

Book Reviews

Kirsner, Robert S. (ed.) *The Low Countries and Beyond*. Lanham, N.Y., London: University Press of America, 1993.

This is another in a continuing series of publications of the American Association for Netherlandic Studies. It results from the Fifth Interdisciplinary Conference on Netherlandic Studies, held at the University of California, Los Angeles, in June 1990. The present volume differs from previous ones (as did the conference itself) in that it was the stated aim, as the title suggests, to go beyond the Low Countries and to offer, in addition to what could be called "core subjects" of Netherlandic studies, papers which deal with aspects of Netherlandic studies in Britain, Canada, Indonesia and South Africa, and with Anglo-Dutch and Dutch-American relations. The underlying belief, as the editor Robert Kirsner states in his Preface, is that such a broad approach strengthens the field (x).

The papers themselves (25 out of 36 read) are arranged in 8 categories: Art (2), History (3), Linguistics (4), Literature (7), *Nederlandkunde* (2), Afrikaans (3), Anglo-Dutch relations (3) and Dutch-American relations (1).

Within these categories the offerings are, as is to be expected, often of great diversity and quality. Thus, in the art section, Patricia Vervoort's discussion of recent translations of Vincent van Gogh's paintings into 3-dimensional objects by Canadian artists Murray Favro, Russ Yuristi, and Joe Fafard makes a strange though thought-provoking bedfellow with David Kunzle's treatment of Sandrart's painting of the Company of Cornelius Bicker. Apart from the historical separation of their subjects, these articles also offer an example of widely differing approaches to art itself: from the meticulously researched and traditional to the (no less well researched) free-wheeling and controversial - whereby Vervoort raises some crucial questions about the mode of existence of a work of art, particularly within a post-modern art discourse.

A similarly wide range of subjects, though not of treatment, is offered in the history section. Ida

Nijenhuis and Paul van de Velde deal with two rather different historical figures: Isaac de Pinto, whose fame as an author rests primarily on an *Apologie pour la nation juive* (1762), but who was also an enlightened philosopher and protector of sephardic rights; and the Indologist P. J. Veth (1814-1895), who is treated here as an "Empire-builder," whereby the wholly positive use of this term probably surprises the reader in a post-colonial historical climate.

The four articles on linguistics are, as is usually the case, rather specialized, though the ICNS is rightly proud of always including some papers in this domain. Justine Pardoën's analysis of word order of final verbal elements in Dutch relates word order directly to interpretation; "a crucial component of the analysis is the use of interpretation structures" (81). Thomas Shannon's article deals with a "cognitive account of some puzzling perfect auxiliary phenomena," by which he means a theory of perfect auxiliary selection based on transitive (have) and mutative (be) prototypes. A semantically based account is favoured over a formal approach in Shannon's theory. Arie Verhagen deals with the inflection of adjectives with nominal infinitives (the use or omission of the suffix "e"); Verhagen claims that he has been able to give an integrated analysis of several phenomena on the levels of phrases, sentences and discourse, but that there are no separate theories for these levels: they are "just that many points on the continuum of "text", to the interpretation of which grammatical elements contribute" (108). Roel Vismans, finally, deals with Dutch modal particles in directive sentences and concludes that there is a rank order of politeness in the sub-set of possible modal particles that can be used (120). All articles in this section appear well-researched, based often on field work with test groups, and all give a plethora of examples. Pardoën and Verhagen give generous credit to each other, both having been involved in a research project entitled "Functional Study of Language: Grammar and Pragmatics" at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam: proof that the world of linguistics is a small though lively one.

The section on literature is by far the largest of the present volume, and offers this reviewer the most

interesting and most accessible material. Gary Lee Baker continues his work on Multatuli with an article on *Woutertje Pieterse*. He claims that the hero's "bifurcated desire" is "caught between a life and death affirmative impulse" (129), whereby the struggle for power, money and material is interpreted as negative, the competition for knowledge (according to Havelaar's *Ideeën*) as life-positive. Multatuli could not arrive at closure (the book breaks off when Woutertje is seventeen), but could not "kill off" his hero, because this would mean destroying "a truly utopian element in the mundane world of middle-class existence" (137). Saskia Daalder and Arie Verhagen collaborated on a paper concerning Marga Minco's *De Val*, in which they analyze Minco's use of tense to create two contrasting positions with respect to past events: the heroine Frieda's (in whom the past is still present - hence the use of the "simple past"), and that of Abel and Kessels, for whom the past is seen as "perfected," hence the use of the perfect tense). Johan Snapper, writing about Minco's prose in general, makes the same point regarding Minco's view of the past, and also deals with her use of space.

In a short and lively paper on Marnix Gijsen, Marcel Janssens presents a "catalogue" of Gijsen's various uses of quotations (up to 40% of Gijsen's text in some instances!) and rightly asks the question whether Gijsen is not indulging in overkill. Cees Nooteboom, who, as we are all aware, is enjoying a veritable boom in Europe, is placed within the context of Post-Modernism (it had to happen!) by Christa Johnson. In her discussion of *Rituëlen* (1980) she sees especially a reaction against "high modernism" and discerns the categories of "the blurred silver screen of communications or 'pastiche,' and themes of avant-garde fragmentation and alienation" (168).

Gospel and religion is the topic of Jacques van der Elst's article on Ida Gerhardt, in which he attempts to contrast Gerhardt's sophisticated religious imagery with well-meaning religious poetry of a number of other poets. Manfred Wolf deals with the Curaçao author Frank Martinus Arion's novel *Nobeles Wilden*, which strikes him as "curiously European" (197), while at the same time representative in its rejection of the dream of the noble savage as a model for a third world country desiring to flourish as a 20th century nation.

