

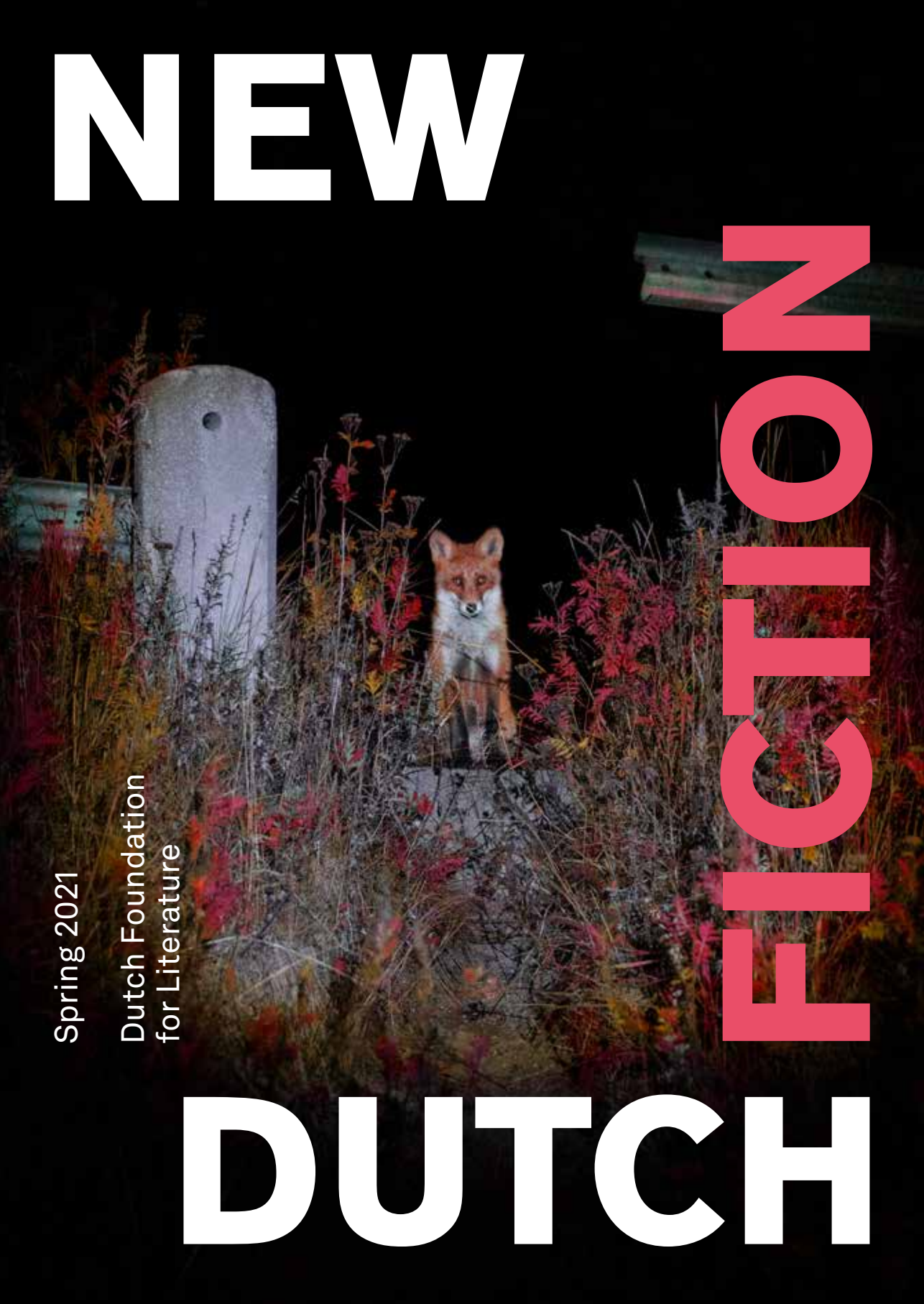
NEW

Spring 2021

Dutch Foundation
for Literature

DUTCH

FICTION



ANSWERS

This new edition of New Dutch Fiction once again presents a selection of books recently published in the Netherlands, books that have been included for their artistic and commercial success.

Who makes the selection?

We want to showcase the best fiction from the Netherlands. Most titles have been published recently and have done very well in terms of reviews, sales and awards or nominations. Equally important is the question: 'Does it travel?' An advisory panel gives us advice and input on new fiction. The final selection is made by the Dutch Foundation for Literature.

At book fairs, do you talk about these books exclusively?

While we like to discuss our catalogue, there are always other titles: books that have just appeared or are about to come out or books that just missed our selection. Our advisors read as much fiction as they can.

Do you work together with Dutch publishers and agents?

We keep each other informed about interest in titles and rights sales. When we commission a sample translation, we usually share the costs. However, we always make our own decisions, and remain completely independent.

How many books by one author will you support?

We can support three books by one author. If the author has changed foreign publishing house, previous titles are not counted.

Are all books in your brochure eligible for a grant?

Yes they are, with a maximum subsidy of 100% of the translation costs for classics and 70% for contemporary prose, based

on the actual fee paid by the publisher and with a maximum of 10,000 euros per translation grant.

Are books that aren't included in your brochure eligible?

As long as it's a good literary title, it probably is. We make our decisions based on three criteria: literary quality of the book, status of the publishing house and quality of the translator.

Can you help us find a translator?

Lists of experienced translators are provided by e-mail. If you want to work with somebody who is not on our list, we require a sample translation of 20 pages and the translator's CV. If the translation is good, the translator will be added to our list. If the translation needs repair, we can make suggestions. If the translation is beyond repair, you are advised to hire somebody who is on our list.

How do we apply for a translation subsidy?

We need contracts with the rights holders and the translator, plus the application form. You can submit digitally from our website: www.letterenfonds.nl/en/translation-subsidy. Meetings are held six times a year.

Do you subsidise production costs?

This is possible in the case of editions of poetry, illustrated children's books or graphic novels. For regular fiction and non-fiction, we support translation costs only.

We would like to invite a Dutch author for a promotional visit

If you organise a good programme and offer the author accommodation, we can cover the travel costs. Because travel is impossible for the moment due to Covid-19, you can apply for a subsidy for the promotion of recent translations: www.letterenfonds.nl/en/travel-costs

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld

My Heavenly Favourite

International Booker Prize winner impresses with a horrific and captivating novel about a forbidden love

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's second novel tells the story of a forbidden love. An aging livestock veterinarian and a fourteen-year-old girl with a vivid imagination engage in a macabre dance as they explore their identity and sexuality. The novel is gruesome, intense and makes for deeply uncomfortable reading, but it is also moving, captivating, addictive – unputdownable.

Only twenty-nine years old, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld is a preternaturally gifted writer. They added 'Lucas' to their name to reflect their non-binary gender identity. Both their poetry and prose have garnered critical acclaim and numerous awards, with the highlight being the 2020 International Booker Prize for *The Discomfort of Evening*, Michele Hutchison's English translation of Rijneveld's debut novel.

