

# NEWS&VIEWS

## From the LOW COUNTRIES

CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE  
FROM HOLLAND  
AND FLANDERS

↓  
EDITION 2010

Independent news from the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Flemish Literature Fund

### That nightingale's a real winner



For his first children's book, *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal* (The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat, publ. De Eenhoorn), Flemish writer Peter Verhelst (47) won not only the Gouden Uil, but also the Gouden Griffel and the Woutertje Pieterse Prize.

This is the only time in the history of Dutch-language children's literature that one book has swept the board, winning all of the major children's book prizes. And it's all the more amazing because *The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat* is a debut. Verhelst has already written with great success for adults though; his novel *Tongkat* (Tongue Cat) won the Gouden Uil for adult literature. In his children's book, Verhelst writes his own version of Hans Christian Andersen's well-known fairytale 'The Nightingale'. In a stunning, poetic style, he tells how the Chinese emperor is deeply moved by the song

of the nightingale. But when an instrument maker creates a mechanical golden copy of the nightingale, he forgets about the real one – until he discovers that nothing can replace the living bird. *The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat* is a luxurious picture book, a hardback with a gilt edge and enchanting paintings by Carll Cneut. In their reports, the judges made it clear that they were also honouring the work of the illustrator. One of the juries wrote, 'Verhelst and Cneut have made such full use of their linguistic gifts and artistic talents that they have created a completely new work of art. (...) It's a perfect symbiosis of picture, text and design. This book is the ultimate journey through the imagination.' The book has also enjoyed success internationally: it won a White Raven Special Mention 2009 and has now been translated into German, French, Spanish, Italian, Korean, Slovenian and Chinese.

#### Carll Cneut in Bologna

The Flemish Literature Fund has given illustrator Carll Cneut a travel grant to visit the International Children's Book Fair 2010 in Bologna. But he is not travelling alone; he is taking along the young and talented illustrator Kaatje Vermeire. Vermeire enjoyed great success with her debut at De Eenhoorn, the picture book *De vrouw en het jongetje* (The Woman and the Little Boy, with words by Geert De Kockere), which was immediately translated into Spanish and will soon be on sale in bookshops in France and Taiwan. This is a wonderful opportunity for her to explore the book fair in Bologna with Cneut, who has already been published in around twenty languages, and to meet international publishers here and there. Keep an eye open for them!

### Bologna Ragazzi Award for The Tree House



The Dutch picture book *De boomhut* (The Tree House, publ. Lemniscaat) by father and daughter Ronald and Marije Tolman won the Bologna Ragazzi Award in the fiction category (illustrated fairy tales). In this book without words, we see a polar bear and a brown bear receiving a procession of exotic visitors to the tree house. The jury described the book as 'a wise, clear, even poetic, example of how an established topos of the collective imagination may be revisited with a fresh eye to reveal a continued relevance to modern times. (...) The book's message is not declaimed, but is conveyed quietly. It pleads for an enlightened ecological stance in which an intense awareness that we are part of nature does not forego our need for elegance and intellectual enquiry.'

### A worldwide success

These children from Kathmandu, Nepal, can't keep their eyes off Dutch illustrator Charlotte Dematons's picture book *The Yellow Balloon*. The book's been a great success with children all over the world. [Read more on page 5.](#)  
/ Photo: Ton Koene



### Gouden Penseel for Sieb Posthuma

## Over 150 pages of excitement

Children's book illustrator Sieb Posthuma won the annual award for best illustrations for his drawings in *Boven in een groene linde zat een moddervette haan* (Up in a Green Lime Tree Sat a Big, Fat Rooster, publ. Gottmer), a collection of animal fables. Posthuma himself thinks that the book contains his best work to date.

Posthuma worked for a year on the 75 illustrations to accompany the animal fables of Aesop and La Fontaine, collected and turned into rhyme by Maria van Donkelaar and Martine van Rooijen. 'The size of the collection called for variety,' says Posthuma. 'I had to bring different rhythms into the illustrations to maintain the excitement over 150 pages.' Posthuma set himself no limits: cutting, pasting, tearing paper, making watercolours with and without outlines, almost Paul Klee-like patches of colour, stylised and detailed animals, comic-book funny, landscapes, zooming in, animals with and without clothes. 'Of course I took into account the atmosphere of the individual fables, but without tying myself to any single technique or just doing

a picture to match the words. I looked for the contrasts, introduced something funny into a drawing for a sad story. Or I drew the main characters in the fable very small and enlarged a detail or something trivial in the surroundings. That kind of unexpected composition is exciting.' The humour in his illustrations often lies in the expressions, Posthuma says. 'In many of the drawings in the fable book you see one character whose expression is commenting on the situation or the other characters. Children notice that and it often makes them laugh. It is as though the character has turned to the reader for a little chat, like a narrator in a play.'





‘This poem is a beautiful example of how Ted van Lieshout takes an everyday event and develops it into a profound and intimate perception of life, a truth of childhood experience, which both children and adults can appreciate.’ << Aidan Chambers, British author of novels for children and young adults



Ted van Lieshout also created the illustrations for his book of poems *Hou van mij* (Love Me). These include drawings, paintings, collages, enhanced photographs and personal snapshots, such as this one of Ted as a child, which is from the Van Lieshout family's own collection.

Mother, sometimes I think, when I can't sleep, that I will wake up one morning and find you dead, or I come home

from school and there you are, lying lifeless behind the door, or in the kitchen, and I can feel by touching the tea pot that you just died.

And what am I supposed to do then? Who should I fetch? Must I wait till the others get home or call an ambulance right away?

Do the dishes while I wait and cover you up with a blanket? Or first pull your dress straight if it's not neatly as it should be? Are there

secrets I must destroy so that no one will find them? Here in our house, in the attic or in the cellar? In the closet I already know?

O, what am I to do when I am the first who must take care of you, Mother, when you are dead, and no one in the world knows it yet?

Written and translated into English  
by Ted van Lieshout

# 2009: the year of Ted van Lieshout

**In 2009, writer and artist Ted van Lieshout (54) won the prestigious lifetime achievement award for Dutch children's literature, which is presented every three years. But his good fortune didn't stop there.**

2009 was a good year for Ted van Lieshout. In September, he won the Theo Thijssen Prize (previously the State Prize) for children's and young people's literature. The jury recognised his achievements and rewarded Van Lieshout with a prize of € 60,000, a bronze statue, a certificate and a glowing report. The jury said, 'Van Lieshout distinguishes himself from many other authors through the variety of his oeuvre, the dialogue between words and pictures, his

original and expressive style and the "other" eyes with which he constantly sees the world from new and different perspectives.'

