

11 Poets from Holland



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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.



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Lieke Marsman

'I've begun breathing again'

After her acclaimed debut collection in 2010, the young poet Lieke Marsman was considered a prodigy by many. Three important literary prizes and four years later, she confirmed her reputation with her next book of poems, *The First Letter*.

It was already evident in her debut collection that she was a thinker, but in *The First Letter* compulsive thoughts and delusions seem to lead a life of their own. A fear of everything and more plays an important role and can even get in the way of the poetry: 'Today/ poetry seems to me a country/ to which I have not/ been given a ticket (...)/ a far-off island/ full of penguins.'

On paper it sounds more or less as it would sound in a hyper-aware and cogitating head. Talking is going on the whole time, the tone muttering at times, at other times as if she is having a row with (ex-) boyfriends and then suddenly realising: 'who is it I'm actually talking to?'

BIG BANG

One night on TV a physicist says
it's not impossible the universe will one day
stop growing and then slowly, faster
than light, implode. In that case
trillions of cosmoses might succeed ours
which would mean right now we are dangling
from a family tree of universes. Imagine
having to reproduce
by ceasing to exist.

Next morning, when I see
how at the start of a day I've begun
breathing again, I compare this tossing
around of stars to the bobbing
of my breasts, to a radio aerial
you aimlessly slide in and out
and then, my best shot to date,
to a sea anemone.

(Translation by Paul Vincent and Lieke Marsman)

The poems represent an attempt to recover language and poetry, and to find peace of mind. 'The loveliest person/ is the one who doesn't reflect on things; who has enough self-trust not to need/ any words inside the head when putting on a cup/ of tea', she writes aphoristically at some point. That this never turns into something sombre or heavy is due to the fact that Marsman's sometimes panic-stricken fears are served with a generous dose of absurdity. She manages to lend even the most painful moments – a girl that is beaten black and blue by her boyfriend – a certain laconic charm, although behind such burly lines one dimly senses vulnerability.

The First Letter concludes with a tender lullaby. The tempest of thoughts has died down, and the poetry has returned. For good, let us hope, for Lieke Marsman is a valuable asset to Dutch poetry.



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Lieke Marsman in translation

Marsman's poems have been translated and published in anthologies and literary reviews in Catalan, Chinese, Czech and English. Her poem 'Oerknal' (Big Bang) was translated into all the official languages of the European Union.

Lieke Marsman is a big talent. In warm, talkative poems she brings philosophical questions back to their human proportions.

– Trouw

Marsman investigates reality and language in a groping, playful and reflective way.

– Jury of the Liegend Konijn Prize

I don't really believe in the so-called therapeutic power of writing poetry. For therapy, I go to a therapist.

– Lieke Marsman

Photo: Tessa Posthuma de Boer

Lieke Marsman (b. 1990) won a national poetry competition at age seventeen and published her first collection of poems, *What I Like to Impress on Myself*, three years later. 'A remarkably mature and convincing debut,' according to the jury of the Liegend Konijn Prize, which is one of the three major prizes a Dutch debut collection can be awarded with. Marsman won the other two, the Buddingh' Prize and the Van der Hoogt Prize, as well. In 2014 her second book of poetry, *The First Letter*, was published.

Maarten van der Graaff

'I want to talk to a fascist'



Maarten van der Graaff's debut collection *Getawaycarpoems* (2013) opens with the line 'enormous enormous space'. In the 50 pages that follow, the poet fills this space by painting, sketching and blotting with an incessant flow of words.

Lucid announcements switch to absurd scenes; a fleeting thought can grow into a whole story or remain fleeting, or it can turn completely into its opposite, because as Van der Graaff writes in 'The athlete trusts his jump': 'Only fascists never contradict themselves'. Alternating between youthful elation and boundless boredom, Van der Graaff tries to express 'how tired everything is' and, simultaneously, how 'fragrant and/ useless and light'. This results in sprawling poems that show what it is like to live and read in this very moment; what it is like to be bored to death every now and then; and what it feels like to refuse to give up hoping, maybe even believing, in

something *more*. 'I like question marks that are everything but profound. Can I go?'

Getawaycarpoems was awarded the C. Buddingh' Prize for the best Dutch-language debut collection in 2014. The jury called Van der Graaff an 'immensely resourceful poet' and praised 'the breadth of Van der Graaff's poems, regarding composition, vocabulary and themes'. Soon after, Van der Graaff published his second book, *Dead Work*. Here again the poet stands firmly situated in the current day and reports his findings without holding back. His tone is confident and free from illusion. In 'Lists', the first half of the book, and 'Clocked poems', the second half, he attempts to create cohesion between his life and surroundings. This attempt is as slippery ('The shape of my existence shows itself/ as crumbly factuality,' he writes) as it is necessary, because there is 'a social sphere I don't understand./ I want to write for those who/ are found in this space.'

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Maarten van der Graaff in translation

Van der Graaff's poems have been translated in English for performances at international festivals, including the Poetry International Festival in Rotterdam. For the German-based project Babelspreh International he wrote an essay on Dutch contemporary poetry.

