

NEW

DUTCH

Autumn 2020

Dutch Foundation  
for Literature

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 decides the contents?

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?' Our specialists Barbara den Ouden, Claudia di Palermo, Victor Schiferli, Tiziano Perez and Dick Broer try and keep up with all the fiction that appears and read as much as they can. As of this year, we have worked with an advisory panel, who give 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 four 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. You can always ask in advance if a book is eligible or not.

### 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](http://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/translation-subsidy). Meetings are held six times a year, the dates are announced on our website.

### 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](http://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/travel-costs)

### What's Schwob?

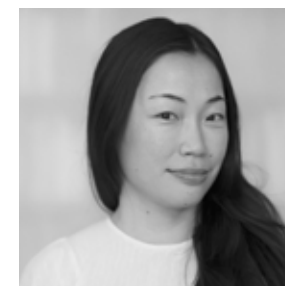
[Schwob.nl](http://Schwob.nl) is a European network for forgotten or undiscovered books, established and maintained by translators, publishers and editors, researchers, readers and critics.

### Can I subscribe to New Dutch Fiction?

Please send us your contact details and we'll add you to our list. All our past issues are available at [www.letterenfonds.nl](http://www.letterenfonds.nl).

# SPECIALISTS

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



Barbara den Ouden  
[b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl)

Fiction  
Graphic novels



Claudia di Palermo  
[c.di.palermo@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:c.di.palermo@letterenfonds.nl)

Fiction



Dick Broer  
[d.broer@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:d.broer@letterenfonds.nl)

Literary thrillers



Victor Schiferli  
[v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl)

Classics  
Poetry



Tiziano Perez  
[t.perez@letterenfonds.nl](mailto:t.perez@letterenfonds.nl)

Managing director  
Brazil  
China  
Japan

# Gerda Blees

## We Are Light

A brilliantly written, richly faceted novel about the profound human need for belonging

Four members of a commune stop eating because from now on they want to live on light and air. The characters in Gerda Blees' novel each have their own reasons for this extreme decision, which ends up costing the protagonist, Elisabeth, her life. This magnificent story is loosely based on true events.

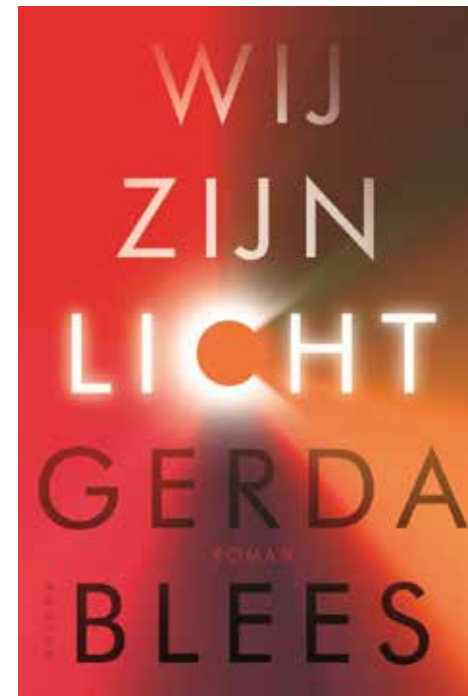
Each of the 25 chapters opens with the words 'We are...' and is told by a different narrator: from Elisabeth's parents and siblings, the neighbors and her sister's lawyer to the night, the daily bread, the scent of an orange, dementia, doubt, and Elisabeth's own body. Each narrator has a unique and distinct voice and makes an essential contribution to the novel's complex tapestry.

For example, bit by bit we learn more about Elisabeth's sister Melodie, a failed cellist and the leader of the commune, as well as two other members of the group, the cheerful Muriël and the troubled Petrus.

Elisabeth's body tells us how much it yearned for attention and the touch of loving hands. We find out from the daily bread that Muriël has a hard time resisting its lure. The pen tells us that members of the commune used him to write letters to parents whom they were no longer speaking to. Even the story itself appears as one of the narrators. It tells us

that the author did not want to provide an explanation for her characters' unstable lives: 'She wants to leave the mystery that is Elisabeth intact, because according to her that's what real life is like too – other people, especially the dead, are mysteries that can't be solved, no matter how frustrating that might be [...]'

Gerda Blees is a compelling storyteller who writes with forensic precision – and with great humor. *We Are Light* is gripping from the first page to the last. It's a moving novel, but at the same time there's enough light and air.



**'The changing perspective allows Blees to zoom in, zoom out, conceal and reveal. It's a game, loaded with unexpected tension [...] You're taken by surprise time and again.'**

NRC Handelsblad

**'Blees knows the art of taking the reader by the hand past successive stages of concern, outrage and resignation. She subtly calls into question the judgments we pass on idealistic people like the novel's protagonists, and she allows us to empathize with people we initially thought we'd never be able to relate to.'**

Tzum

**'An excellent novel [...] The stunning final chapter will leave readers gasping for air.'**

VPRO Gids

### Publishing details

*Wij zijn licht* (2020)

224 pages

59,600 words

Sample translation available

### Rights

Podium

Feline Streekstra

fs@uitgeverijpodium.nl

### Rights sold

German rights (Paul Zsolnay)

### Gerda Blees

(1985) made her debut in 2017 with the short-story collection *Aan doodgaan dachten we niet* (We Didn't Think About Dying). Her first volume of poetry, *Dwaallichten* (Wandering Lights), appeared the following year. *We Are Light* is her first novel and received unanimous rave reviews from the Dutch press. She lives in a commune in Haarlem and is studying Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam.



# Jeroen Brouwers

## Client E. Busken

### A spectacular novel on the decline of a brilliant mind

**At eighty years old, Brouwers once again manages to surprise readers with an extraordinary book, funny and wry at the same time, about the decline of a man with dementia who spends his final days confined to a wheelchair in the Villa Madeleine nursing home.**

*Client E. Busken* – because *patients* no longer exist in the Dutch healthcare system – is furious. Furious with his mother, furious with the staff of Villa Madeleine, the nursing home to which he has been admitted against his will, furious with the other residents. His angry outburst at the paramedics who brought him to this final station in his life were the last words he spoke – ever since, he's been silent.

