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Autumn 2013

10 Books from Friesland



Hidde Boersma

The Most Ordinary of Men

The quiet life of Ale van der Meer, a dude from Friesland

A roadmender without high ideals or grand passions, a man who draws sustenance from the minor vicissitudes and pleasures of life, Ale van der Meer is an anti-hero inspired by a character called Doede, introduced by Boersma in a poem five years ago. Doede is a reference to The Dude in the film *The Big Lebowski*.

Ale van der Meer used to work hard, but nowadays he needs to make sure he takes things easy. For the past year or so, the council has been tendering out the bigger jobs, so Ale and his colleague Anton are left with nothing more demanding than crooked paving stones and broken picnic tables. Set straight a bashed road sign in one village in the morning, repair a bit of pavement in another village in the afternoon, then spend the rest of the day lying in the grass verge with an ice cream, listening to the Tour de France, is the schedule he proposes to his fellow roadmender. 'A busy day, I understand,' is the response.

When Ale isn't working, he peels potatoes for his wife, does a little rowing and chats with people on the street. He goes fishing sometimes too, but preferably using a rod without a hook, since he's not out to catch anything. He likes to just sit in

his boat or in the garden at the back of the house. There is nothing grand or significant about his life, but he is satisfied with himself and the world. This is the source of a freedom that makes him immune to the jokes about his all too scarce work for the council and causes his minor irritations to evaporate, a freedom that means he has room for thoughts that astonish even him. In young Frits, a holiday replacement, the foreman of the council roadmenders finds, without knowing it, a second Doede.

Now aged almost sixty, Ale looks back at his thoroughly run-of-the-mill life, takes stock and decides it has been pleasant enough. Frits, in his twenties, is right at the start and he devotes himself fully to everything life has to offer: the trivial chatter of his workmates, last-minute plans on a day off, a bizarre conversation with an eccentric who lives in a caravan. To this eager young man, the utterly ordinary Ale is a bit of a hero.

Devotion, admiration and putting things into perspective are the key themes of this novel. Dedication to the most everyday things proves exciting, often hilarious, and part of a subtle commentary on modern times.



Publishing details

De gewoanste man (2011)
191 pp., 58,240 words

Rights

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Hidde Boersma (b. 1980) studied humanities and has since done a wide range of work. After his debut as a poet in 2008, he published a short-story collection (2010) in which the central characters were rather unusual. Nevertheless they resemble Ale van der Meer in *The Most Ordinary of Men* in that they are all people who plough their own furrow without paying too much attention to what others say.

Photo: Reyer Boxem

Reinder Brolsma

Land and People

Utterly convincing portrait of a remarkable man in an epic with modern appeal

Daniel van Kuken is a mystery. This does not trouble him, but it troubles his parents, wife and children all the more. His oppressive presence drives them out of the house one by one. So what does he do? He stubbornly carries on working. But he is well aware that not only do his family and neighbours fear him, they laugh at him as well. In the end he asks himself: what kind of a man am I?

Anyone reading *Land and People* will see film scenes before them: a couple with an eleven-year-old son, their household effects piled up on two farm carts, slowly creeping along an endless sea dyke. To left and right is flat farmland with nothing but potatoes and turnips. As they get closer to their new home, they are watched by the strange inhabitants of the labourers' houses along the old dyke. What can they expect of the new residents of the farmhouse?

The small Van Kuken family features an unusual combination of rigid piety and an extreme urge to get on in the world. They live as simply as possible and do all they can to earn money. But young Daniel has his odd moments. One day he unexpectedly comes home with a beautiful young horse, and he refuses to listen to any more pious talk. He is not trying to provoke conflict but simply obeying his instincts.

Young Daniel does not try to connect

with anyone else in the new village. He lives purely for himself. Even the jovial and vivacious young woman who stays with the family for a while and later marries him does nothing to change that. But neither does she simply accept her husband's boorish gruffness. She refuses to relinquish her little pleasures and sees to it that the children are able to live elsewhere. The village community naturally follows all this with great fascination.

