

**With other Words: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Dutch Poetry by Women.** Edited by Maria Jacobs. Windsor, Ontario: Netherlandic Press, 1985. 95 p.

The editor's foreword to this anthology concludes with a revealing anecdote. At a poetry reading given in Ann Arbor a few years ago by seven or eight male Dutch poets, one of them was asked why no women poets had come although there were so many good ones in Holland. He replied: "Are there?" The purpose of this volume is to prove that there are.

Or rather, to use a British cliché, "to prove it if proof were needed." And indeed, since five of the six women poets are discussed in the first history of Dutch literature I picked up, I am happy to report that they are not unknown. Undervalued they may be, of course.

We all too readily fear that a group of women writers are going to speak with one voice, a shrill one, and this volume "proves if proof were needed" that that image also is false. On this showing, the eight voices, here represented by anything from two to seven poems each, are all different. Andreas Burnier's personae travel and worry about who they are. Fritzi Harmsen van Beek's run-on lines might seem chatty, but the density of images is far too great to justify such a characterization. Judith Herzberg's simplicity, her concentration on "little nearby things", is deliberate, achieved by effort as she tells us, wrung from life's usual disappointments. Patricia Lasoen's speaker is a wife and mother with a fresh accurate view of the world. Hanny Michaelis is represented by two poems very different from each other, one musing about a lover, the other evoking the din of Amsterdam; one would have liked more poems by her, so as to form a clearer impression. Ankie Peypers poses metaphysical questions in familiar-seeming imagery. Elly de Waard conveys excellently the hesitancy of someone in love, while Ellen Warmond's poems radiate the joy of someone who is loved in return.

The background of the translators is as varied as the voices they have here undertaken to convey. All save Dorothy Howard were born in the Netherlands. Maria Jacobs publishes poetry and translations, and Dorothy Howard and Hendrika Ruger have translated as

a team before. Guusje Grodde and Ekki Kloezeman, so far as I know, are publishing translations for the first time. All acquitted themselves well, usually solving very happily the problems of imagery, rhythm and grouping of the words in lines despite the differences between English and Dutch syntax.

Wrapped around these poems are some magnificent drawings of plant and insect life done by a woman scientist called Maria Sibylla Merian. To be a woman scientist in 1700 required some courage, one may think, since in those days women were not supposed to admit to being intelligent. And this remarkable lady was also physically brave enough to travel in Surinam. Did one of the translators of this volume have a twinkle in her eye when she chose the cover, in which a splendid, presumably female plant seems to ignore the presumably male would-be pollinators, polluters and parasites crawling over it?

Beside the large and comprehensive anthology, there will always be a place for the volume which makes a special point, and that women poets are too often overlooked is certainly a point worth making. Readers who already knew, or don't wish to be taught things, can reflect on the curious situation of those who read a book in a language which they used every day years ago in a distant country, and which is still familiar yet has become foreign, and are moved to communicate the text to those they now live among. Or, of course, you can just enjoy the poems.

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