Van der Graaff is the Molotov cocktail of Dutch poetry.
– *De Morgen*

Resourceful and mocking he conquers a spot of his own in poetry. He's a poet with guts.
– *Trouw*

He is definitely the best poet of his generation.
– *De Groene Amsterdammer*

Photo: Daniël Webb

LIST OF CIVIC SONGS (fragment)

Tonight I want to talk to a fascist.
By soft light and beer, on Europe
and on bosses, the bosses of bosses.
It will be like we're in a saloon,
the food and drink of an underwater city.
And in the twilight, in each other's lust
we will see Europe and know that something old
has been taken from us.

I eat in front of the television. I am the citizen of a state,
eat a microwave meal, watch a rerun of *Frasier*.
It is my duty to eat the sausage and lick clean the gravy tray.
Online I read a polemic essay that I once wrote
and despise the petty style, the calculation.

(...)

(Translation by Willem Groenewegen)

Maarten van der Graaff (b. 1987) published *Getawaycarpoems* (2013) and *Dead Work* (2015) and was awarded the C. Buddingh' Prize for best debut collection in 2014. He is co-founder and editor of the online literary journal *Samplekanon*, and an instructor in Creative Writing at the ArtEZ Institute of the Arts in Arnhem.

Alfred Schaffer

'I take another really good look'



In 2014, Alfred Schaffer's latest poetry collection, *Man Animal Thing* was published and met with instant acclaim. 'This book is a real happening in poetry, a masterpiece,' according to leading daily *NRC Handelsblad*.

And another daily, *Trouw*, wrote: 'Schaffer shows what kind of animal things a man is capable of and how little human lives are worth sometimes. He does this with humour, with *schwung*, tenderly and thoughtfully; in poetry in which bloodlust can look like a "massive bar of dark chocolate." (...) *Man Animal Thing* grabs you by the throat.'

Partly inspired by *Chaka*, a famous South African novel from 1931, written by Thomas Mofolo, the book charts the imaginary progress of the nineteenth-century statesman and tyrant, Shaka Zulu (1787-1828). Structured around a series of daydreams and major events in Zulu's life, the poet extracts Zulu from the historical

past and moves him to the modern media age where speed dating, UFOs and effervescent painkillers are the norm. The collection is hugely diverse, from lyrical poetry to tweets – to wit: 'SHAKA'S COURT CASE LIVE FROM NEWS24':

7:20 *A closely-guarded Shaka Zulu hurries through the Court's back entrance.*

7:41 *The row of journalists at the main entrance twists and turns like a spastic snake.*

8:13 *@SimonsHo6. Made it! We're on the fourth row! S. crumpled up next to his mother on the front row. #Shakasmum*

Schaffer's poetry has shifted from linguistic experimentation, unsettling observations in a sober business-like tone and reflections on life's incoherence to a more mature, overarching vision in which formal and conceptual experiment goes hand in hand with lucid, lyrical texts. His early promise has been more than realised.

DAY(DREAM) # 5,106

The classic shoot-out.
And with so much competition too
it's bizarre, it makes my balls tingle.
I stand on one side and on the other side
there's me too, only the leaked version with a cold.
The albino smurf cut out of The Smurfs
and somewhere else I forgot.
Tension crackles like a fire in a paper factory.
I take another really good look –
how fat I've become, god almighty, I'm not solid.
Like a dictator in formaldehyde.
Between us a boundless expanse, a concrete polar region.
Actually just a mixture of sand and grass
no larger than the back garden I used to lie in.
I see myself thinking but that's not my body
that's not me, I would never grope around my jacket pocket
for a mouth organ
to play a foolish little tune on.

(Translation by Michele Hutchison)

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Alfred Schaffer in translation

Schaffer's poems have been translated and published in anthologies and reviews in Arabic, Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Macedonian, Rumanian, Turkish, Indonesian, Spanish and Swedish. In 2013 Protea Bookhouse published *Kom in, dit vries daar buite*: Schaffer's selected poems, translated into Afrikaans.

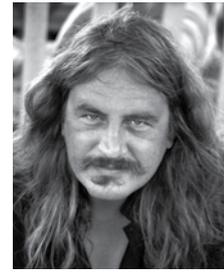
The artistry is never obtrusive, nor even obvious, but the poems are resonant and unbounded. They coherently straddle disparate and incongruous worlds, periods, settings, and move seamlessly between private and communal spaces. The effect is that one is drawn into the powerful processes of poetry establishing its own reality.
– *Breyten Breytenbach*

Photo: Karoly Effenberger

One of the most talented poets of his generation, **Alfred Schaffer** (b. 1973) debuted in 2000 with the collection *His Rise in the Suburbs*. His second book, *Vagrants* (2002) was nominated for the prestigious VSB Poetry Prize. After that came *No Hands Before Your Eyes* (2004), *Foam* (2006) and *Cage* (2008). After winning the Jo Peters Poetry Prize for his first collection, he also won the Hugues C. Pernath Prize, the Ida Gerhardt Poetry Prize and the Jan Campert Prize. Schaffer grew up in The Hague, the son of Dutch-Aruban parents. He currently works as a lecturer at Stellenbosch University in South Africa.

