Romantic agony'. In a climate where many of her contemporaries turn mainly to wild and unconstrained forms of poetry, Perquin shows herself a more classical poet, but one who in a subtle way raises the issue of the perverse character of the world and society. No wonder she's regarded as one of the most promising young female poets of the moment and has already won a considerable amount of literary prizes.

Rights

G.A. van Oorschot
Herengracht 613
NL – 1017 CE Amsterdam
t +31 20 623 14 84
contact@vanoorschot.nl
www.vanoorschot.nl

Ester Naomi Perquin in Translation

Perquin performed on several foreign stages and her poems have been translated and published in English, French, German, Slovenian and Spanish. In 2010, her poem 'State Secret' was translated in all languages of the European Union.

The tone, the clarity and the eye for the ordinary in an 'ordinary' form are very effectively conveyed.
– Meander

As far as I'm concerned, the poem 'At Full Moon' should be chalked on walls, and the poem 'Architects', which seems to be partly pillorying unrestrained building mania, should definitely be made compulsory reading for all kinds of architectural courses. Perquin, a new asset to watch out for.
– Sapsite

Photo: Sander Vermeer

DELAY

We are modern. It's not the right century for love and there are no women anywhere standing on towers looking out. The last knight died of syphilis.

We have lost the knack of fluttering banners, the whispering between the stones, song and the names of flowers.

Hastily we toss each other body parts in passing. All is well.

Bolt these doors when it grows dark. Stay with me. Lock your horse.

(Translation by David Colmer)

Ester Naomi Perquin (b. 1980) worked in the prison service to help fund her studies at the school of creative writing in Amsterdam. Her debut, *Napkins at Half Mast* (2007), was awarded the Liegend Konijn Prize, and followed by a second collection, *On Behalf of the Other* (2009), which was awarded the J.C. Bloem Prize. For both collections jointly she also received the prestigious Van der Hoogt Prize. 2012 saw the appearance of her striking third collection *Cell Inspections*, which gained her the VSB Poetry Prize in 2013.

Mustafa Stitou

‘Mocking and pitying at once’



When Mustafa Stitou made his debut with *My Forms* in 1994, he was the first Dutch poet of Moroccan origin to publish a collection with a major publishing house. This might have helped a bit in raising extra attention to his work, as did the fact that he was only nineteen years old when he published it, but the most important reason for the sensation that *My Forms* caused, can merely be attributed to the unusual tone of voice the poet displayed in it, combined with highly original images and points of view.

Of his first three collections, Stitou says: ‘My debut was uninhibited, but it contained poems that were not really rounded off. In the second collection, the poems were more flawless and light-hearted, but I overtaxed the experiment. I’ve eased back with this [third] collection: I’ve combined the candour of the first book with the precision of the second.’

In all of his collections, including the latest, Stitou often presents Eastern and Western values and modes of thought as being in conflict, but he does so in an unpredictable fashion. He creates a medley of the high and low and of different cultures that gives rise to a vibrant tension, while also provoking urgent questions – for instance about identity, which is one of Stitou’s most important subjects.

In general, Stitou distinguishes himself by means of a phenomenal application of language in which emotion and intellect enter into a rare bond. He tacks easily between reality and imagination, irony and commitment, humour and seriousness – with all their ambiguities, invariably wrapped in dazzling forms. He is also an excellent reciter and performs at literary events and festivals throughout the country and abroad.

*

On my back I carried the coffin in which my father lay. Bent low by its weight, I staggered forward step by step. My pace slowed, the burden was too great. It was beyond me. Carefully I lowered myself full-length to the ground, slid out from under the coffin, raised the lid without hesitating and whispered, Father, I can’t carry you. I’m sorry. Could you maybe walk a little?

It took him a while to open his eyes. His face was unshaven, his hair tousled. He was wearing long johns and a white vest. Then he sighed and shook his head, mocking and pitying at once, like always. He sat up, climbed out of the coffin and moved on with calm steps. I walked along behind him and I too said nothing.

The coffin remained where it was, in the middle of the path.

We reached the grave, which was already dug. Without a word he settled down: lying on his side, then turning over to lie on the other side.

His god wants him to face east, I thought, towards Mecca. Fortunately he didn’t ask me which way east was, because I didn’t know.

He folded his hands together, slid them under his head as a pillow, sighed deeply again and closed his eyes, and I, I fell to my knees and began, with furious sweeps of my arms, to fill the grave.

(Translation by David Colmer)

Rights

De Bezige Bij
Van Miereveldstraat 1
NL – 1071 DW Amsterdam
t +31 20 305 98 10
f +31 20 305 98 24
h.deinum@debezigebij.nl
www.debezigebij.nl

Mustafa Stitou in translation

Stitou performed on many international stages and his poems have been published in anthologies and magazines in Argentina, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Slovenia, South-Africa, Rumania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

The conceivable and the inconceivable are equalized. ‘The underlying is what shows itself,’ writes Stitou. It is the rich breeding ground of these luxuriantly thriving poems.

