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Six BOOKS

FROM HOLLAND AND FLANDERS

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INTRODUCTION

For years J.J. Voskuil's reputation rested on just one book: *Bij nader inzien* ('On Second Thoughts', 1963), a precise and gripping account of the life led by a group of Amsterdam students in the early fifties. In 1996 the impending publication of new work by Voskuil was announced: a five-thousand-page seven-novel cycle entitled *Het bureau* ('The Bureau'). The first three books have already appeared to an enthusiastic response and Voskuil's readers eagerly await the next. The second volume, *Vuile handen* ('Dirty Hands'), was nominated for this year's Libris Literature Prize.

Early this year Marcel Möring's long-awaited new novel appeared. After the great success of his previous one, *Het grote verlangen* (*The Great Longing*), which won the AKO Literature Prize, has been translated into ten languages and has sold more than one hundred thousand copies in the Netherlands alone, Möring spent five years quietly working on *In Babylon*. The resulting book is nothing short of a masterpiece: a family chronicle, adventure novel, fairytale collection, Gothic novel and love story all in one.

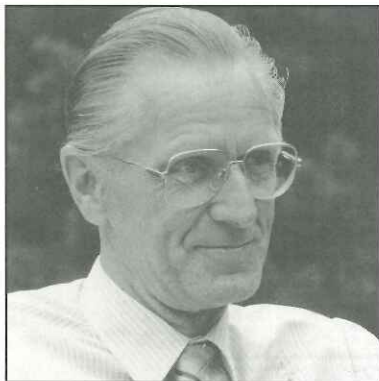
The poet, essayist and author Benno Barnard was born in the Netherlands but has been living in Belgium for many years. *Door God bij Europa verwekt* ('Belgium: Europe's Bastard Son') is his declaration of love for Belgium as land of disunity, decaying cities and decided tolerance.

Patricia de Martelaere and Kristien Hemmerechts are leading figures in contemporary Flemish literature. Hemmerechts's novels and short stories have been popular for years. Her new novel *Margot en de engelen* ('Margot and the Angels') describes a girl who runs away from home and ends up joining a sect which ultimately commits collective suicide.

Patricia de Martelaere reaped a great deal of success in 1994 with a collection of clear, expressive and stimulating essays entitled *Een verlangen naar ontroostbaarheid* ('A Longing to be Inconsolable'). A second volume has now appeared. In *Verrassingen* ('Surprises') she once again makes great thinkers and authors accessible to the public at large, unearthing surprising new insights for herself along the way.

Finally, a Dutch writer who writes in Frisian, the language spoken in the northern Dutch province of Friesland. Durk van der Ploeg is one of this language's most important writers. His book *Reis naar de Kalkman* ('Journey to the Kalkman') deals with an episode drawn from the occupation of Friesland and its repercussions in the early seventies when a German veteran returns to the village where he was once stationed.

THE EDITORS



Durk van der Ploeg

REIS NEI DE KALKMAN

Journey to the Kalkman

Durk van der Ploeg (b. 1930) has been publishing poetry and prose in the Frisian language since 1959. In 1974 the Bezige Bij published a Dutch translation of his novel *Een vers graf* ('A Fresh Grave'). His poetry and short stories have won numerous awards. His most recent publications, mainly set in northeast Friesland, deal chiefly with the Second World War and its repercussions. *Reis nei de Kalkman* is the third part of a cycle: four independent novels covering the community of Dongeradeel during the Depression and the War. The complete cycle consists of: *De Jacht* ('The Hunt', 1988), *It Wrede Foarjier* ('The Cruel Spring', 1994), *Reis nei de Kalkman* (1995) and *It Lekken oer de Spegel* ('The Sheet over the Mirror', 1995).

Publishing details

Reis nei de Kalkman (1995)

207 pp. 1,500 copies sold

RIGHTS

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For years Günther Ewaldsen has owned a holiday home in Nes, on the coast of Friesland. After his divorce he begins a relationship with his Frisian neighbour, Anna Richter, the relatively young widow of a former resistance member. Anna's relationship with Günther is ambivalent, feeling, as she does, both love and guilt towards the past. When Günther tries to remodel his house and Anna's into one living area she can no longer avoid feeling that her lover still acts like the occupier. The story reaches its dramatic climax in 1970 on Remembrance Day when it becomes clear that the villagers are unable to tolerate Günther Ewaldsen's presence any longer. He falls victim to a kangaroo court and is later found dead on the Kalkman sandbank.

Reis nei de Kalkman is more than just a story about the fate of Anna and Günther; it considers the wartime experiences of different Germans who were stationed around the village of Nes. One is Kaspar August Klingemann, an adherent of the Confessional Church, who deserted in 1944 and lived in hiding at Anna's family home until the end of the War. Another is Wolfgang Schöde who was a *Feldwebel* with the coast guard near Nes between 1942 and 1945. The author gives a subtle account of their behaviour during and after the War.

Reis nei de Kalkman provides a panoramic picture of the War, the resistance, and how northeast Friesland coped. The area's characteristic mud flats serve as an atmospheric backdrop for a consideration of universal human problems. It is also an up-to-date novel, which tries to answer the question as to whether Germans should be allowed to participate in our Remembrance Day services and Liberation Day celebrations?

One of the very best Frisian books about World War II.

Jelle Krol in LEEUWARDER COURANT

The echo of World War Two resounds skilfully through these books. But I could still imagine them being just as easily set in the Balkans.

Jacobus Quiryn Smink in HJIR

Reis nei de Kalkman is an ambitious novel about what happens when Germans return to Friesland, this time as holiday-makers. (...) Durk van der Ploeg pays a great deal of attention to the Germans' backgrounds and does it with sympathy. Günther and his family also suffered at the hands of Hitler.

Doeke Sijens in TROTWAER