

A young boy's memories of an aunt who became a nun in China

The Yellow River Is Freezed Over

LEO PLEYSIER

This book is narrated by the author as a young boy, who listens to his mother read out letters from her absent sister-in-law, a Catholic nun doing missionary work in far-off China. The letters are written in a rather formal style that contrasts noticeably with the family's relaxed vernacular speech. Language is an important feature of this book, including the grammatical error in the title.

A highpoint in recent Flemish literature

HET NIEUWSBLAD

The aunt's adventurous life opens up new worlds for the boy, and he has a hard time reconciling the woman of the letters with the emaciated, neurotic nun who returns to live with them for a short time before setting off again, this time for India. The novelty is the narration of the story from a child's perspective – a child who is so close to the ground that he tells people apart by their feet.

More beautiful and more moving prose has not appeared this year. A gem.

VRIJ NEDERLAND



AUTHOR



Leo Pleyzier (b. 1945) made his debut in 1971 with 'Mirliton', a collection of stories which was met with immediate praise, but it was with 'White Is Always Nice' that he found his passport to a broader public. It set the tone for a further two novels with a female voice: 'The Cupboard' and 'The Yellow River is Freezed over'. Pleyzier's primary merit is his capacity to recast the language of everyday people in literary language. Photo © Michiel Hendryckx

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