

# 10 Books from Friesland



**N**ederlands  
letterenfonds  
dutch foundation  
for literature

FRANKFURT  
BOOK FAIR  
GUEST OF HONOUR  
2016

FLANDERS &  
THE NETHERLANDS

2016

# This Is What We Share

This year the Netherlands and Flanders are guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

The Dutch Foundation for Literature, which is organizing the related events along with the Flemish Literature Fund, stimulates the promotion of Dutch- and Frisian-language literature worldwide. We're presenting our authors under the heading 'This Is What We Share'.

More than seventy writers in different genres will be making public appearances at the Fair. Naturally we're proud of the more than 300 translations of Dutch-language titles that are appearing in German as a result of the choice of the Netherlands and Flanders as guest of honour, and they will be receiving huge attention from the media and the reading public this autumn.

As an introduction to the variety that Dutch and Frisian literature have to offer, we've collected together a batch of new and exciting titles that we'd like to present to you. In our various brochures you'll find novels, non-fiction, children's and young adult literature, graphic novels and poetry. These are the stories we share. Ultimately it's not about our language or our country: let it be the stories that convince you.

Here, now, in Frankfurt, or later, elsewhere in the world: Willkommen.



**Barbara den Ouden**  
Fiction – France, Italy, Spain,  
Eastern Europe, Latin America,  
Russia, Graphic Novels  
[b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl)



**Tiziano Perez**  
Managing Director  
Fiction – Brazil, China, Japan  
[t.perez@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:t.perez@letterenfonds.nl)



**Agnes Vogt**  
Children's Books and YA  
[a.vogt@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:a.vogt@letterenfonds.nl)



**Alexandra Koch**  
Schwob (Modern Classics),  
Frisian Literature  
[a.koch@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:a.koch@letterenfonds.nl)



**Victor Schiferli**  
Fiction – Germany, UK and US,  
Scandinavia, Israel, South Africa  
[v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl)



**Thomas Möhlmann**  
Poetry, Fiction in the Arab World  
[t.moehlmann@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:t.moehlmann@letterenfonds.nl)



**Mireille Berman**  
Non-Fiction  
[m.berman@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:m.berman@letterenfonds.nl)

Are you looking for  
a translation grant?  
A Dutch translator?  
Advice on a specific book  
you are considering?  
Rights information?  
Our colleagues will be  
happy to help you further.

For an online catalogue of  
Dutch books in translation:  
[www.vertalingendatabase.nl](http://www.vertalingendatabase.nl).

# Froon Akker

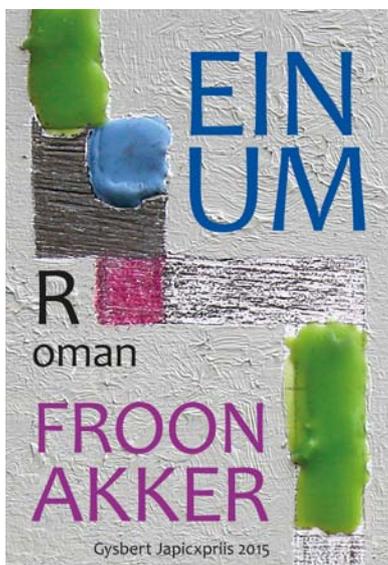
## Einum

Meandering voices of a disappearing village

**In *Einum* Froon Akker sings the praises of life in a village where on the face of it little happens. In reality it only seems that way. The surroundings are cheerless and tragedy far from unknown, but *Einum* is also a novel full of social sensitivity, warmth and empathy.**

In the fictional, unsightly, depopulating village of Einum, somewhere below the sea dyke on Friesland's Wadden Sea coast, live a handful of villagers.

The blonde Casper performs 'playground duty' at night and – although married – is actually attracted to school-boys. The little girl Agnetha, named after the singer from ABBA, falls in love with Jente, a fellow villager of the same age with a scooter and a passion for bird spotting. Old Rindert, a farmer dependent on homecare services and on his nephew and his nephew's wife, who work for him and secretly have their eye on his farm. Finally there's Alie, suffering from dementia and looked after by her loving husband, who is close to exhaustion. The background to their stories is the planned demolition of a large number of houses, which upsets the whole village.



In every chapter of the novel, Froon Akker gives one of the villagers a voice of their own, in meandering sentences in which an occasional comma allows the reader to draw breath amid the torrent of penetrating thoughts.

At first we have the impression that these are all separate stories, but gradually the relationships between the characters take shape and the stories interlock. There is much visible and invisible suffering, and life in Einum wounds and scars, it seeps away, but from time to time there is something light, something funny, something beautiful – there is life.

Akker has a surprising way of linking together protracted common-places with unavoidable strokes of fate. Something mysterious lurks between the lines and the tension slowly builds. In 2015 the book was awarded the Gysbert Japicx Prize. According to the jury, 'in eighteen subtly shifting "shots", unspoken thoughts, loneliness and dreams pay sensitive tribute to a depopulating countryside. And if one thing becomes clear, then it is that Einum is not confined to Friesland.'

Koos Tiemersma (b. 1952) made his name with a number of novels in the Frisian language, including his debut, *De Ijeder* (The Ladder, 2001), which won him the Rink van der Velde Prize and was also published in Dutch. Under the pseudonym **Froon Akker** he switched to writing e-books, which he markets on various sites including his own. In 2015 his novel *Einum* (2012) won him the most prestigious Frisian literary award, the Gysbert Japicx Prize.



