Internationalization in Belgian Literary Periodicals after WWI.
Outline of a Research Project

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Abstract

The current paper presents an overview of the author’s PhD project (2006-2010), but opens with a more general issue, concerning the fundamental choices one has to make to start up a research project. The triad research object(s) – research question(s) – methodology(-ies) and their inherent interaction offer a conceptual framework that will allow to highlight, step by step, the author’s specific project on internationalization in Belgian literary periodicals after the First World War.

1. Theoretical framework

Nowadays, almost every new PhD student is confronted from the very beginning of his/her research project with guidelines – first and foremost pragmatic ones –, often formulated in emblematic slogans like “publish or perish”. On an even more fundamental level, e.g. when tracing a research corpus or during the selection and elaboration of research questions, these same pragmatic goals appear. Nonetheless, actual scholars, such as the philosopher Hannah Arendt, remind of one of the possible initial motives of science. At the beginnings of her Origins of Totalitarianism she announces the very general desire “I want to understand”. The same goes for Marc Angenot (2000: 15), who – in the same vein – quotes Spinoza: “Non lugere neque detestari sed intelligere”. However, good and honest intentions do not suffice to elaborate a convincing research project. The main, fundamental choices with which a researcher is confronted can be summarized in three interrelated elements, which on a diachronic level can also be considered as succeeding phases. They precede the research as such, but are (or should be) constantly fine-tuned during the analysis itself. Although they are intrinsically correlated, for the sake of the argument they are further on in this paper treated individually.
The first two elements are the demarcation of the research object(s) and the fine-tuning of the research question(s). Both influence each other mutually. Depending on the particularity of the research object, the research questions will become more or less relevant in order to obtain a good understanding of the research object. Inversely, the research questions will determine the demarcation of the research object, balancing between the ideal of representativity on the one hand, and the demand of exhaustivity on the other hand. The methodology, then, is the third constitutive element: within the framework of an appropriate methodology, the researcher will have to find a balance between mimetism and deformation, between description and interpretation\(^1\) of the research object. The risk of *Hineininterpretierung* is always present and can only be limited by an intense interaction between the material and methodological meta-reflections, though over-interpretation can never be totally avoided. Indeed, the border between over-interpretation and interpretation is sometimes small, the more so since “backwards causation” can occur. In this context, Herman de Dijn (2006: 11) states:

> It [i.e. the world of meanings] is a world where, for example, “backwards causation” is indeed possible. […] The world of (historical, religious) meanings only exists in a sort of in-between, the ‘in-between’ of the interaction concerning the assumed meaning, the interpreter, and other interpreters, also past and future ones. (my transl.)

In order to make the interactions in this triad of material-questions-methodology more concrete, a schematic overview of the PhD research project in question will be given below.

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\(^1\) In reference to the opposition made in the field of translation studies’ descriptive-normative spectrum, see Toury (1995). It should be noted that the opposite of a descriptive point of view does not imply automatically a normative approach here.
2. Elaboration

2.1. Descriptive section

2.1.1. Corpus

The PhD project in question is a part of a more general research project, with the programmatic title ‘Sire, y a-t-il des Belges?’ A Century of Intra- and International Literary Relations in Belgium (1850-1950). The main angle of this project is to explore the way in which literary relationships are shaped and take place.

Bearing this basic question in mind, the choice for literary magazines as the main corpus material becomes evident. They are the medium par excellence through which literary exchanges could take place and were literally materialized – and therefore can be studied. In spite of these arguments, the study of literary magazines holds also a restriction: the different contributions necessitate a specific way of reading in accordance with the specificities of the periodical’s genre. In contrast to the cliché that periodicals function as a mirror, a mise en abyme of their time, it should also be stressed that the literary magazine possesses only a very relative representativity.

