

LITERARY PRIZES:

Their Role in the Making of Children's Literature

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The institutional discussion on the (literary) quality of texts is confined to one or more groups of experts and can be divided into phases. The phased character is due to the fact that various types of experts successively devote their attention to an ever smaller part of the total literary production. Gradually, they reach agreement on the literary quality of the texts that remain object of their study. A discussion is confined to the set of experts who accept both their mutual expertise and the arguments they pass off as the right qualitative standards to be applied in the evaluation of texts. One text can be subjected to discussions and evaluations in various circuits of experts.

The prizes presented to Dutch children's books in the period 1955–1985 very well illustrate the two features of the institutional discussion on the (literary) quality of texts. Prizes meant for texts published recently make a broad selection from the totality of literary works produced. Prizes awarded structurally at a later stage, such as prizes for the complete works of an author, narrow down this selection. Roughly, the participants in the institutional discussions on children's literature can be divided into two groups; one group claims to use 'pedagogic' standards, the other group claims to use 'purely literary' standards. Accordingly, the character of the prizes ranges from 'pedagogic' to 'literary'. These differences do not manifest themselves in the number of judges that prizes share; there are no mutually exclusive circuits of experts. But the recruitment of the judges does reflect the difference in character. Until 1970, nearly all judges who awarded several prizes started their career in the juries with a 'pedagogic' character. Afterwards, the predominantly 'literary' juries were the first to recruit this kind of judges. This shift is accompanied by a growing interest of academically trained students of literature in the evaluation of children's books.

1. Introduction

Literary prizes occupy a central position in the literary field, since they are related to many of its institutions. The literary field is thought of as the set of interrelated institutions and organizations which produce, distribute, judge and/or acquire literary works, such as publishing firms, public libraries, book

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stores, reviewers, etc. Quite a few of the organizations belonging to the literary field institute prizes. However, literary prizes pre-eminently relate to the institution of criticism. Reports of juries are similar to reviews and other types of criticism in that they contain statements on the qualities of texts, their literary value and the legitimate ways of discussing these texts. In short, they contain statements meant to contribute to the harmonization of opinions on literature.

Within the institution of criticism, the quest for consensus of opinion can be divided into several phases: various types of literary critics and scholars successively devote their attention to an ever smaller part of the totality of literary works produced. Gradually they reach agreement on the literary value of the texts that remain object of (their) study. Just like critics, literary prizes can be split up into types, differing with respect to their temporal position vis-à-vis the literary work praised. The categories of prizes range from prizes for debuts to prizes for complete works. In this paper, I will investigate whether the types of prizes relate to one another in the same way as the types of critics are thought to interrelate.

As has been indicated before, literary prizes are related to several institutions and not just to criticism. Within some of these institutions, people argue about literature in a way comparable to criticism: they pronounce upon the literary quality of texts. At least concerning children's literature, these kinds of statements also are made by people belonging to the institutions 'education' and 'public libraries'. Of course, these institutions set the discussion on literature in a different context, viz. the instruction in reading literature and the propagation of reading (literature). Therefore, this discussion will be different from the kind of discourse produced by critics. What is the relationship between these different parties in the system of literary prizes? Are they on 'speaking terms' with one another?

These questions existed prior to the analyses of the interrelationships between prizes reported in this article. The analyses focussed especially on the agreement between prizes with regard to the winners and judges they did or did not share. Concepts from network analysis will be applied to data concerning prizes for Dutch children's literature in the period of 1955–1985.

2. Relations between literary prizes

The act of awarding a literary prize is an instance of literary criticism. Juries, critics and others who partake in an institutional discussion¹ on literature,

¹ A discussion is institutional if the statements are made in the setting of a body or organ instituted for this purpose. These bodies or organs guarantee a certain degree of continuity of the discussion, irrespective of the expert(s) involved. On the other hand, these organs are usually indispensable for making the discussion a public one.

essentially share a common goal: they try to legitimize texts as literary texts of a specific rank. Each review or award is an effort to determine a text's literary value and quality. However, none of the students of literature has at his/her disposal an unequivocal and reliable instrument to assess this value. The determination of a text's literary value is a never-ending process in which the diversity of the opinions of individual contributions gradually diminishes. Critics feel obliged to harmonize their opinions in the long run. This brings about a certain agreement on the value that is attached to the works of an author.