Ted van Lieshout writes poems, novels for children and young adults, non-fiction books about art, and work for theatre and television. He does not shy away from difficult subjects, writing very openly and incisively about issues including, for example, the deaths of his father and brother and awakening homosexuality. But his work never becomes sentimental and also has a cheerful side.

Van Lieshout studied illustration and graphic design at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and made his debut in 1986 with the children's book *Raafs reizend theater* (Raven's Travelling Theatre) and the poetry collection *Van verdriet kun je grappige hoedjes vouwen* (You Can Make Sorrow into Funny Hats). He has won major

awards including five Zilveren Griffels and one Gouden Griffel, two Zilveren Zoenen and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis for his book *Gebr.* (Brothers), which has been translated into many languages.

He won his most recent Zilveren Griffel last October for his poetry collection *Spin op sokken* (Spider in Socks). The same month saw a staggering print run of 113,000 copies of his picture book *Koekjes!* (Cookies!), with illustrations by Sieb Posthuma.

The crowning touch to his year of success was *Hou van mij* (Love Me), a monumental doorstopper of a collector's edition containing nearly all of Van Lieshout's poems and just as many drawings to delight the eye. Ted van Lieshout's books have been translated into Slovenian, Swedish, Norwegian, English, German, Danish, Italian, French, Spanish and Estonian.

## Erna Sassen on her powerful YA novel: 'I hope my book offers comfort.'

/ Photo: Mark Sassen



**Erna Sassen had already written five cheerful books for children of around eight years old, so the sledgehammer blow she delivered with her first YA novel *Dit is geen dagboek* (This Is Not a Diary, publ. Leopold) hit home with unexpected force. 'A complex novel about the teenage soul, which is intensely moving,' wrote the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*.**

### What is the book about?

Erna: *This Is Not a Diary* is an intense novel about the inner emotional life of 16-year-old Boudewijn, whose mother has thrown herself in front of a train. I tried to make the book hard and raw, but also loving and sometimes humorous. Boudewijn develops as a person: he finally manages to let go of his anger and to feel his grief. The book has a hopeful ending. Although it's not a self-help book, I think that many young people and adults may gain something from it. I hope it offers comfort.

### How were you able to write about such a difficult subject with such insight and empathy?

My father was chronically depressed and often talked about suicide. So that threat was present in our house. When my brother was young he had serious depression too, which lasted over a year. Later I experienced at close hand how disastrous the consequences of suicide can be for those who are left behind.

### Is that what you want this book to show?

In part. I'm mainly interested in grief. Boudewijn goes through a delayed grieving process. As a survival tactic, he froze all of his emotions when his mother committed suicide. But now he's stuck. He's even pushed his girlfriend away because he doesn't dare to start an intimate relationship with her. His mother is standing in his way, because of his anger about her abandoning him and his grief that she'll never be there again. Boudewijn's dad tells him to start a diary. Writing allows him to put his grief into words and he slowly climbs out of his valley of despair. I truly believe that's how it works; writing really can get you back on your feet.



## First doodle books and now a drawing diary!

Have you come across doodle books yet? Those books with fun drawing activities, like the ones by Japanese illustrator and writer Taro Gomi. They're pretty popular in Holland and Flanders. Most publishers buy these books from abroad, but Nieuw Amsterdam recently published a book that was originally written in Dutch and which is at least as much fun as doodle books from other countries: *Mijn tekendagboek* (My Drawing Diary) by award-winning illustrator Ceseli Josephus Jitta. It's a diary for children who are not yet able to write or who simply prefer to draw. Encouraged and inspired by Josephus Jitta's many drawings, children can paint, cut and paste about their experiences. The book also includes fun activities: map out the way from school to your house, draw your own reflection or write with two pens at the same time. It's a fantastic book, a must-have for doodlers all over the world!



# YA novel *We All Want Heaven* sweeps the board

**The long and involving wartime novel *Allemaal willen we de hemel* (We All Want Heaven, publ. Querido) was the clear winner amongst the YA titles of 2009.**

In just one year, this novel by Els Beerten (51) won the Boekenleeuw, the Gouden Uil Young Readers' Prize, the Gouden Lijst and the Nienke van Hichtum Prize. The book tells the impressive story of four young Flemish people during the Second World War. Jef and Ward want to become heroes and they join the Flemish National Union. This political faction recruits boys to go and fight alongside the Germans on the eastern front. Jef and Ward are naïve enough to believe that Bolshevism is a greater danger to the catholic Flanders than the German occupier. Jef's parents prevent him from going, but Ward is determined to leave for the front. Even Renée, his sweetheart, cannot stop him. Little Remi views this adult world through a child's eyes. These young people take it in turns

to speak, each of them as the first-person narrator of their own chapters. This allows the reader to get to know the characters from the inside out as well as through the eyes of the other individuals in the story. A magnificent and shocking book about love, friendship, loyalty, devastating choices and the grey area between right and wrong. Norwegian, Spanish and German translations are coming out soon.



Els Beerten / Photo: Jan Simoen



## Els Beerten on her wartime novel: 'An elderly reader said to me: the way you describe the war is just how it was.'

*We All Want Heaven* started with a question. How does a man survive when he thought he was doing the right thing, but gradually comes to realise that half the world is judging him? How does he deal with the question of guilt? As I was writing the book, I became aware that I would never have an answer. Because I wasn't in my characters' shoes; I was writing in the warmth of my home and not on the eastern front in temperatures of minus 40. I gained a great deal of compassion for people who court disaster to the same extent as Ward and Jef. Later I came to see that the knowledge that you cannot make judgements about what something is like until you have experienced it yourself can also be an answer. I hope that my book gives the reader that sense of empathy. That and the fact that you had better be very careful before you start following a flag. That you have to be aware that you are not an island, that there is always someone who is influenced by your decisions. Does that make my book different from all of the other books about the war? When the book had been out for a few months, I received a phone call from a very elderly woman. She said that all her life she had been looking for a book that presented the time during and after the war as it really was. She had read many books that came close, but they were all in English. In Flanders and the Netherlands she kept encountering the same black-and-white point of view in books. And it wasn't like that, she said. Black and white came after the war, when people thought they had to judge and put the blame where it belonged. And then she read my book. And the way I described it, she said, was just how it was. It was the very first book to get it right. She had lived in a small village, where life was just how it was in my book, and after the war she had taken care of a concentration-camp survivor for many years. So she was not trying to gloss over any acts of war. I was so happy to hear her reaction. And then I heard more of the same. From people like that one old man, who came from a resistance background, but still had friends who fought on the eastern front. He had seen how they had suffered because of all the accusations, even after doing time in prison. He had never understood how people could judge others so harshly and ruin their lives. The man told me that my book reflected exactly the way he saw life and how he wanted to live his life. Not judgementally, but with understanding and compassion. That would make the world a better place.