In the section dealing with *Nederlandkunde*, a re-

examination of the Second World War and the Dutch-Indonesian conflict is undertaken by Bob de Graaff and Peter Romijn respectively. These interrelated articles are in the nature of reports on recent developments in historiography in the Netherlands, and are welcome material for researchers and teachers of Dutch culture *extra muros*. Particularly valuable in both cases are the copious references to published materials in the footnotes.

Welcome are also the articles on Afrikaans. Most Netherlandists, I suspect, have only a rather nebulous idea about the state of Afrikaans. Paul Roberge, Johan Smuts, and Hein Willemse demonstrate that it is a language in flux, subject to many influences, among others the influence of black South Africans (Hein Willemse), and the armed struggle of the South Africa Defense Force to preserve the status quo, which created the genre of "border literature" (Willemse). It is a language evolving from "verbasterde Hollans" via a "dochtertaal van het Nederlands" to "Afrikataal" (Roberge).

The section entitled Anglo-Dutch relations appears to me somewhat of a misnomer: it does not deal with politics, but is a somewhat incongruous "grab-bag" of cultural cross-influences. Mary Arshagouni Papazian, in the first article, compares the painting by Rembrandt entitled "The Raising of Lazarus" (1631) with the treatment of the same theme in John Donne's "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions" (1624), and attempts to derive a "Protestant aesthetics characteristic of 16th and 17th century Anglo/Dutch art," a rather daunting enterprise. On a more practical level, Henry Snyder reports on the progress of the British computer project entitled the "Eighteenth Century Sort Title Catalogue" (ESTC), a system which will make access to inventories of early printed books in the Low Countries far easier than in the past. Roland Todd's treatment of the circumstances surrounding Marnix of St. Aldegonde's vernacular Dutch Psalm translation establishes a tenuous link with England also, since it was partly intended for use by the Dutch congregations in England, though it was in fact never adopted there.

The final article, the only one in the section Dutch-American relations, is an interesting tidbit by Augustus Veenendaal Jr. He discusses a number of American towns which have little-known connections

with Holland by way of emigration and business ventures, such as Buffalo, N.Y., Washington, D.C., Spokane, Wash., and Cimarron, N.M.

As always with proceedings of conferences, variety is both a strength and a weakness in this volume: reading this cornucopia of topics, falling (although sometimes barely) within a very broadly defined area of studies called "Netherlandic," and showing such a wide range of interests, methods, and traditions can at times be an exhilarating, at times a supremely frustrating experience. The sane approach, obviously, is to pick and choose, to nibble, perchance to put aside. Though proceedings usually do not take pride of place on my bookshelf, this one is, when all is said and done, a welcome addition to the still rather limited library of books on Netherlandics published in North America.

AUGUSTINUS P. DIERICK
University of Toronto

J.P. Snapper and T.F. Shannon, Eds.: *The Berkeley Conference on Dutch Literature 1991: Europe 1992; Dutch Literature in an International Context*, Lanham, Md., University Press of America Inc., 1992. "Publications of the American Association for Netherlandic Studies, 6". pp. 211.

This volume contains thirteen contributions which all treat aspects of the same theme: the relationship of Netherlandic (Dutch and Flemish) literature to other literatures.

Paul Sellin opens the debate with a discussion of the catalogue of Nicolaas Heinsius' library which was put up for sale in 1682. In a style that is sometimes peculiar and at other times antiquated, Sellin describes the types of works of various national literatures contained in the Heinsius catalogue, and he concludes:

The Bibliotheca Heinsiana thus confronts us with problems. If we take the evidence of one of the finest private libraries ever to be assembled in the Netherlands up to 1681 at face value, the catalogue implies that while the prestige of Dutch literature toward the end of the century seems greater than that of its Teutonic siblings,

it is dubious whether Dutch literature would consider itself as much of a peer of French and Spanish as its seventeenth century apologists sometimes suggest, and the lustre of Italian utterly eclipsed it (18).

Of course a catalogue cannot "imply" anything, nor can a literature "consider...itself...a peer"; such details aside, however, the author makes clear that analyzing a catalogue in isolation from other essential information (such as the obvious question of which books Heinsius actually owned) is not helpful in determining the relative status of seventeenth century Dutch literature in Europe.

Margriet Lacy's contribution deals with Belle van Zuylen's role in eighteenth century intellectual life. She was friends with James Boswell, Benjamin Constant and David Constant d'Hermences. She wrote a novel called *Trois Femmes* in which she criticized French *émigrés* for their inability to adapt. She was a supporter of Rousseau and could have married Boswell but did not. Lacy concludes:

[In] the eighteenth century, national literatures are taken for granted and...flourish... [I]nternational contacts, however, seem to be equally taken for granted and flourish also. Sometimes they were initiated spontaneously and individually, for intellectual purposes. Belle van Zuylen and the notorious Abbé Prévôt [sic] are excellent examples, while in other cases they came about because of non-literary circumstances (especially political) - and here French novelists such as Marivaux come to mind again (30).

We do not learn from this article why Belle van Zuylen moved to Switzerland - perhaps for the same reason that led Marivaux to publish the later volumes of his *Vie de Marianne* in The Hague, namely tolerance - and what made her such an attractive interlocutor to certain European luminaries.

Manfred Wolf discusses Couperus's novels *Noodlot* and *Langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid* in the context of the "Aesthetic movement". He compares *Noodlot's* main character to that of Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* and remarks that the