Within the long period under consideration (1850-1950), the years just after the First World War (during which a real ‘explosion’ of new literary periodicals took place) are interesting from a triple point of view:

First, during the nineteenth century, literary magazines fulfilled the crucial function of a (passive) carrier of ideas, a means of communication that permitted foreign literatures to communicate with each other. Paul Aron (1991: 55) even states that “c’est aux périodiques que l’on doit l’essentiel de l’ouverture internationale de nos lettres, leur participation aux courants de l’avant-garde et jusqu’à l’existence même d’une activité scripturale dans le pays”.

Moreover, the magazine was the place in which the dynamics of literary life could be seen at work: aesthetic discussions and debates could be followed up in the succeeding issues. In addition, in the twentieth century’s historical avant-garde (1910-1930), literary magazines

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2 Under the supervision of prof. R. Meylaerts (promotor) and prof. L. D’hulst (co-promotor). For a detailed overview of the umbrella project, see Mus, D’hulst & Meylaerts (2007).

3 See Mus (forthcoming a). The particularities of the genre ‘revue’ and the consequences for reading will be made explicit in the introductory chapter of my thesis, but oriented specifically to the Belgian situation.

4 When we take a look at the creation of literary magazines in Belgium, there is a peak of new periodicals after every period of recession, namely between 1919 and 1930 (World War I), just after 1930 (the crash), just after World War II and during the seventies (after the oil-crisis). For more details, see Aron & Soucy (1998).
played a more active role: they were the forum through which ideas and aesthetic conceptions were born and developed. Hence, it is no wonder that these magazines are much more canonized in literary histories than the nineteenth century magazines, although the latter had a longer existence and were more settled in the cultural landscape.

Second, literary relations were very intense between the two world wars: the avant-garde is generally characterized as a highly international phenomenon. What is striking about the Belgian situation, is that “en profondeur, l’influence étrangère – bien présente surtout pendant les années 1920-1925 – nourrit rarement l’imaginaire national”, as Paul Aron (1991: 57) notes. In addition to this, after the First World War, the central place of nationalism was supplemented by other ‘-isms’, such as provincialism (or regionalism) and internationalism. The dialectics of this triad (with variants) runs through many secondary texts about literature. The place and status of ‘Belgian literature’ can be grasped through this spatial framework, though requires a more intricate diversification.

Third, for a small sector on the literary scene, ‘internationalization’ was in the very center of their reflection: international contacts were not (only) a consequence but also an inherent part of their poetics. This was the case for a small group who saw themselves as the heirs of the French Clarté-group and its sources of inspiration, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland. From the beginning, they declared themselves explicitly internationalist. Internationalist and international are not meant synonymous here. The former indicates a constitutive element of a specific ideology, whereas the latter could be seen just as a descriptive characteristic. The fundamental Clarté-ideas of internationalism, pacifism, etc. were imported into Belgium by its official Belgian representative Paul Colin, editor in chief of the literary journal *L’art libre* (1919-1922). The Clarté-ideology was mainly propagated – to a greater or lesser extent – by three magazines, situated in two urban centres of the avant-garde, Brussels (*L’art libre*) and Antwerp (*Lumière* and, less clearly, *Ça ira!*). The Antwerp magazines did not exist independently from each other: the *Ça ira!*-group, guided by Maurice Van Essche, was formed by a number of dissidents from the *Lumière*-group, led by Roger Avermaete. These three (francophone) magazines can be considered as the most developed Clarté-publications. However, in Flanders too, several magazines saw the light and

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5 The question that raises then is why these frequent exchanges did not give birth to a modification of the national imagination.
6 See also Dirkx (1988).
7 Therefore, the notions of exotopy and utopia will be used (see below).
established an explicit or implicit link with Clarté: Ruimte (1920-1921), Het Overzicht (1921-1925), Ter Waarheid (1921-1924), Staatsgevaarlijk (1919).8

The basic-corpus consists of the above mentioned Clarté-magazines.9 The reasons for this choice are the following: (a) the literary magazine fulfilled an active role in the formulation and elaboration of aesthetic conceptions; (b) international relations were intense during this period; (c) internationalization is at the center of the reflections; (d) the literary avant-garde in Belgium was concentrated around three urban regions: Brussels, Antwerp and Liège.

