

# Constructing **A**ge **F**or **Y**oung **R**eaders: A digital approach

**Vanessa Joosen**



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



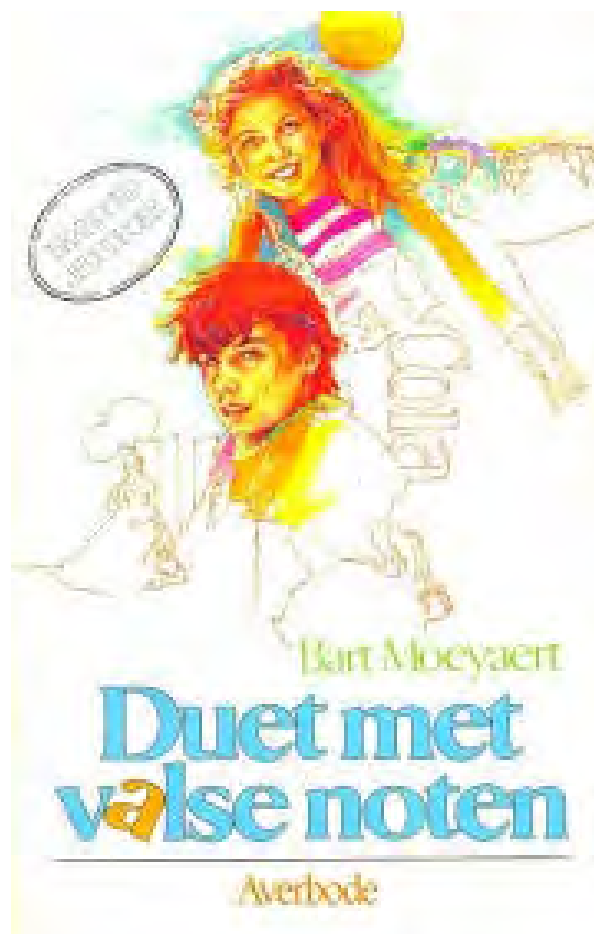
PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

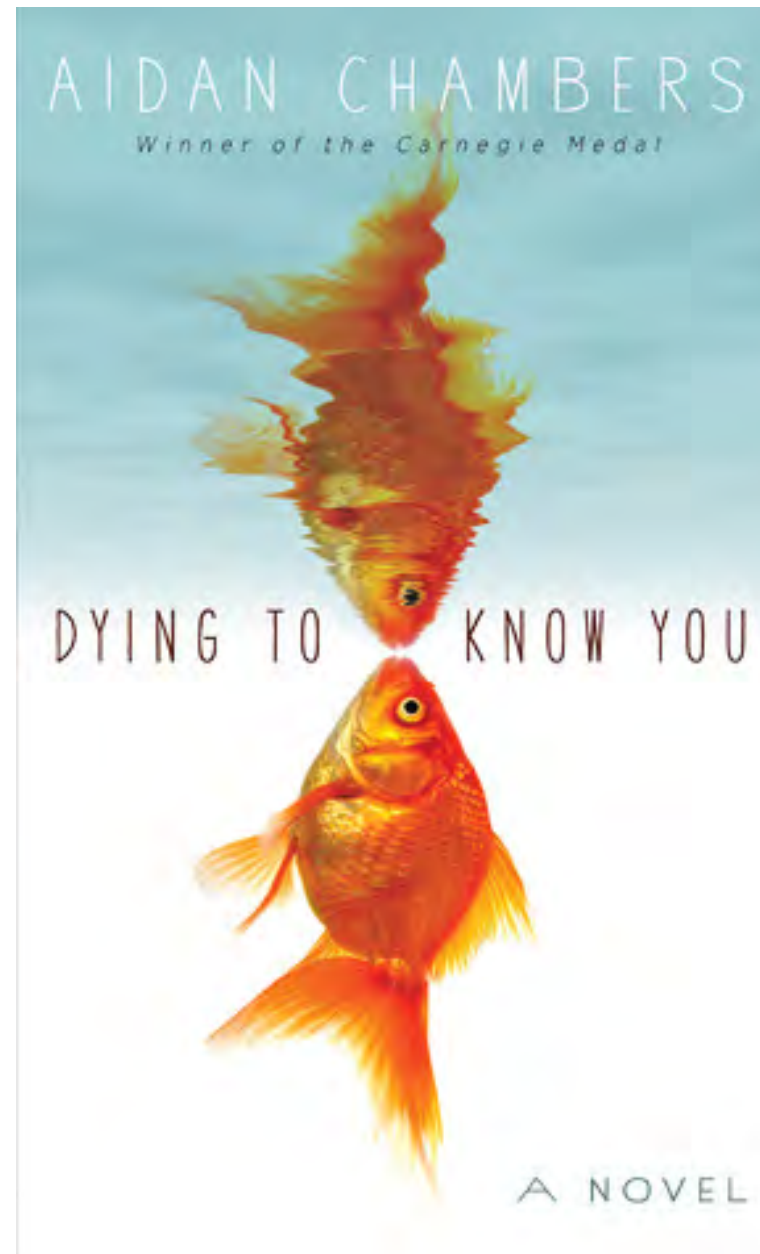
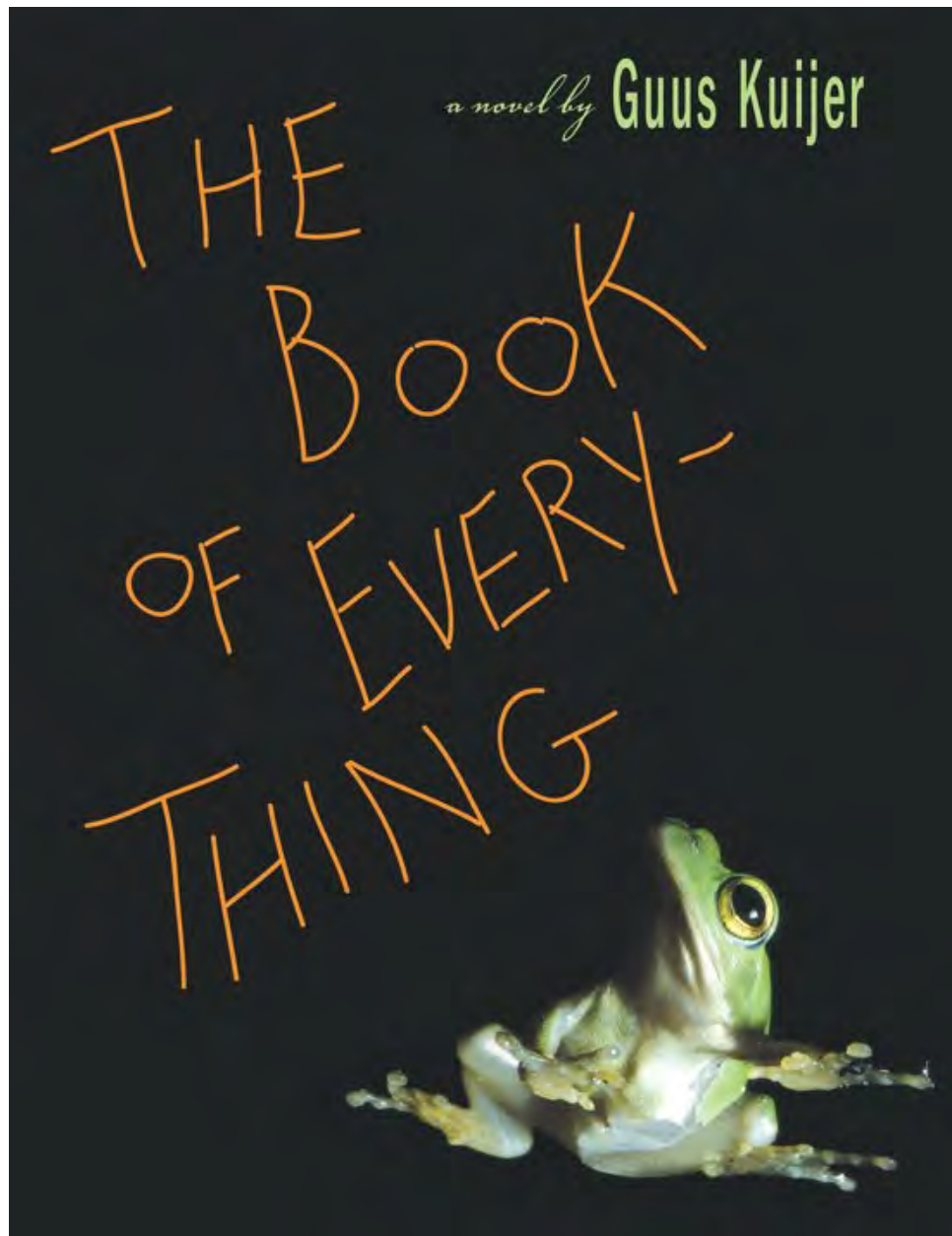
## Adulthood in Children's Literature

Vanessa Joosen



# Age of the author?



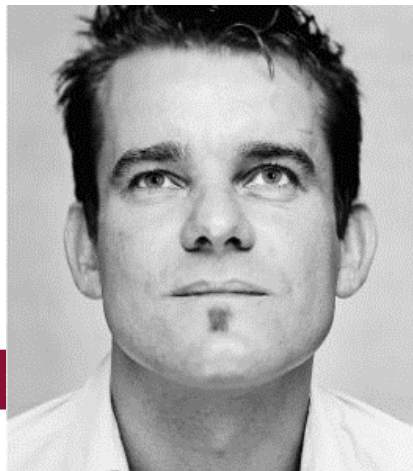
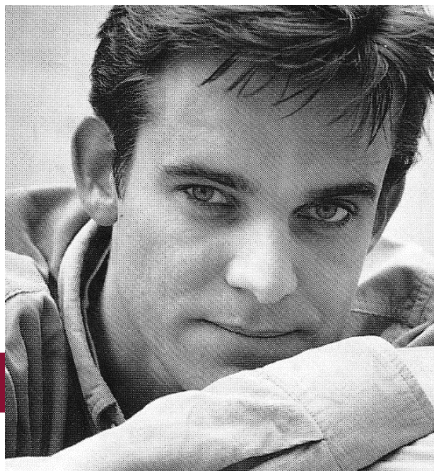