Busken pretends to be deaf and dumb so that he can ignore the patronizing staff who are treating him like an infant and depriving him of all privacy. He who, by his own account, was a neurosurgeon, a paleogeneticist, a Latin scholar, a robotics engineer. Or maybe just a mailroom employee – we never find out for sure. 'I'm losing track of things,' Busken admits. He is a rather unreliable omniscient narrator – whether because of his forgetfulness or because he's deliberately wrongfooting the reader in an act of rebellion against the outside world, which has robbed him of his freedom. His rich use of language serves as a testament to his erudition, but

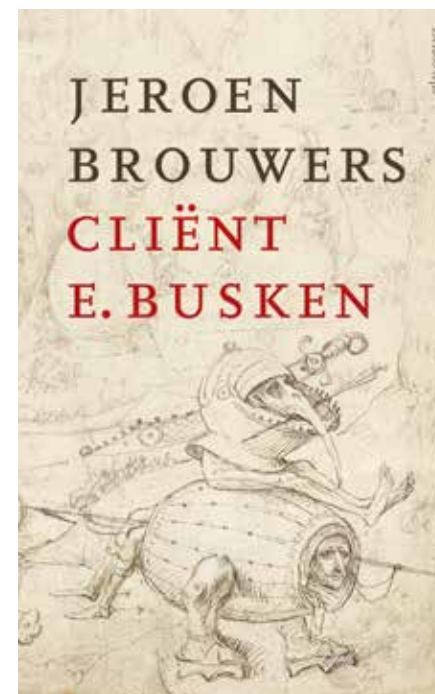
'like pearls slipping off a string, one by one words are beginning to escape [him].'

In this novel, which describes one day in the life of the snarling protagonist, we are taken along on his endless, confused but often witty train of thought, suspended between the present and the past, with fragmented memories of both true events and likely invented characters.

There's an encounter with a young new caregiver who fires up Busken's imagination, one or two sanitary accidents, a few meddlesome fellow clients, a barbecue at the end of the day and the constant craving for a cigarette. Apart from that, nothing much happens – Busken is waiting for death.

If this ends up being his final book, it will be a phenomenal finish to Brouwers' career. He treats the reader to a story that brings to mind the greats of world literature: Joyce's stream-of-consciousness and single-day narrative, Proust's polyphony of inner voices (with the name of the nursing home, Villa Madeleine, being an explicit reference), Svevo's cigarette motif, the misanthropy of Canetti's Kien.

Brouwers' prose is a succession of masterful sentences that beg to be read out loud so you can savour them one by one on your tongue. As Brouwers himself said in an interview, 'Even as an old fart I've gone and done something truly innovative.'



**'Brouwers lets us ride the waves of his thoughts, and in so doing manages – and this merits special praise – to effortlessly captivate us. The language is as rich and dense as poetry, and every bit as fluid.'**

NRC Handelsblad

**'It's this and this alone that we, just like [Busken], are made up of: language, nothing else. In that sense, this new highlight in Brouwers' oeuvre, misanthropic though it might be, is an inimitable paean to us all.'**

De Standaard

**'Fantastic! Once you've finished Client E. Busken, you'll want to pick it back up and start all over. Busken is like a grumpy old man on speed.'**

DWDD

**'A monument of language.'**

Trouw

Publishing details  
*Client E. Busken* (2020)  
224 pages  
59,600 words  
45,000 copies sold  
Sample translation available

Publisher  
Atlas Contact  
Hayo Deinum  
hdeinum@atlascontact.nl

Translated titles  
Please see [en.vertalingendatabase.nl](http://en.vertalingendatabase.nl)

Jeroen Brouwers  
(b. 1940) Jeroen Brouwers' work has strong autobiographical elements, such as in the widely praised *Bezonken rood* (Sunken Red, 1981). In his long career he has been honored with many literary prizes, including the F. Bordewijk Prize for *De Zondvloed* (The Deluge, 1988) and the Multatuli Prize for *Het verzonkene* (The Submerged, 1979). In 2007 Brouwers was awarded the prestigious Dutch Literature Prize (which is awarded once every three years) for his entire oeuvre. With *Het hout* (The Wood, 2014), the first Dutch novel about child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, Brouwers won the ECI Literature Prize. *Client E. Busken* might be his last novel.

Photo: Stephan Vanfleteren



# Rodaan Al Galidi

## Holland

### Tragicomic novel about a displaced man trying to find his way in life

Semmier Karim fled Iraq and ended up in the Netherlands where, after waiting in an asylum seekers' center for nine years, he finally received a residency permit. In *Two Blankets, Three Sheets*, Rodaan Al Galidi described the bureaucratic red tape surrounding immigration; in the sequel, *Holland*, Semmier gets to know the country and its inhabitants. He affectionately criticizes Dutch society and provides funny descriptions of First World problems.

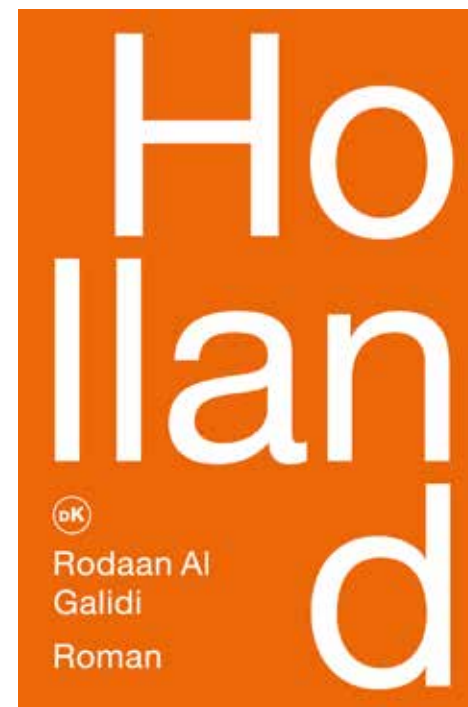
Semmier's various temporary homes include a farm, a monastery, a run-down apartment shared by a bunch of students, and a house full of undocumented people and asylum seekers. He eats simple Dutch fare (potatoes, boiled-to-death vegetables and one piece of meat per person), listens to many political discussions and attends a farewell ceremony for a rabbit.

Semmier discovers that walking a dog is the best way to get talking to Dutch people – in fact just walking with a ball and a leash is enough. Semmier gets to know people, makes friends and falls in love with the somber Lidewij. His unrequited love for her runs like a thread throughout the book. Semmier's hobby – collecting discarded photo albums from acquaintances – is another leitmotif. As he studies the pictures of them and their ancestors, he invents their life stories

and empathizes with the people in the pictures. It's his way of fostering a connection with people who could disappear from his life at any moment.

Beneath seemingly casual observations about a typical Western society, readers will discover a novel about identity and the need for kinship. Al Galidi shows, painfully, how solidarity with other people can make you both strong and weak. When Semmier has a socially maladjusted friend move into his room in the student flatshare, the others give him a choice: either his friend goes or they both do. Without a moment of doubt, Semmier packs his bags and they both leave.