After he died, I received a photograph of his grave. His name was John. And written on his grave was the title of my book: 'We All Want Heaven'. I still cannot describe how that makes me feel. I keep thinking: John alone has made all of those years of writing worthwhile.

## REVIEW



## Tiffany is thirteen and wants a baby

**TIFFANY DOP – TJIBBE VELDKAMP  
PUBLISHER: LEMNISCAAT**

When you read reports about teenage mothers, you think about pressure and stupid accidents. What kind of teenage girl would deliberately choose to get pregnant? Tjibbe Veldkamp has written about a girl just like that: Tiffany Dop is thirteen and she wants to have a baby.

Tiffany's ability to fight like an alley cat is her salvation in the rough neighbourhood where she grows up. Even her brothers Danny and Bruce, who are both yobs themselves, are scared of her fists. Her

tough-talking mother Sheila earns money on the side as a prostitute and only pays attention to her children when she wants to wheedle money out of them.

Tiffany is swept along in this antisocial environment until a woman in a shopping centre dumps a baby on her and asks her to keep an eye on it for a moment. Tiffany experiences something she has never felt before: 'I felt weird. A bit tearful, but in a good way (...) Suddenly I realised what was wrong with me. I felt love.'

Without tender descriptions like that, in which Tiffany suddenly becomes a vulnerable little girl, the dramatic quest that follows might seem over the top. But there is something endearing about Tiffany's actions, even though they are shocking at times. She goes out looking for a man who will make her pregnant. 'I wanted to be the way I am with a baby.' Tiffany takes her clothes off in front of an older man and tries to pick up a guy in the red-light district. When a family friend sexually assaults her, she wonders whether she should just let him. Student type Olivier, whom she unsuccessfully attempts to ensnare in the library, says he can hook her up with an 'STD-free sex machine'. But it turns out that he's actually trying to stop her from getting pregnant.

Even with all of the tragedy of Tiffany's emotional abuse, Veldkamp's tone remains pleasantly straightforward, and is often even amusing. The result is a book that is as unusual as it is touching.

# In memoriam Veronica Hazelhoff 1947-2009

**With the death of Veronica Hazelhoff last year, the Netherlands lost one of its most important writers of children's books.**

Writer Veronica Hazelhoff died at the University Medical Centre in Utrecht on 1 July 2009. Three years earlier, she had presented her latest book *Bezoek van Mister P.* (Mr P's Visit) to a ward full of chronically ill children in the same hospital. For the first time, having written 23 other titles, Hazelhoff had decided to write a book about rheumatoid arthritis, which she had suffered from since she was 25 and which made writing very difficult for her.

Hazelhoff made her debut in 1981 with *Nou moe!* (Oh, really!), the first part of a humorous trilogy for girls based on the badly behaved Maartje.

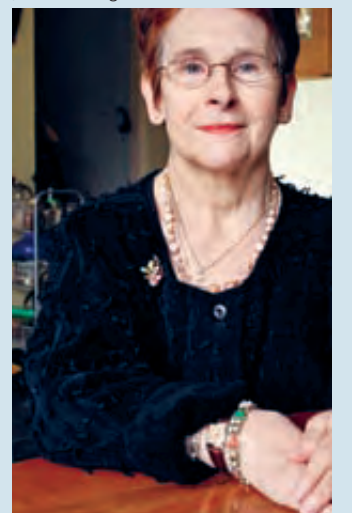
This book won her a Zilveren Griffel and was translated into German and Norwegian. She went on to win a Gouden Griffel for the third part in the trilogy, *Auww!* (Owww!). Her later work also often featured precocious children with the gift of the gab, but her tone became increasingly serious. Her book *Veren* (Feathers), which won many awards, is often seen as a turning point in her oeuvre, as she began to place the emphasis on the understated and subtle description of important emotions.

Hazelhoff once said in an interview that writing was a way for her to enter into a fantasy world and forget about the pain of her rheumatoid arthritis. That's why she never wrote about the illness – until *Mr P's Visit*, which she viewed as her most important book: 'When it was finished, I thought: it's done. Even if not a soul reads it, even if the world comes to an end, I have written

what I needed to write. I'll never write another book like it.' This book won Hazelhoff her third and final Zilveren Griffel.

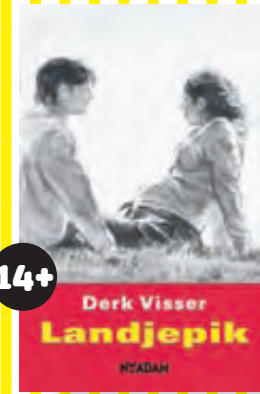
The books of this very special writer have been translated into German, French and Norwegian and are published in the Netherlands by Querido in Amsterdam.

**Veronica Hazelhoff in 2007**  
/ Photo: Jörgen Caris





REVIEW



Off to Kosovo in  
Evren’s BMW

LANDJEPIK – DERK VISSER  
(A GAME OF CONQUEST)  
PUBLISHER: NIEUW AMSTERDAM

In the sock department of a superstore, Turkish Evren (17) asks Serbian Ana (15) for her hand in marriage. They had sex five months ago in the wood behind the playground and now he wants to marry her, because she’s carrying his child, but Ana doesn’t think much of that idea. She wants to go back to Kosovo, where her parents

were murdered during the war. She doesn’t know how she’s going to get there yet, which is very convenient for Evren: ‘I’ve got a car,’ he says. ‘A BMW. A beautiful car to get married in.’

