‘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
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 Fristian 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. Subsidies for travel and work grants are also organized for beginning translators into Dutch.

**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.

**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. Its significant component, the database of Dutch-language literature in translation, can be pursued online at www.vertalingendatabase.nl.

**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 (NLPF) and the Foundation for Literature (PvdL), 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.

---

3  Multatuli Little Walter Pieterse
4  Louis Couperus Eline Vere
5  Nescio Amsterdam Stories
6  F. Bordewijk Blocks; Growling Creatures; Bint
7  J.J. Slauerhoff Law on Earth
7  E. du Perron Country of Origin
8  A. Alberts The Islands
8  F. B. Hotz Men Play, Women Win
9  Hella S. Haasse The Black Lake; The Ways of the Imagination
10 Willem Frederik Hermans Tears of the Acacias
11 Gerard Reve The Early Years
12 Jan Wolkers American Crewcut
12 J.J. Voskuil The Bureau
13 Harry Mulisch Two Women
14 Andreas Burnier The Boys' Hour
14 F. Springer Tehran: A Swan Song

---

3 – 14 Dutch Classics Fiction
15 – 26 Dutch Classics Non-fiction
27 – 38 Dutch Classics Children's books
39 – 50 Dutch Classics Poetry
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.

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 ostentatious 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. Gronloh (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.

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, ‘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 Gronloh 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.’

Joe O’Neill, author of Netherland

‘Nescio is the greatest Dutch writer.’

Tommy Wieringa
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.

Evolving 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 decline of the Western Empire and Proust’s Les faux-monnayeurs 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 Guadalajara (Circé, 2008) and La rivolta di Guadalajara (Milan, 1999).
— Translated into German by Albert Vigoëls Thelen.

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

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.

‘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 ship determined Slauerhoff’s literary future. His poems, stories and novels are still in print and read, Cees Nooteboom being one of his greatest admirers.

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.

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

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

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).

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 À 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 Vergaderszaal (The Meeting Room; 1975) and De honden jegen niet meer (The Dogs No Longer Hunt; 1979).

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 shay 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.

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 that lifestyle 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.’

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.

Haasse 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.’

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

Rights
Querido

Translations
De wegen der verheffing – French (Actes Sud, 1998), German (Berteisemann, 1999), Italian (Iperborea, 2000), Polish (Noir sur Blanc, 2004)

‘Hella S. Haasse’s novels have been familiar to 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 Acaicas

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 Acaicas, 1949), De donkere kamer van Damocles (The Darkroom of Damocles, 1958), and Nood meer slapen (Beyond Sleep, 1966).

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

'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 Nadert 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.

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 Closing of the Bolshovits Family is set during the Holocaust, yet nowhere is this theme made explicit. Instead we watch through the eyes of an Amsterdam man 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 hurts 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, ceremonial 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.’

'To write is to astound, Willem Frederik Hermans once regarded Oskar as a surrogate father.

— 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.

'The most provocative and controversial Dutch writer of his generation 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 Closing of the Bolshovits Family is set during the Holocaust, yet nowhere is this theme made explicit. Instead we watch through the eyes of an Amsterdam man 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 hurts 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, ceremonial 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 most provocative and controversial Dutch writer of his generation 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 Closing of the Bolshovits Family is set during the Holocaust, yet nowhere is this theme made explicit. Instead we watch through the eyes of an Amsterdam man 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 hurts 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, ceremonial 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.
Jan Wolkers
American Crewcut

The life of a tormented, damaged young soul


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 deathbed, Eric is fighting a war of his own. The Netherlands has entered the most grueling months in its history: the hungry 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 passed us 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’s 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’s 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).

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 Steigfried (2001), were all international bestsellers.

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.

J.J. Voskuil
The Bureau

A depiction of the world of bosses and wage slaves


‘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 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.

— The Great Dutch Novel!

Dutch Classics Fiction

Het bureau deel 1: Meneer Beerta (1962) 145 pages, 40,000 words

Rights
J.M. Meulenhoff

Translations
Swedish (Forum, 1985)

Het bureau deel 1: Meneer Beerta (1962)
773 pages, 240,000 words, 400,000 copies sold

Rights
G.A. van Oorschot

Translations
German (C.H. Beck, 2012)
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.

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.
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.

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.
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.

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.

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 great prophets of abstraction. Mondrian, however, did not found an academic school, inspired an intellectual culture.

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.

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.

Dutch Classics Non-Fiction

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 circles: The Waning of the Middle Ages, 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. 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.

