

***Belgian Cultural Mediators, 1830-1945.
Crossing Borders, Borders Resisting***

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Belgian Cultural Mediators, 1830-1945. Crossing Borders / Borders Resisting Introduction

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In nineteenth-century Europe, at a time when national consciousness was rising, the fixing of national boundaries did not imply the cessation of intranational and international cultural interaction. Quite the contrary: the solid affirmation of national cultures went hand in hand with the intensification of cultural exchanges in the fields of literature, music and art. In this special issue, attention is devoted to the actors and carriers of these intercultural processes, whom we define as ‘cultural mediators’. They were often public figures, sometimes writers or artists themselves, but also experts in diverse cultural fields, and involved in multiple national and international networks. The chameleon-like role they played, constantly crossing linguistic, artistic and geographical borders, is largely forgotten today. Nevertheless, by serving as bridges or gatekeepers, cultural mediators seem to have designed a new set of mediating practices which contributed greatly to the construction of cultural identities.

Which actors can be defined as cultural mediators, a concept created a posteriori to describe a number of specific cultural agents in past and present cultures? The concept of cultural mediator refers to strikingly flexible and multifunctional actors who negotiated their way – sometimes pragmatically, sometimes with financial and/or ideological motives, sometimes quite unconsciously – between different cultures and language groups. They often simultaneously assumed different roles, combining activities as editors, art dealers, writers of chronicles, (self-)translators, multilingual writers, art and literary critics and playwrights, and they transferred a variety of cultural objects, for example via exhibitions, translations, musical performances, artistic and literary chronicles or essays. They did this using a plethora of interrelated discursive transfer techniques (translation, adaptation, plagiarism, summary, censorship, etc.) and, by doing so, they manipulated in many ways cultural products within or between nations or regions. This versatility was reflected in their activity in a variety of more or less institutionalised networks: they corresponded with friends or colleagues (informal networks), founded or played a part on the editorial boards of national and international periodicals, appeared in salons, in literary and artistic associations, in art and music academies, in artists’ workshops, etc. In short, cultural mediators behaved as real migrants and hybrid figures, with an often remarkably flexible ideology, which crossed borders of many kinds without necessarily annulling them.

Why should we study these cultural mediators? To a much greater extent than the prominent figures who have been canonised by mainstream cultural and literary historiography, these agents are the true architects of shared frames of reference, in other words a model of a (sub)national and/or international culture, especially in emerging multilingual and heterogeneous cultures such as Belgium. Their complex, partly overlapping and field-transcending agent roles are a major yet rarely acknowledged kind of cultural practice because they are much more complex than is usually recognised in national studies of the inception and development of literary and artistic repertoires, or in single disciplinary approaches. This implies that research on cultural mediators should by definition be interdisciplinary, combining literary/sociological, translational and cultural-historical approaches, thus enabling the complex practices of cultural mediation to be revealed.

In summary, in this special issue we aim to obtain a deeper understanding of the 'morphology' of cultural mediators. What were their personal and professional trajectories and how did they develop intercultural networks in a heterogeneous society? What was the content and the position of their cultural exchanges within Belgium and between Belgium and its neighbouring countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Is it possible to distinguish subtraditions of cultural mediation during this period? For example, does the First World War represent a major moment of rupture in the history of Belgian cultural mediation? How did they respond to the growing linguistic conflicts between Dutch-speakers and French-speakers? And finally, we want to discuss the relationship between mediators' transfer activities and the production, combination and rejection of cultural identities such as a (sub)national or an international (cfr. European) cultural identity. By doing so, we want to contribute to a renewed intercultural historiography of cultural practices. The focus of this special issue is based on the research strands from our interdisciplinary project 'Customs Officers or Smugglers? The mediating role of intercultural mediators within Belgium and between Belgium and France, 1850-1945'. This project, which began in September 2011 at KU Leuven, brings together translation scholars, literary historians and cultural historians and aims to research the role of Belgian intercultural mediators, their transfer practices and their impact on identity discourses from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War.

In line with the multidisciplinary and historical goals of this special issue, we invited researchers from various disciplines to examine the 'habitus' and the transfer practices of specific Belgian cultural mediators in the fields of the arts and/or literature, who would enable us to discuss the chronological evolution of cultural mediation and its impact on the construction of cultural identities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the first article, the collaborators in the aforementioned project 'Customs Officers or Smugglers', Lieven D'Hulst, Maud Gonne, Tessa Lobbes, Reine Meylaerts and Tom Verschaffel, present methodological reflections on the study of cultural mediators. While bringing together approaches from literary history, cultural history and translation studies, the article presents a tentative multipolar model for studying cultural mediators in general. One of the major advantages of this interdisciplinary dialogue is the systematic focus on mediators' often reciprocal activities in both literary and artistic fields, as cultural historians

‘on their own’ tend to focus more on mediators’ cultural practices, while literary historians and translation scholars are likely to concentrate solely on transfers of discursive products. The proposed general research perspectives are illustrated with examples from the Belgian case, for example the painter Alfred Stevens and the bilingual writer Georges Eekhoud.

Belgian cultural mediators who were involved in art dealing and literary exchanges in the nineteenth century are discussed in the articles by the art historian Jan Dirk Baetens, the translation scholar Liselotte Vandenbussche and the literary historian Clément Dessy. Baetens and Dessy both explore Belgian mediators’ networks and transfer activities in the interactions between Belgian and British cultural life. In Baetens’ article, ‘The Belgian Brand: Ernest Gambart and the British Market for Modern Belgian Art, c. 1850-1870’, the fruitful combination of socio-economic, financial and art historical perspectives reveals the thus far hardly known impact of art dealers like Gambart on the production, reception and circulation of Belgian art on British soil. Dessy, for his part, analyses the promotion of the Belgian francophone writers Maurice Maeterlinck and Émile Verhaeren across the Channel at the end of the nineteenth century. He reveals an intense Belgian-British network of cosmopolitan and polyvalent mediators such as Gérard Harry, William Archer and Alma Strettell, who devoted themselves to the circulation of symbolist works among an English readership using strategies such as commentaries, interviews, chronicles and translations. Dessy also highlights the importance of the mediator’s fame in the transfer process. Vandenbussche, finally, discusses the role of the bilingual translator Frans Rens as a mediator of Flemish culture and language in mid-nineteenth century Belgium, basing her article on a corpus study of Dutch-language translations of Belgian francophone literature. She particularly stresses the complex interleaving of translations, adaptations, rewritings and plagiarism. Both Baetens and Vandenbussche demonstrate the benefits of an *histoire croisée* approach in the study of cultural mediators, showing clearly that many of these exchanges do not lead only to one-way traffic, but often affect all cultures involved in these encounters.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the First World War and the conflicts between the Germanic and Latin cultures not only confronted Belgian cultural mediators with the complication of international encounters, but also with an increasingly linguistically conflicted Belgium, which rendered intranational cultural mediation more problematic compared with earlier decades. From the interwar period onwards, Belgium evolved slowly from a bilingual, heterogeneous society into a nation with two more homogeneous language communities, one Dutch-speaking and the other French-speaking. In their article ‘Transgenerational brokering. The case for symbolism and surrealism in Flanders’, Hans Vandevorde and Christophe Verbruggen examine the relationship between one generation of monolingual and bilingual ‘cultural brokers’ such as Paul-Gustave van Hecke and Marc Eemans and cultural mediation. They define ‘generation’ as a transnational group in which the participants belong to the same ‘*esprit du temps*’. According to the authors, these generations consist of more members than is traditionally acknowledged by literary historiography, since francophone and Dutch-speaking groups of intellectuals can be combined as they shared similar experiences and values, apart from and transcending language barriers and ideological differences.

While cultural interactions between the Dutch and French language communities continued to be an important element of Belgian cultural life during the interwar period (visible for example in the activities of Georges Eekhoud, Roger Avermaete and Gaston Pulings, as discussed in the first article by D'Hulst et al.), Belgian Dutch-speaking intellectuals also increased their attention for the Netherlands, as francophone intellectuals did for France. Dorien De Man exemplifies these closer contacts between Dutch and Flemish intellectuals with an analysis of the extensive correspondence between two female writers during the interwar period, the Flemish author Marie Elisabeth Belpaire and the Dutch poet and socialist Henriette Roland Holst. By using a gender perspective and combining different network theories (e.g. Boissevain, Latour and Buzelin), De Man investigates Belpaire's and Holst's numerous connections in international networks, the way they favoured (or blocked) exchanges between various intellectuals and the effects of their networking activities on the cultural field. Elke Brems, finally, studies a different type of transnational encounters, those between pro-Flemish Belgian writers and German intellectuals during a second period of ideological upheaval and international hostilities, namely the Second World War. She focuses on the radical pro-Flemish writer Wies Moens, who encouraged the circulation of literary texts, translations and National Socialist ideological beliefs between Flanders and Germany. As Brems shows, Moens attempted to integrate Flemish and Germanic cultures by making use of translation.

The foregoing articles offer us two insights in particular, one on the historical evolution of the cultural mediators' role in Belgian cultural life from 1830 to 1945, and one on the morphology of the cultural mediator over time. First, these articles testify to the existence of different traditions of cultural mediation. During the nineteenth century, bilingual mediators made a major contribution to the creation of a national Belgian culture, as they carried literature and arts from one language community to another, and did so in a remarkably fluent way. At the same time, these bilingual mediators also transcended the Belgian border and became involved in the circulation of literary and artistic products between Belgium, France and/or Great-Britain. The internal regionalisation of Belgium after the First World War clearly affected the position of cultural mediators and their transfer practices in several ways. On a geographical level, from 1918 onwards the transcending of linguistic borders within Belgium became less natural and was more heavily criticised than had been the case in the nineteenth century, and cultural mediators increased their already extensive attention for foreign cultures, especially the Netherlands, France and also Germany. They often promoted a combination of diverse cultural identities: some encouraged – sometimes in French – a Flemish and European cultural identity, which did not necessarily imply the rejection of the Belgian nation. And on the level of cultural fields, it becomes clear when linguistic conflicts intensified that paintings, sculptures and music circulated more easily than novels and poetry, as the former were less confronted with the increasing presence of the language boundary. Yet this special issue also reveals challenges and questions that require further research. For example, more work needs to be done to genuinely understand the effects of transfer practices on the hybrid character of the final literary and artistic products and on their production, distribution

and reception. Also, more long-term research on cultural mediation within Belgium in the twentieth century should lead to a better comprehension of the changing position of cultural mediators, especially after 1918 and 1945, and must include attention for the potentially different attitudes towards the transfer of literature, of arts and of music. Where did a hybrid bilingual cultural life persist and in which cultural fields did it diminish – and precisely how, when and why did that happen?

Secondly, as regards the ‘morphology’ of cultural mediators, this special issue reveals that despite the changing political and cultural-historical context, it could be said that cultural mediators also shared certain characteristics over time. They were multifunctional intellectuals who adapted quickly to a changing context and who were intrinsically – and perhaps in large part unconsciously – flexible as they transcended language barriers, religions and ideologies. They were bilingual or were able to understand different languages and they were involved in diverse cultural fields and networks at home and abroad. Yet at the same time, their international activities often went hand in hand with the enunciation of a more fragmented cultural configuration, focusing on the promotion of national and subnational identities. In order to better understand how cultural mediators perceived their own role and their activities, one could suggest that researchers should pay more attention to the transfers’ discursive dimensions : how did mediators describe their role, position and practices within and across cultural fields ? How did they handle the increasingly conflicted cultural context in which they operated? And how were these mediators and their activities interpreted and remembered by their contemporaries?

Let us conclude with the apparent contradiction just mentioned between the ‘universal’ mode of communication and the omnipresent national identity discourse as also discussed by Joep Leerssen in the final article. In this reflective article, Leerssen demonstrates how in nineteenth-century Europe, national literary identities were born out of transnational cultural activities performed by cultural mediators who crossed multiple thresholds. This evolution, which Leerssen describes as ‘from network to patchwork’, led to the marginalisation of cultural mediators, that is of those who worked along the seams between the patches, whose re-emergence from obscurity, as demonstrated in the next eight articles, leads to a better understanding of a largely forgotten heterogeneous cultural reality.

Towards a Multipolar Model of Cultural Mediators Within Multicultural Spaces. Cultural Mediators in Belgium, 1830-1945

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In this article we aim to get a deeper conceptual and methodological understanding of the figure of the cultural mediator, understood here as a person active across linguistic, artistic and geographical borders and as the carrier of cultural transfers. Especially in a heterogeneous context in which several languages and cultural domains interacted, such as Belgium during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, cultural mediators played important transfer roles that contributed to the simultaneous construction of a regional, national, and international culture⁽¹⁾. We will further illustrate our model by drawing on some specific examples of cultural mediators' complex transfer activities in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Belgium in order to gain a better comprehension of how Belgian cultural life was organized and practiced and how it evolved. Thirdly, by concentrating on cultural mediators, we want to reveal the constitutive role of intercultural exchanges in the construction of cultures.

Although the history of national literatures has gradually become unthinkable without a thorough attention to the interaction between literatures, it would be premature to consider that the study of international contacts transcends the traditional national models and concepts as such⁽²⁾. According to Middell especially the carriers of cultural transfer need to be studied more in cultural transfer studies⁽³⁾. In short, by examining the 'morphology' of the cultural mediator we want to get a deeper understanding of the role of transfer practices and of interculturality within complex multilingual and multicultural societies like Belgium (and between Belgium and its neighboring nations) in nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

(1) See e.g. Joep LEERSSEN, *National Thought in Europe: a Cultural History*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006.

(2) Vincent EELEN & Raphaël INGELBIEN, "Literaire bemiddelaars in bewogen tijden. Thomas Colley Grattan, zijn bronnen en vertalers in de (ex-)Nederlanden (1828-1840)", in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde*, vol. 128, 2012, 3-4, p. 239.

(3) Matthias MIDDELL, "European History and Cultural Transfer", in *Diogenes*, vol. 48, 2000, 23, p. 23-30.

Studying cultural mediators: a state of the art

In disciplines dealing with intercultural interaction (such as Translation Studies and Cultural Transfer Studies), it is not uncommon to witness changing interests in the categories that make up interlingual and intercultural communication. It would take us too far trying to answer the when's and why's of the changing focus put on processes, products, actors or mediating instances in the course of the last decades. Also, much could be said about the how question: how do scholars look at products, actors and the like, i.e. by means of which concepts and methods? As such, the cultural mediator, which is a rather complex and long neglected category⁽⁴⁾, has aroused in the last decade growing interest in various disciplines dealing with culture, language and communication.

In Translation Studies, for example, it should not come as a surprise that the person of the cultural mediator has been principally approached as a translator, since the focus of past research has been mainly on identifying the specifics of the translator category only. It is simply an outcome of the predominant view on translational communication as deriving from original communication⁽⁵⁾. In Cultural Transfer Studies – one of the research perspectives in which transnational history is promoted – cultural and literary historians examine not only literary, but also musical and artistic exchanges between two or more geo-cultural spaces in a specific historical context, paying large attention to the relation between cultural encounters and the construction of cultural identities. Inspired by anthropology, micro-history and 'Alltagsgeschichte', they were drawn to practices rather than discourses and to the individual of the cultural mediator ('gatekeeper', 'go-between', 'passeur', 'Mittler') who is defined as the 'carrier' of cultural transfers and whose discursive and institutional mediating practices are studied⁽⁶⁾.

(4) See e.g. Lieven D'HULST, "(Re)locating Translation History: from Assumed Translation to Assumed Transfer", in *Translation Studies*, vol. 5, 2012, 2, p. 139-155; Reine MEYLAERTS & Maud GONNE, "Transferring the city – Transgressing Borders. Translation, Bilingual Writing and Selftranslation in Antwerp (1850-1930)", in *Translation Studies*, vol. 7, 2014, 2, p. 133-151; Tessa LOBBES & Reine MEYLAERTS, "Cultural Mediators and the Circulation of Cultural Identities in Interwar Bilingual Belgium. The case of Gaston Pulings (1885-1941)", in *Orbis Litterarum*, in press.

(5) Gideon TOURY, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2012.

(6) Michael WERNER & Michel ESPAGNE, eds., *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand*, Paris, Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988; Michel ESPAGNE & Richard GREILING, eds., *Frankreichfreunde: Mittler des Französisch-Deutschen Kulturtransfers (1750-1850)*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1996 (Deutsch-Französische Kulturbibliothek, 7); Matthias MIDDELL, "Von der Wechselseitigkeit der Kulturen im Austausch. Das Konzept des Kulturtransfers in verschiedenen Forschungskontexten", in Andrea LAGER & Georg MICHELS, eds., *Metropolen und Kulturtransfer im 15/16. Jahrhundert: Prag-Krakau-Danzig-Wien*, Stuttgart, Steiner Verlag, 2001 (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des Ostlichen Mitteleuropa), p. 16-51; Michael WERNER & Bénédicte ZIMMERMANN, "Penser l'histoire croisée: entre empirie et réflexivité", in Michael WERNER & Bénédicte ZIMMERMANN, eds., *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée*, Paris, Seuil, 2004 (Le genre humain), p. 15-49; Christophe CHARLE, "Comparaisons et transferts en histoire culturelle de l'Europe. Quelques réflexions à propos de recherches récentes", in *Les Cahiers Irice*, dl. 1, 2010, 5, p. 51-73.

In other words, the concept of ‘cultural mediator’ has known diverse disciplinary approaches, in which different aspects and interpretations of cultural mediatorship are emphasized. How do these disciplines handle the basic distinctions of the mediator category? After all, one can assume at the outset that like any other instance, the mediating instance carries different aspects of which at least three need to be foregrounded: a cultural mediator can be considered as a person, as a function and as a discursive and practicing instance. While examining how different disciplines approached these three functions, their respective strengths and weaknesses will be revealed.

First, understood as a person, the focus is on the mediator’s biographical data such as personal and social background, education, activities, etc., for which an array of sources are available in archival, printed, oral, audiovisual and electronic form: private and published correspondence, biographies (or autobiographies), radio or television interviews, internet testimonies, blogs and the like. When approached in a quantitative way, as evinced in the sociology of literature, the study of the cultural mediators’ biographical data and their sociability spaces has led to prosopographical studies⁽⁷⁾. In Translation Studies and Cultural Transfer Studies, biographical elements often are merged with one or more other distinctions of the mediator category⁽⁸⁾.

Secondly, understood as a function, the cultural mediator is approached not as an isolated individual but as a more or less institutionalized instance in the cultural field whose activities are not be considered as independent or singular: more, when the instance is taken as a recognized professional network or category, covering a.o. professional certifications, membership of associations; less, when it deals with occasional mediating practices, in rather informal and coincidental constellations, like local or temporary communities. Recent research at the disciplinary border between Sociology and Translation Studies has intensively invested in this functional approach, a.o. considering civil and legal aspects⁽⁹⁾, or censorship and power issues⁽¹⁰⁾. Some important theoretical achievements are Bourdieu’s “habitus” concept⁽¹¹⁾, i.e. a subject’s internalized system of social structures in the form of dispositions⁽¹²⁾, J. Holz-Mänttari’s “Handlungstheorie” (i.e. “konstituierende Merkmale seien

(7) Bjorn-Olav DOZO, *La Vie littéraire à la toise. Études quantitatives des professions et des sociabilités des écrivains belges francophones (1918-1940)*, Liège, Le Cri, 2011.

(8) Élisabeth DÉCULTOT, Michel ESPAGNE & François-René MARTIN, eds., *Johann Georg Wille (1715-1808) et son milieu: un réseau européen de l’art au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, École du Louvre, 2009; Hans-Jürgen LÜSEBRINK, “Sylva Clapin, médiateur d’encyclopédie. Transferts, adaptation et usages du Larousse illustré au Canada”, in Marie-Pier LUNEAU, e.a., eds., *Passeurs d’histoire(s). Figures des relations France-Québec en histoire du livre*, Québec, Presses de l’Université Laval, 2010, p. 165-178.

(9) Salah BASALAMAH, *Le droit de traduire. Une politique culturelle pour la mondialisation*, Arras-Ottawa, Artois Presses Université-Les Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 2009.

(10) Nike POKORN, *Post-Socialist Translation Practices. Ideological Struggle in Children’s Literature*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2012.

(11) Daniel SIMEONI, “The Pivotal Status of the Translator’s Habitus”, in *Target*, vol. 10, 1, 1998, p. 1-39; Reine MEYLAERTS, “Habitus and Self-image of Native Literary Author-Translators in Diglossic Societies”, in *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 5, 1, 2010, p. 1-19.

(12) See e.g. Rakefet SELA-SHEFFY, “How to Be a (Recognized) Translator. Rethinking Habitus, Norms, and the Field of Translation”, in *Target*, vol. 17, 1, 2005, p. 1-26.

analytisches, synthetisches, evaluatives und kreatives Handeln”⁽¹³⁾). In recent studies in the sociology of literature, cultural mediators are conceived as ‘animateurs de la vie littéraire’ who from a central position in diverse networks – the so-called ‘relation capital’ – organize, stimulate and promote literary life⁽¹⁴⁾. Maybe even more obviously than is the case in literature, mediators in musical and artistic life operate within and respond to diverse networks. They are active in official societies such as academies and royal associations, but also in informal and coincidental settings such as families. In Cultural Transfer Studies, the study of cultural and academic life in border regions as ‘lieux de médiation’, the examination of semi-institutionalized transnational and -regional networks such as intellectual, academic and literary-artistic societies and the study of the presence of foreign agents and art critics in the networks of publishing houses, cultural periodicals and art houses played a large role in discovering the concrete activities and function of cultural mediators in spreading, integrating and re-interpreting cultural products in different geo-cultural spaces⁽¹⁵⁾.

Thirdly, conceived as a discursive and practicing instance between two languages/nations/cultures, the mediator has attracted a great deal of academic attention in recent decades. In Translation Studies and Discourse Analysis, researchers tend to focus on the discursive transfers of the cultural mediator as a translator. One may recall the research conducted by Jiří Levý⁽¹⁶⁾ and others about the artistic and ideological beliefs and attitudes of the translator exhibited by the constitutive and individual lexico-semantic, syntactic, prosodic etc. shifts taking place between original and translation. Also, Descriptive Translation Studies (from the late 1970’s on) have put more

(13) Justa HOLZ-MÄNTTÄRI, *Translatorisches Handeln. Theorie und Methode*, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1984.

(14) Bjorn-Olav DOZO, “Structure de l’espace relationnel des auteurs francophones belges de l’entre-deux-guerres”, in Marie-Pier LUNEAU & Josée VINCENT, eds., *La Fabrication de l’auteur*, Québec, Éditions Nota bene, 2008; Daphné DE MARNEFFE, *Entre modernisme et avant-garde. Le réseau des revues littéraires de l’immédiat après-guerre en Belgique (1919-1922)*, doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Jean-Pierre Bertrand, ULg, 2007.

(15) Wolfgang CORTJAENS, Jan DE MAEYER & Tom VERSCHAFFEL, eds., *Historism and Cultural Identity in the Rhine-Meuse Region. Historismus und kulturelle Identität im Raum Rhein-Maas*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2008; Elien DECLERCQ, Walter KUSTERS & Saartje VANDEN BORRE, eds., *Migration, Intercultural Identities and Border Regions (19th and 20th Centuries). Migration, identités interculturelles et espaces frontaliers (XIX^e et XX^e siècles)*, Brussels-Bern, Peter Lang, 2012 ; Michel ESPAGNE & Matthias MIDDELL, *Von der Elbe bis an die Seine: Kulturtransfer zwischen Sachsen und Frankreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1999 (Deutsch-Französische Kulturbibliothek, 1); Christophe CHARLE, Jürgen SCHRIEWER & Peter WAGNER, eds., *Transnational Intellectual Networks. Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Campus, 2004; Annette DE VRIES, *Cultural Mediators. Artists and Writers at the Crossroads of Tradition, Innovation and Reception in the Low Countries and Italy, 1450-1650*, Leuven, Peeters, 2008 (Groningen Studies in Cultural Change, 31); Christophe CHARLE, Julien VINCENT & Jay WINTER, eds., *Anglo-French Attitudes. Comparisons and Transfers between English and French Intellectuals since the Eighteenth Century*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007.

(16) Jiří LEVÝ, *Die literarische Übersetzung. Theorie einer Kunstgattung*, Frankfurt am Main, Athenäum Verlag, 1969.

emphasis on the stylistic and ideological norms of the translator's 'behaviour' or 'strategy' (i.e. terms which at that time carried largely metaphorical meanings). Yet, somehow, this instance – also called the 'figure' of the translator⁽¹⁷⁾ – has itself remained a rather opaque category, opening space for debates about the meaning of the concept of translator's (or translatorial) enunciation and about the many aspects covered by the many names that should be given to this enunciator: is he/she a voice, a point of view, an ethos, a posture, an image?

So far, in Translation Studies, the concern has been to come to terms with the supposed essentials of the translator category, an obviously legitimate solicitude from the viewpoint of the translation theoretician. Translators are, among the numerous cultural agents operating within and between cultures, most conspicuously understood as instances that mediate texts between two languages and cultures. From a theoretical and a methodological viewpoint, such an understanding of discursive mediating between two different languages no doubt helps to provide translators with some specificity in comparison with other types of discursive mediators, e.g. working within a single language (journalists, authors, critics, etc.), or using different techniques (paraphrase, abstract, adaptation, etc.). At the same time, when being approached as agents mediating between languages, translators also gain specificity in comparison with artists, composers, curators, art historians and other instances that operate within or between different semiotic systems.

As already indicated above, Translation Studies preferentially analyses the translator as translating between *two* languages, cultures, nations, i.e. from a binary (source-target) spatial-linguistic viewpoint. Cultural mediators, active across linguistic, artistic and geographical borders and carriers of cultural transfers incarnate complex and multidirectional mediating practices. Research on cultural mediators, especially in multilingual cultures, thus urges Translation Studies to transgress these reductive binary distinctions and to conceptualize plural and multidirectional forms of transfer both within and between cultures⁽¹⁸⁾.

In Cultural Transfer Studies and *Histoire croisée*, cultural historians focus on the cultural mediator not only as a discursive but also practicing instance in the field of arts, literature and music, in order to analyze both his discourse on cultural encounters and his performance of concrete mediating practices, such as traveling and moving around objects. Moreover, in their discourse analysis, historians are more likely to focus on how cultural mediators thought and wrote about these cultural encounters in order to learn more about the mediators' motives for spreading, integrating or interpreting specific cultural products in a certain historical context and in order to learn more about the mediators' ideas on cultural identities⁽¹⁹⁾. So, in contrast

(17) Elżbieta SKIBIŃSKA, ed., *Figure(s) du traducteur*, in *Romanica Wratislaviensia*, vol. 59, 2012.

(18) See e.g. Sherry SIMON, *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006; Sherry SIMON, *Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory*, New York, Routledge, 2012.

(19) C. CHARLE, J. SCHRIEWER & P. WAGNER, *Anglo-French Attitudes*, op. cit.; W. CORTJAENS, J. DE MAEYER & T. VERSCHAFFEL, *Historism and Cultural Identity*, op. cit.

to researchers in Translation Studies, they tend to have less attention for a thorough text analysis and for example for the transformations in literary texts due to the transfers⁽²⁰⁾ and to focus more on the reality and materiality of everyday practices. This attention for objects and practices has enriched the study of mediation and mediators, as it motivated a distraction from an all too exclusive attention for writers and theorists and could bring into the light those mediators who do not have explicitly explained their aims and strategies and elucidated their identities⁽²¹⁾.

The study of cultural transfer enables a better understanding of the number and variety of international and intercultural exchanges and to bring on the stage mediators who are active beyond more or less official and institutionalized relations. On the other hand, similar to Translation Studies, the research on cultural transfers is more or less exclusively conducted within the context of two nations and cultures (originating in work on French-German literary transfers of Werner & Espagne⁽²²⁾). Moreover, due to a lack of archival material, or simply because most research is embedded in a single national context, a lot of researchers focus on the integration of 'foreign' elements into the receiving culture. By using this rather unilateral perspective, they gained in-depth knowledge of the motives of cultural agents to integrate specific 'foreign' cultural products and of their reinterpretations of these products⁽²³⁾. From this point of view, cultural mediation may be reduced to the organization of this unilateral influence.

As a conclusion, in this state of the art, two important problems in the approach of cultural mediators are revealed. The first problem can be situated in the reduction of the obviously versatile nature of cultural mediators to their status as translators. A too strong focus on the supposed specificity of the translator as a discursive agent or, by extension, on the supposed specificity of an artist, a composer, a curator, an art historian, etc. is almost untenable from an analytical or historical viewpoint: we know that many if not most translators, artists, etc. take up additional discursive, artistic and institutional activities during their careers, such as author, critic, journalist, teacher, politi-

(20) Examples of text analysis in Reine MEYLAERTS, *L'aventure flamande de la Revue belge: langues, littératures et cultures dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, Brussels, Éditions Archives et Musée de la Littérature – P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2004 (Documents pour l'histoire des francophonies. Europe, 5); Johannes KONST, Inger LEEMANS & Bettina NOAK, eds., *Niederländisch-Deutsche Kulturbeziehungen 1600-1830*, Göttingen, V&R Unipress, 2009 (Berliner Mittelalter- und Frühneuezeitforschung, 7); Maud GONNE, "Overlap of Agent Roles in Early 20th Century Belgium: 'a Lucrative Way of Spending Time'", in *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, forthcoming.

(21) Ingrid GODDEERIS & Noémie GOLDMAN, eds., *Animateurs d'art*, forthcoming.

(22) M. WERNER & M. ESPAGNE, *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles*, op. cit.; Hans-Jürgen LÜSEBRINK, Rolf REICHARDT a.o., eds., *Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997 (Deutsch-Französische Kulturbibliothek, 9); M. ESPAGNE & M. MIDDELL, *Von der Elbe*, op. cit.

(23) M. ESPAGNE & M. GREILING, *Frankreichfreunde: Mittler*, op. cit.; H.-J. LÜSEBRINK & R. REICHARDT, *Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch*, op. cit.; Lynne TATLOCK & Matt ERLIN, eds., *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America. Reception, Adaptation, Transformation*, Rochester-New York, Camden House, 2005 (Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture).

cian, publisher, in quite variable configurations. Moreover, it is hardly feasible to mark clear boundaries between translating and other writing activities: to start with, the very act of translating includes forms of non-translating (borrowing, adaptation, rewriting, etc.); in addition, the formal and functional properties of translations are subject to change and therefore may lose at times specificity in comparison with other transfer modes. In the search for method to study the dialectical relationship between translation and other discursive, artistic and institutional mediating practices, inspiration can be found in the more encompassing and contextualizing approach of cultural mediators in Cultural Transfer Studies in which the merging of and the reciprocity between diverse transfer activities (being a migrant, a painter, a literary critic, an art dealer, a multilingual writer and a translator) are often stressed⁽²⁴⁾.

The second problem concerns the way in which the geo-cultural spaces in which cultural mediators are operating are defined and studied. In both Translation Studies and Cultural Transfer Studies, mediating activities are often researched within a 'bipolar' framework of two nations or languages. So, despite the intention to transcend a national research perspective, Cultural Transfer Studies have been criticized by Werner and Zimmermann for studying solely the implications of transfers on the receiving culture and for reproducing the idea of 'fixed nations'. After all, researchers often focused on the cultural mediators' activities between two rather 'static' national entities, whose characteristics seemed to be pre-determined⁽²⁵⁾. With the concept of *Histoire croisée*, Werner and Zimmermann tried, quite successfully, to give more attention to the reciprocity of cultural transfers, to the impact of exchanges to all cultures involved in these processes of encounter and to the changing nature of geo-cultural spaces as a result of these cultural contacts⁽²⁶⁾. By overcoming the focus on exchanges between two 'fixed nations', room was made to give more attention to the activities of cultural mediators within multicultural and multilingual nations like Canada, Belgium and Spain⁽²⁷⁾ which previously had been examined from the perspective of a single so-called homogeneous language community, excluding the mediators' multilingual networks and activities⁽²⁸⁾.

In view of the preceding, it probably makes more sense to approach mediators from a less restrictive or a priori methodological or disciplinary

(24) T. LOBBES & R. MEYLAERTS, "Cultural Mediators", *op. cit.*; A. DE VRIES, *Cultural Mediators: Artists*, *op. cit.*

(25) See for this internal critique, since Werner is one of the founders of Cultural Transfer Studies: M. WERNER & B. ZIMMERMANN, *Penser l'histoire croisée*, *op. cit.*

(26) M. WERNER & B. ZIMMERMANN, *Penser l'histoire croisée*, *op. cit.*; V. EELLEN & R. INGELBIEN, *Littéraire bemiddelaars*, *op. cit.*

(27) Dirk DE GEEST & Reine MEYLAERTS, "Littératures en Belgique: un problème, une problématique, un programme", in Dirk DE GEEST & Reine MEYLAERTS, eds., *Littératures en Belgique: diversités culturelles et dynamiques littéraires*, Bruxelles, P.I.E.-Peter Lang, p. 17-34; R. MEYLAERTS, *L'aventure flamande*, *op. cit.*; Montserrat BACARDÍ, *La literatura catalana contemporània: intertextos, influències i relacions*, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2013.

(28) Benoît DENIS & Jean-Marie KLINKENBERG, *La Littérature belge. Précis d'histoire sociale*, Bruxelles, Éditions Labor, 2005 (coll. Espace Nord); B.-O. DOZO, *La Vie littéraire*, *op. cit.*

viewpoint and to replace the binary model of two languages, two nations and two cultures interacting through one specific set of activities and procedures by a plural one that takes into account more activities and more forms of agency. This may come closer to the demands of the historian's rationale working within a given space and time frame. How broad one should define the spectrum of mediating activities that are taken up by mediating agents hinges upon the corpus under study and of course upon how the researcher will approach his/her object. Since, in order to be carried out, (verbal) mediation needs numerous elements within a single (communication) process, it is also indispensable to look at the relations between these elements. Critical discourse analysis, at least in its textually oriented version as shaped by Norman Fairclough and his colleagues, has developed a comprehensive view of verbal communication, in which discourse is part of a social practice, i.e. "an articulation of diverse social elements within a relatively stable configuration, always including discourse. Let us say that every practice includes the following elements: Activities, Subjects, and their Social Relations, Instruments, Objects, Time and Place, Forms of consciousness, Values, Discourse"⁽²⁹⁾. He continues: "These elements are dialectically related [...]. That is to say, they are different elements but not discrete, fully separate, elements. There is a sense in which each 'internalizes' the others without being reducible to them" (ibid.). As a consequence, texts as constituents of discourse are more than finite products occupying fixed places between equidistant subjects such as authors, translators, critics and readers. The preceding implies also that the relations operating between subjects like authors, translators, critics, publishers, composers, artists, painters, sculptors, journalists, the reading and listening public... or between objects like original and translation, source texts and target texts, work of art and critic, etc. are dialectical in their turn. At first sight, there should be nothing odd about such a hypothesis: we all know that authors may interact with the translators of their work, that authors may write about translators and vice versa or that translators may turn into authors. We also know that authors may be(come) self-translators or write in two languages. And we know how dynamic the relations are between writing and translating in the world of multimedia. Mediators in music and visual arts develop discursive activities, they speak and write, make public statements, quote and translate. And they are quoted by others, described, characterized, labelled, caricatured by contemporaries. For some categories of agents in artistic life (art dealers, critics, curators, etc.) mediation can be seen as their core business, but others too, including the artists themselves, develop mediating activities. Even though these activities, including the mediation between national cultures, may not be an explicit goal for those involved nor at the center of their work, they still can be crucial for processes of intercultural exchange and identity formation.

To sum up: all constitutive elements of discourse are interdependent units, which means they may enter combinations both like fixed pieces with fixed roles on a chess board and like flexible, open or so to speak permeable

(29) Norman FAIRCLOUGH, "The Dialectics of Discourse", in *Textus*, vol. 14, 2, 2001, p. 3-10.

structures, whose changing and shared roles depend on numerous conditions that need to be taken into account. In other terms: subjects such as authors and translators, critics, publishers, composers, artists, painters, sculptors, journalists, ... (or activities such as translating, writing, paraphrasing, criticizing, painting, composing, publishing, etc.) become so within the constellation of relations they forge with other elements, which precisely turn them into authors, translators, critics, publishers, composers, artists, painters, sculptors, journalists, ... (or into activities such as translating and writing), and into all intermediate forms. In other terms, it becomes questionable whether one should consider communication units such as subjects or activities as closed entities rather than permeable or “liquid” categories.

Towards a multipolar model of mediation

The preceding has some further methodological implications that we will only be able to mention in an introductory manner. Most of the research on translating agents⁽³⁰⁾ aims at showing that the latter “are diverse, including politicians, military personnel, publishers, educators, and others”⁽³¹⁾. Yet, the translational action is commonly selected from a translational or translatorial viewpoint (rather than the military, political or educational ones, which need to be approached from other angles, then). And if the translation scholar is interested in larger networks of translators and translation activities, he/she will naturally be tempted to take a similar stand.

Still, it no doubt makes little sense to split up the agents’ activities along scholarly or disciplinary viewpoints only, not only because several actions may be tight together by the same agents, but also because their interdependence may change their mutual properties. More is needed to understand the relations between subjects and activities and other parameters of communication (discourse also involves codes, space and time, values, etc.). And how explain the evolution of these relations? A broader, dynamic and systemic, view implies a shift in perspective and needs further elaboration⁽³²⁾. Let us very briefly make two proposals here. First, one could think of the metaphor of “pole” to handle these categories. This metaphor, as derived from electromagnetic theory and used in e.g. economy and human geography, states basically that central points or poles exert variable attraction (or repulsion) on their surrounding field or space. Applied to mediation, a pole may be understood as a subject or an activity, clustering central or dominant features and attracting (or repulsing) less dominant ones. In turn, the latter

(30) John MILTON & Paul BANDIA, eds., *Agents of Translation*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2009.

(31) Hélène BUZELIN, “Agents of Translation”, in Yves GAMBIER & Luc VAN DOORSLAER, eds., *Handbook of Translation Studies II*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2011. DOI: 10.1075/hts.2.age.

(32) See also Raila HEKKANEN, “Fields, Networks and Finnish Prose: A Comparison of Bourdieusian Field Theory and Actor-Network Theory in Translation Sociology”, in Dries DE CROM, ed., *Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminar in Translation Studies*, 2008. <http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/papers>, Accessed 19 January 2015.

may become dominant at a given moment in time (e.g. translators becoming authors during Classicism, or writing being defined as translating during Postcolonialism) or, synchronically, depending on the situation from which the discourses and transfers emerge: authors or artists becoming critics when the publishing institutions are saturated (economical factor), authors becoming prefacers in order to promote relatives (relational factor), authors translating engaged authors (ideological factors), etc. More concretely, in a discursive setting, a historical approach should look at the modalities by which the poles enter the communication situation of mediating instances.

Subject poles cluster attributes that qualify agents as translators, or as translators and critics, or as translators and authors, or as combinations of these, depending on the prevailing dominant traits attributed to given subject poles: e.g. AUTHOR-translator or CRITIC-translator or TRANSLATOR-journalist, or translator-PUBLISHER, or ART DEALER-journalist, or CRITIC-composer, painter-JOURNALIST, etc. Activity poles cluster the corresponding attributes of the institutional and/or discursive actions taken up by these subjects: TRANSLATING-teaching or WRITING-translating or even TRANSLATING-WRITING (e.g. the roles assumed by the French-Canadian writer Nancy Huston). Further, subject poles and activity poles dialectically interact. Take the case of 19th-century French translator Gérard de Nerval: his successful translation activity induces a change from a dominant poet function into a dominant translator function, whereas later on, the translator subject is gradually replaced by a journalistic one that adapts his translation activities into re-translation activities.

Our second proposal is that we view these poles as interacting within larger cultural and institutional poles, also clustering central or dominant features and attracting (or repulsing) less dominant ones. Instead of being approached as opposite and well finite categories between which the mediating instance occupies a perfect in-between, cultural and institutional sets should be studied as liquid and complex entities producing hybrid identities, that only make sense considering the (largely interiorized) socio-cultural configuration: e.g. a FRANCOPHONE-Flemish author, a French-BELGIAN painter, a DUTCH-Flemish editor. In addition to subject and activity poles, verbal mediation encloses other poles such as codes or value systems – for example the Belgian Cyriel Buysse (1859-1932), starting his carrier as a Flemish Francophone writer, and, for ideological reasons, turning to Dutch. All poles are part of larger networks of agents, their activities and mediation processes (these should also be described). In short, interacting poles make up multipolar settings, which carry us away from traditional binary views on mediation. This is even more so for multicultural spaces, as we will see further. In the examples that are following, we will show that intercultural mediators typically attract different, if not contradictory, features creating hybrid and multilingual clusters from which emerge (inter-)national and cultural discourses.

This being said, it is likely to believe that in multicultural and rapidly changing cultural systems, like 19th-century Belgium, the agents' strivings are characterized by constant minor or major corrections and by the search for new compromises between more or less appealing poles, given the shifting national ideologies that steer the institutions and practices as well as their evolution.

Mediators in nineteenth century Belgium: Stevens' family international promotion of Belgian art

As a young bilingual nation state created in 1830, Belgium experienced difficulties with a full embracement of the romantic ideal of one people, one state and one language. The creation of a national culture was therefore somehow less problematic in the non-discursive domains of music, painting, sculpture: these products can circulate faster and can modify perceptions and hierarchies quicker than discursive ones⁽³³⁾. The nineteenth-century Belgian Stevens family beautifully illustrates the complexity and variegation of mediating activities, characterized by thoughtfulness, deliberate strategies and division of labor as well as by informality and loyalty⁽³⁴⁾. Its most successful and – till today – most famous member was Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), painter of the (female) *beau monde* of Paris. His older brother Joseph (1816-1892) also was a painter, mainly of social scenes and animals (dogs), working in Paris too and then in Brussels. Their younger brother Arthur (1825-1890) was an international art dealer and critic, and his wife Mathilde Kindt (1833-1886) was a writer and art critic too, and she held one of the most prestigious literary salons in Paris at the time. After they broke up, Arthur settled in Brussels again, operating there as a confidant and artistic advisor of king Leopold II.

During their entire career the family and its members mediated between Belgium and France, between Paris and Brussels. Clearly they identified with both, be it not all at the same time and to the same extent. In 1895, when after a lifelong in Paris Alfred considered returning to Belgium but was refused the prestigious appointment as director of the Académie de Beaux-Arts in the capital, he was disappointed about the country's lack of gratitude. In his *Impressions sur la peinture* (1886), he witnessed that “un peintre a tort d'abandonner le pays où il est né et où il a passé sa jeunesse”⁽³⁵⁾. Some decades earlier, in 1870, inspired by the French setback from the French-Prussian War, he explicitly identified with France: “Je suis à Paris depuis vingt ans, j'ai épousé une Parisienne, mes enfants sont nés à Paris, mon talent, si j'en ai, je le dois en grande partie à la France”⁽³⁶⁾. Notwithstanding this statement, which in fact he had to make because he was not French and was not considered as such, Alfred Stevens was Belgian in Paris and French in Belgium. As a subject pole he was identified first as a Belgian-FRENCH painter, then as a BELGIAN-French one, where the qualifier 'Belgian' typically referred to the Flemish component. Indeed, he was successful at the Paris Salon and with the French (and American) buyers, but he was so as a member of the “Belgian school”, with work that represented “Flemish” art. In 1907 critic Paul Lambotte assessed that “Ce peintre mondain acclimaté à Paris, [est] resté, par le sens et l'amour de la couleur, un Flamand – un

(33) C. CHARLE, “Comparaisons et transferts”, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

(34) Saskia DE BODT a.o., *Alfred Stevens, 1823-1906*, Brussels, Mercatorfonds, 2009.

(35) Alfred STEVENS, *Impressions sur la peinture*, [s.l.] 1886, aforism CLXVII.

(36) François BOUCHER, *Alfred Stevens*, Paris, Rieder, 1930, p. 28.

Flamand très affiné mais un Flamand – nul ne sait (*sic*) le discuter”⁽³⁷⁾. As an art dealer and critic Arthur promoted the work of his brothers as well as modernist painters, mostly French, the work of whom he sold in Belgium (and elsewhere). He operated as a confidant and artistic advisor of king Leopold II, joined the cultural establishment in Brussels, acted as a member of juries and commissions, which gave him the possibility to promote his brother artists. In this sense, Alfred Stevens also illustrates how subject poles and activity poles dialectically interact. His successful networking activities induce a change from a dominant painter function into a dominant art dealer function. Such data and anecdotes could be multiplied, all showing that the multiple and varied activities of the Stevens' family served their own interests, but by doing so also contributed to the development and the success of the 'Belgian school' and of national culture and prestige. They did so by the use of international networks and exchange and without being inspired by an official patriotic agenda.

