



NEW DUTCH

Frankfurt Book Fair
Issue Autumn 2023
Dutch Foundation
for Literature

FICTION

QUESTIONS

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

Who makes the selection?

Our aim is to showcase the best fiction from the Netherlands. Most titles will have been published recently and will have done very well in terms of reviews, sales and awards or nominations. Equally important is the question: 'Does it travel?' We work with an advisory panel, which gives us recommendations and input on new fiction.

Do you work with Dutch publishers and agents?

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

Are all the books in your brochure eligible for a grant?

Yes, they are, with a maximum subsidy of 100% of the translation costs for classics and 70% for fiction, based on the actual fee paid by the publisher, and with a maximum of 10,000 euros per translation grant.

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

Yes. Our decision will be based on three criteria: the literary quality of the book, the status of the publishing house and the quality of the translator.

Can you help us find a translator?

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

How do we apply for a translation subsidy?

We need copies of the contracts with the rights holders and the translator, plus the application form. You can submit these digitally through our website: www.letterenfonds.nl/en/translation-subsidy.

Meetings are held six times a year.

Can we invite a Dutch author for a promotional visit?

If you organise a good programme and offer the author accommodation, we can cover the travel costs:

www.letterenfonds.nl/en/travel-costs.

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer

Alcibiades

A spellbinding journey back in time to the Athens of antiquity and an astute analysis of present-day democracy

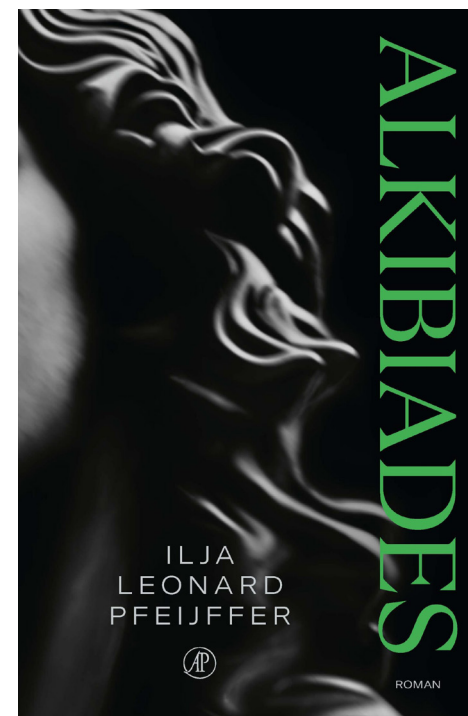
Alcibiades is a sweeping epic about the eponymous diplomat, general, Olympic champion and ‘most beautiful man in Athens’, who uses schemes and plots to bluff his way through the Peloponnesian War. This novel sheds light on the daring democratic experiment that took place two and a half millennia ago, while also serving as a cautionary tale about the destructive power of populism. Classicist and author Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer has utilised his erudition and knowledge of Classical literature and culture to paint a picture of the Greek politician, strategist and general Alcibiades in all his complexity.

Alcibiades (ca. 450-404 BCE) lived during turbulent times when the city-states of Athens and Sparta were at war. He grew up as a member of the privileged elite in Athens. At a young age he grew influential within the democratic assembly that met on the Pnyx. As the resident consul for Sparta he forged important diplomatic relationships.

After several minor triumphs on the battlefield, Alcibiades became convinced that he had to expand the Greek empire westward. He'd barely set off to conquer Sicily when a smear campaign against him was launched in Athens. He was convicted and sentenced to death. This is just the first of a series of narrow escapes,

glorious triumphs and painful defeats, in the process of which he ventures into the depths of Persia.

Pfeijffer portrays his protagonist as a cunning strategist with a knack for getting out of trouble. This book is an adventure novel as well as an apologia written by Alcibiades at the end of his life to defend himself against the accusations of treason and abuse of power. In everything he did, he argues, his ultimate goal was to restore Athenian democracy to its former glory. Pfeijffer leaves it up to the reader to decide how trustworthy and noble Alcibiades' intentions actually are. But his concerns about the well-being of democracy in the face of threats from populist politicians are sure to resonate with contemporary European readers.



‘The most ambitious historical novel to appear in the Dutch-speaking world to date.’

Trouw

‘Pfeijffer immerses readers in a world so vivid and rich in detail that it is wholly convincing.’

De Groene Amsterdammer

‘Alcibiades sets a new standard for the historical novel.’