Their second novel grabs hold of the reader from the opening line. *My Heavenly Favourite* is one, dark, churning current of language, with chapters without a single line break and meandering sentences that run on for a page and a half. Rijneveld seamlessly moves between different registers. The story is filled with references to Dutch luminaries such as Gerard Reve and Jan Wolkers, but also alludes to the magical lyrics of Kurt Cobain and Kate Bush, Nabokov's *Lolita* and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series,

which Rijneveld read in secret growing up in a very religious family, copying out the first volume in its entirety by hand.

My Heavenly Favourite's great strength is its narrative perspective. The story is told by the livestock veterinarian, 'the child molester' who, in his yearning for innocence and purity, grows obsessed with the tomboy with the wheat-blond hair and the pitch-black imagination. He creeps inexorably into her imagination, her language, her mind and her body. In the very first sentence, the veterinarian warns us that he should have 'taken a paring knife and incised [her] like a sore in a claw horn'. But he doesn't.



'Authentic, inescapable, dirty, lyrical.'

Trouw

'This novel is a celebration of language. [...] It is its swirling, obsessive, lyrical style that makes the book soar.'

Het Parool

Publishing details

Mijn lieve gunsteling (2020)

368 pages

97,321 words

55,000 copies sold

Publisher

Atlas Contact

Hayo Deinum

hdeinum@atlascontact.nl

Rights sold

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Buybook), Germany (Suhrkamp), France (Buchet Chastel), Italy (Nutrimenti), Norway (Solum), Russia (Eksmo) Spanish World Rights (Temas de Hoy), Sweden (Tranan)

Translated titles

Please see:

en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld

(b. 1991) is considered one of the greatest new talents in Dutch literature. In 2015, they debuted with the poetry collection *Calf's Caul*, which was awarded the C. Buddingh' Prize for best poetry debut and will soon be published in a Spanish translation. Their second collection of poetry, *Phantomare*, was published in 2019 and won the Ida Gerhardt Poetry Prize. Rijneveld's debut novel *The Discomfort of Evening* (2018) garnered exceptional praise and went on to sell more than 160,000 copies. Translations are due to appear in 37 countries.

Photo: Jeroen Jumelet



Philip Snijder

Back to Bickers Island

A moving search for a lost mother with a lesbian double life

In the '60s and '70s, Bickers Island, behind Amsterdam's Central Station, was a run-down working-class neighbourhood. For Philip Snijder it's a mythical, claustrophobic island, which he has described with humour and melancholy in all his novels to date, starting with his successful 2007 debut, *Zondagsgeld* (Sunday Money).

A constant topic in his work is the battle to escape his surroundings. The narrator of *Back to Bickers Island* is a sixteen-year-old boy who spends a lot of time riding around the city on his moped. His life is aimless and boring; he smokes a joint from time to time and on one occasion he visits an aging prostitute. Then, one Sunday afternoon he comes home to find his mother has disappeared: no one knows where she is.

Philip and his mother aren't very close. Apart from her duties as a – rather joyless – housewife, she spends a lot of time in her family home with her brothers and sisters, who haven't strayed far from where they were born. When he sees the despair in his father's eyes, he decides to go looking for her. He is given a phone number where he is told he'll be able to reach her. His desire to find his mother is contrasted with flashbacks about his childhood up to that point. The only times he experienced his mother's

love was right before bedtime, when she would crawl into bed with him and sing sad, sentimental folk ballads from the classic repertoire of Amsterdam's Bickers Island.

Snijder masterfully builds suspense. Philip's mother has told him he's the only person who is allowed to visit her. And all the way on the other side of town, in ritzy Watergraafsmeer, she's waiting for him with a woman who clearly comes from a very different background and is very clearly her romantic partner. On Bickers Island, that sort of thing would have been impossible – and it shows that both mother and son had the desire to escape the place where they were at home.



'In his new novel, Philip Snijder has found a fantastic way to lampoon bourgeois smugness.'

[NRC Handelsblad](#)

'The amazing thing about Snijder's storytelling is that there's also something profoundly funny about all that bleakness. Snijder's prose is full of apt, evocative images and perfectly chosen, striking details, which make virtually every mood, experience and flashback feel painfully real.'

[Het Parool](#)

'Snijder's great strength is his unflinching honesty about his struggle with his roots.'

[FD](#)

Publishing details

Het smartlappenkwartier (2020)

222 pages

58,807 words

Rights

Atlas Contact

Hayo Deinum

hdeinum@atlascontact.nl

Translated titles

Sonntagsgeld (Sunday Money).

Munich: Claassen, 2008

Philip Snijder

(b. 1956) studied Italian Language and Literature and made a successful debut in 2007 with *Zondagsgeld* (Sunday Money, 16th print run in 2017), followed in 2011 by *Retour Palermo* (Return Ticket to Palermo), about a young couple from Amsterdam who go to Sicily for their first vacation, which was voted the Novel of the Year by HP/De Tijd magazine. In 2012 he published *Het geschenk* (The Gift), a novel about a son who wants to give his dying father the parting gift of closure on his past. His novel *De volcontinu* (Continuous Production, 2014) follows the protagonist through a series of episodes, from his childhood until he's almost sixty years old. *Bloed krijg je er nooit meer uit* (Blood Doesn't Come Out, 2016) is about a brother-sister relationship marred by shame and resentment.

Photo: Annaleen Louwes



Jessica Durlacher

The Voice

Gripping psychological novel about a Jewish family that takes in a Somali refugee

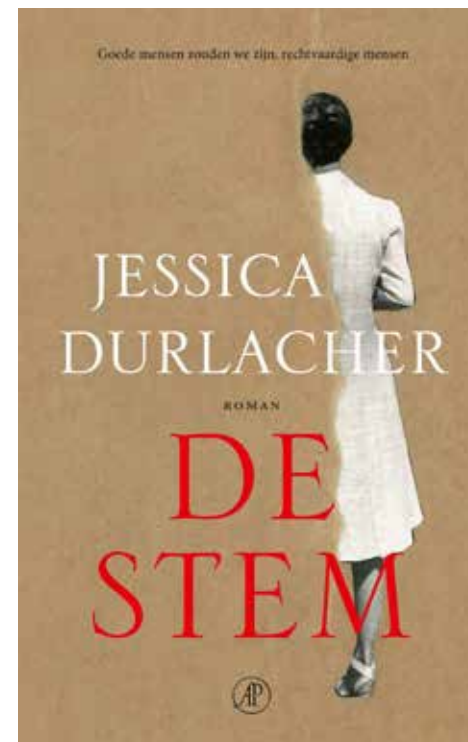
As with Durlacher's previous novels, *The Voice* is about violence encroaching upon ordinary lives and the question of how to be a good and just person. Psychoanalyst Zelda looks back on her past, when she made a home with her husband Bor Wagschal and their patchwork family of three children. As second-generation Holocaust survivors, they are aware that the battle for freedom is never really over. Their friendship with a threatened anti-Islam activist begins to put this moral principle under strain and will ultimately destroy the family.

