Continuity and Change in the Treatment of Frightening Subject Matter: Contemporary Retellings of Classical Mythology for Children in the Low Countries

SYLVIE GEERTS

Ever since its origins, children's literature has dealt with frightening subject matter. The forms of such frightening fiction for children are, however, continuously changing. Retellings of classical mythology are a case in point as myths contain subjects that might be considered a threat to the romantic notion of the innocent child. As such, a focus upon the way authors deal with sex, death and violence in retellings of classical mythology reveals how the paradoxical impulses that govern the act of retelling – that is, a desire for preserving and challenging cultural tradition – alter under the influence of society's changing ideas about children and their literature.

This paper concentrates on the rich and vivid tradition of retelling classical myths in the Low Countries. Shifts in the choice of pretext and in the age of the intended audience reveal a change of attitude towards frightening subjects in classical myths during the last decades. A closer look at retellings of the creation myths, dealing with sexual and lethal violence between parents and children, and the subject of death in the myth of Orpheus shows how the retellings of frightening myths range from unequivocal presentations as cautionary tales to demanding narratives generating unfixed meanings.

Key words: *classical mythology, frightening fiction, discourse, children's literature in the Low Countries, continuity and change*

With violence, rape, murder and infanticide central to their plots, classical mythological narratives might seem to occupy an uneasy place in the field of children's literature. Because writing for children has been – and still remains – informed by romantic images of childhood, such frightening subjects are often regarded as threatening to the presumed innocence of the child reader (Ghesquiere *Perspectief* 86; Joosen and Vloeberghs 34). Frightening fiction

is, however, as old as children's literature itself and, as Kimberley Reynolds points out, has changed shape throughout the history of children's literature, as dominant notions of children and their literature have changed (131). Moreover, motivations for preserving Greek myths for young audiences, such as a desire to pass on cultural tradition and a belief in their pedagogical value and narrative power, have proven strong enough to ensure mythology's place within children's literature (Stephens and McCallum 62–4). The latter certainly holds true for the Low Countries, where classical mythology has received continuous and ample interest from children's book authors and publishers.

We can roughly distinguish between three categories of subject matter present in classical mythology which run counter to the traditional, romantic notion of what is 'safe' reading matter for children: sex, including incest and homosexuality (Ghesquiere *Perspectief* 91–3); death, most notably the definitive and irrevocable character of death (Ghesquiere *Perspectief* 87–90); and violence, which includes both sexual and lethal violence such as infanticide, parenticide and violent relationships between adults and children. The focus in this article is upon the different shapes these aspects of classical mythology take on in retellings for children under the influence of the larger socio-cultural context within which the retellings are designed to function. Changing notions of childhood exert an influence on the development of children's literature in the Low Countries. These evolutions tie in with recent developments in Western children's literature as a whole. As such the tension between conservation and change which governs the act of retelling classical myth is brought to the fore in the way authors deal with the frightening aspects of the mythological pre-texts.

This article draws on a larger study of the retellings of classical mythology which have been published in Flanders and the Netherlands from 1970 until today. The retellings were marketed for young readers (ages seven to sixteen),[1] categorised both as fiction and as non-fiction, written originally in Dutch and first published or revised after 1970. To reveal possible changes in the attitude towards the fear-inducing aspects of classical mythology, I have mapped out some general tendencies within this large body of texts as regards the choice of pre-texts and intended audience. I then test these first findings against the results of an in-depth diachronic examination of the treatment of several specific myths in which frightening subjects play a central role. To examine the treatment of violence and sex, I look into retellings of the Greek creation myth which feature these themes in the context of adult–child relationships. The most widely known account of this myth is Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is taken as a point of reference. For the subject of death, I turn to retellings of the myth of Orpheus, which is known primarily from both Virgil's *Georgics* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. One of the principal questions of this study is how meanings are reproduced and changed in the practice of retelling and how these developments are related to broader social developments, most notably changing ideas of childhood, the 'hybridisation of child and adult culture' (Falconer 7), an increasing belief in the agency of children and the rise of new media and technologies (see also Geerts and Van den Bossche). To answer this question,

I execute a textual analysis on the level of discourse, both from the viewpoint of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough *Discourse and Change*, *Analysing Discourse*; Jørgenson and Phillips) and narratology (Bal; Herman and Vervaeck; Stephens *Narratology*).[2] For the former, I depart from Fairclough's parameters for analysing social events from a representational point of view (*Analysing Discourse* 134–55). Such comparative analysis aims at uncovering which processes, actors and other elements are included or excluded in different representations of the same event and how they are represented. As I deal with literary adaptations of already existing stories, I have replaced Fairclough's 'social event' with the notion 'pre-text'.[3] Throughout this article I will point out the ways the adaptations stress different elements of the pre-text by significant inclusions or exclusions or by giving them grammatical prominence in the sentence. Other parameters for analysis are the level of concreteness/abstraction and additions (especially added legitimations). Furthermore, the representation of processes and actors is analysed linguistically and grammatically. This analysis includes among others the use of active and passive, transitivity and intransitivity (so as to uncover which actors were given agency), metaphors, tense and aspects of verbs. Finally special attention was paid to vocabulary, notably wording, word collocation and 'overwording' by means of dense wording, the use of (near-) synonyms and rewording.

In narratological terms, discourse refers to the way the story (the actual chronological order of events) is represented in a particular text (Stephens *Narratology* 52). This includes changes in the order of events, narrator and point of view. For the Orpheus myth, focus lies on closure which, as John Stephens argues, has a strong ideological dimension because it is able to either express or resist a desire for the safety of fixed meanings and outcomes and, in retellings of the Orpheus myth, is inextricably bound up with the representation of the irrevocability of death (*Narratology* 60; *Language* 41–2).