This process of harmonizing opinions can be divided into phases, which are ordered in time and which deal with ever narrower selections or smaller repertoires of literary works. In his article on the three types of criticism, Van Rees formulates this as follows:

'In the foregoing I have stated that differences between the three types of literary criticism pertain to their different temporal positions vis-à-vis literary texts and the vastness of the choice made from literary works of this century or of earlier periods.'

'The respective types of criticism form the complementary parts of a selection process which is, at the same time, a ranking process by means of which a text, when compared with other texts, grows in importance and eventually may obtain the status of masterpiece. With the transition from primary to tertiary criticism the filters involved become increasingly fine.'
(Van Rees (1983: 406, 403))

In general, the bodies who first study works of an author will spread their attention over a larger sample of literary works than the bodies who discuss these works at a later stage. Usually they will select from the selection made by critics at an earlier stage.

In the article mentioned, Van Rees divides literary criticism into three parts, viz. journalistic reviewers, essayists and academic critics. Although they are the most influential people discussing literature, they are not the only ones. At least in the case of children's literature, also librarians and teachers are involved in the discussion on the value and merits of specific texts. Their professional task differs from the task of a critic: they are supposed to propagate or teach the reading of literature. Presumably, this will bear on the nature of their discussion. In judging texts, some claim to use mainly pedagogic and didactic standards, others claim to use principally artistic, aesthetic arguments. Apart from the question whether the opposition between pedagogic and artistic arguments can be assessed empirically (cf. Baudoin, Duijx and Verdaasdonk (1987)), the opposition might be experienced as real by the people involved. If so, the discussion on children's literature would split up into separate parts, with their own circuits of experts who claim to have at their disposal a specific expertise and specific standards.

My point is this: the harmonization of opinions in a cultural domain (here: children's literature) is a process enacted within one or more groups of experts. These groups can derive their identity from the cultural objects they deal with and from the organization they belong to. A clear example of the first possibility is the separation between professionals dealing either with Dutch or with Frisian literature in the Netherlands. This division cuts through the organizations which focus on both types of literature. On the other hand, in the case of children's literature a contrast between librarians and teachers would be an example of an organizationally determined difference. Groups of experts can ignore one another or compete. To reach a consensus in a situation with various parties, people either give up the quest for one, general consensus, or they accept the prominence of one of the parties. Eventually, the first option will lead to a situation with separated circuits of experts and autonomous processes of harmonizing opinions. Within the system of literary prizes, this would manifest itself as a clustering of prizes, sharing judges *within* the clusters but not *in between* the clusters. When the separation is less stringent, the overlap within and between clusters will differ gradually. In that case it is appropriate to speak of differences between the prizes regarding their character.

In the other case, several parties will try to achieve a general harmony of opinions by deferring prominence to one of the parties. This party is deemed authoritative and its authority is respected. In consequence, members of this party, especially the ones recruited in its juries, will be held in great respect; they will be asked to appear in juries of several other parties. To the system of literary prizes, deferring prominence to one of the parties would mean that one or some of the prizes function as a source of judges to many other prizes. It is obvious that a common orientation on a small set of experts will further a general agreement. It is obvious too, that such a common orientation must be temporary, given the considerable number of new experts entering the literary field and the number of older ones making way.

I have stated before, that, besides critics, librarians and educators devote themselves to the discussion of the quality of children's books. There are reasons to believe that the relations between these parties have changed in the course of time. At first, especially the pedagogues paid attention to children's books, that is, the people professionally concerned with the education and upbringing of children. But in the course of time, people trained in the study of literature at university started to concern themselves with children's books, in the capacity of critic, author or literary scholar. They claimed to focus on the formal aspects of children's books and to study these texts in the way the established literature is studied. That is to say, they sought recognition for children's literature as an autonomous form of art. In the seventies, the two parties, which may be labelled 'pedagogues' and the 'autonomists' respectively, indulged in heated discussions concerning the proper standards to be

applied to children's books. The 'autonomists' seemed to have won this confrontation, since they obtained a structural opportunity to disseminate their opinions in reviews of children's literature in national newspapers and magazines. Thus they created a criticism comparable to the established literary criticism in two respects, in the sense that it concerns itself with the acknowledgement of *literary* quality and, secondly, that it is practised regularly in the context of several national newspapers and weeklies.