The novel opens cinematically, with a scene on a sunny patio in New York: Zelda and Bor's wedding ceremony, just as the first plane crashes into the Twin Towers. This traumatic experience causes Zelda to lose her easy trust in the world, but she still opens up her home and heart to Amal, a Somali asylum seeker who becomes the family's nanny.

Intelligent and gorgeous – the character is loosely inspired by the politician and writer Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who used to be a friend of Jessica Durlacher and her husband Leon de Winter – she soon becomes a friend. Amal has a fantastic voice and participates in *The Voice*, a popular reality-TV talent show. During the battle rounds, she sheds her traditional

Muslim clothing and speaks out against Islam. The fatwa and death threats that follow force Amal to go into hiding in the Wagschal family's garden shed. This causes a rift between Zelda and her husband. Zelda wants to do the right thing, but is apprehensive about putting her family at risk, whereas Bor, a writer and lawyer, is unwavering in his support of Amal. After Amal wins the finale, Bor is murdered. Amal flees to the US and disappears from the life of the broken family.

Because the story is told from Zelda's perspective, we are witness to her struggle to do right by everyone and keep her family together. The title, then, not only refers to Amal's enchanting and destabilizing voice, but also to Zelda's nuanced, unifying voice as a narrator. With *The Voice*, Durlacher has written a razor-sharp, gripping book that explores big issues, such as political engagement and freedom of speech, in a very personal and intimate way.



'How important are your ideals when your children's lives are in peril? This novel does not give any solutions. Ultimately, *The Voice* tells us, the war must be fought in our own heads.'

[de Volkskrant](#)

'This is effective, laser-focused writing, with just the right amount of foreshadowing [...] a perfect sense of timing and skilfully built suspense.'

[De Groene Amsterdammer](#)

'In that sense, *The Voice* is the voice of all of us, the voice of a fearful trust, afraid of being violated.'

[De Limburger](#)

Publishing details

De Stem (2021)

432 pages

115,460 words

13,000 copies sold

Sample translation available

Publisher

Het Getij

Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers

Jolijn Spooren

jspooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl

Rights sold

Germany (Diogenes)

Translated titles

Please see:

en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Jessica Durlacher

(b. 1961), daughter of author G.L. Durlacher, made her debut in 1997 with *The Conscience*. It was quickly followed by the novels *The Daughter* (2000) and *Emoticon* (2004). *The Hero* (2010) was a bestseller and won her the Opzij Literature Prize. Durlacher also translated both volumes of *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, a graphic novel about the persecution of the Jews, and has written a number of novellas. Her work has been translated into several languages and won her a number of literary prizes.

Photo: Billie Glaser



Sofie Lakmaker

The History of My Sexuality

In this funny and moving novel, a young woman grapples with love, gender and being a writer

Sofie is a young woman in Amsterdam who feels unfeminine and is attracted to women. She describes herself as someone who is wrong about pretty much everything: 'About the boys and the girls, the right answer and – much more importantly – the right question.' This history of her sexuality begins with the loss of her virginity and ends right before she starts to visit the hospital where you can become 'less of a girl and more of a boy'. In the meantime, she recounts her chaotic life and sexual experiences: men, women, no one, loneliness, fear – and plenty of hilarious anecdotes.

The narrator clearly enjoys holding forth – but we get the sense that her easy candour could actually betray an underlying insecurity, her shoutiness a way of masking her vulnerability. That combination of bravado and fragility is typical of the author's style, which transcends binary categories. In a brash and irreverent tone, Sofie looks back on her high school years, the various university degrees she's tried on for size, her eclectic group of friends and her travels in Europe. Lakmaker creates a sense of a rapport with the reader by addressing them directly ('Can you *imagine?*'). She describes her mind as 'intense and unruly', which is borne out by the structure of the novel, which

consists of a non-chronological series of anecdotes. The author herself reflects on the lack of a clear narrative arc.

At the end of the novel, however, she brings everything into perfect balance. At the start of the final chapter, she drops a bombshell: 'So this may come as a bit of a surprise, but my mother was actually sick the whole time all this was going on.' At the eleventh hour, Lakmaker's story becomes deeply moving. Suddenly the quippy defiance of the first half of the book feels like a deliberate stylistic choice, form mirroring content. In light of this revelation, her defence mechanisms and her desire to be subsumed into a big love story take on a different meaning. At an organic grocery store, she has an epiphany: 'The only people who shop here are people who need tangible evidence that there's nothing *to* understand, and who therefore want to fork out seven euros for a single packet of pasta.' At this point, her mother has just died.

The History of My Sexuality is full of apt observations and brilliant analogies, and is reminiscent of the early work of Arnon Grunberg, or a more optimistic *The Catcher in the Rye*. But mainly it's a riveting book about a young woman's search for identity and love.



'When Lakmaker criticises human failings, she doesn't use the patronizing first-person-plural – 'we should really...' – rather, it's the 'this drives me crazy' of someone who's lost patience with racism, sexism and entrenched binary thinking.'

[De Standaard](#)

'Sofie Lakmaker's debut novel has all the makings of a hit – because it's a firecracker of a story, funny and unflinching, so engagingly written that you just fly through the pages. You'd almost end up overlooking how honest and vulnerable it is too, how serious, how subtle.'

[NRC Handelsblad](#)

Publishing details

De geschiedenis van mijn seksualiteit (2021)
224 pages
51,650 words
4,000 copies sold
Sample translation available

Publisher

DasMag
Daniël van der Meer
daniel@dasmag.nl

Rights

Cossee
Stella Rieck
rieck@cossee.com

Rights sold

Germany (Piper)

Sofie Lakmaker

(b. 1994) studied philosophy and spent ten years playing soccer on a boys' team. She is a writer and columnist, and works in a pizza shop.

Photo: Willemieke Kars



Ernest van der Kwast Ilyas

A hilarious satire of middle-class marriage morphs into an examination of the immigrant underclass

Peter Lindke is not just an international Rembrandt specialist, but also a husband and father, roles he fulfils with considerably less dedication and success. The novel starts with him accidentally leaving his wife Kee behind at a motorway petrol station. The absurd scene and Kee's bitterly humorous musings immediately establish the lovelessness of their marriage.

From slapstick interactions with the family's perfectly vegan neighbours to the loneliness of the parental bed, Van der Kwast combines caricature and painful insights to depict Peter and Kee's dissatisfied life in a gentrifying neighbourhood.

