

belangrijke bijdragen: Olga van Marion, 'Lessen in liefde. Ovidius' *Heldinnenbrieven* in de Nederlanden' (161-182) en Rudi van der Paardt, "'Pluk de dag, het leven is kort'". Over de receptie van Horatius' *Oden* in de Nederlandse letterkunde' (183-206). Op een algemener niveau treft het dat geen oog werd geworpen op het nu wel fundamentele *De kunst van het kijken* (Gent, Amsterdam 2004; met vertalingen in het Duits, Engels, Frans, Koreaans, Pools en Spaans!) van Patrick de Rynck, waar een frisse en originele visie wordt ontwikkeld op het gebruiken van antieke motieven en mythen in de schilderkunst. Ook had een dialoog met de nieuwe literatuurgeschiedenis, in opdracht van de Nederlandse Taalunie geschreven door Karel Porteman en Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de Muzen. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Literatuur 1560-1700* (Amsterdam 2008) het blikveld, zeker over het zo imposante domein van de emblematiek, aanzienlijk kunnen verruimen. Tot slot had ook het hoofdstuk over de Oudheid in de film aan spankracht kunnen winnen indien de gemakkelijk bereikbare publicaties van de Leuvense oud-historicus Herbert Verreth daarover waren benut.

Een monumentaal boek als dit is, zo blijkt al snel, nooit af. We kunnen het daarom enkel diep betreuren dat zo'n enthousiast en erudiet pleitbezorger als René Veenman, in maart 2010 plots en zeer vroegtijdig overleden, zo abrupt van zijn gonzende plannen en bruisende levenswerk is gehouden. Het is dan ook om meer dan één reden terecht te noemen dat het Nederlands Klassiek Verbond zijn eerste NKV-prijs, bedoeld om een werk te lauweren dat een brug slaat tussen de Klassieke Oudheid en het heden, postuum aan Veenman voor zijn *magnum opus* heeft toegekend.

JAN PAPY, K.U. LEUVEN

Bavel, Bas van, *Manors and Markets: Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 500-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, xiv + 492 pp., ISBN 978 0 19 927866 4).

Bas van Bavel is well known for a succession of innovative articles and essays about many aspects of the late medieval and early modern Low Countries, including such themes as leasehold tenure, the land market, wage labour, farm size, industrialisation, and peasant unrest. He has recently caused a stir in the English-speaking world by advancing in a jointly authored article an explanation for the Dutch reputation for cleanliness in the necessity for hygiene in the dairy industry. Now he has brought many of these themes together in a substantial and carefully integrated study of the economy and society of the Low Countries (which means the county of Flanders as well as the area now included in the Netherlands) from the early Middle Ages to the beginning of the Golden Age. This is written with authority and skill, as you would expect of a book by an established scholar from a publishing house with a strong reputation, but there is also an underlying commitment and enthusiasm which carries the reader along. One feels wiser after reading it, but also convinced by a strong line of argument, and inspired to apply its general messages.

The central aim of the book is to explain how the thinly populated early medieval Low Countries could become a beacon in Europe for economic advance, with its high level of urbanisation, productive agriculture, specialisation in both farming and industry, commercialisation, and flourishing culture. The majority of the book is devoted to the period between 1300 and 1600, when these characteristics emerged most decisively. At times one is so impressed by the case being made for the progressive achievements of the Low Countries that one fears that this is an example of national pride, or at least loyalty to a region. Such thoughts are however quelled when Van Bavel, as well as extolling the virtues of the freedom and productivity of peasants and burghers, also notes the negative

features of the economy, notably the poor living standards, for which the low stature of the population provides evidence, and social inequality, so he is not suggesting that the Low Countries functioned as a Utopia in his chosen period. He is also very conscious that the advances did not continue, so that the Low Countries, though full of industrial enterprises in both town and country in the sixteenth century, did not become the cradle of the Industrial Revolution.

The strength of the book is that it is not just an incisive study of a particular part of Europe with its own peculiar characteristics, but it is also providing through a specific example an exploration of the factors which made it possible for an economy to grow. So it is not about an exceptional case, but has universal lessons. Themes which run through the book are the development of an intensive use of land and the specialisation of agriculture. The regional differences within the Low Countries are emphasized throughout, and among the various subdivisions of the Low Countries Holland stands out because the land was used for industrial crops such as hemp and hops, and for livestock, and grain was imported to feed the people living in its towns. The political context runs against the English assumption that a strong centralised state was the ideal environment for economic prosperity. Security of property holding, and a relatively stable currency was still possible in the small and relatively weak states of the Low Countries. Manors dissolved at an early date, and the population enjoyed personal freedom, without restrictions from their lords. Instead much land was held on short term leaseholds, which provided the institutional basis for productive agriculture. People formed useful associations to maintain dykes and manage pastures. Literacy was widespread, which enabled the economy to function in a sophisticated way. Van Bavel has a rural perspective, but he does not neglect the towns, and he draws attention to the economic integration between town and country. He has written with clarity, but does not conceal the complexities, as his central thesis is that commerce,

farming, institutions and social structures, woven inseparably together, interacted to promote growth. This was made possible by the conjunction of the environment, the political and social structures, and the commercial opportunities. Nothing was inevitable or determined, and he makes the point that commercialisation did not lead inevitably to specialisation – only in particular circumstances.

Van Bavel could not deal with every subject and theme in a book which is already of considerable length. Outsiders are aware of important episodes of destructive warfare, especially at the end of the fifteenth century and in 1566-1581, and it would have been helpful to be reassured that these had only temporary economic consequences. And of course the English think of Amsterdam as the focus of trade in commodities from outside Europe, but this 'global' dimension is given little space.

CHRISTOPHER DYER, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Krabbendam, Hans, Minnen, Cornelis A. van, Scott-Smith, Giles (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009, 1190 pp., ISBN 978 90 8506 653 8).

There is much of great interest in this volume, a testament to the weight the United States carries in the Netherlands today. Literally. Clocking in at over eleven hundred pages, this tome is a credit to the editors' scope of vision and remarkable skill in getting ninety-four different authors writing ninety-two separate essays (several are co-authored) to adhere to an average length of about eleven pages. The result is impressive. Written by authorities, each essay is an excellent introduction to the current state of knowledge and thinking on the topic. It is also very readable, making the volume highly accessible to non-scholars as well as non-specialist scholars. Specialists might quibble with some bits, but the scholarly quality is good overall. Boldly