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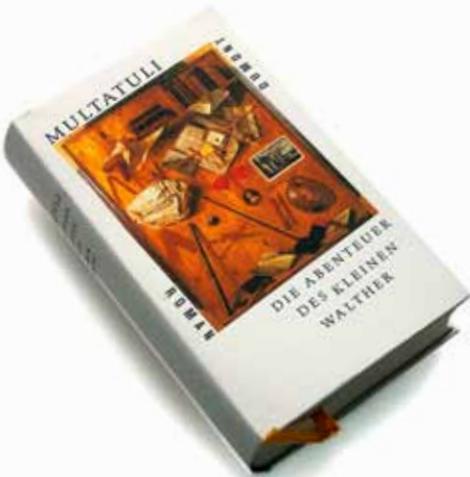
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Multatuli

Little Walter Pieterse

Revolutionary portrait of a boy in the 19th century

Often recognised as the greatest nineteenth-century Dutch writer, Multatuli (Latin for 'I have borne much') was the pseudonym of Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820-87). In 1838 he went to the Dutch East Indies, where he joined the civil service. His abilities were soon recognized and he rose through the ranks, but he became repelled by the brutality of colonial rule and resigned. *Max Havelaar*, his powerful indictment of colonialism, caused a sensation when it was published in 1860, so far it has been translated into over forty languages.



Woutertje Pieterse (1890, most recent edition 2011)
500 pages, 275.000 words

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Publisher
Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep
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www.uitgeverijathenaeum.nl

Translations
German (DuMont, 1999),
English (Friderici & Gareis, 1904)

An imaginative boy growing up in a narrow-minded middle-class household, twelve-year-old Walter Pieterse is the first psychologically complex child protagonist in Dutch literature. The boy wants to meet the expectations of the people around him, but they make demands he can't fulfil.

It becomes clear Walter is an artist in the making, struggling to rise above his origins. He would like to learn, but his teacher is interested only in classification. He wants to be a true Christian, but his pastor can't explain how best to read the Bible. An adventure novel sets his imagination ablaze and inspires him to write stories of his own.

Multatuli shows how stifling an unimaginative environment can be. The message of the story is diametrically opposed to that of most nineteenth-century children's books. The author questions received wisdom, pokes fun at religion and urges his readers not to bow to the wishes of their families or any other type of community.

- When Sigmund Freud was asked to name his favourite books he put Multatuli's Letters and Works at the top of his list.
- In 2007, *Little Wouter Pieterse* was successfully turned into a large-format graphic novel by cartoonist Jan Kruis.
- A full English translation can be found online at the Gutenberg Project.

'If it weren't for Multatuli, literature would simply be not done in the Netherlands, like deep-sea fishing in the Alps or coffee-growing in Newfoundland. *Max Havelaar* is his most famous book by far, but I personally think some parts of *Little Walter Pieterse* are far more beautiful.'

Willem Frederik Hermans

'I don't know the year; but, since the reader will be interested to know the time when this story begins, I will give him a few facts to serve as landmarks. My mother complained that provisions were dear, and fuel as well. So it must have been before the discovery of Political Economy. Our servant-girl married the barber's assistant, who had only one leg. "Such a saving of shoe-leather," the good little soul argued. But from this fact one might infer that the science of Political Economy had already been discovered.

At all events, it was a long time ago. Amsterdam had no sidewalks, import duties were still levied, in some civilized countries there were still gallows, and people didn't die every day of nervousness. Yes, it was a long time ago.'

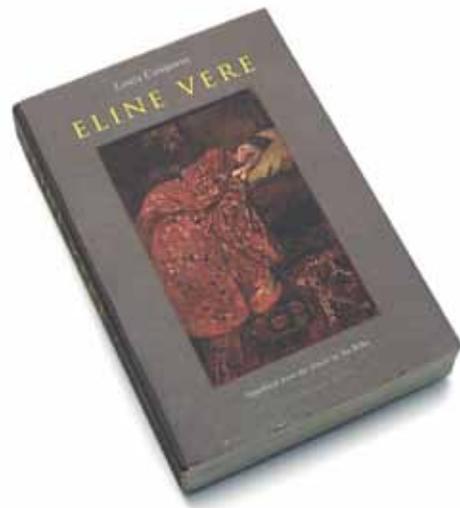
From: *Little Walter Pieterse*

Louis Couperus

Eline Vere

The tragic portrait of a woman, in the spirit of Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary

Louis Couperus (1863-1923) spent much of his younger life in the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia), and many of his novels and stories are set either there or in The Hague where he was born, though his work also contains impressions of Italy, Africa and China. Couperus was the greatest Dutch novelist of his generation, and he is still internationally renowned.



Eline Vere (1889)
561 pages, 195.000 words

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Publisher
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Translations
English (Pushkin Press, 2010; Archipelago, 2011), Macedonian (Ikona, 2012), Urdu (Ferozsons, 1986)

This story of a tragic female misfit ranks with similar portraits by Flaubert, Tolstoy and Ibsen. It is a subtle psychological novel set against a dazzling panorama of Hague society, where the life of a group of leisured families, with its succession of balls, dinners, entertainments and excursions acts as a foil to the heroine's increasing isolation.

The author introduces us, sensitively and subtly, to a gallery of men who impact on her life in various ways. That gallery includes her father, the failed artist, the opera singer Fabrice, by whom she is briefly dazzled, her well-meaning fiancé Otto, her fatalistic cousin Vincent and the energetic, optimistic American Lawrence St Clare. Sadly, none is able to offer her the support and sustenance she needs.

A very popular and widely read author in the Netherlands, Louis Couperus won the admiration of readers and writers in Britain and America: Oscar Wilde complimented him on his handling of sexuality in *Footsteps of Fate*, D.H. Lawrence admired *Of Old People and the Things that Pass*, while Katherine Mansfield praised *The Books of the Small Souls*.

Sadly, his international popularity did not survive the First World War, which confined him within the borders of the neutral Netherlands and prevented him from capitalizing on his reputation. However, enough of his output remains available to show what a compelling read he can be. To this day, Couperus is known for narrative flair, plotting, perceptive characterization and vivid dialogue, *Eline Vere* being a prime example.

- Like Dickens, Couperus was a famed reader of his own work and the dandy in him liked to orchestrate every aspect of the event, insisting on having the onstage flowers replaced during the interval, and even changing his tie and socks to reflect a shift in mood.
- Though he did not publicize the fact, Couperus's colonial family, which included more than one governor general of the Dutch East Indies, also included several Eurasian relations. This may help explain the perceptiveness with which he writes about mixed-race characters in *The Hidden Force*.
- Shortly before his death in 1923, Couperus sold the film rights to *The Hidden Force* to an American company but the picture was never made. Film director Paul Verhoeven has announced his intention to film Couperus' novel.

'His insight into the tragedy of European colonialism made Couperus a great writer. And his sympathy for the hybrid, the impure and the ambiguous gave him a peculiarly modern voice. It is extraordinary that this Dutch dandy, writing in the flowery language of fin-de-siècle decadence, should still sound so fresh.'

Ian Buruma

Nescio

Amsterdam Stories

Bittersweet accounts of dreaming, scheming young men and their ruin

J.H.F. Grönloh (1882-1961), the writer who went by the pseudonym Nescio (Latin for 'I don't know'), had a career as co-director of the Holland-Bombay Trading Company in Amsterdam. For many years Nescio was a one-book author, with a collection of short stories to his name – recently published by New York Review of Books Classics as *Amsterdam Stories*. In 1961, just before his death, the collection *Boven het dal en andere verhalen* (Above the Valley and Other Stories) appeared.



De uitvreter; Titaantjes; Dichtertje (1911-1918)
159 pages, 48.300 words

Rights
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Translations
German (Amman, 1993), English (New York Review of Books Classics, 2012), French (Gallimard, 2005), Hungarian (Gondolat, 2007), Indonesian (Penerbit Djambatan, 1976), Italian (Iperborea, in preparation), Polish (P.I.W., 1980), Slovakian (Európa, 2009), Swedish (Malexis, 2010)

These classic stories paint a vivid picture of Amsterdam in the early twentieth century and testify to a great love of the Dutch landscape. But the most extraordinary thing about them is the style, simplicity going hand in hand with a perfect command of humour, irony, plain speaking, understatement and emotion, and all superbly balanced.

Nescio's subject matter is best expressed in contrasts: freedom versus confinement, mortality versus a longing for eternity. The stories demonstrate that the individual is no match for the world and inevitably comes to grief if he tries to resist or becomes engrossed in big existential questions. As the final sentence of 'Young Titans' puts it, 'And so everything takes its little course, and woe to those who ask: Why?'

Nescio is essentially a lyricist, a poet writing in prose. But he's a cynic, too, as well as a mystic in his own way. Like Chekhov or Turgenev, he expresses complicated matters in simple language, yet his work remains light and playful, tender, moving and outrageously funny – an achievement nothing short of miraculous.

'The Freeloader' and 'Young Titans' describe a circle of young bohemians in the years leading up to the First World War. The former is the story of bon vivant Japi, who tries 'to overcome the body, to no longer feel hunger or exhaustion, cold or rain', but who can also fully enjoy the good things in life, especially if somebody else is paying the bill. He's unable to maintain this footloose lifestyle, however, and the story ends in his suicide. 'Young Titans' involves the same circle of friends, minus Japi. In scene after scene we watch the decline of the five boys. All are forced to abandon their vague ideals, while the artist Bavink is defeated by his ideas for paintings, those 'goddamned things', and goes insane.

'Little Poet', the story of a marriage, also has an unhappy ending. The main character loves his wife, but 'if you're a little poet the prettiest girls always walk on the other side of the canal'. He falls under the spell of his sister-in-law. It is the most literary story of the three: as in Goethe's *Faust*, God and the Devil become involved in the poet's life.

- Nescio wrote two of the most famous opening sentences in Dutch literature, including the often quoted: 'We were kids, but good kids.'
- Only twenty years after his debut, and under sustained pressure, did Grönloh admit he was the author of the famous stories published under the name of Nescio: 'I have always kept as quiet as possible about my writing, because I worked in an office all my life, and if people in those circles find out you have such tendencies, they'll just think you're not fit for your job.'

'The comic note is an element of the famous Nescionic voice, which has within it wryness, lightness, simplicity, and daring vulnerability.'

Joseph O'Neill, author of *Netherland*

'Nescio is the greatest Dutch writer.'

Tommy Wieringa

F. Bordewijk

Blocks; Growling Creatures; Bint

Futuristic modernist tales in a cool, hard-edged style

Ferdinand Bordewijk (1884-1965) made his prose debut with three collections of *Fantastische vertellingen* (Fantastic Tales). The subsequent novels *Blokken* (Blocks), *Knorrende beesten* (Growling Creatures) and *Bint* secured his reputation forever as an author of exceptionally original prose.

Blokken (1931), *Knorrende beesten* (1934), *Bint* (1935)
155 pages, 35.000 words

Rights
Nijgh & Van Ditmar

Translations
Blokken – German (Steidl, 1991), Italian (Bompiani, 2002) *Bint* – German (Beck, 2012)

Bordewijk was associated with the New Objectivity movement because of his cold-blooded style, but the graphic imagery and magical quality of his stories consistently marked him as a great man of letters. He outdid himself with the character of headmaster Bint, who demands iron self-control and discipline from his pupils.

Contrary to its author's intentions, *Bint* became notorious, reaping both praise and moral condemnation. Was Bordewijk's tale a parable of the failure of human discipline or a plea for totalitarian education? With fascism on the rise, readers felt uncomfortable with Bint's philosophy of submission to pain and the subjugation of the will.

Verbal artistry with a veneer of objectivity also characterized his novels of the early 1930s. *Blocks* is a nightmare vision of a future state in which communist ideals are pursued to the point of madness. In *Growling Creatures*, cosmopolitan automobiles seize power from their owners.

- Bordewijk's style is often described as 'reinforced concrete'.
- When speaking of himself as a writer, F. Bordewijk always used the third person.
- The film based on *Character* won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film of 1998.

Maria Dermoût

Days Before Yesterday

A colonial coming-of-age novel in a sensual style

Maria Dermoût (1888-1962) was born on a sugar plantation in Java, in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). *Days Before Yesterday* and *The Ten Thousand Things* are among the classics of Dutch East Indies literature.

Nog pas gisteren (1951)
85 pages, 20.000 words

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Translations
German (Marion von Schröder, 1957), English (Secker & Warburg, 1960)

Evoking bygone days, putting memories into words that bring a lost world within reach, Maria Dermoût is in full command of the art of storytelling. She made her debut with *Days Before Yesterday*, which tells the simple story of a Dutch girl growing up in Java.

Living with her parents in a large, white house near a sugar plantation, she adores the tales told by her servant Oerip, which are permeated with the mysterious atmosphere of the Orient. One day her uncle and aunt pay a visit and she finds herself falling in love for the first time. At the same time, a new age is beginning; paradise is becoming a thing of the past.

The book was written at a historical turning point between the colonial regime and the emergence of an independent nation. Amid the upheavals, Riek tries to preserve her love for the landscape of her youth, but in the end she has no choice but to leave: 'She would need time to lose it all.'

'Mrs. Dermoût, in the manner of Thoreau and the early Hemingway, is an extraordinary sensualist. Her instinct for beauty results, again and again, in passages of a startling, unadorned, three-dimensional clarity; often one can almost touch what she describes.'

The New Yorker

J.J. Slauerhoff

Life on Earth

A spectacular adventure novel set in Shanghai

J.J. Slauerhoff (1898-1936) grew up in the province of Friesland but spent most of his childhood on the island of Vlieland with relations, many of whom were captains or marine pilots. The love of islands, of the sea and of ships determined Slauerhoff's literary future. His poems, stories and novels are still in print and read, Cees Nooteboom being one of his greatest admirers.

Het leven op aarde (1934)
217 pages, 63.000 words

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Publisher
Nijgh & Van Ditmar

Slauerhoff drew from his experiences as a ship's doctor in the 1920s when he wrote this spectacular novel set in China. Cameron, an Irish naval radio operator, meets a lieutenant who turns out to be an opium smoker, as well as a mysterious European woman in a Chinese dress, 'like an overladen fruit tree'. He becomes infatuated by both the woman and opium.

The love story is framed by an exciting narrative concerning Cameron's involvement in arms smuggling, masterminded by the criminal Hsiu. With bold and firm strokes, Slauerhoff paints the life of a European in China who is in search of a purpose, which he ultimately finds in life itself.

Slauerhoff wrote the book in 1933 and 1934, by which time he had gained sufficient distance from his own personal experiences (including the opium use) and was able to revisit the intoxicating romanticism of his adventure.

- Cees Nooteboom presented a television documentary about Slauerhoff and wrote introductions to the Spanish and Italian editions of his work: *La révolte de Guadalaja* (Circé, 2008) and *La rivolta di Guadalajara* (Milan, 1999).
- Translated into German by Albert Vigoleis Thelen.

'His restless soul still shivers through in Dutch literature, incomparable to anyone.'

Cees Nooteboom

E. du Perron

Country of Origin

Multi-layered novel about the decline of the West

Eddy du Perron (1899-1940) was born to a Dutch patrician family in Java and died of a stroke in Holland four days after the German invasion. After moving to Europe in 1921, he published prolifically in all genres, but his main work remains *Country of Origin* (1935).

Het land van herkomst (1935)
502 pages, 187.000 words

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Publisher
G.A. van Oorschot

Translations
English (Periplus, 1999), French (Gallimard, 1980), Spanish (Ediciones del Ermitaño, 2012)

In this autobiographical novel, Eddy du Perron probes his own psyche, alternating and contrasting memories of a childhood in the Dutch East Indies with the perspective of a Paris intellectual reflecting on his identity in a radically changing world.

Du Perron was unsentimental about colonialism and rejected it. His colonial upbringing, however, deeply influenced his innermost values, which hark back to romantic ideals of honour and unwavering loyalty and fidelity. These concepts conflicted with beliefs held by his contemporaries in Europe, who were living in a world adrift.

Country of Origin is a multi-layered modernist novel that combines various types of narration: memoirs, conversations, letters, essays and diaries. A stream-of-consciousness novel, like Joyce's *Ulysses*, Svevo's *Confessions of Zeno*, Gide's *Les faux-monnayeurs* and Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, it is filled with echoes and antitheses.

- French writer André Malraux appears in the novel in the guise of Luc Héverlé, a leftwing activist. After the Second World War, as a minister under De Gaulle, Malraux seems to have discouraged any attempt to publish the existing French translation of the novel, which portrayed him in a explicitly political way.

A. Alberts

The Islands

An archipelago of mysterious and evocative stories

Writer, journalist and civil servant A. Alberts (1911-1995) worked in Paris and the Dutch East Indies as a civil servant. Other important works include *De Vergaderzaal* (The Meeting Room; 1975) and *De honden jagen niet meer* (The Dogs No Longer Hunt; 1979).

De eilanden (1952)
180 pages, 30.000 words

Publisher
G.A. van Oorschot

Rights
The Susijn Agency

Translations
English (University of Massachusetts Press, 1983; Periplus, 1999), German (Suhrkamp, 2003)

When published in 1952, *The Islands* introduced a unique writer. It was the only piece of colonial fiction to celebrate the Indies as an imaginative realm. These interrelated stories form a literary archipelago, as if in imitation of the islands which, strung along the equator like beads, grace the Indian Ocean.

Alberts' fiction resembles a kind of magic. He presents a world that seems to imitate reality and then, with an artistic sleight of hand, transmutes it into something different: a treacherous, eerie and mysterious place. His tales are brief and sober, their syntax plain. Yet the dramatic tension is overwhelming.

Alberts' prose seems to have been carved out of silence. A great deal remains unspoken, as if for some desperate reason. Most of the characters are people who feel out of place in their native Europe and will never fit into their new tropical surroundings. They shy away from contact, even at the price of madness, as in 'The Swamp', a story of endless melancholy and alienation.

'Alberts must have been more aware than anyone of the unknowability of people and the fundamental mysteriousness of their lives.'

