

Quality Non-Fiction from Holland

Nederlands
letterenfonds
dutch foundation
for literature

Spring 2020

Dutch Foundation for Literature

The Dutch Foundation for Literature has the task of supporting writers and translators, and of promoting Dutch literature abroad. It is an independent organization, supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The Foundation's advisors on literary fiction, quality non-fiction, poetry and children's and youth literature are present each year at prominent book fairs, including Frankfurt, London, Beijing and Bologna. *Books from Holland*, *Quality Non-Fiction from Holland* and *Children's Books from Holland* recommend highlights from each category's selection.

Translation Grants

Foreign publishers wishing to publish a translation of Dutch or Frisian literature may apply for a subsidy towards the translation costs. Having acquired the rights, the publisher's application must be accompanied by a copy of the contract with the rights owner and a copy of the contract with the translator. Application forms are available on the Foundation's website. Subsidies are paid after receipt of complimentary copies, with printed acknowledgement of the Foundation's support. A sample translation may be required and evaluated by our external advisors. Applications for translations that have already been published cannot be taken into consideration. Publishers looking for a qualified translator can request a list of endorsed translators for their language area.

Illustrated Books

In the case of illustrated children's books and/or graphic novels, foreign publishers can apply for assistance to cover a portion of the production costs.

Promotional Travel

The Foundation is able to support a publisher wishing to invite an author for interviews or public appearances. Literary festivals are likewise eligible for support. Additionally, the Foundation organises international literary events in co-operation with local publishers, festivals and book fairs.

Writers-in-Residence

The Foundation coordinates writer-in-residence programmes together with foreign universities and institutions. International authors are invited to spend time working in Amsterdam. They may stay one or two months at the writers' lodgings above the Athenaeum Bookshop on the Spui.

International Visitors Programme

The visitors programme and the annual Amsterdam Fellowships offer publishers and editors the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the publishing business and the literary infrastructure of the Netherlands.

Translators' House

The Translators' House offers translators the opportunity to live and work in Amsterdam for a period of time. It is involved with numerous activities assisting and advancing translators' skills. Each year the Literary Translation Days are held for those translating into and from Dutch.

Schwob: Discovering International Classic Works of Fiction

Schwob draws attention to and supports as-yet undiscovered, untranslated classics of world literature. Each month the editors select new titles on www.schwob.nl.

Dutch Foundation for Literature

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See also
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Clarice M.D. Gargard

Daughter of Dragons

My Father, Right Hand Man of Charles Taylor

What if the most important person in your life isn't as straightforward as he seems?

Clarice Gargard had always known her father as an idealist who helped people and fought for those less fortunate – until she discovers he worked closely with Liberia's dictator Charles Taylor. The journey to find out how a person with his ideals could have supported a tyrant takes her through the ancient kingdoms of Liberia to her own life as a West-African immigrant in the United States and Netherlands.

'Everything about my family seemed like an incomprehensible mystery. The older I got, the more questions I had. To paint a clear picture of my own history, that of my family and country, I had to dig deep – into myself, as well.'

Liberia was established in 1847 by former enslaved people from the United States, becoming Africa's first constitutional republic. Unfortunately, the influx of culturally-different newcomers and the ensuing tensions with the indigenous clans did not result in a republic with democracy and freedom for all. In 1980, a coup by indigenous rebel leader Samuel Doe saw the country divide and its economy collapse. Nine years later, a second coup made dictator Charles Taylor the country's 22nd president. He would hold onto power, through two civil wars, until 2003.

Gargard searches for the truth about her father, Sayyuo James Gargard, head of Liberia's main telecommunications corporation, who worked under four Liberian presidents and was purportedly one of Taylor's main advisors. Her family's story begins with her grandfather, the last warrior king of Grand Bassa County, a wise but feared ruler, who was said to have set rival villages on fire from the back of a winged beast. Gargard learns about the struggle that was a part of her father's childhood but also Liberia's ancient traditions, spirituality and indigenous population. Delving into history, geopolitics and the role of the US in Liberia's war affords her multiple perspectives on the country's heavy-handed rulers and what it means to survive or thrive in a troubled nation.

Walking the line between good and evil in search of nuance, Gargard takes the reader on a tour of Liberia's rich and tumultuous history. Childhood memories, including being given butterscotch biscuits by Taylor himself, interspersed with cultural insights and political analyses, make *Daughter of Dragons* as much a reflection on modern society as an intimate family portrait.



Clarice M.D. Gargard (b. 1988) is a journalist, writer and social justice advocate. She was born in the United States to Liberian parents, and sent to the Netherlands at the age of four to escape the Liberian civil war. Her short documentary, *Daddy and the Warlord*, won a Gouden Kalf, the most prestigious film award in the Netherlands. Gargard specializes in political and social issues around power structures, intersectional feminism and human rights. She works for various Dutch broadcasting and print media. In 2019, she was the Dutch UN Women's Representative and also received a Black Achievement Award.

Publishing details

Drakendochter. Op zoek naar mijn vader, rechterhand van Liberiaanse dictator Charles Taylor (2019)
288 pp.
De Arbeiderspers
English sample available

Rights

Singel Uitgeverijen
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Photo: Sharon Jane D



'Gargard realizes only too well that to understand her father she'll have to delve into her family's history, that of Liberia, and her culture. Gargard does a good job of conveying her discomfort with her hero Daddy's role: she'd rather avoid it. [...] The conflicting emotions and interests, so innate to Liberia: that's where the real story lies. And that's good.'
– *Het Parool*

'[A book] that incites thought about good and bad, about colonialism in the past and now, about racism and discriminating stereotypes and about how we see newcomers, and much more.'
– *Trouw*

Theo Mulder

The Brain Collector

The Turbulent Life and Times of Franz Joseph Gall

An engrossing and entertaining biography of the forgotten physician who paved the way for neuropsychology

Franz Joseph Gall dedicated his life to understanding the differences in human behaviour. Immensely famous and influential in 19th-century Europe, he revolutionized our conception of the brain and lay the foundation for neuropsychology. He also believed he could read twenty-seven different character traits – including murderousness, sex drive and musicality – by feeling the various lumps and bumps of the human skull. Today, you are more likely to spot his brain charts or porcelain busts at a flea market than recognize his name.

