

For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays, with Facing-Page Translation. Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé, eds. and trans. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 430; The Early European Drama Translation Series 2. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013. xi + 204 pp. \$65.

For Pleasure and Profit contains an edition, with a lively facing translation, of three early sixteenth-century Dutch plays on mythological subject matter: one on the story of Mars and Venus by the Brussels city poet Jan Smeken, and two anonymous adaptations of Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe. It is the second of a series of two collections of renderings in English by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé of dramatic texts by the Dutch rhetoricians. Volume 1, with three biblical plays, was published in 2006. This book constitutes a welcome addition to a small but growing corpus of Dutch rhetorician texts in English translation, another interesting recent addition to which is Ben Parsons's and Bas Jongenelen's *Comic Drama in the Low Countries, c. 1450–1560* (2012).

As Strietman and Happé indicate in their introduction, *For Pleasure and Profit* is aimed at making Dutch rhetorician drama more widely accessible to scholars working on medieval drama as well as to directors and performers. They could also have added historians and art historians to the list. In addition to their characteristic and in many ways unique literary character, rhetorician texts make up a fascinating source for the cultural history of the Low Countries. We may think, in the case of the plays edited here, of their treatment of the themes of female adultery, suicide, and parent-child relationships, or of their adaptation of the classical tradition.

Plays on classical subject matter seem to have been rarer among the rhetoricians than biblical or purely allegorical ones. Only nine examples of this type have come down to us.

However, they do contain several of the techniques, characters, and themes typical of rhetorician plays. *For Pleasure and Profit* thus also provides a more general sampling of the drama that defined theatrical life in the Low Countries for most of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The most interesting play in the book for the diversity of rhetorician techniques deployed is the shorter of the two Pyramus and Thisbe adaptations. In a sort of performance in the performance, the mythological story is presented to a central protagonist named Amorous. Sensual Appetite and Passionate Lust, two devil-like allegorical characters, or *sinnemens*, try to convince Amorous as well as Pyramus and Thisbe to yield to the pleasures of the flesh. After the performance of the inner play, an allegorical councilor named Poetic Spirit compares the story of Pyramus and Thisbe with the Passion of Christ by means of a tableau vivant showing Christ on the cross.

Strietman and Happé's translation is excellent and the prime reason to buy this book. The translators have found a convincing balance between fidelity to the richness and nuance of the original Dutch texts and accessibility and appeal for a modern English-speaking readership. They have rightly not provided too literal a translation of the rhetorician language in all its complexity and love for neologism and Gallicism. Terms, expressions, and images that are obsolete or unfamiliar generally receive a modern equivalent. Particularly successful in my opinion is the way in which the translators have managed to reproduce the contrast between the lofty language, full of floral imagery, of the enamored protagonists and the down-to-earth, sharp, often-crude, and explicitly sexual language used by the *sinnemens*.

Because of the quality of their translation, Strietman and Happé have largely succeeded in their aim of making this book appealing both to those active in the theater and to scholars. However, the last group in particular might be somewhat disappointed by the materials accompanying the edition and translation, or rather the lack thereof. The absence of a critical apparatus and the minimal explanatory footnotes are defensible. It is a pity, however, that the introductions, though informative and attractively written, are so short. Moreover, the book contains no bibliography and almost no references to scholarship on the Dutch rhetoricians, such as Anke van Herk's recent *Fabels van liefde* (2012), which is entirely devoted to the mythological amorous theater of the rhetoricians. The reader who is charmed by the translation and would like to know more about the Dutch rhetoricians will therefore have to look elsewhere.

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