

BOOK REVIEWS

Reinsma, Reimer, ed. Signalement van nieuwe woorden: W. P. woordenboek van 2000 neologismen. Amsterdam, Brussels Elsevier, 1975, 286 pp.

CAANS members who emigrated to Canada in the early post-World War II years left Belgium and the Netherlands just at that point when the Dutch language was about to enter upon a period of unprecedented growth. The late fifties, and especially the mid-sixties, were years when hundreds of new Dutch words came into regular use, some adopted from foreign languages, English in particular, some in reference to new technical achievements and social change. Now a dictionary of over 2,000 of these new words, new idioms, and new meanings is available for reference purposes. In general, only words that came into use after 1955 have been included.

One of the sources used by Dr. Reinsma and his team of lexicographers in Leiden and Brussels was the section of the Winkler Prins Encyclopedia yearbooks called "Nieuwe woorden in onze taal," which appeared six times between the years 1958 and 1969. Various members of the editorial staff of this encyclopedia also collected new words and usages for Dr. Reinsma's files. These files continue to grow as both general readers and specialists draw his attention to changes in the Dutch vocabulary. A new edition of Signalement van nieuwe woorden is planned for the near future.

With the help of Dr. Reinsma's book CAANS members need not be fazed by such a statement as "Sinds de invoering van de Mammoetwet is de mavo een mogelijke keus voor uw kind." The dictionary explains that it was in 1962 that the MAVO took the place of the former ULO school system.

Certain words and phrases have been so well accepted and so frequently used during recent years that it is somewhat difficult to think of them as dating from the postwar period. For instance, "Ik dacht" used with the meaning

"ik ben van mening" dates from the mid-sixties. An early example of its use was "De kerk, dacht ik, moet in deze tijd staan" (quoted from Zo is Het, 1965).

Dr. Reinsma and his team have provided us with a fascinating and useful reference book, one which deserves a place on the shelves of all members of CAANS.

Joan Magee
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Smaling, Rob, ed. Nederlandse volksliederen oud en nieuw.
Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978, 165 pp.

Those CAANS members who had the pleasure of "singing along with Peter Stokvis and his guitar" at the recent banquet of the Netherlands Study Conference in Toronto will no doubt remember that Professor Stokvis used a new Dutch folksong book for the text and melodies of his songs. The songbook which he brought with him from Leiden is Nederlandse volksliederen oud en nieuw. Its compiler, Rob Smaling, has selected the songs from four sources: manuscripts and songbooks dating from medieval times, folksongs passed down from generation to generation through the ages and written down after 1850, the familiar school songbooks of the turn of the century, and the records of the Folksong Archives of the Netherlands Academy of Science, which include thousands of folksongs recorded in the field during the last 20 years and now available for study. From these varied sources Rob Smaling has selected many well-known songs and a few which are little known by other than the specialist, but all of which are pleasant to sing. The arrangement is for voice with guitar accompaniment. As well as copious illustrations, all original, and drawn for this book by three well-known artists, there are also background notes for each song. An excellent bibliography and discography add to the usefulness

of the book. It would be still more useful if the melodies were harmonized. However, this attractive new book would be an excellent addition to the home library.

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A Discussion of Living Space: Poems of the Dutch "Fiftiers"
Ed., Intro., Peter Glassgold "A New Directions Book,"
New Dir. Pub. Corp., New York, 1979, pp. 86.

I do not understand why Glassgold has decided to refer to the Dutch poets: Schierbeek, Elburg, Kouwenaar, Lucebert, Campert, and Claus by the name of "Fiftiers," which is not correct English, when he could have referred to them as the 'Fifties generation poets, or even as the poets of the nineteen fifties generation on the model of the British writers who are referred to as writers of the eighteen nineties or of the 'Nineties. The affix - "ers" - is used in Dutch to characterize a generation by the decade in which it became prominent, for example "De Tachtigers" i.e., the poets who began publishing in the eighteen eighties. However, in English that affix (in the form of - "er" -) is used to create comparatives and not to typify generations.