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer

'I'd said that anyway'



After reading *Classics* and a stint of teaching at Leiden University, Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer decided that the bohemian lifestyle of a poet, writer and journalist suited him better. His first book of poems, in 1998, earned him the C. Buddingh' Prize; his sixth collection scored no less than a hat-trick of major Dutch poetry awards this year.

A prolific drinker and an even more prolific writer, Pfeijffer has written novels, essays, plays and song lyrics, while simultaneously becoming one of the Netherlands' leading contemporary poets. Pfeijffer is a seasoned performer with great stage presence who likes to provoke. He posed naked on the back of his collected poetry from 1998-2008, *The Man of Many Ways*, and is quick to air his views in his newspaper column, often stirring up new controversies or deliberately making enemies. Running through his entire oeuvre are questions of authenticity and fantasy, imagination,

romantic love, sexual failings, nostalgia, and identity. A commonly posed question is 'How to live'. Pfeijffer has a wide range of styles and registers, combines high and low and is fond of hyperbole. The poet has a strong sense of comic timing and knows when to use the bathetic or the obscene to good effect.

Pfeijffer's background as a classicist is more than apparent in his poetry, yet he is fond of drawing from modern life too. Computer game avatars, erotic comics and television programmes feature in his work, alongside barbarians, witches, pirates, princesses and other mythical figures. In his latest poetry collection, *Idylls*, he found new energy in a combination of a complex classical form – rhyming alexandrines – with accessible, narrative content. The rise and fall of the verse gives the poems a hypnotic power, while the repetition of a running motif 'de nacht is aangezegd' (the night has been announced) affords a dark suspense.

IDYLLS, 16 (fragment)

That thing I'd been meaning to say just now
before you suspended hostilities with a cynical frown,
got up and neatly knotted your hair,
collected your bags with a hurried air,
sighed and hoisted the strap of your vest,
paid half the bill and pointed out a stain on my breast,
called off your troops, their armour pristine,
and slipped past me like an ice-cold breeze,
leaving me there distraught, a hamlet turned to dust,
you sighed again and gave me a look of disgust,
raised an eyebrow, tutted and walked away,
it wasn't 'I love you.' I'd said that anyway.

(...)

(Translation by Michele Hutchison)

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Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer in translation

Pfeijffer's poems have been translated and published in anthologies and reviews in Arabic, English, German, Hungarian, Portuguese and Rumanian. His novel *La Superba* was published in Germany, Macedonia and the US.

A captivating blend of styles and registers (...) everything in this collection undulates, sways, has rhythm and verve.

– NRC Handelsblad

Pfeijffer is an extraordinarily gifted poet.

– Awater

Photo: Gelya Bogatishcheva

With his first book of poems in 1998, **Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer** (b. 1968) was said to 'invade poetry like Genghis Kahn'. With his provocative contributions to poetical and political debates, and the five poetry collections that followed, he is certainly one of the most influential figures in Dutch contemporary poetry. His latest collection, *Idylls*, won him the VSB Poetry Prize, the Jan Campert Prize and the Awater Poetry Prize. He currently lives in Genoa, Italy, where his acclaimed fifth novel, *La Superba*, is situated.

Esther Jansma

'I change so slowly she won't notice'



In Esther Jansma's early work, the voices of the past are heard from bewildering years: as a child, the disappearance of a father, then as a mother, the loss of a child. Her later poetry is less personal but more compelling as her poetic universe expands, embracing the whole world.

It is fitting that Esther Jansma's day job as an archeologist involves dating wood through its annual rings: deciphering the traces left by time. For Jansma a poet is: 'The rag-and-bone man, collector of/ remnants, moments, cracks/ in things'. Interweaving a dazzling variety of strands, her poetry explores time and memory, past and present, death, loss, decay and legacy, and yet draws fresh power from these perennial themes because she writes from two opposite but complementary viewpoints.

She made her debut with *Voice under my Bed* (1988), followed two years later by

Flower, Stone. In her much-acclaimed third collection, *Blowhole* (1993) the poet started to distance herself from autobiographical details. This process continued in her later collections, such as *Time Is Here* (1998), which was awarded the prestigious VSB Poetry Prize in 1999. Time permeates this collection, along with all elements that are related to time: loss, death and bereavement, history and archaeology. Jansma devotes great effort to language itself, the poetic tool *par excellence* to tackle time comprehensively, although often in vain.

More poetry collections followed, along with a book of essays, a novel, a Collected Poems (*Always Today*) in 2006, a Selected Poems (*Forever Somewhere*) in 2015, and an impressive myriad of literary awards, including the Hughues Pernath Prize, the Jan Campert Prize and the A. Roland Holst Award. Together with her husband, Dutch poet Wiljan van den Akker, she also translated two books of poems by the American poet Mark Strand into Dutch.

