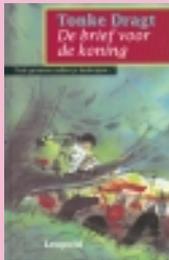
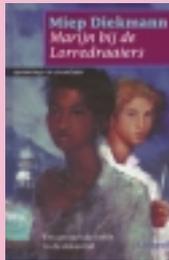


10 Children's Classics

from Holland



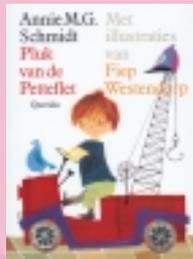
Tonke Dragt



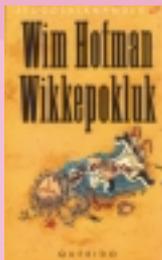
Miep Diekmann



Paul Biegel



Annie M.G. Schmidt



Wim Hofman



Guus Kuijer



Els Pelgrom



Imme Dros



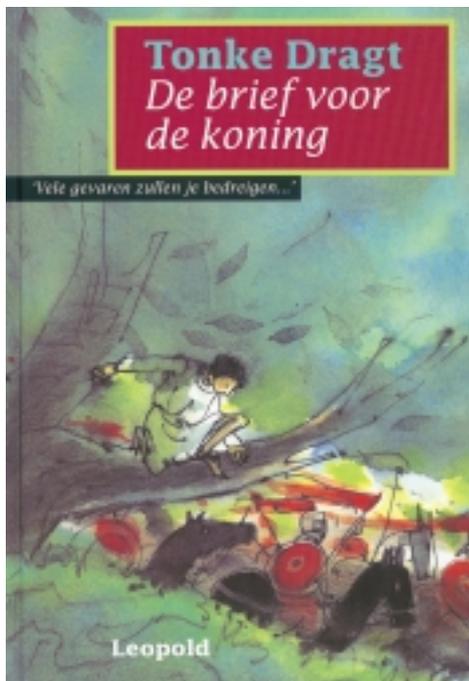
Toon Tellegen



Joke van Leeuwen



FOUNDATION FOR
THE PRODUCTION AND
TRANSLATION OF
DUTCH LITERATURE



A gripping knightly epic

Tonke Dragt

The Letter for the King

IT IS NIGHTTIME, long ago. Five young men are keeping vigil by a 'pale flame' in a chapel. They are allowed to neither speak, nor react to any noise from outside. They must set

their minds to the task ahead of them. Tomorrow they are to be knighted. But then... A knock at the door. A voice from out of the darkness: 'Open up in Gods name!'

De brief voor de koning is a book you find hard to put down. Unusually gripping, the mystery is narrated in a language rich in metaphors but with not one word wasted. Sixteen-year-old Tiuri opens the door of the chapel and discovers, in the conviction that he will now never become a knight, what real chivalry is. He has to deliver a letter to the neighbouring kingdom, on the other side of the 'Mighty Mountains'. Many a danger awaits him. *De brief voor de koning* is an initiation novel, in which Tiuri grows from vulnerable youth to manhood.

On his journey, Tiuri meets a host of people who are not quite what they seem. It appears that Good and Evil cannot always be clearly distinguished from one another. Only a very few figures correspond with the image they present of themselves. On his way through the forest Tiuri meets Marius, the 'Fool of the Forest'. This character is Dragt's version of the 'noble savage', simple in spirit, but nonetheless wise. Marius lives in perfect harmony with nature. The message is clear, but Dragt is no moralist. She wastes no time in announcing with pomp and ceremony that here, finally, is a good person. Apart from all the things Tiuri discovers about himself and the world in which he lives, he finds out what true friendship means. He meets the shepherd boy, Piak. Dragt has created two large-as-life young men, complete with petty quarrels and the odd twinge of jealousy when Tiuri even falls in love for the first time. Everything in this rich book serves to support the plot. In addition to the expressive language, it is the close-knit construction that makes *De brief voor de koning* so breathtaking.

JUDITH EISELIN

Tonke Dragt, born in Batavia in 1930, writes adventure books that explore the boundaries of space and time. As a child, Dragt found herself in a Japanese concentration camp. Inspired by Jules Verne, Dragt wrote her first 'book' while in captivity. She writes both science fiction and historically based books, always coming up with an unexpected twist to surprise her readers.

In 1948, back in the Netherlands, Dragt became an art teacher. Several of her books are self-illustrated. She debuted in 1961 with the fairytale-style *Verhalen van de tweelingbroers* (*Tales of the Twin Brothers*). In 1976 she was awarded the Dutch State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature for her collected works. She is a unique voice in the world of Dutch literature.

Plot, style, composition and appearance form a tight unity. The language is evocative and strikingly clear, with a rich vocabulary. The story itself is colorful and intriguing.

LECTUUR VOORLICHTING

A gripping, cleverly written knightly epic in a grand style and with a broad scope – things we seldom encounter in books for young readers.

HAAGSCHE COURANT

A compelling tale of knights, which is strongly reminiscent of a real fairy tale in its depth and symbolism.