These considerations have led to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1, phases in the harmonization of opinions:

- (a) Prizes will be awarded to the work of an author in a fixed order.
- (b) Especially in the case of prizes for complete works, which by their very nature are awarded at a later stage in a writer's career, the juries will use selections of authors made by way of previous awards of other prizes. They will select their laureate from the winners of other regularly presented prizes.

Hypothesis 2, circuits of experts:

- (a) Prizes belonging to organizations of different institutions, will share less judges than prizes embedded in the same institution.
- (b) In the case of prizes for children's literature, there will be a difference between prizes related to education and public libraries on the one hand, and prizes related to the established literature for adults on the other hand.
- (c) In a certain period of time, one (or some) of the prizes will function as the main source of judges for all prizes.
- (d) In the beginning of the period 1955–1985, the prizes connected to the field of education and public libraries will have functioned as the main source of judges, while at the end of this period the prizes related to the established literature for adults will have adopted this role.

3. The data

The investigation reported here concerns the prizes for Dutch children's literature in the period 1955–1985. The data are taken from a recent survey of literary prizes in the Netherlands, concerning the period 1880–1985 (Michael et al. (1986)). Only prizes awarded to children's literature, written originally in the official Dutch language are taken into consideration; prizes for illustrators and translations are left out of account.

In 1955, the current system of prizes for children's literature, was ushered in by a prize called *Kinderboek van het jaar*, subsequently called *Gouden* and *Zilveren Griffels* ('golden and silver slate-pencils') which were first and second

prizes respectively. In this report I will refer to any of these names with the acronym *GR*, whereas the first and second prize will be indicated by *GG* and *ZG* respectively. The prize was awarded annually to one to ten books, published in the preceding year. A foundation concerned with the collective propaganda for Dutch books, financed by the united publishers and book-sellers, presented the prize. Although the *GR*-prize was not the first prize for children's literature to be presented in the Netherlands, it was the first to be issued after 1950.

In 1956 the then Minister of Education, Art and Science (*O.K.W.*) instituted a once-only prize, but it was not until 1964 that a state prize to be presented regularly, was founded. I'll refer to this prize with the term *state prize* or with the acronym *ST*. This prize is awarded to the complete works of an author. In the same year, the literary foundation of the council of The Hague presented a new prize for children's literature, viz. the *Nienke van Hichtum*-prize (*HI*). This prize has since been awarded to a single book, once every two years on average.

Subsequently, four once-only prizes make their appearance, viz. the *Latent-Talent* prize (1965, *LAT*), the prize of the *Stichting Kinderbelangen* (1969, *KBEL*), the *Laurens Jansz Coster* prize (1979, *COST*) and the *Gouden Driehoek* (1982, *GDR*). In 1983 a new annual prize is instituted, the *Jenny Smelik-Kiggen* prize (*SMKI*). The *Kluwer* prize (*KLUW*), awarded to a children's book for the first time in 1985, completes this system. All of these prizes are presented by a private organization.

Some of the prizes are meant for books in a specific genre or for children of a specific age, others are not specified in these respects. Since these specifications come into existence only in the course of the period and since they turn out to be open to changes, I will not consider them here.

4. Network analysis

The analyses will contain concepts borrowed from network analysis. Therefore, a concise introduction in that technique is appropriate. Network analysis is an application of graph-mathematics in social research. Objects are described as a set of points and a set of lines connecting points. Together they constitute a network or graph. When all points are connected through lines into one 'piece', the network is said to consist of one component. Consequently, a network containing several unconnected parts has several components.