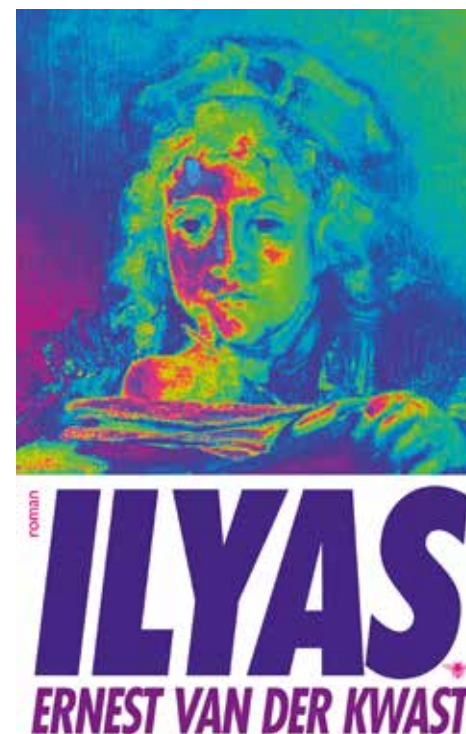
Peter is a curator at a leading gallery specialised in the paintings of Rembrandt, perhaps the pinnacle of Dutch cultural achievement. Although obsessive, his passion for Rembrandt is genuine and more informed than his feelings for the nearest and dearest he barely knows. When he lets himself be drawn into a million-dollar attribution controversy, even appearing on TV, he loses his job and is forced into a personal reappraisal.

With this new phase in Peter's life, the novel transitions to a more serious style that includes characters suffering the downside of social change: Peter's cleaner Djemine and the eponymous

Ilyas. Both are beset by seemingly insoluble debt problems, but Peter now has time to help negotiate a path through the bureaucracy, finding a new vocation for himself in the process.

Drawing on his own experience as a counsellor, the author presents realistic characters and situations while examining Peter's motivations. At the same time the new tone extends to developments in Peter and Kee's unhappy marriage – farce now reconsidered as tragedy. By fusing these disparate elements, the author produces a portrait of class conflict that is entertaining, convincing and ultimately moving.

The novel ends with a moving scene of friendship between Peter and Ilyas. Economic and marital problems remain, but the possibility of real contact is grounds for hope.



'In the successful Mama Tandoori and in his previous novel The Ice-Cream Makers, Ernest van der Kwast revealed himself as a master at writing vivid scenes that always have a painful edge. In Ilyas he has surpassed himself in this regard [...] alive with the joy of writing and never corny because of the unrelenting tension under the surface.'

Trouw

'Every reader who approaches this book with an open mind will be rewarded, as with every good and entertaining book.'

Jan van Mersbergen

Publishing details

Ilyas (2020)

320 pages

79,164 words

Sample translation available

Rights

De Bezige Bij

Marijke Nagtegaal

m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl

Uta Matten

u.matten@debezigebij.nl

Rights sold

Germany (btb Verlag), Croatia (Fraktura)

Translated titles

Please see:

en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Ernest van der Kwast

was born in Bombay in 1981. He published his first book in 2005 and had his breakthrough with the novel *Mama Tandoori* (2010), which went on to become a bestseller in both the Netherlands and Italy. Other works include the novella *Giovanna's Navel* and the novel *The Ice-Cream Makers*, which has been sold to seven countries. Van der Kwast is also active as an interviewer and columnist and, since 2016, as a volunteer counsellor for disadvantaged youth in Rotterdam.

Photo: Stephan Vanfleteren



Henk van Straten

Ernest Hemingway Is Cancelled

A book full of zeitgeist and humour about the fall of the white man

It's difficult for some people in this day and age to do the right thing and not keep hurting others, even if that wasn't their intention. Van Straten ventures into a minefield from which no one escapes unscathed. A powerful novel about masculinity, fatherhood and depression, but also about current hot-button issues such as #MeToo, gender, racism and social prejudice.

'When Julio Iglesias and I walked home from the pharmacy on my fortieth birthday under a hopeful and therefore dishonest spring sun, I saw two men waiting outside my front door who would end up being indirectly responsible for my being sentenced to twelve years in prison, to be followed by a period of detention in a psychiatric hospital.' The very first sentence of the book sets the tone: things will not end well for our nameless narrator, a photography curator in a modern-art museum who is struggling with an identity crisis and on antidepressants. His successful ex-wife continues to hound him, meddling in his difficult relationship with their teenage son and disapproving of everything he says and does.

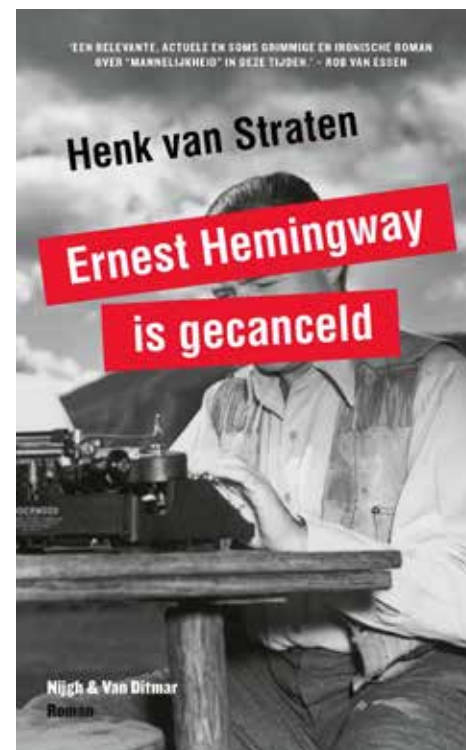
He also gets into trouble at work, where his photography exhibition about Ernest Hemingway is shut down because the woke female museum director, who is one-eighth Indonesian, considers Hem-

ingway to be the epitome of the morally reprehensible white macho. To make matters worse, a brief fling with an eighteen-year-old comes back to haunt him: when she accuses him of sexual intimidation, he ends up losing his job.

The protagonist grows more and more confused. But then a pragmatic roofer comes over with his son to fix a leak, and ends up taking him under his wing and trying to help him get his life back on track. The roofer looks after the whining Doberman – 'Julio Iglesias', from before – that the protagonist doesn't know how to handle, is able to effortlessly communicate with his reticent teenage son, and takes both of them along to a medieval sword-fighting class that is supposed to promote resilience but ultimately smacks of fascism.

Caught between political correctness gone mad on the one hand and conspiracy theorists and right-wing extremists on the other, the protagonist careens toward his downfall, until he finally ends up in prison after being convicted of murdering – with his medieval wooden sword, no less – a hooligan who threatened him. But it is in this solitary, male-only environment that his journey toward redemption begins and he finds peace after becoming a Zen Buddhist.

Van Straten has written a story that is at turns grim, funny and moving.



'Van Straten's great strength is his portrayal of the personal, of individual suffering – of his protagonist's strengths and weaknesses, his humanity and his interactions with others.'

NRC Handelsblad

'This is not just a novel about urgent issues, but also one that explicitly takes inventory of the values of the white man, the most criticised species of our time.'