BOEK EN JEUGD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

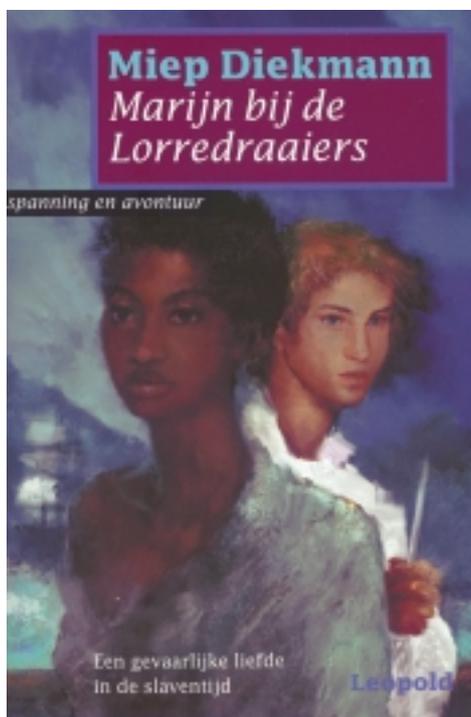
De brief voor de koning (1962)
454 pp

RIGHTS

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Der Brief für den König. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg, 1991.
Dopis pro krále. Praha: Albatros, 2000.



Storms and pirates

Miep Diekmann Marijn and the Smugglers

THIS HISTORICAL youth novel is out on its own where its approach to Dutch colonial history is concerned. The central theme is slave trading in the Caribbean. The three children of a Dutch

dignitary lose both their parents in a hurricane in Curaçao, in 1681. Sixteen-year-old Marijn goes to work as an apprentice surgeon on the ships of various slave traders, including that of the infamous smuggler, Jacob Pieterz, a transporter who avoids the regulations of the West Indian Company.

On board, Marijn becomes acquainted with the degrading business of slave trading and the harsh life of the seaman. Slaves are treated not as people, but as goods. Using numerous details that seem incredible to the contemporary reader, the author demonstrates how great the economic importance was of keeping the cargo as healthy as possible. Life was hard, for the uncivilised crew too, as 'hunger, disease and fear are the invisible fellow passengers at sea'. Marijn experiences thrilling adventures, to put it mildly, with storms and pirates. He is even sold as a white slave to the overseer of a sugar plantation and undertakes a search for the runaway slave girl owned by his family, with whom he is in love.

The narrative perspective, chiefly that of the youthful surgeon, sometimes jumps to the two younger sisters he left behind, working on a slave plantation. The elder as the law-abiding wife of a physician, the younger as a rebellious idealist, who sympathises with the slaves. Through her three young main characters and their adult, worldly-wise adversaries, Diekmann manages to shed light on many aspects of slavery. It is evident that she has carried out careful research for the book. She also, however, tells a compelling personal story, in which, under the influence of their alternative upbringing, three young people break with the prevalent traditions that are supported by politics and religion. It cannot be rewarded with a happy ending, but this dignified treatment makes the historical reality more or less bearable for the reader.

BREGJE BOONSTRA

For more than thirty years, from the mid nineteen fifties onwards, Miep Diekmann (1925) played a prominent role in the world of children's books. She stimulated the developments within Dutch youth literature through reviews, interviews and readings. She was also a translator and coached budding children's authors. Her own works number some fifty titles in various genres, for differing age groups. The five years of her youth she spent in Curaçao inspired her gripping West Indian tales. Typical of Diekmann's work are her impressive choice of subjects, her social involvement, the convincing characterisations of the figures in her stories and her confidence in the capacities of the reader both cognitively and emotionally.

This book is not just a harrowing adventure story but it can also be seen as a plea for an end to racial discrimination, something that persists even in our own century. Marijn and the Smugglers is a book with undeniable literary value and, what is more, it is educational and interesting.

HET VADERLAND

An important book, not just because of the writer's thorough knowledge of history, but also because of the way she manages to incorporate that knowledge into her story.

EVA

An extraordinarily smart book, far superior to the typical fare for young readers.

EVA

PUBLISHING DETAILS

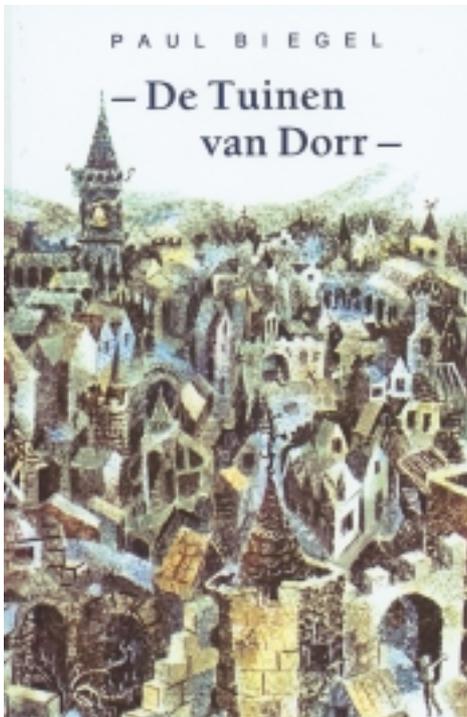
Marijn bij de Lorredraaiers (1965)
332 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Le chirurgien de la fibuste. Paris: Laffont, 1971.
Marijn medzi pirátmi. Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1977.