### Publishing details

*Einum* (2012)  
311 pp., 79,420 words

### Publisher

Elikser  
Jitske Kingma  
jitskekingma@elikser.nl

### Translation

*Einum* (2015)

**'Ingenious writing style in which thoughts and actions are linked together in a stream of conversations.'**

– Doeke Sijens,  
*Leeuwarder Courant*

**'His prose strikes like a meteorite. What a gem of a book.'**

– Sjoerd Bottema,  
*De Moanne*

**'A unique reading experience. Unique not only because these simple, ordinary-seeming people come so vividly and multidimensionally alive but also because of the author's decision to cast much of his prose in an unusual style of minimal punctuation.'**

– Henry Baron,  
*World Literature Today*

Photo: Niels Westra

# Anne Feddema

## Cheetah's Tears

A sense of absurdity makes life bearable – more or less

**Life is disenchanting, that's the message of *Cheetah's Tears*. The stories in this collection touch upon the futility of human dealings. The vicissitudes of fate defeat the strivings and ambitions of the main characters, but imagination, humour and a sense of absurdity make existence easier to bear. It is these that turn *Cheetah's Tears* into a book that treads lightly and is often hilarious.**

Born in, and firmly attached to, the provincial city of Leeuwarden, Anne Feddema needs only his bookcase and his imagination to somersault through cultural history. In ever-changing settings, his main characters, who in their own lives barely rise above anonymity, meet icons of both high-brow and popular culture. A young painter from Leeuwarden travels to Murnau to visit Kandinsky, a would-be writer commits lewd acts in a public toilet with someone he takes to be Rilke, and two men from Leeuwarden, who bear a resemblance to Laurel and Hardy, stroll into a fairytale by the brothers Grimm.

Feddema sprinkles his stories with puns, stylistic capers, bits of fun that are sometimes feeble and sometimes clever, and absurdism with a touch of dada. With great storytelling talent he leads us into a world of nonsensical theatre, where we may, despite everything, find ourselves identifying with characters such as German teacher Hofman, who travels to Berlin to put flowers on the grave of romantic writer Hoffmann only to become caught up in filming of the German detective series *Tatort* and find himself playing a corpse, a role with which he then converges.

However entertaining the twenty-seven stories may be, they have a tragic undertone. Disappointment and failure are the lot of the main characters. The true human condition frequently seems to be laughed off in the collection, but ultimately even Cheetah, Tarzan's chimpanzee, surprises his keeper by being able to cry.



### Publishing details

*De triennen fan Cheetah* (2014)  
208 pp., 42,400 words

### Publisher

Afûk  
Ernst Bruinsma  
e.bruinsma@afuk.nl



The multitalented **Anne Feddema** (b. 1961) came to widespread attention as an artist, with expressive paintings that make frequent reference to European cultural history. As a writer he made his debut in 1997 with the poetry collection *Slapstickiepenbierings* (Slapstick Revelations). For his collection *Reidhintjse op'e Styx* (Moorhens on the Styx) he was awarded the most prestigious Frisian literary award, the Gysbert Japicx Prize, and for *De triennen fan Cheetah* (Cheetah's Tears) the Rink van der Velde Prize. As well as Frisian, Feddema also writes in the dialect of his home city, Leeuwarden.

'The author is both an award-winning painter and poet. The vivid details, poetic touches, and allusions in these stories attest to that: Kandinsky, Ensor, Munch, Hoffmann, Goethe, Grimm, Pushkin, *Doctor Zhivago*, and others.'  
– *World Literature Today*

'*Cheetah's Tears* is a balanced and intelligently written collection, in which Feddema proves himself to be one of Friesland's most original artists.'  
– *Friesch Dagblad*

'The reader can't help feeling jealous of so much imagination.'  
– *Friese-literatuursite*

Photo: Jacob van Essen

# Josse de Haan

## The Frog Years

A fascinating, colourful book about a peculiar, somewhat unholy trinity

**The cover of the book says ‘novel’, but according to the subtitle this is a ‘grotesque or essay’. The first chapter is headed ‘The woman with the weekend arms’. We are introduced to De Grutsk (The Great), one-time poet and teacher, who is writing a book about his childhood in Friesland and what happened next.**

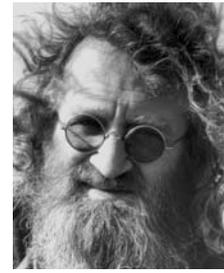
De Grutsk is not yet completely down and out. He’s receiving psychiatric treatment, getting a divorce, arguing with practically everyone, drinking too much and living in the Big City, in other words Amsterdam. He watches video tapes about ‘the old country’ and engages nine prostitutes, making them dress up and behave like women and girls he once knew in Friesland.

So this did not turn out as an ordinary book. From time to time De Grutsk enters into a debate with the author. In between there are digressions on the subject of literature, socialist education, the connection between sperm and literature, socio-cultural training, poetry, works by Niki de Saint Phalle and much more besides.

It is Josse de Haan’s masterpiece, purely and simply a hybrid novel that comes screaming out of the bend, a poetic, insistent, pornographic and compelling book. Particularly penetrating and moving are the musings and experiences of De Lytsk (The Little), a boy from Snyp, an anagram of the village of Peins near Franeker, where De Haan was born.

The author succeeds in summoning up a convincing picture of a small rural community by putting himself in the place of the rather fretful little boy and looking from there at the incomprehensible and often horribly cruel world.

De Haan excels at coarse and shameless love scenes involving the same boy at an older age, after he becomes De Grutsk. He pulls no punches and the language is plain and unvarnished. In Frisian literature this is pioneering. He has his characters discuss the pornographic scenes he has just served up to his readers. Ironic indeed. This is an extraordinary and irresistible book that occupies a unique place in Frisian literature, of which it is an absolute highpoint.