The first two cities can be isolated as a specific sub-group because they are situated on the unique intersection of both international and intranational contacts. Indeed, Brussels was (and is) officially bilingual, and Antwerp is situated in the Flemish part of Belgium,10 but French was spoken by the elite. Although L’art libre was created in Brussels and Lumière and Ça ira! in Antwerp, where the editorial staff included both Flemish (Dutch-speaking) as well as francophone members, the three magazines were almost completely written in French. In this regard, Roger Avermaete writes in his memoirs L’aventure de Lumière:

Au sein du groupe régnait un bilinguisme constant, les uns fidèles à un seul idiome, les autres passant sans effort du français au néerlandais, ou vice-versa. Sans oublier l’anversois [the dialect of Antwerp] haut en couleur et indispensable pour colorer tel récit épique. Jamais il n’y eut à ce sujet ni froissement ni malentendu. Seul [Armand] Henneuse sortait d’un milieu francophone, mais il n’en était pas moins bilingue et parlait même un néerlandais châtié, souvenir de ses études à La Haye. Les autres étaient tous des Flamands. Les discussions se faisaient souvent en français, les conversations étaient mêlées et seul Frank van den Wyngaert, notre poète thiois, comme nous l’appelions volontiers, demeurait toujours fidèle à son idiome maternel. Ceci m’amène à parler de cette irritante question flamande qui n’a cessé de peser sur

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8 For an exhaustive list of Clarté-affiliated-periodicals in Flanders, see Sertyn (1974).
9 The magazines will be studied in extenso, i.e. including the surrounding archive-documents.
10 The political situation in Belgium is very complex and has experienced many transformations during its history. Roughly speaking, the country is divided into three parts: Flanders (officially Dutch-speaking), Wallonia (officially French-speaking) and Brussels (region of the capital, officially French-Dutch bilingual). To be complete, one should also mention the German-speaking part of the country. Meylaerts (2007: 30) affirms that “[t]he country’s most fundamental socio-cultural, socio-political and institutional evolutions, indeed even its existential crises, are closely interwoven with non-violent conflicts between Dutch- and French-speaking groups. These conflicts are generally known as the ‘language question’. Part of this question deals with the first socio-cultural, then socio-political, and sometimes anti-Belgian struggles of the Flemish Movement for the linguistic, but also cultural, political and economic emancipation of Dutch speakers.”
This basic-collection will be completed with a second corpus, consisting of more so-called marginal periodicals. Marginal should be understood here in a double sense. First, in a temporal way, precursor-periodicals, such as Résurrection (1917-1918), will also be included. Second, a handful of quantitatively less developed (but not therefore less important) magazines will be analyzed too: Opstanding, Het Roode Zeil (1920), De Driehoek (1925-1926), De Stroom (1918), De goedendag (1915-1918), Haro! (1919, 1920, 1927), etc. Because they had relatively few publications, it will be quite easy to integrate these titles into the body of the work. Finally, the major avant-garde periodical – with no explicit Clarté-link, however – Le Disque Vert is an inevitable point of reference.

The above mentioned magazines cover the first half of the twenties. The short time span starts in 1917-1918 (with the end of World War I, the importance of the Flemish question, and universal suffrage as cornerstones) and ends around 1924 (the death of Lenin) or, covering a decade, 1929 (the crash). In that case, important publications such as Variétés and Sélection should be included.

Though, it should be mentioned here that at the same time a more traditional literature also persisted (‘arrière-garde’), which was even more visible – in quantitative terms. A second remark is that because of its specificity, quite isolated status and the existing secondary bibliography, the surrealist movement will not be taken into consideration.

