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Annie M.G. Schmidt

Only one writer was entitled to call herself the uncrowned queen of the Netherlands – and that writer was Annie M.G. Schmidt (1911-1995). Her work should be seen as part of Dutch cultural heritage. Three generations have already grown up with the pleasure of reading, listening to, singing and reciting her children’s poems, songs and books, which subvert Dutch family life with their humour and a touch of venom.

Annie M.G. Schmidt’s characters are firmly rooted in the Dutch soil, but at the same time their adventures show a healthy dose of imagination. Her child characters are small, independent spirits, who refuse to allow the adults around them to boss them about. They have names like Pluk or Abeltje or Otje or Floddertje or Wiplala. They drive around in a red tow truck (Pluk), fly out of the department store inside a lift (Abeltje) or talk to animals (Otje).

With her aversion to big words, her playful anarchy and unconventional humour, Annie M.G. Schmidt came as a breath of fresh air in the Netherlands of the 1950s. A king slides down the banister, the manager of a soup factory gets turned into a dog and a terrified knight calls for his mother. It is these amusing inversions of stereotypes and the undermining of authority that made Schmidt so popular with her young readers. *Het fluitketeltje* (The Whistling Kettle), her first collection of children’s poems, came out in 1950 and was followed by a constant flood of publications: poems, columns, children’s books, the first radio soap in the Netherlands, cabaret songs, television series and musicals. Almost everything that Annie M.G. Schmidt wrote was a great success – lots of readers loved her direct language, her irony and her sense of absurdity.

Schmidt said that for a long time, as she was growing up as the daughter of a minister and later working as a librarian, she felt like a ‘mossy tree trunk’. That all changed when she found a job at the former resistance newspaper *Het Parool*, where she got to know journalists and artists. This newspaper was where she published her first children’s rhymes and also began her famous series of stories for toddlers about Jip and Janneke, a little boy and girl who live next door to each other. This was also the start of a long collaboration with illustrator Fiep Westendorp. Over five million copies of the collected stories about Jip and Janneke have now been sold.

Although Schmidt wrote her most famous work forty years or more ago, her books are still being reprinted today. They are still captivating and believable today because they are always slightly detached from the real world. This timelessness also has much to do with the writer’s sparkling sense of humour, which transcends the generations. There is also the fact that, in spite of their quirky domesticity, her books carry a message. *Pluk van de Petteflet* (Tow-Truck Pluck, which won a Zilveren Griffel in 1971), for example, is about a boy who goes out and fights against spray cans and concrete. Then there’s Schmidt’s biggest international success, *Minoes* (Zilveren Griffel, 1970), which is about a cat that turns into a woman after eating the wrong thing from a bin at a scientific laboratory. But Schmidt’s writing never becomes moralistic. She felt that a children’s book had to be true and never fake. Schmidt meant that a story should be written from the heart and should never be used to force a message upon children. Judging by the immense popularity of her work, she clearly succeeded in spades.

— Astrid Lindgren presented the Hans Christian Andersen Award to Annie M.G. Schmidt in 1988.

— Many of Schmidt’s children’s books have been made into films (*Minoes*, *Abeltje*, *Otje*). There was also a television series about her life, based on the biography *Anna* by Annejet van der Zijl.



Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 1262
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

Works

Pluk van de Petteflet (1970)
Minoes (1969)
Jip en Janneke
Otje (1980)
Abeltje (1953)
Wiplala (1957)

Translations

For translated titles by Annie M.G. Schmidt
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Paul Biegel

Paul Biegel (1925-2006) felt that he was unable to describe real life, but as soon as he started making things up, his writing took on a life of its own. The more than sixty books that make up his legacy are firmly rooted in the fairytale tradition of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Biegel never followed trends in children's literature, but fantasy and fairytale were constant features of his work.



Lemniscaat
Vijverlaan 48
3062 HL Rotterdam
The Netherlands
+31 10 2062929
info@lemniscaat.nl
www.lemniscaat.nl

Works

Sleutelkruid (1964)
De kleine kapitein (1970)
Nachtverhaal
De tuinen van Dorr
Juttertje Tim (1991)
De soldatenmaker (1994)

Translations

For translated titles by Paul Biegel
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Through Biegel's book a procession of wizards, fairies, robbers, gnomes and trolls makes its way. His animals are often able to talk, magic is never far away, and the battle between Good and Evil must always be fought, over and over again. What really fascinated Biegel was the adventure, the theme of the quest for higher and deeper wisdom that lies hidden in fairy tales.

'He who seeks shall find, but not always what he was seeking,' says the blind wizard Aljassus in *De tuinen van Dorr* (The Gardens of Dorr, 1969), Biegel's own favourite book. This story serves as a good example of his work, because of the frame narrative that subtly provides the structure of the book, as is the case in two other highlights of Biegel's oeuvre: *Het sleutelkruid* (1964, published in English as *The King of the Copper Mountains*) and *Nachtverhaal* (Night Story, 1992). The book also features typical Biegelian names: Princess Mijnewel (Princess Allmine) and the gardener's boy Jouweniet (Notyours), whose love is frustrated by the wicked witch Sirdis. Sirdis is a typical example of the women in Biegel's work: sly and envious, domineering and vicious, witch and woman at the same time. This female often appears in his later stories, in a variety of different guises, such as the Bronze Lady in the grim war story *De soldatenmaker* (The Soldier-Maker, 1994) or as the black widow in the book of the same name from 1984, who is sometimes a seductive woman, but sometimes a man-eating giant spider.