Humo

‘Pfeijffer’s *Alcibiades* is many things at once: a character study of a brilliant and controversial politician, a Greek history lesson and an astute analysis of democracy.’

de Volkskrant

Publishing details

Alcibiades (2023)

944 pages (including 180 pages of endnotes)

280,000 words

75,000 copies sold

Sample translation available

Publisher

Arbeiderspers

Martijn Prins

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Rights sold

Czech Republic (Host), Germany

(Piper), Italy (Ponte alle Grazie), Spain

(Acantilado), Brazil (Tordesilhas)

Translated titles

Please see: en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer

(b. 1968) has published poetry, stage plays, essays, columns, travelogues, stories, political satires and nine novels. In *Het ware leven, een roman* (Real Life. A Novel, 2006) he set out to play a game with world literature. *La Superba* (2014) showed Pfeijffer's politically engaged side and won him the Libris Literature Prize. In 2017 his novel *Peachez, een romance* came out, followed, in 2018, by his bestselling novel *Grand Hotel Europa*, which sold over 350,000 copies in the Netherlands and has been translated into 24 languages. *Alcibiades* is his first work of historical fiction.

Photo: Stephan Vanfleteren



Sacha Bronwasser

Listen

An ingenious but relentless story of Paris, art and terrorism

This intricately constructed novel succeeds in generating enormous tension while postponing clarification, so that the reader hurtles through the dark towards a satisfying, overwhelming denouement that reveals the inexorable logic binding Philippe, Marie and Flo: a French bourgeois cursed with the second sight, a disillusioned Dutch student and a self-obsessed art photographer.

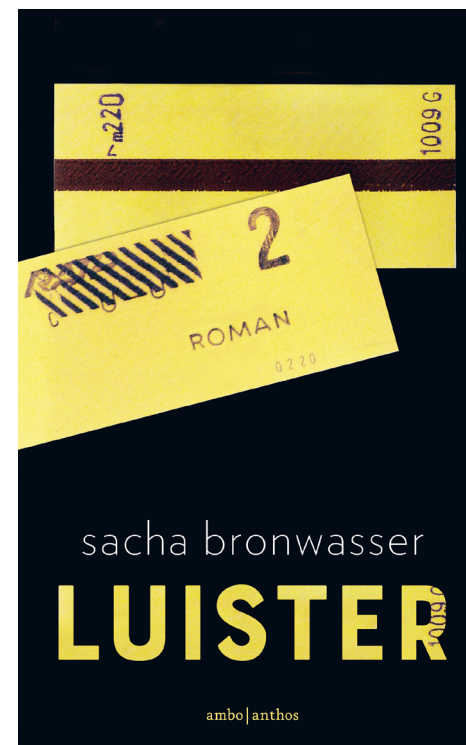
After an intriguing prologue, the author takes us to Paris in the late eighties where Philippe, a happily married French bourgeois, is suffering from a recurrence of the prophetic visions that have afflicted him since childhood. As the city reels from a spate of terrorist attacks, Philippe turns into a neurotic stalker, increasingly focussed on Eloise, the family's new au pair. This all-consuming obsession resembles nothing so much as complete sexual infatuation and threatens to destroy his family.

The next section reveals the aftermath as the novel's narrator, Marie, a former art student, arrives three years later as Eloise's most recent successor. Gradually Marie comes to understand the processes that led to the dysfunctional family she has encountered. At the same time she starts to heal, recovering from the damage she suffered at the hands of her

ruthlessly manipulative mentor, Flo, and developing the love of French that will become a key factor in her adult life.

In the final section, set in 2015, when Paris again suffers a major and even more catastrophic terrorist attack, the issues raised in the prologue are resolved and we learn not just how the three main characters are bound together, but also the immaculate logic behind the novel's construction.

Within this suspenseful, gripping story, *Listen* provides fascinating portraits of the complacent world of the French upper middle class, the life of an au pair and the machinations of modern art. At the same time, the book is an informed, insightful depiction of Paris that rises far above the usual clichés. Bronwasser's novel is a literary statement, a calling card for the future and, most importantly, an irresistible read.



'There is something bitter in this novel, sorrow about lost opportunities, thwarted ambitions, desire, but at the same time the writer refuses to surrender to it. This contrast between bitterness and resistance always produces compelling literature [...] After finishing the book, I sat quietly for a while and stared into space. Shaken and moved.'

De Groene Amsterdammer

'Bronwasser employs a logical narrative structure, one line flowing naturally into the other. Rare, a book that's such a 'good read' but still provides enough food for thought.'

de Volkskrant

Publishing details

Luister (2023)

256 pages

65,000 words

36,000 copies sold

Sample translation available

Publisher

Ambo Anthos

Susanne Rudloff

srudloff@amboanthos.nl

Rights sold

Germany (Arche), Norway

(Solum Bokvennen), USA (Penguin)

Sacha Bronwasser

(b. 1968) is an art historian, presenter and curator, and former art critic.

Although her first novel, *Niets is gelogen* (All True, 2019), was generally well received, it is only now, on the publication of her second, that she has broken through to a wider readership. *Luister* (Listen) appeared in February 2023 and has already been reprinted twelve times. Critically acclaimed at home in the Netherlands, English, German and Norwegian translations are in production.