Georges Eekhoud's transfer of national culture across languages and spaces

More significantly in the literary domain, intercultural transfers are marked by language choices and strategies. From the end of the nineteenth century, minority language Dutch (Flemish) became an important component of Flemish literary identity within Belgium⁽³⁸⁾. As a French speaking Fleming, Georges Eekhoud (1854-1927) took advantage of his double belonging and partial bilingualism to become a real mediator within and between literary (and artistic) networks, promoting works, groups, artists and institutions between Paris, Brussels, Antwerp and Amsterdam. First, as a subject pole, he appeared as the prototype of the Flemish francophone writer, torn between two belongings becoming more and more contradictory. «Tandis que nous autres, hélas! artistes, poètes, gallo-flamands, de double culture sinon de double race, que nous nous appelions Maeterlinck ou Verhaeren, Rodenbach ou Giraud [...], nous nous voyons attirés et repoussés tour à tour par nos mystérieux générateurs»⁽³⁹⁾. As such he was a defender of the very patriotic idea of the Belgian soul – an ideal mixture of German and Latin roots representative of Belgian identity – and bilingualism in essays and articles for (inter)national journals (*La Belgique artistique et littéraire* and *Lumière*). It was exactly this clustering of Flemish-Francophone or German-Latin attributes that, just like for painters, sculptors or composers in the artistic field, made him appreciated as a Belgian novelist in Paris and facilitated the promotion of Belgian literature abroad.

(37) Paul LAMBOTTE, *L'œuvre de Alfred Stevens*, Antwerp-Brussels, Buschmann, 1907, p. 4.

(38) Joris VLASSELAERS, *Literair bewustzijn in Vlaanderen, 1840-1893: een code-reconstructie*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1985.

(39) Georges EEKHOUD, “Jan Vogelzang et Frans Printemps”, in *Le Mercure de France*, vol. 1, 1919, 3, p. 24-36.

At the same time, Eekhoud was an (inter)national and multilingual chronicler. He promoted a Belgian literature and art in French (in *Le Mercure de France*, Paris, in *Durendal*, Brussels), in English (in *The Speaker*, London) or in Dutch (in *Onze Kunst*, Antwerp). In these chronicles, he selected and presented Belgian writers, musicians, sculptors and painters with an obvious preference for Flemish artists as representative of Belgian Art and a clear support of Flemish language. The content of most of those chronicles overlapped. In fact, he recycled his own critic production across languages and national borders. Simultaneously, he translated from Dutch into French various artistic monographs on Flemish and Dutch Art, various Flemish poems (ex. Guido Gezelle) and Flemish short stories (ex. Streuvels). He also (co-)translated most of his own chronicles and articles into Dutch. Finally, Eekhoud also showed interest in theatre. *L'Imposteur magnanime Perkin Waebeck* (1902) was originally written in French, but only his translation into Dutch was ever performed. Travelling between languages served thus not only a collective interest; it was also the way to have an audience and to be published. In short, unlike traditional views on Eekhoud as a Francophone Flemish novelist, his role as a mediator of Belgian literature and art was due to a complex clustering of roles (novelist, translator, self-translator, adaptor, critic, ...) combined with a complex cluster of linguistic and cultural attributes (Flemish, Francophone, Belgian, English) both determined by a combination of collective (editorial, cultural, propagation, didactic...) and personal (prestige, lucrative, ...) interests.

This overlap of interconnected discursive transfer activities and roles emerged in hybrid styles (heterolingualism⁽⁴⁰⁾) and genres (novels containing poems, chronicles, songs, summaries of theatre plays, ...), for example in Eekhoud's popular production. Under the pseudonym of Gabriël d'Estrange, Georges Eekhoud participated in the production of historical serial novels, circulating in Brussels simultaneously in two linguistic versions, a.o. *De Brusselsche Straatzanger* and *Le Chanteur des Rues Bruxellois* (1897-1899). In this historical bilingual popular novel, Georges Eekhoud, in cooperation with Julius Hoste and Jan Bruylants, constructed and propagated on a large scale a so called patriotic history that stages in fact a Flemish identity, language and culture, purified of any francophone element. This identity content conforms to the aim of the growing Flemish Movement, of whom Jules Hoste was an important defender. In spite of its bilingual nature, this production conflicts with Eekhoud's official patriotic discourses on Flemish and francophone linguistic and cultural union. Furthermore, within those hybrid works, various mediation techniques are tested and combined – plagiarism of own or other works, use of heterolingualisms, adaptation of theatre plays, (self,)translation, summaries etc. Afterwards, parts of these serial novels are also re-used, or recycled, in Eekhoud's official French production, published in Paris.

As a consequence, intercultural mediation implies transfers of representations that are not necessarily intercultural. A multilingual and hybrid form

(40) Rainier GRUTMAN, *Des langues qui résonnent. L'hétérolinguisme au XIX^e siècle québécois*, Québec, Fides, 1997. It refers to the occurrence in a text of a foreign language or varieties of a main language.

can convey a discourse that promotes homogeneous identities and cultures. Depending on the activity undertaken, Georges Eekhoud carried an international, national (hybrid) or a regionalist message that sounds incompatible nowadays and doesn't fit with the idea that we have of an intercultural mediator. As a result, the study of transferred and thus necessarily transformed cultural discourses has to supply the study of mediation activities.

Finally, as a subject pole Eekhoud showed an impressive cluster of activities and identity discourses. He adapted as a chameleon to the intercultural networks he created around him and aligned or opposed his action to other actors, institutions, necessities, interests. He promoted different cultural subsets on various scales from inside and outside, contributing to the construction of cultural identities in Belgium.

As these brief portraits show, mediators, clustering a variety of subject and activity roles, were important for the construction of a national culture through (inter)national mediation in nineteenth century Belgium. As much as it was acclaimed, this national culture however was never self-evident. During the interwar period, this constant problematic status of the Belgian nation resulted in growing tensions between the two language groups and cultures. In the aftermath of the First World War, Belgium witnessed a number of rather opposite developments. Increased patriotism immediately after the Great War went together with an intensification of regionalism (especially Flemish groups lobbying for Flemish linguistic and cultural emancipation) and a firm internationalism, not only political (creation of the League of Nations) but also cultural, e.g. international humanism as defended by Romain Rolland in his *Déclaration d'indépendance de l'Esprit* [Declaration of the Independence of the Spirit] (1919), uniting some thousand writers worldwide.

Immediately after the Great War, a pacifist and progressive network between francophone and Flemish cultural avant-garde movements was created in Antwerp, Flanders' biggest city. They were both internationalist and regionalist and bilingual cultural mediators played an important role in this network. The bilingual Fleming Roger Avermaete (1893-1988) was one of them.

Roger Avermaete or the complex dialectics between regional and (inter) national transfer activities

As a subject pole, Roger Avermaete clustered the most diverse attributes. He was an officer at the Dutch-language Charitable Office in Antwerp, a professor (mainly teaching in Dutch but also in French), a bilingual (French – Dutch) writer and critic, self-translator and translator, editor-in-chief of the magazine *Lumière* [Light] (1919-1923) and director of a publishing house by the same name, organizer of exhibitions and conferences in Dutch and French. His transfer activities had both a regional, a Belgian and an international dimension, in dialectically interacting combinations.

Avermaete started as a francophone novelist right after the First World War (*La Conjuration des Chats*, 1919), and French would always remain his main literary language. This means that this bilingual Fleming made his debut in the then still dominant language of the nation state but also the language of literary and cultural internationalism (see below). His debut in Dutch, *Een voorbeeldige vrouw* [An Exemplary Wife] dates back to 1924,

barely five years after his first French publication, and it is a self-translation of *Une épouse modèle* (1923). Avermaete would continue to translate some of his own works and in addition he continued to publish both in French and Dutch in the most diverse genres: prose, poetry, literary and artistic criticism, theatre, (literary, artistic, political) essays, scenarios for ballet, polemics, ... This overlap of interconnected discursive transfer activities and roles didn't however result in a hybrid style (heterolingualism) like it was the case with Eekhoud. Avermaete's pure French and Flemish style was thus more supportive of the idea of a Belgian literature consisting of two equivalent, more or less independent parts, a Flemish one and a Francophone one. Just like in Stevens' case, Avermaete's subject poles and activity poles dialectically interacted. Since Avermaete always considered his self-translations as separate originals rather than translations, he gave precedence to the author function above the translator function, qualifying himself as both a Francophone AND a Flemish Belgian novelist, poet, dramaturge, essayist, polemicist, etc. This once more was supportive of his ideal of a Belgian literature with two equivalent parts. In comparison with the nineteenth-century context, the combination of these linguistic-cultural attributes (Flemish and Francophone) in one and the same subject was however all but evident in a cultural situation of increasing tensions between Flemings and Francophones and between Flemish and Francophone cultures in Belgium.

As an (inter)national and multilingual chronicler Avermaete wrote about Flemish literature in the Francophone Belgian newspaper *L'Indépendance belge* (1936-1939), thus again promoting his preferred idea of a Belgian literature (see above). His intra-Belgian transfer activities had also an international counterpart in his chronicles about international art and literature in the Flemish Belgian *Volksgazet* [People's Gazette] (1931-1938). He further promoted a Belgian literature and art in Francophone and Flemish Belgian, Dutch, French, German, and Brazilian magazines.

The complex dialectics between the regional, national and international subsets in Avermaete's transfer activities is perhaps most clear in his role as editor-in-chief of the magazine *Lumière* (1919-1923). As part of a network of avant-garde magazines (*Ruimte* [Space], *Het Overzicht* [The Overview], *Staatsgevaarlijk* [State Endangering], *De Nieuwe Wereldorde* [The New World Order], *De Internationale* [The International], ... on the Flemish side, and on the francophone side, *La Drogue* [The Drug], *Ça Ira* [It will be alright]), *Lumière* took common positions on international questions, inspired by French movements and as a way to position itself in the French literary field⁽⁴¹⁾. The choice of French as the language of the periodical should also be seen as an international strategy, not as a choice against the Flemish emancipation. On the contrary: Avermaete wrote articles in French to support the Flemish Movement in *Lumière* and opened his periodical to Flemish activists like Moens, van den Reeck and Mortier.

“Maar Wies Moens werkte aan ons tijdschrift mee. Trouwens, bij de franskiljons hadden wij de reputatie flaminganten te zijn. Frans was toen een uiting van een kaste politiek die wij heftig bestreden. Ik droomde in

(41) D. DE MARNEFFE, *Entre modernisme et avant-garde*, op. cit., p. 119.

die tijd, samen met Firmin Mortier en Herman van Reeck alstublieft een internationale van de jeugd te stichten. Frans van de Wijngaard heeft nooit een letter in het Frans geschreven, maar werkte mee: wij vertaalden hem eenvoudig. Ten andere op dat ogenblik hadden wij met evenveel plezier Chinees uitgegeven. (...) Door de taal zelf speelde ik op groter vlak en kon een internationaal publiek bereiken”⁽⁴²⁾.

Within this complex cluster of attributes that characterize Avermaete as a subject and activity pole, Avermaete moved progressively away from his internationalism and regionalism to remain a promoter of Belgian literature and culture as a mixture of Flemish and Francophone elements. For him, there was only one future for Belgium and for the country's unity: overall bilingualism. In 1938 he defends these ideas in his essay, *La Belgique se meurt* [Belgium is dying]. At that moment the linguistic laws implementing the monolingual territorial principle for education, administration and justice (Dutch in Flanders, French in Wallonia, and bilingualism in Brussels) had been implemented for several years.

As this overview makes clear, it would be reductive to confine an intercultural mediator like Avermaete to a single language, artistic activity, and cultural group. He was active across all these borders – without necessarily erasing them – thereby configuring his own hybrid (i.e. national as well as international, intercultural and inter-artistic) positions. He is a good illustration of the fact that we should approach mediation from a less restrictive or a priori viewpoint and instead replace the model of two languages and cultures interacting through a specific set of procedures by a plural one that takes into account more activities and more forms of agency.

Gaston Pulings, a monolingual mediator in a changing cultural landscape

The last portrait is that of Gaston Pulings (1885-1941), a contemporary of Avermaete, living and working in interwar Brussels. Compared to Eekhoud and Avermaete, Pulings came from a different milieu. He was a Catholic and originated from a solely French-speaking family. His case makes us aware of the evolving nature of cultural mediation and mediators in a changing political-cultural context and of the shifting content and impact of intercultural transfers in Belgian cultural life⁽⁴³⁾.

As a subject pole, Pulings truly embodies the characteristics of a cultural mediator. In contrast to Alfred Stevens, Eekhoud and Avermaete, he did not have the talent to devote himself to the arts. During the daytime, he worked as a high-ranking clerk at the Belgian Senate, in the evening he wrote poems. Yet, Pulings was a minor poet, not really being remembered for his refined writing in French, but far more for being a cultural mediator *pur sang*. Indeed, as an art and literary critic in Belgian and French periodicals and as an organizer of exhibitions, he was the motor behind diverse literary and artistic activities, in which exchanges between the two language groups

(42) Joos FLORQUIN, “Ten Huize van ... Roger Avermaete: Manuscript of the Television Program”, 1962, p. 19-20.

(43) T. LOBBES & R. MEYLAERTS, “Cultural Mediators”, *op. cit.*

were visible. His fame in Belgium was based on his success as a critic and promoter of Belgian cultural life in influential Parisian periodicals as *Les Nouvelles littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques* from 1925 until 1940. Pulings maintained one of the largest bilingual networks of his time that enabled him to bring diverse writers, painters and fellow mediators like Avermaete, Paul-Gustave van Hecke and Pierre Flouquet together⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Being aware of his status as a successful cultural mediator, it comes as a surprise when discovering that Pulings was not bilingual. Unlike Avermaete and Eekhoud, Pulings was raised and educated entirely in French. He had a passive knowledge of Dutch, he could read and understand the language on a moderate level, but was unable to write or speak it. His monolingualism symbolizes the changing Belgian political-cultural context in which the two language communities were slowly becoming more homogeneous and true bilingualism was decreasing⁽⁴⁵⁾. Yet, his standing as a cultural mediator suggests that a new form of mediation was emerging, which took place not within a hybrid and linguistically interwoven Belgium but in a country marked by bipolarity in which two more distinct monolingual communities were being formed. Yet, did this changing morphology of cultural mediation also result into the rise of new transfer practices and how did the monolingual Pulings achieve his status as a successful mediator, despite his 'linguistic handicap'?

As a cultural mediator, Pulings clearly aimed to build bridges between the two language groups. He promoted the idea of a 'unique' Belgian cultural identity and stimulated countless cultural contacts between, according to him, equal languages and cultures. In his pieces for the Parisian *Les Nouvelles littéraires* and for Belgian literary-artistic journals as *La Nervie*, he especially demonstrated his fondness of francophone Flemish writers as Maeterlinck and Eekhoud and of Flemish theatre groups as *Het Vlaamsche Volkstooneel*, which performed francophone plays in Dutch⁽⁴⁶⁾. They represented, according to Pulings, the very essence of a 'hybrid' Belgian culture. This idea of a two-fold Belgian cultural identity dated from nineteenth century. Yet, Pulings' conviction that mediation should not be based on any feeling of superiority of the francophone culture was innovative, certainly in French-speaking circles. In contrast to earlier francophone initiatives, he did not encourage the translation of Flemish regional prose that reinforced the impression of the 'good', 'simple' and slightly 'backward' Flanders in francophone Belgium. Pulings rather highlighted the exemplary function and the superiority of contemporary Flemish culture. He adored the avant-gardist Flemish theatre of *Het Vlaamsche Volkstooneel*, modernist novels of Herman Teirlinck and expressionist painters as Constant Permeke. By asking more genuine attention for this Flemish culture, he hoped to stimulate an artistic revival in francophone Belgium⁽⁴⁷⁾.

(44) Björn-Olav DOZO, *Mesures de l'écrivain: profil socio-littéraire et capital relationnel dans l'entre-deux-guerres en Belgique francophone*, Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège-Sciences Humaines, 2011, p. 205.

(45) Céline PRÉAUX, *La fin de la Flandre belge?*, Waterloo, Avant-propos, 2012.

(46) Roland BEYEN, "Ghelderode et la troupe du Vlaamsche Volkstooneel", in *Revue de Littérature comparée*, 3, 299, 2001, p. 411-427.

(47) T. LOBBES & MEYLAERTS, *Cultural Mediators*, op. cit.

Yet, the question remains, how did Pulings as a solely French-speaking mediator establish transfers between Flemish culture and francophone Belgium or France? His linguistic 'limitations' indeed resulted into at least two innovative transfer activities. First of all, in contrast with fellow mediators as Eekhoud and Avermaete, Pulings deliberately focused on non-linguistic activities such as Flemish expressionist painting for which the language barrier was not relevant. Unlike bilingual colleagues, Pulings was not able to translate Flemish prose or poetry and he only published a very small number of his articles in Dutch, probably with the help of a translator⁽⁴⁸⁾. Yet, as a promoter of a two-fold Belgian culture, he wanted to include reviews of Flemish literature in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*. Obstructed by his own language deficit, he demanded advice from bilingual colleagues as André De Ridder. Yet, even with their help, an overview of *Les Nouvelles littéraires* makes clear that Pulings focused more on francophone than on Dutch-speaking literature⁽⁴⁹⁾.

Pulings' reluctance to engage in purely linguistic transfers cannot be explained solely in terms of his own 'language handicap'. It also suggests that literary transfers were becoming more challenging in the context of an increasingly linguistically conflicted Belgium. In contrast to the situation in the nineteenth century, from the interwar period on it was much more difficult to cross the linguistic boundaries. The creation of a national culture was therefore somehow less problematic in the non-discursive domains of music, painting, sculpture. These artistic and musical products, as Charle pertinently stressed, could circulate faster than literary ones and were able to modify perceptions and hierarchies quicker than discursive ones⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The only important exception in Pulings' preference for non-linguistic activities was his large attention for Flemish theatre. In 1928 he co-founded the catholic and francophone periodical *La Scène catholique*, in which he, once again, revealed his wish to regenerate 'retarded' francophone theatre by looking at the 'modernist' Flemish example and as such "servir la cause de la (...) fraternité nationale"⁽⁵¹⁾. In this more literary field, a second element of Pulings' innovative approach of cultural transfers came to the forefront. He defined theatre as a combination of emotions, actors' physical acting and literature, by which he deliberately reduced the linguistic element. In 1929, he encouraged the francophone public as follows: "Si la littérature flamande a pénétré si facilement ces dernières années parmi le public français, elle le doit principalement à ses auteurs dramatiques. Pour suivre les écrits des romanciers, des conteurs, des poètes, il faut une connaissance approfondie de la langue, connaissance qui n'est pas nécessaire pour juger une pièce, les décors, le jeu des acteurs aidant à la compréhension. Allez voir des pièces flamandes!"⁽⁵²⁾. Theatre, he claimed, revolved around the expression

(48) *Ibid.*

(49) Letters from Pulings to De Ridder, Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven (AMVC), De Ridder Archives, Antwerpen, 18 December 1925.

(50) C. CHARLE, "Comparaisons et transferts", *op. cit.*

(51) Gaston PULINGS, "Herman Teirlinck", in *La Scène catholique*, 2, February 1929, p. 25-27.

(52) "La Commission de la Scène Catholique", in *La Scène catholique*, 1, January 1928, p. 5-8.

of emotions that were universally understood, therefore suggesting that the language barrier did not play a fundamental part in the theatre. By doing so, Pulings trivialized the importance of language and of language differences and defined translation as a rather neutral operation between interchangeable languages, a daring point of view in a context of linguistic conflicts. He celebrated for example the collaboration between the francophone playwright Michel de Ghelderode and *Het Vlaamsche Volkstooneel* that resulted into the translation and performance of many of de Ghelderode's works in Dutch. These plays were very successfully received by a bilingual and francophone audience in both Brussels' and Parisian theatres⁽⁵³⁾.

Pulings' high standing as a mediator and his extensive bilingual network indicates that intercultural transfers – while its modalities and content were changing – formed a significant part of Belgium's interwar cultural life. Yet, in the middle of rising linguistic conflicts, Pulings' opinion on the so-called interchangeability of languages and on the absence of language difference will not have been as influential among both language groups as his plea for the existence of a specific Belgian cultural identity. After all, some supporters of the Flemish Movement, such as Paul Van Ostaijen, claimed Dutch literature had to be written in Dutch. Some francophone writers could not agree with Pulings' approval of the installation of the language border and of two more distinct language communities. Nevertheless, when we look more broadly at the history of intercultural contacts within Belgium, precisely theatre and visual arts would appear to be artistic fields in which, after the Second World War, cultural transfers between Dutch- and French-speakers would be successfully performed, while literary exchanges were diminishing. To this very day, it is still unclear, due to a lack of research, which exact position literary and artistic contacts were occupying in Belgian cultural life after 1945, which role cultural mediators still played and in which appearances, and how and when precisely these contacts would decrease or flourish anew at a given moment in time⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Conclusion

The paths of cultural history are neither linear nor unidirectional. National histories don't follow fixed monolingual or territorial schemes. This is not new in itself. Still, the study of cultural mediators, clustering a variety of dialectically interacting activities, and thus transgressing conceptual and disciplinary boundaries makes us crucially aware of what should otherwise be evident. When put back against the horizon of the Belgian case, there is a number of

(53) R. BEYEN, *Ghelderode et la troupe, op. cit.* ; Laurence PIEROPAN, "Michel de Ghelderode: un dramaturge à l'avant-garde de la postmodernité", in Peter BENOY & Jaak VAN SCHOOR, eds., *Historische avant-garde en het theater in het interbellum*, Brussels, Academic and Scientific Publishers, 2010, p. 126-128.

(54) Geert BUELENS, "Gotspe of gods Geschenk? Enkele noties over zin en onzin van een Belgische literatuurgeschiedenis", in Luuk GRUWEZ, Stéphanie VANASTEN & Mathieu SERGIER, eds., *Littéraire belgitude littéraire: bruggen en beelden. Vues du Nord*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2011 (Collection Transversalités), p. 67-81.

tasks facing the historian of cultural mediation: the reconstruction of agency networks needs extensive archive research (letters, testimonies, etc.). At the same time, it makes little sense to split up mediator's activities: one transfer activity of a cultural mediator has to be correlated with other mediating activities. Further, since mediators like Stevens, Eekhoud, Avermaete and Pulings operated within a broader intercultural spectrum, one should be sensitive to the rationale of the relations between intracultural and intercultural agency: not only within Belgium but also between Belgium and Paris, and beyond (United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, etc.). Would this intercultural openness be a symptom of the mediator's actions in peripheral cultures?

And what about the theoretical issues that are raised by this and similar cases? Let us hope that we may arrive at a better understanding of the dialectics of complex mediation, that we may further integrate discursive approaches (towards a scenography of mediators) and current concepts of translation sociology (*habitus*, capital, beliefs). Further, that we give a more solid, methodologically underpinned basis to the interdisciplinary study of translational mediation. Finally, we would favour an extension of the study of mediating or transfer processes in order to include social, legal and political practices, and of the study of discursive transfer techniques to include oral forms, esp. interpretation, a practice that has remained so far largely neglected in this type of study.

SAMENVATTING

Lieven D'HULST, Maud GONNE, Tessa LOBBES, Reine MEYLAERTS & Tom VERSCHAFFEL, *Naar een multipolaire benadering van culturele bemiddelaars in multiculturele ruimtes. Culturele bemiddelaars in België, 1830-1945.*

In dit artikel wordt een diepgaand conceptueel en methodologisch begrip van de culturele bemiddelaar beoogd. Deze bemiddelaar wordt hier als een persoon gedefinieerd die taalkundige, artistieke en politiek-geografische grenzen overschrijdt en die culturele uitwisselingen onderneemt. Vooral in een heterogene context, waar verschillende talen en culturele velden op elkaar inwerken zoals in het België van de late negentiende en de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw, ondernamen culturele bemiddelaars belangrijke uitwisselingsactiviteiten waardoor ze een bijdrage leverden tot de vaak gelijktijdige constructie van regionale, nationale en internationale culturele identiteiten. Na eerst enkele kritieken op verschillende aspecten van cultuurhistorisch, literair-historisch en vertaalwetenschappelijk onderzoek naar culturele bemiddelaars te hebben geformuleerd, stellen we een multipolair model voor dat volgens ons een vruchtbare manier kan zijn om culturele bemiddelaars te bestuderen. De interdisciplinaire onderzoeksperspectieven, zoals voorgesteld in dit model, worden vervolgens aan de hand van enkele korte studies van culturele bemiddelaars, hun interculturele uitwisselingen en hun positie in het negentiende-eeuwse en twintigste-eeuwse België geïllustreerd, om zo een aanzet te geven tot een beter begrip van de veranderende organisatie en praktijken van het Belgische culturele leven doorheen de tijd.

Culturele bemiddelaars – multipolair model – literaire en artistieke uitwisselingen – tweetalige en multiculturele ruimtes – België

RÉSUMÉ

Lieven D'HULST, Maud GONNE, Tessa LOBBES, Reine MEYLAERTS & Tom VERSCHAFFEL, *Vers une approche multipolaire des médiateurs culturels au sein des espaces multiculturels. Médiateurs culturels en Belgique, 1830-1945*

Cet article veut offrir une meilleure compréhension conceptuelle et méthodologique du médiateur culturel, défini dans le cadre de ce numéro spécial comme un passeur de cultures, actif au-delà des frontières linguistiques, artistiques et géopolitiques. Les médiateurs culturels ont joué un rôle déterminant dans la construction d'identités culturelles régionales, nationales et internationales, en particulier dans les contextes hétérogènes au sein desquels interagissent différentes langues et cultures, comme la Belgique entre 1850 et 1930. Premièrement, nous passerons en revue les études consacrées au médiateur culturel telles qu'elles sont envisagées dans plusieurs disciplines (histoire culturelle, histoire littéraire et études de la traduction). Nous proposerons ensuite un modèle multipolaire et interdisciplinaire, applicable à l'étude des médiateurs culturels en général. Les perspectives méthodologiques interdisciplinaires seront ensuite illustrées par l'étude des activités de transfert et de la position de quelques médiateurs culturels belges de la fin du XIX^e et du début du XX^e siècle.

Médiateurs culturels – modèle multipolaire – transferts littéraires et artistiques – espaces bilingues et multiculturels – Belgique

ABSTRACT

Lieven D'HULST, Maud GONNE, Tessa LOBBES, Reine MEYLAERTS & Tom VERSCHAFFEL, *Towards a Multipolar Model of Cultural Mediators Within Multicultural Spaces. Cultural Mediators in Belgium, 1830-1945*

In this article, we want to gain a better conceptual and methodological understanding of the cultural mediator, defined here as a person active across linguistic, artistic and geographical borders and as the carrier of cultural transfers. Especially in a heterogeneous context in which several languages and cultural domains interacted, such as Belgium during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, cultural mediators played important transfer roles by which they contributed to the often simultaneous construction of a regional, national and international cultural identities. After first criticizing several aspects of the approaches of mediators in cultural history, literary history and translation studies, we secondly present a tentative multipolar model to study cultural mediators in general. The proposed research perspectives are illustrated by exploring a number of cultural mediators, their intercultural exchanges and their position in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Belgium in order to better understand how Belgian cultural life was organized and practiced and how it evolved.

Cultural mediators – multipolar model – literary and artistic transfers – bilingual and multicultural spaces – Belgium

The Belgian Brand: Ernest Gambart and the British Market for Modern Belgian Art, c. 1850–1870⁽¹⁾

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When the flamboyant London art dealer, Ernest Gambart, announced his retirement in 1871, the English periodical, *The Athenaeum*, thanked him for his services to the arts and its public. Gambart had introduced the English public to “a very great number of fine works of famous French, Belgian, Spanish, Dutch and German origin”, pictures by “[Henri] Leys and M. [Jean-Léon] Gérôme, A[lfred] Stevens, [Ernest] Meissonier, [Charles-François] Daubigny, [Ludwig] Knaus, and many more”. Thus, he had “done much to educate and elevate artistic and public taste among us”⁽²⁾. The respect paid to Gambart can hardly be a surprise: the dealer’s central role on the London art scene in the 1850s, 1860s and beyond (despite his self-announced retirement in 1871) has been studied in depth⁽³⁾. What may be a little more surprising to some is the prominent presence of Belgian artists in the brief notice in *The Athenaeum*: two of the six names listed, Leys and Stevens, belong to nineteenth-century Belgian artists, and many more could be added. *The Athenaeum* was, moreover, not the only periodical to stress Gambart’s role in the introduction of Belgian art in Britain. In *The Art Journal*’s announcement of the dealer’s retirement, his merits were explained in similar terms: “To him, in a great measure, appertains the merit of introducing into England works by the leading masters of Belgium”⁽⁴⁾.

Gambart is primarily known nowadays as the first major promoter of modern French art in nineteenth-century Britain. His significance for the promotion of contemporary Belgian art has, as a result, been explored only in a very tentative fashion⁽⁵⁾. The same is true, in fact, for the commercial

(1) I am grateful to Jan De Meere, Mark Westgarth and Paul and Sophie Van Hoeck of the Lamorinière family, who all contributed in various ways to this article. All translations in this article are by the author.

(2) “Fine-Art Gossip”, in *The Athenaeum*, vol. 42, 1871, 2261, p. 247.

(3) Jeremy MAAS, *Gambart, Prince of the Victorian Art World*, London, Barrie and Jenkins, 1975; Pamela M. FLETCHER, “Creating the French Gallery: Ernest Gambart and the Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery in Mid-Victorian London”, in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, vol. 6, 2007, 1, s.p. [<http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring07/46-spring07/spring07article/143-creating-the-french-gallery-ernest-gambart-and-the-rise-of-the-commercial-art-gallery-in-mid-victorian-london> (17 April 2014)].

(4) “Minor Topics of the Month”, in *The Art Journal*, vol. 23, 1871, p. 127.

(5) Jean F. BUYCK, *Fr. Lamorinière (1828-1911)*, exhibition catalogue, Schoten, Paeshuys, 1974; Jean F. BUYCK, “Gambart & co. Notities over een tycoon en ‘zijn’ kunstenaars”, in *Na & naar Van Dyck. De romantische recuperatie in de 19^{de} eeuw*, Antwerp, Stad Antwerpen, 1999, p. 80-88.

ties between the nineteenth-century Belgian and British art scenes in general. In spite of the significant artistic cross-fertilisation that these ties produced, hardly any attention has been given to them, in contrast, for instance, to the commercial relations between the French and British art scenes of the time⁽⁶⁾. This lacuna may be explained by the comparative dearth of scholarly attention to the market of contemporary art in nineteenth-century Belgium in general, but it is nevertheless striking⁽⁷⁾. In the eighteenth century, dealers were already shipping works of art, mainly Old Master pictures, from what was then still called the Southern Netherlands to England⁽⁸⁾. These activities continued in the first half of the nineteenth century, when powerful dealers, such as John Smith or the members of the Belgian Nieuwenhuys dynasty, set up major art dealing businesses that usually bought work in Europe and transported it to be sold in Britain⁽⁹⁾. By the end of the nineteenth century,

(6) Edward MORRIS, *French Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 127-143. See for recent case studies: Frances FOWLE, "Making Money out of Monet: Marketing Monet in Britain, 1870-1905", in Frances FOWLE, ed., *Monet and French Landscape: Vétheuil and Normandy*, exhibition catalogue, Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 2005, p. 141-158; Frances FOWLE, *Van Gogh's Twin: The Scottish Art Dealer Alexander Reid 1854-1928*, Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 2010; Anne Helmreich, "The Art Dealer and Taste: The Case of David Croal Thomson and the Goupil Gallery, 1885-1897", in *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. 6, 2005, 2, p. 31-49; Anne HELMREICH, "The Goupil Gallery at the Intersection between London, Continent, and Empire", in Pamela FLETCHER & Anne HELMREICH, eds., *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939*, Manchester-New York, Manchester University Press, 2011, p. 65-84; Petra TEN-DOESSCHATE-CHU, "The Lu(c)re of London: French Artists and Art Dealers in the British Capital", in *Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames 1859-1914*, exhibition catalogue, Ghent, Snoeck, 2005, p. 39-54.

(7) Anneleen ARNOUT, "Het adres van de kunst of de kunst van het adres. Locatiepatronen en de verschuivingen op de scène van de Brusselse kunst- en antiekhandel, 1830-1914", in *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, vol. 9, 2012, 1, p. 30-56; Anneleen ARNOUT, "Gouden toetsstenen? Over de cultuur van schilderijenveilingen in negentiende-eeuws Brussel", in *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis*, vol. 90, 2012, 2, p. 541-570; Saskia DE BODT, *Halverwege Parijs. Willem Roelofs en de Nederlandse schilderskolonie in Brussel 1840-1890*, Ghent, Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1995, p. 61-68; Monique NONNE, "Theo van Gogh: His Clients and Suppliers", in *Van Gogh Museum Journal*, vol. 6, 2000, p. 40-41; Judith OGONOVSKY, "Le commerce de tableaux en Belgique sous le règne de Léopold I^{er} (1831-1865): première vue d'ensemble", in *Art & Fact*, vol. 21, 2002, p. 6-14. There is also a handful of articles devoted to specific Belgian dealers in contemporary art. See for instance: Jan Dirk BAETENS, "Vanguard Economics, Rearguard Art: Gustave Coûteaux and the Modernist Myth of the Dealer-Critic System", in *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 33, 2010, 1, p. 25-41; Jan Dirk BAETENS, "Artful Business: Henri De Braekeleer (1840-1888) and Gustave Coûteaux (1815-1873)", in *Antwerp Royal Museum Annual 2006*, 2008, p. 26-41; Ingrid GODDEERIS, "De drie broers Stevens. Over twee tentoonstellingen in 1850 en 1880", in *Alfred Stevens. Brussel – Parijs. 1823-1906*, exhibition catalogue, Brussels, Mercatorfonds, 2009, p. 177-197.

(8) Dries LYNA, "In Search of a British Connection: Flemish Dealers on the London Art Market and the Taste for Continental Paintings (1750-1800)", in Charlotte GOULD & Sophie MESPLÈDE, eds., *Marketing Art in the British Isles, 1700 to the Present: A Cultural History*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2012, p. 101-118.

(9) There is unfortunately no comprehensive study devoted to the Nieuwenhuys family and their business. See for some basic information: Erik HINTERDING & Femy HORSCH, "'A Small but Choice Collection': The Art Gallery of King Willem II of the Netherlands (1792-1849)", in *Simiolus. Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*,

a shift seems to have occurred and a network of exchange and collaboration that facilitated contacts between contemporary artists, dealers and publicists on both sides of the Channel was in place⁽¹⁰⁾. The foundations for this major shift, however, from a trade in Old Master paintings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to a dynamic artistic dialogue at the end of the nineteenth century, were laid around the middle of the century, when contemporary art dealers such as Gambart established new and lasting networks of commercial and artistic exchange between the Belgian and British art scenes. This article examines these networks and the commercial and artistic ties that they produced. Taking Gambart's business activities as its main, but not exclusive, focus, this article studies the growing importance for Belgian artists of the British market, the increasing interest in Britain in Belgian art, and the central role played in these developments by Gambart and other dealers, not only as simple go-betweens or commercial intermediaries, but also as cultural mediators. Accordingly, the article first maps the gradually increasing, multileveled commercial exchanges between the Belgian and British art scenes around the middle of the century, and subsequently studies Gambart's essential contribution to these exchanges. Finally, this article explores how these primarily commercial exchanges also stimulated artistic cross-fertilisation.

In search of new markets: Belgium and Britain, c. 1850

In the second half of the nineteenth century, while Britain asserted itself as the world's new and undisputable leading industrial and commercial nation, London, the economic heart of the British Empire, quickly emerged as the world's principal and commercially most attractive market for contemporary art⁽¹¹⁾. Fuelled by a constant influx of new goods and new money, and driven by an ever-spreading need for consumption and status, London became the central hub in an international network of artists, dealers, critics and exhibition makers "that extended from Great Britain to North America, the European continent, and the far reaches of the Empire"⁽¹²⁾. Contemporary

vol. 19, 1989, 1-2, esp. p. 9. See on John Smith: Charles SEBAG-MONTEFIORE & Julia I. ARMSTRONG-TOTTEN, *A Dynasty of Dealers: John Smith and His Successors 1801-1924*, London, The Roxburghe Club, 2013.

(10) Laurence BROGNIEZ, *Préraphaélisme et symbolisme: peinture littéraire et image poétique*, Paris, Champion, 2003; Anne VAN BUUL, ed., *Lopende vuurtjes. Engelse kunst en literatuur in Nederland en België rond 1900*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2012; Anne LEONARD, "Internationalist in Spite of Themselves: Britain and Belgium at the Fin De Siècle", in Grace BROCKINGTON, ed., *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin De Siècle*, Oxford-Bern, Peter Lang, 2009, p. 225-246; Lydia SCHOONBAERT, "'Gazette des Beaux-Arts' en 'The Studio' als inspiratiebronnen voor James Ensor", in *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen*, 1978, p. 205-221.

(11) Thomas M. BAYER & John R. PAGE, *The Development of the Art Market in England*, London, Pickering & Chatto, 2011 (Financial History Series), p. 99 ff; P. TEN-DOESSCHATE-CHU, "The Lu(c)re of London", *op. cit.*, p. 39-54.

(12) Pamela FLETCHER & Anne HELMREICH, "Introduction: The State of the Field", in P. FLETCHER & A. HELMREICH, eds., *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.



1. Gustave Wappers, “*Souvenir d’Anvers*”, 1843. Oil on canvas, 102 x 127 cm. Royal Collection Trust. Photograph: Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2015.

art greatly benefitted from London’s vigorous commercial dynamic. The new class of wealthy industrialists and merchants often preferred to spend their money on contemporary art, works which they could understand and for the genuineness of which the living artist could still vouch; this last point not unimportant amongst ever louder claims of massive imports from the continent of spurious Old Master paintings⁽¹³⁾.

Samuel Carter Hall, the editor of Britain’s most influential art periodical, *The Art Journal*, claimed in his memoirs that the prosperity of nineteenth-century British artists was the result of the crusade he had staged in his journal against the import of fraudulent Old Master pictures from the continent and the parallel promotion in *The Art Journal*’s columns of modern British art⁽¹⁴⁾. Ironically, however, the new interest in Britain in contemporary art also quickly led to massive imports of contemporary art from the continent. Art dealers were instrumental in this development. From the 1820s onwards,

(13) T.M. BAYER & J.R. PAGE, *The Development of the Art Market in London*, *op. cit.*, p. 99 ff.

(14) S.C. [Samuel Carter] HALL, *Retrospect of a Long Life: From 1815 to 1883*, London, Richard Bentley, 1883, vol. 1, p. 342 ff; Hazel MORRIS, *Hand, Head and Heart: Samuel Carter Hall and The Art Journal*, Wilby, Michael Russell, 2002, p. 13.

after the end of the Napoleonic wars, tens of thousands of pictures were imported from the continent, mainly Old Master paintings⁽¹⁵⁾. In the 1840s and 1850s, however, dealers were quick to respond to the shift in taste from Old Master paintings to contemporary art and geared their businesses to modern paintings from the continent.

The almost mythical opulence of the London art market attracted Belgian artists as much as their French, German and Dutch peers. Traces of artists' dreams of British gold can easily be found in their correspondence. The Belgian painter, Victor-Jules Génisson, a specialist in church interiors, for instance, repeatedly wrote in the 1850s to his contact in London that he could "hardly believe that [the latter's] rich country would not be able to provide any resources for [him]", for in "a city like London they are inexhaustible"⁽¹⁶⁾. As Génisson admitted in one his letters, it was true that the country already had David Roberts, a British specialist in historic interiors, but Génisson himself would be happy with whatever Roberts left for him of the British gold, no matter how little. "Where he [Roberts] has harvested richly", Génisson wrote, "I am happy to glean in his footsteps"⁽¹⁷⁾.

Conversely, British interest in contemporary Belgian art developed quickly in the decades after the Belgian independence of 1830, probably due in part to the close political ties between both countries. Indications of this increasing interest can be found as early as the 1840s, when the arts in Belgium started to flourish as a result of the financial support injected by the Belgian government in an attempt to revive the national "Belgian school" and stimulate patriotic sentiment through the arts⁽¹⁸⁾. At that time, some of the major collectors of contemporary art in Britain included examples of modern Belgian art in their collections, thus following the example of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, who had pronounced an interest in Belgian art on the occasion of their trips to Belgium in 1843 and 1852 and acquired a number of paintings by living Belgian artists (fig. 1)⁽¹⁹⁾. The collection of John Stewart, for instance, was built around the work of the "leading

(15) Mark WESTGARTH, "'Florid-Looking Speculators in Art and Virtu': The London Picture Trade c. 1850", in P. FLETCHER & A. HELMREICH, eds., *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London*, *op. cit.*, p. 28-29.

(16) Brussels, Royal Library, Manuscripts, Correspondence Henry Mogford [hereafter "RL"], B.R.II.3675/2, 68-69 and 81-82, undated letter from Génisson to Henry Mogford [1851] and letter from Génisson to Henry Mogford dated 10 August 1851.

(17) RL, B.R.II.3675/2, 81-82, undated letter from Génisson to Henry Mogford [1851].

(18) Judith OGOVOSZKY-STEFFENS, *La peinture monumentale d'histoire dans les édifices civils en Belgique (1830-1914)*, Brussels, Académie royale de Belgique, 1999 (Académie royale de Belgique. Classe des Beaux-Arts. Mémoires), esp. p. 55-62; Judith OGOVOSZKY, "Charles Rogier, mécène interposé d'un art national", in Ginette KURGAN-VAN HENTENRYK & Valérie MONTENS, eds., *L'argent des arts. La politique artistique des pouvoirs publics en Belgique de 1830 à 1940*, Brussels, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2001, p. 63-71; Lut PIL, "Painting at the Service of the New Nation State", in Kas DEPZEP & Louis VOS, eds., *Nationalism in Belgium: Shifting Identities, 1780-1995*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998, p. 42-50; Lut PIL, "Quasimodo of Apollo? De romantische historische verbeelding van het 'heroïsche' monument in het jonge België (1830-1860)", in Jo TOLLEBEEK, Frank ANKERSMIT & Wessel KRUL, eds., *Romantiek en historische cultuur*, Groningen, Historische uitgeverij, 1996, p. 255-272.

(19) J. MAAS, *Gambart*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

luminaries” of “the modern Flemish school” and boasted works by Jean-Baptiste Madou, Ferdinand De Braekeleer, Henri Leys, Joseph Dyckmans, Florent Willems and many others⁽²⁰⁾. Thomas Baring’s collection included works by Madou, Leys, Dyckmans, Eugène Verboeckhoven and others⁽²¹⁾. As early as 1845, dealers also advertised their stock of contemporary Belgian and Dutch art in English art periodicals, and even leading art dealers such as Henry Farrer started roaming Belgium in search of new discoveries among the modern artists’ community, as the Belgian journal *La Renaissance* reported in 1847⁽²²⁾.

A key figure in the further development of these early exchanges between the Belgian and British art scenes was Henry Mogford, an artist and former dealer of Old Master pictures who frequently contributed to *The Art Journal* and repeatedly acted as a middleman for the sale or resale of works of art, usually imported from the continent to Britain⁽²³⁾. Mogford regularly reported on the Salons in Belgium or on other news related to the Belgian art scene in *The Art Journal*. In the autumn of 1848, he also made contact with Léon Gauchez, one of the editors of the (short lived) *Revue de Belgique*, which led to a brief but close collaboration between both journals⁽²⁴⁾. Later that year, the *Revue de Belgique* devoted a long article to *The Art Journal*, a periodical that had, according to the author, “a special interest for [its] readers”, because “Belgium occupies a special place in the columns of this beautiful publication; our artists, our writers, our industrialists find [in it] critics of the most enlightened judgment”⁽²⁵⁾. In the following months, the *Revue de Belgique* further pursued its interest and published a number of translated articles from *The Art Journal*, which, in turn, continued to report on a regular basis on modern Belgian art for many years, even after Mogford’s departure as one of its correspondents.

