Willie Burger, Marné Pienaar, reds

Die Tand van die Tyd: Opstelle opgedra aan Jac Conradie

Linguistic section

This book consists of sixteen articles dedicated to Jac Conradie (Charl Jacobus Conradie), a linguist from the University of Johannesburg (formerly Rand Afrikaans University/Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit – RAU) by his friends and colleagues on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his scientific work. As far as the thematic scope of the particular contributions is concerned, their authors deliberately refer, as emphasised in the *Voorwoord* [Foreword], to the wide scientific interests of this scholar, an expert on the history and the present syntax of Afrikaans and Dutch, a renowned specialist in Gothic and Old Norse as well as Romance languages, who has, in his work, also given a considerable amount of thought to the issues of culture and literature in a historical perspective, to philosophy, especially hermeneutics, and to musicology. At this point, it is worth noticing that Conradie started his professional career as a translator. After finishing his doctoral studies in General Linguistics and Old Norse at the Utrecht University (Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht) in the Netherlands, he has lectured, for many years, in the Afrikaans Department at RAU where, at present, he holds the position of full professor in linguistics.

The title of the whole volume, i.e., *Die Tand van die tyd* [The tooth of time] is significant, alluding directly to Conradie's professorial lecture on diachronic and synchronic linguistics given on May 14, 2003. Apparently, the intention of the editors in choosing this title was to emphasize Conradie's strong diachronic awareness as a genuine philologist whose scientific work was largely done during a time when synchronic linguistics dominated (see especially *Voorwoord*). The articles, written in three languages (English, Dutch, and Afrikaans) are divided into four parts, entitled, in Afrikaans: *Vergelykende taalkunde* [Comparative linguistics], *Bemoeienis met die verlede* [Occupation with the past], *Literêre kritiek* [Literary criticism], and *Ikonisiteit* [Iconicity].

The first part of the reviewed volume consists of five articles from the domain of linguistics (practically comparative linguistics), with divergent subject matter and

investigative scope. The first article, on "Non-State Imperfectives in Romance and West-Germanic: How Does Germanic Render the Progressive?," written in a detailed and penetrating way by Werner Abraham from the University of Vienna (Austria), is a comparative study of the grammatical category of the imperfective (especially the imperfective aspect of the verb), which is, in general, marked in Romance and West-Germanic languages by morphology and/or the gerund. The aim of the author is to expose the similarities and differences that exist in the use of syntactic (and also lexical) means of expressing durativity and continuity in such languages as French, Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese, Spanish and Italian, on the one hand, and English, German and Dutch, on the other. To show the semantic nuances in the expression of the imperfective, such factors as time and modality, and, where it was necessary, the counterfactual context have been taken into consideration; the comparison has been strengthened with reference to earlier and new literature. Interestingly enough, Werner Abraham characterizes Brazilian Portuguese as an exception within the Romance languages, because it regularly uses the gerund to render the category of the imperfective.

In his article written in Dutch on "Het geslacht van leenwoorden" [The gender of loan words], Camiel Hamans, at that time a representative of the European Parliament, poses a research question as to what the decisive factor(s) is/are in the gender assignment to loan words in a borrowing language. Hamans carries out an analysis of nouns, borrowed into Norwegian (Bokmål), Polish and Dutch, from original languages like English, French or German. He comes to the conclusion that the phenomenon of gender copying is a rarity. Moreover, not only the grammatical structures of the original language or of the borrowing language ultimately determine the gender of a noun in the target language. According to Hamans, non-linguistic factors, such as, for example, the degree of mastering of the donor language by the speakers of the target language, seem to be most important.

Ben Hendrickx from the University of Johannesburg (South Africa) contributes an article entitled "Was 'Nubian Greek' that Bad?" It is a survey of previous literature on texts coming from the Nubian area, i.e., from the Sudanese territory between the first Nile cataract and Northern Ethiopia, and dating back to the period between the 3rd and 14th centuries AD. These texts, as Hendrickx explains, correspond chronologically and geographically to the existence of the Christian medieval kingdoms in Nubia. Old Nubian, also called Nubian Greek, usually considered a barbaric language, is sometimes considered a highly evaluated language variety related to Greek in Asia Minor, Syria or Egypt, or compared to Classical Greek. Recently, it has even been termed Pidgin Greek, as it has been assumed that the use of this language with its limited vocabulary and simplified grammar was restricted to intergroup communication. Hendrickx tries to assess the state of research on Old Nubian, and, in conclusion, he postulates to conduct such investigations on Nubian Greek that will take into account, as far as it is possible on the basis of available written sources, the language situation in Old Nubia, the multilingualism of individuals and groups of that country, using simultaneously, e.g., Coptic or Blemmyan dialects. Moreover, future research on this modestly attested

language might examine, in his opinion, the development of Nubian in comparison to Byzantine Greek and modern languages in West Africa.