Photo: Bert Wisse



Fien Veldman

Xerox

Absurdist debut novel about a young woman's relationship with her printer

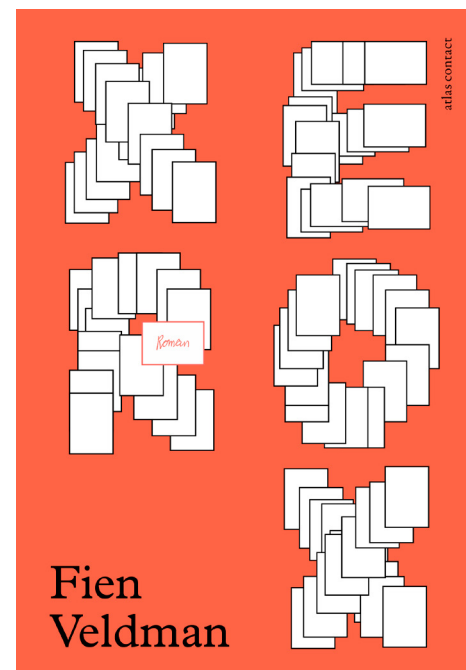
In a European city, an unnamed customer service representative works for a start-up. Printing letters is her only responsibility. She grew up in an underprivileged environment, she has a life-threatening stress-induced allergy and she's very lonely. Her closest relationship is with her printer. In the confines of her office, she talks to the machine about her fears, her past and her dreams.

One day the woman is meant to receive a package from an anonymous sender, but it's been delivered to the wrong address. She frantically searches for it. The package and the printer grow into obsessions and she seems to be slowly losing her hold on reality. Then the printer – her partner, friend, child and pet all rolled into one – falters, just like she does. When her boss finds out she's been talking to a machine, she's sent home, which means she is not near her beloved Xerox anymore. She gets fired and the printer is put out on the curb. The novel ends when a garbage man reunites the woman with her printer.

Xerox could be considered a scathing critique of office culture – that is, if the woman cared enough about her job to critique it – and social class. But even more accurately, it serves as a wonderfully funny reminder that the world is

bigger than the confines of an office cubicle. In writing about them with great precision, Fien Veldman lifts mundane moments out of tidy offices and messy city streets, forcing us to reconsider them as beautiful.

Xerox is a funny and visionary debut, reminiscent in tone and subject of Halle Butler's *The New Me* and Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*, while the portrayal of the eccentric outsider brings to mind Herman Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener*. This is a story that will resonate with everyone, as we've probably all had the experience of completing seemingly random tasks at office jobs while reflecting on our place in society. *Xerox* is a moving and witty novel about class difference in late capitalist society and the longing for humanity in ourselves and the things around us.



'Xerox captures the zeitgeist, a whole society, perhaps even the weltschmerz of a whole generation. It is a story about class differences, social alienation and (not) coping with the present. Hidden in almost every sentence is an astute insight into our society, our modern cities, our working lives, and of course our relationships. For me, the magic of Xerox lies above all in its clear-sightedness and wit, in its subtle and engaging prose. It is a sublime work of literary fiction.'

Lena Däuker, who acquired the German translation rights for Hanser

'You frequently wonder who is really the crazy one here – the protagonist or society.'

Het Parool

Publishing details

Xerox (2023)

206 pages

54,000 words

Sample translation available

Publisher

Atlas Contact

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Rights

Sebes & Bisseling

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Paul Sebes

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Rights sold

Germany (Hanser Verlag),

UK (Head of Zeus, world English rights)

Fien Veldman

(b. 1990) was the 2022 recipient of the Joost Zwagerman Essay Prize for her essay 'Not really making it', about growing up in a working-class neighbourhood in Leeuwarden. In 2018 she won the Elise Mathilde Essay Award for her essay 'Borders, doors and eyes open'. From 2010 until 2016, she worked as a theatre critic. And, of course, she has also worked in customer service.

Photo: Laila Cohen



Tommy Wieringa

Nirvana

Sweeping family epic in which a grandson grapples with his grandfather's troubling past

This ambitious new novel by Tommy Wieringa brings together a number of recurring themes in his work: the loner's battle with his surroundings, and life in the shadow of absent parental figures. The protagonist, Hugo Adema, spends three years of his adolescence living on his grandparents' estate, separate from his twin brother. He experiences this as an exile from his own family, with whom he'll never feel at home again.

In 2016, Hugo is a renowned painter whose life has ground to a halt since Loïs, the love of his life, left him. He returns to his grandparents' estate to investigate the past of his hundred-year-old grandfather Willem Adema. Willem is revered by the rest of the family, and the outside world considers him a visionary hydraulic engineer, though with a tainted past; during the Second World War he initially joined the SS before subsequently becoming a member of the Resistance. The family made excuses for the former while putting him on a pedestal for the latter. Hugo, for his part, has a complicated relationship with his grandfather. They are both gifted loners and unlucky in love, but more than anything they are opposites. Willem Adema represents Nazism and the fossil fuel industry, whereas his

grandson increasingly chooses the path of art and meditation.