Trouw

Publishing details

Ernest Hemingway is gecancelled (2020)

288 pages

79,824 words

Publisher

Nijgh & van Ditmar

Jolijn Spooren

jspooen@singeluitgeverijen.nl

Henk van Straten

(b. 1980) is an author, columnist and journalist. He previously wrote the novel *Bidden en vallen* (Praying and Falling, 2015) and two memoirs: *Wij zeggen hier niet halfbroer* (We Don't Say Half-Brother Here, which won the 2018 Best Book for Young People award) and *Berichten uit het tussenhuisje* (Notes from the Halfway House). In 2020 his thriller novella *Kwaad bloed* (Bad Blood) was published to critical acclaim. Along with *Ernest Hemingway Is Cancelled*, it makes up part of a thematic trilogy about the 'real or imagined fall of the man', as Van Straten himself puts it. His work has been nominated for numerous prestigious literary awards.

Photo: Bianca Sistermans

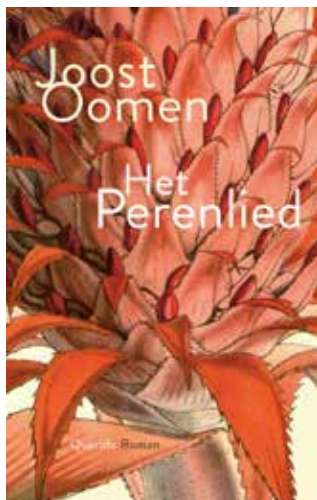


DEBUTANTS

Joost Oomen The Pear Song

'A rollicking riot of a book. You find yourself falling from one surprise into the next, trying desperately to gain a foothold, in scintillating prose where sound, rhythm and associations turn out to be almost as important as meaning.'

NRC Handelsblad



In this fairy tale for adults, Disney World employee Gabriel falls in love with the purple Beet Queen, who was born from a pot of beet soup. When their protest action against the amusement park fails, the Beet Queen follows her father to New York, where he's gone off in search of the love of his life, a colleague who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center. With highly original, colourful illustrations and a poetic style, *The Pear Song* is a plea for finding joy in the everyday.

Publishing details
Het Perenlied (2020)
256 pages
43,683 words

Publisher
Querido
Jolijn Spooren
jspooren@
singeluitgeverijen.nl

Joost Oomen
(b. 1990) is a poet, writer, performer and theatre-maker. He has published two volumes of poetry and appeared at various literary festivals in the Netherlands. His chapbook, *De zon als hij valt* (The Sun When It Falls), was published by Wintertuin Uitgeverij in 2016, and comes out in Italian translation with Tunué in the spring of 2021. *De Volkskrant* recently called him 'the literary talent of 2021.'

Simone Atangana Bekono Confrontations

'Atangana Bekono moves smoothly between registers. The dialogue is incisive and her timing and rhythm make the young characters ring true, even when using slang.'

de Volkskrant

Salomé Atabong, daughter of a Cameroonian father and a Dutch mother, arrives at a juvenile detention centre to start a six-month sentence for an as-yet-unspecified violent crime. Her thoughts, memories, interactions with fellow detainees and reluctant therapy sessions gradually reveal the confusion, anger and sorrow that swirl within her, fed not just by the casual and sometimes aggressive racism of her provincial hometown, but also by the tug of contending family influences.

A lot of first novels have been published in the Netherlands recently, including some very successful ones. The following three authors are also poets and well-known performers of their work.



Publishing details
Confrontaties (2020)
224 pages
56,480 words
Sample translation available

Publisher
Lebowski
Daphne de Heer
daphne.deheer@
lebowskipublishers.nl

Rights sold
Turkey (Fidan Editörlük ve
Yayıncılık Hizmetleri)

Simone Atangana Bekono (b. 1991) first came to prominence as a poet. Her 2017 collection *How the First Sparks Became Visible* was widely acclaimed and has now been published in English. *Confrontations* has been shortlisted for the prestigious 2021 Libris Literature Prize.

Kira Wuck The Marbles King

'Wuck tells the story in sparse, unsentimental prose – sometimes it's even got a list-like quality to it. As if she's taking inventory of everything that happened, so that she can make sense of it.'

de Volkskrant



Anne and Otto meet in the 1970s in Amsterdam, a true hippie paradise. They've both fled their homes – Anne has left behind the darkness of Finland and her bossy mother, while Otto has fled his sadistic father in a Dutch village. They're both looking for freedom and adventure, and in Amsterdam you can decide who you want to be. They become the parents of Jane, the author's alter ego. Jane grows up surrounded by love, optimism and adventure, but also destabilising recklessness.

Publishing details
Knikkerkoning (2021)
208 pages
22,056 words

Publisher
Podium
Feline Streekstra
fs@uitgeverijpodium.nl

Kira Wuck
(b. 1978) is the daughter of a Finnish mother and an Indonesian father. Her first collection of poetry, *Finse meisjes* (Finnish Girls, 2012), received numerous awards and was followed by the short-story collection *Noodlanding* (Emergency Landing) in 2016 and a second volume of poetry, *De zee heeft honger* (The Sea Is Hungry), in 2018. Heavily autobiographical, *The Marbles King* is her first novel.

Nelleke Noordervliet

The Fall of Thomas G.

A rich novel about freedom of speech, social media, racism, parenting, old age, marriage and love

What do you do when after years of marriage your husband turns out to be a complete stranger? And how do you react when, to make matters worse, he – an experienced publisher – brings out a deeply problematic book, only to then die under mysterious circumstances? That's what happens to Isa, the protagonist in Nelleke Noordervliet's *The Fall of Thomas G.*

Isa, an author of children's books, has retreated to her cottage in rural Ireland. From this refuge on the edge of the continent, she tries to understand what has happened and what she has failed to notice all these years – and she tries to get her life back on track.

But that proves challenging: her daughter, Leonie, becomes obsessed with the whole affair and invites herself over. Isa's son also wants to get to the bottom of what happened, and a journalist looking to get the scoop on the scandal gets in touch with the people involved. And then there's the manuscript her husband left her, in which he reveals his secret.

Bit by bit, this intricately structured novel tells us more about the person at the centre of all the controversy: publisher Thomas Geel. Noordervliet alternates between Isa's perspective and those of her son and daughter, and Thomas' former colleague also gets to present her

take on things. The key question is why he decided to publish a conservative pamphlet titled *Contemporary Fanaticism*, a hotchpotch of all the problematic 'isms' of our time, causing a massive scandal.

Once again Noordervliet expertly and grippingly tackles controversial and timely issues such as fanaticism, diversity, inclusiveness and feminism, interweaving them with timeless literary themes – a difficult mother-daughter relationship, love and death, good and evil.

Noordervliet is a consummate storyteller. Like A.S. Byatt, time and again she vividly depicts the context and the period in which the story is set; she shares Benoît Groult's interest in exploring a female perspective, and just like the Danish writer Jens Christian Grøndahl she offers a brilliant psychological portrait of a family that's been ripped apart.