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Esther Jansma in translation

Jansma's poems have been translated and published in thirteen languages, including English (Bloodaxe), French (Farrago) and German (Lichtungen).

This is poetry that oscillates between dazzling exuberance and bitter seriousness, between the ever-renewable game of words and the irrevocability of death.

It is poetry that, due to its refined form, demonstrates the degree to which playing and understanding are interrelated.

– *Ons Erfdeel*

Esther Jansma shows her mastery which is still unequalled by any poets of her generation.

– *NRC Handelsblad*

Photo: Bert van As

PRESENCE

I'm done with questions. From now on I'm going to know things. From now on she is not rose but julia

and her sleep is not the sleep of things.
From now on she can be known, I'm going to live

a long long time with her in a house and feed her,
I'll teach her to speak and she will tell me how it is

while she keeps changing. She keeps using different words.

Sometimes I cut her hair. Then her head changes.

As for me, I change so slowly she won't notice.
When she's grown-up

I'll always have been old and happy.

(Translation by Francis R. Jones)

Esther Jansma (b. 1956) is a leading Dutch poet as well as an influential archaeologist. In both occupations she lends a voice to the past and tries to make time visible in all its aspects. Her most recent collections of poetry are *What It Is* (2008) in the UK, and *Forever Somewhere* (2015) in the Netherlands.

K. Michel

‘The first sentence began with I want’

K. Michel is able to view the world and life from an unforced, but far from naive, point of view. This ‘open’ and often surprising look produces poems in which unusual connections are made – for example between the coming into existence of the earth and human sleep convulsions – or in which he muses on such things as:

Complex processes: when I go barefoot over the tiles towards the balcony, my nose begins to sneeze

In clear, transparent language he dishes up for the reader a world he was unprepared for – one in which language begins with ‘Ouch’ or in which the Hofvijver palace lake in the Hague stands on end and its fish gaze out over the city. Here and there,

his poems are like skipping songs, compilations of what at first sight appear to be dissimilar things, out of which he seems to express a wonderful kind of randomness. All in all, his work is wise and playful, but above all light in tone. Even existential problems are not given a place in the lecture room but in the playroom. About the feeling of freedom, for example, he writes ‘oho you cry/ that’s not for you to dictate/ that has to be my choice/ otherwise it doesn’t count/ fine you say/ decide for yourself then.’

Recognisable and strange, everyday and unexpected, in K. Michel’s poems the reader never quite knows what to expect. His exuberant use of language and choice of subjects make him one of the most interesting poets around at present.

DOWN FROM THE TREES

Ouch of course comes first
closely followed by mmm
then yes then no watch out where
there bah brr again

the first sentence began with I want
the second asked ape gapes we don’t
and the third lied we do

Now tens of thousands of years later
we’re finally able to say
garden furniture cushion storage bag
fluctuating interest rate

and the world has changed
from a running buffet
into a crackling market place

but above the chinking
there is still that tearing sound

(Translation by Paul Vincent)



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K. Michel in translation

Michel’s poems have been translated and published in thirteen languages, including Chinese, English, French, German and Swedish.

A poet with a very keen eye for the absurd, and for the perversions in human existence.

– *NRC Handelsblad*

This is the kind of poetry that can keep you busy for a long, long time. Probably for at least a lifetime.

– *Trouw*

He doesn’t hide away in irony but dares to get personal, without turning too particular or sentimental. He’s a dreamer with both his feet firmly to the ground.

– *Het Parool*

Photo: Melle Hammer

K. Michel (b.1958) can hardly be said to be a prolific writer. Since his debut in 1989, *Yes! Bare as the Stones*, only five new collections of poems have appeared, along with two books of short stories and a collection of essays. Nevertheless, his work has attracted attention from the very outset; for his second collection, *Boom the Night* (1994), he was awarded the Jan Campert Prize, for *Water Studies* (1999) the Herman Gorter Prize and the VSB Poetry Prize, and for *Your Island is bigger during Ebb Tide* (2010) the Awater Poetry Prize and the Guido Gezelle Award. This year, he published his latest collection: *By Foot the Universe is Three Days Away* (2016).

Arjen Duinker

'I found the world irrefutable'

The eyes of Arjen Duinker have really seen a lot of the world, as he is one of the most well travelled poets from Holland, having performed at festivals all over the globe. Still these eyes refuse to focus on anything other than what is right in front of them: exactly what is right in front of them.

From the very beginning, Duinker's poetry has always been about the reality of flowers, stones, mountains, rain, wind, ivy, rivers, the reality of things as separate self-contained entities. That is: all these things as they exist without the interposition of human, all-too-human thought, without the interposition of the abstractions that rear their heads as soon as a human opens his mouth. In his second collection, *Loose Poems* (1990), we read: 'If you give me abstractions,/ I'll give you

a fan of wood', and: 'Nothing is more foreign to me than belief,/ Nothing is more foreign to me than emotional connection/ through thought.' What he wants is that: 'of things/ the very things become visible.'