– Knack

Stitou is being called the most important poet of his generation.

– Noordhollands Dagblad

Photo: Tessa Posthuma de Boer

Mustafa Stitou (b. 1974) published his first collection, *My Forms*, in 1994 at the age of nineteen. In 1998 *My Poems* followed and two years later both collections were republished in one volume. His third collection, *Pig-Pink Picture Postcards* (2003), was awarded both the prestigious VSB Poetry Prize and the Jan Campert Prize. A silence of ten years followed, after which *Temple* (2013) finally appeared, causing an enthusiastic stir among Dutch readers and critics alike.

Maria Barnas

'The sun as always before me'



When *Two Suns* was awarded the C. Buddingh' Prize, the jury considered it 'contemplative, musical poetry, desperate and humorous, powerful and brittle, with a transparency that gets more complex on re-reading'. Although similar words could be used to generally describe Maria Barnas's subsequent collections, the poet's style has clearly evolved: Barnas loosens her grip on syntax and widens her focus.

Meanwhile, sharp observations seem to overrule contemplation, and a light, slightly frightening sense of violence enters her poems now and again. Her craftsmanship, which critics praised in *Twee zonnen*, is still there, but it's put to use in a more nonchalant manner.

Barnas still combines her various artistic trades, and added writing poetry reviews, a libretto and plays for theatre and

radio to the list, but writing poetry is at the centre of her activities. As she once told a reporter of the Dutch daily *Trouw*, she always needs to find a solution for something in a poem first, before she can start thinking about it in any other form. Her distinctive characteristic is that she displays control in all the disciplines she engages in. She sets about things in a self-assured, sophisticated way. Her work is also characterised by a subtle sense of humour. And it has a pleasant, poetic immediacy: when she describes the Amstel river and 'the front of the city', she suddenly briskly continues 'but/ everything that I say exists.' But despite their clarity, her poems can have a disorientating effect. Associations occasionally lead the reader away from the described situation. The perspective in her poems regularly capsizes and changes.

TWO SUNS

When I fall asleep the sea is still below
and the sun as always before me.

I am standing next to a detail of dark water
and later on I'll be by the boats,

their white sails light as voices sighing with relief,
and sometimes ecstatic between the chattering gulls.

But in the ring I was given I am set slanted
next to a date. And I see him disappear in the distance,
with a sun. Sloppily repeated in the window.

He called me Flower. Or else Springtime, Sexy, Sweetest,
Sweetie, Sweet and recently more often
Prefernot, Notnow, Please.

(Translation by Donald Gardner)

Rights

De Arbeiderspers
Franz Lisztplantsoen 200
NL – 3533 JG Utrecht
t +31 30 247 04 68
f +31 30 241 00 18
laetitia.powell@apawb.nl
www.arbeiderspers.nl

Maria Barnas in translation

Poems by Maria Barnas have been translated and published in anthologies and magazines in Argentina, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, South-Africa, Spain, Switzerland and the UK. An extensive collection of her poems was published in Croatia (Brutal).

Maria Barnas definitely knows the tools and how to use them.
– NRC Handelsblad

She doesn't allow us to briefly go back home or get back to reality. We must keep on walking through the wonderland of her metaphors.
– De Groene Amsterdammer

In Barnas's work, nothing is just what it seems.
– De Recensent

Photo: Marijke Aerden

Before she published her first collection of poetry, *Two Suns* (2003), **Maria Barnas** (b. 1973) had already written two novels and established herself as a visual artist. *Two Suns* was awarded the C. Buddingh' Prize, one of Holland's most important debut prizes, and followed by her highly appraised collections *A City Rises* (2007; J.C. Bloem Prize) and *Yeahyeah the Big Bang* (2013).

Mark Boog

'You're here and elsewhere'

Mark Boog likes to reason and philosophize in his poems, without taking recourse to the great philosophers, however. He follows his own independent line of thought, using a logic that may seem anything but logical to others.

In his poems, most of which are situated indoors, he characteristically uses abstractions in the same role as concrete objects. In the poem 'Water, aspirin, you', for instance, the 'you' brings the 'I' an aspirin, whereupon the 'I' says: 'And bring me, while you're/ at it, an eternal darkness'. Grand abstractions such as happiness, chance, doubt, silence, time, loneliness, figure as commonplace objects in his poetry. In some poems this produces an amusing effect, reminiscent of the work of Dutch poet Toon Tellegen; in others it rather suggests a kinship with Gerrit Kouwenaar.

LOVE

The sky lies flat on the ground,
invisible and solid.

