

**DUTCH**

Dutch Foundation  
for Literature

Autumn 2021

**NON-  
FICTION**





# TRAVEL

MIREILLE  
BERMAN

When will we be able to speak of the pandemic in the past tense? Perhaps we are still in the middle, or even at the beginning of something that we cannot yet fully oversee – and still we are already tempted to look back. The same goes for me. Many of the titles in the brochure involve travel, beaten paths are abandoned, searches and quests undertaken, and it's very tempting to see this as a sign of the times. We have spent the past year indoors, after all, confined to our own homes, restricted in our movements, largely deprived of contact with the outside world. The experience of travel, of impromptu conversations, sudden vistas, of straying along unknown paths, exists only in our memories.

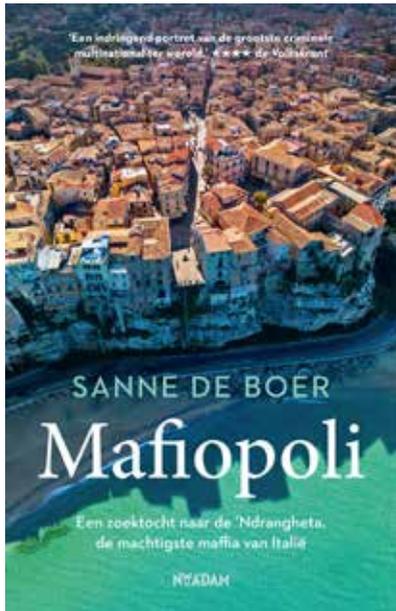
Fortunately literature helps us out of this isolation. Writers have always been our guides to unknown regions, they provide us with a view of the foreign and the other, but at the same time show us that we can feel at home anywhere as long as we look and listen. You don't actually have to set off on a journey for this.

That experience, the travel and exploration of what seems unknown, is central to this autumn's offerings. The fifteen titles in this brochure lead us along the Rhine, into space, to a car factory in Japan, to the German countryside, to slave plantations in Suriname and to the early medieval world of the Vikings. The authors take us on a walk through Amsterdam and through a silent Paris, and show world-famous works of art in museums. They guide us to the Habsburg Empire, through the Balkans, Liberia and southern Italy. And we can also travel inwards, to the depths of our souls, into the abysses of fear and panic, in search of solid ground under our feet.

Over the past year we have stayed in touch with international editors and publishers through a monthly Editors' Hour, during which interesting and inspiring conversations were had about the international book trade. These Editors' Hours made up for a lot – but now we're looking forward to real encounters again and hope to be able to exchange thoughts with you in the near future. Email us at [m.berman@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:m.berman@letterenfonds.nl) for an appointment – online is fine but even better in person.

# Sanne de Boer

Mafiopoli: a town or society run by the mafia (neologism from the Italian word 'mafia' and the Ancient Greek 'polis' for city or community).



Dutch title  
*Mafiopoli*  
Een zoektocht naar de 'Ndrangheta, de machtigste maffia van Italië'  
Year of publication  
2020  
Page count  
304  
Sold copies  
10,000  
Sample translation  
Available (English)  
Publisher  
Nieuw Amsterdam  
Rights  
Melle van Loenen  
mvanloenen@nieuwamsterdam.nl  
Rights sold  
Germany (Aufbau Verlag)  
Italy (Rubbettino)

## Mafiopoli — In Search of the Ndrangheta, Italy's Most Powerful Mafia

**In 2006, journalist Sanne de Boer moves from Amsterdam to a sleepy seaside village in the southern Italian province of Calabria. She relishes the slower pace of life, the overwhelming hospitality of her neighbours, the beautiful nature and wonderful food – until one night a car in her street is set alight. Its owner, a local government worker, refuses to call the police and quits her job. When a man is subsequently shot dead in the village, it turns out he was a member of the Ndrangheta. De Boer, full of questions but met with silence, goes looking for answers in what she soon discovers is the heart of the most powerful mafia in the world.**

From operating in the shadow of the Sicilian and Neapolitan mafias during the 1970s and 80s, the Ndrangheta – named after the Greek for 'society of men of honour' – are now responsible for 80% of the cocaine entering Europe. They are a multi-national organization active in 32 countries (17 of which in Europe) and silently embedded at nearly every level of society, mixing blue- and white-collar crime in the grey area between legal and illegal business. Although mass-arrests have been made in recent years, the full extent of the mafia's political and financial influence is still unknown.

How could such a seemingly unstoppable criminal multinational develop in this remote and beautiful region of Italy? What makes this network of mafia clans so old-fashioned and provincial on the one hand, and so global and modern on the other? What has been the impact of Covid-19 on their business? Building on

## A gripping portrait of the largest criminal multinational in the world

extensive archival research, De Boer uncovers the gripping stories of her neighbours, local business owners, fearless journalists, mafia prosecutors and state witnesses. She exposes the brutal reality of a highly sophisticated mafia that is gaining more and more ground.

Mixing memoir and true crime, *Mafiopoli* is both a unique personal story about De Boer's own experience, living alongside members of the Ndrangheta clans, and a wide-ranging journalistic account, unveiling the mafia's extensive network throughout Italy and the rest of the world, including Germany, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. Though many Europeans might believe otherwise, long gone are the days when the Ndrangheta were just some far-off Italian phenomena. Their nefarious influence outside of Italy will only continue to grow as long as they are left to work undetected.

Sanne de Boer (b. 1979) is an investigative journalist who has lived in Calabria since 2006. She is the first foreign journalist based there to write about the Ndrangheta, and regularly appears on Dutch TV and radio as a mafia expert. She writes for several newspapers and magazines, including *De Correspondent* and *Oneworld*. *Mafiopoli* is her first book.



