



The story of the Dutch boy who prevented a flooding disaster: origin and variations on the theme

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Abstract

The tale of the boy who is said to have prevented a flooding by putting his finger in a hole of the (Spaarndammer) dike in the Netherlands, is well known all over the world. However, little is known about the origin of the story or about the wide range of variations that have been published and are still being published. This paper argues that the French author of children tales Rébecca Eugénie Rodrigues-Henriques (1796–1852) published the first version of the story under the pseudonym Eugénie Foa in French, with the title *Le petit éclusier*, “the little sluicer”. However, the story has been made famous by the American author Mary (Elisabeth) Mapes Dodge, who included the tale in her book *Hans Brinker, or The silver skates. A story of life in Holland*. The paper shows as well that this remarkable tale has found its way into a huge amount of books and other forms of information transfer in at least thirty-five languages. In more or less chronological order, this history will be described, focusing on how and in what variations the story has arisen, been retold and what significance we can assign to all the story variants.

Keywords Hans Brinker · Spaarndammer dike · Eugénie Foa · Mary Mapes Dodge · Haarlem

Introduction

The tale of the boy who is said to have prevented a flooding by putting his finger in a hole in the (Spaarndammer) dike in the Netherlands, is well known worldwide. Certainly in the United States, this inventive guy has determined the image of the Dutch when it comes to their fight against the water, since the appearance of the book *Hans Brinker, or The Silver*

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skates. A story of life in Holland by Mary (Elizabeth) Mapes Dodge in 1866. This book is usually referred to as the origin of the story as well. Although it was already known that this is not correct and that the source needed to be sought earlier and elsewhere, it was not yet known what was exactly the case (Principal Water Authority of Rijnland 2017; Wikipedia English 2017a, b). Sometimes the French author Eugénie Foa was called the true ‘mother’ of the story, but then reference was made to a possibly hypothetical, unidentified story (Wikipedia English 2017a, b). In this paper, I will therefore start by clarifying this French connection. Is the attribution to Eugénie Foa correct, and if so, when did she publish the story? No less interesting is the question of what the original story looked like. Nowadays the general reference to Hans Brinker—also known as Hansje Brinkers, Hansie Brinkers, or Hannes Brinker—is to the boy who did put his finger in a hole in the dike to prevent a flooding. However, it will be shown that in the original publications, and even in the book of Mary Mapes Dodge, it was not Hans Brinker who prevented the flooding. In the meantime, the story has been told in an unprecedented flow of books, films, plays, etc. in at least thirty-five languages. In addition, many variants on the original theme circulate. In this paper, attention will be paid to this development too, by offering in more or less chronological order how the story has been told in different versions and what significance we can assign to all the variants.

The story

The story and its different variants is essentially as follows. A boy is walking in the evening, along the (Spaarndammer) dike, to bring (pan) cakes to a blind old man. On his way back, he hears water flowing from a sluice gate/dike/split stone. He puts his finger in the hole to block the water. Only the next morning, he is discovered by a clergyman and the hole is closed definitely. He has prevented a flooding disaster.

The Spaarndammer dike

Although not explicitly stated, the original tale deals with a hole in one of the sluices in the Spaarndammer dike. The Spaarndammer dike dates from the first half of the 13th century and protected for many centuries the area south of it against flooding from the IJ, which was in open connection with the former Zuiderzee (Figs. 1 and 2) (Giebels 1994). In the dike, there are three sluices in the village of Spaarndam (Fig. 3), just north of Haarlem. One of these is the Kolksluis of 1280, which is the oldest sluice in the world that is still being operated (Wikipedia English 2017a, b). The other two sluices are the Grote Sluis (origin 1569) and the Woerdersluis (origin 1611). These two sluices replaced even older sluices in the dike.

The origin of the story

My in-depth search online, through visits to various libraries—including the National libraries in London, Paris and the Hague—and checks of a significant amount of the books on the topic, I now conclude that the original story indeed must have been written in French by Rébecca Eugénie Rodrigues-Henriques (1796–1852), author of tales for children, under



Fig. 1 Low part of the Netherlands in the 13th Century (Giebels 1994)

the pseudonym Eugénie Foa (Wikipedia French 2017). This story was published for the first time in 1848, in a book with different tales by her under the title *Les soirées du vieux château* (Foa 1848). The title of the original story is *Le petit éclusier*. In the story, she writes that she had heard it from a clergyman (*c'est monsieur l'abbé qui me l'a appris*). This story concerns a hole in the wood trough which water was flowing (*Fissure dans le bois, et à travers cette fissure, l'eau qui coulait*). Therefore, here it clearly concerns a hole in a sluice gate, as is also shown in the illustration of the story (Fig. 4). This observation is further reinforced by the fact that our little hero had to climb from stone to stone to get to the hole (*et grimpa de pierre en pierre pour attendre à la fissure*). In this story, no mention is made of Hans Brinker. It is mentioned that his father was a sluice keeper (*éclusier*). Haarlem is mentioned, which means that it was most likely a hole in a sluice gate of one of the sluices in the Spaarndammerdijk, which at that time, as shown above, was a crucial dike to protect, among others, Haarlem (Fig. 2).

The same story is also included in the book *Sept histoires de petits garçons*, that was published 12 years after her death in 1864 (Foa 1864). In this version, the reference to the clergyman is no longer included. However, an adapted illustration has been placed on which the clergyman who finds the boy in the morning is shown too (Fig. 5). This book was published again in 1875, but then without an illustration (Foa 1875). In order to verify whether there have been other publications of the same story by the original author, all publications of Eugénie Foa that are still accessible have been checked, but without result.