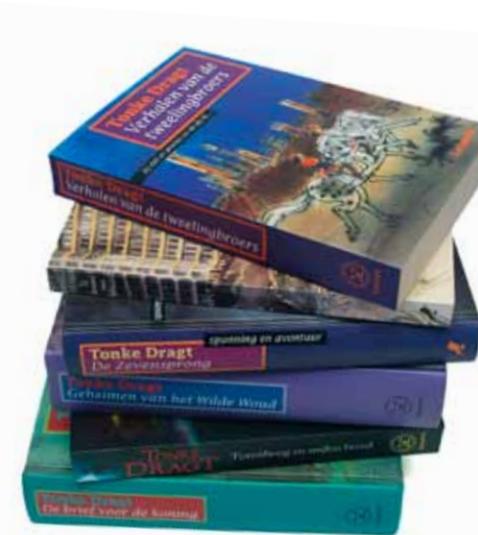
As well as a 'master storyteller with the heart of a highwayman', as Biegel is often described, he is viewed as one of the most important linguistic innovators in Dutch children's literature. Biegel masterfully juggles sound and rhythm. His sparkling sentences are full of alliteration, rhyme, puns and incantations. The writer often added new words to his vocabulary, fun innovations of the kind that appear in the language of Roald Dahl's Big Friendly Giant: someone produces a 'flabby snorking' sound, while someone else has a 'crankety' voice, and characters have evocative names such as Klissedimmer, Glop and Gnazabar. Biegel's language, with its unorthodox inventions and clever phrases, always triumphs, as does his fine sense of humour. Some of Biegel's madcap, unpretentious adventure stories have an episodic structure, because they originally appeared as serialised versions in magazines, such as *Juttertje Tim* (Beachcomber Tim, 1991) and his ever-popular series *De kleine kapitein* (the first part of which came out in 1970) about the little captain who sets out to sea in his boat, the Neverleaky. And then there are Biegel's other books, ones that were not commissioned by magazines, books such as *De tuinen van Dorr*, *Het sleutelkruid*, *De soldatenmaker* and *Nachtverhaal*, which are brimming with mystery and unexpected events and touch upon important themes such as love, loneliness, war and death. The amazing imagination of this teller of fairytales was rewarded in 1973 with the State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature, which was followed by a long series of prizes.

—Of the six finalists for the Griffel der Griffels (the award for the best children's book of the past fifty years), two were by Paul Biegel.

—*De kleine kapitein* is being brought to the big screen by Fu Works, the company that produced *Winter in Wartime* and *Black Book*.

Tonke Dragt

Mention Tonke Dragt (b. 1930) and you have to mention knights. Knights and futuristic worlds. Only two of her substantial novels for young readers, *De zevensprong* (The Seven Ways, 1966) and *De torens van februari* (The Towers of February, 1973), are set in her own era, but those books also combine fantasy and reality.



Leopold
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 1250
info@leopold.nl
www.leopold.nl

Works

Brief voor de koning (1962)
Geheimen van het wilde woud (1965)
De Zevensprong (1966)
Torens van februari (1973)
Verhalen van de tweelingbroers (1961)
Torenhoog en mijlen breed (1969)

Translations

For translated titles by Tonke Dragt
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Tonke Dragt, who was born in Batavia, the Dutch East Indies, was interned in a Japanese prison camp for three years during the Second World War. To escape her bleak reality, she wrote and illustrated stories in old maths exercise books, after erasing the sums, or on toilet paper if nothing else was available. This was writing and drawing as a form of escape from a harsh and complicated world; in the camp, a foundation was laid for a love of writing and illustration that was to become a lifelong career.

The stories that Dragt wrote in her teenage years echoed knightly romances and the science-fiction novels of Jules Verne and she remained faithful to both genres. Her debut in 1961, *De verhalen van de tweelingbroers* (The Stories of the Twin Brothers), is set in a medieval world, where two brothers, each the mirror image of the other, have amazing adventures among troubadours, lords and knights. The motif of the *doppelgänger*, in the form of a twin or one figure divided in two, was to become a constant feature of her work, later appearing in books including *De torens van februari*, which is set in two mirror universes which you can only move between on 29 February.

Two years after her debut, Dragt's most important book *De brief voor de koning* (The Letter for the King) was published. In a universe made up of thick castle walls, dark forests and steep mountain ridges, the young squire Tiuri receives a secret mission on the eve of his knighting ceremony. What follows is an action-packed quest, generously sprinkled with fairytale themes and elements taken from Arthurian legend, in a book that continues to keep readers glued to its pages almost half a century after its publication. In 1965 came the equally exciting sequel, *Geheimen van het wilde woud* (Secrets of the Wild Woods), which was the last of her large-scale knightly romances. She then wrote a contemporary book and a number of shorter stories before embarking on a radically new course in 1969. Dragt's new title was *Torenhoog en mijlen breed* (Sky High and Miles Wide), a fascinating novel about the future, set on the planet Venus. Gradually her books took on a more philosophical character. Within the limits of the universes that the author so carefully constructs, her characters are always searching for the meaning of life and trying to discover who they are. Dragt enjoys experimenting with the magic of everyday life and there is always a suggestion of mystery about the events she creates.

In 1976, Tonke Dragt was awarded the State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature for her imaginative and ingeniously constructed stories, which place her in the same tradition as Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Michael Ende. Since the 1990s, she has been working on a new, wide-ranging cycle, *Zeeën van Tijd* (Oceans of Time), the first part of which was published in 1992. This series is an exercise in thinking about space and time, Einstein's theory of relativity and the music of Bach.

