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Rediscovered Classics



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Ri Cossée-Bommeljé

MY MOTHER'S BOOKSHELF

Eva Cossée

My mother (Ri Cossée-Bommeljé, 1919 – 2011) had to break off her studies during the German occupation of the Netherlands. Then she met my father and supported him in his resistance activities. After the war she continued her education, looked after their three children, worked as a Religious Studies teacher, learned seven languages, and read (almost) everything.

She liked to read books by and about independent women. Ida Simons, Josepha Mendels, and Dola de Jong were amongst her favourites.

Many years later, after my mother's death, as I was clearing out my parents' house, I came upon these novels again. They were where they had always been; in her bookshelves. I took them home with me, and when I reread them I immediately understood why my mother had recommended them to me at the time.

We decided to republish these novels at Uitgeverij Cossee. All of them to great critical acclaim, and sometimes also overwhelming sales.

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DOLA DE JONG



*“In the US we say:
getting old is not
for sissies.”*

Dorothea Rosalie de Jong (1911 – 2003) always dreamt of being a dancer, to the dismay of her father, who wanted to send her to a boarding school. Eventually, he let her intern as a journalist at the *Nieuwe Arnhemse Courant*, a newspaper which owed him money. Her career there was short-lived, however: when the editor called late one night with the request she covers a murder, her father hung up angrily and forbade her to go back to work. Thus, Dola was finally allowed to go to a school for dance: Lilly Green, where Audrey Hepburn later also took classes.

Dola’s writing career began as a way to earn some extra money. She wrote for gossies under the pseudonym Sourit Ballon.

Slowly, her career as a writer began to kick off. At the same time she felt less and less at home in the Netherlands. In 1940, Dola got her hands on a visa and fled to Tangiers. She later moved to the United States, and started writing again. Dola explored many genres, producing children’s books, novels, and short stories. At the end of the war, she wrote *The Field*, which was an instant success, and received the Edgar Allen Poe Award for her thriller *The Whirligig of Time* (1964).

THE FIELD

Aart and Lies flee the Netherlands just before the outbreak of World War II. They take in several children who lost their parents, and the group ends up in Tangiers.

Trying to survive off barren land without help and with the children feeling homesick, *The Field* shows the disruptive effect of war on the lives of refugees.

272 pages | 76,000 words | published in 2015

Rights Germany (Kunstmann), Arabic (Al Kotob Khan), Norway (Aschehoug), Sweden (Nilsson), Denmark (Turbine), Czech Republic (Pistorius & Olsanská), World English (Transit Books), France (Les éditions du typhon) | [Material](#) Full English text available



THE TREE AND THE VINE

Two very different girls share an apartment in Amsterdam; reckless Erica, a young journalist who pursues passionate affairs with various women, and shy Bea, who leads a quiet life.

Erica, who believes herself to be half-Jewish, passes on the opportunity to flee to the United States just before the outbreak of World War II. Bea discovers her feelings for her friend are growing stronger, but denial and shame keep her from acknowledging her affection.

244 pages | 40,000 words | published in 2017

Rights Sweden (Nilsson Förlag), Czech Republic (Pistorius & Olsanská), Spain (Siruela), World English (Transit Books), Italy (La Nuova Frontiera), Poland (ArtRage), France (Les éditions du typhon) | [Material](#) Full English text available



DANCE AROUND THE HEART

Dancing is their life. When music journalist Wouter sees the dazzling ballerina Luca on stage, he immediately falls in love. Though after their marriage, Wouter tries to keep his wife from dancing. Luca's best friend, Enny, teaches at a dance school, together with her partner Peter.

Dola de Jong, chose against her father's wishes – who thought dancing was the equivalent of prostitution – and became a professional dancer. In *Dance Around the Heart*, she describes the world of a group of creative young people in the 1930s. Their struggle with the prevailing norms and values is timeless.

208 pages | 47,500 words | published in 2022



‘The ballet, in particular everything that surrounds it, is depicted convincingly. It’s almost like you’re in the dressing room with the dancers. This is how de Jong draws you in.

– *de Volkskrant* on *Dance around the Heart*

‘Whereas Patricia Highsmith’s *The Price of Salt* notoriously provided a lesbian romance with a happy, or at least hopeful, ending, *The Tree and the Vine* accomplishes something bolder: It normalizes its characters’ unhappinesses, showing them to be just as complicated as anyone else’s.’

– *The New York Times* on the English edition of *The Tree and the Vine*

‘Dola de Jong portrays with precision and ease a generation that through the violence of Nazi terror has been irretrievably marked. Frighteningly up-to-date.’