Trouw

F.B. Hotz

Men Play, Women Win

Bittersweet short stories from the jazz age and after

The life of F.B. Hotz (1922-2000) falls into distinct periods: his childhood, overshadowed by his parents' divorce; a long convalescence from tuberculosis contracted during the war; twenty years as a professional jazz musician; and finally his career as the celebrated author of several collections of perfectly balanced short stories.

Mannen spelen, vrouwen winnen (2011)
384 pages, 134.400 words

Rights
De Arbeiderspers

Translations
German (Arche, 2003)

F.B. Hotz was one of the Netherlands' greatest short-story writers. After his late literary debut in the mid-seventies, he quickly garnered acclaim for his meticulous and polished style.

The stories reflect details of his own life: a childhood overshadowed by his parents' separation, the German occupation and his struggle to support himself as a jazz musician in the 1950s. The theme of strained relationships between the sexes runs throughout the book.

'Women Win', in which a gig at a provincial school dance degenerates into open warfare between teenagers and big-city musicians, is full of comical moments, but is ultimately downbeat, with the protagonists recognizing their that life-style is unsustainable. Conversely, 'The Travelling Salesmen', about the main character's alienation from his father, is full of wry and witty lines.

Although they convey the atmosphere of a particular time and place, these stories are timeless. Essentially, Hotz is a classic artist for whom form is paramount, constantly in search of 'the magic that can give an ordinary word in a calm sentence the power of a stranglehold.'

'Hotz is one of those exceptional authors who get you right where they want you without revealing how they do it.'

NRC Handelsblad

Hella S. Haasse

The Black Lake

The Ways of the Imagination

Two classic novels displaying the versatility of this grande dame of Dutch letters

Hella S. Haasse (1918-2011) was born in Batavia, capital of the Dutch East Indies. Her mother was a concert pianist, and after her father retired from the colony's finance ministry he wrote detective novels under a pseudonym. Haasse produced an enormous body of writing: novels, plays and essays.



Oeroeg (1948)
116 pages, 26.000 words
De wegen der verbeelding (1983)
149 pages, 30.000 words

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Translations
Oeroeg – English (Portobello, 2013), French (Actes Sud, 1991), German (Rowohlt, 1994), Hungarian (Magvető, 1987), Indonesian (Gramedia, 2009), Italian (Lindau, 1992), Serbian (Prometej, 1994).
De wegen der verbeelding – French (Actes Sud, 1998), German (Bertelsmann, 1999), Italian (Iperborea, 2000), Polish (Noir sur Blanc, 2004)

'Oeroeg was my friend' are the opening words of Hella S. Haasse's short debut novel which examines friendship, betrayal and social engagement. It is easy to understand why its political and cultural subtexts have fuelled controversy from the time of its first publication to the present day. Discrimination, inequality and the struggle for independence are universal themes of worldwide relevance in our own time.

The narrator is a young Dutchman, son of a manager of a Java plantation; Oeroeg is his Javanese friend. As children, they play among the ferns, canna flowers, dogs and chickens in 'the overgrown garden of Kebon Djati, the trampled, red-brown mud paths through the paddies, deep in the mountain lands of Preanger'.

One night at a party on the shores of Telaga Hideung – the Black Lake – Oeroeg's father drowns. This incident brings dramatic changes. The friendship between the boys, who come from opposite ends of the social spectrum, does not stand the test of time. Life in Java changes: religious and social tensions mount, and the indigenous population rises up against the colonial regime to fight for its independence.

Another dimension of Haasse's talent is on display in *The Ways of the Imagination*, an impressive product of her creative powers in which her evocative prose shimmers with hidden meanings. A truck driver gives a stranded Dutch family a lift to the south of France and, as they drive through the night, tells them about his adventures on the road. Many of the characters are caught up in uncanny events; others are enigmatic figures, powered by passions they choose not to explain. This casts the reader in the role of detective, requiring us to collect the clues, tie together the loose ends and reconstruct the story of a life.

We never see the big picture – another recurring theme in Haasse's work. What she shows us are mere snippets of Ariadne's thread in the labyrinth. In this classic novel, Haasse explores the timeless literary theme that we never really know another person; however hard we try, we cannot uncover another's true motives. All we can do is weave circles around the mystery and follow its trail down the paths of the imagination.

'Hella S. Haasse's novels have been familiar to her Dutch readers for decades, but she has almost never made the transition into English. There's no obvious explanation, unless it is that her work is not flashy enough and too difficult to make a fuss of. We have been the losers: it is exactly her unflashy quality that is remarkable, the way her stories derive an unostentatious strength from her steady, irresistible immersion in her characters' lives.'

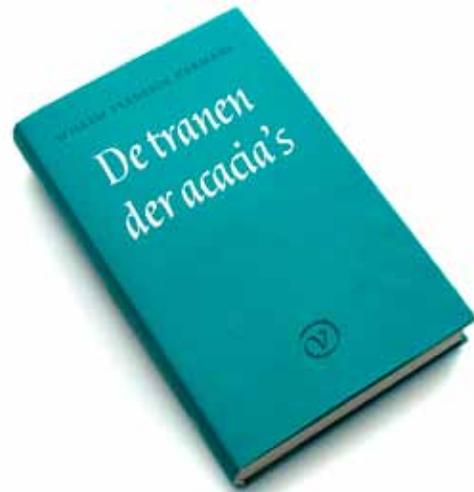
The Guardian

Willem Frederik Hermans

Tears of the Acacias

A grisly, contrarian war novel about the dark side of liberation

Willem Frederik Hermans (1921-1995) was one of the most prolific and versatile Dutch authors of the twentieth century. He wrote essays, scientific studies, short stories, and poems, but was best known for several novels, the most famous of which are *De tranen der acacia's* (The Tears of the Acacias, 1949), *De donkere kamer van Damocles* (The Darkroom of Damocles, 1958), and *Nooit meer slapen* (Beyond Sleep, 1966).



De tranen der acacia's (1948)
422 pages, 135.000 words

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Rights
De Bezige Bij

Translations
German (Kiepenheuer, 2005; Aufbau, 2007)

This may be the most contrarian war novel ever. It is the masterpiece of a young author who came out of the war with a vision of human nature as dark as the night and a determination to turn that vision into literature. The book opens with the unlikely friendship between Oskar Ossegal, a forty-year-old chemist, and Arthur Muttah, a chemistry student. The latter is practically an orphan and regards Oskar as a surrogate father.

To write is to astound, Willem Frederik Hermans once claimed, and *Tears of the Acacias* is nothing if not astounding. As Canadian soldiers liberate the exuberant city, Arthur Muttah wants nothing but to disappear: 'Everyone was doing nothing but screaming, waving flags, taking pictures, kissing soldiers and asking for cigarettes. Everyone wanted a lift, further into town, and he was in search of what might be the only car headed in the opposite direction.'

Wartime Amsterdam with its sinister streets and Brussels in the frenzy of liberation form the backdrop to the story, and the two cities are drawn with chilling precision. Although the situations described in the novel remain chaotic, they have the transparency of classical tragedy. The personalities are unstable and make blind choices, and their fateful decisions lead to catastrophe.

More than just sophisticated linguistic constructs, his novels are philosophical parables in which the loneliness of the individual and the chaos of the world meet and give rise to compelling literature that grabs the reader by the throat.

More from Hermans

- Ik heb altijd gelijk* (I Am Always Right, 1951). A man returns to Holland in 1948 from the war in Indonesia and despises everything. He dreams of starting a political party that will put an end to the Netherlands as a nation.
- Het behouden huis* (The House of Refuge, 1952). A young soldier, fighting against the Germans on the Eastern Front, withdraws to a civilian house, kills the inhabitants and acts as if he is the owner. Slowly, the house takes him over and becomes a character in its own right.
- Richard Simmillion: Een onvoltooide autobiografie* (Richard Simmillion: An Unfinished Autobiography, 2005). Powerful, haunting stories about the protagonist's strained relationship with his father and the suicide of his sister, from the perspective of Hermans' alter ego Richard Simmillion.

'There is his accurate delineation of place, the inscrutability of his characters and a fascination with language's capacity to order reality.'

Times Literary Supplement

'Not only would Dutch literature be considerably poorer without Hermans; so would European literature.'

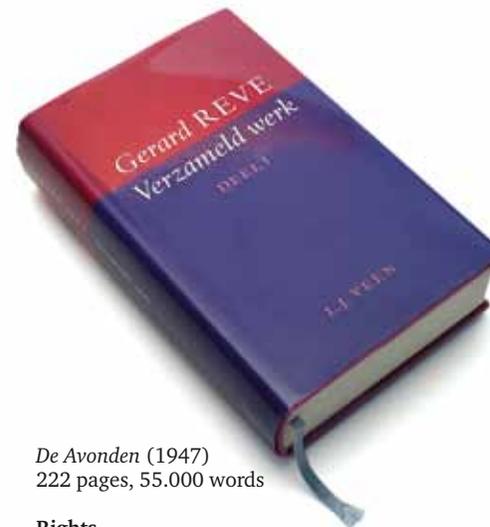
Süddeutsche Zeitung

Gerard Reve

The Early Years

One of the Netherlands' most controversial and beloved writers

The most widely read book by Gerard Reve (1923-2006) remains his debut *De Avonden* (The Evenings, 1947), but the controversial, epistolary novels *Op weg naar het einde* (On My Way to the End, 1963) and *Nader tot U* (Nearer to Thee, 1966), with their frank discussion of homosexuality and the author's conversion to Catholicism, were instrumental in establishing Gerard Reve as a public figure in the Netherlands.



De Avonden (1947)
222 pages, 55.000 words

Rights
Andrew Nurnberg

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Translations
De Avonden – German (Merlin, 1988), French (Gallimard, 1970), Hungarian (Jelenkor, 1998), Norwegian (Gyldendal, 1993), Slovakian (Európa, 2007), Spanish (Acantilado, 2011), Swedish (Ersatz, 2008).
Werther Nieland – Included in *The Dedalus Book of Dutch Fantasy* (1994)

No author from the Netherlands has influenced later generations so profoundly as Gerard Reve – the marriage of eloquence and everyday banality is central to his style of writing. Before the publication of his debut novel *De Avonden*, Reve wrote two impressive novellas.

The Downfall of the Boslowits Family is set during the Holocaust, yet nowhere is this theme made explicit. Instead we watch through the eyes of an Amsterdam boy as the family of one of his friends slowly loses everything and is then taken away. The only one left behind is the father, who later takes his own life. Because the word 'Jewish' is never mentioned, the reader senses this could have happened to anyone.

Werther Nieland is a novella set in the working-class Amsterdam neighbourhood where Reve grew up. It is the tale of young Elmer, who longs to make friends and tries to control the world around him by forming secret clubs, of which he is the president. When he invites Werther to become a member, a game of attraction and repulsion begins. It is a psychological masterpiece; in just a few words, Reve conjures up a child's whole world, full of oppression and enchantment.

Reve's debut novel *The Evenings* continues to win new readers. The book describes the aimless days between Christmas and New Year's Eve, when one holiday has passed and the next one begins. The Second World War has just ended, but the country is in crisis, the streets are dark and there is little to do.

Ashamed of his middle-class family, twenty-three-year-old antihero Frits van Egters hurls sarcastic remarks at his friends and parents. His nightmares, along with his unrelenting observation of all the details that exude quiet despair, form a poignant contrast with his tender words to a toy rabbit, the sole object of his affection.

The closing scene, in which Frits learns his mother accidentally bought fruit juice for New Year's Eve instead of wine, prompting a solemn, ceremonious monologue in which he addresses his parents with love and compassion ('It has been seen. It has not gone unnoticed'), has often been called the most beautiful passage ever written in Dutch.

- Gerard Reve's candid collections of letters from the 1960s did a great deal to advance the liberation and social acceptance of homosexuals.
- One of Reve's favourite books was Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*, about which he presented a television documentary.
- In the 1950s, Gerard Reve wrote a collection of stories in English, some of which were published by George Plimpton of *The Paris Review*.

'One of the great stylists of modern Dutch literature.'

The Times Literary Supplement

Jan Wolkers

American Crewcut

The life of a tormented, damaged young soul

After the Second World War, Jan Wolkers (1925-2007) attended art schools in The Hague and Amsterdam. In 1961 he published his first collection of short stories, *Serpentina's Petticoat*. It was followed by *Kort Amerikaans* and *Gesponnen suiker* (Candy Floss, 1963). The rawness of his work and his descriptions of both horror and tenderness caused controversy.

Kort Amerikaans (1962)
185 pages, 40.000 words

Rights
J.M. Meulenhoff

Translations
Swedish (Forum, 1985)

J.J. Voskuil

The Bureau

A depiction of the world of bosses and wage slaves

J.J. Voskuil (1926-2008) made his debut in 1963 with a 1,200-page novel called *Bij nader inzien* (On Second Thoughts), about a group of students in Amsterdam between 1946 and 1953. Following his retirement, he wrote *The Bureau*: seven books, a total of 5,500 pages, published between 1996 and 2000.

Het bureau deel 1: Meneer Beerta (1996)
773 pages, 240.000 words, 400.000 copies sold

Rights
G.A. van Oorschot

Translations
German (C.H. Beck, 2012)

Eric van Poelgeest is a tormented soul, damaged inside and out; the scar on his face is like the mark of the devil. As a child he was forced to have his hair in a crewcut, so everyone could see his disfigured features.

While his brother, a resistance fighter, lies on his death-bed, Eric is fighting a war of his own. The Netherlands has entered the most gruelling months in its history: the hunger winter of 1944. 'Looking around, you'd never know my brother was dying,' he thinks. 'There are buttercups in the bloody grass and flowering rushes in the ditches. The peace that passeth understanding.'

To avoid being sent to a German labour camp he has gone into hiding in a deserted art academy building. He has no idea what to do with his rage and his energy, so he paints and takes refuge in loveless sex with two women friends.

As in *Kort Amerikaans*, Jan Wolkers's brother Gerrit died in the Second World War at the age of twenty-two. Death permeates Wolkers' entire oeuvre, both visual and literary. Nevertheless, he regarded death as part of life: 'If there was no death, everything would become pointless.'

—Many of Jan Wolkers' novels have been made into films. *Turks fruit* (Paul Verhoeven, 1973) with Rutger Hauer playing the lead, *Kort Amerikaans* (Guido Pieters, 1979) and *Terug naar Oegstgeest* (Theo van Gogh, 1987).

Never has the humour and boredom of office life been described as in the *The Bureau*. Set in an academic institute in Amsterdam, it mercilessly describes the frivolity, the petty irritations and teasing, the conniving and crawling, the hierarchy, the suppression of emotions and the alienation found there.

Mr Beerta is a brilliant portrait of the institute's director, a symbol of academic research as a kind of occupational therapy that provides status and income for its practitioners, who prudently remain silent when outsiders and inferiors question its meaningfulness.

Gradually the Bureau itself emerges as the real main character, an institute which draws its staff into itself every morning with a magnetic power, encloses them, wrings them dry, then spits them back out at the end of the working day.

'The Bureau is the universe in a pocket edition, an allegory of society. The fact that there is still plenty to laugh at, mainly because of the sublime style and the often comic dialogue, makes human fate bearable.'

Jury report, Libris Literature Prize 1997

'The Great Dutch Novel.'

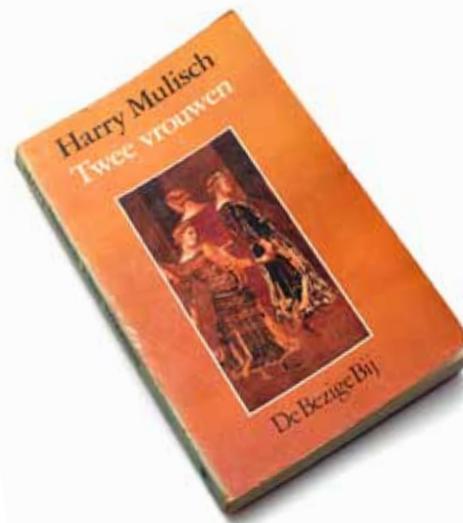
NRC Handelsblad

Harry Mulisch

Two Women

An understated love story and a modern Greek tragedy

Harry Mulisch (1927-2010) made his debut in 1951 with *Tussen hamer en aambeeld* (Between Hammer and Anvil), followed immediately by a second novel, archibald strohalm. He remained a prolific author, producing a total of eleven novels, six short-story collections, eight novellas, nine collections of poetry and many volumes of essays, pamphlets and studies. He is one of the most influential Dutch writers of the twentieth century. *Twee vrouwen* (Two Women, 1975) was the first in a series of successful novels. *The Assault* (1982) was translated into more than thirty languages. His last three novels, *The Discovery of Heaven* (1992), *The Procedure* (1998), and *Siegfried* (2001), were all international bestsellers.



Twee vrouwen (1975)
160 pages, 35.000 words

Rights
De Bezige Bij

Translations
English (John Calder; 1980), Czech (Ivo Zelezny, 1993), French (Actes Sud, 2005), German (Rowohlt, 2000), Hebrew (Keter, 1983), Icelandic (Vaka-Helgafell, 1999), Polish (Dolnoslaskie, 1990), Portuguese (Teorema, 1999), Slovakian (Danubiapress, 1993), Spanish (Tusquets, 1988)

In 1975 Harry Mulisch published a novel that stunned the critics with the simplicity of its storyline and the unexpected theme of lesbian love, which until then had been almost exclusively the domain of female writers. But *Twee vrouwen* is above all a psychological novel.

After her childless marriage comes to an end, art historian Laura falls in love with a young woman called Sylvia. She has a volatile personality. After a while she disappears but is discovered having an affair with Laura's ex-husband. She pretends to be in love with him, but when she becomes pregnant she returns to Laura. The man, furious at being manipulated, kills Sylvia and her unborn child, and Laura loses her beloved a second time.

Why does the novel have such an impact? In the years prior to its publication, Mulisch wrote mainly non-fiction and experimental work. Readers were surprised by this classic tale of love, jealousy, and murder. Since the novel is written from Laura's perspective, the reader identifies with her sense of abandonment, her happiness when Sylvia returns and her ultimate anguish.