### Publishing details

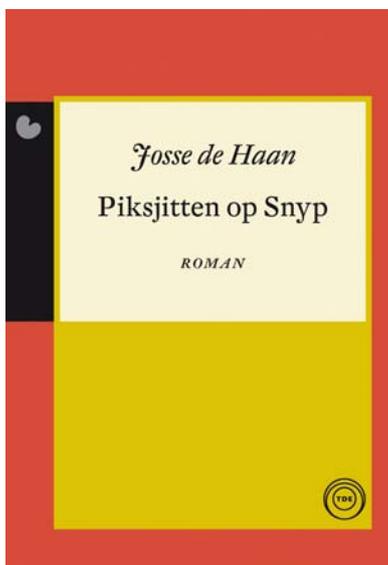
*Piksjitten op Snyp* (1999)  
510 pp., 232,050 words

### Publisher

Elikser  
Jitske Kingma  
jitskekingma@elikser.nl

### Translation

*Kikkerjaren* (Piksjitten op Snyp,  
Meulenhoff, 1999)



**Josse de Haan** (b. 1941) devoted himself to literature, especially Frisian literature, from the 1960's onwards, having taught in primary and secondary schools. He wrote poetry, novels, essays and plays and ran a one-man magazine called *iP2r90-Rendez Vous*. He was one of the founders of *Operaesje Fers* (1968, Telepoëzie), which was emulated elsewhere, including New York with its *Dial a Poem*. The novel *Piksjitten op Snyp* (The Frog Years) is his magnum opus. He publishes work in Frisian, Dutch and other languages, with thirty-five book publications to date, and has won a number of prizes including the most prestigious Frisian literary award, the Gysbert Japicx Prize (2007).

**‘I found this an exceptional and irresistible book. De Haan has created a marvellous show out of it all, resolutely bringing on stage one new tone and atmosphere after another, clowns, vulgar sex, higher acrobatics and profound seriousness...’**  
– Kees ’t Hart in *De Groene Amsterdammer*

**‘The Frog Years is a surprising, polymorphous novel in which present and past, city and countryside, romanticism and pornography, realism and poetry form a dazzling amalgam.’**  
– Kester Freriks in *NRC*

Photo: Anneke Bleeker

# Aggie van der Meer

## The Eighteen

Opting for personal integrity in times of repression

**In *The Eighteen* the central character finds himself in a position whereby he confronts the collective. His idealism comes up against the corrupting practices of a regime. The need to make choices and the unavoidable consequences are the theme of this novel, a theme that Aggie van der Meer makes concrete in a story that is as succinct as it is moving, with a pertinent structure.**

On 16 January 1969, Prague student Jan Palach set fire to himself, with fatal results, in protest at the quashing of the Prague Spring by the Russians. It was an act that brought hundreds of thousands of people back out onto the streets. To prevent Palach from acquiring hero status, the authorities tried to discredit him by distorting his motives. Relatives of Palach responded by taking legal action against the state.

In *The Eighteen*, one of the eighteen members of the politbureau responsible is given a voice, a past and a conscience. Ferenc Hacha, a Jew, fled from Dresden to Prague as a child to escape the Nazis. He survived the Second World War, and communist ideas restored his faith in the future. In the court case brought by Palach's family against the state he turns against the other members of the politbureau, but to no avail.

The reader follows Hacha on his lonely journey, sharing his thoughts and his memories. He struggles with the question of what to do in the face of a totalitarian system that feels threatened. Hacha's Kafkaesque battle for truth is in essence a desperate attempt to retain his own self-respect. From that position he looks back on his confusing past and ahead to a future that remains for a long time uncertain.



### Publishing details

*De achttjin* (2016)  
144 pp., 38,260 words

### Publisher

Afûk  
Ernst Bruinsma  
e.bruinsma@afuk.nl

'The set-up of the novel [...] is from a literary point of view perfect.'

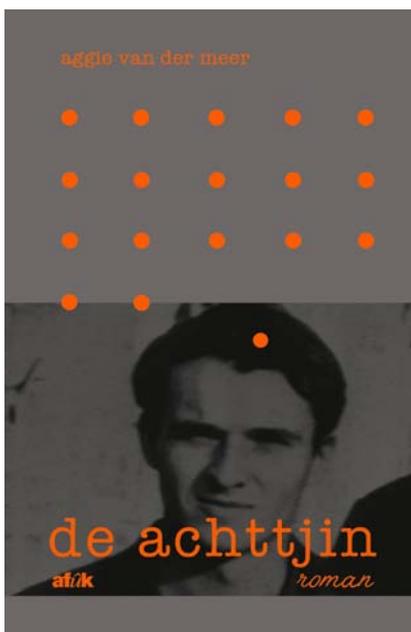
– *Leeuwarder Courant*

'*The Eighteen* by Aggie van der Meer deserves to be translated into Dutch, German, Czech, Spanish, Russian and English, because it is a world-class book.'

– *Friese-literatuursite*

'Aggie van der Meer, the oldest of them all, can inspire the Frisian writers of 2016, by her example, to seek an authentic voice, an impertinence, a contrary position, a personal perspective, both in thinking and in writing style.'

– *Fers2*



**Aggie van der Meer** (b. 1927) worked as an art teacher and as a garden architect. She was active in the peace movement and devoted herself to reform within the Catholic Church. Only later in life did she become a literary author, publishing her first book in 2000. Characteristic of her work – several poetry collections, novels and stage plays – is an engagement that is thoroughly convincing as literature.

Photo: Wietze Landman

# Tiny Mulder

## Thin Ice

Resistance under occupation, witnessed by a teenage girl

**Collaborate, accommodate or resist – in occupied territories ordinary people confront this moral dilemma. In *Thin Ice* an adolescent girl describes the choices made by her and the people around her in the occupied Netherlands during the Second World War. The novel depicts the frightening and often heroic consequences of those decisions, while at the same time everyday life goes on as usual.**

Klaske Jagersma is fourteen when the war becomes a reality even inside the family home. Her parents decide to take in a Jewish girl, Anneke, to save her from deportation. Further secret guests follow as the Jagersma household becomes a refuge for those who have gone into hiding and for downed Allied pilots. Moreover, Klaske herself, after the example of her older sister Dineke, becomes involved with the resistance. Teenage girls do not quickly arouse suspicion, so she is able to make an important contribution.

Klaske, the narrator of the story, takes a full part in events, but she is also the sober,

sometimes even ironic spectator. Her observations and comments enable us to feel the psychological tension that events create in those involved. The choices made turn out to have their unpredictable sides. The adolescent Klaske secretly finds the danger she faces in her underground activities attractive. No less unforeseen is that her mother feels as if she is handing over a child of her own when she returns Anneke to her real parents after the war.

