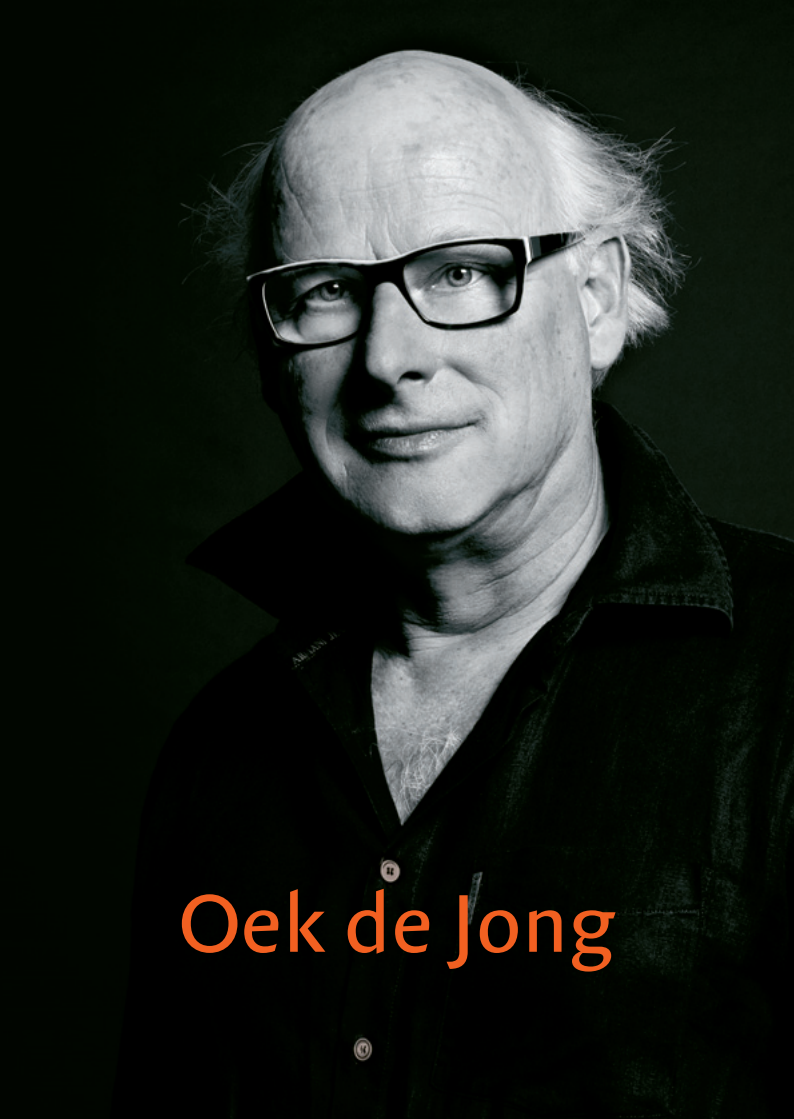

Oek de Jong


OEK DE
JONG PIER
EN OCEAAN
atlas contact

OEK DE JONG

PIER AND OCEAN

In *Pier and Ocean*, Oek de Jong chronicles the history of Abel Roorda, his parents and grandparents, and the immense changes in The Netherlands between the winter famine of 1944 and the new affluence of the 1960s. The novel is set in Amsterdam and in rural Friesland and Zeeland, parts of the country that were then still considered deeply provincial. The gripping scenes from the marriage of Abel's mother and father provide glimpses of love in a bygone age.

Atlas Contact 2012 **55,000 copies sold**
Fiction, 804 pages,

Rights sold: L'Harmattan (Hungary)
Sample translation available
Winner of the Belgian Golden Book Owl 2013
Winner of the Bordewijk Prize
Winner of the Zeeuwse Book Prize
Shortlisted for the Dutch Libris Literature Prize 2013
Longlisted for the AKO Literature Prize 2013

Pier and Ocean is a novel of the water that is so central to Dutch life, from still pools in peat bogs to the sea crashing through breakwaters onto the beaches of Zeeland. Like his father and grandfather before him, Abel Roorda is drawn to water in its many guises. *Pier and Ocean* is a novel of profound longing.