Lovers in a petrified city

Paul Biegel

The Gardens of Dorr

THIS BOOK CAN BE seen as the magnum opus in Biegel's sizeable oeuvre. He presents a theme relevant to all times and all cultures – love conquers death –, convincing and often

touching characters and an extraordinarily ingenious composition, plus an abundant wealth of language, humour and imagination.

Princess Nevermine's dearest friend is the gardener's apprentice, Evermine, but the witch Sirdis cannot bear to see their blossoming love and turns the boy into a flower. For seven long summers, the little princess searches for the lost gardens of Dorr, where the seed from the flower can again grow into a man, her living love. Behind the girl rides the minstrel Jarrick, who acts as jester in the court of the king, 'because he is such an expert on sadness'. Slowly but surely, he reveals the secret of the seed and, when the last piece of the puzzle falls into place, the wicked witch shrivels up and the dead city of Dorr is green again and there is feasting everywhere. Everyone can start living happily ever after, because Good has once more proved to triumph over Evil. And the proof is a brave young girl, whose motto is, 'The heart goes forth when reason fails'.

The non-chronological composition weaves a beautiful cloth, into which the story of the lovers and the petrified city are skilfully interwoven as the warp and weft. In contrast to fossilised age is the bloom of youth, but children need not be aware of that. They will be enchanted by the mysterious, terrifying and moving stories and delight at the silly verses and newly-baked words in this great, timeless and ageless narrative.

BREGJE BOONSTRA

In the almost forty years Paul Biegel (1925) has been writing for children, he has enjoyed unabated success with both readers and critics. Oblivious to passing fashions and visibly enjoying playing with language, he relates his timeless tales of dwarfs, princesses, witches, robbers and talking animals. His world is that of the fairytale, with a riddle to be solved, a scraggy hero and the eternal struggle between Good and Evil.

Some of Biegel's stories are of the adventurous, unpretentious kind *De kleine kapitein* (The Little Captain, 1971), *De tuinen van Dorr* (The Gardens of Dorr, 1969), *Nachtverhaal* (Night Story, 1992) and *De soldatenmaker* (The Soldier-Maker, 1994), on the other hand, are based on great themes such as friendship and love, loneliness, fear, jealousy, death and war.

Paul Biegel is certainly one of the best authors of children's books working today. One of those rare writers who – through the style, composition and "depth" of their books – manage to raise the children's book to the level of literature.

DE VOLKSKRANT

There are some really brilliant stories in this book that are also quite humorous.

DE VOLKSKRANT

Solidly written and poetic, this fairytale-like text never seems forced.

NIEUWSBLAD VAN HET NOORDEN

PUBLISHING DETAILS

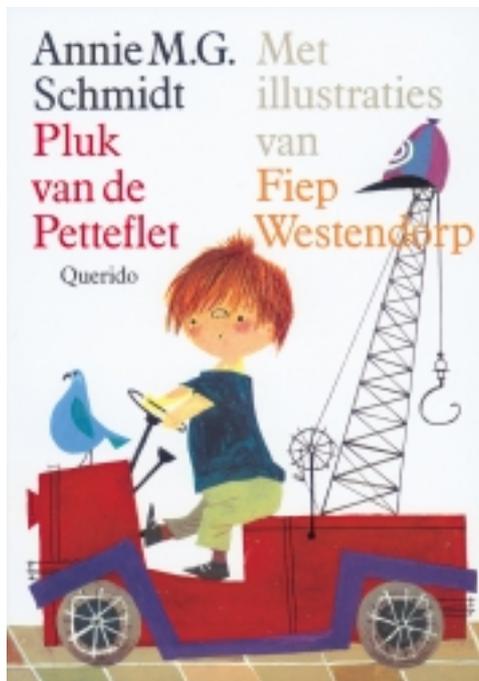
De tuinen van Dorr (1969)
144 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

The Gardens of Dorr (De tuinen van Dorr).
London: Dent & Sons, 1975.



Nice and naughty

Annie M.G. Schmidt

Puck and his Breakdown Lorry

THERE IS PROBABLY one only children's book in the world where a cockroach is cherished as a pet and that is *Pluk van de Petteflet*. Shy little Zaza, content with a

piece of apple peel now and again, can be seen as a symbol for the contrariness in all Schmidt's works. Everything has to be just that little bit different, freer, with more room to manoeuvre. In anything but dignified language, Schmidt creates a world in which children and animals - and the odd nice adult - struggle against hypocrisy and bourgeois respectability. Not too wild, not aggressive, but in a friendly, funny way. 'Nice and naughty', as she once called it herself in a poem.

Pluk van de Petteflet was published in 1971, since when the book has become an institution in the Netherlands. Many a bookshop has a wooden replica of the main character Puck's red breakdown lorry on its doorstep. Those too big to try it out for size are disappointed.