Even more than adventure and heroism, *Thin Ice* is about uncertainty and anxiety. The central characters value human empathy above dogma and ideology.

Tiny Mulder works her own memories of the war into the novel. She too was active in the Dutch resistance and her parents hid people in the house. Her intention in writing *Thin Ice* was to reach young people in particular, but the novel was read by many adults and grew to become one of the most highly rated books ever written in the Frisian language. It was reprinted five times and also published in Dutch.



### Publishing details

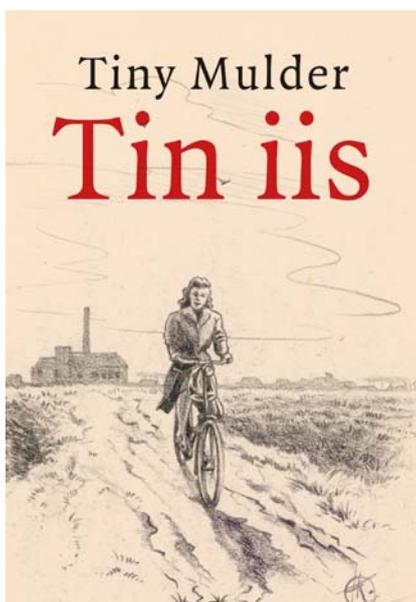
*Tin iis* (1981, 6th edition 2014)  
305 pp., 101,320 words

### Publisher

Elikser  
Jitske Kingma  
jitskekingma@elikser.nl

### Translation

Gevaarlijk ijs (Noordboek, 2003)



Starting with her debut *Orange Umbrella* in 1962, journalist and reviewer **Tiny Mulder** (1921-2010) made her name as a poet with a highly individual voice. She also wrote and translated children's books, radio plays and stage plays. Her first novel, *Thin Ice*, was published in 1981. In 1986 she was awarded the Gysbert Japicx Prize, the most important Frisian literary award, for her oeuvre as a whole.

'Tiny Mulder writes from the inside about what life in wartime meant for ordinary people, who also faced a dilemma.'

– *Leeuwarder Courant*

'[The people in this book] do what they have to do. Without any fuss. That's what the book is about. A very good book. For precisely that reason.'

– *Trotwaer*

'The more you read, the more exciting the book becomes [...]. I often wanted to get to the end of the chapter before I went to bed.'

– A secondary school pupil (4th grade) on [www.scholieren.com](http://www.scholieren.com)

Photo: Henk Kuiper

# Willem Schoorstra

## Rêdbâd. Chronicles of a King

The life and times of a legendary Frisian king

**Little is known about the historical Rêdbâd, king of the once extensive Frisia. A biography of the early mediaeval monarch based on facts alone would be short and not bring him any closer to us. But the narrative talent with which Willem Schoorstra mixes historical knowledge with imagination brings the legendary Rêdbâd back to life in a novel as exciting as it is voluminous.**

The story is told in retrospect by the elderly Hadagrim, who has been Rêdbâd's confidant. He sets himself this final task because 'history has never, ever known a king like Rêdbâd'. It is a story full of political and military intrigues, with the Frankish Pepin of Herstal as Rêdbâd's great enemy. But at the same time Hadagrim offers a subtle psychological portrait of the Frisian king and tells of his personal ups and downs. It makes an almost mythical ruler a person of flesh and blood once again.

Rêdbâd is a man of passions, who does not shrink from atrocities and violence.

The novel paints a picture in vivid colour of how Rêdbâd hastens the death of his father Aldgillis, how he rapes Fredou, the woman he desires, how his wife Thiada deceives him, how the daughter whose marriage he arranged commits suicide. Bright red is the blood that flows so liberally, especially in the battles against the Franks, which eventually make an invalid of Rêdbâd. After his death he turns out to have conceived a son with Fredou who, it is suggested, will continue his dynasty.

As legend would have it, Rêdbâd refused at the last moment to have himself baptized when he realized that in a Christian afterlife he would not meet his heathen ancestors. This legend symbolizes the change and uncertainty that mark Rêdbâd's era, caused by a world outside Frisia. Schoorstra depicts Rêdbâd's life and times by placing his hero's contemplations and deeds in a broader historical context. The result is a captivating, multi-layered novel, a real page-turner.

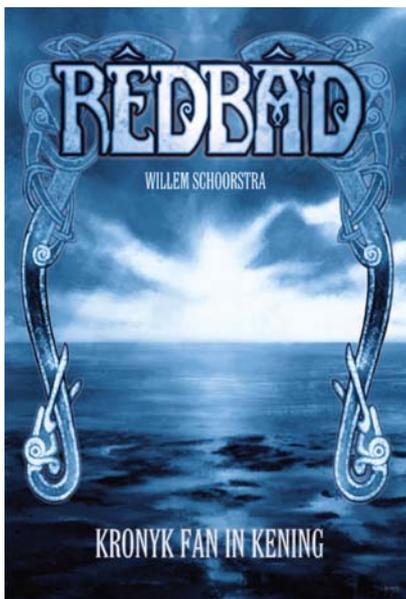


### Publishing details

*Rêdbâd. Kronyk fan in kening*  
(2011)  
368 pp., 126,590 words

### Rights

Noordboek  
Arie Krijgsman  
arie@friesepersboekerij.nl



**Willem Schoorstra** (b. 1959) began as a poet but since his story collection *Berjochten út Babel* (Messages from Babel, 2002) he has developed as a writer of prose. The novel *Swarte ingels* (Black Angels), about an incestuous relationship, won him the Fedde Schurer Prize, awarded to the best debut, and was translated into Dutch. A second novel about relationships, *De ôfreakken* (The Settlement), was followed by *Rêdbâd* and *Pier*, about the late mediaeval Frisian avenger Pier Gerlofs Donia.

'Anyone reading this book will sooner or later fall under the spell of Willem Schoorstra's clever writing. He has managed to give an impression of what life was like thirteen centuries ago.'

– *Leeuwarder Courant*

'With *Rêdbâd* Willem Schoorstra has written his magnum opus.'

