

*Goed Boek!*  
**Approaches to ‘Good’ Dutch Children’s  
Literature between 2010 and 2020**

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## Abstract

This thesis studies the various approaches within the assessment of ‘good’ Dutch children’s literature. It responds to a lasting discourse: a book’s quality versus the reader’s enjoyment. Anne de Vries (1991) has defined four (two pedagogical and two aesthetic) approaches that encompass this discourse. My research departs from his theory and determines what approaches are prevalent in the current assessments of children’s books. I categorise the appraisal of the winners of two Dutch children’s book prizes (*Gouden Griffel* and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs*) between 2010 en 2020. I have developed a qualitative coding scheme that draws from several models for analysing critical argumentation (Abrams, 1958; Boonstra, 1979; Krikhaar & Ros, 1986; Linders & Op de Beek, 2009; Ros, research in progress) and distinguish between five types of argumentation: mimetic, expressive, autonomous, comparative, and pragmatic. My results show that juries and critics use a variety of arguments to justify what they deem ‘good’ literature. Style (an autonomous argument) is the most common aspect but often appears with other positive qualities and kinds of argumentation. I deduce juries’ and critics’ approaches from their argumentation, concluding that contemporary criticism carefully balances comments on literary and artistic qualities (autonomous and comparative argumentation) with remarks about the reader’s emotional needs (pragmatic argumentation). This approach defies the dichotomy of quality versus entertainment apparent from the meta-critical discourse. My conclusion leads me to question to what extent the balanced approach has always existed. In my discussion, I ponder whether this attitude lived in past critical assessments or if today’s critics have shifted towards more child-centred argumentation.

## Samenvatting

Deze scriptie bekijkt de verschillende benaderingen binnen de Nederlandse beoordeling van ‘goede’ kinderboeken. Mijn onderzoek haakt in op een voortgaand discours: de kwaliteit van een boek tegenover het plezier van de lezer. Anne de Vries (1991) definieert vier (twee pedagogische en twee esthetische) benaderingen die stromingen binnen dit discours vertegenwoordigen. Ik vertrek vanuit zijn theorie en probeer vast te stellen welke benaderingen in de huidige bekritisering van kinderboeken dominant zijn. Ik categoriseer de beoordelingen van de winnaars van twee Nederlandse kinderboekenprijzen (Gouden Griffel en Woutertje Pieterse Prijs) tussen 2010 en 2020. Aan de hand van verschillende argumentatiemodellen (Abrams, 1958; Boonstra, 1979; Krikhaar & Ros, 1986; Linders & Op de Beek, 2009; Ros, lopend onderzoek) ontwikkel ik een kwalitatief coderingsschema. Ik maak onderscheid tussen vijf argumentatietypes: mimetische, expressieve, autonome, vergelijkende en pragmatische argumentatie. Mijn resultaten tonen dat jury’s en critici verschillende soorten argumenten gebruiken om wat zij als ‘goede’ literatuur bestempelen te rechtvaardigen. Stijl (een autonoom argument) staat hierbij centraal maar gaat vaak gepaard met andere positieve kwaliteiten. Uit de argumentatie van de jury’s en critici leid ik hun benaderingen af. Hieruit concludeer ik dat hedendaagse critici commentaar op literaire en artistieke kwaliteiten (autonome en vergelijkende argumentatie) zorgvuldig balanceren met opmerkingen over de emotionele behoeften van lezers (pragmatische argumentatie). Deze benadering doorbreekt de dichotomie van kwaliteit tegenover amusement die binnen het meta-kritische discours heerst. Dit roept de vraag op in hoeverre deze gebalanceerde benadering altijd al heeft bestaan. In mijn discussie overdenk ik of critici deze balanceeroefening vroeger ook al uitvoerden, of dat zij door de jaren verschoven zijn naar meer kindgerichte argumentatie.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework**

### **1.1 Background**

Since the emergence of children's literature in the late modern period, its content and purpose has been contentious. What constitutes a 'good' children's book depends on the context in which the book functions. The historical period, geographic location, and role of the person handling the book (e.g., literary critic, academic, reading promoter, author, parent, or child) are examples of significant factors to defining the criteria of a 'good' children's book. Aside from this context, there are many thinkable purposes of children's literature. For example, books for children may have a didactic or educational purpose, could be considered art, or 'simply' entertainment. These purposes are potentially controversial: if a children's book is educational, what lessons do we want children to learn? And if books for children are literature or art, should the literary and artistic qualities be fully comprehensible to children, or is it acceptable for some of these aspects to be beyond their grasp?

In this thesis, I look at the approaches underlying 'good' children's literature, where I define 'good' as prizewinning. I delve into the reasons why juries and critics consider prizewinning books worthy.

#### ***1.1.1 Types of Children's Book Prizes***

Several variables are relevant to children's book prizes (Yokota, 2010). First, we can divide awards over age groups or reading levels. Second is the jury's composition: are there adult or child judges, and what is their (professional) background? Third, prizes can be bestowed based on popularity, quality (of the text, illustration, translation, an author's lifetime work or a combination), or specific content goals (like a certain school subject). There are also prize contests where the winner gets published. Fourth, prizes have various ranges of impact, e.g., local, state, national, international, and special interest populations. Finally, there is the outcome of the prize, with juries either compiling lists of books or selecting a single winner, with or without runners-up getting a special mention.

### *1.1.2 Children's Book Prizes in the Netherlands*

I examine two Dutch prizes in my thesis, the *Gouden Griffel* and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs*. In this section, I give a short history of children's book prizes in the Netherlands, focusing especially on these two.

After the Second World War, there was a growing concern over cultural decay amongst children and youths. In response, the state provided a budget to promote children's books (De Vries, 2004). The first *Kinderboekenweek*<sup>1</sup> was organised in 1955. The award ceremony for the *Kinderboek van het Jaar*<sup>2</sup> took place during this week, which is now a yearly event in October or November. In 1971, the prize was renamed *Gouden Griffel*<sup>3</sup> and has been awarded each year since then by CPNB, *Stichting Collectieve Propaganda voor het Nederlandse Boek*<sup>4</sup>. Every year a maximum of two books per age or genre category<sup>5</sup> are nominated with a *Zilveren Griffel*<sup>6</sup>. Of these nominations, one is chosen as book of the year, receiving the *Gouden Griffel*.<sup>7</sup> Since 1980, a maximum of three honourable mentions per category can receive a *Vlag en Wimpel*<sup>8</sup>.

In 1988 two significant new awards were established, the *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs*<sup>9</sup> and *Prijs van de Nederlandse Kinderjury*<sup>10</sup>. The organisation of the *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs* aims to foster the quality of Dutch-language children's literature. The jury nominates a minimum of three and a maximum of six titles from the previous year, of which they crown one as the winner in March or April for exceptional qualities in language, content, and design. The prize is named after Multatuli's book character 'Woutertje Pieterse', an energetic boy from Amsterdam who often gets into trouble with his neighbours.<sup>11</sup> The initiators of the prize use this name because Woutertje deviates from virtue, and they emphatically wanted to break with the tradition of moralism in children's books.

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<sup>1</sup> Children's book week.

<sup>2</sup> Children's book of the year.

<sup>3</sup> Golden slate pen.

<sup>4</sup> Foundation for collective propaganda of the Dutch book.

<sup>5</sup> The age categories are six and younger, six to nine, nine and older, and nine to fifteen (added in 2019). The genre categories are informative and poetry (added in 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Silver slate pen.

<sup>7</sup> The *Gouden Griffel* is only awarded to Dutch language books, while translated works can receive a *Zilveren Griffel*.

<sup>8</sup> Flag and pennant.

<sup>9</sup> Woutertje Pieterse Prize

<sup>10</sup> Prize of the Dutch children's jury.

<sup>11</sup> Multatuli first published Woutertje Pieterse's stories in *de Ideeën*, a collection of aphorisms and essays that appeared between 1862 and 1877. In 1890, his widow bundled the fragments about Woutertje in a novel.

The prize of the *Kinderjury* stems from an opposing ideology, wherein children's judgments form a counterweight to those of adults. The *Kinderjury* is composed of child readers between the ages of six to twelve and crowns two books each year.<sup>12</sup> In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a growing impression that adult-awarded prizes were problematic because of the contradictions involved in improving children's tastes while simultaneously indulging them (Wilkie-Stibbs & Barker, 2004). Children's-choice prizes surfaced in many countries to allow child readers a voice in choosing 'good' literature.

However, children's literature professionals often criticise children's and youth-choice prizes for promoting books of inferior quality. For example, last summer, the selection of the *Jonge Jury* (*Kinderjury* for adolescents) became controversial. In an opinion piece in *De Volkskrant*, Van Dijk & Klaver (2021) contend that books promoted by the *Jonge Jury* confirm sexist and racist thinking, drive the reader from kick to kick, and are stylistically, substantively, culturally and morally impoverished or even harmful.<sup>13</sup> Their statements, widely considered condescending towards the youths who read these books and the authors who write them, reopened a longstanding and polarising debate on whether a 'good' book or the reader's enjoyment has a higher value. This debate is reminiscent of the one that motivates my problem definition and shows that within the world of children's literature, the conversation about quality versus pleasure is ever-recurring.

## 1.2 Problem Definition

My thesis emerges out of a thirty-year-old dispute over what a prizewinning children's book ought to be. During a lecture at a literary conference in 1990, Anne de Vries, a researcher and theorist of children's literature, accused the *Gouden Griffel* jury of disregarding children with their choices. In his lecture, he especially took offence to the 1985 winner *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper*. De Vries argued that contemporary children's book juries and critics overemphasised the importance of literary qualities in a children's book to the extent that they lost sight of whether children enjoyed or understood the story. *Kleine Sofie* was illustrative of this; De Vries cited children who said they neither comprehended nor enjoyed the plot or theme because it was too abstract for them. He went on to contend that a book that children could or would not read, like *Kleine Sofie*, was not prizeworthy at all. Crowning 'unreadable' books would undermine the significance of children's book prizes. De Vries

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<sup>12</sup> Dutch language as well as translated works

<sup>13</sup> The article is a summary of their research paper for *De Nederlandse Boekengids* (2021).

reasoned juries should keep in mind that children are less experienced readers than adults. He stressed that children's books could be literary works, but they should be accessible to their targeted audience first and foremost.

My thesis responds to the polemic that arose after De Vries' 1990 lecture and his plea for 'accessible' children's literature. The central research question reads: "What approaches to children's literature are prevalent within the assessment of Dutch prizewinning children's books between 2010 and 2020?" Before explaining the sub-questions, I present my theoretical framework, based on De Vries' research into the approaches to children's literature.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

#### ***1.3.1 De Vries' Approaches to Children's Literature***

In contrast with the controversial and normative 1990 lecture, De Vries' 1989 dissertation *Wat heten goede kinderboeken?* is a descriptive work that is seminal in the study of Dutch children's literature. It examines the various approaches to Dutch children's literature since the 1880s. De Vries distinguishes between two main approaches to children's books: a pedagogical approach and an aesthetic approach.