Press on *Pier and Ocean*:

"Oek de Jong's magnum opus. A stunning evocation of time gone by and an authentic portrait of the artist as a young man." –NRC *Handelsblad*

"A sweeping family history. *Pier and Ocean* is very likely to become the literary event of 2012." – *Vrij Nederland*

"Unquestionably Oek de Jong's finest work." – *Trouw*

"A masterful novel. De Jong has a slow, penetrating style of writing that never loses its light touch, and he is a master of describing emotion" – *Knack*

"De Jong is not a wrathful god looming over his characters. He makes them shine in all their vulnerability." – HUMO

"An elegy to the provincial family life that has vanished." – *De Groene Amsterdammer*

Oek de Jong (born 1952) is one of The Netherlands' best known prose-writers. He is the author of successful novels such as *Billowing Summer Dresses*, *Circle in the Grass* and *Hokwerda's Child*, which was nominated for the Dutch Libris Literature Prize and the Belgian Golden Book Owl. Half a million copies of his books have been sold, and his work has been translated into nine languages.

For more information about Oek de Jong's translated novels: www.oekdejong.nl/english

Press on Circle in the Grass

"Here, an incomprehensible fourteen years late, is Oek de Jong's wonderfully powerful novel about the most unstable feeling in the world – love."
– *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

"*Circle in the Grass* is considered one of the most important contemporary Dutch novels. And probably rightly so." – *Wiener Zeitung*

TRANSLATOR CHRISTIANE KUBY
on
Pier and Ocean

Es hat seine Zeit gedauert, aber jetzt habe ich *Pier en oceaan* zu Ende gelesen, und da ich ganz aus meinem subjektiven Erleben heraus sprechen darf, sage ich, dass es ein großartiges, ein hinreißendes Buch ist. Ja, es hat 800 Seiten, und ja, es hat nicht das, was man einen Plot nennt, zumindest nicht einen auffälligen, an der Oberfläche sichtbaren Plot. Und doch habe ich vergeblich auf den Moment gewartet, in dem sich Langeweile einstellen würde, ich war ja darauf vorbereitet, dass es "Längen" geben könnte... Aber sie kamen nicht, ich habe mich keinen Moment gelangweilt, im Gegenteil: Von mir aus hätte der Roman noch viel mehr Seiten haben dürfen!

Er wird nämlich von einer inneren Spannung getragen, die an keiner Stelle nachlässt. *Pier en Oceaan* ist ein Bildungsroman, ein nahezu klassischer Entwicklungsroman, dessen zeitlicher Bogen sich von den 50er Jahren bis zum Anfang der 70er Jahre spannt, und er führt uns in den Kern des Erlebens einzelner Figuren ebenso hinein wie in das Zeitgefühl einer Epoche, in der sich so vieles im Herzen der Gesellschaft veränderte. Nachkriegszeit, Sechziger Jahre, das war in Hol-

land anders als in Deutschland oder Frankreich, und doch ganz ähnlich, und in diesem Roman erleben wir die holländische Variante, erkennbar, individuell, und, das Individuelle übersteigend, auch die Revolutionierung des gesellschaftlichen, religiösen und politischen Lebens in Westeuropa.

Vor allem aber erleben wir die Entwicklung des jungen Abel Roorda vor dem Hintergrund seiner Zeit, und parallel dazu die Entwicklung seiner Mutter Dina, der ältestes Kind er ist und unter deren unglücklicher Ehe mit dem innerlich immer abwesenden Vater Lieuwe er leidet. Oek de Jongs Stil ist malerisch und musikalisch zugleich, seine Fähigkeit, Situationen, Menschen, Orte so zu schildern, dass man sich mühelos in sie hineinversetzt, ist erstaunlich und ein Zeichen dafür, dass dieser Autor sein Handwerk versteht. Die Sensibilität, mit der er jede Szene, jede zwischenmenschliche Regung, jede Wetterlage, jede atmosphärische Spannung anzurühren und heraufzubeschwören versteht, ist für den Leser ein Genuss. Auch die Verknüpfung der individuellen Schicksale, denen man mit aufmerksamem Herzen folgt, weil der Autor einen schon von der ersten Seite an für sie gewinnt, und die natürlich "den Plot" des Romans ausmachen, mit der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung ist meisterhaft subtil gemacht. [..]