Hugo feels alienated from the times he lives in and from his right-wing family. His sense of isolation only grows when his beloved governess, Beth, passes away. Hugo unearths his grandfather's long-lost diaries, which cast a shocking new light on his wartime years, and decides to use them in his latest art project. Around the same time, Loïs exhibits nude photos of him. His erstwhile muse has turned him into an object – it's a betrayal Hugo has a hard time coping with. However, it doesn't keep him from proceeding with his own art project, which exposes his grandfather as a war criminal. It will mark his comeback as an artist, but it will also cause an irreparable rift with his family.

Nirvana is a complex and compelling novel with themes that call to mind Michel Houellebecq's *The Map and the Territory*. The intimate story of an artist trying to figure out how he feels about a problematic ancestor is interwoven with reflections on the past century. With *Nirvana*, columnist, essayist and novelist Wieringa has written his magnum opus.



'Almost 500 pages of moving, thought-provoking literature. Absorbing and unputdownable.'

Nieuwsblad van het Noorden

'A wide-ranging novel, historical and strongly contemporary, intensely Dutch yet worldly [...] Wieringa maintains a constant grip on his rich material, at home in all surroundings and every period – or, rather, at home and alienated. It is almost as if he is describing it all from inside and outside simultaneously, criticising and strongly empathising in fluent evocative paragraphs.'

Het Parool

Publishing details

Nirvana (2023)

480 pages

127,000 words

Sample translation available

Publisher

De Bezige Bij

Marijke Nagtegaal

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Uta Matten

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Rights sold

Italy (Iperborea), Poland (Pauza)

Translated titles

Please see: en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Tommy Wieringa

(b. 1967) is the author of *Alles over Tristan* (Everything About Tristan, 2002) and *Joe Speedboat* (2005), his staggeringly successful breakthrough novel which went on to sell 300,000 copies. Wieringa's work has been translated into languages as disparate as French, Hebrew and Korean. *Dit zijn de namen* (These Are the Names, 2012) earned him the Libris Literature Prize and the Inktaap young readers' award. *The Death Of Murat Idrissi*, Sam Garrett's translation of *De dood van Murat Idrissi* (2017), was longlisted for the 2019 Man Booker International Prize. His most recent novel, *De heilige Rita* (The Blessed Rita, 2017), received the Bookspot Readers and Literature Prize, the Gouden Boekenuil audience award and the Inktaap.

Photo: Keke Keukelaar



Cobi van Baars

The Unintended

Heart-wrenching novel about twins separated by adoption

In 1960s Limburg – a deeply Catholic part of the Netherlands – a young, unmarried woman gives birth to twins in a ‘home for unwed mothers’ but has to give the girls up for adoption. At four months old, Aaf and Annemarieke are adopted by separate families. While Aaf grows up in a loving family, Annemarieke’s childhood is cold and lonely. It’s not until they are twenty-one years old that they find out about each other’s existence.

When Aaf learns that she has a sister, she decides to look her up. The two sisters soon grow close, although they find themselves butting heads at times. Once reunited, can they still consider themselves unique as individuals? They both grow keenly aware that their fortunes could so easily have been reversed.

As they embark on the search for their biological parents, the young women find themselves confronted with the bureaucratic maze of Youth Services and a mother who has serious mental health issues. They manage to track down their biological father, now living a carefree life in Greece, unaware of their existence. Despite his family’s attempts to prevent them from meeting, the book ends with a loving reunion.

The perspective alternates between the various characters and an omniscient narrator whose appeals to the reader draw you even deeper into the story.

Cobi van Baars weaves the lives and inner worlds of her protagonists into an impressive narrative, providing seemingly offhanded insight into her characters’ minds. Her prose is deft and evocative, with generous doses of humour. With this gripping and moving book, Cobi van Baars demonstrates her keen psychological insight and establishes herself as a powerful voice.



‘She must have a tremendous sense of empathy. She deftly exposes how the course of events affects each character differently – everyone suffers in their own way.’

Trouw

‘The Unintended by Cobi van Baars is an adoption drama full of infuriating injustice – and a remarkable literary achievement.’

Het Parool

‘Hope, time, fate and happenstance, the roles played by strangers, the Church, government bodies, nature and nurture, and how views on these subjects shift over time: The Unintended is a spellbinding, tightly crafted novel about all this and more.’

NRC

Publishing details
De onbedoelden (2023)
224 pages
50,000 words
11,000 copies sold
Sample translation available

Rights
Atlas Contact
Hayo Deinum
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Cobi van Baars
(b. 1967) is an author and a painter. She earned a first-class honours degree in Dutch Literature with a thesis on the relationship between literature and the visual arts. She published her debut in 2017. *The Unintended* is her fourth novel.