Mogford may have been prompted to start exploring the commercial potential of his network on the European continent more actively by a letter written to him in June 1848 by the Belgian lithographer Gustave

(20) “Visits to Private Galleries: The Collection of John Stewart, Esq., M.P. The Albany”, in *The Art-Union*, 9, 1847, p. 213-215.

(21) “Visits to Private Galleries: The Collection of Thomas Baring, Esq., M.P., No. 40 Charles-Street, Berkeley-Square”, in *The Art-Union*, vol. 9, 1847, p. 275-277.

(22) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 92; Advertisement in *The Art-Union*, vol. 7, 1845, p. 301; “Variétés littéraires et artistiques”, in *La Renaissance. Chronique des Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 9, 1847-1848, p. 80. See on Farrer: Mark WESTGARTH, *A Biographical Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Antique and Curiosity Dealers*, s.l., The Regional Furniture Society, 2009, p. 99-101.

(23) Jan Dirk BAETENS, “For Public Good and Private Benefit: Henry Mogford and the Mid-Victorian Art Scene”, in Ingrid GODDEERIS & Noémie GOLDMAN, eds., *Animateur d’art. Dealer, Collector, Critic, Publisher. The ‘Animateur d’Art’ and his Multiple Roles*. Brussels, Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, p. 109-121.

(24) RL, B.R.II.3675/2, 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 24-25 and 26-27, letters from Gauchez to Mogford dated 3 October 1848, 4 November 1848, 16 May 1849, 29 May 1849, 30 May 1849, 24 July 1849 and two undated letters; Ingrid GODDEERIS, “Forward! – Selfhelp. – Self-Respect: Léon Gauchez (1825-1907) et la Société Internationale des Beaux-Arts de Londres”, in I. GODDEERIS & N. GOLDMAN, eds., *Animateur d’Art, op. cit.*

(25) E. JAMES, “The Art-Journal”, in *Revue de Belgique. Littérature et Beaux-Arts*, vol. 3, 1848, 1, p. 306.

Simoneau, whose lithographies he had been selling on an occasional basis in England⁽²⁶⁾. In this letter, Simoneau observed that industry, commerce and even the arts had come to a complete standstill in Belgium, as a consequence of the turbulent political developments in France that had led to the June Days Uprising in Paris a few days earlier. This, Simoneau suggested, created excellent commercial opportunities for the international art trade: “It may be possible, my friend, to help some of our unfortunate [Belgian] colleagues; I could, in the present circumstances, buy paintings [here] cheaply; if we could place them in England, where the gold still circulates, and be content with a small profit, the business could work, I think”⁽²⁷⁾. By 1850 at the latest Mogford was supplementing his sales of Simoneau’s lithographies with pictures by Belgian painters, including Génisson’s. By then, he must have made a name for himself in Belgium, for the influential Belgian art dealer Gustave Coûteaux asked him to assist in selling in Britain by way of public subscription the Belgian painter Ernest Slingeneyer’s ambitious history painting, *The Death of Nelson*⁽²⁸⁾.

Mogford’s most momentous move came in 1851, when he joined forces with the French entrepreneur Ossian Verdeau to set up the General Exhibition of Pictures by the Living Artists of the Schools of All Countries⁽²⁹⁾. The General Exhibition featured art from various European countries and was presented as an unofficial fine arts section of the Great Exhibition, held in the same year in London, where the fine arts were notably absent. In reality, however, the exhibition was a commercial enterprise that tried to ride the wave of success of the Great Exhibition. Mogford and Verdeau contacted artists and dealers all over Europe and invited them to submit works for the exhibition, which would then be sold with a commission for the organising committee. The General Exhibition must have made Mogford sense the commercial potential of Belgian art in London. In the following years, he continued to act as a go-between in various transactions involving Belgian artists, whilst also actively promoting them in the columns of *The Art Journal*. In 1852, he also started exploring the potential of British art in Belgium. With the help of his friend Gustave Wappers, he became the British agent of the tri-annual Salon in Antwerp of 1852, in charge of securing contributions from British artists to the Salon, which the organising committee was at that time trying to give a broader international appeal⁽³⁰⁾. In 1853, he was given

(26) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 440-441, 442-443, 444-445, 446, 451-452, 453-454, 455-456, 461-462, 463-464 and 465-466, letters from Simoneau to Mogford dated 12 June 1845, 4 July 1845, 13 August 1847, 15 January 1848, 10 April 1848, 20 May 1848, 28 June 1848, 29 March 1849, 21 October 1849 and 26 August 1850.

(27) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 455-456, letter from Simoneau to Mogford dated 28 June 1848.

(28) J.D. BAETENS, “Vanguard Economics, Rearguard Art”, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

(29) *General Exhibition of Pictures, by the Living Painters of the School of All Countries*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1851.

(30) RL, B.R.II.3674, 57, 59 and 60, letters from Wappers and Théophile Smekens (in the name of The Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Antwerp) to Mogford dated 12 February 1852 and 11 March 1852, and circular letter from The Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Antwerp dated 15 April 1852.

the same responsibility for the Salon organised in Ghent that year⁽³¹⁾. Earlier, he had also been briefly in charge of the Fine Arts and Antiquities section of the Great Industrial Exhibition in Dublin, organised in 1853, for which he solicited Coûteaux's help again⁽³²⁾. As a result of these efforts, 160 modern Belgian paintings were on view in Dublin, some of them from Coûteaux's stock, making the Belgian display of contemporary art one of the largest of the exhibition, second only to Britain⁽³³⁾. All these activities culminated in 1854, when Mogford attempted to organise a Belgian exhibition in London, entirely devoted to modern Belgian art. By then, however, he was already working for Ernest Gambart, who was quickly becoming London's most powerful art dealer.

Ernest Gambart and the "Galerie franco-belge"

Gambart, born in Kortrijk (Courtrai, presently in Belgium) in 1814, started his career in the London art world in the 1840s as a print publisher⁽³⁴⁾. In the late 1840s, he was involved in a number of commercial exhibitions of contemporary art, which probably inspired him to set up his own commercial gallery. In 1854, he started organising the so-called French exhibitions on an annual basis in his gallery at 120/121 Pall Mall. Here, he introduced the London public to contemporary French pictures by fashionable artists such as Rosa Bonheur and Paul Delaroche, casting himself in the role of promoter of the modern French school and transnational arbiter of taste. Showpieces by Bonheur, Delaroche and other favourites of the crowd were complemented by a much larger stock of what has been called, in another context, "peinture bourgeoise": easily consumable pictures, mostly genre paintings and landscapes⁽³⁵⁾.

Gambart's initial focus on French art was not accidental. The rise of London as the leading centre for the trade in contemporary art went hand in hand with the internationalisation of the trade and, concurrently, with its growing specialisation⁽³⁶⁾. The combination of these two elements led to the reorganisation of the London art district following a logic of "national branding". The various galleries in and around Bond Street, the heart of the art trade, regularly specialised in contemporary art from specific countries and

(31) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 212, letter from Louis Roelandt (in the name of The Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Ghent) to Mogford dated 16 May 1853.

(32) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 431, letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 21 June 1853.

(33) *Official Catalogue of the Great Industrial Exhibition in Connection with the Royal Dublin Society*, 1853, exhibition catalogue, Dublin, John Falconer, 1853, p. 160-164.

(34) P. FLETCHER, "Creating the French Gallery", *op. cit.*; J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 63 ff.

(35) Véronique CHAGNON-BURKE, "Rue Laffitte: Looking at and Buying Contemporary Art in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Paris", in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, vol. 11, 2012, 2, s.p. [<http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer12/veronique-chagnon-burke-looking-at-and-buying-contemporary-art-in-mid-nineteenth-century-paris> (2 March 2014)].

(36) T.M. BAYER & J.R. PAGE, *The Development of the Art Market in London, op. cit.*, p. 106; Pamela FLETCHER, "Shopping for Art: The Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery, 1850s-90s", in P. FLETCHER & A. HELMREICH, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, op. cit.*, p. 47-64.

often assumed a corporate identity that referred to these specific countries. Walking through the art district and visiting the likes of the German Gallery, the Dutch Gallery, the Continental Gallery and even the Japanese Gallery, thus resembled, in Pamela Fletcher's terms, "a Grand Tour on Bond Street" that enabled the visitor to get acquainted with the contemporary art production from all of Europe and beyond in just one day⁽³⁷⁾.

Although Gambart's gallery became known as the French Gallery, his business operations were equally crucial for the introduction and promotion in London in the 1850s and 1860s of a number of leading Belgian artists. In fact, the idea to sell contemporary Belgian paintings along with French art seems to have been on Gambart's mind from the very establishment of his gallery. Mogford, who acted as the dealer's secretary for the first French exhibition in 1854, may have played a crucial role in this⁽³⁸⁾. Gambart probably recruited Mogford's help in order to enlist the support of the influential *Art Journal*, for which the latter still wrote in 1854. While preparing for the first French exhibition in early April 1854, however, he also seems to have asked Mogford to make contact again with Coûteaux and ask him to contribute to the show. Coûteaux declined, indicating that he specialised in the Flemish school and adding that he would gladly have sent over some of his stock for an exhibition of contemporary Flemish art (in Britain, the terms "Flemish" and "Belgian" seem to have been used interchangeably in reference to modern art, although "Flemish" emphasised, of course, the continuity of the artistic traditions of the national school)⁽³⁹⁾.

Coûteaux's suggestion struck a chord and a few months later, following the success of the first French exhibition, Mogford, and probably Gambart, made plans to organise a full-blown Belgian exhibition in London. For this new Belgian exhibition, Mogford solicited the help of Joseph-Octave Delepierre, an attaché at the Belgian embassy in London, who urged him to "arrange with great zeal, the exhibition of the modern Belgian School of art in London" and assured him of the additional support of Édouard Stevens, the *Sécretaire général* of the Belgian Ministry of Home Affairs⁽⁴⁰⁾. Coûteaux vowed his support as well, and a number of Belgian artists submitted works or promised to do so⁽⁴¹⁾. The Belgian exhibition was announced in *The Art*

(37) Pamela FLETCHER, "The Grand Tour on Bond Street: Cosmopolitanism and the Commercial Art Gallery in Victorian London", in *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. 12, 2011, 2, p. 139-153. Invaluable for tracing these and many other galleries are two recent scholarly websites: the London Gallery Project [<http://learn.bowdoin.edu/fletcher/london-gallery/>] (4 April 2014) and Exhibition Culture in London 1878-1908 [<http://www.exhibitionculture.arts.gla.ac.uk/>] (4 April 2014)].

(38) *First Annual Exhibition of the French School of the Fine Arts*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1854.

(39) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 432, letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 1 April 1854; see on the use of the terms "Belgian" and "Flemish" in Belgium: S. DE BODT, *Halverwege Parijs*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

(40) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 485-486, letter from Delepierre to unspecified recipient [Mogford] dated 31 July 1854.

(41) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 133 and 433-434, letter from François Bossuet to unspecified recipient [Mogford?] dated 28 November 1854 and letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 18 October 1854; B.R.II.3675/2, 449-450, letter from Jean-Baptiste Kindermans to Mogford dated 3 November 1854.

Journal in October 1854, and again in January 1855, but failed to materialise in the end⁽⁴²⁾. Coûteaux blamed the failure on the lack of a subsidy from the government, but other elements may also have played a role⁽⁴³⁾. Most notably, rivals were making their own plans. In the autumn of 1854, Mogford's and Gambart's scheme was crossed by another exhibition of modern Belgian art, mounted by the Belgian businessman, Michel Corr-Van der Maeren in the Crystal Palace, relocated after the Great Exhibition to Sydenham, and cancelled only at the very last moment after a damning notice in *The Art Journal*⁽⁴⁴⁾. Gambart remained determined, however, to promote Belgian art as well as French art in Britain. To this end, Mogford contacted Coûteaux again in 1855 and asked him to submit work by Leys to Gambart's French exhibition⁽⁴⁵⁾. The exhibition catalogue indicates that apart from a picture by Leys, probably from Coûteaux's stock, Gambart also showed the work of a limited number of other Belgian artists: Édouard Hamman, Adèle Kindt, Charles Verlat and Gustave Wappers⁽⁴⁶⁾. A year later, in 1856, two new attempts were staged to present a more or less representative display of the work of the contemporary Belgian school in London, one by Mogford, who had by then fallen out with Gambart, and one by Gambart himself.

In 1856, shortly after parting with Gambart, Mogford was appointed Director of the Crystal Palace Picture Gallery, located in the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, where he attempted to set up a permanent universal art exhibition that featured contemporary art from all European countries but was, in fact, a simple commercial selling exhibition. Although the gallery was not exclusively dedicated to Belgian art, a note by the Belgian painter, Petrus Kremer, suggests that Mogford either planned a special "Belgian exhibition" in 1856 or promoted his enterprise in Belgium as an exclusively "Belgian exhibition"⁽⁴⁷⁾. A substantial portion of the Crystal Palace Picture Gallery was, in any event, devoted to modern Belgian art: of the 900 oils and 250 watercolours on view in 1856, 160 were by Belgian or Dutch artists, according to *The Literary Gazette*⁽⁴⁸⁾. Mogford's failure to organise an exhibition exclusively devoted to Belgian art, may have been due to Coûteaux's refusal to back up his scheme. In a letter dated 4 May 1856, Coûteaux wrote to him that he would not send anything to the exhibition until Mogford finally achieved the sale of Ernest Slingeneyer's painting, *The Death of Nelson*, which had been in his hands since 1850. Coûteaux concluded his letter with a threat: "I will admit that other openings have been made to me to obtain my support for an exhibition of paintings by the Flemish school in London and if you turn down my proposition, [...] it will not be impossible that I will have to engage my-

(42) "The Present State of Commerce in Art", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 6, 1854, p. 313; "Minor Topics of the Month", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 7, 1855, p. 33.

(43) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 435, letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 22 February 1855.

(44) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 433-434, letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 18 October 1854; "A 'Little Go' at the Crystal Palace", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 6, 1854, p. 314; "Minor Topics of the Month", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 6, 1854, p. 347.

(45) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 435, letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 22 February 1855.

(46) *Second Annual Exhibition of the French School of the Fine Arts*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1855.

(47) RL, B.R.II.3675/2, 492, note by Petrus Kremer dated 16 May 1856.

(48) "Crystal Palace Gallery", in *The Literary Gazette*, vol. 40, 1856, p. 667.

self immediately in another scheme”⁽⁴⁹⁾. The other scheme which Coûteaux referred to was the Flemish exhibition which Gambart was organising at the same time in his gallery. This time, the plans materialised. The Flemish exhibition opened in December 1856 and it was, according to *The Athenaeum*, the “first laudable attempt to get up a Flemish Exhibition in London”⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The critical reception of Gambart’s Flemish exhibition was mixed, but the show nevertheless laid the basis for much of Gambart’s further dealings with Belgian artists. It included works by Eugène De Block, Ferdinand De Braekeleer, Jean Portaels, Alfred Stevens and Florent Willems, all of whom Gambart would begin to promote more actively in the following years⁽⁵¹⁾. In those years, Gambart refrained from further exhibitions exclusively dedicated to the Flemish (or Belgian) school, but he gave modern Belgian art a prominent position in his by then famous annual French exhibitions. From 1860 onwards, he even renamed his exhibitions in order to highlight his Belgian stock. Henceforth, the title of the exhibition catalogues read: “Annual exhibition in London of pictures, the contributions of artists of the French and Flemish schools”⁽⁵²⁾. Much later, in a letter from 1881, Gambart even remembered his gallery as “la galerie Franco-Belge”⁽⁵³⁾.

From 1858 onwards, Gambart almost systematically enlarged the space allocated in his exhibitions to include pictures by Belgian artists or by Dutch artists resident in Belgium. Although the catalogues that accompanied these exhibitions are far from complete because Gambart regularly changed his displays during exhibitions, they offer a clear indication of the growing importance of the “Belgian school” to his business. The catalogue of the 1858 exhibition lists a mere eight pictures by Belgian artists, including one by the Dutch-born Henriette Ronner Knip⁽⁵⁴⁾. The 1859 catalogue includes 24 paintings by Belgians artists from a total of 175⁽⁵⁵⁾. After a brief dip, with only 16 Belgian pictures from a total of 267 in 1860 and a mere handful in 1861, the year 1862 ushered in the most successful decade for modern Belgian art in London⁽⁵⁶⁾. That year, the International Exhibition was held in London, and the Belgian fine arts section was very well received by both the British and the foreign press, with special praise reserved for

(49) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 436, letter from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 4 May 1856.

(50) “The Flemish Exhibition”, in *The Athenaeum*, vol. 27, 1856, 1520, p. 1539.

(51) “Minor Topics of the Month”, in *The Art Journal*, vol. 8, 1857, p. 34; “The Flemish Exhibition”, in *The Literary Gazette*, vol. 40, 1856, 42, p. 1002; “The Flemish Exhibition”, in *The Athenaeum*, vol. 27, 1856, 1520, p. 1539-1540.

(52) *Seventh Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1860 (and subsequent catalogues).

(53) Letter from Gambart to Émile Lefèvre dated 4 March 1881, published in Émile LEFÈVRE, *Joseph Lies. Sa vie, ses œuvres, ses écrits et ses juges*, Antwerp, Jos. Theunis, 1888, p. 301.

(54) *Fifth Annual Exhibition in London of Paintings by Artists of the French School*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1858.

(55) *Sixth Annual Exhibition in London of Paintings by Artists of the French School*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1859.

(56) *Seventh Annual Exhibition*, *op. cit.*; *Eight Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1861.

the work of Louis Gallait and Henri Leys, both of whom would later be promoted by Gambart. The International Exhibition made the British public more receptive to foreign art, as *The Illustrated London News* remarked in a review of Gambart's exhibition in 1863, and Gambart may have anticipated the Belgian success in particular⁽⁵⁷⁾. The catalogue of his 1862 French and Flemish exhibition lists 29 pictures by Belgian artists from a total of 194⁽⁵⁸⁾. The 1863 catalogue lists 23 Belgian paintings from a total of 136, rising to 37 among 186 in 1864 and 53 among 163 in 1865, a third of the paintings on view⁽⁵⁹⁾. The 1866 catalogue includes 37 paintings by Belgian artists and the 1867 catalogue lists 41, from a total in both years of 218⁽⁶⁰⁾. At the same time, Gambart also promoted Belgian art outside Britain. He regularly sent works to the continent for the Salons in Paris or other exhibitions, and in 1866 he even included works by Leys, Gallait, Verboeckhoven, Willems and Victor Lagye in an exhibition staged in New York in collaboration with Knoedler & Co., the former New York branch of Goupil⁽⁶¹⁾. Finally, in 1867, Gambart sold the lease of his gallery to Henry Wallis, after which the Belgian contingent once again dropped from 24 paintings in 1868 to 22 in 1869 and 18 in 1870⁽⁶²⁾.

(57) "The Exhibition at the French Gallery", in *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 22, 1863, 1199, p. 439; J.F. BUYCK, "Gambart & co", *op. cit.*, p. 82.

(58) *Ninth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1862.

(59) *Tenth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1863; *Eleventh Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1864 (including four paintings by the Dutch-born but Belgium-based painter Petrus van Schendel); *Twelfth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1865 (including three paintings by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, two paintings by Hubertus van Hove and four paintings by Petrus van Schendel, all born in the Netherlands but living and working in Belgium).

(60) *Thirteenth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1866 (including two pictures by Alma-Tadema, two by van Hove and four by van Schendel); *Fourteenth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1867 (including two pictures by Alma-Tadema and one by van Schendel).

(61) "De schoone kunsten in Amerika. Twee tentoonstellingen te Nieuw-York", in *De Vlaamsche School*, vol. 12, 1866, p. 30.

(62) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 200; *Fifteenth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1868 (including two pictures by Alma-Tadema and one by Willem Roelofs, also Dutch-born but based in Belgium); *Sixteenth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1869 (including one picture by Alma-Tadema and two by Roelofs); *Seventeenth Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures, the Contributions of Artists of the French and Flemish Schools*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1870 (including one picture by Alma-Tadema, five by Roelofs and two by David Oyens, also of Dutch origin but working in Brussels).

The Belgian brand

Most of the Belgian painters promoted by Gambart were popular and commercially successful painters of genre and historical genre scenes, such as Ferdinand De Braekeleer, Henri Campotosto, Jean-Baptiste Madou, Gustave De Jonghe, Alfred Stevens and Florent Willems, complemented by a handful of landscapists and animal painters, including François Lamorinière and Eugène Verboeckhoven. The real attractions of Gambart's annual Belgian displays, however, were Gallait and Leys, arguably Belgium's most famous artists of the time.

Gallait seems to have attracted Gambart's attention in 1862, possibly as a consequence of the artist's impressive display at the International Exhibition in London that year. Gambart included a genre picture by Gallait entitled *Roman Mother* in his spring exhibition of 1862. In the autumn of 1862, Gambart promised him the enormous sum of £4,000 (in Belgium, an unheard of 100,000 francs) for *The Plague at Tournai*, a colossal canvas that Gallait had conceived almost 20 years earlier, in 1843, and would only finish in 1882⁽⁶³⁾. Although the precise nature of the arrangements between Gambart and Gallait are unknown, the dealer seems to have negotiated some kind of exclusivity for the representation of the artist in Britain. In early 1863, after Belgium's success at the International Exhibition, plans were made for a new, comprehensive exhibition of modern Belgian art in London, but, as the *Journal des Beaux-Arts* reported, Gallait did not participate because of Gambart's exclusive rights⁽⁶⁴⁾. In the following years, Gambart regularly presented works by Gallait in his exhibitions and actively promoted the artist, taking him on tours throughout Britain in 1863 and 1864⁽⁶⁵⁾. In 1866, Gambart also organised a great fancy-dress party in London, inviting all of his British, French, Belgian, Dutch and German artists to the event. That year, Gallait showed one of his pictures in Gambart's gallery and also made a trip to England, so his name may have been included on the guest list⁽⁶⁶⁾. Gambart himself, in any event, dressed for the party as one of Belgium's national heroes, the sixteenth-century Count Egmont, probably as a reference to his own Belgian roots, but most certainly also as a tribute to Gallait's famous series of paintings depicting scenes from Egmont's life, one of which, *The Lecture of the Death Sentence to the Counts of Egmont and Horne*, Gambart had shown in his exhibition of 1864 and subsequently sold to the Belgian king⁽⁶⁷⁾.

Even more important for Gambart's business was the Antwerp-based painter Henri Leys. In 1851, Mogford explicitly asked Coûteaux, who held a contractual monopoly on Leys's artistic production, for work by the

(63) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 159; Serge LE BAILLY DE TILLEGHEM, *Louis Gallait (1810-1887). La gloire d'un romantique*, exhibition catalogue, Brussels, Gemeentekrediet, 1987, p. 225.

(64) "Correspondances particulières. Bruxelles", in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 5, 1863, 8, p. 61.

(65) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 167.

(66) S. LE BAILLY DE TILLEGHEM, *Louis Gallait, op. cit.*, p. 303.

(67) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 190; H., "Correspondance particulière. Bruxelles", in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 8, 1866, 21, p. 162.



2. Henri Leys, *Adriaen van Haemstede Secretly Preaching the Reformation in Antwerp around 1552*, 1858. Oil on panel, 100 x 175 cm. Private Collection. Photograph: Auctioneers Bernaerts.

Antwerp artist for the General Exhibition, and he did so again in 1855, for the second French exhibition⁽⁶⁸⁾. The General Exhibition included Leys's *Brigands Gambling for the Booty*, now in the Belgian royal collection, and his *Courtyard of the Antwerp City-Hall with Soldiers Gambling* from 1853 was on view in the French exhibition of 1855. It was especially after Leys had won one of the great medals of honour at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1855 that the artist's work became much sought-after, which may have further kindled Gambart's interest. In 1859, the dealer showed one of Leys's major works, *Adriaen van Haemstede Secretly Preaching the Reformation in Antwerp around 1552*, which he had purchased from Coûteaux (fig. 2)⁽⁶⁹⁾. From 1862 onwards at the latest, again following the International Exhibition in London, Gambart also dealt directly with Leys. That year, he visited the artist in Antwerp and bought the preparatory oil studies that Leys would make for the murals that had just been commissioned from him for the Antwerp City Hall, for which the dealer was prepared to offer an incredible amount of £10,000 (250,000 francs), more than the total amount Leys received for the original murals⁽⁷⁰⁾. From then on, Gambart made regular visits to Antwerp,

(68) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 429 and 435, letters from Coûteaux to Mogford dated 12 May 1851 and 22 February 1855. See on the contractual relationship between Leys and Coûteaux: J.D. BAETENS, "Vanguard Economics", *op. cit.*

(69) *Sixth Annual Exhibition*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

(70) Brussels, Archives of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Gustave Coûteaux papers [hereafter "ARMEFAB"], III.189, letter from Leys to Coûteaux dated 21 November 1862. In 1863 the *Journal des Beaux-Arts* reported a price of 1,500,000 francs or £60,000 for the set of paintings, but Gambart was quick to correct this in one of the

and in 1863, the *Journal des Beaux-Arts* also mentioned Gambart's exclusive rights to represent Leys in Britain⁽⁷¹⁾. As in the case of Gallait, however, the precise nature of the collaboration between the artist and the British art tycoon remains unclear. It is clear from Leys's letters to Coûteaux and Gambart that some of his paintings passed directly from his studio to Gambart's gallery, including some of the studies for the murals in the City Hall⁽⁷²⁾. Until 1865, however, Leys remained contractually bound to Coûteaux on an exclusive basis⁽⁷³⁾. At least until that date, therefore, Coûteaux probably also received a share in the profits. Gambart, in any event, also bought directly from Coûteaux's stock. When the Belgian dealer put part of his collection up for auction in 1865, he included the copies that Leys had made after the murals he had painted in the dining room of his own house, which had been on view at the International Exhibition of 1862⁽⁷⁴⁾. Gambart promptly bought the set of five paintings, for a total amount of 52,900 francs (more than £2,000)⁽⁷⁵⁾.

In 1868, a year after Gambart had withdrawn from the French Gallery, Leys reported in a letter to Coûteaux that he had had to end his business relationship with Gambart, because things were no longer working⁽⁷⁶⁾. By then, however, Leys's had become a household name in artistic circles in Britain. In 1868, Leys even exhibited one of the studies for his murals in the Antwerp City Hall at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition, and Daniel Maclise, an old acquaintance of Gambart's and a member of the exhibition's hanging committee, removed one of his own paintings in order to give Leys's work a favourable spot⁽⁷⁷⁾. Leys travelled to London for the occasion and attended the Royal Academy's official dinner and rumours of the time

following issues. See: "Nouvelles d'atelier. Chronique", in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 5, 1863, 14, p. 114; letter by Gambart published in: *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 5, 1863, 19, p. 152. See on Leys's murals for the City Hall: Jan Dirk BAETENS, "Voor vorst en vaderland. Een nieuwe lezing van de muurschilderingen van Henri Leys in het Antwerpse stadhuis", in *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis*, vol. 90, 2012, 2, p. 513-539.

(71) "Correspondances particulières. Bruxelles", in *Journal des Beaux-arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 5, 1863, 8, p. 61.

(72) ARMFAB, III.206 and III.211, letters from Leys to Coûteaux dated 29 March 1863 and 12 April 1863; Paris, Fondation Custodia, Frits Lugt Collection, 1973-A-1013, letter from Leys to Gambart dated 22 May 1864.

(73) ARMFAB, I.3 and I.4, agreements between Leys and Coûteaux dated 31 May 1860 and 15 May 1865. The agreement between Leys and Coûteaux of 1860 stipulated that Leys could sell directly to collectors but not to other dealers. The 1865 agreement, which replaced the former contract, held no such stipulation. See: J.D. BAETENS, "Vanguard Economics", *op. cit.*, p. 31-32.

(74) *Exposition universelle de Londres en 1862. Belgique. Catalogue des produits industriels et des œuvres d'art*, exhibition catalogue, Brussels, 1862, p. 260; *Catalogue de la collection de tableaux anciens et modernes des écoles flamande, hollandaise et française composant la galerie de M. Gustave Coûteaux*, auction catalogue, Brussels, 20-22 March 1865.

(75) H., "Bruxelles", in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 7, 1865, 6, p. 45-46.

(76) ARMFAB, III.267, letter from Leys to Coûteaux dated 8 March 1868.

(77) *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts*, exhibition catalogue, London, William Clowes, 1868, p. 5; "Fine-Art Gossip", in *The Athenaeum*, vol. 39, 1868, 2114, p. 634.

suggested that he was about to be elected as one of the first new foreign members of the Royal Academy⁽⁷⁸⁾. Leys's premature death in 1869 prevented his election, but Gallait was chosen in his place⁽⁷⁹⁾. From the elected artists from France, both Jean-Léon Gérôme and Ernest Meissonier had also been promoted in the French Gallery by Gambart.

Leys's role was important for Gambart in other ways as well, because many of the Belgian artists the dealer represented came from Leys's Antwerp circle, including Ferdinand De Braekeleer, Leys's brother-in-law, and the latter's son, Henri De Braekeleer, who was trained in Leys's studio. The Antwerp-based landscapist, Lamorinière, whose work was regularly offered in the French Gallery in the 1860s, received his first order from Gambart in 1862 through negotiations of Leys⁽⁸⁰⁾. It was, naturally, also in this circle that Gambart looked for artists that could produce pictures similar to Leys's popular but expensive paintings. Victor Lagye and Joseph Lies, whose works were regularly on view in Gambart's gallery, were obvious choices. Lagye was a protégé of Leys's, while Lies was a close friend, and both artists produced a number of paintings in Leys's sixteenth-century-styled historicist vein. Gambart also bought work by Wilhelm Koller, an Austrian epigone of Leys's, James Tissot, who also imitated the artist, and Albrecht and Juliaan De Vriendt, two other Antwerp-based followers.

There is little doubt that Leys also had a hand in the introduction of Gambart to Lawrence Alma-Tadema, who would become Gambart's most successful artist⁽⁸¹⁾. Alma-Tadema was born in Friesland, in the Netherlands, but was trained at the Antwerp Academy and worked in the 1860s, at least occasionally, in Leys's studio. According to an anecdote told by several of Alma-Tadema's earliest biographers, either Leys or Lagye was directly responsible for bringing him into contact with Gambart in 1865⁽⁸²⁾. When Gambart asked Lagye (or Leys, depending on the version) for directions to the studio of Joseph Dyckmans, another Antwerp painter, he was deliberately given the address of Alma-Tadema's studio. On arriving there, the dealer took the joke well and he immediately bought the painting that Alma-Tadema was working on at the time, thus laying the foundation for a long-term collaboration. The value of the anecdote can be questioned for several reasons. Gambart had regularly dealt in Dyckmans's work since at least 1859, and it would seem odd that, as a regular visitor in Antwerp in the 1860s, he would still need directions to the artist's studio in 1865⁽⁸³⁾. It also seems probable that Leys had already called Gambart's attention to Alma-Tadema

(78) "Royal Academy", in *The Athenaeum*, vol. 39, 1868, 2115, p. 668; "Royal Academy", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 20, 1868, p. 103.

(79) "Fine-Art Gossip", in *The Atheneum*, vol. 40, 1869, 2185, p. 347; "Fine-Art Gossip", in *The Atheneum*, vol. 40, 1869, 2200, p. 878.

(80) J.F. BUYCK, *Fr. Lamorinière (1828-1911)*, *op. cit.*, s.p.

(81) See on the collaboration between Alma-Tadema and Gambart: Marike NOOIJEN, *Het commerciële succes van Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Een analyse van de Londense kunstmarkt, 1850-1900*, unpublished MA-thesis, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2013.

(82) J. MAAS, *Gambart*, *op. cit.*, p. 171-172 and 304, note 1; Vern G. SWANSON, *The Biography and Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema*, London, Garton, 1990, p. 30.

(83) *Sixth Annual Exhibition*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

earlier, as the French painter Rosa Bonheur had done on the occasion of Alma-Tadema's medal at the Paris Salon of 1864⁽⁸⁴⁾. What is clear, however, is that Gambart recruited Alma-Tadema if not precisely as an epigone of Leys's, then certainly as an artist who could make it in the slipstream of the older painter. Gambart's catalogues explicitly mention Alma-Tadema as a pupil of Henri Leys, and the first painting the dealer bought from Alma-Tadema, *Leaving Church in the Fifteenth Century*, is very similar, both in subject and composition, to some of Leys's works.

The prominence of the historicising works by Gallait and Leys and his circle indicates the importance of artistic tradition and history in Gambart's conception and promotion of the modern Belgian school, concurrent with the general idea around the middle of the century that modern Belgian painters, in essence, continued the traditions of the old Flemish masters. Most of the other Belgian painters represented by Gambart depended on seventeenth-century Flemish or Dutch examples, usually by producing pastiches of seventeenth-century genre or landscape painting or by applying that tradition to contemporary subjects. Gambart's modern Belgian brand was, in other words, largely a brand based on tradition and revivalism.

The larger picture

It is difficult to estimate the precise monetary value of exports of modern Belgian art to Britain in the years under scrutiny here. The data available in the annual trade statistics published in the *Statistique de la Belgique. Tableau général du commerce avec les pays étrangers* make no distinction between Old Master paintings and contemporary pictures and, from 1865 onwards, no distinction whatsoever between paintings and 'objets d'art' in general⁽⁸⁵⁾. In addition, the *Tableau général* provides information on the value of the export of works of art only, not on the number of works of art exported, which makes it difficult to assess whether value was correctly attributed to exported paintings. In general, the *Tableau général* gives a confused impression of the volume of exports of art to Britain, with a total volume of more than 300,000 francs worth of paintings exported to Britain in 1840, rising to almost 400,000 francs in 1850 and an impressive 1,800,000 francs in 1854, and then fluctuating in a more or less unpredictable fashion during the two following decades, with ranges between 200,000 and 1,000,000 francs per year.

In simple quantitative terms, the impact of Gambart's business operations appears limited at first sight. Between 1859, the first year when a substantial number of Belgian pictures were on view in the French Gallery, and 1867, when Gambart sold the gallery's lease, slightly more than 260 Belgian pictures were listed in Gambart's exhibition catalogues, including a small

(84) Edmund W. GOSSE, "Lawrence Alma-Tadema, R.A.," in F.G. DUMAS, ed., *Illustrated Biographies of Modern Artists*, London-Paris, Chapman and Hall – Ludovic Baschet, 1882, p. 80.

(85) *Statistique de la Belgique. Tableau général du commerce avec les pays étrangers*, Brussels, Hayez.

number of works by Dutch painters resident in Belgium. This is clearly but a tiny fraction of the total amount of modern pictures that were bought and sold each year in London. However, Gambart's catalogues are far from complete. New additions were often introduced during exhibitions and, as exhibiting pictures could also wear them out, certainly not all of the paintings Gambart had in stock were put on display⁽⁸⁶⁾. Major commissions, like Gallait's huge *The Plague at Tournai*, although never delivered, are not included in the catalogues. In Leys's case, Gambart's catalogues list 15 paintings by the artist between 1859 and 1867, but we know from various other sources that at least five other paintings went through his hands and that, before his agreement with Leys was terminated, four additional large oil studies for the City Hall murals and eight smaller studies for dynastic portraits in the City Hall were destined for him as well⁽⁸⁷⁾. The example of Alma-Tadema, of Dutch origin but working and living in Belgium in the 1860s, is the most striking. Between 1865, when Alma-Tadema first exhibited with Gambart, and 1867, when Gambart left the French Gallery to Henry Wallis, the artist showed only seven works at the gallery but sold 23 works in total to the dealer⁽⁸⁸⁾. In total, Gambart bought many more pictures by Alma-Tadema. He concluded two consecutive contracts with the artist, securing him on an exclusive basis, first, of 24 paintings, and then, on the basis of the second agreement, of another 52. In 1870, Alma-Tadema even moved to London to be able to serve the British market as efficiently as possible.

It would be mistaken, in any event, to consider only documented individual sales of modern Belgian pictures in London. Gambart not only bought and resold pictures, but he was also involved in the promotion and marketing of his artists through other channels. It is difficult, for instance, not to see his hand in the series of 13 articles published in 1866 and 1867 by James Dafforne in *The Art Journal* and entirely devoted to modern Belgian artists, 23 in total, virtually all of whom were from Gambart's stable⁽⁸⁹⁾. Gambart was also involved in the production and distribution of prints of works in his stock. In the case of Alma-Tadema especially, this was an important part of his business model, but he also published prints of the works of many other

(86) A. HELMREICH, "The Art Dealer and Taste", *op. cit.*, p. 42.

(87) Two of the replicas of the murals in Leys's dining-room, *Lucas Cranach the Elder Portraying Luther* (1865), *Leaving Church* (1866), and *The Wandering Minstrel* (1868). See: H., "Bruxelles", in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 7, 1865, 6, p. 45-46; ARMFAB, III.256, letter from the Belgian Commission of the Universal Exhibition in Paris of 1867 to Leys dated 19 November 1867; Paul MANTZ, "Artistes contemporains. M. Henri Leys", in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 8, 1866, p. 314.

(88) M. NOOIJEN, *Het commerciële succes van Lawrence Alma-Tadema*, *op. cit.*, p. 108; V.G. SWANSON, *The Biography and Catalogue Raisonné*, *op. cit.*

(89) James DAFFORNE, "Modern Painters of Belgium", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 18, 1866, 5-8, 37-39, 73-75, 101-104, 133-135, 197-200, 237-239, 265-267, 301-303, 333-335, and vol. 19, 1867, 9-11, 41-43, 69-72. Articles devoted to Nicaise De Keyser, Jean-Baptiste Madou, Eugène De Block, François-Antoine De Bruycker, Louis Gallait, Jean-François Portaels, Henri Leys, Florent Willems, Joseph Van Lerijs, Charles De Groux, Constant Claes, Gustave De Jonghe, Joseph Coomans, Eugène Verboeckhoven, Charles Tschaggery, Louis Van Kuyck, Wilhelm (Guillaume) Koller, Ferdinand De Braekeleer, Charles Baugniet, Henri Bource, Adolphe Dillens, Petrus van Schendel, Fanny Geefs. Only De Bruycker, De Groux and Bource cannot be connected to Gambart with any certainty.

3. William MacDuff,
Shaftesbury, or Lost and Found, 1862. Oil on canvas,
46,7 x 40,5 cm. London,
Museum of London.
Photograph: Museum of
London.



of his artists⁽⁹⁰⁾. Gallait's *The Lecture of the Death Sentence to the Counts of Egmont and Horne*, for instance, was sold in 1866 to the Belgian king, but Gambart reserved the reproduction rights for himself⁽⁹¹⁾. Leys complained in a letter of 1859 that Gambart was planning a print of his *Adrien van Haemstede* without asking his permission⁽⁹²⁾. The print was probably never made, but later Gambart did agree to finance an ambitious scheme to have the famous French etcher, Félix Bracquemond, make etchings of the murals in Leys's dining room, even though only one was eventually realised⁽⁹³⁾. Prints of Belgian pictures, produced by Gambart or others, circulated widely in Britain. William MacDuff's painting, *Shaftesbury, or Lost and Found*, which depicts two boys in front of the window display of Henry Graves's print shop and art gallery, may illustrate this point: the print in the top left corner is an engraving of *The Blind Beggar*, one of the popular successes in Britain of the Belgian section of the International Exhibition of 1862, made by Joseph Dyckmans, whose work Gambart regularly showed in his gallery (fig. 3).

In order to fully assess the presence of Belgian art on the mid-nineteenth-century British art scene, it is also necessary to consider Gambart's operations in a larger commercial and cultural context. In the years after the sale of the

(90) Robert VERHOOGT, *Art in Reproduction: Nineteenth-Century Prints after Lawrence Alma-Taema, Jozef Israëls and Ary Scheffer*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2007, p. 427-506.

(91) H., "Correspondance particulière. Bruxelles", in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature*, vol. 8, 1866, 21, p. 162.

(92) ARMFAB, III.127, letter from Leys to Coûteaux dated 21 [?] March 1860.

(93) Cathérine MÉNEUX, "France-Belgique. Les échanges entre graveurs à l'eau-forte 1860-1890", in *Nouvelles de l'Estampe*, vol. 35, 1997, 151, p. 7.

lease of the French Gallery to Henry Wallis in 1867, the latter continued on a regular, although smaller, basis to show Belgian pictures in the gallery, including works by Stevens, Verboeckhoven and Willems. Gambart, in the meantime, set up a new gallery on King Street with his nephew Léon Lefèvre and his partner F.G. Pilgeram, where Belgian art was also on offer⁽⁹⁴⁾. When in 1871 Gambart left the Lefèvre Gallery, as these new premises became known, the gallery kept selling Belgian pictures. After the termination of his contract with Gambart in 1875, Alma-Tadema continued the collaboration with Pilgeram and Lefèvre, to which he sold 33 of his paintings between 1874 and 1879 alone⁽⁹⁵⁾. Pilgeram and Lefèvre were also in touch with other artists from Belgium whom Gambart had formerly marketed. In February 1871, they contacted Henri De Braekeleer, who had had four pictures in the French exhibition of 1865, and reminded him of the fact that there was still a remaining order from Gambart for one or two pictures⁽⁹⁶⁾. De Braekeleer sent them at least three pictures, including *A Flemish Kitchen Garden*, formerly in the Ionides Collection and now at the Victoria and Albert Museum⁽⁹⁷⁾.

Other players, both dealers and collectors, were also active in the trade in modern art between Belgium and Britain. François Lamorinière exhibited nine paintings in the French Gallery between 1862 and 1866, but sold at least two more pictures to Gambart in those years⁽⁹⁸⁾. After the termination of his collaboration with Gambart, and probably in part thanks to the latter's promotional activities, Lamorinière was regularly able to sell pictures to other British dealers and collectors, including at least five paintings to the London-based critic and dealer, Thomas John Gullick, and a set of 24 etched copperplates to an agent in Liverpool⁽⁹⁹⁾. Sixteen paintings by Petrus van Schendel are included in the catalogues of the French Gallery's exhibitions between 1859 and 1867, and possibly more were sold by Gambart in those years. In the preceding years, however, van Schendel had already enjoyed significant commercial success in Henry Mogford's Crystal Palace Picture Gallery, as one of his imitators, Andreas Franciscus Vermeulen, mentioned

(94) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 208. See also the London Gallery Project, *op. cit.*

(95) M. NOOIJEN, *Het commerciële succes van Lawrence Alma-Tadema, op. cit.*, p. 108-110.

(96) Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, B807, Henri De Braekeleer papers, letters from Pilgeram and Lefèvre dated 16 February 1871, 16 June 1871, 15 August 1871, 26 September 1871, 4 October 1871, 16 October 1871, 17 November 1871, 12 January 1872, 31 January 1872 and 22 February 1873. De Braekeleer's correspondence indicates that Pilgeram also made the trip to Belgium at least once.

(97) Inv. CA1.88. The work is incorrectly dated 1864 because of two other, similar paintings by De Braekeleer of that date. It follows from the correspondence with Pilgeram and Lefèvre that De Braekeleer made the paintings in 1871. At the time, De Braekeleer was bound to the dealer Coûteaux by an exclusive agreement, but it is not clear whether Coûteaux played any role in De Braekeleer's dealings with Pilgeram and Lefèvre. See: J.D. BAETENS, "Artful Business", *op. cit.*, p. 26-41.

(98) Putte, Domaine Lamorinière, François Lamorinière papers, notebook with records of sales and drafts of letters. The records are incomplete but include two paintings sold to Gambart that cannot be identified in the French exhibition catalogues: *Effet de neige* and *Soleil couchant*, both dated 1864.

