Ik heb geen verstand van poëzie, G.A. van Oorschot als uitgever van poëzie

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SUMMARY

The investigation of the behaviour and activities of publishers is part of the shift towards the analysis of social, institutional and infrastructural aspects of literature that has recently taken place in studies of Dutch literature. Scholarly investigation of publishers and publishing houses is still relatively new. Two important contributions were made by Van den Brink (1984) and De Glas (1989). Van den Brink focussed on managerial and legal aspects related to the entire sector of the 'information media' (i.e. anything from publishing volumes of poetry to floppy disks), while De Glas concentrated on the development of the publication list of two prewar Dutch publishing houses. It is quite remarkable that, although the publishing companies he describes were ideological foundations serving the working classes, De Glas dismisses the opinions of publishers on literature and society as useless and irrelevant; instead, he suggests that a large-scale analysis of the publishing list yields a far more solid framework for writing an adequate history of a publishing house, which, in conjunction with matters pertaining to business economics, can provide insight into the long-term strategies of its policy-makers (see 'Inleiding').

The present study investigates a far smaller area than an entire sector of information media or complete publishing houses. It deals with the poetry catalogue of G.A. van Oorschot's publishing house, which contains less than a hundred titles. Nevertheless, other aspects of the publishing house are also discussed, as is the publisher himself. In contrast to the approach of De Glas, the mental and moral profile of the publisher himself has been studied in detail. Mr. Van Oorschot always appealed to certain literary traditions, good taste and social interests, which offers a very

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fruitful starting point for the description of his company (see chapter 1).

Managerial, logistic and financial aspects are also analysed. In spite of the simple organisation, the structure of the company of G.A. van Oorschot had a great influence on its policy towards literature. Financial considerations were of far greater consequence than the publisher would ever have admitted. Studying the structure of the organisation furthermore shows how a company with hardly any staff could not only exist but even assume a status of authority with regard to matters of literary history (see chapter II).

The moral profile of the publisher was mainly reflected in the literary magazines he published through the years and which he considered as 'weapons for a just cause'. These magazines (De baanbreker, Libertingage and Tirade respectively) were highly important to Van Oorschot's list of publications. The editors of these magazines, if not unpaid employees, were at least important and influential advisers to the company. The impractical preference of Van Oorschot for a certain (and certainly unpopular) political opinion upset and on several occasions even broke the otherwise fruitful relationship between the magazines and the output of the publishing house (see chapter III).

Roughly speaking, the company's output of poetry consists of three categories of volumes of poetry, varying in form, size, price, 'completeness' and canonicity. Best known are the precious 'Collected Works' (Verzamelde Werken) of highly reputable poets; apart from many important poets from the interbellum, Van Oorschot in this series also brought together major poets from the first two decades of the century and, in a later period, some poets of his 'own breed' as well. Secondly, contemporary poetry of generally young poets was published mainly in separate small volumes; during the first few years of the company's existence, Van Oorschot seemed to use this format mainly for the exposure of uneven work of friends and sympathizers. In the mid-sixties his magazine Tirade drew together several poets who (despite their unmistakable differences) were soon regarded as a separate literary movement, and the work of these so-called Tirade-poets sold ex-temely well. Finally, some category, were being published, starting in 1952 (see chapter II).

In 1967, undiplomatic events disrupted the relations between publisher and Van Oorschot's knowledge of current literature: new editors finally put to rest the careers of the poets concerned. From this 'solo' period and from this period of the careers of the poets concerned, the work of these so-called 'solo' period and the work of the 'solo' period and the work of the...
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