TENDENCIES

Classical mythology often features taboo subject matter. From the adventurous stories of heroes such as Odysseus through the explanatory myths of origin to the mythological accounts of tragic heroes such as Oedipus, each myth deals with violence, death or sex. In this respect, myths are no different from other pre-texts not originally aimed at children but now often categorised as such, most notably stories from the Bible and fairy tales. There are three kinds of myth which have remained popular as pre-texts in Dutch children's literature from the 1970s up until today. The first category is myths with punitive violence. Elizabeth Wanning Harries, for example, points out that in most fairy tales retold today violence has a cautionary function.[4] Fairy tales with 'punitive' violence deliver a strong educational and moral lesson which accounts for their popularity in children's literature (Wanning Harries 54). Kimberley Reynolds reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of frightening fiction for children, which is not

limited to myths or fairy tales: 'the early history of frightening fiction largely consists of stories designed to scare children into good behaviour' (131). In many classical myths and Bible stories, too, violence is punitive. Mythical characters like Phaeton and Icarus can be said to have attempted to disturb the cosmic order through challenging the gods and their rules. This kind of transgressive behaviour is expressed through the Greek term 'hybris' – often translated as arrogance – and is severely punished by the gods: both Phaeton and Icarus find an untimely death as a punishment for taking to the air, the domain of the gods. The fact that such myths can easily be modelled as cautionary tales, an important subgenre of children's literature, accounts – at least partly – for their popularity in the field.

The same goes for the most popular myths in children's literature of the Netherlands and Flanders: the adventurous hero stories of Odysseus, Jason and Theseus.[5] Margery Hourihan points out how violence in the hero story, as in the case of cautionary tales, serves a clear function and is accepted as part of the genre's convention. In her ideology-critique analysis of the hero story, Hourihan explains how the hero's violent triumph over 'the wild things' has an important ideological and psychological function, as it symbolises the transition from childhood into adulthood (107).

A third kind of myth which has been popular as a pre-text in Dutch children's literature from the 1970s onward is the aetiological myth, most notably myths that explain natural phenomena, such as the creation myths.[6] I would argue that in this case, too, the didactic potential and functional nature of the myth – and by extension of the frightening elements inherent to it – accounts for its presence in children's literature. The myth of Orpheus has also been retold continuously, but remarkably it does not fit into one of the three identified categories. I will return to this point in my discussion of this particular pre-text.

Besides these aspects of continuity there are also important aspects of change in the pre-texts the authors of Dutch children's books privilege in their retellings. In the Low Countries, the 1990s are an important turning point for children's literature, as literary and philosophical aspects become more important and the status of the field increases. Under the influence of this literary and social emancipation, the interest in ancient myths attains spectacular heights in the late 1990s.[7] Authors such as the highly acclaimed Imme Dros begin to see the myths as sites for literary and philosophical experiment and renewal. From this point onwards, every author wants to give his or her original version of the already existing story, which results in a large number of retellings of the same pre-texts. The emphasis in the retellings on literariness and philosophy stands in marked contrast with the adaptations of the 1970s and 1980s, when authors stressed the adventurous, fantastic elements of the pre-texts and exploited the pedagogical potential of the myths. From the mid 1990s onward, Dutch and Flemish children's book authors produce retellings which constitute a literary and interpretative challenge for the reader. Moreover, they turn to myths which had not been retold in children's literature before. Remarkable examples are the tragedies of Oedipus and Agamemnon and stories with a strong sexual and gender bias such as the myths of Scylla or Philomena and Procne. Another

significant recent evolution is a shift in age of the intended reader of adaptations of Greek mythology. It is only very recently that adaptations marketed for readers aged seven or older have appeared,[8] whereas previously the minimum age was no lower than ten and averaged out at twelve or older. These shifts in choice of pre-text and age of the intended reader hint at an altered treatment of fear-inducing subject matter and hence a changing view of children as readers of classical myths. These changes relate to developments in Western children's literature in general, where the traditional childhood image is no longer dominant and where higher demands are made of the reader.

INCEST, INFANTICIDE AND CASTRATION: VIOLENCE AND SEX IN RETELLINGS OF THE CREATION MYTHS

The presence of violence and sex in the Greek creation myths centres on adult–child relationships: children and parents have incestuous relations, parents expel and murder children and children violently overrule the parent. The latter – child-to-adult rebellion – is probably the most problematic aspect when it comes to children's literature. Ever since Jacqueline Rose pointed out that children's literature is designed to serve adult needs and desires, critics have debated about the essence of the adult–child relationship central to writing for children. In her metacritical analysis of the issue, Clémentine Beauvais confirms that there is critical agreement on the fact that 'the children's book displays representations of the adult–child relationship from the point of view of the adult' (75); some scholars describe this relationship in terms of 'power', while others take a more moderate stance. Hence, the presence of child-to-adult rebellion in the Greek cosmogony can be said to run counter to the very essence of writing for children. And while adult-to-child oppression will probably be most threatening to the child reader, child-to-adult rebellion might well arouse the fear of the adult writer. My analysis focuses on cosmogonic myths, a category of creation myths which describes how the cosmos came into being and, in Greek mythology, cannot be separated from the theogonic myths (describing the creation of the gods). The oldest and most influential account of the cosmogony by Hesiod (Hes. *Theog.* 116–138) is strongly teleological in structure and meaning. Hesiod describes how the world develops from an anarchic place characterised by patricide and infanticide to a more ordered world ruled by Zeus in which the patriarchal family is the basic unit. This evolution takes place through a chain of succession whereby the father is violently deposed by the son: in the beginning there was Chaos and next Gaea (the Earth), as well as Tartarus (the Underworld) and Eros (the personification of sexual procreation). Gaea then gave birth to a son named Uranus (Heaven). Out of the union between mother and son the Cyclopes and Hekatonchires were born, as well as the twelve Titans. As a punishment for expelling his children, Uranus was attacked and castrated by the youngest of the Titans, Cronus. The latter then married his sister Rhea and, out of fear of being overruled by them, devoured his own children. Saved by his mother,

the youngest son, Zeus, defeated his father and became the ruler of the world (Arrighetti; Graves 39–42; Grimal 167–168; 'Kronos').

A detailed comparison of six retellings (see Appendix 1) written between 1976 and 2009 shows that the earliest retellings by Hanny Lim (1976) and H. J. M. Broos ([1967] 1991) approach the sensitive subject matter of the myths of origin rather cautiously,[9] while the most recent retellings, most notably Els Pelgrom's version (2007), give very explicit accounts and even stress the frightening and gruesome aspects of the myth. Moreover, the most recent version of the myth, by Hein van Dolen (2009), is aimed at readers aged six or older, while for the others the minimum age is ten years (Kramer 2005; Pelgrom) or twelve to thirteen years (Dros 1999).

