



DUTCH

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NON- FICTION

AN OPEN MIND



MIREILLE
BERMAN

It is clear from the growing number of translations of Dutch non-fiction titles that the genre is being recognized and valued abroad. The most important Dutch non-fiction writers are able to compete with their peers in other countries: Renate Rubinstein, for example, may well be the Dutch Joan Didion; Anton de Kom is on an equal footing with Franz Fanon; Abel Herzberg rivals Primo Levi; and Jill Lepore's historicising of the USA is something previously done for Europe by Geert Mak.

The selection of non-fiction titles presented here shows that Dutch non-fiction is socially-engaged. Although these titles often derive their inspiration from the situation in the Netherlands, they reflect on burning issues that are currently playing out worldwide: concern about the climate crisis, a critical look at the colonial past, the denunciation of institutional racism. One constant in Dutch non-fiction is the Second World War. This period (and in particular the persecution of the Jews) has been the subject of debate for decades and remains still a moral benchmark.

The authors in this brochure manage to transcend the perspective of Dutch society through their personal vision, an open mind and a candid tone. Perhaps it is Dutch free-thinking that has a say in this, but in any case it offers them the opportunity to look beyond the boundaries of a local culture.

The Dutch Foundation for Literature aims to promote literary non-fiction that is surprising, moving and thought-provoking. This year some remarkable books have been published once more, and we would like to bring them to the attention of foreign publishers. Finding an international audience is important, not so much to propagate Dutch culture, but to create polyphony, to contribute to discussions that transcend the borders of countries and cultures. Translation grants are available for all the books presented here and, of course, for any other high-profile, remarkable and eye-opening literary non-fiction written in Dutch.

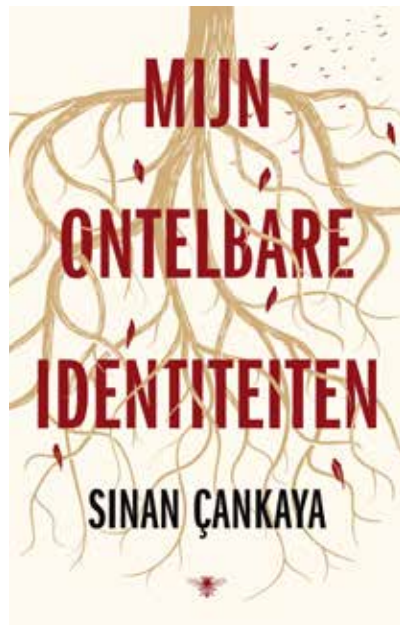
Author

Sinan Çankaya

English title

My Innumerable Identities

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Mijn ontelbare identiteiten

Year of publication

2020

Page count

240

Sold copies

10,000

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

De Bezige Bij

Rights

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When asked to give a speech on ‘breaking through boundaries’ at his old secondary school, cultural anthropologist Sinan Çankaya finds himself forced to describe his quest for his identity. ‘But what do they want me to say?’ he asks himself repeatedly. He can’t help but think of the problems he faced due to others constantly pigeonholing and defining him, and the discrimination he experienced at that very school.

Çankaya, the son of hardworking Turkish migrant parents, shares with the reader the doubts and memories the invitation arouses in him. As a pupil at the school, he had been notably taught by a history teacher who was a prominent member of an extreme right political party. This man’s contempt for the only Turkish-Dutch boy in the class was formative, as was his assertion that the boy would never amount to much.

As Çankaya describes his own life journey from emigrant child to lecturer at an Amsterdam university, he demands the freedom to decide himself who he is. Constantly resisting the reduction of his individuality to just one label, he tells painfully witty anecdotes about his drive for elasticity, and the many micro-revolutions he initiated. Writing with irony about his own masculinity and pride, he investigates the prejudice that hides within language and its registers. His work on structural racism in the Dutch police force as an anthropological researcher provides a perfect illustration of why the Black Lives Matter movement has gained such urgency.

Tagline

A moving, hard-hitting and often humorous memoir that became an immediate bestseller upon publication

Combining his own experiences with his viewpoint as an anthropologist, the writer reflects on how identities are created. He concludes that it is a transaction with another, ‘I am, through you.’ Çankaya proposes that each person has multiple, fluid, shifting identities. ‘A person is not just a man, heterosexual and white, not just a woman, black or homosexual. Our bodies are always entwined with other identities, history and the course of one’s life.’

This is a universal story about a boy wrestling himself from his environment, becoming socially mobile and fighting back. It is a personal story written in a literary style, acerbic and reminiscent of the French writer, Eddy Bellegueule, but more reflective, layered, and more political. One might describe the writer as a Dutch Ta Nehesi Coates, sharing common ground with Kwame Appiah.

Biography

Sinan Çankaya (b. 1982) is a writer and cultural anthropologist. He earned a PhD on diversity within the police force, and went on to research ethnic profiling. His journalistic writings are published each month at *De Correspondent*. He is currently working as a lecturer at Amsterdam’s Vrije Universiteit (VU).

In the press

‘I know no one who writes about racism, exclusion, discrimination and identity in such an in-depth, razor sharp, powerful and yet nuanced manner as Sinan Çankaya.’

**Rutger Bregman,
bestselling author**

‘Çankaya describes his longing for a life as a chameleon in a most impressive way.’