In this engrossing history, neuropsychologist Theo Mulder traces the lives of the Austrian Gall and his followers, the founders of the notorious pseudoscience called phrenology, as they navigate a Europe shaken by the French Revolution. Mulder leads us through Gall's early, life-changing discoveries and paints the popular candlelit dissections he theatrically staged at his home in Vienna. When his lectures were forbidden by Franz II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and his work banned by the Catholic Church, Gall embarked on a tour of Europe in a carriage piled high with human and animal skulls. He was undeniably brilliant and uncompromising, as vain as he was charming, a womanizer and a showman. Gall quickly rose to international stardom as he felt his way through the heads of Europe's geniuses and criminals.

In his attempt to localize psychological characteristics in different portions of the brain, he should be remembered as one of the first to investigate the biological connection between the brain and behaviour. His approaches to mental health were far ahead of their time and his contributions to anatomy and anthropology were fundamental. His theories earned him the favour of the bourgeoisie, and the admiration of figures like Goethe, while bringing him into conflict with none other than Napoleon, for whom Gall's biological and materialist theories were inconvenient at a time when he was pitching himself as a unique genius gifted with supernatural spiritual powers.

In Great Britain and the United States, Gall's legacy would enjoy its greatest influence and fame, though ultimately cement his fall from grace. Carried forward by admirers and opportunists, Gall's ideas came to influence every facet of society as they were applied in the fields of law, business, science and even art. While Gall's initial work focused on the study of the brain, in both countries, phrenology transformed into a racist science, used to bulwark nationalism and colonialism. Thus remembered, Gall was forgotten.

Mulder's account is a compelling plea to restore Gall to his rightful place in history and a meditation on the tangled relationship between science and power.



Theo Mulder (b. 1953) is a neuropsychologist. He was a professor at the universities of Nijmegen and Groningen as well as the director of institutes at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. His previous book, *The Born Adapter: On the Brain, Movement and Change* (2003), which surveyed the fascinating science of human movement and rehabilitation, sold 20,000 copies in the Netherlands. The book was also translated into German.

Publishing details

De Hersenverzamelaar.
Het veelbewogen leven van
Franz Joseph Gall (2020)
344 pp.
English sample available

Rights

Balans
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Photo: Steef Meyknecht



'The Brain Collector is a colourful, often hilarious story about how easily and readily we desire a manageable (or controllable) world.'
– NRC Handelsblad

'An outstanding book.'
– Nederlands Dagblad

Aletta Jacobs

Recollections

The autobiography of the Netherlands' first female doctor and most famous feminist

Aletta Jacobs is the Dutch icon of the battle for equal rights for women. Thanks to her daring, persistence and intellect, she made it possible for women to vote, study and save money in their own bank accounts. In the list of her many achievements, Aletta Jacobs was the first woman to attend high school, the first to complete a university degree and the first to get a doctorate. Aside from this, she was also a gifted writer.

'I felt deeply unhappy at the prospect that my life would go on like that of so many unmarried women in our village. Housework in the morning, sitting peering out through the insect screens, with some needlework in the afternoon, and that for years on end, each day anew. It was enough to drive you mad and I had firmly resolved to avoid this future myself.'

From the age of six, Aletta Jacobs was determined to become a doctor, like her father. Raised in an intellectual family in which daughters were perceived to have the same right to learn and progress as sons, she flourished. Each obstacle set in place by male-dominated society, she simply leapfrogged. Her strength of character and independent mind come across on every page of her event-filled life story.

Was there anything Aletta Jacobs couldn't do? When she wanted to read medical publications and discovered that the Amsterdam Reading Room was only open to men, she fought for an end to this discrimination and won. She put paid to single women who wanted to go to the theatre having to pay for a male chaperone, and insisted on breaking taboos by walking along the high street between midday and four in the afternoon, a time slot reserved for prostitutes. She campaigned for better hygiene and healthcare for those same prostitutes, and for education on STDs.

A better working environment was another of her successes, for women to be able to sit when manning a till all day. And crucially, after time spent in London and having come into contact with the Suffragette movement, she set up the Association of Women's Right to Vote (1894). By 1919, that right had been won. Aletta Jacobs also entered into a liberal form of marriage with her husband, Carel Victor Gerritsen, in which both were financially independent. Her political activism took her all around the world, from South Africa to Washington to Sarajevo. Written in the seventh decade of her life, *Recollections* was first published in 1924, four years before the author's death.



Aletta Jacobs (1854–1929) was born in Sappemeer in Groningen in 1854, the eighth of eleven children. Her mother was a housewife and her father a doctor. In 1878 she graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Amsterdam, after which she set up her own GP practice. She married Carel Victor Gerritsen in 1884 and gave birth to a son in 1893 who died the same day. Other published works include *The Woman: Her Body and Internal Organs* (1899), three epistolary collections and the Dutch translation of *Women and Economics* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1900).

Publishing details

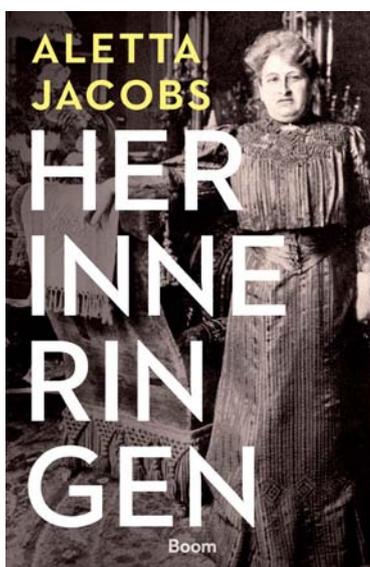
Herinneringen. De autobiografie van Nederlands bekendste feministe en eerste vrouwelijke arts (2019)
314 pp.

English sample available

Rights

Boom
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Photo: Max Büttinghausen / Groninger Archieven



'You may be sure that it gave me great pleasure to meet so interesting a woman.'
– President Woodrow Wilson, 1915

'Surprising in this autobiography are the many trips Jacobs took across the whole world to fight for women's rights and pacifism. A young girl's book becomes a tale of heroism.'
– *Trouw*

'Aletta Jacobs describes all these milestones in such a sincere, sometimes almost astonished manner, that reading this 1924 biography will prove inspiring for assertive women, female students first of all.'
– *NRC Handelsblad*

Jelle Brandt Corstius

BAM

A Nothingness Journey

Three friends on an absurd journey through the Siberian taiga aboard the Baikal–Amur Mainline

As a small boy with a curiosity for the world, Jelle Brandt Corstius spent countless hours daydreaming over his illustrated atlas. The map of Siberia, with its empty expanses and magical sounding villages, enchanted him. Did the people in Novy Urgal feel lonely, so far from the rest of the world? At the time, the Soviets were building an ambitious railway through the Siberian wilderness: the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM). Thirty years later, Jelle realises his childhood dream, in a very different Russia.