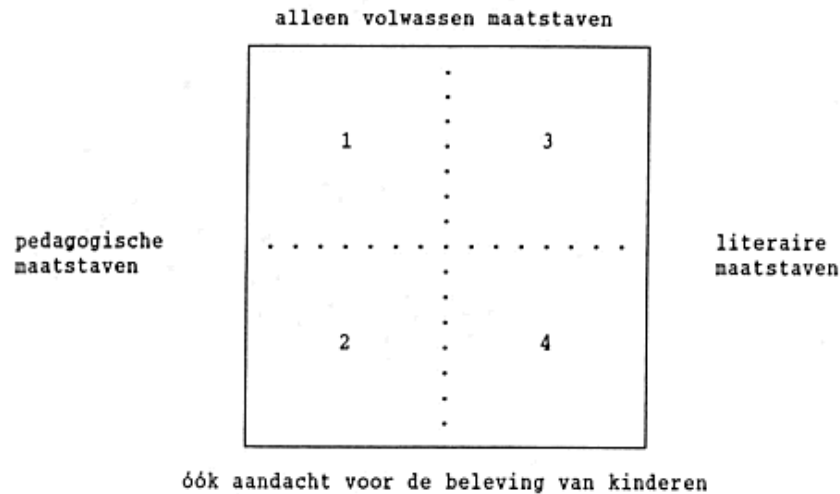
The pedagogical approach stems from an Enlightenment tradition. It sees children's literature as a tool to teach moral and societal values. Books should give the right example. The aesthetic approach embodies the Romantic tradition that considers children innocent, pure and loveable. This approach holds that a good children's book should be a work of art that reflects the child's experience of the world. De Vries believes that out of this approach, a third category emerges in the 1970s, as a reaction to the overly moralising and somewhat patronising children's books celebrated in the preceding decades. In the purely literary approach, artistic autonomy has the highest value.

In 1991 De Vries revisits and adapts his categorisation, adding a fourth approach to create what I interpret to be a field (figure 1). The x-axis represents pedagogical versus literary standards, while the y-axis signifies how intelligible the works are for children. He divides the pedagogical approach into two categories: the first represents a pedagogical approach of the adult world that teaches moral ought's and ought not's (area 1 on the field). The second pedagogical approach (area 2) empathises with children's emotions and needs. As mentioned above, the literary or 'aesthetic' approach also consists of two categories: the purely literary approach that does not consider children, which developed in the 1970s (area



3) and the Romantic aesthetic approach that tries to cater to the imaginations and understandings of children (area 4). This ‘Romantic’ approach does not stress the image of a pure or loveable child but of an adult who cares for the child so deeply that a bond of understanding exists between the two.

**Figure 1.** *Field with De Vries’ four approaches to children’s literature (De Vries, 1991).*



### 1.3.2 Linders’ (1989) Criticism of De Vries (1989)

Although *Wat heten goede kinderboeken?* established De Vries’ position within the academic world of children’s literature, Linders (1989) is critical of De Vries’ categorisation and labelling. She argues that because he applies his two categories retroactively, they are broad and undefined. Moreover, she regards the names poorly chosen. De Vries sees the ‘pedagogical’ approach in terms of the Enlightenment, leaving little room for other conceptions of pedagogy. Similarly, he does not define his ‘aesthetic’ approach with classical literary theory but relies on Romantic ideals, which Linders argues are often pedagogical. Next, she criticises De Vries for failing to provide a study befitting its title. Although he carefully lays out who had what influential ideas on children’s literature throughout his period of study, De Vries hardly discusses what books were considered ‘good’ based on which arguments, as the title ‘What *are* good children’s books?’, suggests. Finally, she remarks that the conclusions that De Vries draws from his studied reviews are opaque: it is unclear to her why certain statements are labelled as pedagogical or aesthetic and De Vries

fails to provide argumentation or justifications for his method. She scathingly writes that ‘the reader is forced to blindly trust the interpretations of the author’ (Linders, 1989, p. 15).

Despite Linders’ criticism, De Vries’ grouping can be a helpful tool for summarising the approaches to children’s literature. His updated field already offers more room for different conceptions of pedagogy than the two main approaches originally described in the dissertation, which Linders criticised for pitting aesthetics against pedagogy. Her critique that De Vries looked at influential thinkers of children’s literature and not at which books were deemed ‘good’ and why may be justified. As I describe under my research method, I try to prevent this by analysing the arguments for ‘good’ books themselves, which I define as books that have won a *Gouden Griffel* or *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs*. Lastly, I aim to be transparent in my method and classification so that readers can follow why I chose certain labels or categories.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

As stated, my main research question is: “What approaches to children’s literature are prevalent within the assessment of Dutch prizewinning children’s books between 2010 and 2020?” While De Vries describes his approaches by studying the poetical statements of influential pedagogues, educators, and critics, I glean the contemporary approaches from jury reports and critics’ reviews by analysing what arguments they give for ‘good’ children’s literature. I limit my research to two adult-judged prizes (*Gouden Griffel* and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs*) and exclude the *Kinderjury*. Though Van der Boog (2017), whom I return to in the following section, shows children do provide arguments for ‘good’ books, these significantly differ from adults’. The prize of the *Kinderjury* usually goes to popular works, like books that are part of a series. The children’s-choice prize, therefore, represents another perspective on ‘good’ literature than that of most adult juries and critics. Including it within my scope would lead to a comparative study, for which I do not have the time and space in this thesis.

My sub-questions thus read:

- a. What arguments do the juries of the *Gouden Griffel* and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs* give for crowning books between 2010 and 2020?
- b. What positive arguments do newspaper critics give for these winning titles between 2010 and 2020?

- c. What – if any – discernible patterns emerge from the juries’ and critics’ arguments?
- d. Where – if at all – do these arguments fall in De Vries’ field of approaches to children’s literature?
- e. How do these outcomes relate to De Vries’ history of the approaches to children’s literature?

I answer the first three sub-questions in my results chapter and the last two in my conclusion and discussion.

### **1.5 Societal and Academic Relevance**

De Vries’ research on approaches to children’s literature ends with the 1990s. Besides De Vries, Krikhaar & Ros (1986) have carried out a notable survey of children’s literary criticism between 1965 and 1984. One of their main conclusions is that throughout this period, children’s literary criticism slowly evolves, counting more argumentation and less retelling of the story. However, they note that this argumentation is still not always well-grounded. I refer to their research throughout the rest of the thesis and explain their model, which forms the basis for my coding, in detail in the next chapter.

In my literature search, I found two similar theses. Hoogstraaten (2010) studies the jury reports of the *Gouden Griffel*, *Gouden Zoen* and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs* between 1999 and 2008. She contrasts her research with Krikhaar & Ros’ findings and concludes that the trend they signal (more argumentation) perseveres. Van der Boog (2017) compares the *Gouden Griffel* and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs* to the *Prijs van de Nederlandse Kinderjury* in the period 2007 to 2017. She departs from the hypothesis that children and adults assess literature differently and tries to map wherein the differences lie. Although this is another perspective than mine (I only consider adult valuations), her thesis provides an example for analysing juries’ argumentations.

In the context of societal relevance, my thesis can further our understanding of how ‘good’ (prizewinning) Dutch children’s literature has been defined and received over the past decade. Prizewinning books are often bought, recommended, or read to children by parents, teachers, librarians, and other involved adults. Therefore, they are influential to children’s cognitive, social, and psychological development (Ghesquiere, 2016). Critics’ and juries’ approaches to children’s literature are relevant to the discourse on and conception of children and childhood.

## Chapter 2: Method

As said, I aim to define the prevalent approaches within the assessment of ‘good’ children’s literature by analysing the argumentation of contemporary juries and critics. Because of the limited time frame, my scope solely includes winners of the *Gouden Griffel* (henceforth GG) and *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs* (henceforth WPP) between 2010 and 2020 (see Appendix A for the list of winning titles). I have selected these two prizes because they are well-known nationally and awarded yearly to originally Dutch-language works, enabling a specific look at the approaches underlying Dutch and Flemish children’s literature.

### 2.1 Data Collection

The initial research phase entailed collecting data: the jury reports of the GG and WPP between 2010 and 2020 ( $n = 22$ ) and two to three critics’ reviews per winning title ( $n = 51$ ).

#### 2.1.1 Jury Reports

I searched for the GG jury reports online. They were not all accessible on the website of CPNB. I found reports for each year except 2011 and 2012. I contacted CPNB for these years, upon which they sent me the former. The latter was missing in their database too. I found fragments of the 2012 report online, which I use in my analysis. The WPP jury reports were all obtainable from the WPP website.

The jury reports of the GG and WPP differ in form and purpose. Between 2010 and 2014, the WPP reports consist of a single text with introductory comments focused on naming the winner of the prize and sometimes a few other titles the jury had considered. From 2015, the format changes to a discussion of five to six titles with less ‘space’ allotted to the winning book than before. The GG report consists of all the nominations for the *Zilveren Griffels* and *Vlag en Wimpels* (each on its own page), prefaced by an introduction. As mentioned, one of these nominees gets awarded the *Gouden Griffel*, but the jury does not always explain this final decision in text.

#### 2.1.2 Reviews

I searched for critics’ reviews via the online newspaper database LexisNexis, using the winning authors’ first and last names and/ or the title combined with the word ‘*recensie*’ (review) or synonyms like ‘*boekbespreking*’, ‘*boekbeoordeling*’ as search terms. I aimed for three reviews per winning title. I could not always find enough reviews that met my criteria,

of which the foremost was that the text gives arguments about the book's qualities. Many articles were authors' interviews with a brief review or a compilation of short reviews, often lacking argumentation, with only descriptive information and one-lined judgements.

I have reviews on most winning titles from *Trouw* (n = 17).<sup>14</sup> I have five reviews from *NRC Handelsblad/ NRC.NEXT*.<sup>15</sup> Three reviews come from *De Volkskrant*<sup>16</sup> and another three from *Het Parool*<sup>17</sup>. Finally, I use one review each from the *Leeuwarder Courant*<sup>18</sup>, *Dagblad van het Noorden*<sup>19</sup>, and *Reformatorisch Dagblad*<sup>20</sup>. Most of these newspapers have backgrounds that trace back to *verzuiling* or 'pillarisation', with historically Protestant (*Trouw* and *Reformatorisch Dagblad*), Catholic (*De Volkskrant*), Socialist (*Het Parool*) and Liberal (*NRC*) traditions. Although pillarisation is less relevant to most newspapers today, in some cases, the newspaper's character may affect the arguments in children's book reviews.

Because I did not find enough newspaper reviews that met my requirements, I widened my search. I explored Jaap Friso's online review page *JaapLeest*, which had reviews on all but one of the winning titles (n = 18). I noticed it was more difficult to find reviews of Flemish prizewinning titles. To get reviews on these books, I use two reviews from the Belgian site *Pluizuit*.