(99) Putte, Domaine Lamorinière, François Lamorinière papers, notebook with records of sales and drafts of letters.

in a letter from 1859⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. The dealers, Arthur Tooth, Thomas McLean and Prosper-Léopold Everard, also frequently sold contemporary Belgian art in Britain⁽¹⁰¹⁾. The latter, Belgian by birth and controlling establishments in London, Paris and Brussels, organised exhibitions in the so-called Flemish Gallery from 1871 onwards, where he offered works by Leys, Gallait, Stevens and many others⁽¹⁰²⁾. In 1878, he rebranded his gallery and named it the Continental Galleries, but he continued to put Belgian art on view on a regular basis⁽¹⁰³⁾. Everard's Flemish Gallery was in competition with the Belgian Gallery, established in 1875 at 28, Old Bond Street by J.H. Gammon and E.J. Vaughan and, like the Flemish Gallery, specialised in modern Belgian art⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. In 1877, the gallery moved its premises to 112, New Bond Street, where, again, a number of Belgian exhibitions were organised. On the occasion of the move to New Bond Street, the gallery sent stencilled letters to studios all over Belgium inviting artists to submit their work, and indicating that annual sales had amounted to an impressive 500,000 francs over the last few years⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. Even firms mainly specialising in French art, like Goupil, offered Belgian art for sale in London. A search of the Goupil stock books reveals that at least 135 works by Belgian artists were sold in London between 1860 and 1900, including many pictures by painters who were also promoted by Gambart, such as Paul-Jean Clays, Joseph Coomans, Gustave De Jonghe, Stevens, Willems and Verboeckhoven⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. Finally, this long list of major dealers can be supplemented by another list of more modest dealers and occasional middlemen, whose names regularly pop up in letters to or from Belgian artists, either dealers with fixed establishments in London or travelling intermediaries like the Belgian painter Charles Dielman, who made occasional trips to London in the late 1850s and early 1860s with a small selection of Belgian pictures for sale⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

(100) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 676, letter from Vermeulen to Henry Mogford dated 18 January 1859. See also: Jan M.M. DE MEERE, *Petrus van Schendel (1806-1870). Een leven tussen licht en donker*, Leiden, Primavera, 2012, p. 178. Many thanks to Jan de Meere for his useful comments on van Schendel's commercial success in Britain.

(101) E. MORRIS, *French Art, op. cit.*, p. 86.

(102) "The Flemish Gallery", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 23, 1871, p. 289-290; W.M. SCOTT, "The Flemish Gallery", in *The Academy*, vol. 6, 1874, 136, p. 642; "Flemish Gallery", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 27, 1875, p. 60.

(103) "The Everard Galleries, New Coventry Street", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 30, 1878, p. 14; "The New Continental Galleries, Bond Street", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 31, 1879, p. 77.

(104) P. FLETCHER & A. HELMREICH, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, op. cit.*, p. 296. See also the London Gallery project, *op. cit.*

(105) Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, B807, Henri De Braekeleer papers, letter from Gammon & Vaughan (Offices of the London International Exhibition of Fine Arts) to Henri De Braekeleer [and other recipients] dated 20 February 1877.

(106) The stock books are kept at the Getty Research Institute and can be searched online [<http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/goupil/servlet.starweb?path=goupil/goupil.web> (3 May 2014)].

(107) Examples abound. Victor-Jules Génisson exhibited some of his works at William and Henry Smart's shop at 10, Tichborne Street. See: RL, B.R.II.3675/2, 61-62, 70-71, 76-77 and 92, letters from Génisson to Mogford dated 8 January 1851, 26 March 1853, and two undated letters. The Belgian middleman Charles Dielman traveled to London in 1859

“Knowing the tast[e] of the English gentlemen might be of great use to me”

The quotes from *The Athenaeum* and *The Art Journal* at the beginning of this article make clear that people in Britain were well aware of Gambart’s role in the introduction of modern Belgian art in the country. People on the Belgian art scene were equally conscious of the dealer’s contribution to its international reputation. As late as 1880, Gambart was invited to be a member of the visiting committee of the Exposition historique de l’art belge, a prestigious retrospective of nineteenth-century Belgian art organised on the occasion of the semi-centennial celebration of Belgian independence that year⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. A year later, in 1881, he was made a knight in the Order of Leopold for his services rendered to the arts in Belgium⁽¹⁰⁹⁾.

Conversely, contemporary Belgian art held a special place in Gambart’s thoughts even after his retirement. In 1875, he commissioned the Belgian artist, Nicaise De Keyser, to paint a cycle of four large canvases that were to decorate the sumptuous palace he had had constructed for himself in Nice, on the Côte d’Azur, representing the painters of antiquity, the Old Masters of the South, the Old Masters of the North, and, finally, the masters of the nineteenth century (fig. 4)⁽¹¹⁰⁾. Of the 23 depicted painters on the latter canvas, four belong to the group of Belgium based artists with whom Gambart started to do business in the 1850s and 1860s: Alma-Tadema, third from the left in the upper register, Leys, slightly to the right of the middle in the upper register and towering over Eugène Delacroix next to him, Gallait, fifth from the right between Paul Delaroche and Horace Vernet, and, finally, De Keyser himself, third from the right⁽¹¹¹⁾.

The question that remains to be answered, however, is what precise impact the business operations of Gambart and similar internationally active dealers from Britain in the end had on the production, distribution and reception of Belgian art. The most obvious terms in which we can assess this impact are probably financial. There is little doubt that the money that could be made on the British art market contributed to the prosperity of the Belgian art scene of the time. Even Leys, probably Belgium’s most famous artist in the 1860s, was impressed by the possibilities of the London art market and Gambart’s supreme mastery of it. After a fall-out with Coûteaux over their contractual arrangements in 1863, Leys pointed out to his Belgian dealer that Gambart was the one who really knew how to do business, even for

and in 1860 with paintings by Eugène De Block, Ferdinand De Braekeleer and Charles Degroux and put some of his stock on sale in 1860 through Edward Foster, a picture dealer and auctioneer established at 54, Pall Mall. See: RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 544 and 545-546, letters from Dielman to Henry Mogford dated 20 April 1859 and 20 March 1860.

(108) I. GODDEERIS, “De drie broers Stevens”, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

(109) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 264.

(110) J.F. BUYCK, “Gambart & co”, *op. cit.*, p. 89-95.

(111) The other painters are mostly French and British artists belonging to Gambart’s stable such as Rosa Bonheur, Ernest Meissonier and John Everett Millais, supplemented by others with whom Gambart did little, if any, business such as Eugène Delacroix and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Other artists, including Édouard Frère and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, are conspicuously absent. De Keyser himself was probably only included as the painter of the canvases.



4. Nicaise De Keyser, *The Schools of the Nineteenth Century*, 1878. Oil on canvas, 284 x 401 cm. Nice, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Photograph: Ville de Nice, Muriel Anssens.

the large preparatory studies for the murals in the Antwerp City Hall, for which he had paid the magnificent sum of 250,000 francs: “When I think about how Gambart does considerable business with paintings that are so large and difficult to sell, and that even then he is delighted, that proves that there are different ways to consider the position [of the contractual relationship between Leys and Coûteaux] and that one has to think a bit about everything”⁽¹¹²⁾. Even in Leys’s case, on the other hand, most of the profits to be earned on the British market seem to have gone to Gambart or other dealers, even though precise information available on this point is limited. The example of Leys’s *Adriaen van Haemstede* may illustrate this point, nevertheless. Shortly after Gambart had bought the painting from Coûteaux in 1859, he sold the work again to Thomas Plint for £5,000 or 125,000 francs, an impressive amount by British standards and an incredible amount for one painting by contemporary Belgian standards⁽¹¹³⁾. Leys, however, had received only slightly more than 13,000 francs for the painting from Coûteaux⁽¹¹⁴⁾.

(112) ARMFAB, III.204, letter from Leys to Coûteaux dated 5 December 1863.

(113) Dianne SACHKO MACLEOD, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 185-186.

(114) The painting was one of a group of three for which Leys received a global price of 40,000 francs. See: ARMFAB, I.3, agreement between Leys and Coûteaux dated 31 May 1860. There is no information on the sale from Coûteaux to Gambart. When the painting was put up for auction after Plint’s death in 1862, it fetched only £850, due to the general economic slump in the early 1860s.

It is more difficult to assess the effects of the cross-channel trade in contemporary art in artistic terms. If De Keyser's artistic pantheon for Gambart can be seen as an attempt to write and codify the history of art from antiquity to the nineteenth century in a certain manner, emphasising the artists and more traditional and academic forms of art supported by Gambart, this raises the question whether dealers like Gambart actually did weigh on the development of the arts and, thus, changed the course of art history⁽¹¹⁵⁾. The Belgian art critic, Camille Lemonnier, was unequivocally negative about the way in which mass-exportation to Britain, America and Germany affected art production in Belgium, especially in Antwerp. In his eyes, the interest and commercial concerns abroad had made many Belgian painters repeat over and over again the recipes of their more famous predecessors, mostly seventeenth-century Old Masters, which led to the serial production of unambitious art and, thus, to a bloodless commodification of art⁽¹¹⁶⁾. From our present perspective, Lemonnier's harsh judgement may seem too rooted in vanguard progressivism, but his concerns were not unfounded. As mentioned above, most of Gambart's Belgian artists, from Alfred Stevens or Gustave De Jonghe to Florent Willems or the Dutch-born Petrus van Schendel, referred in some way or another to earlier Netherlandish examples, especially seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish genre painting. In addition, dealers did not want innovation, but stimulated artists to repeat earlier successes⁽¹¹⁷⁾. It is undoubtedly also in this light that Gambart's interest in epigones of Leys's, including Koller, Lagye, James Tissot and many others, must be seen.

Dealers, whether serving the home market or markets abroad, of course always had an impact on artistic production. It is not a surprise that Gambart could dictate the size of the paintings that Lamorinière made for him, as a letter from the painter to the dealer indicates; Belgian dealers undoubtedly often did the same thing⁽¹¹⁸⁾. When Gambart visited Henri De Braekeleer in 1875 to remind him of a painting the artist had promised him and asked him to add a figure to the composition, that question was no different from similar requests made to De Braekeleer by Coûteaux, his Belgian dealer⁽¹¹⁹⁾. Yet, the international dynamic that framed the operations of dealers such as Gambart may have added an additional dimension to their impact. Questions

(115) J.F. BUYCK, "Gambart en co", *op. cit.*, p. 84-85.

(116) Frank VAN DEN WIJNGAERT, "De schilderkunst in de XIX^e eeuw", in *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis van Antwerpen in de XIX^{de} eeuw. Instellingen – Economie – Cultuur*, Antwerp, Lloyd Anversois, 1964, p. 329.

(117) Malcolm WARNER, "Millais and the Market Place", in P. FLETCHER & A. HELMREICH, eds., *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London*, *op. cit.*, p. 231-232; P. FLETCHER & A. HELMREICH, "The Periodical and the Art Market", *op. cit.*, p. 340.

(118) Putte, Domaine Lamorinière, François Lamorinière papers, notebook with records of sales and drafts for letters, draft for a letter from Lamorinière to Gambart dated 16 June 1862.

(119) Mark-Edo TRALBAUT, *De Braekeleeriana. Archivalia, rariora en curiosa in verband met leven en werk van de Antwerpse kunstschilder*, Antwerp, Stad Antwerpen, 1972, p. 52; Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, B807, Henri De Braekeleer papers, letter from De Braekeleer to Gambart dated 13 September 1875. See also: J.D. BAETENS, "Artful Business", *op. cit.* De Braekeleer ignored both Gambart's and Coûteaux's request.

of national identity and national differences in taste, for instance, often played a role in artists' success abroad. The evidence here, however, is sometimes contradictory. Gallait was appreciated in Britain as the "Delaroche [...] of the Belgian school", continuing, in other words, French *juste-milieu* art, but Leys was hailed as the new (and essentially Flemish) Jan Van Eyck⁽¹²⁰⁾. In addition, despite usually building on their native artistic traditions, foreign artists often adapted their work to British exigencies. A quick survey of the catalogue of the General Exhibition organised by Mogford in 1851 makes this clear. Even taking into account the popularity of themes taken from British history or literature in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of works with titles referring to Britain, British culture or British history in the catalogue is striking, from Édouard Cibot's *Anna Boleyn* or Paul Delaroche's *Cromwell and Charles I*, to Henri Lehmann's *Hamlet*, Johann von Schraudolf's *St. Boniface of England, Preaching Christianity to the Pagans of Germany* or Ary Pleijsier's *Evening View in the Frith of Forth, Scotland*⁽¹²¹⁾. Some artists explicitly referred to British taste in the letters accompanying their submissions to the General Exhibition. The Dutch marine painter, Petrus Johannes Schotel, sent in a work that would "possibly be to British national taste", depicting the shipwreck scene from Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and observed in a later letter that only in Britain "nautical art" could be genuinely appreciated⁽¹²²⁾. The landscapist, Louis-Désiré Thiénon, later asked Mogford, when he was director of the Crystal Palace Picture Gallery, whether he thought views of Scotland and Wales would have a better chance of selling than landscapes of Germany or the Pyrenees⁽¹²³⁾.

Differences in stylistic preferences, as opposed to iconographic concerns, also played a role. In 1854, for instance, the sculptor, Jacques-Augustin Dieudonné, wrote in a letter to Mogford that he had talked to Rosa Bonheur about sending her famous *Horse Fair* to Gambart's first French exhibition that year, adding that the work needed some retouching in order to comply with British taste: "I have made her understand how much I thought her intention [to finish some of the more sketchy parts before sending the painting to London] right and useful, explaining to her that I believe I have seen in England a more often pronounced taste for conscientiously finished works"⁽¹²⁴⁾. The German painter, Christian Grabau, sounded almost desperate

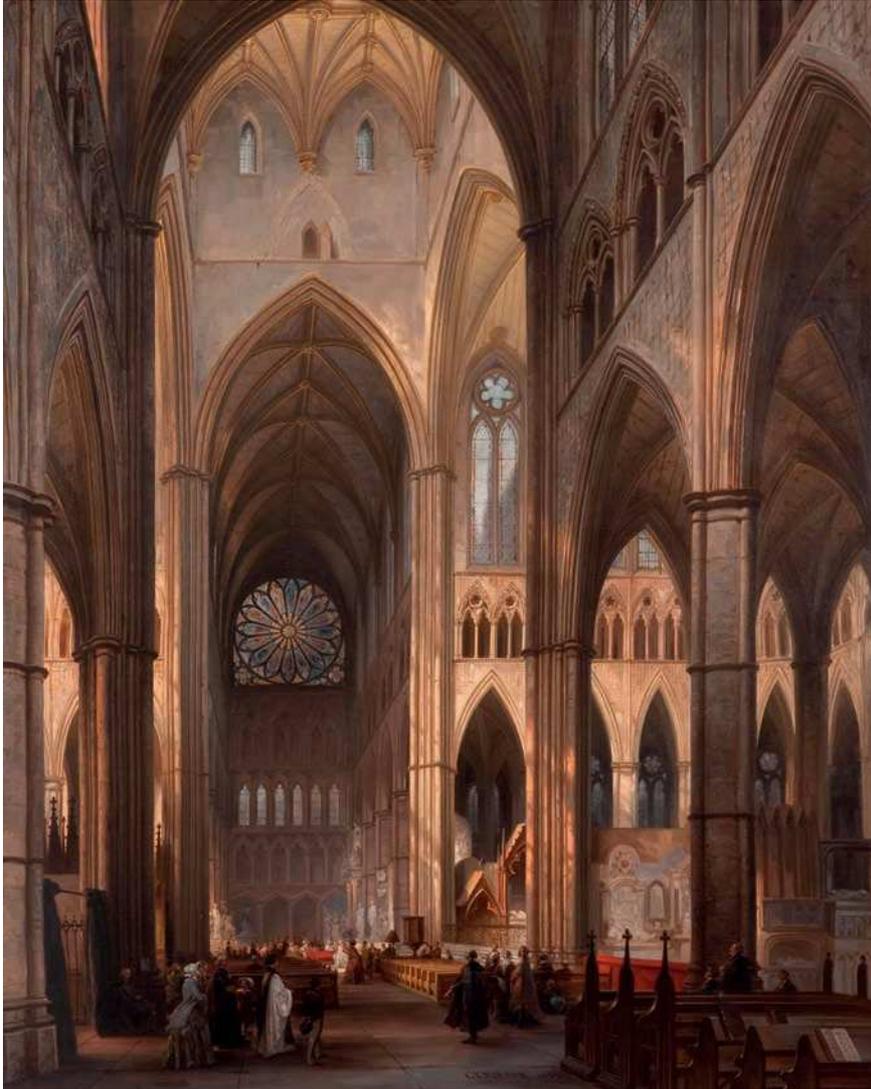
(120) "Exhibition of French and Flemish Pictures", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 16, 1864, p. 177.

(121) Stephen BANN, "The Tudors Viewed by French Romantic Artists", in Marcus Bull & Tatiana C. String, eds., *Tudorism: Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 183-200; Beth SEGAL WRIGHT, "Scott's Historical Novels and French Historical Painting 1815-1855", in *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 63, 1981, 2, p. 268-287.

(122) RL, B.R.3675/3, 414-415 and 416-417, letters from Schotel to Henry Mogford dated 13 July 1851 and 23 October 1851.

(123) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 528, letter from Thiénon to Mogford dated 6 October 1857.

(124) RL, B.R.II.3675/1, 563-564, letter from Dieudonné to Mogford dated 9 January 1854. The work was not shown in the first French exhibition but in the second, in 1855. See also: MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 73-76.



5. Victor-Jules Génisson, *Interior of Westminster Abbey*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 143 x 114 cm. Rademakers collection. Photograph: Rademakers collection.

when he reacted in a letter to his British contact to the comment that two of his paintings had been found rather “dismal in colour” by the British public and almost begged: “knowing the tast[e] of the English gentlemen might be of great use to me”⁽¹²⁵⁾.

(125) RL, B.R.II.3675/2, 156, letter from Grabau to unspecified recipient dated 16 October 1857.

Belgian artists responded to the British market in similar ways. Slingeneyer's ambitious history painting, *The Death of Nelson*, which Coûteaux tried to sell in Britain in the early 1850s, must have been made especially for the British market, especially considering Coûteaux's and Slingeneyer's own efforts, helped by Mogford, to have the painting purchased by public subscription for the Painted Hall in Greenwich Hospital⁽¹²⁶⁾. The painting failed to sell, but *The Art Journal* did publish a print of it in 1854⁽¹²⁷⁾. In spite of the difficulties in selling the *Nelson*, Slingeneyer was at the same time also negotiating with the dealer and print publisher, Henry Graves, to commission another painting that he hoped would appeal to British taste, *Napoleon on Saint Helena*, a subject bound to be popular in Napoleon-obsessed Britain. The painting was to be engraved and the print thus made was meant as a pendant to a print of a painting by Sir Edwin Landseer depicting Wellington on the battlefield in Waterloo, possibly Landseer's *A Dialogue at Waterloo*. Slingeneyer was sensitive to the different taste in Britain, both in style and subject matter. In his negotiations, he proposed a price of 200 guineas for the paintings and 100 guineas for the reproduction rights, adding, however, that only 100 guineas would be due if the painting was not to be engraved, because this would mean that "the way in which [he] would have conceived the idea behind this subject would not be in accordance with English taste"⁽¹²⁸⁾. Later, he also suggested that *Napoleon on Saint Helena* might not be a suitable subject in Britain because Napoleon had lost much of his poetry by then, and he proposed changing the subject to *Waterloo, 8 O'clock in the Morning*⁽¹²⁹⁾.

Less ambitious painters were equally interested in fathoming the finer nuances of British taste. Victor-Jules Génisson painted a number of interiors of churches and other historical buildings in Britain, obviously destined for the British market, for which he spent some time in the country (fig. 5). In his letters to Mogford, he also constantly wondered what the ultimate recipe for success in Britain would be, asking whether his paintings were perhaps "a little hard" and should be more colourful, and wondering whether it had, in fact, been a good idea to paint British church interiors, as the British public would perhaps prefer bright interiors with white-washed walls, as opposed to the sombre, Gothic churches they were used to in their own country⁽¹³⁰⁾.

As these examples show, it is as a rule difficult to make a clear distinction between the impact of dealers and middlemen on artists' creative choices on the one hand, and the strategies that artists themselves devised in order to conquer foreign markets through their dealers on the other. As Albert Boime has observed, artists often think as businessmen and vice versa. (International) entrepreneurship is, in other words, always a matter of both

(126) "The Death of Nelson", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 6, 1854, p. 208; RL, B.R.3675/1, 431 and 436, letters from Coûteaux to Henry Mogford dated 21 June 1853 and 4 May 1856; B.R.II.3675/3, 475-476 and 480-481, letters from Slingeneyer to Henry Mogford dated 29 January 1852 and 19 December 1853.

(127) "The Death of Nelson", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 6, 1854, p. 208-212.

(128) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 477-478, letter from Slingeneyer to Henry Mogford dated 28 November 1853.

(129) RL, B.R.II.3675/3, 494-495, undated letter from Slingeneyer to Henry Mogford.

(130) RL, B.R.II.3675/2, 66-67, 68-69, 81-82, 83-84 and 95, letters from Génisson to Mogford dated 5 August 1851 and 10 August 1851, and three undated letters [c. 1851].

artist and dealer, not of just one of them⁽¹³¹⁾. There are, nevertheless, some clear examples in the dealings with Belgian artists by Gambart and his circle that suggest the impact dealers could have, not only on the production of art, but also on its reception. Thus, Gambart not only played an essential role in the selection of Belgian pictures and the way these pictures were commented upon by befriended British art critics, he also regularly changed the titles of the paintings he exhibited, which obviously affected the way in which they were received. In a letter to Joseph Lies from 1864, Gambart not only inquired whether Lies could reserve the painting he had on his easel for him “in case”, at least, “the subject suits our country”, but he also indicated that he had changed the title of another painting, which depicted two farm girls and a poacher, from the rather prosaic title, *Dangerous Encounter*, to the much more suggestive title, *Wolf and Sheep*⁽¹³²⁾. A similar thing happened when Leys’s *Adriaen van Haemstede Secretly Preaching the Reformation in Antwerp around 1552* was presented in London as *Early Days of the Reformation; Wiesseling, the Carpenter of Antwerp, Secretly Expounding the Scriptures* (fig. 2)⁽¹³³⁾. The change in title may seem futile but is telling, nevertheless, for Leys’s paintings refers to an actual historical episode – Adriaen van Haemstede’s preaching in Antwerp in various hidden locations, including the courtyard of a carpenter’s shop – and is based on a number of historical sources. This serious-minded and strict historical dimension, however, disappears in Gambart’s title. The picture becomes a mere historical genre scene of a carpenter (of German stock, it would appear), preaching in his own work-yard, making it much easier for a broad and foreign audience to identify with the scene.

In some cases, Gambart and other middlemen operating on both sides of the Channel also directly influenced the creative choices made by artists. The clearest example of this can probably be found in the oeuvre of the Antwerp landscapist, François Lamorinière. In 1862, shortly after making contact with Lamorinière, Gambart asked him to come to Britain to sketch and paint. Lamorinière declined at first, but made it clear to Gambart that he realised his concern about the marketability in Britain of Belgian landscape subjects, reassuring him: “have no fear, I am certain that you will be satisfied of the results I will achieve in the [Belgian] Ardennes and that as to the sale of the paintings, I know perfectly well how to choose my subjects”⁽¹³⁴⁾. Two years later, in 1864, and again in 1865, Lamorinière did make the trip to England, which resulted in a series of at least nine landscapes of

(131) Albert BOIME, “Entrepreneurial Patronage in Nineteenth-Century France”, in Edward C. CARTER II, Robert FORSTER & Joseph N. MOODY, eds., *Enterprise and Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century France*, Baltimore-London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 187-191.

(132) Letter from Gambart to Lies dated 22 April 1864, published in É. LEFÈVRE, *Joseph Lies, op. cit.*, p. 109.

(133) *Sixth Annual Exhibition, op. cit.*, p. 11. At the Thomas Plint sale, the painting was presented as *Capestro, the Carpenter of Antwerp, Preaching in his Work-Yard*.

(134) Putte, Domaine Lamorinière, François Lamorinière papers, notebook with records of sales and drafts of letters, draft for a letter from Lamorinière to Gambart dated 16 June 1862.



6. François Lamorinière, *In the Woods of Burnham*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 107 x 132 cm. Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Photograph: KIK-IRPA.

the woodland around Burnham, four of which were exhibited in Gambart's gallery (fig. 6)⁽¹³⁵⁾.

Less straightforward but perhaps more intriguing is the case of Alma-Tadema. In 1865, when Gambart first put him under contract, Alma-Tadema almost completely abandoned the Merovingian and medieval subjects that had characterised his work in the preceding years in favour of the genre subjects situated in classical antiquity for which he is now most famous. According to Alma-Tadema's own account, Gambart preferred the medieval scenes and only reluctantly permitted the artist, whose mind had turned to antiquity, to paint a number of classical scenes for him. Only when it became clear that the classical scenes could sell, would Gambart have abandoned his initial reserve⁽¹³⁶⁾. While the exact discussions between Gambart and

(135) Putte, *Domaine Lamorinière*, François Lamorinière papers, notebook with records of sales and drafts of letters, drafts for letters from Lamorinière to Gambart dated 20 March 1865 and 14 June 1865; J.F. BUYCK, *Fr. Lamorinière (1828-1911)*, *op. cit.*, s.p.; Henri LAVACHERIE, *Notice sur Jean-Pierre-François Lamorinière*, Brussels, Palais de l'Académie, 1956, p. 16; *Twelfth Annual Exhibition*, *op. cit.*, p. 9; *Thirteenth Annual Exhibition*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

(136) E. GOSSE, "Lawrence Alma-Tadema", *op. cit.*, p. 80; J. MAAS, *Gambart*, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

Alma-Tadema are unknown, the artist's account of them seems odd. Not only did Alma-Tadema not paint a single classical picture before his agreement with Gambart, the dealer also already had plenty of painters producing medieval scenes in the style of Leys, mostly artists from Leys's Antwerp circle, to which Alma-Tadema also belonged. In addition, a year before he met Alma-Tadema, Gambart already started to display a pronounced interest in scenes set in classical antiquity. In 1864, he bought a painting by the great British classicist, Frederic Lord Leighton, and in the same year, he also started exploring the potential of genre scenes situated in classical antiquity, marketing scenes very much like Alma-Tadema's later pictures by the Belgian painter, Joseph Coomans, who regularly exhibited in Gambart's gallery from that year onwards⁽¹³⁷⁾. Classical antiquity, in any event, must have seemed a safer choice in Britain than Alma-Tadema's previous Merovingian scenes, which clearly addressed the French rather than the British public. Rather than simply taking Alma-Tadema on his word, therefore, we may wonder whether his insistence on this point may not suggest precisely the opposite: that it was in fact Gambart who was, at least partially, responsible for the drastic change in his work in the 1860s, which was soon to make his fortune in Britain.

In general, the impact of the operations of dealers and other middlemen was probably subtler than these examples suggest. A final example, provided by the international career and artistic development of Leys, Gambart's most successful Belgian artist, may illustrate this point. The close parallel between the work of the Pre-Raphaelites in England on the one hand and Leys's art, dubbed "Pre-Rubenite" or "Pre-Rubensian" by British art critics in the 1860s, on the other, has often been noted⁽¹³⁸⁾. It was, probably, at least partially this parallel that aroused Gambart's interest and lay at the basis of Leys's success in Britain, as the purchase of Leys's *Adriaen van Haemstede* by Thomas Plint, a collector of Pre-Raphaelite pictures, indicates. Gambart's promotion of Leys in Britain did not leave the artistic community unaffected either. The Pre-Raphaelites and their supporters looked eagerly at Leys's pictures in Britain, whether at the International Exhibition of 1862 or in Gambart's gallery, where some of the Pre-Raphaelites themselves regularly exhibited. This interest is visible in the work of John Everett Millais and Ford Madox Brown, but the best example of the instrumental role played by Gambart in facilitating these contacts can be found in the correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In a letter from 1868, Rossetti wrote excitedly that Gambart would bring Leys to his studio, so that he could finally meet him⁽¹³⁹⁾. Following Leys's visit, Rossetti wrote in a letter to Jane Morris that Leys had admired the portrait he was making of her and that he could hardly

(137) J. MAAS, *Gambart, op. cit.*, p. 172-173.

(138) "Art Summary. Exhibitions and Pictures", in *New Quarterly Review and Digest of Current Literature*, vol. 8, 1859, p. 179; Joseph Beavington ATKINSON, "International Exhibition, 1862", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 14, 1862, p. 167; "Pictures British and Foreign: International Exhibition", in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 46, 1862, p. 368; "Exhibition of French and Flemish Pictures", in *The Art Journal*, vol. 16, 1864, p. 177.

(139) Letter from Rossetti to George James Howard dated 2 May 1868, published in: William E. FREDEMAN, ed., *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Cambridge, Brewer, 2002-2006, vol. 4, p. 57.

wait now to start painting again⁽¹⁴⁰⁾. The importance of Leys for the artists of the so-called St. John's Wood Clique, British painters of a slightly younger generation, has also been pointed out⁽¹⁴¹⁾.

What may seem, at first sight, a one-way operation facilitated by an internationally operating dealer, is, on closer inspection, possibly a more complex case of mutual interaction and influence made possible by different commercial agents. Leys's art began to change dramatically in the summer of 1852, when he first started to develop his sixteenth-century styled "Pre-Rubénite" works. This development in his oeuvre has always been explained, and not without reason, as a direct consequence of his trip through the German states in the summer of 1852 and his confrontation with the work of sixteenth-century northern masters, such as Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach the Elder⁽¹⁴²⁾. Pre-Raphaelite painting and its promotion by commercial agents, however, may also have played a role. Pre-Raphaelite art first crossed the Channel to France in 1855, on the occasion of the Universal Exposition in Paris. What is generally forgotten, however, is that three years earlier, in the summer of 1852, Millais's *Marianna* and Brown's *Lear and Cordelia* were already on view in Antwerp. That year, the organising committee of the tri-annual Salon attempted to give their exhibition a more international scope by inviting foreign artists⁽¹⁴³⁾. Mogford, whom Gustave Wappers had already asked in 1849 to encourage his compatriots to submit work to the Antwerp Salon, was contacted again and suggested, after consultation with his editor, Samuel Carter Hall, that it would be best to have a local co-ordinator in Britain and offered his own services⁽¹⁴⁴⁾. The organising committee agreed and sent Mogford a list of British artists "of first rank" who could submit works with all expenses for transportation and insurance covered by the Salon's budget⁽¹⁴⁵⁾. The list featured some of the best-known British artists of the time, including Daniel Maclise, Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, Sir Edwin Landseer and William Mulready, but the organising committee indicated that Mogford could also suggest additional names. Mogford replied that he would "prepare a list of those artists whose works are worthy of being sent", specifying that these

(140) Letter from Rossetti to Morris dated 5 May 1868, published in: FREDEMAN, ed., *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 58-59.

(141) Edward MORRIS & Frank MILNER, "And When Did You Last See Your Father?", exhibition catalogue, Liverpool, National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, 1992, p. 6.

(142) See for instance: Gustave VANZYPE, *Henri Leys*, Brussels, Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1935, 58.

(143) *Exposition nationale. Notice des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et dessin, exécutés par des artistes vivants, et exposés au Salon d'Anvers*, exhibition catalogue, Antwerp, Société Royale d'Encouragement des Beaux-Arts, 1852, p. 38 and 68.

(144) RL, B.R.II.3674, 37-38, letter from Gustave Wappers to Mogford dated 6 May 1849; Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, M1371, Archives Koninklijke Maatschappij tot Aanmoediging der Schone Kunsten [hereafter «KMASK»], B84, letter from Mogford to Wappers dated 27 January 1852, and H9, record of the meeting of the organizing committee of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts on 9 February 1852.

(145) RL, B.R.II.3674, 57, letter from Wappers and Théophile Smekens to Mogford dated 12 February 1852.

would all be “artists of acknowledged talent”⁽¹⁴⁶⁾. Subsequently, Mogford added at least one name to the committee’s own list. A letter from Wappers, who corresponded with Mogford for the organising committee, to Théophile Smekens, the committee’s secretary, suddenly mentions “Millais, preRaffaelite” [*sic*], an artist at that time undoubtedly completely unknown in Antwerp, as in the rest of Europe⁽¹⁴⁷⁾.

There is little doubt that Mogford, following the self-professed ambition of the Salon’s organising committee to enable artists and the public in Antwerp to become acquainted with the best, “first-class” foreign artists, was responsible for the inclusion among the British entries of the promising but young Millais and, possibly, Ford Madox Brown⁽¹⁴⁸⁾. There is even lesser doubt that Leys saw the paintings by Millais and Brown exhibited at the Salon before leaving for Germany in August 1852. What must remain a matter of speculation for now is to what extent the confrontation with these early Pre-Raphaelite works played a role in Leys’s reinvention of himself as a Pre-Rubénite or, perhaps, as a Belgian Pre-Raphaelite. It is not inconceivable, however, that these pictures made him see the primitive and semi-primitive northern painters, which he was to encounter on his trip through the German states and to which the Pre-Raphaelites were equally attracted, in another light. It would make the appeal of Leys’s work to the Pre-Raphaelites in the 1860s appear only more natural.

Even if we are uncertain as to the extent of Rossetti’s response after his exchange of ideas with Leys, and even if the example of Leys’s own artistic development is speculative, this last example of (possible) artistic cross-fertilisation nevertheless suggests that it is such dynamics in which the chief importance of dealers and other middlemen resides. Their impact on both the production and reception of art was not achieved primarily through direct intervention in the artistic or receptive processes, but rather in a more oblique way. First and foremost, it was by opening new markets and building new, international audiences, through exhibitions, prints and publications, that they accommodated the exchange of ideas and created the possibilities of international artistic cross-fertilisation.

(146) Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, M1371, Archives KMASK, B84, letter from Mogford to unspecified recipient [Gustave Wappers and/or Théophile Smekens] dated 17 February 1852.

(147) Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, Archives KMASK, B84, letter from Wappers to Smekens dated 10 July 1852.

(148) Antwerp, House of Literature Archives, Archives KMASK, B5, 115, copy of a letter from unspecified author [Smekens and/or Wappers] to Mogford dated March 1852. Brown, who had studied at the Antwerp Academy and undoubtedly still had some relations in the city, is not mentioned in the correspondence. It is possible that he simply responded to the notice published by Mogford in *The Art Journal* and transported his painting at his own expense. See: “Correspondence. Exhibition at Antwerp”, in *The Art Journal*, vol. 4, 1852, p. 158.

SAMENVATTING

Jan Dirk BAETENS, *Gemaakt in België. Ernest Gambart en de Britse markt voor moderne Belgische kunst, ca. 1850-1870*

Deze bijdrage bestudeert de impact van de kunsthandelaar Ernest Gambart en zijn kring op de commerciële en artistieke wisselwerking tussen de Belgische en Britse kunstscènes rond het midden van de negentiende eeuw. Als de toonaangevende handelaar in moderne kunst in Londen, kocht en importeerde Gambart werk van veel van de belangrijkste Belgische kunstenaars van zijn tijd en creëerde hij een markt voor deze kunstenaars in Groot-Brittannië, waar de interesse in Belgische kunst parallel met zijn activiteiten hand over hand toenam. Dit artikel onderzoekt de effecten van de handel van Gambart en zijn kring en bestudeert hoe in de eerste plaats commerciële operaties ook een artistieke dialoog tussen België en Groot-Brittannië stimuleerden.

Kunstmarkt – kunsthandelaars – negentiende-eeuwse schilderkunst – Ernest Gambart – Henry Mogford

RÉSUMÉ

Jan Dirk BAETENS, *Produit en Belgique. Ernest Gambart et le marché anglais pour l'art moderne belge, 1850-1870*

Cet article examine l'impact du marchand d'art Ernest Gambart et de son cercle sur les échanges commerciaux et artistiques entre la scène belge et britannique au dix-neuvième siècle. En tant que marchand d'art moderne le plus prisé de Londres, Gambart acquérait et importait des œuvres d'art de nombreux artistes belges contemporains et constituait, presque à lui seul, un marché pour la Grande-Bretagne, où l'intérêt croissant pour l'art belge entraînait en corrélation avec l'intensification des activités commerciales de Gambart. Cette contribution analyse ainsi les effets de l'entreprise de Gambart et de son groupe, en particulier la façon dont les opérations commerciales ont également stimulé un dialogue artistique entre la Belgique et la Grande-Bretagne.

Marché de l'art – marchands d'art – peinture du dix-neuvième siècle – Ernest Gambart – Henry Mogford

ABSTRACT

Jan Dirk BAETENS, *The Belgian Brand: Ernest Gambart and the British Market for Modern Belgian Art, c. 1850-1870*

This article explores the impact of the art dealer Ernest Gambart and his circle on the commercial and artistic exchanges between the mid-nineteenth-century Belgian and British art scenes. As London's leading dealer in contemporary art, Gambart bought and imported works by many of the major Belgian artists of his time and almost single-handedly created a market for these artists in Britain, where the general interest in Belgian art greatly expanded hand in hand with the dealer's operations.

This article discusses the effects of the business schemes of Gambart and his circle on the production, distribution and consumption of Belgian art and explores how primarily commercial exchanges also stimulated an artistic cross-fertilization between Belgium and Britain.

Art market – art dealers – nineteenth-century painting – Ernest Gambart – Henry Mogford

The Flemish Author, Bilingual Mediator, and Multilingual Translator Frans Rens and the Modest Transfer of Francophone Literature in 19th-Century Belgium

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Zoo is 't, maer 't vlaemsche kleed past best aen vlaemsche denking;
Zoo lydt zy 't minst gevaer aen woord- of zinverkrenging.
[...]
Gord, zoo gy vlaming zyt, het zuiver kleed heur aen
En laet uw naem op zyne zoomen staen!
Zoo leve onze beider geest in heiligen verstande.

[That's right, but Flemish gowns suit best our Flemish thoughts
This way, there is no threat to violate its words or sense.
[...]
Assume, if you are a Fleming, this unpolluted gown.
And leave your name on its hems.
So live our minds in sacred harmony. (my translation, LV)]

With these lines, taken from an unpublished poem from 1844 kept in the Ghent University Library, the Flemish middlebrow poet Frans Rens (1805-1874) replies to the anonymous translator who interpreted one of his Dutch poems in French. His poetic reply is called 'To the unknown who sent me a French translation of my poem "The two village girls"', and illustrates Rens's early efforts to promote the Dutch language in Flanders⁽¹⁾. Rens, a then well-known yet minor poet and cultural mediator, encourages the anonymous translator in this poem to choose Dutch over French and expresses his views on culture, identity, language and translation. Rens dismisses the moral decay of the time as seen in the city and personified by one of the village girls. He rejects the city's vanity and sinfulness, and argues in favour of the countryside, where the love for the good and the beautiful still reigns, and women still find their destination in marriage, without indulging in endless freedom and empty sensuous pleasures. He connects in this poem French with pomp and circumstance, and pleads for the rich Dutch language to express one's feelings and identity. Although the anonymous poet is said to be free to choose a "foreign" language to air his inclinations, Rens assures him that they both keep on thinking in Dutch, since "no mould can hurt its

(1) See appendix 1 for the full poem in Dutch. The poem is taken from Ms 2142A, 'Frans Rens. Gedichten en Brieven, 1829-1855', n° 24. Ghent University Library, Manuscript Reading Room.

powerful thoughts” (my translation, LV). Although the language is said to be “but a gown” (my translation, LV), making French and Dutch equally suitable to express the inner life, Rens stresses that “Flemish gowns suit best [their] Flemish thoughts” (my translation, LV), by avoiding the risk of violating their true sense.

Despite these rather negative views on translation into French, which are corroborated by Rens’s negative views on the “frivolous” and “cruel” French in other poems⁽²⁾, Rens was a bilingual mediator himself, translating and adapting literary works from French into Dutch, and a multilingual translator and mediator as well, transferring works from many European languages other than French so as to prove the viability of Dutch. In order to expand our knowledge on the role of cultural mediators in Belgium, I will focus on the translation scene in 19th-century Flanders, and more specifically on Rens’s motivation as a translator and mediator. I will situate his mediating activities in the first Dutch-language magazines and journals in Belgium’s early years against the wider background of the translation flows in the Flemish literary field and the modest transfer of francophone literature in Flanders, and point to some intercrossings with contemporary Belgian francophone authors, translators and mediators, who also had their hearts in the Flemish cause, such as the francophone mediator and translator Joseph Octave Delepierre (1802-1879) from Bruges, and the famous francophone writer, mediator and publisher Joseph-Ernest Buschmann (1814-1853) from Antwerp.

Frans Rens as a Belgian/Flemish author

Rens figured as a secondary character in my doctoral research on, amongst others, Virginie Loveling (1836-1923), one of the most important realist authors in Flanders. Loveling wrote the manuscript ‘Herinneringen aan Frans Rens’ [Memories of Frans Rens] in 1905, one hundred years after Rens was born, and placed it under an embargo until twenty years after her death. It was published in 1949 by Ger Schmook. The publication was followed in 1950 by the publication of another, much older manuscript called ‘Onze Rensen’ [Our Renses], containing several ‘Renses’: poems and funny illustrations of Rens and his entourage by Virginie’s sister Rosalie (1834-1875), when she was about twelve years old. By these drawings the young Rosalie, who would also become a poet and writer, mockingly portrayed the older romantic generation of Flemish writers and linguistic activists of the early Flemish movement, to which Rens also belonged, and who were probably discussed in the high-minded liberal family in Ghent, where the sisters were temporarily staying.

In these funny illustrations, Rens is presented at the bedside and the funeral of the father of the Flemish movement Jan-Frans Willems, next to writers as Johanna Courtmans-Berchmans, Hendrik Conscience, or Prudens van Duyse. Rens is also present at the bedside of his friend and poet Karel Ledeganck, his entombment and his funeral, and Benninck’s illness, death

(2) See ‘De Dood van Jakob van Artevelde (1345)’, Ms 2142A, ‘Frans Rens. Gedichten en brieven, 1829-1855’, n° 4; ‘Valois, Gravin van Johanna van Henegouwen (1340)’, Ms 2142A, n° 6; ‘De dood van Philips van Artevelde’, Ms 2142A, n° 30.

and funeral. The drawings are later accompanied by satirizing poems and stories in which they hold these writers up to mockery, and this sentiment is to some extent repeated in Virginie's later manuscript 'Herinneringen aan Frans Rens', in which she portrays him "with all his funny little ways", as "a remarkable man, a typical figure, whom she felt, from a social point of view, pity for" (my translation, LV)⁽³⁾. According to her, Rens looked older than he was, uncared-for, lonely, in ill health, and he only married at a later age with a very young woman whom he lost early⁽⁴⁾. Last but not least, she sketches him as a zealous worker, with restricted means but an infinite patience⁽⁵⁾.

I will supplement Loveling's opinion with some facts to modify this view. Rens was born in 1805 and died in 1874. Schmook calls him "one of our most zealous *dii minores*"⁽⁶⁾, a minor poet, who was loved and respected by almost all of the 19th-century Flemish authors. Rens can thus be regarded as a mediator more than a poet, and was constantly begging for contributions to the journals he edited. He was a self-educated man working in the civil service as a tax inspector and later also a school inspector⁽⁷⁾. Besides his government job in which he was serving the young Belgian nation, he set out to become a poet and serve the Flemish cause. He published a long poem in praise of the first count of Flanders ('Boudewyn de Yzeren') in 1837, and two volumes of poetry, *Gedichten* [Poems] (1839) and *Bladeren uit den vreemde* [Stories from abroad] (1855), containing translations and adaptations of French, German, Spanish and English ballads, folk tales, and romances. In between, he also published a diplomatic yet combative editorial with a new program defending the Dutch language within the Belgian state (*De Eendragt*, 6 November 1847). In his foreword to his volume *Gedichten*, he introduced his work as "his offer on the altar of the budding Flemish literature" (my translation, LV)⁽⁸⁾, so both his literary work as his societal work were characterised as offers of an obedient and tireless servant to the

(3) "Hoe dan ook, Virginie Loveling heeft Frans Rens, met al zijn hebbelikheden, een merkwaardig man gevonden, *een typisch figuur, dat haar, menselijk gesproken, te doen gaf*". Gerard SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling, *Herinneringen aan Frans Rens* (1905). Een onuitgegeven tekst bezorgd door G. Schmook", in *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, 1949, p. 96.

(4) "Rens is 41 jaar oud en nog ongehuwd: eenzaam, onverzorgd. Tastend naar geluk. Naar steun" (p. 98); "Een meisje trouwt *drie-en-twintig jaar jonger* dan de vrijgezel zonder vrijersmanieren. Zulk laat wonder!" (p. 99); G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 98-99.

(5) "Door haar harde, bezwarende getuigenis heen, huldigt zij toch het wezen, dat slechts labeuren heeft gekend, *ploegen, met de beperktheid van zijn middelen, met de onuitputtelijkheid van zijn geduldsgaven*; een wezen, dat geleefd, en gevegeteerd heeft, haast ongevoelig, naast een vrouw met een ontombare hunkering naar de bewijzen van het uiterlijk bestaan"; G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 102.

(6) "Eén van onze noestste *dii minores*"; G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 93.

(7) Jozef VERCOULLIE, "Rens, François", in *Biographie nationale*, dl. 19, 1907, col. 137.