The novel describes the goings on in and around Daniel van Kuken's farmhouse against the background of the social and economic developments of the turn of the twentieth century. The presence of a capricious narrator is one striking aspect of the book. He sometimes makes fun of the characters a little, but nevertheless he indulges them a great deal. He shows complete understanding for their emotions, while at regular intervals taking his distance from them. He contemplates how people mess things up and how nature is completely unconcerned about human beings. In asides he also reflects on his role as narrator. All this gives a novel about the old farming life a modern vivacity and appeal, all of it reflected in the narrator's spontaneous delivery.

Land and People is astonishing for its richness of perspective, its stylistic power and its remarkable irony and humour.

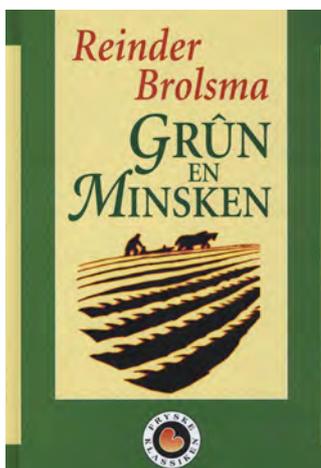


Publishing Details

Grûn en minsken (1940)
284 pp., c. 112,000 words

Rights

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Reinder Brolsma (1882-1953) started his working life as a housepainter, and the stories he heard when working in people's homes provided him with material for his early published work. He later earned his living as a journalist, and the lives of simple people remained a source of inspiration. He was undoubtedly influenced by the work of Charles Dickens. His oeuvre includes many short stories and ten substantial novels. A thousand blue handwritten notebooks have survived.

'Brolsma writes completely instinctively. He may more than once have violated standard grammar to some degree, but only ever deliberately, which makes him exciting to read.'
– *De Harpe*

Photo: Kolleksje Tresoar

Homme Ernstma

Lovedeath

A defiant literary gem full of eroticism and sacred magic

When first published in 1963, *Lovedeath* was outlawed by the critics because of its combination of eroticism and sacred magic. In the 1990s it was rediscovered and translated, and since then its exceptional importance has been recognized in wider and wider circles. This is an intriguing little novel about an eccentric baron who tries to secure his future by means of speculation and fantasies.

The nineteenth century is coming to an end. When Wibe van Holdinga, the last in line of an old noble family, takes over his parents' country estate, surprising things happen. The young baron sells the cows that have been at the manor house since time immemorial and buys a herd of skinny, low-grade cattle. He puts the money this renders up into investments that have no value. 'Make money from nothing,' is his motto, and he believes he can do so by playing the game of love.

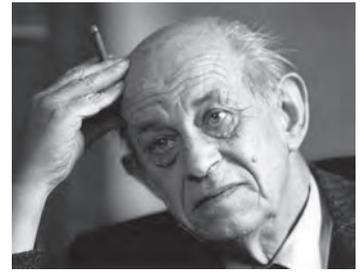
When Wibe was about twelve years old, he played mothers and fathers with the daughter of the head gardener. She was a little older and already knew a thing or two. Physically, Wibe was not yet able to perform, but the conviction with which they made love, gave their game the power of a magical erotic ritual. 'I've had a son,' he said to his mother when he got home.

As he grows up, Wibe turns his thoughts to the social and economic consequences of the Franco-German war, the theories of Charles Darwin and the factories that are changing the nature of work and labour relations. He gets married but the couple remains childless. For Wibe van Holdinga it is clear that changes are needed to continue the existence of his family and country estate.

The baron changes his course radically, selling his cattle and turning his attention to stock jobbing with shares in railway companies. Bizarre erotic experiments are needed to help him decide when to buy or sell. His wife, in genteel French and German, gives her own commentary on the experiments performed by the strange baron.