Since his debut *Patchouli* (2005), Derk Visser has rapidly developed into an author who is able to portray realistic teenagers with a great deal of daring and precision. His best book to date is *Landjepik* (A Game of Conquest), a multicultural tragicomedy, with great momentum, humour and dialogue that doesn’t pull any punches.

Ana gets into Evren’s BMW and the two of them head off to Kosovo. As they travel, they have emotional conversations about their past: Ana talks about her parents’ murder and Evren tells her about the frustration of his relationship with his father. And they find each other in a shared sense of indignation about the pampered Netherlands: ‘Here they all go off paintballing, but where I come from they used real ammunition. You couldn’t just wipe the red off your head when the game was over,’ Ana says. Then Ana realises they’re being followed by a couple of shady-looking Antilleans and she finds a pistol in the glove compartment. The dramatic events that follow bring Ana and Evren closer together. Until their adventure comes to an abrupt – and open – end.

Jury falls for Rousseau’s son



***Ik denk dat het liefde was* (I Think It Was Love) is the title of Kathleen Vereecken’s historical novel, but the jury for the Boekenleeuw 2010 had no such doubts. For them it was love at first sight!**

Just before this newspaper went to press, it was announced that Kathleen Vereecken had won the Boekenleeuw, the most important children book award in Flanders. Her book is based on an amazing true story: philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau may have published *Émile, ou De l’éducation*, his groundbreaking treatise on education in 1762, but he actually put his own five children in a home for foundlings!

Vereecken tells the fictional story of his eldest son Leon. He grows up in the French Morvan region, knowing that his life as a foundling will not amount to much. But he fights to free himself from this harsh existence and heads to Paris, looking both

for happiness and for his parents. All he has from them is a mysterious card. He is greatly dismayed when he discovers that his father is Rousseau.

According to the jury, Vereecken ‘creates an exceptionally atmospheric and realistic portrait of the era’. The report goes on to say, ‘Against a changing background of French landscapes and the turbulent commotion and unbearable stench of Paris, the author sketches Leon’s physical and psychological growth with great verve, showing his development from foundling to writer, as a sensitive young man who still continues to believe in love in spite of the circumstances and in spite of himself.’

You can find further information about this book and a column written by the author in the Inspiration brochure available through the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Flemish Literature Fund.



\ Photo: Andy Huysmans

TOP3 THE BEST NEW DUTCH-LANGUAGE  
CHILDREN’S BOOKS ACCORDING  
TO THESE EXPERTS

THE (DUTCH) REVIEWER THE BOOKSELLER THE TRANSLATOR THE PROFESSOR THE (FLEMISH) REVIEWER



Bas Maliepaard



Margriet Obers



Laura Watkinson



Helma van Lierop



Annemie Leysen

**1 >> De boomhut**  
Ronald and Marije Tolman (*The Tree House*, Lemniscaat)  
A poetic picture book without words. The setting of a fantastic tree with a house in it, an etching by father Ronald Tolman, slowly fills up with an exotic procession of brightly coloured animals created by his daughter Marije. Brilliant! 4 and up.

**2 >> Dit is geen dagboek**  
Erna Sassen (*This Is Not a Diary*, Leopold)  
Very poignant, hard-hitting novel in diary form about Boudewijn (16), who ends up in an apathetic depression a couple of years after his mentally ill mother jumps in front of a train. 15 and up.

**3 >> Ziek**  
Gideon Samson (*Sick*, Leopold)  
Belle does not leave her hospital bed for the entire length of this book, but her story captivates the reader from start to finish. Stands an excellent chance at the Griffels this year! 12 and up.

**1 >> Fluit zoals je bent**  
Edward van de Vendel (compilation) (*Whistle As You Are*, Querido/De Eenhoorn)  
A wonderful collection with magnificent illustrations and poems about animals! 6 and up.

**2 >> Air time**  
Marc van Velzen (Querido)  
About Sebastiaan, who is badly bullied. He tries to fight back by challenging his enemy to a dangerous stunt competition on BMX bikes, but it nearly ends in disaster. 12 and up.

**3 >> Voordat jij er was**  
Daan Remmerts de Vries (*Before You Were There*, Querido)  
A beautiful picture book that approaches the story of the Creation in an original way. With an extraordinary mixture of photographs and drawings by Philip Hopman. 3 and up.

**1 >> Kiek**  
Mariken Jongman (Lemniscaat)  
A warm, touching and often amusing YA novel about Kiek’s search for her unknown father. 14 and up.

**2 >> Allemaal willen we de hemel**  
Els Beerten (*We All Want Heaven*, Querido)  
A powerful and absorbing story about loyalty and betrayal in a time of war. It’s crying out to be translated. 14 and up.

**3 >> Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal**  
Verhelst/Cneut (*The Secret of the Nightingale’s Throat*, De Eenhoorn)  
Carll Cneut is a masterful illustrator. His recent collaboration with Peter Verhelst is a thing of beauty. A delight for the eyes and a definite recommendation! 7-10.

**1 >> De hondeneters**  
Marita de Sterck (*The Dog Eaters*, Querido)  
A moving Bildungsroman about the First World War. This book gives an original perspective on history and touches the reader with its colourful characters and the wonderful folktales that are woven into the plot. 14 and up.

**2 >> Fluit zoals je bent**  
Edward van de Vendel (compilation) (*Whistle As You Are*, Querido/De Eenhoorn)  
An anthology of animal poems by both familiar and not so well-known poets, delightfully illustrated by Carll Cneut. 6 and up.

**3 >> Juwelen van stras**  
Carli Biessels (*Jewels Made of Paste*, Lannoo)  
An evocative story about a young Jewish girl who has to go into hiding. Told from the girl’s perspective, her grief about the loss of her family becomes palpable, but the book also looks forward to a better future. 8 and up.

**1 >> Fluit zoals je bent**  
Edward van de Vendel (compilation) (*Whistle As You Are*, De Eenhoorn/Querido)  
A beautifully designed poetry collection featuring the most wonderful Dutch poems about animals. Carll Cneut has created a masterpiece with his sublime illustrations and secretly added his own unique interpretation. 6 and up.

**2 >> Tiffany Dop**  
Tijbbe Veldkamp (Lemniscaat)  
A deeply moving and highly original portrait of a wayward thirteen-year-old girl who wants a baby. A mixture of absurd humour, peculiar thoughts and surprising emotions, written in a believable narrative style. 13 and up.