(8) "Hier is ook *mijn* offer op het altaar der ontkiemende Vlaemsche Letterkunde"; G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Flemish people⁽⁹⁾, a typical stance adopted by cultural mediators in the context of an emergent literature⁽¹⁰⁾.

Rosalie and Virginie had a rather poor opinion of his poetical work: they called his volume *Gedichten* (1839) mockingly *Woorden, Klank en Spelling* [Words, Sounds and Spelling]⁽¹¹⁾, and could not appreciate his well-intended advice. Moreover, they were really dissatisfied when he changed something about their poems without noticing them before it was published.

We felt aggrieved [– these first two years –] to see these pieces, which we constructed so slowly and carefully, stanza's which sometimes took us months to compose before they pleased us, appear with a pointless correction. We did not dare to complain to himself, but criticized his acts behind his back, so the rumour would reach him. "If something does not please me, I will simply cross it out", he told us (my translation, LV)⁽¹²⁾.

His merit did not so much lie in his own creative literary work, but consisted more of his accommodating work in literary societies and journals⁽¹³⁾. In the early 1830s, just after the Belgian independence, he published poetry and prose in the short-lived *Nederduitsche letteroefeningen* [Low Dutch Literary Exercises] (1833-1834), the first Flemish literary magazine after the Belgian Revolution. In 1834, he founded the literary yearbook *Nederduitsch letterkundig jaarboekje* (1834-1875). He also played an important role in the bimonthly magazine *De eendragt* [The Union] (1846-1879), which he founded with distinguished writers such as Snellaert, Heremans and Van Duyse; he took a very active part as a literary critic and editor with remarkable organizational skills⁽¹⁴⁾. He also contributed to publications such as the literary supplement *Bydragen der Gazette van Gend* [Supplement to the

(9) "De zin mag en moet voor heel zijn leven gelden, Rens heeft, zij het dan door de definitie van zijn temperamentloos leven, een werkelijk offer gebracht: dat van de dienende, van de stroomregelaar, die elk jaar parade houdt en de debutanten telt; die dag voor dag de geesten richt, het gedachte-verkeer zijn voedsel geeft, zonder 'dichterlijke gloed, zonder verheffing' zoals Coopman en Scharpé opmerken, doch met een regelmatigheid en een taaiheid, die enkel te vinden zijn bij de overtuigde karakters, gedragen en gestuwd door een hoger levensdoel; karakters, die slachtoffers maken in hun intieme omgeving, terwijl zij ijveren aan een taak, hun overgelaten, overgedragen of opgedragen door anderen, die hun tijd beter weten te verdelen, althans naar een minder dwingend en eentonig levensprincipe, en in harmonischer rythme, voor vreugd en smart vatbaar blijken"; G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 104.

(10) François PROVENZANO, *Historiographies périphériques. Enjeux et rhétoriques de l'histoire littéraire en francophonie du Nord*, Bruxelles, Académie royale de Belgique, 2011, p. 39.

(11) G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 114.

(12) "Het griede ons [– de eerste twee jaren –] die stukjes, welke wij zoo langzaam en zorgvuldig vervaardigden; strofen waaraan wij soms maanden werkten, voordat zij ons bevredigden, met een dwaze wijziging te zien verschijnen. Klagen deden wij niet bij hem, maar deden het achterrug, zoodat het hem ter oor kwam. 'Als iets [mij daarin] niet [aanstaat], met een pennestreek is het gedaan', had hij ons verklaard"; G. SCHMOOK, "Virginie Loveling", *op. cit.*, p. 131.

(13) J. VERCOULLIE, "Rens", *op. cit.*, col. 138.

(14) Marc CARLIER, Lut TROCH & Hans VANACKER, *De eendragt, 1846-1879*, Gent, Cultureel Documentatiecentrum Rijksuniversiteit, 1988, p. 10.

Ghent Gazette] (1836-1839), the scholarly journal *Belgisch museum* [Belgian Museum] (1837-1846), the more popular *Kunst- en letterblad* [Art and Literature Paper] (1840-1845), *Het Taelverbond* [The Language Association] (1845-1852) and the newspaper *Vlaemsch België* [Flemish Belgium] (1844).

In these magazines and societies he tried to gather the well-known writers of the time, and also took care of younger authors⁽¹⁵⁾, among others the then 15- and 17-year old Virginie and Rosalie Loveling, by offering them the opportunity to publish in his periodicals and giving them advice. Because of this amiability, tolerance and paternal help, his nickname became “Father Rens”⁽¹⁶⁾. Two important societies that he founded were ‘Maatschappy van Vlaemsche Letteroefening’ [Society of Flemish Literary Practice] with its motto ‘De Tael is Gansch het Volk’ [The language defines its people] as early as 1836, and ‘Vlaemsch Gezelschap’ [The Flemish Society] in 1846. He was a liberal, a member since 1851 and the president since 1862 of the liberal literary association ‘Willemsfonds’, but kept himself away from actual politics⁽¹⁷⁾. This is probably the reason why he was appreciated by many and managed to gather writers of all movements to contribute to his journals⁽¹⁸⁾.

Rens’s motives to write poetry were not strictly literary, but ethical and political, as was most of the literature in the early years of Belgium. Through his own poems, his translations and his mediating work serving the Flemish movement, he wanted to prove the viability of ‘Flemish’ or Dutch as a cultural language in Belgium. Rens wished the Flemish would mark themselves through their language as a separate people within the Belgian nation. He considered Dutch or Flemish “the national language of the majority of the Belgian people”, which is “firmly guaranteeing their independence” as “an indispensable vessel of civilization” and “faithful picture of our glorious past”⁽¹⁹⁾.

In sum, it might be said that Rens combined several of the cultural transfer activities a mediator undertakes: he was a poet, literary critic, editor, and a founding father of several cultural societies and editing boards. In the following part of this paper, I will move on to his role as a multilingual translator and bilingual mediator, which forms an intrinsic part of his endeavour to serve the Flemish cause. It will prove difficult to separate these two roles, so each will be dealt with in relation to the other.

Rens as a multilingual translator

Belgium is a highly interesting case to study cultural transfer. Founded in 1830, with the imposition of French as the official language on top of the Walloon and Flemish dialects in the South and the North, it serves as a case in point to study intra-cultural relationships and leave behind the “association of national cultures with homogeneous national languages and

(15) G. SCHMOOK, “Virginie Loveling”, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

(16) J. VERCOULLIE, “Rens”, *op. cit.*, col. 138.

(17) Frans HEYMANS, “Frans Rens”, s.d., retrieved from <http://www.literair.gent.be/html/lexicondetail.asp?ID=5&AID=489&l=R>, June 2014.

(18) M. CARLIER, L. TROCH & H. VANACKER, *De eendragt, 1846-1879*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

(19) Letter of Frans Rens and Julius Vuylsteke to Jacob Muyltermans, 19 September 1874, AMVC-Letterenhuis, Antwerp, W709/B, BE-ANN07/lh/M965/50.

nation states”⁽²⁰⁾. The official language in Belgium was French, being used for political, civic and cultural matters, but in order to manifest itself vis-à-vis France, the medieval heritage, national history and “northern” cultural legacy were emphasized, both in francophone and Dutch literary works, as manifest illustrations of the unifying “*âme belge*”⁽²¹⁾. The relationship with the French language in Flanders was therefore a fraught one, and many writers and linguistic activists were trying to strengthen the eminence of Dutch as a cultural language⁽²²⁾. This can be seen in the translation streams within Belgium in the larger 19th century, and also in Rens’s oeuvre.

In the following survey sample of translations and adaptations into Dutch that were made between 1830-1914, I want to stress the translations and adaptations made from French, and single out the intra-Belgian, Dutch versions of francophone literature, which have received little attention in scholarly literature until recent years. The research I have done during the last couple of years contains 186 book publications that appeared in Dutch between 1830 and 1914 and 98 literary journals. My sample survey of 3293 items indicates that about a third (1189) of the items is originally written in German, a sixth (573) in French and about one eighth in English (422). It shows that those three most popular source languages provided about 66% of the translated works before 1914. This top three mirrors the chart that Reine Meylaerts drew up for book publications that were translated into French between 1830 and 1899 and points to a certain balance in import and export: first translations from German, then translations from Dutch, and lastly from English. Of course, these numbers should be regarded with caution, since reliable bibliographical data are scarce for the 19th century⁽²³⁾.

The French authors of whom the work was translated between 1830 and 1914 were famous, canonised names such as Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, Jean de la Fontaine, Molière and de Musset, as well as lesser-known authors such as Raoul de Navéry or Casimir Delavigne. Translated francophone authors from Belgium were among others André Van Hasselt, Joseph-Ernest Buschmann, Charles Rogier, Charles de Coster, Ferdinand Bouché, Georges Eekhoud, Edmond de Bruyn, Felix Bogaerts and Jacques Mesnil, pseudonym of Jean-Jacques Dwelshauvers. In any case, translations of French authors such as Molière and de Musset clearly outnumbered the translations of francophone Belgian authors.

About a sixth of the Dutch translations in my survey sample were translated from French (573). Of this number, only 39 translations (0,1%) involved francophone Belgian authors. The reason for this small share cannot

(20) Lambert: 1991 quoted in Theo HERMANS, *Translation in Systems. Descriptive and Systemic Approaches Explained*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing, 1999, p. 123-124.

(21) Christian BERG, “De Frans-Belgische letterkunde en het Vlaams bewustzijn. Het symbolisch tekort”, in Ada DEPREZ & Walter GOBBERS, eds., *Vlaamse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw. Dertien verkenningen*, Utrecht, HES Uitgevers, 1990, p. 156-170.

(22) Erik SPINOY, “De samenwerking van Hendrik Conscience en Octave Delepière”, in *Spiegel der Letteren*, dl. 30, 1988, 2-3, p. 147-148.

(23) Reine MEYLAERTS, “Kleine literaturen in vertaling: buitenkans of gemiste kans?”, in Lieve JOOKEN, Heili VERSTRAETE & Michael HINDERDAEL, eds., *De aarde heeft kamers genoeg. Hoe vertalers omgaan met culturele identiteit in het werk van Erwin Mortier*, Antwerpen, Garant Uitgevers, 2009, p. 33-49.

be the fact that, due to their good command of French, educated Flemish readers did not need translations from French⁽²⁴⁾, since there was a fairly large number of French writers translated. Apparently, there existed a reading public that was interested in these translations from French, presumably middle class readers of Flemish literary journals, whose command of French was not good enough or who wanted to support the rise of Dutch as a literary language in Belgium, and a lower middle class public interested in drama, regarding the many plays that were translated from French. Hermans also points to these political motivations and to linguistic pride, urging translators in Flanders to showcase the flexibility and power of Dutch in Flanders⁽²⁵⁾. The fact that most educated readers in Flanders knew French, therefore fails to explain the lack of intra-Belgian translations from French into Dutch in the larger 19th century.

As has already been shown by others, the development of the bilingual literary field in Belgium plays a crucial role in this respect. Between 1830 and 1850, many pirate editions of works that appeared earlier in France flooded the Belgian market⁽²⁶⁾, and between 1850 and 1880, an own literary production in French could not be started off so easily⁽²⁷⁾. Francophone writers such as De Coster, Buschmann and Van Hasselt – who were actually translated in Dutch – and Octave Pirmez, Adolphe Mathieu and Charles Potvin were rather isolated cases⁽²⁸⁾. One of the reasons why there were so few translations of francophone writers was thus not only the good command of French of the educated audience and the lesser developed publishing system in Flanders, but also the mere fact that there were very few successful francophone writers in Belgium that could be translated. Before 1880, the largest part of the literary production in Belgium was written by Flemish-speaking Romantic and realist authors from the middle class, such as Conscience, Sleenckx, Zetternam, Loveling or Bergmann⁽²⁹⁾.

To assess this situation in greater detail, I will position Rens's translations and adaptations in this chart and try to find the motivations to make these. By studying the motivations of in this case Rens, I second Theo Hermans's and

(24) Lieven D'HULST, "Traduire la poésie entre 1830 et 1880: quelques observations liminaires", in Dirk DE GEEST & Reine MEYLAERTS, *Littératures en Belgique. Diversités culturelles et dynamiques littéraires / Literatures in België. Culturele dynamiek en literaire diversiteit*, Bruxelles-Bern, Peter Lang, p. 137-151 ; Reine MEYLAERTS, "175 jaar intra-Belgische relaties: nog steeds een blinde vlek?", in *Filter. Tijdschrift voor vertalen en vertaalwetenschap*, dl. 12, 2005, 3, p. 25-32 ; R. MEYLAERTS, "Kleine literaturen in vertaling: buitenkans of gemiste kans?", *op. cit.*

(25) Theo HERMANS, "Old Flanders, Octave Delepierre en het vertalen", in *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, dl. 122, 2012, 1, p. 41.

(26) A. DEPREEZ & W. GOBBERS, *Vlaamse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw*, *op. cit.* ; C. BERG, "De Frans-Belgische letterkunde en het Vlaams bewustzijn", *op. cit.*

(27) Lieven D'HULST & Karen VANDEMEULEBROUCKE, "Literair België in de negentiende eeuw: een land van importeurs?", in *Filter. Tijdschrift voor vertalen en vertaalwetenschap*, dl. 12, 2005, 3, p. 48.

(28) C. BERG, "De Frans-Belgische letterkunde en het Vlaams bewustzijn", *op. cit.*, p. 158-159.

(29) Herman VAN PUYMBROUCK, *Georges Eekhoud en zijn werk*, Antwerpen-Amsterdam, De Nederlandsche Boekhandel-Van Holkema & Warendorff, 1914.

Reine Meylaerts's view that purely quantitative overviews also take too much the perspective of nation-states as a starting-point to assess relationships of dominance and dependence⁽³⁰⁾. It is important to study the actual contacts between the mediators of these relations and their works to get insight in the transfer activities and complex intra-national intersections.

Rens as a bilingual mediator

I have traced about 44 translations and adaptations by Rens in my sample survey taken from literary and cultural journals published between 1830 and 1914. The largest part is made up of poems translated from German (16 = 36%), and the other translations stem from Scandinavian languages (15 = 34%): Danish (8), Finnish (3), Swedish (3), Norway (1) – and also French (8), English (2) and Spanish (1). It mirrors the general chart of translation streams in Flanders, although German is here accompanied by the Scandinavian languages and Finnish. If we take the Germanic languages and Finnish together, French takes the second place and English the third. In the following section, I will focus in more detail on Rens's motivations to translate francophone literature.

French authors whose work is translated by Rens are Victor Hugo and Xavier Marmier in *Nederduitsch Letterkundig Jaarboekje* and *Het Taelverbond*, and Jean Reboul and Sophie Gay in the *De Vlaemsche Rederyker*⁽³¹⁾. The first was the literary yearbook which Rens himself edited. As was the case for almost all new Belgian journals at the time, contributors were not paid and it took him pains to gather enough contributions every year. *Het Taelverbond* was oriented towards the Germanic world, yet also published translations from French⁽³²⁾, as is also exemplified by Rens's translations. The journal *De Vlaemsche Rederyker* only published Rens's translations when the Dutch Lodewijk van Hooegeveen Sterck was the editor in chief (1844-1847). His successor P.F. Van Kerckhoven was also a liberal supporting the Flemish cause, yet never appreciated Rens's poetry or his *Jaarboekje*⁽³³⁾.

The poems by Marmier were themselves already translations of songs from for instance the Faroe Islands, Denmark and Sweden, and point to a diachronic intercrossing between the Germanic and Romance worlds. His other translations of Hugo, Reboul and Gay are renditions of edifying poems on an abandoned girl, a beautiful sleepwalker, or domestic life and love. Rens thus uses these translations from French in search of either Germanic legends in the case of Marmier, or universal themes without stressing their French

(30) T. HERMANS, *Translation in Systems*, *op. cit.*, p. 111; R. MEYLAERTS, "Kleine literaturen in vertaling: buitenkans of gemiste kans?", *op. cit.*

(31) Cf. John GHEERAERT, *Frans Rens (1805-1874)*, unpublished master's thesis, Ghent University, 1962, p. 45.

(32) Ada DEPREZ, *Het Taelverbond: letterkundig tijdschrift, 1845-1852; Tydschrift voor geschiedenis, taal-, oudheid- en letterkunde, 1853-1855*, Gent, Cultureel Documentatiecentrum Rijksuniversiteit, 1985, p. 9.

(33) Michael BRYN & Ada DEPREZ, *De Noordstar, 1840-1842; De Vlaemsche Rederyker, 1844-1856*, Gent, Cultureel Documentatiecentrum Rijksuniversiteit, 1985, dl. 11, p. 33-38.

cultural background, in the case of Hugo, Reboul and Gay. These results confirm earlier research of paratextual statements in 19th-century translations made in Flanders, in which translations from German are chosen in the service of a moral restoration, to stimulate patriotic love by referring to a shared ethnic background, while translations from French are mostly downplaying their origins, primarily focussing on the subject matter, and stressing the free translation and dynamic equivalence with the source text (except for the translation of Hugo's work)⁽³⁴⁾. The translations of intra-Belgian francophone works by Rens confirm this view, and show that he mainly searches for a Germanic subject matter in these works: Rens published for instance the poem 'Bossaert van Avesnes' in *Nederduitsch Letterkundig Jaarboekje* of 1839, based on the 16th-century writer Pierre d'Oudegherst's *Chroniques et Annales de Flandres* on the victories the earls of Flanders gained from 620 until 1471. In 1846, he published the verse monologue 'De Graef van Hoorne, in de gevangenis, vóór zyne onthoofding' [The Earl of Hoorne, in prison, before his decapitation] based on Joseph-Ernest Buschmann's play *L'écuelle et la besace. Scènes historiques du 16^e siècle* (1839), which was itself inspired by Victor Hugo⁽³⁵⁾, but focussed on the historical events in the 16th-century Low Countries. The play's foreword contained a reflection on the negative impact of the clandestine press and literary piracy, the general ignorance towards the budding literature in Belgium, and a hopeful call for young writers to speak out. This must of course have appealed to Rens, who used ideas from Buschmann's play as a source for another poem as well, namely 'Alva, by de onthoofding van Egmont en Hoorne (1568)' [Alva, at the decapitation of Egmont and Hoorne], in which he lets the headman reflect on the execution to come and question his share and responsibility⁽³⁶⁾. Buschmann was also the publisher of Conscience's work from 1843 till 1852⁽³⁷⁾. He considered the Latin cultures too corrupted to function as benchmarks and reacted against the decadence of the French literature, to which only the 'northern' purity could provide the necessary counterweight; in his view, Belgium had to devote itself to a unitary literature in mind and purpose, although conveyed in two different tongues⁽³⁸⁾. Buschmann's own literary work inspired Rens and other Flemish poets, among whom Jan Alfried De Laet, Theodoor Van Rijswijck and P.-J. Van Kerkhoven. Their translations and adaptations form part of the early intercrossings between francophones and neerlandophones in the young nation, and counter the purported lack of interest from the Walloon side which is also stressed at the time⁽³⁹⁾.

(34) Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE & Stefaan EVENEPOEL, "Vreemde eend of verre buur? Natievorming, literaire vertaalopvattingen en vertaalpraktijk in Vlaanderen (1830-1914)", in Nele BEMONG, Mary KEMPERINK, Marita MATHIJSEN & Tom SINTOBIN, eds., *Naties in een spanningsveld. Tegenstrijdige bewegingen in de identiteitsvorming in negentiende-eeuws Vlaanderen en Nederland*, Hilversum, Verloren, p. 170-172 & 176-177.

(35) Ludo SIMONS, *Geschiedenis van de uitgeverij in Vlaanderen. 1. De negentiende eeuw*, Tielt-Weesp, Lannoo, 1984, p. 36.

(36) Ms 2142A, 'Frans Rens. Gedichten en brieven, 1829-1855', n° 7.

(37) L. SIMONS, *Geschiedenis van de uitgeverij in Vlaanderen*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

(38) C. BERG, "De Frans-Belgische letterkunde en het Vlaams bewustzijn", *op. cit.*, p. 164.

(39) T. HERMANS, "Old Flanders, Octave Delepierre en het vertalen", *op. cit.*, p. 56, 83.

A last example is Rens's verse translation of Joseph Octave Delepierre's 'Le lac d'amour, ou Stromberg et Mina', which was in fact already a French translation of the Flemish tale 'Het Minnewater, of de legende van Stromberg en Mina', published in Delepierre's volume *Chroniques, traditions et légendes de l'ancienne histoire des Flandres* (1834). Delepierre held a PhD in law and was a remarkable and prolific historian; he wrote on 'Flemish' (and Dutch) literature in the British journal *The Athenaeum* and in his *Sketch of the History of Flemish Literature* (1860)⁽⁴⁰⁾. He was a well-known figure in the Belgian literary and scientific world, who cooperated with Jan Frans Willems in the 1830s, helped Hendrik Conscience with his historical research in 1838, and published amongst many other works the said anthology *Chroniques, traditions et legends*, and an adapted English version called *Old Flanders; or, Popular Traditions and Legends of Belgium* (1845). In this anthology Delepierre not only translated and adapted old legends and folk tales, but also contemporary stories of Flemish writers such as Conscience, Ledeganck, Nys and De Laet, yet without mentioning their names⁽⁴¹⁾.

As Delepierre often adapted medieval Flemish texts in order to legitimate the Belgian state and contribute to the nascent patriotic feelings by supplying the young nation with a Flemish past⁽⁴²⁾, Rens must have greeted him as an ally in his defence of their cultural heritage and shared mother tongue. Delepierre also had a Flemish mother and explicitly promoted the Flemish language, although he never wrote in Dutch and was not as militant as many of his colleagues⁽⁴³⁾. Rens took much more trouble in actively promoting Dutch as a cultural language by his literary production in Dutch and his role in the establishment of literary journals in the Dutch mother tongue.

Using a specific part of the francophone Belgian literary production as a source of inspiration, Rens is thus taking a detour to return to a glorious Flemish past, before the region was conquered and annexed by foreign powers, in order to convince the public of its cultural past, present and future, but this time in Dutch. His work offers new and clear cases of the intercrossings *histoire croisée* focuses on, in which translations are not proofs of a single one-way process at a particular moment in time, but an intricate process over time, in which mediation goes back and forth. It illustrates again Theo Hermans's view on translation in Belgium, which is said to be an interlacement of translations, adaptations, rewrites and plagiarism, due to the specific context in which Dutch-speakers and French-speaking writers interacted⁽⁴⁴⁾.

(40) This work is apparently based on the French volume *Histoire de la littérature flamande* (1848) by F.A. Snellaert, but Delepierre did not mention this. A Dutch translation of Snellaert's literary history would be published by Buschmann (T. HERMANS, "Old Flanders, Octave Delepierre en het vertalen", *op. cit.*, p. 57). Lori VAN BIERVLIET, "J.O. Delepierre, 1802-1879, Brugs historicus, publicist en bibliofiel", in *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge*, dl. 118, Brugge, 3-4, p. 173-291.

(41) L. VAN BIERVLIET, "J.O. Delepierre, 1802-1879", *op. cit.*, p. 210.

(42) L. VAN BIERVLIET, "J.O. Delepierre, 1802-1879", *op. cit.*, p. 174 & 196 ; T. HERMANS, "Old Flanders, Octave Delepierre en het vertalen", *op. cit.*, p. 50 & 97.

(43) L. VAN BIERVLIET, "J.O. Delepierre, 1802-1879", *op. cit.*, p. 196-198.

(44) T. HERMANS, "Old Flanders, Octave Delepierre en het vertalen", *op. cit.*, p. 41 & 98.

Remarkably, Rens's poems are not real translations respecting the original form, but adaptations transgressing generic borders, retaining merely the subject matter. This reminds us of the contradiction "entre dire et faire" (the paradox between saying and doing) demonstrated by Karen Vandemeulebroucke in her study of the nationalist journal *Revue de Belgique*, where francophone translators as Potvin and Kurth expressed their interest in Flemish poetry, but completely disregarded its literary form⁽⁴⁵⁾. They acknowledged the existence of Flemish poetry as part of the Belgian production, but ignored its individuality by rendering prose translations of the selected poems. The subject matter of the Flemish literary production was thus retained, but French remained the language *par excellence* to express that content. Eekhoud's translations of Conscience seem to be in the same vein, since Eekhoud also adapted and interpreted his stories in very idiosyncratic ways, thus rendering a particular 'Eekhoudian' image of Conscience⁽⁴⁶⁾ – although his translation strategies also remarkably differ depending on the translated work and also show his admiration and awe for Dutch-language writers such as Streuvels⁽⁴⁷⁾. A last example is given by Delepierre's translations of Flemish stories, in which he also focusses more on the subject matter than the literary form, as has been clearly demonstrated in a recent analysis of Delepierre's *Old Flanders*⁽⁴⁸⁾.

By adapting Buschmann, d'Oudegherst and Delepierre, Rens did not take a subordinate position with regard to these francophone writers. The motto of his second *Jaarboekje*, taken from the Dutch writer Spandaw, corresponds with this position: 'Whoever is trying to repeat a foreigner slavishly / Is ready for foreign slavery'⁽⁴⁹⁾. Rens probably hoped to reveal that Dutch was equally appropriate as French, or even more appropriate than French, to express the national past and stress its rich legacy and cultural heritage. This parallels the mediation by francophone critics, writers and translators who promoted French as a national and cultural language by retaining the subject matter, yet more or less silencing their Dutch-speaking authors. Rens did not choose the francophone works to showcase the literary qualities of these works, but used them to nourish the Belgian literature in Dutch and reveal their "âme belge" in Dutch. Apparently, the language proved much more than "but a gown" and coincided with adaptations in different degrees. Rens's efforts to promote the Dutch language and the Flemish culture are thus reflected both in the choice of his allies as in his particular mediation of their work.

(45) Karen VANDEMEULEBROUCKE, "Entre dire et faire: la traduction poétique dans deux revues belges francophones du XIX^e siècle", in Francis MUS, Karen VANDEMEULEBROUCKE, Lieven D'HULST & Reine MEYLAERTS, eds., *La traduction dans les cultures plurilingues*, Arras, Artois Presses Université, p. 47-59.

(46) Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE, "Het Frans als doorgeefluik van een Vlaams verleden: Hendrik Conscience in handen van Georges Eekhoud", in *De Negentiende Eeuw*, dl. 37, 2013, 3, p. 244-259.

(47) Reine MEYLAERTS & Maud GONNE, "Fransch kleed uittrekken en vlaamsch pak aanpassen". Stijn Streuvels vertaalt uit het Frans", in Marcel DE SMEDT, ed., *Stijn Streuvels als vertaler: taal- en stijlgymnastiek*. *Jaarboek van het Stijn Streuvels genootschap*, Kortrijk, Stijn Streuvels genootschap, dl. 19, 2013, p. 95-118.

(48) T. HERMANS, "Old Flanders, Octave Delepierre en het vertalen", *op. cit.*, p. 50.

(49) 'Wie vreemden slaafsch poogt na te klappen / Is rijp voor vreemde slavernij'. Ada DEPREEZ & Mario BAECK, *Nederduitsch Letterkundig Jaarboekje, 1834-1875*, Gent, Cultureel Documentatiecentrum Rijksuniversiteit, 1983, p. 14.

APPENDICES

**1. Aen den ongenoemde die my eene fransche vertaling van mijn Dichtstukje:
De twee dorpsmeisjes zond.**

De haet der zeedloosheid, dier pestvlaeg onzer tyden
 Deed dan uw eerlyk hart ook lijden,
 O Gy die uwen naem omsluijert voor mijn lof!
 En in mijn needrig lied vond uw verrukking stof
 Om in Racine's tael de reine deugd te schetsen.
 Die, met den stand vernoegd dien God haer gaf op 't veld
 De steedsche pracht verfoeit, in top van eer gesteld
 Door de ondeugd die heur smacht met ydel, godloos smachten.

Zoo stemde ons beider zielsgevoel,
 Onz' beider walg voor toomloosheid te samen,
 Onz' beider afkeer van 't oneerbaar zingewoel,
 Waarvoor een aterling alleen zich niet kan schamen,
 Die spotziek blyft by 't goede, en by het schoone koel.

Zoo streeelde ons de eenvoudige, maegdlyke min,
 De zucht tot der ouderen zeden,
 Die vlekloos bewaerd zyn op 't vreedzame land,
 Afschuwlyk ontaerd in de steden.

Zoo streeelde ons het leven dat zachtjes daer vloeit,
 Als 't beekje in de zwygende dalen,
 Alleen door den adem des zefiers beroerd,
 Door 't zonlicht beglinsterd met stralen.

Zoo scheen ons de band van den zaligen echt
 Den vrouwen verheven bestemming:
 Geen spoorlooze vryheid, geen grillig genot,
 Die bron van gewetensbeklemming!

Myn zang, beroofd van prael,
 Klonk in der vaden tael:
 'k Heb sinds myn teedre jeugd, die ryke tael verkoren
 Ter vrye ontboezeming van vreugde en bange smart;
 U moog'de glans van vreemde spraek omgloren
 Om lucht te geven aen de neiging van uw hart:
 Wy beiden blyven toch op vlaemsche wyze denken;
 Geen vorm kan 't innig pit van die gedachten krenken;
 De tael is heur gewaed.

Zoo is 't, maer 't vlaemsche kleed past best aen vlaemsche denking;
 Zoo lydt zy 't minst gevaer aen woord- of zinverkrenking.
 Dit kleed, dat door geen tyd besmet wordt of vergaet;
 Waerin zy wordt herkend door zonen van den landen,
 Bevrydt voor vreemden hoon en schande,
 Gord, zoo gy vlaming zyt, het zuiver kleed heur aen
 En laet uw naem op zyne zoomen staen!
 Zoo leve onze beider geest in heiligen verstande.

F. Rens

Gent, september 1844

2. Overview of translations by Frans Rens

Adam Gotlob Oehlenschläger	I. Wintersmart II. Zomertroost. Gedachte van Oehlenschläger	Nd Lk Jb	1862
Adelheide von Stolterfoth	Keizer Hendrik IV te Hammersteen	Nd Lk Jb	1850
Walter Scott	De pelgrim / te vergelijken met Walter Scott, The palmer	Nd Lk Jb	1844
<i>Deensche sage</i>	De wederkomst der moeder. Deensche sage	Nd Lk Jb	1859
<i>Deensche sage</i>	Hella	Nd Lk Jb	1860
<i>Deensche sage</i>	Morten van Vogelsang	Nd Lk Jb	1870
<i>Deensche zang</i>	's Heilands geboorte	Nd Lk Jb	1860
<i>Deensche zang</i>	De elfenheuvel	Nd Lk Jb	1866
<i>Deensche zang</i>	Avondschemering	Nd Lk Jb	1866
Ernest Buschmann	De graef van Hoorne, in de gevangenis, voor zyne onthoofding / geïnspireerd op Ernest Buschmann, L'écuelle et la besace	Nd Lk Jb	1846
<i>Finlandsch lied</i>	Wiegezing	Nd Lk Jb	1865
<i>Finlandsch lied</i>	's Meisjes grafschrift	Nd Lk Jb	1866
<i>Finlandsche zang</i>	Des grijsaards wederkomst	Nd Lk Jb	1862
Friedrich von Schiller	Het vreemde meisje	Nd Lk Jb	1835
Friedrich von Schiller	De handschoen (Vry naer Schiller)	Nd Lk Jb	1844
Friedrich von Schiller	Goedheid en grootheid	Nd Lk Jb	1835
Gleim	De geestverschyning, Liebchen und der Geist	Nd Lk Jb	1837
Ludwig Uhland	De bruid / te vergelijken met Uhland, Des Goldschmied's Töchterlein	Nd Lk Jb	1839
<i>Noordsche sage</i>	Het herderinnetje	Nd Lk Jb	1857
Octave Delepierre	Stroomberg en Mina / te vergelijken met Le lac d'amour, ou Stromberg et Mina in: Chroniques, tradition et légendes de l'ancienne histoire des Flandres	Nd Lk Jb	1838
<i>onbekend</i>	Lucia. Zweedsche sage	Nd Lk Jb	1858
<i>onbekend</i>	Het schippertje	Nd Lk Jb	1859
<i>onbekend</i>	De twee zusters. Deensche sage	Nd Lk Jb	1854
<i>onbekend</i>	Het leelyke meisje	Nd Lk Jb	1852
Pape	Anna	Nd Lk Jb	1842
Pierre d'Oudegherst	Bossaert van Avesnes	Nd Lk Jb	1839
<i>Rheinischer Sagen- und Liederschatz</i>	De heilige Adelheide	Nd Lk Jb	1850
<i>Rijnsage</i>	Hedwig van Wolkenburg	Nd Lk Jb	1871
<i>Rijnsage</i>	De dolende monnik	Nd Lk Jb	1872
<i>Rijnsage</i>	De jonkvrouw van Rozengouw	Nd Lk Jb	1873
<i>Rijnsage</i>	Twee Rijnsagen. I. De wraak der onschuld II. Treurmare	Nd Lk Jb	1874
Stagnelius	De trekvogels. Onderwerp van den Zweedschen dichter Stagnelius	Nd Lk Jb	1858
Stöber	Zalige dood	Nd Lk Jb	1848

Victor Hugo	Vaderheil. Geïnspireerd op Victor Hugo	Nd Lk Jb	1856
Xavier Marmier	De wonderharp. Met een verwijzing naar X. Marmier, Chants du Nord, Brux.	Nd Lk Jb	1846
Rehfrus	Eer en liefden. Spaensche romance	Muzen-Album	1845
Weisze	Gestrafte ontrouw. Vry naar Weisze	Muzen-Album	1846
Lord Byron	De Traen (Fragment, naer Lord Byron)	Het Taelverbond	1845
Haring	De reizende gezel. Hoofddenkbeelden van Haring	Het Taelverbond	1846
Klopstok	Het Vlaemsche meisje. Klopstok's Deutsches Mädchen, vry gevolgd	Het Taelverbond	1846
[Xavier] Marmier	Het vermogen der harp (met een verwijzing naar Marmier: Chants du Nord-Suède)	Het Taelverbond	1845
W. Aschenberg	De Slag van Woeringen. Historisch verhael (°1288). Naer het Hoogduitsch van W. Aschenberg	Belgisch Museum	1838
[Jean] Reboul	De slaepwandelaerster	De Vlaemsche Rederyker	1845
Sophie Gay	De vondeling	De Vlaemsche Rederyker	1844

ABSTRACT

Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE, *The Flemish Author, Bilingual Mediator, and Multilingual Translator Frans Rens and the Modest Transfer of Francophone Literature in 19th-Century Belgium*

In order to study the role of cultural mediators in Belgium, I focus on the translation scene in 19th century Flanders; more specifically on translations and adaptations from French, and the poet and editor Frans Rens's motivations as a translator and mediator. By situating his adaptations and mediating activities in the bigger picture of translation flows in the 19th century Flemish literary field, and studying the intercrossings with contemporary Belgian francophone authors, translators and mediators such as Joseph Octave Delepierre and Joseph-Ernest Buschmann, I shed a light on the early intersections between francophones and neerlandophones in the young nation, and illustrate how Rens uses translations to nourish the Belgian literature in Dutch. The article shows that Rens's efforts to promote the Dutch language and the Flemish culture are reflected both in the choice of his allies as in his particular mediation of their work.

Translation – cultural mediation – Belgium – 19th century – French and Dutch literature – Frans Rens – Joseph Octave Delepierre – Joseph-Ernest Buschmann

RÉSUMÉ

Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE, *L'auteur flamand, médiateur bilingue et traducteur multilingue Frans Rens et le transfert modeste de la littérature francophone en Belgique au XIX^e siècle*

Afin d'étudier le rôle des médiateurs culturels en Belgique, cet article se focalise sur la scène traductive belge du XIX^e siècle et, plus spécifiquement, sur les traductions et adaptations depuis le français et sur les motivations du poète et rédacteur Frans Rens pour traduire et adapter des œuvres françaises. En situant ses adaptations et activités de médiation dans la perspective plus large des courants traductifs du champ littéraire du XIX^e siècle et en étudiant les interactions avec les auteurs francophones, les traducteurs et les médiateurs comme Joseph Octave Delepierre et Joseph-Ernest Buschmann, cet article veut éclairer les intersections entre francophones et néerlandophones dans la jeune nation et illustrer la façon dont Rens utilise les traductions pour alimenter la littérature belge en néerlandais. Cette contribution montre finalement comment les efforts de Rens pour promouvoir la langue néerlandaise et la culture flamande se reflètent, d'une part, dans le choix de ses alliés et d'autre part, dans la médiation de leurs œuvres.

Traduction – médiation culturelle – Belgique – XIX^e siècle – littérature française et néerlandaise – Frans Rens – Joseph Octave Delepierre – Joseph-Ernest Buschmann

SAMENVATTING

Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE, *De Vlaamse schrijver, tweetalige bemiddelaar en meertalige vertaler Frans Rens en de bescheiden transfer van Franstalige literatuur in het 19^{de}-eeuwse België*

Om de rol te bestuderen van culturele bemiddelaars in België richt dit artikel zich op het 19^{de}-eeuwse vertaallandschap in België, en meer specifiek op vertalingen en bewerkingen uit het Frans en de motieven van de dichter en redacteur Frans Rens om Franstalige werk te vertalen en bewerken. Door zijn bewerkingen en bemiddelende rol te situeren in het grotere geheel van vertaalstromen in het 19^{de}-eeuwse literaire veld, en door de interactie te bestuderen met toenmalige Franstalige auteurs, vertalers en bemiddelaars als Joseph Octave Delepierre en Joseph-Ernest Buschmann werp ik een licht op de vroege kruisbestuivingen tussen Frans- en Nederlandstalige actoren in het jonge België, en toon ik aan hoe Rens vertalingen gebruikte om de Belgische literatuur in het Nederlands te voeden. Mijn bijdrage toont aan dat de inspanningen van Rens om de Nederlandse taal en Vlaamse cultuur te bevorderen zowel zijn medestanders heeft bepaald als de specifieke manier waarop hij bij hun werk heeft bemiddeld.

Vertaling – culturele bemiddeling – België – negentiende eeuw – Franse en Nederlandse literatuur – Frans Rens – Joseph Octave Delepierre – Joseph-Ernest Buschmann

Across the Channel : médiations et traductions du symbolisme littéraire belge en Grande-Bretagne (1890-1900)

Clément DESSY

Chargé de recherches FRS-FNRS – Maître d’enseignement à l’ULB

En 1895, le critique français Gabriel Mourey publie chez Ollendorf un essai intitulé *Passé le Déroit* et sous-titré *La vie et l’art à Londres*. Ce titre métaphorique illustre l’attitude impérialiste de deux capitales qui, à la fin du XIX^e siècle, se positionnent en rivale l’une de l’autre⁽¹⁾. Londres ou Paris utilisent l’étendue de leur pouvoir politique pour asseoir la domination de leur modèle culturel sur le reste du monde. Pourtant, le passage de la Manche conduit non seulement vers la France, mais aussi vers d’autres régions voisines, alors émergentes, en tant que puissance à la fois industrielle et coloniale, et dont la petite taille dissimule mal les ambitions au niveau mondial... Mais, certes, des côtes anglaises, on traverse la Manche, mais aussi la mer du Nord, pour atteindre la Belgique.

La seule ouverture d’une ligne de chemin de fer avait déjà suffi à intensifier les échanges culturels entre Bruxelles et Paris en réduisant progressivement les temps de trajet entre les deux villes. Les questions de mobilité, de même, ont permis à de nombreux liens de s’affermir entre Bruxelles et Londres. Laurence Binyon, poète et employé à la section des livres imprimés du British Museum, et Olivier-Georges Destrée, poète et critique introducteur du préraphaélisme en Belgique, avaient ainsi mis au point dans les années 1890 un rituel de rencontre qui leur permettait de se voir sur le temps d’un week-end : le poète anglais, après sa journée de travail, quittait la ville et embarquait sur un ferry vers 18 heures et arrivait à Bruges vers minuit, où il passait la nuit. Il rencontrait son ami, arrivé dans la « ville morte » le lendemain matin, et demeurait avec lui jusqu’à la fin de la journée du dimanche, où il reprenait alors la route vers Londres, qu’il atteignait entre 23 heures et minuit⁽²⁾.

(1) Voir Christophe CHARLE, Julien VINCENT & Jay WINTER, eds., *Anglo-French Attitudes. Comparisons and Transfers Between English and French Intellectuals Since the Eighteenth Century*, Manchester-New York, Manchester University Press, 2007.

(2) Ces éléments peuvent être glanés à travers la correspondance échangée entre Laurence Binyon et Olivier-Georges Destrée, conservée à la British Library, Londres dans le dossier MS 103/73, voir en particulier les cartes adressées par Destrée le 2 octobre 1896. Pour une introduction aux échanges entre Binyon et Destrée, on lira Marysa DEMOOR & Frederick MOREL, « Laurence Binyon and the Belgian Artistic Scene. Unearthing Unknown Brotherhoods », in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, t. 44, 2011, 2, p. 184-197.

Si le recours à la langue française provoque souvent l'inclusion des écrivains symbolistes belges à l'ensemble de la littérature française, la distinction nationale opérée d'emblée par le titre de cet article n'a pas pour objectif d'effectuer une futile différenciation. Les écrivains belges de la fin du XIX^e siècle, mus par une volonté de s'autonomiser par rapport au centre parisien⁽³⁾, définissent volontiers leur pratique à partir de représentations ethniques qui jouent un rôle essentiel dans leur relation avec l'Angleterre. L'âme belge, telle que définie par Edmond Picard⁽⁴⁾, fondée sur un partage entre latinité et germanité, confère aux écrivains une image cosmopolite qui les autorise à jouer sur tous les tableaux, et notamment à tenter la conquête littéraire et artistique de l'Albion.

L'anglophilie cultivée dans les milieux de l'avant-garde symboliste belge différencie ces derniers de l'attitude française, nettement plus anglophobe. Cet intérêt anglophile semblerait même plus présent dans les revues belges de langue française plutôt que néerlandaise⁽⁵⁾. Bruxelles se présente alors comme une plateforme de rencontre où se rassemble une communauté d'expatriés londoniens, notamment autour de la place de Londres à Ixelles⁽⁶⁾. L'anglophilie de la capitale belge se diffuse au-delà des frontières du pays, notamment vers les peintres et écrivains néerlandais, comme Jan Toorop qui

(3) Selon le modèle de la phase « centrifuge », exposé par Benoît DENIS & Jean-Marie KLINKENBERG, *La littérature belge. Précis d'histoire sociale*, Bruxelles, Labor, 2005, p. 65.

(4) Edmond PICARD, « L'âme belge », 1897, in Paul ARON, ed., *La Belgique artistique et littéraire. Une anthologie de langue française 1848-1914*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 1997, p. 89-98.

(5) « Uit vorig onderzoek is immers al gebleken dat de Engles-Franse contacten in België talrijker en/of intensiever waren dan de contacten tussen Nederlandstalige Vlamingen en Britten », selon Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE, « Swarth, De Mont en de prerafaëlieten. Gelijkgestemde zielen, gedeelde natuur », in Anne VAN BUUL, ed., *Lopende vuurtjes. Engelse kunst en literatuur in België en Nederland rond 1900*, Hilversum, Uitgeverij Verloren, 2012 (Rythmus. Jaarboek voor de studie van het fin de siècle), p. 57. Elle se réfère notamment aux études de Francis MUS, « The Image of English Literature in Belgian Avant-Garde Periodicals » et de Karen VANDEMEULEBROUCKE, « Presence Treatment of English Poetry in 19th-Century Belgian Literary Periodicals », in Tom TOREMANS & Walter VERSCHUEREN, eds., *Crossing Cultures. Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literature in the Low Countries*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2009, p. 107-120 et 121-136, et de Johan DE SMET, « Van Nu en Straks in avant-gardistisch perspectief. Analogieën en divergenties met *L'Art Moderne*, *La Jeune Belgique* en *La Société Nouvelle* », in Raf DE BONT, Geraldine REYMANANTS & Hans VANDEVOORDE, eds., *Niet onder één vlag. Van Nu en Straks en de paradoxen van het fin de siècle*, Gent, Kantl, 2005, 109-143.