Both Lim and Broos leave out the incestuous relation between Gaea and Uranus. Lim states that Uranus 'was a powerful god' who 'became the father of the tremendous Cyclopes' and 'was also the father of the Titans, the giants' (9).[10] Lim does mention that Uranus 'arose from' Gaea (8: 'Uit Gaia kwam [...] voort'), but leaves out all reference to sexual activity and gives agency solely to Uranus, leaving Gaea's motherhood unmentioned. Through stressing Uranus's power and his ability to produce powerful progeny, Lim adds to the impression that Uranus has no need of a woman at all. Broos only mentions Uranus for the first time as Gaea's spouse,[11] thus leaving out their blood-tie. He goes on to state that 'the twelve Titans are the children of this married couple' (15).[12] In her version, Dros does hint at the incestuous relationship: 'And while she was sleeping, Uranus, father Heaven, arose from her fertile body. He first begot with Gaea three Cyclopes' (21).[13] Kramer, then again, bowdlerises the story by stating that 'as time went by, above Gaea also arose heaven: Uranus' (7).[14] Comparable to Lim's, Broos's and Dros's account is the abstract phrasing with omission of sexual activity in Kramer: 'Monsters! Those were the first descendants of Gaea and Uranus. Tremendous freaks' (11).[15] Els Pelgrom's account contrasts sharply with all of the former versions through its explicit wording[16] of sexual activity and the agentic role given to Gaea. Pelgrom refers repeatedly to Gaea's capacity to create and uses transitive verbs to describe the birth of Uranus: 'and then Gaia has created something else, she has produced something out of herself. She bore a son. The son's name was Uranus' (19).[17] Pelgrom's account is entitled 'The Great Mother' and, from the beginning, Gaea is put forward as a powerful figure. Pelgrom uses the technique of embedded narration and lets 'the storytellers of long ago' state that:

> once in that infinite dark mouth a creature stood up, a goddess. She had made herself out of nothing. They named her the Great mother. [....] Gaea created herself so as to be the opposite of Chaos in every respect (19).[18]

The use of the storytellers as embedded narrators and the overwording give extra weight to the statements. The latter technique is also central to the way Pelgrom renders the incestuous relationship between Gaea and her sons, Uranus (and Pontus). 'Both sons' are said to:

want to penetrate every hole of Gaea. Everywhere she wasn't, there was either water or air. But especially Uranus didn't want to let go of his mother Gaea and always lay on top of her, penetrated her and impregnated her. Thus they became the first couple. And they produced children (20).[19]

By repeating the words 'son' and 'mother', Pelgrom stresses the incestuous nature of the sexual activity. Moreover, the use of plastic imagery and the shifting of agency to Uranus portray the male character very literally as an oppressive presence to Gaea and to 'her' children, as he 'always lay on top of Gaea and poured his seed into her womb; she had no rest and could hardly breathe. Neither was there any space left for her children' (21).[20] The most recent retelling, by Hein van Dolen, depicts the incest metaphorically, stating that the son 'missed his mother so badly that he had to cry. His tears became clouds and those let drops of rain fall down' (11)[21] which made the earth fertile. The fact that only three out of six of the analysed retellings include the incest between mother and son, while only one out of six (Lim 1976) leaves out the incest between the siblings Cronus and Rhea, seems to suggest that adult – and especially parent–child – relations are treated with more caution, although more recent retellings hint at an evolution in this respect.

A comparison between the episodes depicting disownment of the children by the father appears at first sight to display the same anxiety about problematic parent–child relations. The episode where Uranus expels his children to the underworld goes unmentioned twice (Broos, Dros).[22] Kramer and Van Dolen stress the monstrosity of Uranus's children and present the father's deeds as – to a greater or lesser extent – a logical consequence of their non-normative appearance and behaviour. Hesiod, too, describes the appearance and strength of Uranus's sons but does not make an explicit connection between this and their banishment at their father's hands. He states that 'they were hated by their own father' and that 'Heaven rejoiced in his evil doing' (147). Kramer and Van Dolen both state that Uranus 'was ashamed' of his children. Van Dolen adds that he 'would rather not see them' (12: 'schaamde [. . .] zich; wilde ze liever niet zien'), while Kramer explains that 'he was not quite happy' and 'afraid' (11: 'beschaamd; niet bepaald gelukkig; bang'). Such addition of legitimation through rationalisation of the adult's violent and oppressive behaviour towards children points back at the cautionary use of violence discussed earlier.[23] As such, adult-to-child repression – however threatening to the child reader's feeling of safety it may be – can be interpreted in the light of the maintenance of the adult–child relationship, central to writing for children. Kimberley Reynolds' analysis of frightening fiction points in the same direction: 'threats to children from those who should be caring for them permeate children's literature [. . .] and underpin most juvenile examples of frightening fiction' (133). She goes on to argue that violence directed at children serves to promote coercion and conformity in the child reader. Pelgrom, however, subverts such adult–child relations. Her version is coloured by her account of Uranus's oppressive behaviour, which is portrayed in unambiguously negative terms. After stating that he did not leave any space

for his children to breathe, Pelgrom mentions that he forced them to return to Gaea's womb (21), which provokes resistance from the children. Pelgrom hence legitimates the behaviour of the children, rather than of the father, and promotes reader alignment with their perspective when stating that: 'Uranus did not accept for his progeny to overrule him and exiled them' (21).[24]

In Hesiod, Cronus is said to devour his children to prevent them from usurping his place. This explanation is explicitly taken up in all retellings and most authors dilate upon Cronus's motivations. Van Dolen states that 'he evidently didn't want to let that happen' (14: 'Dat wilde hij natuurlijk niet laten gebeuren'), and in Kramer's version, we read that Cronus was 'suspicious and afraid', 'half-crazy with fear' and even 'that there was no other solution' (29). Pelgrom, however, repeatedly refers back to the castration, which she equals with 'patricide', a crime which will inevitably be punished.[25] After stating that 'the inevitable was bound to happen', she shifts focalisation to Cronus, and as a result readers are again not very likely to align with the adult's perspective: 'But he wouldn't end up like his father! He would have the better of the Goddesses of vengeance!'(26).[26] That readers are prompted to align with the children's perspective contrasts sharply with the other versions, where the legitimations serve to make Cronus's deed somewhat reasonable.