# CAFYR

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**the age  
of the author**



**books by  
children's authors  
with long careers**

PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

## Adulthood in Children's Literature

Vanessa Joosen

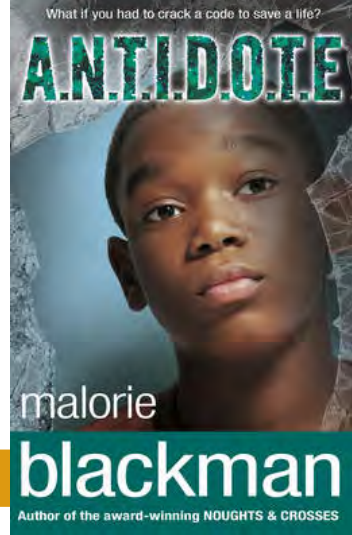
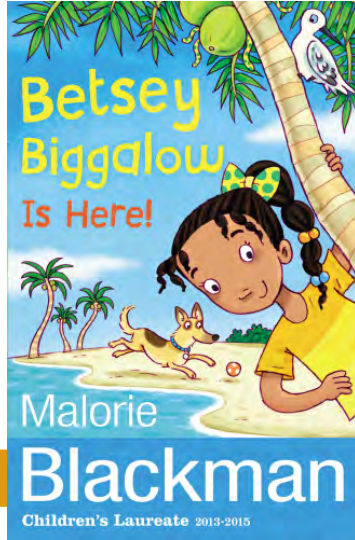
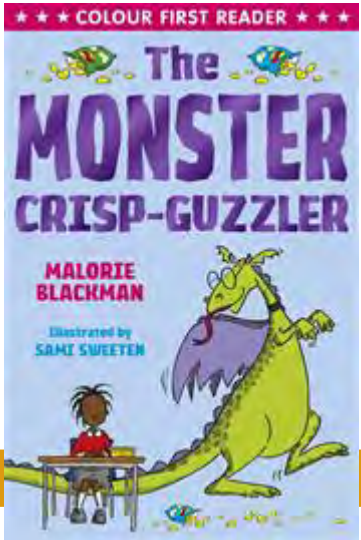


BLOOMSBURY

# Age of the intended reader?

# CAFYR

## the age of the intended reader



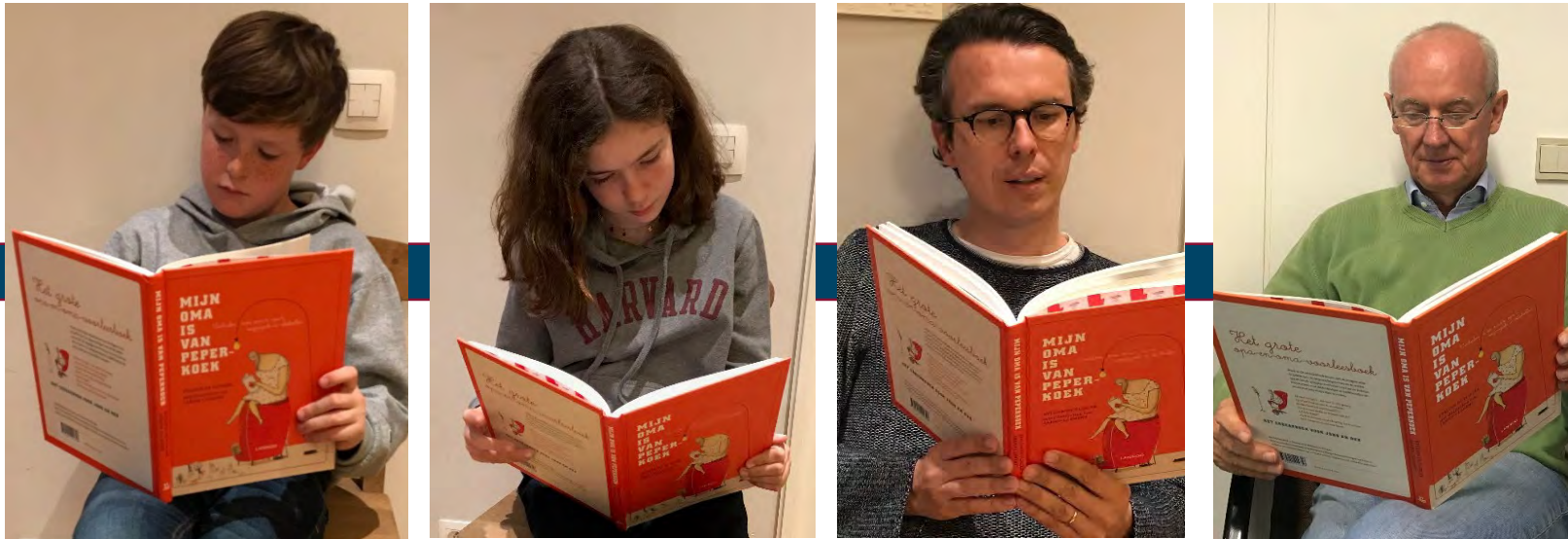
books by  
authors who  
write for  
different  
audiences



# CAFYR

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the age of the  
real reader



books read  
by people of  
different ages



# Close and distant reading



# CORPUS

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**750 children's books**

**Flanders**

**The Netherlands**

**United Kingdom**





# Guus Kuijer

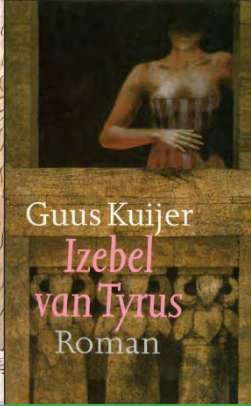
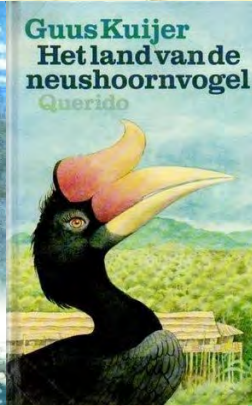
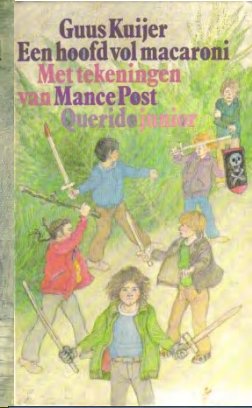
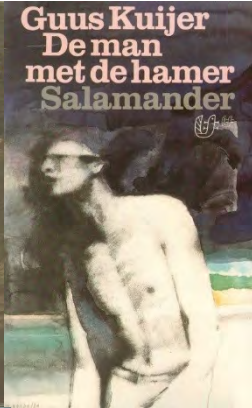
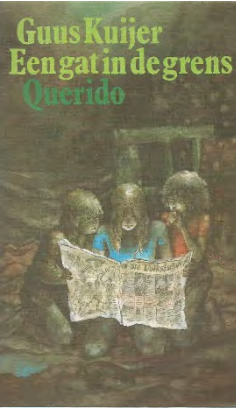
° 1942

32 novels

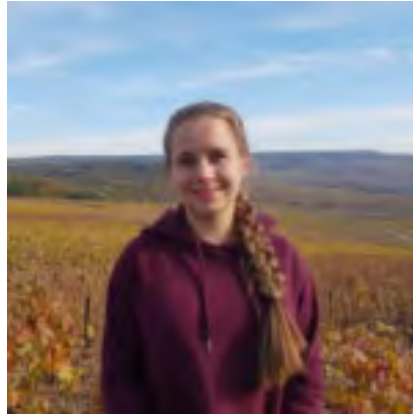


THE ASTRID LINDGREN  
MEMORIAL AWARD









**CAFYR = TEAM WORK**

# DIGITIZING TEXTS

- OCR-software: ABBYY
  - XML editors
- Oxygen and Sublime

PDF

TXT

XML

Kuijer Hoe Mieke Mom haar maffe moeder vindt - Notepad

File Edit Format View Help

Guus Kuijer  
Hoe Mieke Mom haar maffe moeder vindt

Met tekeningen van Mance Post

Amsterdam Em. Querido's Uitgeverij b.v. 1993

JeugdSalamander

Eerste en tweede druk, 1978; derde en vierde druk, 1979; vijfde druk, 1981; zesde druk, 1984; zevende druk, als  
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ISBN 90 214 3204 8 / CIP / NUGI 221

De ouders van Mieke zijn toevallig allang dood. Daar heeft ze dus geen zorg meer over. Ze wonen in een kist in de achtertuin. De raampjes steken nog net boven de grond uit. Achter het ene raampje zit haar moeder meestal te breien. Achter het andere raampje zit haar vader een pijpje te roken.

'Hihhi, wat een luizenkop hè?' giechelt haar vader. En ze lachen haar samen uit.

Maar ze kunnen gelukkig niet uit hun kist. Daar zijn ze veel te dood voor.

Mieke gaat elke dag even kijken. Soms zet ze bloemen voor de ramen. Ze kijkt of de schoorsteen nog trekt of ze lapt de ramen.

'D'r zitten nog strepen op, uilskuiken,' roept haar moeder dan.

'Hahaha,' lacht haar vader als ie de bloemen ziet, 'boerenkool in een vaasje, hahaha.'

Mieke trekt er zich niks van aan.

'Dag mam. Dag pap,' zegt ze vriendelijk.

Ze zwaait als ze weggaat.

'Appellap,' gilt haar moeder dwars door de ramen heen.

'Oliebol,' brult haar vader.