In *Lovedeath*, play is a *condition humaine*. Intelligently and elegantly, extremes are combined to create something truly new. Those combinations – of the magical thinking of an apparently mad baron and his unerring insights into political and social realities, or of the formality of a noble family and the raw sensuality of the head gardener's daughter – are provocative. The writer's style is spontaneous and personal, as sensuous as it is distinguished, and at the same time thoroughly literary.

F.S. Sixma van Heemstra (1916-1999) studied art history and gained a doctorate in sociology and philosophy. Among other things he worked as a translator for the EEC. He published fiction and non-fiction in French, Dutch and Frisian. When *Lovedeath* appeared in 1963 the author used the pen name of Homme Ernstma and no one knew his true identity. The pseudonym refers to *humo ludens*, 'man the player', about whom the study by historian Johan Huizinga appeared in 1938. The author called his novel, with some understatement, a 'freshly reworked and improved version' of Huizinga's book.



Publishing Details

Leafdedea (1963)
93 pp., 10,200 words

Rights

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Translations

Amourmort. Actes Sud, 1997.
Also in Dutch (ebook available at www.dbnl.nl).



'This is an absolute masterpiece, the highpoint of post-war Frisian literature.' – *De Moanne*

Photo: Kolleksje Tresoar

Tsjêbbe Hettinga

Equinox

An ultimate highpoint in the work of a visionary poet

Tsjêbbe Hettinga is familiar to many, and the rich sounds and rhythms of his verses leave no one unmoved. Whether he was performing in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris, New York or Medellín, audience and poetry critics alike were lyrical in their praise. Hettinga's poetry is often compared to the resonant work of Dylan Thomas, whose work he translated.

Equinox has been described as a highpoint in his oeuvre, with its images evoking a childhood in the Frisian countryside along with scenes from the New World, where Hettinga spent a great deal of his time. Between them lies an ocean of possibilities, desires and fears. The images slip past. Red clogs take a little boy to the

waiting horses. 'The foal dashes off into the motherless land/ straight towards the walls of the light sea air/ Red clogs filled with empathy go after him. And look'.

His concrete, earthy images sometimes acquire a cosmic dimension but ultimately they all point back to the fisherman, the village on the coast, the boy at play or the woman longing for love. Hettinga's central concern is the equilibrium between earthly existence and the cosmos. The equinoxes, those two magical moments in the year when day and night are of equal length, represent that balance, and Hettinga connects them with homecoming, or the abolition of an eternal disunity, of a split that is one of the themes of this cycle of poems about the two continents on which the poet lived and worked.

wounded continents

The farmer - cap on head, cigarette in mouth -
Crawls along in his wagon on this blue and white
Late summer afternoon, through alternating
Sun and shadow, milk cans rattling, the warm smell of
The black horse rising up to him as he goes
From the clacking wooden shoes to the snuffling cows.
The milkmaid bouncing along in the back has

A touch of summer - and her fingers - forever
In het hair, as blond as straw kissed by the moon.
A few nights ago, rafters preached and nails decreed:
"Go, flee, take her, Rica, to Amerigo!"
Swept up into her cobweb eyes, I go with her
To the land that turns her to milk, the cloud-cupped
Land that turns two wounded continents into one.

translated by Susan Massotty



Publishing Details

Equinox (2009) 83 pp.

Rights

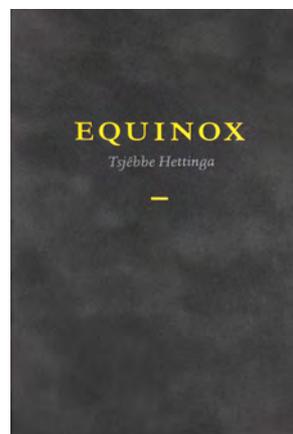
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Selected Translations

Strange shores/Frjemde kusten.
Frysk en Frij 1999. Other collections
in French (*L'oreille du loup*, 2008)
and in Spanish (*Paso de Barc*,
2012).