In his article "The Structure of the Swahili Noun Phrase: Evidence from Fictional Narratives," Armani Lusekelo from the Dar es Salaam University College of Education (Tanzania) reports on his analysis of the structure of the noun phrase in Swahili, which he conducted in comparison with other Bantu languages. As source material, he takes noun phrases selected randomly from stories published in Swahili newspapers and from novels written in Swahili. Lusekelo examines 291 noun phrases, by, among others, statistical means, for types of word categories, grammatical units and constituents, and for order within the phrase. After the analysis of the hierarchical structure of the Swahili noun phrase, the author estimates that most typical phrases consist of two or three elements, yet the number of noun dependants in the phrase occasionally amounts to even more than seven slots.

The article in Afrikaans "Die vertaling van 'n vertaalterminologielys in Afrikaans: 'n Prosesbeskrywing" [The translation of a translation terminology list: a description of the process] by Marné Pienaar and Anne-Marie Beukes from the University of Johannesburg (South Africa) is an outcome of both authors' work on the translational terminology list project, the aim of which was to translate into Afrikaans and publish a list of 200 basic terms from the domain of translation studies. This list has been elaborated hitherto in four languages (French, English, German, and Spanish) by the FIT (*Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs / International Federation of Translators*). Exemplary sentences translated from English into Afrikaans are enclosed in the article. They contain explanations of such terminological distinctions as ambiguity with reference to a text or an utterance, cohesion of the text, compensation as a translation procedure, equivalence as the relation of identity between the translation units which can be established by a translator, or intertextuality understood as linguistic or thematic relationships between the text and other texts written by the author. These notions are regarded here literally as 'stumble blocks' in the translation; their translation evidently proves that conceptual and morphological as well as syntactic differences among languages cause translating and interpreting difficulties.

In the literary section, *Bemoeienis met die verlede*, Stanisław Prędota, a linguist from the University of Wrocław (Poland) contributes the Dutch article "Over de oudste Nederlandse priamels" [On the oldest Dutch priamels]. The author lists 19 Middle Dutch priamels excerpted from *Proverbia Communia*, an anonymous collection of proverbs from the 15th century, which includes 803 lemmas and is the oldest printed collection of Dutch proverbs (cf. *Proverbia Communia*: *A Fifteenth Century Collection of Dutch Proverbs Together with the Low German Version* [Jente 1947] [1]). Prędota commences with the definition of priamels as a poetic genre, originally widespread in Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages. He notices that these short, epigrammatic poems, consisting of a series of parallel

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[1] Jente, Richard, ed. 1947. *Proverbia Communia*: *A Fifteenth Century Collection of Dutch Proverbs Together with the Low German Version.* Folklore Studies 4. Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Publications.

notions seeming at first sight unrelated or paradoxical but brought together generally at the end of the phrase, have been treated by contemporary researchers mostly as a particular genre of proverbs (cf., e.g., MDu. *Anxt ende vreese doen den ouden lopen*. / Du. *Angst en vreeze doen den oude lopen* [fear and fright make the old run]). Prędota stresses the fact that the characteristic feature of priamels is their twofold form. On the basis of Dutch priamels, he proposes a typology of priamels in accordance with their structure while pointing out, in consequence, that they usually have a moralizing and/or comical function.

Elżbieta Wąsik

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

wasik@ifa.amu.edu.pl

Literary section

The section *Literêre Kritiek* [Literary Criticism] [2] consists of four articles that range from highly theoretical, such as Willem Botha's "Breyten Breytenbach as konseptuele versmelter" [Breyten Breytenbach as conceptual blender], to the practical "'Te hel met heling, Niggie!' – Wanneer traumanarratiewe tekort skiet" ['To hell with healing, Niggie!' – when trauma narratives fall short] by Thys Human. In the other two contributions N.P. van Wyk Louw represents a past – firstly as the voice of the older poet in "'His Master's Voice': Tom Gouws se navolging en afwyking in gesprek met Van Wyk Louw" [Tom Gouws's imitation and deviation in conversation with Van Wyk Louw] by Marthinus P. Beukes and secondly as the Afrikaner thinker of the early 20th century, in Karin Cattell's "Die 'wil tot vernuwing': N.P. van Wyk Louw en Afrikaneridentiteit in die vroeë 20ste eeu" [The 'will to renewal': N.P. van Wyk Louw and Afrikaner identity in the early 20th century].