**3 >> De wei van koe**  
Paul de Moor (*Cow’s Field*, Lannoo)  
Telling a good story in words of one syllable is no easy task – and making sure that the monosyllabic story has its own style and voice is definitely a challenge. In a story of over 150 pages, De Moor describes the fortunes of a cow who has been thrown out by the farmer. An unusually evocative and poetically written book. 7 and up.



# The Yellow Balloon

## A worldwide success

**Freelance photographer Ton Koene has discovered that Dutch illustrator Charlotte Dematons's picture book without words *De gele ballon* (The Yellow Balloon) appeals to children all over the world.**

Koene takes Dematons's picture book with him on his journeys around the world and shows it to children wherever he goes. He took this photograph in Kathmandu, Nepal. Ton says, 'The children thought the book was absolutely wonderful and couldn't stop looking at it! But they're not the only children who have enjoyed this book. It's also been a great success at the North Pole, in the Amazon, in Tuvalu, Ethiopia, Sudan, Burma and all over the world.'

An enlargement of this photo hangs on the wall in Charlotte Dematons's studio. 'I was so incredibly touched when I received this photograph,' the illustrator says. 'When I created this book, my thoughts went on a journey around the world from behind my easel, even going to places where I've never been in real life. I searched in magazines like National Geographic for remote places

around the world that I could use in the book. Ton told me that the children immediately start looking for the place where they live. It does me so much good to know that children all over the world can recognise their own living environment in my book.'

*The Yellow Balloon* (publ. Lemniscaat) has now been published in Denmark, the Faeroes, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Turkey and the USA. The book also won the children's jury prize at the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava in 2005. Photographer Ton Koene makes his own books for children too, together with journalist Nathalie Righton. The duo recently published a non-fiction book *Help, mijn iglo smelt* (Help, My Igloo's Melting, publ. Lemniscaat), about climate change.



3+

## As proud as a peacock

**André Sollie, writer and illustrator can be as proud as a peacock: he has just won the Flemish Boekenpauw (Book Peacock) illustration prize for his picture book *De zomerzot* (The Summer Fool).**

'The Summer Fool is roaming through the land again,' Menno's mum always says when it's hot outside. When little Menno stays at home alone for a short while one day, the summer fool takes on the strangest forms in his imagination. Is it an angel? A clown? Or maybe it's even a devil or some kind of thief!

The Boekenpauw jury had this to say in their report: 'This moving book is all about nameless childhood fears and the longing for warmth and security. The words and pictures combine in an ingenious way. The minimal text and the fragile illustrations leave a great deal unsaid, and the sturdy figures are packed with hidden emotion. In a design that captures all the essential details, Sollie experiments with daring combinations of colours, changing perspectives and surprising compositions. A beautiful and generous picture book, in which André Sollie successfully explores new expressive possibilities.'



3+



Photo: Luc Vlemminckx

## Children's book Eep! now a movie



8+

The film *Iep!* (Eep!) had its world premiere at the Berlinale 2010, the film festival in Berlin. The film is based on the Dutch children's book by Joke van Leeuwen. The story is about Viegeltje, who looks like a girl, but has wings instead of arms. Birdwatcher Warre finds her under a bush and takes her home with him. He and his wife decide to bring her up as a normal girl. But one day Viegeltje flies south with the other birds. It's the beginning of a long and exciting journey. The book *Eep!* (publ. Querido) has won many awards and has been translated into Catalan, German, Danish, English, French, Georgian, Italian, Russian and Slovenian.

## REVIEW



16+

## Zwigman completes Victorian masterpiece

**SPIEGELJONGEN – FLOORTJE ZWIGMAN (MIRROR BOY)**

**PUBLISHER: DE FONTEIN**

Her Dutch fans have had to wait a while, but the publication of *Mirror Boy* has finally completed Floortje Zwigman's trilogy, which began with *Schijnbewegingen* (Tricks of the Trade, 2005) and *Tegenspel* (Countermove, 2007). This is a masterpiece of nineteenth-century proportions, in which Zwigman demonstrates more strongly than ever before her ability to create a world all of her own.

The story is about Adrian Mayfield, the son of a pub landlord who has fallen upon hard times. Adrian is in love with the upper-class artist Vincent Farley. This is a forbidden love and could cost the filthy rich Farleys their reputation. The love appears to be mutual at

first, but Vincent decides to allow a doctor to treat him for his 'illness' and to marry a girl of his own class. In the final part, we discover how it all turns out, but knowing Zwigman it does not bode well.

One of the more fascinating elements of this series of novels is that the reader also finds out about the downfall of the world-famous Irish dandy and writer Oscar Wilde. In *Mirror Boy*, the trial brought against him for sodomy comes to a tragic conclusion. Like a reflection of this event, Adrian's life descends to a low point that is enough to make your hair stand on end.

Zwigman describes all of this in a terse style, with the occasional cynical observation, and that is perhaps the sharpest aspect of her books. By focusing on the right detail in the right place, introduced without any lecturing or theatrics, she creates that addictive Zwigman Universe, which you just want to stay and explore.

It is not even entirely clear whether her novels are actually about homosexuality or more about life in the lower echelons of society in the Victorian era and the sharp contrasts between rich and poor. During his most difficult moments, Adrian wonders whether he really loved Vincent and not just the dream of a life that was wealthy and secure. And so Zwigman presents the reader with not only a poignant and sometimes shocking love story, but also a wonderfully complete portrait of an era.

You can find further information about this book and a column written by the author in the Inspiration brochure available through the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Flemish Literature Fund. The first two volumes in Zwigman's trilogy have already published in German and Danish.

## Film of the book Winter in Wartime on Oscars shortlist

The magnificent film of Jan Terlouw's children's book *Oorlogswinter* (Winter in Wartime, publ. Lemniscaat), now almost a classic, just missed out on an Oscar nomination for best foreign-language film, but it was on the shortlist. As a consolation for director Martin van Koolhoven, the film has been sold to Australia, Ireland, England, Germany, New Zealand, France, Austria, China and the United States. Terlouw's book tells how 14-year-old Michiel joins the Dutch resistance in the final, ice-cold winter of the Second World War. He learns that there can be a fine line between good and evil and that war may seem exciting, but ultimately is horrifying. The book won the Gouden Griffel and has been translated into ten languages.