Photo (© Sacha de Boer)

**'A splendid book about the ruthless Ndrangheta in Italy. Beautifully written, excellently researched.'**

**De Telegraaf**

**'Besides *Gomorra* by Roberto Saviano, this is one of the best books on the mafia available.'**

**NBD Biblion**

# Caroline de Gruyter

## It Won't Get Any Better — A Journey through the Habsburg Empire and the European Union



Dutch title  
*Beter wordt het niet. Een reis door het Habsburgse rijk en de Europese Unie*  
Year of publication  
2021  
Page count  
243  
Sample translation  
Available (English, German, Danish)  
Sold copies  
20,000  
Publisher  
De Geus  
Rights  
Singel Uitgevers  
Martijn Prins  
m.prins@singeluitgeverijen.nl  
Rights sold  
Germany (Böhlau Verlag)

For the European Union, recent years perhaps have felt like the beginning of the end, what with nationalism rising across the board, geopolitical dynamics shifting throughout the world, ugly deals with border nations, Brexit and financial troubles. Europeans love to complain the EU has too little power, or too much, that it's too slow, too weak, too divided. And yet European Affairs correspondent Caroline de Gruyter recognizes striking parallels with the Habsburg Empire, which saw itself similarly tasked with unifying many different, wary and critical states, and nevertheless lasted six centuries: 'the zeitgeist is different, but the nature of the political games is not.' What can the EU learn from the Habsburgs?

In *It Won't Get Any Better*, De Gruyter goes in search of the similarities and differences between the Habsburg Empire and the EU. She alternates insightful political analyses and historical explanations with entertaining personal anecdotes and interviews with authors, journalists and present-day Habsburgs. Paying particular attention to the dynamics and geo-political importance of middle Europe – where Hungary has always been headstrong – she uncovers a bygone era that nevertheless left clear traces in the peoples and cultures living at the centre of the former empire. As she notes, the empire's demise was not the rebellion of its peoples against an oppressive regime, but rather a downward spiral set off by the First World War. It was only through war – which the empire's stumbling, 'half-finished' bureaucracy had prevented for so long – that nationalist movements could actually take root.

## In defence of bureaucracy and the political craft of muddling through

More than making a comparison, De Gruyter goes to bat for the Habsburg (and European) strategy of muddling through, or 'kicking the can down the road', in response to new challenges from outside and a changing environment. Bureaucratic sluggishness and endless rules, though frustrating, are the result of compromise – perhaps our greatest defence against conflict and war. Indeed, the EU has helped its constituent nations become peaceful and prosperous.

Far from sombre or pessimistic, this is a smart, funny and optimistic plea for the Europe Union in a time of widespread discontent, and for finding peace with slowness and imperfection. Because in the end, when seeking to appease and unify so many independent actors, it won't get any better than this. Soft power might not be pretty, but its infinitely better than waging war.

Caroline de Gruyter (b. 1963) is a European Affairs correspondent for the leading Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* and a regular contributor to *Carnegie Europe* and *Foreign Policy*. She was posted to Brussels twice and spent more than twenty years covering Europe. Her previous books include *Swiss Lives: the New Political Reality in Europe*

(2015) and *A Cursed Paradise: Why Politicians Must Finally Take Europe Seriously* (2016). De Gruyter currently lives in Oslo but wrote this book, her fifth, in Vienna, the former capital of the Habsburg Empire.

**'By knowing and understanding the past, we can guard against mistakes. That, too, is a reason to read *It Won't Get Any Better*.'**

**NRC Handelsblad**

**'Caroline de Gruyter writes with great passion and clarity.'**

**De Correspondent**



# Marjolijn van Heemstra

## In Lightyears No One Is in a Hurry — A Quest for More Space in Our Lives



Dutch title  
*In lichtjaren heeft niemand haast.*  
*Een zoektocht naar meer ruimte in ons leven*

Year of publication  
2021

Page count  
178

Sold copies  
14,000

Sample translation  
Available (English)

Publisher  
De Correspondent

Rights  
Janklow & Nesbit  
foreignrights@janklow.co.uk

Rights sold  
Norton (US)

3:32 a.m., the hottest summer on record, and writer, poet and theatre maker Marjolijn van Heemstra cannot get to sleep. She lies in bed, scrolling through stories of rage and injustice, the climate crisis and political protest, her thoughts endlessly orbiting identity debates and the growing divisions around her. She cannot see a way out, a perspective beyond her daily life, a future for her children beyond the brokenness of the present. But then she stumbles on the ‘The Hubble Ultra Deep Field’, an image of billions of stars scattered in the darkness like countless broken fragments, and she has a realisation: we are surrounded by so much more than the daily stream of apocalyptic news.

In *In Lightyears No One Is in a Hurry*, Van Heemstra investigates how outer space can provide us with new perspectives on ourselves and the planet. Inspired by astronauts’ stories of recognising the earth’s fragility in an infinite, inhospitable universe, she pursues this ‘overview effect’ in everyday life. What begins with the Hubble Telescope’s composite photograph, leads her from poets and philosophers, psychologists and park rangers, self-proclaimed ‘luna-tics’ and Mars missions, space rights lawyers and aspiring space colonists, to the search for exoplanets and extra-terrestrial life and more.

Time and again, outer space proves to be a place vital to humanity’s collective imagination, hopes and dreams – but also a political space, vulnerable to the same dangers of short-term thinking that have wreaked so much damage here on earth. With the aeons and light years aeons outer

## A bestselling book about how outer space can help connect us on earth

space asks us to think in, it serves as an important antidote, a realm that must be defended for the common good. ‘Understanding that we all live on a very small planet in a ridiculously large, completely unfathomable cosmos helps relativise individual problems, conflicts and differences.’ By attending to our place in the cosmos, by being what Van Heemstra calls astronauts on earth, we can find each other again on the basis of a common vista.

In this autobiographical meditation in eighteen parts, Van Heemstra’s writing is clear and poetic. She restores mystery and wonder to the everyday, remarking in an interview: ‘I didn’t make my space voyage on earth because I wanted to understand things. I wanted precisely to break free from understanding. And the heavens are a very good place for that.’

Marjolijn van Heemstra (b. 1981) has been fascinated by space and space travel for years. Since 2019, she has been covering Space in all its facets for online journalism platform *De Correspondent*. She was previously a columnist for the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* for many years and has written three poetry books and two novels. Her novel

*In Search of a Name* (2017) was nominated for the Libris Literature Prize, was awarded the BNG Bank Literature Prize, and has been published in eight languages.