## 2.2 Coding and Analysis

In the data analysis, I sorted the arguments juries and critics give for the winning titles. Through the process of coding, naming, and categorising the relevant statements, data can be organised in a way that offers a more comprehensive view of the issue or the data itself (Flick, 2007). The coding in this thesis is deductive, meaning the codes were set before approaching the data. Although I initially tried to derive a coding scheme from the four approaches in De Vries' field, I did not find this workable in practice. The four approaches do not encompass the full gamut of arguments that juries and critics give about children's literature. While looking into previous research on reviewing practices, I found Krikhaar & Ros' (1986) dissertation, which analyses over 300 children's book reviews between 1965 and 1984. Their dissertation offers a comprehensive method to categorising the statements made

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<sup>14</sup> Sixteen by Bas Maliepaard and one by Annemarie Terhell.

<sup>15</sup> Three by Thomas de Veen and one each by Simone van Driel and Marieke van Twillert.

<sup>16</sup> All by Pjotr van Lenteren.

<sup>17</sup> Two by Joukje Akveld, one by Hans Smit.

<sup>18</sup> By Marja Boonstra.

<sup>19</sup> By Kirsten van Santen.

<sup>20</sup> By Gert van de Wege.

in reviewing texts on children's literature. They base their study on Boonstra's (1979) model for categorising criticism on novels, which in turn builds on Abrams' (1954) classification of critical theories. I discuss Krikhaar & Ros' model after first delving into Abrams' and Boonstra's theories.

### ***2.2.1 Abrams and Boonstra on Literary Criticism***

Abrams describes four 'critical theories' that reign in art and literature: mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective. Mimetic theories are about the relationship between art and reality. These see art as imitating life. Pragmatic theories are about the relationship between a work and its audience. These perceive art as a tool that triggers something within its audience. Expressive theories are about the relationship between the work and the artist. These deem the author's intentions or expression of character the most important. Objective theories do not relate the work to something else. These consider works as an autonomous whole; as art for art's sake.

Boonstra's model for classifying the arguments in the literary criticism of novels uses Abrams' four critical theories as types of argumentation. She avoids using Abrams' terminology, opting to define her categories by the above-described relationships the work has with reality, readers, the author, or itself. Boonstra adds a fifth type, arguments in relation to other works, which I later refer to as 'comparative' arguments.

Within her five categories, Boonstra defines several sub-arguments:

**Table 1.** *Boonstra's argumentations.*

Work in relation to (perceived or ideal) reality	Arguments about reflection	A good novel accurately replicates reality
	Arguments about abstraction	A good novel successfully distorts reality
	Arguments about engagement	A good novel includes societal issues
	Moral arguments	A novel is good when I agree with the moral of the story
Work in relation to the author	Expressive arguments	A good novel displays the author's personality
	Intentional arguments	A novel is good when the author achieves their (perceived) intentions
	Arguments about the author's poetics	A novel is good when the author's general view on literature is reflected in it
Work as an autonomous whole	Compositional arguments	A good novel is well-structured
	Stylistic arguments	A good novel has 'good' language use
Work in relation to the reader	Emotional arguments	A good novel exudes feelings in its readers
	Identification arguments	A novel is good when readers can see themselves in it
	Didactic arguments	A good novel teaches its reader something or offers new experiences
Work in relation to other literary work	Arguments about originality	A good novel distinguishes itself from other works
	Arguments about tradition	A good novel follows the example of other works
	Relative arguments	A novel is not necessarily good but has value within a series

### 2.2.2 From Adult's to Children's Literature: Krikhaar & Ros' Model for Analysing Reviews

Krikhaar & Ros' model is specifically designed to suit the particularities in the reviews of children's literature. First, they explain that four components make up a reviewing text on children's literature:

**Table 2.** Krikhaar & Ros' coding scheme with the four components of children's literature.

I Descriptive remarks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Statements with information about the book's contents</li> <li>2. Statements with information about the book's form</li> <li>3. Statements with information about the appropriate age range</li> <li>4. Statements with information about the writer</li> <li>5. Statements with information about other aspects</li> </ol>
II Meta-critical and institutional remarks	Statements about children's literature criticism and institutions such as the GG or WPP. These can either be judging: the critic has a certain attitude towards other criticism or an institution, or descriptive: the critic describes tendencies in criticism or institutions.
III Judging & argumentative remarks	Statements with argumentation for the judgement of a book. This is the most important group to my research, as it presents the reasons why a book is considered 'good'.
IV Other remarks	Statements that do not fit into the previous three groups. Often introductory, conjunctive, or conclusive remarks or citations of the reviewed text.

Krikhaar & Ros' arguments in group III are derived from Boonstra's categorisation. However, for my coding of this group, I use a revised version of their 1986 model, also by Ros (research in progress). She bases her update on yet another model for critical analysis by Linders & Op de Beek (2009), who divide judging statements into aspects and qualities: an aspect of a book is assessed by its positive or negative qualities (see Appendix B for a coding example). In the tables below, I summarise the aspects and qualities from my coding. I use most of Ros' adaptation of Linders & Op de Beek's model, adding and redefining a few categories.



**Table 3.** *Aspects.*

A style	Statements about the tone, language, word choice, sentence structure and stylistic devices
B Composition	Statements about the structure
C Plot/ contents	Statements about the storyline or contents in informative books or poetry
D Characters	Statements about the characters
E Theme	Statements about the theme, problems, or ideas
F Illustration	Statements about the illustration or illustrator
G Author	Statements about the author or their (perceived) intention
H Symbolism	Statements about the symbolism or metaphors
I Design	Statements about the design, appearance, and execution (typeface, paper, editing, price)
J Work as a Whole	Statements about the work as a whole, generally
K Genre	Statements about the genre
L Other	Statements that do not fit into another category

**Table 4.** *Qualities*

1 Efficiency	Statements about the amount of space and time aspects of the book take up
2 Coherence	Statements about the extent to which aspects of the book are coherent (for example coherence between the illustrations and text)
3 Continuity (author/ oeuvre)	Statements about the extent to which the book forms a continuation or a change within the body of work of an author
4 Intensity/ liveliness/ appeal	Statements about the liveliness, intensity, or ability of the book to grip its readers
5 Literary/ artistic/ intellectual qualities	Statements that describe a literary, artistic, or intellectual phenomenon or quality of an aspect of the book

6 Suspense	Statements about the suspense, tension, thrill, or excitement of aspects of the book
7 Humour	Statements about the wit or lightness of an aspect of the book
8 Believability/ realism	Statements about how believable or realistic aspects of the book are
9 Emotionality	Statements about the emotions certain aspects of the book rouse
10 Education	Statements about what the reader may learn from aspects of the book
11 Patronising	Statements about the extent to which aspects of the book are (not) patronising
12 Adaptation	Statements about how much an aspect of the book is adapted to its reader
13 Identification	Statements about aspects of the book the reader can identify with
14 Religious qualities	Statements about religious aspects
15 Political and societal qualities	Statements about politics, society, or societal engagement
16 Moral qualities	Statements about morality or to what extent aspects of the book are moralising
17 Originality	Statements about the originality of an aspect of the book
18 Clarity	Statements about the clarity of an aspect of the book
19 Intertextuality	Statements about the use of other literary or artistic sources as inspiration for aspects of the book
20 Good/ other	Praising terms that describe the greatness of the book, and statements that do not fit into another category

### 2.3 Analysis of Method and Procedure

During the coding process, I read the jury reports and reviews by the sentence, giving one or more codes to each line. Because group III is the most important to my research, I paid the most attention to these judging statements. After coding the first few texts myself, I let

another person try coding. I found that our coding was different, but that a discussion led to us agreeing on every occasion. In response to this, I have defined signal terms for each category (Appendix C). These terms help to justify the chosen codes. However, coding is still a limitation because it remains interpretative. Therefore, I do not quantify the results. In the analysis of the codes, I looked for patterns, like which aspects and qualities occur most often and how they are applied. The juries' and critics' use of argumentation is described with examples from the reports and reviews in the next chapter.

In the conclusion and discussion, I take the final step to answering my research question. I link the results back to De Vries' field by evaluating whether the argumentation I have distilled from the juries' and critics' judgements fits any of the approaches. For this, I re-examine De Vries' definitions of pedagogy and aesthetics and analyse whether and how the argumentation can be brought under these definitions (see Appendix D for my coding tree). By comparing the five types of argumentation with De Vries' four approaches, I assess whether his model holds or which changes need to be applied for it to remain relevant in the present context of children's book's assessment.

## Chapter 3: Results

In this chapter, I present the results of my coding. I have analysed the arguments underlying ‘good’ books. These arguments are indicative of the approaches to children’s literature. As discussed in the methodology chapter, I arrange the juries’ and critics’ judgements and argumentation into five sets: mimetic, expressive, autonomous, pragmatic, and comparative argumentations. Below, I explain and discuss each of these with examples from the jury reports and reviews.

### 3.1 Mimetic Arguments: The Children’s Book and Reality

Mimetic arguments relate the literary work to reality. A book can be considered good because it reflects reality accurately, engages with current issues, teaches a moral lesson, or, conversely, because it does not, weaving in elements of fantasy, magical realism, or metaphysics. This definition corresponds with Boonstra’s (1979) sub-categories of reflection, abstraction, societal engagement, and morality. From my list of aspects and qualities, I consider statements about the theme, believability, and moral, political, social, and religious qualities to be mimetic arguments.

#### 3.1.1 Thematic Arguments

The theme is discussed about half of the time. Considering this, a well-chosen theme appears significant for the juries and critics. Interestingly, two books for which the jury and critics give an above-average amount of thematic arguments are both non-fiction. The zoological theme of *Winterdieren* (Dumon Tak, 2011) is praised for its coherence, education and lightness. Van Twillert (2012) commends the author for including the less ‘child-friendly’ sides of the animal kingdom: ‘In a not too explicit way, Dumon Tak talks about sex and violence, and just like in wildlife documentaries that’s the funniest part.’<sup>21</sup> *Het raadsel van alles wat leeft en de stinksokken van Jos Grootjes uit Driel* (Schutten, 2013) explores the theory of evolution and is celebrated for its educational value and ability to make complicated concepts understandable for children and attractive to adults.

Not just books with a tangible theme receive praise for their subject. *Voordat jij er was* (Remmerts de Vries, 2009) is an adaptation of the creation myth. The GG jury is delighted that the book ‘[...] shows the awareness of a growing child and can be read on all

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<sup>21</sup> “Op een niet al te expliciete manier heeft Dumon Tak het ook over seks en geweld, en net als in natuurfilms is dat het grappigste deel.”

kinds of levels: as a reversal of the relationship between the human and animal world, as a child's egocentric universe, as a starting point for philosophical conversations about the faith and the malleability of society.'<sup>22</sup> In other words, the jury values that the theme enables a religious, philosophical or pedagogical discussion with children and adults alike.