– *Ensafh*

'The way the book is written takes the reader back to the old days. A book to read more than once. Great, fantastic novel.'

– *Goodreads*

– *Goodreads*

Photo: Angela Dekens

# Hylke Speerstra

## The Comfort Bird

The true story of two Frisian families

**There is no better way to keep the past alive than by telling personal stories. In *The Comfort Bird* Hylke Speerstra reconstructs with great skill and affection the history of two Frisian families whose fate was determined by the course of history on a larger scale.**

During migration, Hylke Speerstra tells us, practically every flight of *wilsters* (the Frisian for golden plovers) is accompanied by another species of bird, which flies with them as a 'comfort bird'. On a long migration that involves great hardships, you do after all need comforting. Speerstra could not have chosen a better title for his book.

In *The Comfort Bird* he follows two families from Hichtum in Friesland. In 1911 three generations of one family set out together for America, to make their dreams come true in the land of limitless opportunity. They manage, with great difficulty, to survive in arid and poor South Dakota. The other family keeps its roots in Friesland but sees Germany as the promised land.

The stories of the two families intersect when their descendants serve on the front line in the Second World War, one family as reluctant attacker and occupier, the other as liberator of Europe; one as victor, the other as loser.

Making use of family records, diaries, conversations and surviving letters, Hylke Speerstra, who was himself the boy next door to one of the family members, has reconstructed both histories and brought them back to life. With his dazzling, vivid language, his huge capacity for empathy and his eye for crucial, striking anecdotes and details, he enables the reader to hear not only the words and thoughts of people from earlier times but their heartbeat as well.

His description of tough ways of life, in rural Friesland and in rural America, the dangerous crossing, the profound homesickness, the comfort of family and finally the insanity of the war are inimitable and unforgettable, bringing back forgotten times and resonating long after the book ends. *The Comfort Bird* is literary history writing of the highest calibre.



### Publishing details

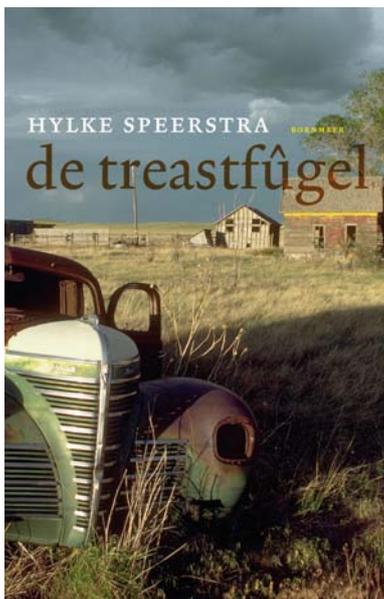
*De treastfûgel* (2013)  
208 pp., 53,000 words

### Publisher

Bornmeer  
Steven Sterk  
info@bornmeer.nl

### Translated titles

*De troostvogel* (De treastfûgel, Atlas Contact, 2013)  
*Het wrede paradijs* (It wrede paradys, Atlas Contact, 2013)  
*Cruel Paradise: True Stories of Dutch Emigrants* (It wrede paradys, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2005)  
*The Comfort Bird* (De treastfûgel, Mokeham Publishing, 2017)



**Hylke Speerstra** (b. 1936) is one of the best known of living Frisian authors. His work is a mixture of fiction and non-fiction, of the kind often found in Anglo-Saxon literature. He is regarded as a born storyteller, 'a chronicler of his time,' according to Geert Mak. For years Speerstra worked as a journalist. He is best known for his stories about emigrants. His book *It wrede paradijs* (Cruel Paradise) is one of the best-selling Frisian books of all time. It also appeared in Dutch and in English.

'Beautifully told.'  
– Gerben de Vries,  
*De Moanne*

'With his almost fairytale style of narration, in *Comfort Bird* Speerstra creates a combination of historically factual account and compelling literary story.'  
– Kim van Goethem -  
*NPO Geschiedenis*

Photo: Linus Harms

# Tsead Bruinja

## Vacuum Cleaner Singers

A poetry collection about leaving, returning and settling

**The bilingual volume *Vacuum Cleaner Singers* combines poetry, music and art; it is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which three artists, Frisian by birth, investigate nostalgia and our longing for the past.**

Tsead Bruinja's lyrics lead the way, taking us back to the Frisian village in which he grew up. They tell of the depression of the 1930s, of a father who lost his job and a family that had to move house as a result. The poems, which tend towards prose, can to a large extent be traced back to the poet's own life. Vivid lines, without punctuation, lay a shroud of melancholy over the story of the adolescent boy, who is branded a 'peasant' because he comes from out of town, fills shelves in the supermarket, struggles with feelings of melancholy such as 'puppylovelovesickness' and makes half-hearted plans to kill himself.

Typography is deployed as a way of reinforcing meaning: descending lines depict the poet's tears at his mother's funeral.

As well as the past there are poems about the present, about the poet Bruinja for whom language means identity. He writes and travels all over the country with a suitcase full of his published collections, to perform at places where people are not always looking for poetry.

Bruinja's poetry generally stands in the midst of life. And a little of his engagement – mixed with a fair dose of self-mockery – comes through when he performs at a fundraiser for the homeless, in a place where 'artists stood selflessly listening to themselves / while the good cause stood outside smoking and drinking'.

*Vacuum Cleaner Singers* shows how a childhood in a Frisian village shaped the poet and his way of thinking. His way of loving, too, since old village customs, with girls who jumped on the back of boys' scooters as a sign that the courtship was 'on', are reflected in modern city life. Years later, as an adult, the poet knows he has found his girl when she lets him take her home after a meal: he pedals, while she sits on the back.



### Publishing details

*Stofsûgersjongers / Stofzuigerzangers* (2013)  
128 pp.