(6) Cette anglophilie belge a été bien montrée par Laurence BROGNIEZ, *Préraphaélisme et symbolisme. Peinture littéraire et image poétique*, Paris, Champion, 2003 (Romantismes et Modernités). Plus récemment, une géographie culturelle de l'anglophilie bruxelloise a été mise en évidence à travers l'exemple du poète belge Georges Khnopff par Hans VANDEVOORDE, « 'L'âme bruxelloise'. Georges Khnopff en de Engelse kunst en literatuur tijdens het fin de siècle in België », in A. VAN BUUL, ed., *Lopende vuurtjes, op. cit.*, p. 23-36. On consultera l'ensemble de ce dernier ouvrage pour plusieurs exemples de réception belge et néerlandaise du préraphaélisme. Au sujet de l'anglophilie et de la germanophilie de Georges Khnopff, on lira également Clément DESSY, « Georges Khnopff ou la reconversion cosmopolite de l'homme de lettres », in *Textyles*, t. 45, 2014, p. 47-67 (version en ligne, url : <http://textyles.revues.org/2535>).

a pu découvrir de nombreux ouvrages d'art et de littérature britanniques à Bruxelles⁽⁷⁾. Le peintre Fernand Khnopff, les écrivains Maurice Maeterlinck, Émile Verhaeren, Charles van Lerberghe ne dissimulent pas un profond intérêt pour les arts et la littérature venus d'Angleterre. Il faut signaler également que si les symbolistes belges ont gagné une légitimité en tant que Belges par rapport au centre parisien, le besoin de reconnaissance internationale se fait sentir étant donné l'étroitesse du champ littéraire belge et de son lectorat. À tout prendre, parier sur Londres évite aux Belges une trop grande inféodation aux évolutions du champ littéraire français. L'axe Bruxelles-Londres comporte donc un certain nombre de spécificités qui justifient qu'on l'aborde comme un vecteur privilégié dans les circuits de diffusion européenne de la culture à la fin du XIX^e siècle.

À cause de la nécessité de passer d'une langue à une autre, les critiques, médiateurs et traducteurs vont jouer un rôle essentiel dans l'amorce d'une diffusion large des auteurs symbolistes belges de l'autre côté de la Manche. Ceux-ci vont opérer à travers des organes de presse périodique, comme cela fut déjà le cas avec la chronique pionnière sur la littérature belge flamande entretenue par deux Belges, Paul Fredericq et Émile de Laveleye, sollicités par *The Athenaeum* de 1869 à 1904⁽⁸⁾. Au regard de la réception française du symbolisme belge, mieux documentée, plusieurs questions s'imposent d'emblée : qui sont les premiers médiateurs des symbolistes belges à Londres ? Comment participent-ils à leur diffusion et quelles autres fonctions assument-ils outre celle de traducteurs ? En dehors de ces interrogations sociologiques, des questions de représentations se posent également, qui dépassent la relation binaire Belgique-Angleterre : les médiateurs anglais différencient-ils les symbolistes belges par rapport à leurs homologues français ? Les rapports belgo-britanniques peuvent-ils être dissociés de tout lien avec la France ? C'est à ces questions que nous nous emploierons à répondre dans les pages qui suivent. Deux auteurs belges symbolistes furent particulièrement traduits et commentés en Angleterre dès les années 1890 ; l'attention se portera par conséquent sur leurs médiateurs : il s'agit de Maurice Maeterlinck et d'Émile Verhaeren.

« The Belgian Shakespeare » et ses premiers traducteurs

« It was France that invented the ingenious libel of “the Belgian Shakespeare” »⁽⁹⁾. Rien ne pouvait en effet intriguer davantage les critiques anglais que le mot provocateur d'Octave Mirbeau. Le critique français n'est pas le premier à découvrir Maeterlinck, mais il se fait son habile et stratège

(7) Anne VAN BUUL, *In vreemde grond gewortel. Prerafaëlitisme in de Nederlandse literatuur en beeldende kunst (1855-1910)*, Hilversum, Uitgeverij Verloren, 2014, p. 85-87 et 302-305.

(8) On lira à ce sujet l'étude de la mise en place et de l'évolution de cette rubrique dans Marysa DEMOOR, « In a Nutshell. The Belgian Cultural Pages in the *Athenaeum* », in Joris DUYSCHAEVER & Frank MATTON, eds., *Flemish, Scottish, and Other European Minority Literatures. Canon-Formation and Nationalism*, Maastricht, Shaker, 2005, p. 117-126.

(9) Anonyme, « The Princess Maleine and The Intruder », in *The Athenaeum*, 23 avril 1892, 3365, p. 526.

promoteur en publiant à son sujet un célèbre article dans *Le Figaro* en août 1890. L'auteur de *La Princesse Maleine* y voit son œuvre décrite comme « comparable », voire « supérieure à ce qu'il y a de plus de beau chez Shakespeare »⁽¹⁰⁾. En effectuant cette très avantageuse comparaison, Mirbeau, qui répand de la sorte autour de Maeterlinck la brume de Thulé et l'aura du « divin Will », ne pouvait qu'exciter l'opinion britannique par ricochet : son mot étonne (voire indigne) à Londres, où les commentateurs et gloseurs de cette comparaison se multiplient. On surnomme vite et durablement le dramaturge le « Belgian Shakespeare ».

Dans *The Academy*, l'écrivain écossais William Sharp dénonce une mystification dans l'attribution de la découverte de Maeterlinck par Mirbeau en France et par William Archer – évoqué plus loin en ces pages – au Royaume-Uni⁽¹¹⁾. Apparemment bien informé sur le champ littéraire belge, il évoque le nom d'Albert Arnay, important critique belge aujourd'hui méconnu, qui, le premier, aurait défendu Maeterlinck⁽¹²⁾. Celui-ci ne l'aurait pas comparé au seul Shakespeare, mais plus globalement, et de façon plus pertinente, au théâtre élisabéthain. Pour Sharp, si Arnay avait émis la comparaison mirbellienne, « particularly with implied depreciation of Shakespeare, there is no doubt that he would have been hearkened to greedily across the Meuse and even beyond the Channel »⁽¹³⁾. Si Sharp réfute la comparaison, il se rend cependant compte qu'elle fait utilement du bruit pour Maeterlinck. Il ne la ruine donc pas complètement en ajoutant :

« A strain of English blood, I understand, runs in the veins of M. Maeterlinck. However this may be, his literary inheritance is markedly English. He himself admits this; and it is doubtful if any continental writer [...] is more intimate not only with our latter-day poets, but with the superb wilderness of Elizabethan literature itself »⁽¹⁴⁾.

Si Mirbeau a savamment orchestré la promotion de l'auteur belge, il ne faudrait pas pour autant lui attribuer la paternité de cette idée du rapport à Shakespeare que Maeterlinck a lui-même mise en place en se référant constamment à la littérature anglaise et en ne cachant pas sa prédilection pour le théâtre élisabéthain. En tout cas, dès septembre 1892, l'anglophilie du dramaturge gantois et sa célébrité permettent au *Pall Mall Gazette* de présenter Fernand Khnopff comme « the Maeterlinck of the brush »⁽¹⁵⁾.

Aux yeux d'Arthur Symons, le critique et écrivain écossais William Archer (1856-1924) aurait été le premier à avoir fait découvrir Maeterlinck aux Anglais à travers son article « A Pessimist Playwright », publié dans *The*

(10) *Le Figaro*, 24 août 1890.

(11) William SHARP, « “The Princess Maleine” and “The Intruder” », in *The Academy*, 19 mars 1892, 1037, p. 270-272.

(12) Robert O.J. VAN NUFFEL, « Une lettre d'Albert Arnay sur *Les Sept Princesses* », in *Annales de la Fondation M. Maeterlinck*, t. I, 1955, p. 91-96.

(13) W. SHARP, « “The Princess Maleine” and “The Intruder” », *op. cit.*, p. 270.

(14) *Ibid.*, p. 270.

(15) Anonyme, « A Poet painter » [interview de Fernand Khnopff], in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 septembre 1892.

Fortnightly Review, en septembre 1891⁽¹⁶⁾. Tout en admirant Maeterlinck, Archer n'ose réitérer la comparaison de Mirbeau, jugée exagérée, et va lui préférer celle – bien moins efficace, mais néanmoins amusante – d'un « Webster who has read Alfred de Musset⁽¹⁷⁾ ». Il y revient néanmoins au moment de parler de *La Princesse Maleine*: « In reading the last two acts, we feel that M. Mirbeau was not so utterly astray in citing the name of Shakespeare, if only he had used it more discreetly »⁽¹⁸⁾.

Dans son article, Archer cite des extraits de *L'Intruse*, dont il traduit une partie dans la même livraison. En s'impliquant dans un travail de traduction, le critique en vient à évoquer des questions de style, particulièrement déterminantes dans les débats propres au champ littéraire anglais de cette période⁽¹⁹⁾ :

« I have translated only seven pages out of seventy, yet enough, perhaps, to convey some impression of M. Maeterlinck's peculiar trick of dialogue. His short and simple phrases, his chiming reiterations, at first suggest the method of Ollendorf (a dramatist in his way) rather than that of Shakespeare or Alfred de Musset »⁽²⁰⁾.

Après ces considérations stylistiques, Archer met l'accent sur le caractère pessimiste des pièces du dramaturge et sur ses personnages submergés par la fatalité. Il ne fait que prolonger le sens de son action en faveur du théâtre d'Ibsen, dont il s'est fait l'ardent défenseur en traduisant *The Pillars of Society* dès 1880. Or, comme le montre Pascale Casanova, c'est la charge subversive du réalisme d'Ibsen qui a conditionné la réception du dramaturge norvégien à Londres et non un symbolisme nordique éthéré conçu en rejet du naturalisme, comme à Paris⁽²¹⁾. La caractérisation « pessimiste » du théâtre maeterlinckien se situe donc dans une suite logique, faisant du dramaturge belge un annonciateur funeste. Archer continue d'ailleurs de traduire abondamment Ibsen en même temps qu'il promeut Maeterlinck.

Le critique devient donc un des premiers traducteurs anglophones de ce dernier, même s'il ne se consacre encore qu'à des extraits et non à une œuvre complète. Il donne à lire en anglais des parties de *L'Intruse* et de *La Princesse Maleine* au sein de son article. Ses traductions, qui apparaissent plus comme un péri-texte de ses articles, vu leur caractère parcellaire, s'inscrivent dans une démarche critique : Archer oriente ses commentaires de l'œuvre sur un plan stylistique en prenant dès lors à témoin ses traductions pour attester sa compétence d'analyse et d'expertise. Sa première (et unique) traduction

(16) William ARCHER, « A Pessimist Playwright », in *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 50, septembre 1891, 297, p. 346-354.

(17) *Ibid.*, p. 346.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 354.

(19) À ce sujet, on lira l'étude pionnière de Gilles PHILIPPE, « “En matière de style, l'Angleterre a surtout retenu la leçon française.” Le *Criterion* et la question du style français », in *CONTEXTES*, numéro sur la « Sociologie du style littéraire », à paraître en 2015.

(20) W. ARCHER, « A Pessimist Playwright », *op. cit.*, p. 349.

(21) Pascale CASANOVA, « The Ibsen Battle: a Comparative Analysis of the Introduction of Henrik Ibsen in France, England and Ireland », in C. CHARLE, J. VINCENT & J. WINTER, eds., *Anglo-French Attitudes*, *op. cit.*, p. 214-232.

complète de Maeterlinck, *Interior*, issue du drame pour marionnettes, est publiée en novembre 1894 dans *The New Review*⁽²²⁾. Cette traduction sera reprise quelques années plus tard dans un recueil des pièces pour marionnettes en 1899 aux côtés des traductions d'Alfred Sutro⁽²³⁾, qui deviendra un traducteur « attiré » de Maeterlinck. Occupant à l'égard de l'auteur belge une fonction relevant essentiellement de la critique de théâtre, Archer s'adjoint une pratique de traduction qui renforce son rôle de médiateur en faveur de l'écrivain.

D'autres anglophones ont très tôt contacté Maeterlinck pour une autorisation de traduction. C'est le cas de More Adey⁽²⁴⁾, proche d'Oscar Wilde, critique d'art et corédacteur en chef du *Burlington Magazine*, qui a sollicité le dramaturge au sujet de la *Princesse Maleine* – déjà promise à un autre traducteur, que nous verrons – et des *Aveugles*⁽²⁵⁾. Il recevra l'autorisation de traduire *L'Intruse*, montée au Haymarket Theatre de Londres, le 27 janvier 1892, soit sept mois après la première parisienne. Toutefois, un quiproquo entre l'éditeur Heinemann et More Adey semble avoir obéré la possibilité de toute collaboration ultérieure⁽²⁶⁾. Utilisant le pseudonyme de William Wilson, Adey est surtout resté connu, en ce qui concerne cet aspect de son activité professionnelle, pour sa traduction du *Brand* d'Ibsen en 1891, c'est-à-dire à une période proche de celle où il s'intéresse à Maeterlinck. Cet exemple confirme qu'en Angleterre, les premières introductions du théâtre de Maeterlinck sont passées par les mêmes canaux que ceux du dramaturge scandinave. Entre des œuvres en norvégien et en français, il n'y a pourtant linguistiquement rien de commun pour un Anglais. Cette « coïncidence » confirme l'idée de Blaise Wilfert selon laquelle, malgré des différences de réception et d'interprétation, les champs anglais et français cultivent des intérêts comparables en matière de littératures étrangères⁽²⁷⁾.

Le tour des premières figures de traducteurs de Maeterlinck ne s'achève pas ici. Si Archer fut le premier à faire paraître des bribes traduites de *La Princesse Maleine*, il n'est cependant pas le premier à en publier la complète traduction : c'est au journaliste « assimilé belge », Gérard Harry, que revient ce rôle. Celui-ci dirigea les quotidiens de *L'Indépendance belge* et du *Petit Bleu du Matin*. Né à Paris de parents anglais immigrés, il a développé un bilinguisme dont il tente de tirer le plus grand profit dès les débuts de sa carrière. Il se décrit d'ailleurs lui-même fièrement comme un « métèque »

(22) Maurice MAETERLINCK, « Interior. A Drama for Marionnettes. Translated by William Archer », in *The New Review*, vol. 11, novembre 1894, 66, p. 543-554.

(23) Maurice MAETERLINCK, *Three Little Dramas: Alladine and Palomides, Interior, The Death of Tintagiles*, Londres, Duckworth, 1899.

(24) À son sujet, voir Barbara PEZZINI, « More Adey, the Carfax Gallery and 'The Burlington Magazine' », in *The Burlington Magazine*, t. 153, décembre 2011, p. 808-814.

(25) On lira les lettres de Maurice Maeterlinck adressées à Gérard Harry consignées dans Robert O.J. VAN NUFFEL, « Inventaire des documents du cabinet M. Maeterlinck », in *Annales de la Fondation M. Maeterlinck*, t. 4, 1958, p. 44 et 45 (lettres 5 à 10).

(26) *Ibid.*, p. 45.

(27) Blaise WILFERT, « Literary Import Into France and Britain Around 1900: a Comparative Study », in C. CHARLE, J. VINCENT & J. WINTER, eds., *Anglo-French Attitudes*, op. cit., p. 190.

dans ses mémoires⁽²⁸⁾. Devant la difficulté de percer au sein des milieux littéraires parisiens et après une brouille familiale, il contacte Léon Bérardi à Bruxelles, directeur de *L'Indépendance belge*, pour devenir journaliste dans ce quotidien libéral. Il se rend dans la capitale belge en octobre 1876⁽²⁹⁾ et, sur place, il prend connaissance des innovations littéraires de la génération symboliste. À la suite de l'article de Mirbeau, Harry, flairant le souffre répandu par la comparaison avec Shakespeare, sollicite directement le *New York Herald* en 1890 pour lui livrer une interview de Maeterlinck, alors qu'il ne connaissait pas encore le dramaturge⁽³⁰⁾. La rencontre entre les deux hommes, en octobre de la même année, constitue le début d'une longue amitié qui conduira Harry à publier un essai sur l'écrivain, publié en 1909 et traduit ensuite en anglais⁽³¹⁾. Après l'interview et un autre article paru dans le *Manchester Guardian*⁽³²⁾, Harry, alors âgé de 36 ans, publie en 1892 chez William Heinemann, *The Princess Maleine*⁽³³⁾, c'est-à-dire quelques mois après l'article d'Archer. À ce sujet, Harry explique :

« [Mon] bilinguisme me fut fort utile, surtout à mes débuts, alors que n'ayant pu faire encore aucune preuve sérieuse d'aptitude littéraire, il me mit le pied dans l'étrier comme traducteur à *L'Indépendance*. Par la suite, il me permit de révéler le génie naissant de Maeterlinck aux Britanniques par une traduction anglaise de la *Princesse Maleine*, à propos de laquelle le grand écrivain belge me déclara épistolairement : « Vous avez fait autant pour ma diffusion en Angleterre qu'Octave Mirbeau en France » [...] »⁽³⁴⁾.

Dans son édition du texte, la note introductive est assumée par un écrivain alors célèbre, Hall Caine, qui fut secrétaire de Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Il faut dire que les tensions se crispent autour de l'importation des œuvres

(28) « En Belgique, les uns me croient Français, d'autres Irlandais ou Anglo-Américain ; en France, je passe généralement pour un Belge, de patriotisme notoire. À Londres, il y a trente-cinq ans, j'eus à prendre la parole un soir, en anglais, sous les vitrages du Palais de Cristal, à la fin d'un banquet offert par la « Institute of British Journalists » [...]. Le lendemain, les journaux de Londres furent unanimes à déclarer qu'on avait rarement entendu un étranger discourir sur les bords de la Tamise avec si peu d'accent exotique. Ils me sacraient polyglotte wallon » (Gérard HARRY, *Les confessions d'un métèque. Mes mémoires*, préfacé par M. Maeterlinck, t. 1, Bruxelles, Office de Publicité, 1927, p. 1-2).

(29) Voir R.O.J. VAN NUFFEL, « Inventaire des documents du cabinet M. Maeterlinck », *op. cit.*, p. 38-40.

(30) Gérard HARRY, *Spectacles, figures, leçons d'un demi-siècle. De Léopold II et Guillaume II à Mussolini. Mes mémoires*, t. 3, préfacé par M. Maeterlinck, Bruxelles, Office de Publicité, 1929, p. 233.

(31) Gérard HARRY, *Maurice Maeterlinck*, Bruxelles, Charles Carrington, 1909; Gérard HARRY, *Maurice Maeterlinck, A Biographical Study: With Two Essays by M. Maeterlinck*, traduit par Alfred ALLINSON, Londres, Georges Allen & Sons, 1910.

(32) Gérard HARRY, « A New Shakespeare », in *Manchester Guardian*, 28 octobre 1890.

(33) Maurice MAETERLINCK, *The Princess Maleine* [translated by G. Harry,] and *the Intruder* [translated by W. Wilson], avec une introduction de Hall Caine, Londres, William Heinemann, 1892.

(34) G. HARRY, *Mes mémoires*, t. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

de Maeterlinck⁽³⁵⁾ : l'appel à une caution consacrée révèle une implication véritable dans cette promotion. Or ce type de caution ne peut incomber à Harry, lui qui n'a de renommée qu'à Bruxelles et demeure inconnu du public anglais malgré ses origines. Les critiques soumises à son égard ciblent d'ailleurs cruellement les traces d'une maîtrise imparfaite de la langue : « To criticize it in detail would be to rewrite every page. We should not have believed that anything so easy to translate could possibly have been translated so badly. It is charitable to suppose that Mr. Gérard Harry, the translator, is not an Englishman; but if he is not an Englishman, why was he chosen to translate anything into English^{(36)? »} Cela semble évident : la figure de Harry, contrairement aux deux autres, trahit un mouvement d'importation venu de la Belgique même et ses paramètres diffèrent forcément.

Les traducteurs attitrés de Maurice Maeterlinck

Plusieurs figures se sont déjà succédé sans parvenir à être durablement adoubées. Alfred Sutro deviendra le premier traducteur attitré de Maeterlinck⁽³⁷⁾. Né en Angleterre au sein d'une famille juive ayant émigré de Bavière, il doit une part de ses connaissances linguistiques à une scolarité qu'il a suivie à Bruxelles à la fin des années 1870. Comme avec Harry, les liens sont d'emblée amicaux entre les deux hommes⁽³⁸⁾. Ils se rencontrent à Paris vers 1894 dans le cadre des répétitions du Théâtre de l'Œuvre qui monte alors les pièces de Maeterlinck sous la direction de l'acteur Aurélien Lugné-Poe⁽³⁹⁾. En mars 1895, le metteur en scène et le dramaturge se rendent à Londres pour donner plusieurs représentations à l'Opéra-Comique⁽⁴⁰⁾. Durant ce séjour, Sutro, en médiateur prévenant, organise une rencontre de Maeterlinck avec Archer ainsi qu'avec George Bernard Shaw⁽⁴¹⁾. Avant même de devenir son traducteur, Sutro qui a des ambitions dans le milieu

(35) Gérard Harry en atteste dans ses mémoires par rapport aux épisodes liés à la publication de sa traduction : « Voici qui donnera une idée de la violence de la controverse dont il était l'objet. On sait que je traduisis la *Princesse Maleine* en anglais, avec l'espoir de la faire paraître à Londres chez mon ami William Heinemann ; celui-ci, à son habitude, soumit l'œuvre à un collaborateur spécialement chargé des lectures préliminaires des manuscrits. Or, ce lecteur dit à Heinemann ce rapport : "La *Princesse Maleine* est le plus révoltant plagiat shakespearien que j'ai jamais rencontré. Je ne puis concevoir comment, qui que ce soit, sous le soleil, ait eu la monumentale audace de présenter un tel drame comme une œuvre personnelle". C'est uniquement pour m'être agréable que Heinemann finit par publier ma version anglaise de la *Princesse Maleine*, malgré ce rapport très défavorablement disposé » (G. HARRY, *Mes mémoires*, t. 3, *op. cit.*, p. 234, note de bas de page).

(36) Anonyme, « The Princess Maleine and The Intruder », in *The Athenæum*, *op. cit.*, p. 526.

(37) À son sujet, on lira Lewis SAWIN, *Alfred Sutro: a Man With a Heart*, Niwot, University Press of Colorado, 1989.

(38) Maeterlinck dédie d'ailleurs la *Vie des abeilles* (1927) à son « ami Alfred Sutro ».

(39) Voir ses mémoires : Alfred SUTRO, *Celebrities and Simple Souls*, Londres, Duckworth, 1933.

(40) Jacques ROBICHEZ, *Le Symbolisme au théâtre. Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Œuvre*, Paris, L'Arche, 1957, p. 328.

(41) A. SUTRO, *Celebrities*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

théâtral assume un rôle de relais au sein des milieux critiques et littéraires londoniens. Sa position diffère en cela de celle de Harry, dont l'ancrage belge ne lui permettait sans doute pas de disposer d'un tel réseau à Londres.

S'il commence son travail en publiant en 1896 la pièce *The Death of Tintagiles* dans la revue littéraire *The Pageant*⁽⁴²⁾, Sutro traduira essentiellement les essais du dramaturge puisqu'il s'attache dès 1897 à l'essai du *Trésor des humbles* (*The Treasure of the Humble*)⁽⁴³⁾, avec une préface d'Arthur Bingham Walkley, critique également favorable à Ibsen) et, en 1898, à *La sagesse et la destinée* (*Wisdom and Destiny*)⁽⁴⁴⁾. Il obtient ensuite une exclusivité sur les essais, ce qui va lui permettre de se faire un nom. Il entretient aussi quelque velléité dans l'écriture dramatique puisqu'il publie une pièce, en 1900, *The Cave of illusion*, à laquelle Maeterlinck offre le concours d'une préface (publiée en français). Cela montre combien le nom de l'auteur belge possède une fonction légitimante, même dans le champ littéraire anglais.

Son travail de traducteur, souvent salué, souffre toutefois de sévères critiques à ses débuts dans les revues anglaises. Un article énumère sur trois longues pages les carences de ses traductions sous un titre dont l'interrogation résonne d'emblée comme une sentence : « Can Mr. Alfred Sutro translate Maeterlinck? »⁽⁴⁵⁾. Malgré ces critiques, Sutro restera un fidèle traducteur du Gantois, livrant des travaux jusque 1930, alors qu'il recrute lui-même son successeur Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, qui traduira aussi des œuvres de Maeterlinck de 1904 jusqu'à sa propre mort en 1921.

Entre Archer et Sutro, une autre traductrice essentielle a officié. Il s'agit de Laurence Alma-Tadema, écrivaine et romancière, fille du peintre préraphaélite Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Celui-ci, d'origine néerlandaise, a suivi sa formation en peinture à l'Académie d'Anvers dès 1852 et est devenu ensuite élève du peintre belge Henri Leys. Installée à Londres dès 1870, la famille Alma-Tadema entretient également des liens avec Fernand Khnopff, jouissant d'une certaine notoriété outre-Manche dès les années 1890⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Miss Laurence Alma-Tadema a traduit parmi les œuvres majeures de Maeterlinck comme *Pelléas et Mélisande* et *Les Aveugles* (*Pelleas and Melisanda and The Sightless*)⁽⁴⁷⁾. Ses travaux reçoivent les meilleurs compliments⁽⁴⁸⁾. Selon *The National Observer*, son travail « is excellently well

(42) *The Pageant*, vol. 1, 1896, p. 47-71.

(43) Maurice MAETERLINCK, *The Treasure of the Humble*, avec une introduction d'A.B. Walkley, Londres, George Allen, 1897.

(44) Maurice MAETERLINCK, *Wisdom and Destiny*, Londres, George Allen, 1898.

(45) Jane T. STODDART, « Can Mr. Alfred Sutro Translate Maeterlinck? », in *The Bookman*, novembre 1898, p. 41-43.

(46) Le peintre a d'ailleurs raconté les souvenirs de sa rencontre avec Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema dans une conférence publiée de l'Académie royale de Belgique : Fernand KHNOFF, « Des souvenirs à propos de Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema », in *Annexe aux Bulletins de l'Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, 1915-18, p. 10-12.

(47) Maurice MAETERLINCK, *Pelleas and Melisanda, and the Sightless*, traduit par Laurence ALMA TADEMA, Londres, Walter Scott, 1895.

(48) Voir notamment Anonyme, « Maeterlinck in English », in *The Bookman*, vol. 9, octobre 1895, 49, p. 26-27.

done. The question is whether it was worth doing »⁽⁴⁹⁾. Dans cet article intitulé « The Belgian Shakespeare », le critique explique que la majorité des personnes pourraient lire sans difficultés le dramaturge « in the original Belgian »⁽⁵⁰⁾, faisant ici allusion aux irrégularités de sa langue... Cette vision révèle un fait majeur : une part assez importante du lectorat anglophone potentiel de Maeterlinck est considérée par le critique comme suffisamment compétente pour lire le texte dans sa langue originale. Par ailleurs, la référence à l'« original Belgian », évidemment stigmatisante, montre combien ce lectorat serait capable d'interpréter les écarts de Maeterlinck vis-à-vis d'un usage normé de la langue littéraire. Mettant en valeur la traductrice, il dévalue *a contrario* le dramaturge, dont l'œuvre, selon lui, aurait mieux valu n'être jamais écrite. On peut en déduire qu'une personnalité comme Laurence Alma-Tadema, qui semble bénéficier d'un *a priori* positif, apporte son nom pour promouvoir l'œuvre de Maeterlinck. En effet, le critique s'étonne du fait « that Miss Alma Tadema and other undeniably gifted persons discern poetry in it ». Pour lui, ils font erreur malgré leur talent : « they fix their own attributes on Mr Maeterlinck », dont l'écriture ne se composerait que d'« eccentricity of incoherence and repetition »⁽⁵¹⁾.

Alma-Tadema développe plusieurs idées sur Maeterlinck dans une préface introductive au recueil de ses traductions. Elle produit une réelle analyse et non une simple translation linguistique. Le critique du *National Observer* réagit d'ailleurs à cette préface qui suscite le débat⁽⁵²⁾. D'après Alma-Tadema, Maeterlinck poserait un voile sur le monde tout en possédant un regard perspicace sur ses grands mystères, ce qui semble poursuivre de façon ambiguë la voie d'une interprétation de son œuvre dans la lignée du réalisme ibsénien, dont on a vu combien lui était liée la réception de Maeterlinck outre-Manche.

Résolument engagée en faveur de l'auteur belge, la romancière participera également à la publication dans *The Times* d'une lettre ouverte de protestation à l'occasion de la censure et de l'interdiction pour immoralité de la représentation de *Monna Vanna* par les services royaux du Lord Chamberlain. La pièce, qui devait être donnée en français au Great Queen-Street Theatre, par la compagnie du Théâtre de l'Œuvre⁽⁵³⁾, sera finalement jouée dans un théâtre privé. Cette interdiction pousse Arthur Symons, indigné, à écrire une lettre ouverte qu'Alma-Tadema va elle-même diffuser dans les milieux littéraires pour obtenir des signatures⁽⁵⁴⁾. Elle rédige ensuite, après la représentation, une analyse approfondie de la pièce dans *The Fortnightly Review*⁽⁵⁵⁾. Loin de se limiter à la traduction, Alma-Tadema aura activement plaidé en faveur de

(49) Anonyme, « The Belgian Shakespeare », in *The National Observer*, vol. 14, 2 novembre 1895, 363, p. 711.

(50) *Ibid.*

(51) *Ibid.*, p. 712.

(52) *Ibid.*

(53) À ce sujet, voir Dawn B. SOVA, *Banned Plays. Censorship Histories of 125 Stage Dramas*, New York, Checkmark Books, 2004, p. 184-186.

(54) Arthur SYMONS, *Selected Letters 1880-1935*, édité par Karl BECKSON et John M. MUNRO, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989, p. 166.

(55) Laurence ALMA TADEMA, « Monna Vanna », in *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 72, July 1902, 427, p. 153-156.

Maeterlinck en jouant de ses relations privilégiées avec le monde artistique et littéraire anglais. La prédilection picturale du « Belgian Shakespeare » pour le mouvement des peintres préraphaélites, dans le sillage duquel se situe le père de « Miss Tadema », fait sens et montre combien les réseaux belgo-anglais et l'anglophilie de l'avant-garde belge peuvent participer jusqu'au recrutement des médiateurs et traducteurs.

Les traducteurs d'Émile Verhaeren

La notoriété d'Émile Verhaeren en Angleterre n'a pas émergé aussi rapidement que celle de Maeterlinck⁽⁵⁶⁾. Sa première traductrice, Alma Strettell (1853-1939), comme Laurence Alma-Tadema, appartient à une élite culturelle cosmopolite. Elle a grandi en Italie avant de venir s'installer à Londres, peu après le mariage de sœur Alice Vansittart Strettell, en 1873, avec le critique d'art Joseph Comyns Carr, défenseur des préraphaélites et directeur de la Grosvenor Gallery puis de la New Gallery à Londres. En 1890, elle épouse le peintre anglais Lawrence Alexander Peter Harrison. C'est dire combien Alma Strettell est familière des galeries d'art et du monde de la peinture. Cette position lui aurait peut-être permis de connaître la jeune Alma-Tadema : ce petit monde se côtoie vraisemblablement.

La réputation de Strettell en tant que traductrice s'est établie bien avant qu'elle ne s'attache à l'œuvre de Verhaeren. À destination de l'anglais, elle a traduit à partir du grec, de l'allemand, ainsi que – et surtout – des chansons roumaines d'Elena Vacarescu, qui lui ont procuré une appréciable notoriété et qui furent réalisées en collaboration avec la reine consort Élisabeth de Roumanie (pseud. Carmen Sylva) en 1891⁽⁵⁷⁾.

En se consacrant à Verhaeren, elle s'implique directement dans le milieu des petites revues littéraires d'avant-garde, comme *The Yellow Book*, où elle publie plusieurs poèmes traduits : « Rain »⁽⁵⁸⁾, « The Fishermen »⁽⁵⁹⁾ et « The Wind »⁽⁶⁰⁾ (ce dernier publié conjointement avec une chanson populaire roumaine, « A Soldier's Farewell »). Le fait que le nom de la traductrice soit alors mis en avant par rapport à celui du poète belge (mis entre parenthèses) montre que c'est la réputation de Strettell qui sert à ce moment celle de Verhaeren. À cela s'ajoute le fait qu'un même numéro publie ensemble des textes belge et roumain, aux rapports très lâches entre eux. La « sélection » lettrée de la traductrice constitue une marque de goût et une forme d'auctorialité. Strettell publie également d'autres traductions de

(56) Une partie conséquente de la recherche a déjà été défrichée concernant ce poète par le travail consciencieux de Jacques Marx au sujet d'Alma Strettell et d'Osman Edwards : Jacques MARX, « Verhaeren et ses traducteurs anglais », in *Revue de Littérature comparée*, 2001, 3, 299, p. 443-454.

(57) Hélène [Elena] VACARESCU, *The Bard of the Dimbovitza. Roumanian Folk Songs Collected from the Peasants by Hélène Vacarescu*, traduction de Carmen Sylva [pseud., i.e. Elizabeth, Queen of Roumania] et Alma Strettell [2 volumes], Londres, J. R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1891-94.

(58) *The Yellow Book*, vol. 8, janvier 1896, p. 223-225.

(59) *The Yellow Book*, vol. 9, avril 1896, p. 135-139.

(60) *The Yellow Book*, vol. 11, octobre 1896, p. 163-165.

Verhaeren dans *The Fortnightly Review* : « The Silence »⁽⁶¹⁾, en mars 1896, et « The Grave-Digger », en novembre 1896, associé cette fois à une étude sur le poète, rédigée par Virginia Crawford⁽⁶²⁾. La traduction, en ce dernier exemple, mise aux côtés d'une analyse, planifie une véritable introduction.

Finalement, l'ensemble de ces traductions essayées dans des périodiques lui permet de publier en un recueil une sélection des poèmes de Verhaeren en 1899 chez John Lane, l'éditeur du *Yellow Book*. Ce volume reprend surtout des poèmes issus des *Villages illusoires* et de recueils plus anciens. Elle rédige une note introductive où elle présente le poète comme profondément influencé par les paysages flamands de l'Escaut, ce « country of mist and flood, of dykes and marshes »⁽⁶³⁾, qui conférerait aux textes des qualités visuelles et picturales liées à leur « terroir ». Pour favoriser sa réception, elle signale la connivence de Verhaeren avec Maeterlinck, déjà plus familier aux lecteurs anglais. Ses lettres au poète attestent la constitution d'une relation amicale, mais surtout, ses différents déplacements lors desquels la traductrice donne aussi facilement rendez-vous à Paris ou à Londres, révélant son mode de vie cosmopolite⁽⁶⁴⁾.

Sur la même période, comme le montre Jacques Marx, Osman Edwards (1864-1936), devient le traducteur attiré de Verhaeren, en jetant son dévolu sur une autre partie de l'œuvre du poète. En août 1896, dans une autre revue littéraire d'avant-garde, *The Savoy*, il juxtapose la version française « Pieusement » à sa traduction anglaise « In Pious Mood » et signe cette dernière de son seul nom. Coïncidant avec Alma Strettell, Edwards publie encore une étude importante sur le poète, en novembre 1896, dans *The Savoy*⁽⁶⁵⁾. Critique, conférencier, traducteur du norvégien Bjørnson, admirateur du Japon où il a vécu et au sujet duquel il a abondamment écrit, Edwards semble également un digne représentant du cosmopolitisme fin de siècle qui cultive un intérêt presque obligé pour la littérature scandinave. Avant de traduire Verhaeren, il a publié une critique louangeuse des *Villages illusoires* dans le *Daily Chronicle* en 1895, où il prépare la réception anglaise de Verhaeren en le comparant à Rossetti dans son style d'écriture⁽⁶⁶⁾. Dans une lettre au poète, il avoue avoir voulu contrebalancer la visite de Maeterlinck en Angleterre en publiant ce dernier article⁽⁶⁷⁾. Preuve à nouveau que la réception des deux auteurs belges se conditionne alors l'une par rapport à l'autre.

(61) *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 59, 351, p. 463-465. Le texte est signé « Alma Strettell [sic] » en petites majuscules (« From the French of Émile Verhaeren »).

(62) Virginia Mary CRAWFORD, « Émile Verhaeren: the Belgian Poet », dans *Fortnightly Review*, t. 60, 1896, p. 715-720.

(63) *Poems of Émile Verhaeren, Selected and Rendered into English by Alma Strettell, with a Portrait of the Author by John S. Sargent*, Londres-New York, John Lane-The Bodley Head, 1899 (réédité en 1915).

(64) Ces lettres sont conservées aux Archives et Musée de la Littérature (AML), Bruxelles, sous les cotes FS XVI 101/10 et 16, 145/25 et 26, 148/507 à 510 et 111/16. Une lettre de l'éditeur John Lane à Verhaeren est également conservée : FS XVI 101/08.

(65) Osman EDWARDS, « Émile Verhaeren », in *The Savoy*, t. 7, novembre 1896, p. 65-78.

(66) Voir la traduction française de ce texte dans *Le Coq rouge*, juin 1895, p. 107-110.

(67) Lettre d'Osman Edwards à Émile Verhaeren, 19 mai 1895. Bruxelles, AML, cote FS XVI 145/24.

La dernière figure – et non la moins célèbre – à aborder parmi les premiers traducteurs anglais des auteurs symbolistes belges n'est autre qu'Arthur Symons, le « décadent » britannique. Déjà réputé pour sa francophilie, sa « gallomanie », l'écrivain publie dès 1893, dans le *Harper's Magazine*, son article « The Decadent Movement in Literature⁽⁶⁸⁾ », où il aborde Maeterlinck au sein d'une pléiade d'auteurs français : Mallarmé, Verlaine, Huysmans, Goncourt... Pourtant, cela ne l'empêche pas, dans une importante notice qu'il rédige sur la littérature belge contemporaine dans la dixième édition de l'*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1902), d'évoquer ce moment où « a group of Belgian writers began to detach themselves from the various schools of France »⁽⁶⁹⁾ en se rassemblant autour de Camille Lemonnier. Symons est donc nettement conscient des enjeux spécifiques à une tendance nationale belge vis-à-vis de la littérature française.

S'il n'a produit que des textes critiques à propos de Maeterlinck, il a par contre traduit une pièce de Verhaeren, *Les Aubes*, avec la connivence d'Edwards (puisqu'il lui emprunte son exemplaire)⁽⁷⁰⁾. À nouveau, c'est le statut confirmé du traducteur qui vient faire office de caution pour l'auteur belge comme le montre un article intitulé « Mr. Arthur Symons as Translator » dans *The Academy* : « We must confess that Mr Arthur Symons's name on the title-page seemed to us a guarantee of good work »⁽⁷¹⁾. Pourtant, malgré la caution du nom, le titre de l'article suggère qu'on n'est guère habitué à le voir dans ce rôle : et c'est bien le prétexte saisi pour égratigner la traduction comme une des moins soignées jamais rencontrée ! Au *Bookman*, l'appréciation sera un peu plus clémente en rappelant de prétendues difficultés (bien sûr non énumérées), qui seraient posées dès le départ par la pièce de Verhaeren et son écriture⁽⁷²⁾.

Il faut d'emblée noter que l'œuvre dramaturgique du poète belge obtiendra un écho important au Royaume-Uni. La traduction des *Aubes* est publiée en 1898 avec une note introductive où Symons analyse et interprète d'abord l'ensemble de la poésie de Verhaeren. Il observe en particulier le passage d'un symbolisme vers une forme de naturalisme dans ses poèmes, où le goût du visuel, grâce aux influences picturales et à un regard aiguisé, demeurerait omniprésent. Cette prégnance visuelle rejoint l'atavisme flamand par rapport à un héritage pictural déjà évoqué dans le milieu anglo-saxon par Alma Strettell et qui constitue un topos du symbolisme littéraire belge⁽⁷³⁾. En dernier lieu,

(68) Arthur SYMONS, « The Decadent Movement in Literature », in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, t. 87, novembre 1893, 522, p. 858-867.

(69) A[rthur] SY[MONS], « Belgium. Literature », in *The New Volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica*, dixième édition, t. 26, Édimbourg-Londres, A&C Black, 1902, p. 203.

(70) A. SYMONS, *Selected Letters 1880-1935*, op. cit., p. 125.

(71) Anonyme, « Mr. Arthur Symons as Translator. *The Dawn* ("Les Aubes"). By Émile Verhaeren », in *The Academy*, 3 décembre 1898, p. 370.

(72) Anonyme, « A Belgian Symbolist Drama », in *The Bookman*, vol. 15, décembre 1898, 87, p. 81.

(73) À ce sujet, voir notamment Paul ARON, « Quelques propositions pour mieux comprendre les rencontres entre peintres et écrivains en Belgique francophone », in *Écriture*, 1990, 36, p. 82-91 ; « Un pays de peintres », in P. ARON, ed., *La Belgique artistique et littéraire*, op. cit., p. 125-257 et Laurence BROGNIEZ & Véronique JAGO-ANTOINE, eds., *La Peinture (d)écrite*, in *Textyles*, 2000, 17-18.

Symons tisse opportunément un lien entre les *Aubes* et la tradition du théâtre élisabéthain en expliquant que l'alternance entre vers et prose de la pièce, qui a pu choquer les Français, ne pourra perturber le lecteur anglais⁽⁷⁴⁾. Il prétend avoir traduit littéralement le texte en conservant les rythmes à défaut des rimes. Ce procédé aurait d'après lui été approuvé par Verhaeren, qui aurait lui-même écrit à Symons que s'il avait pu écrire son texte en anglais, il aurait évité de faire rimer son texte⁽⁷⁵⁾. La référence au théâtre élisabéthain montre par ailleurs que, comme dans le cas de Maeterlinck, le fait de présenter une certaine disponibilité des textes belges à l'égard de la tradition anglaise fait partie de la mise en place d'une réception critique positive.

En guise de conclusion

Cet article, qui se consacrait au cas spécifique et restreint de la première phase d'importation de la littérature belge symboliste dans le champ littéraire anglais, a mis en évidence plusieurs figures qui cumulent plusieurs fonctions en dehors de celle de traducteur, cette dernière demeurant souvent même marginale au sein de leurs activités. Un certain nombre d'entre elles sont déjà impliquées dans les milieux littéraires et cherchent à lier la caution de leur nom à une découverte étrangère qu'ils souhaitent partager avec le public anglais. Un « goût », dont ils se portent garants, leur est attaché. Ils s'adjoignent une forme d'auctorialité par la bande : le goût du critique dilettante, celui de l'esthète qui s'affirme publiquement pour ses goûts raffinés.

En ces années 1890, le choix de traduire un auteur belge n'est pas tant motivé par la recherche de profit financier que par la quête d'un profit symbolique. Ces médiateurs et traducteurs fréquentent les cercles restreints d'une élite culturelle cosmopolite à la fois littéraire et artistique. Leurs possibilités de proximité avec la Belgique leur permettent souvent d'entretenir des relations directes avec Maeterlinck ou avec Verhaeren.

Les traducteurs se dévaluent peu dans une activité qu'ils détachent d'une fonction purement linguistique pour la lier à un acte de médiation, de promotion. Les essais ou les articles qui escortent leurs travaux transmettent les premiers éléments nécessaires à un débat littéraire. Ces analyses ne sont donc point, comme on pourrait l'attendre, des mises au point formelles concernant leurs transactions linguistiques. Dans une visée critique, on y cible les spécificités des auteurs belges, en mettant éventuellement en évidence des penchants anglophiles qui peuvent susciter la sympathie des lecteurs. Ce travail de médiation, s'il aboutit à des recueils, aujourd'hui les plus visibles dans les catalogues de bibliothèques, se déroule en fait préalablement dans les revues littéraires, où les nombreuses traductions, distribuées et redistribuées, sont abondamment débattues. On notera, dans ce cadre, à travers les exemples d'Alma Strettell et d'Alma-Tadema, que les revues permettent alors pleinement aux femmes d'assumer une pratique de la traduction qui leur sert encore si souvent de mode d'entrée en littérature,

(74) Arthur SYMONS, « Introduction », in Émile VERHAEREN, *The Dawn*, traduit par Arthur Symons, Londres, Duckworth, 1898, p. 7.

(75) *Ibid.*, p. 8.

comme l'a montré Marysa Demoor dans le cas des traductrices recrutées à *The Athenaeum*⁽⁷⁶⁾.

Jethro Bithell, au début du siècle suivant, incarnera une autre figure distincte du médiateur britannique. Il représentera le professeur d'université en lettres (germaniques, en l'occurrence) cherchant à établir une légitimité académique, en jouant un rôle de médiateur. Il traduira cette fois à lui seul l'ensemble des poètes et écrivains belges de langue française du symbolisme à travers une très large et sérieuse anthologie⁽⁷⁷⁾. Il dépassera même ce rôle en historiographiant pour la première fois le mouvement⁽⁷⁸⁾ et en écrivant une des premières monographies sur Maurice Maeterlinck⁽⁷⁹⁾. Son exemple achève de démontrer combien la Grande-Bretagne fut une véritable terre d'élection pour le mouvement belge.