2.1.2. Methodology

The methodology that is opted for relates to a specific research corpus and research questions (see below). Since the ensemble of avant-garde literary magazines has already been studied in a descriptive-historical approach, resulting in short, synthetic texts, the adopted approach will differ on several points from previous studies. Nonetheless, these publications are an interesting point of departure, since they offer information – often of a sociological nature – that is both necessary and fundamental for my project. They can be split into three categories:

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11 For a detailed discussion of this fragment, see Mus (forthcoming b).

First, short (summary) articles, often on the occasion of an exposition (e.g. Mertens, Warmoes, Adriaens-Pannier, Verleysen, Verhasselt, etc.) and bibliographies.\textsuperscript{12}

Second, student papers and theses, with much descriptive information (index, summaries of periodicals, etc.) but often less or no analytic depth. (e.g. Escoyez, De Borle, Danhieux, De Marneffe, etc.).

The doctoral thesis of Daphné de Marneffe (2007), \textit{Entre modernisme et avant-garde. Le réseau des revues littéraires de l’immédiat après-guerre en Belgique (1919-1922)}, bears close resemblance to my PhD project. Apart from this recent comprehensive publication, however, hardly any research has been done in this area. My project differs from the thesis by De Marneffe’s on the following points:

(a) De Marneffe undertakes a sociological network-oriented descriptive study, whereas I will focus on the internal content-oriented discursive constructions. In the introduction she writes: “C’est principalement dans le cadre de l’étude d’un courant littéraire ou artistique, ou d’une trajectoire d’un auteur, que l’on se penche sur le \textit{contenu} des revues, souvent riche en renseignements de toutes sortes. Ce n’est pas, en premier chef, leur contenu qui nous intéresse ici.” (Marneffe 2007: 4). The (“external”) networks that she revealed are an ideal point of departure for my (“internal”) project.

(b) De Marneffe only considers the francophone sector, whereas I intend to include also the Dutch magazines. It is true that there were few interactions between Flemish (Dutch-speaking) and francophone magazines, but nonetheless they existed and shared a common literary patrimony, time-period, and operating base (mainly Antwerp). Paul Aron (1991: 334-335) states that “[…] l’avant-garde anversoise des années ’20 […] ne peu[t] être sérieusement abordé […] dans un cadre linguistique étroit”.\textsuperscript{13}

Third, testimonies of friends, relatives, or other ‘implied’ persons. These texts’ content offer a treasury of well elaborated information. However, there is neither critical distance, nor scientific framework leading to any analysis (e.g. Jespers, Neuhuys, etc.). Presumably, there is a link between the presence of the surviving witnesses (that have a privileged relation to the matter) and the descriptive character of the existing publications.

\textsuperscript{12} Both contemporaneous bibliographies (Rodrique, Het Overzicht, 7 arts, and the Ghyselinckx-inquiry) and contemporary ones (Adriaens-Pannier, Mariën, Mertens, Warmoes, Verhasselt, Aron).

\textsuperscript{13} Coudenys (1995: 38) has a similar opinion.

I will opt for an internal discursive approach, inspired by the socio-critical\textsuperscript{14} readings of Marc Angenot, Ruth Amossy and Michel Biron. Several arguments motivate this approach:

First, the state of the art: instead of a sociological and/or descriptive reading (see above), a socio-discursive and interpretative approach is chosen.\textsuperscript{15}

(a) Marc Angenot pays much attention to all kinds of “rhetoric and semiotic subtleties of communication” (Geldof 2000: 313) resulting in several micro-analyses without neglecting the context. Several case studies will serve as point of departure to compose a mosaic of a period of Belgian literature.

(b) Like Angenot, Ruth Amossy includes discourse analysis and more specifically the study of rhetoric and argumentation structures. Aware of the fact that socio-criticism started as a discipline mainly concentrated on the novel, she showed its utilities to a broader text-base, including non-fiction texts: “(l)es discours culturels, théoriques ou idéologiques, non-littéraires” (Amossy 1992: 31). It is also my aim to focus primarily on literary criticism and at a later stage, fiction, narrative or creative texts (prose, poetry, theatre).