'With this last collection, Tsjêbbe Hettinga confirms his exceptional significance for Frisian - and Dutch - poetry.'
- *de Volkskrant*

Photo: Anneke Bleeker



Tsjêbbe Hettinga (1949-2013) made his debut as a poet in the 1970s. He read at international festivals in London, Paris and New York. Hettinga was not only awarded Frisian literary prizes; this poet from the far north of the Netherlands also won the Hans Berghuisstok from the municipality of Maastricht, the country's most southerly city. Other winners have included Chinese poet Duo Duo and Breyten Breytenbach. His work has been translated into Dutch, French, German, English and Spanish. In 2012 a bilingual version of *Equinox* was published with translations into Dutch by Benno Barnard and David van Reybrouck. A CD has also been issued on which Hettinga reads poems from *Equinox*.

Ulbe van Houten

Holwerda's Sin

A collision between tradition and modernity,
the familiar and the strange

A powerful man is slowly being destroyed, by his servants and his wife, but just as much by his own nagging conscience. The trial of strength is vast and tragic, but described with a subtle sense of humour and the refinement of a modern psychological novel.

A pious and universally respected farmer, Holwerda feels himself lord and master in his house and on his land. But the members of his new haymaking team seem unimpressed. He has hired them for five weeks, and even on the first day the ease with which they move around his land, his farmyard and his house unnerves him. So much spontaneity and humour, energy and appetite: they are directly undermining his authority!

He hopes the weather will stay fine and he will be able to send them home after four weeks. The workers make very clear that they are expecting work – and pay – for five weeks. The farmer forces them to work even harder. Five weeks' pay for four weeks' work – in the farmer's eyes that's absurd.

Yet something is playing on his mind. He finds himself in a moral dilemma, which enrages him even more. Everyone can feel the tension. What will the farmer do if the hay is in after four weeks? Will the haymakers force him to pay?

The contrast between the farmer's rigid outlook and sense of superiority and the deftness and self-confidence of the workers gives the novel an almost physical strength and a subtle humour. The confrontations between the farmer and his wife put things even more on edge: he feels he risks becoming inferior not only to the labourers but also to his wife, and in his powerlessness and repressed rage he makes himself appear ridiculous.

The short interior monologues in which the tension and despair of the farmer are expressed alternate between raw vexation, bizarre rationalization, repressed fear of the people he has to live with and a holy fear of God. Tragedy with comic touches is the result. The novel continues to speak to new generations. Several years ago it was again chosen as the best Frisian novel.



Publishing Details

De sûnde fan Haitze Holwerda
(1938)
200 pp., 54,400 words

Rights

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The oeuvre of **Ulbe van Houten** (1904-1974) consists mainly of short stories and novellas. *Holwerda's Sin* initially appeared in serial form. The author knew both the rigid world of the Reformed Church farmers, in which his father worked as a labourer, and that of the workers from the progressive Frisian region of Het Bildt where he found work as a teacher. Van Houten is a subtle stylist who always manages to find precisely the right linguistic register for his characters and to make the tension almost physically tangible.

Photo: Kolleksje Tresoar

Elske Kampen

Of Glass the Breaking

Solid and powerful, yet also elegant and melodious poetry



With this impressive collection of poetry, Elske Kampen proves once again that sound and rhythm constitute the foundations of language. The measured lines and subtle rhythms, the alliteration and assonances draw the reader into the poems and the world they evoke.

Sometimes it is the bold parallels and unusual sentences that build a world out of nothing, while the understated use of sound and the irresistible rhythm invite further investigation. In other poems familiar situations acquire new dimen-

sions. A confused elderly lady somehow preserves the memory of herself as a young woman: 'Your grey picture lies threadbare in her shadow / like a story made of single sounds.' Girls, mothers, fathers and lovers come alive in the poems, but so do old and new forms and things.