'As a writer, Noordervliet is not just indebted to the Enlightenment and humanism – she's also interested in exploring the murky depths of the human psyche. It's precisely this combination that makes her work so compelling.'

Trouw

'Five stars are barely enough: Noordervliet pulls the reader into the story and for the next three hundred pages doesn't let go.'

Hebban

Publishing details

De val van Thomas G. (2020)
320 pages
86,373 words
Sample translation available

Rights

Atlas Contact
Hayo Deinum
hdeinum@atlascontact.nl

Translated titles

Please see:
en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Nelleke Noordervliet

(b. 1945) made her debut with *Tine of De dalen waar het leven woont* (Tine or The Valleys Where Life Lives, 1987), a fictionalised biography of the wife of nineteenth-century Dutch writer Multatuli. Her other publications include the novels *De naam van de vader* (The Name of the Father, 1993), which received the Multatuli Prize and was nominated for the 1994 Aristeion European literary prize, *Uit het paradijs* (Paradise Lost, 1997), *Pelican Bay* (2002), and *Vrij man* (Free Man, 2012). Her 2017 novel *At the End of the Day*, her magnum opus, is an outstanding European novel, breathtaking in its ambition. Noordervliet also writes short stories, essays and criticism. She is a critical thinker and a popular speaker.

Photo: Werry Crone



Mathijs Deen

The Lightship

The stunning story of a ship without a destination

The routine on board the Texel, a lightship – essentially a floating lighthouse – is disturbed when the cook smuggles a live billy-goat on board to use in a stew. The animal's arrival leads to tension among the crew and ultimately causes the shift to end in tragedy.

For four weeks on end, the crew of the Texel lead a monotonous, isolated existence. They keep watch, make meteorological observations and keep the light burning for approaching ships. Everyone on board longs for the end of their shift. But things get shaken up when Lammert, the ship's cook, brings a goat on board. He plans to slaughter it halfway through the shift so that he can make gule kambing, an Indonesian dish from his childhood.

The young animal's presence brings up buried fears and emotions in the crew. The youngest sailor grows attached to the goat, while the unhappy Gerrit Snoek sees the devil in its horns. When the ship is enveloped in a dense fog and the cook retreats to his cabin after his malaria flares up, things quickly take an ominous turn.

Deen writes in clear and timeless prose. The ship itself seems like a living being – the foghorn bellows ominously and the ship tosses around on the waves like a chained animal. In a style and

setting that echoes Joseph Conrad, Deen captures the tragic resonance of this ship that can't go anywhere, whose crew members are each trapped in their own past. He describes the contrast between these rough seamen and the young billy-goat with a tenderness that never lapses into sentimentality.

The Lightship is an affecting story that reads almost like a parable, while at the same time the subtle presence of Lammert's trauma firmly places it in the context of Holland's colonial past.



'The style of *The Lightship* is reminiscent of Hella Haasse's clear, strong storytelling, or H.M. van den Brink's unerring precision. Deen shares their timelessness.'

[NRC Handelsblad](#)

'Deen [...] is familiar with nautical jargon, the shorthand typically used by seafaring folk – the 'old man' for the captain, 'hitch' for shift – and makes effective use of it, without at any point romanticizing things. A stunning novella – you find yourself secretly hoping it's the prologue to a novel.'

[de Volkskrant](#)

'[Deen] ably and lyrically evokes a mysterious maritime world of lonely men in the fog.'

[Trouw](#)

Publishing details

Het lichtschip (2020)

128 pages

22,056 words

Publisher

Thomas Rap

Rights

De Bezige Bij

Marijke Nagtegaal

m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl

Uta Matten

u.matten@debezigebij.nl

Rights sold

Germany (Mare Verlag), Italy

(Iperborea)

Translated titles

Please see:

[en.vertalingendatabase.nl](#)

Mathijs Deen

(b. 1962) is a radio producer and a writer of non-fiction, short stories and novels. His short-story collection *Brutus heeft honger* (Brutus Is Hungry) was nominated for the AKO Literature Prize. In 2013, his book *De Wadden* (The Wadden Islands) was published to critical acclaim and sold 25,000 copies. In 2018 he published a collection of travel stories called *Over oude wegen* (Down Old Roads: A Journey Through Europe's History), which was nominated for the Bob den Uyl Prize and received the Halewijn Prize. His latest novella, *The Lightship*, is longlisted for the Libris Literature Award.

Photo: Lin Woldendorp



Frederik Baas

The Last Straw

A masterful game of cat and mouse between author and reader

Tom writes self-help books about how to become clutter-free in every way. He is an expert in note-taking, tidying up, organising and streamlining. What his philosophy comes down to is that people should focus on maintaining an orderly life. Keep your possessions to a minimum and close the door behind you to shut out other people's chaos. 'Any mess that isn't inside should stay outside.' He knows what he eats on which day of the week and has his daily schedule worked out down to the hour, and this gives him a sense of peace.

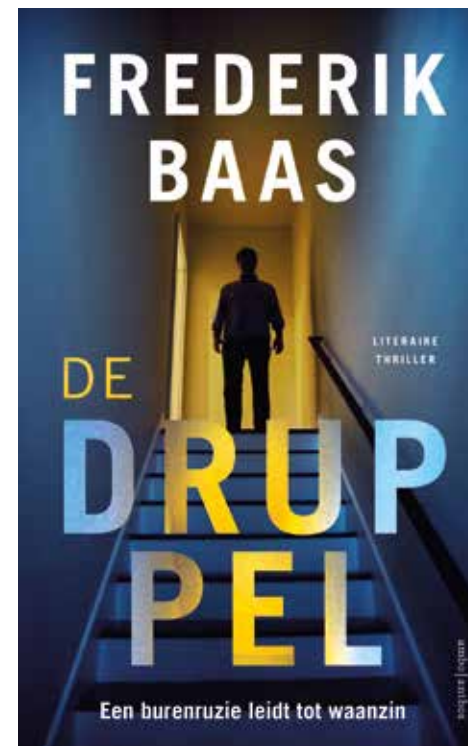
He divorced his wife because he could no longer deal with her clutter. His seventeen-year-old son David is the only person who is allowed into his private sanctum – on the agreed days, that is. He's allowed to make a mess, but only in the part of the attic that Tom has converted into a bedroom for him.

When the doorbell rings one day and cops come bounding up the stairs after his son has buzzed them in without thinking, suddenly the unexpected comes crashing into his tidy existence. The police aren't there for him but for his upstairs neighbour, Gerard de Vries, who has been accused of stalking his ex-wife. From that moment Tom's tranquil life is under threat. He worries that the neighbour is holding a grudge against him for

having opened the door. Once Gerard has been released Tom keeps hearing noises upstairs and begins to suspect that his neighbour is following him and intends to harm him. His paranoia rapidly spirals out of control, until the proverbial last straw: he storms out of his apartment in a fit of anger and gives his neighbour a shove, causing him to fall down the stairs and die.

