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.

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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'Hermenches. 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

former's "dissipations are somewhat more innocent than those of Dorian Gray" but that in both novels "the aesthetizing tendency is... portrayed as at once admirable and corrupting" (35). Manfred Wolf defines the movement as follows:

> [it] professed to be a love of Art for Art's sake, but was actually more a love of the artistic as a style, a fondness for the charming and out of the ordinary, an aversion to the commonplace. Aestheticism was principally a rebellion of life-style, to use deliberately our own contemporary jargon, a wish to avoid the traps of a vulgar everyday mediocrity (34).

Well perhaps, but this definition is not very precise and hence not very useful. Of *Langs Lijnen*, Wolf declares "this more mature work is much more than its predecessor itself an aesthetic artifact" (37). I thought that this statement was true of all novels; however, it allows Wolf to say of one of its characters: "In Cornélie we see an infinitely finer version of what we had already seen in *Noodlot*, an attraction to the artistic" (38). Wolf concludes: "In part, the decline of Couperus' reputation is the decline in our century of Aestheticism" (40). He then points out that "Aestheticism and Decadence have made a comeback" and wonders if "In view of all this, could Couperus NOW be accommodated in our own *fin de siècle*?" (42).

One could disagree with these opinions. On the one hand, *Noodlot* is naturalistic and it is surprising to see it mentioned in a discussion of Aestheticism. On the other hand, neither that movement nor Couperus have ever been out of fashion. Yet if Couperus has been neglected by some international readers, Wolf perhaps unwittingly explains why when he quotes Gomperts: "Wilde was the most provocative, Proust the most rebellious, and Couperus stood in between by not violating convention but *undermining* it" [my italics] and when he compares him to D. H. Lawrence: "Unlike Lawrence Couperus finds no joy in this [lust for energy] and regards this development with a kind of horror" (39). In other words, Couperus was a timid prude when compared to his British and French counterparts. Withal it is a very disparate quartet, and this opinion of Couperus seems unfair.

Hugo Brems' article discusses foreign models for the postwar poetic development in the Low Countries. He focuses specifically on new realism in the sixties. In doing so he is "less concerned with the actual production of poetry and more with peri- and metatextual evidence in programmatic texts, interviews, reviews, anthologies, translations, quotations and different intertextual data" (46). This well organized overview emphasizes some interesting points, such as the assertion by Kouwenaar and Constant that "Experimentalism is rediscovering the original sources and functions of art and poetry" (49). And about the Flemish new realism he says:

> [it] gets its qualities from a fruitful tension between affinity and individuality. It is fundamentally related to an international context while asserting its own individual identity (55).

In "The Bind of Double Metonymy," André Lefèvere uses metonymy "in a slightly (wickedly?) different sense, namely as a part that 'determines' a whole" (57). There really is nothing "wicked" about this obfuscatory misuse of terms, but it allows him to make grandiose statements, such as: "There are dominant metonymies and non-dominant metonymies" (57), when he could just as well have used "literature" or "culture" for "metonymy". But Lefèvere has an additional purpose; it is to demonstrate that Dutch and Flemish writers are often mediocrities who regularly indulge in arrogant and hypocritical "America-bashing" (59). For example, he declares that "A non-dominant literature finds itself in the unenviable position of having to hawk its products in translation" (58). Surely all literatures are in this position if they are to be read by speakers of other languages, and why is it unenviable? Netherlandic literature is part of European literature, and many European writers succeed admirably in translation. To confuse matters further, Lefevère claims on one page:

> it is doubtful that Dutch literature of the present or relatively recent past will conquer America on its aesthetic or thematic merits. The aesthetics are too similar, and therefore not noticeably better, the thematics too derivative and unexciting (67).

and on the next : "But are Dutch authors then doomed

to write about themes that are popular in the US? ...yes, if they want to be published in the US" (68). Do American readers want something different or not? I think they do, judging by the success of *The Name of the Rose* and the continued popularity of certain Russian and French writers. Oddly enough, Lefèvere claims that "the literature of [i.e. about] the former Dutch East Indies" could be "worth publishing", but he does not explain why *Max Havelaar* has not been a big seller in English translation.

Lefèvere's analysis thus seems flawed. As for its style, let me conclude by quoting a rhetorical question of his:

> In other words, not to put too fine a point on the matter, is it because Konsalik and Le Carré, to quote but two names, have been translated into Dutch and afford the average Dutch language man or woman what producers of "high" literature tend to call "a good read" in a denigratory tone of typewriter that those very producers of "high" literature are, in fact, at liberty to produce "high" literature and little else?

A denigratory tone of typewriter? You have got me there, André!