### **3.1.2 A Heavy yet Light Theme**

A recurring sentiment on a 'good' theme is that it should have philosophical or intellectual depth or say something about society without preaching and with lightness. For example, the theme of death in *Doodgewoon* (Westera, 2014) is complicated to explain to children because it might evoke too much fear or sadness. Therefore, the critics praise the 'brave' choice of theme and applaud the writer and illustrator for making death an accessible topic for children and treating it with humour and lightness in between the more emotionally loaded poems.

Another example of a heavy yet light theme can be found in *Driedelig paard* (Van Lieshout, 2011), praised for its humorous treatment of societal criticism. Maliepaard (2011a) writes: 'Social critique is given repeatedly in this poetry collection, sometimes sharply, for example in the proposal of a retirement home to put difficult residents to sleep or, if necessary to cut expenses, to 'clean up' the entire home. The poems' strength is that they are hilariously disruptive.'<sup>23</sup> The WPP jury report (2012) adds that Van Lieshout is not at all lecturing in his social criticism: 'In this extremely inventive book, the author undermines all kinds of ingrained social hang-ups that we don't even know are hang-ups anymore. Without being too emphatic about it.'<sup>24</sup>

### **3.1.3 Moralisation and Social Engagement**

In my coding, the quality of 'morality', strictly defined with De Vries' pedagogical approach in mind, does not occur. This code refers to overt moralising: how the author applies an intentional and irrefutable moral lesson in the book is either praised, berated, or deliberated (do I agree with the moral of the story?) by the jury or critic. Such discussions of direct

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<sup>22</sup> "Het laat de bewustwording van een opgroeiend kind zien en laat zich op allerlei niveaus lezen: als omdraaiing van de relatie tussen mensen- en dierenwereld, als het egocentrische universum van een kind, als vertrekpunt voor filosofische gesprekken over het geloof en de maakbaarheid van de samenleving."

<sup>23</sup> "Maatschappijkritiek vind je vaker in deze bundel, soms nog scherper, bijvoorbeeld in het voorstel van een bejaardentehuis om lastige bewoners te laten 'inslapen' of desnoods het hele huis te 'ruimen' om aan hun bezuinigingsverplichting te voldoen. De kracht van de blokgedichten is dat ze op een hilarische manier ontregelen."

<sup>24</sup> "De auteur ondergraaft in dit uiterst inventieve boek allerlei ingeroeste maatschappelijke hang-ups waarvan we niet eens meer weten dat het hang-ups zijn. Zonder dat hij daar al te nadrukkelijk over doet."

moralising do not appear, yet this does not mean that children's books are devoid of ethical issues. For example, the abovementioned *Voordat jij er was* is lauded as a starting point for philosophical conversation, whilst the themes of *Doodgewoon* and *Driedelig Paard* show that philosophy and morality are present as a theme in children's literature.

Two books that exemplify arguments about morality on a contemporary societal problem are the winners of 2017, *Stella, ster van de zee* (Dendooven, 2016) and *Naar het noorden* (Meindert, 2016), each featuring a displaced protagonist searching for a home. Critics link the themes of both books to the European refugee crisis, which was then at its peak, with the UN Refugee Agency declaring 2015 as 'the year of Europe's refugee crisis' (UNHCR, 2015). Friso (2016a) writes that *Naar het noorden* has 'An extremely topical theme in these refugee times, which Meindert may unintentionally provide insight into.'<sup>25</sup> Maliepaard (2018) says that with *Stella* '[...] Dendooven implicitly processes the current events of boat refugees into an original fairy tale about 'washing up' in a new country, being different and longing for a home.'<sup>26</sup> Although morality and ethics are implicit in these themes, overt moralising is neither praised nor discussed by critics and juries alike. For this reason, I believe that moralisation, or at least the kind of moralisation as described in De Vries' (1989) pedagogical approach, is not a necessary quality, and even undesirable, to a 'good' children's book today. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

### **3.1.4 A Note on Believability**

Believability or realism usually refers to the plot or characters and is not a very common quality. However, in the WPP report (2011) on *De hemel van Heivisj* (Lindelauf, 2010), the jury insistently writes that 'You *believe* what you read, and that's what real literature is all about.'<sup>27</sup>, thereby stating that 'good' literature should be believable. This is in contrast with how seldom both juries and critics discuss believability. In his review of *Gips* (Woltz, 2015), Friso (2015b) writes that the story is '[...] not like in everyday life, but that's not necessary for a novel.'<sup>28</sup> These conflicting messages lead me to suppose that believability is not a crucial quality to a 'good' book, but when intended and executed well, it receives praise.

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<sup>25</sup> "In deze vluchtelingentijd een uitermate actueel thema waar Meindert misschien onbedoeld inzicht in geeft."

<sup>26</sup> "Impliciet verwerkt Dendooven zo de actualiteit van bootvluchtelingen in een origineel sprookje over 'aanspoelen' in een nieuw land, anders zijn en het verlangen naar een thuis."

<sup>27</sup> "Je *geloof*t wat je leest, en daar gaat het om in echte literatuur."

<sup>28</sup> "Het is niet zoals in het dagelijks leven maar dat hoeft in een roman ook niet."

### ***3.1.5 Mimetic Arguments in Conclusion***

There is a variety of possible mimetic arguments, from a well-chosen and implemented theme, to believability, and social, philosophical, moral, and religious qualities in a story. Mimetic arguments are often given in the reviews and jury reports, but an accurate mirroring of reality is not expected of a ‘good’ children’s book. Dogmatic religion and moralising lectures are not found in these books, though morality and social commentary in the theme, often with a humoristic wink, are. In conclusion, mimetic arguments often recur in the assessment of ‘good’ children’s books but are never juries’ or critics’ leading motivation.

## **3.2 Expressive Arguments: The Children’s Book and its Author**

The second set of arguments is about the author’s presence in the work. In my coding, these arguments encompass the aspect of the author and the qualities continuity and the author’s emotionality (a sub-category within emotionality).

### ***3.2.1 The Author’s Craft***

The author is mentioned in about half of the jury reports and critics’ reviews. When the author is praised, the juries and critics do not tend to make arguments about intention or expression but instead commend their adaptive, intellectual, or literary capabilities, often using the term ‘craftsmanship’ to express the author’s greatness. For example, in the jury report on the *Hemel van Heivisj*, the WPP jury writes that ‘The author brings a wonderful universe to life with exceptional craftsmanship.’<sup>29</sup>

### ***3.2.2 Authors and Emotionality***

The discussion of *Winterdieren* is one instance wherein the author’s excitements appear to be decisive for the book’s good quality. The GG jury report (2012) comments on the author’s expressive style: ‘*Winterdieren* is a gem within non-fiction, a fascinating, adventurous and infectious book, which attests to a love for writing, a keen eye, originality, passion and craftsmanship.’<sup>30</sup> Friso (2011b) adds that ‘The enthusiasm jumps from the pages and is the strongest asset of Dumon Tak’<sup>31</sup>, and Maliepaard (2011b) confirms: ‘Even the least cuddly animals become interesting thanks to her because she talks about them with genuine

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<sup>29</sup> “De auteur brengt hier met uitzonderlijk vakmanschap een wonderlijk universum tot leven [...]”

<sup>30</sup> “*Winterdieren* is een parel binnen de non-fictie, een boeiend, avontuurlijk en aanstekelijk boek, dat getuigt van schrijflust, kijklust, originaliteit, passie en vakmanschap.”

<sup>31</sup> “Het enthousiasme spat van de bladzijdes en is de sterke troef van Dumon Tak.”

amazement.<sup>32</sup> Although these arguments are about the author and her enthusiasm for the theme, they are ultimately also stylistic arguments, as Dumon Tak's passion dictates her style.

Annet Schaap's *Lampje* (2017) offers an interesting case for emotional arguments concerning the author. The WPP jury (2018) names the main character's bravery as an asset for *Lampje* and relates it to Schaap: 'This year, the jury opted for dazzling language, atmospheric imagery and sincere daringness: For an illustrator who, like her protagonist, has finally dared to give in to her deep desire to write, and is now suddenly a writer too.'<sup>33</sup> At the time, Schaap was already a successful illustrator of popular children's book series. *Lampje* was her writing debut, and its literary qualities blew away critics, who wondered why Schaap had not started writing sooner (Friso, 2017). Learning to write is central to *Lampje*'s plot and the jury believes this symbolises Schaap's personal struggle with wanting to become a writer. They consider this a significant additional argument to the other qualities that make *Lampje* a great book.

### ***3.2.3 Continuity in the Author's Work***

Continuity within the author's oeuvre is hardly mentioned. It does not come up in the jury reports and only appears in a few reviews. This could be explained by the jury of the GG and WPP not considering it their purpose to place the winning book within a context of the author's oeuvre because that is what lifetime awards, like the *Theo Thijssen Prijs*, are for.

### ***3.2.4 Expressive Arguments in Conclusion***

Above I have sketched some examples in which expressive arguments are given by either a jury or critic. Generally, these arguments do not seem to be very important to deciding what a 'good' children's book is. An author's merits can be supplementary to a book that already has other good qualities but is scarcely decisive to naming great children's literature.

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<sup>32</sup> "Zelfs de minst aabare dieren worden dankzij haar interessant, omdat ze vanuit een oprechte verwondering over hen vertelt."

<sup>33</sup> "De jury koos dit jaar voor wervelende taal, voor sfeervol beeld en voor oprechte durf: Voor een illustrator die net als haar hoofdpersoon eindelijk heeft durven toegeven aan haar diepe verlangen te willen schrijven, en nu ineens ook schrijver is."



### 3.3 Autonomous Arguments: The Children's Book as a Work of Art

Autonomous arguments are about the work as an independent piece of art. I use 'autonomous' instead of Abrams' (1954) original term 'objective' because the latter elicits comparisons between objective and subjective views on art, potentially leading readers to believe that an 'objective' argument, whereby an artwork is considered only in itself, is 'objectively' better. Within the context of this analysis, autonomous arguments encompass anything to do with form, in text and visuals. I consider the aspects style, composition, symbolism, illustration, design, and work as a whole and the qualities coherence, efficiency, humour, and literary/ artistic/ intellectual qualities to be autonomous arguments.

#### 3.3.1 Writing Style and Literary Qualities

A survey of my coding shows that most arguments the juries and critics make fall in the autonomous category. Style of writing is the most discussed aspect overall, and when other kinds of argumentation are paired with stylistic aspects, they often become autonomous arguments too. For example, a character has a believable voice (mimetic-stylistic argument), the author's passion for the theme creates an engaging text (expressive-stylistic argument), the writing is original (comparative-stylistic argument), or the emotionality of the story is well-captured in text and illustration (pragmatic-stylistic argument).