Vrij Nederland

Photo (© Marijn Smulders)



Author

Thalia Verkade

With Marco te Brömmelstroet

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Het recht van de snelste. Hoe ons verkeer steeds asocialer werd

Year of publication

2020

Page count

254

Sold copies

10,000

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

De Correspondent

Rights

Janklow & Nesbit Agency

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English title

The Right of the Fastest — How Traffic Has Become Increasingly Antisocial

Now people are spending more time at home, rethinking the way we design public space has become more urgent than ever. All over the world, initiatives are being launched to rearrange cities and streets. Bogota has imposed 50km/hr speed limits, built bike lanes and instigated car-free Sundays; part of Brussels has become a ‘home zone’ with restricted traffic; cars are being banished from the streets of Madrid, and in Great Britain a court case has been launched to stop building motorways with public money.

From traffic jams to bicycle highways, from sleeping policemen to shared cars, the way we move around has an enormous impact on the way our streets, our cities and our society are arranged. It even determines how we interact with each other. In *The Right of The Fastest*, Thalia Verkade argues for a new vision of public space and an infrastructure in which people, not machines, take centre stage.

Journalist Thalia Verkade’s journey begins with the ‘traffic jam issue’ in the Netherlands, a small, densely-populated country where the total length of traffic jams is reported on the daily news. Not self-driving cars but the bicycle, Holland’s USP, is the answer, she decides – and bicycle super-highways. When she seeks the advice of town planner (nickname: ‘bicycle professor’) Marco te Brömmelstroet, all her preconceptions are turned on their head. Why do people need to cycle as fast as possible? Why do you even need to travel in a straight line?

Tagline

A timely investigation into why personal transport is dictated by speed and efficiency and what we have lost in the process

Following the automobile revolution in America, wide access to cars changed our lives. Cars began to take priority over other road users and the freedom they afforded became a kind of dependency. The idea that traffic must flow comes from nineteenth-century Paris – after a revolution, a cholera epidemic and economic problems, the city was streamlined, alleys were replaced with boulevards allowing faster passage, one-way-streets were created for safety. With the metaphor of a circulatory system (traffic as blood) came the belief in flow, and the concepts of blocked arteries and bypasses. And with this came haste and road rage.

Verkade learns that building new motorways doesn’t actually reduce traffic but increases the number of cars. Even as we commute faster and faster, we still arrive home at the same time. If you make offices easier to get to, people move further away. So how can we do things differently? The answer lies in reclaiming the streets as part of our natural habitat.

Biography

Thalia Verkade (b. 1979) is a journalist who covers mobility for *De Correspondent*. Previously she worked for *nrc.next* and *NRC Handelsblad*. She couldn’t have written this book without Marco te Brömmelstroet (b. 1980), Professor of Urban Mobility Futures at the University of Amsterdam. Marco te Brömmelstroet is a town and urban planner, frequently

called upon by international media as a talking head on the subject.

In the press

‘Thalia Verkade is one of those people who continue digging where others would stop, before finally coming up with the most wonderful and surprising discoveries and insights.’

Joris Luyendijk, author and journalist

‘These writers have the gift of looking again at things you thought you knew, like your own street, your bike or your life.’

Arjen van Veelen, author

‘Alice in Trafficland’

De Groene Amsterdammer

Photo (@De Correspondent)



Author

Pieter van Os

English title

Hiding in Plain Sight — How a Jewish Girl Escaped Death and Found Love Among the Nazis

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Liever dier dan mens. Een onwaarschijnlijk overlevingsverhaal

Year of publication

2019

Page count

368

Sold copies

9,000

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

Prometheus

Rights

Prometheus
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Polish Catholics believed she was one of them. A devoted Nazi family took her in as if she was their own daughter. She fell in love with a German engineer who built airplanes for the Luftwaffe. What nobody knew was that Mala Rivka Kizel had been born into a large Polish orthodox Jewish family in Warsaw in 1926. By using her charm, intelligence, blond hair and blue eyes to assume different identities, she was the only member of her family to survive the Second World War.

When Dutch journalist Pieter van Os stumbled upon Mala's story in a Warsaw piano bar, he set out to revive the world through which she had made her way, from war-ravaged middle Europe to the nascent state of Israel before finally settling in the Netherlands, where she lives today. With her memoir and their interviews as guide, Van Os physically retraces Mala's steps, stopping in at local archives and remote villages, searching for anyone who might have known or helped her seventy-five years before.

Wandering many a side trail, he recounts individual stories of horror and luck, and discovers that somewhere between memory and history, people can vanish without a trace. With a poetic eye for detail, Van Os weaves a harrowing tapestry of the persecution of Jewish people in Poland and Ukraine before, during and after the war. Through Mala's story he explores the modern obsession with nation, race and identity, as well as the deepest abysses of human nature that lurk in their wake.

Tagline

A prize-winning exploration of nationalism and identity, transformation and survival

Various encounters along the way also allow Van Os to reflect more broadly on that which is passed on to each new generation. He critically addresses the uses and abuses of history, whenever the horrors of the past are doctored or omitted for the sake of an inspiring national narrative. How does telling the story of the past change what actually happened?