Fig. 2 II with on the south side the Spaamdammer dike. Map dated 1802 (Archive Principal Water Authority of Rijnland. Collection of Maps, A-0885)



Fig. 3 Aerial picture of the village of Spaarndam taken from the North side. The land in front belongs to the IJpolders that were reclaimed around 1867 in the framework of the construction of the North Sea Canal that connects the city of Amsterdam with the North Sea

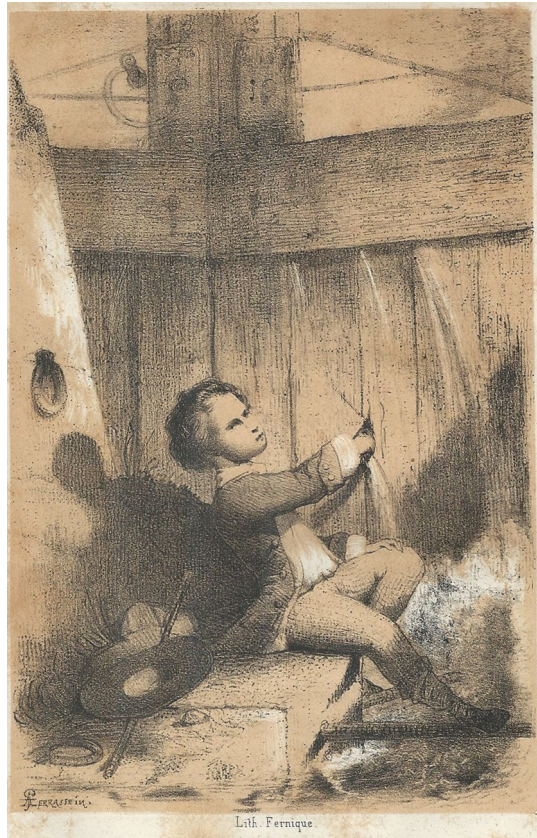
Twenty-one years later, this original story is referred to in the English translation by Sarah West Lander, published under the title *The little Dykeman* (Lander 1869). The reference is “*From the French of Madame Eugénie Foa*”. However, no further details on the actual French publication and on the date of the publication are given. In this story, a literal translation of the tale by Eugénie Foa, a crack in the wood is mentioned. Through the crack, the water was flowing. It is mentioned that the father of the hero was a Dykeman. This story also includes the illustration of the above-mentioned publication by Eugénie Foa of 1864 (Fig. 5).

First publication in English

Much earlier, however, on February 23, 1850, an almost identical story had already been published in Eliza Cook’s Journal, entitled *The brave little Hollander*. This story describes a hole in a sluice gate too. The name “Hans Brinker” itself is not mentioned, but reference is made to the brave and good little Hollander. In addition, this story mentions that his father was a sluice-keeper. It is remarkable that this story has been published 19 years earlier than the above-mentioned translation by Lander. However, no reference is made to the original tale by Eugénie Foa.

Also in 1850, the more or less identical story was published in Sharpe’s London Journal of Entertainment and Instruction, entitled *The little hero of Haarlem*. This story concerns a hole in a sluice gate as well and there is no mention of Hans Brinker, only of the real little hero of Haarlem. In addition, this story states that his father was a sluicer. Several websites mention that this was the first story in English, for example, Wikipedia English (2017a, b).

Fig. 4 Illustration of the tale by Eugénie Foa from 1848 entitled *Le petit éclusier*



However, this must be based on a misunderstanding, because both the volumes 11 and 12 of the journal were published in 1850. The story, which is in volume 12, must, therefore, have been published in July (or perhaps even later), which must mean that it was published after the publication in Eliza Cook's Journal.

The story in Sharpe's London Journal of Entertainment and Instruction is referred to in the almost identical story in Harper's New Monthly Magazine (1850). Here too we read about a hole in the wood, that his father was a sluicer and the title *The real hero of Haarlem*.

In the period thereafter, the almost identical story, with or without reference to Sharpe's London Journal of Entertainment and Instruction, appeared in several other magazines in England and the United States, including (i) *Gems gathered in haste* 1851; (ii) *The ladies' repository* 1852; (iii) *Beeton's Boys Own Magazine* 1855; (iv) McGuffey's new high school reader for advanced classes 1857; (v) *The Rhode Island schoolmaster* 1858; (vi) *Sargent's school monthly, for home and school use* 1858; (vii) J.S. Laurie, *The 'sixth' standard reader* 1863.

The publication in *The Rhode Island schoolmaster* (1858) concerns an abbreviated version of the previous stories. It is interesting, as far as it could be traced, that this publication mentions for the first time that the boy did put his finger in a hole in the dike—the sluice has disappeared.



Fig. 5 Illustration in the reissue of the tale by Eugénie Foa of 1864 under the title *Le petit éclusier* and the English translation by Sarah West Lander under the title *The little Dykeman* (1869)

Mary (Elizabeth) Mapes Dodge, *Hans Brinker, or The silver skates. A story of life in Holland*

Generally, and certainly on various websites, the book of the American author Mary (Elizabeth) Mapes Dodge, entitled *Hans Brinker, or The Silver skates. A story of life in Holland*, of which the first edition was published in 1866, is referred to as the source of the story (Dodge 1866). Mary Mapes Dodge was also an author of tales for children and an editor (Gannon and Thomson 1993; Wikipedia English 2017a, b). This book is by far the most famous of all publications on Hans Brinker and has been a huge bestseller. Hans Brinker is featured in the title of the book and is also the main character, but he is not the one who puts his finger in the dike. It is a boy who is not named who does that. His story is described in Chapter 18 of the book,

with reference to Lesson 62, entitled *The hero of Haarlem*. Why specifically Lesson 62 is mentioned is not explained. The story in this chapter is almost identical to the earlier stories by Eugénie Foa, in Eliza Cook's *Journal*, Sharpe's *London Journal of Entertainment and Instruction* and the other above-mentioned stories that were published before the first edition of her book. Mary Mapes Dodge has made the adaptation that the story of the hero of Haarlem is read in a school class.