Un élément qu'il importe de noter, et qui vient confirmer l'hypothèse liminaire de cet article : le désir de l'avant-garde belge de traverser la Manche, grâce à l'activation de nombreux relais, a permis à Maeterlinck de gagner Londres presque aussi rapidement que Paris : *L'Intruse*, montée au Théâtre d'Art de Paris en mai 1891, est jouée au Haymarket Theatre de Londres en janvier 1892. Les traductions des œuvres de Maeterlinck en anglais tardent d'ailleurs peu et si Verhaeren a quelque retard, celui-ci est vite comblé. Cette prise en compte est nécessaire afin de mieux saisir le succès des auteurs belges en Angleterre. Malgré la différence linguistique, la renommée se révèle fulgurante outre-Manche. Enfin, on aura vu qu'il est utile d'extraire les données d'une étude sur des relations *binaires* pour les replacer sur un plus vaste échiquier si l'on souhaite prendre la réelle mesure de ces échanges, qui furent, pour le cas qui nous occupe, déterminants dans la réussite européenne, voire mondiale, des symbolistes belges.

RÉSUMÉ

Clément DESSY, *Across the Channel : médiations et traductions du symbolisme littéraire belge en Grande-Bretagne (1890-1900)*

Le symbolisme en Belgique constitue un mouvement dont la portée s'est étendue largement au-delà des frontières du pays. Sa réception en Angleterre et le rôle des médiateurs à cet égard semblent avoir été presque complètement passés sous silence. Au point de vue littéraire, les écrivains belges de langue française sont traduits et publiés dans les revues littéraires anglaises. *The Pageant* publie des traductions des pièces de Maurice Maeterlinck tandis qu'Émile Verhaeren est traduit dans la revue *The Savoy*. Cet article interroge la chronologie de l'introduction des auteurs

(76) Marysa DEMOOR, « Laat-Victoriaanse vertaalsters en vertaalpraktijk in de Athenaeum », in Dirk DELABASTITA & Theo HERMANS, eds., *Vertalen historisch gezien. Tekst, metatekst, theorie*, 's-Gravenhage, Stichting Bibliographie Neerlandica, 1995, p. 35-50.

(77) *Contemporary Belgian Poetry*, selected and translated by Jethro BITHELL, London, Walter Scott, 1911.

(78) Jethro BITHELL, *Contemporary Belgian Literature*, London, Fisher Unwin, 1915.

(79) Jethro BITHELL, *Life and Writings of Maurice Maeterlinck*, London, Walter Scott Publishing, 1913.

symbolistes belges outre-Manche. Il montre combien les traducteurs ont à cet égard œuvré de façon déterminante en conjuguant leur action avec une fonction de critique et de médiation. L'étude comparée des différents profils de traducteurs démontre la proximité qu'ils entretiennent avec des milieux belges et cosmopolites. Elle montre en outre que la promotion des auteurs belges constitue une opération *win win* avec les traducteurs qui feront de l'Angleterre une terre d'élection pour le symbolisme belge, lui ouvrant les portes d'un succès européen voire mondial.

Littérature – médiation – réception – symbolisme – théâtre – traduction – transfert

SAMENVATTING

Clément DESSY, *Across the Channel : bemiddelingen en vertalingen van het Belgische literaire symbolisme in Groot-Brittannië (1890-1900)*

Het Belgische literaire symbolisme heeft zich tot ver buiten de nationale landsgrenzen verspreid. De aandacht voor het Belgische symbolisme in Groot-Brittannië en de rol van culturele bemiddelaars hierin werden tot nu toe weinig bestudeerd. In Britse literaire tijdschriften kwamen vertalingen van Franstalig-Belgische symbolistische schrijvers aan bod. *The Pageant* bijvoorbeeld had oog voor Maurice Maeterlinck, terwijl *The Savoy* vertalingen van Émile Verhaeren publiceerde. In dit artikel worden de introductie, de verspreiding en de receptie van Belgische symbolistische schrijvers in Groot-Brittannië geanalyseerd. Deze studie van Brits-Belgische literaire relaties toont aan dat vertalers hierin een beslissende rol hebben gespeeld doordat ze zowel als literaire critici als bemiddelaars optraden. Een vergelijking tussen de vertalers met een diverse achtergrond maakt duidelijk hoezeer zij met Belgische, internationalistische en kosmopolitische kringen waren verbonden. Dankzij deze vertalers kenden Belgische symbolistische schrijvers in Groot-Brittannië een groot succes, wat voor de bredere Europese bekendheid van het Belgische symbolisme van groot belang was.

Bemiddeling – literatuur – receptie – symbolisme – theater – vertaling – transfer

SUMMARY

Clément DESSY, *Across the Channel: Mediations and Translations of Belgian Literary Symbolism in Britain (1890-1900)*

Belgian Symbolism is a movement whose scope has expanded far beyond its borders. Its reception in England and the role of mediators have been almost ignored by the research. Yet, French-speaking Belgian authors were translated and published in English literary journals: *The Pageant* published translations of Maurice Maeterlinck's plays, while Émile Verhaeren's poems were translated in *The Savoy*. This article establishes the timing of the introduction of the Belgian Symbolist writers in Britain. It shows how the translators have played a decisive role by combining their action with a function of critique and mediator. This comparative study of the different profiles of translators demonstrates their proximity with Belgian and cosmopolitan networks. It also shows that the promotion of Belgian authors by their translators constitutes a win-win deal, that made England a chosen land for Belgian symbolism, one of its most important steps to its European success.

Literature – mediation – reception – symbolism – theatre – translation – transfer

Transgenerational Brokering. The Case for Symbolism and Surrealism in Flanders

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“nicht nur der Lehrer erzieht den Schüler,
auch der Schüler den Lehrer”
(Karl Mannheim)

Successive symbolist and surrealist generations appear capable of being distinguished just as well in the major French⁽¹⁾ as in the minor French-Belgian literary field – which, according to Bourdieu, despite all resistance is dominated by the French field⁽²⁾. Moreover, in the entire Belgian field, which also has a Dutch language field, these generations appear to consist of more members than traditional literary history ascribes to them. The most important explanation for this is that generations in literature can not only be defined on the basis of the ‘we-feeling’ expressed by the members at the time of their joining or a posteriori. Even if the existence of generations seems to imply the existence of a shared collective identity and sociologically speaking, this form of ‘Selbstthematisierung’⁽³⁾ or intellectual *self-fashioning* is indeed very important for each generation, this does not exclude our ability

(1) Concerning generations in French symbolism, see Michel DÉCAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes. Vingt ans de poésie française (1895-1914)*, Toulouse, Collection Universitas, 1960, p. 48, and in painting: Pierre-Louis MATHIEU, *The Symbolist Generation: 1870-1910*, Geneva, Skira, 1990. See also Paul-Henri BOURRELIER, *La Revue blanche. Une génération dans l'engagement 1890-1905*, Paris, Fayard, 2007. Concerning generations in French surrealism, see Jean-Luc RISPAIL, *Les Surréalistes: une génération entre le rêve et l'action*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991.

(2) Pierre BOURDIEU, “Existe-t-il une littérature belge? Limites d'un champ et frontières politiques”, in *Études de Lettres. Revue de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Lausanne*, 1985, 4, p. 3-6; ID., “Champs littéraire et rapports de domination: un entretien de Jacques Dubois avec Pierre Bourdieu”, in *Textyles*, 1998, 15, p. 12-16; Benoît DENIS & Jean-Marie KLINKENBERG, *La littérature belge. Précis d'histoire sociale*, Bruxelles, Labor, 2005. See also: Joseph JURT, “Le champ littéraire entre le national et le transnational”, in Gisèle SAPIRO, ed., *L'espace intellectuel en Europe. De la formation des États-nations à la mondialisation. XIX^e-XXI^e siècle*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009, p. 201-232. With a focus on symbolism: Paul ARON, “Pour une description sociologique du symbolisme belge”, in Anna SONCINI FRATTA, ed., *Le mouvement symboliste en Belgique*, Bologne, Clueb, 1990, p. 55-69.

(3) Daniel MORAT, “Die Generation der Intellektuellen. Intellektuellenkultur und Generationsdiskurs in Deutschland und Frankreich 1900-1930”, in Bernd WEISBROD, ed., *Historische Beiträge zur Generationsforschung*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2009, p. 39-76.

to ascribe to such a generation all kinds of groups or individuals who did *not* see themselves as part of a generation or who were not recognised as such by that restricted literary generation. A second important element in our view of generations is that it is not primarily the shared decisive or, to use a buzzword, ‘traumatic’ experiences – to which great attention is paid in many generation theories⁽⁴⁾ – which are defining when it comes to distinguishing such a generation in a broad sense, but even more the comparable and interconnected social relations⁽⁵⁾, in other words, the relationships that have arisen through a common socialisation.

In countries such as Belgium, in which two literary (sub)fields, or (depending on the perspective: opposing fields)⁽⁶⁾ appear to be active, one of which appears more focussed on the Netherlands and the other on France, the concept of generation has a particular advantage. It allows one to see that in the formation of national literatures forces are at work that bridge the language barriers and national borders. Here, we deliberately use this vague word ‘forces’⁽⁷⁾ to stress what transcends the individual and also to indicate that the common features seem to come from within, even if they are determined by the socio-historical situation. Based on two Flemish case studies we show that especially language frameworks were broken through in the formation of a ‘Belgian literature’: multiple authors made themselves acquainted to two literary fields (the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Flemish, which is part of the Franco-Belgian). This observation leads to a double adjustment to the history of literature, which allows it to be excessively guided both by the national and by the generational sentiment that authors attribute to themselves. In particular we show that contemporaneous authors and criticism no less than in later literary history tends to homogenise and exclude. Especially with bilingual authors, their role in one field tends to be hypostasised to the detriment of their role in the other, or

(4) H.A. BECKER, *Toekomst van de Verloren Generatie*, Amsterdam, Meulenhoff, 1997 and other sociologists emphasise those decisive experiences that create discontinuity in the history. They do this in imitation of Mannheim (1928), who spoke about the importance of “gesellschaftlich-geistige Umwälzungen” (Karl MANNHEIM, *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, hg. von Kurt H. WOLFF, Neuwied/Berlin, Luchterhand, 1964, p. 550) and especially about “entscheidende Kollektivereignisse” (p. 552). Mannheim thought, however, that such events could take place but did not have to: “Ganz entscheidende Kollektivereignisse können hierbei „kristallisierend“ wirken” (p. 552). Edmunds & Turner interpret those “Kollektivereignisse” unilaterally as “traumatic historical events” (June EDMUNDS & Bryan TURNER, “Global Generations: Social Change in the Twentieth Century”, in *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 56, 2005, 3, p. 560).

(5) To assign authors to a social generation, Dozo measures inter alia the distance from one author to other authors in his network. Björn-Olaf DOZO, *Mesures de l'écrivain. Profil socio-littéraire et capital relationnel dans l'entre-deux-guerres en Belgique francophone*, Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège, 2011.

(6) Joseph JURT, “Le champ littéraire entre le national et le transnational”, in Gisèle SAPIRO, ed., *L'espace intellectuel en Europe, op. cit.*, p. 201-232.

(7) Compare also the word ‘force’ taken over from physics in Bourdieu or ‘social energy’ in Greenblatt (Joseph JURT, «Das Konzept des literarischen Feldes und die Internationalisierung der Literatur», in Horst TURK, Brigitte SCHULZE & Roberto SIMANOWSKI, eds., *Kulturelle Grenzbeziehungen im Spiegel der Literaturen*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 1998, p. 89).

their role in the field is even seized upon in order to write it out of that history, while it can be unmistakably attributed to the same generation to which those authors who do become canonised belong, or who have counted themselves as belonging to. It is on two of such ‘cultural brokers’⁽⁸⁾ or middleman that we focus in this article: P.-G. (Gust) van Hecke (1887-1967) and Marc. Eemans (1907-1997). Both van Hecke and Eemans are associated with surrealism, but they belonged to different generations and both transcended them in many perspectives.

The theory of literary generations reconsidered

To remove from the term ‘generation’ its noncommittal figurative use, which is still very common in literary history, we reach back to a number of sociological interpretations of the concept⁽⁹⁾. In sociology, the term generations is used to designate groups of people who do not necessarily know each other but are characterised by an identical socio-historical setting (in Mannheim’s terms: *Lagerung*)⁽¹⁰⁾ and belong to the same birth cohort. Karl Mannheim, the patriarch of the theory of generations, spoke in *Das Problem der Generationen* (1928) of ‘Geburtseinheiten’ to designate the segments of a society that compete with each other within a ‘Geburtszusammenhang’⁽¹¹⁾. He distinguished these ‘Geburtseinheiten’ from ‘konkrete Gruppen’. In that, he had in mind the example of the liberal and romantic-conservative youth who fought each other for dominance in the first half of the nineteenth century. Groups of writers, intellectuals or politicians in all kinds of relationships may therefore, strictly according to Mannheim’s view, not be described as a generation⁽¹²⁾. However, writers and politicians are grouped by the sociologists of today, such as Henk Becker, into a ‘partial

(8) Cultural broking is defined by Jezewski & Sotnik as “the act of bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change” (Mary Ann JEZEWSKI & Paula SOTNIK, “Culture Brokering: Providing Culturally Competent Rehabilitation Services to Foreign-Born Persons”, Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange, 2001).

(9) Wohl distinguishes between “four well-established models for writing the history of a generation. One was the method of literary generations; the second, the method of political generations; the third, the method of youth generations; and the fourth, cohort theory” (Robert WOHL, *The Generation of 1914*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979). Our approach combines these various models: it is based on birth ages, and on socio-historical and literary phenomena.

(10) “Auch räumlich getrennte Individuen, die niemals in persönliche Berührung miteinander geraten, verbunden werden können” (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 546-547); “auch außerhalb dieser konkreten Gruppe lebende, aber in verwandter Lagerung sich befindende Individuen” (p. 548).

(11) “zwei nacheinander folgende Generationen stets einen jeweils anderen Gegner in der Welt und in sich bekämpfen” (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 537)

(12) Mannheim did write about a “freischwebenden Literatenschicht” (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 561) as part of the “Mittelschichten”, the only “Schicht” that can vacillate and thus seems to be more sensitive to trends in the dominant current (p. 563).

Generation', since the effects of discontinuous changes that are elicited by decisive experiences, apply to "certain categories of contemporaries" and not to the generation as a whole⁽¹³⁾.

In more than one aspect, Mannheim's theory causes one to think of Pierre Bourdieu's. Also with Bourdieu, there is a power struggle; the dispositions arising from internalising the (common) objective conditions and which form the *habitus*, resembling the "ererbten Lebenshaltungen, Gefühlsgehalte, Einstellungen" about which Mannheim speaks and which then at a later stage in life, around the seventeenth year of life, are called into question⁽¹⁴⁾. Bourdieu saw in the intergenerational struggle for cultural and symbolic capital an important explanation for social change, just as Mannheim saw the 'generational shift' as an explanation for social evolution⁽¹⁵⁾. Yet there are also differences. The great importance which Bourdieu placed on social origin in the formation of cultural capital cannot be found in Mannheim. A second difference is that less emphasis comes to be placed on individual authors (which in Bourdieu, despite his field perspective, is still often the case) and also not on specific groups, for which, in the sociology of literature, different approaches are being developed⁽¹⁶⁾, but more on links that override groups. Literary and artistic generations go wider than literary groups, also follow each other diachronically and do not necessarily manifest themselves as a group, although, in retrospect, mostly (but not necessarily) a 'we-feeling' can be construed⁽¹⁷⁾.

At this point, we would like to distinguish between the 'self-proclaimed generation' and the 'reconstructed generation' in literature: the first arises

(13) H.A. BECKER, *Toekomst van de Verloren Generatie*, *op. cit.*, p. 19. Becker gives as examples artists, politicians, policy makers and scientists. Partial generations, according to him, are formed later in the life cycle and disappear faster (p. 144 and 148).

(14) "All jene Gehalte und Einstellungen, die in der neuen Lebenssituation unproblematisch weiterfunktionieren, die den Fonds des Lebens ausmachen, werden unbewußt, ungewollt vererbt, übertragen" (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, 538); Cf. "Es gibt zunächst den Fall, wo diese Generationseinheit einfach und unbewußt aus einem neuen, durch sie geschaffenen Impuls heraus ihre Werke und Taten gestaltet und nur intuitiv von einer Zusammengehörigkeit weiß" (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 550).

(15) See "das stete Neueinsetzen neuer Kulturträger" (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 530) and the "steten Abganges früherer Kulturträger" (p. 532).

(16) Cf. Denis Saint-Amant and David Vrydaghs who use the 'conduite de vie' ('Lebensführung') of Max Weber to analyse literary groups. According to them, the difference from a *habitus* concept is that in a 'conduite de vie' we are dealing with restricted groups; that it disappears with the disappearance of the group; that it is not determining in principle and only affects a selection of behaviours (Denis SAINT-AMANT & David VRYDAGHS, "La biographie dans l'étude des groupes littéraires", in *CONTEXTES*, [Online], 2008, 3, Online since 25 June 2008, connection on 15 September 2014. URL: <http://contextes.revues.org/2302>; DOI: 10.4000/contextes.2302).

(17) For this 'we-feeling', see for example J.M.J. SICKING, "Periodiseren door middel van generaties", in *Forum der Letteren*, vol. 23, 1982, 1, p. 46-59. Corsten works out the detailed theory of "kollektive Selbstverständnis einer Generation" from a sociological perspective. He makes a distinction in the 'Wir-Sinn' (Michael CORSTEN, "The time of generations", in *Time & Society*, vol. 8, 2004, 2-3, p. 42) between a 'Wir-Gefühl' and a 'Wir-Handeln', whereby the first is not long lasting.

based on a ‘we-feeling’⁽¹⁸⁾ of the participants, while the second is primarily defined by the work of the socio-historical situation (birth, historical circumstances, the start of the (literary) activity, relationships with younger or older authors, etc.). The combination of these two concepts of generations may lead to a revision of literary history, since it is primarily guided by the self-positioning (the ‘we-feeling’) of new groups. An important point is how we can link the generation concept to the discursive ‘self-thematisation’ in the texts themselves. Just as Bourdieu assumed a homology between the space of the work (prises de positions) and the space of positions, where producers and institutions are located, Mannheim also assumes a *Generationsstil*, which he equates with the somewhat vague notion of ‘Generationsentelechie’ and speaks of ‘Generationsgattungen’⁽¹⁹⁾. A cohort will be only become a generation at the moment when it becomes a generation in itself which is aware of its historicity and appropriates unto itself a common goal. The study of discursive self-thematisation also allows the important question of the social conditions under which a generation becomes literarily significant and ultimately dominant to be addressed. But, as mentioned, that self-thematisation must be critically weighed by a broader socio-historical gaze. Elements in this are that it should be verified whether no members have been excluded by the self-thematisation, and also that the effectiveness of a self-thematising generation is measured: in other words, is it active.

In a study on the emergence of ‘global generations’, June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner combine insights of Bourdieu and Mannheim in order to be able to explain social change. Their central point is that passive generations alternate with active generations “when they are able to exploit resources (political/educational/economic)”⁽²⁰⁾ to innovate in various fields. Generations become active when there is a “co-occurrence of incentive and means”⁽²¹⁾. The marginal note that must be placed alongside this is that within one and the same generation, multiple generation units or concrete groups that are representative of a generation can compete for cultural hegemony, or – as Bourdieu would put it – dominance and that thus usually only one will eventually be labelled as active⁽²²⁾.

It is not so difficult to make the theory of generations suitable for transnational research, since generations are not necessarily restrained by borders. In this way, we can also use the field concept, to which not necessarily a nation

(18) In this connection, Corsten talks about “discursive practices of cultural circles of adolescent age groups”. See M. CORSTEN, “The time of generations”, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

(19) K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 550-553, 554.

(20) We already see the distinction between active and passive generations in Van Doorn (J.A.A. VAN DOORN, *Gevangen in de tijd. Over generaties en hun geschiedenis*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2002, p. 125). See Vandevoorde, who applies it to *Van Nu en Straks* (actively) and the “Knopsen” (passively): Hans VANDEVOORDE, “Over “generaties” in de literatuurgeschiedenis. Een revisie”, in Lars BERNAERTS, e.a., ed., *Breuken en bruggen. Moderne Nederlandse literatuur / Hedendaagse perspectieven*, Gent, Academia Press, 2011, p. 15-29.

(21) EDMUNDS & TURNER, “Global Generations”, *op. cit.*, p. 562-563.

(22) Michel WINOCK, “Les générations intellectuelles”, in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, vol. 22, 1989, p. 37-38.

but usually a linguistic area is linked, without falling into a narrow nationalism. If nowadays one can speak of the emergence of global generations – global ‘lost generations’ – then the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century is the period in which transnational generations sought and found a collective identity. Before then, that was limited to a very small group. Transnational generations were united in correspondence networks, periodicals and various other forms of informal and formal sociability. We do not go so far in avoiding a ‘methodological nationalism’ with these transnational generations that we no longer take the ‘roots’ of cosmopolitans into consideration⁽²³⁾.

In any event, the history and sociology of intellectuals (including writers) is a domain in which generation theories have been successfully applied. In the wake of Wilhelm Dilthey, Michel Winock, in his article “Les générations intellectuelles”, substantiated the idea that generations which are formed by relatively small groups in their formative years (a notion of Dilthey which was adopted by Mannheim)⁽²⁴⁾ are receptive to the same ‘esprit du temps’⁽²⁵⁾. The generations that Winock, with a blunt historical brush, identified for each decade (starting with the Dreyfus generation), were not reducible to the experience of a shared historical event (e.g. the First World War) or belonging to a demographic cohort – although these certainly play an important role – but their members do share an ideological system in which several contradictory answers to major historical events were possible⁽²⁶⁾.

Conversely, the history of intellectuals and writers is of importance because they form the ‘concrete groups’ that are decisive and representative of broader societal generations. Or as Mannheim himself put it: “The unity of a generation does not consist primarily in a social bond of the kind that leads to the formation of a concrete group, although it may sometimes happen that a feeling for the unity of a generation is consciously developed into

(23) We find this argument for a cosmopolitan perspective again in a text by Beck & Beck-Gernsheim “which privileges the simultaneity and the mutual interaction of national and international, local and global determinations and developments”. See: Ulrich BECK & Elisabeth BECK-GERNSHEIM, “Global Generations and the Trap of Methodological Nationalism For a Cosmopolitan Turn in the Sociology of Youth and Generation”, in *European Sociological Review*, vol. 25, 2009, 1, p. 26. From another angle, Sidney Tarrow and Donatella della Porta coined the concept of the ‘rooted cosmopolitan’. Cf. Sidney TARROW, *The New Transnational Activism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005 (Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics).

(24) Mannheim spoke of ‘erste Eindrücke’ (see also Pinder) or ‘Jugenderlebnisse’ (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 536). Becker places these formative years between the ages of ten and twenty-five (H.A. BECKER, *Toekomst van de Verloren Generatie*, p. 21). Mannheim himself speaks only of the seventeenth year of life (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 539).

(25) M. WINOCK, “Les générations intellectuelles”, *op. cit.*, p. 17-38.

(26) M. WINOCK, “Les générations intellectuelles”, *op. cit.*, p. 19. Also in Mannheim, one can already find an emphasis on the polar tensions within and also between generations. He also states explicitly that members of earlier or later generations can follow the ‘Lage’ of a certain strongly manifesting generation (K. MANNHEIM, *Das Problem der Generationen*, *op. cit.*, p. 549).

a basis for the formation of concrete groups”⁽²⁷⁾. ‘Concrete groups’ were formed around typical sociability structures⁽²⁸⁾, leading figures and mentors. Mentors need not personally be part of the concrete groups and may also belong to another linguistic and culture area and a different generation. In other words, the identification of examples, leaders and mentors situated in another literary field, gives access to a transnational, a transregional and transgenerational approach.

The case of symbolism: Gust van Hecke

In the self-definition of writers and literary critics, it is not uncommon for literary ‘movements’ and ‘generations’ to be used as synonyms. This is also the case with symbolism. “Symbolism has been used to describe a movement which, during the last generation, has profoundly influenced the course of French literature”, wrote Arthur Symons in 1899. Most studies conceptualise the symbolist ‘generation’ as nationally bounded entities but symbolism as such is recognised as one of the first (if not the first) international literary movements. Yet, already at the ‘birth’ of symbolism itself, particularism was not avoided⁽²⁹⁾. In the famous literary survey of 1891, Edmond Haraucourt (1856-1941) was asked whether symbolists represented “les tendances de la jeunesse littéraire”. He replied that they only represent a portion of his generation: “Ils représentent une partie de notre génération”⁽³⁰⁾. He did see them as a well-defined group, but not as a generation.

“What distinguishes the Symbolism of our day from the Symbolism of the past is that it has now become conscious of itself”, says Symons⁽³¹⁾. Within symbolism itself, new self-conscious literary generations were soon distinguished, just as national and regional variants crystallised⁽³²⁾. The first generation of Belgian Symbolists (Verhaeren, Van Lerberghe, Maeterlinck and others) and their special relationship with the French literary field have

(27) Karl MANNHEIM, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1952, p. 288.

(28) Jean-François SIRINELLI, “Le hasard ou la nécessité? Une histoire en chantier: l’histoire des intellectuels”, in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, vol. 9, 1986, p. 97-108; Viorel-Dragos MORARU, *Les générations dans l’histoire littéraire*, Québec, Laval University, 2009 (thèse de doctorat), p. 171-180.

(29) Henri DORRA, ed., *Symbolist Art Theories: a Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994; A.J. MATHEWS, *La Wallonie, 1886-1892: the Symbolist Movement in Belgium*, New York, King’s Crown Press, 1947; Anna BALAKIAN, *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages. Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982; Anna BALAKIAN, *The Symbolist Movement: a Critical Appraisal*, New York, Random House, 1967.

(30) Jules HURET, *Enquête sur l’évolution littéraire: conversations avec MM. Renan, de Goncourt, Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, Huysmans, Anatole France, Maurice Barrès*, Paris, Charpentier, 1891, p. 388.

(31) Arthur SYMONS, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, New York, Dutton, 1919, p. 3.

(32) See for instance the generational divisions made by critic Camille Mauclair (Simonetta VALENTI, *Camille Mauclair, homme de lettres fin de siècle: critique littéraire, œuvre narrative, création poétique et théâtrale*, Milano, V&P Università, 2003, p. 96-114).

been well studied in the meantime. The Belgian offshoots of what was termed by Décaudin as the ‘naturist’ generation, the second generation of Belgian symbolists⁽³³⁾, was the group associated with the Franco-Belgian magazine *Antée* (1905-1908). The Belgians formed one of the many neo-symbolist groups on the eve of the First World War identifiable in literature in both the French language and elsewhere, and who preached, above all, a return to life⁽³⁴⁾. Common literary characteristics are an integration of naturism, symbolism and regionalism in the form of bucolic simplicity. The reception of Francis Jammes and André Gide in the French-speaking part of Belgium took place at the same moment that, in France, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier and Maurice Le Blond tried to incorporate Jammes and Gide into the naturist movement⁽³⁵⁾. *Antée* is on record as the precursor of *La Nouvelle Revue française*, the most important inter-war French magazine⁽³⁶⁾. It is immediately also clear that this magazine was strongly oriented towards France. *Antée* was founded by Christian Beck (also known as Joseph Bossi), Henri Vandeputte (1877-1954) and the still young socialist journalist Louis Piérard (1886-1951)⁽³⁷⁾. They may also be referred to as the ‘leaders’ of their group. Banker and poet André Ruyters (1876-1952) later joined the editorial staff. When, in 1906, the magazine *L’Ermitage* ceased to exist, Ruyters suggested to Gide that they start up a French-Belgian magazine: “l’Antée enrichi”. He hoped that Gide would agree to be the editor-in-chief. It never got that far. *Antée* had to wait until the moment that *La Revue blanche*, published in Paris, also threw in the towel for Gide and his friends to begin publishing increasingly in the magazine.

Antée however, was not able to overcome the bankruptcy of the publisher (also publisher of Arthur Symons). Through the mediation of Verhaeren and with the financial support of the French symbolist pivotal figure Francis Vielé-Griffin (1864-1937) a new series was started in Paris in 1908, but it got no further than one issue⁽³⁸⁾. It would eventually take until 1910 before the group around Gide, of which Ruyters was now also a part, started with *La Nouvelle Revue française*⁽³⁹⁾. According to Albert Mockel, friend of Gide and together with him the mentor of young Belgians, *Antée* was the best Belgian magazine: “Les autres sont ou trop spécialisées, ou trop peu littéraires ou encore infectées de ce particularisme belgeois qui est la forme bruxelloise du nationalisme”⁽⁴⁰⁾. Gide was at that time present everywhere

(33) They were also called post-symbolists.

(34) M. DÉCAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes*, op. cit., p. 161 and *passim*.

(35) For naturism, see M. DÉCAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes*, op. cit., p. 58-80.

(36) For *La Nouvelle Revue française*, see: M.-N. KOFFEMAN-BIJMAN, *Entre classicisme et modernité. La Nouvelle Revue Française dans le champ littéraire de la Belle Époque*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2003.

(37) See also the testimony in Marianne PIERSON-PIÉRARD, *Trois cent trente-deux lettres à Louis Piérard: Précédées de mémoires extérieurs*, Paris, Lettres modernes, 1971.

(38) M. DÉCAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes*, op. cit., p. 221.

(39) See M.-N. KOFFEMAN-BIJMAN, *Entre classicisme et modernité*, op. cit., p. 34-36.

(40) Albert Mockel to Anatole France, 18 March 1907, cited in: Jean Marie D’HEUR, “Sur une lettre inédite d’Albert Mockel à Anatole France au sujet d’*Antée* (1907)”, in *Le Centenaire du Symbolisme en Belgique. Lettres romanes*, vol. 40, 1986, p. 305-306.

in Belgium and frequently spent time there⁽⁴¹⁾. He was allied to Ruyters and others by Nietzscheanism⁽⁴²⁾.

A little later on, this French-speaking generation was to gain a following of younger Dutch-speaking authors, the so-called ‘Boomgaardgeneratie’ (The Orchard generation), named after the magazine *De Boomgaard* (1909-1911). After a series of failed magazine projects, at the instigation of André De Ridder (1888-1961), the initiative was taken to create a “simultaneously broader and more closed grouping”, which after months of financial uncertainty eventually resulted in the formation of *De Boomgaard*⁽⁴³⁾. In Paul-Gustave van Hecke (1887-1967), De Ridder found his most important ‘compagnon de route’. The authors of the journal managed to ‘fashion’ themselves as an open, cosmopolitan group⁽⁴⁴⁾ and had clearly identifiable leaders and mentors. Their first mentor was the somewhat older Karel van de Woestijne (1878-1929), perhaps the only true representative of Dutch speaking literary symbolism in Flanders. As regards year of birth and poetics, he strongly resembles the *Antée* authors. De Ridder and van Hecke constituted the ‘leaders’ of *De Boomgaard*. They sought their literary examples abroad, including in Gide and Jammes and decadent prose writers such as Huysmans and Wilde.

Van Hecke and De Ridder never lost their epigonic place in Dutch speaking literature and came to be irrevocably associated with *De Boomgaard*. Easily ignored is the fact that shortly after the war they started writing in French and that they acquired prestige mainly through promoting modern art⁽⁴⁵⁾. As a gallery owner and director of the magazines *Sélection* and *Variétés*, van Hecke even played an important role in the emergence of surrealism in Belgium, a role that could count on considerable attention in the past decade⁽⁴⁶⁾. From a would-be leader in the Dutch speaking Belgian literary subfield and a passive actor he evolved into a model and mentor for a new generation in the broader Belgian intellectual field, thanks to a translinguistic artistic legitimacy he acquired. He was a cultural broker and a model in the

(41) See an unpublished lecture by Hans Vandevoorde in 2007 about the reception of Gide-Jammes in the Netherlands, which is studied from the point of view of the ‘histoire croisée’.

(42) Gide’s Nietzscheanism consisted inter alia of a rebellion against the Christian morality of good and evil and an emphasis on the independence of the individual in his moral choices (Catharine Hill SAVAGE, *André Gide: l’évolution de sa pensée religieuse*, Paris, Nizet, 1962). A combination of hedonism and emphasis on self-discipline is the consequence of this.

(43) Christophe VERBRUGGEN, *Schrijverschap tijdens de Belgische belle époque*, Nijmegen-Gent, Vantilt-Academia Press, 2009; Jean WEISGERBER, *De Vlaamse literatuur op onbegane wegen. Het experiment van “De Boomgaard” (1909-1920)*, Antwerpen, C. de Vries-Brouwers, 1956, p. 22-28.

(44) In practice, however, not very much is noticeable of that cosmopolitanism.

(45) This moment seems to coincide with the start of the gallery *Sélection* and the eponymous magazine. For *Sélection*, see An PAENHUYSEN, *De Nieuwe wereld. De wonderjaren van de Belgische avant-garde (1918-1939)*, Antwerp, Meulenhoff-Manteau, 2010, p. 381.

(46) See, for example, the most recent Virginie DEVILLEZ & Peter J.H. PAUWELS, eds., *Kunstpromotor Paul-Gustave Van Hecke (1887-1967) en de avant-garde*, Gent-Kortrijk, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten van België-Uitgeverij Snoeck, 2012 and Manu VAN DER AA, e.a., *Themanummer Paul-Gustave van Hecke (1887-1967)*, in *Zacht Lawijd*, vol. 11, 2012, 2.

sense that he facilitated the genesis of a new, active generation: that of the surrealists. *Mutatis mutandis*, Henri Vandeputte would, for that matter, play a comparable role later on. Vandeputte (who contributed to *Variétés*) could fall back much more than van Hecke on good contacts in Paris for his activities as a gallery owner and art promoter. The last author for whom he acted as mentor was the young Hugo Claus⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The authors of *De Boomgaard* and *Antée* are never related to each other in Dutch-language and French-language literary histories. Indeed, separately, the Boomgaarders and the *Antée* generation do not seem to form any literary generation. Together, however, we can ascribe them to the same historical-sociological generation thanks to their common socialisation in the Belgian literary system and especially through their common admired predecessors (Verhaeren, for example). Additional research would be able to clarify the extent to which this generation is also identifiable in other linguistic areas and whether they have become dominant everywhere after the Great War in the literary-artistic system⁽⁴⁸⁾. In order to achieve that dominance, these figures had to be able to acknowledge the vision of the post-war youth. Thus, in Van Hecke we can see a mentor who was educated by his own disciples.

The case of surrealism: Eemans

In the first half of the twentieth century and still during a part of the second half, there was no question in Belgium of two autonomous literary fields: one Dutch-speaking and one French-speaking. The Dutch-speaking literary field had at the end of nineteenth century gradually emancipated itself from the French-speaking one, but at the heart of the linguistic area, the bourgeoisie clung stubbornly to French (never more than 3% according)⁽⁴⁹⁾, which produced a series of French-speaking Flemish authors. French still had more prestige than Dutch – the language of the majority of the population in Belgium – and was also the official language in large sectors of education into the thirties. After each world war, when part of the newly created Flemish intellectual elite went into collaboration, Dutch again lost importance⁽⁵⁰⁾. That is why, after the First World War, many of the authors whose schooling had still been in French, switched linguistic group⁽⁵¹⁾. Alongside

(47) Georges WILDEMEERSCH, “Henri Vandeputtes brieven aan Hugo Claus”, in *Zacht Lawijd*, vol. 6, 2007, 4, p. 38-63.

(48) The Portuguese case already seems to offer some leads. See: Jacinto PRADO-COELHO, “Symbolism in Portuguese literature”, in A. BALAKIAN, *The Symbolist Movement*, *op. cit.*, p. 549-564.

(49) McRay cited in Rainier GRUTMAN, “L'écrivain flamand et ses langues. Note sur la diglossie des périphéries”, in *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, 1990-1991, p. 118.

(50) Even the children of the writers who were supporters of the Flemish movement were often French-speaking (for example the children of Adolph Herckenrath and Paul Kenis), or predominantly French-speaking (Vermeulen).

(51) Examples are: Camille Poupeye (employee of De Ghelderode), Paul-Gustave van Hecke and André de Ridder, or Fernand Berckelaers also known as Michel Seuphor. Grutman characterises Seuphor as a ‘francophone’, just as much as Conscience, Buysse and Van de Woestijne (R. GRUTMAN, “L'écrivain flamand et ses langues”, *op. cit.*, p. 124-125, notes 6 and 7).

the unilingual French-speaking Flemish authors and the Dutch-speaking authors in Flanders, in the twenties, there was still a minority of bilingual writers who predominantly made use of French: the poet and painter Marc Eemans (1907-1998), of whom we will speak in particular, belonged to it. It should be noted that many Dutch-speaking writers were also able to use French as their medium of communication, not only for administrative purposes but also for speeches, texts on special occasions or even for (the translation of) their own literary work⁽⁵²⁾.

Eemans is a forgotten figure in Belgian surrealism for two reasons. Firstly, surrealism was seen perceived as a 'Roman' phenomenon⁽⁵³⁾. Hence the affinity of Dutch speaking authors (Van Ostajen) with surrealism is not seen, or the Dutch speaking work of someone like Eemans is not listed in the summaries of surrealism in Belgium. Secondly, Eemans has been written out of that history because of his collaboration during the Second World War⁽⁵⁴⁾. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, Dutch surrealism came to be extensively studied more rapidly, possibly because it was seen as an exotic phenomenon, while the 'natural' status of the French brought with it that Dutch speakers in Flanders could read (the Surrealists in) French and were thus better acquainted with surrealism than the average Dutch literature lover.

Piet Tommissen pointed out – not without Flemish nationalist motives – that Dutch was not entirely alien to the Belgian surrealists: there are the painters Frits van den Berghe (1883-1939) and E.L.T. Mesens (1903-1971)⁽⁵⁵⁾. The latter (who was from Brussels) debuted in *Ter waarheid*, an avant-garde magazine to which Joris van Severen (later pioneer of the far right Verdinaso) also belonged. Rachel Baes (1912-1983), the mistress between 1936 and 1940 of Van Severen, who was the son of a Flemish (French speaking) notary and very attracted by French culture, and who herself at that time was still doing expressionist painting⁽⁵⁶⁾, as well as Marcel Mariën (1920-1993) had Flemish roots – but were in fact French-speaking. We can still add to this list the gallery owner and pub-owner Geert van Bruaene (1891-1964) as well as the aforementioned van Hecke and Eemans, who came to his 'surrealistic poetics' through Van Ostajen⁽⁵⁷⁾.

(52) Thanks to the language laws and the standardisation of the Dutch language, at the end of the fifties the balance was tipped once and for all and French came to be used almost exclusively for poetry or criticism (cf. R. GRUTMAN, "L'écrivain flamand et ses langues", *op. cit.*, p. 123).

(53) Dina HELLEMANS, "Être ou ne pas être... surréaliste: coordonnées du surréalisme en Flandre", in Jean WEISGERBER, ed., *Les Avant-gardes littéraires en Belgique*, Bruxelles, Labor, 1991, p. 373-418.

(54) The same also applies to an author like Pol le Roy, who, after the war, wrote remarkable prose poems that explicitly refer to Breton.

(55) Piet TOMMISSEN, *Marc Eemans*, Brussel, Henry Fagne, 1972, without pages. See also his introduction to Marc EEMANS, *De Laatste Surrealist*, Antwerpen, Kunst & Kapitaal, 1984, p. 10-11.

(56) Sofie VAN LOO, "De ambigue beeldtaal van Jane Graverol en Rachel Baes", in *Gekooïd verlangen. Jane Graverol, Rachel Baes en het surréalisme*, Gent, Ludion, 2002, p. 42.

(57) Henri-Floris JESPERS, "Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar: een biecht", in *Tijdingen*, vol. 18, 1997, 2, p. 10-13. See also Marc EEMANS, "Bij Paul Van Ostajen in de leer", in *De Periscoop*, vol. 7, 1956, 1, p. 1-2.

The names cannot serve to suddenly make surrealism in Belgium into a Flemish phenomenon⁽⁵⁸⁾, but the age differences of the members point to the different generations that were involved with surrealism in Belgium. This generational perspective may provide more clarity about the neglect of Dutch speaking surrealism. In the first place, generations indicate a strong togetherness ('we-feeling'), which may also precipitate into similar forms of expression or styles. Thus the Belgian surrealists employed their own genre: the 'tracts' (pamphlets). "Le tract est au surréalisme belge ce que le manifeste est au surréalisme français", writes Michel Biron⁽⁵⁹⁾. After the first (Brussels) group – often described as a 'generation' – which surfaces simultaneously with the French surrealists, but from which it clearly wishes to distinguish itself⁽⁶⁰⁾, traditionally a second Hainault group is distinguished, that came to the fore in the thirties⁽⁶¹⁾. The Hainault group was dependent on the French surrealists and more politically militant. From a sociological standpoint the first and second groups belong to the same generation, most of whose members came from the petty bourgeoisie (of hatters, tailors and grocers). The age of Eemans, the Benjamin of the first group who gathered in the 'Société du Mystère', points to the unity of those first and second groups or so called 'generations': his year of birth leaning more towards that of the second 'generation' than the first. As a precocious boy, he was first involved in the abstract, constructive direction and then in 1925-1926 made the leap into surrealism. With the help of his friend Mesens he had his first exhibition in 1928 at P.G. van Hecke's gallery 'L'époque', who also allowed him to take care of front covers for *Variétés*. In 1930, whether voluntarily or not, he left the group, where he had for some time encountered resistance on account of his alleged epigonism⁽⁶²⁾. The marriage of the

(58) It is remarkable that the transfer of the languages was not unilateral, as is usually the case (R. GRUTMAN, "L'écrivain flamand et ses langues", *op. cit.*, p. 122). There is, amongst the (monolingual) French-Belgian surrealists – rarely – evidence of an interest in Dutch: Paul Colinet wrote some poems in Dutch, Marcel Lecomte translated the poetry of Karel van de Woestijne and wrote about Van Ostaijen.

(59) Michel BIRON, *La modernité belge. Littérature et société*, Bruxelles-Montréal, Labor-Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994, p. 218.

(60) Their independence is embodied by Nougé: refusal of automatic writing; a less pronounced political stance; the refusal to create a body of work (B. DENIS & J.-M. KLINKENBERG, *La littérature belge, op. cit.*, p. 184-187, M. BIRON, *La modernité belge, op. cit.*, p. 210); importance of music for Mesens, Souris, and others (Patricia ALLMER, e.a., *Collective Inventions. Surrealism in Belgium*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2007).

(61) For the differences between the two groups, see for example B. DENIS & J.-M. KLINKENBERG, *La littérature belge, op. cit.*, p. 186.

(62) See the statements from letters of Goemans and Nougé that Mariën (Marcel MARIËN, *Autant en rapporte le vent*, Bruxelles, Marcel Mariën, 1973, p. 1) cites. Mariën writes that the surrealists removed him from the group "pour cause d'insuffisance intellectuelle et morale" (M. MARIËN, *Autant en rapporte le vent, op. cit.*, p. 1). Eemans defended himself by pointing to his own style that would speak from his earliest works – "Ik ben eerder lyrisch en elegisch, romantisch aangelegd. Magritte eerder prozaïsch en platvloers, met zijn bolhoed en zijn kefhondje" (H.-F. JESPERS, "Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar", *op. cit.*, p. 11) – and by ascribing it to Mariën's jealousy over a women's issue (Jane Graverol) (H.-F. JESPERS, "Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar", *op. cit.*, p. 13). Eemans always saw himself as a surrealist later. His definition of surrealism in later life indicates the specific *Lagerung* that he ascribes to it: "Het surrealisme is een geestesgesteldheid en de

surréaliste Irène Hamoir, who was his girlfriend, to Louis Scutenaire would have played a role according to Eemans. But above all: “It was a matter of opposing sensibilities”⁽⁶³⁾. However, in terms of vision, his mysticism was more closely in line with his age-mates from the thirties. Unlike Paul Nougé, he defended automatism, for example⁽⁶⁴⁾. He shared his interest in the occult with the later Breton and some authors of *Le Grand Jeu* (and with the Belgians Marcel Lecomte and Camille Goemans). Viewed politically, he was receptive to the Trotskyism which was also implicit in Breton’s second manifesto (1929), but his tendency to the mythical primordial sacred rites of the Germans led him to National Socialist theories and collaboration in the Second World War⁽⁶⁵⁾. Pol le Roy, who did not allow surrealism to influence him until the war, is incidentally the same age as Eemans. The right-wing sympathies of the later Eemans (although initially revolutionary and according to the formulation of Mesens, a lifelong “sentimental anarchist”), Le Roy, René Braet and Baes are at odds with the leftist ideology on which most other surrealists prided themselves.

