

MARK INSINGEL

Reflections

Translated from the Dutch by
Adrienne Dixon

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\$4.95.

Reflections, optical as well as psychological, are the theme of this extremely experimental and highly artistic poem in prose. It is a collection of related impressions and interwoven images. In an elegaic tone the author tries to reproduce blurry childhood memories, murky adulthood reminiscences and foggy future visions.

Mainly because of its immoderate subjectivity and demanding style. Mark Insingel's book would not appeal to the reader of traditional novels, the reader who usually appreciates clear and coherent plot, simple extrinsic structure and moderate intellectual content. Other than in narrative and dramatic works, lyrical poetry does not tell a story, construct a plot or describe an action; it merely conveys impressions, recalls moods or expresses feelings. And this is exactly what Mark Insingel does in his first novel. But in addition to this, he also tries to depict certain incidents and describe specific actions, even if he reduces his story to a sequence of hazy pictures and "abstract[s] the text to the very bone," as he himself admits in an interview with Lidy van Marissing.

The successful fusion of its lyrical and narrative attitudes is one of the things that make this work exceptionally amusing. A thorough examination of this book reveals some fascinating aspects. One notices, for example, that its extrinsic structure resembles that of a well planned and precisely executed poem.

The book consists of thirteen chapters, or stanzas, if you wish to call them that. The first and last stanzas complement each other. They are nearly of the same length (55 and 58 lines) and have the same peculiar style. Also the central motifs of these two stanzas are very similar (*Revolving* and *A Circle*). Aside from these two, one also notices that the stanzas become shorter (355, 299, 247, 183, 134, and 102 lines). After the seventh stanza they

start to get longer again (117, 184, 253, 316, 377). Each stanza, with the exception of the seventh which could be regarded as a caesura or a diaeresis, has its counterpart.

Intrinsically one could also observe that each stanza has its own central-motif; once again, with the exception of the seventh. These central-motifs, which are capitalized and incorporated into the text are: 1 REVOLVING, 2 A KNOCKING, 3 THE LETTERS, 4 THE OPENINGS, 5 A SLIM YOUNG LADY, 6 COFFINS, 7 8 A ROTTING CORPSE, 9 A HANDSHAKE, 10 THE STREET, 11 THE PUZZLE, 12 A CAR, 13 A CIRCLE.

Leitmotifs and leitsymbols (the grandfather, the dog, Mr. and Mrs. Candlemaker, the net curtains, mirrors, photographs, the girls Janna and Marina, loneliness, shyness, conventional phrases of greetings, doors, windows, coffins, a sportscar, death, fire, tennis, cigarettes, gravel, pond, shadows, and of course "the vicious circle of never clear meanings," p. 56) hold the intrinsic parts of this prose-poem together and make it one complete unit. Because of the perfect interconnection between form and content, between extrinsic and intrinsic structures, Mark Insingel's book is one of the most challenging and interesting works of modern fiction.