Symon Andriesson

Duytsche Adagia ofte Spreecwoorden
Antwerp, Heynrick Alssens, 1550

In Facsimile, Transcription of the Dutch Text and English Translation

Edited by
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With two introductory texts by
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mic publications (such as this critical edition) are serious work and thus fittingly take on a serious tone in presentation. We do not, however, mean to make a thunderclap out of a fart’ [16.1], and thereby lose the pleasure and humor which Andriessoon and his contemporaries took in their proverbs and expressions.

For all that we can learn from the Duytsche adaigia, in many ways we remain ‘lanterns without light’ [83.6]; we know effectively nothing about how Andriessoon came to assemble this book, about where he found his proverbs or who he consulted on their definitions, about why this Amsterdam notary chose to publish it in Antwerp or what his contemporaries took in their proverbs and expressions.

We do not, however, mean ‘to make a thunderclap without which this edition of Andriessoon’s Duytsche adaigia eft spreecwoorden here presented, and especially the curator of that collection, for their extraordinary generosity in allowing this invaluable text to again come to light. The publication of this book, we earnestly hope, will allow us in a very positive sense ‘to pay with words’ [53.7] their kindness.

II Historical proverb scholarship in Flanders and the Netherlands

Herman Roodenburg

It is a common belief among the Dutch that they possess more proverbs and proverbial phrases than, for instance, the English, the Germans or the French. If this were correct, if this self-image tallies, then Dutch scholars have sorely neglected this treasure. The Dutch contribution to international proverb scholarship is a modest one, particularly in the field of proverb history. For instance, although W.H.D. Suringar published his masterful study, Enamur verten Nederlandtscbe spreukwoorden, in 1873, it is still considered unrivalled. Dutch proverb historians have been chiefly paronomiographers—they have collected proverbs and proverbial phrases. Still essential in this regard are the collections of F.J. Harrbomee and P.A. Stoot, though both collections also have their shortcomings. In the field of paronomiology, the proper study of proverbs, Dutch folklorists, philologists and other scholars have mostly sought to explain a single proverb or they have published valuable editions of historical proverb collections, as did, for instance, G.G. Kloek. Foreign scholars have mostly shunned such editorial work. A notable exception is the American paronomiologist Richard Jente, who produced the exemplary edition of the oldest Dutch proverb collection, the Proverbia Commissa from ca. 1495.

Remarkably, Dutch proverb scholarship has focused almost exclusively on the sixteenth century, in particular on the paintings and drawings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Bruegel’s Netherlandish Proverbs, among his most famous paintings, has attracted dozens of studies, by Dutch and Flemish, but also by German, American and other scholars. Most of this work, however, is more iconographic than iconological in its approach. Relying on contemporary proverb collections and on the spadework of Suringar, Harrbomee and Stoot, most authors have merely sought to identify the

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1 In the last decade Dutch scholars have been interested in comparative paronomiology. For an excellent international bibliography, containing 4598 entries, see Wolfgang Mieder, International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography, 2 vols., New York, Garland, 1982-1993; see also the yearly bibliographies in Mieder’s electronic journal De Proverbia.

2 W.H.D. Suringar, Enamur verten Nederlandtscbe spreukwoorden, van afterkomstige adagia geordend in drie orden, met nieuwe gedeelte toegevoegd, Utrecht, Enschede, 1873.

3 P.J. Harbomee, Spreekwoordentabellen der Nederlandtscbe taal, van Hasselt, 1866; P.A. Stoot, Nederlandtscbe spreukwoorden, van Nederlandsch tot Franse spreukwoorden, van hun oorsprong tot hun vertaling, Amsterdam, 1868-1870.

4 E. Warnersen, Duytsche adaigia, van naar naar Nederlandsche spreukwoorden, Antwerpen, 1550.

proverbs and proverbial phrases depicted, and to provide brief accounts of their possible meanings. A few other artists who included proverbs in their paintings and drawings, for example Bruegel's 'Voorouwerr' Hieronymus Bosch, Frans Hogenberg and Jan van Doetinchem, have been dealt with in a similar way. This joining of iconography and paraprosdokia has certainly enhanced our knowledge of sixteenth-century proverbs. At the same time other, no less interesting periods have come off badly. Where, for instance, is the proverb scholarship on painters such as Sebastiaen Vrancx, Jacob Jordaens or Jan Steen? And where are the studies of our seventeenth-century facies or on proverb collectors such as Jacob Cats, Johann de Braekeleer and Carolus Tuitman? Furthermore, in its general lack of depth the majority of Bruegel studies have contributed only marginally to paraprosdokia and even less to a more broadly oriented social or cultural history of Netherlandish proverbs. Thanks to a number of art historians, mainly from the United States, this situation has now begun to change. To the great nineteenth-century collectors, proverbs were one with the 'folk'. Proverbs contained the 'wisdom of the folk'; they belonged to a national and dateless 'folk tradition'. Such essentializing notions dominated proverb scholarship for a long time. As the Flemish folklorist Alphons de Cock phrased it in 1910, proverbs 'climb up to centuries long gone'; they 'mirror the realm of thought of our ancestors in ancient times'. Scholars of a younger generation were less mythologizing in their concepts, but they still saw proverbs as reflecting 'folk life' or the 'folk spirit'. In fact, the enigmatic figure of Bruegel matched these notions perfectly. Supposedly of peasant origin himself, as his first biographer, Carel van Mander, observed, Bruegel depicted this peasant world time and again. It earned him the nickname of 'boeren-Bruegel' among later generations. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, this epithet acquired a new and very different meaning. As romantic nationalism spread across Europe, Flemish, Dutch and German scholars came to see the painter as the true son of an

8 For a still impressive study, see Jan Gracza, Vlijt in en vreugde in het werk van Pieter Bruegel, Antwerpen, Standford Boekendruk, 1957.
11 A 'social history of language', as outlined in several volumes by the historians Margaret Sullivan, 'Bruegel's Proverbs: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance'. Art Bulletin 73 (1991), pp. 426-446. 
14 For a reevaluation of Erasmus' interest in Dutch proverbs, see Ari Wesseling, 'Dutch Proverbs and Expressions in Erasmus' Colloquies, and Letters', Renaissance Quarterly 55 (2002), pp. 16-17.
17 For a survey of this monograph, see Mark Meadow, 'Proverbs and Popular Culture in the Netherlands', in: Ton Dekker, Herman Roodenburg and Gerard Rooijakkers (eds.), The History of Proverbs, 2 vols., Antwerp, De Schaep, 1959, pp. 200-201.
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With this new edition of Symon Andriessoon’s Duytsche adagia the focus is again on the sixteenth century, although with broader goals than in many earlier such publications. Editing a proverb collection would appear to belong, strictly speaking, more to parremiography than to parremiology. Clearly, the first objective of the two editors, Anneke Fleurkens and Mark Meadow, was to unlock this unique proverb collection for a broad Dutch- and English-speaking audience. However, as both the introduction and the annotation make clear, we may safely situate this edition within the new trend of analytical proverb studies of the last years. Like Bruegel, the notary Symon Andriessoon was not a humanist, nor do we know about any links between him and Amsterdam humanists. As Bas Dudok van Heel explains, Andriessoon belonged to the urban middle classes and his interest in the vernacular reminds us in the first place of other Amsterdam notaries, such as Dirck Voleckerse, Coornhert or Gedeon Fallert. I am convinced that this edition will prove a welcome contribution to both Dutch parremiography and parremiology, and perhaps to a nascent social history of the Dutch language as well.