At times reading like an erudite detective story, reminiscent of essayistic historians such as Daniel Mendelsohn and Philippe Sands, this poignant, rich book is an engrossing meditation on what drives us to fear the 'other' and what in turn might allow us to feel compassion for them.

Biography

Pieter van Os (b. 1971) writes for *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Groene Amsterdammer*. His published works include the books *The Netherlands in Focus*, *Father and Son* *Receive the Spirit* (with Henk van Os), and *We Understand Each Other Perfectly*, about his years as a parliamentary journalist. After living in Warsaw, Poland for four years, he

currently resides in Tirana, Albania. In 2020 he won the Brusse Prize for best Dutch-language journalistic book of the year with *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

In the press

'In almost every sentence, Van Os compels admiration with his elegant prose, demonstrating his erudition but never showing off or taking away from the gravity of the subject matter [...] *Hiding in Plain Sight* is more than a survival narrative. It is a history of Eastern European mentality.'

de Volkskrant

'I couldn't stop reading. A stunning book.'

Geert Mak, writer and historian

Photo (© Angèle Etoundi Essamba)



Author

Margot Dijkgraaf

English title

Rebel Voices — Female Writers Who Changed French Literature

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Zij namen het woord. Rebelse schrijfsters in de Franse letteren

Year of publication

2020

Page count

240

Sample translation

Available, in French

Publisher

Atlas Contact

Rights

Atlas Contact

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They were exiled, publicly attacked and persecuted, their work was torn to shreds — even physically burned — and yet female writers have consistently pushed French literature in new directions by rebelling against the literary and cultural norms of their day. In *Rebel Voices*, literary critic and journalist Margot Dijkgraaf sketches ten portraits of women from the 17th to the 21st century who have not only left their definitive mark on the French world of letters, but also inspired readers and writers for generations.

Be it Colette or Françoise Sagan, George Sand or Simone de Beauvoir, Maryse Condé or Annie Ernaux, their determined quests for authenticity in a male-dominated world have helped initiate literary revolutions in subject, imagination and style. But who were these extraordinary women prepared to risk significant danger? Dijkgraaf builds on over thirty years of expertise in French literature to bring each writer colourfully to life. Drawing on letters, journals, and interviews and visiting now-historic sites, she delves into each writer's inspirations and writerly aspirations, and paints the social worlds of which each was as much a record and a product, as well as a refusal.

Striking is each writer's insatiable hunger for all that life has to offer. Though their groundbreaking oeuvres were often also the product of humiliation, alienation or frustration, these women pursued experience and knowledge with an impassioned investigative spirit. They fought for their personal freedom, not without moments of disappointment and rage. In doing so, they defy easy labels and often eschew the word

Tagline

Ten captivating portraits of female writers who forever changed French literature

'feminist' despite helping pave feminism's way in France and beyond. These are resolute women of action, and through their eyes we witness the French revolution, butt heads with Napoleon, travel extensively, shatter sexual taboos, lash out at economic and gender inequalities, grapple with identity, race and colonialism. We converse with the leading intellectuals of their age, engage in political debate and consider the art of writing.

Written in an engaging and accessible style, this an informative history of French culture and letters to inspire a new generation of readers. And while we may often be inclined to reach for the English-language cultural world, Dijkgraaf presents convincing proof that the endlessly fascinating world of French literature has just as much to offer.

Biography

Margot Dijkgraaf (b. 1960) is a literary critic, journalist and author. She was the director of the Centre Français du Livre at the Maison Descartes as well as the academic-cultural centre Spui25 in Amsterdam. She currently works for the Dutch embassy in Paris. In 2009 the French government presented her with the *Chevalier de la*

Légion d'honneur. Previous books from her hand include *French-Language Literature of Today* (2003), *Mirror Images and Shadow Play: The Oeuvre of Hella Haasse* (2014) and *Reading in France: A Literary Tour of France* (2018).

In the press

'Entertaining, enlightening and inspiring, she describes heroines such as George Sand, Simone de Beauvoir, Madame de Staël, Colette and Annie Ernaux, together a cross-section of four centuries of literature.'

Trouw

'Dijkgraaf beautifully demonstrates how those "feminine writers" (there are undoubtedly also masculine female writers, who obediently conformed to the prevailing rules) had to fight during their lives for autonomy and authenticity.'

de Volkskrant

Photo (© Bart Koetsier)



Author

Miriam Rasch

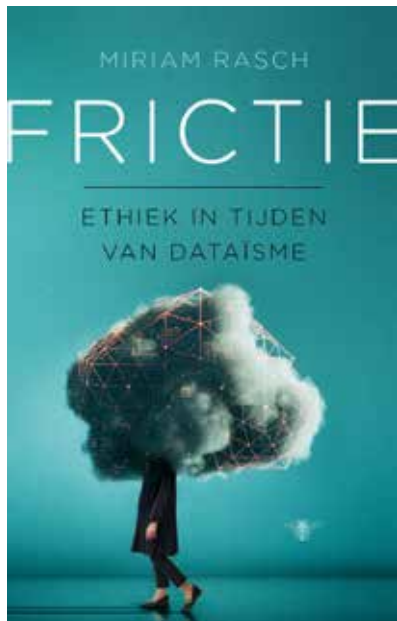
English title

Friction — Ethics in Times of Dataism

Tagline

Strikingly intelligent philosophical investigation that aims to reinject ethical considerations into a life governed by data

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Frictie. Ethiek in tijden van dataïsme

Year of publication

2020

Page count

238

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

De Bezige Bij

Rights

Bee Rights

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Today's world is dominated by information gathering, and because everything is understood and described in terms of data, it has come to rule our lives. But how can we live freely in this world of comprehensive digitization that predicts our every move? Rasch searches for alternative ways of thinking about ourselves and our environment that will free us from the binary restrictions of 0s and 1s.