—*De brief voor de koning* won the Griffel der Griffels in 2004, a 'winner of winners' award for the best children's book of the past fifty years.

—Over a million copies of the book have been sold.

Jan Terlouw

Very few politicians have turned their party manifesto into a successful children's book. Jan Terlouw (b. 1931) did exactly this in 1971 as a brand-new member of the Dutch parliament with the social-liberal party D66, when he wrote *Koning van Katoren* (King of Katoren) and won the Gouden Griffel, the prize for the best children's book of the year. Within a fairytale setting, a series of events unfolds that are all connected to the ideals of his party. However, as far as children are concerned, what they are reading is first and foremost an exciting tale, written in a direct style, with great pace and tension.



Lemniscaat
Vijverlaan 48
3062 HL Rotterdam
The Netherlands
+31 10 206 29 29
info@lemniscaat.nl
www.lemniscaat.nl

Works
Koning van Katoren (1971)
Zoektocht in Katoren (2007)
Oorlogswinter (1972)

Translations
For translated titles by Jan Terlouw
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

In *Koning van Katoren* six grumpy ministers rule the land of Katoren and claim that they are looking for someone to succeed the dead king, but nothing ever happens – until the day Stach turns up on the doorstep, determined to become the new king. The ministers, afraid of losing their comfortable position at the court, give the boy seven almost impossible tasks to perform, all of which somehow involve the problems of modern society.

Hindered by those in authority, but supported by the people and the love of a girl, Stach manages to complete all of his tasks, like a true Hercules. By contrasting traditional views with new insights, Terlouw demonstrates how power corrupts. He continued in the same vein in the sequel *Zoektocht in Katoren* (Quest in Katoren), which was published 36 years later. In his other books, too, the author provided his readers with food for thought by focusing on issues involving ethics, morality, society and the environment, and he wrote with the intention of encouraging young people to take responsibility for their own actions. He was particularly interested in environmental and economic affairs, as can be seen in *Oosterschelde windkracht 10* (1976), which presents a clear picture of the arguments for and against damming the Oosterschelde estuary.

Terlouw's writing career began in 1970, at his wife's insistence, after he had spent years telling their children stories that he had made up. His most autobiographical story is *Oorlogswinter* (Winter in Wartime, 1972), set in the last cold winter of World War II, which again won the Gouden Griffel. The writer himself was eight years old when war broke out and he lived through the occupation. He incorporated some of these experiences into his story, which is not only a gripping book about wartime, but also a nuanced psychological portrait, in which a suspected collaborator shelters Jews and a good friend turns out to be a traitor. In 2008, the book was made into a successful film by Martin Koolhoven. *Winter in Wartime* had a commercial release in countries including America, China, Australia, France and Germany, and narrowly missed out on an Oscar nomination.

In 2010, research showed that Jan Terlouw is the writer with the strongest reputation in the Netherlands – stronger even than a literary author such as Harry Mulisch or young readers' favourite Carry Slee. Terlouw thought this was a fine accolade, but one that needs to be put into perspective. 'I was the first writer in the Netherlands to address political themes in children's books, but I never won the State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature. It would seem that the literary merits of a writer are more important than whether he writes good books for a wide audience. I think that's a bit of a poor show.'

—*Koning van Katoren* has been reprinted more than fifty times; over 350.000 copies have been sold.

—Director Ben Sombogaart (*De tweeling/Twin Sisters*) is working on an international film adaptation of *Koning van Katoren*.

—More than forty years after his debut, all of Terlouw's children's books are still in print.

Thea Beckman

Thea Beckman (1923-2004) is often referred to as the Grand Old Lady of the historical children's book. Her rich stories have transported generations of children back in time. Beckman's first historical novel, *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* (Crusade in Jeans, 1973), was an immediate hit and was the start of a long and successful career as a children's writer.



Lemniscaat
Vijverlaan 48
3062 HL Rotterdam
The Netherlands
+31 10 206 29 29
info@lemniscaat.nl
www.lemniscaat.nl

Works
Kruistocht in spijkerbroek (1973)
Trilogy: *Geef me de ruimte!* (1976),
Triomf van de verschroeide aarde (1977),
Het rad van fortuin (1978).
Thule-trilogy: *Kinderen van moeder aarde* (1985),
Het helse paradijs (1987),
Het gulden vlies van Thule (1989).
De Stomme van Kampen (1992)

Translations
For translated titles by Thea Beckman
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Kruistocht in spijkerbroek is set in the Middle Ages, at the time of the crusades. The twentieth-century teenager Dolf Wega travels back in a time machine and ends up in 1212, right in the middle of a children's crusade. He looks around in bewilderment at the eight thousand barefoot children, who are singing and praying as they make their crusade to Jerusalem. But this children's army is in a real mess. The children barely have anything to eat and many of them are sick and weak.

Using his twentieth-century knowledge, Dolf brings some order to the crusade. With his talent for organisation, he succeeds in leading the children over the Alps and they safely reach the beach at Genoa, where the sea will part and allow the children to walk to the Holy Land – or at least that is the intention.