Photo: TradeMark Fotografie



Saskia Goldschmidt

Kukuruznik

A moving family saga interwoven with the forgotten history of courageous female aviation pioneers

After the death of her father Boaz, Noa finds a chest full of documents about courageous female aviators and a stack of letters. As she studies this inheritance, she begins to realise that this chest also contains the key to her own past.

Her father's first letter is addressed to Noa. He writes about his research into female pilots in the interwar period and tells her these documents will reveal something about his own past. Then Noa reads the exciting stories about female aviators all over the world who, in the early days of aviation, got into rickety little planes and tried to break records. She reads about Rosy Rose, the first Black woman pilot in the US. About Adrienne Bolland, *the enfant terrible* who only got her pilot's license so she could pay off a gambling debt, but ended up being the first ever woman to fly over the Andes in a fragile little plane, eight years before Antoine de Saint-Exupéry followed suit. Noa reads about Hanna Reitsch, the Leni Riefenstahl of aviation who, in the final days of the war, was still being sent on missions by the Führer. And she finds letters from Doris, a young woman who faithfully kept writing to her husband after he'd died in a crash. Noa begins to understand why female pilots from the past were so in love with flying: because

for a moment their world, in which their fates had been decided for them, would shift – even if it was only for as long as they were up there, suspended above everything.

Noa wonders why her father wrote so much about female pilots and so little about the tragic fate of her own Jewish family. Noa's parents met after the war and got married, but there was a lack of real connection in their marriage. They were traumatised by the war and they were only able to connect through music. Then, in her father's last letter, Noa reads that at one point, before the war, he was married to Jente, Doris' daughter. They had a baby, also called Noa. But when the war broke out Boaz was forced to stay in Europe, and Jente and their little girl died in Chicago. It wasn't until after the war that Boaz heard this heartbreaking news.

After reading this final letter, everything falls into place: finally Noa understands her parents' past – and her own.

Kukuruznik is a rich, carefully crafted novel about courage and resilience, about family secrets and survivor's guilt. And about the art of learning to see in the dark, like the Russian women in the Red Army who learned to fly in Kukuruzniks. By incorporating the stories of all the groundbreaking female pilots, Saskia Goldschmidt finally gives them their rightful place in the history of aviation.



'These are tales of derring-do, chutzpah, determination, resilience, ambition, drive – because these incredible women possessed all of those qualities, "despite" their gender. But their experience as females in the field also means that these are tales of loneliness and roadblocks – because they were up against implicit prejudice and explicit barriers to access. (...) From the inspirational characters to their frustrating experiences with being patronised and excluded to the compelling details of the trials and tribulations they went through – these well-told stories make for highly enjoyable reading.'

NRC

Publishing details

Kukuruznik (2023)

400 pages

120,000 words

5,000 copies sold

Sample translation available

Publisher

Meulenhoff

Orli Naamani

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Rights

Sebes & Bisseling

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Paul Sebes

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Translated titles

Please see: en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Saskia Goldschmidt

(b. 1954) made her debut in 2011 with *Verplicht gelukkig, portret van een familie* (Obliged to be Happy: Portrait of a Family), the story of her search for her Jewish family history that had previously been swept under the rug. In 2012 she published the successful novel *De hormoonfabriek* (The Hormone Factory), which was followed by *De voddenkoningin* (The Vintage Queen) and *Shocked Earth*. She also edited *Dagboek uit Bergen-Belsen* (Diary from Bergen-Belsen) by Renata Laqueur.

Photo: Krijn van Noordwijk



Joke van Leeuwen

I Thought That You

Razor-sharp and tragicomic story of a love affair gone wrong, told by a narcissist

I Thought That You is about manipulation in a romantic relationship and a protagonist who gradually shows himself to be a toxic individual. The nameless narrator feels hard done by; he has a drinking problem and is prone to fits of rage. He is a painter who compares himself to Van Gogh when in reality he hasn't got much further than an exhibition in a neighborhood restaurant.

He is drawn to Zigi, his new girlfriend, for her good looks and successful career as a classical violinist. She spends a lot of time rehearsing, which frustrates him – why isn't she more available to gush over his paintings? 'An artist needs someone who is devoted,' he says, an implicit reference to Van Gogh's sister-in-law, who made him famous.

I Thought That You only gives us his side of the story. We never learn the narrator's name, but we do find out virtually everything else about him. In brief chapters of lucid prose crackling with hatred and envy, the failed painter describes his relationship with Zigi, his failed marriage and relationship with his daughter, the disdain he feels toward his parents and the rest of the world.