Het is winter. De ramen zijn dicht. En het jaar is

```
<text>
<body>
<p><rsaid direct="false">De <rs ref="moeder vader">ouders</rs> van <rs ref="mieke">Mieke</rs> zijn toevallig allang dood. Daar heeft <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> dus geen zorg meer over. <rs ref="moeder vader">ze</rs> wonen in een kist in de achtertuin. De raampjes steken nog net boven de grond uit. Achter het ene raampje zit <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs>
<rs ref="moeder">moeder</rs> meestal te breien. Achter het andere raampje zit <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder vader">vader</rs> een pijpje te roken. Als de raampjes openstaan hoor je <rs ref="moeder vader">ze</rs> schelden, want dooie mensen slaan graag lelijke taal uit. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="moeder">'Zo kromme <rs ref="mieke">kabouter</rs>!'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">roept <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder">moeder</rs> als <rs ref="moeder">ze</rs> <rs ref="mieke">Mieke</rs> ziet. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="vader">'Hihhihi, wat een <rs ref="mieke">luizenkop</rs> hè?'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">giechelt <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder vader">vader</rs>. En <rs ref="moeder vader">ze</rs> lachen <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> samen uit. Maar <rs ref="moeder vader">ze</rs> kunnen gelukkig niet uit <rs ref="moeder vader">hun</rs> kist. Daar zijn <rs ref="moeder vader">ze</rs> veel te dood voor. <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> gaat elke dag even kijken. Soms zet <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> bloemen voor de ramen. <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> kijkt of de schoorsteen nog trekt of <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> lapt de ramen. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="moeder">'D'r zitten nog strepen op, <rs ref="mieke">uilskuiken</rs>,'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">roept <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder">moeder</rs> dan. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="vader">'Hahaha,'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">lacht <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder vader">vader</rs> als <rs ref="moeder vader">ze</rs> de bloemen ziet, </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="vader">'boerenkool in een vaasje, hahaha,'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false"><rs ref="mieke">Mieke</rs> trekt er zich niks van aan. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="mieke">'Dag <rs ref="moeder">mam</rs>. Dag <rs ref="moeder">pap</rs>,'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">zegt <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> vriendelijk. <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> zwaait als <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> weggaat. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="moeder">'<rs ref="mieke">Appellap</rs>,'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">gilt <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder">moeder</rs> dwars door de ramen heen. </rsaid><rsaid direct="true" who="vader">'<rs ref="mieke">Oliebol</rs>,'</rsaid><rsaid direct="false">brult <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> <rs ref="moeder vader">vader</rs>. Het is winter. De ramen zijn dicht. En het jaar is bijna om. Het wordt tijd dat <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> <rs ref="moeder vader">moeder vader</rs> van de overkant gaat opzoeken. <rs ref="mieke">Mieke</rs> knoopt <rs ref="mieke">haar</rs> jas goed dicht en steekt de straat over. <rs ref="mieke">ze</rs> drukt bij <rs ref="moeder vader">moeder vader</rs> op de bel. Als <rs ref="moeder vader">moeder vader</rs> opendoet
```



# METAREFLECTIONS

- <seg about="oldadult">Old people die, that's just the way it is. </seg>
- <seg about="adult">because grownups, well, you know, they are easily shocked</seg>
- <seg about="child">They can be troublesome, can't they, at that age.</seg>



# DIALOGUE

**<said direct="false">**Granpa is staying with Madelief. That's nice, because Madelief has a break and her mother hasn't. With grandpa there it's a lot nicer. For example, you can play games with him very well. When he loses he only gets a little angry. **<said>**

**<said direct="true" who="madelief">**"Granpa?" **</said>**

**<said direct="false">** Madelief asks. **</said>**

**<said direct="true" who="madelief">**"Did you think grandma was a nice person?" **</said>**



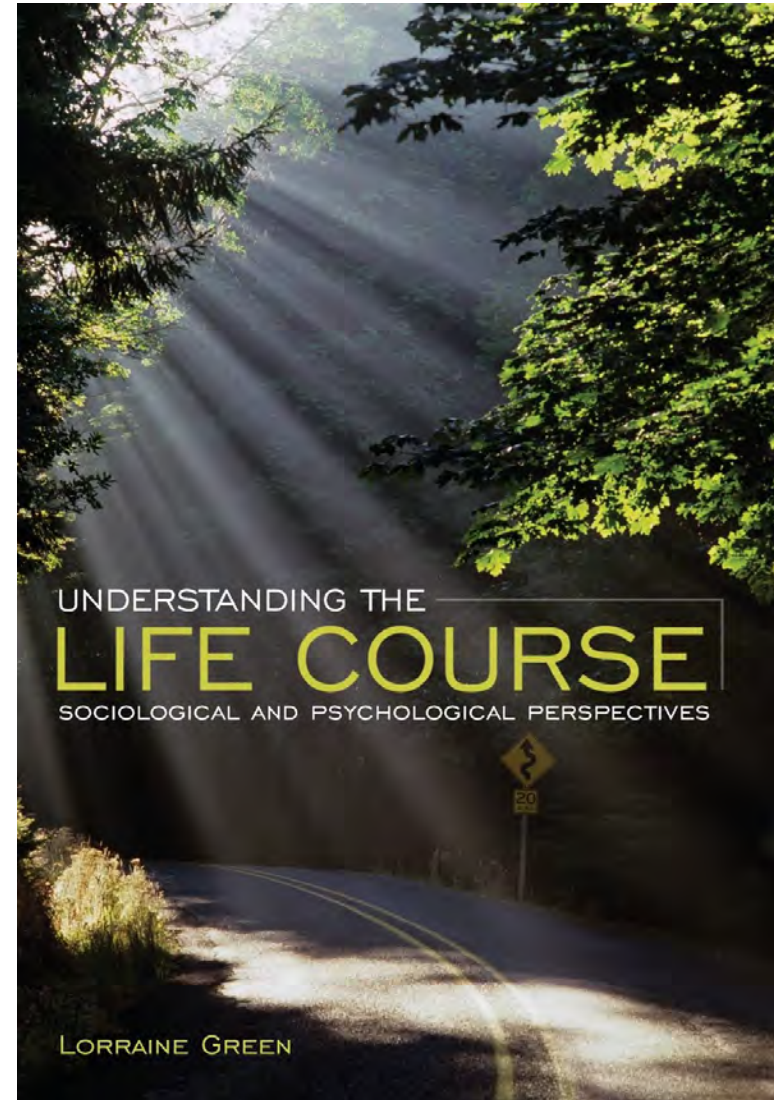
# CHARACTER IDENTITY FEATURES

ID	full name	Individual /group	species	gender	ethnicity	relation to protagonist	age	life stage	certainty
bolle	Bolle	individual	human	male				child	medium
moeder	moeder van Madelief	individual	human	female		parent		adult	medium
robbie	Robbie	individual	human	male		protagonist	9		high
jan	Jan	individual	human	male		sibling		middlechild	medium
kinderen	kinderen	group	human			friends		child	high
robbievader	Vader van Robbie	individual	human	male		parent		adult	medium



# CAFYR'S AGE MODEL

- unborn
- infant: 0—2
- child: 3—11
  - early child: 3—5
  - middle child: 6—8
  - late child: 9—11
- adolescent: 12—19
- adult: 20+
  - early adult: 20—39
  - middle adult: 40—59
  - old adult: 60—79
  - deep oldadult: 80+



# METAREFLECTIONS: XML => SPREADSHEET

book	Intended reader of book	speaker	age speaker	about	Value	Type	metareflections
Het land van de neushoorn-vleugel	12	Narrator	17	17 old adult	Negative	emotion experience	I dreamed like an inexperienced boy dreams of love. Old men laugh bitterly about dreams like that



**What kind of book is it?**



**Who says it?**

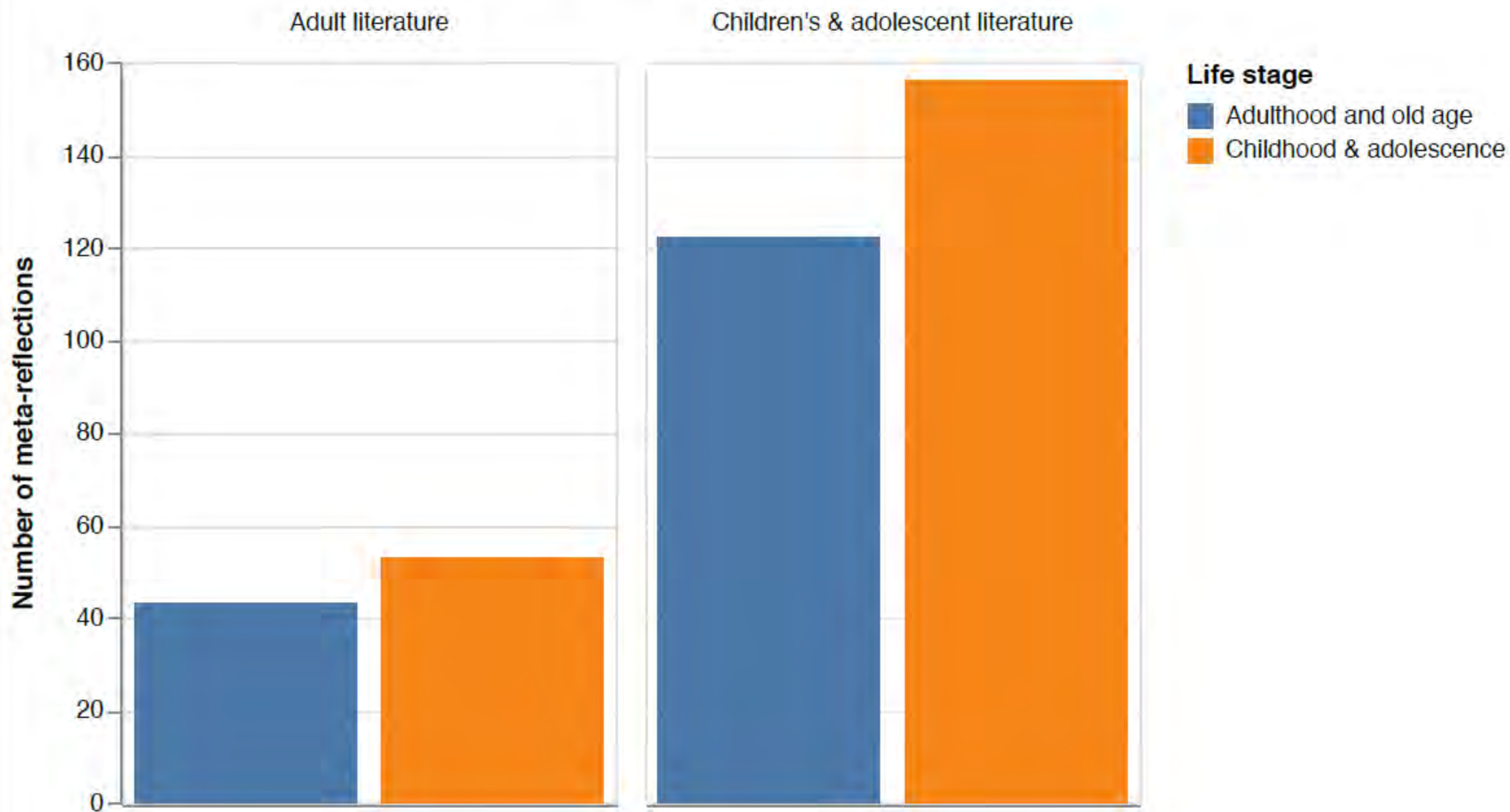


**About which age?**



**What is said?**

## Kind of literature





# METAREFLECTIONS IN ADULT LITERATURE

- When someone wants to leave they duck and crawl out **like a child** between the legs. (*De man met de hamer*)
- I cried **like a small child** at Efua's breasts (*De redder van Afrika*)
- Nasta recognized **the child in her** that looks with longing eyes at a birthday gift still wrapped. (*Het vogeltje van Amsterdam*)