The first Dutch translation with adaptation of Mary Mapes Dodge's book was published by Andriessen (1867) titled: *De zilveren schaatsen. Een schets uit het Noord-Hollandsche volksleven*. In this adaptation the author speaks of a little blonde-haired boy (*kleinen blondharige knap*)- who did put his finger in the dike. The relevant text is almost identical to the English story by Mary Mapes Dodge, and thus also to the French original. In a footnote it is stated: "I leave this lovely legend for the author's sake" (*Ik laat deze lieve legende voor rekening van de schrijfster*). After this publication, several other Dutch translations and adaptations have been published, for example, a modified version by Bruijn (1954). Anita van der Ven (1983) took care for a translation of the complete book of Mary Mapes Dodge. In the latter publication an illustration by Louis Rhead is shown, which for the first time was presented in a re-issue of Mary Mapes Dodge's book of 1924 (Fig. 6), and has also been included in various other re-issues. From the illustration, it can be deduced that the illustrator probably had no idea what a dike was, because it looks more like a dune. For de Klerk (1998 and 2017 Personal communication), the church in this illustration, which is the Medieval church in the centre of the village of Zoutelande in the Province of Zeeland, was the reason to wonder if the story of the boy who put his finger in the dike did not take place in Zeeland.

In addition to the translations in Dutch, Stahl (1875) made a French translation of the book of Mary Mapes Dodge, entitled *Les patins d'argent*. It is remarkable that he speaks about a dike and a hole in thick shelves (*et aperçut dans une des planches épaisses qui la composaient un petit trou d'où s'échappait un mince filet d'eau*), as Mary Mapes Dodge wrote about a dike. The illustration in this publication shows a hole in a wooden shelf as well (Fig. 7). It seems that he knew the original story by Eugénie Foa. Incidentally, this illustration is quite remarkable from a hydraulic point of view, because the boy seems to be just lying on the ground behind the wooden shelf—there is no place for the water to flow, one would think. The same figure was also published in an English version of the story (Dodge and Schules 1875).

The first translation in Italian was published by Stahl and Dodge (1876) and in German by Gehrts et al. (1890). Later translations followed in, among others, Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Danish, Estonian, Farsi, Finnish, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Yiddish. Of the book itself, more than 330 editions have been published in English by several publishers in English-speaking countries. Re-issues have also been published in different other languages. In this case, Italian is the top with 183 identified editions, followed by France (118), Turkey (66), and the Netherlands as the fourth with 48 editions (Bijlsma 2018).

Other publications with/of the story

In 1868 Phoebe Cary published a poem entitled *A leak in the dike* (Ames (ed.) 1873). This poem is about the same subject, but the boy is called Peter. This poem also refers to a hole in the dike, which is apparent from these two lines: *And, stealing through the sand, He sees a stream not yet so big*. Shortly thereafter, Bradley (1873) published in

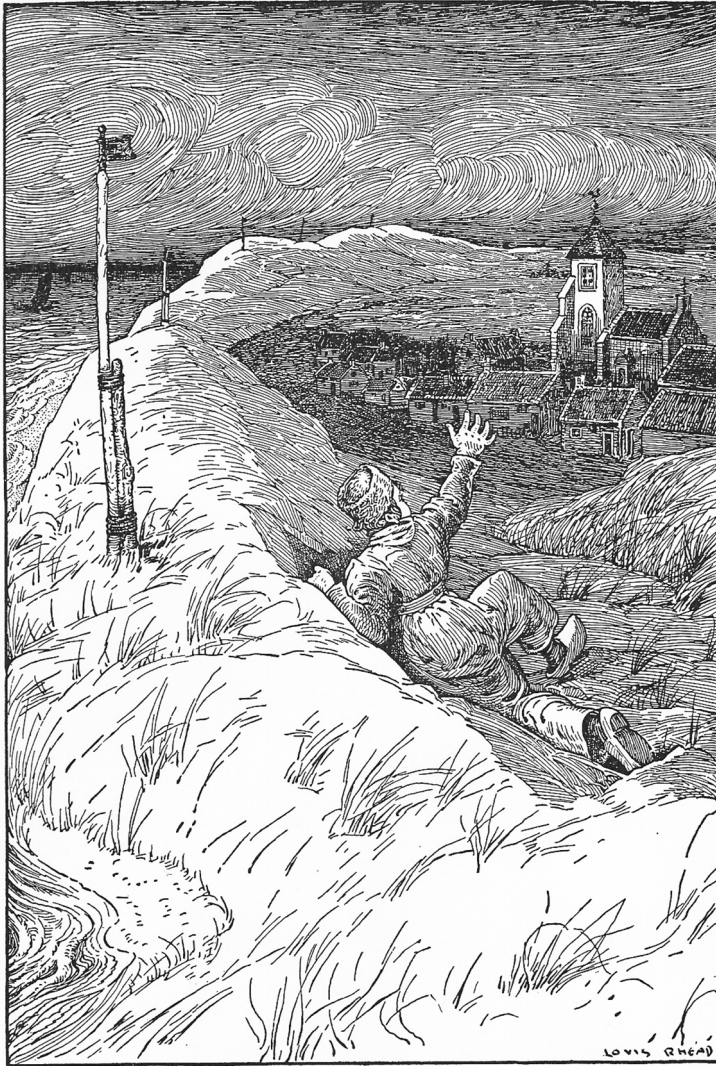


Fig. 6 Illustration by Louis Rhead, included in the English edition of the book of Mary Mapes Dodge of 1924 and in the Dutch edition by Anita van der Ven of 1983

the magazine *The Aldine* a rather different version of, in principle, the same story entitled *The little hero of Haarlem*. Here the boy is called Hansel Vedder. He did put his finger in a split stone.