Data thrives on action, it assembles around bustling centres of activity, streets, stations, the airport. Faces scanned, gestures classified – nervous, aggressive, neutral – telephone signals tracked and vetted. If I leave my home I cannot avoid being translated into data, my body and mind cooperating with the machinery of datafication. If I don't want to be a part in this, I'll have to go back inside.

Asking herself what gets lost or omitted when we are straightjacketed into the reductionist logic of dataism, Rasch begins a necessary search for a more human mode of thought that takes things like the ineffable and the sublime into account. Ethical discussions in this area are complex because dataism includes a dominant system of norms and values that leave no room for contradiction. What's more, data is undeniably successful and efficient: each day we play along to the algorithms of Spotify, Netflix and Facebook. But when everything is considered quantifiable, the world becomes one-dimensional, flat and frictionless.

Rasch sees data as a way of translating or even 'producing' reality, but, she says, there are other more dignified thought systems that leave room for ambiguity and personal freedom. Rasch's examination joins the field of thinkers like Michel Serres, Evgeny Morozov and Peter Sloterdijk. But she also turns to literary authors such as Ta Nehesi Coates, Audre Lorde and Claire Lispector. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is a recurring theme in the book. Beauvoir's claim that friction is the foundation of ethics is central, and Rasch's statement 'Without failure, no morality' is derived from this.

This is a topical, challenging essay, written in a fresh elegant style, with a literary pen. Rasch does not work on a simple conclusion or ready-made solution to the problem, her book stimulates and challenges thought, looking for a way to move beyond the totalitarianism of technology. Rasch's book is an ode to friction, an argument for contradiction, and for seeking out the spaces in between the numbers.

Biography

Miriam Rasch (b. 1979) works for the Institute of Network Culture at Amsterdam's polytechnic university. She studied literature and philosophy. Her book *Swimming in the Ocean: Dispatches from a Post-Digital World* (2017) was shortlisted for the 2018 Socrates Cup philosophy prize and in 2015 she won the Jan Hanlo Essay Prize.

In the press

'Mind-expandingly multi-faceted [...] poetic.'
NRC Handelsblad

'A salient argument for more friction between people and algorithms'
de Volkskrant

'Here is an essayist who playfully combines philosophical, literary and political perspectives. [...] Rasch turns many things on their heads and in a constantly lively tone.'

Trouw

Photo (© Merlijn Doomernik)



Author

Murat Işık

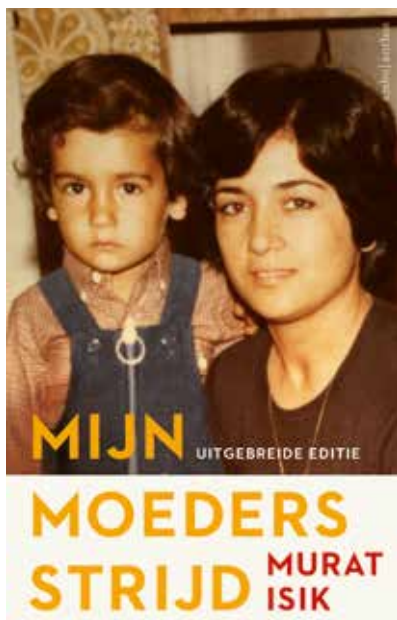
English title

My Mother's Fight

Tagline

Extended version of the 135,000 copy-selling 2019 Dutch Book Week Essay

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Mijn moeders strijd

Year of publication

2020

Page count

160

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

Ambo Anthos

Rights

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‘Being a girl made me an unhappy child,’ author Murat Işık’s mother tells him. In *My Mother’s Fight* he traces his mother’s tumultuous childhood in Turkey and her struggle to free herself first from traditionalist expectations and later from her marriage to an angry, unpredictable compatriot. Even the act of telling her story to her son meant contravening deeply-embedded notions of pride and a cultural taboo against airing one’s dirty linen in public.

Işık’s mother Aynur grew up in a dusty village in eastern Turkey, without running water or electricity, where men ruled and womanhood was a curse. But in order to understand what shaped her, he first has to delve into his maternal grandmother’s life. This was a woman who buried eight of her children, barely escaped death herself and was unable to offer her remaining three children any emotional support. The resulting portrayal of agricultural, patriarchal twentieth-century Turkey is shocking and makes it all the more clear how far Işık’s mother has come.

Later, when an earthquake strikes her village, Aynur moves with her family to the modern city of Izmir. ‘It took a natural disaster to give my mother’s fate a favourable turn,’ Işık remarks. In Izmir, aged fourteen, she goes to work for a middle-class Turkish couple whose egalitarian marriage inspires her to look for a different kind of life. She marries Işık’s father, and together they end up in Amsterdam, by way of Hamburg. Although her marriage is unhappy and her situation initially seems hopeless, she learns a new

language, makes a professional career for herself in a hospital and even buys a flat.