Pier en oceaan hat das Niveau großer Literatur, die

jeden echten Leser mitreißt, egal wie alt er ist, ob er sich mit der Epoche oder den Figuren identifizieren kann oder ob er etwas ihm Fremdes kennenlernt.

PIER EN OCEAAN
by
Oek de Jong

Excerpt from Pier and Ocean pp.791-793

Two days after his confession they had zipped their sleeping bags back together in the tent and made love. The first time fast and fierce, then again, this time quiet and slow. Abel didn't know if it had helped. Neither did Digna. She'd turned on her side, her back to him, felt for her insect repellent and rubbed some on, then fallen asleep.

Abel lay awake. He heard the waves breaking at the foot of the cliff, the water splashing up and cascading down onto the rocks, the sea withdrawing with a rattling of pebbles on the beach, the next wave breaking with the same dull drone. After his confession, Digna hadn't wanted to touch him for two days, even preferring not to look at him. The turning point had come this evening. Perhaps you needed it, with a girl like

that, she'd said. A while later, after she'd put on her jumper, pulling her hair roughly out of the neck hole: and perhaps it's good for us in the end too. Her rage had flared up again as they made love.

He listened to the breaking of the waves, the rattling of the pebbles. Slowly the sweat dried on his body. Slowly the emotions ebbed away. He felt even more miserable, more guilty, now that he'd seen Digna's helpless love, now he'd felt her arms and legs around him again, now he'd heard her come. Digna. Enraged and in love at the same time. He closed his eyes and saw Denise. She was still there. He pushed the memories away. But then – when Digna seemed fast asleep – he let her back in. Denise with her sorrowful eyes. His body had yearned for her. He could still feel that yearning. Come on, come on, oh jesusandmary, come on. Her husky voice. Twice he'd driven to the station to take the train to Vlissingen without actually going. The day before departure he'd gone home after dinner at the Maelcotes' and driven past the station again. The train from Vlissingen had just arrived, as if it was meant to be. It was just after a storm. Steam rose from the street, a damp warmth hung under the trees on the station square. He saw Denise emerge from the station, a baggy nylon jacket over her miniskirt, a shoulder bag, a shopping bag. An unknown girl he knew.

She stopped a man and asked him for a light. The man gave her a light and made himself scarce, as if frightened by her. He saw her cross the empty, steaming station square and disappear slowly but surely under the trees of the avenue into town. He'd wanted to follow her, speak to her. But it was impossible.

Abel listened to the waves at the foot of the cliff. The dull drone. The water splashing up and crashing down. He drifted further, thinking of his father and mother, his brothers and sisters in the bungalow far away, the boat he wasn't sailing, the white hull in the dark reeds. The new moon he'd seen rise this evening had risen there too... Toni, as he'd last seen him: lying on his stomach in the saloon of the sloop, a fat black fly on the blond hair at the back of his head. He'd heard nothing more from him... Dave, upper body naked, jeans sliding down. Anja, strands of hair over a blanket, a piece of her harem trousers, two solid bare feet. Denise's warm body under the sleeping bag in the forecabin. It seemed long ago... Still the fear was there as he thought back to his journey over the dark shallows. Having just clambered on board, as he removed his muddy shoes, he'd seen the rising water flow around the ship, dead calm, glistening... Stop thinking about it... Stop thinking about it... Watse and Lena, at a campsite somewhere, lying around in their tent

playing cards half the day... Job practised the cello eight hours a day... Danker was now helping his father on the land... He and Digna in a tent on a cliff in Finistère... Everyone far away, alone. Even Digna, lying just beside him. Images of the sea drifted through his head: swirling between the rocks, splashing high in the glare of the evening sun. An unknown coast, but immediately familiar. A place where he wanted to be, and Digna too... Long strands of seaweed, washed up on the beach, stretching metres long. That's the ocean... A long train of seaweed wound around my body, a bunch of it on my head. That'd make me feel cheerful... Might it cure me? But what of? A bunch of seaweed on my head, my whole body wound up in it... A beautiful stone, found on the beach. That raises expectations, vaguely, for a second, less than a second. Especially when it's a stone she's found and given you... Despite her rage she still gave me a stone... Pubic hair spreads the scent of her excitement... You'd hoped your life would be different in another country, but it's the same... It'll be the same everywhere.