12+

## Dutch princess writes children's book

The Dutch princess Laurentien van Oranje has written a children's book. *Mr. Finney and the World Turned Upside-down* (publ. Querido) is the first part in a series about climate change and was published simultaneously in English and Dutch. In the book, the fish-like creature Mr. Finney goes on a journey around the world. As he travels, he sees the consequences of environmental pollution. Award-winning illustrator Sieb Posthuma provided the drawings for the book. Princess Laurentien is married to Queen Beatrix's third son.





# Introducing... some talented new writers!

**Simon van der Geest (31)** made his very promising debut last year with *Geel gras* (Yellow Grass, publ. Querido). His poetry collection *Dissus*, based on Homer's *Odyssey*, will come out in May 2010.

**Why should a foreign publisher have your book translated?**  
Simon: *Yellow Grass* is a wonderful story about a girl called Fieke, who has a lot of courage and loads of imagination. One day she unzips her tent at a French campsite and finds that her parents have left without her. Together with the runaway Jantwan, she comes up with a plan to find them. People have told me that it's a fantastic read. One girl said she was laughing so much she fell out of bed... I want children all over the world to have that same pleasure!

**Which language would you most like to be translated into?**  
It's great that *Yellow Grass* is already being published in German! Other than that, I think it would be fantastic to be translated into English. The British have such a rich literary tradition. I can imagine that the slightly absurd tone of *Yellow Grass* would go down well there. And it's about a holiday in France, which the British know something about. I think a Norwegian translation would be very nice too. The Norwegians I know have a great sense of humour. And I think it's a wonderful language. A language with beautiful silences. A language that lends itself well to telling lots between the lines.

**Which internationally renowned author do you admire?**  
David Almond. The way he creates so much tension with his wonderful, pure style... He draws you into his world with his rhythmic sentences. It's so clever the way he makes his world so realistic and easy to identify with, but at the same time so magical.



**The debut of Gideon Samson (24), Niks zeggen! (Say Nothing!), won a major award for new writers. Last year saw the publication of his highly praised second book, Ziek (Sick, publ. Leopold).**

**Why should a foreign publisher have your book translated?**  
Gideon: Sick is a story that had to be told. Some stories are scandalously neglected, some are completely ignored, while others are just told. And then there's a small, select group of stories that really need to be told. I didn't know that myself until I came across my story and simply could not ignore it. Sick is about Belle, a very sick girl who is angry with the world and spends the length of the book expressing that anger from her hospital bed. She is incredibly irritating and at the same time she's the sweetest girl in the world. And that is exactly what I like. You can find hospital beds with angry girls in them in every country in the world. In that respect, Sick is pretty much a universal story. I want Belle to have readers who can share her story and her life, even though they have a different language in their heads.

**Which language would you most like to be translated into?**  
I think translating is a fascinating profession. Someone who knows about these things once told me that Dutch people love short sentences and have a fondness for colloquial language. But in some other countries those are precisely the stylistic features that are not seen as literary. I find those kinds of contrasts so interesting, particularly when you think that Sick is full of short sentences and spoken language, which combine to form a rhythmic whole. I think it'd be a challenge to translate that. Into English, for example, or French. A language that I can speak myself would be good fun, so that I could have a read and see what they'd done with it. Although I have no objections to Spanish. A friend of mine speaks Spanish, so that would work out rather well. *Sick* is coming out in German soon.



**De 17e zomer van Maurice Hamster (The 17th Summer of Maurice Hamster, publ. Clavis) is the name of the first YA novel by Laure Van den Broeck (32). The book was nominated for the Boekenleeuw, the most important children's book prize in Flanders.**

**Why should a foreign publisher have your book translated?**  
Laure: In *The 17th Summer of Maurice Hamster*, seventeen-year-old Maurice falls completely under the spell of the scheming Dean, who's a bit of a show-off and not entirely to be trusted. Maurice is no hero, but a character with whom readers can identify, which makes this story about friendship and betrayal all the more exciting and gripping. It also contains a healthy dose of humour. Humour and irony are often missing from YA novels, but I really can't do without them!

**What language would you most like to be translated into?**  
When I started writing, I lived in the United States. I decided to write the book in English, because it was a better fit for the American setting of the story. I found it easier to get the right tone in English too. I only translated the manuscript into Dutch afterwards. But my English version is very close to my heart. I'm really proud of it and would so love to see it published!

**Which internationally renowned author do you admire?**  
There are loads of them! But if I have to name one book that I think is just perfect, it's Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. It's staggeringly skilful the way he manages to build up the tension subtly and deliberately and then, near the end, with just one sentence – one single sentence! – he really lets you have it with a massive whack. Ishiguro was born in Japan, but succeeded in creating the most perfect British butler of all time.



**De kleine Odessa (Little Odessa, publ. Van Goor) by Peter Van Olmen (46) has been compared to Jostein Gaarder's Sophie's World and Cornelia Funke's Inkheart, but it offers a unique mix of original ideas, drama and humour. The book has been nominated for the Boekenleeuw.**

**Why should a foreign publisher have your book translated?**  
Peter: It's a big, ambitious story, about quick-witted twelve-year-old Odessa, who longs for a father. When she goes looking for her kidnapped mother, she ends up in Scribopolis, a city full of writers, where she meets Kafka, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and the Brontë sisters. After lots of adventures, she finds out who her father is, and comes closer to herself. Young readers love the exciting adventure full of unicorns and dragons and the pace of the story. More experienced readers love the psychological depth, the inclusion of the writers and literary characters, and the underlying question: should literature inspire people or guide them? And absolutely everyone loves Lode A., the fearless, funny, cigar-smoking canary.

**Which language would you most like to be translated into?**  
All of the languages from countries where I have friends and there are quite a lot of those. French? Half of my friends are French-speakers and they're dying to read the book. But maybe Afrikaans would be best, because I don't know anyone there and I'd like to make some new friends.

**Which internationally renowned author do you admire?**  
Shakespeare! He's the most generous writer I know. He doesn't hold anything back, but gives his audience everything: a clever plot, drama and humour, sharp characters, psychological depth, and such rich subject matter. I'd love to be able to write like that. There's a reason why the writers in Scribopolis elected him as the Chairman of the Council of Immortals. Who am I to argue with them?





## Picture gallery 5 perfect picture books

Which recent Dutch and Flemish picture books would we particularly recommend? The illustrations in this little picture gallery speak for themselves!