On publication, *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* made one reviewer sigh: 'Every single thing about this book is good!' The Gouden Griffel prize for the best book of the year came along a year later. It went on to sell over half a million copies. What makes the story so strong is the way the protagonist views the Middle Ages through modern eyes. The anachronisms that always lie in wait in historical stories are not a pitfall here, but a deliberate element of the story. Dolf's amazement, admiration and incomprehension for the way people lived eight hundred years ago make it easy for readers to put themselves in his shoes.

Other historical books followed for Beckman, always backed up with thorough research. Sometimes her studies turned up so much material that she was able to use it in several books. Her lengthy visit to the municipal archive of the Hanseatic town of Kampen resulted in four stories, for example, including a gripping portrait of the deaf-mute artist Hendrick Avercamp: *De stomme van Kampen* (The Mute of Kampen, 1992).

In addition to *Kruistocht in Spijkerbroek*, Beckman's trilogy about the Hundred Years' War, *Geef me de ruimte!* (Give Me Space!, 1976), *Triomf van de verschroeide aarde* (Triumph of Scorched Earth, 1977) and *Het rad van fortuin* (Wheel of Fortune, 1978), also made her popular far beyond Dutch borders. The series is about an unconventional girl who travels across war-torn France. Such independent spirits were to become Beckman's trademark.

Beckman's epic, compelling narrative style made her one of the most popular children's writers of the twentieth century. Her trilogy about the future also demonstrates that her interests extended beyond the historical. These books, *Kinderen van Moeder Aarde* (Children of Mother Earth, 1985), *Het helse paradijs* (The Infernal Paradise, 1987) and *Het gulden vlies van Thule* (The Golden Fleece of Thule, 1989), take place after the Third World War in a world where women are in charge. These are stories that continue to captivate the reader even today. Beckman's books never feel at all dated, precisely because of the fact that they are set in the past or in the distant future.

—*Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* was awarded both the Gouden Griffel and the European prize for the best historical book for children. It has been reprinted 88 times.

—*Crusade in Jeans*, the film adaptation of *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek*, had 400,000 visitors in the Netherlands, where it won the Gouden Kalf prize for the best film (2007), and was selected for the film festival in Berlin.

Guus Kuijer

'Grandma is dead, but Madelief doesn't feel the need to cry.' In 1978, Guus Kuijer (b. 1942) wrote himself into the history of children's literature with these words. *Krassen in het tafelblad* (Scratches on the Tabletop) was his fourth book about Madelief, a series he based on a girl he knew. This flawlessly written children's novel uses everyday language to describe the complex family issues that adults become involved in, and Madelief's amazement as she observes them. *Krassen in het tafelblad* won Kuijer the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis and his second Gouden Griffel. In the same year, he became the youngest Dutch writer ever to have been awarded the Staatsprijs voor Kinder- en Jeugdliteratuur for his oeuvre.



Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 1262
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

Works

Het boek van alle dingen (2004)
Polleke (1999-2003)
Madelief (1975-1978)
Olle (1990)
Eend voor eend (1983)

Translations

For translated titles by Guus Kuijer
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

In 1974 Guus Kuijer made his debut with *Met de poppen gooien* (Throwing Dolls), his first Madelief book. With his realistic dialogue and gentle irony, he established himself as the true heir to the anti-authoritarian mentality of Annie M.G. Schmidt. In an age when children's books dealing with social issues were enjoying a heyday, Kuijer stood out with his sense of playfulness and originality, which soon won him the Gouden Griffel.

His stories about fatherless Madelief were also a product of their time, but Kuijer was never guilty of the dogmatism that infected so many of his fellow writers. Kuijer believes that seeing things through a child's eyes allows us to perceive them directly and simply. 'And so it's easier to become aware of how absurd things are and how strangely people behave. By imagining what it would be like as a child, you are sometimes able to explain something without simplifying it.'

However, Kuijer's work does not only reveal an amazing insight into the minds of children. In the 1980s, he also revealed himself to be a keen observer of the ups and downs of life as an animal. Showing the same kind of affinity that he had previously displayed in his books about children, his book *Eend voor eend* (Duck by Duck, 1983) tackled the life of the ducks around his farmhouse in the province of North Holland, and was followed seven years later by an affectionate portrait of his Airedale terrier, *Olle* (Olle, 1990). This realistically depicted pet can talk, an ability that the reader accepts without question. And it is Olle himself who asks for an injection at the end of his life. With a bare minimum of words, Kuijer evokes great emotion: 'Olle sighed out his life. It was just a small sigh.'

And then, in 1999, Polleke came along: eleven years old, her heart on her sleeve and head over heels in love with Mimoen, her Moroccan classmate. *Voor altijd samen, amen* (Together Forever, Amen, which won Kuijer's third Gouden Griffel) is the first book in a five-part series. Once again, the human condition is seen through the eyes of a child, but this time the stories are set in a multicultural society, there is a father with a drug problem and religion raises its head in the form of Polleke's grandparents. However, as always in Kuijer, it is not the problems that count, but the people, who are so engaging in their struggle to surmount their difficulties.

In 2004, Kuijer published what he views as his most important children's book: *Het boek van alle dingen* (The Book of Everything), which is set in the 1950s. Thomas's father rules his family with the bible in one hand and a hard wooden spoon in the other. But Thomas is determined to be happy one day and, slowly, cracks begin to appear in his father's impregnable authority. Once again, this is a Kuijer child who does not allow himself to be disheartened by the adult world around him. Once again, big problems are reduced to the size of a child. And once again, the Gouden Griffel went to the grandmaster of the pure childlike gaze.