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 ritual 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
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 encompasseleven 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.

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 pronounce-ments 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 comic, 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.

Lois 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 Azaucier’s Stairs, The Darkroom in Sudan, 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, Mandurin in Sulphuric Acid. Hermans also wrote many essays that have gained classic status in the Netherlands, summarizing his outlook in the term mondo, a dog’s world in which the human being is nothing more than ‘a chemical process’ and nothing less than a ‘jungle animal’.

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 Anglophone’), 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 ‘Trobiand 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, Antiapathetic 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 unlikable, 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 not the writer’s work. At the same time they are grimly cheerful, using 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, Antiapathetic 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 unlikable, 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 not the writer’s work. At the same time they are grimly cheerful, using 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’.

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
Ashes in the Wind

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 the 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 weapon.’

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?’ Perhaps even more importantly, Presser inspired a new generation to continue research-Ing the persecution and extermination of the Jews. More than 200,000 copies sold 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?’ 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

Uren met Henk Broekhuis (1978)
136 pp. 62,000 words
12,000 copies sold

Rights
G.A. van Oorschot
Herengracht 613
1017 CE Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 6231484
contact@vanoorschot.nl
www.vanoorschot.nl

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 delusional 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
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.

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 interwar 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
Dutch
Children’s books
Classics
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.
Paul Biegel

Paul Biegel (1925-2006) felt that he was unable to describe real life, but as soon as he started to write, things took on a life of their 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 rather set out to create his own space before the fairytale tradition of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Biegel's oeuvre: Het slleutelkruid (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 ‘flabbery snorking’ sound, while someone else has a ‘crankey’ voice, and characters have evocative names such as Klossidiminer, Glop and Granzabar. 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 serialized 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.

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 Alyassus 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 ‘flabbery snorking’ sound, while someone else has a ‘crankey’ voice, and characters have evocative names such as Klossidiminer, Glop and Granzabar. 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 serialized 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

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 math 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 knighthly 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 doppelganger, 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 Tuur 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 woord (Secrets of the Wild Woods), which was the last of her large-scale knighthly romances. She then wrote a con- temporary book and a number of shorter stories, each one embarking on a radically new course in 1969. Dragt’s new title was Torenhoog en mijlen breed (Sky High and Miles Wide), a fantas- tin novel about the future, set on the planet Venus. Gradually her language developed, its themes 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 Chil- dren’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 if 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 fairytail 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.

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 raising 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 his 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 Carye Sles. Terlouw thought this was a fine accolade, but one that needs to be put into perspective. ‘I was the first writer of modern society. 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.

Beckman’s trilogy Kruistocht in spijkerbroek (1973), set in the Middle Ages, at the time of the crusades. The twentieth-century teenager Dolf cooperates with his talent for organization, 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 anarchism that always lies 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 lengthiest visit was to the municipal archive of the Hanseatic town of Kampen resulting 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 ras van fortuin (Tune 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 helde paradisj (The Infernal Paradise, 1987) and Het gulden vlees 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 Kalp prize for the best film (2007), and was selected for the film festival in Berlin.
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 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 showered 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, the surprising and innovative interplay of text and illustrations.

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 Appelmoestraat is anders* (April 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 Wiegljetje, 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 Wouterjte Pieterse prizes, one Jenny Smelik BBY 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.

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. *Kraassen in het safelblad* (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. *Kraassen in het safelblad* 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.

Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 12 62
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

**Works**

Madelief (1975–1978)
*Olle* (1990)
*Eend voor eend* (1993)

**Translations**

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

Joke van Leeuwen

Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 12 62
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

**Works**

*De appelmoestraat is anders* (1978)
*Deesje* (1985)
*Toen mijn vader een struik werd* (2010)
*Waarom lig jij in mijn bedje?* (2011)

**Translations**

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

**Translations**

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

In 1984, following a collection of poetry for adults, Tele-
gen'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
dereenden kon omvallen (Almost Everyone Could Fall Over,
1993, Gouden Griffel, Wouterjte 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, melan-
choly, insecurity, fear of dying. However, Tellegen has never
taken anything like the work of Roald Dahl seriously.

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, melan-
choly, insecurity, fear of dying. However, Tellegen has never
taken anything like the work of Roald Dahl seriously.