Illustration by Noëlle Smit from **Fiet wil rennen!** (Fiet Wants to Run, publ. Querido)



Illustration by Pieter Gaudesaboos from **Tommie en de torenhoge boterham** (Sammy and the Skyscraper Sandwich, publ. Lannoo)



Illustration by Ronald and Marije Tolman from **De boomhut** (The Tree House, publ. Lemniscaat)



Illustration by Philip Hopman from **Voordat jij er was** (Before You Were There, publ. Querido)

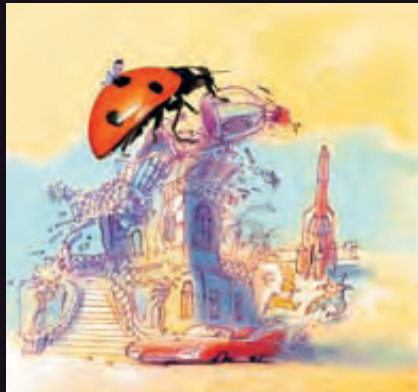


Illustration by Wouter van Reek from **Keepvogel, Het diepste gat** (Coppernickel: The Deepest Hole, publ. Leopold)



## REVIEW



8+

## Mees Kees would rather watch Spider-Man

MEES KEES, PARTS 1 TO 4 – MIRJAM OLDENHAVE  
PUBLISHER: PLOEGSMA

In 2008, Mirjam Oldenhave made a dramatic impression with her YA novel *Voor jou 10 anderen* (Ten a Penny, publ. Querido). Until then, she had written humorous books for younger readers. She also excels in that genre, as demonstrated by her 'Mees Kees' (Teacher Kees) series, which now runs to four volumes.

The series is about Tobias and his supply teacher, 25-year-old student Kees. He's still

learning how to be a teacher and Tobias and his classmates really enjoy helping him. In fact, they're only too keen to encourage his irresponsible teaching methods.

Mees Kees finds it difficult to control his own inner child. He starts every morning with his food project: eating his lunch sandwiches, because he doesn't want his omelette to get cold. When it's time for biology, he'd rather watch a *Spider-Man* DVD than give a lesson about spiders and his history lessons consist of reading an *Asterix* comic.

Oldenhave subtly pokes fun at problem-focused education. Whether you're dyslexic, highly gifted or make too much noise, Mees Kees will soon cure you: 'Sammy's dyslexic, but you'd hardly notice now. Eh, Sam?' Sammy nodded. 'Only when I'm reading.'

Oldenhave tells her stories with such a great sense of humour that you can't help laughing out loud. But there's more to Mees Kees than just jokes. The engaging narrator Tobias, who usually makes trouble because of the problems he's having at home, develops a special relationship with Kees: 'Our teacher always closed her eyes when she saw me, just for a moment, but she still did it. But Mees Kees's eyes go wide open whenever he sees me.' Observations like this elevate the book above the superficial kind of writing that can often be found in series books. It's no wonder that Mirjam Oldenhave has been asked to write the special gift book for this year's Dutch Children's Book Week.

# Dutch illustrations on a world tour

Are you curious about the rich variety of illustrations from the Netherlands? Then visit the exhibition 'An Elephant Came By, 24 Dutch Illustrators', which is starting its journey around the world this spring. Reviewer Joukje Akveld, who helped to compile the exhibition, tells us about this very special selection.

Dutch people like to make art; that's the same today as it's always been. Considering the small geographical area where this art is created, it is surprising how many artists our small country has produced. There are the great painters such as Rembrandt and Vermeer, but the Netherlands also has a tradition of illustrators of children's books and picture books that goes back a long way. And perhaps the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are for Dutch illustration what the seventeenth century was for painting: a Golden Age with a wide variety of artists with international appeal.

Working in their own distinctive visual styles, artists such as Max Velthuijs, Dick Bruna, Fiep Westendorp, Mance Post and Thé Tjong-Khing have paved the way for new generations of illustrators. They have created an atmosphere in which craftsmanship is coupled with artistry and technical perfection goes hand in hand with stylistic innovation.

Younger illustrators such as Marit Törnqvist, Philip Hopman and Noëlle Smit owe a great deal to their predecessors, but even greater than this affinity is their individuality and

their courage to develop their own forms of expression; the differences in their technique, use of materials, style and composition are significant.

However, there is still something that unites the work of these illustrators, something that makes it unmistakably Dutch. A gentle sense of humour perhaps, an urge to downplay things? Maybe it's something that defies description.

'A good illustration is real art. You can just hang it up on the wall,' says artist Philip Hopman. He's not the only one with that opinion. The work of Ingrid and Dieter Schubert, Annemarie van Haeringen and Sieb Posthuma has been exhibited all over the world; children beyond the borders of our country love to look at their pictures too.

The travelling exhibition 'An Elephant Came By' wants to introduce even more people, both big and small, to Dutch children's book illustrations. The exhibition features the work of 24 illustrators. Together, these illustrations demonstrate the quality, individuality and great variety of contemporary children's illustration in the Netherlands.

/ Photos: Delano van Diest



## Exhibition and catalogue

The exhibition 'An Elephant Came By' had its grand opening in Amsterdam in December last year and is embarking upon its world tour in Spain this spring. In autumn, it will tour around different cities in Mexico. Over the next few years, China, Germany, England, France and a number of countries in eastern Europe are among the stops on the itinerary. Ted van Lieshout wrote the text for the accompanying catalogue (translated by Laura Watkinson): interviews with the illustrators, a state-of-the-art essay about children's book illustration in the Netherlands and a story about an elephant who walks around the exhibition. Philip Stroomberg was responsible for the design of both the catalogue and the exhibition.

Would you like to invite the exhibition to come to your country or pop in to visit it yourself? Then please contact Agnes Vogt at the Dutch Foundation for Literature for further information: [a.vogt@nlpvf.nl](mailto:a.vogt@nlpvf.nl).