At the end of the book it turns out that Semmier's search for a home, friendship and love hasn't entirely succeeded. Semmier's grief and acceptance of his fate will leave no reader untouched. With *Holland*, Al Galidi gives readers a sneak peek into his own photo album and sheds light on the predicament of displaced people.



***'The chasm is there. But Semmier doesn't waste time complaining about it – he does everything in his power to get closer, both to Lidewij and to the Netherlands. That's what makes this novel so digestible and so painful at the same time: it's more of a comedy of manners about someone trying to integrate than an indictment of the impossibility of ever succeeding at that, which makes the criticism inherent in the novel hit all the harder.'***

NRC Handelsblad

***About Two Blankets, Three Sheets: 'This vital, eye-opening work is essential to our collective education, as a history, as a call to action, bringing one person's suffering vividly to life in the imagination of strangers.'***

The Guardian

#### Publishing details

*Holland* (2020)

399 pages

101,543 words

7,500 copies sold

#### Rights

De Kade

Rodaan Al Galidi

522061@assendorp.net

#### Rights sold

World English (World Editions)

#### Translated titles

*Two Blankets, Three Sheets*: US (World Editions, 2020)

*The Autist and the Carrier Pigeon*:

Bulgaria (Balkani, 2013), Denmark (Turbine, 2013), Italy (Il Sirente, 2016), Lithuania (Gelmės, 2015), Macedonia (Ikona, 2013), Serbia (Zavet, 2013), Slovenia (KUD Sodobnost International, 2016), Czech Republic (Daupin, 2015)

#### Rodaan Al Galidi

is a poet and writer. Born in Iraq, trained as an architectural engineer, he has lived in the Netherlands since 1998. His novel *The Autist and the Carrier Pigeon* (2009) was crowned with the prestigious European Union Prize for Literature in 2011. 2016 saw the publication of his well-received poetry collection *Refrigerator Light* and his sixth novel, *Two Blankets, Three Sheets*, which sold 60,000 copies.

Photo: Writers Unlimited / Serge Ligtenberg



# Pieter Waterdrinker

## The Rat of Amsterdam

### A pitch-black novel about a universe dominated by deceit and hypocrisy

Pieter Waterdrinker's panoramic new book is a hellish indictment of the charity industry, the fraudulent use of EU funds, and shysters who pay gratuitous lip service to altruism but are really just looking to line their own pockets.

Meet Ruben Ivanovich Katz (b. 1978, Riga), the protagonist of Pieter Waterdrinker's gripping new novel, *The Rat of Amsterdam*. He is Latvian, Russian, Jewish and holds a passport to the 'flower-bulb kingdom by the sea.'

He and his parents left the Soviet Union less than a year before the country fell apart, traveling to Poland, Germany and the Netherlands, with Israel as the intended final destination they never reached. Only Ruben's father is Jewish, but the Katz family pretends to be of pure descent so that they can emigrate. But that's not the only lie in the life of this failed migrant, who seems to be carrying the entire history of the failed Soviet empire on his shoulders. Waterdrinker's literary universe is one characterized by deceit and hypocrisy, and this new novel appears to form a thematic trilogy with his previous novels *Poubelle* and *40 Tchaikovsky Street*.

Ruben starts off working for the 'National Poor People's Lottery,' which people play with a lottery ticket based on

their fingerprints. He figures out a way to link together the fingerprints of people living in the same area. Later he returns to Russia, where he puts his rhetorical and creative genius to use working for the 'Siberian Front,' a group that organizes a reconnaissance trip through Russia for Europeans seeking to emigrate. When his childhood sweetheart Phaedra drowns, he gets the blame.

Ruben Katz, who is writing all this down at the age of 41 in a Dutch prison cell, swears he is innocent of Phaedra's death – that his life has just happened to him, including his metamorphosis from human to rat.

Ruben is the perfect vehicle for Waterdrinker to take on big topics such as love and death as well as offer his view of humankind and the precarious times we live in. Through Ruben, he gives a face to the nebulous figure of the Russian – that unknown, yet feared and maligned other who, Waterdrinker shows, is not an ounce better or worse than anyone else in Europe.

Waterdrinker's literary talent is revealed in the long, breathless sentences and stunning turns of phrase that propel the story forward and constantly reveal new layers of meaning. Language is like liquid gold in Waterdrinker's hands.



**'Reading Waterdrinker is a joy. No trepidation, no clenched butt cheeks, no political correctness of any kind. No Dutch parsimoniousness. No – his writing is rich, fatty, all-or-nothing, grand – like a giant, like a Russian.'**

De Standaard

**'He paints a grotesque but entirely credible picture of the mentality of those people who cynically exploit charity.'**

De Groene Amsterdammer

#### Publishing details

*De rat van Amsterdam* (2020)

592 pages

194,825 words

30,000 copies sold

#### Rights

Nijgh&Van Ditmar

Jolijn Spooren

j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl

#### Translated titles

*The German wedding*: UK (Atlantic Books, 2009), Germany (Aufbau, 2007)

*The Long Song of Tchaikovsky Street*: Germany (Matthes & Seitz, 2020),

World English (Scribe, in preparation)

*Liebman's ring*: Russia (St. Petersburg Limbus Press, 2003)

#### Pieter Waterdrinker

(b. 1961) grew up in the seaside resort of Zandvoort, where his parents ran a family hotel. He has been based in Russia since 1996, dividing his time between Moscow and St. Petersburg and working as a writer and correspondent for *De Telegraaf*. His work has been published in many different languages all over the world.

Photo: Julia Lisnyak



# Arthur Japin

## Mrs. Degas

### A sensitive novel that looks back on the life of the iconoclastic French impressionist

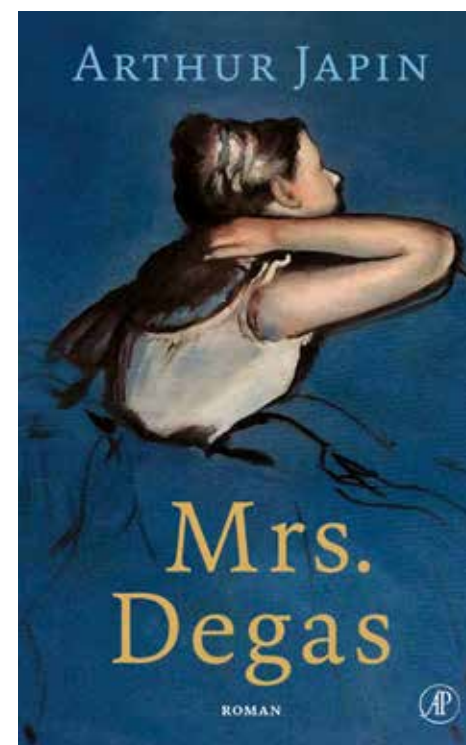
Arthur Japin brings us another brilliant historical novel centered on an artist – this time, Edgar Degas. In this book he once again has the artist look back on his life, resulting in a wholly engrossing account that also allows Japin to share his views on what it means to be an artist.