I have little to say about L. Nathan's "A Mirror for Translators". He translates Cees Nooteboom's "Het papier op de lelie" and posits an ideal translation and reader. I agree with him that "... very few translations, alas, perform the mirror trick of making a good poem in the receiving language while staying faithful to the original" (72). Indeed, the most famous translation I am familiar with is "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" and apparently it is totally unfaithful to the original. So much for fidelity.

Reinier Salverda provides us with an excellent analysis of Dutch East Indies literature. He deals with its history; the importance of Multatuli, Couperus, Du Perron. Next he treats the international aspects: the influence of India, Arabia and the importance of Joseph Conrad. He discusses the role of translation, which introduced European literature to the Dutch colonists and also to the Indonesians in their language(s). He speaks of the long indigenous literary tradition and finally concludes that

> The East Indies was one gigantic babylonic BAZAAR, an international literary market place where the Dutch have played an important role as intermediaries between all these literatures (99).

Salverda's article would make a fine introduction to the study of the (Dutch) literature of the East Indies.

J. Goedegebuure's article "Expressionism and New Objectivity" makes another worthwhile contribution. Not only does he trace the various international strands that go to make up these two ostensibly very different movements, he also provides a historical and political time-frame for the German and Dutch evolution of these trends. Goedegebuure also makes the very important point that "until the first decades of the twentieth century Dutch literature was dominated by French literature" (109-10), so that the impact of German expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* must be seen as representing a major shift in Dutch literary orientation.

B. Müller discusses "The Second World War in Dutch and German Literature". It is difficult to imagine a more perfect topic for a comparative analysis of a theme shared by "victor" and "victim." Unfortunately, the opening sentence sets the tone: "My research to date has concentrated on the perception of Germany in postwar Dutch literature, comparing non-fiction images in a socio-historical context" (123). Why look for non-fiction images in literature and what does he compare these images with? This article is permeated by wooden expressions and impossibly vague generalities. To give some examples: "[Hellema's] main theme is 'that's the end of it'" (126). Müller refers to "the political brisance [honestly?] of their message" (126) and to a character who is "one of many apparently useless wheels in the war machine" (127). He concludes that *Montyn's* "positive beginning is a misguided start" (127-8) and remarks that Mulisch's *The Assault* "is a novel about the pervasive digestion of the war in Holland" (128). This could have been a useful introduction to Dutch and German writing about WWII, but as it stands it is less than illuminating.

Jacques van der Elst entitles his contribution

"Lucebert versus Breytenbach" on the grounds that, coming from two different countries, they must be in "opposition" (133). However, he then shows that they share certain themes and devices: the use of religious themes (the Bible, Zen Buddhism), paradox, and "inversion as stylistic device" (143). Van der Elst claims that "Lucebert strives to be a social prophet" (152) and that Breytenbach wishes "to achieve the great void" (143). I myself am not sure that one can speak of either opposition or similarity. There may be intrinsic merit in comparing the work of any two poets, but van der Elst does not convince me that these two very different poets are comparable. He mentions Achterberg; a comparison between that poet and Breytenbach might be more illuminating.

A.M. Musschoot makes some interesting points in her discussion of Leon de Winter and Peter Handke, but unfortunately she indulges sometimes in pointless labelling, for example when she refers to de Winter's "subject matter... as late existentialist" (157). According to her, some of de Winter's novels "can be considered as examples of explicit rewriting" (159) of Handke's works, but she prefers to see de Winter's as explicitly postmodern and dealing with "the problem of representation itself" (165). Representation is "problematized," becomes "tentative" (166) and de Winter is even "attracted to hypothetical cases [and] model building" (167). Lately, however, he has "renounced all technical hyper-sophistication and returned to a more classical way of writing" (168).

Wiljan van den Akker's "A Mad Hatter's Tupperware Party: Postmodern Tendencies in American and Dutch Poetry" is as much a grab bag as the title indicates. He feels that in the Sixties "American culture experiences its avantgardism" and that "[c]ontrary to France and Germany, the United States did not have a real, influential avant-garde between the two wars" (181). Of course, that depends on your definition of "avant-garde". Such an assertion completely ignores the tremendous international influence exercised by such writers as Faulkner, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Eliot and Pound. Nonetheless, van den Akker clearly underscores the significant role that American poets such as Stevens and Williams have had on recent Dutch poetry. Unfortunately, his article is also marred by peculiar turns of phrase. He speaks of "some arbitrary man from one of America's bigger cities" (173); he proposes "to put [a statement] in terms of poetry" (177) and quotes four lines of prose; he claims that France's "Académie Française... wreathe[s]... writers... with national honor" (183) and that poets of "*Gard Sivik*... consciously... tended to transform everything in reality into art" (184), which contradicts his statement that "these poets claimed [to have]... got hold of true reality" (183-4).