OEK DE JONG
HOKWERDA'S KIND

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 "un-

Atlas Contact 2004 **65,000 copies sold**
Fiction, 444 pages

Rights sold: Germany by Piper Verlag and in France by Editions Gallimard

trustworthy" father at a young age. In her twenties, after a successful but prematurely broken sports 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 another affair. She herself turns out to be untrustworthy, just like her father.

In *Hokwerda's kind*, 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.

Press on *Hokwerda's Child*

"The prologue of this novel is, in itself, a cruel, unforgettable little tale..." – *Le Temps*

"In *Hokwerda's Child*, Oek de Jong explores domestic violence. An astonishing novel."
– *Journal du Dimanche*

"Sensational novel [..] Lin Hokwerda drifts like one of Lars von Trier's heroine" – *Le Figaro*

"We are still haunted by this story long after reading it." – *Elle*

"An unsettling and fascinating novel by an author whose every book is an event in the Netherlands." – *Le Monde*

NOVELIST MARCEL MÖRING
on
Hokwerda's Child
to his English publisher (2002)

This isn't something I often do, but I would like to draw your attention to a book that has just been published in The Netherlands. It is a book by a writer I have admired ever since his debut in the late seventies and who, after a long period of virtual silence, has come forward with an absolutely breathtaking novel called *Hokwerda's Child*.

Oek de Jong, that's his name, is fifty-ish and has made his name with two novels: *Opwaaiende zomerjurken* (*Billowing Summer Dresses*) and *Cirkel in het gras*

(*Circle in the grass*). The last one is one of my favourite Dutch novels of the past century. The first rapidly reached a hundred thousand copies and was very much the critical and commercial success of its time. *Circle in the grass* was an even bigger hit.

Now, what about this wonderful book?

It is in a sense a return to qualities of the Russian novel, in terms of narrative, treatment and style. It is no way "heavy", but the story is told with intense attention to detail, musicality and imagery. Just to illustrate how well this works, I would like tell you about the strange apprehension I felt after reading the prologue, which vividly shows us the image of a young child, Lin, who is over and over again tossed into the black water of a stream by her father, Hokwerda. It is a game, that father and daughter are playing (how far can he throw her), and without telling us, De Jong makes it absolutely clear that there is something very deep and very dark and ominous about it. The child shivers. It is the close of day. The water looms dark and deep. And she keeps asking her father to throw her in, again, and again, and again. This about trust, surrender, danger and safety. And then, the child is tired, very tired, she doesn't surface anymore. Hokwerda stares into the deep darkness of the water, looking for bubbles, movement, anything, and goes in to rescue her.

Saved, the girl ask: “Be it far, dad?”

The prologue is almost too much. After reading it I felt drawn to the prologue and just couldn’t get myself to read it again. When, after an week, I finally summoned up the courage to do it, I was as touched and horrified as the first time. That doesn’t happen very often to me.

What is so special about the prologue and the way it leads you into the actual narrative, is that it grips you by the throat and leaves you with no illusions whatsoever about what is to come: this is going to be a story about fate and doom. But as Lin’s story gets on the way, everything changes, and we dip into the life of sensual, self-assured young woman who relishes a good roll in the hay (sorry to be so corny), carefully picks her lovers and knows how to surrender and be her own woman at the same time. Life, vivid, bright full, that is what the rest of the book seems to be.

The narrative encompasses two stages in her life and, effectively, two lovers. The first one is tough and sensual Henry from Amsterdam, a welder who works on an oil rig on the North Sea. She leaves him for the second one: a barrister, from her native Frisia, a cultured and well read man, the kind of man you want her stay with. But the raw passion that was between her and Henry, their mutual surrender, the inexplicable magnetism they exert on each other, draws her back to her first

lover, even after he has horribly betrayed her.