—In 2012 Guus Kuijer was the first Dutch author to be awarded the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

—In 1979, the 37-year-old Guus Kuijer was the youngest-ever winner of the Staatsprijs voor Kinder- en Jeugdliteratuur (State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature).

Joke van Leeuwen

Joke van Leeuwen (b. 1952) has proved to have little talent for failure. Her illustrations have been rewarded with prizes of all shapes and sizes and her elegant stories, skilfully crafted poems, distinctly different non-fiction books and poetry and novels for adults have been showered with praise. Critics love her characters' joyful defiance of convention, which brings to mind the books of Annie M.G. Schmidt, as well as the clever mix of seriousness and humour in her work and the surprising and innovative interplay of text and illustrations.



Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 1262
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

Works

De appelmoesstraat is anders (1978)
Iep! (1995)
Deesje (1985)
Toen mijn vader een struik werd (2010)
Heb jij mijn zusje gezien? (2006)
Waarom lig jij in mijn bedje? (2011)

Translations

For translated titles by Joke van Leeuwen
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

During her studies at art school in Flanders, Joke van Leeuwen was impressed by the fusion of text and drawings in the work of the Jewish American artist Ben Shahn. Since her debut, *De Appelmoesstraat is anders* (Applesauce Street is Different, 1978), this combination of words and images has been her trademark. Her illustrations are intricately entwined with her sentences: they help to tell the story and their content is just as important as the words. Van Leeuwen believes that pictures are more direct than language, which leads to fewer misunderstandings. Drawings have a universal clarity and can give a child just that little extra push that is needed for them to become wrapped up in a story.

Whether she is working with words or pictures, Van Leeuwen always likes to shock, provoke and undermine. Her work makes the obvious become remarkable, because she has such a different way of looking at the world, always seeing things from underneath or from the side, like a young child who is still capable of wonder. The result is situations that are fun, but often a little awkward too. It is no coincidence that many of her characters are outsiders who stumble from one misunderstanding to another on their journey through life. Whether their name is Kukel, Deesje, Bobbel or Viegeltje, Van Leeuwen's protagonists are headstrong, non-conformist figures with an open mind and a strong sense of curiosity, who are trying to find their way in a world that is pretty complicated.

Her big success came with *Deesje* (1985), which won not only the Gouden Griffel and a Zilveren Penseel, but also the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis. As in her earlier books, the protagonist is an endearing little misfit who has amazing adventures on an exciting journey, but this time the story is rooted more deeply in reality and the timid girl of the title is a charming little person of flesh and blood.

Perhaps an even greater success was *Iep!* (1995), which is about a couple who one day find a little creature that is half bird, half human, and decide to take her home with them. The story was made into a movie by Lemming Film in 2010 and was highly acclaimed at international festivals.

Remarkably, Van Leeuwen is still striking out along new paths. She has surprised her readers in recent years with two picture books for toddlers: *Heb je mijn zusje gezien?* (Have You Seen My Sister?, 2006) and *Waarom lig jij in mijn bedje?* (What Are You Doing in My Bed?, 2011). She also reached new heights with *Toen mijn vader een struik werd* (When My Dad Turned into a Bush, 2010), a serious story by Van Leeuwen's standards, about a girl in a war zone who has to flee her homeland – and told, as always, with that outstanding, inimitable lightness of tone.

—Joke van Leeuwen has won one Gouden Griffel award, two Gouden Penseel awards, ten Zilveren Griffels, one Zilveren Penseel, two Woutertje Pieterse prizes, one Jenny Smelik IBBY prize, one Gouden Ganzenveer, and one Theo Thijssen prize for her entire oeuvre.

—The film adaptation of *Iep!* won prizes at festivals in Poland, Vancouver, Copenhagen, Montreal and Milan.

Toon Tellegen

A children's book critic once wrote about the work of Toon Tellegen (b. 1941) that his readers are not confined to a particular age group, but defined by their sensitivity to language, mental agility and belief that almost anything is possible. There is no other author in the Dutch language whose work exhibits such a hazy dividing line between young readers and adults as Toon Tellegen. His philosophical animal stories, made up of short, contemplative sentences, resist any attempts to impose an age category.

In 1984, following a collection of poetry for adults, Tellegen's animal stories were combined for the first time in *Er ging geen dag voorbij* (Not a Day Went By). Since then, there has been a steady stream of collections with enigmatic titles such as *Toen niemand iets te doen had* (When Nobody Had Anything To Do, 1987, Gouden Griffel winner) and *Bijna iedereen kon omvallen* (Almost Everyone Could Fall Over, 1993, Gouden Griffel, Woutertje Pieterse Prijs). Tellegen has now written close to a thousand animal stories and 600.000 copies of his compilations have been sold.

In his animal stories, there is only one of each kind of animal roaming around the forest. All of these animals are the same size and there is no hierarchy, so everyone gets along. In Tellegen's animal forest, where the ocean and the desert are never far away, plenty of letters are written, always delivered by the wind. None of the animals develop significantly as characters; the stories about Squirrel, Ant, Beetle, Mole, Cricket and Elephant can be read as an everlasting series of moments. The creatures contemplate and cogitate, ponder and sigh, dream and harbour vague longings for distant unknowns and forgotten friends.

These stories are never so much about the experiences of the animals (in fact, very little actually happens), but more about language: the choice of words is precise, the construction of the sentences is poetic, and the formulation is apparently simple, but always reveals that huge imagination.