(c) Michel Biron convincingly shows the utility of socio-criticism for Belgian literature (see also below). In La modernité belge, he studies the function of modernity in Belgian literature from 1875 to 1980. Given that the period under consideration covers more than a century, it goes without saying that representativity prevails over exhaustivity for Biron. Nonetheless, the readings of the surrealist texts of Nougé prove that he also pays attention to specific text-analyses.

Second, socio-criticism emphasizes the inextricable relation between the social and the textual. In Belgium, literature’s link with other societal spheres (cultural, but also political, economic, etc.) is constant. Aron (1994: 98) mentions a “faible degré d’autonomisation du champ culturel”. Moreover, the relation between literature and politics is privileged during the years 1918-1922 (see Aron 1994: 98).

Special attention will be paid to the analysis of translations. The notion of translation is a polysemic one, which can be used in several literal and metaphorical senses and can be mobilized in different contexts. In my research, the study of translations is a tool (and not a

\textsuperscript{14} For a short description of what socio-criticism is, see http://sociocritique.mcgill.ca/theorie.htm.

\textsuperscript{15} It goes without saying that also a descriptive section will have to be included in my dissertation, not only for evident reasons of clarity of the argument, but also because new elements (namely: archive-documents) will be noted.

goal on its own\textsuperscript{16}, a parameter to answer a specific question, namely: to what extent were these magazines internationally oriented and how was this internationalization concretized? In other words, translation is seen as a symptom, a manifestation of internationalism. The quantitative analysis of translations (i.e. the mapping of the translation-traffic) is a first way to measure the degree of internationalization. A second phase will be the qualitative (comparative text) analysis of translations.\textsuperscript{17} The advantage of translation analysis (in comparison with other kinds of discourse analysis) is the existing point of reference, in the form of a source text. Transformations can be seen “at work” because there is both the starting point as well as the end point of the process. “Comprendre, c’est traduire” says George Steiner in \textit{Après Babel} (see Ricoeur 2003: 22).

The isolation of translated texts is all the more relevant and justified because the label ‘translation’ existed at the time and was recognized as such to save us from getting a distorted image of reality.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, due to their visibility, translations can be used in a strategic way to pinpoint, for example, the international character of the magazine. Translation carries great symbolic importance: it can accentuate the ideological, socio-cultural fault lines of society and reveals something about cultural identity. Several textual examples legitimize the specific focus on translations:

First, as an international(ist) magazine, \textit{L’art libre} published many review-articles about foreign literature. The textual examples that are discussed are printed in the text in translation, but often mentioning the source-text in a footnote. Other attitudes were also possible: \textit{Lumière}, which was very France-oriented, only mentioned the translations. \textit{Het Overzicht} published poems in the source-language (or a mix of languages) without translation. The question that arises then is does a homology between the translation-attitude and the more general question of internationalization and more in concreto, the openness toward foreign literatures, exist? Is translation symbolic of something more significant? Can translations function as a mirror?

\textsuperscript{16} That is why my research can be labelled in the first place as a literary-discourse oriented study and should only in the second place be situated within the field of translation studies.

\textsuperscript{17} Because there is no great body of translations, more attention will be paid to the qualitative text-analyses than to a quantitative statistic analysis, which would not yield significant results.

\textsuperscript{18} This has the advantage that the analysis will give a reliable image of reality, but it could tend toward a mimetic (repetitive) description. The alternative (to put an “external” grid on the research data) will certainly lead to a non-mimetic \textit{interpretation}, including the risk of manipulation, even distortion of reality. Pike expresses this idea as follows: “it proves convenient – though partially arbitrary – to describe behavior from two different viewpoints, which lead to results which shade into one another. The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system.” For more details, see Pike (1971).
Second, the symbolic value of translations is pinpointed in an article, published in *L’art libre*. The way to romanize the names of Russian authors is an indication of the attitude towards their literature. The author of the article (Jacques Olivier, pseud. Paul Colin) states that “il est bien certain que la seule règle dont il faut s’inspirer, est la nécessité de suivre le plus exactement possible la langue originale. On ne traduit pas un nom propre, on le *transcrit*” (Olivier 1921: 173).