One should probably not read too much into the sequence of articles, but it is interesting to note that it turns chronology on its head, and that we move from Breytenbach to Van Wyk Louw by way of an article on trauma and intertextual relationships. Perhaps such an arrangement gives one the sense of delving into a past, wielding a literary trowel.

Willem Botha's discussion of Breyten Breytenbach in the context of Conceptual Blending Theory stands out as a bold and systematic analysis of Breytenbach's infamous "ondeursigtigheid" [opacity] (Burger en Pienaar 2009: 143). By means of Lakoff and

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[2] All translations my own – T.K.

Johnson's views on the cognitive unconscious, and Evans and Green's conceptual domains, Botha unpacks stacked metaphors such as "tyd is die verskietende komeet van geheue" ('time is the shooting comet of memory' is not a satisfactory translation) from the first poem in the section 'daar is geen tyd' [there is no time] in *Die windvanger* [The wind catcher]. In the blending action, which is posited as fundamental to the metaphoric process, doors are opened to the possibility of emergence. This phenomenon is well known in complexity theory, and in this context it describes the emergence of new, unforeseen meanings which can not be reduced to structural elements of the text. As Botha rightly emphasises in the conclusion, clinical analysis of syntax becomes crucial in such an approach. The careful yet bold scientific approach of the article impresses, and leaves the reader somewhat discomfited by the (succesful) application of an almost mathematical logic to poetic analysis.

Trauma narration is discussed in a refreshing, somewhat sceptical fashion in Thys Human's "Te hel met heling, Niggie." The specific war trauma in Ingrid Winterbach's *Niggie* is broadened via reference to the Koninginnedag tragedy in Appeldoorn and the activities of the TRC in South Africa. Human identifies *Niggie*'s conclusion as "die suggestie dat vermyding, liggaamlike vertroosting, trane, die bottel, maar ook die kruid – tabak en veral andersins – in sommige omstandighede ook, of dalk eerder, die pyn van trauma kan verdoof" [the suggestion that avoidance, physical consolation, tears, the bottel, but also the leaf – tobacco and especially otherwise – can in some cases also, or perhaps rather, dull the pain of trauma] (Burger en Pienaar 2009: 168). This sceptical perspective on the possibility of catharsis and healing is balanced by an emphasis on the sense-making function of narrative.

The coupling of present to past is investigated explicitly in Beukes's article on the relationship between a younger and older poet. Aesthetics gain a narrative character by the "terruggaan [...] op oerbelewenisse" [returning to primordial experiences] and the intertextual conversation (sometimes) also involves a ideological corrective from a different world-view (Burger en Pienaar 2009: 171) (attributed to a newspaper article by T.T. Cloete in *Beeld*). Beukes limits Gouws's "correction" (Burger en Pienaar 2009: 173) of Van Wyk Louw's rational world-view to an analysis of the poem "Suiwer Wiskunde" [Pure Mathematics] next to Gouws's "onsuiwer wiskunde" [impure mathematics], but also reads "soko" next to "Raka" and notes that "klein voetpaadjies" [small footpaths] and "bekende voetpaadjies" [known footpaths] become "afdraaipaadjies" [diverging paths] (Burger en Pienaar 2009: 178). In Gouws's rewriting of "Raka" the animal grows inside the self, but it is equally impossible to close the "hek" [gate] and exclude it (Burger en Pienaar 2009: 178).

Cattell analyses Van Wyk Louw's innovative approach to the concepts 'nation,' 'individual,' identity' and 'nationalism' as presented in his critical essays in *Berigte te velde* [Reports from the field] and *Lojale verset* [Loyal opposition], with specific reference to

the instability of identity within a changing relationship between nation and individual. Via Said, Ricoeur and others, the historical development of the concept 'Afrikaner' is problematised. An important emphasis is placed on the expectations generated by adherence to specific identities. The entanglement of language, religion and nationalism (especially as argued by Muller and Diederichs) is especially interesting with the benefit of hindsight. Van Wyk Louw's concepts of 'loyal opposition' and 'vergaan-om-te-ontkiem' [perish-to-propagate] are presented in an engaging manner, and the process of 'vertrek en terugkeer' [depart and return] is still relevant in a contemporary context.

These divergent contributions represent a fitting variety of research interests to pay tribute to the exceptional academic Jac Conradie.

Tertius Kapp
Adam Mickiewicz Universiteit, Poznań
tertiuskapp@gmail.com