His work is often absurd and frequently funny, but the author still touches on existential emotions: loneliness, melancholy, insecurity, fear of dying. However, Tellegen's work never becomes gloomy and his pleasure in writing always shines through between the sentences. His distinctive style has inspired a range of leading illustrators, including Annemarie van Haerengen, Mance Post and Jessica Ahlberg, to create magnificent illustrations.

In addition to his extensive collection of animal stories, Tellegen has also written a number of books that take place outside the forest. The grim *Juffrouw Kachel* (Miss Stove, 1991, Woutertje Pieterse Prijs) is set within the walls of the classroom of a tyrannical teacher, with a first-person narrator who dreams up the most terrible acts of revenge and writes them down in his diary.

The best dad in the world appears in *Mijn vader* (My Father, 1994). The young narrator makes no secret of his admiration for his fantastic father, who hurls crooks out of the window with great skill and knows the answers to all of the questions at school. This affectionate portrait of the relationship between a father and son was captured perfectly in Rotraut Susanne Berner's full-colour illustrations. Finally, *Mijn avonturen door V. Swchwrn* (My Adventures by V. Swchwrn, 1998), originally published as the gift book during Children's Book Week, is about a boy who dreams of becoming a writer and then starts writing, giving a wonderful insight into Tellegen's own boyhood dreams of writing. A film adaptation of this book came out in 2012.

—Toon Tellegen has won two awards for his oeuvre: the Theo Thijssenprijs for his children's books and the Constantijn Huygensprijs for his entire body of work, for both children and adults.

—A film adaptation of his book *Mijn avonturen door V. Swchwrn* has recently been made by Flinc Film.



Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 12 62
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

Works
Dierenverhalen (since 1984)
Juffrouw Kachel (1991)
Mijn avonturen door V. Swchwrn (1998)
Mijn vader (1994)

Translations
For translated titles by Toon Tellegen
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Peter van Gestel

Van Gestel's characters think silly thoughts until they drive themselves round the bend. There's often some great sadness involved that is best left unmentioned – because you'll only end up whining and no one likes a whiner. But Van Gestel's books never become gloomy, because he is not that kind of writer.

You could see the title of his latest children's book, *Al dat heerlijke verdriet* (All That Wonderful Sorrow, 2011), as the motto of his entire oeuvre, but the tragic elements of his work never become bogged down in greyness or gloom. His eloquent characters always manage to retain a certain cool and a detached sense of humour; no war is going to change that (*Winterijs*, Winter Ice, 2001), and neither is a dying father (*Al dat heerlijke verdriet*) or a brother who commits suicide (*Die dag aan zee*, That Day by the Sea, 2003). Sometimes there is even something enjoyable about the sadness, something that you can melt into.

The stories frequently feature a shiver of pleasure when something tragic is involved. And Van Gestel's characters babble away, but the writer does not allow them to take turns and react to one another politely; someone asks a question, another person asks something else, but there is no chance of any answers because the conversation has already moved on. Such skilfully crafted dialogue reveals the writer of radio plays and scripts that the author was when he first started out. His writing career is something that more or less happened to Van Gestel. He once wanted to be an actor, but while he had the ambition, the talent was lacking. As an author of children's books, Van Gestel has written his way to the top of Dutch children's literature. His talent lies in his impeccable style and his ability to create great sorrow that lurks just beneath the surface, without his work ever becoming maudlin or melancholy. This is most apparent in *Winterijs*, a book that is suffused by an unutterable sense of loss. In the cold winter of 1947, the protagonist Thomas is driven by his dead mother's physical absence and his grieving father's mental distance to seek the companionship of the Jewish cousins Zwaan and Bet, who have lost both of their fathers and one of their mothers in a concentration camp. *Winterijs* won all the major awards for children's literature, including the Gouden Griffel and the Woutertje Pieterse Prijs. With their ten-year-old protagonists and post-war settings, *Kleine Felix* (Little Felix, 2008) and *Al dat heerlijke verdriet* are distant relations of that book.

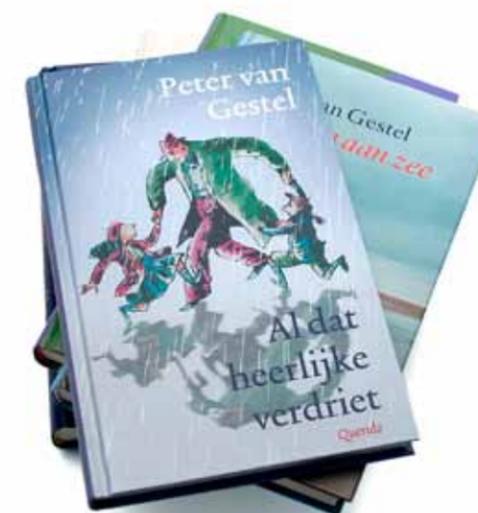
Mariken (1997), with its medieval setting, is somewhat isolated within Van Gestel's oeuvre. An engaging girl goes out into the big wide world and falls in with a troupe of travelling players. This book not only resulted in prizes for the author, but also a play and a successful film adaptation. And as happened later with *Winterijs*, the label of 'classic' was already being mentioned even before the book had won a single prize.

—'The street urchin has fallen out of favour. That's nice for the neighbours, but it's a shame for children's literature,' says Peter van Gestel, who fills his stories with cheeky little boys and equally mischievous little girls.

—*Winterijs* has been acclaimed as one of the finest Dutch children's books about the Second World War.

—The film adaptation of *Mariken* was awarded a Gouden Kalf, the most important Dutch film prize.