## Nominations for the German Youth Literature Prize 2009



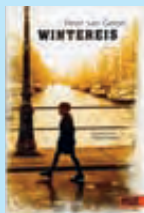
Bart Moeyaert  
**Durf voor drie / Mut für drei** (Courage for Three, publ. Querido / Carl Hanser Verlag)



Marjolijn Hof  
**Een kleine kans / Tote Maus für Papas Leben** (Against the Odds, publ. Querido / Bloomsbury)



Do Van Ranst  
**Ravenhaar / Rabenhaar** (Raven Hair, publ. Davidsfonds / Carlsen Verlag)



Peter van Gestel  
**Winterijs / Wintereis** (Winter Ice, publ. De Fontein / Verlag Beltz & Gelberg)



Floortje Zwigman  
**Schijnbewegingen / Ich, Adrian Mayfield** (Tricks of the Trade, publ. De Fontein / Gerstenberg Verlag)

## The titles in News & Views

### DUTCH

**3+** Dematons, Charlotte – **De gele ballon** (Lemniscaat)  
Dumon Tak, Bibi – **Fiet wil rennen!**  
Tolman, Ronald en Marije – **De boomhut** (Lemniscaat)

**4+** Reek, Wouter van – **Keepvogel, Het diepste gat** (Leopold)  
Vries, Daan Remmerts de – **Voordat jij er was** (Querido)

**6+** Donkelaar, Maria van – **Boven in een groene linde zat een moddervette haan** (Gottmer)  
Josephus Jitta, Ceseli – **Mijn tekendagboek** (Nieuw Amsterdam)  
Matter, Maritgen – **Schaap met laarsjes** (Querido)  
Oranje, Laurentien van – **Mr. Finney en de wereld op z'n kop** (Querido)  
Vendel, Edward van de – **Fluit zoals je bent** (Querido)

**8+** Biessels, Carli – **Juwelen van stras** (Lannoo)  
Leeuwen, Joke van – **Iep!** (Querido)  
Luiten, Karin – **Lekker opscheppen!** (Ploegsma)  
Oldenhav, Mirjam – **Mees Kees** (Ploegsma)  
Vendel, Edward van de – **Opa laat zijn tenen zien en Draken met stekkers** (Querido)

**10+** Geest, Simon van der – **Geel gras** (Querido)  
Gestel, Peter van – **Winterijs** (De Fontein)  
Geus, Mireille – **Big** (Lemniscaat)  
Hazelhoff, Veronica – **Bezoek van Mister P.** (Querido)  
Hof, Marjolijn – **Een kleine kans** (Querido)  
Stoffels, Karlijn – **Koningsdochter, zeemanslief** (Querido)  
Lieshout, Ted van – **Hou van mij** (Leopold)

**12+** Samson, Gideon – **Ziek** (Leopold)  
Terlouw, Jan – **Oorlogswinter** (Lemniscaat)  
Veldkamp, Tjibbe – **Tiffany Dop** (Lemniscaat)  
Velzen, Marc van – **Air time** (Querido)

**14+** Visser, Derk – **Landjepik** (Nieuw Amsterdam)

**16+** Sassen, Erna – **Dit is geen dagboek** (Leopold)  
Zwigman, Floortje – **Een groene bloem: Schijnbewegingen, Tegenspel en Spiegeljongen** (De Fontein)

### FLEMISH

**3+** Francis, Lorraine – **Tommie en de torenhoge boterham** (Lannoo)  
Sollie, André – **De zomerzot** (Querido)

**6+** Heede, Sylvia Vanden – **Vos en Haas** (Lannoo)  
Kockere, Geert De – **De vrouw en het jongetje** (De Eenhoorn)  
Moeyaert, Bart – **Durf voor drie** (Querido)  
Moor, Paul de – **De wei van koe** (Lannoo)  
Verhelst, Peter – **Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal** (De Eenhoorn)

**10+** Olmen, Peter Van – **De kleine Odessa** (Van Goor)

**14+** Leeuw, Jan de – **Bevroren kamers** (Davidsfonds/Infodok)  
Ranst, Do van – **Mijn vader zegt dat wij levens redden** (Davidsfonds/Infodok)  
Ranst, Do van – **Ravenhaar** (Davidsfonds/Infodok)  
Sterck, Marita de – **De hondeneters** (Querido)  
Beerten, Els – **Allemaal willen we de hemel** (Querido)  
Broeck, Laure Van den – **De 17e zomer van Maurice Hamster** (Clavis)  
Vereecken, Kathleen – **Ik denk dat het liefde was** (Lannoo)

### Colophon

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Independent news from the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Flemish Literature Fund

# Get stuck in!



8+

If children don't get tears in their eyes from chopping onions, they'll certainly have them from laughing at this cookery book. Every page is richly illustrated with humorous cartoons and drawings, often combined with photos. There's even a page full of vegetable jokes! But the recipes are definitely serious. The numbered steps will lead even the novice chef to a successful result. Not all of the recipes are very ambitious. Alongside frankfurter pasta and sushi, you'll find 'how to boil potatoes', 'Grandma's apple sauce' and meatballs.



## Recipe Carrot cupcakes



Time to make: 25 minutes  
Time in the oven: 15-20 minutes

For 12 cupcakes, you need:  
200 g carrots  
200 g self-raising flour  
200 ml sunflower oil  
100 g caster sugar  
1 packet of vanilla sugar  
4 eggs  
1 orange  
1 teaspoon of cinnamon

Icing:  
1 packet of cream cheese  
50 g icing sugar

1. Heat the oven to 180°C.
2. Use a mixer to beat the eggs together with the caster sugar and vanilla sugar.
3. Grate the orange peel with a fine grater and add it to the mixture.
4. Add the sunflower oil and mix.
5. Sift the flour and cinnamon into the mixture. Mix with a spoon.
6. Grate the carrot finely and mix it in.
7. Fill a muffin tin with 12 paper cupcake cases and add two spoonfuls of mixture to each of them.
9. Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes until they're risen and nicely browned. Take them out of the oven and leave them to cool.
10. Icing: make sure the cream cheese is at room temperature. Mix it with the icing sugar and spread the mixture on the top of the cakes when they're cool. Decorate with a few shreds of grated carrot if you like.

This is an abbreviated version of a recipe from Karin Luiten's children's cookery book *Lekker opscheppen!* (Get Stuck In, publ. Ploegsma).

## Flo's poetic comic strips

The fun comic strips about Renske below are by Floor de Goede, alias Flo. Two years ago, together with poet Edward van de Vendel, he came up with a special new genre: comic-strip poems. De Goede pours Van de Vendel's poetry into speech bubbles and then draws his fantastic comic strips around them. The first volume, *Opa laat zijn tenen zien* (Grandpa Shows His Toes), won a Zilveren Griffel in October 2009. Querido have just published the latest book, *Draken met stekkers* (Dragons with Plugs).