You are dressed in the colour of your hair,
in your eyes, your steps and your words.
You're here and elsewhere. I give chase to you

and shudder. You are too tall perhaps,
or too near. Your inapproachability
is unforgivable. If I could be a bird –

but the precision escapes me
as does the trust. I look at you

and shudder. Talk to me, as I'll keep quiet,
suffer my stranglehold, suffer
the awkwardness, suffer me, love.

(Translation by Willem Groenewegen)

Boog in his poetry emphasizes the uselessness of all human actions, keeping in mind, moreover, that total destruction may be just around the corner: 'and for a while the wrecker's been awake./ although on a heavy, iron chain in front of our window/ the wrecking ball hangs still, gleaming in the late summer sun.' Yet the poet resists any kind of inertia: we 'beat our night clothes, ourselves, like carpets'. It is the pointlessness which clothes everything 'in a storm coat/ of tension'. The poet fights arbitrariness by plotting a course, and by classifying everything and anyone (e.g. himself as 'among the lucky'). Language plays an allaying role here, as Boog says in an interview: 'it helps to say things beautifully'.



Rights

Cossee
Kerkstraat 361
NL - 1017 HW Amsterdam
t +31 20 528 99 11
f +31 20 528 99 12
molegraaf@cossee.com
www.cossee.com

Mark Boog in translation

Boog's poems have been published in anthologies and magazines in Arabic, German Portuguese, Rumanian, Spanish and Turkish. A full collection of his poems in translation was published in Lithuanian (Aidai).

His work is an interplay of intimacy and space, of domesticity and eternities.
– Gerrit Komrij

Boog is a master of reversal and of 'false appearance' in the good sense of the term. He conceals nothing in this way, but actually makes everything more painfully visible. And in such a manner that you can often laugh about it.
– Trouw

Photo: Isa Boog

Mark Boog (b. 1970) was awarded the Buddingh' Prize for new Dutch-language poetry for his debut collection *As if Something Happens* (2000). He has since been publishing at high speed, certainly for a poet who boasts about his strong penchant for idleness: five novels and five new volumes of poetry, one of which, *The Encyclopaedia of Big Words* (2005) won the prestigious VSB Poetry Prize. His most recent collection is *But Singing* (2013).

Menno Wigman

‘They keep on singing’



As a poet, and also as a translator, Wigman is steeped in the tradition of nineteenth-century dark romanticism, including that period’s mix of posture and authenticity. The existence he describes has all the hallmarks of a lost generation in the style of the French *Poètes Maudits*.

He is, in fact, a modern-day practitioner of Weltschmerz and Spleen: love is consummated but doomed to fail; paradise is forever sought but never found, young people indulge in loose and licentious living, but gloom persists.

After Wigman’s first collection *In the Summer All Cities Stink* (1997), his next one, *Black as Caviar* (2001), though retaining some of his illusionless outlook, sounded somewhat less bitter. As Dutch critic Rob Schouten put it: ‘The ugliness of the world and the failures of life continue to set the mood, but there may be some

merit in this [...]. With increasing subtlety and effectiveness, Wigman succeeds in translating personal and up-to-date impressions into universal and timeless terms and images. A punk rocker on his way to becoming a classic.’

The word ‘classic’ also comes to mind when one tries to describe Wigman’s style and formal technique which show a conscious and masterful use of (half) rhymes, metre and rhythm. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he remains loyal to classical verse forms, or creates poems that at least have the looks and sound of timeless pieces by long diseased ancestors. But he manages to revitalize these forms, give them an unmistakably personal and modern touch and thus write poems that are both transparent and edgy. So far, each new collection confirms Wigman’s status as one of the most talented and popular poets among his generation.

ROOM 421

My mother’s falling apart. She lives in a closet,
not quite a coffin, where she wets her chair
and sits the same day out each day. A view
of trees as well and in those trees are birds
and none of them know who they’re from.

I’ve been her son for more than forty years
and visit her and don’t know who I see.
She read to me and tucked me in at night.
She stammers, falters, stalls. She’s falling apart.

Animals never think about their mothers.
I spoon some quivering mush into her mouth,
and tell myself she still knows who I am.

Blackbirds, probably. They keep on singing.
The call of the earth. From curse to curse, it’s heard.

(Translation by David Colmer)

Rights

Prometheus
Herengracht 540
NL – 1017 CG Amsterdam
t +31 20 624 19 34
f +31 20 622 54 61
d.larsen@pbo.nl
www.uitgeverijprometheus.nl

Menno Wigman in translation

Wigman’s poems have been published in anthologies and magazines in Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Macedonian, Portuguese, Rumanian and Spanish. A full collection is in preparation in the UK, after previous ones in France (Cheyne) and the US (Midwest Writing Center).

When you notice that
you’re constantly about
to quote, you know you’re
in the right spot: you’re
reading poetry that sounds
great and really has
something to say at the
same time.

