

Western masculinity called into question in bloodcurdling novel about hunting

# Trophy

GAEA SCHOETERS

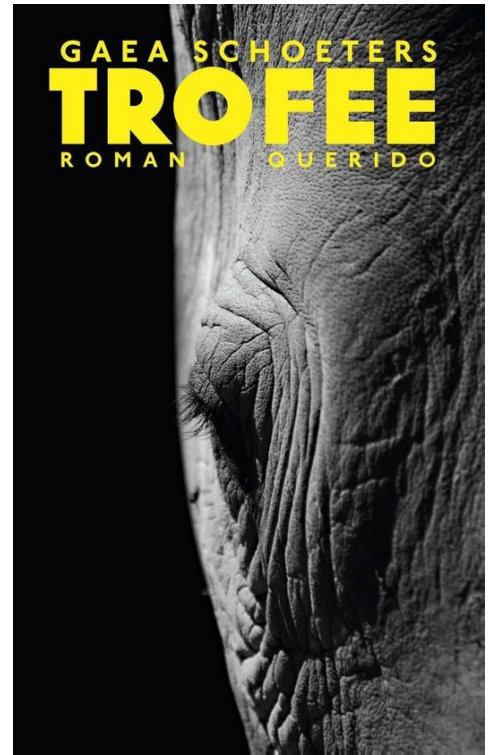
Hunter White lives for the big game hunt. An immensely wealthy American share trader, he goes to Africa to shoot a rhinoceros, the last of the Big Five he has yet to bag. The hunt gives him, more than anything else, the feeling of being alive. Moreover, he believes trophy hunting creates not just job opportunities but an income the local population needs to combat poaching. When he discovers, after a disappointing rhinoceros hunt, that there is something called the 'Big Six', his hunting expedition takes a sinister turn.

In 'Trophy' Schoeters takes us into the twisted mind of a Western hunter. White is guided by a morally dubious compass as he weighs up the value of a life, whether of a person or of an animal. In a stylistic tour de force, Schoeters builds the tension step by step and sets Hunter White, local tracker Dawid and young hunter !Ngate against each other in a gruesome and captivating game of chess. Her rhythmical style underscores the almost physical sense of threat created by the plot.

'Trophy' is an ode to wild nature and a sharp critique of how we relate to Africa. Without moralizing, Schoeters raises crucial ethical questions about the mentality of Westerners. At the same time she looks at the nuances of the complex subject of hunting, instead of presenting us with the usual fierce supporters and opponents. Above all, this disconcerting novel of ideas, with its painful and stark questions about contemporary colonialism and masculinity, holds a mirror up to the reader.

**'Trophy' makes you think, makes you angry, then makes you question yourself and sweeps you along right from the very first page to the cracking bittersweet ending.**

FINANCIEEL DAGBLAD



## AUTHOR



**Gaea Schoeters** (b. 1976) is a very versatile author. She has written all sorts of texts, from travelogues and novels to operas and theatre plays as well as children's books. Additionally, she works as a journalist and writes columns and essays about current topics for various newspapers and literary magazines. Her work, praised for its descriptive and detailed writing style, is situated between formal experiment and social engagement. *Photo © Annelies Van Parys*

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