All six of the retellings explicitly mention that Cronus eats his children. The cruelty of the deed is only softened by Van Dolen, who lets Cronus declare that 'the little ones are put away safely' while he feels them 'crawling around', 'finding it to their liking' (14).[27] The castration, by contrast, is described in much more guarded terms: Cronus alternately 'defeated his father' (Lim 9); 'deprives his father of the rule over the world' (Broos 15); 'drove his father away' (Dros 21–2); and was told 'to sting his father in his belly' (Van Dolen 13).[28] Besides Pelgrom, the only other author who explicitly mentions the castration is Kramer ('emasculated', 'the bloodied body parts which he had chopped off' 20; 21: 'ontmande', 'bebloede lichaamsdelen die hij had afgehakt'). Moreover, the agentic role of Gaea, present in the pre-text, is stressed in some of the versions, thus emphasising the responsibility of the other parent rather than the son.[29] Van Dolen, for example, states that Gaea 'instigated' Cronus who 'did exactly as his mother asked' (13: 'Stookte op'; 'deed precies wat zijn moeder vroeg'). Again Pelgrom's account is rather exceptional, giving a detailed and vivid account in present perfect tense and stressing the gruesome nature of the deed: 'then, he has grabbed in his left hand Uranus's genitals and with one stroke cut off his father's member and his balls' (22).[30] Moreover, the act is described as liberating: 'This was the first time that sons stood up to their father and the father was emasculated. The consequences were severe' (23), as Uranus 'having extricated' [losgemaakt] himself (22, 23) bestows freedom and the growth of life on earth (23–4).

Thus, while authors seem gradually less reluctant to describe violence and sex for children, they display a persistent anxiety about non-normative parent–child behaviour, most notably that which involves incestuous relationships and child-to-adult oppression. On the other hand, additions of

explicit legitimisations and the agentic role of the male adult present the adult-to-child oppression as acceptable and subscribe to the patriarchal discourse informing the pre-text. Pelgrom, however, replaces the patriarchal discourse with a matriarchal form of feminist discourse, most notably by giving Gaea agency and the role of a powerful mother goddess and creator who is closely connected to nature and by collocating Uranus consistently with 'oppression' and 'pressure'. Pelgrom's stance towards child-to-adult oppression is rather ambivalent: the castration of the father is a serious crime equated with patricide and demanding punishment, but it is also an act of liberation, both for women and children.

AND THEY WERE DEAD HAPPILY EVER AFTER: THE ORPHEUS MYTH AND THE IRREVOCABLE NATURE OF DEATH

The famous story of the poet Orpheus who goes to the underworld to fetch back his deceased wife only to lose her a second time is one of the most popular mythological stories to be retold in children's literature in the Low Countries (see Appendix 2). With the irreversibility of death as its principal theme, a central figure who serves as an example of 'unheroic failure' (Heat as cited in Salzman-Mitchell 76) and the lover expressing the desire for the unattainable other (Hardie 66), this is a surprising fact. Whereas Virgil's account of the story ends with the loss of Eurydice (*Georgics* IV 453–527), the events that follow the 'second death' of Eurydice in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are no less problematic: the mourning poet loses interest in women and practices pederasty (X 78–85); Bacchants tear him apart (XI 1–49) and his head and lyre float away down a river towards Lesbos, where they become an oracle (XI 50–60). In the final passage of Ovid's version, however, the souls of Eurydice and Orpheus are reunited after Orpheus's death (XI 61–6). This strong closure appears – at least partly – to account for the myth's continuous appeal as it complies with the majority of children's books which follow a circular structure (Nodelman 199).

An analysis of the treatment of the myth in recent Dutch children's literature puts this assumption into perspective. Indeed, a notable part of the Dutch retellings of the myth includes Ovid's final episode, giving it a fairy-tale-like ending: 'But Orpheus himself ... Orpheus was happy. [....] Never again would they be parted' (Lim 36).[31] But the majority of the retellings from the late 1990s onward break with this convention. The first author to end the story of Orpheus after the loss of Eurydice was Imme Dros (1997). The tragic ending in her version contrasts sharply and explicitly with the fairy-tale-like endings of the former versions:[32]

> Whatever he did then and later, he could not enter [Hades] anymore. Orpheus had to live the rest of his life. Without love, all alone, unhappily ever after. His music which comforted other people, could not help him. The same question could always be heard in it: Why? Why did you look? Why, why did you look?[33]

Tels (1997) and Van Dolen (2009) similarly end their account with the image of an inconsolable Orpheus.

The choice between Virgil's or Ovid's ending of the story is indicative of the author's attitude towards the child reader. According to John Stephens, strong closure displays 'characteristically a desire for fixed meanings, and is apparent in the socializing, didactic purposes of much children's literature. There is an idea that young children require [...] certainties about life rather than indeterminacies or uncertainties or unfixed boundaries' (41). In the case of the Orpheus myth, the protective impulse informing the choice for strong closure is closely connected with the way authors give meaning to the subject of death. Rita Ghesquiere points out that the motif of death remained taboo in Dutch and Flemish children's literature up until the 1980s. Recent evolutions in the treatment of the subject include a philosophical treatment centred on the definitive character of death, the use of a more mature tone and the inclusion of more concrete information (Ghesquiere *Perspectief* 89–99; 'Engelen' 30–1). The retellings of the Orpheus myth display all of these current developments. While the versions which include the reunion of Orpheus and Eurydice undo the definitive character of death, the versions of Dros, Tels and Van Dolen stress the irrevocability of death. Moreover, Dros foregrounds Orpheus's tragic feelings of guilt by means of repetitive rhetorical questions and in such a manner conveys uncertainty and promotes a questioning attitude.