There are several simplified publications, all based on the story of the boy who put his finger in the dike. The following stories can be mentioned. In the booklet *Little Karl* by Uncle Milton (1908) the father is a fisherman and his son Karl is taking care of the sheep. He is found on the same evening, instead of the next morning. Another story is entitled *The boy at the dike* with illustrations by Marguerite Scott (1961). Here, the



Fig. 7 Illustration by Théophile Schuler in the French edition by Stahl (1875) and by T.H. Schules in the English edition by Dodge (1875). As it is the same illustration, the illustrator probably used a different name in English and in French

name of the author is even not mentioned. The boy is called Peter as well. This time he puts his arm in a wall (Fig. 8).

Norma Green and Eric Carle (1975) published a very simplified and quite different version of the story about the boy who put his finger in the dike under the title *The hole in the dike*. Also in this story the boy is called Peter. With the title *The boy who holds back the sea* Hort (1987) published a similarly modified version with beautiful illustrations by Thomas Locker (Fig. 9). Here the name of the boy is Jan.

I did not find in any of the translations of Mary Mapes Dodge's book that it was Hans Brinker himself who put his finger in the dike. However, Bert Sliggers's book (in Dutch) *Volksverhalen uit Noord- en Zuid-Holland* (1980) includes a story under the title *Hansie Brinkers of Spaarndam*. This is an abbreviated version of the story of a boy who put his finger in the dike, called Hansie Brinkers. Some recent Dutch publications only give the story of the boy who put his finger in the dike in a popular way. In these publications, the boy is called Hans Brinker. It is, first of all, *Hans Brinker: een oer Hollands avontuur* by Rooi (2009a, b) (Fig. 10). At the end of the booklet, it is mentioned that Hans has dreamed all of it. Then there is *Het verhaal van Hans Brinker* by Hammerstein (2014a, b). The English translation of the Dutch edition by de Rooi (2009a, b) has been published under the title *Hans Brinker: a classic Dutch adventure*. The English translation of the Dutch edition by Hammerstein (2014a, b) was published under the title *The story of Hans Brinker*.

The publication of *Donald Duck Adventure in Amsterdam* deserves a special mention (Disney 2007). Uncle Donald discovers a hole in the dike and tries to block it with a bar that he finds nearby (Fig. 11). However, this is a bar of dynamite to blow up a dragon that



Fig. 8 Image in the publication of Marguerite Scott (illustrator) of 1961. Here the boy is called Peter and he puts his arm in a wall



Fig. 9 Beautiful image by Thomas Locker in the publication by Lenny Hort of 1987

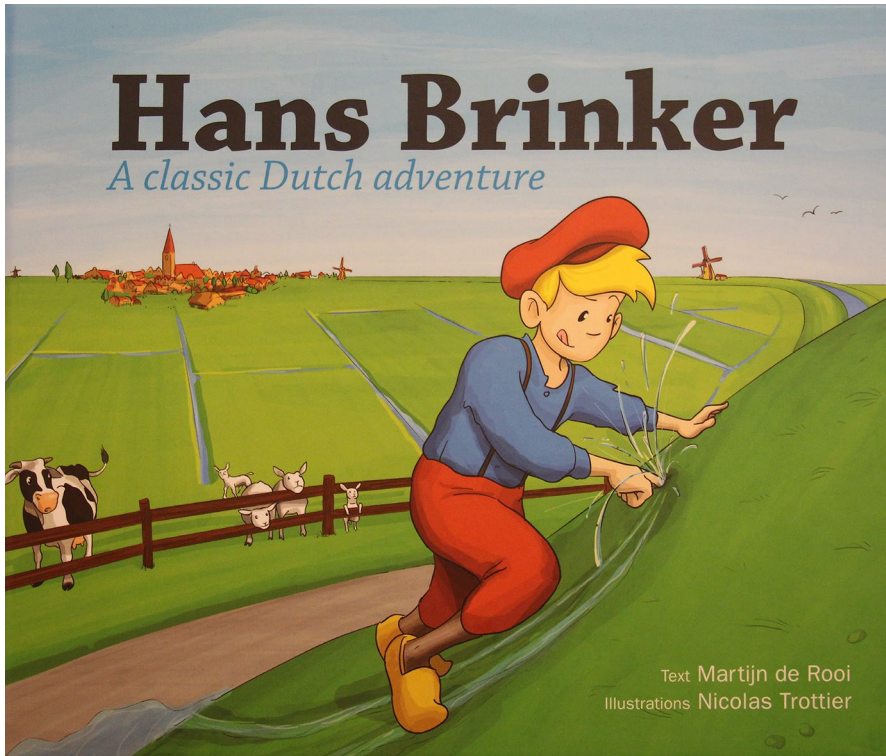


Fig. 10 Illustration by Nicolas Trottier in the publication by de Rooi of 2009a, b

is standing nearby. When the mayor presses the button to blow up the dragon, he blows up the dike.