– *Die TAZ* on the German edition of *The Field*

BEA VIANEN



‘This is first and foremost a story of self-liberation, of resistance against fate. The intensity makes clear this novel was written from the bottom of the author’s heart.’ – De Groene

Amsterdammer on My Name Is Sita

Bea Vianen (Suriname, Paramaribo, 1935-2019) was for several decades the most read writer of Suriname, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In colonial Suriname when women (East Indian women in particular) had no voice, she stood up and delivered extraordinary literary productions that painted a keen and critical picture of Suriname at the time.

My Name Is Sita (1969), in which she describes the sense of suffocation in her native country with extraordinary sharpness, became a classic both in the Netherlands as well as Suriname. *My Name Is Sita* was followed by *Encaged* in 1970 which was equally received with much praise. Vianen wrote prose as well as poetry about

her relationship with the Surinamese population, her Hindu heritage, and beauty and oppression in Suriname, controlled by its colonial past. She divided her time between Suriname and the Netherlands and lived to be 83.

MY NAME IS SITA

My Name Is Sita is the coming-of-age story of a young girl who finds her way to adulthood and emancipation in 1950's Suriname, a country torn apart by ethnic and religious divisions. After her mother's passing, Sita has to take care of her authoritative father and little brother while fighting for a place within society. When she finds herself pregnant with her neighbour's child, however, she has no other option than to marry him. It puts an end to a future in which she would finally be free.

224 pages | 54,000 words | published in 2021

Rights Germany (Transit), VS/Canada (Sandorf Passage)

Material English sample and German translation available



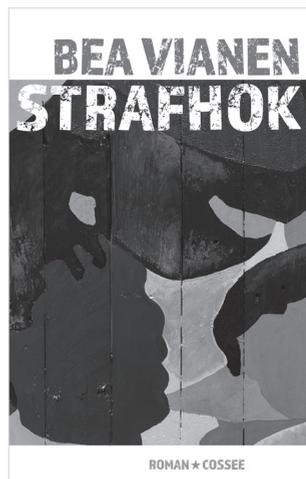
ENCAGED

It's the early seventies. In a neighborhood of Paramaribo, the Hindustani, Javanese, Muslim, and Creole communities live side by side. But to what extent are they living together? When a town official is murdered, the neighborhood becomes the backdrop of a large-scale uprising. We follow Nohar, Roebia and Raymond in their plight to resist the postcolonial government.

Encaged is a gripping novel and interesting addition to contemporary conversations on identity, in which Bea Vianen portrays the diversity of Surinamese society with verve.

320 pages | 75,000 words | published in 2022

Material English sample available



HENRIETTE ROOSEBURG



*“I don’t want to
walk on the treadmill
of civilisation!”*

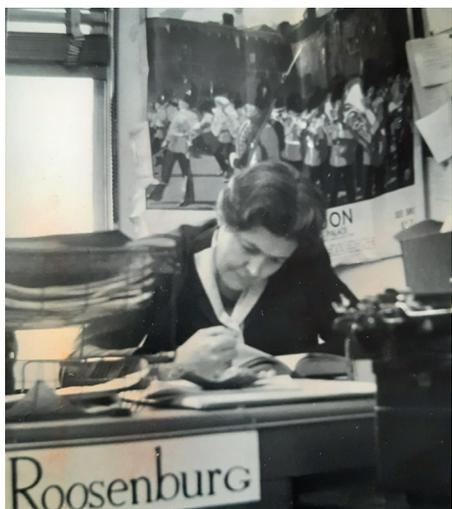
Henriette Roosenburg (1916 – 1972) was part of the Dutch resistance during World War II. Much like Eva Cossée’s mother, Henriette quit her studies after the nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1940 and joined the resistance.

Through friends, Jet got involved with the underground press *Vrijheid* (later *Het Parool*), for which she collected news. In 1943, she helped Piet Gerbrands and resistance group *Fiat Libertas* (“Let there be freedom”) assist Allied pilots across the border to Belgium. She made so many trips across the border, it earned her the nickname “Zip”.

Eventually, Jet was betrayed, arrested, and sentenced to death. She was shipped

from one prison camp to the next, miraculously escaping her death sentence each time.

After the war, Roosenburg emigrated to the United States, where she worked for *Time/Life* as a journalist. After sharing the tale of her journey homeward, her colleagues encouraged her to write it down. *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* first appeared as a periodical in *The New Yorker*, and was so well-read that it was republished by Viking as a memoir. Roosenburg’s publisher called it “an absolute knock-out”: it was an instant bestseller.