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

Peter van Gestel

‘Ten-year-old boys are an endless source of fascination for me,’ Peter van Gestel (b. 1937) once said. His stories are never so much about the experiences of the characters as the style of telling them. His distinctive style has inspired a range of leading illustrators, including Annemarie van Haerinen, Hans 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 and inside a classroom. His first book to be published, Mijn avonturen door V. Schwerm, (My Adventures by V. Schwerm, 1998), originally appeared within Van Gestel's oeuvre. An engaging girl goes out into the world with great enthusiasm, but the conversations have 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.

Peter 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 heer-
lijke 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 charac-
ters always manage to retain a certain cool and a detached sense of humour; no war is going to change that (Winterijs, Wintersel, 2001), and neither is a dying father (Al dat heerlijke verdriet) or a brother who commits suicide (De 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 some-
thing 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 per-
son asks something else, but there is no chance of any answers
because the conversation has already moved on. Such skillfully
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 Win-
erijs, 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 Winterijs, who have lost both of their fathers and mothers in a concentra-
cion camp. Winterijs won all the major awards for children's literature, including the Gouden Griffel and the Wouterjte Pieterse Prijs. With their ten-year-old protagon-
ists and post-war settings, Kleine Felix (Little Felix, 2008) and Al dat heerlijke verdriet are distant relations of that book.

Marken (1997), with its medieval setting, is somewhat iso-
lated within Van Gestel's oeuvre. An engaging girl goes out into the
big wide world and falls in with a troupe of travelling play-
ners. 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 Marken was awarded a Gouden Kalf, the most important Dutch film prize.
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.

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.

— Imme Dros’s work is closely intertwined with the drawings of her husband Harrie Geelen, who has illustrated the majority of her books.

Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 12 62
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

**Works**

*Odysseus, een man van verhalen* (1994)
*Ilios* (1999)
*De reizen van de slimme man* (1988)
*Mee met Aeneas* (2008)
*Annetje Lie in het holst van de nacht* (1987)

**Translations**

For translated titles by Imme Dros see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations
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.

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.

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)

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 Idyll 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. He 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.

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 at 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.
Awater is no stranger here it seems.
I think, or it least it paves the way for a very interesting future.

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 at 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.

(…)
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.

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 find shelter’ 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

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 the earth. Achterberg appealed to his interest in metaphysics. He could think of no one to compare Achterberg with in foreign literature – except perhaps Paul Celan.

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 cellophone ‘an aquarium of light’. Famous artists and philosophers such as Spinoza, Hercules Seghers and Zadkine populate his poems; politicians and artists who are not spared criticism and, as a traveller, he visits Golgota 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 was 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 ‘roose’, 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 microcosm.

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 ashens 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 with bass bell’s tolling undertone

‘We raise our eyes to Thy high throne.’

Valerius: – a solemn singing

the thin, transparent gleam of a bus that’s wed to ours,

and later, after a quick and limber stretch,

In front of me, the freshly–shaven necks

we look out, a smallish moon relieves the gloom.

the sea is on the left, subdued but restless,

The bus drives through the darkness like a room,

the narrow road is straight, the dam is endless,

The Carillon

The people in the streets looked stricken, their ashens 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 with bass bell’s tolling undertone

‘We raise our eyes to Thy high throne.’

Valerius: – a solemn singing

the thin, transparent gleam of a bus that’s wed to ours,

and later, after a quick and limber stretch,

In front of me, the freshly–shaven necks

we look out, a smallish moon relieves the gloom.

the sea is on the left, subdued but restless,

The bus drives through the darkness like a room,

the narrow road is straight, the dam is endless,

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 Isselmeer 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 incomunicable. 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 Carillon

The people in the streets looked stricken, their ashens 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 with bass bell’s tolling undertone

‘We raise our eyes to Thy high throne.’

Valerius: – a solemn singing

the thin, transparent gleam of a bus that’s wed to ours,

and later, after a quick and limber stretch,

In front of me, the freshly–shaven necks

we look out, a smallish moon relieves the gloom.

the sea is on the left, subdued but restless,

The bus drives through the darkness like a room,

the narrow road is straight, the dam is endless,

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 Isselmeer 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 incomunicable. 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 Carillon

The people in the streets looked stricken, their ashens 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 with bass bell’s tolling undertone

‘We raise our eyes to Thy high throne.’

Valerius: – a solemn singing

the thin, transparent gleam of a bus that’s wed to ours,

and later, after a quick and limber stretch,

In front of me, the freshly–shaven necks

we look out, a smallish moon relieves the gloom.

the sea is on the left, subdued but restless,

The bus drives through the darkness like a room,

the narrow road is straight, the dam is endless,
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 Gallipool 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 brutal 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. 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 ‘very 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.