Albertine Deletaille (1978) published in French *Hans Brinker: le petit héros de Haerlem*. This is also a deviant version that only deals with, in this case, Hans Brinker who put his finger in the dike. In this publication, there are different illustrations of the boy and the hole in the dike, of which one is included here in Fig. 12.



Fig. 11 Variant on blocking the hole in the dike in a special publication of Donald Duck (Disney 2007)

Table 1 shows a summary of the publications on the boy who put his finger in the sluice gate/dike/split stone to prevent a flooding.

Hans Brinker in sound, movie, art and tourist industry

Based on the book of Mary Mapes Dodge, a fair amount of audio discs, cassettes, CDs, MP3 recordings and Youtube views have been made. There are spoken texts about the boy who put his finger in the dike by Sarah Cone Bryant (2012) and by Neculai Pieptu (2016). Audio recordings with the full text of Mary Mapes Dodge's book have been made by Flo Gibson (1991), John McDonough (1996), Mark M. Smith (2007) and Christine Marshall (2012). There are also movies, videos, DVDs, animations, as well as plays and music scores. Tom Taggart (1937) made the script for a play. The story of the boy who put his finger in the dike is in the third part.

Unfortunately, none of the movies that are still accessible, include the story of the boy who put his finger in the dike. This is different from the animations of which three can be mentioned. These have been made by Ninja9rr (2008), Hoàng Thu Hà (2013) and John Mendelsohn (2014). For the well-known Dutch cineast Bert Haanstra the story has been the inspiration to make a film with, among others, actors Albert Mol and Co van Dijk and singer Ramses Shaffy (1960). In this movie, the statue of Manneken Pis in Brussels has been stolen. Because the assumption is that this was done by Dutch people, some Belgians steal out of revenge the statue of Hans Brinker. Based on the story, two short documentaries have been made as well, namely by the Dutch television program Nieuwsuur (2012) and by Isabel Hartmann and Johannes Radig (2013). The Dutch children's television programme Het Klokhuis has shown two short sketches about Hansje Brinkers (2015, 2016).

There are five statues of the boy who put his finger in the dike. Three are in the Netherlands, in the villages of Spaarndam and Harlingen, and in the park Madurodam (with miniature highlights of Holland) in the Hague (Fig. 13). The statue in Spaarndam has the inscription *Dedicated to our youth to honor the boy who symbolizes the perpetual struggle*



Fig. 12 One of the illustrations in the book of Albertine Deletaille of 1978

Table 1 Identified publications on the boy who put his finger in the sluice gate/dike/split stone to prevent a flooding. Only the first year of a publication is given and the total number of issues

Year/number of issues	Author ^a or Magazine/translator	Language	Name main character or title	Named source of the water leak ^b	Location ^b
1848 (3)	Eugénie Foa pseudoniem of Rébecca Eugénie Rodriguès-Henriques	French	Le petit écluser	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1850	Eliza Cook's Journal	English	The Little Hollander	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
	Sharpe's London Journal of Entertainment and Instruction	English	The Little Hero of Haarlem	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1851	Harper's Magazine	English	The Little Hero of Haarlem	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1851	Gems Gathered in Haste	English	The Little Hero of Haarlem	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1852	The Ladies' Repository	English	The Little Hero of Haarlem	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1854	Van Court's New Monthly Magazine	English	The Little Hero of Haarlem	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1855	Beeton's Boy's Own Magazine	English	The Little Dutch Hero	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1856	McGuffey's New High School Reader for Advanced Classes	English	The Hero of Haarlem	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1858	The Rhode Island Schoolmaster	English	The Boy at the Dike	Dike	Village in Holland
1858/1859	Sargent's School Monthly, for Home and School Use	English	The Boy at the Dike	Dike	Village in Holland
1863	The 'Sixth' Standard Reader	English	The Little Dutch Hero	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1866 (333)	Mary Elizabeth Mapes Dodge	English	<i>Hans Brinker, or The silver skates. A story of life in Holland. In this book: The hero of Haarlem</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1867 (10)	Mary Mapes Dodge, retold by P.J. Andriessen	Dutch	<i>De zilveren schaatsen. Een schets uit het Noord-Holland-sche volksleven. In this book: Een blondharrige knaap</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1868	Phoebe Cary	English	Peter	Dike	Holland

Table 1 (continued)

Year/number of issues	Author ^a or Magazine/translator	Language	Name main character or title	Named source of the water leak ^b	Location ^b
1869	Sarah West Lander	English	The little dykeman	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1873	Mary E. Bradley	English	The little hero of Haarlem—Hansel Vedder	Stone dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1875 (35)	P.J. Stahl pseudonym of Pierre-Jules Hetzel	French	<i>Les pattins d'argent. In this book: un petit garçon aux cheveux d'or</i>	Sluice gate	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1876 (2)	P.J. Stahl	Italian	<i>I pattini d'argento</i>		
1876	P.J. Stahl	Russian	<i>Serebrianye kon'ki: istoriia biédnogo gollandskago semeštva: poviest' dliia iunoshstva</i>		
1890	Marie and Getraud – Gehrts	German	<i>Hans Brinker oder Die silbernen Schlittschuhe. In this book: Ein blondlodiges bublein</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1892 (6)	Mary Mapes Dodge, retold by P.J. Andriessen	African	<i>De zilveren schaatsen. Een schets uit het Noord-Hollandsche volksleven. In this book: Een blondharige knaap</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1899 (2)	Mary Mapes Dodge/Marie and Gertrud Jacobi	German	<i>Hans Brinker oder Die silbernen Schlittschuhe. In this book: Ein blondlodiges bublein</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1900	Mary Mapes Dodge (168)	Italian	<i>Pattini d'argento. In this book: un ragazzo biondo</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1902	Mary Mapes Dodge/Ingeborg v d Lippe Konow	Norwegian	<i>Sølvskøtterne</i>		
1904 (7)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Danish	<i>Hans Brinker eller Sølvskøtterne: en Fortælling fra Livet i Holland</i>		