**‘Marjolijn van Heemstra excels in her clever and original thoughts on the cosmos. Formidable.’**

Frank Westerman

**‘In the immense vastness of the universe and our awareness of our insignificance, Van Heemstra finds not impotence but comfort and she is able to convey this feeling.’**

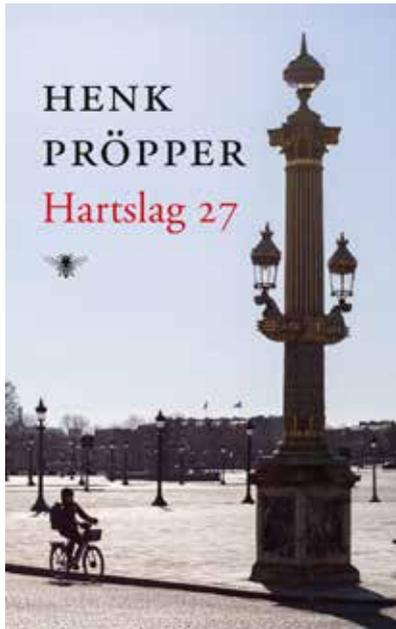
Dagblad van het Noorden



Photo (© Frank Ruiter)

# Henk Pröpper

## 27 Beats per Minute



Dutch title  
*Hartslag 27*  
Year of publication  
2021  
Page count  
144  
Sample translation  
Available (English)  
Publisher  
De Bezige Bij  
Rights  
Bee Rights  
Marijke Nagtegaal  
m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl  
Uta Matten  
u.matten@debezigebij.nl  
Rights sold  
Mountain Leopard Press (UK)

**In a silenced Paris, in the calm of a city spellbound by a pandemic, the protagonist of *27 Beats per Minute* reflects on the pillars of his existence and the matters that have shaped him. Through his reflections, the reader is transported across the city, taking in European literature and history along the way. 'I walk through the streets and alleys, aimlessly and without direction, in this alienating setting. The city is entranced by Covid-19 and me by my mind's musings.'**

Pröpper's mental journey begins in the spring of 2020, when recovering from major heart surgery, he walks through the empty Paris streets. The city is in lockdown, and Pröpper takes short walks in the hour a day that Parisians are allowed outside within a one-and-a-half kilometre radius of their homes. But the emptiness of the streets does not mean that there is nothing to see, on the contrary. In his immediate vicinity he discovers memorial plaques, monuments and statues which honour and commemorate famous and less famous Parisians. They form a kind of library, filled with stories and memories that are triggered. He reflects on his own life, remembers books that strongly affected him, and searches for the keynotes of his existence.

First of all, that has been literature: the children's books he devoured as a boy, then the books of Maigret, and later those of Balzac, Hugo and Flaubert. Associations and thoughts alternate, memories arise, observations and feelings are shared: on the attraction of the big city; the soulless ruin that once was the magnificent Notre Dame; Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony;

## A personal essay tackling sickness, vitality and the importance of literature

a Louise Bourgeois artwork in the Tuileries. The Second World War, which determined and shaped Pröpper's way of thinking, makes him reflect on commitment, courage and betrayal. And so the reader accompanies the writer through Paris's present and past: meanderingly contemplative, searching for joie de vivre, eloquent and extremely erudite, but averse to pretension and with a subtle sense of humour.

He speaks to no one, everything is reduced to its essence. He is a sick man, confronted with decay and upheaval, who must face his own vulnerability. This is precisely why he seeks solace in the beauty of the city, and in that of literature. The power of literature allows him to make an urgent appeal to the reader: Pröpper urges independent and original thinking, which makes this essay, though very personal, anything but limited to one man's view.

Henk Pröpper (b. 1958) is the author of the novel *The Crab's Sword* and of numerous essays. For forty years he has written about the literature and culture of France, the country where he worked as a diplomat and director of the Institut Néerlandais. Pröpper also writes for *de Volkskrant*, especially on matters regarding France. From 2011 to 2016, he was Publishing Director of De Bezige Bij.

**'This finely-cut gem compels one's admiration.'**

**Knack**

**'A concise masterpiece about a tumultuous year.'**

**Vrij Nederland**

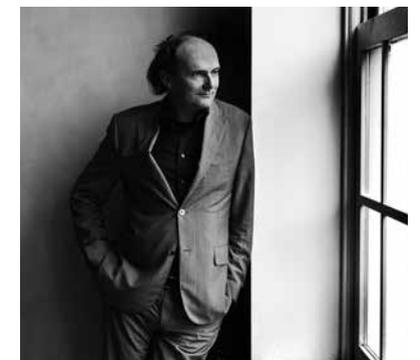


Photo (© Stephan Vanfleteren)

# Mathijs Deen

## The Boundless River — Stories from the Rhine Basin



Dutch title  
*De grenzeloze rivier*  
*Verhalen uit het rijk van de Rijn*  
Year of publication  
2021  
Page count  
336  
Sample translation  
Available (English)  
Publisher  
De Bezige Bij  
Rights  
De Bezige Bij  
Marijke Nagtegaal  
m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl  
Uta Matten  
u.matten@debezigebij.nl

In *The Boundless River* Deen does not tell the story of the Rhine directly, from source to sea, but as a current fed by many tributaries. Meandering from the mighty hippos that once grazed on the river's banks millions of years ago to the exhausted salmon that saw their habitat slowly change, from the girl from ancient Steinheim to the Roman general Corbulo, to the young Goethe and the North Sea fisherman Kommer Tanis – Deen tells stories in which the Rhine is ever present, at times in the lead role, at others as an extra. He shows how, since the beginning of time, the river has connected and divided, terrified, consoled, sustained and engulfed.

*The Boundless River* takes the same approach as Deen's acclaimed books *The Wadden Islands* and *Down Old Roads*, set in the grey zone between fact and fiction, knowledge and imagination. 'Imagine the river is a character, she'll need a birth and death as well. Tell me how she was born.' This is what Deen asks his friend, a geologist, one sunny day in September. The answer that follows is the start of a journey that will carry the reader from a time far before we ever spoke of a European continent to the current day, in which skippers still regard the Rhine as a living being.

Deen tells his story as a conversation with his contemporaries, a geologist, a skipper, a primary school teacher, the paleo-geographer Kim Cohen, who tells him that the Rhine does not start in the Alps, but flows together from all parts of Europe, from Italy to the Netherlands, from Saxe-Weimar to France. But the river's contemporaries also speak, such as the girl from Steinheim, who

## The Rhine as a thread connecting millions of years of history

drowned in the Rhine 300,000 years ago, and Julius Caesar, who saw the river as the border of his empire. We hear of Charlemagne, who tried in vain to connect the river with a canal on the Danube, and the countless generals, from Pichegru to Patton, who had to cross the river. This makes *The Boundless River* not only a history of one of the most powerful manifestations of European nature, but also a history of the cultures that emerged on the banks of the Rhine.