Tom's story is interspersed with emails between Gerard and a writing coach. Gerard is looking for help writing stories that aren't true but seem true.

Since we see things from Tom's perspective, Baas viscerally conveys the sense of a mind unravelling. Before the fatal encounter in the stairwell, the prose becomes clipped and staccato. Afterwards the sentences get longer again, but Tom still can't find peace. He goes looking for Gerard's ex-wife. What's happened to the lifeless body at the bottom of the stairs, and what was David doing in his room upstairs while all this was going on? Baas subtly ratchets up the tension with every page.



'Storytelling elevated into an artform. The Last Straw is literature, pure and simple.'

Literair Nederland

**About *Diary From the River*:
'Full of suspense, with a surprising dénouement.'**

VN Detective & Thrillergids

'Beautiful and restrained.'

de Volkskrant

Publishing details

De druppel (2020)

252 pages

63,465 words

Rights

Ambo Anthos

Orli Naamani

onaamani@amboanthos.nl

Translated title

Diary From the River, Egypt
(Dar Oktob, in prep.)

Frederik Baas

is the pseudonym of Jan van Mersbergen (b. 1971). He made his debut as a crime writer with *Diary From the River* (2017), followed a year later by *Herberekening* (Recalculation). *The Last Straw* is his third thriller. Van Mersbergen's work has been published in translation in France, Germany, Britain, Spain, Catalonia, Turkey, Lebanon, Serbia and Slovenia.

Photo: Merlijn Doornik



Jacob Israel de Haan

Pathologies

One of the first novels ever to describe a gay relationship openly and shockingly

At the start of the 20th century, Jacob Israel de Haan led an eventful life as a poet, journalist, teacher and lawyer. His autobiographical novella *Pijpelijntjes* (Pipelines, 1904) caused a storm of controversy with its portrayal of a subject that was considered scandalous at the time – a romantic relationship between two young men. He lost his teaching job and the entire print run was pulped. In his 1908 novel *Pathologies*, he once again openly and radically tackled the topic of homosexuality.

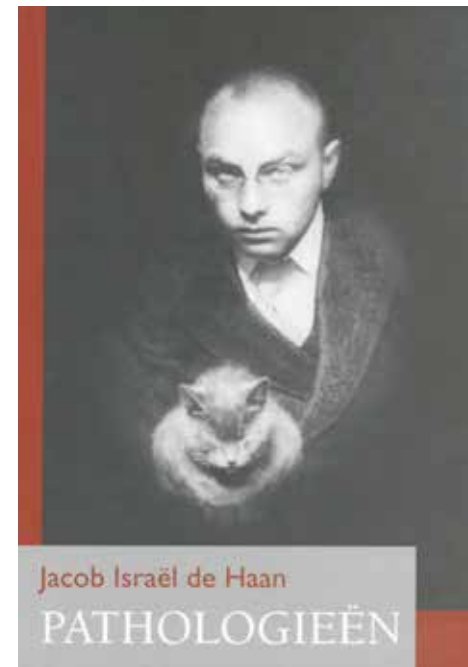
The adolescent Johan lives a secluded life with his father and their elderly housekeeper in a large house. His mother has died a few years earlier. For a number of years Johan has been plagued by erotic fantasies and dreams about classmates, which he finds deeply worrying. When, to make matters worse, he finds himself feeling sexually attracted to his own father – first in a dream, and then in real life – he grows desperate. He has a deep bond with his father, and finally he confesses his feelings, to his father's great shock.

They decide to live in separate parts of the large house, but Johan finds it unbearable being constantly in his beloved father's proximity without being able to interact with him. He asks to move out, and finds room and board with an

older married couple in Haarlem. This is where he meets René, a young, confident artist. Johan falls head-over-heels in love and the two boys enter into a sadomasochistic relationship.

Pathologies is a landmark novel in the history of LGBT writing. Johan is one of world literature's tragic, troubled young heroes, on a par with Goethe's Werther and Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov. In a time when Oscar Wilde was imprisoned for his homosexuality and there were virtually no novels in which this subject was discussed so candidly, this book was as shocking as it was unique.

De Haan's precise, lyrical prose and his protagonist's struggle to come to terms with his fantasies and desires – rife with taboos that still continue to resonate today – form the beating heart of this novel.



Publishing details
Pathologieën (1908)
257 pages
75,057 words

Rights
Public domain

Jacob Israel de Haan (1881-1924) was born into an Orthodox Jewish family and is considered one of the most important poets and thinkers of his time. His sister was Carry van Bruggen, the author of a large number of novels and philosophical essays. Following the controversy surrounding his novels, Jacob Israel de Haan emigrated to Palestine, where he joined an ultra-Orthodox community and was assassinated in 1924 by a member of a paramilitary organisation. The political assassination drew worldwide attention. In 1932, the German author Arnold Zweig published his novel *De Vriendt kehrt heim* (De Vriendt Goes Home), inspired by these events. De Haan is generally considered to have been a precursor of the gay liberation movement that took off in the second half of the 20th century. A line from his poetry is featured on the Gay Monument on Amsterdam's Keizersgracht: 'Such an endless desire for friendship'. In the '70s and '80s, his books were reissued and enjoyed a surge in popularity.

'This very special work has the serious, sorrowful beauty, the sense of mysterious fatefulness, that immediately distinguishes true masterpieces. This is a book that will establish the author's name as a great literary artist once and for all.'

George Eekhoud



Frenk Meeuwsen

Year Zero

Frenk Meeuwsen recounts the story of how he unexpectedly became a father relatively late in life

It isn't just as a parent that Frenk Meeuwsen is a late bloomer – he only made his debut as a cartoonist three years ago with *Zen Without a Master*, a graphic novel filled with Eastern philosophy and spirituality that was also semi-autobiographical. With *Year Zero*, a beautifully drawn, compellingly told story that took him several years to make, Meeuwsen proves that he's here to stay in the cartooning world.

In previous relationships Frenkel – *Year Zero*'s protagonist – has never felt ready for parenthood, even if his reluctance to become a father often caused problems. Yet with his much younger girlfriend, Zaza, he does find himself wanting to have a child. He brings the subject up on a terrace in Paris during a weekend getaway. Like Frenkel himself, Zaza is very surprised, but after they talk about it she gets on board with the idea.

The adventure that follows, full of humour and momentum, is recognisable for any parent, but also well worth a read for people who don't have any experience in this area. Meeuwsen vividly conveys both the tremendous sense of joy that accompanies a birth and also the fears and doubts.

Meeuwsen's background as a visualiser and creator of storyboards in the advertising world shows – not only in

his technically sophisticated, realistic drawing style, but also in his ability to tell a story as entertainingly as possible. Unlike *Zen Without a Master*, *Year Zero* is in colour, and Frenk Meeuwsen uses those colours in a very exciting way. For example, Frenkel dreams in mainly blues and blacks while the scenes in the hospital are characterised by various shades of pale green. *Year Zero* is also a subtle paean to Amsterdam, where most of the story is set. Locals will be quick to recognize many of the locations, while others will enjoy the way Meeuwsen's drawings convey the city's charm.