Table 1 (continued)

Year/number of issues	Author ^a or Magazine/translator	Language	Name main character or title	Named source of the water leak ^b	Location ^b
1908	Uncle Milton	English	Karl	Sluice gate	Holland
1922 (7)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Finnish	<i>Hopealuistimet</i>		
1924 (35)	Mary Mapes Dodge	French	<i>Les patins d'argent. In this book: Héros de Haarlem</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1929	Mary Mapes Dodge	Ukrainian	<i>Sribni kobzantsi</i>		
1930	Mary Mapes Dodge/H.R.S. van der Veen	Dutch	<i>Hans Brinker</i>		
1931 (19)	Mary Mapes Dodge, retold by Gur'ian	Russian	<i>Plotina. Rasskaz v pereraboike Gur'ian</i>	Dike	
1932 (4)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Estonian	<i>Hõbeutsud</i>		
1938	Johanna Spyri	English	<i>Hans Brinker or The silver skates</i>		
1938 (2)	Mary Mapes Dodge/Helene Khatskels	Yiddish	<i>Di zilberne gitsihers</i>		
1940 (9)	Mary Mapes Dodge/Baozhen Li	Chinese	<i>Yin bing xie</i>		
1940	Mary Mapes Dodge, retold by Ivan Sommerville	English	<i>Hans Brinker or The silver skates.</i>		
1948 (6)	Mary Mapes Dodge/Momoko Ishii	Japanese	<i>Hansu Burinkā; Gin no sukēto. In this book: sunny-haired boy</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1954 (8)	Margreet Bruijn	Dutch	<i>Hannes Brinker of De zilveren schaatsen: Een nieuw verhaal naar het oude boek van Mary Mapes Dodge. In this book: Een echte held</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk
1956	Nino Burdese	Italian	<i>I pattini d'argento</i>		

Table 1 (continued)

Year/number of issues	Author ^a or Magazine/translator	Language	Name main character or title	Named source of the water leak ^b	Location ^b
1957 (3)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Latvian	<i>Sudraba slidas</i>		
1958 (4)	Margreet Bruijn	German	<i>Die silbernen Schlittschuhe. In this book: Ein richtiger kleiner held</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1958 (2)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Swedish	<i>Silverskridskorna: historien om Hans Brinker</i>		
1961	Marguerite Scott, illustrator (no author mentioned)	English	Peter	They write dike, but they show a stone wall	Holland
1962	Walt Disney	English	Donald Duck	Dike	Duckstad
1963 (3)	Dao Qi	Chinese	<i>Yin bing xie, Jian xie ben</i>		
1965	J.M. van Walsum-Quispel	English	<i>Hans Brinker</i>		
1967 (2)	Margreet Bruijn	African	<i>Hannes Brinker of De zilveren schaatzen: Een nieuw verhaal naar het oude boek van Mary Mapes Dodge. In this book: Een echte held</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk
1967	George Sand	French	<i>Les patins d'argent</i>		
1971 (8)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Spanish	<i>Los patines de plata</i>		
1975	Mary Mapes Dodge	Armenian	<i>Artsat' e sahukner</i>		
1975 (2)	Norma Green (2)	English	Peter	Dike	Holland
1978	Albertine Deletaille	French	<i>Hans Brinker: le petit héros de Haarlem</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1979	P.J. Stahl	German	<i>Die silbernen Schlittschuhe</i>		
1980 (3)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Bulgarian	<i>Сребърните кънки</i>		

Table 1 (continued)

Year/number of issues	Author ^a or Magazine/translator	Language	Name main character or title	Named source of the water leak ^b	Location ^b
1982 (13)	Mary Mapes Dodge	Turkish	<i>Gümüř Patenler</i>		
1983 (5)	Mary Mapes Dodge/Amita C. van der Ven	Dutch	<i>Hans Brinker of de zilveren schaatsen. In this book: Een blonde jongen</i>	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
1984	William Furstenberg	English	<i>Hans Brinker: The silver skates</i>		
1987	Lenny Hort	English	Jan		
1988	Louise Betts	English	<i>Hans Brinker</i>	Dike	Holland
1992	Mary Mapes Dodge	Korean	<i>Ŭnpit sŭk' eitŭ. Chikyŏngsa</i>		
1994	Mary Mapes Dodge	Hebrew	<i>Hans Brinker o maḥalīkayim shel kesef</i>		
1997	Bobbe Bramson	English	<i>Hans Brinker, or, The silver skates</i>		
	Sarah Toast	English	The little Dutch boy: a tale of perseverance		
2001	Mary Mapes Dodge	Arabic	<i>al-Zallajāt al-fiddīyah. Dār al-'Im lil-Malāyīn</i>		
	Mary Mapes Dodge	Lithuanian	<i>Hansas Brinkeris</i>		
	P.J. Stahl	Vietnamese	<i>Nhung doi gay tuot bang bang bac</i>		
2002	Malvina G Vogel	English	<i>Hans Brinker</i>		
2005	Bies van Ede	Dutch	Gijs van Gennip	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem
	Sarah Albee	English	The little Dutch boy		
	M.M. Diji	Japanese	<i>Gin no suketo</i>		
2007	Walt Disney	Dutch	Donald Duck	Dike	Duckstad