*There's an empty white page and it needs to be filled.* That's the opening sentence of this compelling novel. It refers to Degas' blank canvas, waiting for the first black line, but it's also an allusion to Japin's task as a writer. 'I'm interested in the emotional story, the layer beneath the facts. I keep those facts intact, but I want to know how things *felt*,' says Japin. And as a reader, too, you get to slip under the French painter's skin and be swept up in a story that will be etched into your mind as indelibly as Degas' pictures of ballerinas and melancholy absinthe drinkers.

The place is Paris, the year is 1912. Degas, the painter, is a grumpy old man, by now virtually blind. The night before he is forced to move out of the house that holds a lifetime's worth of paintings, papers and documents, a young American woman shows up at his door offering to help him organize his archives. It turns out that she plays a special role in his family history. Her cryptic reports of her visits, and her feverish research in what

appears to be an attempt to shed light on a painful episode from Degas' past, form the framework for Japin's masterful reconstruction – hovering somewhere between fact and fiction. It's the intriguing story of the only – and impossible – love of the painter's life: his blind Creole cousin, Estelle. During a visit to his family in New Orleans, where his brother René – Estelle's husband – ran a business, Degas painted a portrait of her arranging flowers. Years earlier, this same Estelle, newly widowed, had fled the American Civil War to move into her painter cousin's Paris apartment.

Japin alternates between the story of the artist in his Paris circle and his sojourn in the US. Japin has a clear preference for the turmoil and drama that characterize the latter, along with the exotic setting. He explored similar territory in *The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi* and *In Lucia's Eyes* – about the life of Casanova – as well as in *Vaslav* (about Nijinsky) and *Kolya* (about the Tchaikovsky brothers). *Mrs. Degas* fits nicely into this series, in which the author interweaves page-turning entertainment with his views on art. Japin keeps choosing figures from different disciplines – ballet, music and this time painting – in order to maintain the distance that he feels is necessary in the creative process.



***'[Japin] is a novelist who disavows the restraint that characterizes much of Dutch literature. His characters are passionate, they have big strengths and big flaws – in short, they lack that characteristic Calvinist mediocrity, and are more reminiscent of 19th-century novels such as Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina and The Idiot.'***

Trouw

***'A beautiful but sad story that can be seen as a plea to always be honest and straightforward about your feelings, no matter how difficult that might be.'***

De Telegraaf

Publishing details  
*Mrs. Degas* (2020)  
336 pages  
75,000 words

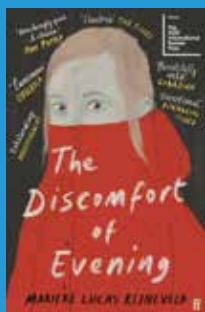
Publisher  
De Arbeiderspers  
Jolijn Spooren  
jspoor@singeluitgeverijen.nl

Translated titles  
Please see  
en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Arthur Japin (b. 1956) has written for the stage as well as for radio, film and television. His breakthrough came in 1997 with the novel *De zwarte met het witte hart* (The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi), which sold over 150,000 copies and was awarded several prizes. *Een schitterend gebrek* (In Lucia's Eyes) won him the Libris Literature Prize in 2004 and the Inktaap young readers award, while *De overgave* (Surrender) received the Dutch Railways Readers' Prize (NS Publieksprijs) in 2008. Since then he has published four more successful novels as well as several novellas and short stories. His books have sold more than one and a half million copies in the Netherlands alone, and have been published in more than twenty different languages.

Photo: Corbino





Cover of the English edition  
by Faber & Faber

# The Discomfort of Evening by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, translated by Michele Hutchison is the winner of the International Booker Prize 2020

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld is the first Dutch person and youngest writer to win this prestigious prize.

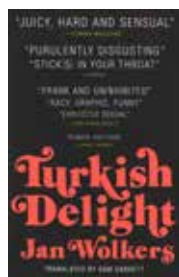
So far the book has been sold to over 35 territories. For more rights information please check [en.vertalingendatabase.nl](http://en.vertalingendatabase.nl) or contact the rights manager Hayo Deinum [hdeinum@atlascontact.nl](mailto:hdeinum@atlascontact.nl)

For publishers who have now gotten a taste for Dutch literature, we have asked Michele Hutchison to recommend four other related authors.

## Jan Wolkers

He is Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's greatest source of inspiration.

#religion #sexuality #nature  
#poetic language



### TURKISH DELIGHT (1969)

Raw novel about the ill-fated love between a sculptor and a bourgeois woman.

Rights sold to more than 20 countries

Rights: 2 Seas Agency, Marleen Seegers [marleen.seegers@2seasagency.com](mailto:marleen.seegers@2seasagency.com)



### RETURN TO OEGSTGEEST (1964)

Autobiographical novel about the author's Calvinistic parents and the death of his brother are accompanied by stories of his nascent sexuality.

Rights sold: Germany (Rowohlt), Hungary (Magvető), Poland (PIW), Turkey (Versus), Sweden (Forum)

Rights: Meulenhoff, Anita Verweij [averweij@meulenhoffboekrij.nl](mailto:averweij@meulenhoffboekrij.nl)

## Gerard Reve

An author whose inimitable style, full of wit and melancholy, influenced later generations of Dutch authors. His coming out as a homosexual in the early 1960s contributed immensely to the LGBTQ community.

#adolescence #families #dark humour  
#homosexuality

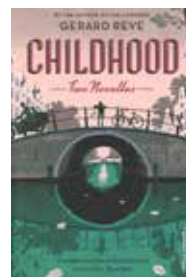


### THE EVENINGS (1947)

Dark and caustic novel about the lonely adolescent Frits van Egters. Often referred to as 'the ultimate novel on boredom'.

Rights sold: Denmark (Turbine), Germany (Merlin), World English (Pushkin Press), Italy (Iperborea), Croatia (Hrvatsko filolosko društvo), Spain (Acantilado), Turkey (Kirmizi Kedi Yayınları), Sweden (Ersatz).