Murat Işık, the acclaimed bestselling author of the semi-autobiographical *Be Invisible*, focuses on Aynur’s struggles as a girl and woman, and on her hard-knock life. In doing so, he describes how this has shaped him, as a man, as a writer: ‘Hearing, as a son, how my mother had to fight and overcome so many setbacks, inspired me to solidarity with her struggle.’

My Mother’s Fight is the portrait of an intelligent woman from a disadvantaged background who nevertheless managed to free herself from a restrictive marriage and follow her own path in life. It is also Işık’s reflection on his formation, and a depiction of a mother-son relationship with all its attendant loyalty, tenderness and conflicts.

Biography

Murat Işık (b. 1977) is a Dutch writer and lawyer of Zaza-Turkish descent. Işık studied law at the University of Amsterdam and San Francisco State University. His first novel, *Lost Country*, was published in 2012 and won the Bronze Owl literary prize. His second novel, *Be Invisible*, was published in 2017. This story is set in the Amsterdam Bijlmer

neighbourhood, where Işık grew up. It was awarded the Dutch Book Trade Prize 2018, the Libris Literature Prize 2018 and De Inktaap 2019.

In the press

‘Işık allows his mother to stand out, to shine even, in this essay.’

NRC Handelsblad

‘A story that cannot be told enough: the story of a long and difficult but ultimately successful journey to emancipation.’

Het Parool

Photo (© Merlijn Doomernik)



Author

Ivar Schute

English title

Unearthing the Holocaust — An Archaeologist’s Search for Buried Traces

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

*In de schaduw van een nachtvlinder.
Een archeoloog op zoek naar sporen van de Holocaust*

Year of publication

2020

Page count

224

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

Prometheus

Rights

Prometheus
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It is only within the last two decades that archaeologists have started working on the camps of World War Two. Indeed, for many, archaeology and the atrocities of the Holocaust are not a logical combination, though excavations are now bringing important new information to light in locations with few survivors or records. As Holocaust archaeologist Ivar Schute writes, archaeology offers us an invaluable perspective in a time where Holocaust denial continues to grow: ‘If the Nazis attempted to erase their traces, then they certainly didn’t think like archaeologists.’

In this ‘book of astonishment’, Schute recollects the last ten years of his research, which has taken him to some of the most horrific sites in the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and Poland. After excavating at Treblinka, he joined the international team of archaeologists that uncovered the foundations of eight gas chambers at camp Sobibor, the largest Holocaust dig site to date. And with more than 40,000 Nazi camps across Europe, an overwhelming network of mostly forgotten labour and transit sites that enveloped the death camps, there remains much research to be done, and much we can still learn.

The work itself is complex and controversial. Schute details the tensions and struggles with media outlets, local governments, treasure hunters and holocaust deniers. There is the emotional toll of unearthing individual lives in everyday objects, such as tea strainers, a child’s name plate, a wedding ring – more often than not the objects that accompanied their owners moments before their murder. He details painstaking

Tagline

A personal account of over ten years of pioneering archaeological work at some of the Holocaust’s most horrifying sites

attempts to track down the next of kin, and the incalculable value these last objects take on for family members. For Schute, it is the disarming power of these buried objects that can best keep the memory of that history alive, especially for new generations with new questions and new demands. In that way archaeology can also help us commemorate loss, even work through the injustices of the past. Unresolved dilemmas and paradoxes do however remain: To whom do the artifacts belong? And then what exactly to do with them? How best to respect the dead?

Unearthing the Holocaust is a thoughtful and moving read, as well as a convincing argument for archaeology’s unique ability to uncover what historians have thus far been unable to reconstruct. Because when we begin to look at ‘empty’ landscapes with an archaeologist’s eye, we become aware of the unfathomable archive right beneath our feet.

Biography

Ivar Schute (b. 1966) has worked for nearly thirty years as an archaeologist in the field of heritage and monument management. While doing so, he has specialised his research in World War II archaeology and has conducted excavations and geophysics at German Nazi camps Amersfoort, Vught, Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen,

Treblinka and Sobibor, in addition to a number of smaller forced labour and transit sites. While he has regularly published articles, taken part in interviews and publicly presented his findings throughout the last ten years, this is his first book.

In the press

‘Although there have been countless books written about the Holocaust, [these] are nevertheless new reflections that make *Unearthing the Holocaust* a valuable addition to the library of any reader interested in science and history.’

New Scientist

‘For those who want to be convinced of the importance of archaeology for the research and commemoration of the Holocaust, *Unearthing the Holocaust* presents an outstanding case.’

Historiek

Photo (© Ilja Keizer)



Author

Nadia de Vries

English title

Hypochondriac — The Invisible World of Illness

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Kleinzeer. De onzichtbare wereld van ziekte

Year of publication

2019

Page count

144

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

Pluim

Rights

Pluim

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As a young girl, Nadia de Vries is diagnosed with systemic mastocytosis, a rare disease that can develop into an aggressive form of leukaemia. While doctors line up to examine her in the hospital, she is told she will likely never reach adulthood. Having made peace with death, she spends hours watching TV and on the computer; she never learns how to swim. But, when in her teens, De Vries makes a full recovery, she must find a place in the world in which she has never learned to live. Her resulting depressions and suicidal ‘aspirations’ are diagnosed as a personality disorder – a condition that only arouses scepticism and humiliation.