Table 1 (continued)

Year/number of issues	Author ^a or Magazine/translator	Language	Name main character or title	Named source of the water leak ^b	Location ^b
2009	Nicolas Trottier	Dutch and English	Hans Brinker	Dike	Holland
2010	Margarita Pinto	Spanish	<i>Los patines de plata</i>		
2011	Ji Dao	Chinese	<i>Yin bing xie</i>		
2014	Mary Mapaes Dodge Maria Johanna Gerarda Hammerstein	Georgian Chinese, Dutch, English and Russian	Hans Brinker	Dike	The Netherlands
2017	Mary Mapes Dodge Robert Louis Stevenson	Dutch	Hans Brinker <i>Hans Brinker-de zilveren schaatsen</i>	Dike	Holland
Year not clear	Kathy Valentine Mary Mapes Dodge	English Albanian, Farsi, Greek, Romanian	Hans	Dike	Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem

^aIn case of several authors only the first author is mentioned

^bWhen no information is given, it is most probable the Spaarndammerdijk/Haarlem, while in almost all cases it is a translation of the book of Mary Mapes Dodge

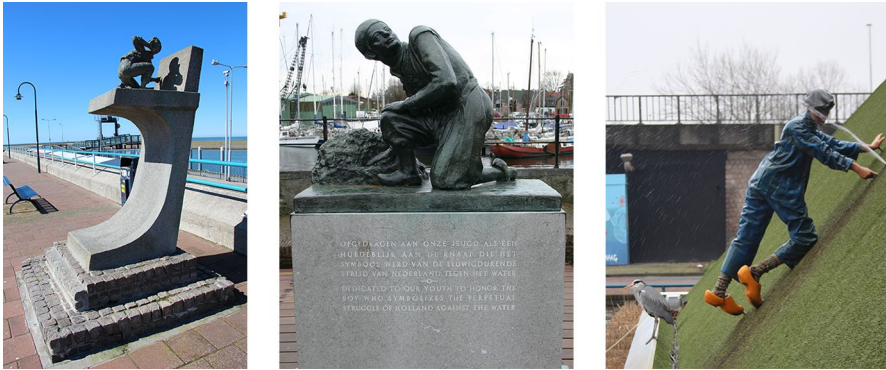


Fig. 13 Statues in the villages of Spaarndam and Harlingen, and at the entrance of the park Madurodam in the Hague

of Holland against the water. At the statue in Harlingen there is no inscription, but it is called *The boy (It Jonkje)*. At the statue in Madurodam there is no inscription. There is also a statue in Holland, Michigan, USA. Here the boy is called Pieter. Finally, there was a statue in Tacoma, Washington, USA. However, the park in which this statue was placed has been closed. In addition, Madurodam has a section of a dike with syringes that represent water from different holes in the dike. The challenge is to keep as many syringes closed as possible. The exhibition includes an explanation that mentions that the origin of the story is the book by Mary Mapes Dodge.

There have been Hans Brinker museums in Alkmaar, Schermerhorn and in Kameleondorp in Terherne, Province of Friesland, but all three are now closed. There is a Holland cycling tour (98 km), which leads along the statue in Spaarndam, and another cycling tour called Hans Brinker Spaarndam Tour. In Amsterdam, you could book a Hans Brinker day trip by boat that, after a visit to the statue in Spaarndam, was concluded with a Hans Brinker liqueur. There is also a Hans Brinker hotel in Amsterdam. Finally there is Hansje beer that, based on the label, is derived from Hans Brinker's story (Fig. 14). In addition, Café Spaarndam has a Hansje Drinker beer glass with a small hole in it that you have to close with a finger during drinking. For sale are, for example, Hans Brinker vases, Delft Blue plates and tulips. At Schiphol Airport there were small Delft Blue Hans Brinker statues for sale.

The boy who prevented a flooding disaster in cartoons

The boy who blocked the water with that one finger is also a symbol of the Netherlands for cartoons. In this case, generally reference is made to Hans Brinker. A couple of cartoons are included in this paper, namely a cartoon in the newspaper *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (1972) when large natural gas resources were explored in the North of the Netherlands (Fig. 15) and a cartoon from the *Evening Post*, which also has been published in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* (1988) when there were large demonstrations against nuclear missiles (Fig. 16). At the occasion of the international symposium on Polders of the World, held in Lelystad in October 1982, a cartoon adapted to the theme has been made by TOM (Fig. 17).



Fig. 14 Label of Hansje beer



Fig. 15 Cartoon in the newspaper *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* of May 6, 1972 related to the export of natural gas