Why your colleagues love this:

“It’s a gripping tale of a heroic end-of-war and post-war odyssey, told with great attention to detail, in which the relationship between the four returnees is as important as what they observe and experience.” – *Scribe*

“Wow, a real reading experience. An unusual perspective on Germany in the Zero Hour, and so much bravery and humanity despite all the misery.”

– *Aufbau*

THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN

Towards the end of World War II, Joke, Nel, Dries and Zip are sent from one German camp to another, further and further away from their home country: the Netherlands. But suddenly the rumour of Hitler’s death starts spreading. The next morning an unknown guard opens the doors and a truck with Russian soldiers arrives.

The foursome decides to travel home by boat. Along the way, they’re faced with the aftermath of the war: plundering soldiers, scarce food supplies, and many Germans refusing to offer a place to stay.

How do you start a journey when the roads are blocked? Who can you trust in a country where the Nazi regime has only just fallen?



288 pages | 80,000 words | published in 2020

Rights Germany (Aufbau), World English (Scribe), Italy (Fazi Editore), Spain (Altamarea), Albania (Dituria) | [Material](#) Full English text available

JOSEPHA MENDELS



*“I don’t think ahead.
I don’t think.
I write.”*

Josepha Mendels (1902 – 1995) grew up in a Jewish Orthodox family. In 1936, she left the Netherlands for Paris and started working as a journalist. As World War II broke out Josepha fled to London, where she worked for the radio broadcast of the Dutch government in exile. In this period she published *Rolien and Ralien*, her first novel. The manuscript for this debut was almost lost forever when Mendels’ backpack, which contained the book, was stolen during her flight to the United Kingdom. Luckily, she had saved a copy in Paris and managed to finish the book.

She then published *I Told You So*. It is her only novel set during World War II.

Mendels also wrote for magazines and

newspapers, and was known for always giving her candid opinion, specifically when it concerned female sexuality. Because of this she is seen as an instigator of the Dutch ‘70s wave of feminism. A large part of her work is based on her own experiences and she has a fragmentary, humoristic and intuitive writing style. Josepha Mendels received the Anna Bijns Prize for the Female Voice in Literature for her entire body of work in 1986.

I TOLD YOU SO

The year is 1943: the war starts to close in on the Netherlands and hiding is dangerous. Frans and Henriëtte decide to flee to London, where they meet each other by chance. Cut off from their homeland, they jump head-first into their new lives – and a serious love affair.

They create a unique way of living together and the temporary state of their affair makes it even more special. They know this will not last forever. When the war is over, Frans will return to his family in the Netherlands.

A novel about the cruel necessity of love during the harshest times, full of sharp observations and beautiful sentences.



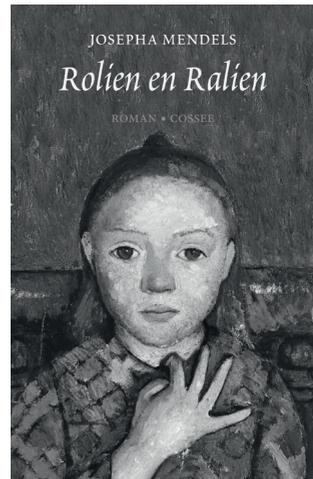
224 pages | 64,000 words | published in 2016

[Rights](#) Germany (Wagenbach) | [Material](#) English sample and German translation available

ROLIEN AND RALIEN

Rolien, the youngest of three sisters, is not taken seriously by her siblings. She feels left out and therefore makes up her own playmate Ralien to keep her company. This ultimately takes over her life.

When the book was first published, the press thought it was dangerous because of its display of the many layers of female friendship. Even today, *Rolien and Ralien* remains a fascinating coming-of-age novel. It has been referred to as the first female Bildungsroman and a high point of Dutch LGBTQ-literature.



224 pages | 43,000 words | published in 2017

[Rights](#) Germany (Wagenbach) | [Material](#) English sample and German translation available

A.H.NIJHOFF



“Women aren’t free. They’re brought up this way: to marry and have a family. I am absolutely not in favour of this.”

During her time in high school, **A.H. Nijhoff** (1897 – 1971) was infatuated with Martinus Nijhoff, an older boy with a bohemian lifestyle. They started dating, and when she was eighteen she became pregnant with his child. They married under pressure of Martinus’ family – a well-known family of publishers.