Stylistic arguments form the overtone in the argumentation on 'good' children's books. Within the discussion of poetry, there is an even greater mention of stylistic and literary qualities, perhaps because poetry relies more on form compared to novels or non-fiction. The GG jury (2011) praises Simon van der Geest for his use of stylistic devices in *Dissus* (2010): 'He nonchalantly writes repetitions, alliterations and inner rhyme into rhythmically narrative poetry that almost feels musical.'<sup>34</sup> In the GG report (2015) for *Doodgewoon*, the jury uses nearly the same words to describe their admiration for Bette Westera's technique: 'Her verses are classic: repetitions, enumerations, inner rhyme, crossed rhyme, alliteration and every now and then an enjambment.'<sup>35</sup>

Humour commonly recurs as a stylistic mechanism to bring lightness to a text. Above, I write about the notion of a 'heavy yet light' theme. Bringing lightness to an otherwise sad theme is typically achieved with a humoristic style, as sketched before with the example on

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<sup>34</sup> "Schijnbaar nonchalant verwerkt hij herhalingen, alliteraties en binnenrijm tot ritmisch goed lopende verhalende dichtregels, die bijna muzikaal aandoen."

<sup>35</sup> "Haar verstechniek is klassiek: herhalingen, enumeraties, binnenrijm, gekruist rijm, alliteratie en een enkel enjambement."

*Doodgewoon*. Although humour could be an argument in relation to the reader because it evokes something, the descriptions of ‘clever’ humour used in most reviews and jury reports treat humour as an autonomous argument. Gideon Samson’s absurdist *Zeb*. (2018) exemplifies the ‘elevated humour’ juries and critics seek. De Veen (2018) praises Samson for the literary value of his absurdism, which shows ‘[...] how humour can achieve more in a children’s book than just a giggle.’<sup>36</sup> The small deviations from reality produce an original story with dry wit. De Veen: ‘There is (in the opinion of traders in humour) simple humour and quality humour. The eleven stories in *Zeb*. [...] belong to the latter category. These jokes are masterfully put together, surprise every time and are not at all stale, this is literature, and it remains fun.’<sup>37</sup>

### ***3.3.2 Illustration, Design and Artistic Qualities***

Illustration is a frequently used argument. To my surprise, the GG makes just as many arguments on illustration as the WPP does, even though the GG’s organising body (CPNB) annually awards a separate prize for illustration in children’s literature.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, I posit that the juries deem illustration can complete a book, making it deserving of their attention. This is supported by the fact that they often praise coherence between text and illustration. For example, in the WPP report (2015) for *Doodgewoon*: ‘The book needed an illustrator too, who unites humour with seriousness in the same self-evident way, and whose palette is sufficiently rich to grasp and depict the various aspects of this theme with force.’<sup>39</sup>

### ***3.3.3 Acclaiming Statements and the Work as a Whole: Unspecific Arguments***

Two of the most common codes, both separately and in combination with each other, are the aspect of ‘work as a whole’ and quality ‘good’. Juries and critics make many statements about a work’s greatness, using terms like masterful, sparkling, supple or powerful. These words only express the ‘good’ quality, without specifying how or why. They recur with all aspects, meaning the quality ‘good’ can also apply to other sets of argumentations. For example, a powerful theme is mimetic, a masterful author is expressive, a supple retelling of

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<sup>36</sup> “Samson laat zien wat humor in een kinderboek nog méér vermag dan een giechel.”

<sup>37</sup> “Je hebt (in de ogen van handelaars in humor) simpele humor en kwaliteitshumor. De elf verhalen in *Zeb*. [...] horen tot die laatste categorie. Deze grappen zitten meesterlijk in elkaar, verrassen telkens en worden niet uitgekauwd, dit is literatuur en dit blijft leuk.”

<sup>38</sup> The *Gouden Penseel*, or ‘golden paintbrush’.

<sup>39</sup> “Er was ook een illustrator nodig, die op eenzelfde vanzelfsprekende manier humor met ernst verenigt, en wiens palet voldoende rijk is om de uiteenlopende aspecten van dit thema met kracht te vatten en te verbeelden.”

the creation myth is comparative, and a sparkling writing style is autonomous. Pragmatic argumentation is an exception because it relies on specific reader-centric qualities, for which the general descriptor ‘good’ is not applicable.

Although the ‘good’ terms are broadly used, they are most often combined with the autonomous aspects style, plot, illustration, and work as a whole. Of these, the latter is the least specific aspect, as well as the most common. In light of my research, this is unfortunate: it is impossible to determine in which way a book is good when a jury or critic only says, ‘this is a great book’. Krikhaar & Ros (1986) write that clear argumentation was lacking in the judgement of Dutch children’s literature in the period that they studied (1965 – 1984). My findings show that although clear arguments on the text and visuals are made in the reports and reviews, undefined statements still often appear in the judgement of children’s literature.

### ***3.3.4 Autonomous Arguments in Conclusion***

The majority of the juries’ and critics’ arguments are autonomous. The text is the most important to a ‘good’ book, and coherent visuals in illustration and design support the quality. Compared to Krikhaar & Ros’ (1986) findings, which show that jury reports and reviews lacked literary or formal critique in the past, juries and critics between 2010 and 2020 substantiate ‘good’ children’s literature with a lot of clearly defined autonomous argumentation. However, undefined statements are still a common occurrence.

### **3.4 Comparative Arguments: The Children’s Book Compared to Other Works**

Comparative arguments relate the children’s book to other literary, artistic, or popular works. Statements about the qualities of originality and intertextuality fall in this group. I consider the comparative arguments a sub-group of the autonomous arguments, or strongly related to them. The act of comparing a children’s book to an established work of art or literature insinuates that the book is worthy of being associated with such an autonomous work and could be considered art itself. Sometimes, similarities to works that are generally not considered artistic are pointed out. Even then, I believe that the comparison objectifies and elevates the books to autonomous artworks with their own recognisable style, whether they are considered ‘good’ or artistic.

### 3.4.1 Originality: An Essential but sometimes Unfounded Quality

Considering originality lies at the heart of the prizes, it is not mentioned as often as expected in the jury reports. The critics give even fewer arguments on originality. The juries often discuss the significance of originality in their introductory statements, yet the winning book is supported with this kind of argumentation in only about half of the reports. This finding aligns with Van der Boog (2018), who examined the GG jury reports between 2007 and 2017. I affirm her research and add that both juries are guilty of stressing originality without justifying it in the argumentation.

The lack of strong argumentation invites critics to denounce the jury's verdict. An example can be found in *Juwelen van stras* (Biessels, 2009), which the WPP jury (2010) calls a 'completely original story'. Maliepaard (2010a) begs to differ: 'The perspective of the naive child who understands little about the war is not as original as the jury would have you believe in its report. The novella is reminiscent of *'De oorlog van Sophie'* by An van 't Oosten and *'Duveke'* by Elly de Vries, in which five/ six-year-olds also feature as protagonists.'<sup>40</sup>

### 3.4.2 Intertextuality: References to Established Literature and Popular Work

The quality of intertextuality is subtly present in the reports and reviews. For instance, Westera is often compared to Annie M.G. Schmidt, and her verse about the brevity of death is seen as a reaction to Willem Wilmink's line on the lastingness of being dead in the GG jury report for *Doodgewoon*.<sup>41</sup> Van Lenteren (2012) sees similarities to Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* in the design of *Spinder* (Van der Geest, 2012). He seems to believe that using the style associated with Kinney's work could be a ploy to get children to read books with more elevated content: '*Spinder* appears to be just such a diary full of scribbles, cartoons and amusing lists, reading almost as easily. Only then featuring an original, non-superficial protagonist with a completely personal philosophy of life, who is touching and sometimes even causes a bit of stomachache.'<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Het perspectief van het naïeve kind dat weinig van de oorlog begrijpt, is niet zo origineel als de jury in haar rapport wil doen geloven. De novelle doet wat dat betreft meteen denken aan *'De oorlog van Sophie'* van An van 't Oosten en *'Duveke'* van Elly de Vries, waarin ook vijf/zesjarigen de hoofdrol spelen."

<sup>41</sup> "De dood is maar voor even" (Westera), versus "Dood zijn duurt zo lang" (Wilmink).

<sup>42</sup> "*Spinder* lijkt precies zo'n lollig dagboek vol zelfgemaakte tekeningen en cartoons en vermakelijke lijstjes en leest ook bijna net zo lekker weg. Alleen dan met een origineel, volstrekt niet oppervlakkige hoofdpersoon met een volstrekt eigen levensfilosofie, die weet te raken en soms zelfs een beetje buikpijn geeft."

Intertextuality is most apparent in *Dissus* (Van der Geest, 2010), which is an adaptation of the *Odyssey*. The authors' retelling of a familiar tale is central to both books' strongest qualities. Though at first glance *Dissus*' main merits are its engaging plot, the relatable main character and literary style, the original revision of the *Odyssey* in a Dutch 'polder' setting is a central asset for the book. Intertextuality provides the basis for this book and is a fundamental argument in its judgement.

### ***3.4.3 Comparative Arguments in Conclusion***

To conclude, it is striking that despite being foundational to the assessment of both prizes, originality does not get mentioned more often as an argument for these 'good' books. Furthermore, perceived and obvious references to other texts and artworks can be found in the assessment of several books and sometimes come to the fore.

## **3.5 Pragmatic Arguments: The Children's Book and its Readers**

The final set consists of pragmatic argumentation. These arguments are about the work in relation to the reader, though there remains the question of who that reader is. I include several qualities from my coding here: intensity, suspense, emotionality, identification, adaptation, patronising, education, and clarity. All these qualities concern the reader's perception of the book and their reading experience.

### ***3.5.1 Intensity and Suspense: Engaging the Reader with Excitement***

Intensity and suspense are usually about the plot or composition of the story, and they sometimes describe captivating characters or style. Neither are very common qualities, with suspense appearing more often amongst GG books, while liveliness is distributed equally. Van der Geest won the GG in 2011 and 2013, receiving a bulk of suspense arguments: '*Dissus* is easily read (aloud) and is a suspenseful boy's story in wonderful language with a good dose of humour.'<sup>43</sup> (Friso, 2010c). Maliepaard (2012a) writes that in *Spinder* 'Such an ordinary brotherly squabble may not seem like an exciting starting point, but Simon van der Geest turns it into an oppressive story.'<sup>44</sup> The jury report of the GG (2013) adds that 'The diary form, in which the reader is addressed directly, creates a bond of trust between Hidde

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<sup>43</sup> "*Dissus* leest gemakkelijk (voor) en is een spannend jongensboekverhaal in prachtige taal en met veel humor."

