

Reve, Gerard (also Gerard Kornelis van het Reve) (b. 1923), Dutch author. Reve is one of the leading Dutch writers in the period after World War II. He was born into an Amsterdam communist family.

After the war, he became a journalist and in 1947 published his first novel, *De avonden* (*The Evenings*). Most critics saw the book as an expression of youth's nihilism, which helped very much to establish its lasting success. In the 1950s Reve struggled with his work and his life. He married, but divorced and entered the gay world. His work stagnated although he published some superb short stories, several of which appeared in English at the time when he lived in London trying to make a new start. After he returned to Amsterdam, his work became explicitly homosexual and sadomasochistic. His favourite scene, which is repeated in many versions in his work, is a triangle named 'revism': the beloved young man punishes an impertinent lad while Reve assists the bully. Spanking on corduroy butts is the preferred form of castigation.

His books of letters, *Op weg naar het einde* (*Towards the end*, 1963) and *Nader tot U* (*Closer to you*, 1966), became big hits. Other than sexual themes, his topics are his alcoholism, his hatred of the working class and his conversion to the Catholic Church, as indicated in the book-titles. Just before he sought refuge in Mother Church, he was involved in the so-called 'donkey-scandal'. Reve had become one of the editors of the Dutch gay journal *Dialog*. In an article for this magazine he expressed his love for God, who had descended from heaven in the form of a donkey which Reve fucked. As possible blasphemy, it became a court case in three stages that each time hit the front pages of the Dutch newspapers. In the last instance, at the Dutch Supreme Court, Reve was acquitted because this tale of heavenly bestiality was deemed to be his way to express his beliefs. Although Reve has since always posed as a devout Catholic and a faithful follower of pope and church, because of the sexual explicitness of his work relations were not optimal.

Reve adorned his series of lovers with the names of beasts of prey: wolf, tiger, fox. With one of them he staged a

marriage-like celebration in a Catholic church and at a later point he maintained a household with two lovers. The work and life of Reve offered a mind-blowing experience to many young men coming out in the 1960s and 1970s.

Reve wrote his best work in the 1960s. In the late 1960s he moved to Frisia, leaving the city he hated. Since 1970 he has lived in France, in England, and once more in the Netherlands, and has ended with his lover, 'Sailor Fox', an avowed paedophile, in Belgium. The many novels he has written since the 1960s are of varying quality, repeating the basic sombre schema of his first books, and always with a good dose of 'revism'. Translating his books is difficult because of his old-fashioned, ironic style. Two of his books, *Lovely Boys* and *The Fourth Man*, have been made into movies. For his work Reve received the most prestigious literary prizes of the Netherlands. Apart from novels and short stories, he has written one unsuccessful play and a thin book of excellent poetry. In December 1998, the publication of his collected works began.

There are dozens of specialised publications on Reve, but no general introduction to his life and work.

Gert Hekma