Third, in the literary magazines, it was a frequent technique to translate fewer fictitious texts (prose, poetry, theatre) and more literary criticism. The translation is mobilized to make a claim for authenticity: in those articles, we are dealing with a journalist on the spot, who is giving a so-called reliable and authentic state of the art of the actual literary situation in his country. In other words, the texts become a testimony and, paradoxically, translation becomes a means to attest authenticity.

2.2. Interpretative section

2.2.1. General Questions

Before zooming in on more specific research questions, a more general exploration of the material is necessary to become familiar with it. In order to do so, a functionalist perspective will be adopted by asking the question how within the field of cultural and social discourse a specific ‘literary’ zone is traced and defined. The problematic becomes all the more relevant within the Belgian post-war situation in which literature is interconnected with politics and other arts. For example, the Flemish question roams through the reflections in (mainly Dutch but also francophone) magazines. As regards the interconnection with other arts, the case of *L’art libre* is striking here. In the founding manifesto of the magazine, Colin (1919: 1) writes:

Le premier numéro de L’art libre paraît le jour où le cercle des Quinze organise sa première exposition. Ainsi s’affirment, dès le début, la concordance de leur effort et la communauté de leur objectif.

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19 For a more detailed elaboration of this example, and other examples, see Mus (forthcoming c).
20 For an elaborated example, namely the treatment of English literature in *Le Disque Vert*, see Mus (forthcoming d).

Moreover, the specific situation that characterizes the years after the First World War necessitates this functionalist approach. The war not only did material damage, but also on an institutional and even intellectual level, it created a vacuum. Within this (relatively) ‘empty’ space, it becomes thus all the more difficult to begin to speak. What legitimizes one’s “prise de parole” at this turning point? What matters is the credibility of one’s words. What it comes down to is being believed. To achieve this goal, a set of tactics is applied. On the one hand, the total independence, hence the neutrality, of the authors accentuated. On the other hand, the opposite goes too: the inscription within a tradition functions as a trump card. The reference to the “master’s voice” (e.g. Rolland or Barbusse) confers authority to the message. As Ruth Amossy (1999) puts it in her book *Images de soi dans le discours: la construction de l’éthos*, when one wants to speak legally, one needs the presence of another voice. It is only within this framework that the words of the self are admitted. This vacuum, this wrested situation, gives birth to a specific ab-solute (literally: untied) situation, an exotopy that has consequences. That is why, for example, in (mostly retrospective) overviews this period is labeled as a hazardous, partial unreal ‘adventure’.

2.2.2. Specific questions

A first section of question concerns Internationalization. Within the Belgian and international scholar context, intra-national and international contacts (and translations) remain for the most part a virgin territory. That is why this type of research aims to make an original contribution to the literary historiography of Belgian literature in particular and of literary identity in multilingual cultures in general. The main question here will be to what extent these groups were really international, both on the level of the facts and on the level of the discourse.

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21 This term refers to Michel de Certeau, who saw this mechanism of “prise de parole” at work during “l’événement” of May ’68.
22 Tradition and a reference to older “masters” is then “wicked”: the future belongs to the youth. See in particular Coppieters (1993: 36vv).
23 The word ‘exotopy’ is derived from Greek: exo (outside) and topos (place). It was originally created by the Russian theoretician M. Bakhtin and can be defined as “une ‘extériorité interne’ qui determine la posture créatrice de l’auteur dans son rapport à l’oeuvre en train d’écrire” (see Thubières). It is my aim to develop and integrate this notion, which is characteristic for the Belgian situation after World War I and could function as an alternative for the existing regionalism-nationalism-internationalism-triad-hypothesis.
24 For example, see the already mentioned memoirs of Avermaete (1969).
25 In the introduction of my dissertation, a chapter will be dedicated to the way in which the intranational contacts are thematized in different literary Belgian histories, both Dutch and Francophone.
(a) Quantitative aspect. One of the aims of the general research project is to set up a database including the paratextual data of the articles published in a selection of literary magazines.\textsuperscript{26} The inventoried data allow an initial statistical and quantitative overview of the (distribution of) attention attributed to foreign literatures: which were the dominant partners of a so-called minor European literature?