Mulisch explores themes that would return in his later work. For him, lesbian love is problematic because it is infertile; when the laws of nature are violated, destiny takes charge. To what extent can humans intervene? With modern technology, we have almost become capable of creating life. We can artificially postpone death, clone living beings and manipulate the reproductive process. Along with Mulisch's successful novels of the 1980s and 1990s, this remains a compelling book. In 2008 it was distributed by libraries as part of a national reading campaign. More than a million copies were printed and the book became the subject of widespread debate, bringing it back more to attention.

More by Mulisch

—*De diamant* (The Diamond, 1954). The main character is the largest diamond in the world, which brings death and destruction to all who possess it, east and west, even after it is broken in two. The story ends with the destruction of the diamond itself.

—*Het zwarte licht* (The Black Light, 1956). A day in the life of lonely carillonneur Maurits Akelei, who decides to celebrate his birthday by treating the world to heavenly music. By the end of his party, an ecstatic mob marched through the flooded streets toward its doom.

—*Hoogste tijd* (Last Call, 1985). An ageing actor from a renowned theatrical family makes his comeback. His return to the big city and his infatuation with a young actress slowly but surely lead to his downfall.

'A moving love story, but at the same time a literary page-turner – a term more commonly applied to thrillers. No reader will remain unmoved by the chilling conclusion.'

Philip Freriks

Andreas Burnier

The Boys' Hour

A novel about different ways of being excluded

Andreas Burnier (1931-2002) was born Catharina Irma Dessaur. She studied sociology, earned a doctorate and became a professor of social criminology. Her literary work includes novels and collections of short stories and essays.

Het jongensuur (1969)
106 pages, 20.000 words

Rights
Atlas Contact

Translations
German (Twenne, 1993)

The year is 1945. Simone has survived the war. To evade capture by the Germans, she had to go into hiding without her parents in a series of households, adapting to the lives of farmers, Calvinists, Catholics, social democrats, and intellectuals. But did she ever really fit in anywhere?

Simone is the eternal outsider. She is a girl who wishes she weren't one, placed in the wrong body by the Creator: 'Women and Jews – I hardly see a difference. They can't retaliate; they're always guilty.' As the precocious Simone observes the often inexplicable behaviour of the children and adults around her, she cobbles together her own private world view.

The six chapters, unfolding in the reverse of a chronological order, show Simone's attempts to break free of fixed patterns, through her short hair, her imagination and her physical activities. But when she goes swimming at a time reserved for boys, she exposes herself to humiliation and disgrace.

'I tried to imagine how it would feel to have been born a boy. It wouldn't come as a surprise. It would seem only natural that your body was perfectly fine, that you could play football, walk the streets at night and strike up conversations with girls, or swim during the boys' hour.'

From: The Boys' Hour

F. Springer

Tehran: A Swan Song

A moving love story during the 1979 Iran revolution

F. Springer (1932-2011) was the pseudonym of Carel Jan Schneider. As a diplomat and public official of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Schneider travelled the world, and all his postings – New Guinea, New York, Bangkok, Brussels, Dhaka, Luanda and Tehran – feature as backdrops to his stories. His style is reminiscent of the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Tehran. Een zwanenzang (1991)
376 pages, 120.000 words

Rights
Querido

One of the most international of Dutch authors – earning comparison to Graham Greene for both his international settings and the clarity of his style – Springer has a cool eye for his characters' weaknesses. A typical Springer novel presents these failings with humour and mild irony, using a major political upheaval as a setting.

This novel tells the story of Toby Harrison, the author of a series of popular histories that rely on fantasy and jokes rather than facts. Convinced he's landed the biggest fish of his career, Harrison travels to Iran to write a family history for the Shah.

Springer gives an insider's account of the origins of the Islamic Revolution, describing the old regime's bureaucrats, the Western hangers-on gathered at the Hilton and the Shah himself. As the dark ages descend on Tehran, Harrison's infatuation with his secretary, Patricia Jahanbari, the embodiment of the modern secular Iran of the 1970s, propels him and the book to a crushing, dismal ending. This abrupt swing from comedy to tragedy is vintage Springer.

— Full German translation by Helga van Beuningen available.

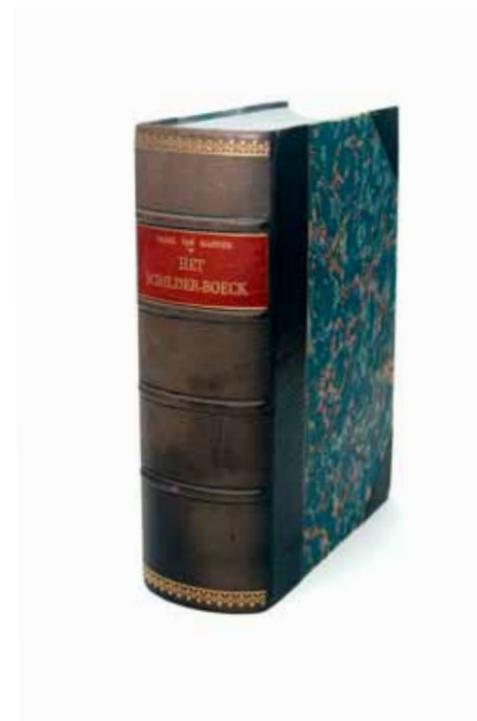
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Non-fiction
Classics

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Karel van Mander *The Book of Painters*

Karel van Mander (1548-1606) is known mainly as a poet and author, although in his own day he was also successful as a painter and a designer of prints and tapestries. He was born in Meulebeke in Flanders and spent several years in Rome before settling in Haarlem in 1583 and helping to found an academy of painting, where he taught for twenty years. His pupils included Frans Hals.



Het schilderboek (1604)
200 pp, 100.000 words
With commentary (54.000 words)

Rights
Public domain

Translations
For all translations see
www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Karel van Mander's monumental *The Book of Painters* of 1604 was underpinned by literary scholarship as well as a familiarity with the practice of painting. It was a winning combination. In writing the book, Van Mander set out to educate young artists who had yet to learn the trade and become its worthy practitioners. Over the years *The Book of Painters* became an indispensable, entertaining source of knowledge, both of the painters of the Low Countries and of their work in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Living in Italy between 1573 and 1577, Van Mander became familiar with the genre of artists' biographies that dated back to antiquity but was given new form around the mid-sixteenth century by Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Architects, Painters and Sculptors*. Van Mander followed Vasari in combining biographies and anecdotes with descriptions of works of art. This formed the core of his work, making up three of the five volumes. He relied on traditional sources for such ancient artists as Zeuxis, Parasius and Apelles, the 'Prince of Painters', while Vasari was his source for the Italians, from Giotto to Michelangelo.

The main significance of Van Mander's work lies in the volume dealing with the 'Illustrious Netherlandish and High-German Painters' in which, based on his own research, he tells the stories of painters and painting in the German lands and especially the Low Countries. Van Mander begins around 1420 with the brothers Jan and Hubert van Eyck, who created the astonishing 'Adoration of the Mystic Lamb' altarpiece that can still be seen in the St. Bavo Cathedral in Ghent. The author regarded them as having laid the foundations for the great tradition of Netherlandish painting.

Of the later Dutch masters, Van Mander reserved his greatest admiration for those who took their lead from the classics and the Italian Renaissance. Among them was Joannes Stradanus, who worked for the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Another, Bartholomaeus Spranger, was on a par with Italian artists at the court of Rudolph II in Prague. In Van Mander's opinion the Haarlem engraver and painter Hendrick Goltzius could rival the great Michelangelo both in style and in his choice of subjects. There is an immediacy to this volume, due in part to the painters' own responses to a list of questions that Van Mander sent them.

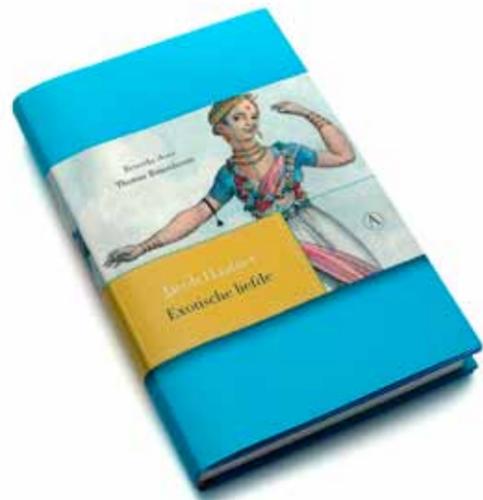
The three biographical volumes of *The Book of Painters* are buttressed by volume one, which covers the theory and practice of the painter's trade, and the final volume, where Van Mander reveals how painters would rely upon Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for mythological themes. The book is a milestone in Dutch art historiography, with its well-documented attention to individual artists and the elevation of their trade to the status of a respectable profession. Van Mander presents extraordinary insights, personal yet based on extensive knowledge, into the artistic world that prepared the way for the famous Dutch Golden Age.

To this day we owe our knowledge of many painters to Van Mander's remarkable work. His writing is lively and personal, anecdotal, amusing and fresh.

NRC Handelsblad

Jacob Haafner Travels in a Palanquin

In the late eighteenth century Jacob Haafner travelled to India and Ceylon. He fell in love with the East and learned several of the local languages. In his account, published after his return in 1787, Haafner denounced the rapacity and barbarity of the Dutch and British in their dealings with the natives and with the slaves. His *Travels in a Palanquin* is an outstanding work of Dutch romantic literature. He tells of a thousand-kilometre voyage he made in 1786 along the east coast of India, from Calcutta to Negapatnam, in a palanquin (a luxurious sedan chair), ingeniously interweaving his observations with the tale of his love for a young, beautiful Indian dancer called Mamia and her heartrending death.



Exotische liefde (2011)
254 pp, 100.000 words
With illustrations

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Publisher
Athenaeum - Polak & Van Genneep
+31 20 551 1262
www.uitgeverijatheneum.nl

In the seventeenth century, their Golden Age, the Dutch excelled at painting, innovative business enterprise and adventurous sea travel, voyaging to Africa, Asia, and North and South America. They came upon the Chinese and Japanese, Persians and Javanese, Indians, Khoikhois, Inuit, Papuans, Easter Islanders and Tierra del Fuegians, for whom it was often their first contact with Europeans. Dozens of Dutch seamen, merchants, administrators and military men wrote reports of their travels and encounters, creating a literary genre that became extraordinarily popular in the Netherlands. Sober yet entertaining, their books offered an irresistible combination of adventure, drama and observation. Through the many translations, readers in the rest of Europe gained their first insights into distant regions.

An early example of the genre is a book by Gerrit de Veer, one of the survivors of the winter of 1596 on Nova Zembla, where a ship carrying seventeen Dutchmen became trapped in pack ice during a failed expedition to Asia. They survived the harsh conditions in a house built of driftwood and managed, by some miracle, to return to the Netherlands. De Veer's gripping account became an instant bestseller that is eagerly consumed in the Netherlands to this day (a film based on the book became a box-office hit in 2011).

Other outstanding practitioners of the rich Dutch travel-writing tradition are Adriaen van der Donck, Johan Nieuhoff and Willem Bosman. In 1655 Van der Donck, in service with the Dutch West India Company, was the first to give a detailed description of the lives of the Native Americans in the colony of New Netherland, along the Hudson and Delaware rivers. That same year, Nieuhoff travelled on behalf of the Dutch East India Company to the imperial court in Peking. He failed to secure any trading contracts, but his account is one of the liveliest descriptions we have of seventeenth-century China. Half a century later, Bosman shocked his readers with a disturbing depiction of the slave trade on the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), where he had become a powerful merchant at the Elmina slave fort.

Two centuries of Dutch stories from overseas

- Gerrit de Veer, *A True Description of Three Voyages by the North-East towards Cathay and China* (Waerachtighe beschryvinghe van de drie seylagien, ter werelt noyt soo vreemt ghehoort, Amsterdam 1598)
- Adriaen van der Donck, *Description of New Netherland* (Beschryvinge van Nieuw Nederlant, Amsterdam 1655)
- Johan Nieuhoff, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China* (Het gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, of Sineeschen Keizer, na Peking in Sina, Amsterdam 1665)
- Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts* (Nauwkeurige beschryving van de Guinese Goud- Tand- en Slavekust, Utrecht 1704)
- Jacob Haafner, *Travels in a Palanquin* (Reize in eenen Palanquin, Amsterdam 1808)

Haafner deserves to be wrested from oblivion if only because he was so progressive in his day.

Maarten 't Hart

Vincent van Gogh The Best of his Letters

Vincent van Gogh was born in the southern Dutch town of Zundert in 1853. He worked as an apprentice art dealer and as a missionary, but decided in 1880 to devote himself to art. After falling out with his family, and feeling isolated from the art world, he moved to Paris, where his brother Theo lived and worked. There he met Paul Gauguin and several other important young artists. In 1888 he moved to Arles in the South of France, weary of the big city and hoping to find a better atmosphere and quality of light. He toyed with the idea of establishing an artists' cooperative, but periods of intense productivity were punctuated by bouts of severe mental illness. Van Gogh killed himself in 1890.



The Quintessential Van Gogh (1872-1890)
265 letters (151 in Dutch, 112 in French,
1 in English and 1 in English/Dutch)
600 pp, 364.000 words
With 108 sketches (in 52 letters)
Introduction by the editors Leo Jansen,
Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker, curators at
the Van Gogh Museum (15.000 words)

Rights
Van Gogh Museum, Ms Suzanne Bogman, Head of
Publications, P.O. Box 75366, 1070 AJ Amsterdam,
+31 20 570 52 14, bogman@vangoghmuseum.nl,
www.vangoghletters.org

Translations
The Letters. The complete illustrated and annotated edition, 6 vols. (2009); in Dutch (Amsterdam University Press), English (Yale University Press) and French (Actes Sud)

Vincent van Gogh was a gifted writer as well as a pioneering artist. The hundreds of letters he wrote to his brother Theo and to artist friends including Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard amount to a running commentary on his life and work. They also helped him to develop his ideas about art, about life, about painting techniques and artistic ambitions. He wrote of his perpetual struggle and his meagre success, of despair and illness. Van Gogh's letters are the most moving artist's correspondence in world literature.

Even those who feel they know all there is to know about Van Gogh will be surprised by this generous selection from the complete correspondence published to great acclaim in 2009. It demonstrates that the prevailing image of a capricious and restless genius does not reflect the full reality. Van Gogh was not always drunk or depressed, hastily committing the world around him to canvas. His letters are not irrational rants full of incoherent assertions. True, he had great difficulty keeping his personal life on track, but when it comes to his vision of art, his artistic ambitions, the literature he devoured or his opinions on society and human existence, his thinking was structured and purposeful. He was a seeker and he took life seriously in every sense. There are no trivialities here.

The letters offer not only a detailed insight into Van Gogh's inner life but a vision of the world in which he moved, coloured, at times distorted, by his own point of view. He was not so isolated as the myth would suggest. Conscious of the advance of industrialization that typified the nineteenth century, in his youth he read contemporary classics, and as an artist he followed innovative authors such as Zola and Maupassant. He was familiar with the artistic avant-garde in Paris and exchanged ideas and works with its major figures, including Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat and Paul Signac.

Van Gogh's powers of observation and his astute analyses of people and situations are accompanied by a strong feeling for language and apposite turns of phrase. It has been said that he could have become a writer had he not been an artist. His prose is utterly compelling, straight from the heart and free of sensationalism. Each letter contains an argument, a point, an aim. Van Gogh considered it a mortal sin to be noncommittal; in his writing, as in his art, something was always at stake.

This selection of letters shows that Van Gogh, despite his difficult character and egocentric behaviour, always held to a clearly plotted course. He knew what he was about, and the poignant *document humain* that testifies to the fact has the same characteristic fervour as his art: 'I want to go forward at any price and – I want to be myself.'

There is scarcely one letter by Van Gogh which I, who am certainly no expert, do not find fascinating.

W.H. Auden

The purest of styles

Charles Bukowski

Piet Mondrian

The New Art – The New Life

Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), pioneer of abstract painting, was greeted internationally as the most important Dutch painter since Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh. To this day he is regarded as one of the top hundred artists of all time. His work is represented in art collections all over the world.

Piet Mondrian's literary oeuvre remains largely undiscovered to this day, despite its immense importance to anyone endeavouring to understand the abstract visual language that made Mondrian one of the most influential figures in modern art. It is of great value in its own right, in that it expresses a firm conviction that art will conquer all domains of life, both individual and public, thereby eventually eliminating itself.

Mondrian's message is so all-encompassing that it led him to use a wide range of literary forms: essays, short prose, philosophical fragments, works for the theatre, journalism and autobiography. No facet of modern life was too trivial to be included in his writing on culture. He was equally likely to explore the significance of bars, the essence of jazz or modern man's need for optimal hygiene.

Although Mondrian lived at a time of economic and political crisis and war, and felt intimidated by the rise of a mass society (to his death he consistently refused to use the telephone), his vision of humanity was remarkably optimistic. He had a sincere semi-religious faith that the good in people would ultimately triumph and that mind would prevail over matter.

From the moment he first fully committed himself to abstract painting, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Mondrian felt a need to justify his artistic opinions in writing. The rigour and fervour with which he professed his ideals on paper have rightly led to comparisons with other great prophets of abstraction such as Kandinsky, Malevich and Klee, all three of whose essays on art theory long ago received the worldwide recognition that still awaits Mondrian's writing.

Mondrian's desire for an international career led him to use several different languages in his literary work, depending on which country he was living in at the time – respectively the Netherlands, France (1912-1914 and 1919-1938), Britain (1938-1940) and the United States (1940-1944). His artistic and political choices clearly determined where he lived: Paris because that metropolis was the world's artistic focal point in his day, London because he felt safe there for a while from the rise of national socialism in Germany, and New York because the voluntary exile saw in that city the beginnings of his ideal future: an urban democratic society, shaped by playful human creativity, powered by the latest technologies, breathing to the rhythm of jazz. That dream is tangibly present in everything Mondrian wrote.

It was in editing these writings that I got to understand Mondrian's concepts for the first time.

Robert Motherwell, American abstract painter (responsible in 1945 for the first edition of work by Mondrian written in English)

Mondrian's theoretical attempts constitute a major document of modern culture.