So Puck is a little boy with a breakdown truck. He has no parents, but that is simply by the by. And he has no house, either. Luckily, a pigeon finds the answer for him: the little room in the tower of the highest block of flats in the town is unoccupied. Puck makes friends in and around the flats, the pigeon, the cockroach, a bookseller, the unorthodox Mr Stamper and his sons with their unruly mops of hair, a seagull with a wooden leg, the longest horse in the world. Together, they prevent the only piece of the park still anything like the woods from being paved over. Together they save the rare *Curliqueue*, a bird with curls instead of feathers, from a sticky end in the museum for stuffed birds. *Pluk van de Petteflet* is one of those scarce books that continue to surprise, delight and touch, never losing its sparkle.

JUDITH EISELIN

Annie M.G. Schmidt has often been hailed as the 'true queen' of the Netherlands. Her books are still being reprinted and reprinted and a number have already been successfully filmed. Schmidt, born in 1911 in Kapelle (Zuid Beveland) as a vicar's daughter, debuted in 1950. Before the war she was a librarian and, afterwards, was made head of documentation for the Dutch national newspaper, *Het Parool*, where her talents as a text writer were discovered. Schmidt enjoyed an immensely successful career. In 1965 she was awarded the first Dutch State Prize for Children's and Youth Literature. Many more awards followed. In 1988, she received the international Hans Christian Andersen Prize. Schmidt died on 12 May 1995.

Annie M.G. Schmidt's books deserve preferential treatment. Books of this quality are a rare thing.
NRC HANDELSBLAD

In the first reading it is mainly the story that enchants the reader. Reading the book a second time, one is struck by how clear the sentences are, how carefully the words have been chosen, how everything seems to be in just the right place. With each subsequent reading you see that there are hidden jokes you can only pick up by re-reading.
TROUW

For the very young this is a delightful book to be read aloud - but Pluk and his adventures are for all ages.
DE VROUW

PUBLISHING DETAILS

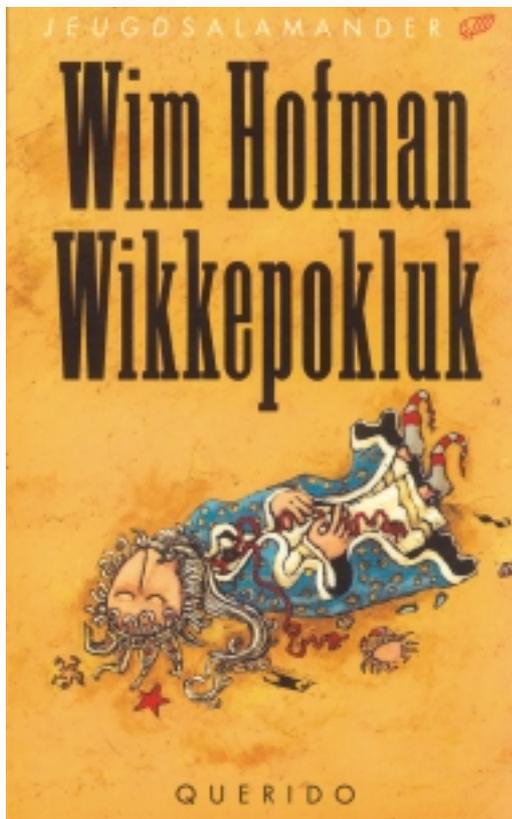
Pluk van de Petteflet 1971
167 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Pløk fra Plækshuset. Århus: Modtryk Forlaget, 1998
Niks no nagennama; Otíte; Minuce.
Riga: Apgāds Rasa, 2002



Packed with puns and humor

Wim Hofman

The Travels of King Wikkepokluk

THIS BOOK IS considered to be Hofman's most typical and personal work. The author received the Golden Slate Pencil. The precise pen drawings reflect the essence of the story: a combination of absurdity and desolation.

Wim Hofman (1941) originally trained as a missionary, studying Sociology and Theology. He moved to painting, and in 1969, to writing. He illustrates all his books himself and his sympathy for children, growing up in this harsh world, is obvious from his books, especially in his powerful and touching version of Snow White, *Zwart als inkt* (Black as Ink, 1997). His absurd fantasies, the animated objects, the word games and his love for the sea and everything maritime are typical elements. His books have won many prizes – for both the text and illustrations – including the Dutch State Award for children's literature.

Followed by three loyal subjects, King Wikkepokluk is seeking a place where he can reign in peace. They end up on an uninhabited island, in a devastated city, a den of thieves and almost in the mouth of a dragon. The royal ambitions are not great. Wikkepokluk would be happy in a tree – but all the trees are already full of kings – in a house without a roof, without walls or a floor or in a dingy prison cell. Finally, he finds his kingdom in a chest. 'And if no one has opened the chest, then he is still there to this day'.

In addition to this familiar ending and the opening sentence – 'Once upon a time there was a king who lived in a beast' – there are other references to fairytales. There is a difficult task to perform before he can marry the queen, and a thousand-year old man who is the source of all wisdom. The surrealistic and sometimes oppressive character, on the other hand, is entirely un-fairytale-like. Hieronymus Bosch figures pop up and in innumerable boxes live an equal number of bizarre creatures, which Wikkepokluk sets free, as if performing a pale imitation of the Creation. Unlike most fairytale writers, Hofman also amuses himself with plays on words and in embellishing his strange tale with surprising gems.