Why is it that we empathise more with bodily illnesses than with their mental counterparts? How can we explain the glaring divide between the way we romanticise and idolise the suicide stories of famous artists or intellectuals and the pervasive dismissal or even fear of mental illness in everyday life? Writer, poet and academic researcher Nadia de Vries transforms her personal experience into an incisive study on the interplay between illness and identity. Weaving in figures like Anne Sexton, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, she recounts her painful story with elegance and candour, openly addressing her struggle with self-harm, suicide attempts, crippling alcoholism, sexual violence, delusions in public and dancing in diapers. In doing so, she explores how society treats its ‘weak’, its abnormal, those who are too fat, too thin, or unstable.

Tagline

An intimate, poetic essay about empathy and mental illness

As such, *Hypochondriac* is the deeply personal story of a writer and a young woman coming into her own while grappling with the pains of mental illness. It is also a damning indictment of the persistent stigmas that surround mental illness in our society today. With literary flare, this stirring personal statement argues for more visibility and empathy concerning mental illness, as well as every person’s right to a place in the world and their right to vulnerability.

I do not believe in catharsis. Set your house on fire or shave your head bald, but the past is inside you. No therapist will beat it out. This is not cynicism. This is the ordinary realisation that fiction will not save you. This book is not fiction, nor does it serve as consolation. I no longer want consolation because consolation has a time and a place, and I want to take a place that is unconditional.

Biography

Nadia de Vries (b. 1991) is a writer, poet and academic researcher. In 2018 she published a poetry bundle in English, titled *Dark Hour*, at Dostoyevsky Wannabe, where she also curated the poetry collection *Amsterdam* in 2020. Besides other works of poetry, she also self-published an anthology titled *Sisterhood* (2016), which gathered the work

of new female European authors. Regarding her nonfiction work, her essays in Dutch have appeared in *De Gids* and *nY*. Her doctoral research at the University of Amsterdam focuses on the representation of the human corpse in contemporary digital culture.

In the press

‘This reader is left with admiration for a writer able to formulate the “relentless chaos” in her head with such style and courage’

de Volkskrant

‘De Vries shows herself to be a sharp observer and successfully captures in harsh words and with humour her flirt with the abyss.’

Tzum

Photo (© Lola Noir)



Author

Gerbrand Bakker

English title

Servant, Alone

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

Knecht, Alleen

Year of publication

2020

Page count

287

Sample translation

Available

Publisher

De Arbeiderspers

Rights

Cossee

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After achieving international fame as a novelist with *The Twin* (International Dublin Literary Award 2010) and *The Detour*, Gerbrand Bakker made his autobiographical debut with *Jasper and His Servant* in 2016. Now, the author returns with a mesmerising sequel, building on his fictional oeuvre to present an intimate life become novel. Recording and recollecting everything with a precise pen and wry humour, he searches for answers: Where does his depression spring from? And how can he overcome it?

In *Jasper and His Servant*, author Gerbrand Bakker described his move from Amsterdam to the mountainous German Eifel, the process of restoring a house, taming the garden, getting to know his neighbours, and adopting Jasper, a stray dog whose servant he promptly became. But now the servant is alone. Jasper may have been more of a nuisance than anything else, however, the void left by his death renders the author's life meaningless and, before long, his loneliness unfolds into a deep depression.

Bakker experiences and contemplates as a writer, jotting down the everyday with searing honesty, ruthlessly portraying himself and those around him. Trading between Eifel and Amsterdam, he describes a chemical darkness that began with an anxiety-ridden road trip to Greece, interweaves conversations and memories of relationships and romances with different men, and runs up against misunderstanding from his family and friends. He gardens, goes back and forth with his sexologists, reflecting on love and desire (and his lack of it). As in *Jasper*, the battle

Tagline

An unsparing and dryly humorous journal of depression from the prize-winning author of *The Twin*

with self-hate and the need for the structure and labour of writing are ever-present. Across 87 short chapters, the contours of Bakker's depression emerge through the many small details that envelop it:

A better characterisation of a depression is the word nothing. No man's land. There is nothing, you are nothing. You are not in touch with yourself, not with your thoughts, not with your feelings, not with your body, not with others.

With a style reminiscent of Knausgaard's autofiction, *Servant, Alone* presents an absorbing portrait of a writer's struggle with an invisible, ineffable condition. His prose is exact, rarely if ever figurative, powerfully evoking loneliness and longing, while at other times tender or wickedly humorous. Or as the jury of the International Dublin Literary Award aptly noted: 'His writing is wonderful: restrained and clear [...]. There are intriguing ambiguities, but no false notes.'

Biography

Gerbrand Bakker (b. 1962) is one of the most widely-translated and well-known Dutch authors living today. He broke through to an international audience with his acclaimed debut novel *Boven is het stil* (*The Twin*, 2006), which he followed with the novels *Juni* (*June*, 2009) and *De omweg* (*Ten White Geese; The Detour*, 2010). Besides writing

columns for *Trouw* and *De Groene Amsterdammer*, he has published works of non-fiction, including *Rotgrond bestaat niet* (*What About Nature*, 2018). He is also a gardener.