Mathijs Deen (b. 1962) is a radio producer and a writer of non-fiction, short stories and novels. In 2013, his book *The Wadden Islands* was published to critical acclaim and sold 25,000 copies. In 2018, he published a collection of travel stories called *Down Old Roads: A Journey Through Europe's History*, which was nominated for the Bob den Uyl Prize and

received the Halewijn Prize. His latest novella, *The Lightship*, was longlisted for the Libris Literature Award. His work has been translated into German, Italian and Korean.

About *Down Old Roads*:

**'Mathijs Deen is an exceptional prose stylist.'**

**Het Parool**

**'Deen's impressive fund of historical knowledge allows him to travel effortlessly through the centuries.'**

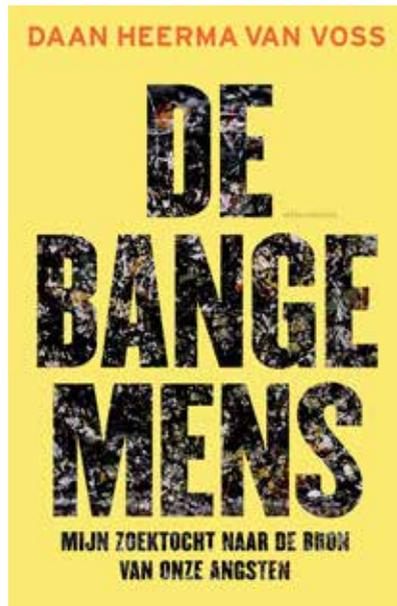
**NRC Handelsblad**



Photo (© Lin Woldendorp)

# Daan Heerma van Voss

## The Anxiety Project — My Journey to the Centre of our Deepest Fears



Dutch title  
*De bange mens*  
Year of publication  
2021  
Page count  
293  
Sample translation  
Available (English)  
Publisher  
Atlas Contact  
Sold copies  
5,000  
Rights  
Lisette Verhagen  
lverhagen@pfd.co.uk  
Rights sold  
Germany (Diogenes Verlag)  
UK (MacLehose Press)  
Poland (Slowne), Russia (AST)

When Dutch novelist and historian Daan Heerma van Voss finds himself in yet another break-up because he is just too anxious to be with, he sets out to unearth the roots of his deepest fears. He is not alone though: 264 million people suffer from anxiety, and this number is growing every day. Digging more deeply, Heerma van Voss wonders whether our genes have something to do with it. What is the link between anxiety and creativity? And how can you love another when you are in a constant state of fear?

To answer these questions and get a grip on this unpredictable ‘monster’, Daan delves into his memories and family history, and searches for explanations in the literature on fear. It will be a long journey that takes him abroad and introduces him to philosophers, artists, scientists and the fellow anxious. In the French countryside, he comes to understand the history of anxiety, and in particular the imagination’s unique role in human fear. Unlike other animals, we can fall prey to the fearful possibilities we constantly imagine. This inspires him to go to Jakarta, where he discovers that at least the last four generations in his family have suffered from the same anxiety but with varying medical ‘explanations’.

Our current medical label, ‘anxiety disorder’, was only coined in 1980 and turns out to have a disturbing history of its own. With the help of fellow patients in the Netherlands, Daan addresses the usefulness of such diagnoses and the accompanying therapies and pharmaceutical treatments. Ultimately, he links the international growth of anxiety to a marked cultural and economic shift,

## An insightful personal essay about a growing social phenomenon

since the 1980s, away from communal dealings with anxieties and towards the individual. This isolation and pressure has only been heightened by the internet and social media: engulfed by images of success, we allow our expectations to grow while genuine opportunities are shrinking. More than raising awareness, Daan argues for acknowledging anxiety as a collective rather than individual matter.

The lived experience of fear, however, remains very personal and Daan importantly contributes an intimate portrait to what is most often a clinical conversation. As someone who has experienced panic attacks since the age of six, he not only seeks understanding of his fear, and his fear of fear (of ‘waking the monster’), but also self-reconciliation. Heartfelt and timely, *The Anxiety Project* combines a personal account, historical argument and investigative essay with a highly readable style.

Daan Heerma van Voss (b.1986) is a historian and author. He has written for several national and international newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, *Vogue US*, *Pen International*, *Haaretz* (Israel), *Dissidentbloggen* (Sweden) and *Svenska Dagbladet*. His novels have been shortlisted for a number of prizes and he was awarded

De Tegel for extraordinary journalistic achievements. His much-acclaimed novel *The Last War* (2016) has been translated into German, Spanish, Swedish and Chinese. *The Anxiety Project* is his first major work of non-fiction.

**‘A candid book in which Heerma van Voss goes in search of the source of his anxieties.’**

**NRC Handelsblad**

**‘Heerma van Voss not only uncovers our relationship with the phenomenon of fear, but also scrutinizes himself mercilessly.’**

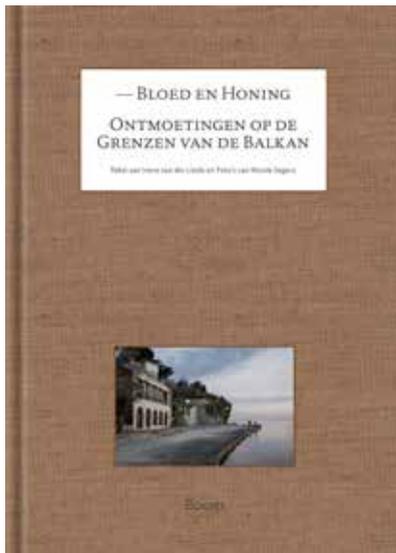
**Tzum**



Photo (© Jean Couent)

# Irene van der Linde & Nicole Segers

## Blood and Honey — Encounters on the Borders in the Balkan Region



Dutch title  
*Bloed en honing*  
*Ontmoetingen op de grenzen van de Balkan*

Year of publication  
2020

Page count  
688

Sample translation  
Available (English)

Publisher  
Boom / Lectoris

Rights  
Laurens Molegraaf  
laurens@santasado.com

In 1937, the British writer and journalist Rebecca West travelled through the Balkans. Everywhere she looked she found traces of the meaning of its name, derived from the Turkish: *'bal'* – honey, *'kan'* – blood. More than eighty years, and many wars and attempts at reconciliation later, Dutch writer Irene van der Linde and photographer Nicole Segers set off in her footsteps, visiting the seven countries that now form the Balkans. They search for the meanings of the new borders in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro.

