

from the prologue to this novel, called *In a Dark Wood Wandering* in an exemplary translation into English by Lewis C. Kaplan and Anita Miller, testifies to the successful simultaneous rendition of historical fact and fictitious character development.

For the chapter on Marga Minco, Johan P. Snapper (Berkeley) has chosen the soberly written but deeply moving story "The Return" which, like the entire literary output of this eminent writer, deals with the incomprehensibly cruel fate endured by the Jewish population of Holland during World War II. Minco uses a disarmingly simple style, but Snapper helps the reader a great deal in understanding the subtleties of this prose by pointing at the symbolic meaning of such ordinary words as street and bridge. His translation succeeds in capturing both the story's simplicity and its sense of deep tragedy.

In the second sentence of his introduction to the Belgian author Monika van Paemel, Basil Kingstone (Windsor) uses the simple words: "Her childhood was dreadful; her father wanted a son and her mother didn't want any children at all" (p. 574). Thus, raised under dreadful circumstances but endowed with a powerful creative talent, van Paemel fascinates the reader from the first line he/she reads in Kingstone's translation, which can be called a worthy equivalent of the writer's not easily accessible prose. The inextricable conglomeration of narrative voices, characteristic of van Paemel's style, seems to create the perfect operational platform for an author who is in constant search of her identity in a hostile world.

I suppose that I am not the only lover of Dutch poetry who, upon being introduced to Eva Gerlach's literary output, could not suppress a feeling of irritation and frustration resulting from both my inability to comprehend her verses and my awareness of being confronted with a major poetical voice. For that reason, I feel indebted to Myra Scholz-Heerspink (a freelance translator, living in Holland) for her well-informed interpretation of this at first sight enigmatic poetry. Scholz-Heerspink's discussion of Gerlach's predilection for intricate constructions intertwined with endeavours to tackle the existential problems of life and death, is especially helpful. That the poetess acknowledged in an interview that there exists an affinity between her

poetry and that of Gerrit Achterberg does not come as a surprise to a reader acquainted with the latter's work. Like Achterberg, Gerlach shows a tendency to discuss profound problems in a language interspersed with everyday and even frivolous speech. Although Scholz-Heerspink is fully aware of this at moments amazing dichotomy, it seems that she did not try hard to find English equivalents for Gerlach's common expressions. The very first line of the first poem in the collection *Domicilie* (Domicile, 1987) for instance, reads: "Wat lig je stil hart, een mens schrikt ervan," rendered in English as "How still you lie, heart, gives a person a fright" (p. 649). The ordinariness of the line is obviously lost in this translation. The inadequacy is the more surprising since the translator herself quotes the poetess as explaining that her aim in the first series of this collection was: "... to call back to life a person who has just died, by remembering her hour by hour" (p. 633). As in Achterberg, the contrast between language and theme is at moments so glaring in Gerlach's poetry that it is an absolute necessity to find proper English equivalents for the various linguistic levels.

In conclusion, however, this collection of informative introductions and more than adequate translations can only be warmly recommended to both readers with no Dutch or only a very basic knowledge of it.

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Jacqueline Wesselius (ed.), *Het Mijneveld, over journalistiek en moraal*, Amsterdam: Nigh & Van Ditmar, 1994, 311p., ill.

Writing is a matter of choosing: choosing a topic, a viewpoint, a technique, the right words. There are always many possibilities, but only one is chosen, the rest is rejected. Even naturalist authors, who tend to describe things in great detail, cannot be comprehensive. Objectivity is impossible, the truth is elusive. Writers have known this all the time. Journalists are beginning to discover this truth as well, certainly after events like the closely managed reporting from the Gulf War and the staged-for-television military landings in Somalia, where television cameras preceded the invading American soldiers. *All the news that's fit to print. Photos don't*

lie. Facts in the news section, comment on the editorial page. Journalists used to believe in these maxims but, as Jacqueline Wesselius and a dozen other writers point out in *Het Mijneveld*, there are cracks appearing in the journalists' shining armour.

A Dutch photographer publishes a photo from Bangladesh of a group of intensely sad-looking people living in a camp. The photo, reprinted in *Het Mijneveld*, is a powerful comment about the lives of these refugees, but in the accompanying interview the photographer admits that by cropping and retouching he has eliminated some laughing children, who spoiled the intensity of the picture. The original photo is shown as well and indeed, there are some giggling children, who laugh as only children can laugh but who distract from the message the photographer had wanted to convey. The picture with the children still in it tells the truth of that particular moment, but the retouched photograph tells the deeper truth of the bleak existence of a group of underprivileged people. Does the journalistic code of ethics permit the publication of the second picture? The photographer answered affirmatively, but admitted that there is no hard and fast answer to problems like this. And indeed, there is not. If the journalist tries for objectivity he will opt for the photo with children, but if the photo-reporter sees himself as a crusader than he will publish the retouched picture. But is the journalist as crusader still a journalist? And if the journalist is not a crusader, what was he doing in Bangladesh in the first place?

It is the strength of this collection of essays and interviews that, in raising these and similar problems, it makes clear that the journalistic code of ethics is not carved in stone. The independence of the journalist is threatened from many sides: large companies offer freebies, like samples of their product, dinners and excursions; advertisers feel that they should receive favourable treatment; the taste and preferences of subscribers have to be met or the commodity (and news *is* a commodity!) won't sell; news sources have to be humoured lest they may dry up; juicy stories or muck-raking reportages, in the name of the collective interest, may infringe on the rights of the individual. In all these cases the journalist is made to tread a fine line and forced to make decisions from day to day without being guided by a firm code. A *minefield*, indeed.

There is ample material for discussion in this collection of essays, especially for the beginning journalists at whom it seems to be aimed: the publication was sponsored by the section for Higher Education and Information and Communications at the Christian University Windesheim in Zwolle.

Jacqueline Wesselius, the Amsterdam journalist who edited the volume and who introduces the various sections that deal with the issues mentioned above, writes in her final conclusion that the overall quality of Dutch journalism is reasonably high and that none of the excesses in which, for example, the London tabloids excel, occur in The Netherlands. Seen from Canada one tends to agree with this: true, there are gossip magazines, but they are still pretty decent, and two or three of the few big daily newspapers that have remained after all the disappearances of the last decades (80 between 1946 and 1993!) are of high quality, an opinion with which this reviewer concurs. However they, like newspapers all over the world, cope badly with a problem that is also discussed in *Het Mijneveld*: the problem of ego- and ethnocentricity. Any Canadian who has tried to find news from home in a newspaper bought in Paris, London or Amsterdam can vouch for that!

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