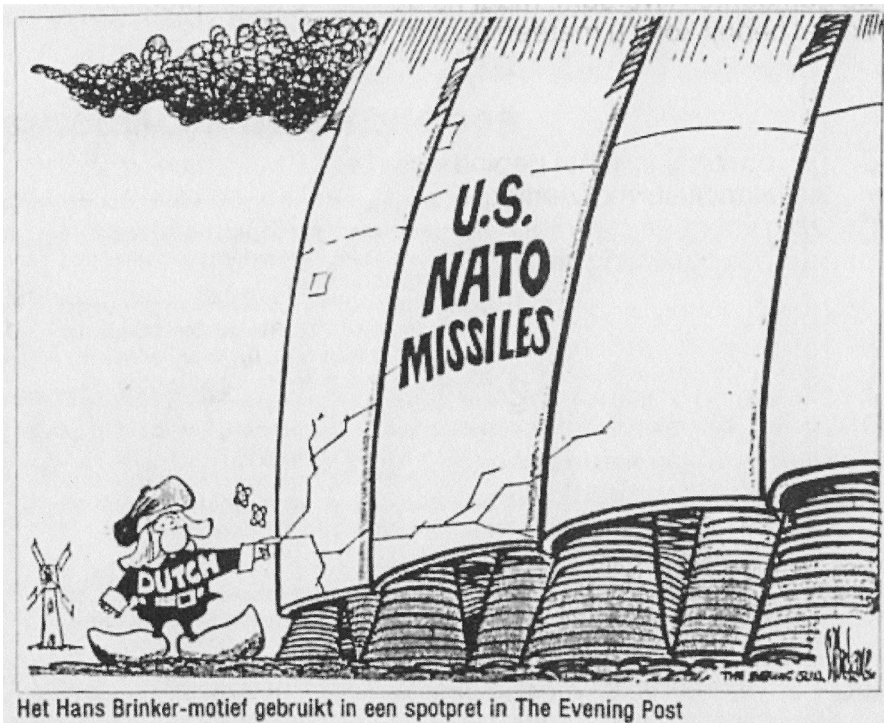


Fig. 16 Cartoon by an article in the *NRC Handelsblad* of January 9, 1988 under the title *The immense happiness of being a Dutchman*

Concluding remarks

The story of the boy who is said to have prevented a flooding by putting his finger in a hole of the (Spaarndammer) dike in the Netherlands, is well known worldwide, although the Dutch are less familiar with it. Generally, the origin of the story was attributed to the American author Mary Mapes Dodge, whose first book was published in 1866 under the title *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates. A story of life in Holland*. Some better-informed sources assigned the origin of the story of the boy who put his finger in the dike to Sharpe's London Journal of Entertainment and Instruction. This paper describes that this must have been based on a misunderstanding and that the original publication in English was in Eliza Cook's Journal of February 23, 1850. However, it was unknown that the true original publication of the story must have been by the French author of tales for children Rébecca Eugénie Rodriguès-Henriques (1796–1852), published in 1848 under the pseudonym Eugénie Foa. In this story, the boy did not put his finger in a

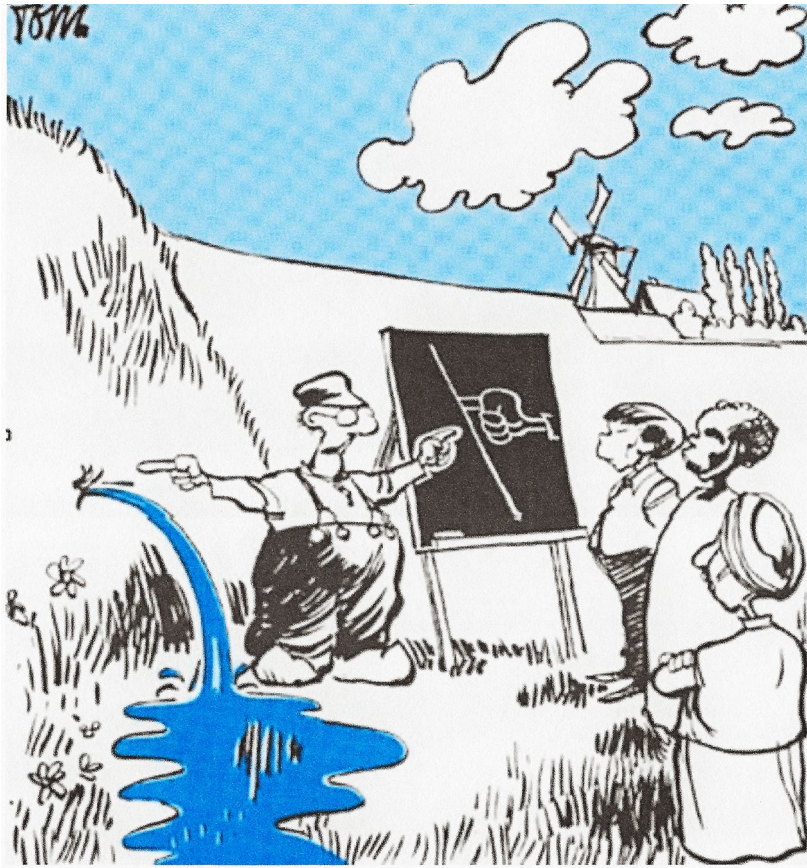


Fig. 17 Cartoon by TOM at the occasion of the international symposium on Polders of the World, October 1982, Lelystad

dike, but in a sluice gate. It was almost unknown that there are so many variants of the story and that there are hundreds of editions in at least thirty-five languages.

In the original publication of Eugénie Foa, it was specifically mentioned that it was a hole in a sluice gate and that flooding of Haarlem was prevented. Haarlem is mentioned as well in the publications by Mary Mapes Dodge, but the hole in the sluice gate has been replaced by a hole in the dike, as was done for the first time in 1858 in the publication of *The Rhode Island schoolmaster*. However, in other publications Haarlem is often not mentioned. That it was Hans Brinker who put his finger in the dike is only mentioned in the most recent publications in Dutch. In fact it starts with the publication by Bruijn (1954), who called the boy Hansie Brinkers. This chronology of stories suggests that popular stories and narratives do continue to play their role in societal debates and daily lives, but that it is good to consider that these stories could have changed appearance and content quite a bit along the way.

All in all, the story in all its different versions has yielded huge publicity for the Netherlands, which internationally certainly did not hurt the image that the Dutch have as very good water managers.

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