The poet seems to embrace everything she loves with sound and rhythm, yet she keeps her distance by means of the solid, robust form of her poems. There is an unusual wariness in these verses, something guarded, although it leaves just enough space for the poems to live and breathe.

Publishing Details

Fan glês it brekken (2010)
53 pp.

Rights

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'Of Glass the Breaking is bang on target. It is a joy to read and most of the poems have the added value of not stopping after you have read them.'
– www.ensafh.nl

'This debut is far more than a promise; it is an immediate classic.' –
Cornelis van der Wal,
Friesch Dagblad

Photo: Haye Bijlstra

Iron Girl

See how the girl Ivanhoe walks in the distance alone.
In green boots she strides like a knight along the path.
Stiff-legged and straight-backed, she is the iron girl.
Sharp stalks cut secret codes into her hand.
Then, like a small grey heron, she dives down suddenly.

Along the enchanted path she steals towards the empty farm.
She loves the secret that lies beneath the wooden floor
and the wind-stretched sky above the creaky roof.
She loves the doors there, that open with a moan
and the animals lurking in the dark.

Friendly and patient the dead await her there.
They whisper softly of what was and what is yet to come.
They gently sing the closed iron girl open
and rock her in their supple arms beyond the reach of time.
Then twilight points her towards the long road back.

Translated by Judith Wilkinson



Elske Kampen (b. 1955) went to teacher training college and studied to become an art teacher, but poetry writing became increasingly important to her. She was taught by Tsjêbbe Hettinga, although she developed a very different style. The critics praised the collection *Of Glass the Breaking* as an extremely strong debut. It won her both the jury prize and the readers' prize for the best debut of the past three years, which ensured it a place on the shortlist for the most important literary prize for Frisian literature in 2013.

Jaap Krol

Numbers

Miniatures of people in an unusual light

Seen from above it is a district where all the houses are the same, with gardens front and back, and living rooms with anonymous people in them. Jaap Krol zooms in on the residents, and his portrayals of them give mysterious depths to their everyday lives. Krol's unadorned style and unusual storytelling create a strange tension and bizarre scenes. The author takes care never to make anything or anyone seem ridiculous, allowing the reader to feel life's tingling and smarting.

A small child wakes up early one Sunday morning and explores the living room, causing considerable chaos in the process. When the toddler succeeds in opening the curtains, he concludes to himself: 'There was the light.' It is the overture to what could be called a symphony of the street, populated by children, hesitant lovers, couples who know each other rather too well, pairs of alcoholics, tough adolescents, and insecure husbands and wives.

In thirty-five sketches, Krol depicts the lives of people in different living rooms at different times. He shows how, consciously or unconsciously, they scrabble about at the edge of the abyss that lies concealed within their lives. Their imagination or curiosity, fear or shyness, or the lie that gives colour to their lives turn their living rooms into universes filled with enigmas. Krol gives them teacups, football pictures, a dog or a film scene – something to cling on to, or to lose themselves in. Such things prove a treacherous footing.

Each story is self-contained and written in a style that suits the characters or the situation. Yet they form a single whole. All of them – and all in a similar manner – are ordinary and at the same time extremely strange. Masterfully deploying situations, repetition and silences as his means of manipulation, Krol briefly turns everyday life inside out.

Jaap Krol (b. 1970) graduated in religious studies, and as a student he contributed to the student union magazine *De Harpe*, which brought him a kind of cult status. Since then he has developed a style entirely his own. In 2002 he made his debut with a collection of stories of unusual content and narrative style. The prose that followed is notable in particular for its original take on ordinary things and Krol's talent for finding precisely the right description for them. A critic once wrote: 'Krol does not make use of the usual formulations. It's as if he sees and describes everything in a new way. Until you discover that what he is describing seems extremely familiar.'