'Ten-year-old boys are an endless source of fascination for me,' Peter van Gestel (b. 1937) once said. His stories often feature boys of this age. As a reader, you can spot a little Van Gestel lad straightaway: they are usually a little grubby around the edges, tend to keep themselves to themselves, are not easily impressed by the adults around them, but are mad about an older girl they know. They are called Thomas or Felix or Jasper and they all have something rascally about them, something a little wild and unconventional, even if their father is a writer or their mother plays the piano beautifully.



Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 12 62
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

De Fontein
Herculesplein 96
3584 AA Utrecht
The Netherlands
+31 88 800 26 00
info@defonteintirion.nl
jeugd.defonteintirion.nl

Works
Winterijs (De Fontein, 2001)
Mariken (Querido, 1997)
Kleine Felix (Querido, 2008)
Al dat heerlijke verdriet (Querido, 2011)
Die dag aan zee (Querido, 2003)

Translations
For translated titles by Peter van Gestel
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

Imme Dros

Imme Dros (b. 1936), born on the northern Dutch island of Texel, once said that she feels as though many of her books lay waiting in a glass casket for someone to kiss them awake. This is a fitting statement for a writer who has adapted well-known fairy tales to create original and distinctive scripts for plays. But her heart lies with the tales of classical antiquity even more than with the stories of Andersen and Grimm.

Imme Dros, encountered the works of Homer at school. His verses about heroism and distant sea journeys fuelled not only her love of Greek mythology, but also of language. In *De reizen van de slimme man* (The Journeys of the Clever Man, 1988), she combined these two passions for the first time to create a contemporary tale about teenager Niels, who becomes fascinated by the journeys of Odysseus, the ‘clever man’ of the title. Odysseus’ adventures, full of heroic feats and the violence of war, inspire Niels to write his own life story.

Dros went on to write a highly acclaimed translation of the *Odyssey* and created an adaptation for young people, *Odysseus, een man van verhalen* (Odysseus, a Man of Stories, 1994). Of all the Greek figures, Odysseus is perhaps her favourite: ‘All of those guys are heroes, of course, but Odysseus is exceptional because he makes things up. Odysseus has imagination.’ And the author shares that imagination. In Dros’s retelling, Odysseus is a man who takes shape through other people’s stories: the stories of Hermes, of Athene, of his son Telemachos. These are tales that are full of playful anachronisms, where someone has to take the minutes at the meetings of the gods and news reports come live from the beach of Ithaca. This book was followed by equally imaginative adaptations of the history of the Trojan War (*Ilios*, 1999), the wanderings of Virgil’s hero Aeneas (*Mee met Aeneas*, Off with Aeneas, 2008) and many other Greek myths (including Perseus, Hercules and Medea).

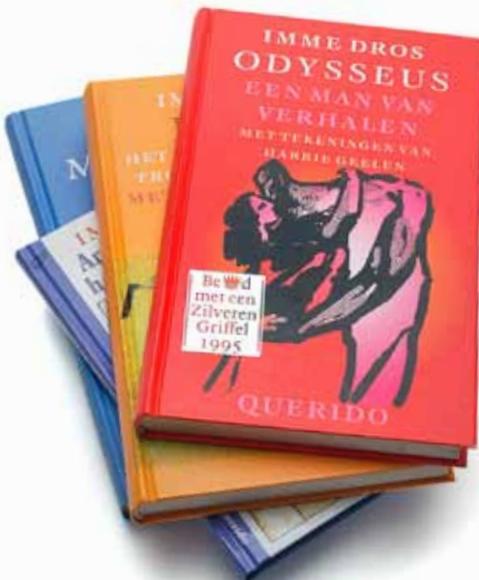
Since the early 1980s, Imme Dros has been highly praised for her realistic characters, her striking dialogue and her carefully crafted, often amusing language. Using simple words and images, the author presents problems that are familiar to all of us.

Her wide-ranging oeuvre has two main target groups: teenagers and toddlers. In addition to her adaptations of the classics, Dros has written a number of realistic teen novels about young people on their way to adulthood who are confronted with the complexities of love and their own odyssey to find out who they are. Dros’s *Annetje Lie in het holst van de nacht* (Annetje Lee in the Dead of Night, 1987) stands apart from her books for teenagers and toddlers. This is a story about a girl who has to stay with her grandmother for unspecified reasons and experiences feverish adventures under the covers ‘in the dead of night’, which develop along the same peculiar lines as her dreams. This book about fear and loneliness, full of rhymes, repetitions and nightmarish escapades, takes place on the boundary between reality and the imagination, and quickly gained the status of a classic. As in Dros’s other books, her endless shaping and polishing of the sentences has resulted in a staggering linguistic tour de force, magnificent in its simplicity and poetic eloquence.

— Imme Dros is the only children’s book writer to have won a Zilveren Griffel fourteen times.

— More than 50.000 copies of Dros’s adaptation of the *Odyssey* have been sold in the Netherlands.

— Imme Dros’s work is closely intertwined with the drawings of her husband Harrie Geelen, who has illustrated the majority of her books.