At over 4,000 km long and running 700 km to the north of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the BAM was a Soviet-era project built on top of the frozen bones of gulag prisoners. After the USSR collapsed, the settlements along the line turned into ghost cities and towns as their residents streamed to warmer destinations. Today there is not a single train that connects Moscow to Amur.

Thirty years after promising himself to ride the BAM to the end of the line, one day, Jelle finally finds two friends willing to join him: castle-residing artist and charmer Aldo, and graphic designer and stoic Fabian. Together they form a comic team, united by their love of the Russian poetry of Boris Ryzji. They vaguely intend

to make an ambitious art project from the trip and surprisingly even receive sponsoring from Fjällräven.

The thermometer reads -50°C. The train thunders through the endless taiga and crosses one time zone after the next. One dislocated shoulder, a stinking doghair suit, and many, many potato sandwiches later, they will reach the frozen Pacific Ocean. Along the way, the three travellers step out in desolate mining villages, meet militant taxi drivers, corrupt officials, Putin-lovers and -haters, and talk politics in a country straining under international sanctions. Where neither country trusts the others' new sources, Jelle offers us a look into the real daily lives of young and old people living in Siberia.

Jotting everything down with a dry humour and a catchy style, Jelle carries us on a nostalgic journey that is as entertaining as it is bizarre. Jelle takes it all in stride – in Russia, he has no choice: 'I've learned to just accept this kind of illogic, otherwise you're bound to suffer a heart attack sooner or later. The only thing you can be sure of is that nothing will come of your expectations. But something else will replace them, and that can be beautiful. There are no givens, but everything is possible.'



Jelle Brandt Corstius (b. 1978) is a writer, Russia expert and travel-documentary maker. His last book, *Ash in the Bag* (2016), was nominated for NS Readers' Prize (NS Publieksprijs). After making a name for himself on Dutch television with his travels in Russia, Brandt Corstius embarked on journeys through the Caucasus and India. His travels have also provided the inspiration for a number of his books, including *Small Countries—Reports from the Caucasus* (2009), *From Moscow to Medan* (2010) and *From Bakoe to Batoemi* (2012).

Publishing details

BAM. Een reis van niets naar niets (2019)

136 pp.

Das Mag

English sample available

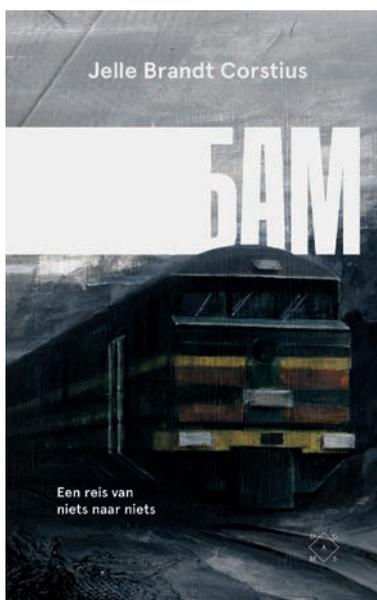
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'Two artist friends accompany him. *BAM* is their humour-filled account, full of bizarre encounters, like the man fuelling his stove with Lenin's complete works.'

– *De Morgen*

'With renewed astonishment, the journalist looks at the country he knows so well. Who lives here? And why? The temperature drops and drops, the landscape becomes ever emptier. Harrowing stories alternate with juicy anecdotes – Brandt Corstius does what he's good at.'

– *de Volkskrant*

Selma van de Perre

My Name is Selma

The Exceptional Story of A Jewish Resistance Worker

She lost almost everything: her parents, her sister, her name, her identity

When 97-year-old Selma van de Perre appeared on the Netherlands' most popular talk show, she became an immediate sensation. The memoirs of this eloquent Ravensbrück survivor went straight into the bestseller list. 'We were normal people thrown into extraordinary circumstances. This book was written as a testimony to our fight against inhumanity,' she writes. Her page-turning story offers a valuable new witness account of Jewish experience within the resistance movement.

When the Second World War broke out, Selma Velleman was seventeen, an intelligent girl who had hoped to go to university. She lived with her mother, two older brothers, her younger sister and her father, who worked in the theatre. Until then, being Jewish had never played a large role in her life – like many, her family were non-practising Jews. Now suddenly it became a matter of life or death. Summoned to register for a work camp in 1942, she managed to evade it by adopting a false identity. She became Margareta van der Kuit, Marga for short, and left her family to live undercover in Utrecht. The people housing her belonged to the resistance and before long she had joined the cause herself, forging documents and delivering them throughout the country.

Selma escaped the Nazis on multiple occasions, but in July 1944 she was arrested, held for questioning and convicted as a political prisoner. She was sent on to Ravensbrück women's camp and set to work in the Siemens factory, making (and sabotaging) arms for the Germans. Unlike her sister and parents, she survived the horrors of the war. The whole time no one knew she was Jewish, nor her real name. It was only after the war, before being repatriated from Sweden, that she managed to admit to her true name.

'In no other Western European country was the persecution of the Jews as efficient and the death toll as high as it was in the Netherlands. At least three quarters of the Jewish population was murdered, among them my father, mother and little sister Clara, my grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins. In this personal testimony I have recorded the small details that made up our lives, the sheer luck that saved some of us and the atrocities that led to the deaths of so many. It is a tribute to all those who suffered and died, and to my courageous friends and colleagues in the resistance who risked their own lives to try and save others. The horrors of World War II and the bravery of the people who defied them must never be forgotten. I hope this book will contribute to their lasting memory.'



Selma van de Perre (b. 1922) was a member of the Dutch resistance 'TD Group' during World War II. Shortly after the war she moved to England, where she worked for the BBC and met her future husband, Belgian journalist Hugo van de Perre. She went on to work as foreign correspondent for a Dutch TV station for a number of years. In 1983, Selma van de Perre received the Dutch Resistance Commemoration Cross. She still lives in London and has a son.

Publishing details

Mijn naam is Selma (2020)

240 pp.