ARTnews

The New Art – The New Life. The collected writings (1986) 400 pp, 200.000 words
With illustrations in black and white, notes and references

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Public domain

Translations
For all translations see
www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Johan Huizinga

The Waning of the Middle Ages

Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) was the most important Dutch historian of the twentieth century. He published a number of classic works, among them *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919) and *Homo Ludens* (1938), as well as a biography of Erasmus (1924) and his final book, *Dutch Civilization in the Seventeenth Century*. Two influential studies in cultural criticism made his name known far beyond his own country and specialist field: *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (1935) and *Disfigured World* (1946). His meticulous investigation into 'forms of life and thought', his sensitivity and his imaginative power made him a leading figure who, although he did not found an academic school, inspired an intellectual culture.

Johan Huizinga is the Netherlands' most famous historian, but he is read primarily as a writer. No ordinary historian would create such a variety of work. In his best known books, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* and *Homo Ludens*, he expresses himself as, respectively, a historian, biographer, cultural critic and anthropologist. Huizinga's work is of lasting value as literature; he was the only convincing candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature the Netherlands has so far produced.

The Waning of the Middle Ages is a classic and, without doubt, Huizinga's masterpiece. It is structured around contrasts: mind and body, life and death, dream and reality, form and content, word and image. His central concern is the relationship between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He argues that they have more in common with each other than with the modern era and regards the late mediaeval period 'not as the precursor of things to come but as the gradual demise of a world nearing its end'.

The book examines the art of the late Middle Ages, in particular that of Van Eyck. Practically all Huizinga's contemporaries were of the opinion that realism in art, with its painstaking depiction of the world in every detail, should be seen as something new, as the harbinger of the Renaissance. Huizinga was aware of the advent of realism but believed it was purely a matter of technique, while the content of Van Eyck's painting was entirely in keeping with the late mediaeval worldview.

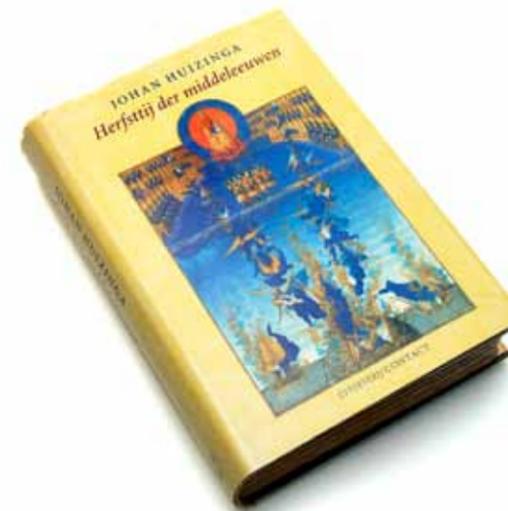
In *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Huizinga presents a periodic table of mediaeval passion by juxtaposing wealth and poverty, warmth and cold, darkness and light, silence and noise, town and country, despair and happiness, cruelty and tenderness. At the same time he describes the rituals used to channel that passion, the processions and ceremonies, executions and sermons. His almost tactile account of the intricacies of daily life strongly influenced what would later be known as the history of mentalities.

Huizinga was a major influence on art historians. *The Waning of the Middle Ages* culminates in two brilliant chapters about the relationship between word and image in mediaeval culture. He wrote that it almost seemed 'as if that century had painted only its virtues and described only its vices'. His book was an attempt to correct this 'visual error' by returning the ethereal art of the time to its living context and comparing the words written with the images painted. The impact of those two chapters was immense, breathing fresh life into a whole branch of study.

Despite his fame and the continuing popularity of his work, many of Huizinga's potential readers remain unaware of his existence. Much has been translated, much of it badly. Other classic works, especially the magnificent essays he published in two influential collections, are still waiting to be opened up to an international readership. His work is rather like the wreck of a seventeenth-century galleon: treasures await anyone who ventures to raise it.

It is one of the greatest, as well as one of the most enthralling, historical classics of the twentieth century.

Francis Haskell, author of *Patrons and Painters*



Herfsttij der middeleeuwen (1919)
471 pp, 176.000 words
40.000 copies sold of 1997 edition

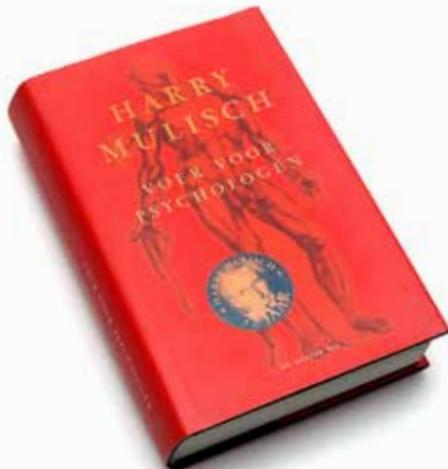
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Translations
For all translations see
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Harry Mulisch

Fodder for Psychologists

Harry Mulisch (1927-2010) made his debut in 1951 with the novella *Between Hammer and Anvil*. His oeuvre steadily grew to encompass eleven novels, six short-story collections, eight novellas, nine poetry collections, seven stage plays, many books of essays, pamphlets and studies. At the time of the student and workers' revolts of the 1960s, Mulisch wrote mainly political essays rather than novels. One of his most important non-fiction works is *Criminal Case 40/61*, in which he reports on the trial of Adolf Eichmann and dissects the fascistic personality.



Voer voor psychologen (1961)
251 pp, 80.000 words

Rights

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For over half a century Harry Mulisch has been the Netherlands' most eminent writer. He is still recognized as such all over the world because of the profound questions about human existence he addresses in his work, yet there is nothing ponderous about his style; a love story with an exciting plot can be read as a philosophical essay about basic human values. All his writing explores issues of conscience and ways of orienting ourselves in a rapidly changing society.

The central concern is always humanity's moral lapse, which Mulisch saw as culminating in the Second World War, a crucial disjunction in the history of civilization. That war rendered former values redundant, and concepts of guilt and innocence became relative. In his early novel *The Stone Bridal Bed* Mulisch puts this insight into the mind of an American pilot who has dropped bombs on Dresden. In his last novel, *Siegfried*, he goes so far as to subject Adolf Hitler to a thought experiment in which the final remnants of his humanity fall away. With astonishing ease, Mulisch connects pioneering technological advances with new moral dilemmas. His masterpiece *The Discovery of Heaven* is an extended critique of the technology-dominated society towards which the twenty-first century is headed.

In Mulisch's view any serious writer is morally obliged to weigh social change against humanity's universal moral standards. As a consequence he investigates and calls to account his own authorship. He was one of the first Dutch writers to analyse what he was doing, and his *Fodder for Psychologists* remains topical to this day, having lost none of its power as an examination of the conscience of the twenty-first-century individual. In the autobiographical sections he presents ironic descriptions of the origins and development of his life as a writer, interspersing them with short stories, dialogues and philosophical or scientific disquisitions. The book includes one of the most moving and sharply observed passages of Mulisch's entire oeuvre, in which he describes his father's death.

Crucial to *Fodder for Psychologists* are Mulisch's pronouncements on the writing profession, some of which have become common currency in the Dutch literary world, such as: 'It's not the writer's imagination that counts but the reader's.' Or: 'Anyone who writes affects people. The change he causes in people, in society, in literature, is *him*. He lives on in it.' Most often quoted is his final declaration: 'It is best to magnify the mystery.' This sentence has often been used to characterize Mulisch's complex work, and it is precisely what continues to make *Fodder for Psychologists* so fascinating: he gives an account of his authorship that is at times moving, at times comical, but in the end the power of a literary work remains a mystery.

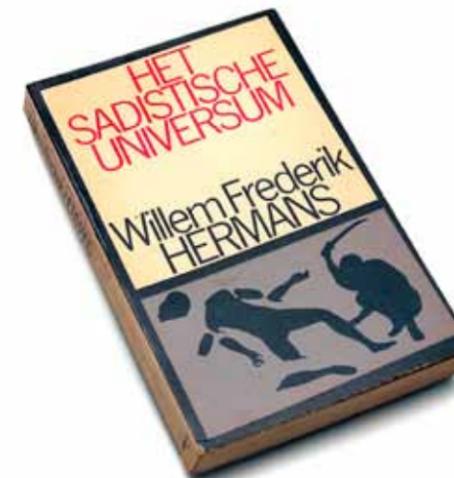
If you want to read a beautiful and powerful book, an asset to our literature, then throw yourself upon this *Fodder for Psychologists*.

Louis Paul Boon

Willem Frederik Hermans

The Sadistic Universe

Willem Frederik Hermans (1921-1995) is considered by many to be the Netherlands' greatest writer, based on several classic novels that include *Acacia's Tears*, *The Darkroom of Damocles* and *Beyond Sleep*. Initially he practised criticism as polemic, as a means of demanding attention and space for his fiction and for the ideas at its root. This resulted in the most famous collection of polemic in Dutch literature, *Mandarins in Sulphuric Acid*. Hermans also wrote many essays that have gained classic status in the Netherlands, summarizing his outlook in the term *mondo cane*, a dog's world in which the human being is nothing more than 'a chemical process' and nothing less than a 'jungle animal'.



Het sadistische universum (1965)
179 pp, 70.000 words

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The Sadistic Universe is the most remarkable essay collection of post-war Dutch literature – as the author intended. In his foreword Hermans announces a completely new type of essay, resolving to name his sources, translate all quotations and draw conclusions that will not please the reader.

Willem Frederik Hermans regarded himself above all as a novelist, yet at least a third of his oeuvre consists of essays and criticism, intended to challenge as well as elucidate. Hermans employs a scorched-earth policy to clear a path for his own ideas and methods. Some of the 'monologues' in *The Sadistic Universe* have become classics, targeting the English ('Monologue of an Anglophobe'), horse-lovers, doctors, filmmakers and crime writers. At the same time they are grimly cheerful, using humour as a defensive tactic.

Among the essays are exposés of a kind that would make Roland Barthes proud: 'The phenomenology of the pin-up girl' links its subject to 'everything that is dead, unused, and immaculate', while 'The new nature' describes the modern cultured person as a new barbarian who understands less about his surroundings than a Trobriand Islander in New Guinea. In the series 'Minor Protocols', about a visit to Oradour sur Glane, a climb up Etna and a journey through Spain, he listens to the sinister insinuations of a sadistic universe which underlies everyday reality.

The title of the collection is taken from its first essay, about the Marquis de Sade, but it represents Hermans' entire project as a writer, which is to look 'behind no-trespassing signs', to bring out the jungle animal lodged in us all. For Hermans there are really only two types of writer: those who say what the public wants to hear (the 'whorenalists'), and those who say what the public actually knows to be true but has no wish to hear, 'what it has dreamed but repressed on waking'.

In the central essay, 'Antipathetic characters in novels', he accounts for his authorship in a way no Dutch writer before him had done. Here again are those blunt dichotomies. There are two kinds of fictional character, likeable and unlikeable, and two kinds of writer: 'The first try to justify themselves as people, while the second try to justify themselves as writers.'

Hermans' oeuvre is specific to his own reality. We cannot know how the world really is and supposedly realistic novels are essentially mythical – unconsciously so, whereas Hermans' goal is deliberately to create a mythology. He consciously 'wants the impossible' and when asked precisely what he means by that, he responds: to be immortal – an impossible notion, since 'actual immortality ought to make it possible for him one day to make good everything that has gone wrong, to put right all the damage done'.

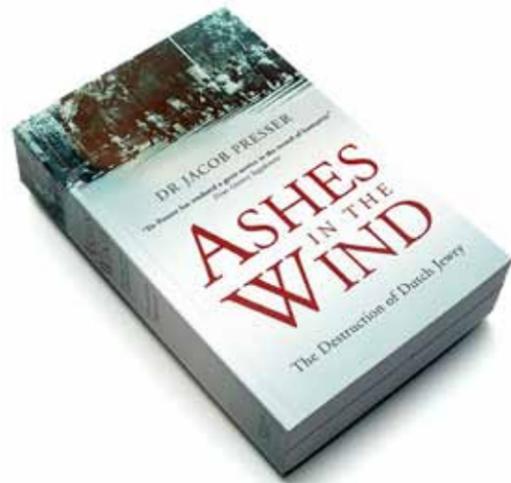
It's possible to see *The Sadistic Universe* as a range of exhibits, as a fat dossier packed with facts, entertaining, odd and scientific, that testify to copious knowledge and inventiveness, along with fantastic illustrations and gruff rebuttals: all in all an impressive accumulation of incriminating evidence against life.

Het Parool

Jacques Presser

Ashes in the Wind

Jacques Presser, historian and author, was an enthusiastic, highly original contemporary historian who regarded history writing as an art rather than an academic discipline. He came to fame as a committed chronicler of the murder of the Jews and as a much-loved professor, making frequent use of what he calls 'ego documents' – a term now commonly used for written sources of a distinctly personal character. *Ashes in the Wind* was his last book, and it demanded the utmost of him.



Ashes in the Wind by historian Jacques Presser is a raw book, an emotional and bitter account of the fate of the Jews of the Netherlands. The memoirs, diaries and letters used to illustrate it cannot fail to affect the reader. Presser felt duty-bound 'to be an interpreter for those who are condemned to eternal silence; only here and now, only this one time, could they make themselves heard once more'. Nowadays it goes without saying that no history of genocide against the Jews can confine itself to the perspective of the perpetrators, but when this book appeared in the 1960s that was far from the case.

Presser was himself one of the persecuted. *Ashes in the Wind* includes his personal experiences, and his identity card with its 'J' for Jew. He survived the war by going underground; his wife was deported and murdered. He had great trouble embarking on the book, until the writing of his novella *Night of the Girondists* (1957) helped him to break through. Its protagonist at the Dutch transit camp Westerbork cooperates in the selection and transport of Jews, becoming increasingly aware of his own Jewishness as his identity crisis moves towards its tragic climax.

Night of the Girondists is obviously personal, a reflection of Presser's own attitude as he became more engaged with his Jewishness, which from that point on he regarded as an inescapable community of fate. It was this hard-won sense of solidarity, combined with an urge to commemorate the dead, that guided him in writing *Ashes in the Wind*. Presser spares no one. He points firmly to the share of responsibility that falls to Dutch society, and in the name of the victims he passes harsh judgment on the behaviour of the leaders of the Jewish community: 'You were the tools of our mortal enemies. You helped with our deportation. You owe your lives to that obscene activity.'

Judgement passed on the Jewish leaders is more nuanced today, recognizing the stark 'choiceless choices' they faced, but at the time *Ashes in the Wind* was published, the war had barely passed into history, and only a few years earlier Adolf Eichmann had been executed after a sensational trial. Presser's book prompted self-examination. 'What did we Dutch do?' wrote a reviewer in 1965. 'We may have felt sympathy, but we didn't prevent what happened.' Perhaps even more importantly, Presser inspired a new generation to continue researching the persecution and extermination of the Jews. More than fifty years later, *Ashes in the Wind* still moves readers and forces them to think.

Presser saw the best and the worst of the Dutch response to Nazi occupation. To an impressive extent he carried this balanced view into his remarkable book.

The Jewish Chronicle

Presser has rendered a great service to the record of humanity. *Ashes in the wind* is a monument to the memory of the Jewish citizens of Holland who were massacred.

Times Literary Supplement

Ondergang. De vernietiging en verdelging van het Nederlandse jodendom 1940-1945 (1965)
556 pp, 250.000 words,
English authorized edition (1968/2010)
More than 200.000 copies sold

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Karel van het Reve

Hours with Henk Broekhuis

Karel van het Reve (1921-1999) was a Slavist, writer and translator. From 1957 to 1983 he was professor of Slavic literature at the University of Leiden, with a break in 1967-1968 when he served as Moscow correspondent for the Dutch daily newspaper *Het Parool*. He was a productive essayist and a newspaper and radio columnist, as well as the author of two novels. He made his name with his *History of Russian Literature from St. Vladimir to Anton Chekhov* and in 1981 he was awarded the P.C. Hooft Prize for his essays.



Karel van het Reve was a professor of Slavic literature, but he is mainly known as an essayist. For decades his was the voice of common sense, as he picked holes in fashionable beliefs before consigning them to the bin. He was at his best when letting fly at popular 'truths', whether derived from everyday life or borrowed from acknowledged authorities. He questioned, often to devastating effect, Freud's ideas, Darwin's theory of evolution, literary studies, the communist world view, Dostoyevsky's reputation, sociology, the revolutionary left, religion and much more. His weapons were level-headedness, humour, an irrepressible urge to rile and pester, and above all a clear, deceptively simple style.

Van het Reve came from a communist background. His books and articles about Russian writing included *The Soviet Annexation of the Classics*, a contrarian history of the country's literature up to the end of the nineteenth century. Van het Reve worked as a correspondent in Moscow for a year, from 1967 to 1968. As a result of coming into contact with *samizdat* Russian writers, some of whom became his friends, he set up the Alexander Herzen Foundation to ensure that their work could be published in the West. One of his most important books was *The Faith of the Comrades*, a masterly dismantling of communist doctrine. Having abandoned the communist faith, Van het Reve seems to have resolved never again to become the victim of any such delusionary system. He could spot humbug at ten paces and would fervently set about combating it.

Hours with Henk Broekhuis is a collection of articles first published in a prominent newspaper. Henk Broekhuis was the upright Dutch persona he adopted for the collection. Each article analyses and refutes a popular misconception, received idea or fashionable opinion. He writes about the pencil as a phallic symbol, a light bulb that would burn for a century, the dangers of swimming in ebb and flood tides, the poor getting poorer as the rich get richer, the influence of advertising, the Russian revolution, Jewish dietary laws – in short, all manner of issues in the fields of culture, politics, religion and society. These essays have lost none of their topicality.

In recent years Van het Reve's collected works have been published in a seven-volume India-paper edition (6,500 pages in total), meeting with a degree of success unprecedented for essayistic writing. More than ten years after his death, he is back at the centre of public debate. On many an issue, columnists sigh: 'I wonder what his opinion would have been about this,' or, 'If only Karel van het Reve was still alive.'

Irresistible: a lucid style, brilliant examples, and, throughout, the deadpan expression of a man standing aside and refusing to be flustered by all the fuss.

De Volkskrant

With his feigned innocence, Karel van het Reve has been making the Netherlands think for some fifty years.

