

Loneliness and friendship,
loyalty and betrayal in times of
migration and radicalisation

Cleansing

TOM LANOYE

Gideon Rottier is a loner with a speech impediment and an unusual job. He works for Extreme Cleansing, a cleaning company that takes up where others leave off: fires and floods are their speciality, along with suicides and years of neglect. And whenever they get the chance, Gideon and his colleagues make off with stuff that's not theirs as well.

Gideon's life takes a different turn when Youssef, a refugee, becomes his new colleague. After an awkward start, they become best friends, partly thanks to a shared love of literature. Youssef even moves into Gideon's townhouse, which is full of pilfered things. When Youssef saves Gideon's life after an explosion, the latter promises to take care of his friend's family in a world that seems to be getting more hostile and violent by the day.

Lanoye leaves no stone unturned in a ruthless novel. **1/2**

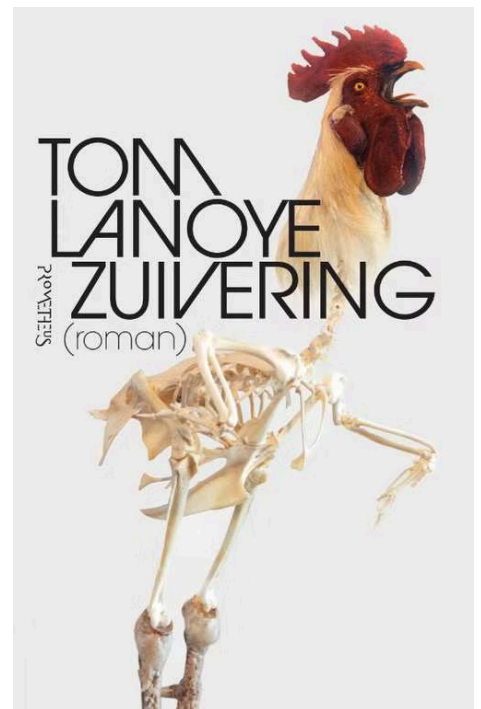
DE MORGEN

After two suicide bombers detonate their explosive belts at Central Station, Youssef packs his rucksack and disappears, leaving his Flemish host to look after his wife and children, who radicalise in response to the shock.

Boasting virtuoso language and characters who both love and resist one another, 'Cleansing' is set against the backdrop of a 'broken and disintegrating continent'. It is a wonderful picaresque novel as well as a terrifying dystopia. A brutal and intense book for brutal and intense times.

Lanoye beautifully portrays the extreme moral dilemmas of our age and the human drama of friendship. ****

DE STANDAARD



AUTHOR



Tom Lanoye (b. 1958) is a literary one-man business, and one of the most popular authors in Flanders and the Netherlands. His theatre work, novels, short stories, novellas, columns, poetry and performances can only be described as exceptional. He established his reputation with the autobiographical coming of age novel Cardboard Boxes. His bestselling novel Speechless was shortlisted for the most important literary prizes and won the Gouden Uil Readers' Prize. In his magnum opus The Turntable, Lanoye places question marks beside important issues concerning the collaborative past of Flanders. In October 2024, Tom Lanoye was awarded the Grand Prize for Literature, a prestigious triennial award recognising authors of significant literary contributions in the Dutch language area. King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium presented the award at the Royal Palace in Brussels, followed by several speeches and performances. Read the full jury report. Photo © Arthur Los

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