Though he leaves a great deal out, before long his tone, his arrogance, his sense of having been wronged by the

world and his lack of self-awareness tell us more than enough. He's constantly making excuses for himself – nothing is ever his fault. And yet you can't help but get the impression that he is the problem. In his attempts to hide he is in fact giving himself away. In spite of it all, readers will find themselves riveted. His twisted logic, his way of thinking and talking – from his perspective, it all makes perfect sense. And because his irritation with the little things in life is so funny and relatable, you're with him right up until the next angry outburst, even as you want to shout at Zigi to get the hell away from this guy.



'A razor-sharp portrait (...) The voice of this antihero narrator is as shocking as it is irresistible.'

Het Parool

'I Thought That You turns out to be more subtle and nuanced than it seems at first glance. Don't be too quick to judge – this novel will get under your skin.'

NRC

Publishing details

Ik dacht dat jij (2023)

140 pages

24,000 words

5,000 copies sold

Sample translation available

Publisher

Querido

Martijn Prins

m.prins@singeluitgeverijen.nl

Translated titles

Please see: en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Joke van Leeuwen

(b. 1952) writes prose and poetry for children and adults as well as working as an illustrator and performer. Her novel *Alles nieuw* (All New) was shortlisted for the AKO Literature Prize, *De onervarenen* (The Inexperienced) was shortlisted for the Libris Literature Prize and *Feest van het begin* (Feast of the Beginning) earned the AKO Literature Prize. She received the Gouden Ganzenveer (Golden Goose Feather) and the Constantijn Huygens Prize for her body of work.



Esther Verhoef

Alter Ego

Riveting psychological thriller about a top chef, his young wife and her lover

Esther Verhoef's books have sold almost three million copies, making her one of the most successful writers in the Netherlands. Her thriller *Alter Ego* is widely considered her strongest book to date.

After a difficult childhood in a dysfunctional family, things finally seem to be going well for Lynn. She is married to Camiel Storm, a celebrity chef twenty years her senior with a thriving television career, and she does the PR for his Michelin-starred restaurant. To the outside world they look like a real power couple. But appearances are deceptive – while Camiel cooks up the most incredible food every night, Lynn, who is often alone and unhappy, embarks on a passionate but destructive affair with young, temperamental Laurens.

Ambitious plans to expand the restaurant put even more pressure on Lynn and Camiel's marriage. And to make matters worse, Camiel's ex-wife, who still retains a share in the company, won't leave them alone. Suddenly inexplicable things start happening. A prowler circles Lynn and Camiel's villa and Lynn receives terrifying threats. Who is targeting the couple?

The story moves back and forth between this nerve-racking present and flashbacks to Lynn's childhood, when she would lie in bed at night petrified as her

alcoholic father abused her mother. This experience permanently scarred her. As her own life gets more and more stressful, she too starts drinking more; sometimes she's no longer sure what is real and what isn't. Is she losing her hold on reality?

Alter Ego is a hair-raising thriller with complex, well-drawn characters. The reader is constantly wrongfooted – there are surprising plot twists all the way to the very last page, making this a classic page-turner and Verhoef's strongest book to date.



'Alter Ego is Verhoef's best book to date. Marvelously written, with layered characters and a more-than-convincing plot that manages to surprise you till the very last line.'

Vrij Nederland Thrillergids

'Esther Verhoef is clearly among the literary elite in our country.'

Algemeen Dagblad

Publishing details

Alter Ego (2023)

416 pages

80,000 words

80,000 copies sold

Sample translation available

Publisher

Prometheus

Nikki Verkerk

foreignrights@pbo.nl

Rights

Cooke McDermid Literary Agency

Hana El Niwairi, Suzanne Brandreth

rights@cookemcdermid.com

Translated titles

Please see: en.vertalingendatabase.nl

Esther Verhoef

(b. 1968) is one of the Netherlands' most successful and versatile authors. No other writer of thriller fiction has received and been nominated for as many prizes. Her psychological thrillers and novels have sold almost three million copies in the Netherlands. She also writes under the pseudonym Nova Lee Maier.

Photo: Mark Uyl



Marga Minco

An Empty House

A restrained novel about the lives of two young Jewish women who lose their loved ones in the Second World War

On 10 July 2023 Marga Minco, one of the most renowned authors in the Netherlands, died at the age of 103. She leaves behind a small but impressive body of work in which memories of the Second World War and the Holocaust play a central role. She writes about these subjects with great restraint: 'You have to write soberly about a dramatic event, or it becomes melodrama. I wanted to say it as precisely as possible. Never two words if just one could do.'

Her novel *An Empty House* (1966) is an example of the ingenious way Minco seamlessly interweaves the present and the past through the use of brief flashbacks. The book consists of three episodes, which are three days from the life of the protagonist, Sepha. She is a young Jewish woman who has spent the war in hiding, during which she embarked on an affair with Mark, who lived in hiding with her.