Vrij Nederland

Uren met Henk Broekhuis (1978)
136 pp, 62.000 words
12.000 copies sold

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Rudy Kousbroek

The Secret of the Past

Forty Black-and-White Journeys through Time

Rudy Kousbroek (1929-2010) wrote more than forty books over the course of half a century. The polemical core of his work is *The East Indies Camp Syndrome* (1992) in which he uses intense childhood memories to analyse political relations in the colonial East Indies as well as the controversial realities of the wartime internment camps. In all his essays Kousbroek is extraordinarily successful at switching back and forth between history and politics on the one hand and personal and autobiographical material on the other, which makes his work both immediate and universal.



Opgespoorde wonderen (2003-2010)
90 pp, 40.000 words
40 illustrations in black and white

Publisher

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Translations

Spanish (Adriana Hidalgo)

While novelists Harry Mulisch and Willem Frederik Hermans were giving the Second World War its place in Dutch literature, essayist and journalist Rudy Kousbroek immortalized the drama of decolonization in the Dutch East Indies as no other writer has done. He approached his subject from many perspectives (political, historical, autobiographical), but only towards the end of his life did he discover the ideal form. He called it 'photosynthesis', a combination of a black-and-white photograph printed on ordinary paper and an essay of just one thousand words. He published three collections of such pieces, almost a hundred in all, and *The Secret of the Past* contains a careful selection of these visual-literary journeys through time. They are a monument to autobiographical memory as well as an eloquent protest at the passing of time.

Born in Sumatra in 1929, the son of a Dutch planter, Kousbroek emigrated to the Netherlands in 1946 and lived in Amsterdam for only four years before settling in Paris, where his studies included Japanese, Chinese and mathematics. He lived abroad for almost fifty years altogether, yet along with Slavist Karel van het Reve he is regarded as the most important essayist of postwar Dutch literature. In 1975 he was awarded the P.C. Hooft Prize for his oeuvre to date, the highest literary honour in the Netherlands.

As a writer of political and cultural essays, Kousbroek was a critical rationalist and a polemicist. Averse to such varied phenomena as religion, Maoism, factory farming, fashion and sport, he could be vehement to the point of activism. The enormous breadth of his interests stemmed from his scientifically trained, investigative spirit, coupled with a great enthusiasm for methodical thinking and the miracles of technology.

His yearning for the 'country of origin', the long-lost East Indies, nourished Kousbroek's writing, providing him with a wide range of memories, dreams and fantasies. It also shaped his many attempts to delve into history at other times and places. In *The Secret of the Past* a Proustian autobiographical quest broadens into a comprehensive bid to recreate the landscape, the music, the architecture, the tenderness and the smells of a permanently 'lost time' with the maximum possible precision. Ruins in the jungle, the airships of the inter-war years, demolished railway stations, dead pets, the streets of Paris, a little church on the Banda Islands, the departure of an ocean steamer: the gamut of emotions conjured up by Kousbroek is perfectly balanced by the accuracy with which he investigates and presents his discoveries. The apparently simple photograph of his father which ends the book is transformed by its accompanying essay into an enchanting portrait of a man loved by all. There are few non-fiction books in Dutch literature that so stimulate the reader to identify with an author's deepest impulses.

His knowledge and his often brilliant comprehension of technical matters help him in accurately deciphering a photograph, while the emotion with which he greets the discovery makes it meaningful, giving it a place in a wide world of knowledge and experience.

Vrij Nederland



C

Dutch
Children's books
Classics

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Annie M.G. Schmidt

Only one writer was entitled to call herself the uncrowned queen of the Netherlands – and that writer was Annie M.G. Schmidt (1911-1995). Her work should be seen as part of Dutch cultural heritage. Three generations have already grown up with the pleasure of reading, listening to, singing and reciting her children’s poems, songs and books, which subvert Dutch family life with their humour and a touch of venom.

Annie M.G. Schmidt’s characters are firmly rooted in the Dutch soil, but at the same time their adventures show a healthy dose of imagination. Her child characters are small, independent spirits, who refuse to allow the adults around them to boss them about. They have names like Pluk or Abeltje or Otje or Floddertje or Wiplala. They drive around in a red tow truck (Pluk), fly out of the department store inside a lift (Abeltje) or talk to animals (Otje).

With her aversion to big words, her playful anarchy and unconventional humour, Annie M.G. Schmidt came as a breath of fresh air in the Netherlands of the 1950s. A king slides down the banister, the manager of a soup factory gets turned into a dog and a terrified knight calls for his mother. It is these amusing inversions of stereotypes and the undermining of authority that made Schmidt so popular with her young readers. *Het fluitketeltje* (The Whistling Kettle), her first collection of children’s poems, came out in 1950 and was followed by a constant flood of publications: poems, columns, children’s books, the first radio soap in the Netherlands, cabaret songs, television series and musicals. Almost everything that Annie M.G. Schmidt wrote was a great success – lots of readers loved her direct language, her irony and her sense of absurdity.

Schmidt said that for a long time, as she was growing up as the daughter of a minister and later working as a librarian, she felt like a ‘mossy tree trunk’. That all changed when she found a job at the former resistance newspaper *Het Parool*, where she got to know journalists and artists. This newspaper was where she published her first children’s rhymes and also began her famous series of stories for toddlers about Jip and Janneke, a little boy and girl who live next door to each other. This was also the start of a long collaboration with illustrator Fiep Westendorp. Over five million copies of the collected stories about Jip and Janneke have now been sold.

Although Schmidt wrote her most famous work forty years or more ago, her books are still being reprinted today. They are still captivating and believable today because they are always slightly detached from the real world. This timelessness also has much to do with the writer’s sparkling sense of humour, which transcends the generations. There is also the fact that, in spite of their quirky domesticity, her books carry a message. *Pluk van de Petteflet* (Tow-Truck Pluck, which won a Zilveren Griffel in 1971), for example, is about a boy who goes out and fights against spray cans and concrete. Then there’s Schmidt’s biggest international success, *Minoes* (Zilveren Griffel, 1970), which is about a cat that turns into a woman after eating the wrong thing from a bin at a scientific laboratory. But Schmidt’s writing never becomes moralistic. She felt that a children’s book had to be true and never fake. Schmidt meant that a story should be written from the heart and should never be used to force a message upon children. Judging by the immense popularity of her work, she clearly succeeded in spades.

— Astrid Lindgren presented the Hans Christian Andersen Award to Annie M.G. Schmidt in 1988.

— Many of Schmidt’s children’s books have been made into films (*Minoes*, *Abeltje*, *Otje*). There was also a television series about her life, based on the biography *Anna* by Annejet van der Zijl.



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Works

Pluk van de Petteflet (1970)
Minoes (1969)
Jip en Janneke
Otje (1980)
Abeltje (1953)
Wiplala (1957)

Translations

For translated titles by Annie M.G. Schmidt
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Paul Biegel

Paul Biegel (1925-2006) felt that he was unable to describe real life, but as soon as he started making things up, his writing took on a life of its own. The more than sixty books that make up his legacy are firmly rooted in the fairytale tradition of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Biegel never followed trends in children's literature, but fantasy and fairytale were constant features of his work.



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Works

Sleutelkruid (1964)
De kleine kapitein (1970)
Nachtverhaal
De tuinen van Dorr
Juttertje Tim (1991)
De soldatenmaker (1994)

Translations

For translated titles by Paul Biegel
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Through Biegel's book a procession of wizards, fairies, robbers, gnomes and trolls makes its way. His animals are often able to talk, magic is never far away, and the battle between Good and Evil must always be fought, over and over again. What really fascinated Biegel was the adventure, the theme of the quest for higher and deeper wisdom that lies hidden in fairy tales.

'He who seeks shall find, but not always what he was seeking,' says the blind wizard Aljassus in *De tuinen van Dorr* (The Gardens of Dorr, 1969), Biegel's own favourite book. This story serves as a good example of his work, because of the frame narrative that subtly provides the structure of the book, as is the case in two other highlights of Biegel's oeuvre: *Het sleutelkruid* (1964, published in English as *The King of the Copper Mountains*) and *Nachtverhaal* (Night Story, 1992). The book also features typical Biegelian names: Princess Mijnewel (Princess Allmine) and the gardener's boy Jouweniet (Notyours), whose love is frustrated by the wicked witch Sirdis. Sirdis is a typical example of the women in Biegel's work: sly and envious, domineering and vicious, witch and woman at the same time. This female often appears in his later stories, in a variety of different guises, such as the Bronze Lady in the grim war story *De soldatenmaker* (The Soldier-Maker, 1994) or as the black widow in the book of the same name from 1984, who is sometimes a seductive woman, but sometimes a man-eating giant spider.

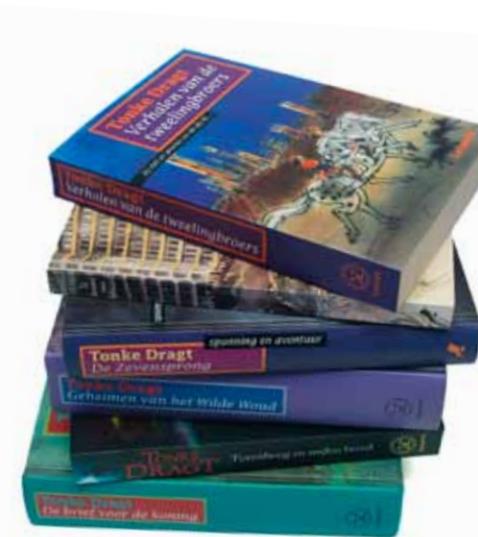
As well as a 'master storyteller with the heart of a highwayman', as Biegel is often described, he is viewed as one of the most important linguistic innovators in Dutch children's literature. Biegel masterfully juggles sound and rhythm. His sparkling sentences are full of alliteration, rhyme, puns and incantations. The writer often added new words to his vocabulary, fun innovations of the kind that appear in the language of Roald Dahl's Big Friendly Giant: someone produces a 'flabby snorking' sound, while someone else has a 'crankety' voice, and characters have evocative names such as Klissedimmer, Glop and Gnazabar. Biegel's language, with its unorthodox inventions and clever phrases, always triumphs, as does his fine sense of humour. Some of Biegel's madcap, unpretentious adventure stories have an episodic structure, because they originally appeared as serialised versions in magazines, such as *Juttertje Tim* (Beachcomber Tim, 1991) and his ever-popular series *De kleine kapitein* (the first part of which came out in 1970) about the little captain who sets out to sea in his boat, the Neverleaky. And then there are Biegel's other books, ones that were not commissioned by magazines, books such as *De tuinen van Dorr*, *Het sleutelkruid*, *De soldatenmaker* and *Nachtverhaal*, which are brimming with mystery and unexpected events and touch upon important themes such as love, loneliness, war and death. The amazing imagination of this teller of fairytales was rewarded in 1973 with the State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature, which was followed by a long series of prizes.

—Of the six finalists for the Griffel der Griffels (the award for the best children's book of the past fifty years), two were by Paul Biegel.

—*De kleine kapitein* is being brought to the big screen by Fu Works, the company that produced *Winter in Wartime* and *Black Book*.

Tonke Dragt

Mention Tonke Dragt (b. 1930) and you have to mention knights. Knights and futuristic worlds. Only two of her substantial novels for young readers, *De zevensprong* (The Seven Ways, 1966) and *De torens van februari* (The Towers of February, 1973), are set in her own era, but those books also combine fantasy and reality.



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Works

Brief voor de koning (1962)
Geheimen van het wilde woud (1965)
De Zevensprong (1966)
Torens van februari (1973)
Verhalen van de tweelingbroers (1961)
Torenhooch en mijlen breed (1969)

Translations

For translated titles by Tonke Dragt
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Tonke Dragt, who was born in Batavia, the Dutch East Indies, was interned in a Japanese prison camp for three years during the Second World War. To escape her bleak reality, she wrote and illustrated stories in old maths exercise books, after erasing the sums, or on toilet paper if nothing else was available. This was writing and drawing as a form of escape from a harsh and complicated world; in the camp, a foundation was laid for a love of writing and illustration that was to become a lifelong career.

The stories that Dragt wrote in her teenage years echoed knightly romances and the science-fiction novels of Jules Verne and she remained faithful to both genres. Her debut in 1961, *De verhalen van de tweelingbroers* (The Stories of the Twin Brothers), is set in a medieval world, where two brothers, each the mirror image of the other, have amazing adventures among troubadours, lords and knights. The motif of the *doppelgänger*, in the form of a twin or one figure divided in two, was to become a constant feature of her work, later appearing in books including *De torens van februari*, which is set in two mirror universes which you can only move between on 29 February.

Two years after her debut, Dragt's most important book *De brief voor de koning* (The Letter for the King) was published. In a universe made up of thick castle walls, dark forests and steep mountain ridges, the young squire Tiuri receives a secret mission on the eve of his knighting ceremony. What follows is an action-packed quest, generously sprinkled with fairytale themes and elements taken from Arthurian legend, in a book that continues to keep readers glued to its pages almost half a century after its publication. In 1965 came the equally exciting sequel, *Geheimen van het wilde woud* (Secrets of the Wild Woods), which was the last of her large-scale knightly romances. She then wrote a contemporary book and a number of shorter stories before embarking on a radically new course in 1969. Dragt's new title was *Torenhooch en mijlen breed* (Sky High and Miles Wide), a fascinating novel about the future, set on the planet Venus. Gradually her books took on a more philosophical character. Within the limits of the universes that the author so carefully constructs, her characters are always searching for the meaning of life and trying to discover who they are. Dragt enjoys experimenting with the magic of everyday life and there is always a suggestion of mystery about the events she creates.

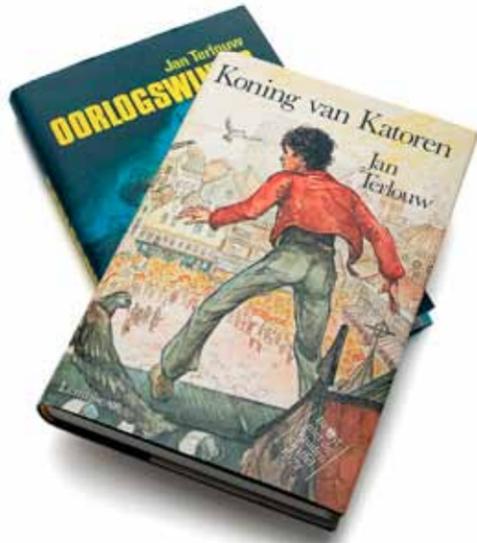
In 1976, Tonke Dragt was awarded the State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature for her imaginative and ingeniously constructed stories, which place her in the same tradition as Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Michael Ende. Since the 1990s, she has been working on a new, wide-ranging cycle, *Zeeën van Tijd* (Oceans of Time), the first part of which was published in 1992. This series is an exercise in thinking about space and time, Einstein's theory of relativity and the music of Bach.

—*De brief voor de koning* won the Griffel der Griffels in 2004, a 'winner of winners' award for the best children's book of the past fifty years.

—Over a million copies of the book have been sold.

Jan Terlouw

Very few politicians have turned their party manifesto into a successful children's book. Jan Terlouw (b. 1931) did exactly this in 1971 as a brand-new member of the Dutch parliament with the social-liberal party D66, when he wrote *Koning van Katoren* (King of Katoren) and won the Gouden Griffel, the prize for the best children's book of the year. Within a fairytale setting, a series of events unfolds that are all connected to the ideals of his party. However, as far as children are concerned, what they are reading is first and foremost an exciting tale, written in a direct style, with great pace and tension.



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Works
Koning van Katoren (1971)
Zoektocht in Katoren (2007)
Oorlogswinter (1972)

Translations
For translated titles by Jan Terlouw
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

In *Koning van Katoren* six grumpy ministers rule the land of Katoren and claim that they are looking for someone to succeed the dead king, but nothing ever happens – until the day Stach turns up on the doorstep, determined to become the new king. The ministers, afraid of losing their comfortable position at the court, give the boy seven almost impossible tasks to perform, all of which somehow involve the problems of modern society.

Hindered by those in authority, but supported by the people and the love of a girl, Stach manages to complete all of his tasks, like a true Hercules. By contrasting traditional views with new insights, Terlouw demonstrates how power corrupts. He continued in the same vein in the sequel *Zoektocht in Katoren* (Quest in Katoren), which was published 36 years later. In his other books, too, the author provided his readers with food for thought by focusing on issues involving ethics, morality, society and the environment, and he wrote with the intention of encouraging young people to take responsibility for their own actions. He was particularly interested in environmental and economic affairs, as can be seen in *Oosterschelde windkracht 10* (1976), which presents a clear picture of the arguments for and against damming the Oosterschelde estuary.

Terlouw's writing career began in 1970, at his wife's insistence, after he had spent years telling their children stories that he had made up. His most autobiographical story is *Oorlogswinter* (Winter in Wartime, 1972), set in the last cold winter of World War II, which again won the Gouden Griffel. The writer himself was eight years old when war broke out and he lived through the occupation. He incorporated some of these experiences into his story, which is not only a gripping book about wartime, but also a nuanced psychological portrait, in which a suspected collaborator shelters Jews and a good friend turns out to be a traitor. In 2008, the book was made into a successful film by Martin Koolhoven. *Winter in Wartime* had a commercial release in countries including America, China, Australia, France and Germany, and narrowly missed out on an Oscar nomination.

In 2010, research showed that Jan Terlouw is the writer with the strongest reputation in the Netherlands – stronger even than a literary author such as Harry Mulisch or young readers' favourite Carry Slee. Terlouw thought this was a fine accolade, but one that needs to be put into perspective. 'I was the first writer in the Netherlands to address political themes in children's books, but I never won the State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature. It would seem that the literary merits of a writer are more important than whether he writes good books for a wide audience. I think that's a bit of a poor show.'

—*Koning van Katoren* has been reprinted more than fifty times; over 350.000 copies have been sold.

—Director Ben Sombogaart (*De tweeling/Twin Sisters*) is working on an international film adaptation of *Koning van Katoren*.

—More than forty years after his debut, all of Terlouw's children's books are still in print.