'Even the most mundane things are unique for the person going through them – that's the story of *Year Zero*.'

[de Volkskrant](#)

'In *Year Zero*, Meeuwsen's artistic talent explodes off the page, and he really knows how to tell a story too.'

[Het Parool](#)



Publishing details

Jaar nul (2020)

237 pages

approximately 8,000 words

Full colour

Publisher

Sherpa

Mat Schifferstein

mat@sherpa.nu

Rights

avant-verlag

Johann Ulrich

info@avant-verlag.de

Rights sold

Zen zonder meester (Zen Without a Master): Czech (Fundacja Tranzyt), English (Centrala), Polish (Fundacja Tranzyt)

Translated titles

Zen ohne Meister: Germany (avant-verlag, 2017)

Jahr Null. Als wir Eltern wurden: Germany, (avant-verlag, 2021)

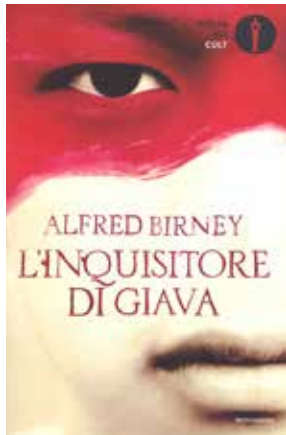
Frenk Meeuwsen

(b. 1965) studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and the National Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam. His paintings have been exhibited in the Netherlands and internationally. He works as a visualiser in the advertising world. His first graphic novel, *Zen zonder meester* (Zen Without a Master, 2017) appeared in several different languages.



RECENT

This is a selection of recently published translations from the Dutch. For more information please go to our online database of translations: en.vertalingendatabase.nl



Alfred Birney
L'inquisitore di Giava

Translated into Italian by Mario Corsi for Mondadori, 2020



Mathijs Deen
Der Schiffskoch

Translated into German by Andreas Ecke for Mare Verlag, 2021



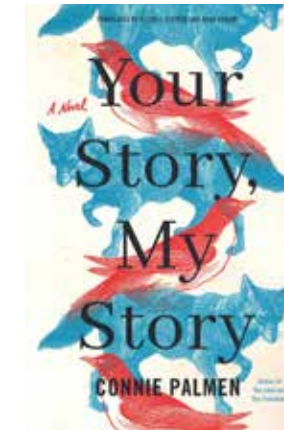
Arnon Grünberg
Besetzte Gebiete

Translated into German by Rainer Kersten for Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2021



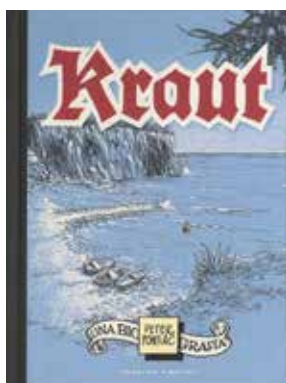
Marga Minco
Nachgelassene Tage

Translated into German by Marlene Müller-Haas for Arco Verlag, 2020



Connie Palmen
Your Story, My Story

Translated into English by Anna Asbury and Eileen J. Stevens for Amazon Crossing, 2021



Peter Pontiac
Kraut

Translated into Spanish by Julio Grande for Fulgencio Pimentel, 2020



Marieke Lucas Rijneveld
Nelagoda večeri

Translated into Bosnian by Maja Weikert for Buybook, 2020



Marieke Lucas Rijneveld
Obehaget om kvällarna

Translated into Swedish by Olov Hyllienmark for Tranan, 2021



Jaap Robben
Summer Brother

Translated into English by David Doherty for WorldEditions, 2021



Niña Weijers
Ich. Sie. Die Frau

Translated into German by Helga van Beuningen for Suhrkamp, 2021

TRANSLATIONS

The Foundation's specialists are usually present at prominent book fairs, including Frankfurt and London. They will be happy to give you more information or arrange a videocall with you.



Barbara den Ouden
b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl
Fiction, graphic novels



Victor Schiferli
v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl
Fiction, classics, poetry



Tiziano Perez
Managing director

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

Nederlands Letterenfonds
www.letterenfonds.nl
post@letterenfonds.nl
t +31 (0)20 520 73 00

Postbus / PO Box 16588
NL-1001 RB Amsterdam

Visiting address:
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89
1018 VR Amsterdam

Nederlands
letterenfonds
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Editors
Dick Broer, Mara van Herpen,
Barbara den Ouden, Claudia
di Palermo, Tiziano Perez,
Victor Schiferli

Contributions
Onno Blom, Dick Broer, Peter
van Brummelen, David Colmer,
Margot Dijkgraaf, Mara van
Herpen, Andrea Kluitmann,
Barbara den Ouden, Claudia
di Palermo, Victor Schiferli

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Advisory panel
Esther op de Beek, Margot
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Reeders

Translation
Emma Rault

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Linda Westin

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Wilco Art Books

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Philip Stroomberg

This brochure is printed on
FSC-certified paper.

CONTACT

*‘Authentic, inescapable,
dirty, lyrical.’*

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld
My Heavenly Favourite 2

*‘Snijder’s prose is full of apt,
evocative images and perfectly
chosen, striking details.’*

Philip Snijder **Back to Bickers Island** 4

‘This is effective, laser-focused writing.’

Jessica Durlacher **The Voice** 6

*‘It’s a firecracker of a story,
funny and unflinching, so
engagingly written that you
just fly through the pages.’*

Sofie Lakmaker
The History of My Sexuality 8

*‘Ernest van der Kwast
revealed himself as a master
at writing vivid scenes that
always have a painful edge.’*

Ernest van der Kwast **Ilyas** 10

*‘Van Straten’s great strength
is his portrayal of the personal,
of individual suffering.’*

Henk van Straten
Ernest Hemingway Is Cancelled 12

‘A rollicking riot of a book.’

Joost Oomen **The Pear Song** 14

*‘An extremely personal book about
extremely personal experiences
– just what literature should be.’*

Simone Atangana Bekono **Confrontations** 14

*‘These eccentric lives
essentially seem completely
logical and self-evident.’*

Kira Wuck **King Marble** 15

‘Five stars are barely enough.’

Nelleke Noordervliet **The Fall of Thomas G.** 16

*‘A stunning novella – you find
yourself secretly hoping it’s
the prologue to a novel.’*

Mathijs Deen **The Lightship** 18

*‘Storytelling elevated into
an artform. The Last Straw
is literature, pure and
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Frederik Baas **The Last Straw** 20

*‘This is a book that will establish
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Jacob Israel de Haan **Pathologies** 22

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explodes off the page.’*

Frenk Meeuwsen **Year Zero** 24