The second loss of Eurydice and the reunion in the underworld are not the only episodes privileged to conclude the story of Orpheus, however. Both Pelgrom (2007) and Cielen (2009) end their version after an explicit description of the murder of Orpheus by the Maenads. He was 'chopped into pieces' (Pelgrom 164: 'hakten hem in stukken'), and they 'cut his head off' (Cielen 188: 'sneden zijn hoofd af'). By contrast, all of the retellings that include the reunion in the underworld also include this scene, but state that he was 'murdered'. Only the most recent versions, by Kramer and De Cock, use more explicit phrasing ('torn apart': 'verscheurd'; 'aan stukken gescheurd'). This confirms the results of the textual analysis of the creation myths which unveiled a tendency towards a more explicit treatment of violence. Moreover, it complies with Ghesquiere's conclusion that contemporary children's books contain more tangible information on the subject of death. This is certainly the case in Pelgrom's book, which deals with death very outspokenly. Pelgrom describes both the physical decomposition of the body and the philosophical questions surrounding the subject:

> And if nothing happens with the body, it gets worse. Flies start buzzing around. What should we do? The best solution will be to bury it in a hole in the ground. Or maybe burn it. And only when this has happened, the deceased is gone forever and never comes back. You know that (91).[34]

Both Pelgrom and Cielen continue their version of the Orpheus myth with a description of how the head and the lyre wash ashore in Lesbos. As the purpose of Cielen's book is to recount myths that explain constellations, his account of

the Orpheus myth ends with an epilogue stating that Apollo placed the lyre in the sky, which in a sense resolves the openness of the ending. Pelgrom, however, gives a detailed description of the prophesying head of Orpheus, which is ended rather abruptly by an intervention of Apollo who, jealous of Orpheus's success, angrily instructs him to stop. The Orpheus myth is the final story in Pelgrom's collection of retellings of classical myths. Moreover, the concluding statement that 'the head hasn't sung and hasn't said anything since' (166)[35] is also the final sentence of the book. This appears at first sight a rather strong form of closure. The symbolic and metatextual character of the final scene, however – whereby the figure of Orpheus is turned into a symbol for the art of storytelling – discloses the fictional character of the story and subverts strong closure.

Perhaps the most radical strategy to defy strong closure can be found in the playful versions of the Orpheus myth by Lida Dijkstra (2001) and Frank Groothof (2007). Both retellings comply with the recent tendency for more defiant treatment of classical pre-texts in children's literature (Stephens and Geerts; Geerts and Van den Bossche). Frank Groothof gives a rather cynical account of the old Orpheus mourning at the gates of the underworld and laughed at by the guardian Cerberus. The mocking depiction of Orpheus can be said to undermine strong closure in the following conversation between the tellingly 'Old Orpheus' and 'Jurieke' (diminutive naming for Eurydice): 'Old Orpheus: "I could have known you would not have forgotten me but it took so long." Jurieke: "I kept waiting, you were always on my mind, dear man"' (63).[36] Dijkstra takes the idea of playful alteration of the pre-text a step further, by presenting two possible story endings. In her retelling, the story of Orpheus is an embedded narration which the narrator initially had ended after the second death of Eurydice. In response to a hearer's request for a more satisfying ending, she gives two possibilities, presented in two parallel columns. The left column describes the reunion of the lovers in the underworld, while in the account in the right column the pre-text is drastically altered. Orpheus does not turn around and as a result he and Eurydice leave the underworld together. What follows is a disenchanting description of the life of an unhappily married couple. The final scene shows a harsh domestic fight:

Behind a chest filled with linen Orpheus ducked away and muddled thoughts came to his mind.

> If I could live my life over again would I marry Eurydice again by the way grandmother was quite wrong stupid story about those half creatures granny always talking nonsense if I lived alone in this house I'd know better a glass of wine while watching the yellow moon rising above the mountains. Then a bronze mirror landed on his head and he died (101).[37]

The embedded narration and alternative ending give Dijkstra's version a strong metatextual dimension and explicitly resist fixed meanings. This brief overview shows that the popularity of the Orpheus myth as a pre-text in children's literature has far from diminished. Moreover, from the 1970s up

until today, retellings keep appearing which adopt the strong closure present in the Ovidian pre-text. By undoing the irrevocability of death, these versions express a protective attitude towards the child reader. This contrasts with recent retellings of the myth which resist strong closure and lay bare the definitive character of death. Additionally, authors of children's literature increasingly address philosophical questions surrounding the subject of death and include explicit descriptions of its physical aspects. Moreover, a recent evolution is that retellings provoke uncertainty in the reader by subverting the pre-text.

CONCLUSION

The persisting desire for strong closure and an impulse to avoid frightening subjects show that protective impulses toward the child reader remain pervasive in retellings of classical mythology. Moreover, an anxiety about problematic adult–child relationships continues to inform the practice of retelling and is closely connected to a desire to maintain the status quo. Adult-to-child oppression is legitimated so as to lend a cautionary function to this form of violence, while child-to-adult rebellion is not legitimised and is described in much more guarded terms. However, along with meaningful shifts in the choice of pre-text and a decreasing minimum age of the intended reader, the explicit treatment of violence, sex and death in recent retellings points at a changing attitude with 'a far more knowing version [of childhood] replacing the Romantic innocent' (Rudd 12). Authors such as Pelgrom and Dijkstra are significant advocates of such changing visions of childhood. Meanings in their books are unclear and their treatment of the mythological pre-texts conforms with what Reynolds identified as a recent body of frightening fiction 'calling into question those in authority' and 'disturbing the adult–child power dynamic' (131). The retellings of Pelgrom and Dijkstra tie in with recent developments in Western children's literature in general, where dominant power structures are challenged and readers are prompted to take up an active, questioning attitude. Kimberley Reynolds mentions the 'transformative power' (1) of contemporary children's literature and Julia L. Mickenberg and Philip Nel speak of 'radical children's literature' (445) in this respect. The analysis of the treatment of fear-inducing elements of contemporary Dutch retellings of classical mythology points out that these changes in Western children's literature affect the practice of retelling traditional stories. Pelgrom strongly addresses power relations by explicitly calling into question the authority of the adult over the child. Moreover, she replaces the pre-text's patriarchal discourse with a matriarchal form of feminist discourse and, as such, undermines the authority of the metanarrative informing the pre-text. Dijkstra's subversive, mocking attitude towards the pre-text has a similar effect. Hence, the retellings of Dijkstra and Pelgrom are indicative of a recent trend towards a looser treatment of classical mythology which challenges both adult authority and the authority of a whole cultural tradition.