Thea Beckman

Thea Beckman (1923-2004) is often referred to as the Grand Old Lady of the historical children's book. Her rich stories have transported generations of children back in time. Beckman's first historical novel, *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* (Crusade in Jeans, 1973), was an immediate hit and was the start of a long and successful career as a children's writer.



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Works
Kruistocht in spijkerbroek (1973)
Trilogy: *Geef me de ruimte!* (1976),
Triomf van de verschroeide aarde (1977),
Het rad van fortuin (1978).
Thule-trilogy: *Kinderen van moeder aarde* (1985),
Het helse paradijs (1987),
Het gulden vlies van Thule (1989).
De Stomme van Kampen (1992)

Translations
For translated titles by Thea Beckman
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Kruistocht in spijkerbroek is set in the Middle Ages, at the time of the crusades. The twentieth-century teenager Dolf Wega travels back in a time machine and ends up in 1212, right in the middle of a children's crusade. He looks around in bewilderment at the eight thousand barefoot children, who are singing and praying as they make their crusade to Jerusalem. But this children's army is in a real mess. The children barely have anything to eat and many of them are sick and weak.

Using his twentieth-century knowledge, Dolf brings some order to the crusade. With his talent for organisation, he succeeds in leading the children over the Alps and they safely reach the beach at Genoa, where the sea will part and allow the children to walk to the Holy Land – or at least that is the intention.

On publication, *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* made one reviewer sigh: 'Every single thing about this book is good!' The Gouden Griffel prize for the best book of the year came along a year later. It went on to sell over half a million copies. What makes the story so strong is the way the protagonist views the Middle Ages through modern eyes. The anachronisms that always lie in wait in historical stories are not a pitfall here, but a deliberate element of the story. Dolf's amazement, admiration and incomprehension for the way people lived eight hundred years ago make it easy for readers to put themselves in his shoes.

Other historical books followed for Beckman, always backed up with thorough research. Sometimes her studies turned up so much material that she was able to use it in several books. Her lengthy visit to the municipal archive of the Hanseatic town of Kampen resulted in four stories, for example, including a gripping portrait of the deaf-mute artist Hendrick Avercamp: *De stomme van Kampen* (The Mute of Kampen, 1992).

In addition to *Kruistocht in Spijkerbroek*, Beckman's trilogy about the Hundred Years' War, *Geef me de ruimte!* (Give Me Space!, 1976), *Triomf van de verschroeide aarde* (Triumph of Scorched Earth, 1977) and *Het rad van fortuin* (Wheel of Fortune, 1978), also made her popular far beyond Dutch borders. The series is about an unconventional girl who travels across war-torn France. Such independent spirits were to become Beckman's trademark.

Beckman's epic, compelling narrative style made her one of the most popular children's writers of the twentieth century. Her trilogy about the future also demonstrates that her interests extended beyond the historical. These books, *Kinderen van Moeder Aarde* (Children of Mother Earth, 1985), *Het helse paradijs* (The Infernal Paradise, 1987) and *Het gulden vlies van Thule* (The Golden Fleece of Thule, 1989), take place after the Third World War in a world where women are in charge. These are stories that continue to captivate the reader even today. Beckman's books never feel at all dated, precisely because of the fact that they are set in the past or in the distant future.

—*Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* was awarded both the Gouden Griffel and the European prize for the best historical book for children. It has been reprinted 88 times.

—*Crusade in Jeans*, the film adaptation of *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek*, had 400,000 visitors in the Netherlands, where it won the Gouden Kalf prize for the best film (2007), and was selected for the film festival in Berlin.

Guus Kuijer

'Grandma is dead, but Madelief doesn't feel the need to cry.' In 1978, Guus Kuijer (b. 1942) wrote himself into the history of children's literature with these words. *Krassen in het tafelblad* (Scratches on the Tabletop) was his fourth book about Madelief, a series he based on a girl he knew. This flawlessly written children's novel uses everyday language to describe the complex family issues that adults become involved in, and Madelief's amazement as she observes them. *Krassen in het tafelblad* won Kuijer the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis and his second Gouden Griffel. In the same year, he became the youngest Dutch writer ever to have been awarded the Staatsprijs voor Kinder- en Jeugdliteratuur for his oeuvre.



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Works

Het boek van alle dingen (2004)
Polleke (1999-2003)
Madelief (1975-1978)
Olle (1990)
Eend voor eend (1983)

Translations

For translated titles by Guus Kuijer
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

In 1974 Guus Kuijer made his debut with *Met de poppen gooien* (Throwing Dolls), his first Madelief book. With his realistic dialogue and gentle irony, he established himself as the true heir to the anti-authoritarian mentality of Annie M.G. Schmidt. In an age when children's books dealing with social issues were enjoying a heyday, Kuijer stood out with his sense of playfulness and originality, which soon won him the Gouden Griffel.

His stories about fatherless Madelief were also a product of their time, but Kuijer was never guilty of the dogmatism that infected so many of his fellow writers. Kuijer believes that seeing things through a child's eyes allows us to perceive them directly and simply. 'And so it's easier to become aware of how absurd things are and how strangely people behave. By imagining what it would be like as a child, you are sometimes able to explain something without simplifying it.'

However, Kuijer's work does not only reveal an amazing insight into the minds of children. In the 1980s, he also revealed himself to be a keen observer of the ups and downs of life as an animal. Showing the same kind of affinity that he had previously displayed in his books about children, his book *Eend voor eend* (Duck by Duck, 1983) tackled the life of the ducks around his farmhouse in the province of North Holland, and was followed seven years later by an affectionate portrait of his Airedale terrier, *Olle* (Olle, 1990). This realistically depicted pet can talk, an ability that the reader accepts without question. And it is Olle himself who asks for an injection at the end of his life. With a bare minimum of words, Kuijer evokes great emotion: 'Olle sighed out his life. It was just a small sigh.'

And then, in 1999, Polleke came along: eleven years old, her heart on her sleeve and head over heels in love with Mimoen, her Moroccan classmate. *Voor altijd samen, amen* (Together Forever, Amen, which won Kuijer's third Gouden Griffel) is the first book in a five-part series. Once again, the human condition is seen through the eyes of a child, but this time the stories are set in a multicultural society, there is a father with a drug problem and religion raises its head in the form of Polleke's grandparents. However, as always in Kuijer, it is not the problems that count, but the people, who are so engaging in their struggle to surmount their difficulties.

In 2004, Kuijer published what he views as his most important children's book: *Het boek van alle dingen* (The Book of Everything), which is set in the 1950s. Thomas's father rules his family with the bible in one hand and a hard wooden spoon in the other. But Thomas is determined to be happy one day and, slowly, cracks begin to appear in his father's impregnable authority. Once again, this is a Kuijer child who does not allow himself to be disheartened by the adult world around him. Once again, big problems are reduced to the size of a child. And once again, the Gouden Griffel went to the grandmaster of the pure childlike gaze.

—In 2012 Guus Kuijer was the first Dutch author to be awarded the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

—In 1979, the 37-year-old Guus Kuijer was the youngest-ever winner of the Staatsprijs voor Kinder- en Jeugdliteratuur (State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature).

Joke van Leeuwen

Joke van Leeuwen (b. 1952) has proved to have little talent for failure. Her illustrations have been rewarded with prizes of all shapes and sizes and her elegant stories, skilfully crafted poems, distinctly different non-fiction books and poetry and novels for adults have been showered with praise. Critics love her characters' joyful defiance of convention, which brings to mind the books of Annie M.G. Schmidt, as well as the clever mix of seriousness and humour in her work and the surprising and innovative interplay of text and illustrations.



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Works

De appelmoesstraat is anders (1978)
Iep! (1995)
Deesje (1985)
Toen mijn vader een struik werd (2010)
Heb jij mijn zusje gezien? (2006)
Waarom lig jij in mijn bedje? (2011)

Translations

For translated titles by Joke van Leeuwen
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

During her studies at art school in Flanders, Joke van Leeuwen was impressed by the fusion of text and drawings in the work of the Jewish American artist Ben Shahn. Since her debut, *De Appelmoesstraat is anders* (Applesauce Street is Different, 1978), this combination of words and images has been her trademark. Her illustrations are intricately entwined with her sentences: they help to tell the story and their content is just as important as the words. Van Leeuwen believes that pictures are more direct than language, which leads to fewer misunderstandings. Drawings have a universal clarity and can give a child just that little extra push that is needed for them to become wrapped up in a story.

Whether she is working with words or pictures, Van Leeuwen always likes to shock, provoke and undermine. Her work makes the obvious become remarkable, because she has such a different way of looking at the world, always seeing things from underneath or from the side, like a young child who is still capable of wonder. The result is situations that are fun, but often a little awkward too. It is no coincidence that many of her characters are outsiders who stumble from one misunderstanding to another on their journey through life. Whether their name is Kukel, Deesje, Bobbel or Viegeltje, Van Leeuwen's protagonists are headstrong, non-conformist figures with an open mind and a strong sense of curiosity, who are trying to find their way in a world that is pretty complicated.

Her big success came with *Deesje* (1985), which won not only the Gouden Griffel and a Zilveren Penseel, but also the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis. As in her earlier books, the protagonist is an endearing little misfit who has amazing adventures on an exciting journey, but this time the story is rooted more deeply in reality and the timid girl of the title is a charming little person of flesh and blood.

Perhaps an even greater success was *Iep!* (1995), which is about a couple who one day find a little creature that is half bird, half human, and decide to take her home with them. The story was made into a movie by Lemming Film in 2010 and was highly acclaimed at international festivals.

Remarkably, Van Leeuwen is still striking out along new paths. She has surprised her readers in recent years with two picture books for toddlers: *Heb je mijn zusje gezien?* (Have You Seen My Sister?, 2006) and *Waarom lig jij in mijn bedje?* (What Are You Doing in My Bed?, 2011). She also reached new heights with *Toen mijn vader een struik werd* (When My Dad Turned into a Bush, 2010), a serious story by Van Leeuwen's standards, about a girl in a war zone who has to flee her homeland – and told, as always, with that outstanding, inimitable lightness of tone.

—Joke van Leeuwen has won one Gouden Griffel award, two Gouden Penseel awards, ten Zilveren Griffels, one Zilveren Penseel, two Woutertje Pieterse prizes, one Jenny Smelik IBBY prize, one Gouden Ganzenveer, and one Theo Thijssen prize for her entire oeuvre.

—The film adaptation of *Iep!* won prizes at festivals in Poland, Vancouver, Copenhagen, Montreal and Milan.

Toon Tellegen

A children's book critic once wrote about the work of Toon Tellegen (b. 1941) that his readers are not confined to a particular age group, but defined by their sensitivity to language, mental agility and belief that almost anything is possible. There is no other author in the Dutch language whose work exhibits such a hazy dividing line between young readers and adults as Toon Tellegen. His philosophical animal stories, made up of short, contemplative sentences, resist any attempts to impose an age category.

In 1984, following a collection of poetry for adults, Tellegen's animal stories were combined for the first time in *Er ging geen dag voorbij* (Not a Day Went By). Since then, there has been a steady stream of collections with enigmatic titles such as *Toen niemand iets te doen had* (When Nobody Had Anything To Do, 1987, Gouden Griffel winner) and *Bijna iedereen kon omvallen* (Almost Everyone Could Fall Over, 1993, Gouden Griffel, Woutertje Pieterse Prijs). Tellegen has now written close to a thousand animal stories and 600.000 copies of his compilations have been sold.

In his animal stories, there is only one of each kind of animal roaming around the forest. All of these animals are the same size and there is no hierarchy, so everyone gets along. In Tellegen's animal forest, where the ocean and the desert are never far away, plenty of letters are written, always delivered by the wind. None of the animals develop significantly as characters; the stories about Squirrel, Ant, Beetle, Mole, Cricket and Elephant can be read as an everlasting series of moments. The creatures contemplate and cogitate, ponder and sigh, dream and harbour vague longings for distant unknowns and forgotten friends.

These stories are never so much about the experiences of the animals (in fact, very little actually happens), but more about language: the choice of words is precise, the construction of the sentences is poetic, and the formulation is apparently simple, but always reveals that huge imagination.

His work is often absurd and frequently funny, but the author still touches on existential emotions: loneliness, melancholy, insecurity, fear of dying. However, Tellegen's work never becomes gloomy and his pleasure in writing always shines through between the sentences. His distinctive style has inspired a range of leading illustrators, including Annemarie van Haerengen, Mance Post and Jessica Ahlberg, to create magnificent illustrations.

In addition to his extensive collection of animal stories, Tellegen has also written a number of books that take place outside the forest. The grim *Juffrouw Kachel* (Miss Stove, 1991, Woutertje Pieterse Prijs) is set within the walls of the classroom of a tyrannical teacher, with a first-person narrator who dreams up the most terrible acts of revenge and writes them down in his diary.

The best dad in the world appears in *Mijn vader* (My Father, 1994). The young narrator makes no secret of his admiration for his fantastic father, who hurls crooks out of the window with great skill and knows the answers to all of the questions at school. This affectionate portrait of the relationship between a father and son was captured perfectly in Rotraut Susanne Berner's full-colour illustrations. Finally, *Mijn avonturen door V. Swchwrn* (My Adventures by V. Swchwrn, 1998), originally published as the gift book during Children's Book Week, is about a boy who dreams of becoming a writer and then starts writing, giving a wonderful insight into Tellegen's own boyhood dreams of writing. A film adaptation of this book came out in 2012.

—Toon Tellegen has won two awards for his oeuvre: the Theo Thijssenprijs for his children's books and the Constantijn Huygensprijs for his entire body of work, for both children and adults.

—A film adaptation of his book *Mijn avonturen door V. Swchwrn* has recently been made by Flinc Film.



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Dierenverhalen (since 1984)
Juffrouw Kachel (1991)
Mijn avonturen door V. Swchwrn (1998)
Mijn vader (1994)

Translations
For translated titles by Toon Tellegen
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Peter van Gestel

Van Gestel's characters think silly thoughts until they drive themselves round the bend. There's often some great sadness involved that is best left unmentioned – because you'll only end up whining and no one likes a whiner. But Van Gestel's books never become gloomy, because he is not that kind of writer.

You could see the title of his latest children's book, *Al dat heerlijke verdriet* (All That Wonderful Sorrow, 2011), as the motto of his entire oeuvre, but the tragic elements of his work never become bogged down in greyness or gloom. His eloquent characters always manage to retain a certain cool and a detached sense of humour; no war is going to change that (*Winterijs*, Winter Ice, 2001), and neither is a dying father (*Al dat heerlijke verdriet*) or a brother who commits suicide (*Die dag aan zee*, That Day by the Sea, 2003). Sometimes there is even something enjoyable about the sadness, something that you can melt into.

The stories frequently feature a shiver of pleasure when something tragic is involved. And Van Gestel's characters babble away, but the writer does not allow them to take turns and react to one another politely; someone asks a question, another person asks something else, but there is no chance of any answers because the conversation has already moved on. Such skilfully crafted dialogue reveals the writer of radio plays and scripts that the author was when he first started out. His writing career is something that more or less happened to Van Gestel. He once wanted to be an actor, but while he had the ambition, the talent was lacking. As an author of children's books, Van Gestel has written his way to the top of Dutch children's literature. His talent lies in his impeccable style and his ability to create great sorrow that lurks just beneath the surface, without his work ever becoming maudlin or melancholy. This is most apparent in *Winterijs*, a book that is suffused by an unutterable sense of loss. In the cold winter of 1947, the protagonist Thomas is driven by his dead mother's physical absence and his grieving father's mental distance to seek the companionship of the Jewish cousins Zwaan and Bet, who have lost both of their fathers and one of their mothers in a concentration camp. *Winterijs* won all the major awards for children's literature, including the Gouden Griffel and the Woutertje Pieterse Prijs. With their ten-year-old protagonists and post-war settings, *Kleine Felix* (Little Felix, 2008) and *Al dat heerlijke verdriet* are distant relations of that book.

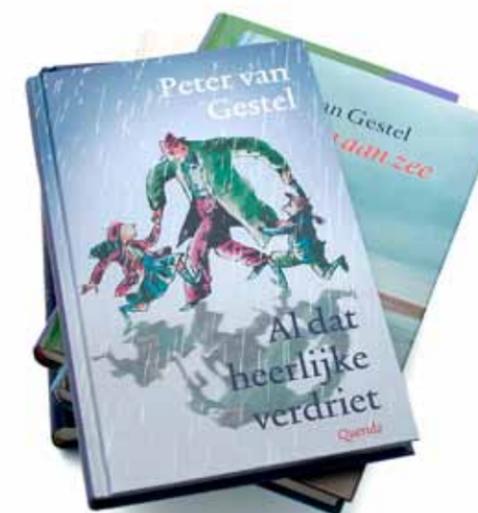
Mariken (1997), with its medieval setting, is somewhat isolated within Van Gestel's oeuvre. An engaging girl goes out into the big wide world and falls in with a troupe of travelling players. This book not only resulted in prizes for the author, but also a play and a successful film adaptation. And as happened later with *Winterijs*, the label of 'classic' was already being mentioned even before the book had won a single prize.

—'The street urchin has fallen out of favour. That's nice for the neighbours, but it's a shame for children's literature,' says Peter van Gestel, who fills his stories with cheeky little boys and equally mischievous little girls.

—*Winterijs* has been acclaimed as one of the finest Dutch children's books about the Second World War.

—The film adaptation of *Mariken* was awarded a Gouden Kalf, the most important Dutch film prize.

'Ten-year-old boys are an endless source of fascination for me,' Peter van Gestel (b. 1937) once said. His stories often feature boys of this age. As a reader, you can spot a little Van Gestel lad straightaway: they are usually a little grubby around the edges, tend to keep themselves to themselves, are not easily impressed by the adults around them, but are mad about an older girl they know. They are called Thomas or Felix or Jasper and they all have something rascally about them, something a little wild and unconventional, even if their father is a writer or their mother plays the piano beautifully.