In the press

'This isn't therapeutic writing. Bakker experiences, thinks and records because he is a writer, not because he wants to resolve something [...] He describes as best as he can only that which is most meaningful in his life... Honest, investigative, critical and intimate.'

de Volkskrant

'If this is the form in which Bakker's writing fits best (and I think it is), part of you hopes, harsh though it may be, that his self-exploration is not finished yet.'

NRC Handelsblad

Photo (© Ella Tilgenkamp)



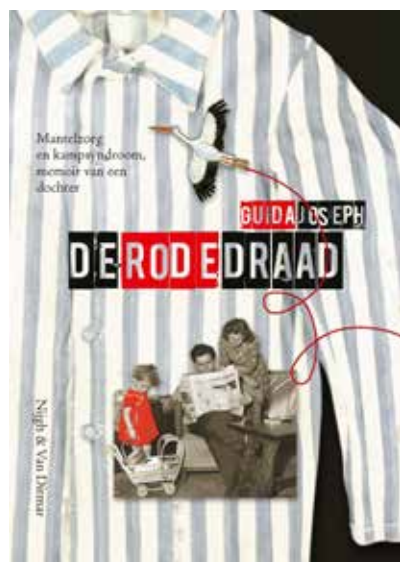
Author

Guida Joseph

English title

The Connecting Thread – Caregiving and Camp Syndrome: A Daughter’s Memoir

Cover of Dutch edition



Dutch title

De rode draad. Mantelzorg en kampsyndroom, memoir van een dochter

Year of publication

2020

Page count

232

Publisher

Nijgh & Van Ditmar

Rights

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Artist Guida Joseph has created an unusual documentary memoir on both her family’s origins and current experience by adopting a two-pronged approach via each of her parents. In the first part of the book, she relays her Jewish father’s roots and war trauma, incorporating sections of his own camp memoir and historical documentation. The second part describes the complexities of caring for her alcoholic, senile mother.

The author writes, ‘For as long as I can remember, I have been busy rescuing my parents and playing father and mother to two unhappy children.’ Working from a therapy-based approach, Joseph attempts to break free from the noose of her parents’ traumas.

Particularly the pieces on caring for her 94-year-old mother are recognizable, with its comical irritations, frustrations and downright despair. Her witty portrayal of her larger-than-life mother shows her in all her facets: fierce, quirky, brave, deaf, tricky and helpless. But her late father also comes to life, a man who made old-fashioned gruel for her every Sunday, but could also become incomprehensibly angry and lash out hard – not just at the dog.

This is a work of art, full of memories and reflections, that offers as much visual as reading pleasure. It is a graphic memoir in the style of Maira Kalman or Francine Oomen: tragicomic, with striking details. The author uses drawings, doodles, letters, old photos and historical documents to tell her story.

Sample pages



In the press

‘Funny and grim.’
NRC Handelsblad

Biography

Guida Joseph (b. 1949 in Amsterdam) works as an illustrator of children’s books, magazines and for television. She trained at the Rietveld Art Academy.



Section

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

Published

IN THE NETHERLANDS

Cover of Dutch edition



Tagline

The art of asking questions, according to Socrates

Author

Elke Wiss

English title

Socrates in Sneakers
— A philosophical guide to asking good questions

In a time when everyone trumpets over each other and opinions are quickly assigned the same value as facts, connection is often hard to find. Many of our conversations are more of a debate than a dialogue. We would rather speak than listen, we do not have time to ask questions. Drawing inspiration from Socrates and other philosophers, Elke Wiss shows us why we are so bad at asking good questions, and how we can become better at it.

In the press

'In Socrates in Sneakers, Elke Wiss makes a passionate plea for asking good questions that stimulate, enrich and deepen interpersonal contact.'

deleesclubvanalles.nl

'Practical philosopher Elke Wiss tells us what we can learn from Socrates about the art of a beautiful argument.'

[de Volkskrant](#)

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Publisher

Ambo Anthos

Rights

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Tagline

Debut by a 97-year-old

Cover of Dutch edition



Author

A.F. van Ravesteijn

English title

I Was There
— Forced Labourer in Germany 1942–1945

In the autumn of 1942, Louis van Ravesteijn, an office clerk born in The Hague, is, like thousands of other Dutch nineteen-year-olds, forced to work in Nazi Germany. The young man ends up in a prisoner-of-war camp where Russian and Ukrainian men and women must work under appalling conditions. He helps where he can and has to constantly weigh up who he can trust. Despite the life-threatening situation, he falls in love. Van Ravesteijn did not keep a journal and it was only much later in life that he wrote down his memories, making his debut at the age of 97. Shortly after publication he passed away. He left behind a unique document, one remarkably well-written and rich in evocative details.

In the press

'Few will imitate him: debuting at 97. A.F. van Ravesteijn did it. From the first sentence it is clear: he can write.'