Thomas Rap

57,000 copies sold

Full English translation available

Rights

Bee Rights

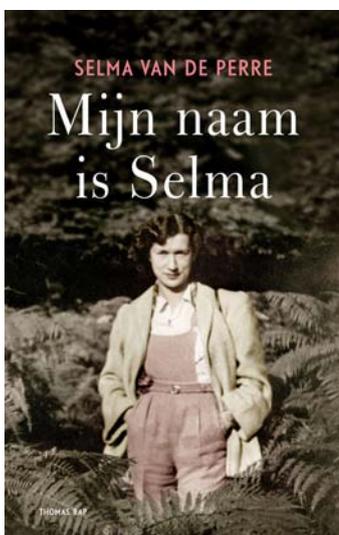
Marijke Nagtegaal

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Rights sold

Transworld (UK), Scribner (US), BTB Verlag (Germany), Mondadori (Italy), Matar (Israel), Wielka Litera (Poland), Tammi (Finland)

Photo: Chris van Houts



'What a woman. What courage and strength. So moving.'

- Writer Saskia Noort

'A stunning book... *My Name is Selma* should be made compulsory reading in schools.'

- Libelle

Maxim Februari

The Unreliable Narrator

A subtle yet sharp collection of essays, columns and lectures
by the winner of the 2020 P.C. Hooft Prize



Sharp, erudite, playful and funny: these are the words often used to describe the work by judicial philosopher Maxim Februari. He is without a doubt the most original essayist in the Dutch language. This year he was awarded the Netherlands' greatest literary prize, the P.C. Hooft Prize. In this collection of lucid and thought-provoking meditations, Februari takes on big, contemporary questions such as digitalization, moral responsibility and the rule of law with subtle humor and musical prose.

With a keen eye for the peculiarities of everyday life, Februari nimbly pokes holes in our convictions and continuously reminds us of the human in the digital machine. At a time when businesses would love nothing more than to reduce us to valuable datapoints and algorithms promise to relieve us of decision making, Februari delivers tech criticism at its finest: erudite and frightening. The blind belief in technological progress is a thorn in his side, and he convincingly spotlights the darker possibilities and uncertainties offered by today's technology, especially to business leaders and policymakers. What happens, for example, when the laws and rules are digitally integrated into the software behind stoplights and search engines? What does that mean for our legal system?

And while he addresses big topics, there is always a personal element in Februari's

work. Februari argues for maintaining the human dimension in our decisions, emphasizing the importance of interpretation and understanding: 'It can't hurt to reflect for a moment on the transition from writing to calculation.' Human decisions made with compassion will always be fairer than what any self-learning algorithm can offer us. Because even algorithms need to be directed: 'Who, for example, designs the risk models and who decides the criteria for risk reporting?' asks Februari. 'Fortunately, I have a respectable skin tone, and a respectable post code, so I suspect I can safely continue committing fraud, you won't hear me complaining. But what does the equality principle think of that?'

The cautionary tone and the activist element in Februari's work will remind readers of contemporary thinkers like Naomi Klein and Evgeny Morozov. However, it is Februari's extremely literary and utterly direct, appealing style that, with regards to originality, could better be compared to that of Rachel Cusk or Julian Barnes. Grouped broadly into five sections, these short pieces dance from the urgent physical concerns of our digital age to the datafication of human existence, from the dangerous power of multinational tech companies to the importance of art and literature today. Februari assures us there is hope for the future. It's for us to decide – preferably with courage, trust and some enjoyment.

Maxim Februari (b. 1963) is a writer and judicial philosopher. He is interested in the influence of technology on law, politics and policymaking. He is the author of acclaimed novels (*Lump and The Book Club*), essays and columns. *The Making of A Man: Notes on Transsexuality* was published in English in 2015, and Spanish and Turkish in 2016. In 2008, Februari received the Frans Kellendonk Prize for his entire oeuvre and, in 2018, the J.H. Heldring Prize for his column writing. This year he was awarded the prestigious P.C. Hooft Prize for his essays.

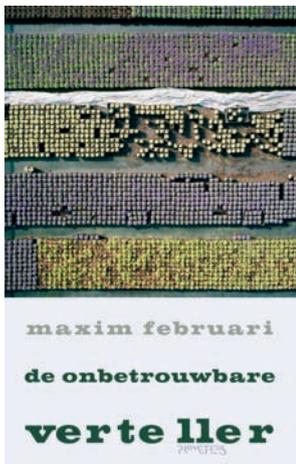
Publishing details

De onbetrouwbare verteller (2019)
297 pp.
English sample available

Rights

Prometheus
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Photo: Niek Stam



'Februari's storytelling style raises an effective barrier to single-mindedness, stubborn convictions and pigheadedness. What's more, his style also allows for irony without it turning into sarcasm and, not least, self-mockery that doesn't become vanity.'

– Jury report of the P.C. Hooft Prize

'And that's what Februari does time and again: he sees through the smokescreens, clears them and offers a perspective on the actual problems behind them. *The Unreliable Narrator* makes you more aware, more intelligent, more responsible – and it delights on every page.'

– *Het Parool*

Herman Pleij

Exercises in Pleasure

Love and Lust in the Late Middle Ages

The sexual revolution you haven't heard of

For centuries, the church held the medieval body captive; temptations of the flesh were to be resisted and earthly urges mastered. Marriage was to serve reproduction and quell lust. Pleasure was out of the question. But in the 14th and 15th centuries, popular entertainment increasingly began to question those assumptions, unleashing nothing less than a sexual revolution. Turning to text, art and song, emeritus professor Herman Pleij brings the medieval imagination to life in all of its lewd and lascivious detail.

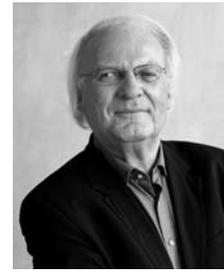
After the fall of Adam and Eve, the body was considered weak and sinful, at permanent risk of falling into the devil's clutches. St. Augustine saw the wild bestiality of Satan in uncontrollable erections; abbesses poked their eyes out and monks bit off their tongues to banish sinful thoughts. With the rediscovery of nature, however, the Bible's interpretation began to shift. If our bodies were created by God to feel earthly pleasures, wasn't it only natural to enjoy them? Wasn't the sensual Song of Songs in effect a handbook? In the Late Middle Ages, the fantastic world of literature was the unconsecrated ground where artists experimented with new lifestyles and gave their imagination free rein.