Appendix 1

	The cosmogony	
1	Lim, Hanny and A. D. van Heyningen-Will (ill.). *De wijze uil van Paradijs* [The wise owl of Paradise]. Willemstad: St. Augustinus boekhandel, 1976.	Lim (1976)
2	Broos, H. J. M. *Kleine Griekse Mythologie* [A Concise Greek mythology] [1967]. Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff, 1991.	Broos (1991 [1967])
3	Dros, Imme and Harrie Geelen (ill.). *De reis naar de liefde: de mythe van het gulden vlies* [A journey to love: the myth of the golden fleece]. Amsterdam: Querido, 1999.	Dros (1999)
4	Kramer, Simon and Els van Egeraat (ill.). *De strijd van de Titanen* [The battle of the Titans]. Ploegsma kinder- en jeugdboeken/Ploegsma Amsterdam: Ploegsma, 2005.	Kramer (2005)
5	Pelgrom, Els and Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Donder en bliksem. Griekse mythen* [Thunder and Lightning. Greek myths]. Tielt: Lannoo, 2007.	Pelgrom (2007)
6	van Dolen, Hein and Louis van Geijn (ill.). *Op naar de Olympos! Verhalen over Griekse goden, helden en mensen om voor te lezen of om zelf te lezen* [Off we go to Olympus! Stories about the Greek gods, heroes and humans to read and tell]. Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2009.	Van Dolen (2009)

Appendix 2

	The myth of Orpheus	
1	Lim, Hanny and A. D. van Heyningen-Will (ill.). *De wijze uil van Paradijs* [The wise owl of Paradise]. Willemstad: St. Augustinus boekhandel, 1976.	|Lim (1976)
2	Meppelink, Henriette and Peter Bata (ill.) and Willem van de Woestijne (ed.). *Mythologie: Griekse godenverhalen* [Mythology: stories about Greek gods]. AO junior, 23. Lelystad: Stichting IVIO, 1988.	Meppelink (1988)

	The myth of Orpheus	
3	vander Beken, Dirk and Paul De Becker (ill.). *De bekendste mythen en legenden* [The most famous myths and legends]. Aartselaar: Zuidnederlandse Uitgeverij, 1994.	|Vander Beken (1994)
4	Roodbeen, Merit. *De mooiste Griekse mythen en sagen* [The most beautiful Greek myths and sagas]. Hoevelaken: Verba, 1997.	|Roodbeen (1997)
5	Tels, Leontien and Frans van der Steen (ill.). *Koning Midas heeft ezelsoren en andere verhalen uit de oudheid* [King Midas has donkey ears and other stories from antiquity]. Den Haag: De Nieuwe Haagsche, 1997.	|Tels (1997)
6	Dros, Imme and Harrie Geelen (ill*.). De macht van de liefde: de mythen van Pygmalion, Narkissos, Tereus, Orfeus en Helena* [The power of love: the myths of Pygmalion, Narcissus, Tereus, Orpheus and Helen]. Amsterdam: Querido, 1997.	|Dros (1997)
7	Dijkstra, Lida. *Wachten op Apollo* [Waiting for Apollo]. Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 2001.	|Dijkstra (2001)
8	Groothof, Frank, et al. *Orpheus en de Hellehond van de Hades* [Orpheus and the Hellhound of Hades]. Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers, 2007.	|Groothof (2007)
9	Pelgrom, Els and Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Donder en bliksem. Griekse mythen* [Thunder and Lightning. Greek myths]. Tielt: Lannoo, 2007.	|Pelgrom (2007)
10	Kramer, Simon and Els van Egeraat (ill.). *Van Grote Beer en Orion* [On the Great Bear and Orion]. Ploegsma kinder- en jeugdboeken/ Ploegsma Amsterdam: Ploegsma, 2008.	|Kramer (2008)
11	Cielen, Luc and Iris Beeckman (ill.). *De sterrentuin* [The garden of stars]. Antwerpen: Manteau, 2009.	|Cielen (2009)
12	van Dolen, Hein and Louis van Geijn (ill.). *Op naar de Olympos! Verhalen over Griekse goden, helden en mensen om voor te lezen of om zelf te lezen* [Off we go to Olympus! Stories about the Greek gods, heroes and humans to read and tell]. Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2009.	Van Dolen (2009)

	The myth of Orpheus	
13	De Cock, Michael and Gerda Dendooven (ill.). *Diep in het woud. Verzamelde verhalen van Ovidius* [Deep in the woods. Collected stories of Ovid]. Kleine Klassiekers [Little Classics]: Davidsfonds/Infodok, 2011.	

NOTES

1. As a point of reference I have used the website bibliotheek.be which offers a catalogue of all public libraries of Flanders. Where available, I have used categorisation as it appears on the publisher's website.
2. Both for the interdisciplinary methodology and for its implementation in the field of children's literature, I am highly indebted to the work of John Stephens (1992) and Robyn McCallum and John Stephens (2011). For my approach to retellings in children's literature I draw on Stephens and McCallum's seminal study *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture* (1998).
3. I use the term 'pre-text' as it was coined by John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, as a fairly neutral alternative for 'source text' (Stephens and McCallum 4).
4. Not all violence in fairy tales, however, is punitive: 'in some there is a pervasive, almost random violence: inanimate objects become malicious, animals turn hostile. [. . .] In some there is a kind of insidious, coercive violence often designed to force young girls into submission' (Wanning Harries 55).
5. The *Odyssey* is by far the most popular pre-text in children's literature and has been retold over twenty times in the Low Countries from 1970 until today.
6. Explanatory and cautionary myths are somewhat misleading terms as they refer to the function a myth can have rather than to categories of myth. Several myths have both explanatory and cautionary functions. Think of Arachne who is punished and turned into a spider. At the same time the myth explains the origin of the spider.
7. For the role of Imme Dros in this period, see Geerts 'Mythologie'. For the philosophical dimension of contemporary Dutch children's literature, see Ghesquiere 'Engelen'.
8. The first two books for this age group appeared in 2009 (Van Dolen and De Cock).
9. In a preface, the authors of the revised edition state that they have only introduced minor changes to the original text: most notably, spelling, choice of words and style were updated but the contents were left mostly unchanged (Broos: 6).
10. 'was een machtig god; werd de vader van de geweldige Cyclopen; was ook de vader van de Titanen, de reuzen'.
11. 'The spouse of Gaea is called Uranus, heaven.' [Echtgenoot van Gaia heet Uranus, de hemel.]
12. 'De twaalf Titanen zijn de kinderen van dit echtpaar.'
13. 'En toen ze sliep ontstond uit haar vruchtbare lichaam Ouranos,/vadertje Hemel./Hij kreeg met Gaia eerst drie Kyklopen.'
14. 'na verloop van tijd ontstond er boven Gaia ook de hemel: Ouranos'.
15. 'Monsters! Dat waren de eerste nakomelingen van Gaia en Ouranos. Geweldige gedrochten.'
16. Wording is significant as it 'entails "intepreting" in a particular way, from a particular theoretical, cultural or ideological perspective' (Fairclough *Discourse and Social Change* 190–1). In the case of taboo subjects, it is useful to conceive wording as a continuum ranging from hinting at and abstract representation to explicit wording, overwording and concrete representation.
17. 'En toen heeft Gaia nog iets geschapen, ze heeft iets uit zichzelf voortgebracht. Ze baarde een zoon. De zoon heette Uranus.' The activation of Gaia in Pelgrom as opposed to the

