

Hokwerda's Child [2002] German / Danish / French



In der äussersten Finsternis, Piper Verlag, Munich, 2005, translated by Thomas Hauth; *La fille de Hokwerda*, Editions Gallimard, Paris, 2004, translated by Anita Concas; *Hokwerda datter*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2004, translated by Tim Kane.

Darkly scintillating romance

In the eighties, Oek de Jong's debut, *Opwaaiende zomerjurken* (*Billowing Summer Frocks*), became a genuine cult book for a whole generation of students. It was followed by the beautiful 'Roman' novel *Cirkel in het gras* (*Circle in the Grass*), after which silence reigned. The announced publication of De Jong's third novel, *Hokwerda's kind*, mesmerised the whole literary world in the Netherlands. And rightly so: he has issued a brilliant psychological novel that, at one stroke, has placed him among the foremost Dutch authors.

In *Hokwerda's kind*, the writer tells the story of a determined young woman, Lin Hokwerda, who loses herself in love. It is narrated with a broad vision yet with an extraordinary eye for detail. The novel opens with an oppressive scene: as a young girl, Lin Hokwerda is repeatedly thrown into the river by her father, who holds her by one arm and one leg and hurls her into the water that runs behind their house in the Friesian countryside. Every time after the rough splash into the water, she swims back to her father. Again and again she is flung back - until she almost drowns.

The shadow of this scene hangs above the entire book. With her mother and sister, Lin flees her 'untrustworthy' father at a young age. In her twenties, after a successful but prematurely broken sport career, she meets the man of her dreams. But the pattern of their love resembles that of the opening scene: Lin is consistently cast away by Henri but always comes back. When she meets Jelmer, a mild-mannered lawyer, and again falls in love, it appears, for a moment, that she can eradicate her fatal man from her life. However, she cannot quieten her restlessness and seeks out Henri once more. They explore the boundaries of responsibility, and have an affair. She herself turns out to be untrustworthy, just like her father.

In *Hokwerda's child*, De Jong allows his characters to reach the peaks of love in sensual, erotic scenes, banishing all threats for a moment. But, with great stylistic force, De Jong eventually carries Lin and Henri to the 'outer darkness', to the inevitable doom.

65.000 copies sold.

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