Back with Henry, with child, they pick up where they once left off. One night, out for the weekend on his little boat, he goes to town to buy provisions, and doesn't come back. She is, as they say, great with child and waits as the evening falls. She lights the lanterns, broods about what might have happened and gets more and more frightened as the hours go by. When he eventually comes back, after a long, frantic night alone, she sits up, hears him entering the cabin and kills him.

It was a story about fate and doom after all.

And it is a story that is beautifully told. I'm not the only one to recognize the qualities of this heart-wrenching novel. It has been in the top ten since it was published and is bound to be high on the lists of the jury's for next year's big prizes. After some ten years of silence an writer has come back on the scene to sweep the Dutch readers of their feet.

I would very much like to urge you to read the translated sample that is available at Atlas Contact and consider it for publication. I feel that publishing this book is not just buying the rights to *Hokwerda's Child* (and a backlist off two equally beautiful books), but also an investment into a writer who will continue to grow and grow and grow."

HOKWERDA'S KIND

by

Oek de Jong

Prologue

That evening Hokwerda slung his daughter, time after time, over the border of reeds along the Ee. He grabbed her by wrist and ankle, lifted her thin body, swung it back and forth until it had enough momentum, then slung it off over the reeds. On her back, with a look half-fearful, half-ecstatic, the girl flew to meet the water, seeming at the highest point of her flight to hang motionless in the air for a full moment, then fell with a shout, disappeared from sight and hit the water with a smack.

It was a still summer's evening, and after each smack the stillness sounded even deeper. The water of the Ee murmured contentedly after a long, hot day. The sun was low in the sky, the trees in the yard were casting long shadows. From the pastures came the bawling of cattle that wanted milking, from far away the dull and regular thumping of the machine used to turn the hay. In the trees jackdaws carried on their conversation.

After his throw, Hokwerda walked along the high wall of reeds to the landing, where he could see her com-

ing: the little head raised anxiously, the hurried strokes, quick as a pollywog. Of his two girls, this one was the apple of his eye. Yes, the little one's the apple of my eye, he sometimes said to whoever would listen, and at the words "apple of my eye" he always choked up. Hokwerda was like that. He tried not to say it, because it summoned up too much emotion, something came over him. But sometimes he *had* to say it: apple of my eye, the apple of my eye, and then he'd choke up. At this moment too, that was what she was, swimming towards him in the evening light. Even from far away he could hear her panting. At the dock she began treading, her churning legs visible through the water.

The girl looked up at her father and tried not to see his bandaged right hand.

That morning she had risen early, the way she often did. Halfway down the stairs she'd stopped in her tracks. On the wall in the hallway were streaks, reddish-brown streaks, as though someone had tried to hold himself up there by one hand, a dirty hand, then slipped to the floor. While she stared at it, she remembered how she'd woken from the noise and lay listening with her head off the pillow. She walked through the hallway to the kitchen. In the back door, a pane was broken, the glass was still on the floor.

Once outside in the dewy grass, it came after her. She crossed the sloping lawn to the water first. The reeds weren't moving yet. She could hear the birds hiding in it – they were tucked up together in there, busy as could be. But the reeds still stood motionless. From one moment to the next there could be wind, and then the reeds would start their hissing. Sometimes she was there when it happened: that there was suddenly wind. She walked to the vegetable garden. The lid of low glass, where the cucumbers grew, was propped open. She stuck her hand in beneath it: it was warmer there. She went to the rhubarb to see the sparkling cups of water at the base of the big leaves. More moisture had collected at one leaf than at the other. Individual drops of dew on the leaf itself were round or almost round, and she pushed them gently with her fingertip to make them roll down, into the sparkling cup. Usually she went into the tool shed too, just for the smell: that dampish air where she could make out dried earth, the smell of her father's corduroy jacket, of gasoline, and of the leather straps on his clogs. That morning she skirted the shed. She followed the path along the water. But even at the horses, the horses walking slowly towards her across the pasture, it came after her, it loomed at her back. When she got home from school that afternoon the house smelled of paint: the

wall in the hallway had been whitewashed.