But Netty was not made for Martinus’ lifestyle. In 1920 she left for Paris with her four-year-old son and started writing her first novel. Eventually, she returned to Martinus, but the relationship was troubled. They travelled to Italy together, but when Martinus left, Netty stayed. She lived in Italy for five years before moving back to Paris, where she met British artist Marlow

Moss. Marlow gave Netty the inspiration and peace she needed to write a novel. *Two Girls and I* was first published in 1930, in episodes. Netty purposely chose a neutral pseudonym – A.H. – so she wouldn’t be discarded as one of the many “lady writers”.

Critics were upset by Nijhoff’s debut, shocked by the free sexuality and hints at abortion and homosexuality. Fellow writers, however, hailed A.H. Nijhoff as a great new literary talent. The book was seen as a unique piece of writing in Dutch literature, differing greatly from the novels at the time.



“A melancholic and sweltering novel.”

– *Trouw*

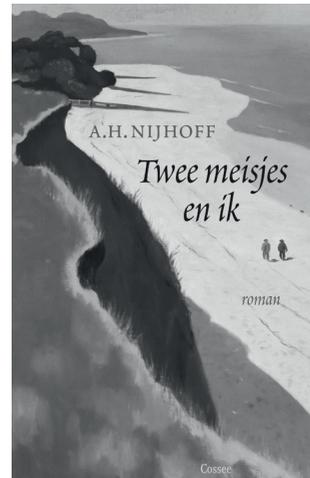
“For today’s readers, this novel by A.H. Nijhoff is a beautiful psychological portrait of an older man whose life is determined by a friendship to two independent women.” – *Literair Nederland*

“Nijhoff breaks into the souls of people who lived out-of-the-ordinary lives. The story meanders melancholically, but never gets boring.” – *Humo*

TWO GIRLS AND I

Two young girls and their relationship with a much older doctor, a Frenchman with a showy young lover, a foul-mouthed colonel, a moody nurse, allusions to a lesbian affair, abortion, and drugs. In short; a novel by an author who couldn’t care less about conventions and who wanted to be in charge of her own life – and all this in 1931.

The characters encounter each other by coincidence, in a remote town on the Southern coast of England. The décor is a small hotel and a beach house, rocks and rain, green-grey water and a little strip of sand. A.H. Nijhoff observes and analyses the complex development of their relationships. She carefully sketches how throughout the years, they meet again, much more experienced and disillusioned, ready for new developments.



288 pages | 78.000 words | published in 2018

Material English sample, Danish translation available

IDA SIMONS



“Make sure you stay original and don’t imitate others.”

Ida Simons (1911 – 1960) was a writer and pianist. She came to the Netherlands with her parents during World War I. Ida was well-known for her intelligence, her irony and her mockery, which could be sharp but was never intended to hurt her sparring partners. She began her career as a pianist at the age of 19 and garnered success all across Europe.

Her rise to fame came to an end with the German invasion. Simons was deported to Westerbork and then Theresienstadt, along with her family. After the war, she started performing again but found that she was no longer able to live the demanding life of a performing artist.

She then began to write, resulting in

one volume of poetry, two novellas, and two novels. Her first, *A Foolish Virgin* was published in 1959 and was highly regarded at the time. In 1961, *Like Water in the Desert* was published posthumously.

Unfortunately, Simons’ work was forgotten after her untimely death. Since her rediscovery in 2014, her work has been widely read and translated into more than twenty languages.

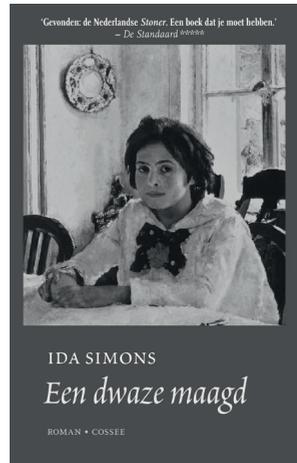
A FOOLISH VIRGIN

A Dutch classic about the young girl Gittel, who grows up in the Jewish community of Antwerp in the late 1920s and early 1930s. As a respite from her parents' cat-and-dog life, Gittel develops a passion for the piano.

Gittel learns her first lessons of life when her infinite trust in older friend Lucie is violated. Simons describes the vulnerable relationship between two girls: who, wonders Gittel, can be trusted in this world of impostors?