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Works
Winterijs (De Fontein, 2001)
Mariken (Querido, 1997)
Kleine Felix (Querido, 2008)
Al dat heerlijke verdriet (Querido, 2011)
Die dag aan zee (Querido, 2003)

Translations
For translated titles by Peter van Gestel
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Imme Dros

Imme Dros (b. 1936), born on the northern Dutch island of Texel, once said that she feels as though many of her books lay waiting in a glass casket for someone to kiss them awake. This is a fitting statement for a writer who has adapted well-known fairy tales to create original and distinctive scripts for plays. But her heart lies with the tales of classical antiquity even more than with the stories of Andersen and Grimm.

Imme Dros, encountered the works of Homer at school. His verses about heroism and distant sea journeys fuelled not only her love of Greek mythology, but also of language. In *De reizen van de slimme man* (The Journeys of the Clever Man, 1988), she combined these two passions for the first time to create a contemporary tale about teenager Niels, who becomes fascinated by the journeys of Odysseus, the ‘clever man’ of the title. Odysseus’ adventures, full of heroic feats and the violence of war, inspire Niels to write his own life story.

Dros went on to write a highly acclaimed translation of the *Odyssey* and created an adaptation for young people, *Odysseus, een man van verhalen* (Odysseus, a Man of Stories, 1994). Of all the Greek figures, Odysseus is perhaps her favourite: ‘All of those guys are heroes, of course, but Odysseus is exceptional because he makes things up. Odysseus has imagination.’ And the author shares that imagination. In Dros’s retelling, Odysseus is a man who takes shape through other people’s stories: the stories of Hermes, of Athene, of his son Telemachos. These are tales that are full of playful anachronisms, where someone has to take the minutes at the meetings of the gods and news reports come live from the beach of Ithaca. This book was followed by equally imaginative adaptations of the history of the Trojan War (*Ilios*, 1999), the wanderings of Virgil’s hero Aeneas (*Mee met Aeneas*, Off with Aeneas, 2008) and many other Greek myths (including Perseus, Hercules and Medea).

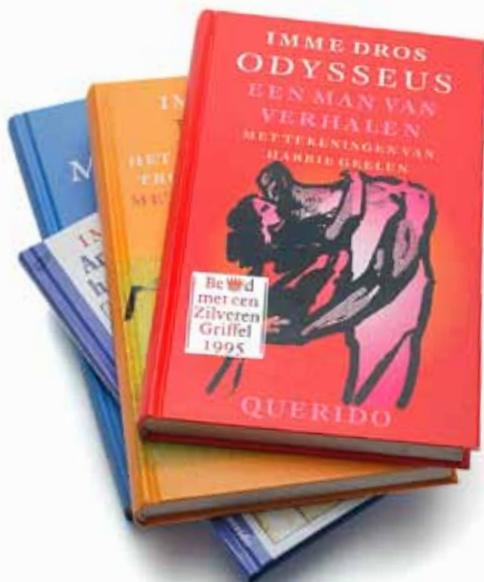
Since the early 1980s, Imme Dros has been highly praised for her realistic characters, her striking dialogue and her carefully crafted, often amusing language. Using simple words and images, the author presents problems that are familiar to all of us.

Her wide-ranging oeuvre has two main target groups: teenagers and toddlers. In addition to her adaptations of the classics, Dros has written a number of realistic teen novels about young people on their way to adulthood who are confronted with the complexities of love and their own odyssey to find out who they are. Dros’s *Annetje Lie in het holst van de nacht* (Annetje Lee in the Dead of Night, 1987) stands apart from her books for teenagers and toddlers. This is a story about a girl who has to stay with her grandmother for unspecified reasons and experiences feverish adventures under the covers ‘in the dead of night’, which develop along the same peculiar lines as her dreams. This book about fear and loneliness, full of rhymes, repetitions and nightmarish escapades, takes place on the boundary between reality and the imagination, and quickly gained the status of a classic. As in Dros’s other books, her endless shaping and polishing of the sentences has resulted in a staggering linguistic tour de force, magnificent in its simplicity and poetic eloquence.

— Imme Dros is the only children’s book writer to have won a Zilveren Griffel fourteen times.

— More than 50.000 copies of Dros’s adaptation of the *Odyssey* have been sold in the Netherlands.

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Annetje Lie in het holst van de nacht (1987)

Translations

For translated titles by Imme Dros
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Herman Gorter Poems of 1890

Starting point of Dutch Modernity

Herman Gorter (1864-1927) was a leading member of the Eighties Movement, a highly influential group of writers in the Netherlands at the end of the nineteenth century. His first book, a 4,000 verse epic poem called *May*, sealed his reputation as a great writer upon its publication in 1889, and is regarded as the pinnacle of Dutch Impressionist literature. Gorter rapidly followed this up with a book of short lyric poetry simply *Poems* in 1890, which was equally hailed as a masterpiece. Thanks to the publication of a.o. *The School of Poetry* (1897) and his endeavours to combine lyricism and social involvement, his poetic significance remained undisputed. Today his poems are regarded by many as the starting point for Modernity in Dutch poetry as a whole.



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Herman Gorter in translation
Gorter's poems have been published in over ten languages, including German (Maas & Van Suchtelen), Frisian (Frysk & Frij), English and Japanese

Herman Gorter published his *Poems of 1890* one year after his very successful first book of poetry, *May*. It marked a radical new departure in poetry, not only in a Dutch but in a European context. Gorter aimed at a poetic form of what later became known as 'sensitivism': the recording of fleeting, fragmentary moments of individual experience with an almost mystical intensity. The only obvious point of comparison for this new-found artistic and verbal extremism is the Rimbaud of 'Le bateau ivre', 'Voyelles' and 'Un saison en enfer', though there is no question of any direct influence.

The result of Gorter's attempt was a series of a hundred or so poems, some of only two lines (e.g. 'You're a dusky white lily girl, / You're a butterfly velvet swirl') and none longer than a few pages. They still retain a thread of rhyme, mostly in full rhyming couplets, but this serves as a background for irregular line lengths and syntax, a radical use of neologism, synaesthesia, surging eroticism, a haunting fragmentary musicality and occasional astonishingly simple and direct love poems. Gorter's explosive and sometimes tortured expressionism recalls that of his contemporary Vincent van Gogh.

Any of our sophisticated compatriots, from the highest rank to the lowest, should take of his hat immediately, as soon as this man's immortal name is mentioned.

Willem Kloos, 1891

He hasn't grown old at all, Gorter, and I don't think his best work ever will.

Martinus Nijhoff, 1952

So many years after his death, it's still a great pleasure to read his poetry. For she is emotion, she is music, she is eroticism, and those never age.

Pieter Boskma, 1997

That cold flesh of another
against my own dry knuckles
and my eyes unseen in the night –
that cool, juicy flesh – and all the might
of me into the night – as if I'm dead,
all black, no white, no red –
my whole head cools, it would seem,
nowhere does a goal gleam –
so beautifully black the night's pall
eyeless, with no thoughts at all,
that wet bath of night,
that drowned state, that hole in daylight,
that dewy feeling round here,
my head so beautifully clear.

(Translation by Paul Vincent)

J.C. Bloem Collected Poems

Comforting gloom

The poet and essayist J.C. Bloem (1887-1966), after obtaining a degree in law, spent much of his life going from one uninteresting administrative post to another. Among other things, he translated the incoming nightly telegrams for a large newspaper, and worked as a clerk at magistrates' courts that had been listed for closure. He found this work an absolute torment and became legendary for his laziness and his drinking. But his small poetic oeuvre gained him great acclaim and an unprecedented number of readers.

Bloem's so-called laziness and his fame were interconnected in some way. His reluctance to commit to his jobs was rooted in a deeply felt belief that material success was meaningless, since human life is surrounded by the darkness of death. After the big dreams of his youth, he became more and more obsessed with the losses that life inevitably brings. Bloem felt that, as our existence is caught between two endless silences, the most we can say in the end is that it was loud for a brief moment. With his increasingly sombre outlook, he managed to touch tens of thousands of readers, and, paradoxically, offer them comfort. Reading his poetry helped them accept the unacceptable.

Bloem's poems are paradoxical in another way too: he uses strict classical forms, while at the same time his poetry sounds surprisingly natural and simple. The simplicity is deceptive, however; very tellingly, the 'lazy' Bloem would sometimes spend days reworking just a few lines of poetry. In this way, using a limited vocabulary, he could achieve his own impressively subtle range of suggestion within strict boundaries.

In Bloem's view, every passing day takes something away from life. But despite this gloomy perspective, his poems are rarely of a dull grey; the greyness has a soft glow, even if that glow is often almost beyond our reach.

What has always captivated Bloem's readers is the warmth and humanity of his voice. Not only has it earned him a place as one of the most important Dutch poets of the twentieth century, but it has made him loved by a wide audience, so much so that some of his verses have become winged words.

I wish for everyone to find the happiness of Bloem's
sadness and gloom.

De Standaard der Letteren

Dapper Street

Nature is for the satisfied or hollow.
And what does it add up to in this land?
A patch of wood, some ripples in the sand,
A modest hill where modest villas follow.

Give me the city streets, the urban grey,
Quays and canals that keep the water tamed,
The clouds that never look finer than when, framed
By attic windows, they go their windswept way.

The least expectant have most to marvel at.
Life keeps its wonders under lock and key
Until it springs them on us, rich, complete.

One dreary morning all this dawned on me,
When, soaking wet in drizzly Dapper Street,
I suddenly felt happy, just like that.

(Translation by Judith Wilkinson)

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J.C. Bloem in translation
Bloem's poems have been published in English
(Avalon Press) and Spanish (Plaza & Janés)

Martinus Nijhoff Awater

Twentieth-century exploration of the modern world

Martinus Nijhoff was born in The Hague in 1894, into a family of booksellers and publishers. During his life he published four collections of poetry, which belong to the best work ever published in Dutch. Right from his debut with *The Wanderer* in 1916, he was recognized as a poet of rare brilliance. His next collections, *Forms* in 1924 and *New Poems* in 1934, confirmed his reputation as a great innovator of the Dutch literary landscape, although he remained faithful to traditional verse forms. His last important work of poetry was the long poem *Zero Hour*, which was published in conjunction with *An Idylle* in 1942. After that, he mainly dedicated himself to writing plays and translations, until his untimely death in 1953.

The poetry of Martinus Nijhoff possesses an intoxicated clarity that conceals enigmatic worlds behind its ostensible simplicity. Nijhoff was familiar with international modernism: he stayed in Paris regularly in the 1920s and followed artistic developments there closely. As an influential critic he developed an anti-romantic, modernist outlook on literature that displays a correspondence with the poetics of Paul Valéry and T.S. Eliot: poetry is not an expression of emotion but rather an autonomous organism that the poet constructs with the application of all his or her technical ingenuity; the substance is generated by the language itself during the creative process.

His long epic poem *Awater*, which appeared in 1934 as part of *New Poems*, is indisputably one of Nijhoff's most important works, which immediately makes it also one of the most important works in twentieth-century Dutch poetry. It's an exploration of the modern world, but the purport remains ambiguous, as is often the case in Nijhoff's work. He's a master in presenting a vivid mystery that, in an apparently self-evident articulation, consistently challenges one to formulate new interpretations. His poetry has continued to fascinate readers right down to the present day and seems to function time and again as a point of orientation for new poets.

Nijhoff is undoubtedly one of the most important poets
of the twentieth century. Unique in his era, he managed
to reach out to the diverse movements of international
modernism without losing the distinctiveness of his own
oeuvre.

Leesidee

A very good Dutch poet is Nijhoff. His poem 'Awater' is the
poem to reckon with, one of the grandest works of poetry
in this [twentieth] century... This is the future of poetry,
I think, or it least it paves the way for a very interesting
future.

Joseph Brodsky

(...)

Bursts of electric light on the façade
keep writing and rewriting the restaurant name.
A doorman at the glass revolving door
is posted there to help a double queue
of people in and out. We go in too
and hear the sound of music as we enter.
Awater is no stranger here it seems.
Heads turn as he strolls in between the tables.
'What?' whispers someone. 'Don't you know Awater?'
I think he's an accountant, some such thing.
I do know him, I just don't know him well.
Some say he spends his evenings reading Greek,
but others claim it's actually Irish Gaelic.'

(...)

(Fragment of *Awater*; translation by David Colmer.)

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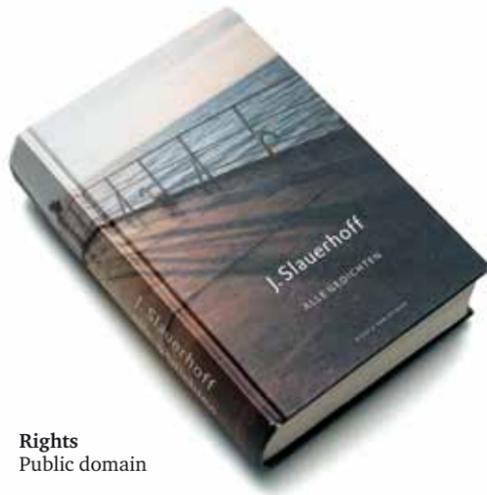
Martinus Nijhoff in translation
Nijhoff's poems have been published in over ten
languages, including English (Anvil Press Poetry),
German (Suhkamp), Russian (University of
St. Petersburg) and Slovenian (Sodobnost)

J. Slauerhoff

Collected Poems

A romantic poet in modernist times

Besides poems, J. Slauerhoff (1898-1936) also wrote stories, novels, and a play. In addition, he published travelogues and reviews. Ten collections of his work were published during his comparatively short life. Despite his 'violations' of verse technique, Slauerhoff was regarded by his contemporaries as a genuine poet with a completely distinctive voice. Nowadays he is still widely sold and read.



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J. Slauerhoff in translation

Slauerhoff's prose and poems have been published in over twenty languages, but until now a fully-fledged Selected Poems has only appeared in Frisian (Bormmeer) and Portuguese (Círculo de Cultura Portuguesa na Holanda)

J. Slauerhoff owes the unique position he occupies in Dutch literature to completely personal themes he carved out in equally personal poetry. Longing for the passionate love for a woman, struck by the tragedy of loneliness, the yearning to be elsewhere or somewhere in the past, the desire for the sea, the disenchantment with present-day life, the awareness of degeneration, all these themes mark him as a late Romantic poet. On the other hand, the rawness and acrimony of his tone, as well as his split personality, make him a true exponent of his era.

Born and raised in Leeuwarden, capital of the province of Friesland, Slauerhoff studied medicine in Amsterdam and became a ship's doctor on Dutch vessels sailing to East Asia. His poor health was repeatedly the cause of broken employment contracts. Accordingly, he led an itinerant life. 'Nowhere but in my poems can I dwell,/ Nowhere else could I a shelter find' are the first lines of one of his most renowned poems, which can be regarded as characteristic of his life and work.

His work also displays a certain restlessness, which he not only depicts in the content of the work but also substantiates in the form of his poetry. His verses are often 'unfinished'. Unlike most of his contemporaries Slauerhoff adhered to classical verse forms, but his verse structure is often irregular. A deliberate cynicism or grotesque imagery contributes to the coarse nature of his poetry, in which a vulnerable sensitivity shines through the thin membrane of the verse.

Slauerhoff, who is referred to as the only *poète maudit* in Dutch literature, was influenced by French poets (Rimbaud, Verlaine, Corbière), the Czech/German Rilke, and several Chinese poets (Bai Juyi, Li Po), whose work he translated.

His restless soul still shivers through in Dutch literature, incomparable to anyone.

Cees Nooteboom

Homeless

Nowhere but in my poems can I dwell,
Nowhere else could I a shelter find;
No love of home preoccupied my mind,
A tent could be uprooted by the gale.

Nowhere but in my poems can I dwell.
While I'm still sure that in the desert bare,
In steppes, in towns or in some wooded vale
A roof can still be found, I have no care.

Though it be long, the day'll dawn without fail
When before eve my former strength declines
And pleads in vain for the frail words and signs
I once built with, and earth will have to keep
Me enveloped and I'll have to bend down deep
To where my grave bursts open, dark and pale.

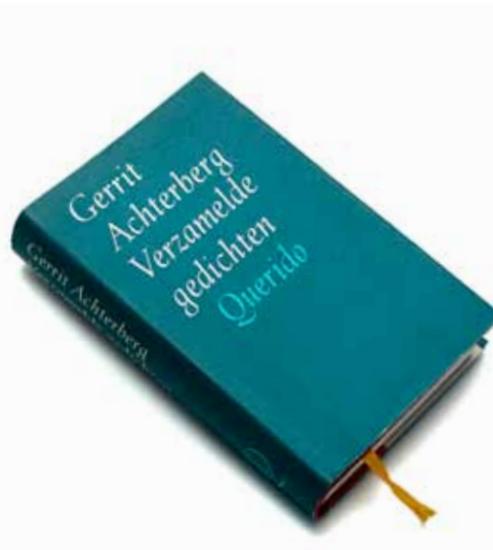
(Translation by Paul Vincent)

Gerrit Achterberg

Collected Poems

A living struggle between live and death

Gerrit Achterberg (1905-1962) won all the major Dutch literary awards, and in 2005 the 14th edition of his *Collected Poems* was published. Dozens of Dutch and Flemish writers dedicated a poem to him, including Harry Mulisch. What attracted him about Achterberg was purely the sound, the language, the invoking of something that is beyond the stars and that greatly appealed to his interest in metaphysics. He could think of no one to compare Achterberg with in foreign literature – except perhaps Paul Celan.



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Gerrit Achterberg in translation

Achterberg's poems have been published in over ten languages, including Spanish (Losada), Russian (University of St. Petersburg) and English (Oolichan Books)

From his youth until his unexpected death, Gerrit Achterberg lived in seclusion. Firstly on one side of the so-called Utrecht hill ridge, in the Calvinist rural village Neerlangbroek. There he made friends with the son of the local Count. Later, in the difficult crisis years of the 1930s, when Achterberg had failed as a teacher and in despair had killed his landlady in the city of Utrecht, this nobleman became his life-long protector. After detention in a number of psychiatric institutions, Achterberg went to live in Leusden, on the other side of the same Utrecht hill ridge. He lived there with his wife and wrote the impressive cycle *Game of the Wild Hunt* (1957). In it, the influence of living in the shadow of castles and churches is much in evidence – as is the universal theme of the search for a lost love. She sometimes takes the form of a marble statue and she's always alive in the completely original imagery of the poet. The same applies to other characters. His mourning mother, for example, can be 'a grey Friday morning' that has to do the room, while dust quivers; his father leads cows as if celebrating a mass: 'their tongues curled round his hands like a fish', and the poet himself is a cow that is so blissfully being milked by the farmer. In his poems, *bronze* becomes 'a tomb of wind and wood' and *cellophane* 'an aquarium of light'. Famous artists and philosophers such as Spinoza, Hercules Seghers and Zadkine populate his poems; politicians and psychiatrists are not spared criticism and, as a traveller, he visits Golgotha in order to meet Jesus, that 'trader in old rust'.