They travel along deserted roads and over barren plains, through dark rocky gorges and abandoned villages. They visit Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, Skopje, Ohrid and Tirana and meet artists, scientists, dreamers, fighters and the forgotten. The reader is taken to remote corners where at first sight time has stood still. On this journey they are also confronted with horror, such as the bridge in Visegrad upon which thousands of Bosnians were murdered and then thrown into the river in 1992, and with the nostalgia of cosmopolitan, opulent Sarajevo, where a woman in their hotel prepares a dish from the Habsburg era. Hope for a better future is hard to find, even though much has changed since the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.

Van der Linde and Segers argue that it is precisely in the Balkans that we need to think about the future of Europe. What Rebecca West saw – different peoples, who nevertheless lived peacefully side by side – is exactly what the authors of *Blood and Honey* don't see: nowadays the predominant mood is embitterment and nostalgia for a

## Literary reportages on hope, embitterment and nationalism in the Balkan countries

unitary state. The fragmentation and division is unprecedented, ultra-nationalist politicians meet with extraordinary success, nobody seems to have dealt with the trauma of the Balkan wars. Ensuring democracy on the fringes of Europe is all the more urgent. 'Don't think it won't happen, that there won't be a war. The world you live in, which you consider normal, can disappear in a puff of smoke. Nobody believed it, we didn't either, but it happened anyway,' historian Jesenko Galijašević warns in Sarajevo.

*Blood and Honey* tells of unity and separation, of the sobering reality of nationalism put into practice. It tells of hope and disappointment, passion and lethargy, day-to-day worries and geopolitical forces, and of fragmentation, as is happening elsewhere in Europe. Language and image are intertwined in this unique example of slow journalism, a mix of literary non-fiction and documentary photography.

Writer and historian Irene van der Linde (b.1963) and photographer Nicole Segers (b.1960) have been working together for some twenty years. Their work has been shown in the Kunsthal in Rotterdam, at Breda Photo and in a collaborative project with Rem Koolhaas in Brussels. Their main focus is the influence of the new European borders on peo-

ple's lives. They published *Het einde van Europa* (The End of Europe, 2004) – the French translation was nominated for the Prix du Livre Européen – and *Het veer van Istanbul* (The Istanbul Ferry, 2010). *Blood and Honey* is the final part of this trilogy about the Balkans. It was voted best text/photo book 2021 at the Dutch Photo Book Prize.

**'Everyone should read this book about a forgotten corner of Europe.'**

**NRC Handelsblad**

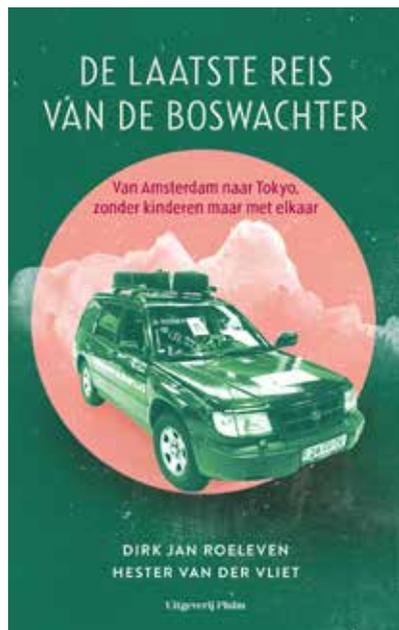
**'A poignant contemporary travel guide. It does what good guides do: provide insight and break down barriers.'**

**Trouw**



# Dirk Jan Roeleven & Hester van der Vliet

## The Forester's Last Journey — From Amsterdam to Tokyo without Children but with Each Other



It is an absolutely insane project: a couple, both in their late fifties, together for decades, decides to take their old banger, a third-hand Japanese Subaru, back to the place where it was manufactured. Spontaneously, because they don't feel like dumping the car at the scrapyard after so many years of loyal service. And what's more: 'The lack of a reason is a good impetus to do something, I think. Futility as meaning.' Friends respond with admiration, envy and disbelief: 'Everyone dreams of doing something like this, but you go and do it.' And off they go – driving their 17-year-old Subaru Forester back to the factory in Tokyo.

With 500,000 kilometres on the clock and music blaring, they drive through rivers, cross mud flats and sand dunes, on Russian asphalt, Kazakh steppe highways and Mongolian desert roads, all the way to Vladivostok, where they take the ferry to Japan. The distance totals over 23,000 kilometres, without air conditioning or any real knowledge of car maintenance. The hero of the story is, of course, the Forester, who drags them through deserts, even if there is no road at all, who sometimes splutters during heavy downpours, but otherwise takes all of it on without any problems. Sometimes everything comes together and fortune favours them, as it does upon arrival in the city of Khabarovsk. 'The weather is mild and sunny, the road is approaching perfection, the rolling countryside is covered in birch forests and there is hardly any traffic. Life smiles at us.'

But there is more at stake. If two people find themselves side by side in the car for days upon end, it provides the opportunity to address long

## An adventure-packed travel memoir about love, happiness and raw grief

unspoken grievances. In this case, their involuntary childlessness. Dirk Jan's sorrow has been gnawing away in the background. They did want children, but not at any cost, and gave up after three failed attempts at IVF. They moved on and enjoyed a good life, with travel and interesting jobs. Their circle of friends split, the people with children dropped out, the friends without children remained. On this road trip, they can finally have a long-delayed conversation and address latent regret. The journey not only provides new vistas, but also closure: by bringing home and saying goodbye to their Subaru in Japan, they also bury the trauma of their childlessness.

Dirk Jan Roeleven (b. 1961) works as a filmmaker, creating items for a variety of Dutch TV programmes. His writing debut *The New Bicycle*, which sold over 15,000 copies, takes the reader on a journey from Italy to the Netherlands and shares Roeleven's thoughts about his father's early passing.

Hester van der Vliet (b. 1961) is a film producer with a focus on documentary film. Since 2000, she has been working as a senior producer for the Dutch broadcaster BNNVARA.