The author claims to have been influenced by James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. Some readers will recognise the symbolism of a pointless existence, which – whatever we do – ends up in a wooden box. Others will primarily find pleasure in the incoherent series of events in which a major Hofman adage can clearly be seen: 'Anything can happen on paper, like in your head'.

BREGJE BOONSTRA

A story packed with puns and delightful humor.

FRIES DAGBLAD

An imaginative and very funny story.

NRC

People who take note of the remarkably deft and expressive use of language, the rich vocabulary, the momentum and movement of words will agree with me that Wim Hofman is a writer to keep an eye on.

HERVORMD NEDERLAND

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Koning Wikkepokluk de merkwaardige zoekt een rijk (1973)

134 pp

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Van Holkema & Warendorf
Onderdoor 7

NL - 3995 DW Houten

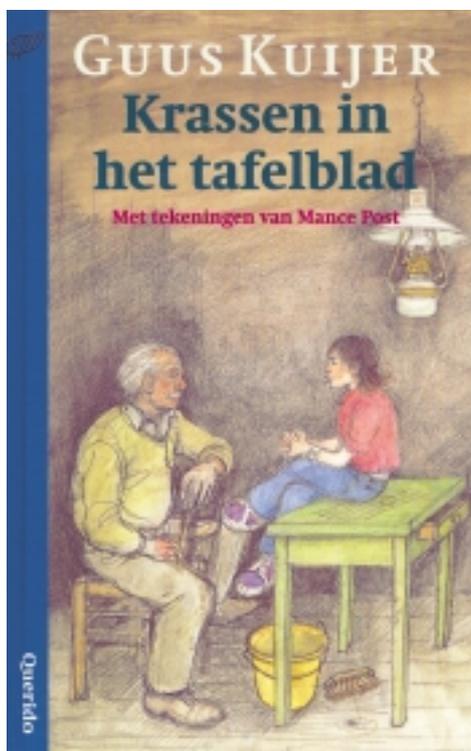
TEL. +31 030 - 63 77 660

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

König Wikkepok. München: Middelhaue, 1998.



A barred prison window with a head behind

Guus Kuijer

Scratches on the Tabletop

WHEN DAISY'S Grandma dies, the girl realises to her surprise that she barely knew her and that her mother does not seem particularly upset. Daisy goes to stay with her kind, sensible Grandad, to cheer him up a bit in

Guus Kuijer (1942) debuted in the mid-seventies, when children's books were rediscovered as a weapon in the struggle for a better world. His five books about Madelief (Daisy) were an immediate success. As a true disciple of Annie Schmidt, he does not make the children any better behaved or the adults any more sensible than they actually are. His style is precise and graceful and his ability to describe major issues with a modicum of words is unsurpassed.

After an initial period when he was awarded every prize possible and after a number of animal stories and socially committed novels for young readers nothing was heard from him for a while, until Polleke (Polly) appeared in 1999. Twenty-five years after Madelief, this new Kuijer heroine attempts to hold her ground in what has become a complex, multicultural society in the Netherlands.

his loneliness. There begins the search for the woman who was her grandmother. Like a cunning, dogged detective, bit by bit she pieces together what has never been talked about in the family and why.

Grandma was an independent woman, with an original frame of mind. She needed to spread her wings, but lacked the courage to defy the restrictive spirit of the times. She gave up her dreams to settle down with her husband. This turned her into an embittered, intolerant wife and mother, with a duster in her hand from dawn 'til dusk. In the garden house Grandad once built especially for her, Grandma left a sad, but enlightening vestige of her existence: a barred prison window has been scratched into the table top, with a head behind.

Perhaps the finest of all Kuijer's works, a few years ago this book was successfully turned into an impressive children's film. The author is brilliant at writing childish dialogue and, as always, succeeds in describing people and situations to a tee with a minimum of words and dry humour. It is a sign of true genius in youth literature to be able to write at a simple level about the real issues that every human life revolves around: the relationships between loved ones and between parents and children. Kuijer presents his characters warts and all. He does not judge, but gently encourages Daisy, the child who, observing with amazement the mess that grownups make, continues to ask questions. Even when she is well aware the questions are awkward.

BREGJE BOONSTRA

A book that deals with subjects that have not yet been dealt with, and that is reason enough for it to have been written.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Between the lines of his children's book Guus Kuijer weaves a complete family saga. In a sparkling, unpretentious children's story he relates the story of a marriage in the same subtle fashion.

ALKMAARSE COUNANT

A jewel of a children's book.

HET VADERLAND

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Krassen in het tafelblad (1978)
101 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

La maison au fond du jardin. Paris: Éditions Pocket, 1997.
Himitsu no koya no maderifu. Tokyo: Kokudoshia, 1999.