Performed in public rather than read, these plays, poems and songs entertained but also informed their audiences. The

Low Countries were on the rise, and in the growing cities there was a hunger for information, a desire to know more about mechanics and positions, anatomy and foreplay. Inspired by the *Romance of the Rose*, authors and performers began by projecting wild sex onto the caricatural lives of peasants and the clergy, feigning moral outrage. By 1500, they were crafting a modern literature that plainly glorified pleasurable sex. It was a new world that required a new vocabulary and a new language, and it is almost shocking to read how these virtually unknown texts by leading authors of the day artistically cast graphic obscenities.

Suddenly sex was seen as healthy. The Greeks and Romans offered the arguments for women to take an active role and make sexual demands, and couples were taught to enjoy pleasure together. Nevertheless, these would remain times of intense misogyny, as it also became popular to believe that assault and rape belonged to the higher forms of lovemaking. Repression would follow halfway through the 16th century, and sex once again vanished from the public eye as the church forced pleasure back into the function of reproduction.

Pleij leaves no stone unturned in this rich and vivid portrait of a society wrestling with complex questions about sex, love and desire – questions readers will be no doubt be surprised to recognize today.



Herman Pleij (b. 1943) is an emeritus professor of medieval literature at the University of Amsterdam. His work focuses mainly on the cultural history of literature, the development of commonplace morality and the formation of Dutch identities in general. Previous titles include the bestselling *The Guild of the Blue Barge* (1979), *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life* (1997), *Colors Demonic and Divine: Shades of Meaning in the Middle Ages* (2002) and *Moet kunnen: In Search of the Dutch Identity* (2014). Various works have been translated into English, Chinese, Arabic, Hungarian and Lithuanian.

Publishing details

Oefeningen in genot. Liefde en lust in de late Middeleeuwen (2020)
435 pp.

English sample available

Rights

Prometheus
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Photo: Ilja Keizer



'With his mediagenic performances, the emeritus professor creates certain expectations but *Exercises in Pleasure* is no popular history, nor just a quickie. It is primarily an elaborate, richly-illustrated voyage of discovery by the literary Herman Pleij on how "eloquently-expressed obscenities" paved the way for a short-lived period of sexual liberation, which the church soon put a stop to. Which in turn planted the seed of last century's sexual revolution.'
– *Het Parool*

Marian Donner

In Praise of Wilder Lives

An Anti-Self-Help Manifesto

Why we all need to stink, drink, bleed, burn and dance more

Never have there been more books, TED Talks, classes and podcasts about how to become thinner, healthier and happier. The message pushed by the self-help industry is simple: success and happiness in this world are a personal choice – and we buy it. The self-help industry is one of the largest industries on the planet and shows no sign of slowing down. Meanwhile, burn outs, depressions and psychological disorders are only on the rise.

In Praise of Wilder Lives turns this ideology on its head: rather than ask what's wrong with us, we need to ask what's wrong with the world. The self-help industry is part of a larger system of beliefs that undermines us as individuals, precisely by convincing us that we have no choice but to keep up. Lurking behind the relentless drive to 'love' and 'care' for ourselves is a tacit agreement to be constantly productive and ready to work. That's how we've been taught to succeed in this neoliberal economy.

By dissecting popular culture, Marian Donner makes a compelling case to resist a system that is tearing us down. To do so we will need to re-imagine the very things we take for granted as true and, above all:

realistic. Picturing another world begins and ends with taking another view on the human body. While they quantify and monetize our behaviour, businesses let us chase after physically impossible ideals. Being a living, breathing human today seems like an almost impossible ask. The less we stink or bleed the better. Failing and inefficient decisions are no longer options for the successful individual.

Playfully provocative and compellingly written, this book will bring to mind those written by rebellious essayists like Katie Roiphe (*In Praise of Messy Lives*). Donner effortlessly mixes the likes of Brad Pitt, Samuel Beckett, Slavoj Žižek, Virginia Woolf and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, allowing each of them to convince.

This is a rousing call to loosen up, swap rigour for forgiveness – to fail, improvise, be unhealthy and ugly, sweat, stink, differ from the norm. Be fat, old, unhealthy. Walk around with yellow teeth and sweaty palms. Set your wrinkles and potbelly against the health and happiness hegemony. Because it's not about you, it's about transforming the world. We agreed to this one, and that means we still have the power to change it.



Marian Donner (b. 1974) was born and grew up in Amsterdam. She studied psychology before working in politics, hospitality and international development. She has published two novels, *8.30am: Rising* (2006) and *Lily* (2011) and writes opinion articles for various leading newspapers and magazines. Regarding her own imperfect life, she says, 'I smoke. I also really like to drink. I don't have a successful job and I'm really lazy. I waste a lot of time doing nothing.'

Publishing details

Zelfverwoestingsboek. Waarom we meer moeten stinken, drinken, bloeden, branden en dansen (2019)
142 pp.
Das Mag
Fourth edition, 10,000 copies sold
English sample available

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Photo: Maarten van der Kamp



'An anti-capitalist self-help book.'
– *NRC Handelsblad*

'A plea for more messiness and less careerism in which Donner defends the losers: people who can't keep up or deviate from the norm also have important value.'
– *Het Parool*

'A fervent call to no longer give in to the neoliberal pressure to constantly optimize oneself.'
– *Knack*

Wytske Versteeg

Vanishing Point

On Violence and Vulnerability

A profound inquiry into the aftermath of violence
by the winner of the 2020 Frans Kellendonk Prize

‘As a writer, I go in search of uncomfortable stories, things that don’t want to be told.’ In this case, the story that defies telling is Versteeg’s own. More than just a story, it is a philosophical quest – how to live after violent acts have been committed against the body? How to find a language for this experience? In this naked, mesmerising account, Versteeg explores the many facets of pain and the challenges of recovery.

As a first-year student, Wytske Versteeg was sexually assaulted twice within a short period of time. These were neither her first nor her last encounters with sexual violence. *Vanishing Point* describes the aftermath of these experiences, which destroyed from a young age a trust in the world that is typically taken for granted. It is the story of a fight not only against pain, shame and alienation, but against the limitations of language itself: ‘We all know what the vanishing point of language looks like: we know it from television. When something really terrible happens, the sound is taken away and we see the main character’s experiences in silence, and often jerky, slowed down as though there’s something wrong with time.’