In his collections to date he has consistently tried to shed his own personality, essence and baggage in order to smuggle into his poems the things he experiences without thinking: the effortless, the self-evidence of things like flowers and stones. In every poem it's as if the poet is, to quote from 'The Dreaming Hour': 'body-searched by uninterpreted nonhuman reality'. The poems come right up to the reader, go through his pockets, check the seams and hems of his personality, his essence, his baggage, amiably but determinedly shaking him down.

AMBITION

After my encounter with the arms dealer
I wandered into a bar to tell about it.

I said I found the world irrefutable,
To this day a ground truth.

I also said the arms dealer's parrot kept quiet,
I couldn't have spoken more truthfully.

And I said his ambition made him sweat,
A truth with echoes of coincidence.

And I told him about the price of arms,
Truth that pours pain on every encounter.

(Translation by Ina Rilke)



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Arjen Duinker in translation

Duinker's prize-winning collection *The Sun and the World* (2004) was published in English translation in Australia. Other book-length collections have appeared in France (Caractères), Portugal (Teorema), Italy (Mobydick), England (Arc), Iran, Finland and Russia. One of Duinker's poems was translated into 220 different languages for a project called 'World Poem'.

Duinker is celebrating the feast of the pleasant meaninglessness, with intelligent poetry in stead of slogans.
– Herman de Coninck

Duinker's multi-coloured, inquisitive poetry is infectiously happy. 'Happiness also exists without a definite article', he says. 'The rest is superstition, aimed at fools,/ As talk of the importance of taste/ Is a matter of false civilization.' In other words, if you're unable to love these poems, you're a sourpuss.
– *De Volkskrant*

Photo: Jacqueline Koster

Arjen Duinker (b. 1956) published thirteen books of poetry and one novel. He made his debut as a poet in 1988 with *Red Shore*. In 2001 he received the Jan Campert Prize for his volume *The History of an Enumeration* (2000). His collection *The Sun and the World* won the prestigious VSB Poetry Prize in 2005. Most recently he published *Catalogue* (2016). His UK collection *The Sublime Song of a Maybe* appeared in Arc's Visible Poets Series.

Pieter Boskma

'I should be grateful'

Pieter Boskma is a cosmic poet and has been since his first collections: a wide panoply of verse full of ecstatic moments, metaphysical revelations, idyllic and elegaic flushes, his work contains it all.

Cosmic poets are rather thin on the ground in the Netherlands and so they immediately stand out, like Herman Gorter and Hendrik Marsman in their days. Boskma too is an exceptional phenomenon; no poet in the Netherlands can be swept along so intensely by mysticism, magic and the overwhelming impact of reality.

He is not a philosophical or psychological poet but a singer who is not averse to myth. When he is dealing with love and eroticism, for example, it is as if the whole earth is at stake. He is also quite happy to talk about 'the Girl', a kind of prototype of

the admired and desired woman, a real muse. But however convincing his lyricism about nature and (wo)mankind may be, he also has a sense of humour that occasionally cuts those exalted feelings and blazing forces down to size and brings his stampeding thoughts to heel.

One of his most impressive collections is *The Earthly Comedy* (2002), a huge 'novel in verse' that vies with the great poetry of the past. The death of his wife inspired the impressive mourning collection *Dying Bloom* (2010), followed by the ecstatic song of spring *Human Hand* (2012) in which he brings a new wife, Hera, to life. In it, between the cosmic acts, he sits on a terrace and experiences 'nothing but charm and pleasant travel blues', indicating that even the Netherlands' most unconstrained of poets' has his more restrained moments.

IMMANENT SELF-PORTRAIT

It still feels strange getting up in the morning without love,
pushing onwards with a slight shiver through the loveless day
and going to bed at night with nothing changed.

The thing that makes it bearable and keeps you going,
giving you a smile and an erection at dawn's first light,
guiding you through darkest Dantean woods on your way -

to have lost the very thing that tells you you're alive.
And it's still strange that my verses keep on coming.
It seems they are indifferent to how I'm doing.

Sometimes they even bring on a woman in my dreams,
I should be grateful, because it's written here -
my work makes me; I am more and more what I make.

The perfect balance and disinterestedness of such a thing,
a self-contained process of beauty and fulfillment
which suddenly shows up out of nowhere like a kiss.

After our ashes are scattered, we're left with this.

(Translation by Donald Gardner)



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Pieter Boskma in translation

Boskma's poems have been translated and published in anthologies and reviews in China, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary and the United States. In 2012 he was one of the poets participating in 'The New York to Pittsburgh and Back Dutch Poetry Tour'.

Powerful imagination, lyrical daring, melancholy and eroticism: Boskma is dancing the same tightrope as Gorter in his sensitivist period.
- *NRC Handelsblad*

Boskma is not only a Romantic poet, a poet of longing, but is definitely also socially engaged in his diatribes against the spirit of the age and the rise of fundamentalism.
- *Meander*

Photo: Peter Boer

Pieter Boskma (b. 1956), a Frisian by birth, studied various languages, East Asian art history and anthropology between 1977 and 1984. He made his debut in 1984 with the privately published collection *Virus, virus* and at the end of the 1980s joined the Maximums, a group of poets calling for more action in poetry. Since then he has written stories, novellas and over ten collections of poetry, including his most recent one: *Self*.