[NRC Handelsblad](#)

Publisher

Cossee

Rights

Stella Rieck
rieck@cossee.nl

Tagline

Puberty as a time of opportunity and growth

Cover of Dutch edition



Publisher

Pluim

Rights

Evi Hoste

ehoste@pluim.nl

Author

Jelle Jolles

English title

Get to Know Your Child — About development, learning, thinking and the brain

Children and teenagers are ‘works in progress’. A child starts on the path towards adulthood at the age of eight and won't have reached its end until long after turning twenty. In that process, the role of parents and guardians is essential. Jelle Jolles, a professor of neuropsychology and the author of the bestselling *The Teenage Brain*, explains how you can better understand your child and give them the space to develop their learning, thinking and behaviour precisely in those teenage years. In this illuminating book, he argues for a change of attitude in our society: adolescence is a period of opportunity and possibility, not of doom and gloom.

In the press

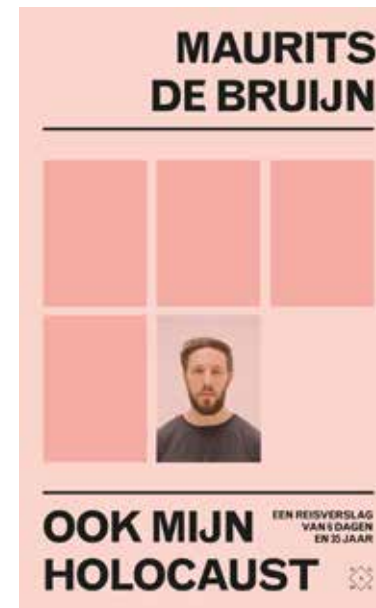
‘Jelle Jolles, author of books about teenage development, gives advice. What do we learn? Adolescents are not nearly as incomprehensible as we think.’

de Volkskrant

Tagline

A family history leaves its traces

Cover of Dutch edition



Publisher

Das Mag

Rights

Daniel van der Meer
daniel@dasmag.nl

Author

Maurits de Bruijn

English title

Not Only Your Holocaust — A journey of six days and thirty-five years

In *Not Only Your Holocaust*, Maurits de Bruijn examines how his mother's ordeals influenced his own life. It wasn't until he was an adult that he discovered, during a trip to Israel, that his mother was Jewish, and that, naturally, this made him Jewish too. When they were deported, her parents had entrusted his mother to Christian neighbours, who ended up raising her. With candour and irony, De Bruijn describes how this history had a knock-on effect.

In the press

‘Not Only Your Holocaust is a tender account of a journey, a family and a life. A book to treasure.’

Trouw

‘This personal account draws you in and makes you think.’

Nederlands Dagblad

RECENT TRANSLATIONS



Author

Rutger Bregman

Swedish title

**Folk flest er gode.
En ny fortelling om
menneskenaturen**

Original Dutch title

De meeste mensen
deugen

Published in

Norwegian by Spartacus
(2020)

Translated by

Guro Dimmen

Other translations

Armenian (Vernatun),
English (Bloomsbury),
Finnish (Atena), French
(Seuil), German (Rowohlt),
Italian (Feltrinelli),
Croatian (Naklada
Ljevak), Portuguese
(Planeta do Brasil),
Slovak (N. Press),
Swedish (Natur och
Kultur).



Author

Marian Donner

Italian title

**Manuale di autodistru-
zione. Perché dobbiamo
bere, sanguinare,
ballare e amare di più**

Original Dutch title

Zelfverwoestingsboek

Published in

Italian by Il Saggiatore
(2020)

Translated by

Marco Cavallo

Other translations

French (Le cherche midi),
German (Ullstein),
Spanish (Planeta).



Author

Bregje Hofstede

German title

**Die Wiederentdeckung
des Körpers. Essay über
Burn-out**

Original Dutch title

De herontdekking van
het lichaam

Published in

German by Oktaven
(2020)

Translated by

Christiane Burkhardt
and Janine Malz

Contains

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



Author

Linda Polman

Italian title

**Gente di nessuno.
Rifugiati e migranti in
Europa dal 1938 a oggi**

Original Dutch title

Niemand wil ze hebben

Published in

Italian by Luiss University
Press (2020)

Translated by

Olga Amagliani



Author

Frank Westerman

Swedish title

**Vi, människor.
Mänsklighetens
ursprung och våra
glömda förfäder**

Original Dutch title

Wij de mens

Published in

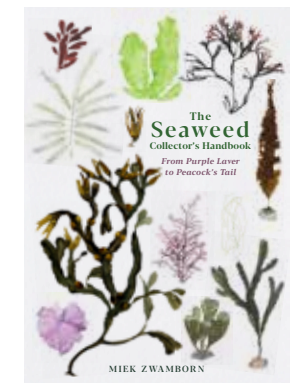
Swedish by Weyler förlag
(2020)

Translated by

Joakim Sundström

Other translations

English (Black Inc.),
French (Stock), German
(Aufbau), Italian
(Iperborea), Polish
(Agora), Spanish (Abada).



Author

Miek Zwamborn

English title

**The Seaweed
Collector's Handbook**

Original Dutch title

Wieren

Published in

English by Profile Books
(2020)

Translated by

Michele Hutchison

Other translations

German (Matthes &
Seitz), English (Greystone
Books (Can)).

About

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For more information, please see www.letterenfonds.nl/en/translation-subsidy

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for literature

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Solidarity protest against anti-black violence in the US and EU, in Amsterdam, June 2020.