Treading water, treading that deep, empty water, the girl looked up to him, waiting for him to hold out his hand. She panted. The evening sun rested on her face, across her eyes the strands of hair she didn't dare to brush away. Hokwerda waited. She had her mother's eyes. Those big, slightly bulging eyes that made him go soft.

"*Wie it heech, heit?*"

They spoke Frisian together, even though his wife didn't like it.

"*Ja, it wie heech, famke, mar it koe noch heger.*"

Finally he stuck out his hand to her, his bandaged right hand, which after a moment's hesitation she grasped with both hands. Hokwerda seized one of her wrists – she had to hold on tight – and swung her up onto the dock. He wanted to make his daughter strong. Water dripped from her swimsuit, her baggy swimsuit. She was his skinny grasshopper, the one who refused to grow at all. Why? She was almost eight now; people thought she was six. Why did she stay little while the other one flourished and grew? She glanced up at him, timid. Looking for something to do with her hands, she whisked the hair away from her face. Her limbs were all trembling. Seven or eight times already he'd slung her over the border of reed,

with all his might. Smacking onto the water like that hurt.

"Ready to take a rest now, girlie?"

It sounded teasing. He saw her steel herself, little as she was. No, she didn't need a rest. Three deep breaths, she said (as he'd taught her to say), and began taking three deep breaths, while behind them a rowboat slid by, its outboard plugging away – Hokwerda glanced over his shoulder, greeting with an abrupt nod – tracing its bow wave across the broad water, making the reeds shake and bow. Then she took three deep breaths and ran away to "the spot", the spot where they did their trick. She could really run. Hokwerda adored her. She was so light, she moved so lightly and easily. Life hadn't left any of its heaviness in her yet, heaviness he was beginning to feel. There was no weight in her yet. Light as a feather she was, really light as a feather, and always full of good spirits.

But when he got to her, in the shadow of two tall elms, that uncontrollable thing came over him again, and it grew stronger when he felt her thin wrist, her slender ankle in his hands. Crush them, he could crush them just like that. He smiled at her. They were going to do their trick again. The pendulum movement began. Her little body, tense at first, relaxed: she surrendered. She let her head and her long hair hang, she yelled and

looked around her the whole time, still observing, fascinated by the picture of that world standing on its head – with her father as unyielding middle point. Hokwerda speeded up the movement, shouted something to her, teasingly, then let her go. In a thrash of arms and legs she flew over the tufts of reed, up, seemed to hang motionless for a moment, then fell and was gone. Hokwerda only half-heard the crude smack she made when she hit water. His head pounded, painfully, so painful it was as though his skull was bursting. His eyes misted over.

Walking along the reeds, hurrying now – he couldn't hear her swimming – he looked at the low, rambling house, the two old workers' cottages he'd bought and torn through the wall to make one. It was as though a huge cloud of doom hung over his house and yard, despite the peacefulness of the evening, as though he himself was surrounded by doom, as though it came steaming out of him. He didn't care anymore. It actually did him good to have that uncontrollable thing break loose in him. If something had to happen, let it happen now.

The back door of the house flew open.

"Stop it! Stop it right now, you idiot!"

Hokwerda ignored his wife. She disappeared into the house, but left the door open.

At the dock he waited for his daughter. Thirty, forty meters she had to cover each time, because of a bend the river made here. In the village further up a car crossed the bridge, the planks rattled beneath its tires. Then it was still again. Now he could hear his daughter's panting. She kept her eyes fixed on him. He knew he needed to look at her to boost her spirits: she was tired, almost done for, it cost her more and more effort each time to reach the landing. But Hokwerda didn't look at her. His gaze slid down almost covetously to his rowboat, prim and proper as always, not a single blade of grass on its scrubbed planking, and to the outboard engine, the old Johnson he'd got running again, to the oars, the corf, the rods, the poles for his nets. No one was allowed in his boat. The girl was the only one he ever took with him, and sometimes the other one too, so as not to seem unfair. But he preferred going out alone.