<sup>44</sup> "Zo'n alledaagse broedertwist lijkt misschien geen spannend uitgangspunt, maar Simon van der Geest maakt er een beklemmend verhaal van."

and the reader – one cannot come closer to a character, a more intense look at his inner life is not possible. *Spinder* is unusually exciting.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.5.2 Emotionality: Engaging the Reader with Feelings**

All kinds of aspects have the potential to be emotional and, therefore, emotionality is a common quality, especially in combination with characters, plot, and style. Terms like ‘touching figures’ and ‘poignant scenes’ are regularly-used descriptors. *Naar het noorden* is a particularly emotional book. The GG jury (2017) describes how ‘Meinderts makes the increasingly intense hunger and cold tangible in harrowing scenes, painful details and powerful sentences.’<sup>46</sup> Maliepaard (2016) adds how ‘Meinderts empathetically describes the main character’s culture shock’<sup>47</sup>, and Smit (2016) concludes that ‘The boy’s despair and panic are so well portrayed that it gives you a stomachache when you read it.’<sup>48</sup> *Kelderkind* (Dieltiens, 2012) is another highly emotional book. The WPP jury (2013) considers this novel a great example for historical fiction because the readers are invested in its main figures: ‘Imagine the characters come to life, that you feel for them, that you are in suspense about the ending and are left wondering what is fact and fiction.’<sup>49</sup> Finally, in *Dissus*, emotions translate into the imagery too. The GG jury (2011) writes that ‘Dissus’ development, the tragedy and the emotions are not only touched upon in the text but are also strikingly depicted in the illustrations.’<sup>50</sup>

### **3.5.3 Adaptation, Patronising and Identification: Approaching to the Reader**

‘Adaptation’, ‘patronising’ and ‘identification’ are all about a text’s ability or attempt to come closer to its designated readers, namely children. Firstly, with adaptation, a text succeeds in meeting children’s abilities, striking a balance between complexity and simplification. It is not written about commonly, but it occurs slightly more often in

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<sup>45</sup> “Door de dagboekvorm, waarbij de lezer ook nog eens rechtstreeks aangesproken wordt, ontstaat er een vertrouwensband tussen Hidde en de lezer – dicht op de huid van een romanfiguur kun je niet zitten, een intensere blik op diens zielenleven is niet mogelijk. Ongemeen spannend is *Spinder*.”

<sup>46</sup> “Meinderts maakt de steeds heviger honger en kou voelbaar in schrijnende scènes, pijnlijke details en krachtige zinnen.”

<sup>47</sup> “Meinderts beschrijft invoelend de kleine cultuurschok.”

<sup>48</sup> “De wanhoop en de paniek van de jongen zijn zo goed getroffen dat je er bij het lezen zelf buikpijn van krijgt.”

<sup>49</sup> “Stel nou dat de personages tot leven komen, dat je met ze meevoelt, dat je in spanning zit over de afloop en je afvraagt wat feit en fictie is.”

<sup>50</sup> “De ontwikkeling van *Dissus*, de tragiek en de emoties worden niet alleen raak getroffen in de tekst, maar worden ook in de illustraties treffend verbeeld.”

deliberations of the GG, for instance in the report (2010) for *Voordat jij er was*: ‘And all this in an extremely light and surprising packaging that does not go over the heads of young readers.’<sup>51</sup> A patronising text overreaches its attempt to come closer to the reader and ends up underestimating their ability, spelling out the details and leaving little to the imagination. There is not a single mention of a patronising text, and the code ‘patronising’ only appears when the positive quality is that the book is anything but oversimplifying. For example: ‘Westera takes children seriously, in the theme and her writing.’<sup>52</sup> (Friso, 2014). Finally, a reader identifies with a text when they recognise themselves in aspects of it, usually in a character. Identification very scarcely appears in my coding. It could be that children can or do identify with these books, but that adult critics and juries read and judge with different things in mind than identification.

### **3.5.4 Education and Clarity: Informing the Reader**

Education is only an argument for five books. Of these, two are non-fiction (*Winterdieren* and *Het raadsel van alles wat leeft*) and the second pair are historical novels (*De hemel van Heivisj* and *Kelderkind*). The final book is *De regels van drie* (Hof, 2013), which is set in Iceland, and of which the WPP (2014) jury writes that ‘[...] the author does not unnecessarily show off her knowledge, but unforcedly incorporates all kinds of interesting facts in her story, about the eating habits, the foreign language, the landscapes and the climate.’<sup>53</sup> Education is the purpose of the two non-fiction books, so it is not surprising that it forms an argument there. In the other three books, education occurs because of the setting, subtly informing readers about life in a different time or place.

Interestingly, the 2016 WPP winner *Stem op de okapi* (Van de Vendel, 2015) is a non-fiction book that I have not coded with arguments on education, though the content descriptions in the jury report and reviews make clear that it is an informative book. It is praised for its literary and artistic merits rather than education: its poetical and unexpected style, the realistic as well as fantastical illustrations of the okapi, and the clear concept: approaching the okapi from every possible angle in text and visuals. This fits my general impression that a ‘good’ style in poetry and art is more important to the WPP than education.

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<sup>51</sup> “En dat allemaal in een uiterst luchtige en verrassende verpakking die nergens over de hoofden van kleine lezers heen gaat.”

<sup>52</sup> “Westera neemt kinderen serieus, in het thema en in haar manier van schrijven.”

<sup>53</sup> “Toch koketteert de auteur niet nodeloos met haar kennis, maar verwerkt zij op een onnadrukkelijke manier allerlei wetenswaardigheden in haar verhaal, over de eetgewoonten, de vreemde taal, de landschappen en het klimaat.”

Clarity is a criterion for non-fiction works with the GG. It is unsurprising then that it appears in the deliberations on *Winterdieren* and *Het raadsel van alles wat leeft*. There is also a discussion on the clarity of *Driedelig paard*. In this work, Van Lieshout experiments with ‘block’ poems, texts without titles or spacing, which Friso (2011a) thinks ‘[...] greatly increase readability, especially for readers who have trouble with poems.’<sup>54</sup> Maliepaard (2011a) has his doubts: ‘The text blocks look impenetrable at first glance, but those who start reading will experience how exciting this experiment of form is.’<sup>55</sup> In any case, Van Lenteren (2011) writes that ‘The narrative perspective is clear [...]’.<sup>56</sup>

### **3.5.5 Pragmatic Arguments in Conclusion**

Many qualities fall under the umbrella of pragmatic argumentation. Some, like emotionality, are frequently recurring, others less so. The variation in reader-centric arguments shows that there are many ways that ‘good’ literature can engage its readers. However, an unresolved issue with pragmatic argumentation is *which* reader is addressed. As this research shows, children’s books enjoy a wider audience than just children. Sometimes, critics and juries make statements that reflect how a child might read, but they are ultimately adult readers. What is the value of an adaptive argument made by a person for whom the adaptation is not necessary? This has been a debate within the world of children’s literature for decades. Although one might argue that the pragmatic arguments laid out in this chapter say more about the relationship between the text and the critic or jury than between the child and the book, contemporary researchers argue for a model of kinship between adults and children. The central question is to what extent adult critics experience literature differently than children. I will treat this model in the discussion of the next chapter.

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<sup>54</sup> “Hele vlakken tekst lopen vol wat de leesbaarheid sterk vergroot, zeker voor lezers die aanhikken tegen gedichten.”

<sup>55</sup> “De tekstblokken zien er op het eerste oog ondoordringbaar uit, maar wie begint te lezen, ervaart hoe spannend dit vormexperiment is.”

<sup>56</sup> “Het vertelperspectief is helder [...]”



## Chapter 4: Conclusion and Discussion

I have previously mapped the various arguments that underlie ‘good’ children’s books. This chapter answers my research question: I evaluate whether any of De Vries’ four approaches emerge from the argumentation and if so, which is prevalent. I further examine if his model holds relevance for the contemporary assessment of children’s literature. In the subsequent discussion, I contextualise my findings. For this, I use introductory statements from the jury reports and academic literature and newspaper reporting on the valuation of children’s books.

### 4.1 Conclusion

Although Boonstra’s (1979) five types of argumentation do not fit precisely into De Vries’ (1991) field, it can aid our understanding of the assessment of children’s literature and the approaches to children’s literature in general. For this, I broaden some of De Vries’ definitions. As I will explain below, mimetic and pragmatic arguments mostly suit the pedagogical approaches and autonomous and comparative arguments the aesthetic approaches. Expressive argumentation is less compatible with the field: the context determines whether an author’s expressions or intentions lean towards pedagogy or aesthetics.

Area one on the field, which represents a pedagogical approach inspired by Enlightenment views on education, is not at all prevalent in my results. However, if I redefine it to include less explicit morals and social engagement, it could encompass much of the mimetic argumentation. I believe this pedagogical approach was last most prevalent in the 1970s. Ros (2016a) describes how children’s literature from this decade is regularly perceived as socially critical. The themes of ‘good’ books in this period often include the breaking down of social roles and taboos. However, Ros’ analysis of jury reports in this decade nuances the common opinion that 1970s critics of children’s literature *only* care about socially relevant themes. She shows that thematic arguments do appear more often in this decade than earlier and later decades, but that form (how a book manages to convey the theme) is not insignificant. I reason that the mimetic argumentation of the 2010s does not so much demand societal criticism as it praises books that have intellectual depth and pave ways to discussions about society with both children and adults. This way, the first pedagogical approach endures within the contemporary assessment of children’s literature.

Area two represents another pedagogical approach. Instead of encompassing the lessons or realities adults want children to be confronted with, this approach aims to meet

children's emotional need for entertainment, adventure, and fantasy. In this sense, pragmatic argumentation, praise of how the text affects the reader, falls under this approach. I believe the second approach is not heavily present in today's critical practice. Pragmatic arguments are made throughout the jury reports and critics' reviews but always appear alongside other argumentation, most notably autonomous arguments. These (literary) arguments draw away from the pedagogical approach.

Area three is the purely literary approach that puts literature ahead of children's opinions. This approach is not widespread in present evaluations either. Although autonomous and comparative argumentation suit this approach well, again, they are never the sole argument underlying 'good' books. The appraisal of only a few books leans towards this literary approach. Still, there are always mimetic, expressive, or pragmatic arguments that feature alongside autonomous and comparative ones. According to De Vries (1990), the 1980s were a period in literary criticism wherein this approach reigned with an active disregard for what children think (I will examine in the discussion whether this is true). In any case, in the jury reports and reviews of the 2010s, the jury or critic seems to always be aware of the child reader.

De Vries explains area four by citing Theo Thijssen (1905, p. 21): 'A children's writer must be a writer. To him language must be *more* than it is to us ordinary people; and besides, he must love the child; love it *so* much that the child understands him [...].'<sup>57</sup> This aesthetic approach for children is essentially a blend of areas two and three. It combines literary standards (autonomous and comparative arguments) with meeting children's needs in the text (pragmatic arguments). De Vries believes this approach should be the norm. I consider it the most common in current critical practice. Though critics and juries use a range of argumentation, autonomous and pragmatic arguments appear most frequently, often together. Besides this, the juries show an awareness of the historical conflict between literary qualities and accessibility to children in their introductory statements. I return to these statements in the discussion.

