Evolution of Paul van Ostayen" by Paul Hadermann. Van Ostayen has always been one of my favourite poets, but to claim that: "It was with fire that he defended modern art" (255) is going too far! The author also speaks of "scenes of... *self-scourging*" and "*disindividualized* artistic expression" (257). The words in italics simply do not exist in my vocabulary.

Clearly this beautifully produced volume, which in principle deserves to be read and studied throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, suffers from some unfortunate flaws. There is no doubt in my mind that the "Stichting Ons Erfdeel" should continue to publish *The Low Countries Yearbook*, but I would like to propose some modifications.

Since technically and artistically this work is a masterpiece, they should try to re-focus the content. My personal preference would be for fewer articles but longer ones, that treat a subject matter in great depth, place it in an international context and explain the specific relevance of the topic to the Anglo-Saxon world. Some obvious themes would be a more detailed exposé of the latest thinking and legislation on euthanasia in the Netherlands, and questions of bilingualism and federalism in Belgium. I would also prefer to see these topics treated by non-native i.e. Anglophone experts in order to obtain a "foreign" or "international" perspective. In this way one could also avoid the somewhat painful literal translations which burden the text.

Presently, the volume is a jumble of too much and too little. To be a truly international success, the "Yearbook" needs to be more clearly focused, to contain material that is of specific interest to Anglo-Saxons and to be written in a more readable and more idiomatically correct English. I am a regular reader of *The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books, The Guardian* and *The Observer* and I always marvel at the clarity, the conciseness and the succinctness with which they treat relatively abstruse subject matter. Using these publications as a guide, or some of their correspondents as authors, could be an excellent starting point.

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David F. Marley: *Pirates and Engineers, Dutch and Flemish Adventurers in New Spain (1607-1697).* Windsor, Ontario: Netherlandic Press, 1992.

David F. Marley: *Sack of Veracruz: The Great Pirate Raid of 1683.* Windsor, Ontario : Netherlandic Press, 1993.

The Netherlandic Press's list, judging by my book shelf, has concentrated on Dutch literature and the Dutch in Canada. With these two books, the Press expands its perspective to look at the Dutch presence in the West Indies and New Spain in the seventeenth century, at the height of Dutch sea power. It was a turbulent time and place. Spain was the nominal owner of the area - the Pope had said so - but Dutch, English and French colonies sprang up everywhere, only to change hands with every fleet that arrived from Europe. Even when there was peace in Europe, which was seldom, the seizure of land and ships continued throughout the Caribbean. Consequently merchant ships were armed to defend themselves against other vessels - but could very well take to attacking others instead. Besides merchantmen and warships, there were pirates and privateers, the only difference being that the latter had a licence from one country to prey on the shipping of another (the government took a percentage), whereas the pirates were in business for themselves. One ship might play several such parts, for different countries in turn, and its crew could be of several nationalities.

The Dutch, a mighty sea power at the time, were of course prominent in this complex and changeable region. Their relationship with the Spanish authorities was especially difficult. For the civil government, they had been rebels before Dutch independence and frequently the enemy thereafter; in addition, they traded with Spanish settlers in defiance of the Crown's monopoly. For the Inquisition, they were heretics, though in time it became illegal to persecute them for that. Civil government and Inquisition, moreover, were frequently locked in a power struggle, and foreigners might well be caught in the middle. David Marley tells us, in *Pirates and Engineers*, the stories of "a handful" of Dutch (and Flemish) men who appear and then disappear, more or less quickly, in the spotlight cast by the Spanish-American archives, which he has studied for years. Long-time readers of this Journal will remember his previous accounts of two of them (IV ii - V i (1983), p. 74-77 and 78-81).