– *Het Parool*

Decadent-romantic, dark
therefore, or light-footed.
Or an amazing combination
of that two.

– *NRC Handelsblad*

Photo: Roeland Fossen

Menno Wigman (b. 1966) published five poetry collections, compiled several anthologies, and translated a large number of European poets, including Baudelaire, Rilke and Laske-Schüler. In 2006, Wigman was the youngest poet to write the ‘Gedichtendagbundel’: a small collection with a print run of 15,000 copies, published to celebrate the Dutch and Flemish National Poetry Day. A collection of his essays on poetry, *Save Us from the Poets*, was published in 2010. His most recent collection of poems, *My Name is Legion* (2012), was shortlisted for the VSB Poetry Prize and won the Awater Poetry Prize in 2013.

Nachoem M. Wijnberg

'Why would I do that'



One ought to be able to say of a poem: it begins well, but by line seven it becomes a false claim – according to Nachoem M. Wijnberg, one of the Netherlands' preeminent living poets. He also once said that a child of twelve could understand his poems.

Correspondingly, in his phrasing, he seeks clarity and validity. Perhaps this evokes ideas of simplicity and straightforwardness, but that is not the case: opinions are seldom as diverse as those concerning this oeuvre. The vast majority of poetry lovers agree that Wijnberg writes brilliant, powerful poems, but what are they actually about?

Some readers refuse to believe that Wijnberg's poems contain a 'deeper' significance, and enjoy the directly apparent as much as possible. They praise the simplicity, tragedy and beauty of the situations he sketches. They applaud his lack of metaphor. Others put his work

through a post-modern filter and maintain that Wijnberg questions language, reason, and unambiguousness.

Yet others refer to the poets Jewish roots and point to traces of the Talmud. Or they perceive references to the Holocaust in unsuspected corners of the oeuvre. Others again wish to regard him purely as a 'classical' poet who creates his own visual imagery: averse to trains of thought and artistic movements but full of respect for tradition.

If it were not such a cliché, one might say: a Wijnberg poem captures the reader instantly but does not reveal itself easily. However, this cliché is not truly applicable: Wijnberg's poems expose themselves immediately, it is only during re-reading that they turn out to comprise unexpected aspects. One question fragments into a myriad of other questions, but the main issue in many cases appears to be a truly fundamental one: 'What is worthwhile?'

FOLLOWING MY HEART WITHOUT BREAKING THE RULES

Sticking to the rules without sticking to the rules by going where the rules no longer apply. I could stick to the rules there too by applying them to things that, from a great distance, resemble what the rules are about.

But why would I do that, to avoid confusing someone who is looking at me from a great distance?

Behind this morning the morning when the rules are all I have is getting ready.

(Translation by David Colmer)

Rights

Atlas Contact
Prinsengracht 911-915
NL – 1017 KD Amsterdam
t +31 20 524 98 00
f +31 20 627 68 51
umatten@atlascontact.nl
www.atlascontact.nl

Nachoem M. Wijnberg in translation

Wijnberg's poems have been translated and published in anthologies and magazines in Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Hungarian, Macedonian, Rumanian and Spanish. A Selected Poems appeared in English (Anvil Press Poetry) and is being prepared in Italian (La Camera Verde).

You will not readily take his work as belonging to anyone else in the Netherlands or anyone else from his generation.
– *Vrij Nederland*

Wijnberg is such a unique author that you always recognize his voice in extremely diverse collections. And that is the characteristic feature of a significant poet.
– *De Groene Amsterdammer*

Photo: Vincent Mentzel

Nachoem M. Wijnberg (b. 1961) has been writing at demonic speed for over twenty years now, publishing seventeen books of poetry and four novels. His collections, from *The Simulation of Creation* (1989) to *Another Joke* (2013), have won practically every poetry prize that the Netherlands can boast, and made him one of the most important Dutch poets of the present day. He's also a Professor at the University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Economics and Econometrics.

Anne Vegter

'It takes intense bliss'



With her turbulent style and extraordinary themes, Anne Vegter is one of the most prominent poets in present-day Dutch literature. Her inimitable language and the peculiar conceptual acrobatics were the striking features of her first two collections *It Sprang* (1991) and *Shares and Obligations* (2002).

She once remarked in an interview: 'I often find normal means of expression hopelessly exaggerated.' In her case, her lyrical ego may leap from a stairway while observing, en passant, that a calendar is hanging askew. Elsewhere, someone is listening to Bach with a frown on the back of his head. In her third collection, *Spamfighter* (2008), her work became more serious and sedate, despite the ongoing turbulence in the language and the abundance of fantasy. Her unique mixture of a keyed-up overtone and a melancholy and fragile undertone is

perfectly expressed in a line such as: 'A ray of sunshine festively penetrates the windows of the clinic.'