# METAREFLECTIONS ABOUT ADULTHOOD

- You are acting like (a) grownup(s)!
- we walked like grownups: with no purpose (*Met de wind mee naar zee*)



# METAREFLECTIONS ABOUT ADULTHOOD

- And take the backsides, for example. Nobody considers as a twenty-year-old that he will one day be dragging half a pig behind him. (*De man met de hamer*)
- Could it be true? Would adult people be so terribly childish? (*Drie verschrikkelijke dagen*)



# METAREFLECTIONS ABOUT ADULthood

- I am never afraid, because that is not suited for grownups. (*Krassen in het tafelblad*)
- When you are an adult, you no longer want to play in the street. (*Grote mensen, daar kan je beter soep van koken*)
- grownups should take care of themselves (*Voor altijd samen, amen*)





# Susan Neiman Why Grow Up?



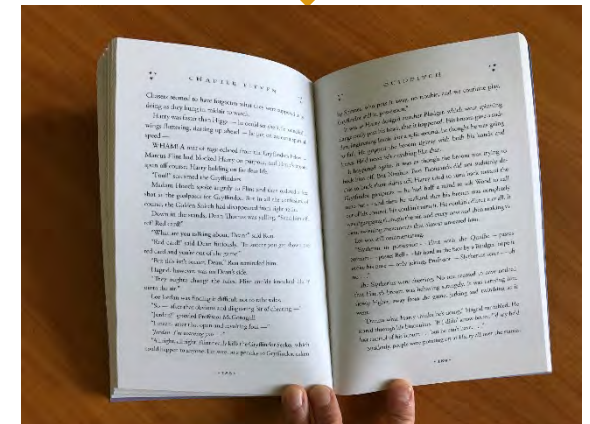
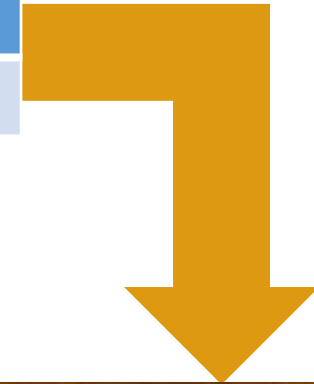
Subversive Thoughts  
for an Infatile Age

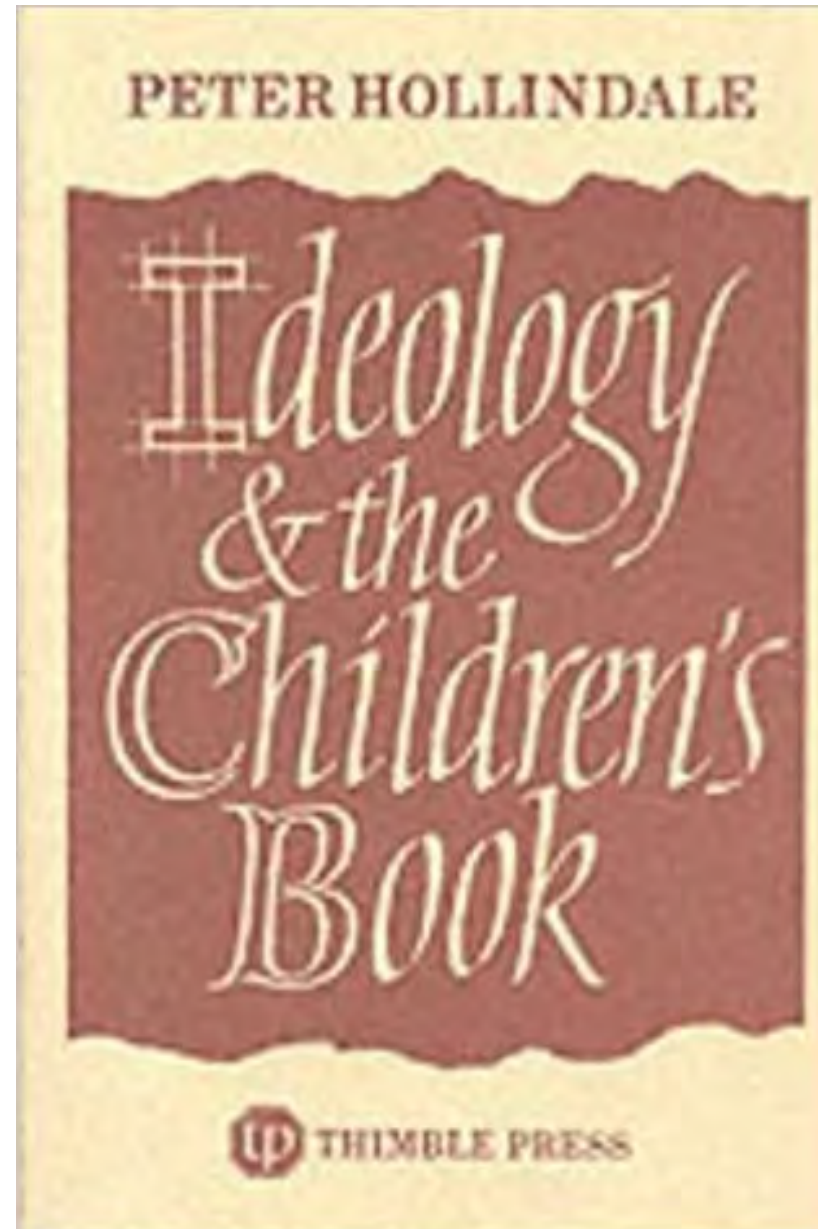
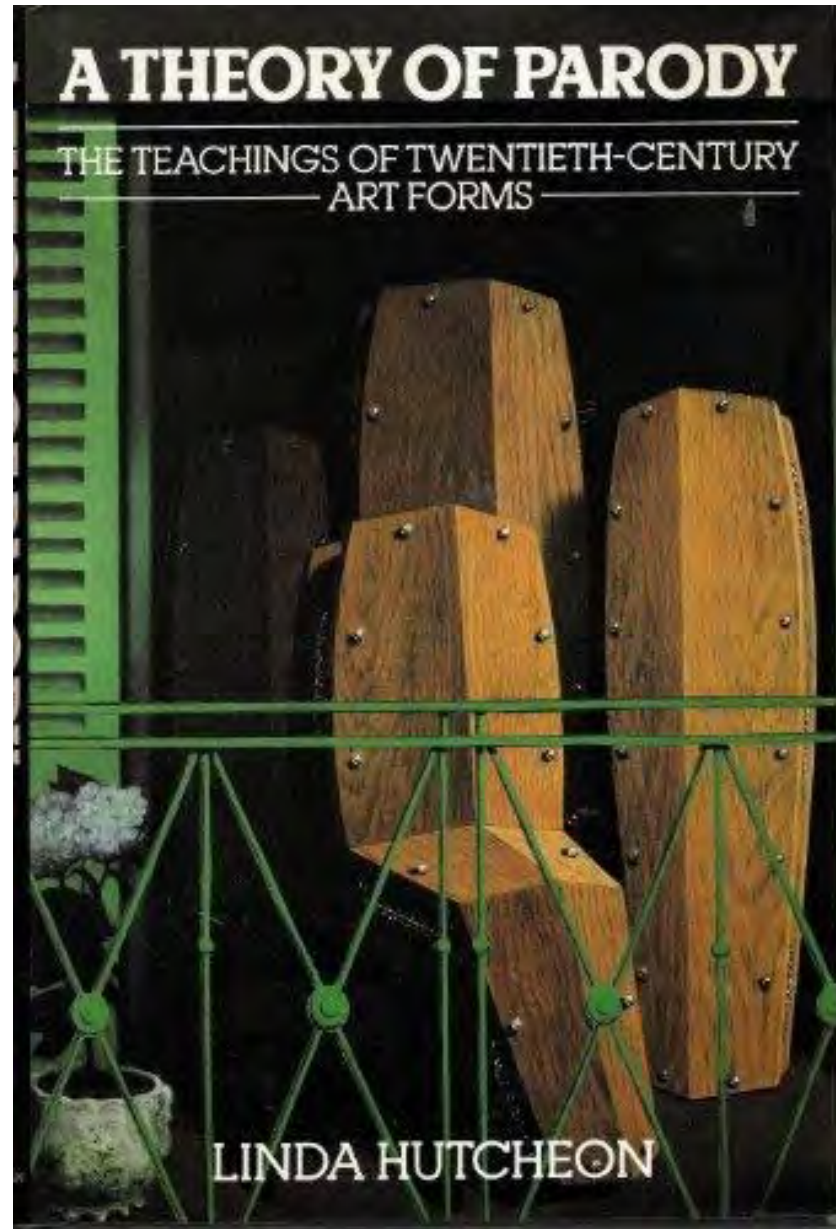


# DISTANT AND CLOSE READING



book	intended reader of book	speaker	age speaker	about	Value	Type	metareflections
Het land van de neushoorn-vleugel	12	Narrator	17	17 old adult	Negative	emotion experience	I dreamed like an inexperienced boy dreams of love. Old men laugh bitterly about dreams like that





<said direct="true"  
 who="madelief">"Granpa?"</said><said  
 direct="false">Madelief asks.</said>

ID	full name	Individual/group	species	gender	ethnicity	relation to protagonist	age	life stage	certainty
1	John	individual	human	male				adult	medium
2	Madelief van Houten	individual	human	female		parent		adult	medium
3	John	individual	human	male		protagonist	1		high
4	Jan	individual	human	male		sibling		adolescent	medium
5	John	group	human			brother		adult	high
6	Madelief van Houten	individual	human	female		parent		adult	medium

**Statistical analyses:** calculate weight and differences between word frequencies in child speech and adult speech

Jason Kessler's **Scattertext**







Search for term

zood

Term: zooo

child-adolescent frequency:

16 per 25,000 terms

4 per 1,000 docs

Some of the 92 mentions:

margot  
Dit is **zooo** waar!

narrator  
**Zooo** gaaf!

narrator  
Want grote jongens kunnen **zooo** stom doen.  
  
ik was **zooo** kwaad.  
  