Rights: De Bezige Bij, Marijke Nagtegaal [m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl](mailto:m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl)  
Uta Matten [u.matten@debezigebij.nl](mailto:u.matten@debezigebij.nl)



### WERTHER NIELAND (1949)

Young Elmer tries to control the world by forming secret clubs. When mysterious Werther becomes a member, a game of attraction and repulsion begins.

Rights sold: UK (Pushkin Press).

Rights: De Bezige Bij, Marijke Nagtegaal [m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl](mailto:m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl)  
Uta Matten [u.matten@debezigebij.nl](mailto:u.matten@debezigebij.nl)

## Jaap Robben

A poet, children's book author and theatre director. In his two novels he writes about young adults coping with dysfunctional families in secluded areas.

#young adults #trauma #absent parents  
#closed communities



### YOU HAVE ME TO LOVE (2014)

Nine-year-old Mikael lives on an island off the coast of Scotland. His father saves him from drowning, but dies in the attempt. Overwhelmed by grief and guilt Mikael has to stand up to his mother, who wants him to take over the role of his father.

Rights sold: Czech Republic (Vysehrad), World English (World Editions), Germany (Ars Vivendi), Turkey (Kahve Yayınları).

Rights: De Geus, Jolijn Spooren [j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl](mailto:j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl)



### SUMMER COAT (2018)

13-year old Brian lives in a caravan with his shady father. One summer he has to take care of his disabled brother Lucien. An honest, tender account of brotherly love in troubled circumstances.

Rights sold: World English (World Editions), Czech Republic (Albatros), Russia (Mann, Ivanov and Ferber), Slovenia (Mladinska knjiga)

Rights: De Geus, Jolijn Spooren [j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl](mailto:j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl)

## Gerbrand Bakker

An author who won both the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2010 for *The Twin* and the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2013 for *The Detour*.

#farming community #poetic language  
#nature #homosexuality #death of sibling



### THE TWIN (2006)

After his twin brother died, Helmer had resigned himself to taking over his brother's role on the farm. When he reconnects with his sister-in-law and cousin, he tries to take his life into his own hands.

Rights sold to more than 25 countries.

Rights: Cossee, Stella Rieck [riek@cossee.com](mailto:riek@cossee.com)



### JUNE (2009)

In 1969 the 2-year-old daughter of Anna Kaan was run over by the village baker and killed. Forty years later, this tragic death still influences the whole family.

Rights sold: Catalonia (Rayo Verde), Denmark (Gyldendal), England (Harvill Secker), France (Gallimard), Germany (Suhrkamp), Italy (Iperborea), Macedonia (Antolog), Spain (Rayo Verde)

Rights: Cossee, Stella Rieck [riek@cossee.com](mailto:riek@cossee.com)

# Jente Posthuma

## What I'd Rather Not Think About

### Loving depiction of twins who have grown apart

What if one half of a pair of twins no longer wants to live? What if the other can't live without them? Those questions are at the heart of *What I'd Rather Not Think About*, Jente Posthuma's second novel. The protagonist is Two – that's not her real name, but it's what her brother calls her because she was born 45 minutes later. The brother himself is One.

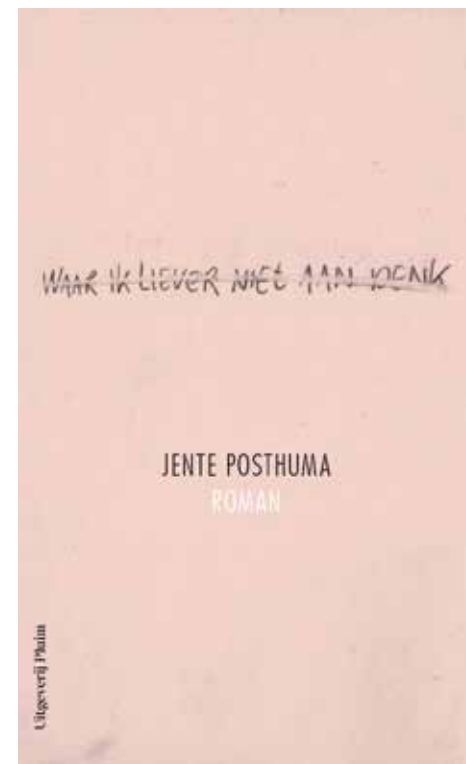
This ranking implies that the brother is the strongest and smartest. No one is worried about him. "There's nothing my son can't do," my mother used to say. "He'll grow up to do something special." That's also how Two sees him. He's her anchor. But from the very first page, when brother and sister 'play waterboarding,' the book chips away at that image. Because even though people say that twins understand each other wordlessly, this isn't true for the twins in Posthuma's novel – or at least it hasn't been since they were nine. That was the year he got bullied in school; from that moment on 'my brother's eyes slowly extinguished.'

In brief, precise vignettes, Posthuma tells the story of a depressive brother, viewed from the perspective of the sister who resents her twin, struggles to understand him and misses him terribly. She looks back on their childhood, with an absent father and a mother who wasn't

physically affectionate; on trips to New York and the fall of the Twin Towers. She tells of their adult lives, how her brother tried to find happiness, lost himself in various men and the Bhagwan movement, though never completely. How she wanted him to know that she needed him, but never managed to find the right words.

To dull the pain, she collects sweaters: 'At twenty-seven years old, I had one hundred and forty-two sweaters and it was time go to therapy.' She grows obsessed with Mengele and his experiments on twins. And even though she's married to Leo, her brother always remains number one.

Posthuma's scenes are deceptively light and sometimes wryly absurd, full of dialogue that is all about what's not being said. Two's urge to keep her brother close is always pulsing beneath the surface. But her brother is 'broken and can't be fixed anymore.' After his death, Two hides out in his apartment, reading and rereading his journals. The desire to understand him remains, but she doesn't find the answers she's looking for. Posthuma has written a novel about this predicament that is deeply moving, vulnerable and funny.



**'A tragic story about twins in which there's still plenty to grin about.'**

De Volkskrant

**'The strength here is truly in the minimalist prose – razor-sharp sentences that often slot together perfectly in a seemingly nonchalant way. The result is a powerful story about death, life and survival.'**

Nederlands Dagblad

**'A poignant, restrained novel about depression.'**

Trouw

#### Publishing details

*Waar ik liever niet aan denk* (2020)

239 pages

39,932 words

#### Publisher

Pluim

#### Rights

Cossee

Stella Rieck

rieck@cossee.com

#### Jente Posthuma

(1974) debuted in 2016 with *People Without Charisma*, which was published to critical acclaim: Dutch newspaper *Trouw* described it as 'assured, dryly funny, wholly individual.' It was nominated for the Diraphte Literatour Prize and the Hebban Debut Prize as well as longlisted for the ANV Debutantenprijs for best debut novel. Her second novel, *What I'd Rather Not Think About* (2020), has been just as well-received.