Querido
Singel 262
1016 AC Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 551 12 62
rights@querido.nl
www.querido.nl

Works

Odysseus, een man van verhalen (1994)
Ilios (1999)
De reizen van de slimme man (1988)
Mee met Aeneas (2008)
Annetje Lie in het holst van de nacht (1987)

Translations

For translated titles by Imme Dros
see www.letterenfonds.nl/translations

The Dutch Foundation for Literature / Nederlands Letterenfonds

supports writers, translators and Dutch literature in translation

Information

The Foundation's advisors on literary fiction, quality non-fiction, poetry and children's and youth literature are present each year at prominent book fairs, including Frankfurt, London, Beijing and Bologna. The brochures *Books from Holland and Flanders*, *Quality Non-Fiction from Holland* and *Children's Books from Holland* recommend highlights from each category's selection.

Translation Grants

Foreign publishers wishing to publish a translation of Dutch or Frisian literature may apply for a subsidy towards the translation costs. Having acquired the rights, the publisher's application must be accompanied by a copy of the contract with the rights owner and a copy of the contract with the translator. Application forms are available from the Foundation's website. Subsidies are disbursed after receipt of proof samples, citing the subsidy. If the Foundation is not acquainted with the translator, a sample translation will be evaluated by external advisors. The maximum subsidy is 70% of the cost of translation. Applications for translations that have already been published cannot be taken into consideration. Publishers looking for a qualified translator can request a list of endorsed translators for their specific language area.

Illustrated Books

In the case of illustrated children's books and/or graphic novels, foreign publishers can apply for assistance to cover a portion of the production costs. Subsidies are jointly funded by the Mondrian Foundation and the Dutch Foundation for Literature.

Documentation centre

The documentation centre is an extensive information resource regarding Dutch literature abroad. The library contains more than 11.000 translated titles in more than seventy-five languages. The documentation centre can be visited by appointment. One significant component, the database of Dutch-language literature in translation, can be perused online at www.vertalingendatabase.nl.

Promotional travel

The Foundation is able to support a publisher wishing to invite an author for interviews or public appearances. Literary festivals are likewise eligible for support. Additionally, the Foundation organizes international literary events in co-operation with local publishers, festivals and book fairs.

Writers-in-residence

The Foundation coordinates writer-in-residence programmes together with foreign universities and institutions. Foreign authors are also invited to spend time working in Amsterdam. They may stay one or two months at the writers' lodgings above the Athenaeum Bookshop on the Spui (in co-operation with the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts). In addition, Amsterdam Vluchtstad offers accommodation to writers fleeing the regime of their home country.

International visitors programme

The visitors programme and the annual Amsterdam Fellowship offer publishers and editors the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the publishing business and the literary infrastructure of the Netherlands.

Translators' House

The Translators' House offers translators the opportunity to live and work in Amsterdam for a period of time. It is involved with numerous activities assisting and advancing translators' skills. Each year the Literary Translation Days are held for those translating to and from Dutch. The event also includes translation workshops.

Grants

The Foundation for Literature is active locally, offering travel and work grants to authors and translators in the field of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children's and youth literature. Workshops are also organized for beginning translators into Dutch.

Schwob

Schwob draws attention to as-yet undiscovered, untranslated world literature. Each month the editors select a modern classic, spotlighting it on www.schwob.nl, by way of reviews and sample translations.

Background

The Dutch Foundation for Literature, created in 2010 as the result of the merger between the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature (NLPVF) and the Foundation for Literature (FvdL), is an independent organization financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Policies and projects are carried out in close co-operation with the Flemish Literature Foundation.

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for literature

‘Much of the best postwar fiction written in Dutch has recently become available in English. Much still remains to be done.’

Tim Parks, *The New York Review of Books*

Website

All titles in this brochure can be found on the Foundation's website: www.letterenfonds.nl. The category 'Authors and translators' offers information on the work of nearly 500 Dutch-language authors, and has a searchable database of more than 17.000 translations from Dutch into other languages.

Advisors

Fiction

Barbara den Ouden
b.den.ouden@letterenfonds.nl

Victor Schiferli
v.schiferli@letterenfonds.nl

Pieter Steinz
p.steinz@letterenfonds.nl

Non-Fiction

Maarten Valken
m.valken@letterenfonds.nl

Children's Books

Agnes Vogt
a.vogt@letterenfonds.nl

Poetry

Thomas Möhlmann
t.moehlmann@letterenfonds.nl

Credits

Contributors

Hein Aalders, Wiljan van den Akker, Joukje Akveld, Maarten Asscher, E.M. Beekman †, David Colmer, Margot Dijkgraaf, Anja de Feijter, Lieneke Frerichs, Kester Freriks, Roelof van Gelder, Léon Hanssen, Wim Hazeu, Ingrid Hoogervorst, Francis R. Jones, Leo Jansen, Bram de Klerck, Conny Kristel, Nop Maas, Marita Mathijssen, Gerda Meijerink, Willem Otterspeer, Victor Schiferli, Rob Schouten, Bart Slijper, Kees Snoek, Pieter Steinz, Paul Vincent, Maria Vlaar, Rudi Wester, Judith Wilkinson

Editors

Dick Broer, Thomas Möhlmann, Barbara den Ouden, Victor Schiferli, Pieter Steinz, Maarten Valken, Agnes Vogt

Translation

Diane Butterman, David Colmer, John Irons, Francis R. Jones, David McKay, Laura Watkinson, Liz Waters, Judith Wilkinson

Copy-editing

Liz Waters, Jan Michael

Design

Philip Stroomberg

Printing

Mart.Spruijt bv

Nederlands Letterenfonds / Dutch Foundation for Literature

Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89
1018 VR Amsterdam
Tel. +31 20 520 73 00
Fax +31 20 520 73 99
The Netherlands
post@letterenfonds.nl
www.letterenfonds.nl