active role of Uranus and the intransitive and impersonal verbs in the other versions has strong ideological implications. According to Fairclough, activation of actors implies that 'their capacity for agentive action, for making things happen, for controlling others and so forth is accentuated' (Fairclough *Discourse* 150).

18. 'dat er ooit in die oneindige donkere muil een wezen was opgestaan, een godin. Zij had zichzelf gemaakt uit het niets. [. . .] Gaia schiep zichzelf zo dat ze in alles het tegengestelde was van Chaos.'

19. 'wilden in elke opening van elk kuiltje van Gaia doordringen. Overal waar zij niet was, daar was óf water óf lucht. Maar het was vooral Uranus die zijn moeder Gaia nooit los wilde laten en altijd boven op haar lag, in haar doordrong en bevruchtte. Zo werden zij het eerste liefdespaar. En ze kregen kinderen.'

20. 'Uranus lag altijd boven op Gaia en liet zijn zaad in haar schoot stromen; zij had nooit rust en kon bijna niet ademen. Ook voor haar kinderen was er geen ruimte.'

21. 'Hij miste zijn moeder zo erg dat hij erom moest huilen. Zijn tranen werden wolken en die lieten regendruppels omlaag vallen.'

22. It should be noted here that the accounts of Broos and Dros are very short (the latter being an embedded narration), hence one could also argue that they only mention the episodes that are most important for the progress of the story.

23. According to Fairclough texts can vary in how implicitly or explicitly they legitimise social order and in which strategies for legitimation they use. In the examples discussed, rationality and semantic relations of purposes are foregrounded (Fairclough *Analysing Discourse* 98).

24. 'achterdochtig en bang; half gek geworden van angst; maar het was de enige uitweg'. Lim adds a rhetorical question: 'Why he did that?' followed by a flashback, representing Uranus's direct discourse in cursing his son to be, in his turn, overruled by his father.

25. 'the punishment of the goddesses of vengeance which is inevitable' [de straf van de Wraakgodinnen, die zeker zou komen]; 'vengeance' [vergelding] (25); 'what he had done... wasn't that equal to patricide' [Wat hij gedaan had... stond dat niet gelijk aan vadermoord?] (25); 'inevitable' [onvermijdelijk] (26)

26. 'Maar hem zou het niet vergaan zoals zijn vader! Hij zou de wraakgodinnen te slim af zijn!'

27. 'hier veilig opgeborgen; voel ze daar rondkruipen; hebben het naar hun zin'.

28. 'versloeg zijn vader; beroofd zijn vader van de heerschappij over de wereld; verjoeg zijn vader; dat hij zijn vader in zijn buik moest steken'.

29. In Hesiod's account, the instigator, too, is Gaea who 'vexed in her heart' incites her children to punish their 'sinful father' for 'doing shameful things' (136).

30. 'Hij heeft toen snel met zijn linkerhand Uranus' geslacht beetgepakt en met één haal zijn vaders lid en ook zijn ballen afgesneden'.

31. 'Maar Orpheus zélf ... Orpheus was gelukkig. [. . .] Nóóit meer zouden zij gescheiden worden' (compare Meppelink 1988; Vander Beken 1994; Roodbeen 1997; Kramer 2008 and De Cock 2011).

32. For an analysis of the tragic aspect of Dros's account, see Geerts 'Gids'.

33. 'Orfeus moest blijven leven tot aan het eind van zijn dagen./Zonder liefde, alleen, heel lang en heel ongelukkig./Zijn muziek die anderen troost gaf, kon hem niet helpen./Altijd klonk daar dezelfde kwellende vraag in door: waarom?/Waarom keek je? Waarom, waarom heb je gekeken?'

34. 'En als er niets met het lichaam gebeurt, wordt het steeds erger. Er zoemen al vliegen omheen. Wat moeten we doen? Het begraven in een gat in de grond zal het beste zijn. Of misschien is verbranden nog beter. En pas als dat is gebeurd, is de gestorvene echt voor altijd weg. Dat weet je.'

35. 'Sindsdien heeft het hoofd nooit meer gezongen en geen woord meer gezegd.'

36. 'Oude Orpheus: Ach, ik had wel kunnen weten/Dat je mij niet zou vergeten/Maar het was zo lang. Jurieke: Ik ben altijd blijven wachten/Jij was nooit uit mijn gedachten/Lieve man.'

37. 'Achter een kist met linnengoed dook Orpheus weg en hij kreeg warrige gedachten.
    Als ik mijn leven mocht overdoen zou ik dan weer met Eurydice trou-

wen grootmoeder zat er trouwens behoorlijk naast stom verhaal van die
halve schepsels grootje ook altijd met haar oudewijvengeklets als ik
alleen in dit huisje woonde wist ik het wel beker wijn in de hand en dan
kijken naar de maan die geel boven de bergen opkomt.

Toen kreeg hij een massief bronzen spiegel op zijn kop en blies zijn laatste adem uit.'