In this investigation, the prizes are the points. That is to say, all instances or presentations of the same prize together form one point. A line between two prizes can mean two things: either it represents a winner, whom both prizes share, or it represents a shared judge. A person connecting two or more points

is called a *multiple* actor. Only multiple actors cause lines in a network. In the paragraphs to follow, I will deal with multiple winners and multiple judges.

The line between two points can become an arrow (i.e. acquires a direction) if it is to represent a sequence. For instance: if author A receives prize X, then prize Y and finally prize Z, due to this author a network is created with three points (X, Y and Z) and two lines (X–Y and Y–Z). This network can be pictured as:

$$X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z$$

If networks get bigger and more complex, pictures are not useful analytic instruments anymore. A complex network can be drawn in numerous ways and the drawings themselves soon wind into a ball offering very little information to the spectator. Matrix-representations are more convenient and, furthermore, they can be manipulated mathematically. The matrix-representation that I will use is called *reachability matrix* (cf. Knoke and Kuklinski (1982) or Berkowitz (1982)). In this kind of matrix, the set of points fills the rows as well as the columns. Every cell contains a number indicating whether the point specified in the column can be reached by way of one or more lines from the point specified in the row (these points are called *receiver* and *sender* respectively). The simple network pictured above is represented in table 1. A '1' in the matrix indicates that a point is reachable for another point, a '0' indicates that this is not the case. The cells on the diagonal contain a '-' because it is nonsensical to speak of the reachability of a point for itself. Instead of a one or a zero, other numbers can appear in the cells. For instance the *distance matrix* contains numbers which indicate the minimal number of lines ('path-length') that connect two points. I will use another version of the reachability matrix: the numbers in the cells indicate the number of multiple actors that combine the two points in the specified order. For every multiple winner or judge, a prize is counted only once, viz. the first time it occurs in a particular career. The repetition of an award or of a jury membership is considered to be insignificant.

Table 1
An example of a simple reachability matrix.

From	To		
	X	Y	Z
X	-	1	1
Y	0	-	1
Z	0	0	-

5. Phases in the quest for consensus

Do juries choose the same winners and, if so, what can be inferred about the role of the various prizes in the harmonization of opinions on children's literature? Table 2 gives the first impression of the number of winners shared. This table shows that prizes which are presented several times are quite often awarded to multiple winners. The state prize caps everything: any winner of this prize has received one or more other prizes as well. Some of the once-only and recently instituted prizes are awarded to multiple winners, others are not. The prizes without multiple winners are isolated points in the network. They have not chosen their winners from the regular corps of laureates. This is not surprising, though, if one considers the somewhat deviant goals of these prizes, viz. the rewarding of children's books about ethnic minorities (SMKI), books which do away with the 'role-stereotypes' (GDR) and the rewarding of unpublished manuscripts (LAT). These prizes are unlikely to play an important part in the general quest for consensus (if any).

The reachability matrix, picturing the order in which prizes were won by individual authors, is split up into two parts. The first part (table 3) contains the winners of a state prize only, the second part contains all other multiple winners (table 4). For ease of survey the three isolated prizes have not been included. Seven authors received a state prize (ST). All of them had received a GG before. More than half of them carried off another regularly presented prize (HI and/or ZG), but this happened as often before getting a state prize, as afterwards. The GG is the only prize which qualifies structurally for the role of 'preselector', at least in relation to the state prize.

Table 2
The prizes and their winners.

Prize	Number of winners		Period
	multiple	total	
Gouden Griffel (GG)	18	31	1954-1985
Prijsvraag O.K.W. (OKW)	1	2	1956
Staatsprijs (ST)	7	7	1964-1982
N. van Hichtumprijs (HI)	9	10	1964-1985
Latent talent (LAT)	0	3	1965
Prijs Kinderbelangen (KBEL)	1	1	1969
Zilveren Griffel (ZG)	17	35	1971-1985
L. Janszn Costerprijs (COST)	1	1	1979
Gouden Driehoek (GDR)	0	1	1982
J. Smelik-Kiggenprijs (SMKI)	0	3	1983-1985
Prijsvraag Kluwer (KLUW)	1	1	1985-
Total	22	62	

Table 3
Reachability matrix: winners of a state prize ($N = 7$).