They experience the Liberation together, after which Sepha goes to the countryside for a while to recuperate. Hitchhiking back home, she meets Yona. The two women exchange stories about their time spent in hiding. When they get back to Amsterdam, Sepha expects to see Mark, but he is not home. She puts her hand into the mailbox of the neighbor's house, where she used to go play as a

child: 'I felt the cold against my fingers, the cold of a big hole that the wind blew through.'

The house is an important symbol in the book – the epigraph by Kafka ('houses are so much wiser than the people who stare at them') is another allusion to this motif. The house symbolises a lost touchstone in life. The second part of the book takes place on a holiday two years after the Liberation. Sepha and Mark are married now but both are having affairs. He mainly just wants to party where she buries her feelings. When she gets the definitive confirmation from the Red Cross that her parents and sister died in the concentration camp, her reaction is characteristically understated: 'I cover over the letters with other papers, like someone shoveling sand into a drawer.'

The most important themes in the novel are survivor's guilt, antisemitism (which is still rampant after the war), and the impossibility of going on living. Sepha wants to continue with her life but feels detached from the world and has a hard time with intimacy; Yona stays stuck in memories she can't relinquish. Minco's exacting prose paints a moving, indelible portrait of two women each trying, and failing, to forge their own path after the Liberation.



'Her small, moving novel *An Empty House* is a literary document of our post-war history, along with her equally intense war chronicle *Bitter Herbs*.'

Elsevier

'Minco is a masterful storyteller. With Sepha, she created a complex female character limping her way to an uncertain future.'

Bookgazette (Germany)

Publishing details

Een leeg huis (1966)

162 pages

40,000 words

100,000 copies sold

Full English translation available

Publisher

Prometheus

Nikki Verkerk

foreignrights@pbo.nl

Translated titles

Ein Leeres Haus: Germany

(Arco Verlag, 2020)

Marga Minco

(1920-2023) made her debut with *Bitter Herbs: A Small Chronicle*. A touchstone of European Holocaust literature, the book has sold half a million copies and was translated into 20 different languages. New work followed at irregular intervals: *De andere kant* (The Other Side, 1959), *Een leeg huis* (An Empty House, 1966), *De val* (The Fall, 1983) and *De glazen brug* (The Glass Bridge, 1986). She also published short stories and children's books. In 2005, Marga Minco was awarded the prestigious Constantijn Huygens Prize for her oeuvre and in 2018 she received the P.C. Hooft Prize, one of the most important Dutch literary awards.

Photo: Hans van Dijk



Micky Dirkzwager Blink & Breathe

Tragicomic, autobiographical graphic novel about a student who overcomes an eating disorder by learning to let go

Micky is an art student and she can't bear life. Or to be more accurate, she sees bears everywhere, all the time. 'Maybe you should just stay in bed, where it's safe and cosy,' the bears tell her. The bears get in her way, and yet she can't cope without them.

Should we get that deep fryer? Micky's roommates wonder. She doesn't think so. She lives in a flatshare in Utrecht with sweet, fun, quirky flatmates. The reader accompanies her as she is accepted into art school, deals with her painting teacher's baffling feedback and learns how to critique other people's work. Everything should be going well and yet something isn't right. Micky is a perfectionist and feels burned out. When she finally goes to see a therapist, she is told she doesn't have burnout – she has an eating disorder. It takes some time before Micky, too, realises the perks of a deep fryer.

Dirkzwager describes Micky's problems with tongue-in-cheek hyperbole and lots of humour, both visually and in the text. Her way of drawing and writing is fresh, surprising and engaging. Her metaphors are brought to life: they become characters in her story and she engages in a dialogue with each of them before they ultimately part ways.

Blink & Breathe is part of the growing genre of graphic nonfiction in which

cartoonists depict their lives, relationships and dilemmas. Like her fellow cartoonists both in the Netherlands and beyond, Dirkzwager tells her story in a way that will resonate with a wide audience.

Micky Dirkzwager

(b. 1998) is an illustrator, cartoonist and violinist. After studying psychology for a year, she changed track and went to Utrecht School of the Arts to study illustration. *Blink & Breathe* is her graduation project. She published her first work when she was still in art school, including several children's books and *Dat is dan jouw probleem* (Well, That's Your Problem, 2018), an anthology of autobiographical comics.

Photo: Gert Jan Pos



Publishing details
Knipperen & Ademen (2023)
208 pages
Approximately 6,200 words
Full color

Publisher
Scratch Books
Chris Mokken
chris.mokken@scratchbooks.nl



'Dirkzwager's Blink & Breathe is a graphic journey of discovery that goes far beyond your garden-variety autobiographical comic.'

9e kunst

'A book that will have you roaring with laughter one moment and leave you speechless the next – an impressive achievement. In short: highly recommended, especially since Micky Dirkzwager is very stylistically versatile too, and readers will find themselves in awe of her artwork.'