208 pages | 45,000 words | published in 2014

Rights Armenia (Antares), Brazil (Alfaguara), Catalan (Proa), Czech Republic (Pistorius & Olanská), Denmark (Klim), Finland (Gummerus), France (Belfond), Germany (Luchterhand), Iceland (Bjartur), Israel (Yedioth), Italy (Rizzoli), Norway (Pax), Romania (Polirom), Spain (Alfaguara), Sweden (Natur & Kultur), Turkey (Bence Kitap), World English (MacLehose), Russia (Knizhnik)



Material Full English/German/
Spanish/French text available

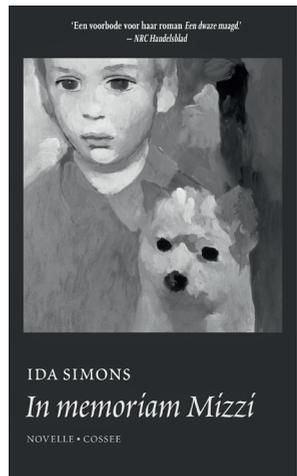
IN MEMORY OF MIZZI

The life of a mother and her son in the camp is hard, but when the Jewish doctor Herr Keppler asks if the boy likes dogs, they both jump up. Keppler introduces them to Mizzi; not just a regular dog, a dog that smiles. Mother and son are both captivated by her. You wouldn't expect it, Keppler explains, but many animals are kept in the camp – until they are discovered.

As long as she can, Mizzi smiles at the prisoners and the sick, the children and their parents. The reader of this amazing, almost fairytale-like story gets a rare insight into the daily life of those without prospects, and at the perseverance of those who fight for their existence.

64 pages | 6,000 words | published in 2015

Rights Germany (Luchterhand) | Material Full English text available



LOEKIE ZVONIK



*“Civilised behaviour
doesn’t involve shouting,
isn’t intriguing,
doesn’t impose, and is
therefore doomed to be
disregarded.”*

Loekie Zvonik (1935 – 2000), pseudonym of Hermine Louise Marie Zvonicek, studied German philology in Ghent, where she first met fellow student Dirk de Witte.

When Zvonik and De Witte met again, later in life they began a passionate affair. But De Witte had become a tormented writer, obsessed with the theme of suicide in literature. In December 1970, De Witte ended his own life.

This tragedy formed the basis for Zvonik’s debut *Who Was the Hatter?* which was published in 1975. The serene, elegant style of Zvonik’s writing ensured the novel was hailed by many and cemented the author as one of the most prominent writers of her generation.

It was surprising to many that Zvonik only published three novels during her lifetime. Instead of chasing fame, she preferred to simply live. “In every life, important things happen,” she once said. “Something doesn’t become important only after it is turned into literature.”

She retreated to a cabin in the south of the Netherlands, where she dedicated herself to her job and her family. As the years passed, every trace of the writer slowly disappeared.



“*Who Was the Hatter?* is a marvel of the literary art, a skillfully interwoven web of citations, references and themes, in a style that is masterful down to the last detail.” – *de Volkskrant* *****

“Zvonik’s prose has a serene and calm touch to it. It is precise but loving. What a sad, but beautiful and well written story.” – *Literair Nederland*

WHO WAS THE HATTER?

Didier and Hermine experience a short-lived affair while studying at the University of Ghent. By coincidence, they meet again twelve years later, travelling to a congress in Vienna. Their past infatuation turns into an intense friendship, in which Hermine inadvertently becomes Didier’s muse. Didier is a classic romanticist with a great fascination for the dark side of life. Even Hermine is unable to save him.

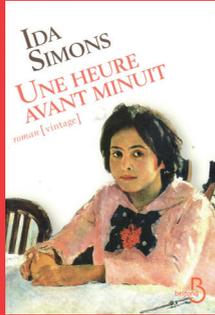
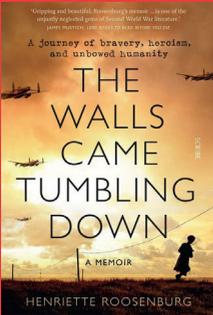
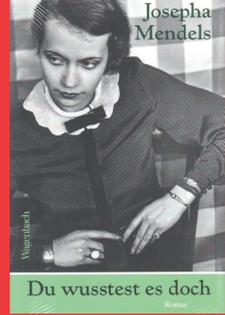
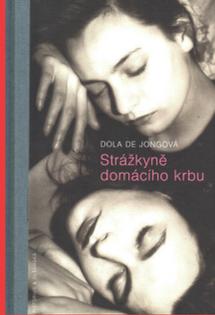
In this breath-taking chronicle of proclaimed death, Hermine reconstructs the last weeks of his life. In a serene, elegant and subtle style, she tries to uncover his motives, ultimately trying to find out to what extent you can love someone while at the same time keeping your distance.

221 pages | 40,000 words | published in 2018

Rights Germany (Luchterhand/btb) | [Material](#) English sample and German translation available



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