**'A very honest and moving book – and an exciting one!'**

Radio 1, Kunststof

**'So many life lessons to learn from these experiences and encounters. The most important being: dream, dare, do.'**

Algemeen Dagblad

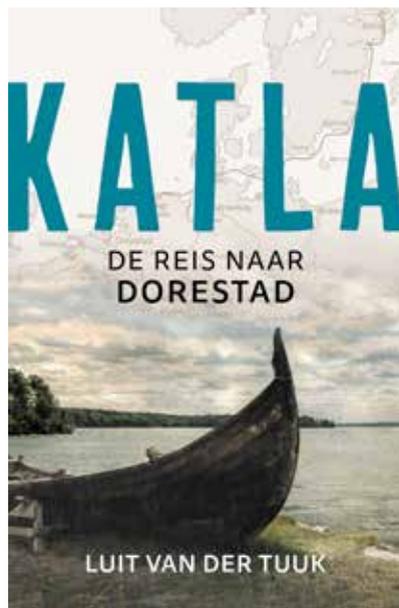


Photo (© Ivo van der Bent)

Dutch title  
*De laatste reis van de Boswachter.*  
*Van Amsterdam naar Tokyo zonder kinderen maar met elkaar*  
Year of publication  
2020  
Page count  
296  
Sample translation  
Available (English)  
Publisher  
Pluim  
Sold copies  
7,500  
Rights  
Cossee International Agency  
Stella Rieck  
s.riek@cossee.nl

# Luit van der Tuuk

## Katla — The Journey to Dorestad



Twelve centuries ago, Katla, a young Viking from Sweden, sailed to the Low Countries aboard a merchant ship. It would have been a long, dangerous journey that few aside from traders, colonists and noblemen would have dared make – perhaps least of all a young merchant's daughter travelling without a male protector. As such, she remains a historical anomaly and we know precious little about her or her extraordinary voyage. Historian and conservator Luit van der Tuuk pieces together a portrait of this remarkable woman, by bringing to life the early Middle Ages in north-western Europe in all their surprising detail.

Katla is based on various historical and archaeological sources, ranging from religious chronicles and travel logs to epic sagas and runestones. We initially encounter Katla in a minor role in Saint Rimbart's biography of Saint Ansgar, which mentions her travelling to Dorestad, a bustling trading centre on the banks of the Dutch Rhine, in 852. It was her pious mother's final wish that Katla hand out her large inheritance to the poor in Dorestad, given there were too few on the island of Birka, where they lived. We do not know if she ever returned home.

Katla's story is also the story of a long-murky period of European history, and to recreate the world through which she passed, Van der Tuuk explores how the Vikings lived on Birka, which was in its own right an important stop on the long trade routes that connected Sweden with Constantinople and even the Caspian Sea. It was a time in which traders and raiders could be one

## A perilous medieval voyage, through the eyes of a young Viking woman

and the same, and Dorestad, in turn, served as an important link between western and northern Europe in the trade of enslaved people and luxury goods. Van der Tuuk also examines daily life in the towns and villages, customs surrounding magic and religion, techniques in shipbuilding and navigation, and the hazards of travelling by boat. We learn of the many power struggles between the Vikings, Frisians, Franks and peoples of the British Isles.

Van der Tuuk populates this world with the warring rulers, explorers and everyday people and does away with many cultural clichés. He also includes photos of artefacts and historic sites in the present day. Central to this short, accessible history is the free and independent position of women in medieval Scandinavian society in contrast to the rest of Europe, as well as the Nordic tradition of proud, strong women in their sagas. Katla is a perfect example.

Luit van der Tuuk (b. 1954) is specialised in the early medieval history of north-western Europe. He is conservator at the Dorestad Museum and has published works about the Vikings's role in the Low Countries, among other subjects. Previous books include *Vikings* (*Vikingen. Noormannen in de Lage Landen*, 2015) and *Praise and Slander: Women*

*in the Early Middle Ages* (*Lof en laster. Vrouwen in de vroege middeleeuwen*, 2019).

About Vikings:

**'In at times riveting passages, Van der Tuuk describes life in the ninth and tenth centuries.'**

**NRC Handelsblad**

Dutch title  
*Katla*  
*De reis naar Dorestad*  
Year of publication  
2021  
Page count  
224  
Sample translation  
Available (English)  
Publisher  
Omniboek  
Rights  
Shared Stories  
Julia Foldenyi  
julia@sharedstories.nl



# Jac P. Thijssse

## Time for an Outing — Walking Diaries, 1884-1898



Dutch title  
*Nu ga ik er eens op uit*  
*Wandeldagboeken 1884-1898*  
Year of publication  
2021  
Page count  
240  
Editor  
Marga Coesèl  
Publisher  
Van Oorschot  
Rights  
2 Seas Literary Agency  
Marleen Seegers  
marleen.seegers@2seasagency.com

**‘An engaging, open-minded nature lover like Thijssse is just what we need so urgently today.’**

Tzum

### A richly-illustrated introduction to a pioneering Dutch nature writer

The leading Dutch conservationist Jac. P. Thijssse (1865-1945) remains well known today – not only for his influential studies of Dutch botany and the early history of the environmental movement, but most of all for his charming popular books such as *A Year in Birds* and *Blonde Dunes*. He co-founded an influential nature magazine and a major Dutch organization for conservation and was instrumental in establishing the first Dutch natural monument, the Naardermeer.

His series of beautifully illustrated Verkade albums can still be found in the collections of many Dutch families. For many younger readers, they sparked a lifelong interest in nature and in exploring the Dutch countryside. Thijssse’s diaries report on his own explorations, with keen observations of the landscape, the birds and animals, and the changing seasons.

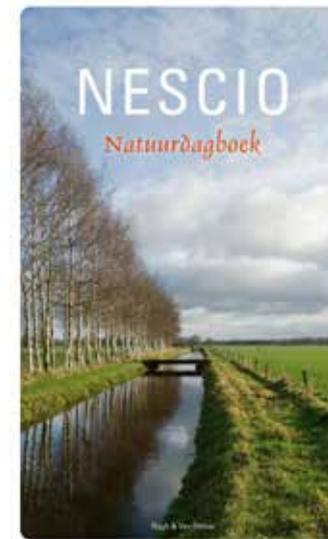
Marga Coesèl puts the diaries into context with a biographical introduction, expert commentary, and a wealth of magnificent period illustrations of the species and places described by the young Thijssse – including many of Thijssse’s own skilful drawings. This beautiful edition tempts the casual reader to keep coming back for more and offers new insights into the origins of Thijssse’s ideas and conservationist values. It also transports us back to a lost world of Dutch nature: ‘Hundreds of black seaducks on the Zuiderzee. In the evening, thousands of hooded crows, rooks, and jackdaws fly from the city to pass the night in the reed beds by the sea.’