With music by Femke IJlstra and etchings by Mirka Farabegoli

### Publisher

Afûk  
Ernst Bruinsma  
e.bruinsma@afuk.nl

**'Often unerringly precise in the things he wants to say.'**  
– Eppie Dam, *Leeuwarder Courant*

Photo: Tineke de Lange

### Bed

the names you use  
for food cutlery and crockery on the table  
are not the first names

which I learned for food cutlery and crockery  
and when you touch me you sometimes touch  
a completely different part of me

than where my sister  
would pinch me after I'd teased her  
or where my mother would put a little  
more effort in washing me

we sleep in the same bed  
but yours is shorter  
and mine sounds more  
like the bleating of a goat

your father and mother  
your grandfathers and mothers  
they are called something else

they never cuddled up to you  
gave you a kiss  
or a good wash

we live in the same world  
I cuddle up to you  
give you a kiss

for those things we use  
the same names now

your bed and kisses  
are growing longer  
every year



**Tsead Bruinja** (b. 1974) is regarded as one of Friesland's leading poets, though he is equally well known in the rest of the Netherlands, and indeed beyond. He writes both in the Frisian language and in Dutch, and is a popular guest at literary festivals. Bruinja made his debut in Frisian in 2000. His Dutch-language collections were nominated for the Jo Peters Poetry Prize and the Ida Gerhardt Poetry Prize. His poems have been translated and published in reviews and anthologies in France, Germany, Iraq, Nepal, Slovenia, South-Africa, the UK and the USA.

# Theunis Piersma

## Guests of Summer

An ode to the house martins, who bring summer to Friesland

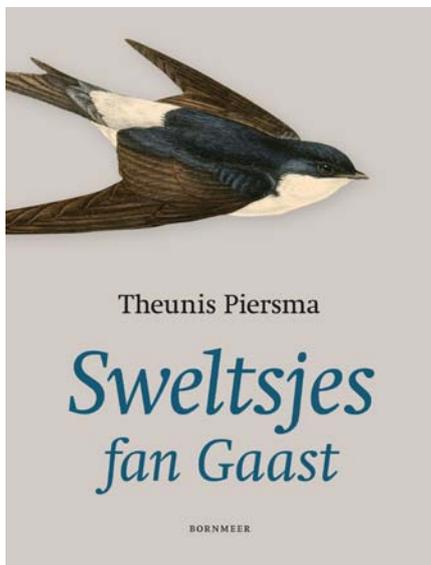
***Guests of Summer* presents a lively picture of a small creature in our immediate environment that often goes unnoticed: the house martin. The book offers a fascinating insight into the life cycle and behaviour of a familiar yet enigmatic bird. Rooted in scientific research and larded with historical asides, *Guests of Summer* is above all an ode to a welcome summer visitor.**

Why do house martins collect feathers in the air as they fly? And why only white feathers, not black? These are just two of the many questions Theunis Piersma asked as he observed the house martins around his house. They nest in large numbers in his home village in Friesland, Gaast, living close to the villagers. In the summer, that is. In winter they are away, which prompted a neighbour to ask Piersma, an ornithologist, where they go in winter.

Piersma's search for answers to these and other questions resulted in a lovingly

written 'biography' of the house martin. The reason swallows collect white feathers from the air, for example, is because they use them to line their nests, and white feathers, more than black, have disinfectant properties. *Guests of Summer* contains countless intriguing findings like these. In pursuit of his subject, Piersma did not limit himself to Gaast. The fact that the house martin is a migratory bird invites him to explain how ecological systems stretch right across the world.

As well as being an ode to the house martin, *Guests of Summer* – Piersma's first book in his mother tongue, Frisian – is an implicit salute to rural Friesland, where the living is good as long as the house martins return every summer. Piersma succeeds in getting this feeling over to readers who do not know Friesland and rarely if ever see a house martin. No wonder the book has already been published in both a Dutch and an English translation.



**Theunis Piersma** (b. 1958) is Professor of Migratory Bird Ecology in Groningen and a Wadden Sea researcher on the island of Texel. For his ground-breaking book about migratory birds he was awarded the Spinoza Prize, the highest scientific award in the Netherlands. With countless publications to his name, he is regarded as an international authority in his field. Moreover, he knows how to convey his scientific insights to the public at large.



### Publishing details

*Sweltsjes fan Gaast* (2014)  
136 pp., 27,500 words

### Publisher

Bornmeer  
Steven Sterk  
info@bornmeer.nl

### Translations

*Zwaluwen van Gaast* (Bornmeer, 2014)  
*Guests of Summer. A House Martin love story* (BTO Books, Thetford, 2016)

'This is a delightful book [...] written by a leading ornithologist and ecologist whose observations of the birds around him are informed by a love of birds but also an understanding of what makes them tick.'  
– Mark Avery on the English edition

'Piersma's cheekiness, the self-mockery that pops up here and there [...] and the slightly ironic tone from time to time [...] mean that bird-lovers will not be the only readers to get great enjoyment out of this book.'  
– *Leeuwarder Courant*

'Theunis Piersma has enriched our knowledge of birds and of language.'  
– *NRC Handelsblad*

Photo: Rob Buiters

# Hanneke de Jong

## Salsa Girl

Young-adult story about the discovery of womanhood and an unwanted pregnancy

**A recognizable, moving and frank story about a girl who discovers her femininity, falls in love, loses herself and gets into trouble before at last finding herself again. Awakening sexuality, unwanted pregnancy, shame and uncertainty, and learning to accept responsibility: *Salsa Girl* ought to be required reading for adolescents and their parents.**

It's holiday time and fourteen-year-old Freya goes to Curacao with her parents and her little brother. There they visit Freya's older brother, who is doing voluntary work on the island.

It is a time of rest and recuperation. After the death of Freya's grandpa the family is in need of a bit of distraction. Despite the presence of her irritating younger brother, her apathetic father and a mother who reads self-help books all the time, Freya hugely enjoys the heat, the sea, the beach, the being away from home. And to top it all there is Guido, the wildly attractive friend of her brother. He teaches Freya salsa dancing, not the sedate steps she knows from dancing school but the real salsa, which is all about unadulterated passion and seduction.