Particularly her last collection, *Island Mountain Glacier* (2011), contains tributes and litanies to life and love. The capricious and rich joie de vivre that transcends the shadow side of domestic situations is assigned a darker hue, like a face that is enhanced by creases: 'Your age scrubs your family coat'. Her apparent spontaneity in 'showing and tripping' – as her poems might sometimes be characterized – leans heavily on stringent selection: only the appropriate moment and the right words are allowed to participate in the performance.

Public appreciation of her work is increasing over the years, which has provisionally culminated in her appointment as Poet Laureate for the Netherlands, the most public function that a poet in the Netherlands can fulfil.

SHOWING AND TRIPPING

It takes intense bliss in this dress to look at neighbours stashing their rubbish bag in a container around midnight with tenderness.

It takes intense bliss in this dress to flag down a taxi unwilling to take you to the edge of the city where broad-leaved trees propagate.

It takes intense bliss in this dress to make a sound that drowns out animals to catch the attention of a dolled-up queen.

It takes intense bliss for this dress to be carried to a show drunk and wide awake, blindly find the door through which to exit the stage.

It takes intense bliss in this dress to pop one, go on a balloon ride and look down on the mosaic of your country like a slow astronaut.

It takes intense bliss in this glorious weather to be killed with care. Voices scream instead of dress say shroud.

(Translation by Astrid Alben)

Rights

Querido
Singel 262
NL – 1016 AC Amsterdam
t +31 20 551 12 62
f +31 20 620 35 09
rights@singel262.nl
www.querido.nl

Anne Vegter in translation

Vegter's poems have only been published in anthologies in English, French and Spanish so far. She has been invited to perform on several international stages, including the festivals of Rotterdam and Medellín.

Tumultuous work, in which the chaos can scarcely be tamed and much is possible that would not work in more concentrated poetry. Vegter's later books make it evident that the poetic principle of free and idiosyncratic use of language forms the basis of everything she writes.
– Trow

Photo: Roger Cremers

Anne Vegter (b. 1958) is a very versatile poet and writer. In 1989 she made her debut with the children's book *The Lady and the Rhinoceros*, which was promptly awarded the Woutertje Pieterse Prize. Her first poetry collection, *It Sprang* (1992), showed that a poet of stature had risen. Several more children's books and poetry collections followed, as well as a collection of erotic stories and several plays, but in every genre the fact that she is first and foremost a poet glimmers through. In 2013 she was appointed Poet Laureate for the Netherlands.

Eva Gerlach

‘For days and nights I searched’



After submitting to several reviews, Gerlach published her first collection *No Further Distress* in 1979. It immediately impressed by the precise and considered organization of the individual poems and of the whole collection, yet with a strong, dark, emotional current underlying this formal control.

Two years after its publication the collection was awarded the Van der Hoogt Prize, an important prize aiming to stimulate young writers and poets. In many subsequent collections over the years, Eva Gerlach developed into a poet of classical stature. The narrative tone of her early poems gradually gave way to an astute, incisive plasticism, by which she seems to be trying to get a hold on life's events.

Gerlach's poems, in their often dark way, are concerned with the themes that have concerned poets in all ages: transience, loss, the human condition. Avoiding any tendency towards dramatic display or

literary effect, she writes about the mysterious, invisible forces that govern our lives, about the thought 'that in presence lives a truth/ greater than just that/ of the address.'

Eva Gerlach's poetry has more and more freed itself from the prevailing trends in post-war Dutch poetry. Irony, therapeutic impact or linguistic autonomy, the three mainstays of the poetry of her generation, never play a significant part in her work. She is first of all a modest, unsentimental, yet penetrating portrayer of human emotions and motives. Over most recent years a stronger experimental tendency seems to surface in Gerlach's poems and more surrealistic elements are amplified. This might also be regarded a further fine-tuning of a strong and distinct poet's tone of voice, which either whispering, stammering or speaking quite clearly always reminds us: 'Whatever's whole we fail to see' and 'all that is split up sticks in us for good'.

SO

A dog with iron eyes had clamped my hand
in his mouth. I did not want this
to happen but feared I would tear
if I offered resistance. Dog, listen
I said, let me go and I'll give you
whatever you want. But he just
wanted me to stay put, use my spare hand to
stroke him. So. For days and nights I searched
his eyes to find the stronger of us two.

(Translation by John Irons)

Rights

De Arbeiderspers
Franz Lisztplantsoen 200
NL – 3533 JG Utrecht
t +31 30 247 04 68
f +31 30 241 00 18
laetitia.powell@apawb.nl
www.arbeiderspers.nl

Eva Gerlach in translation

Gerlach's poems have been published in anthologies and magazines in Bulgarian, Czech, Chinese, English, Farsi, Finnish, French, Frisian, German, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish and Swedish. A collection of her poems was published in Portuguese (Quetzal).