Moors Magazine

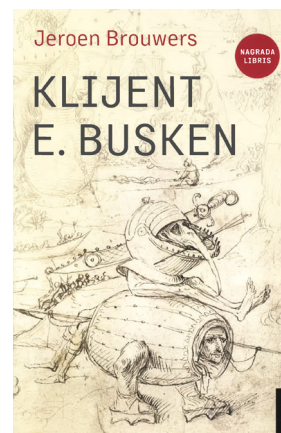
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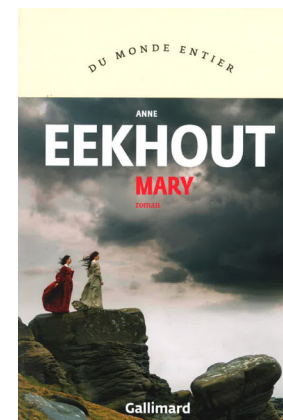
Gerbrand Bakker
Berberin Oğlu
(The Hairdresser's Son)
Translated into Turkish by
Gül Özlen for Metis, 2023.



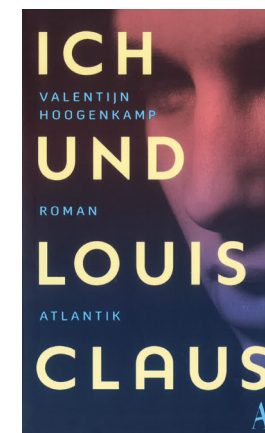
Hanna Bervoets
[Bèi xiāoshī de tiē wén]
(We Had To Remove This Post)
Translated into Complex
Chinese by Jerry Kuo for
ACME Publishing, 2023.



Jeroen Brouwers
Klijent E. Busken
(Client E. Busken)
Translated into Croatian by
Svetlana Grubić Samaržija
for Naklada Ljevak, 2023.



Anne Eekhout
Mary
(Mary and the Birth of
Frankenstein)
Translated into French by
Isabelle Rosselin for
Gallimard, 2023.



Valentijn Hoogenkamp
Ich und Louis Claus
(Adoring Louis Claus)
Translated into German
by Stefanie Ochel for
Hoffmann und Campe,
2023.



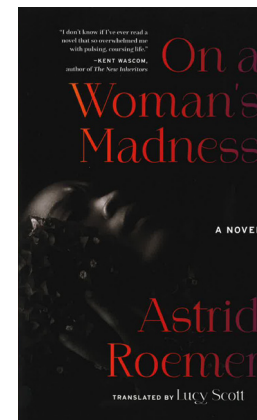
Tobi Lakmaker
Historien om min seksualitet
(The History of my Sexuality)
Translated into Norwegian
by Hedda Vormeland for
Aschehoug, 2023.



Eva Meijer
Il nuovo fiume
(The New River)
Translated into Italian
by Stefano Musilli for
Nottetempo, 2023.



Marieke Lucas Rijneveld
[Fukai na yūyami]
(The Discomfort of Evening)
Translated into Japanese
by Yumiko Kunimori for
Hayakawa Publishing, 2023.



Astrid H. Roemer
On a Woman's Madness
(Over de gekte van een
vrouw)
Translated into English by
Lucy Scott for Two Lines
Press, 2023.



Barbara Stok
La filósofa, el perro y la boda
(The Philosopher, the Dog
and the Wedding)
Translated into Spanish by
Maria Rosich for Salamandra
Graphic, 2023.

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

Barbara den Ouden, Denise Larsen and Tiziano Perez will be present at the Frankfurt Bookfair (4.1 F54), and will be more than happy to make an appointment or arrange a videocall with you.



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The text about *Xerox* was based on the pitch by Sebes&Bisseling.
The text about *I Thought That You* was based on a review by Dries Muus in *Het Parool*.

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***'Alcibiades sets a new standard
for the historical novel.'***

Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer **Alcibiades** 2

***'Rare, a book that's such a
'good read' but still provides
enough food for thought.'***

Sacha Bronwasser **Listen** 4

***'It is a sublime work
of literary fiction.'***

Fien Veldman **Xerox** 6

***'Almost 500 pages of
moving, thought-provoking
literature. Absorbing and
unputdownable.'***

Tommy Wieringa **Nirvana** 8

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crafted novel.'***

Cobi van Baars **The Unintended** 10

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Saskia Goldschmidt **Kukuruznik** 12

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Joke van Leeuwen **I Thought That You** 14

***'Esther Verhoef is clearly
among the literary elite
in our country.'***

Esther Verhoef **Alter Ego** 16

***'Minco is a masterful
storyteller.'***

Marga Minco **An Empty House** 18

***'A book that will have you roaring
with laughter one moment and
leave you speechless the next.'***

Micky Dirkwager **Blink&Breathe** 20