Classic

20

# Nescio

## Nature Diary



Dutch title  
*Natuurdagboek*  
Year of publication  
1996  
Page count  
528  
Publisher  
Nijgh & van Ditmar  
Rights  
Singel Uitgevers  
Martijn Prins  
m.prins@singeluitgeverijen.nl  
Jolijn Spooren  
j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl

**‘A poetic geography [...] a distillation of the authentic spirit of place.’**

De Leeswolf

### A goldmine of exquisite prose and a sketchbook of a vanishing world

J.H.F. Grönloh (1882-1961), who wrote under the pen name of Nescio, is the legendary miniaturist of Dutch literature. The director of a successful trading company, he earned posthumous fame with his three stories ‘The Freeloader’, ‘Little Titans’, and ‘Little Poet’, which have now been translated into many languages.

Like the sketches of Rembrandt or Van Gogh, these tales of young bohemians in Amsterdam evoke the vast panorama of the human condition. Nescio’s small body of writing is matchless in its precision, delicate irony, and clarity. This personal diary, never published during his lifetime, is a goldmine of exquisite prose. Notes on train times and the price of sandwiches alternate with flashes of brilliant description: ‘small yacht with 4 white sails on motionless water, mirror image (!), no separation between water and sky’; ‘lots and lots of little lambs curled up like pussycats’; ‘the poplars across the river, so tall and top-heavy, and slender, no leaves except on top, a curtain of enchanted Egyptian trees, Pharaoh walking among them.’ Some characters come straight out of Nescio’s stories: ‘the train was full of onanists who got out somewhere it wasn’t supposed to stop, 12 to 16 years old, foolish faces, glasses, cigarettes, cardboard suitcases and ill-fitting clothes.’

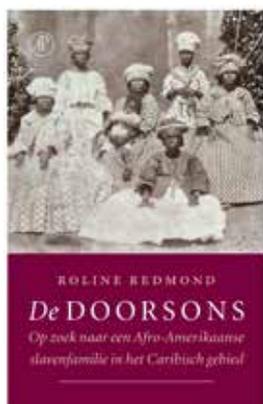
The diary dates from 1946 to 1955, just as the baby boom and urban renewal were starting to change the Netherlands completely; Nescio captured a landscape that he knew would soon be gone forever.

Classic

21

An impressive chronicle of an enslaved family

## Roline Redmond The Doorsons — In Search of an Afro-American Enslaved Family in the Heart of the Caribbean



After ten years of searching for official records, delving into the few written resources and speaking to witnesses and descendants, anthropologist Roline Redmond tells the story, spanning two centuries, of her enslaved family. In her search for answers, she considers herself a contemporary *griot*, a West African chronicler of family history: Who were her ancestors, what was their daily life like? How was colonial oppression passed down from generation to generation?

The Doorsons lived in freedom from 1873, but in great poverty. They were able to work their way up thanks to their enormous willpower and perseverance, often driven by women, protecting their offspring and using ancient rituals to heal the inherited pain of loss and longing.

Three women are central to this survival story: Redmond's great-grandmother, a market vendor, her grandmother, a laundress ('Back always bent, hands wrinkled from the water, face covered in droplets'), and her daughter – Redmond's mother – a seamstress. Though strong and independent, these generations of matriarchs exuded an air of loss, and a longing for connection with kin, both living and dead.

**'How do you pen a family history when there are almost no written sources? It's almost impossible. Redmond managed it anyway, and with great success.'**

NRC Handelsblad

Page count  
424  
Publisher  
De Arbeiderspers  
Rights  
Martijn Prins  
m.prins@singeluitgevers.nl  
Sample translation  
Available



Photo (© Chris van Houts)

In defence of art and its enjoyment and for deferring judgement

## Wieteke van Zeil Always Something to Find — The Art of Judging



How often do we really take the time to reach a considered verdict? Looking at art can help us, art is patient, it broadens perspectives, helps one see things anew.

Taking striking elements from numerous works of art as her basis, Wieteke van Zeil provides insight into how opinions are formed: what role, for example, does your mood and your background play, and why it is so difficult to change your mind? She explains how to look at art, history and current affairs in new ways. Why is Jesus always a white man in art? And why is it that female artists are still not valued?

With a fresh, witty style, she shows us mind-expanding details: a frog jumping out of a medieval birthing bed; unicorns in a chandelier; the significance of a Beyoncé and Jay-Z hit to Géricault's *Raft of The Medusa*. Wieteke van Zeil visits museums, galleries and private collections across the centuries and continents and shares her perceptive gaze and expertise.

**'Van der Zeil writes so infectiously about art that you immediately want to reserve a time slot at the museum.'**

NRC Handelsblad

Page count  
320  
Publisher  
Atlas Contact  
Rights  
Hayo Deinum  
hdeinum@atlascontact.nl  
Rights sold  
Germany (Seeman Henschel)  
Sample translation  
Available



Photo (© Najib Nafid)

A letter to his daughter and an ode to the women in his family



Page count  
224  
Publisher  
De Geus  
Rights  
Cecile Barendsma  
cecile@cblagency.com  
Sample translation  
Available



Photo (© Robert van der Molen)

## Vamba Sherif Unprecedented Love

'You asked me to chronicle your grandmother's life and describe the environment I grew up in.' With these words, the Liberian-Dutch writer Vamba Sherif opens this tender account to his ten-year-old daughter. He goes on to describe his happy childhood, growing up in Liberia, in an extensive, female-dominated family of prominent intellectuals and scientists. But when young Vamba breaks unwritten laws, nosing around family documents not intended for his eyes, the verdict is harsh: banishment. He moves to Kuwait, flees to Syria during the Gulf War and eventually ends up in the Netherlands. While the civil war in his native country hits his family hard – he will never see his mother again – Vamba has to fight to survive in Dutch society.

This beautifully written book is the final chapter in that battle: he hopes his daughter will become aware of her African roots, that her father's life story will become part of her identity. And he gives her life lessons: 'Be brave. Nothing can destroy your humanity. Only if you allow them will negative experiences get a hold of you.'