That remark aside, I think that Glassgold stumbled upon an excellent idea when he decided to bring together the translations of some of their poetry in one volume. Yet, I do not think that the editor went far enough with this collection. Aside from a fairly brief introduction of four pages (of which only two pages treat of the significance of these poets as a group) as well as a one page bio-bibliographical sketch for each poet, Glassgold does not provide any theoretical or critical justification for presenting the English reader with these translations. Glassgold does not comment on the quality or on the kind of translations with which he provides us and he does not provide the reader who knows

Dutch with the chance to judge because the originals are not included. Neither does Glassgold explain why he chose these poems rather than others, and therefore it is again left up to the reader to discover whether or not the poems are representative.

These criticisms may seem to be just so much negative carping, but if we agree that there is a need for a collection of poetry in English from the Dutch 'Fifties generation, we have to ask what purpose it should serve. It seems to me that the English reader would find most useful a collection which contained 1) a lengthy introduction outlining the intentions of that generation 2) a theoretical justification of the choice of the poems as "illustrations" of the theories which the poets attempted to put into practice 3) a critical statement on the relative success or failure of their enterprise 4) a discussion of the extent to which the English versions obscure or highlight the poetic features which were the most striking contributions of that generation of poets.

All this may seem a lot to ask, but what Glassgold has given us cannot satisfy very many. All one can say of this collection is that one likes certain poems and not others and, certainly, that was not the purpose of the exercise. Now I will reprint Glassgold's quotation from the Cobra manifesto of 1948, as well as one of the poems, to show the reader the unrealized potential of Glassgold's collection. As is stated by the painters who formed Cobra:

A living art recognizes no distinction between the beautiful and the ugly because it doesn't draw up any aesthetic norms. The ugly which functioned as a supplement to the beautiful in the artistic production of the culture of the last centuries was a permanent indictment of the unnaturalness of this class community and its aesthetics based on

virtuosity, a demonstration of the curbing,
restrictive influence which these aesthetics
exerted on the natural creative urge. (p. ix)

Canadians familiar with the paintings of Karl Appel can see that these remarks are not in the least out of place. But how can one really judge by the English translations whether or not these poets intended to adhere to this programme or whether they explored successfully "the space of complete living"? (p. ix) The following poem by Kouwenaar does indeed convey some such message:

as an object

A poem as an object

a glass revolving door and the chinese waiter
returning steadily with other dishes

a park attendant filing his nails
amid siberian children from maine

a prehistoric venus together with
a spider on the freeway

a glass of mother's milk, a dinner jacket
starched yellow

a bee, a penknife
both stinging, an airplane
dissolving in village rain

a poem as an object (pp. 28-29)

Clearly, these poets have potential; but would it not have been instructive to have been able to compare this translation with the original?

Luckily, and thanks to the kind assistance of Henny Ruger, I have some of the originals at hand, and they show where the translator's converge with and diverge from the

poems in Dutch. Peter Nieuwhuis' translation of Lucebert's "9000 Jakhalzen Zwemmen naar Boston" ("9000 Jackals Swimming to Boston") loses some of its anti-religious and anti-establishment impact because Nieuwhuis does not translate "paters" as religious fathers and he misses the double meaning of "tachtigers" ("octogenarians" but also "the poets of the 1880's," as previously indicated). He turns "beeldenaar" into "effigy" rather than "faces of a coin" and instead of speaking of "lasthebbers" as "agents or representatives," they become abstruse "mandataries." The same translator, when dealing with Kouwenaar's "ervaring" ("experience"), misses the poet's interplay between "hoornvee, ooghoek," and "hooikoorts."

In conclusion, and not to belabour a point, it should be clear that Glassgold could have done a lot better. The ultimate purpose of my remarks is to inspire someone to produce in English the kind of thorough introduction to and anthology of the Dutch poetry of the 'Fifties generation which I have attempted to describe. In the meantime, Glassgold's selection will at least provide a glimpse of these poets' abilities.

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