There she was, panting, treading water, in her face those strands of hair she didn't dare to wipe away. Hokwerda waited. Once again he waited before reaching out his hand. With his clog he could shove her little head under water like that, hold it under water till she floated there lifeless. Right now she was still his daughter, his. If his wife carried out her threat, he'd have lost her, for good. Shove that little head under.

Once he'd drowned her, she'd be floating under the dock then, he'd have to drown those other two, holding them under water with one hand on each head, and finally he'd have to throw himself in too, with a stone, with the outboard tied to his ankles.

He broke out in a panicky sweat.

"*Was dit de hoogste, heit?*"

Hokwerda bent all the way over, farther than he had to, lifted her with both hands from the water, and in one and the same movement set her on his arm, dripping and everything. The girl was gasping for breath. Her heart hammered against her soft ribcage, so hard he could feel it against his own chest. Her teeth were chattering, though she tried not to let them.

"Are you going to cut it out now!" he heard the screaming behind him. "Are you going to cut it out, or what!"

His wife's voice blared across the water, and he hated that voice. He didn't answer. Two jackdaws flew up cawing from the elms. Hokwerda held his child pressed against him. The cool water soaking his shirt refreshed him. He whispered to her and tried to look her in the eye. But she didn't want to look into his eyes. Something in her body resisted.

"I bet you feel like quitting now, don't you, girlie?"

His voice sounded quiet, seductive. His voice didn't

sound good. The girl felt that. She looked down, at his big hands, the black grime of the garage still under his nails (there was something wrong with that), at his clogs, at the water slapping dully against the flanks of the rowboat. She was dizzy. She smelled her father's strong smell. She wanted to be with him.

"Call it quits?"

She shook her head.

"I can do it again."

It sounded like she was offering herself up. Her father's hand holding hers, she walked back to the spot behind the reeds. The shadow beneath the elms made her shiver, and the rustling of the trees made her feel suddenly alone. She stepped on a stone and hurt herself. The invisible water filled her with fear; every time she came up she felt so small in the broad channel.

Hokwerda picked her up. He couldn't help it. He felt something go wrong, go completely wrong, but he couldn't stop it. It overcame him. He heard the jackdaws cawing.

One more time she flew through the air, her stomach sucked in, no longer proud of what she dared, blank almost. She smacked down on the water. A tearing sound went past her ears. Then it was quiet and peaceful around her. Her hair fanned out, she could still feel

that, and it made her glad. The light fell into the water in slanting bundles, and in those bundles it swirled. She did nothing anymore, and sank away. With her heel and then her thigh she landed on the velvet-soft mud, that rose in clouds. The water went murky. She looked up to where it was lighter. Nothing more could happen to her now.

Only when she heard a motor coming did the girl begin moving again, kicking, and rose to the top. When she broke the surface and came out of the silence into the noise of evening, there was a boat beside her, dark, and she was lifted up. He was so far away, her father. How long? Suddenly she could feel him again: his warm body, his strong neck, his chest, his hands on her back, especially his warmth was what she felt, his warm body. Now she was with him. She let herself sink away again, her chin on his shoulder, water still coming from her mouth. Like a little monkey she clung to him, her legs wrapped around his waist. Above the noise of the idling motor, the child's coughing sounded across the water.

Translated by Sam Garrett

"Oek de Jong is not only on a par with Mulisch and Nooteboom, he is also younger, heftier, more ironic and precise. It was about time he was discovered."
– *Neue Züricher Zeitung* on *Circle in the Grass*

Uitgeverij Atlas Contact

Prinsengracht 911-915
1017 KD Amsterdam

Postbus 13
1000 AA Amsterdam

T +31 (0)20 524 98 00
F +31 (0)20 622 36 97

Rights department
Hayo Deinum
senior rights manager
hdeinum@atlascontact.nl
M +31 6 29 01 34 29

Design: Wim ten Brinke
Photography author: Annaleen Louwes
Lithography: Bert van der Horst, BFC

www.atlascontact.nl
@AtlasContact
www.facebook.com/atlascontact