That's what good poetry
does: touch upon
something essential in
reality, something you'd
immediately sense or
recognize, though you
never saw it like that
before.

– Trouw

Everything starts moving,
becomes ambiguous, gets
a new meaning.

– Jury of the P.C. Hooft
Prize 2000

Photo: Roeland Fossen

Eva Gerlach (b. 1948) writes both poetry for adults and poetry for children. She published her first collection for adults, *No Further Distress* in 1979. Her first volume of children's poetry, *Hey Mr. Moose*, was published in 1989 and promptly awarded the 'Zilveren Griffel', an important children's literature prize. Her entire oeuvre was awarded the highly prestigious P.C. Hooft-prijzen in 2000. Her most recent collections are *The Poem Happens Now* (Selected Poems; 2009) and *Knot* (2011).

Gerrit Kouwenaar

‘Teach ice water to boil’



Typically, Kouwenaar’s poems present themselves as ‘language objects’: poetry for Kouwenaar consists of words – not thoughts, feelings or anything else. This does not detract from the fact that his poems often have an incredible emotional charge as is clearly evident from just such a collection as *Totally White Room* (2002), which is in part a requiem for his deceased wife.

Via Kouwenaar’s intense mastery of what could be called the entire ‘semantic field’ of language, his poems attempt to get as close as possible to ‘physical reality’ or – as he himself often writes – the ‘flesh’. In his

poetry, flesh becomes word. Furthermore, Kouwenaar’s linguistic examinations of the passage of time and its causes are unrivalled. In the language of his poems, that which is fleeting and transitory is captured, and thereby retained. Kouwenaar once said, ‘Art only deals with a couple of simple themes: life, death, injustice, beauty. You want to create something that will withstand time. Nothing is present forever. A good work of art has been stolen from time, has outwitted merciless time.’ In Kouwenaar’s poetry, things are the same ‘today as always’. And that is how it will remain.

ONE MUST

One still has to count one’s summers, pass
one’s sentence, snow one’s winter

one still has to get the shopping done before
dark asks the way, black candles for the cellar

one still has to give the sons a pep talk, measure the daughters
for their suits of armor, teach ice water to boil

one still has to show the photographer the pool of blood
get unused to one’s house, change one’s typewriter ribbon

one still has to dig a pit for a butterfly
trade the moment for one’s father’s watch –

(Translation by Lloyd Haft)

Gerrit Kouwenaar (b. 1923) was a member of the Dutch Fiftiers Movement, an important group of poets that sent Dutch poetry in a completely new direction after World War II. Nowadays he’s considered ‘the grand old man of Dutch poetry’ and had collected nearly all literary prizes one can collect in the Netherlands. His oeuvre, apart from almost eight hundred pages of poetry, includes three novels and an immense number of translations. Literary studies, monographs and film documentaries have been devoted to his work. In 2008, his most recent collection was published: *Falling Silence, Selected Poems*.

Rights

Querido
Singel 262
NL – 1016 AC Amsterdam
t +31 20 551 12 62
f +31 20 620 35 09
rights@singel262.nl
www.querido.nl

Gerrit Kouwenaar in translation

Kouwenaar’s poems have been published in anthologies and magazines in numerous languages. Full collections have appeared in English (*Actual Size*), French (*Comp’Act*), German (*Limes Verlag, Kleinheinrich*), Polish (*Witryn Artystów*) and Swedish (*Ellerströms*).

Kouwenaar has written, ever since he found his form twenty years ago, the same poem over and over, but this has rendered masterful works of art in every instance in which fifty years of craftsmanship serve as, for want of a better word, wisdom.
– *De Volkskrant*

He is a highly skilful poet who undoubtedly considers every word coolly, but in this way manages to also blend in emotions that come into their own in this controlled, strict environment.
– *Trouw*

You can’t use poems to smash windows.
– *Gerrit Kouwenaar*

Photo: Roy Tee

Rutger Kopland

‘Look it in the eyes – it will look in yours’

Rutger Kopland published his first collection, *Among the Cattle*, in 1966 at a time when realism ruled supreme in Dutch poetry. It remained apparent in Kopland’s work, in which he invariably seeks to connect with day-to-day reality.

But the poet wants to do more than just describe; his poems try, however modestly, to offer some solace from the disappointments of life. From the very start they have been imbued with the paradisiacal vision of Psalm 23 and the fact that we, with ‘all those fine promises’ (the title of one of his collections), are seeking happiness all our lives. From the 1980s onwards, his poetry grew sparser, less ironical and anecdotal, more philosophical. But whatever form

they take, Kopland’s poems are bound to treat the mysteries of life, death, love and chance. They are, in the poet’s own words, ‘variations on a theme’, analyzing and demonstrating the ‘mechanics of emotion’.