Anneke Brassinga

'As I do'



Anneke Brassinga is the language wizard of Dutch poetry. Perhaps the special feeling for language that she possesses has something to do with her work as a translator. Whatever the case, you are certain to find words and expressions in her work that you will encounter nowhere else.

Her collected works, *Passwords* (2005), looks like something of a sanctuary for threatened word species. In it you will find words like 'nornenkot' (Norns' hovel) and 'dropknotsen' (liquorice lollies) or 'het wijdbeense zwerk' (the straddle-legged welkin). This might induce you to believe that a completely different world appears in her work from the everyday, accessible one. In one of her poems she described the occupation of the poet as follows: 'the word-poacher goes to inspect his snares'.

This, however, is no mere rhetoric, no word-play on the play itself, and although Brassinga would also really seem to be in search of forgotten roots of the language, there is more involved; her abundance of language is placed at the service of a sensation that could almost be called mystical. It sometimes seems as if the poet in her work steps outside herself; for her, language is not just a means of communication but also a way of becoming ecstatic.

At the same time, you feel that via her baroque use of language in which intense experiences of love, despair, doubt play a role – something is at stake: could it be primeval forces? All-in all, Brassinga's work – from her debut *Aurora* (1987) up to and including her latest collection *The Mutual* (2014) – leaves an incomparable and very particular impression on her readers.

BY THE SEA

The wind weighs the words
and finds them too light
the wind weeps, sweeps the words
aside, out of sight

the storm petrel that gulps them up
will rise to the heights of the giant albatross
or merely wish to screech
as I do, dusted monkey chained to its perch.

(Translation by John Irons)

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Anneke Brassinga in translation

Brassinga's poems have been translated and published in twelve languages, including Chinese, English, French and Spanish. This year, Matthes & Seitz publishes an anthology of her poems in German translation: *Fata Morgana, dürste nach uns!*

Brassinga exploits language with humour, primal force and lust to experiment.
– *NRC Handelsblad*

A mind-expanding universe of language and a rollercoaster of intertextuality.
– Jury of the P.C. Hooft Prize 2015

Poetry on the border between life and death, and the omnipotence of language. That's what Brassinga's poems are about.
– *De Standaard*

Photo: Serge Ligtenberg

Anneke Brassinga (b. 1948) published essays, prose, eleven books of poems and numerous translations in to Dutch of a.o. Nabokov, Beckett and Plath. Her poetry was awarded the Herman Gorter Prize, the Paul Snoek Prize, the Ida Gerhardt Prize and the VSB Poetry Prize. She also won two major prizes for her complete works: the Constantijn Huygens Prize 2008 and the P.C. Hooft Award 2015.

Hester Knibbe

‘I take the brains’

A *Thin Permanence* is the title of one of Hester Knibbe’s collections. The title says much about her poetry: a poetry in which the attention for things permanent invariably combines with themes like vulnerability, fragility, transience.

Permanence, says Knibbe, is only appearance, in a sense, because all those things that seem to have stood the test of time – classic art, Greek mythology, Chinese temples – have not always remained the same: ‘Change has always been/ here’.

It is change, the motion of life, which Knibbe tries to come to grips with in her poems. Not to understand it unequivocally, but to probe it, give it a form by which to get hold of it. While she keeps her distance, the poet finds images that represent the actual events as well as her personal experience of them.

Since 1982, Knibbe has published over a dozen volumes of poetry. In 2001 she received the Anna Blaman Prize for her work. The jury report emphasized the development that is so apparent in this oeuvre: a development ‘from tentative, groping poems to an effective, surefooted poetry which stands as if it has always been here.’ In 2015, her collection *Archaic the Animals* won the top Dutch-language poetry prize, the VSB Poetry Prize; she was also appointed as the Rotterdam City Poet Laureate.

Comparing the poems from her earliest collections, *Between Gestures and Words* and *Girl in a Bathing Suit* with those in the latest volume, we find much similarity, especially in form – frequent use of internal rhyme and enjambment, flowing rhythm – but striking differences and ongoing development as well.

*

I take the brains the tongue and the cheeks,
one said, but I throw away the heart.

We were stunned into silence, went over the rest
of the body, keeping our thoughts to

ourselves. Climbed up the mountain next morning
to look for food, found inedible.

Then we slaughtered innocence.
We left brains tongue and cheeks
intact, took the heart.

(Translation by Vivien D. Glass)

Hester Knibbe (b. 1946) is the current poet laureate of the city of Rotterdam. She chaired the Dutch PEN between 2008 and 2010, and published fifteen books of poetry to date, earning her a number of prestigious Dutch prizes, among which the Herman Gorter Prize (2000), the A. Roland Holst Prize (2009) and the VSB Poetry Prize (2015).