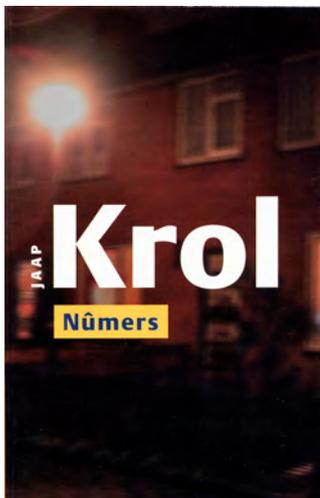


Publishing Details

Nûmers (2004)
191 pp., 38,400 words

Rights

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'The fact that so sober a narrative style can conjure up such worlds proves that this is extraordinary, top-class writing.'
– Jelle van der Meulen

Photo: Haje Bijlstra

Elmar Kuiper

In the Name of Myself

A collection of provocative poetry

Elmar Kuiper makes you believe in preposterous things. The lines of his verse sometimes seem like ordinary observations or casual questions, although presented by someone willing to be carried along by associations, physical sensations and spontaneity. He carries the reader with him: 'am I in fact that heron? / I clip wings to their proper proportions, nail pinions / to a heavenly body and let my eyes go.'

Kuiper's strongly associative images are convincing, and the sound and rhythm of his poems full of energy. *In the Name of Myself* is very personal – how could it not

be with a title like that? The poet expresses himself in cycles of poems that suggest a specific frame of mind, sometimes fierce, spontaneous and grotesque, sometimes evincing pain and sorrow.

The poet and protagonist is a strong presence. He seems to be engaged in conversation, with a heron with whom he has a difficult relationship, or with an absent lover, or with himself. Communication between them generally does not go smoothly. It seems impossible to enter into a dialogue, since no one ever answers. The longing for love is directly proportionate to the desire to give love, whether to a loved one or to life itself.



Publishing Details

Ut namme fan mysels (2006)
74 pp.

Rights

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'Elmar Kuiper has found a personal poetic tone that has a history and a future.'
– *Leeuwarder Courant*

Photo: Haye Bijlstra

jotting down a dream

already anticipating death
following the route to heaven
naked as a newborn babe

leaves me cold.

unmoved I think of
the hurried song of the warbler
as a routine job.

well, every once in a while I jot down a dream.
not long ago I saw a heron on an embankment
without any wings

he wanted to slip quietly away
but I specifically
forbid him to.

so beautifully
did his wings fit
my body!

[daily reflection is desirable. I cut off the wings and let the heron pray for a new pair. in the end his death does not leave me cold.]

Translated by Susan Massotty



Elmar Kuiper (b. 1969) studied at the art academy and developed into an artist, performer and poet. In 2010, with director Pim Zwier, he made a film called *Oerdak – Poem in Progress*, in which he talks about what language and being bilingual mean to him. The film was nominated for the ZEBRA film festival in Berlin. In the same year as *In the Name of Myself* (2006), Kuiper published an anthology in Frisian and Dutch with the title *Call up the Rottweiler*. In 2010 came a Dutch-language collection (*Bonded Swallows*) that attracted much attention and led to a nomination for the C. Buddingh' Prize. Kuiper then published another Frisian collection, *Granite Smiles* (2011). Several of his poems have been published in *Poetry Wales*.

Janneke Spoelstra

Being Jiks

A frank account by a young woman who discovers she is a lesbian

Whenever there is a game of football she plays with the best of the boys. No one is as good at lighting fires, and she is the cheekiest at ringing doorbells and running away. But when it comes to love everything gets complicated, because Jiks discovers she is attracted to her own sex. She wonders how people cope with 'being different'. This is the story of a quest, with both comic and melancholic touches.

In the first chapter everything still seems innocent and unproblematic. When Jiks goes home at the end of an afternoon of building dens with friends, two boys and a girl, her grandma gives her a treat to go with her cup of tea. The final words of the chapter are from grandpa, who comes into the room and says to Jiks: 'Hello there, young man!' Those four words sum it all up: the warm-heartedness and love, but also the unintentional emphasis on being different, the pleasures along with the painful situations, in short both the ordinary and the far from ordinary.