Leo van Wilder Courant

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 Willinson)

Lucebert
Collected Poems
The ‘Emperor’ of his revolutionary generation

Lucebert (ps Luberus Jacobus Swaanwijk, 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.

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

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer

School of Poetry

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

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 bencenches 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 Butterman)
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.

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 brochure Books from Holland and Flanders, Quality Non-Fiction from Holland and Children’s Books from Holland recommended highlights from each category’s selection.

Translation Grants
Foreign publishers wishing to publish a translation of Dutch or Fristian 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.

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.schwo.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 (PvdL), 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

3 – 14 Dutch Classics Fiction
15 – 26 Dutch Classics Non-fiction
27 – 38 Dutch Classics Children’s books
39 – 50 Dutch Classics Poetry

3 Multatuli Little Walter Pieterse
4 Louis Couperus Eline Vere
5 Nescio Amsterdam Stories
6 F. Bordewijk Blocks; Growling Creatures; Bint
7 J.J. Slauerhoff Days Before Yesterday
8 Hella S. Haasse Life on Earth
9 E. du Perron Country of Origin
10 Maria Dermoût Tears of the Acacias
11 Gerard Reve The Early Years
12 Jan Wolkers American Crewcut
13 Harry Mulisch Two Women
14 Andreas Burnier The Boys’ Hour
15 F. Springer Tehran: A Swan Song

Multatuli
Little Walter Pieterse
Louis Couperus
Eline Vere
Nescio
Amsterdam Stories
F. Bordewijk
Blocks; Growling Creatures; Bint
J.J. Slauerhoff
Days Before Yesterday
Hella S. Haasse
Life on Earth
E. du Perron
Country of Origin
Maria Dermoût
Tears of the Acacias
Gerard Reve
The Early Years
Jan Wolkers
American Crewcut
Harry Mulisch
Two Women
Andreas Burnier
The Boys’ Hour
F. Springer
Tehran: A Swan Song
‘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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Advisors</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All titles in this brochure can be found on the Foundation’s website: <a href="http://www.letterenfonds.nl">www.letterenfonds.nl</a>.</td>
<td>Fiction Barbara den Ouden <a href="mailto:b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl">b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl</a> Victor Schiferli <a href="mailto:v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl">v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl</a> Pieter Steinz <a href="mailto:p.steinz@letterenfonds.nl">p.steinz@letterenfonds.nl</a></td>
<td>Contributors Hein Aalders, Woljan van den Akker, Josjeke Abkról, Maarten Aukier, E. M. Beekman, David Colmer, Margot Dijkgraaf, Anja de Poije, Lieneke Frericks, Koert Freriks, Roelof van Gelder, Léon Hansen, Wim Hazeu, Ingrid Hoegersvaren, Franck R. Henges, Leo Janse, Beam de Klerk, Conny Kranen, Nop Maas, Marta Mathijzen, Gerda Meijerink, Willem Onweers, Victor Schiferli, Rob Schouten, Bart Slippers, René Snoek, Piet van Smeerd, Paul Vinceti, Maria Vlaar, Rudi Water, Judith Wilkinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-fiction Maarten Valken <a href="mailto:m.valken@letterenfonds.nl">m.valken@letterenfonds.nl</a></td>
<td>Editors Dick Broos, Thomas Möhlmann, Barbara den Ouden, Victor Schiferli, Pieter Steinz, Maarten Valken, Agnes Vogt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s Books Agnes Vogt <a href="mailto:a.vogt@letterenfonds.nl">a.vogt@letterenfonds.nl</a></td>
<td>Translation Diane Butterman, David Colmer, John Irwin, Francis R. Jones, David McKay, Laura Waters, Liz Waters, Judith Wilkinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry Thomas Möhlmann <a href="mailto:t.moehlmann@letterenfonds.nl">t.moehlmann@letterenfonds.nl</a></td>
<td>Copy-editing Liz Waters, Jan Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Design Philip Stroomberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Printing Mart Spruit bv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nederlands Letterenfonds / Dutch Foundation for Literature Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89 1018 VR Amsterdam Tel. +31 20 520 73 00 Fax +31 20 520 73 09 The Netherlands <a href="mailto:post@letterenfonds.nl">post@letterenfonds.nl</a> <a href="http://www.letterenfonds.nl">www.letterenfonds.nl</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>