It is undoubtedly the human aspect of his poems that has made Rutger Kopland one of the Netherlands’ most read poets for almost half a century. He asked essential questions without answering them definitely; in his poems man is first and foremost a searching creature. And for that indefinite search he has coined his own inimitable lyrical style, groping, tentative, full of repetitions, minor shifts and modulations. After all, ‘happiness/ must exist somewhere at some time because/ we remember it and it remembers us’.



Publishing details

G.A. van Oorschot
Herengracht 613
NL – 1017 CE Amsterdam
t +31 20 623 14 84
contact@vanoorschot.nl
www.vanoorschot.nl

Rutger Kopland in translation

Kopland’s poems have been published in over twenty languages, including English (Enitharmon, Harvill, Waxwing), French (Gallimard), German (Hanser) and Italian (Edizioni del Leone). Noble Prize Winner J.M. Coetzee translated Kopland’s poetry for his anthology *Landscape with Rowers: Poetry from the Netherlands* (Princeton University Press).

One wonders how long it will take the Nobel Prize committee to consider Rutger Kopland, clearly an exceptionally gifted poet, and a very proper focus for their liberations.

– *Poetry Nation Review*

The quality of his lyrics and elegies, alpha and omega of the poet’s trade, indicate a warm and intelligent man who tackles the big subjects with economy and tact.

– *The Independent*

Photo: Roy Tee

SELF-PORTRAIT AS A HORSE

When I was still a horse in a meadow

I must have lived in his body
have seen in his eyes what he saw

that life would never begin nor
would ever end, nor be repeated

I must have left his body and my memories
must have remained behind in him

you are standing by the fence round a meadow
on the other side a horse is standing

look it in the eyes – it will look in yours

(Translation by James Brockway)

Rutger Kopland (1934-2012) published over fifteen volumes of poetry, three essay collections and a collection of travel and translation notes. He has won numerous prizes for his poetry, including the prestigious VSB Poetry Prize and the P.C. Hooft Prize, one of the Dutch-speaking world’s most important literary awards. Kopland ranks high as one of the Netherlands’ best-loved poets, his collections sold over 200,000 copies so far. In 2013 a final edition of his *Collected Poems* was published.

Recent Translations



Maria Barnas
Tamo gdje treba biti tiho
Croatian translation by Romana Perećinec. Published by Brutal in 2013.



Remco Campert
Jagen, Leben, Erinnern
German translation by Marianne Holberg. Published by Arche in 2011.



Arjen Duinker
[Lestnica skarpy]
Russian translation by Julia Telezjko. Published by Kolo in 2009.



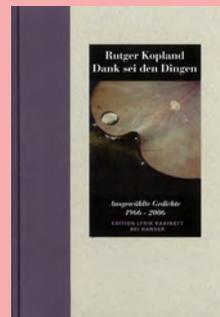
Hans Faverey
Chrysanthemums, rowers
English translation by Francis R. Jones and Lela Faverey. Published by Leon Works Press in 2011.



Hans Faverey
Poèmes
French translation by Éric Suchère and Erik Lindner. Published by Théâtre Typographique in 2012.



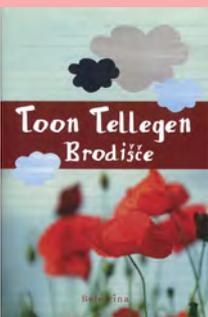
Tsjèbbe Hettinga
La Luz del Mar seguido de Santa María del Mar
Spanish translation by Diego Puls. Published by Cecal - Paso de Barca in 2012.



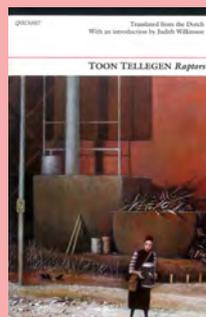
Rutger Kopland
Dank sei den Dingen
German translation by Mirko Bonné and Hendrik Rost. Published by Hanser in 2008.



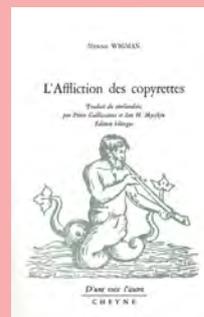
Rutger Kopland
[Selected Poems]
Farsi translation by Nasim Khaksar. Published by Pazand in 2013.



Toon Tellegen
Brodišče
Slovenian translation by Mateja Seliškar. Published by Studentska založba in 2012.



Toon Tellegen
Raptors
English translation by Judith Wilkinson. Published by Carcanet in 2011. Popescu Prize 2011.

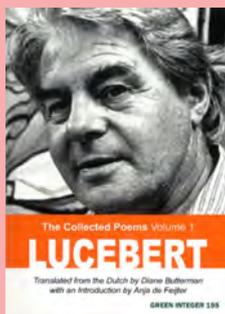


Menno Wigman
L'Affliction des copyrettes
French translation by Pierre Gallissaires and Jan H. Mysjkin. Published by Cheyne in 2010.



