

Road trip along the Danube meets modern motherhood book

Sulina's Voice

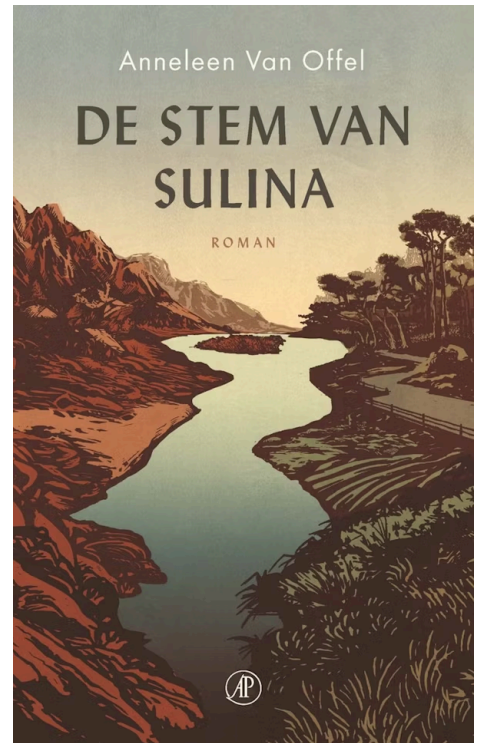
ANNELEEN VAN OFFEL

A writer who is pregnant with a daughter decides to make one final trip before the baby arrives. She drives along the Danube in a campervan with her boyfriend Leon, from its source in the Black Forest in Germany to its mouth at Sulina in Romania. Along the erratic course of the river the author explores her new environment and reflects on the origin stories of the regions they travel through. While a relentless transformation is underway inside the writer in the form of her pregnancy, she nourishes herself with stories about female transformation from Greek, Celtic and Roman mythology. She investigates how connotations and stereotypes surrounding femininity are passed on, or indeed thrust into oblivion. With the help of work by Claudio Magris, by Martin Heidegger and by Hélène Cisoux and her *écriture féminine*, she tries to find out what a modern sense of home involves and how uprooted we are from everything that is ancient, natural and mythical.

Penetrating voyage to discover maternal intuition, a lost natural instinct and a sense of home. ****

HUMO

Like the DNA spiral, with its two strands connected by bridges, in 'Sulina's Voice' the story of pregnancy, the birth of a child and the challenges of motherhood are interlinked. In a bloodcurdling childbirth scene halfway through the book, daughter Rumi comes into the world. But her arrival does not mark the end of the journey. The author seeks a path through sleepless nights, daily routines and lullabies. Contemporary 'invisible' motherhood seems to need to make do without rituals, without stories, without social embedding. In refined and probing language, Van Offel endeavours to remedy that deficit. Reflecting the way the author is subject to transitions, the book switches between reporting and lyricism, between mythology and cultural history, between the diaries of a mother, author and traveller. Van Offel allows us to share in her quest, which, because of the echoes of centuries-old fairy tales and stories, is universal as well as intensely personal.



AUTHOR



Anneleen Van Offel (b. 1991) is an author who bases her work on research, a journey or an encounter. Her style is investigative and innovative, and she exhibits great empathy and thoroughness in examining her subjects. Van Offel studied vocal arts at the Antwerp Royal Conservatory. She has written columns for a Flemish newspaper, and short stories and poetry for several literary journals. She is the programmer and moderator for various literary events. *Photo © Damon De Backer*

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Martijn Prins - m.prins@singeluitgeverijen.nl

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

The novel reveals itself to be a network of significances, sparkling and crackling with inventive ideas. ****

DE STANDAARD