Photo: Bas Uterwijk



# Ewoud Kieft

## The Imperfected

### Fundamental questions about free will, identity and the consequences of manipulation and nudging

In historian Ewoud Kieft's science-fiction novel, people are healthy and by and large fairly happy. Sexism, racism and physical decay are virtually extinct. Artificial intelligence has found its way into all aspects of society, and smart algorithms monitor and assist people as they go about their everyday lives.

The nature of these algorithms is determined by the protocols of 'the Conglomerate,' a tech giant-cum-secret service. The system has rendered politics and religion superfluous; work has been automated, and many people are leading prosperous and peaceful lives. In this seemingly idyllic existence, the operating system Gena plays a central role. Gena is an application that serves as a custodian, teacher and parent figure all rolled into one – as well as being the narrator of Kieft's novel. Through Gena we get to know the protagonist of *The Imperfected*: Casimir Zeban or Cas, a somewhat adrift guy in his early thirties who relies on Gena for companionship, mental health support and even advice on his love life.

The novel becomes increasingly dystopian as the downsides of a world controlled by algorithms become apparent. The residents of the Conglomerate lead exceedingly comfortable lives, but they are also docile, unaccustomed to pain, emotionally impoverished. What

takes place beyond the network is carefully kept from them. And yet Cas finds himself growing dissatisfied with this unruffled existence after he encounters the 'Imperfected,' a group of misogynistic reactionaries who embrace physical decay as an expression of freedom. When Cas falls under their spell, disconnects from the network and disappears, Gena has to explain to the Conglomerate's Supervisory Board what has happened. Why was she unable to keep him from going down this road?

The novel's unique narrative perspective is its great strength. Gena's support and guidance is subtle and empathetic – she 'tries to avoid playing the role of judge and jury, an all-seeing institution which judges their actions and decisions'. Consequently, Gena does not have access to all of Cas' thoughts – he also has the option of turning off the app and being free from supervision for a while. Kieft makes clever use of this 'freedom', creating gaps in the story that make the reader empathize with both Gena and Cas and that raise fundamental questions about free will, identity and the unforeseen consequences of manipulation and nudging. Ewoud Kieft steers clear of easy answers. He explores the idea that manipulation and paternalism can also lead to regression and the rise of reactionary ideology. Gripping and ominously topical.



***'Playful and serious, Ewoud Kieft has a profound understanding of the eternal, universal struggle: the shadow sides of freedom and the essence of our individuality. An exceptionally intelligent, exciting debut.'***

Het Parool

***'There's something exciting about sci-fi novels, because they confront you with the unknown, and done well – with the right mix of the familiar and the strange – they can have real literary merit. Ewoud Kieft's The Imperfected is one of those books [...] Kieft deftly juggles the opposing forces of the familiar and the strange.'***

Trouw

Publishing details  
*De onvolmaakten* (2020)  
384 pages  
88,574 words  
Sample translation available

Rights  
De Bezige Bij  
Marijke Nagtegaal  
m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl  
Uta Matten  
u.matten@debezigebij.nl

Ewoud Kieft (1977) is a writer, historian and musician. Previously, he wrote *War Enthusiasm* and *The Banned Book*, respectively about the attraction of war and Nazism. Both books were shortlisted for the Libris History Prize. *The Imperfected* is his fiction debut.

Photo: Stephan Vanfleteren



# Cynthia McLeod

## The Cost of Sugar

A timely and poignant bestseller from Suriname about rivalry, love and slavery

*The Cost of Sugar* takes us to 18th-century Suriname, the heyday of the sugar trade. Set against a backdrop of historical events from the period, it tells the story of the sisters Sarith and Elizabeth. Their vastly different personalities end up having dramatic ramifications – for themselves, for the slaves around them and, by extension, for our understanding of Holland's slavery past.

Who is the smartest sister? Who is the prettiest? At surface level, *The Cost of Sugar* is about the rivalry between the beautiful, spoiled Sarith and her more measured, considerate foster sister Elza. Growing up in the upper echelons of Surinamese society, on a plantation with many slaves, their overriding focus is on finding a suitable husband. But beneath that surface, their story touches on more profound, deep-seated issues.

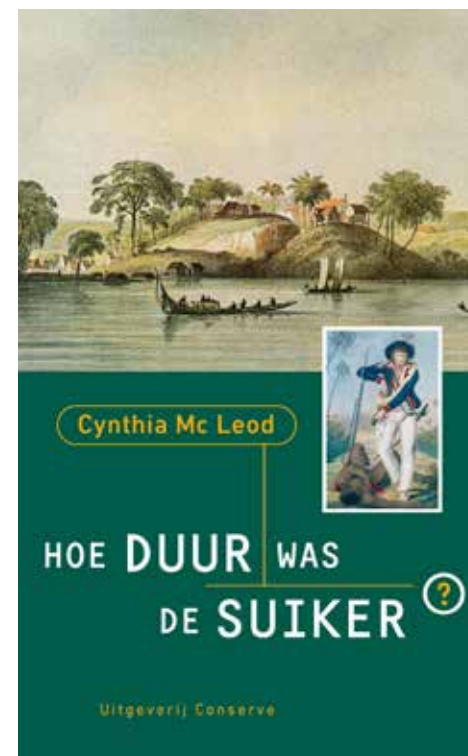
When we first meet the sisters, the plantations are going through a period of upheaval. The soil is becoming barren, slaves are beginning to revolt and there is growing friction between the plantation owners about the sometimes gruesome punishments that are meted out to slaves. And it becomes apparent that things are more complex than they first appeared.

Sarith is Jewish: her ancestors were the first planters to settle in Suriname. They devoted their lives to building

up the plantations, and now they find themselves powerless as they watch their valuable investment drying up before their eyes. Sarith is in a similar predicament: despite her great beauty, she is having no luck finding a man. Elizabeth is the first to get married, to the ambitious, progressive Dutchman Rutger. They start a loving family in Paramaribo, Suriname's capital. Sarith is jealous and tries to seduce Rutger, but her egotism gets in the way. When she takes her despair out on Ashana, her stepfather's personal slave, it causes a rift with Elizabeth and Rutger.

But *The Cost of Sugar* is not just about the sisters and their lives. We also get to know Mini-Mini, Sarith's personal house slave, offering us a glimpse into the inhumane conditions in which the slaves are forced to live. We also see the revolt against slavery from multiple perspectives: that of the escaped slaves – the Maroons – themselves, and of the troops of reinforcements sent from the Netherlands to quell the uprising, but also that of those slaves who, in exchange for their freedom, are made to turn against their own people.