From	To							
	ST	HI	GG	ZG	OKW	KBEL	KLUW	COST
ST	–	2	0	3	0	0	0	1
HI	2	–	0	2	0	0	0	1
GG	7	4	–	5	0	0	0	1
ZG	2	1	0	–	0	0	0	0
OKW	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0
KBEL	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0
KLUW	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0
COST	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	–

In the case of the multiple winners without state prizes, a similar order cannot be found. Sometimes the GG is awarded after an HI, ZG or a once-only prize. The relationship between HI and ZG is curious. The HI is presented to a (future) winner of a ZG seven out of nine times. But, apart from the times it was awarded to previous winners of the state prize, it combined with a GG only three out of seven times. The ZG is considered to be a second prize in relation to the GG. This gives the impression that the HI is quite often meant as a correction on the GG: authors who did or would not get a first prize (GG) but who could get one of the second prizes (ZG), received an HI. Maybe the HI offered itself as a ‘preselector’ next to the GG; anyway, it did not function as such in relation to the state prize.

I would like to characterize the roles of the individual prizes in the harmonization of opinions as follows. The GG is the most important filter in the system of prizes: winners of this prize only, seem to qualify for a state prize. The state prize is a leg-up to more permanent attention and esteem for the laureate’s literary work, as e.g. the awards of other prizes after the state

Table 4
Reachability matrix: other multiple winners ($N = 15$).

From	To						
	HI	GG	ZG	OKW	KBEL	KLUW	COST
HI	–	1	2	0	0	0	0
GG	0	–	5	0	0	1	0
ZG	2	3	–	0	0	0	0
OKW	0	1	0	–	0	0	0
KBEL	0	1	1	0	–	0	0
KLUW	0	0	0	0	0	–	0
COST	0	0	0	0	0	0	–

prize testify. The role of the HI is less unequivocal. On the one hand, this prize seems to improve the chance of receiving a state prize, in so far as it is combined with a GG. On the other hand, this prize seems to be intended to play a part similar but competitive to the GG: it is awarded frequently to authors who would not receive a GG, although they did get a ZG. The ZG is a genuine second prize, a consolation rather than a leading prize. Finally, the once-only and recently instituted prizes seem to have a neglectable role in the harmonization of opinions, at least for the time being. Maybe they have existed for too short a period to be influential as yet.

Hypotheses 1(a) and 1(b) do not have to be rejected. Some prizes are presented in quite a fixed order to individual authors. The leading position of the GG as a 'preselector' for other prizes is supported by other observations as well. In the fifties and sixties, the Dutch newspapers and weeklies did not pay attention to children's literature in a structural manner. But when a GG was presented, they dedicated a considerable number of their pages to this branch of literature. Usually the laureate was interviewed and besides the book being awarded a prize, earlier works were reviewed. Statements made about the specific qualities of an author's literary work, made in consequence of the award, could become a fixed item in the reviews that would appear later on. Receiving a GG seemed to be a precondition for a children's book to become object of criticism in those years.

6. Circuits of experts

Do the members of juries for children's literature prizes have the same institutional background? A survey of the formal recruitment procedures shows that the regularly presented prizes differ gradually only. (Source: a Dutch lexicon for children's literature). The GR-jury, that is, the jury which awards for the state prize, contains authors, critics and teachers. Specific for the GR-jury are the members recruited from public libraries. The composition of the HI-juries is more or less the same, at least until 1977. Since 1977, the HI-juries contain members of the board of the literary foundation presenting the prize, together with, at most, two previous winners of the prize. The members of the board mainly stem from the world of the established literature for adults: authors, critics and scientists specialized in literature. This indicates that the HI had more of a literary character than the GR, which recruited its judges outside the established or 'high' literature. The state prize can be pictured in the middle. True, the ST-juries contained judges from outside the established literature to a considerable extent, but the organization nominating the judges unmistakably maintained close relations with the world of 'high' literature. This organization also nominated the judges for the Dutch state prize for literature (novels, poetry and essays).