What Life Has to Offer

Els Pelgrom

Little Sophie and Lanky Flop

KLEINE SOFIE EN LANGE WAPPER is about a little girl who is terminally ill. Sophie experiences a thrilling adventure in her feverish dreams when her dolls and

stuffed toys come to life at night. The tomcat, Terror, has written a play in the style of the *Commedia dell'Arte* about *What Life Has to Offer*. Teddy, Sophie and her cuddly friend, Lanky Flop, take part in the play in Sophie's cardboard toy theatre. Terror also takes a role and directs the play. Sophie travels from her room into another world, a harsh world, in which, in the space of one night, she becomes acquainted with life, complete with poverty and wealth, injustice, lies and hypocrisy. Sophie tumbles from one adventure to another: from the boggy marshland to the year market, from the 'Home for Unfortunate Children' to Teddy's luxurious villa, from the King's palace to a prison cell, finally ending up in a raging storm at sea. Pelgrom describes all this with great imagery, at a high tempo and with sensitivity and precision. At the end, Sophie whispers, laughing: 'What Life Has to Offer! That's what I wanted to know. So much! So much!' Then the play is ended and Sophie dies contentedly. The family and neighbours pay their last respects and, the next morning, Sophie is travelling with her friends in a beautiful deep blue car through green hills and blue skies. 'An endless journey had begun'.

The book has justifiably been highly praised as a literary masterpiece and a rich, comforting children's book about dying. When it was first published, in 1984, however, it was the subject of some controversy, due to its stratified, multi-interpretable text, full of symbolism and references to literature and theatre and because, at the time, death was still rather a taboo in children's books. It soon became clear, however, that this was an undeniably magisterial children's novel, a modern classic of substance.

LIEKE VAN DUIN

Els Pelgrom (1934) debuted in 1977 with *De kinderen van het achtste woud* (*The Winter When Time Was Frozen*), in which she writes about her memories of the war. It was one of the first children's books about war without clichéd heroes or villains and it immediately won her the Golden Slate Pencil. An impressive string of works followed, for which she received the Theo Thijssen Prize, the Dutch triennial State Award for youth literature, in 1994. Her work is amongst the finest youth literature of the nineteen eighties and includes *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* (*Little Sophie and Lanky Flop*, 1984), *Het onbegonnen feest* (*Impossible Party*, 1987) and *De eikelvreters* (*The Acorn Eaters*, 1989). Her writing is characterised by the blend of reality and fantasy into a credible whole, by a penchant for folk culture and by the focus on the underdog, the misplaced, the 'unfortunate' child, who is, however, never pitiful.

I wish I were a child and got this book as a gift. I wish I didn't know what it was about and could start reading it from the beginning. I know I would have had a wonderful day.

VRIJ NEDERLAND

Little Sophie and Lanky Flop is the product of an outstanding collaboration between author and illustrator, who deliver top quality in language, imagination and design.

HAARLEMS DAGBLAD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

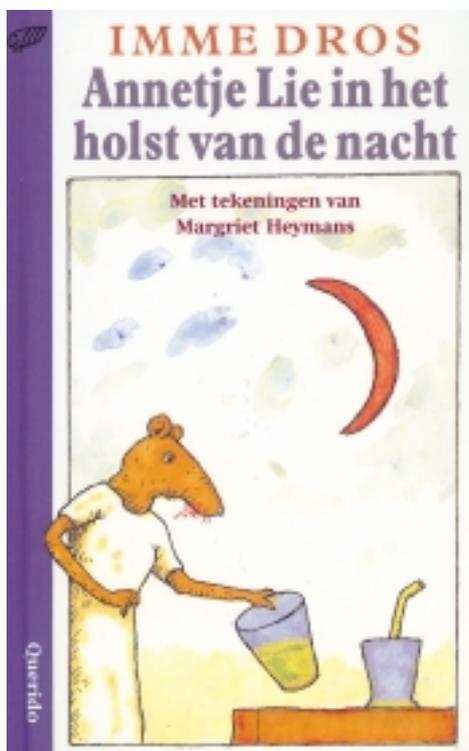
Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper (1984)
125 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Little Sophie and Lanky Flop.
London: Jonathan Cape, 1987.
Chiisana sofie to noppo no batabata.
Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2000.



Children's fears and fantasies

Imme Dros

Annelie in the Depths of the Night

THE IMPORTANT role fantasy and symbolism play in *Annelie in the Depths of the Night* (1987) earn it a place of its own amongst Imme Dros' generally realist work. Annelie is taken to her Grandmother's by her

father for unclear reasons and for an indeterminate length of time. Grandma is kind and caring and Annelie sleeps in the bedroom her mother occupied as a little girl, which is full of toys and a four-poster bed. But it doesn't help. The only bed the little girl wants to sleep in is her own.

Under her eiderdown, Annelie finds 'the depths of the night', where she has strange adventures. Scary characters appear and events follow one after another with the associative randomness of a nightmare. In the course of the story, it becomes clear to the reader that the child is gradually becoming sicker and sicker. She talks of being thirsty, of having headaches, she contracts a temperature and lapses into delirium, the doctor is called and she finds herself in a hospital bed. What exactly is wrong with the main character is not revealed. It must be the mysterious, often serious illness caused by anxiety, powerlessness and desolation.