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Hester Knibbe in translation

Knibbe’s poems have been translated in German, French, Spanish, Turkish and Hebrew. In 2015 her first major collection in English, *Hungerpots* (transl. Jacquelyn Pope), appeared at Eyewear Publishing, London.

Knibbe’s voice can be harrowingly clear and dreamily disorienting, often in the same poem – but it’s a fortifying and ennobling one nonetheless.
– Christian Wiman

Simultaneously austere and elaborate, her poems investigate contradiction and ambiguity: the ‘flexibility of stone’, the Persephone who is complicit in her own kidnapping, the fluidity between dream life and the waking world.
– Kathryn Maris

Knibbe’s poems expose the field of tension between what remains and what withers away.
– Paul Demets

Photo: Arend Knibbe

Toon Tellegen

'And I faced love'

Anything is possible in the world of Tellegen's poems. He experiments with human identity and the poem is the ideal place for reflecting on the subject. This could easily be heavy-handed, except that his poetry stands out for its light-hearted, lucid tone and its unphilosophical, indeed extremely evocative narrative style.

Tellegen often surprises the reader by taking things literally, and thus creating a wealth of meanings. Take for instance this very immediate and intriguing opening: 'A man falls prey to doubt from time to time, decides to split in half, and moves in two directions.' After having been split in two for a while, he goes looking for himself again, carefully sneaking up on himself from two different angles. The poem renders a state of mind in the form of a story. Tellegen is a master at projecting emotional states such as fear, helplessness,

alienation, surrender, delight in narrative poetry. Strikingly often, he is concerned with disappearance, grief, death. He lets an apple rot slowly, he kills a mosquito, conscious of guilt, he discovers a bull in the china shop of his soul, he watches himself climb a wall on the edge of his thoughts.

Each of his poems - and there are many - is a stunningly sharp and telling parable about human feelings and behaviour. They are never realistic, always grotesque, exaggerated, surreal, absurd (here Tellegen owes a debt to Daniil Charms), and always busy with language. His verse inevitably draws the reader into the poem: 'Life is a side branch of love', 'A man discovered that love does not exist', 'Shall I give you a lethal kiss?'

Tellegen's poetic universe is a densely populated one and literally covers every aspect of our inner and outer worlds. His poetry is simply unparalleled.

THE TRUTH

You must, they said, face the truth.
Now! Immediately!

When it grew dark they whispered:
now you may face something else -
if you like.

It was quiet
and I faced love
and thoughtlessness with its giant wings
and the simplicity of the moonlight on my wall.

Now the truth again, they said. Now!

(Translation by Judith Wilkinson)



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Toon Tellegen in translation

Tellegen's poems have been translated and published in a dozen languages. Four books of poems have appeared in English so far, including *Raptors* (Carcenet, 2011; Popescu Prize for European Poetry in Translation) and *A man and an angel* (Shoestring, 2013).

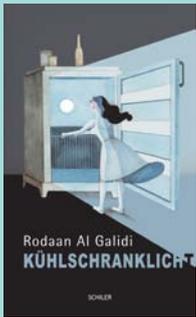
Tellegen's poems are parables for grown-up children. Their world is stripped-down, urgent, playful, quirky, familiar as children's games yet strangely disorienting. They induce a mini-millennial fever, the disquieting excitement of being about to pass through the needle's eye.
- *The Manhattan Review*

Tellegen's poetry is full of cheerful human misunderstanding. With their fairytale speed, his poems encompass entire novels.
- Herman de Coninck

Photo: Mickey van Uden

Toon Tellegen (b. 1941) is considered one of Holland's finest poets and his work has been awarded many literary prizes. He has published almost thirty collections to date. While he considers himself in the first place a poet, he is also a well-known children's book writer, whose animal stories delight children and adults alike.

Recent Translations



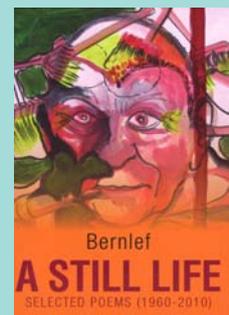
Rodaan Al Galidi
Kühlschranklicht
German translation by Stefan Wieczorek. Published by Hans Schiler in 2016.



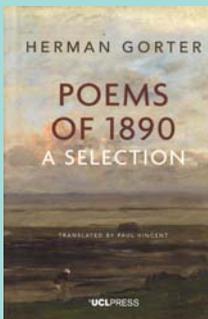
Anneke Brassinga
Fata Morgana, dürste nach uns!
German translation by Ira Wilhelm et al. Published by Matthes & Seitz in 2016.



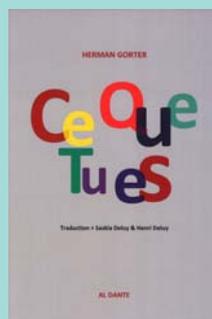
Tsead Bruinja
spezialist auf dem gebiet von fensterrahmen
German translation by Ard Posthuma et al. Published by Edition Virgines in 2016.



Bernlef
A Still Life
English translation by Scott Rollins. Published by Guernica in 2016.