Table 5
The prizes and their judges.

Prize	Number of judges		Period
	multiple	total	
Griffels (GR)	19	75	1954–1985
Prijsvraag O.K.W. (OKW)	2	5	1956
Staatsprijs (ST)	16	45	1964–1982
N. van Hichtumprijs (HI)	6	23	1964–1985
Latent talent (LAT)	3	5	1965
Prijs Kinderbelangen (KBEL)	5	5	1969
L. Janszn Costerprijs (COST)	1	3	1979
Gouden Driehoek (GDR)	1	2	1982
J. Smelik-Kiggenprijs (SMKI)	2	7	1983–1985
Prijsvraag Kluwer (KLUW)	1	5	1985–
Total	25	144	

The difference in character between the HI and GR is plausible, witness the following statement of a Dutch author in a newspaper (Gooi- en Eemlander, Oct. 7 1983): ‘This prize is more of a literary decoration. That’s what makes me feel proud’ [transl. mine]. In this review she compares her HI with the GG she has received two years before.

The lexicon conveyed little information about the formal composition of the once-only prizes, nor did other sources. In these cases, the actual flow of judges from prize to prize is the only way to analyze the origins of their expertise. I turn to that now.

If prizes have the same judges, it is plausible that they invoke a similar type of expertise and, in that sense, have a similar character. Does the system of children’s literature prizes consist of one or more circuits of experts? In table 5, the numbers of multiple judges are enumerated. The percentage of multiple judges appears to be lower than the percentage of multiple winners. The overlap between prizes is less strong here. One could say that most of the prizes recruit their judges for the most part from a source of their own. Nevertheless, all prizes share at least one judge with one of the other prizes: each prize had one or more multiple judges. Together, the prizes form a network consisting of one component, mainly because the judges who start their career in the GR-juries can be found later on in juries for eight out of nine other prizes. The only prize which doesn’t share judges directly with the GR (COST), shares judges with both of the two prizes that are closely connected with the CR (*viz.* ST and HI). So there are no separate circuits of experts. The multiplicity of the links, that is the number of multiple judges shared, ranges from 1 to 11 (ST–GR). However, the total number of judges recruited for each prize varies accordingly, so there is no reason to assume that the variation in the strength of links between prizes points toward partly

Table 6

Reachability matrix: initial and later prizes of multiple judges, making their debut between 1955–1970.

Initial	Later								Total
	ST	HI	GR	LAT	OKW	KBEL	KLUW	COST	
ST	–	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
GR	6	3	–	2	2	2	1	0	13
LAT	0	0	0	–	0	1	0	0	1
KBEL	2	1	0	0	0	–	0	0	2

overlapping circuits of experts. Consequently, it is unlikely that more than one process of harmonizing opinions has taken place in the field of children's literature.

Hypotheses 2(a) and 2(b) predicted a contrast between prizes related to education and public libraries on the one hand, and prizes related to the world of 'high' literature on the other. This would manifest itself in the amount of overlap between juries. These hypotheses have to be rejected. The prizes recruited their judges to a high degree from the same institutions and even if this wasn't laid down in formal rules, it nevertheless happened in practice. True, differences in character were found between the regularly presented prizes, but it was not possible to trace any consequences in the actual flow of judges between the prizes. The judges are likely to have attempted to reach one, general consensus. Did they consider one of the parties to be prominent, for the sake of harmony? Is there a prize where most of the multiple judges made their appearance and, if so, in which circuit of experts did they eventually arrive?

The total number of multiple judges is 25. Fourteen made their debut in a GR-jury, seven in an ST-jury and the remaining four made their appearance in juries for three different prizes. Clearly, the GR- and ST-prizes were prominent. But were they prominent simultaneously or one after the other?