Before going on to the discussion, I want to conclude how usable De Vries' field is to comprehending the contemporary assessment of children's books. Though I have demonstrated that it can aid in subdividing the literary criticism of the past decade, the field

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<sup>57</sup> "Een kinderschrijver moet schrijver zijn. Hem moet de taal iets méér zijn dan het ons gewone menschen is; en bovendien moet hij van het kind houden; zóóveel houden, dat het kind hem verstaat. Hij moet eerlijk geven wat er in hem leeft; en wat er in hem leeft moet voor het kind zijn; en zóó hevig moet het in hem zijn, dat hij 't uit; dat hij 't uiten moet."

alone gives an incomplete view of juries' and critics' judgements. Its limits to understanding critical evaluations likely stem from the sources De Vries uses to define his approaches: pedagogues' and educators' poetical statements. These texts advocate a single notion of the 'good' children's book, whereas jury reports and reviews almost always encompass several argumentations. Whilst De Vries' field offers a broad and visual representation of approaches, Boonstra's five types of argumentation give more detailed information on what professionals justify as 'good' children's books. In other words, while Boonstra's model is specifically designed to order literary critics' arguments, De Vries' broad categories are also applicable to the books themselves, author's statements, readers' interpretations, and all actors and trends in children's literature. I hence think that both De Vries' field of approaches and Boonstra's argumentations (or another classification of arguments) are necessary to understand juries' and critics' positions.

## 4.2 Discussion

I have concluded that De Vries' ideal book is presently most common in the literary criticism of children's literature. The phrase 'can be read on various levels' is regularly used, and juries and critics often stress that children and adults can find enjoyable elements in the book. Additionally, contemporary juries appear conscious of their role in the discussion of the child versus literary value. In 2013, the GG jury writes that they 'do not want to problematise the relationship between children and literary quality. They choose the best books without any imaginary children in mind.'<sup>58</sup> In the 2018 report, they add that they do not believe in archetypical children: '*The* child does not exist. There is a span in children's development, dependent on many factors.'<sup>59</sup> Similar statements appear in WPP reports. For example, in 2012, the jury refers to the debate about the literary quality of children's books: 'Should a good children's book primarily reflect the child's world, or should it only meet high literary standards? Either view is hard to defend. [...]. Adults can say all sorts of things about children's perception, but some caution is advised, lest we confuse our world with that of children. Furthermore, what one child deeply enjoys, another dismisses.'<sup>60</sup> In 2017 they

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<sup>58</sup> "De jury van 2013 wil de verhouding tussen het kind (lees: de aantrekkelijkheid en/of toegankelijkheid van een boek voor wat met een vies woord 'de doelgroep' heet) en de literaire kwaliteit van een boek niet problematiseren. Zij heeft simpelweg gekozen voor de boeken die zij in het afgelopen jaar de beste vond. Er hebben geen denkbeeldige kinderen aan de jurytafel gezeten. Wie zouden dat ook geweest moeten zijn?"

<sup>59</sup> "Hét kind bestaat niet. Er is een bandbreedte in ontwikkeling die afhankelijk is van vele factoren."

<sup>60</sup> "Moet een goed jeugdboek zich vooral aansluiten bij de wereld van kinderen of moet het uitsluitend voldoen aan hoge literaire eisen? Beide opvattingen zijn lastig te verdedigen. [...]. Aan de andere kant valt er in de hoofden van kinderen maar moeilijk te kijken. Wij ouderen kunnen van alles over de belevingswereld van

specify this stance, saying ‘Because who are we, adults, to think we can know what children find beautiful, or funny, or difficult, or exciting, or moving?’<sup>61</sup>

These quotes show an awareness of the (perceived) contradiction between child-centred and literary arguments. The jury clarifies that it is not their place to engage in this debate. Their purpose is to promote ‘good’ children’s books to a broad population. Juries also seem not to believe in an archetypical child with distinct capabilities. This helps them justify their choices: juries’ judgements are not for specific children who may or may not understand or agree with the winner, but for what *they* consider a ‘good’ book.

Beneath these statements lies the question of how much adults’ and children’s reading experiences actually differ. We can better understand the jury’s position with Gubar’s (2013) kinship model of perceiving children. Adults and children are neither the same nor radically different. They are bound by the human experience. At first glance, the juries’ statements mostly emphasise the differences between adults and children. They argue that as adults, they do not know how children experience a book and therefore their judgements are principally for themselves. However, in adding that each individual child is different, they minimise the distinction between children and themselves and hint at kinship. Moreover, both the juries and critics apply pragmatic argumentation in their assessments of a book’s positive qualities. Coats (2018) points out that a good deal of adults’ identity is built on childhood experiences. If adults retain memories and have imaginations of what it may be like to be a child, why, then, would adults not be able to empathise with children’s books and their protagonists, themes, or plots? If we understand present-day approaches within the kinship model, adults’ judgements about how well a book is adapted towards children’s needs are valuable because the reading experience is not fundamentally different.

Though we see current juries and critics seek a balance between child-centred and literary qualities, one could argue that this has been a longstanding standard in the assessment of children’s literature, even in the period that De Vries criticised. Bekkering and Van Lierop (1997) question De Vries’ (1990) claim that the GG jury did not consider children, specifically with *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper*. They contend that De Vries does not clearly explain which ‘faulty’ criteria the jury holds, does not give examples of the jury overemphasising style and composition, and uses anecdotal evidence that children did not

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kinderen beweren maar enige voorzichtigheid is geboden, straks verwarren we onze wereld met die van kinderen. En wat het ene kind prachtig vindt, werpt het andere kind verre van zich.”

<sup>61</sup> “Want wie zijn wij, volwassenen, om te denken dat we kunnen weten wat kinderen mooi vinden, of grappig, of moeilijk, of spannend, of ontroerend?”

enjoy the book. Bekkering & Van Lierop make the case that the jury report of *Kleine Sofie* actually followed De Vries' ideal of a literary book for children, citing: 'It is a book that can be read ten times and still be surprising. Best of all, the book can be read to children as young as eight, while twelve-year-olds, parents and grandparents will enjoy it too.'<sup>62</sup> (Bekkering & Van Lierop, 1997, p. 462). They argue that the jury and De Vries do not hold different criteria for 'good' children's literature but have different understandings of what content is accessible or interesting to children.

If we consider the statement of the 1985 GG jury, De Vries' fourth approach already lived then. However, there are signs that a shift has taken place. One year before his criticism of De Vries, Bekkering, then a parting GG jury member, argues (1996) that the primary function of 'good' children's literature is *tegendraadsheid*: subversiveness in form and content. The purpose of 'good' children's literature is to undermine certainties or truths. Almost two decades later, Bekkering reflects on his old self, saying his literary judgements have become milder: 'Children's literature is not solely about the text. The (hypothetical) reader must play a role in the critic's interpretation and appreciation.' (Bekkering, 2012, p. 64). Further pointing to a critical shift, is De Veen's (2012) analysis of past WPP winners in *NRC Handelsblad*.<sup>63</sup> In the article 'Woutertje becomes more child-friendly', De Veen claims that the evaluation of children's literature has moved towards legibility since the 1980s and 90s.

Has a shift taken place? Accessibility and subversiveness are not necessarily opposites. We can view the tension between readers and literature as a dichotomy or, conversely, an identifying characteristic of children's literature (Ros, 2016b). As stated, area four (which De Vries propagates) combines elements of the literary third area (which borders on Bekkering's 1996 view) with the second area's attention to children's needs. A softer shift of emphasis might have taken place *within* area four. The evaluative criteria may have stayed the same while the interpretations of what accessible content is have changed. However, to substantiate this, further research beyond the scope of my thesis is required.

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<sup>62</sup> "Het is dus een boek dat je wel tien maal kan lezen en bekijken en dan nog verrassend is. Het mooiste is dat het boek voorgelezen kan worden aan kinderen van 8 jaar, terwijl 12-jarigen, ouders en grootouders er ook nog van zullen genieten."

<sup>63</sup> "Woutertje wordt kindvriendelijker."

### 4.3 Limitations and Recommendations

My findings are limited by an interpretative and fallible coding process. The juries' and critics' arguments are not always clearly defined, and it is up to the researcher's interpretation to form a categorisation. Although I have defined signal terms to justify my coding, a cross-check of the reports and reviews with more researchers would strengthen the results of this thesis. Studying more books per year by including more prizes could substantiate the results. For example, additional research could compare my findings with a study of jury reports of other adult-judged prizes (e.g., the *Zilveren Griffels*, *Vlag en Wimpels* or *Nienke van Hichtum Prijs*) over the same period. Similar research over a longer period could examine the above-mentioned question of whether and how a shift has taken place in the approaches.

Related research could look at authors' poetics: what approaches are prevalent within their intention statements, and what do they believe the purpose of children's literature is? A final recommendation is to do more research into critical argumentation in the context of kinship and difference models. Although I consider it wise to view the present judgements from a kinship model, qualitative interviews could delve into critics' and juries' objectives and beliefs on this issue.

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## Appendix A: Winning Titles GG and WPP 2010-2020

### *Gouden Griffel*

2010	Daan Remmerts de Vries. (2009). <i>Voordat jij er was</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2011	Simon van der Geest. (2010). <i>Dissus</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2012	Bibi Dumon Tak. (2011). <i>Winterdieren</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2013	Simon van der Geest. (2012). <i>Spinder</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2014	Jan Paul Schutten. (2013). <i>Het raadsel van alles wat leeft</i> . Uitgeverij Gottmer.
2015	Bette Westera. (2014). <i>Doodgewoon</i> . Uitgeverij Gottmer.
2016	Anna Woltz. (2015). <i>Gips</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2017	Koos Meinderts. (2016). <i>Naar het noorden</i> . Uitgeverij Hoogland & Van Klaveren.
2018	Annet Schaap. (2017). <i>Lampje</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2019	Gideon Samson. (2018). <i>Zeb</i> . Uitgeverij Leopold.
2020	Bette Westera. (2019). <i>Uit elkaar</i> . Uitgeverij Gottmer

### *Woutertje Pieterse Prijs*

2010	Carli Biessels. (2009). <i>Juwelen van stras</i> . Uitgeverij Lannoo.
2011	Benny Lindelauf. (2010). <i>De hemel van Heivisj</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2012	Ted van Lieshout. (2011). <i>Driedelig paard</i> . Uitgeverij Leopold.
2013	Kristien Dieltiens. (2012). <i>Kelderkind</i> . Uitgeverij De Eenhoorn.
2014	Marjolijn Hof. (2013). <i>De regels van drie</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2015	Bette Westera. (2014). <i>Doodgewoon</i> . Uitgeverij Gottmer.
2016	Edward van de Vendel. (2015). <i>Stem op de okapi</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2017	Gerda Dendooven. (2016). <i>Stella, ster van de zee</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2018	Annet Schaap. (2017). <i>Lampje</i> . Uitgeverij Querido.
2019	Kathleen Vereecken. (2018). <i>Alles komt goed, altijd</i> . Uitgeverij Lannoo.
2020	Bette Westera. (2019). <i>Uit elkaar</i> . Uitgeverij Gottmer.