Freya loses her heart to the dance and to Guido. She wants to be more than his salsa girl and she decides to do all she can to make him fall in love with her. Back in the Netherlands she discovers that her impetuous holiday love has not been without consequences. What should she do and whom can she trust?

An adolescent girl, who feels like a real woman for the first time, allows herself to be carried away until she loses sight of her own limitations and thereby gets into trouble: it is a subject that can all too easily lead to stories that wag moralistic fingers. Hanneke de Jong skilfully avoids that trap. Without frills, sentimentality or sensationalism, and with accessible, clear sentences and a subtle sense of humour, she gives a familiar theme a fresh, contemporary feel. The clever structure – with chapters set in the present in which Freya needs to come to a decision and looks back at exactly what happened on Curacao – creates sustained tension.

The convincing characters and the author's perceptible empathy make Freya's struggle with her conscience a story with which any adolescent and any parent can identify.



### Publishing details

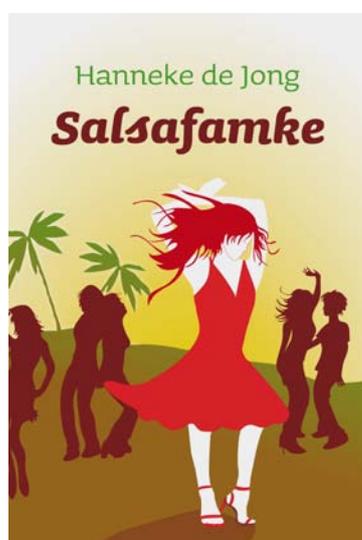
*Salsafamke* (2008)  
144 pp. 37,996 words

### Publisher

Noordboek  
Arie Krijgsman  
arie@friesepersboekერი.nl

### Translation

*Salsameisje* (Salsafamke,  
Olga kinderboeken, 2009)



**Hanneke de Jong** (b. 1952) has written ten children's books, four young adult titles and seven plays. She was twice awarded the Simke Kloosterman Prize for the best Frisian young adult book, in 2010 for *Salsafamke* (Salsa Girl) and in 2016. Her young adult novel *De lêste brief* (The Last Letter) was awarded a Silver Pin in 2000 by the Frisian Children's Book Jury and the Dutch translation, published by Van Goor, won her a Golden Kiss. Her young adult novel *Sterke skouders* (Strong Shoulders) gained a place in the 2006 IBBY List of Honour.

**'Direct style, contemporary language and warm atmosphere.'**  
– Jury Report, *Simke Kloosterman Prize*

Photo: Haye Bijlsma

# Voices from the North

In 2015 these four Frisian poets were featured in the brochure *Voices from the North (of Holland)*.

## Girl Under the Apple Tree

the good earth that turns towards the sun  
and the night untangling from its branches

the apples

the fine light hair on her goose bumps

the night between her breasts  
and the book on her lap

I had a face  
half-done

and

wanted

to read along

singer with lime on his claws  
who can't come tumbling  
out of the tree

and doesn't catch any birds

a bag of blood without hands

in his head  
a new silence

on his body  
a new pair of hands



**Tsead Bruinja**  
(b. 1974)  
*Grass That's Already  
Laughing* (2005)

**Translation**  
David Colmer &  
Tsead Bruinja

## For Heaven's Sake

They imprisoned a bird  
gave wings to  
a dog and a horse.

They fired questions at  
listened blankly to  
a bird

until the sound

died out.

They reached a verdict  
said: for heaven's sake dog  
for heaven's sake horse

sing

like a bird

chirp

now that you can fly.



**Elmar Kuiper**  
(b. 1969)  
*Heartbeat* (2004)

**Translation**  
Susan Massotty &  
Willem Groenewegen

## Progress

A small group was passing through the street with Bibles in their hands. My father was standing next to me, grinning. He said, "Those people still believe in God." He probably stopped to think about what he'd just said. The word "still" implied progress. "Those people still believe in God." It suggested levels of increasing insight. My father sniffed and mumbled, "We still believe in progress." Silently we watched the slight figures until the small group had disappeared around the corner. Then I looked to the side and behind me. There was no one there.



**Nyk de Vries** (b. 1971)  
*Motorman* (2007)  
**Translation**  
David Colmer & Nyk de Vries

## Candy Says

She glided over the parquet, his little  
princess on the piano, piccola bitchy.

I hung on for dear life, hungrily ate  
his leftover crusts and limp lettuce.

Call me Candy. Whose legs he licked.  
Whose sweet breath he sucked. Who knows.

I plucked her song from the drain, smeared  
spit on the mirrors. Candy says: drop dead.



**Albertina Soepboer** (b. 1969)  
*The Fire Worshipers* (2003)  
**Translation**  
Susan Massotty

# Earlier brochures

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

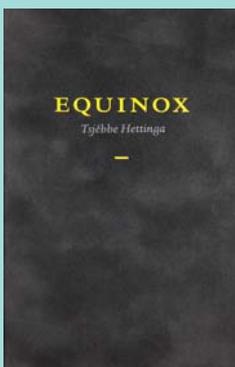


Hidde Boersma  
**The Most Ordinary of Men**  
De gewoanste man (2011)

Rights: Noordboek, Arie Krijgsman,  
a.krijgsman@friesepersboekerij.nl

Dedication to the most everyday things proves exciting, often hilarious, commentary on modern times.

An ultimate highpoint in the work of a visionary poet

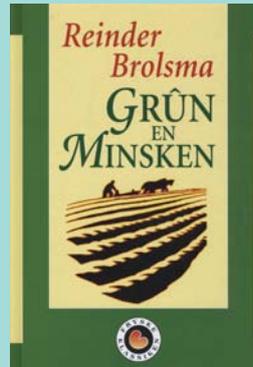


Tsjêbbe Hettinga  
**Equinox**  
Equinox (2009)

Rights: Bornmeer, Steven Sterk,  
info@bornmeer.nl

Hettinga's poetry is often compared to the resonant work of Dylan Thomas, whose work he translated.