At the turning point in the illness, Mum finally arrives and promises to visit every Sunday from now on; not every day, but she will come every Sunday. The unconditionally happy ending one would like as reader does not prove possible, but there is hope. With this essentially open ending Dros remains true to her approach to young readers, which expresses sympathy and compassion. The eloquence of the narration is reinforced by the subtle drawing pen of Margriet Heymans. She records Annelie's experiences in an on-going comic strip at the top of each page. 'The dead of the night', is brought to life in a perfect harmony of words and pictures by a writer and an artist who both have respect for the mysterious, rich reality of children's fears and fantasies.

BREGJE BOONSTRA

Imme Dros (Texel, 1936) studied Dutch language and literature in Amsterdam, where she met her husband, illustrator Harrie Geelen. The isolation of Texel island life and the need to make choices are recurring themes in Dros' work. Influenced by her highly praised translation of Homer's *Odyssey* (1991) she wrote some interesting youth novels related to these ancient tales. She is currently retelling a number of Greek myths.

Imme Dros' language, for younger and older children, is always careful and often poetic. Her work satisfies the demands of literature, without losing its relevance for its audience, making her one of the most highly acclaimed Dutch authors of children's books.

Imme Dros has cast a spell that you have to experience.

GOUDEN GRIFFEL JURY

Annelie in the Depths of the Night is very successful in its composition and language and can be read on a variety of different levels. The book is a mini-masterpiece.

ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD

In this splendid book Imme Dros uses an enviably poetic sort of language, full of puns, Lewis Carroll-like dialogue, functional symbolism and repetitions that are reminiscent of fairy tales and nursery rhymes. This yields a well-balanced style, full of whimsical ideas and lovely images, which powerfully evoke recognizable emotions like fear, happiness, loneliness, sorrow and the need for security and peace.

VERNIEUWING

PUBLISHING DETAILS

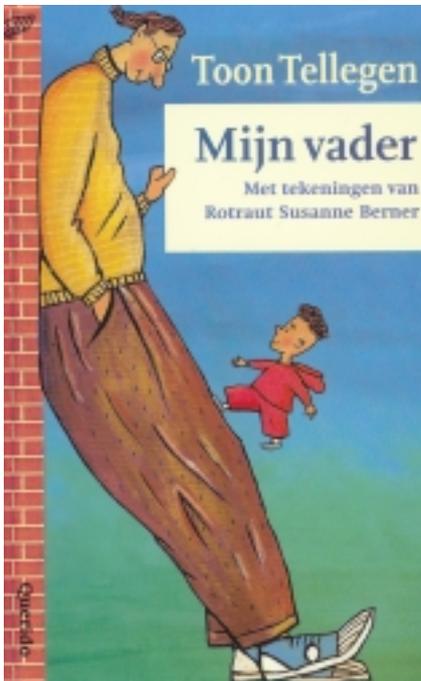
Annetje Lie in het holst van de nacht
(1987)
118 pp

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WEBSITE www.querido.nl

SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Annelie in the Depths of the Night.
London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991.
Nel profondo della notte. Milano: Mondadori, 1998.



The father of all fathers

Toon Tellegen

My Father

TOON TELLEGEN'S animal stories were originally published under Querido's children's book fund, but have now been compiled for an adult audience. An unusual, but quite understandable develop-

ment. Tellegen is a self-willed writer who is difficult to place into any of the accepted literary pigeonholes and now readers of all ages have discovered his remarkable animal forest. A delightful place for language lovers who are wont to entertain strange thoughts now and again. Here, the profound brooding of Tellegen's poetry for adults finds an endearing, comical counterpart without losing its serious undertone.

The register of *My Father*, in which a small boy tells about his extraordinary father, is light. The book is beautifully designed and Rotraut Susanne Berner's absurdist drawings make the relationships immediately evident. Father is a giant – but a visible and friendly one – an overgrown rascal in enormous trainers with strange glasses and an odd shock of hair. His son, Jozef, is a mini-person with a big head, who looks up to his father in every sense of the word.

Jozef draws a portrait of this awe-inspiring being, who knows everything and can do everything: catch thieves, become invisible, put out fires, hold back bulldozers and stop the war. Father whispers him the answers at school, knows better than the doctor and throws the horrible swimming teacher into his own horrible swimming pool.

The form is that of all Tellegen's prose: a seemingly random number of short passages – without any apparent order or cohesion – in which the same characters continually appear. There is also a clear Von Münchhausen-style tendency towards tall stories. Just as, in the animal stories, the elephant flies and sits on the branch of a tree, and just as Miss Stove is the epitome of pedagogic pestilence, this is about the father of all fathers. It is precisely the way the age of unconditional belief and trust in paternal omnipotence is seen through childish eyes that ensures that this tall tale will be recognised by all readers as a true story, in essence.

BREGJE BOONSTRA

For a long time Toon Tellegen (1941) combined writing with a GP's practice. Since 1997, however, he has devoted himself entirely to writing. Tellegen began his literary career as a poet. In 1984 he published *Er ging geen dag voorbij* (Not a Day Went By), his first collection of animal stories for children. They were followed by many more.

Animal stories form an essential part of Tellegen's work. With his characteristic combination of surrealism, upscaling and black humour, however, he has also written about a crazy doctor, a deeply depressed cricket, a world populated entirely by elephants and the terrifying teacher, *Juffrouw Kachel* (Miss Stove). He has been awarded all the major literary prizes.