In the case of Belgium, \textit{internationalism} has to be understood in a specific way. Because of the geographic proximity and linguistic (quasi-)equality, the relations with France (or respectively the relations with the Netherlands for what regards the Flemish scene) are privileged in that they outshine all other relationships with other literatures. Hence, it becomes possible and important for further analysis to distinguish between ‘direct’ relations with other literatures, or ‘indirect’ relations, mediated via French literature, which was a dominant and evident partner. The contacts with French literature are a constant in Belgian literary history so that they can hardly be seen as indicators of an international openness. In a certain way, the opening towards French (and Dutch) literature is an inherent part of Belgian literature, which makes Belgian literature “always already” implicated in an international scene.

(b) Qualitative aspect. A meticulous discourse analysis (see 2.1.2.) will highlight the way in which international, foreign literatures are presented both in literary criticism and in translations. What is their role, their status in the periodicals? Does the scarcity of reference points due to the vacuum produced by the First World War provoke the necessity of other (international) frameworks? Does the utopian\textsuperscript{27} (literally: no-where, non-place), hence not palpable, unrealistic character of the texts bring along a need for concretization of this utopos, namely the distant and (partially) inaccessible other?

A second section of questions regards \textit{ethos and identity}. Once the relations with the “(linguistic) other(s)” have been mapped, it becomes possible to have a look at the issue of identity. Indeed, the process of identification implies a kind of interplay, even a dialogue between different ‘groups’ – a notion that requires a flexible interpretation: I am not only dealing with criteria that are national (literary) demarcation criteria (the Belgian, French, English… literature), but also with (smaller) regional (Antwerp, Brussels), linguistic (Dutch-

\textsuperscript{26} Up to now, the database includes \textit{Ça ira!}, \textit{Lumiè re}, \textit{L’art libre}, \textit{Le Disque Vert}, \textit{Résurrection}, \textit{Variétés}, \textit{La Nervie}, \textit{Correspondance}, \textit{Ruimte} and \textit{La renaissance d’Occident}. The database will be helpful in mapping networks.

\textsuperscript{27} Besides the notion of exotopy (see footnote 23), the notion of utopy opens another spatial framework within the Belgian literature can be grasped.
speaking, French-speaking, etc.) and even aesthetic (Futurists, Dadaists, Expressionists, etc.) criteria. What matters here is the existence of a kind of distance separating two poles so that the interaction and, as a consequence, the relation between them can take place. Through the interaction, not only the image of the other appears, but also the image of the self. Indeed, it has become a commonplace in psychology (and psychoanalysis in particular) that it is only through the (relation with the) other that one can come to a proper identity. For example Lacan (1966: 89-97) explains in his text about the so-called mirror-stage that the mirror image of a young child furnishes a background against which the child can constitute a proper identity. Mutatis mutandis, this argumentation can be applied to the literary situation of the post-war Belgian literature.  

Hence, also the question as to whether or not there is a link between a growing internationalization and the awareness of one’s own identity? It should indeed be stressed that the problematic of identity is not only limited to the 19th century, during which a lot of the European nation-states were formed. The struggle for distinction (see Bourdieu 1979) and, hence, the search for identity, whether it is thematized or not, always roams through social practices.

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28 The Belgian philosopher Rudi Visker (2008) provides a similar example. One becomes aware of one’s mother tongue only in a changing situation, namely in the confrontation with a foreign language. He makes a nuance: the confrontation with the other doesn’t lead to the construction of an identity, but to the raising of consciousness about it. Still there remains the question if the linguistic “confrontation” Dutch-French was a real one, because the situation did not change – one was used to a bilingual society.


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