WORKS CITED

Primary Works

Broos, H. J. M. *Kleine Griekse Mythologie* [1967]. Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff, 1991.
Cielen, Luc and Iris Beeckman (ill.). *De sterrentuin*. Antwerpen: Manteau, 2009.
De Cock, Michael and Gerda Dendooven (ill.). *Diep in het woud. Verzamelde verhalen van Ovidius.* Kleine Klassiekers: Davidsfonds/Infodok, 2011.
Dijkstra, Lida. *Wachten op Apollo*. Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 2001.
Dros, Imme and Harrie Geelen (ill.). *De macht van de liefde: de mythen van Pygmalion, Narkissos, Tereus, Orfeus en Helena*. Amsterdam: Querido, 1997.
—(ill.). *De reis naar de liefde: de mythe van het gulden vlies*. Amsterdam: Querido, 1999.
Groothof, Frank, et al. *Orpheus en de Hellehond van de Hades*. Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers, 2007.
Hesiod, *Theogony; Works and Days; Testimonia*. Ed. and transl. by Glenn W. Most. *The Loeb Classical Library 57*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
Kramer, Simon and Els van Egeraat (ill.). *De strijd van de Titanen*. Ploegsma kinder- en jeugdboeken/Ploegsma Amsterdam: Ploegsma, 2005.
—(ill.). *Van Grote Beer en Orion*. Ploegsma kinder- en jeugdboeken/Ploegsma Amsterdam: Ploegsma, 2008.
Lim, Hanny and A. D. van Heyningen-Will (ill.). *De wijze uil van Paradijs*. Willemstad: St. Augustinus boekhandel, 1976.
Meppelink, Henriette and Peter Bata (ill.) and Willem van de Woestijne (ed.). *Mythologie: Griekse godenverhalen*. AO junior, 23. Lelystad: Stichting IVIO, 1988.Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. Transl. by Frank Justus Miller; rev. by G. P. Goold, *The Loeb Classical Library 43*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
Pelgrom, Els and Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Donder en bliksem. Griekse mythen*. Tielt: Lannoo, 2007.
Roodbeen, Merit. *De mooiste Griekse mythen en sagen*. Hoevelaken: Verba, 1997.
Tels, Leontien and Frans van der Steen (ill.). *Koning Midas heeft ezelsoren en andere verhalen uit de oudheid*. Den Haag: De Nieuwe Haagsche, 1997.
vander Beken, Dirk and Paul De Becker (ill.). *De bekendste mythen en legenden*. Aartselaar: Zuidnederlandse Uitgeverij, 1994.
van Dolen, Hein and Louis van Geijn (ill.). *Op naar de Olympos! Verhalen over Griekse goden, helden en mensen om voor te lezen of om zelf te lezen*. Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2009.
Virgil, *Eclogues; Georgics; Aeneid I-VI*. Transl. by H. Rushton Fairclough; rev. by G. P. Goold. *The Loeb Classical Library 63*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Secondary Works

Arrighetti, Graziano (Pisa). 'Theogony'. *Brill's New Pauly*. Antiquity Volumes. Ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider. Brill Online, 2013. 25 September 2013. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/theogony-e1208970>
Beauvais, Clémentine. 'The Problem of "Power": Metacritical Implications of Aetonormativity for Children's Literature Research'. *Children's Literature in Education* 44 (2013): 74–86.
Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Fairclough, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

—. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Falconer, Rachel. *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Geerts, Sylvie. 'Een gids in het land van de mythen: Imme Dros hervertelt de klassieken'. *Literatuur zonder leeftijd* 78 (2009): 38–57.

—. 'Mythologie als levensles. Imme Dros en de klassieken'. *Literatuur zonder leeftijd* 91 (2013): 133–46.

Geerts, Sylvie and Sara Van den Bossche. *Never-ending Stories: Adaptation, Canonisation and Ideology in Children's Literature*. Ghent: Academia Press, 2014.

Ghesquiere, Rita. 'Waar komen die engelen vandaan? Filosofie en kinderliteratuur'. *Morele verbeelding. Normen en waarden in de jeugdcultuur*. Ed. P. Mooren, H. van Lierop-Debrauwer and A. de Vries. Tilburg University Press: Tilburg, 1999. 29–46.

—. *Jeugdliteratuur in perspectief*. Leuven: Acco, 2009.

Graves, Robert. *Griekse mythen*. Trans. P. Syrier. Amsterdam: Olympus, 2008.

Grimal, Pierre. *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. Trans. A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Hardie, Philip. *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Herman, Luc and Bart Vervaeck. *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

Hourihan, Margery. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Joosen, Vanessa and Katrien Vloeberghs. *Uitgelezen jeugdliteratuur: een ontmoeting met traditie en vernieuwing*. Leuven: LannooCampus, 2008.

Jørgenson, Marianne and Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002.

'Kronos'. *Brill's New Pauly*. Antiquity volumes. Ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider. Brill Online, 2013. 25 September 2013. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/kronos-e623640>

McCallum, Robyn and John Stephens. 'Ideology and Children's Books'. *Handbook of Research in Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Ed. S. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enisco and C. Jenkins. London: Routledge, 2011. 359–71.

Mickenberg, Julia L. and Philip Nel. 'Radical Children's Literature Now!' *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 36.4 (2011): 445–73.

Nodelman, Perry and Mavis Reimer. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* [1992]. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003.

Reynolds, Kimberley. *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Rudd, David. 'The Development of Children's Literature'. *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*. Ed. D. Rudd. London: Routledge, 2010. 3–13.

Salzman-Mitchell, Patricia B. *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image, and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2005.

Stephens, John and Sylvie Geerts. 'Mishmash: Conceptual Blending and Adaptation in Contemporary Children's Literature Written in Dutch and English'. *Never-ending Stories: Adaptation, Canonisation and Ideology in Children's Literature*. Ed. S. Geerts and S. Van den Bossche. Ghent: Academia Press, 2014. 193–214.

Stephens, John. 'Narratology'. *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*. Ed. D. Rudd. London: Routledge, 2010. 51–62.

—. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. New York: Longman, 1992.

Stephens, John and Robyn McCallum. *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998.

Wanning Harries, Elizabeth. 'The Violence of the Lambs'. *Marvels and Tales* 19.1 (2005): 54–66.

Sylvie Geerts currently works as an assistant at the Department of Greek and Latin at Ghent University. In her doctoral thesis she examines contemporary Dutch retellings of classical mythology for young readers as a form of reception of the classical tradition. In 2010 she was awarded a fellowship for a stay of three months at the International Youth Library of Munich (Germany). Together with Sara Van den Bossche, she organised a conference on adaptations of children's books and edited the conference proceedings *Never-ending Stories – Adaptation, Canonisation and Ideology in Children's Literature* (Ghent: Academia Press; Ginkgo, 2014).