Thus we meet six sailors from Flushing who were shipwrecked in 1607 off Tabasco. They were tortured but seemed to know nothing useful, so were sent home. The treatment meted out to such visitors was usually less harsh. Willem Jan Ent of Rotterdam was captured and interrogated when his ship left without him, but he suffered no harm that we know of. In any case the interrogation was really intended to restore the reputation of the Governor of Yucatan, who was under a cloud because the Dutch pirate Laurens de Graaf had sacked Campeche. Samuel Stefan of Delft fared less well; he was imprisoned for three years at Veracruz on suspicion of heresy (i.e. being Protestant), even though as a Dutchman he was legally protected from this prosecution.

We also read of two men who escaped from the Dutch fleet that briefly took Acapulco in 1625. One, a deserter, received absolution just before he died in a Mexico city jail. The other, captured by the Dutch, left a report of lurid blasphemous goings-on before returning to Peru. A Flemish Catholic in Santa Fe (this was 217 years before the US seized New Mexico) was also accused of blasphemy, but no action was taken, for the charge arose out of personal animosity. Again, in 1655, a group of Dutch and French sailors were captured at Tampico, and the Dutch were mostly Calvinist, but the Inquisition made no attempt to convert them. This story gives us yet another insight into those distant times: it seems anybody could walk off the street into the royal jail and talk theology with these novel prisoners!

Two of the men we meet are more important: one pirate and one engineer. The pirate (privateer, he would insist) is Jan Erasmus Reyning. He had distinguished himself in the sack of Panama in 1671, perhaps the most grievous smash and grab raid of the age. Like all the other privateer captains, however, he felt that he had been robbed of his share of the loot by the expedition's leader, the notorious Henry Morgan, and the English proposed to arrest and hang him for refusing to surrender his privateer's licence. So he saved his life and extracted payment from the English by becoming a Spanish coastguard, seizing ships that were illegally cutting dyewood around Campeche - a neat revenge.

The engineer is Adrian Boot. Hired to end the constant floods in Mexico City (the Spaniards had neglected the Aztec flood control system), he lived there for 25 years and ended his days in undeserved disgrace. He fortified Veracruz and Acapulco, but the Dutch twice briefly seized the latter and he was of course suspected of collusion with them. In fact it was the fault of the corrupt and impoverished colonial government; they failed to supply men and weapons. Above all, the drainage problem was beyond the technology of the time, and every flood "proved" that he had not done what he was (sometimes, when the funds did not end up in some official's pocket) paid to do.

These are well-told human stories, but the major events of the time are just out of the picture. In *Sack of Veracruz* on the contrary, one such event is front and centre, and David Marley tells it straight through in a sweep that carries the reader along. He sets the scene with great economy. The year is 1683. A slave trader called van Hoorn has his ship and cargo of slaves seized in Santo Domingo, in reprisal for the capture of a Spanish warship by the Dutch pirate Laurens de Graaf, all too well known to the Spanish as Lorencillo. Van Hoorn determines on reprisals of his own: he obtains a privateer's commission from the French and joins a *flibustier* called Grammont, who takes him to de Graaf. The assembled scoundrels realize they have permission to attempt any coup they like, and decide to sack Veracruz, just when it is full of merchandise awaiting the silver fleet from Spain. Many of the pirates have been there and they know the layout of the city and where all the rich people live. They also know that sand has drifted to the top of the defensive walls.

The city, indeed, is as vulnerable as possible. The governor is young and arrogant, and locked in rivalry with the commandant of the San Juan de Ulua fortress offshore. The patrol outside the city consists mostly of greenhorns substituting for other people. And the official supposed to issue the monthly ration of gunpowder has not done so.

In any case de Graaf's tactics work superbly. His ships that reconnoitre the situation are Spanish vessels and do not arouse suspicion. He does not land where expected. By the time someone outside the walls suspects something, his men are inside and in position. He meets little resistance. The proceeds of the raid are immense.

I will not spoil the enjoyment of future readers -

and I hope they will be numerous - by telling the rest of the story. I will merely praise the way David Marley narrates it. You are not aware what a vast array of information he has here distilled until you reach the end and see the list of sources: five pages of them, mainly manuscripts of the time. Great learning worn wonderfully lightly. A great read.

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