

Huisbeelden in de moderne Nederlandstalige poëzie. [Images of house and home in contemporary poetry written in Dutch].

Irena Barbara Kalla. Ghent: Academia Press (Lage Landen Studies Vol. 4), 2012. 381pp. ISBN: 9789038220864.

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Writing about matters related to the Low Countries in a language other than Dutch often requires a word or two of geo-linguistic clarification. Such explanation is also appropriate here, not only to account for a rather rough translation of the title of Irena Barbara Kalla's book. Dutch (*Nederlands*), the official language of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is also one of the three official languages of Belgium, where it is spoken predominantly in Flanders and hence is often—incorrectly—referred to as “Flemish”. As *Huisbeelden in de moderne Nederlandstalige poëzie* is a survey of the post-1945 poetry from both the Netherlands and Belgium, the language functions as the main distinctive criterion, which is reflected in the original title and its rough translation.

The New Oxford American Dictionary, which the late Steve Jobs was kind enough to include in the Apple computers' software package, defines *house* as “a building for human habitation, esp. one that is lived in by a family or a small group of people”. The lexicographic entry contains a number of pictographic representations of different house styles. The physical manifestation of the archetypal concept HOUSE is only one of many senses of this word researched in Kalla's book. Apart from denoting a building, a house also means “dwelling, relatives, family, origin, space, identity, memory, future” (5). Having its own connotations, each of these senses evokes different images poetically expressed through metaphors and metonymies. Meanings of the word *house* and the imagery constructed around it have changed in time; fifty years

ago they were different than they are now; in what way different is one of the questions Kalla attempts to answer. Obviously, the images employed in the analysed poems are never without context; in order to explain certain metaphors, a broader contextual perspective—sometimes including the entire oeuvre of a given author—is often necessary. Kalla examines poems written in the years 1950–2012, focusing on the dynamic relation between individuals and their homes and houses, on the poets' views on their art expressed by means of house and home imagery, and on the images themselves, whose evolution she attempts to reconstruct.

Kalla's study consists of three parts. The first one focuses on the images of house and home in poetry, with particular regard to the relation space-identity-language, followed by the short outline of the methods of analysing poetry applied in Dutch studies. This leads to the presentation of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Blending Theory (BT) developed by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier—the main methodological framework of Kalla's work. The second part consists of a critical overview of house and home images in the poems written in Dutch in the period 1950–2012. Partially reflecting the chronology used in the (northern) Dutch literary historiography, the survey is arranged per decennium and is preceded by a brief account of the most important house and home images since the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which is necessary in order to obtain a broader contextual perspective. A quantitative principle is used in the selection of research material. Detailed analyses of the poems representative for each decennium constitute the third part of Kalla's study. The selected texts are representative with regard to the relation “I”–“house”, the poetical views, and conceptual metaphors dominant in the decade in question.

The Blending Theory, enabling a view of a literary text as a complex blend, is a research

tool, originating from the cognitive approach to language and, by extension, also to literature. This approach, and especially its literary application propagated by, among others, Peter Stockwell has not yet been widely used in the study of literature and Dutch literature in particular, though its growing popularity is a fact. Kalla's *Huisbeelden in de moderne Nederlandstalige poëzie* can therefore be viewed as a pioneering work not only in Polish or Central European Dutch studies, but also in Dutch studies in general. The methodological sections of Kalla's work start with conclusions driven from Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* and lead through the subsequent stadia of the development of the cognitive approach to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Turner and Fouconnier's Blending Theory and Stockwell's cognitive poetics. As English is the main—not to say the sole language of this approach—the author writing in a language other than English faces translation-related difficulties. Kalla often retains a given term in its original English form. In spite of this fact, the Dutch text of her study does not seem distorted. The methodological framework of literary cognitivism is still relatively new, hence a model analysis demonstrating the workings of this methodology, similar to the ones in the third part of *Huisbeelden in de moderne Nederlandstalige poëzie*, but located in the first part, may prove useful to readers not entirely familiar with this approach.

Both the cognitive approach and the quantitative principle of sources selection offer specific advantages to the second part of Kalla's study. Conceptual metaphor, a concept covering a broader spectrum of rhetoric/stylistic phenomena, counters the danger of (over)simplification, which is not easy to avoid while attempting to study sixty years of literary production within the space of 250 pages. Adopting the quantitative principle in the process of selection of the research material also seems to have been a good choice

given the size of the work corpus manageable by a single researcher. Adopting the qualitative principle might have provided the author with more representative and perhaps less self-evident research material; on the other hand, it is the quantitative principle that provides a diversity of material, therefore countering its supposedly self-evident character.

The implicational structure of Kalla's book is one of its best features. The adopted methodology in part one helps to structure the overview in part two, which then leads to the selection of both conceptual metaphors and poems characteristic of a given decennium in part three. The poems by Jan G. Elburg, the core member of the Fifties Movement (*Beweging van Vijftig*), and by the poet-architect Albert Bontridder serve as realisations of the conceptual metaphor HOUSE IS A BODY—one that, according to Kalla, was most prominent in the fifties. The sixties are represented by the texts by J. Bernlef and Herman de Coninck, realising the conceptual metaphor POEM IS A HOUSE. The cognitively defined space of poetic reflection plays the main role in this section. The following section—devoted to the poems by Willem van Toorn and Luuk Gruwez seen as realisations of the conceptual metaphors POEM IS A HOUSE and HOUSE IS A POEM—is somewhat problematic. Of the books of poems discussed in this section, only one was published in the 1970s. This section also seems the most interdisciplinary; in addition to the terminological apparatus of the Blending Theory, Kalla refers to Gérard Genette's classification of texts. The subject matter of the discussed poems makes this section fairly intertextual. The following section—an analysis of the poems by Leonard Nolens and Esther Jansma, in which the conceptual metaphor LANGUAGE IS A HOUSE is discussed—also contains texts written in two decades, respectively the 1980s and 1990s. HOUSE IS THE WORLD and EUROPE IS A

HOUSE are the conceptual metaphors representative of the beginning of the twenty-first century. The texts by the Fleming Erik Spinoy and the half-Palestinian Ramsey Nasr are chosen as actualisations of those conceptual metaphors. A change in Dutch attitudes towards emigrants that occurred in the first decade of the twenty-first century serves as important contextual background.

Like Stockwell before her, Kalla advocates the use of the cognitive approach as a means of teaching literature, especially poetry. However, her study itself does not contain many didactic implications. Other possible applications of the cognitive methodology in literary studies as well as pointers to future research, which Kalla's innovative study suggests, are also not expressed adequately.

"In verscheidenheid verenigd – eenheid in verscheidenheid" [In diversity united—unity in diversity]—the motto of the Dutch studies conference held in Poznań in May 2013—is a good phrase to describe Irena Barbara Kalla's book: an analysis of poems written in Dutch, conducted by the Polish researcher, in the methodological framework of the English-language texts. By combining these elements Kalla arrives at conclusions relevant for Dutch (the survey of Dutch poetry), English (another application of cognitive approach) and Polish studies (an account of the house-related imagery, popular in Polish Literature). Her decision to write in Dutch enables Kalla to escape the problem of translation of the source material. On the other hand, the innovative character of this book and its interdisciplinary value, beg the conclusion that at least fragments of Kalla's study should be translated.

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