In each chapter the author looks at another aspect of the life of a lesbian approaching adulthood. While still a child, Jiks feels different, which is difficult enough. When she becomes a teenager

and a young adult her childhood friendships have to make way for new relationships. She watches boys and girls flirting and naturally wants to join in. But she doesn't really get anywhere: 'The whole thing was almost real, she thought.' Only after leaving school does she become conscious of her sexual orientation. She moves in with the love of her life, but what will the neighbours say?

Spoelstra switches between different narrative perspectives, genres and styles. There are dreams and there are reports almost like diary entries, redolent of melancholy and despair. There are realistic sketches that can sometimes be sober but are often comical or even hilarious, as well as stories that are striking for their revealingly honest self-examination. Despite all this variation, the stories are so closely connected that *Being Jiks* is more like an entirely new type of novel than a short-story collection.

The book is very strong stylistically. The terse, jagged sentences perfectly depict a vulnerability wrapped up in matter-of-factness, and the alternation between unpolished spontaneity and precision in the choice of words and in composition comes across as entirely natural.



Publishing Details

In Jikse-libben (2008)
100 pp., 26,500 words

Rights

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Janneke Spoelstra (b. 1962) trained as a medical laboratory technician but then went on to other studies and now has her own translation and copywriting agency. She made her debut in 2004, as a poet. Since *Being Jiks* she has published a further volume of poetry.

'Spoelstra has a controlled way of writing and she succeeds in moving the reader again and again. Fortunately she is not afraid of humour, and all these things combined make for a wonderful book.'

– Jelle van der Meulen

Photo: Linus Harms

Rink van der Velde

The Trap

A powerful and realistic drama in the style of Hemingway

The central characters in the popular novels of Rink van der Velde are often men who keep as great a distance as possible between themselves and the authorities. The eel fisherman in *The Trap* is no exception. When questioned at the local police station during the Nazi occupation, he has to put up with faked friendliness and gross humiliations to avoid getting his son into difficulties. This is a story with no way of escape.

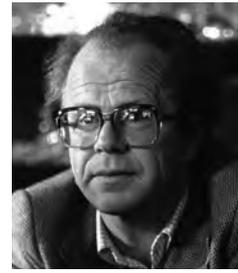
Before he became a fisherman, he got on the wrong side of the police and other authority figures more than once. A couple of times he landed in jail, but since those days he has been forced to marry, moved to an isolated spot by a lake with his wife and child, and started a business there. For his only son's sake he wants to change course. He leads a solitary life, to prevent his smouldering rage against everyone in a position of authority from erupting. His goodwill is being tested now that his son is suspected of involvement in a weapons drop. At the police station they know more

about his son than he does, and they use that advantage to put pressure on him.

The power of this novella lies in the way it links the slumbering conflict between the eel fisherman and authority, the fisherman's instinctive love for his son and the circumstances of the German occupation. It is a combination that produces an unusual wartime novel, a drama in which there is no place for the usual division of roles between good people and bad. The eel fisherman is no resistance hero and certainly no angel, and to him the stuck-up resistance man, with his fine words, is just as distasteful a person as the Dutch civil servant or the German officer who humiliates him.

In the English-language press, Van der Velde's style – intense and realistic but tightly controlled – prompted comparisons with Hemingway. The most striking things about this short novel are indeed the firm hand with which the story is set down, the portrait it paints of the fisherman and the mounting inner tension.

Rink van der Velde (1932-2001) worked as a journalist for a number of newspapers as well as writing a large number of stories and several novels. The characters in his work are generally described with such empathy and humour that they go on to lead a life of their own. Van der Velde is probably the most read and appreciated writer in Friesland. In 1975 he was awarded Friesland's foremost literary prize for his oeuvre as a whole. Many more novels and stories followed. After he died, a literary prize was established in his name, and the houseboat where he often wrote has been made available to writers as a place to work. Since it was first published in 1966, *The Trap* has been reprinted ten times, translated into Dutch three times and made into a film (in 2000). In 1995 an English translation was published that won high praise, and a second English translation appeared in 1997.