Tables 6 and 7 each contain a reachability matrix with the prize where the judge started his/her career in the rows and the prizes they awarded afterwards in the columns. Table 6 contains the data related to the judges who made their appearance in the system of children's literature prizes in the period 1955–1970, the remaining judges are included in table 7. In the early part of the seventies, there is a clear break in the exchange of judges between the GR-juries and the ST-juries. A large proportion of the judges who made their debut in the GR-jury before 1971, eventually turn up in a jury for the state prize. However, after 1970 very few judges made their appearance in a GR-jury. On the other hand, after 1976 the GR-juries start to recruit judges who made their debut in an ST-jury. Finally, in 1985, the first HI-debutant

Table 7

Reachability matrix: initial and later prizes of multiple judges, making their debut between 1971–1985.

Initial	Later					
	ST	HI	GR	SMKI	GDR	Total
ST	–	0	4	1	1	5
HI	1	–	0	0	0	1
GR	0	0	–	1	0	1

Note: For the sake of clarity, rows containing zeros only have not been included.

becomes a member of the jury for the state prize. These facts clearly support hypotheses 2(c) and 2(d).

I think there are some reasons that can account for this development. First of all, the GR-prizes had been presented nine times by the time the other two regularly presented prizes were established. Therefore, the people nominating the judges for the GR-juries had many opportunities to be the first to select experts in the field of children's literature.

Secondly, the GR's name and the way of recruiting judges changed in 1971. Between 1971 and 1979, the GR-juries were a collection of deputies from the various Dutch regions. Such a system of representation does not guarantee the selection of the most prominent experts at all. Meanwhile, in the context of education and libraries and in that of the established literature, new forums for the institutional discussion on children's literature came into existence, viz. professional papers and committees of literary organizations respectively. Here, new people got the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise. The council nominating judges for the state prize went along with this development, while the GR-juries experimented with the system of regional representation. In 1979, this system was abandoned in favour of a construction with several organizations nominating some judges, among others the literary organizations. The GR-prizes seem to have changed their strategy, adopting a course similar to the state prizes. After that, the GR-juries contained judges who had awarded a state prize previously, instead of the other way round. The GR-prizes were probably prominent until the seventies and after that the state prize.

7. Conclusion

In this article I have investigated two aspects of the quest for consensus in the domain of children's literature: its phased character and its limitation to a circuit of experts. I focussed on the interrelationships between children's literature prizes in the Netherlands. The results can be summarized as follows.

The totality of awards to authors of children's literature clearly shows the traces of the articulated process supposedly characteristic of literary criticism. Prizes meant for recently published work bring about a broad selection from the total literary production. Prizes which are awarded at a later stage in a writer's career, such as prizes for complete works, seem to use this selection and narrow it down. The once-only and recently established prizes play no more than a marginal part in this process and they do not seem to exert a profound influence on the agreement to be reached. Either they reinforce a status-quo, for instance when they are awarded to authors already possessing several (important) prizes, or they are meant to introduce new kinds of texts into the institutional discussion on children's literature.

The fact that all prizes exchange judges points to one, undivided process of harmonizing opinions. There are no independent circuits of experts that might form a closed reference-group. Even the attempts to include new kinds of texts in the harmonization of opinions are initiated by experts who already occupy a position in this process. Nevertheless, differences in character between the regularly presented prizes have been assessed. They range from 'pedagogic' to 'literary' (GR and HI, respectively). The state prize is situated midway between these prizes. The differences in character do not manifest themselves in the number of judges that prizes share. But it does show in the number of multiple judges making their debut in juries of a prize. Between 1955 and 1970, nearly all multiple judges started their career in a GR-jury. In the seventies, the state prize took over this role. This is probably related to a change in the way the GR-judges are recruited. However, an overall development in the field of children's literature seems of importance too. The criticism of children's books is orienting itself more and more towards the criticism of the established (that is: adult) literature: more attention is paid to the so-called 'formal' aspects of texts and the influence of academically trained critics is on the increase. Authors and critics of children's literature are apparently trying to dissociate themselves from the sphere of pedagogy and to bestow upon it the status of an independent form of art. This might explain the prominence of the state prize, which entertains close relationships with the world of the established or 'high' literature. In this perspective, is it accidental that a member of the board of a literary foundation, who is also an academic scholar specialized in literature, is recruited as the chairman of the jury for the state prize in 1985?

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