*The Cost of Sugar* is a compelling novel about interwoven, forgotten histories. Now especially, it deserves to be read by a wide audience.



**'Cynthia McLeod's 1987 novel is a bestseller about several plantation families, rich in detail and the contradictions between master and slave, with people's love lives in the Dutch colony forming a key theme.'**

De Volkskrant

**'What makes the novel even more valuable is its take on the complex and constantly shifting social dynamics of 18th-century Suriname. In her book McLeod shows the subtle hierarchies and codes of conduct that existed in Suriname during the heyday of plantation culture, where the weak links were and what ushered in its downfall.'**

NRC Handelsblad

### Publishing details

*Hoe duur was de suiker?* (1987)

292 pages

101,662 words

150,000 copies sold

### Rights

De Geus

Jolijn Spooren

j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl

### Translated titles

*The Cost of Sugar*: Germany (Bastei Lübbe, 1998), Suriname (The Waterfront Press, 2007 in English)

*Ma Rochelle passée*: Germany (Bastei Lübbe, 2000)

*The free negress Elisabeth*: UK (Arcadia, 2008), Suriname (The Waterfront Press, 2004 in English), Netherlands (Conserve, 2015 in English)

### Cynthia McLeod

(1936) grew up in Suriname as Cynthia Ferrier, the daughter of Johan Ferrier, the first president of post-independence Suriname. Her debut *The Cost of Sugar* catapulted her to instant literary fame in Suriname. Trained as a teacher, McLeod makes her knowledge of Surinamese history accessible to a broad audience. After her debut she wrote several other historical novels, including *The Free Negress Elisabeth: Prisoner of Colour* (2000), about Elisabeth Samson.

Photo: Chris van Houts



# Laura van der Haar

## Around Four Weeks

### A young single mother faces an impossible decision amid a deadly pandemic

**What do you do when you're a single parent without a social safety net and you become sick with a highly contagious virus? Laura van der Haar aptly describes this predicament in her tense, claustrophobic Covid-19 thriller.**

Ida lives in Barcelona. She has a little girl named Joanes who is barely three months old. Ida is feeling short of breath and is afraid she has contracted the virus. She's almost completely on her own – she followed her boyfriend Rainer to Barcelona, but he took off not long after. She's renting a small apartment and doesn't know anyone except her yoga pal Nellie and a colleague from the bakery where she works. She doesn't feel at home here. She can't seem to get used to the culture or the climate. Though she doesn't know a lot of people in the Netherlands either – both of her parents are dead – the prospect of living in a village again and reconnecting with her grandmother, some friends from university and the girl who used to live next door to her was enough for her to start planning a move back home. But the virus has completely upended those plans.

It started with just sneezing, but a sore throat, muscle pain, a fever and nightmares are forcing Ida to realize she needs to get tested and treated. But who will take care of her sweet little girl? Van der

Haar describes with impressive empathy how Ida tries to stem her growing panic. With deft mastery of language, she crafts a tender portrait of a mother's all-encompassing love for her baby. It's both funny and moving how she has Ida use everyday words as terms of endearment for her daughter – 'my little tailgater,' 'my little oil tanker' – or how she describes the mixture of cold and warm air in that transitional time between winter and spring as '2-in-1 weather: vanilla custard with swirls of chocolate.'

Van der Haar slowly ratchets up the tension, creating an eerie, alienating atmosphere reminiscent of masters of suspense like Alfred Hitchcock or Roald Dahl. We're right there in Ida's head as she gets more and more anxious and paranoid. Is it all just a bad dream? And what role does her friend Nellie play in all this?



Publishing details  
*Een week of vier* (2020)  
160 pages  
41,000 words

Rights  
Podium  
Feline Streekstra  
fs@uitgeverijpodium.nl

***'With the pace of a thriller, a surprising plot, profound empathy and poetic language, Van der Haar has given us the gift of the first fully-fledged corona novel.'***

**Elsevier Weekblad**

***'Van der Haar skillfully manipulates her readers.'***

**Trouw**

***'Van der Haar is at her best when she puts us inside Ida's fraying mind.'***

**NRC Handelsblad**

Laura van der Haar (b. 1982) won the Dutch Poetry Slam Championship and debuted as a poet with *Bodemdrang* (Digging In). In 2018, her debut novel *Het wolfgetal* (The Wolf Number) was published to critical acclaim.

Photo: Keke Keukelaar



# Dido Drachman Swan Herders

## A gripping graphic novel about a lost childhood, masterfully painted in neon colors

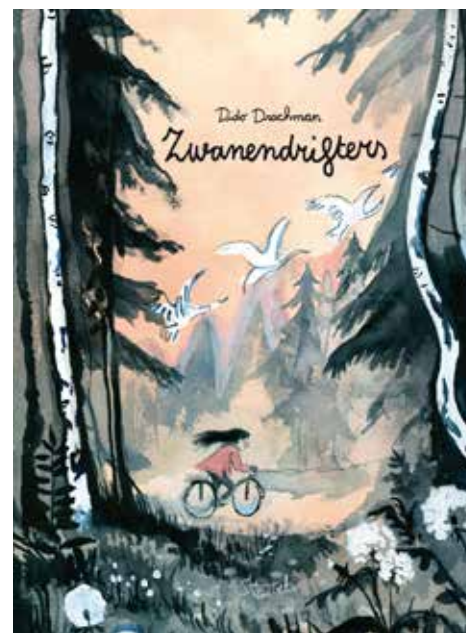
Even though she's just a teenager, Bettie has already witnessed a lot of poverty, abuse and neglect. But the discovery of an old videotape might change everything. After all, dreams of escape can help you rise above even the most toxic environments.

Ever since Bettie's mother disappeared many years ago, she and her brother have been living with their incompetent and aggressive father. As she suffers his abuse, Bettie dreams of a way out. Her prayers are answered when she finds an old videotape with a recording of a Dutch game-show episode. Bettie is shocked to see that her mother is one of the contestants on the show. Though the end is cut off, Bettie is convinced that her mother won the game, and that she used the money to chase her dream: moving abroad and getting rich. Bettie embarks on a journey to find her mother. In doing so, she hopes to escape her own fate as well.

Presenting a widespread issue like child abuse in such fearless, bright colors is a bold choice – and something only a skilled storyteller can pull off. Dido Drachman succeeds marvelously. Her drawings glow like neon, lighting up a young girl's journey with optimism and hope.

