

Chicken Run (2000), *Creature Comforts* (1989) and *Shaun the Sheep* (2015) to its prehistoric caveman film *Early Man*, released in January 2018; and finally, the Oxford-based creative education organisation Flash of Splendour, which is taking these animal tales to reach out and go beyond reading, using innovative pedagogical approaches and new media in creative workshops for primary and secondary schools and in particular for children with special educational needs.

Marshalling the expertise of its four partners to produce an innovative, virtual and animated Fox for British children of any age, the project will culminate in 2020 in a programme of events around Reynard the Fox, including the publication of two books on Reynard (one for children, one academic); an exhibition in the Bodleian; a Reynard the Fox Day, school workshops, film festivals and of course Aardman's animation of *Fantastic Mister Fox*. All this a tribute to the enduring fascination of this Fox, with its wicked sense of humour, forever young.

REINIER SALVERDA

Reynard the Fox and Other Mediaeval Netherlandish Secular Literature. Edited and introduced by E. Colledge. Translated by Professor Adriaan J. Barnouw and E. Colledge. Leyden / London / New York, 1967.

Cor Hendriks, *Richard Deacon, Master of Disinformation*, 2016. Pdf available at: robscholtemuseum.nl.

Alexia Lagast, 'A la recherche de l'œuvre perdue: kritische status quaestionis van het onderzoek naar de Madoc', in *Millennium* 24 (2010), vol.1, pp. 19-33.

Aardman – <https://www.aardman.com>

Bodleian Libraries – <https://bodleian.ox.ac.uk>

Bristol University, Professor Ad Putter – www.research-information.bristol.ac.uk

Dutch medieval literature online at Antwerp University – www.moocmnl.kantl.be

Flash of Splendour – www.flashofsplendourarts.com

International Reynard Society – www.rose.uzh.ch/de/forschung/reynard_society.html

Tiecelyn – www.reynaertgenootschap.be

Alone on the North Sea Coast

Adriaan Roland Holst

Adriaan Roland Holst (1888-1976) set himself a truly formidable task when in 1932 he embarked on *Een Winter aan Zee* (*A Winter by the Sea*), published five years later, in 1937. It comprises sixty-three lyric poems, each eight lines long, each obeying the rhyming scheme *abacbdcd*, each in iambic trimeters. The sequence – but this is very much a *singular* work – is divided into ten sections, to the nature of which the poet supplied a brief, illuminating, though personally reticent 'explanation', included here as afterword. That the work has profound autobiographical roots there can be little doubting, with the first person regularly present, and noticeable in both the first and last poems. It gives us a man alone on the North Sea coast, bereft of the woman he has loved (and still loves?): she has gone to an unspecified city he believes to be corrupt and corrupting. The voice we hear – surmounting all ingenuities of language and metrics and all unflinching interior analyses – is one of agonised individuality. The speaker finds comfort however in the thought of his countless emotional predecessors, members of humanity throughout the ages abandoned, isolated, yet determined to understand their fate.

It is enormously to the translator's credit that this voice prevails – and stays with us – even as he himself wrestles with fashioning from Roland Holst's virtuosic scheme and verse-forms an English-language artefact – mostly in contemporary English, though there are echoes of the Elizabethans on whom translator Roger Kuin is an expert. Yet – and opposite the English text the original is placed in photographed manuscript – he is consistently and scrupulously faithful to a Dutch itself often extremely intricately wrought. Now and again there are sacrifices of fidelity of language to fidelity to Roland Holst's elaborate poetic ingenuities, but these seem unimportant beside the creation of a work that can stand up as a whole, a monument to intensity of feeling and artistic ambition.

Perhaps, as with so many works from the 1920s and 1930s, readers fare better after absorbing the writer's 'explanation': Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922) set an enormous precedent, and, as there, Roland Holst invites us to recall the ancient and

the mythological. He studied at Oxford University when young, and from that time on was a great admirer of W.B. Yeats, sharing 'The Fascination of What's Difficult', the need for classical and Celtic analogues to key situations and characters, and an obsession with the woman Helen of Troy who, Janus-headed, stalks *A Winter by the Sea*. The poet's own loved one continually brings Helen to our imaginative attention; she was 'impassioned beauty incarnate' when he loved her beside the North Sea. She represented for him then the 'City of the World', a platonic *Sancta Civitas*. This she subsequently betrayed by moving to a modern city of worldly values, where, 'tarnished' as likely as not, she 'now wanders, old and embittered, and recognized by no one.' The reason for this cruel fate lies in the terrifying paradox that, through her very beauty, she (like Helen of Troy before her) brought about that first city's destruction. 'Who shall perceive the sense / of emptiness and ages? / Where towers stood battled, tense? / burning, she too can mark / mere fullness of time's pages.' The parallel with Yeats ('When Helen lived' etc.) scarcely needs further comment.

Of the ten sections five are 'groups' of poems – sections I, III, VI, VIII and X – and five – sections II, IV, V, VII and IX – are 'series'. In a 'group' the poems are numbered and should be taken as separate entities, even if themes and images link them; in a 'series' the poems, unnumbered, fol-



Adriaan Roland Holst (1888-1976)

Picture taken by the Dutch poet Lucebert

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low on one from another, and, read consecutively, have cumulative effect. Section I establishes the woman loved by the poet and the North Sea setting of their passion, Section II introduces and imposes on us the tragic, destructive, analogous figure of Helen. In Section III humanity stretching back to antiquity is apostrophised; Section IV is a beautiful, disquieting 'intermezzo' of only two poems, showing today's world under threat from 'alien powers' envoy'. Section V (a 'series') brings us back to the woman herself, recalled in her disappearance, Section VI (a 'group') reveals consequent developments in the poet's own psyche. Section VII is another intermezzo, dealing again with hostility to the world from without; Section VIII is arguably the most personal of all – or, rather, *supra*-personal since the lovers are depicted as inspired by characters from the past. Section IX 'sings the beloved's departure' while not foregoing sombre recognition of her avatars; Section X (a 'group') attempts not so much resolution as lyrical reconciliation to loss as being inextricable from experience.

Every so often the writer – not for nothing was he called 'The Prince of Poets' – rises to solemn musical heights, and his translator with him:

*Where did the time go? How
long has it been snowing?
A mirror's silence now
holds this room hostage, no
more sign of life is going
through. What if she were lying
– alone, as I am so
alone – somewhere and dying.*

PAUL BINDING

A. Roland Holst, *A Winter by the Sea*, translated into verse by Roger Kuin. Ian Jackson, Berkeley, 2017 (limited edition of 250 copies), 148 p. (ISBN 978 1 944769 58 1).

A Piercing Eye Alert to Every Detail **Charlotte Brontë's Brussels Legacy**

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