

is gay and because he wants to be an actor.

Jan Olav Gatland

Komrij, Gerrit (b. 1944), Dutch author. Komrij was born in Winterswijk in the eastern part of the Netherlands. He came to Amsterdam to study literature. Here he met his lover Charles Hofman with whom he still lives. In the 1980s, the couple moved to a 'quinta' (palatial country-house) in northern Portugal.

Komrij's major work is in poetry and criticism, but he also wrote novels and plays and did a series of television talk-shows. His edited collections of Dutch poetry of all ages were bestsellers. After the free poetry of the 1950s, Komrij returned to the classical forms which made his work quite controversial among poets but popular among the public. His criticism of literature, architecture and television for newspapers and weeklies went against the grain and made his reputation in the 1970s: his cracking voice and old man's looks also contributed much to his fame. He wrote a funny and imaginative biography *Verwoest Arcadië* (*Destroyed Arcadia*, 1980). His main novels are *Over de bergen* (*Over the Mountains*, 1990) on renting and losing his 'quinta' in Portugal, and *Dubbelster* (1993) on the hollowness of stardom in the media. His best play is *Het chemisch huwelijk* (*The Chemical Marriage*, 1982). With two gay instead of straight couples, it is a gayification of Goethe's *Wahlverwantschaften*.

The financial rewards he received for the major literary prize of the Netherlands were used to publish his collected poems (1994). His many essays, some gay, some campy, were published in half a dozen books. His translations and criticism indicate a preference for decadent writers: Oscar Wilde, Fernando Pessoa, Ronald Firbank. He also translated Shakespeare and wrote the text for Peter Schat's gay opera *Symposion* (on the life of Tchaikovsky). He was the first to recover forgotten Dutch gay novels from the early twentieth century. Little of his very Dutch and ironic

work has been translated. Although he does not function as a gay spokesman, no doubt has ever existed as to his sexual preference. Gerard REVE's *Lieve jongens* (1972) has a superb sarcastic portrait of Komrij and his lover.

Gert Hekma