

The grey zone of power relations

She.

MAAIKE NEUVILLE

Thirty-nine-year-old actress Ada presents a theatrical monologue that she has written, in the city where she completed her theatre training years before. As she is preparing for her performance, she thinks about the drama teacher that she had a relationship with as a student. The thought of a possible confrontation – she's in his city; could he be in the audience? – triggers an internal monologue in which she contemplates her affair with him. Ada looks back with a very different perspective at the man he was then. She was seeking validation and affection from her teacher, while to him she was an exciting escapade.

At breakneck speed, deeply locked away memories of men from her past rise to the surface against her will. There is the father who hires her as a babysitter and asks for sex, a photographer who persuades her to take off her T-shirt 'so that the lines of her face are set off better', and a doctor who promises to cure her with intimate massages. Each represents an unbalanced relationship, in terms of both age and position. Now that Ada dares to take up the pen, she asks herself to what extent her 'yes' was truly an assent and not just dictated by her insecurity or by her admiration for the knowledge and experience of the other.

An uncommonly deft debut novel, masterfully written: subtle, poetic, true to life.

TROUW

Flashbacks and internal dialogues draw you into Ada's head, which teems with memories and doubts. Ada looks back at the relationships of her past, but the book is more than a settling of scores with her demons. 'She.' is also a description of the moment in which a woman dares to speak out and honestly investigate where her own boundaries and those of others lie, in addition to considering what responsibility comes with a position of power. This debut is a narrative rich in imagery and sensuality, which offers a nuanced view of consent and the #MeToo movement.

Zij.



Maaïke Neuville

AUTHOR



Maaïke Neuville (b. 1983) is an actress, filmmaker, theatre producer and author. She graduated from the Studio Herman Teirlinck theatre school in Antwerp and went on to act for various theatrical companies and film producers. She also creates cinematic poems and short fiction films. Photo © Kaat Pype

ORIGINAL TITLE Zij. (2023, De Bezige Bij, 144 pp.)

TRANSLATION RIGHTS Marijke Nagtegaal - m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl

TRANSLATION GRANTS Elise Vanoosthuyse - elise@flandersliterature.be , Marieke Roels - marieke@flandersliterature.be , Yannick Geens - yannick@flandersliterature.be