The volume concludes with a summary by J.P. Snapper of a panel discussion on "Dutch Literature in the World: Diagnosis and Prognosis". It asks whether Dutch and Flemish literature should be considered as one or whether, as Brems says, they are "Two different literatures, two sub-systems of one principal system" (199). It asserts that "there is so little global awareness of Dutch literature" (I would disagree) and blames "problems of accessibility and dissemination" (201). It also discusses the quality of literary translation and suggests that "the universities should take the lead" (203), but it does not spell out such practical details as which ones and who will pay. It concludes by complaining about the lack of official government support for Dutch programs at foreign universities.

In sum, this volume deals with an important theme but is only somewhat successful. Many of the contributions are informative, thorough and well-written, but too many of them seem to me larded with vague generalities, pointless labels and superficial judgments, and too often they are written in a kind of pseudo-English that reads like transliterated Dutch and in which mixed metaphors and approximate terminology abound.

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Jozef Deleu, ed.: *The Low Countries: Arts and Society in Flanders and the Netherlands*. A Yearbook 1993-1994. Rekkem, Belgium, Stichting Ons Erfdeel, 1993, pp. 320, Can. $97.00.

This is a beautiful book to look at. It possesses an attractive cover with a nicely designed title; it is printed on quality paper and it contains a myriad of colour pictures. This yearbook is made up of 34 articles on a great variety of subjects as well as a "Chronicle" composed of some three dozen short

articles on topics that range from "Architecture" to "Visual Arts."

In many ways, this very handsome volume attempts to address the question "Why does the outside world know so little about the Low Lands?" It does so by providing a variegated series of snapshots of the multifarious activities that typify The Netherlands and Flanders. As a consequence, we learn a little about Hugo Claus, seven women poets, the Dutch documentary, Dutch cabaret, pollution, the Dutch background of New York, and I could go on and on.

This is at once the strength and the weakness of *The Low Countries*. You can leaf through this volume: the beautiful photographs and reproductions alone will provide hours of pleasure and, if you wish, you can select only those articles that are of interest to you. On the other hand, one can criticize the volume because no one theme or topic is treated in great depth.

Of course, there are reasons for this shallow treatment. It is not just a matter of space: the simple fact that each article attempts to provide a kind of general overview often results in a treatment that is neither fish nor fowl. Let us provide some examples. In "The Dutch Documentary", Gerdin Linthorst tries to explain the success of the Dutch documentary film in 4½ pages. This historical overview from the 50's to the 90's leaves one breathless. Numerous names and titles are mentioned and grandiose statements are made. Among the latter: "This [the Fifties] was the period when Dutch documentaries enjoyed huge national and international success." Obviously, this is purely an insider's point of view. Canadians could have made the same claim for the National Film Board documentaries. And sadly, there lies the rub. The focus of this article is both too narrow and too broad. A comparative international approach might have brought out the unique features of the Dutch documentary; an in-depth study of the historical evolution of the Dutch documentary would have provided us with more than a series of snapshots. But 4½ pages is not enough for either treatment.

Let us now glance at "An Anatomy of Dutch Cabaret" by J. Nijhof and P. van der Plank. Once again we are dealing with a historical overview, and unfortunately this "anatomy" gives us only a mishmash of skin and bones. Let us quote some telling phrases: "Dutch cabaret is unique... but that is only an opinion... It is in the first place play with language... but... even to the Dutch mind... the definition or demarcation is not clear-cut." In fact, what we are given is a quick synopsis of this popular form of entertainment, an overview of forty years of one-man shows larded with platitudes and pointless critical remarks. For example:

> This lack of critical reflection, flirting with taboos as is were, is exactly what some people so strongly reject in the work of cabaret artists like Paul de Leeuw: discussing socially loaded topics with the sole intention of making an impression can easily deteriorate into tastelessness! (252)

I must confess that it totally escapes me why this artist is censored for attempting to make an impression!

Several of those contributions also suffer from the fact that they were translated from the Dutch. What sounds profound in Dutch often sounds utterly silly in English translation, for the simple reason that Anglo-Saxons have different expectations. For example, what are we to make of the following assertions: "[Flemish dance] groups have to contend with weather conditions more like those of an open field" (114)? At other times the extended metaphor simply falls flat. In order to discuss P. Saenredam's painting, the authors want us to employ an imaginary thermometer in order to better grasp the difference between "hot" and "cold" paintings:

> the warmest glow in the room will lead you to Rembrandt... Some like it hot... And some like it cold: Walk to the coolest spot and you will find your way to the distinctive realm of Pieter Saenredam (231)

One gets the idea, but in the meantime the reader trips over the metaphor and is left puzzled. Especially since the phrase "Some like it hot" reminds one immediately of Marilyn Monroe in the comic film of the same title.

Let us look at one more article: "The Poetic

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).