## Appendix B: Coding Example

### *Jury report for Spinder (GG 2013)*

1. Het verhaal van Spinder wordt gepresenteerd in de vorm van het dagboek van Hidde, alias Spinder, een eenzelvige, intelligente jongen ('brainbroertje', 'wijsneus') van ongeveer 11 jaar.
2. Spinder richt zich rechtstreeks tot de lezer die ooit zijn dagboek, dat een maand beslaat, in handen zal krijgen: 'Ik ken je niet, en toch ga ik jou alles vertellen. Iemand moet het weten.'
3. Door de dagboekvorm, waarbij de lezer ook nog eens rechtstreeks aangesproken wordt, ontstaat er een vertrouwensband tussen Hidde en de lezer – dicht op de huid van een romanfiguur kun je niet zitten, een intensere blik op diens zielenleven is niet mogelijk.
4. Ongemeen spannend is *Spinder*.
5. Pagina's lang is er sprake van een geheim, dat pas aan het eind van het boek onthuld wordt.
6. Je weet als lezer dat de dood van Hidde's oudste broer, Ward, daarmee te maken heeft.
7. Maar wat precies?
8. Het uitgestelde antwoord op die vraag jaagt je als lezer van pagina naar pagina.
9. Terwijl de virtuositeit waarmee Simon van der Geest zijn verhaal geschreven heeft, juist alle aanleiding geeft aandachtig te lezen.
10. Dat valt je al op bij eerste lezing, maar herlezing brengt nog meer parels naar boven.
11. Die parels schuilen in de inhoud: de 'oorlog' die hij met zijn oudere broer Jeppe voert, hun geheimzinnige deal, hun eenzaamheid en schuldgevoel, het radeloze verdriet van zijn moeder, de ontluikende verliefdheid op Lieke en de beginnende vriendschap met Bor.
12. Maar de schoonheid van *Spinder* is evenzeer in de taal te vinden, met neologismen als 'drumbardementen' en 'brommerpizza'.
13. Hidde vergelijkt de mensen om zich heen en het gedrag dat ze vertonen (overigens ook zijn eigen gedrag) met de insecten die hij houdt – alles krioelt, kruipt en fladdert om hem heen, zoals het ook in zijn hoofd krioelt, kruipt en fladdert.



14. De confrontaties tussen Jeppe en Hidde worden onverbloemd beschreven en laten de lezer soms onthutst achter.
15. Maar subtiel wordt de haat-liefde verhouding tussen de broers geduid en worden erin dat verband mogelijke verklaringen aangereikt, die verre van eendimensionaal zijn.
16. Daar is het psychologisch inzicht van der Geest te groot voor.
17. Tussen de beide broers is het uiteindelijk niet koek en ei, maar er gloort een nieuw begin.
18. Na *Dissus* (2010) heeft Simon van der Geest opnieuw een meesterlijk boek geschreven, passend en overtuigend geïllustreerd door Karst-Janneke Rogaar.
19. De symbolisch geladen bevrijding in het open veld van alle insecten die Hidde in potjes en bakken gevangen hield, is een grandioze apotheose, die de lezer na de pagina's durende beklemming de longen vol lucht doet zuigen.
20. Eindelijk vrij.

### **Coding table**

I only use Group III in my analysis, see Appendix C for the coding scheme.

Line	Remarks	Code	Code	Code
1		I-1	I-2	
2		I-1		
3	The diary form enables an intense experience of the character.	III-B-4	III-D-4	
4	<i>Spinder</i> (the work as a whole) is exciting.	III-J-6		
5		I-1		
6		I-1		
7		I-1		
8	Exciting plot: “jaagt je van pagina naar pagina”	III-C-6		
9	“virtuoos” = good	III-A-20		
10	“parel” = good	III-A-20		
11		III-C-20		
12	“neologisme” = literary	III-A-5		
13		I-1		
14	onverbloemd beschreven, lezer onthutst = emotional	III-A-9		
15	“verre van eendimensionaal” = literary	III-C-5		
16	“psychologisch inzicht” = intellectual	III-G-5		
17		I-1		
18		III-G-20	III-F-20	III-F-2
19	“grandioze apotheose” = exciting plot and symbolism	III-H-6	III-C-6	
20		IV		

### Appendix C: Coding Scheme Group III (with Signal Terms/ Examples)

Aspects	Descriptions	Signal terms/ examples
A Style	Statements about the tone, language use, word choice, sentence structure and stylistic devices	Woorden, taal, stijl, zinnen, toon, tekst
B Composition	Statements about the structure	Perspectief, vertelsoorten, raamvertelling, schriftvorm
C Plot/ contents	Statements about the storyline or contents in informative books or poetry	Verhaal, plot, vertelling, inleiding, conclusie
D Characters	Statements about the characters	Personage, figuur, hoofdpersoon
E Theme	Statements about the theme, problems, or ideas	Thema, problematiek, ideeën, onderwerp
F Illustration	Statements about the illustration or illustrator	Illustraties, tekeningen, beelden
G Author	Statements about the author or their (perceived) intention	Auteur, ( <i>name of the author</i> )
H Symbolism	Statements about the symbolism or metaphors	Symbolisme, beelden, metafoor,
I Design	Statements about the design, appearance, and execution (typeface, paper, editing)	Vormgeving, lettertype, papier
J Work as a whole	Statements about the work as a whole, generally	Boek, werk, bundel, ( <i>title of the work</i> )
K Genre	Statements about the genre	Jongensboek, avonturenboek, scheppingsverhaal
L Other	Statements that do not fit into another category	Sfeer, universum, titel, functie

Qualities	Descriptions	Signal terms/ examples
1 Efficiency	Statements about the amount of space aspects of the book take up	Niet te lang, krijgen genoeg ruimte
2 Coherence	Statements about the extent to which aspects of the book are coherent (for example coherence between the illustrations and text)	Tekst en tekeningen versterken elkaar, passend
3 Continuity (author/ oeuvre)	Statements about the extent to which the book forms a continuation or a change within the body of work of an author	Is een thema dat vaker bij (author) terugkomt, “de toon is telkens onmiskenbaar de zijne”
4 Intensity/ liveliness/ appeal	Statements about the liveliness, intensity, or ability of the book to grip its readers	Aansprekend, boeiend, aanstekelijk, meeleven, bewonderen, intens, trekt lezer boek in, in de ban komen, stuwen verhaal voort, indringend, meeslepend
5 Literary/ artistic/ intellectual qualities	Statements that describe a literary, artistic, or intellectual phenomenon or quality of an aspect of the book	<i>In general:</i> laat zich op allerlei niveaus lezen, gelaagd, verre van eendimensionaal, klassiek, subtiel, vakmanschap, alles heeft een functie, overal is over nagedacht <i>Literary:</i> tragische held, muzikaal, poëtisch, ritmisch, sarcastisch, beeldend, sober, uitgepuurd, literair, magisch, mythologisch, sfeervol, suggestief, gedoseerd <i>Artistic:</i> zwierig, klassieke tekeningen, expressief, eigenzinnig <i>Intellectual:</i> vertrekpunt voor filosofische gesprekken, psychologisch inzicht,

		wetenschappelijk verantwoord, prikkelende gedachte
6 Suspense	Statements about the suspense, tension, thrill, or excitement of aspects of the book	Mysterie, spannend, jaagt je van pagina tot pagina, beklemmend
7 Humour	Statements about the wit or lightness of an aspect of the book	Luchtig, grappig, licht, lichtvoetig, niet loodzwaar, glimlach ontlokkend, geestig, plezier, baldadig, speels
8 Believability/ realism	Statements about how believable or realistic aspects of the book are	Overtuigend, treffend, authentiek, waarachtig
9 Emotionality	Statements about the emotions certain aspects of the book rouse	Ontroerend, ontregelend, gevoelig, onthutst, grijpen naar je strot, ontwapenend, overrompend, pijn, donker, nuchter, warm
9a Author's emotionality	Statements about the emotions of the author	Passie, enthousiasme
10 Education	Statements about what the reader may learn from aspects of the book	Kennis, maakt abstracte begrippen concreet, biedt meest actuele stand van zaken
11 Patronising	Statements about the extent to which aspects of the book are (not) patronising	Niet te kinderachtig, zonder overmatige simplificatie, zonder dat hij daar al te nadrukkelijk over doet, een krachtig pleidooi tegen de betutteling
12 Adaptation	Statements about how an aspect of the book is adapted to its reader	Gaat niet over de hoofden van kleine lezers, toegankelijk, niet overgeconstrueerd
13 Identification	Statements about aspects of the book the reader can identify with	Passend in de verbeelding van een tienerjongen, roept een gevoel van herkenning op

14 Religious qualities	Statements about religious aspects	Vertrekpunt voor filosofische gesprekken over het geloof
15 Political and societal qualities	Statements about politics, society, or societal engagement	Actueel, gesprekken over de maakbaarheid van de samenleving, maatschappelijke hang-ups, iets leert over de huidige tijd, grenzeloos denken ( <i>in refugee context</i> )
16 Moral qualities	Statements about morality or to what extent aspects of the book are moralising/ critic agrees with moral	<i>Not coded</i>
17 Originality	Statements about the originality of an aspect of the book	Zeldzaam, uniek, origineel, authentiek, inventief, eigenzinnig, verrassend
18 Clarity	Statements about the clarity of an aspect of the book	Helder, duidelijk, leesbaar
19 Intertextuality	Statements about the use of other literary or artistic sources as inspiration for aspects of the book	Legt verbinding met het origineel, nieuw jasje, verwijzen naar ( <i>other work</i> )
20 Good/ other	Praising terms that describe the greatness of the book, and statements that do not fit into another category	<i>Good</i> : ambitieus, bewonderenswaardig, briljant, dwars, fascinerend, geraffineerd, ijzersterk, indrukwekkend, ingenieus, kleurrijk, krachtig, knap, magistraal, meesterlijk, mooi, oogstrelend, overtuigend, parel, prachtig, rijk, schitterend, soepel, smaakvol, trefzeker, virtuoos, voorbeeldig, voortreffelijk, weergaloos, wonderschoon <i>Other</i> : stoer, avontuurlijk, spreekt ook volwassenen aan

### Appendix D: Code Tree

Approaches <i>after De Vries (1991)</i>	Argumentation <i>after Boonstra (1979)</i>	Aspects <i>after Linders &amp; Op de Beek (2009) and Ros (research in progress)</i>	Qualities <i>after Linders &amp; Op de Beek (2009) and Ros (research in progress)</i>
	Mimetic	E Theme	8 Believability/ reality 14 Religious qualities 15 Political and societal qualities 16 Moral qualities
Pedagogical	Pragmatic	<i>Non-specific</i>	4 Intensity 6 Suspense 9 Emotionality 10 Education 11 Patronising 12 Adaptation 13 Identification 18 Clarity
Aesthetic	Autonomous	A Style B Composition F Illustration H Symbolism I Appearance J Work as a whole	1 Efficiency 2 Coherence 5 Literary/ artistic/ intellectual qualities 7 Humour 20 Good/ other
	Comparative	<i>Non-specific</i>	17 Originality 19 Intertextuality
	Expressive	G Author	3 Continuity 9a Author's emotionality
<i>Non-specific</i>	<i>Non-specific</i>	C Plot D Characters K Genre L Other	<i>Non-specific</i>