Memories of sexual abuse are often unchronological and fragmentary, particularly when such abuse took place at a young age. This makes them perturbingly questionable, an ambiguity which often goes lost in the stories society tells itself about violence. Can we think beyond narrow categories of victimhood? Is it even possible to discern clearly where sexual violence begins? How can one tell an honest story about violence instead of a fairy-tale narrative? Versteeg charts how the notion of ‘trauma’ changed from a primarily bodily experience to a wound in the psyche that does not seem to heal, a sense of self harmed beyond repair. And yet, psychological trauma is deeply physical as well. How can you become somebody again after having been repeatedly treated as ‘any body’?

With these questions at its core, *Vanishing Point* is a book for all who have experienced the alienation pain can bring. In finding words for this darkness, and the realisation that there is no way of unknowing what you know, this book is an act of hope. If trauma alienates, it may also bring a more acute awareness of the transient and fragile beauty of the world. As the book concludes: ‘All this can disappear at any time. All this is here right now.’



Wytske Versteeg (b. 1983) debuted as a novelist in 2012 with *Weightless*, which won the Women’s Debut Prize, was nominated for the Opzij Literature Prize and longlisted for the AKO Prize. In 2008, her first non-fiction book *This Is Not a Homeless Person* was published and subsequently nominated for the Jan Hanlo Essay Prize. In 2014, her second novel *Boy* was awarded the BNG Literature Prize and translated into Danish, German, English, Italian, Croatian and Turkish. Two more novels followed—*Quarantine* in 2015 and *Grime* in 2017.

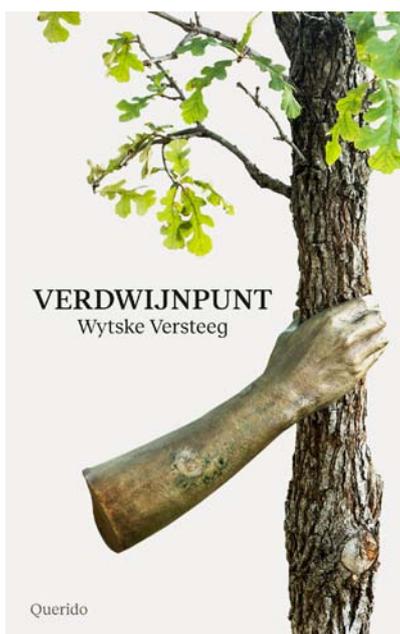
Publishing details

Verdwijnpunt. Over geweld en machteloosheid (2020)
226 pp.
Querido

Rights

Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency
Willem Bisseling
bisseling@sebes.nl

Photo: Eline Spek



‘The human condition is explored through the imagination in many different ways in her work. She uses this not so much for the one-dimensional believability of a story but in her ambition to convey to the reader the vulnerability and complexity of all human endeavour; the drama that lies within fallibility.’
– Jury of the 2020 Frans Kellendonk Prize

On *Quarantine*:

‘With her third novel, Wytske Versteeg proves to be one of the best authors of her generation in terms of composition, subtlety, power of expression and definitely style. Perhaps quite simply the best.’
– *NRC Handelsblad*

Henri Beunders

The Advance of the Tattoo *In Pursuit of A Meaningful Existence*

A cultural history of the meaning of tattoos and their recent mass adoption

Once considered a sign of primitivism, tattoos, sported by icons such as Janis Joplin, Ozzy Osborne and Memphis Depay, have undergone a radical change of image over the past century. Formerly the trademark of the prisoner, sailor or rebel, they are now popular across all walks of life. Beunders traces the cultural developments that led to the cult of body ink, arguing that this cult is synonymous with a society in which everyone becomes (briefly) famous and everything is art, even one's own body.

Body ink was once seen as a characteristic of cultures without paper or books, an exotic adornment at the time of Thomas Cook. Cut to the present day – tattoos have long been out of fashion in the countries where we first came into contact with them; now they are more prevalent in the wealthy west. Spurred on by the global media, they are a sign of success and surplus and an increasing obsession with the body. As German-Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han noted, 'The neo-liberal ideology of self-optimisation has gained religious, even fanatical features.'

Beunders argues that the First World War, which meant the death of ideals like the elite, truth and reality, was a pivotal point for rise of the tattoo. Reactionary futurism, Joseph Beuys' idea of art as

salvation and that every person was an artist, combined with Andy Warhol's democratisation of art, led to their adoption. Tattoos are self-therapy and a message to the world. Whereas make up beautifies temporarily, permanent ink changes who you are. The individual becomes a curator and collector of their own body art. While body art, historically, has always connected man to nature and the gods, in our age of 'turbo-capitalism' the pain and symbolism that make getting a tattoo a spiritual and existential experience have come to represent our new expectations of life and the luxury to question its meaning.

Into his wide-ranging study, interspersed with brief interviews with tattoo-wearers, Beunders weaves a new history of popular culture. He delves into the world of the 'illustrated person', examining motives and explaining fashions. He considers individualism, collectivism, nihilism, status anxiety, fantasy, fetishes, the poison in inks, the risk of disease, addiction, and regret. As tattoos have become mainstream, the tattoo removal industry has seen exponential growth.

In essence, tattoos are a form of communication, an expression of love and commitment, or of belonging to a clan. Tattoos both conceal and reveal, reflecting both our need to hone our identities and our desire to tell stories.



Henri Beunders (b. 1953) describes himself as 'an historian of mentalities, dealing with the silent changes and open conflicts'. He studied history at the University of Amsterdam and worked for Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* before becoming a lecturer at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. His current post is as Professor of Developments in Public Opinion. He has written many books including *From Exaltation to Exorcism: Reflections on Dutch arts, (Multi) Culture, Memory and Public Taboos, The Imagination of the World and The World as Imagination, and How Much Right Does Emotion Have?*

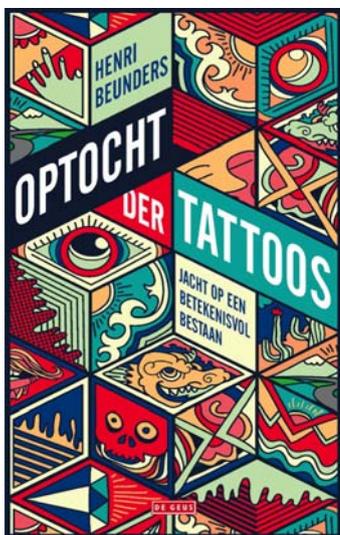
Publishing details

Optocht der tattoos. Jacht op een betekenisvol bestaan (2020)
288 pp.
De Geus

Rights

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Photo: Cora Hendriks



'Fantastic. This is how we have become who we are.'