Herman Gorter
Poems of 1890
English translation by Paul Vincent. Published by UCL Press in 2015.



Herman Gorter
Ce que tu es
French translation by Henri Deluy and Saskia Deluy. Published by Al Dante in 2015.



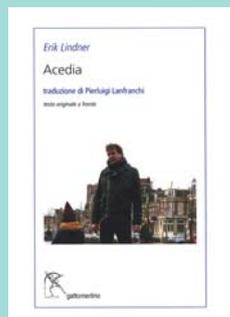
Hester Knibbe
Hungerpots
English translation by Jacqueline Pope. Published by Eyewear in 2015.



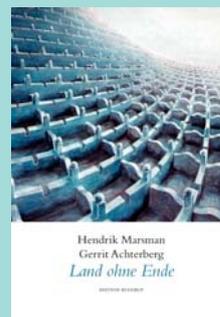
Rutger Kopland
Dangerous Happiness
Arabic translation by Salah Hassan. Published by Dar Mesopotamia in 2015.



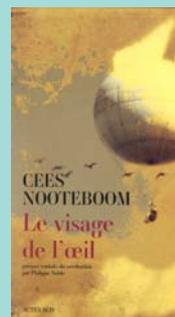
Gerry van der Linden
Uma estranha no Alentejo
Portuguese translation by Ana Maria Carvalho. Published by Caminho das Palavras in 2016.



Erik Lindner
Acedia
Italian translation by Pierluigi Lanfranchi. Published by Gattomerlino in 2016.



Hendrik Marsman & Gerrit Achterberg
Land ohne Ende
German translation by Alfred Schreiber. Published by Edition Rugerup in 2016.



Cees Nooteboom
Le visage de l'oeil
French translation by Philippe Noble. Published by Actes Sud in 2016.



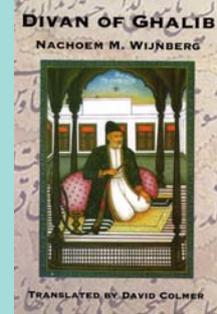
Cees Nootboom
Autorretrato de otro
Spanish translation by Fernando García de la Banda. Published by La Casa de Poesía Silva in 2016.



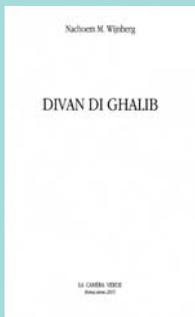
Willem van Toorn
Une cage à la recherche d'un oiseau
French translation by Daniel Cunin. Published by L'Arbre de Diane in 2016.



Menno Wigman
Im Sommer stinken alle Städte
German translation by Gregor Seferens. Published by Parasitenpresse in 2016.



Nachoem M. Wijnberg
Divan of Ghalib
English translation by David Colmer. Published by White Pine Press in 2016.



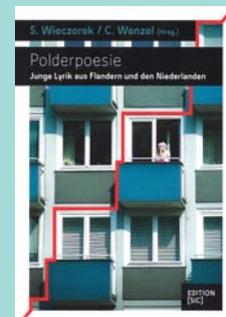
Nachoem M. Wijnberg
Divan di Ghalib
Italian translation by Pierluigi Lanfranchi. Published by La Camera Verde in 2015.



VERSschmuggel = VERSsmokkel
Includes Anneke Brassinga and K. Michel. German translation by Jan Wagner et al. Published by Das Wunderhorn in 2016.



Gegenwartslyriek aus den Niederlanden (II)
Includes K. Michel. German translation by Gregor Seferens. Published by Park in 2015.



Polderpoesie
Includes Alfred Schaffer. German translation by Stefan Wiczorek et al. Published by [SIC]-Literaturverlag in 2016.



100 Dutch-Language Poems
Includes Toon Tellegen, Hester Knibbe, Anneke Brassinga, Arjen Duinker, Alfred Schaffer and Lieke Marsman. English translation by Paul Vincent and John Irons. Published by Holland Park Press in 2015.



Trois poètes néerlandais
Includes Esther Jansma and K. Michel. French translation by Jan H. Mysjkin and Pierre Gallissaires. Published by Le murmure in 2016.



Once poetas holandeses
Includes Arjen Duinker and K. Michel. Spanish translation by Diego Puls et al. Published by Idartes in 2016.



Wir sind abwechselnd Sonne und Meer
Includes Anneke Brassinga, K. Michel and Alfred Schaffer. German translation by Christoph Buchwald et al. Published by Aufbau in 2016.

Lieke Marsman
'I've begun breathing again'

Maarten van der Graaff
'I want to talk to a fascist'

Alfred Schaffer
'I take another really good look'

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer
'I'd said that anyway'

Esther Jansma
'I change so slowly she
won't notice'

K. Michel
'The first sentence began
with I want'

Arjen Duinker
'I found the world irrefutable'

Pieter Boskma
'I should be grateful'

Anneke Brassinga
'As I do'

Hester Knibbe
'I take the brains'

Toon Tellegen
'And I faced love'

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