### Dido Drachman

(b. 1992) is one of the most exciting new talents on the Dutch comic-book scene. After earning a Bachelor's degree in Illustration, Drachman moved to Brussels, the comic-book capital of the world. After receiving her master's degree in Graphic Storytelling in 2019, Drachman exploded onto the European comic scene with her impressive debut graphic novel *Zwanendrifters* (Swan Herders, 2020). The book combines mature storytelling and bright watercolors, reminiscent of authors like Brecht Evens. Drachman's stories remind us that although life can be difficult, it is always full of color.



Publishing details  
*Zwanendrifters* (2020)  
136 pages  
Full color

Rights  
Scratch  
Chris Mokken  
chris.mokken@scratchbooks.nl

**'Swan Herders is a poetic book that gives a detailed account of the coming-of-age of a girl trying to escape her destiny. A subtle debut.'**

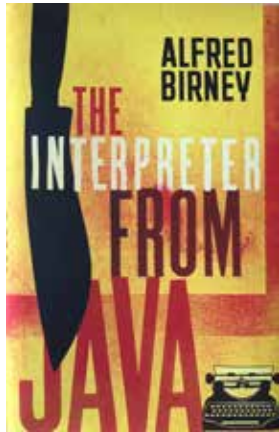
Judith Vanistendael

**'Dido Drachman proves that the comic book format lends itself perfectly to visual poetry. She has the talent to let her drawings float like clouds in the sky – weightless, but chock-full of emotion.'**

Aimée de Jongh

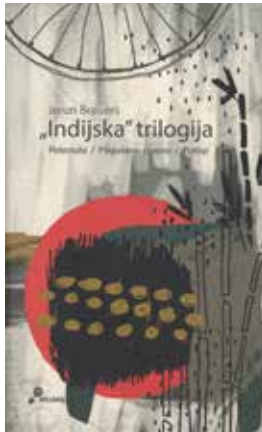


# RECENT



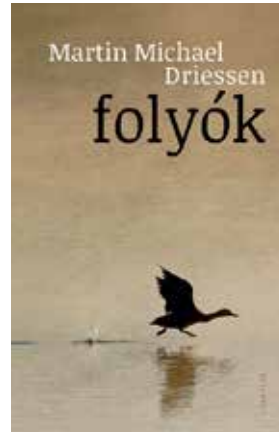
Alfred Birney  
*The interpreter from Java*

Translated into English by David Doherty for Head of Zeus, 2020



Jeroen Brouwers  
*„Indijska” trilogija.*  
*Potonulo; Prigušeno crveno; Potop*

Translated into Serbian by Olivera Petrović van der Leeuw for Futura, 2020



Martin Michael Driessen  
*Folyók*

Translated into Hungarian by Anikó Daróczy for Gondolat, 2020



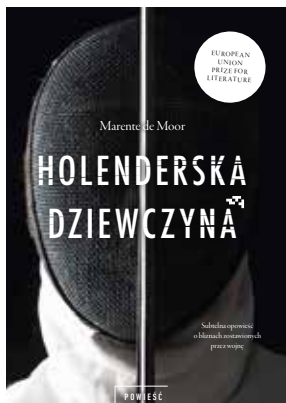
Rob van Essen  
*Der gute Sohn*

Translated into German by Ulrich Faure for Homonculus Verlag, 2020



Marga Minco  
*Das bittere Kraut. Eine kleine Chronik*

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



Marenne de Moor  
*Holenderska dziewczyna*

Translated into Polish by Ryszard Turczyn for Relacja, 2020



Marieke Lucas Rijneveld  
*Qui sème le vent*

Translated into French by Daniel Cunin for Buchet Chastel, 2020



Joost de Vries  
*Leurs ailes de géants*

Translated into French by Emmanuèle Sandron for Les Escales, 2020



Pieter Waterdrinker  
*Tschai Kowski Straße 40*

Translated into German by Ulrich Faure for Matthes & Seitz, 2020



Milan Hulsing  
*L'attentat* (Graphic novel)

Translated into French by Daniel Cunin for La Boîte à Bulles, 2020

# TRANSLATIONS

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](http://en.vertalingendatabase.nl)

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

#### Editors

Dick Broer, Barbara den Ouden,  
Tiziano Perez, Victor Schiferli,  
Claudia di Palermo

#### Contributions

Esther op de Beek, Dick Broer,  
Marlies Hoff, Aimée de Jongh,  
Andrea Kluitmann, Janita Monna,  
Barbara den Ouden, Claudia di  
Palermo, Jeroen Vullings

#### Advisory panel

Esther op de Beek, Margot  
Dijkgraaf, Arjen Fortuin, Andrea  
Kluitmann, Caroline Reeders

#### Translation

Emma Rault

#### Cover photo

Hellen van Meene

#### Printing

Jos Morree Fine Books /  
Wilco Art Books

#### Design

Philip Stroomberg

#### Nederlands Letterenfonds

[www.letterenfonds.nl](http://www.letterenfonds.nl)  
[post@letterenfonds.nl](mailto: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

**N**ederlands  
letterenfonds  
dutch foundation  
for literature

# CONTACT

*'An excellent novel  
[...] The stunning final  
chapter will leave  
readers gasping for air.'*

Gerda Blee **We Are Light** 4

*'A monument of language.'*

Jeroen Brouwers **Client E. Busken** 6

*'Holland is more of a comedy of manners  
about someone trying to integrate than  
an indictment of the impossibility of  
ever succeeding at that.'*

Rodaan Al Galidi **Holland** 8

*'Reading Waterdrinker is a joy.  
No trepidation, no clenched  
butt cheeks, no political  
correctness of any kind.'*

Pieter Waterdrinker  
**The Rat of Amsterdam** 10

*'He is the writer who time  
and again manages to  
breathe new life into this  
trope, often with great  
inventiveness.'*

Arthur Japin **Mrs. Degas** 12

*'Razor-sharp sentences  
that often slot together  
perfectly in a seemingly  
nonchalant way.'*

Jente Posthuma  
**What I'd Rather Not Think About** 16

*'An exceptionally intelligent,  
exciting debut.'*

Ewoud Kieft **The Imperfected** 18

*'What makes the novel even more  
valuable is its take on the complex  
and constantly shifting social  
dynamics of 18th-century Suriname.'*

Cynthia McLeod **The Cost of Sugar** 20

*'Van der Haar has given us the  
gift of the first fully-fledged  
corona novel.'*

Laura van der Haar  
**Around Four Weeks** 22

*'She has the talent to let her  
drawings float like clouds  
in the sky – weightless, but  
chock-full of emotion.'*

Dido Drachman **Swan Herders** 24