Het is **zooo** moeilijk om niet racistisch te zijn!

narrator  
Want grote jongens kunnen **zooo** stom doen.  
  
ik was **zooo** kwaad.  
  
Het is **zooo** moeilijk om niet racistisch te zijn!

narrator  
Want grote jongens kunnen **zooo** stom doen.

narrator  
ik was **zooo** kwaad.  
  
Het is **zooo** moeilijk om niet racistisch te zijn!

narrator  
ik was **zooo** kwaad.

narrator  
' ik vind het **zooo** oenig, ik ontplof bijna.

narrator  
' ik vind het **zooo** oenig, ik ontplof bijna.

narrator

adult-oldadult frequency:

0 per 25,000 terms

0 per 1,000 docs

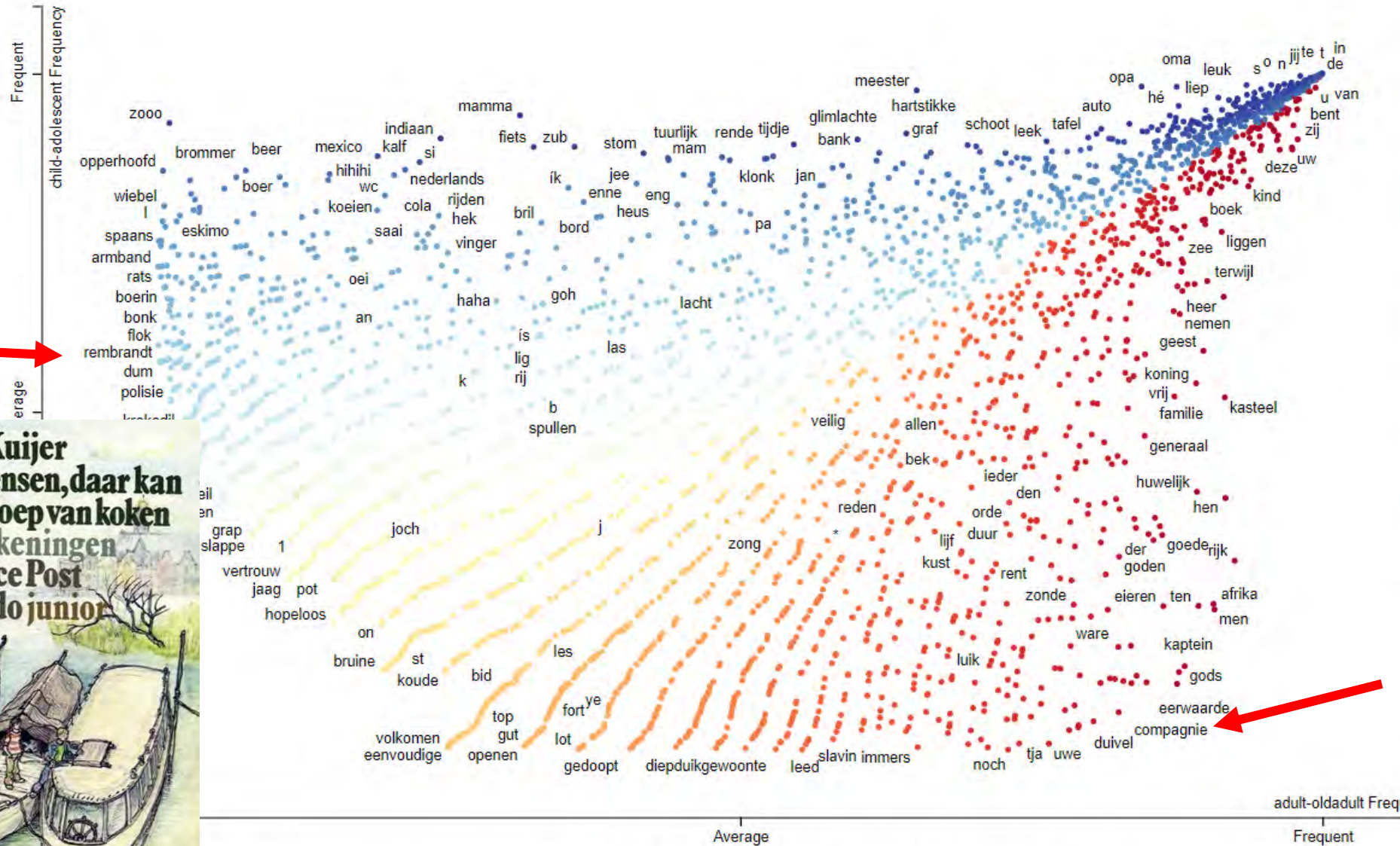
Some of the 1 mentions:

pardon  
'Zooo!'



# Top child-adolescent

meester  
mamma  
zooo  
opa  
oma  
vroeg  
zei  
riep  
moeder  
leuk  
keek  
liep  
indiaan  
hartstikke



child-adolescent document count: 17,846; word count: 157,340  
adult-oldadult document count: 18,580; word count: 271,517



Search for term

Type a word or two...

# Child

slome (lame one)  
schijterd (chicken)  
nietes (no way)  
rolmops (rollmop)

ruzie  
(fight)