Utterly convincing portrait of a remarkable man



Reinder Brolsma  
**Land and People**  
Grûn en Minsken (1940)

Rights: U.H. Brolsma,  
uhbrolsma@hotmail.com

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

A collision between tradition and modernity



Ulbe van Houten  
**Holwerda's Sin**  
De sûnde fan Haitze Holwerda (1938)

Rights: Elikser, Jitske Kingma,  
jitskekingma@elikser.nl

A powerful man is slowly being destroyed, by his servants and his wife, but just as much by his own nagging conscience.

A defiant literary gem full of eroticism and sacred magic

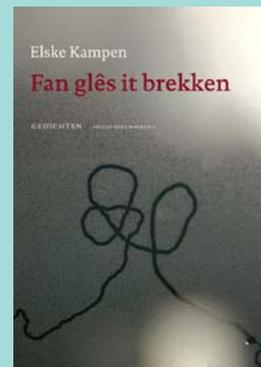


Homme Eernstma  
**Lovedeath**  
Leafdedea (1963)

Rights: Agnès Caers,  
agnes.caers@skynet.be

This is an intriguing little novel about an eccentric baron who tries to secure his future by means of speculation and fantasies.

Solid and powerful, yet also elegant and melodious poetry



Elske Kampen  
**Of Glass the Breaking**  
Fan glês it brekken (2010)

Rights: Noordboek, Arie Krijgsman,  
a.krijgsman@friesepersboekerij.nl

There is an unusual wariness in these verses, something guarded. It leaves just enough space to live and breathe.

Here are all the Frisian titles from the 2013 brochure *10 Books from Friesland*, compiled by Alpita de Jong, and the 2014 brochure *10 Books from Holland*. The brochures can be found in their entirety at [www.letterenfonds.nl/en/publications](http://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/publications).

Miniatures of people in an unusual light



Jaap Krol  
**Numbers**  
Nûmers (2004)

Rights: Bornmeer, Steven Sterk,  
[info@bornmeer.nl](mailto:info@bornmeer.nl)

It is a district where all the houses are the same, with gardens front and back. All of them are ordinary and at the same time extremely strange.

A powerful and realistic drama in the style of Hemingway

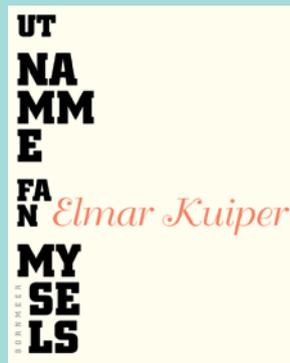


Rink van der Velde  
**The Trap**  
De fûke (1966)

Rights: Noordboek, Arie Krijgsman,  
[a.krijgsman@friesepersboekerij.nl](mailto:a.krijgsman@friesepersboekerij.nl)

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

A collection of provocative poetry



Elmar Kuiper  
**In the Name of Myself**  
Ut namme fan mysels (2006)

Rights: Bornmeer, Steven Sterk,  
[info@bornmeer.nl](mailto:info@bornmeer.nl)

Elmar Kuiper makes you believe in preposterous things.

Scenes from a marriage and from an upbringing in rural Friesland



Ale S. van Zandbergen  
**The Littens Fair**  
Littenser merke (2013)

Rights: Noordboek, Arie Krijgsman,  
[a.krijgsman@friesepersboekerij.nl](mailto:a.krijgsman@friesepersboekerij.nl)

The novel cleverly combines two narratives, interwoven to such an extent that it seems as if the time between them has evaporated.

A frank account by a girl who discovers she is a lesbian



Janneke Spoelstra  
**Being Jiks**  
In Jikse-libben (2008)

Rights: Afûk, Ernst Bruinsma,  
[e.bruinsma@afuk.nl](mailto:e.bruinsma@afuk.nl)

Spoelstra switches between different narrative perspectives, genres and styles: dreams, reports, diary entries.

# 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.

All this explains why the Province of Fryslân and the Dutch Foundation for Literature have joined forces over the past four years to bring Frisian literature to the attention of other countries. In this brochure we present a diverse selection of Frisian prose, poetry, non-fiction and young adult literature, compiled by the Frisian publishing world, and information about all the Frisian titles that have been selected since this collaboration began: a total of twenty-five titles that represent the best of modern Frisian literature.

---

**Frisian authors during the Frankfurt Book Fair**  
Friday 21 October, 3.30 – 4.30 pm, Hall 5.0, C88  
Frysk auf dem Tisch – Taal op tafel – Language on the Table

Three authors featured in this brochure will present their work during the Frankfurt Book Fair. Poet Tsead Bruinja will read from his collection *Vacuum Cleaner Singers*, Willem Schoorstra will present, in words and music, *Rêdbâd. Chronicles of a King* about a Frisian king of the early Middle Ages, and Anne Feddema will read from his short story collection *Cheetah's Tears*.

Writer and poet Eeltsje Hettinga and video artist Lotte Middendorp will show a number of short poetry clips that are part of the digital literary project It Font ([www.itfont.nl](http://www.itfont.nl)), in which poetry, visual arts, readings and music are closely intertwined.

---

## Books from Friesland

is distributed to international editors and publishers. Please contact us if you would like to be included on our mailing list.

---

## Editors

Alexandra Koch  
Dick Broer

---

## Contributions

Eva Gerrits, Kees 't Hart, Klaas van der Hoek, Janita Monna, Alpita de Jong, Victor Schiferli, Tsead Bruinja, Elmar Kuiper, Albertina Soepboer, Nyk de Vries

---

## Translation

Liz Waters, David Colmer, Susan Massotty, Willem Groenewegen

---

## Cover Image

Reyer Boxem

---

## Printing

Platform-P

---

## Design

Kummer & Herrman, Utrecht

**N**ederlands  
letterenfonds  
dutch foundation  
for literature

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

visiting address  
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89  
1018 VR Amsterdam

provinsje fryslân  
provincie fryslân



Provincie Fryslân  
PO Box 20120  
NL-8900 HM Leeuwarden  
+31 58 2925925  
provincie@fryslan.nl  
www.fryslan.nl