Menno Wigman
Black as caviar
English translation by Stephen Frech. Published by Midwest Writing Center in 2012.

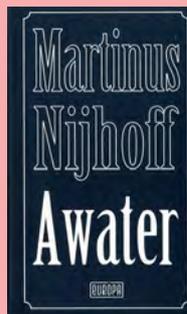
Recent Translations



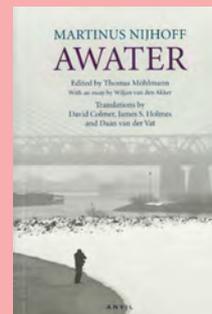
Lucebert
Lucebert - The collected poems, volume 1
English translation by Diane Butterman. Published by Green Integer in 2013.



Ramsey Nasr
[Selected Poems]
Georgian translation by Davit Gholijashvili. Published by Link in 2010.



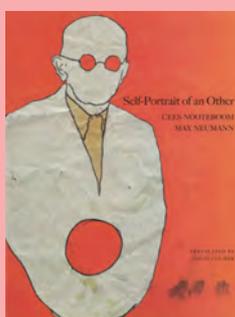
Martinus Nijhoff
Awater
Slovak translation by Adam Bžoch. Published by Európa in 2012.



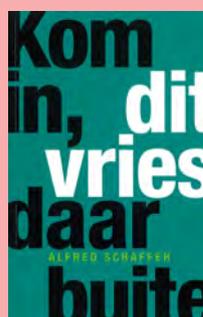
Martinus Nijhoff
Awater
English translation by David Colmer et al. Published by Anvil Press Poetry in 2010.



Cees Nooteboom
Licht überall
German translation by Ard Posthuma. Published by Suhrkamp in 2013.



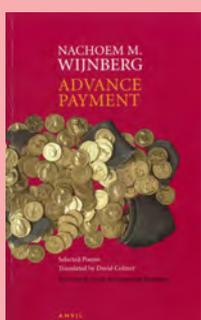
Cees Nooteboom
Self-Portrait of an other
English translation by David Colmer. Published by Seagull Books in 2011. Also in Spain by Calambur Editorial in 2013. Spanish translation by Fernando García de la Banda.



Alfred Schaffer
Kom in, dit vries daar buite
Afrikaans translation by Daniel Hugo. Published by Protea Boekhuis in 2013.



K. Schippers
Tables déplacées. Reportages, recherches, vaudeville
French translation by Kim Andringa and Jean-Michel Espitalier. Published by Le bleu du ciel in 2012.



Nachoem M. Wijnberg
Advance payment
English translation by David Colmer. Published by Anvil Press Poetry in 2013.



Various Dutch authors
50 poetas de Amsterdam
Includes all 11 poets featured in this brochure. Spanish translations by Conchita Alegre Gil et al. Published by Eloisa Cartonera in 2013.



Various Dutch authors
Strange tracks
Includes Ester Naomi Perquin and Menno Wigman. English translations by Paul Vincent et al. Published by Modern Poetry in Translation in 2013.



Various Dutch authors
Poètes néerlandais de la modernité
Includes Eva Gerlach, Gerrit Kouwenaar and Nachoem M. Wijnberg. French translations by Kim Andringa et al. Published by Le Temps des Cerises in 2011.

Ellen Deckwitz
'We need to talk'

Ester Naomi Perquin
'Lock your horse'

Mustafa Stitou
'Mocking and pitying at once'

Maria Barnas
'The sun as always before me'

Mark Boog
'You're here and elsewhere'

Menno Wigman
'They keep on singing'

Nachoem M. Wijnberg
'Why would I do that'

Anne Vegter
'It takes intense bliss'

Eva Gerlach
'For days and nights I searched'

Gerrit Kouwenaar
'Teach ice water to boil'

Rutger Kopland
'Look it in the eyes - it will look
in yours'

Nederlands
letterenfonds
dutch foundation
for literature

Postbus/PO Box 16588
1001 RB Amsterdam
t +31 (0)20 520 73 00
f +31 (0)20 520 73 99
post@letterenfonds.nl
www.letterenfonds.nl

visiting address
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89
1018 VR Amsterdam

Poets from Holland

is distributed free of charge to international editors, publishers and festival organizers. Please contact us if you would like to be included on our mailing list.

Editors

Dick Broer, Thomas Möhlmann

Contributions

Mischa Andriessen, Bas Belleman, Erik Menkveld, Thomas Möhlmann, Rob Schouten

Translations

Astrid Alben, James Brockway, David Colmer, Donald Gardner, Willem Groenewegen, Lloyd Haft, George Hall, John Irons, Ko Kooman, Megen Molé

Cover photo

Rainer Hamburg

Printing

Platform P

Design

Kummer & Herrman, Utrecht