- Henk Schiffmacher, famous Dutch tattoo artist

'Finally a meaningful book on this undervalued phenomenon'

- Raymond van den Boogaard, cultural journalist

On How Much Right Does Emotion Have?:

'An exceptionally wonderful series [of essays] on the state of criminal law.'
- *de Volkskrant*

New & Noteworthy

Published in the Netherlands

The rise of an unconventional, trend-setting footballer

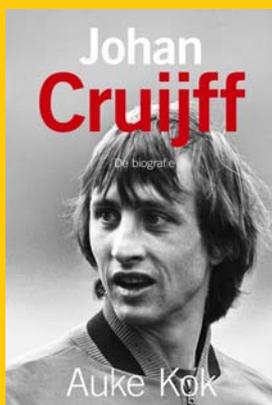
Auke Kok
Johan Cruijff
The Biography

Publisher: Hollands Diep
 Rights: info@hollandsdiep.nl

'Kok convincingly shows how Cruijff, because of his quick thinking and acting, was usually miles ahead of everyone else.'
 – *Het Parool*

'Not only readable and comprehensible to those uninitiated in football, but also critical and balanced.'
 – *Nederlands Dagblad*

Written like a picaresque novel, Auke Kok's bestselling biography of Johan Cruijff tells the story of how this national hero grew to be a global icon. With access to unique documents and drawing from hundreds of interviews, historian and journalist Kok aims to paint a picture of this great footballer and what made him tick. He follows his development from school truant, to Ajax star, family man, captain, trainer, football philosopher and commercial pioneer.



Winner of the 2019 NS Readers' Prize (Publieksprijs)

Martine Bijl
Shattered

Publisher: Atlas Contact
 Rights: Hayo Deinum
 hdeinum@atlascontact.nl
 Rights sold: Paul Zsolnay (Ger)

'Wry, witty, terrifying, heart-breaking.'
 – *de Volkskrant*

'Stunning. Honest and smart, never maudlin: Bijl knows how to write lightly about an extremely heavy topic.'
 – *NRC Handelsblad*

Over 200,000 copies have been sold of Martine Bijl's heart-rending and gripping account of recovery from a brain haemorrhage. Written with humour and panache, she describes her time in a rehabilitation centre where she has to relearn everything, before being hospitalized for an ensuing depression. Her language skills remained unaffected throughout. A book about therapists, well-being, language, learning to fall and occupational therapy, about fears and delusions, about what it feels like when someone else has crawled into your brain and threatens to take it over.



New bestseller by the author of *The Prey*

Jeroen Smit
The Great Fight
And the Solitary Conviction of Paul Polman

Publisher: Prometheus
 Rights: Marisca van der Mark
 foreignrights@pbo.nl



In 2017, Kraft Heinz's attempt to buy the Dutch/British company Unilever for 135 billion euros failed. Its CEO, Paul Polman, refused to work for billionaires, believing companies should be a force for good and take responsibility for the climate.

Having invented the 'business book thriller' genre with his books on Ahold and ABN Amro, Smit continues in the same vein, mapping Polman's attempt to steer Unilever into a safe Dutch haven, escape Brexit, and protect the firm from shareholders focussed on quick profit. Sadly this all ends in drama. Inspiring nevertheless, *The Great Fight* reveals how the business community must be turned if the soul of capitalism is to be saved.

What do the shifting power relations at sea mean for the political world stage?

Haroon Sheikh
Hydropolitics
Collaboration and Conflict on the Seven Seas

Publisher: Boom
 Rights: Eva Wijenberg
 e.wijenberg@bua.nl

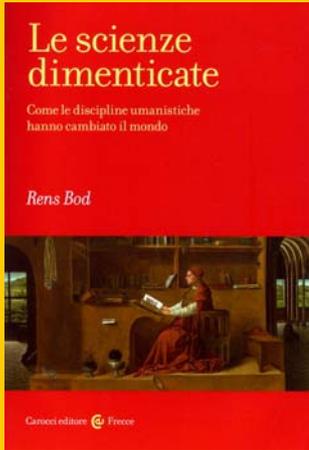


Shortlisted for the 2020 Socrates Philosophy Prize

Channels are being dug to connect seas and artificial islands built while countries compete for access to the ports of island nations and for new routes across the melting North Pole. In *Hydropolitics*, Haroon Sheikh analyses the changing political dynamics of the world's seas. He describes the relationship between land and sea and between water and trade. He pays special attention to the role of the Netherlands and to the changing relationship between the US, a traditional naval force par excellence, and China, traditionally a land force. By exposing historical patterns, Sheikh sheds light on new marine connections and dividing lines from a political, economic and philosophical perspective.

Recent 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.



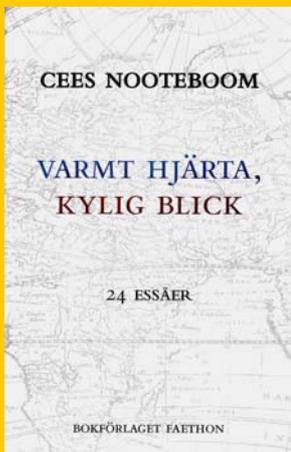
Rens Bod

**Le scienze dimenticate.
Come le discipline umanistiche
hanno cambiato il mondo**

De vergeten wetenschappen

Published in Italian by Carocci (2019).

Translated by Valeria Poli. Also in: Armenian (Sargis Khachents), Chinese (Peking UP), English (Oxford University Press), Korean (Torus Book), Polish (Aletheia), Ukrainian (FOP Zhupansky).



Cees Nooteboom

**Varmt hjärta, kylig blick.
24 essäer**

A selection of his essays

Published in Swedish by Bokförlaget Faethon (2019). Translated by Per Holmer.



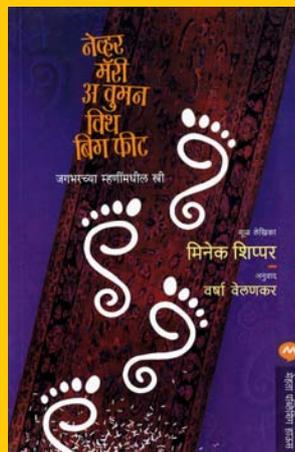
Joke J. Hermsen

**La melancolía en tiempos
de incertidumbre**

Melancholie van de onrust.