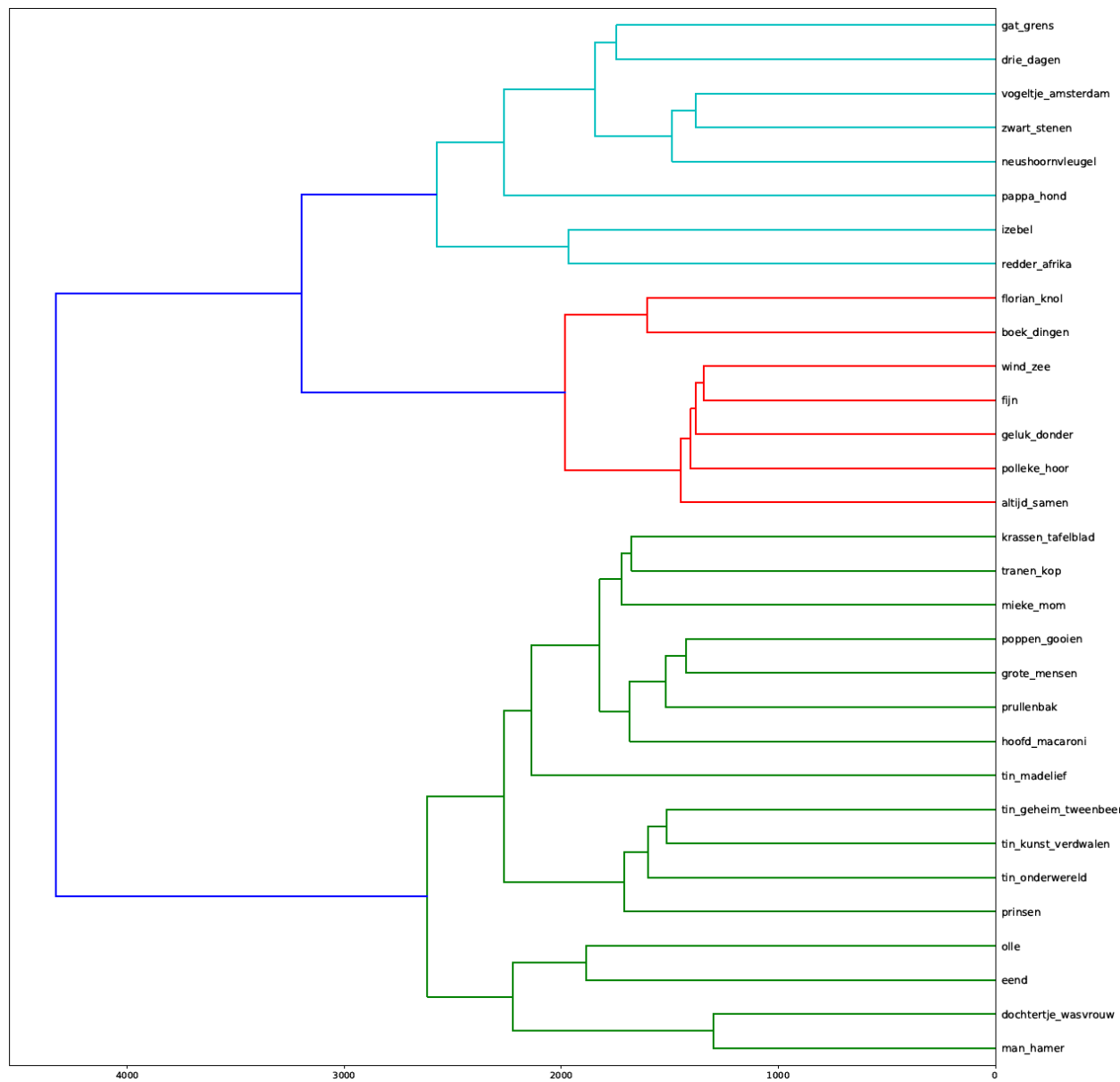
# Adult

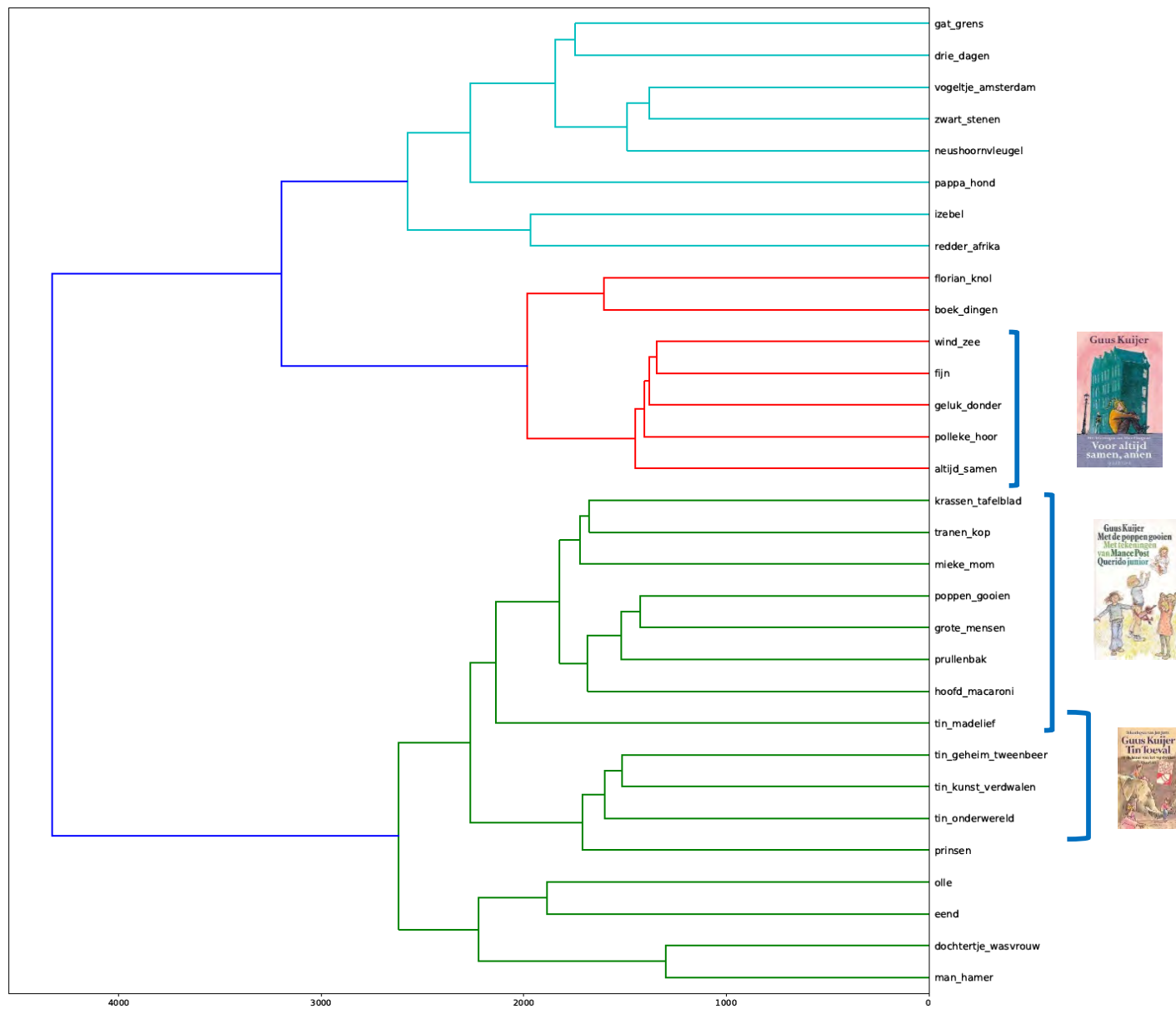
nietwaar (isn't it)  
bovendien (moreover)  
absoluut (absolutely)  
vertrouwen (trust)

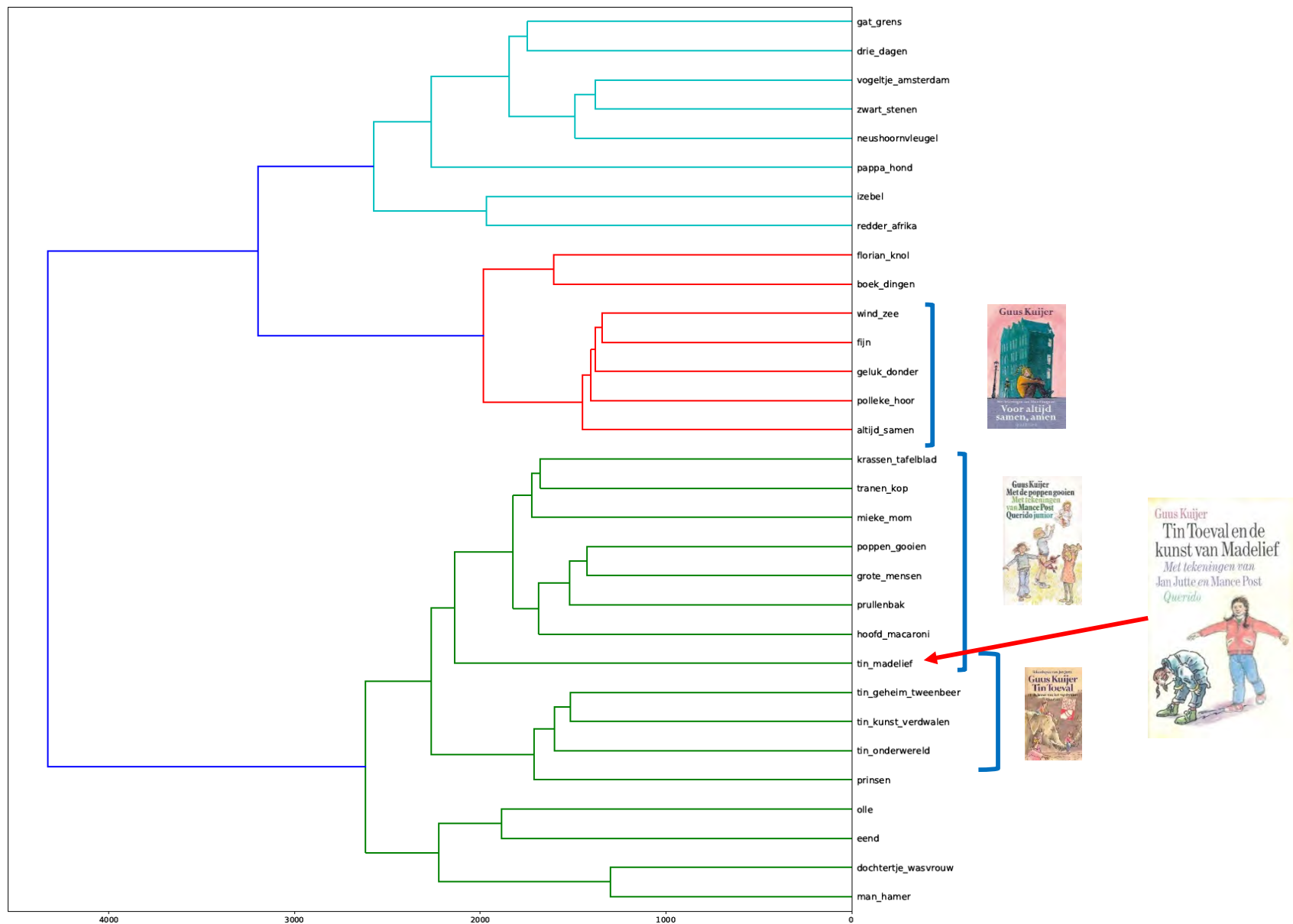
# STYLOMETRY

- entire oeuvre: 31 novels (fiction)
- raw textual material (not annotated)
- word frequencies and combinations (N-grams)
- “robust” results
- Python script with Sk-learn and Scipy
- 2000 most frequent words in corpus and proportional distribution in each book

