

JOHN MICHIENSEN, BROCK UNIVERSITY

Book Review

Hermans, Th., A.J.M. Janssen, P.G.M. de Kleijn, eds. *Handelingen Elfde Colloquium Neerlandicum: Colloquium van docenten in de neerlandistiek aan buitenlandse universiteiten*. Woubrugge: Internationale Vereniging voor Neerlandistiek, 1992.

The proceedings of the eleventh colloquium of the I.V.N., that was held in Utrecht in August 1991, have now been published. The contributions have been divided into five sections: language instruction, phraseology, the art of translation, literature and the visual arts, and the Low Countries and their inhabitants.

They are preceded by the opening lecture at the colloquium on Boendale's *Hoe dichters dichten*, the oldest Dutch poetics, delivered by the medievalist W.P. Gerritsen of the University of Utrecht. He discusses this work in connection with the oral tradition of the wandering minstrels at mediaeval courts, and concludes that the literature of the Low Countries, like that of most of Europe, owes as much to the minstrels as to the written word of the "clerici".

In the section on language pedagogy P. Jordens argues for introducing grammar naturally in second language teaching, and J. Hulstijn discusses new developments in language teaching. Two more essays deal with the difficulties of the meaning of the word "er" in the Dutch language and the idiosyncrasies of idioms.

Idioms are also the subject of the section entitled "Phraseology", and the three essays that are reproduced here lament the fact that little has been done in this area as far as the Dutch language is concerned. For example, on the basis of her search through the standard dictionaries, Fenoulhet concludes that these works are inadequate for finding Dutch idioms in a systematic manner. She feels there is a great need for a dictionary of current idiomatic Dutch.

The largest section of the collection contains ten essays on translating. On a purely descriptive level, the aims and methods of the schools of translating at the universities of Maastricht and Utrecht are discussed. Two essays deal with the reasons for translating certain works by authors who may not be all that popular or considered good in the Netherlands, and yet are a great success in Czechoslovakia and Sweden. Other essays discuss recent developments in theories of translation,

translation computers, and the difficulty of translating legal and technical documents. An interesting essay by H. Reid deals with the difficulties encountered in producing subtitles for films and television documentaries and news reports. J. Walravens demonstrates with the help of a passage from Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* what makes a particular translation successful.

The section entitled "Literature and the visual arts" consists of five contributions, ranging from one dealing with the depiction of stories from the Old Testament in the 15th through the 17th century to T. van Deel's analysis of poems by Simon Vestdijk inspired by paintings with which the author was acquainted. The role of the *Schilder-boeck*, the interaction of 17th century art and poetry, and the connection between painting and poetry in such groups as COBRA in the fifties are discussed in the remaining papers.

Concluding the collection are four essays dealing with the culture and civilization of Holland and Belgium today. Commencing with an amusing description of a pilgrimage that he made with his children some years ago to Dutch historical sites, J. Blokker concludes that Huizinga's contention that a nation can only survive if it has a strong sense of its history and traditions appears to have lost its meaning in contemporary Holland. G. van Istendael discusses changes in Belgian culture and the diminishing influence of the Catholic church in that country, and M.J.M. van Rooy, who outlines changes in the media in the Netherlands over the last few years, would like more serious newspapers demonstrating some reflection and in-depth reporting.

Finally, W.J. van den Akker argues that Dutch studies in language and literature have become too specialized in various sub-disciplines and should become more comparative. He appeals to his colleagues in the Netherlands to be more supportive of the efforts of "Neerlandici extra Muros" in order to preserve Dutch language and culture.

All in all, then, as is to be expected in a collection of this sort, the range of topics discussed is an eclectic one, and the quality of the essays varies, but anyone interested in Dutch and Flemish culture will find something stimulating to read here.