Out of dead matter, the poet makes a living struggle between life and death. In the poem he wants to come together with the beloved and he considers the poem toll-money, paid so as to be able to escape from the psychiatric institution. 'Leg als laatste wat gij doet, al mijn gedichten aan mijn voet, krachten, waarmee ik opstaan moet' (Place as your final act all my poems at my feet, forces, by means of which I must arise).

The Poet as a Cow

Grass... and having grazed,
lying here on folded legs
with eyes amazed
that I don't need to take a step
yet find my mouth as full
as when I walked the field.
It must have slipped my mind again
what kind of animal I am.
Reflected in ditches when I drink,
I see my head and think:
why is that cow so upside down?
In time the gate I use to rub against
grows old and grey and greasy smooth.
I'm shy of frogs and children and they
of me: they find my tongue too rough.
The farmer's milking is such bliss,
I overlook his avarice.
Quite unaware, I dream in mist at night
that I'm a calf, resting by its mother's side.

(Translation by David Colmer)

Ida Gerhardt Collected Poems

A sense of timeless clarity

Ida Gerhardt (1905-1997) was a teacher of classical languages from 1939 to 1963. In 1942, she obtained her doctorate for a translation of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, books I and V. Just before 1940, she made her debut as a poet with the collection *Cosmos*, which was to be followed by more than twenty collections of poetry. She received all the major Dutch literary prizes for her poetry and translations, including the prestigious PC Hooftprijs in 1979 for her entire oeuvre.

Ida Gerhardt is one of the most important female Dutch poets from the pre-feminist period. Her poems are written in the classical tradition of the Symbolists – nothing is arbitrary, unfinished or left to chance – modernism, with its 'loose forms and empty phrases' seems to have passed her by. According to her, the poet has the task of preserving and revealing to humanity the secrets of the cosmos and the micro-cosm.

Initially, she mainly wrote landscape poems, which always had an echo of both her own existence and divine unity. Later, her work also acquires a social element. In her poems she often expresses anger at the decline of culture and the manner in which people treat each other; she advocates serious and painstaking intercourse with life and an opposition to materialism and superficiality. One gets the feeling that she feels herself a solitary figure in this modern age, 'a contrary plant, alone with sun and moon', as she puts it in one of her poems. The solitary poet has the task of warning the world by holding up a mirror to it.

Highly distinctive is the alternation between resolute simplicity and the use of archaisms. In her sculptured use of language one senses a timeless clarity. This has led to her work being appreciated by a great many readers.

The fact that she translated such diverse works as the Old Testament Psalms and Virgil's *Georgica*, indicates the extent to which she wished to be a part of the Christian-classical tradition in literature.

The Carillon

The people in the streets looked stricken,
their ashen faces drawn and tight, –
then something made their features quicken
and, listening, they seemed brushed with light.

For in the clock-tower when, resounding,
the bronze-chimed hour had died away,
the carillonneur began his pounding
and everywhere was heard to play.

Valerius: – a solemn singing
with bass bell's tolling undertone
and flickerings of lighter ringing:
'We raise our eyes to Thy high throne.'

As one of all those nameless people
who by the house fronts came to stand,
I listened to the pealing steeple
that sang of my afflicted land.

This speechless gathering, beyond us
the city with Dutch light above –
I've never for what's stolen from us
felt such a bitter, bitter love.

(Translation by John Irons)

M. Vasalis Collected Poems

Transcendence of the earthly

M. Vasalis (1909-1998) studied medicine, married a neurologist and had four children, one of whom died very young during the Second World War. She worked as a child psychiatrist until her seventieth birthday. Between 1940 and 1954, three collections of poetry were published that gained her the highest literary awards and that were immensely popular with a large reading public. She is dubbed the Dutch Anna Achmatova by some, because right up to the present day, many Dutch people know Vasalis poems by heart. After her death in 1998, a fourth, posthumous collection was published. Her *Collected Poems* were first published in 2006, and reprinted several times since.

Many of Vasalis's poems are located in nature. This being in nature, however, always leads to an inner experience that is the actual subject of the poem. As is the case in, for example, the poem 'The IJsselmeer Dam', where the contrasts between internal and external, man and water disappear and where time finally stands still in a wonderfully illuminated now-moment. Nature grants access to a forgotten or repressed dimension in one's own existence. In many poems such an experience of mental transcendence is central, something that also fascinated Vasalis as a psychiatrist. It may have to do with inebriation, but also with passionate love, melancholy, the dream or vision. The unknown dynamics of the life within is her theme. The way in which she wrote about deep distress, melancholy and the loss of a child has touched many people deeply.

Already early on, Vasalis was compared with the medieval mystic Hadewijch. And a part of her work certainly fits in with the mystical tradition. Space, time and gravity can disappear in the course of a poem, as can the awareness of the ego and the difference between subject and object. These experiences are blissful or terrifying, enlightening or full of mere emptiness. The ego is thereby passively affected, and the oxymoron is the most frequently used stylistic means, since the experience is virtually incommunicable. Vasalis explores that other dimension which lies outside every religious framework. Her concern is pure immanence. Her fellow-poet Clara Eggink has called this the 'transcendence of the earthly'. That makes Vasalis a very modern poet.

The IJsselmeer Dam

The bus drives through the darkness like a room,
the narrow road is straight, the dam is endless,
the sea is on the left, subdued but restless,
we look out, a smallish moon relieves the gloom.

In front of me, the freshly-shaven necks
of two young sailors, who smother one yawn, then another
and later, after a quick and limber stretch,
sleep innocently leaning on each other.

Then all at once, as if it's a dream, I see in the glass
the thin, transparent gleam of a bus that's wed to ours,
sometimes as clear as us, then underwater, drowned;
the clumps of roadside grass
cut through the sleeping seamen.
I see myself as well, my features
floating over the surface
of the sea, an astonished mermaid;
lips move as if to say,
There is no tomorrow, no yesterday,
no start or end to this long trip,
just one extended present – strangely split.

(Translation by David Colmer)



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Ida Gerhardt in translation
Gerhardt's poems have been published in reviews and anthologies in English, French and German



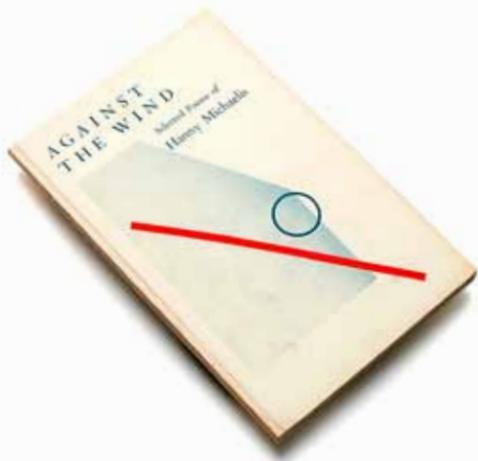
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M. Vasalis in translation
Vasalis's poems have been published in reviews and anthologies in English and French; a Selected Poems appeared in Spanish (Calima)

Hanny Michaelis Collected Poems

Focused poems with a curious strength

Hanny Michaelis (1922-2007) published only six collections of poetry, from *Short Prelude* in 1949 to *Galloping off to a New Utopia* in 1971. In them, as translators Manfred Wolf and Paul Vincent state, 'the poet shifts gradually from an intense preoccupation with her private past (...), to a still vulnerable, but more outward-looking confrontation with herself as a woman, a citizen of Amsterdam, and a Jewish survivor of the Nazi Occupation of Holland, amid a world of environmental pollution, political upheaval and brash materialism.' In 1989 a Selected Poems by her own hand, entitled *The Weed of Doubt*, was published. In 1996 her Collected Poems followed, reprinted for the fifth time by 2011.



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Hanny Michaelis in translation

Michaelis's poems have been published in reviews and anthologies in English, German and Spanish; a Selected Poems appeared in English (Twowindows Press)

The small but distinctive oeuvre of Hanny Michaelis has been awarded numerous literary prizes. She established a reputation as a poet of contained lyricism, and her work is characteristically tempered by an almost wry awareness of limitation. While her poems are often marked by an epigrammatic conciseness and an element of detached and analytical reflection, Michaelis nevertheless embraces the individual, felt experience, in which the overriding logic is that of the imagination.

Since the publication of her memoirs, in 2002, there has been renewed interest in her life and works. As the daughter of Jewish parents who died in Sobibor, Michaelis was confronted with loss and devastation at an early age, and these themes are inherent in much of her poetry. Her difficult marriage to the well-known Dutch novelist Gerard Reve, and the tragic death of her second partner, undoubtedly account for the mournful note of much of her love poetry.

In fact in some of her poems there is even a defeatist, tired quality, a sense that life, inevitably and repetitively, brings loss and disillusionment. Michaelis' range is not vast, moreover, and her vision not infused with immense variety and invention. And yet, arguably, in her best work, there is a toughness, an ability to re-inhabit an experience without sentimentality, that can lend her short, focused poems a curious strength.

A poet who works as carefully as Hanny Michaelis, should perhaps be read more carefully than one would think at first glance.

Leeuwarder Courant

A greyish light always shines on these poems. But they're totally authentic, totally reliable too. Things are named as they are. I've never seen Michaelis use an euphemism, or even attempt at one.

de Volkskrant

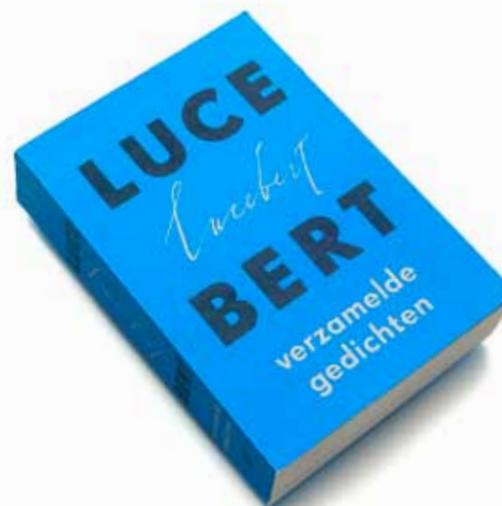
This evening I learnt
that the moon isn't round
but pear-shaped,
with at least two
bulges, maybe
even three. Later,
when I looked out,
a round, incandescent
disc climbed up
above the roofs
and I caught myself
harbouring the same stubbornness
with which I
honour other
dented illusions.

(Translation by Judith Wilkinson)

Lucebert Collected Poems

The 'Emperor' of his revolutionary generation

Lucebert (ps Lubertus Jacobus Swaanswijk, 1924-1994) is one of the most important reformers of Dutch poetry in the twentieth century. He was a key figure in the Fiftiers Movement, an experimental group of poets that changed the face of Dutch literature after World War II. Shortly after the war he began experimenting with abstract drawing and painting as well as with a new poetic mode. He maintained that his language and his country were 'ripe for a mild repetition of the dadaistic and expressionistic experiment' of the early twentieth-century avant-garde in Europe.



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Lucebert in translation

Lucebert's poems have been published in over twenty languages, including English (Green Integer), French (Le Bleu du Ciel), German (Kleinheinrich, Suhrkamp) and Spanish (Universidad de León)

The Fiftiers were connected to the European CoBra Movement and the Experimental Group in Holland, a group of painters and writers, established in 1948 who, as the painter Constant put it in his manifesto, were 'against the degenerate aesthetic concepts that had hindered the development of creativity in the past.' For the first time, a definitive break was being made with the established art and literature of the past.

One thing that characterized the revolutionary new poetry of the Fiftiers was an unrestrained pleasure in language and a belief in what language could bring to bear. Simultaneously the new poetry aimed to present a reality that was stripped of all metaphysical certainty. For Lucebert, such an experience was epitomised as a sharp awareness of being 'a breadcrumb on the skirt of the universe' and it is in his work that we find the expression of this sensibility to be at its most intense. Often hailed the 'Emperor' of the Fiftiers, Lucebert's growing reputation as a poet culminated in his receiving of the Dutch State Prize for Literature in 1983. Throughout his entire life he remained totally devoted to his drawing, painting and poetry.

Lucebert is a prophet who, with the greatest urgency, screams and whispers a message.

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer

School of Poetry

I am no sweet rhymers
I am the swift swindler
of love, the hate beneath it heed
and there above a cackling deed.

the lyrical is the mother of the political,
I am none other than the riot reporter
and my mysticism is the putrefied fodder
of deceit used by virtue to purge it all.

I proclaim that the velvet poets
are dying timidly and humanistically.
from now on the hot iron throat
of moved henchmen will open musically.

yet I, who in these sheaves abide
like a rat in a trap, yearn for the cesspool
of revolution and cry: rhyme-rats, deride,
deride still this far too pure poetry school.

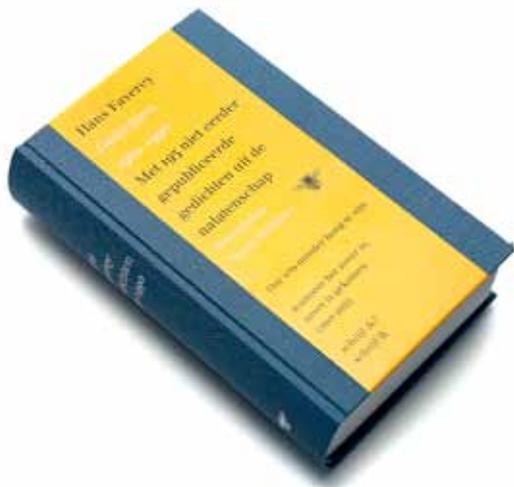
(Translation by Diane Buttermann)

Hans Faverey

Against the Forgetting

Modern and classical
at the same time

Hans Faverey (1933-1990) was born in Paramaribo, Surinam, but grew up in Amsterdam. He published eight collections of poetry, of which the last one, entitled *Default*, appeared only a few days before he died. He received many literary awards, including the Amsterdam Poetry Prize, the Jan Campert Prize and the prestigious Constantijn Huygens Prize for his work as a whole. A posthumous collection, *Spring Foxes*, appeared in 2000. A new, extended edition of his Collected Poems appeared in the Netherlands in 2010.



Rights

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Hans Faverey in translation

Faverey's poems have been published in English (Leon Works Press, New Directions, Anvil Press Poetry), German (Kleinheinrich), French (Théâtre Typographique, Joany) and several other languages

Hans Faverey is currently considered one of the greatest and most influential Dutch poets of the twentieth century, but his poetic reputation grew slowly. His first two collections, *Poems* (1968) and *Poems II* (1972) gained cautious critical acclaim and were seen by some as 'difficult' and 'hermetic'. His third volume, *Chrysanthemums, Rowers* (1977), however met with unanimous praise, and gained the Jan Campert Prize. The poems indeed seem more accessible, though they still contain a sense of mystery and paradox. They also became slightly longer, setting a tone and format which he was to retain for the rest of his poetic life.

The poetry of Faverey seems modern and classical at the same time, transparent and complicated, unpredictable and witty. His work contains traces of the ancient philosophers (e.g. Heraclitus, but also Meister Eckhart), Anglo-Saxon literature and Chinese poetry. Faverey's love for nature, his fascination for landscapes, is tangible in many of his poems. The title poem of *Chrysanthemums, Rowers*, in which eight rowers row further and further inland, until they simply cease to be, was an immediate household classic.

Hans Faverey was the purest poetic intelligence of his generation, the author of poems of lapidary beauty that echo in the mind long after the book is closed.

J.M. Coetzee

A real find among the extensive list of European poets being translated into English.

The Bloomsbury Review

Little by little –
they are drawing nearer: 8 rowers,
growing ever further inland

in their mythology:
with each stroke ever further
from home, rowing with all their might;
growing till all the water is gone,
and they fill the whole landscape

to the brim. Eight –

rowing ever further inland;
landscape, for there is
no more water: overgrown
landscape. Landscape,
rowing ever further

inland; land
without rowers; over-
rown land.

(Translation by Francis R. Jones)

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. The brochures *Books from Holland and Flanders*, *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 disbursed after receipt of proof samples, citing the subsidy. If the Foundation is not acquainted with the translator, a sample translation will be evaluated by external advisors. The maximum subsidy is 70% of the cost of translation. 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 specific 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 Mondrian Foundation and the Dutch Foundation for Literature.

Documentation centre

The documentation centre is an extensive information resource regarding Dutch literature abroad. The library contains more than 11.000 translated titles in more than seventy-five languages. The documentation centre can be visited by appointment. One significant component, the database of Dutch-language literature in translation, can be perused online at www.vertalingendatabase.nl.

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. Foreign authors are also 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). In addition, Amsterdam Vluchtstad offers accommodation to writers fleeing the regime of their home country.

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 to and from Dutch. The event also includes translation workshops.

Grants

The Foundation for Literature is active locally, offering travel and work grants to authors and translators in the field of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children's and youth literature. Workshops are also organized for beginning translators into Dutch.

Schwob

Schwob draws attention to as-yet undiscovered, untranslated world literature. Each month the editors select a modern classic, spotlighting it on www.schwob.nl, by way of reviews and sample translations.

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 close co-operation with the Flemish Literature Foundation.

Interested in receiving a newsletter via e-mail? Send your request to post@letterenfonds.nl or sign up on the website www.letterenfonds.nl

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for literature

‘Much of the best postwar fiction written in Dutch has recently become available in English. Much still remains to be done.’

Tim Parks, *The New York Review of Books*

Website

All titles in this brochure can be found on the Foundation's website: www.letterenfonds.nl. The category 'Authors and translators' offers information on the work of nearly 500 Dutch-language authors, and has a searchable database of more than 17.000 translations from Dutch into other languages.

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