**'A wonderful book about how this Liberian-Dutch writer ended up in the Netherlands and met the future mother of his child.'**

Tzum

A practical and philosophical exploration of humankind's place in nature



Page count  
320  
Publisher  
Atlas Contact  
Rights  
Hayo Deinum  
hdeinum@atlascontact.nl  
Rights sold  
Germany (Beck)  
Sample translation  
Available (German)



Photo (© Jan Banning)

## Pauline de Bok The Pond – The Biotope around the Cowshed Withers and Dies and I Search for New Life There

In *The Pond*, Pauline de Bok withdraws to her home in the countryside of Northeast Germany. But there too, in the midst of forests and lakes, the ecosystem is under threat: the water level is falling, trees are affected by disease and for the first time in twenty years the natural pond near her cowshed dries up. It is alarming, but she refuses to lose heart. She lays a new, clay pond, does battle with goosegrass and brambles, makes room for swallows, bats and insects. In the meantime, she ponders our relationship to nature and the extent to which human intervention is useful or necessary. 'We happen to be an animal species, but within a century we have depleted the earth. And now we think we can carry on like that and save the day too.' And if we do manage to turn the tide, what's the point in the long run? 'We are taking on ever greater burdens and at the same time we realize how powerless we are as individuals and how out of control as a species.'

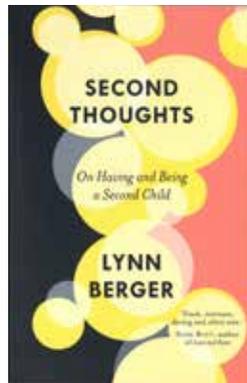
In *The Pond*, daily toil on the farm is connected with fundamental questions about man and nature.

**'Writer and philosopher Pauline de Bok shows that climate change is also being felt on her small farm in north-eastern Germany. She tries to grasp nature's unfathomability.'**

Filosofie Magazine

# RECENT TRANSLATIONS

A selection of recently published translations from the Dutch.  
For more information please go to our online database of translations:  
[en.vertalingendatabase.nl](http://en.vertalingendatabase.nl)



Lynn Berger

**Second Thoughts. On Having and Being a Second Child**

Dutch title  
De tweede

Published in  
English by September  
Publishing (2021)

Translated by  
Anna Asbury

Other translations  
English (Henry Holt and  
Company)



Abel J. Herzberg

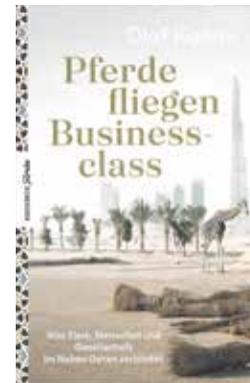
**Amor Fati. Siete ensayos sobre Bergen-Belsen**

Dutch title  
Amor Fati

Published in  
Spanish by Siruela (2021)

Translated by  
Gonzalo Fernández  
Gómez

Other translations  
English (Wallstein),  
German (Erev Rav),  
Hebrew (Yad Vashem),  
Italian (Apeiron)



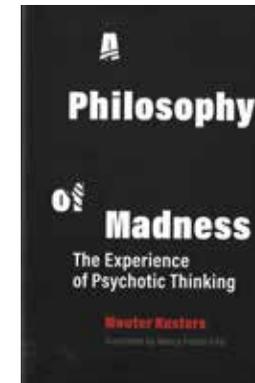
Olaf Koens

**Pferde fliegen Businessclass**

Dutch title  
Paarden vliegen  
businessclass

Published in  
German by Knesebeck  
Verlag (2021)

Translated by  
Christiane Burkhardt



Wouter Kusters

**A Philosophy of Madness. The Experience of Psychotic Thinking**

Dutch title  
Filosofie van de waanzin

Published in  
English by MIT Press  
(2020)

Translated by  
Nancy Forest-Flier



Eva Meijer

**Grensene for mitt språk. En filosofisk undersøkelse av depresjon**

Dutch title  
De grenzen van mijn taal

Published in  
Norwegian by Flux Forlag  
(2021)

Translated by  
Bodil Engen

Other translations  
English (Pushkin  
Press), Polish (Linia),  
Spanish (Katz), Turkish  
(Kaplumbaa Books)



Abram de Swaan

**Contre les Femmes. La montée d'une haine mondiale**

Dutch title  
Tegen de vrouwen

Published in  
French by Seuil (2021)

Translated by  
Bertrand Abraham

Dutch Non-Fiction is distributed to international editors and publishers. Please contact non fiction specialist Mireille Berman via [m.berman@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:m.berman@letterenfonds.nl) if you would like to be added to our mailing list or if you wish to know more about our grants, suitable translators or about the books that we mentioned.

Nederlands Letterenfonds

Postbus / PO Box 16588  
NL-1001 RB Amsterdam

t +31 (0)20 520 73 00  
[www.letterenfonds.nl](http://www.letterenfonds.nl)

The Dutch Foundation for Literature supports writers, translators and literary festivals, and promotes Dutch literature abroad. Translation grants are available to foreign publishers to reduce the economic risks of translating as-yet unknown authors. The subsidy covers up to 70% of the translation costs, with recognized classics qualifying for up to 100%.

For more information, please see [www.letterenfonds.nl/en/translation-subsidy](http://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/translation-subsidy)

**N**ederlands  
letterenfonds  
dutch foundation  
for literature

Editors

Mireille Berman, Dick Broer,  
Haico Kaashoek, David McKay,  
Michele Hutchison

Translation and copy

Michele Hutchison, Haico Kaashoek

Non-fiction advisors

Maya Shamir, Bertram Mourits,  
Regine Dugardyn, Jan Steinz,  
Michele Hutchison

Cover photo

Kazi Md. Jahirul Islam

Printing

Jos Morree Fine Books /  
Wilco Art Books

Design

Philip Stroomberg

This brochure is printed on  
FSC-certified paper.

- Sanne de Boer**  
Mafiopoli 2
- Caroline de Gruyter**  
It Won't Get Any Better 4
- Marjolijn van Heemstra**  
In Lightyears No One Is in a Hurry 6
- Henk Pröpper**  
27 Beats per Minute 8
- Mathijs Deen**  
The Boundless River 10
- Daan Heerma van Voss**  
The Anxiety Project 12
- Irene van der Linde  
& Nicole Segers**  
Blood and Honey 14
- Dirk Jan Roeleven  
& Hester van der Vliet**  
The Forester's Last Journey 16
- Luit van der Tuuk**  
Katla 18
- Jac P. Thijsse**  
Time for an Outing 20
- Nescio**  
Nature Diary 21

People climbing a tree to avoid the rising tide on Kattali Sea Beach in Bangladesh, photographed by Kazi Md. Jahirul Islam in 2012.