Publishing Details

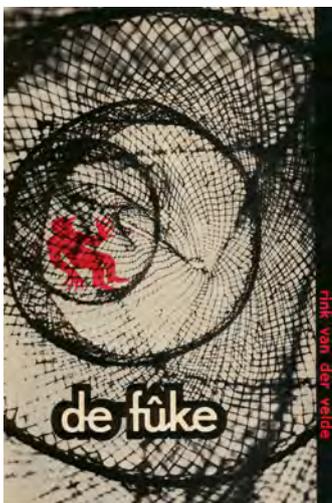
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Translations

The Trap (Redux Publications, 1995;
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1997). Also in Ukrainian translation
(*Vsesvit*, 1983) and Dutch
(Wereldbibliotheek, 1970).



'This is a gem of a novel with universal appeal'
– *Publisher's Weekly*

Photo: Collection Tresoar

Exploring the Literary Landscape of Friesland

Friesland, the most northwesterly province of the Netherlands, is bilingual; everyone speaks Dutch, but a large proportion of the population also speaks Frisian. That has been the case for centuries. The development of Frisian as a written language is a fascinating story. In mediaeval times Frisian was used for official texts in Friesland and its neighbouring regions on the North Sea coast. Between 1600 and 1900 it was mainly a spoken language, with an astonishing number of dialects, and the written form was used only by writers and poets.

From 1820 onwards Frisian literature was given a powerful boost in the province by the three Halbertsma brothers, who with their incisive and extremely popular writings laid the foundations for what was later to become Frisian literature. It was not until the second half of the twentieth century, however, that the language was given a place in public life and in education, and acquired the status of the second official language of the Netherlands.

No literature can exist purely because it has writers and poets; they need publishers and readers. Most Frisian publishers are to be found in Friesland, but many of their readers live outside the province. There are a number of

literary magazines which offer a platform to writers, and they have become more important than ever because of their presence on the internet and the literary gatherings they organize. Alongside and around the magazines, a cultural infrastructure has developed over time that is supported by the state and by the province.

For writers and poets using Frisian, the potential readership is limited, but the sensuality and powerful imagery of the language, as well as its unique idioms and humour, have an appeal that refuses to tailor itself to practical considerations. For many authors and poets, Frisian is the best language in which to express what they want to say. Frisian literature is both rich and broad.

It is for these reasons that the Province of Fryslân and the Dutch Foundation for Literature have for the first time joined forces to promote Frisian literature abroad. Here we introduce you to some interesting and surprising titles, in a wide-ranging survey of poetry and prose that covers not just recent publications by young writers but rediscovered treasures and major works of Friesland's literary heritage.

Translation Grants

For publishers intending to publish a work by a Frisian writer in translation, the same arrangements apply as for Dutch literature: for new prose, subsidies are available to cover up to 70 per cent of the translation costs, and for classics and poetry up to 100 per cent. Not just the books in this brochure, but any other literary publications by Frisian writers qualify for such a grant, including children's and young adult literature. Applications will be judged based on the quality of the source text, the translator and the publisher. For information about translators please contact the foundation.

Advisor on Frisian Literature

Alpita de Jong (b. 1962) has been appointed advisor on Frisian literature to the Dutch Foundation for Literature. An author and translator in her own right, she focuses on Frisian cultural history and Frisian literature. She has published a collection of Italian stories translated into Frisian, as well as an historical anthology of Frisian prose in Dutch. She can be reached at post@alpitadejong.nl. At the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the contact person is Alexandra Koch (a.koch@letterenfonds.nl).

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Full texts by Frisian authors, literary magazines and general information on Frisian authors, can be found online at www.sirkwy.nl and www.dbnl.org.

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