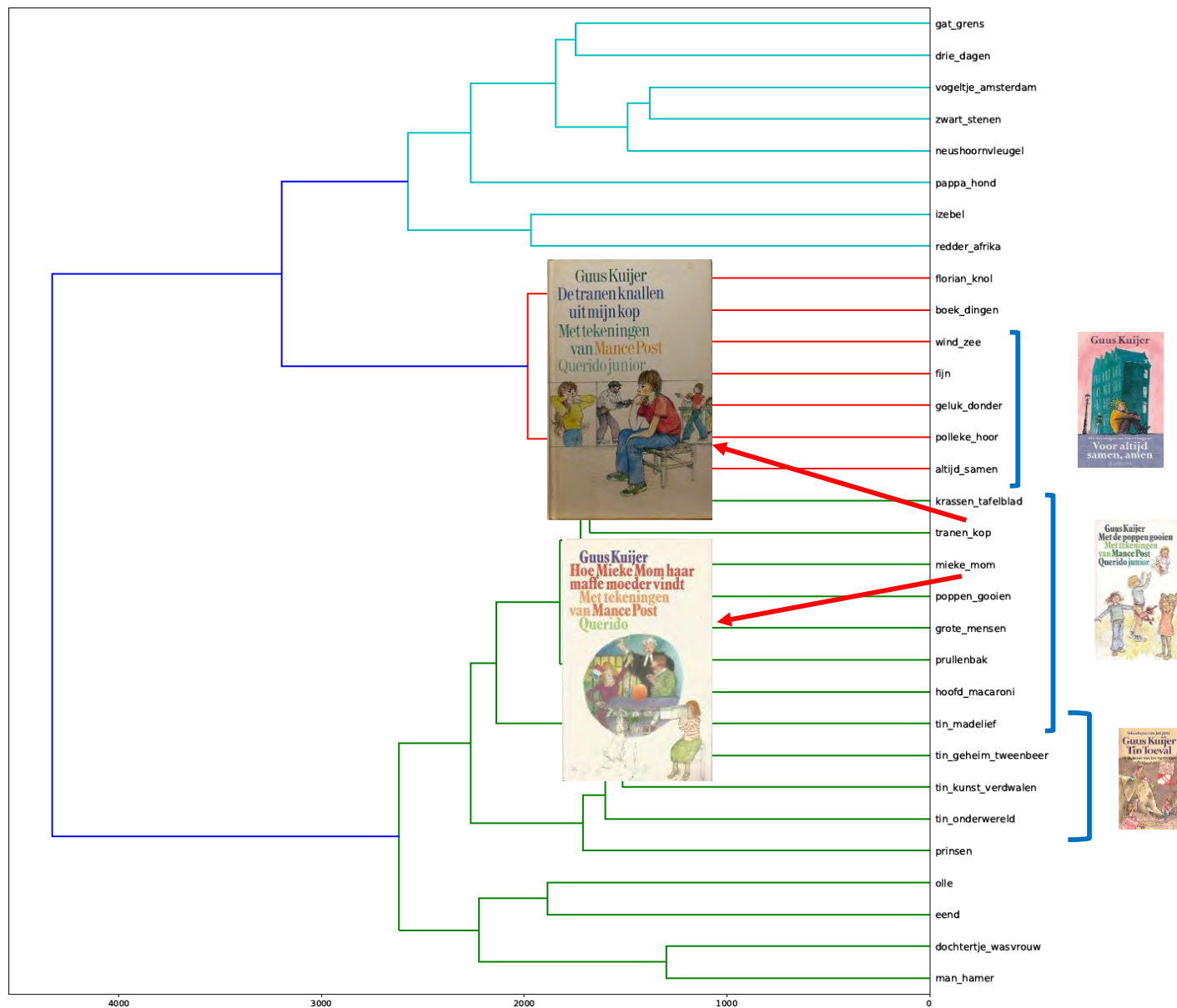


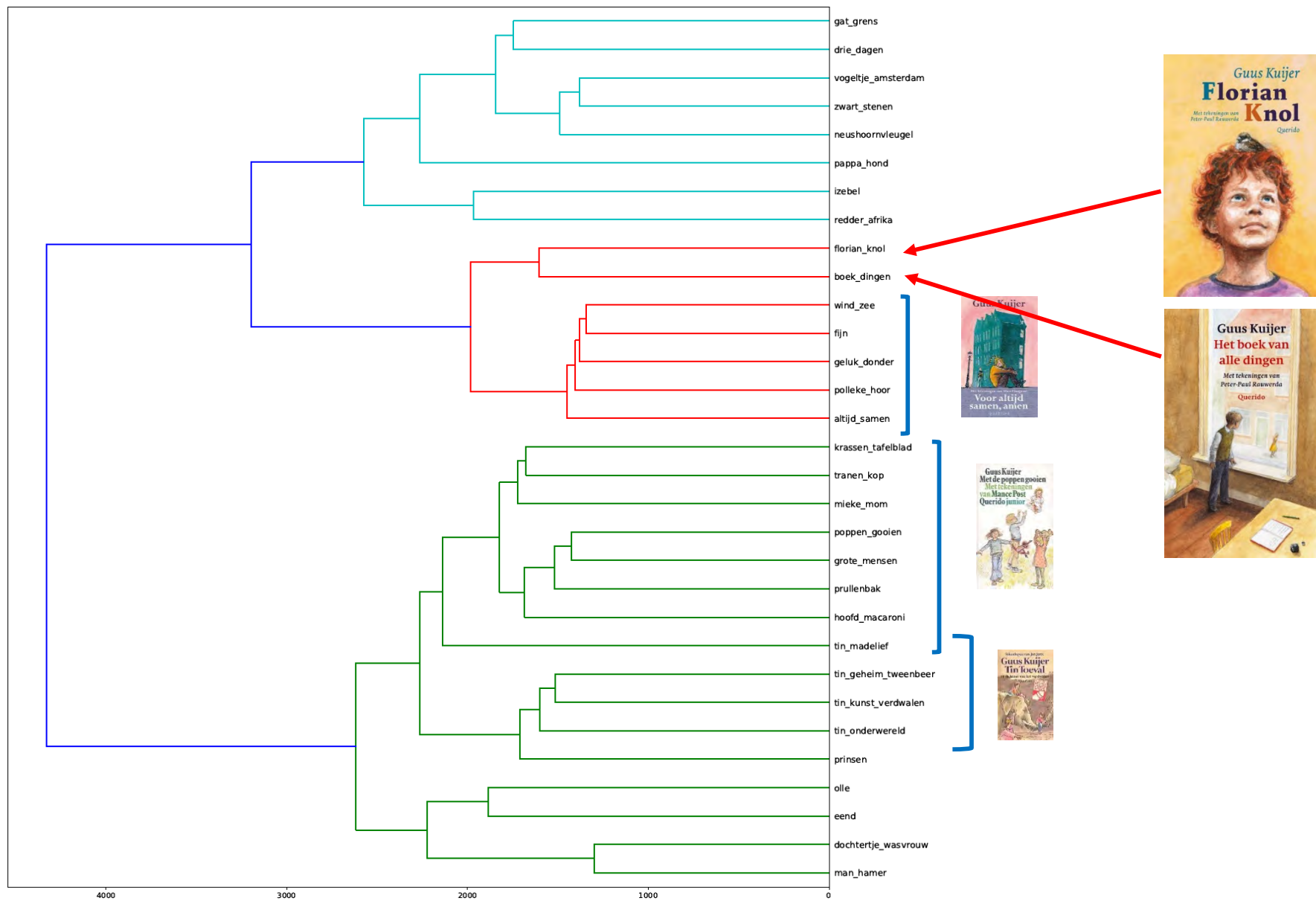


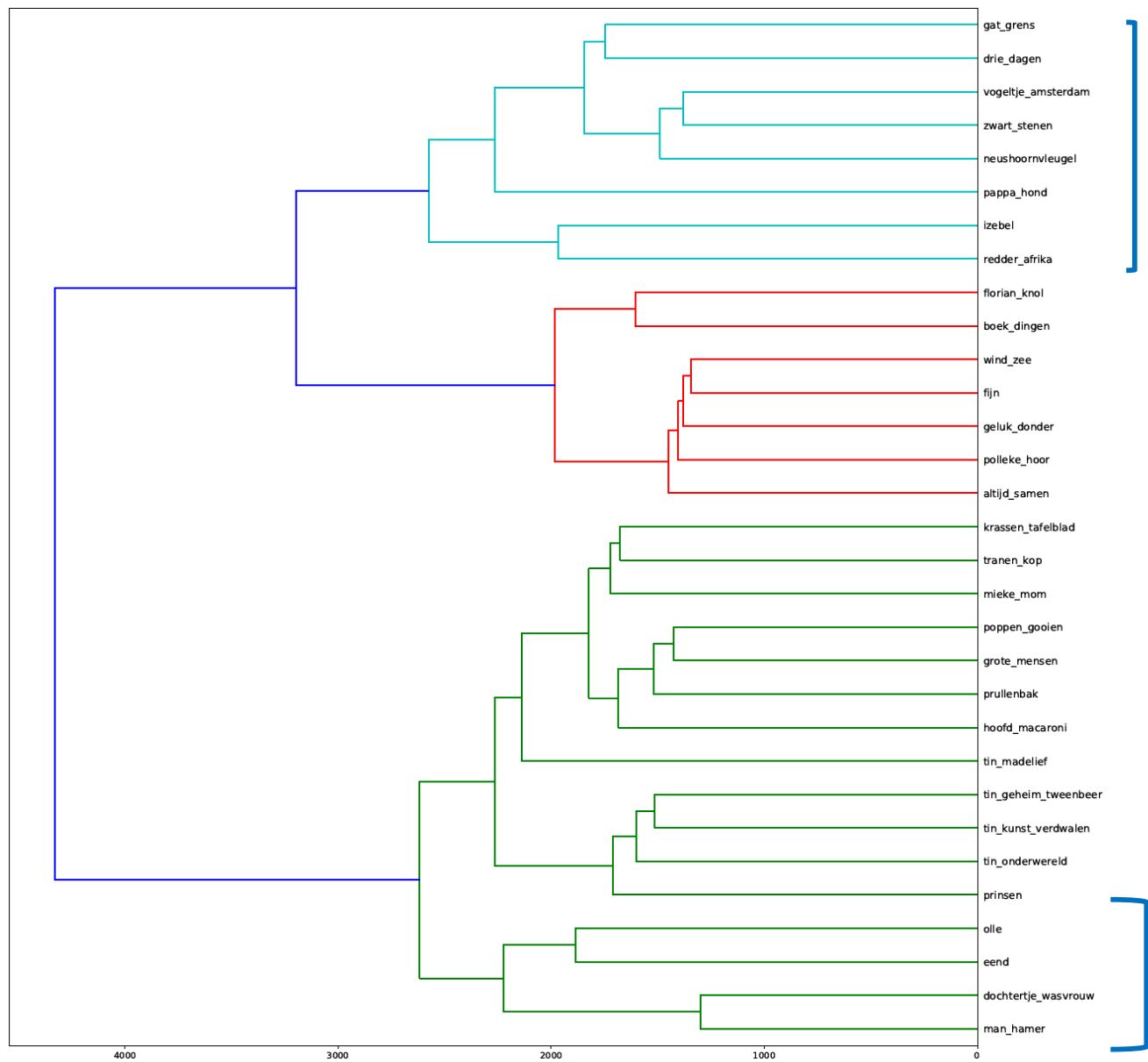


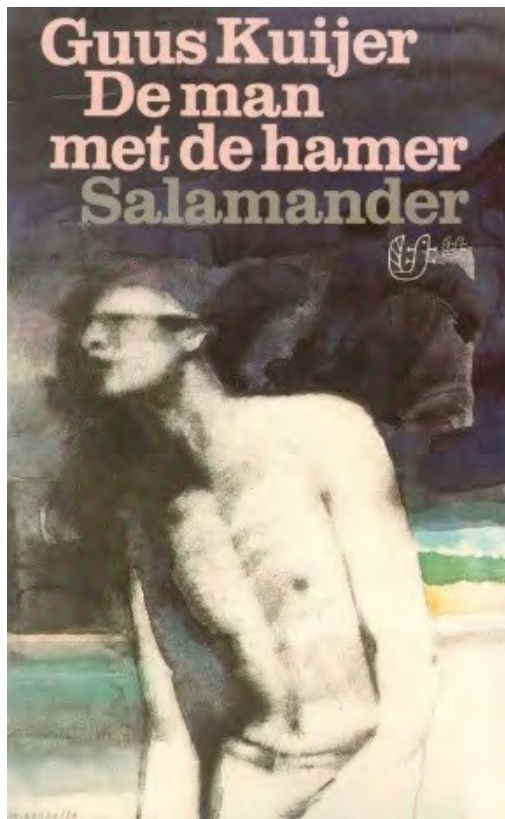










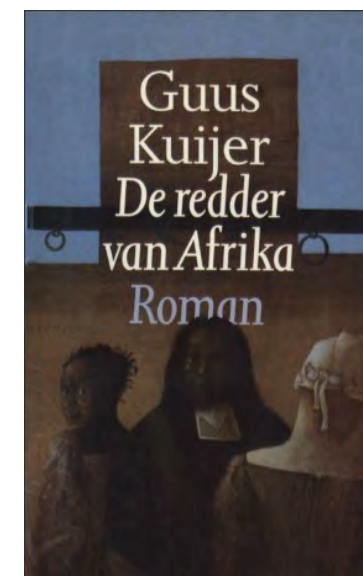
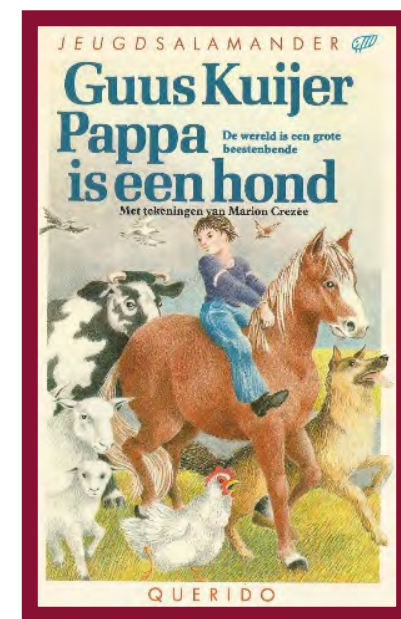
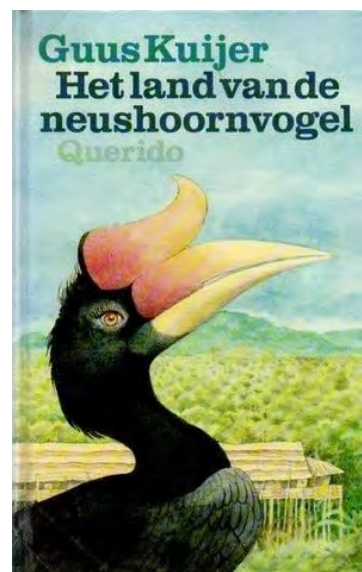
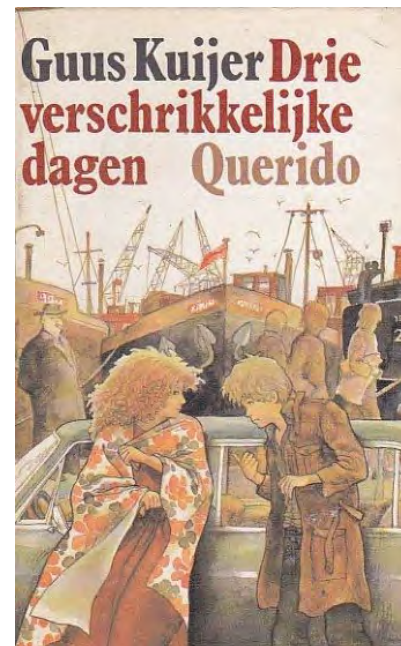
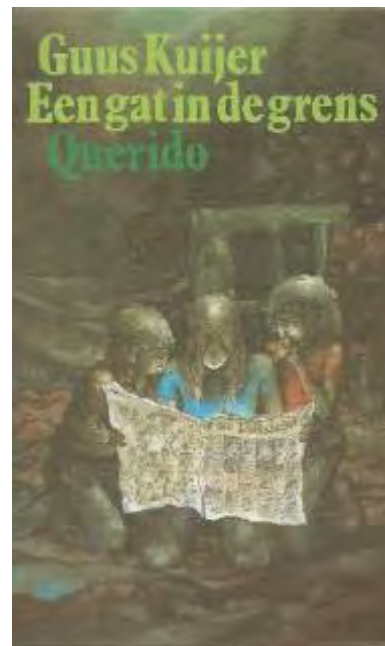
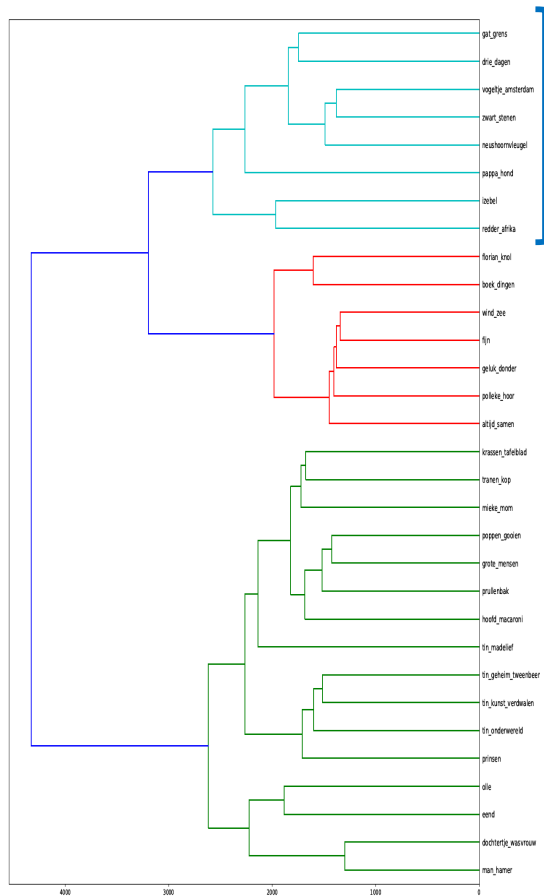




# OLLE

Dogs only fall in love when they are adult. And when adults fall in love, you know what happens. First a bit of sniffing is enough, but soon they want more. Adults are rather simple in that. Look, Olle has a willy of course and