



Matthias Hüning, Jan Konst, Tanja Holzhey (eds.), ***Neerlandistiek in Europa. Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de universitaire neerlandistiek buiten Nederland en Vlaanderen*** (Niederlande-Studien 49; Münster [etc.]: Waxmann, 2010, 366 pp., ISBN 978 3 8309 2382 4).

In 2008, at the Free University Berlin, an international conference took place on the history of Netherlandic studies outside of the Netherlands and Flanders (in this context, ‘Neerlandistiek’ is comprised primarily of Dutch language instruction, and Dutch and Flemish literary and cultural studies). Some 25 Netherlandic studies specialists from twelve different European lands took part. This book includes presentations from this conference and offers, in some twenty essays, a rich and varied image of the position and development of Netherlandic studies and research at a number of European universities outside of the ‘Nederlandse taalgebied’.

Under what circumstances did Netherlandic studies take hold? How and which initiatives, agencies, or individuals nurtured and sustained it? Do patterns emerge in terms of curriculum, networks, or resources? What research paradigms are at work? And, what about those study programs embedded within larger institutes (i.e., ‘Germanic Languages’)? With this book, we get, in effect, a kind of ‘topographical’ historiography of Netherlandic studies in Europe, but this time, via ‘snapshots’ taken, more or less, from *outside* the Netherlands and Belgium. Reporting on the nature and vitality of Netherlandic studies, these articles collectively offer diverse and unexpected perspectives — developments in Serbia is one example — which make matters especially interesting, and occasionally even, for this reader, invigorating.

This book has been thoughtfully assembled. The articles are geographically organized. Thus, the first section considers Netherlandic studies in Germany, beginning in the early nineteenth century. Next, it groups developments in Portugal, France, Luxemburg, Wallonia, and Spain. Then, it reaches into Eastern Europe: the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Western Balkans. Finally, a fourth section looks at select developments in Great Britain and Scandinavia. Introductory essays by Linde van den Bosch and Jaap Grave provide a necessary framework and context for the diversity of articles that follow: Van den Bosch includes data that shows, among other things, that Dutch language studies are on the increase worldwide; Grave, meanwhile, outlines patterns, trends, and constraints in research methodologies.

Of course, circumstances and initiatives vary as the book moves us across space and time. We encounter a variety of institutions, initiatives, or circumstances reported from a wide range of vantage points. Nevertheless, a narrative emerges. First, we read about the founding of the Department of Dutch at the Carl von Ossietzky Universität at Oldenburg (north-west Germany), a kind of programmatic ideal, as Hans Beelen reports. The program came into being via the interests of faculty, a regional government body, and a local community eager to invest in its dual inheritance of language and culture from both sides of the border (academic, yet richly inter-cultural and responsive to community, this department's offerings and objectives could serve as a model of the 'Experiential Learning' undergraduate program type so sought after by United States universities at this time).

This sunny, ideal beginning at Oldenburg contrasts with the more complex historiographies that must inevitably follow. It is fascinating to see how some Netherlandic studies programs operated while being impinged upon by powerful political (i.e., the Nazi's) or cultural forces. Other Netherlandic studies programs are the result of steady planning and careful growth – here, the Nederlandse Taalunie, The Hague, appears to have been consistently instrumental. The efforts of diplomatic agencies must be factored in to a serendipitous degree. Still other Netherlandic Studies programs are forged by the sheer force of personality and conviction: several essays follow in the footsteps of pioneering male 'Neerlandici', as one would expect, but on the whole, the book takes care not to short shrift key female contributors when possible. Wilken Engelbrecht's essay reminds us of the inspiring, indefatigable Olga Krijtová, who translated more than ninety works of Dutch-language literature into Czech and grew a strong Dutch Studies program in Prague after World War II.

The historiography of Netherlandic Studies internationally, has, until now, been scarcely studied and, as editors Matthias Hüning, Jan Konst, and Tanja Holzhey point out – and as this book makes abundantly clear – a synthesized study on these developments is needed. This book offers a promising beginning in this direction and gives us a strong sense of just how rewarding the journey could be.

Christine Petra Sellin, California Lutheran University