What makes My Father special is the superior way that language and imagination, form and content come together. (...) Toon Tellegen is not only a linguistic virtuoso with a large percentage of quotable sentences, he (still) knows how children think and what they need.

DE VOLKSKRANT

In none of his previous books has Tellegen succeeded so brilliantly in combining his own thoughts on life with children's drama and poetic language. He has once again enriched the canon of children's literature.

ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

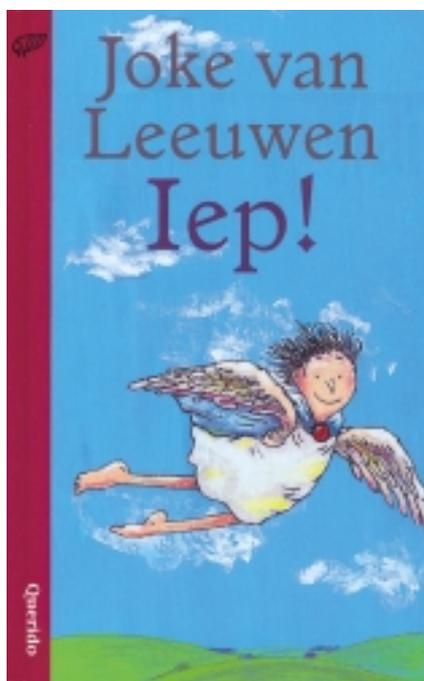
Mijn vader (1994)
106 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Josefs Vater. München; Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1994.
Il mio papà. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001.



A peanut bitter sandwich

Joke van Leeuwen

Cheep!

IN *IEP!* (CHEEP!) Joke van Leeuwen plays with language as never before. It can be read as a story about a creature who is half human, half bird. The bird-watcher Warren

Joke van Leeuwen (1952) studied history at the University of Brussels, performs in cabaret and theatre shows, writes stories and poems for children, which she illustrates herself, and writes prose and poetry for adults. She has received innumerable awards, including the prestigious Theo Thijssen Prize, the triennial Dutch State Prize for youth literature.

In her work, Joke van Leeuwen champions the uninhibited way children look at the world, fighting against repression and narrow-mindedness. A number of stories are about a quest in various stages, such as *Deesje* (Dee Dee, 1985), *Wijd weg* (Far Away, 1991) and *Iep!* (Cheep!, 1996). Joke van Leeuwen demonstrates that high quality literature need not be inaccessible.

finds the creature, who has wings instead of arms, under a bush and takes it home with him. There, he and his wife, Tina, attempt to raise it, smothered in love, as a civilised little girl. Without success: she cannot be tamed. She does learn to talk a little bit, but the only vowel she can pronounce is 'ie', so her name, Birdie, becomes Beedie. The longest sentence she can manage is: 'I wint a peanut bitter sindwich.'

Tina makes Beedie a flap-jacket to hide her wings, but one day she flies off, all the same: 'It looked as if she was doing butterfly stroke, crawfly stroke, treading air.' Wherever Beedie lands people want to keep her, but she always flies off again, without saying goodbye. The end is touching: Tina and Warren nurse Beedie back to health when she gets buckshot in her wing and finally let her go with, as a parting gift, a golden ring inscribed with the words, 'Hiv a gid trip'. Even Tina realises that the only way to save her is to free her: 'You can't keep Beedies, only in your thoughts.'

The story's theme reminds one of Andersen's tale of 'The Chinese Nightingale': if you try to tame beauty and freedom, you will only lose them.

But the book is also about a lot of other things. About perception: 'You can see the same thing but at the same time something totally different.' About the inadequacy of language: 'We smell a lot of differences and don't know what to call them.' Standard phrases, like 'You are welcome any time' are ridiculed, as is the information society, which overwhelms you with unsolicited information. All this is presented with light-hearted humour, in plain language where every word seems to have been carefully tasted beforehand. Simplicity and stratification are in perfect balance: the purest children's language philosophy skilfully concealed in a wonderful tale.

LIEKE VAN DUIN

Like few other authors Joke van Leeuwen manages to exploit fully the possibilities of language and children's logic.

ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD

Anyone who can express so much in a story this clever and exciting, can be called the creator of a classic children's book.

ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD

Simplicity and complexity are in perfect balance: linguistic philosophy for children, skilfully hidden in a fantastic story.

TROUW

Van Leeuwens wit shines through even in individual sentences.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Iep! (1996)
150 pp

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SELECTED TRANSLATED TITLES

Viegelchen will fliegen.
München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001.
Ma non è un angelo. Firenze: Salani, 1998.

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10 Children's Classics presents the loveliest Dutch children's books.

A team of ten experts was asked to select children's books that warranted the status of a classic. There proved to be a high degree of unanimity in their choice, which is extraordinary when you consider the diverse criteria by which children's books are judged, but not when you look at the books themselves. These ten are a cut above the others in every aspect. They are books that are discovered afresh by succeeding generations. The privilege of reading these classics should not remain reserved for Dutch children alone.

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