Published in Spanish by Siruela (2019).

Translated by Gonzalo Fernández Gómez.



Mineke Schipper

**Never Marry A Woman
With Big Feet**

Trouw nooit een vrouw met grote voeten

Published in Marathi by Mehta (2019).

Translated by Varsha Welankar. Also in: Arabic (Dar-el-Shorouk), Brazilian Portuguese (Bertrand Brasil), Chinese (New Star Press), Czech (Lidové Noviny), English (Yale University Press; Amsterdam University Press; Speaking Tiger India), French (Philippe Rey), German (Eichborn), Hungarian (Partvonal), Italian (Ponte Alle Grazie), Korean (Bookscope), Portuguese (Sextante), Russian (Astrel), Spanish (Océano), Turkish (Dogus NTV).



Roxane van Iperen

L'Alto Nido

't Hooge Nest

Published in Italian by Bompiani (2020).

Translated by Francesco Panzeri. Also in: English (Seven Dials / Orion), German (Hoffmann und Campe), Spanish (Planeta), Swedish (Modernista).



Eddy de Wind

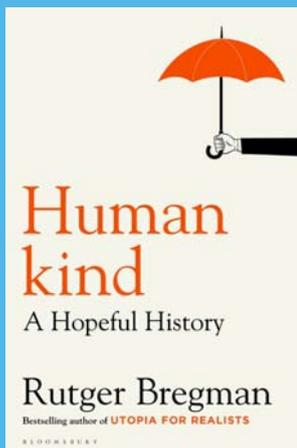
Endestasjon Auschwitz.

Min historie fra innsiden av leiren
Eindstation Auschwitz

Published in Norwegian by Gyldendal Norsk (2020). Translated by Guro Dimmen. Also in: Brazilian Portuguese (Planeta do Brasil), Catalan (Columna), Czech (Leda), Danish (Klim), English (Transworld; Grand Central Publishing), Finnish (WSOY), French (Michel Lafon), Greek (Patakis), German (Piper), Hungarian (Athenaeum), Italian (Rizzoli), Lithuanian (Alma Littera), Polish (Foksal), Spanish (Espasa-Calpe), Swedish (Natur och Kultur).

New Titles in 2020

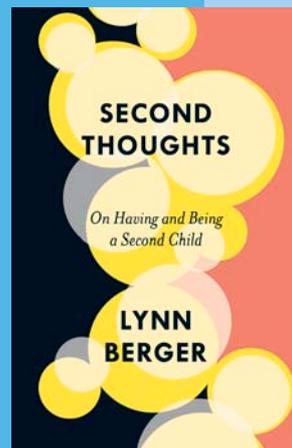
New Dutch Writing is a new high-profile promotional campaign by the Dutch Foundation for Literature to promote Dutch writing in translation in the UK and Ireland and to nurture the next generation of translators.



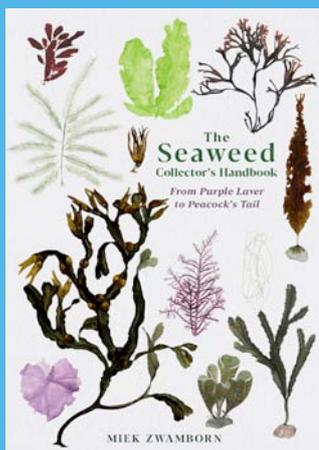
Rutger Bregman
Humankind
 Published by Bloomsbury
 Translated by Elizabeth Manton



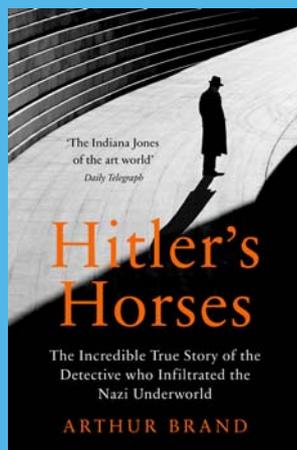
Jelmer Mommers
How Are We Going to Explain This?
 Published by Profile Books
 Translated by Anna Asbury & Laura Vroomen



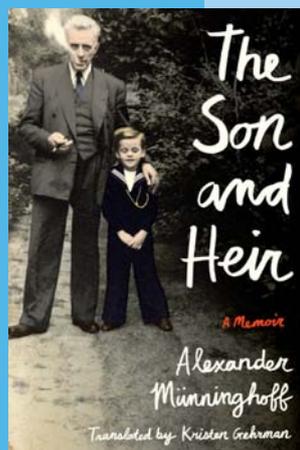
Lynn Berger
Second Thoughts
 Published by September Press
 Translated by Anna Asbury



Miek Zwamborn
The Seaweed Collector's Handbook
 Published by Profile Books
 Translated by Michele Hutchison



Arthur Brand
Hitler's Horses
 Published by Ebury Press
 Translated by Jane Hedley-Prole



Alexander Munninghoff
The Son and Heir
 Published by AmazonCrossing
 Translated by Kristen Gehrman

Including fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, children's and poetry books, the campaign celebrates the work of translators and capitalises on the burgeoning interest in international literature among UK readers while engaging them in a stimulating, cross cultural debate. New Dutch Writing launched in July 2019 will continue through 2020, with over 70 author events at a range of festivals and literature venues nationwide, featuring Dutch writers in conversation with their British counterparts.

For further details: www.newdutchwriting.co.uk

For more information on the New Dutch Writing press campaign, please contact:
 Dusty Miller
dustymillerpr@gmail.com

For more information on New Dutch Writing events, please contact:
 Martin Colthorpe (campaign manager)
martin@modernculture.co.uk
 Rachel Toogood (campaign manager)
rachel.l.toogood@gmail.com
 Lucette Chatelain (Dutch Literary Foundation NDW events co-ordinator)
l.chatelain@letterenfonds.nl

New Dutch Writing

Clarice M.D. Gargard
Daughter of Dragons

Theo Mulder
The Brain Collector

Aletta Jacobs
Recollections

Jelle Brandt Corstius
BAM

Selma van de Perre
My Name is Selma

Maxim Februari
The Unreliable Narrator

Herman Pleij
Exercises in Pleasure

Marian Donner
In Praise of Wilder Lives
An Anti-Self-Help Manifesto

Wytske Versteeg
Vanishing Point

Henri Beunders
The Advance of the Tattoo

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