Dien has a pussy. I don't have to explain that, a child knows. And the willy has to go in the pussy of course.



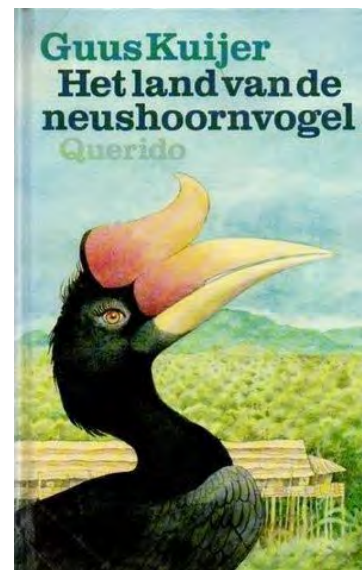
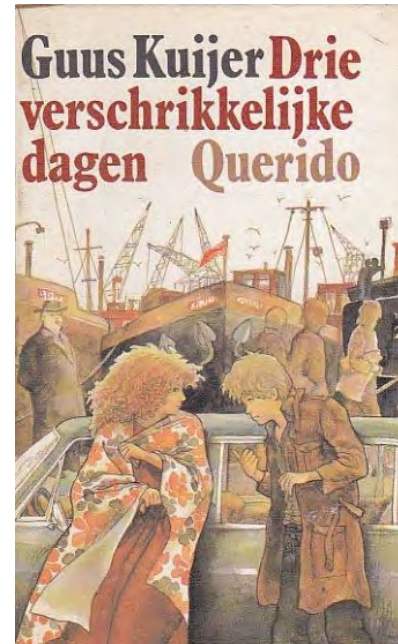
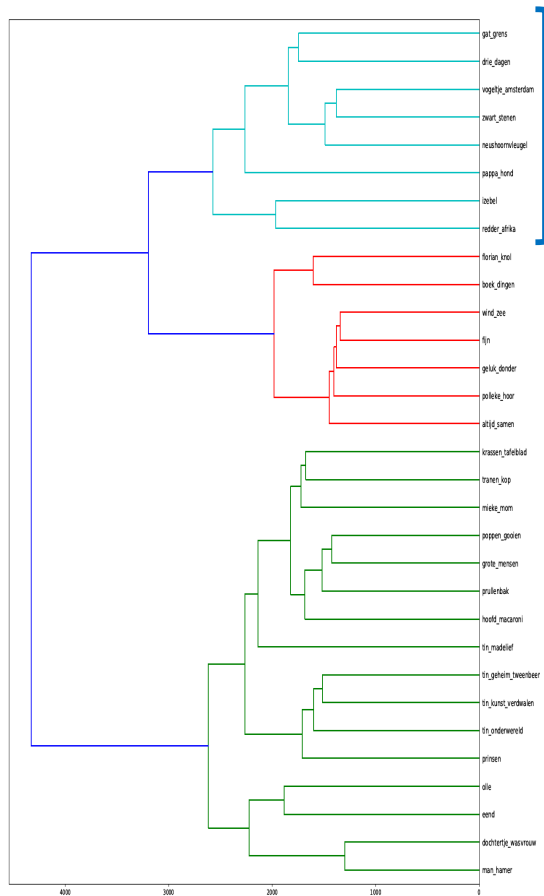


STEVEN CAMPE

The question is whether  
you help a child by  
offering such a story.









# FUTURE PLANS

- verify further results on larger scale
- sentiment analysis
- topic modelling
- Intersectionality e.g. laughter: hihihi vs hahaha
- priorities for close reading
- illustrations



# Constructing Age For Young Readers: A digital approach

**Vanessa Joosen**



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