Secondly, the birth years just make us grasp all the better that there are relatively few surrealists of Flemish descent in the first generation surrealists (who belong to the second generation of avant-gardists)⁽⁶⁶⁾. To be sure, a number of core members (Nougé, Scutenaire) have French fathers or grandfathers. For the first time in Franco-Belgian literature, Belgians from Wallonia and Brussels were taking the lead, where up until the First World War, it was primarily French-speaking Flemings (from the cities) who were having a ball with literature. It is also with the advent of surrealism that, for the first time, European literature was being kept pace with: until then, Belgian avant-garde movements – even symbolism – were behind their foreign counterparts. This leads us to a strange paradox: just at the moment

uitdrukking van een in een welbepaalde tijd etische revolte tegen al de taboes van onze kapitalistische bourgeoismaatschappij. Het surrealisme vormt een gesloten gemeenschap waarin men kan opgenomen worden maar dan ook kan uitgestoten worden door een echte banvloek van de gemeenschap” (letter to Jos Murez, cited in Jos MUREZ, “Nog eens over het surrealisme”, in *Vooruit*, February 8, 1973). He considered himself just as much as a belated symbolist: M. EEMANS, *De Laatste Surrealist*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

(63) H-F. JESPERS, “Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar”, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

(64) “Lettre à Irène sur l’automatisme” (1927), only published in the monograph by Tommisen (Piet TOMMISSEN, *Marc. Eemans*, Brussel, Henry Fagne, 1972, z.p.).

(65) Cf. P. TOMMISSEN, *Marc. Eemans*, *op. cit.*, z.p. In 1932, he still counts himself amongst “les intellectuels de gauche” (letter of 24 August 1932 to Roger Avermaete, Letterenhuis, Antwerp, E1553). Eemans was imprisoned for five years in the Klein Kasteeltje and was afterwards fiercely attacked for his collaboration by Marcel Mariën and the young Tom Gutt. He defended himself by stating inter alia that during the Second World War, he was able to hold back the hunt for ‘Entartete Kunst’ and only wrote about culture (H.-F. JESPERS, “Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar”, *op. cit.*, p. 12-13). Mariën however points to places in his writings from that period in which he fulminates against that kind of art, and accuses him of anti-Semitism.

(66) Just like the French surrealists most of the core members of Belgian surrealism were born in the years after 1895; they were part of what we would like to call the second generation of avant-gardists, born between 1890 and 1905 (Hans VANDEVOORDE, “Generation and Community Art”, unpublished lecture EAM, 2014).

when autonomisation seems to have taken place, a tendency arises to blend into the broader (French or European)⁽⁶⁷⁾ context.

But for the time being, we are still in a literary field where the contacts between the various Belgian subfields take place effortlessly, since French is used as the lingua franca. This French has led to the Dutch variant of surrealism in literature (Van Ostaijen, the bundle *Vergeten te worden* by Marc Eemans from 1930) has long been left out of consideration and if we look at the most recently published history of surrealism by Xavier Canonne⁽⁶⁸⁾, has even been made to disappear out of the history as if by magic. After all, in a minor artistic culture and literature⁽⁶⁹⁾, such variants threaten a homogeneous vision by critics. Belgian surrealism must be ‘leftist-revolutionary’ and ‘in the French language’. Nonetheless, there is a generation that shared similar experiences, values and principles of form beyond the language barriers and ideology. The collective identity construction does not mean that exclusions of individuals are permitted, especially if we look through the eyes of today.

Conclusion

P.G. van Hecke started as an epigone that gladly defined himself as cosmopolitan, and ended as an avant-gardist who finally clung to cosmopolitanism even in practice. When van Hecke joined the larger movement of surrealism, he finally found the kindred spirits that he had earlier needed in order to prove himself as a model and mentor. With van Hecke, we have an older literary figure that reinvents himself through the avant-garde, wearing a modernistic French suit. With Marc Eemans we have a youngster emerging very fast like a meteor who, however, just as quickly grows prematurely old. Eemans quickly sidetracks himself or is quickly cast out. Only by focussing on the interplay between various literary fields and by looking through trans-generational spectacles we notice how both these figures have been erased by

(67) Just before the Second World War, we see the Groupe du Lundi emerging, seeking to link to Paris, or Achille Chavée who wants Walloon autonomy. For de Groupe du Lundi, see Jean-Marie KLINKENBERG, “Lectures du *Manifeste* du Groupe du Lundi (1937)”, in Raymond TROUSSON & Léon SOMVILLE, eds., *Lettres de Belgique. En hommage à Robert Frickx*, Cologne, Janus, 1992, p. 98-124.

(68) In his outstanding work *Surrealisme in België 1924-2000*, Brussel, Mercatorfonds, 2006, Xavier CANONNE minimizes Eemans’ role in Belgian surrealism.

(69) For the definition and discussion of ‘minor literatures’ – “the excluded or marginalized members of the national/international literary system” (Christopher PRENDERGAST, *Debating World Literature*, London, Verso, 2004, p. 15) – , see the discussion about the book by Gilles DELEUZE & Félix GUATTARI, *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, Paris, Minuit, 1975). Prendergast rightly rejects the idea of equating minor literatures with minorities. In any case, much research confirms that the ‘national’ was constructed more by way of the ‘international’ and vice versa and that literary circulation is not only international, but also transnational: cultural goods circulate, continuously traverse borders and even create new frontiers. To this, even generational boundaries can be added, which – as we shall see – are still viewed too often as coinciding with national borders. Michael BOYDEN, “Why the World Is Never Enough: Re-Conceptualizing World Literature as a Self-Substitutive Order”, in Nele BEMONG, Mirjam TRUWANT & Pieter VERMEULEN, eds., *Re-Thinking Europe: Literature and (Trans)National Identity*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2008, p. 59-79.

the history of literature. Although well studied in recent research, Van Hecke has disappeared for a long time from Dutch literary history after the venture of *De Boomgaard* and has achieved no real place for himself in the French literary history; Marc Eemans is kept out of the French-language literature and more particularly art history, but has been able to prove himself even less in the Dutch literature. Only when we let go off the language and by looking at their brokerage, we see their position in relation to the surrealist generation (in a broad sociological sense) that becomes dominant in the twenties⁽⁷⁰⁾. Whether it is characteristic of minor literatures to homogenise more rapidly, we leave undecided. It is clear, however, that in minor literatures, the position of contemporaneous or postfactum neglected figures can be more easily revised. Both van Hecke and Eemans, as marginal bilingual authors – the one too old and the other too young for the Belgian surrealist group –, can, without much effort, be ascribed to the more-broadly based ‘reconstructed’ generation of surrealism, though they have played different roles: van Hecke as a self-appointed member of the surrealist movement fulfilled the role of a mentor, whereas Eemans was the youngest surrealist of all in the core group but was soon excluded. This surrealism appears to be not exclusively left-wing and French-speaking, but also has right-wing and Dutch-speaking representatives. It would be interesting to examine whether that hybrid quality can also be found in other minor or major literatures. By focussing on similar and interrelated social relationships that cross the boundaries of minor literatures but also help shape them, a start can be made in rewriting the history of literature in which linguistic boundaries and the self-definition of writers and literary critics still predominates.

SAMENVATTING

Hans VANDEVOORDE & Christophe VERBRUGGEN, *Transgenerationale bemiddeling. Het geval van symbolisme en surrealisme in Vlaanderen*

In de zelfdefinitie van schrijvers en literaire critici worden literaire ‘generaties’ en ‘bewegingen’ niet zelden als synoniemen gebruikt. In deze bijdrage gaan we dieper in op de theorievorming rond literaire generaties en het fenomeen van de transgenerationale bemiddeling. Uitgaande van de casussen van het symbolisme en surrealisme in het algemeen en P.G. (Gust) van Hecke (1887-1967) en Marc Eemans (1907-1997) in het bijzonder, ontwikkelen we de these dat bij de studie van literaire bewegingen de bemiddelaars die de grenzen in tijd (generaties), taal (Frans en Nederlands) en ruimte (België) overstijgen al te vaak buiten het gezichtsveld blijven. Maar door net te focussen op culturele *brokers* als van Hecke en Eemans is het mogelijk de gangbare geschiedschrijving van het surrealisme in het Nederlandse en Franse taalgebied te retoucheren.

Surrealisme – generaties – transnationale contacten

(70) Only through Eemans’ unpublished texts that were published in the early seventies by Tommissen, is his relationship with surrealism also discursively clarified. See also Marc EEMANS, “Une histoire parallèle du surréalisme en Belgique”, in *Marc Eemans et le surréalisme en Belgique*, in *Espaces*, vol. 11, 1971-1972, 180, p. 2-8.

ABSTRACT

Hans VANDEVOORDE & Christophe VERBRUGGEN, *Transgenerational Brokering. The Case for Symbolism and Surrealism in Flanders*

In the self-definition of writers and literary critics, it is not uncommon for literary 'movements' and 'generations' to be used as synonyms. In this article we focus on theories on generations, literary generations and the phenomenon of transgenerational mediation. Based on the cases of symbolism and surrealism in general and P.G. (Gust) van Hecke (1887-1967) and Marc. Eemans (1907-1997) in particular, we argue that mediators who crossed borders in time (generations), in language (French and Dutch) and in space (Belgium) often remain out of sight in the study of literary movements. But by focusing on cultural brokers such as van Hecke and Eemans, we show that it is possible to adjust the prevailing history of surrealism in the Dutch and French speaking literature.

Surrealism – generations – transnational contacts

RÉSUMÉ

Hans VANDEVOORDE & Christophe VERBRUGGEN, *Médiation transgénérationnelle. Le cas du symbolisme et du surréalisme en Flandre*

Dans les autodéfinitions d'écrivains et de critiques littéraires, les « générations » et les « mouvements » littéraires apparaissent fréquemment sous forme de synonymes. Dans cette contribution, nous nous penchons sur la théorisation des générations littéraires et sur le phénomène de la médiation transgénérationnelle. Le symbolisme et le surréalisme servant à titre d'exemples généraux et les personnages de P.G. (Gust) van Hecke (1887-1967) et Marc. Eemans (1907-1997) comme exemples particuliers, ces cas nous mènent à avancer l'assertion que l'étude des mouvements littéraires ne s'intéresse pas suffisamment aux médiateurs transgressant les frontières temporelles (générations), langagières (français et néerlandais) et spatiales (la Belgique). Certes, c'est en s'intéressant à ces *courtiers* culturels tels que van Hecke et Eemans qu'il est possible de retoucher l'historiographie traditionnelle du surréalisme dans les régions francophone et néerlandophone.

Surréalisme – générations – contacts transnationaux

Mothers of the Matrix. Intercultural Transfer Activities of Henriette Roland Holst and Marie Elisabeth Belpaire

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This article studies the relations maintained between Henriette Roland Holst and Marie Elisabeth Belpaire and points out how the more private nature of their correspondence conveys new discursive images different from the ‘prior ethos’⁽¹⁾ imposed on these women by the institutionalized and social gender conventions. The network of people they both knew or introduced to each other, how they managed that and why on the one hand, and their poetics and reading on the other, show us two women who travelled way beyond the literary and social borders they were confined to. By following the actors, by studying networks from the inside and focusing on the process instead of the product, we can highlight the tensions and struggles in social relationships between persons who have differential access to resources, the strategies they use to stir this imbalance and the creative, situational and thus unpredictable character of cultural transfer.

Self-positioning strategies in the literary field

In *Golden Cables of Sympathy. The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-century Feminism*, Margaret H. McFadden reports an “explosion in the number of physical and verbal connections between women”⁽²⁾. The nineteenth century, McFadden explains, saw the rise of new communication systems – including the travel industry –, the work of religious women, a growing amount of reform movements, international diplomacy and the emergence of female literary celebrities. The combination of these factors caused the accelerated intensification of personal and institutional interconnectedness on an international and trans-Atlantic scale. Along similar lines, networks and intercultural exchange activities between women writers and Belgian cultural mediators grew promptly during the nineteenth century and noticeably expanded in the interwar period, indicated, among other things, by a growing amount of letters and journeys.

(1) Ruth AMOSSY, “Ethos at the Crossroads of Disciplines: Rhetoric, Pragmatics, Sociology”, in *Poetics Today*, vol. 22, 1, 2001, p. 1-23.

(2) Margaret H. MCFADDEN, *Golden Cables of Sympathy. The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism*, Kentucky, The University Press of Kentucky, 1999, p. 3.

Susanne Stark claims that the move of women into the literary field was often accompanied by efforts “to erase traces of creative authorship, which would have upset the values of the predominantly male society they wished to comply with”⁽³⁾. Often, such efforts involved emphasizing conventional female roles other than being an author. For the Flemish writer Marie Elisabeth Belpaire, Reymenants has convincingly shown that she “accepted this motherly role gratefully because she perceived it as the ideal alibi for her own pursuit of power. (...) She realized that too much power in a woman’s hands would not be accepted”⁽⁴⁾. Belpaire’s exceptional capital and privileged point of departure but also her gender designed her audience, production and scope. In 1899, Belpaire wrote to two of her closest male collaborators: “I will always be your Mother Superior, so much more mother than superior”⁽⁵⁾.

An atypical opposite is the Dutch socialist and poet Henriette Roland Holst. Elsbeth Ety observes that Roland Holst planned her pursuit of self-development from the very beginning in an ‘unfeminine’ way⁽⁶⁾. Aged 22, she wrote a sonnet dedicated to the artist Jan Toorop with the line “I am not a woman now, I am just a poet” and to the poet Albert Verwey, whom she chose as a tutor, she makes clear that she wants to be treated as a brother of equal merit⁽⁷⁾. By positioning herself like that she found a way to enter the literary field and over and above that, she entered it as a poet. No less than Belpaire, Roland Holst was aware of the dominant gender conventions.

Roland Holst and Belpaire positioned themselves as part of their strategic operating in the literary field⁽⁸⁾. Rakefet Sela-Sheffy’s use of the Bourdieusian term ‘habitus’⁽⁹⁾ is a relevant concept in this respect. She says that habitus refers to how a person feels he/she can increase his/her prestige in a certain field. That idea of habitus makes it a difficult concept to perceive empirically. In fact, habitus can only be perceived when someone is not able to take the position he or she would like to take, i.e. when someone is struggling to find

(3) Susanne STARK, “Behind Inverted Commas”. *Translation and Anglo-German Cultural Relations in the Nineteenth Century*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1999, p. 43.

(4) Geraldine REYMANANTS, “Catholicism as a Stepping Stone to Authorship. The Contribution of Women to the Flemish Catholic Periodical *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*”, in Petra BROOMANS, ed., *From Darwin to Weil. Women as Transmitters of Ideas*, Groningen, Barkhuis, 2009, p. 131.

(5) “[I]k blijf altijd uw Moeder Overste veel meer moeder dan overste”. All translations are my own. In Geraldine REYMANANTS, *Marie Elisabeth Belpaire. Gender en macht in het literaire veld 1900-1940*, Leuven, Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2013 (*Kadoc-Studies*, 35), p. 119.

(6) Elsbeth ETTY, “Geen vrouw maar ook geen broeder. Het politieke vrijwilligerswerk van Henriette Roland Holst”, in *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 1, 2007, p. 69.

(7) “k Ben nu geen vrouw; ik ben nu enkel dichter” (Sonnet to Jan Toorop, published in 1892). In E. ETTY, “Geen vrouw maar ook geen broeder”, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

(8) These opposing strategies of feminizing or ‘unfeminizing’ oneself can also be observed in Erica van Boven’s article on the use of pseudonyms. Van Boven contrasts expressly female pseudonyms with the better-known male pseudonyms; the choice depending on the period but also on the motives of the female author. See Erica VAN BOVEN, “Het pseudoniem als strategie. Pseudoniemen van vrouwelijke auteurs 1850-1900”, in *Nederlandse letterkunde*, 3, 1998, p. 309-326.

(9) See Rakefet SELA-SHEFFY, “How to Be a (Recognized) Translator. Rethinking Habitus, Norms, and the Field of Translation”, in *Target*, vol. 17, 1, 2005, p. 1-26.

the best ways to increase his/her prestige. For women authors in the first half of the twentieth century (and before of course) this was the case. Women like Belpaire and Roland Holst knew very well how to ‘play the game’, but the gendered character of the literary field asked them to apply particular rules⁽¹⁰⁾.

As Buzelin⁽¹¹⁾ observes, both Latour and Bourdieu have explained actors’ behaviour in terms of strategies and struggles. Women writers developed new rules – some of them deliberately overt – to gain access to positions in the literary field. Research on women authors and women translators⁽¹²⁾ shows remarkable similarities and patterns in their behaviour: women have developed a habitus different from men’s to increase their prestige. Strategies involve among others stressing the coincidental or unintentional nature of their work and their poetics, the selection of a male mentor, the emphasis on their role as a woman and/or a mother, the restriction to particular genres, etc. The seemingly contradictory strategies of Roland Holst fit in a similar system of self-positioning motives allowing women to enter and act in the literary field. However, this habitus may also leave room for other actions and discourses. Especially in relations between women authors, it must have been possible for them to position themselves differently. In this article, I would like to show an example of the way relations between women left more room for positioning themselves as intellectual, strong-willed and witty and how this attitude made them able to act in the literary field notwithstanding their being women.

Golden cables of sympathy

Within the interwar period, male and female Belgian cultural mediators maintained the closest ties with Dutch and Scandinavian women writers, but there were also connections with French, Russian, English, Spanish, Polish and German female authors. To give some examples, the Dutch novelist Marie Koenen corresponded with August van Cauwelaert and Jules Persijn. Jo van Ammers-Küller⁽¹³⁾ wrote to Michael van de Kerckhove, Marcel Matthijs, André de Ridder, Marcel van de Velde and Stijn Streuvels and Albertine Steenhoff-Smulders to Jules Persijn and Alfons Moortgat. The Swedish

(10) For the double standard see among others Erica VAN BOVEN, *Een hoofdstuk apart. ‘Vrouwenromans’ in de literaire kritiek 1898-1930*, Amsterdam, Sara, 1992; Marianne VOGEL, *Baard boven baard: over het Nederlandse literaire en maatschappelijke leven 1945-1960*, Amsterdam, Van Gennep, 2001.

(11) Hélène BUZELIN, “Unexpected Allies”, in *The Translator*, vol. 11, 2, 2005, p. 193-218.

(12) See José SANTAEMILIA, *Gender, Sex, and Translation: the Manipulation of Identities*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 2005 and Luise VON FLOTOW, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the “Era of Feminism”*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 1997.

(13) Johanna or Jo van Ammers-Küller (Noordeloos, August 13, 1884 – Bakel, January 23, 1966) was one of the best-published and translated women writers of the interwar period. During German occupation, she tended towards pro-German sympathies for which she found allies in Marcel van de Velde and Marcel Matthijs. See Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marcel van de Velde, A 311 / B, 9 and 24 July 1940 and Archives Marcel Matthijs, A 311 / B, 1 January 1953.

writer and first woman to win the Nobel Prize of literature Selma Lagerlöf was on friendly terms with Antoon Thiry, August van Cauwelaert and Piet Schepens. The same August van Cauwelaert was also connected to Sigrid Undset from Norway who was in contact with Georges Meir. The Catholic German writer Gertrude von le Fort also maintained a healthy exchange of letters with August van Cauwelaert.

In the centre of this web, linked to almost everybody in it, we find the writer and Maecenas Marie Elisabeth Belpaire and through her, her pupils Louisa Duykers, Hilda Ram, Blanka Gyselen and Josette Pasquasy. Mediators such as Persijn and to a greater extent Van Cauwelaert and Belpaire are the brokers or the nodes in the net. Specifically for women – in this case Belpaire – we can speak of the ‘mothers of the matrix’⁽¹⁴⁾. This metaphor reproduces of course the gender discourse at stake but – without dismissing that these women were first and foremost seen as women by the other actors in the field – it also neatly refers to the fact that these women have the most connections and link several writers and mediators to each other and, more importantly, that their actions result in changes in the literary and cultural field, directly through translation and publication and indirectly through review and article writing.

Early network analyst Jeremy Boissevain already explained how network analysis “links interpersonal relations to institutions” and analyses how ‘people’ – as opposed to ‘roles’ – and their choices and actions could alter and manipulate the institutions in which they participated⁽¹⁵⁾. Buzelin’s comparison of Bourdieu and Latour’s use of the concept of network is a useful addition to this insight, the latter allowing for a focus on process of production and network formation “from the inside, to observe how actors make their decisions and interact while still unsure of the outcome, i.e., when the risks of failure are still present” and the former directing our attention “to institutional factors”⁽¹⁶⁾.

In combining institutional factors with interpersonal ones, the networks analysed in this article will be extended to a textual level. In this respect, it is useful to distinguish between virtual and real spaces where intense and international woman-to-woman communication could take place following McFadden⁽¹⁷⁾ and Jensen⁽¹⁸⁾ and complying with Latour’s⁽¹⁹⁾ focus on careful semiotic analysis of textual evidence, what he calls “inscriptions”; correspondence being one of the ultimate text forms to study these. The real

(14) M.H. MCFADDEN, *Golden Cables*, *op. cit.*

(15) Jeremy BOISSEVAIN, “Network Analysis: A Reappraisal”, in *Current Anthropology*, vol. 20, 2, 1979, p. 392.

(16) H. BUZELIN, “Unexpected Allies”, *op. cit.*, p. 197 and p. 210.

(17) M.H. MCFADDEN, *Golden Cables*, *op. cit.*

(18) Lotte JENSEN, *‘Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt’*. *Vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2001.

(19) See Bruno LATOUR & Steve WOOLGAR, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1986; Bruno LATOUR, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005; Bruno LATOUR, *Changer de société – Refaire de la sociologie*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006.

space then denotes personal contacts and meetings between people while the virtual or ideological space refers to an international community of like-minded authors, translators and readers. Notwithstanding the distinction, personal networks can evolve into virtual ones (e.g. Van Cauwelaert asked his friend Undset to send him her work)⁽²⁰⁾ and vice versa (e.g. the reading of Roland Holst triggered Belpaire to write her a letter)⁽²¹⁾.

The texts that resulted from the connections between women writers and Belgian cultural mediators or that formed the subject of their letters, varied from children's literature that propagated Catholic values to sharp manifestos advocating pro-German ideas and the unification of the 'Greater Netherlands'⁽²²⁾. The often very personal exchanges one encounters in these letters give an impression of the Flemish cultural and literary field at the time, its aspirations and its – sometimes very down-to-earth – administrative composition. We learn how these writers penetrated the literary field of another country and to what extent they influenced it, when and why certain translations were made while others were not and who wanted to publish them. We become aware of the importance of social, symbolic and economic capital in those days and how, perhaps most importantly, the fact that these were all writers of the female sex could determine the issues they were dealing with.

An exceptionally extensive exchange of letters – and also the focus of this article – was the one maintained between Marie Elisabeth Belpaire (Antwerp, January 31, 1853 – June 9, 1948) and Henriette Roland Holst-van der Schalk (Noordwijk, December 24, 1869 – Amsterdam, November 21, 1952). These two women knew each other well through visits, meetings as well as correspondence. They supported each other and each other's contacts even though the ideological harmony between the two was often in danger on account of their very different socio-political and religious background. Their rich correspondence allows for studying processes rather than products and show in great detail how they functioned as transmitters of ideas, texts and cultural objects, how they positioned themselves, in the real and the virtual matrix, but also in discourse with respect to one another, how their networking activities got influenced by the new avenues of international connectedness that McFadden mentions and how the power balances shifted in the Netherlands in contrast to those in Belgium. This article sketches the network of people both Belpaire and Roland Holst knew or introduced to each other on the one hand and their poetics and reading on the other. Both angles show dissimilarities between their self-positioning moves in the social and literary field and the image they convey through their correspondence.

(20) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives August van Cauwelaert, M 896 / B, 16 June 1930.

(21) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B1, 1929.

(22) The idea of 'Greater Netherlands' ('Groot-Nederland') involved the political support and propagation of the unification of the Dutch-speaking regions of Belgium (Flanders) and The Netherlands. The predominant ideological orientation of this ideal was nationalistic and monocultural.

For the sake of truth in our friendship

Already in 1937, Henriette Roland Holst was called “the most interesting female figure in the half-century behind us”⁽²³⁾. Today she is canonized as one of the Netherlands’ most important poets of the first half of the twentieth century⁽²⁴⁾. Roland Holst was, however, much more than a female figure or a poet alone. To call her a versatile woman is an understatement. This former communist was busy in politics, various forms of culture and charity. Through her husband, the at the time very well-known graphic artist Richard (Rik) Roland Holst, and her own network she was at home in many Dutch and international elite as well as ordinary circles. With regard to Marie Elisabeth Belpaire the academic world has been more frugal with its interest until researchers started to call attention to other actors and roles than just the role of the author⁽²⁵⁾. Belpaire’s importance for the Belgian culture and literature on the one hand and women’s education and emancipation on the other can hardly be exaggerated. She was not assisted by a husband in her networking activities, yet she found access to similar circles as Henriette Roland Holst. Belpaire was a socially engaged cultural mediator, critic and translator active in both catholic women’s education and the Flemish Movement. She was also one of the founders of the prominent cultural magazine *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, an exceptional achievement for a woman at that time and place.

On an unknown date in the late twenties, Henriette Roland Holst sent an article she wrote to Marie Elisabeth Belpaire stating “for the sake of truth in our friendship, I send you an article I wrote with which you will disagree. However, I hope you won’t disagree with everything in it”⁽²⁶⁾. Their exchange of letters starts and ends with a dispute although never without friendly words and warm wishes. The dialogue between them clearly allowed for bold communication going beyond their social and institutionalized image or with Amossy their ‘prior ethos’: the image of the speaker that precedes the construction of the image in the discourse⁽²⁷⁾. The first contact between the two women is situated in the late 1920s and their friendship goes on until Henriette’s death in 1952. They keep in touch through correspondence, but they also arranged visits and met each other at celebrations and meetings

(23) K.F. PROOST, *Henriëtte Roland Holst in haar strijd om gemeenschap*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus’ U. M., 1937, p. 1.

(24) Het Geheugen van Nederland/Koninklijke Bibliotheek – Nationale Bibliotheek van Nederland, “Hoogtepunten van het Letterkundig Museum. Henriette Roland Holst (1869-1952)” in www.geheugenvannederland.nl (2003), 27 January 2014.

(25) For work on Belpaire see G. REYMANANTS, “Catholicism as a Stepping Stone”, *op. cit.*; G. REYMANANTS, *Marie Elisabeth Belpaire, op. cit.*; Esther JIRESH, “Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire and Dina Logeman-Van der Willigen. Two Cultural Transmitters in Flanders – in the Same Literary Field?”, in Petra BROOMANS, ed., *In the Vanguard of Cultural Transfer. Cultural Transmitters and Authors in Peripheral Literary Fields*, Groningen, Barkhuis, 2010, p. 33-54.

(26) “Ter wille van de waarachtigheid in onze vriendschap, stuur ik u hierbij een artikeltje van mij, waarmee u het niet eens zult zijn... al zult u, hoop ik, lang [*sic*] niet alles er in oneens zijn”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 27 June most probably 1933.

(27) R. AMOSSY, “Ethos”, *op. cit.*

of organizations in which they were both committed members. Except for a brief mention in Reymenants⁽²⁸⁾, no attention has been paid to the links between these two important women nor to their joint network: national borders still too often delimit the study of history.

The web of people Belpaire and Roland Holst knew or wanted to introduce each other to, both on a real and a virtual level, surfaces in their correspondence. For these two cultural mediators politics, religion and social issues were closely related to literature. Therefore, many of their acquaintances were clergy or politicians who also wrote or writers with political or religious aspirations. The overlap of agent roles was still strong in the beginning of the 20th century and as D'hulst and Vandemeulebroucke state, "it becomes questionable whether one should consider communication units such as subjects or activities as closed entities rather than permeable or "liquid" categories"⁽²⁹⁾. Simultaneously being a writer, critic, activist, politician, translator or poet, Roland Holst and Belpaire themselves were examples of the 'multifaceted agent' even more so when helping one another to move beyond their institutionalized position their gender *a priori* imposes on them.

As will become clear below, not only the bold way they talked about texts but also the textual domains and genres they applied themselves to are far removed from the confined space women were allowed to. Moreover, their different socio-political and religious background asked for a careful self-positioning in the correspondence with respect to one another as well. It is beyond doubt that Belpaire and Roland Holst were very different people. They rarely agreed with each other, yet they allowed each other a high-minded opinion. The changing form of address, from 'Miss' to 'My dearest', explicitly reveals the evolution in their friendship. However, the correspondence also shows their disappointment in each other and intervals in their contact. Even though pressure and distress now and then held both women in their grasp, they remained convinced that "in our hearts we are always one, even if we evaluate the matters of the day very differently"⁽³⁰⁾.

Mothers of the matrix: personal network

This section documents the network of people both Belpaire and Roland Holst knew or introduced to each other, how they managed that and why. Their circle of acquaintances consisted of Dutch, Flemish and foreign politicians, artists and academics. It contained a mixture of people coming from various socio-political groups and cultural areas. Among the Belgians of the group, notable figures in their circle included the missionary Petrus

(28) G. REYMNANTS, *Marie Elisabeth Belpaire, op. cit.*

(29) Lieven D'HULST & Karen VANDEMEULEBROUCKE, "Towards a Multipolar Model of Translational Mediation within Multicultural Spaces", Conference paper, Seventh EST Congress "Translation Studies: Centers and Peripheries", Germersheim, 29-31 August 2013 (forthcoming).

(30) "(...) dat wij in het diepste één zijn, al beoordelen wij vaak de dingen van den dag zeer verschillend". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 23 December 1937.

Vertenten, painter Albert De Roover, the critics Robert Antonissen and August van Cauwelaert, socialist Hendrik de Man and the writers Marnix Gijsen, Emmanuel de Bom, Alice Nahon, Blanka Gyselen and Stijn Streuvels. On the Dutch side they were connected to literary men Albert Verwey, Arthur van Schendel and Frans Coenen, to the writers Maria Viola, Augusta de Wit and Top Naeff, the politician Floor Wibaut (Senior) and the historian Johan Huizinga. Outside the Low Countries, there were the Danish writer Johannes Jørgensen, socialist Leonhard Ragaz and the Romanian writer Panait Istrati.

Latour's actor-networks encompass "anything that can induce, whether intentionally or not, an action". Moreover, actor-networks can only "reveal themselves when activated"⁽³¹⁾. Although Belpaire and Roland Holst explicitly recognize their drive to what we today would call networking and seemingly consciously expand their network, the activation of dormant nodes and connections is often inspired by a situational input and almost always induces action: "Yesterday I received your letter with the to me surprising proposal of a possible encounter with the Queen. I understand your motives only too well, I too always want to bring those dear to me into contact with one another"⁽³²⁾. An important connection to start with is Queen Elisabeth, spouse of King Albert 1st, and queen of the Belgians from 1909 until 1934. Belpaire had arranged a visit for Roland Holst to meet the Queen in relation to the discussion they were having on the Belgian war resisters Hem Day and Léo Champion. Both men had fulfilled their military service respectively in 1922 and 1925. On February 28th 1933, they sent back their military booklet to the Minister of Defence accompanied by a letter in which they refuse "henceforth all direct or indirect participation in national defence actions"⁽³³⁾. They were sentenced so severely (two years in prison and payments) that their cases provoked protests all over the world. On July 25th 1933, Hem Day and Léo Champion started a hunger strike, together with the Flemish conscientious objector Lionel De Vlaminck who was imprisoned at the same location.

(31) H. BUZELIN, "Unexpected Allies", *op. cit.*, p. 197.

(32) "Gisteren kreeg ik uw briefje met het voor mij wel verrassend voorstel, van een mogelijke kennismaking met de Koningin. Ik begrijp zoo goed uw motieven, zelf wil ik ook altijd zoo graag, verschillende menschen die mij lief zijn, met elkaar in kontakt brengen". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 3 August 1933.

(33) The complete letter states: "Attendu que la guerre est un crime contre l'humanité, attendu que le gouvernement belge l'a implicitement reconnu en signant le Pacte Briand-Kellog, attendu que le projet Devèze interdisant toute propagande pacifiste intégrale ne peut être admis par les hommes probes et libres, attendu qu'ayant rempli jusqu'à ce jour leurs obligations militaires ce qui est le plus grand regret de leur vie, les soussignés décident de renvoyer à son Excellence, M. Albert Devèze, Ministre de la Défense Nationale, leur livrets respectifs, lui signifiant par ce geste, leur intention formelle de se refuser dorénavant à toute participation directe ou indirecte à la défense nationale, et leur profond mépris pour le projet de loi dont il est l'auteur". It was signed Léo Champion, secretary of the Belgian section of the WRI (War Resistance International) and Hem Day (M.D., Marcel Dieu), secretary of the CIDA (Comité international de Défense anarchiste). For a detailed account of this process see Hem DAY & Léo CAMPION, *Autour d'un procès* published in 1968 in the anarchistic magazine *Les Cahiers de Pensée et Action* (from 1929 until 1953 entitled *Vie et Action*), managed by Hem Day himself.

Roland Holst actively took part in the anti-war protest actions. She feels “a voice inside” that pushes her to action. “I am weak”, she explains, “but if that voice speaks, I have to listen” and that is “the best I have”. During their repetitive discussions on the case – Belpaire calls it desertion – Roland Holst keeps asking Belpaire to do something for these three Belgian war resisters “through her friendship with the Queen”⁽³⁴⁾. She touches the right chord by mentioning the spirit of Christ in this respect and she manages to convince Belpaire to arrange a meeting with Elisabeth. However, their assistance came too late. A few days before Roland Holst accepted the offer, the three men had been released. This sort of humanitarian actions were not new to Roland Holst. After her rupture with the communist party in 1927, she fought against the violation of human rights anywhere in the world. Elsbeth Ety baptizes her as one of the first human rights activists in the Netherlands. Moreover, she had opposed official Belgian policy before and would do it again. During the First World War she established a committee for aid to Belgian refugees and after the Second World War she pleaded for a reduction of the sentence in Hendrik de Man’s case⁽³⁵⁾.

Actor-network theory implies that “scientific facts and artefacts do not necessarily answer existing needs, do not simply spread in society but have to create their own space by a concomitant process of network formation”⁽³⁶⁾. As such Belpaire’s and Roland Holst’s cultural mediating activities surfacing through material and ideological support are not necessarily based on needs but might be inspired by more intimate and biographical circumstances. Their role as literary agents can be illustrated by their aid to the Dutch writers Maurits Mok (November 7, 1907 – February 7, 1989) and Jef Last (May 2, 1898 – February 15, 1972). The first was a thirty-three years old and unemployed Jewish poet, according to Roland Holst “the strongest poetic talent in many years (...) quiet, unassuming and yet self-conscious”⁽³⁷⁾. Roland Holst regularly lets him type out manuscripts so that he could

(34) The complete letter states: “Maar ik moet u thans over een andere zaak schrijven – ik moet, lieve mamieke, dat wil zeggen de stem van binnen gaf het mij in en dringt mij het te doen, – ik ben een zwak mensch en dikwijls laf, maar dit is het beste wat ik heb: dat als die stem spreekt, ik moet gehoorzamen. Mamieke, kunt gij niet door uw vriendschap met de Koningin iets doen voor de Belgische dienstweigeraars, speciaal voor Leo Campion en Hem Day en L. de Vlaminck, die nu al acht dagen in voedselstaking zijn. Ik begrijp heel goed dat de Koningin dienstweigeraars afkeurt; U hebt mij gezegd dit zelf ook te doen – ik zelf kan niet anders zeggen, dan dat ik geloof, dat uit zulke daden de geest van Christus spreekt. Maar in elk geval was het vonnis schandelijk, het beteekent dat deze jonge menschen te gronde gaan, en dat kan toch de Koningin die een goed en menschelijk hart heeft niet willen. Daarom pleit ik bij u, lieve Mamieke, dat gij bij haar pleit om barmhartigheid. Ik bid er u om in liefde”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 3 August 1933.

(35) Elsbeth ETTY, *Liefde is heel het leven niet. Henriette Roland Holst 1869-1952*, Meppel, Uitgeverij Balans, 1996, p. 456-584.

(36) H. BUZELIN, *Unexpected Allies*, op. cit., p. 197.

(37) “(...) het sterkste dichterlijk talent, dat in veele jaren hier is opgekomen (...) rustig, bescheiden en doch zelfbewust”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 9 December 1939.

earn some money⁽³⁸⁾. Mok also copied Roland Holst's long epic poem in defence of the Jews *In liefde bloeiende (Blooming Love)*, which initiated the establishment of the radical and illegal resistance magazine *De Vonk*⁽³⁹⁾.

Another member of this magazine's editorial board was Jef Last. On Roland Holst's advice Jef Last had joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) and in 1930 became editor of the socialist magazine *De Nieuwe Weg*⁽⁴⁰⁾ of which Roland Holst was a member of the editorial staff. Later, Last and Roland Holst worked together again as editorial staff members of *De Vonk*'s postwar successor *De Vlam*, in a national committee against the death penalty (*Landelijk Comité van Actie tegen de Doodstraf*)⁽⁴¹⁾ and in a committee for the independence of Indonesia (*Werkcomité Ronde Tafel Conferentie der Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië*)⁽⁴²⁾. According to Roland Holst, Last was "extremely talented, a language genius, he knows Chinese, Russian, Spanish, various Scandinavian languages, etc." and he had written "a lot of beautiful things". She called his work *De Vliegende Hollander* (1939, *The Flying Dutchman*) "a masterpiece"⁽⁴³⁾.

In an article published in the political magazine of the Social Democratic Workers' Party *Socialisme & Democratie* (February 1939), Roland Holst expressed her sympathy for Maurits Mok's poetry volume *Kaas- en broodspel* (1938, *Bread and Cheese Revolt*) and especially for Jef Last's *De Vliegende Hollander*. Around the same time she asks Belpaire to read their work and to review it in order to introduce them to the literary scene in Belgium as well.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In spite of M. Mok's Marxist inclination (as is stated clearly in the review) his poetry volume was reviewed very positively in the *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* of May 1939. Jef Last was not reviewed probably because Belpaire, as she stated in her letters, had difficulties finding a copy of his newest work. Eventually, Roland Holst used her connections to give Mok governmental support, something she could not do for Jef Last who had lost his Dutch citizenship because he went to fight in the Spanish civil war.

Not only do they work as a team for promoting or even rescuing people, together Roland Holst and Belpaire also blocked contacts and publication as was the case with Cyriel Verschaeve (Ardoioe, 30 April 1874 – Solbad Hall, 8 November 1949) a Flemish-nationalist priest and writer who had explicitly shown sympathy for the Nazis during the Second World War and was condemned to death in 1946 on account of his collaboration. Verschaeve had always been an admirer of Roland Holst's poetry; he visited her regularly on the Buissche Heide near Zundert and was very excited about those visits.

(38) E. ETTY, *Liefde is heel het leven niet, op. cit.*, p. 547.

(39) E. ETTY, *Liefde is heel het leven niet, op. cit.*, p. 552.

(40) Before, *De Nieuwe Weg* was called *Klassenstrijd* and after 1935 it became *De Internationale*.

(41) E. ETTY, *Liefde is heel het leven niet, op. cit.*, p. 582.

(42) E. ETTY, *Liefde is heel het leven niet, op. cit.*, p. 606.

(43) "Uiterst begaafd, ook een talengenie, kent o.a. Chineesch, russisch spaansch, skandinavische talen enz. Heeft heel mooie dingen geschreven; de «Vliegende Hollander» vind ik een meesterwerk". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 9 December 1939.

(44) In Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 11 January 1940.

They remained in contact for years. In 1925, he published about Roland Holst in the series *Vrouwen van beteekenis: Henriette Roland Holst-Van der Schalk* (Eeghem by Verhaeghe) and in 1937 he chose Roland Holst again as one of the subjects of his work *Dietsche dichters: Albrecht Rodenbach, Delfien van Haute, Guido Gezelle, Henriëtte Roland Holst, Louis Leipoldt* (Zeemeeuw, Brugge). Roland Holst on her side had met Verschaeve on the Gezelle-commemoration in Amsterdam in 1930 and was very enthusiastic about the speech he gave there. In 1934, however, when she was asked to write an introduction for Verschaeve's lyric work, her enthusiasm about his talents had lessened. Eventually she rejected the offer, saying that "the misfortune is that, even though I see the poetic qualities, it does not appeal to me that much. That makes it difficult"⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The exchange of letters between Verschaeve and the Flemish radical nun Gabriëlla-Maria Catharina Van Caeneghem, daughter of Kamiel Van Caeneghem and involved with the Flemish Movement, showed a special interest in the work and person of Roland Holst⁽⁴⁶⁾. Sister Gabriël knew that Verschaeve was acquainted with Roland Holst. In their letters they speculated about Roland Holst's christening and religiousness. Verschaeve mentioned the "very religious review" Roland Holst wrote on his drama *Elijah in Tijd en Taak* (13 February 1937) but he also stated that, "nevertheless, she could use some praying"⁽⁴⁷⁾. *Tijd en Taak*, with William Banning as editor, another good friend of Roland Holst's, called itself a religious-socialist weekly. Roland Holst was a faithful contributor to the magazine and she reacted positively on *Elijah* after Verschaeve's publisher Martha Vande Walle had informed her about the publication⁽⁴⁸⁾. Later on, the review was adopted by the Flemish radical and Catholic women's magazine *Gudrun*.

Five years later, Roland Holst was looking for a Flemish literary critic to supply her with a preface to her non-political volumes: "I am determined to involve a Flemish critic; you know that the Flemish people, and their literature, occupy a warm place in my heart"⁽⁴⁹⁾. Not entirely aware of Verschaeve's collaborational actions nor of the tensions that existed between Belpaire and Verschaeve since 1917 over monarchism and the radical nature of his nationalism⁽⁵⁰⁾, she asked Belpaire whether it would be a good idea

(45) "Het ongeluk is dat, al zie ik de dichterlijke kwaliteiten, het mij zoo weinig ligt. Dat maakt het moeilijk". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 15 August 1934.

(46) Luc VANDEWEYER, "Cyriel Verschaeve aan zuster Gabriël. Zeven brieven, op het nippertje gered van de vernietiging...", in *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, vol. 65, 4, 2006, p. 301-325.

(47) "Religieus is zij. Nog onlangs in het tijdschrift *Tijdbaak* [*sic*] 'voor religieus-socialisten' heeft zij een lange diepgaande en zeer religieuze recensie over mijn laatste werk 'Elijah' geschreven. – Doch bidden kan zij zeker gebruiken". 31 March 1937, Alveringhem. Verschaeve is wrong about the magazine, it is called *Tijd en Taak* and not *Tijdbaak*. See L. VANDEWEYER, "Cyriel Verschaeve", *op. cit.*

(48) L. VANDEWEYER, "Cyriel Verschaeve", *op. cit.*, p. 304.

(49) "Ik ben er bepaald op gesteld, er een Vlaming bij te hebben; u weet dat de Vlamingen zelf, en hun letterkunde, een warm plaatsje hebben in mijn hart". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 17 September 1942.

(50) See G. REYMNANTS, *Marie Elisabeth Belpaire, op. cit.*

to let him write the prefaces. Belpaire immediately and strongly forbade Roland Holst to include Verschaeve: “Henriette love, your name should not be associated with his name. How can he, a devout priest, collaborate with our oppressors, executioners of the Jews, the enemies of all religions and civilization”⁽⁵¹⁾. Roland Holst looked for another prefacer and found one in Professor Dr. Rob Antonissen. Belpaire’s condemnation meant the end of the contact between Roland Holst and Verschaeve. In conclusion, denying the networks and processes behind the production or non-production of texts means a drastic simplification, “a form of rationalization” that undermines the active role of those who are involved in the process⁽⁵²⁾ concealing their strategies and struggles.

Poetics and reading: virtual network

As wealthy women of good families Roland Holst and Belpaire filled their days with their “big correspondence and daily visits”⁽⁵³⁾, reading, listening to music – Bach, Beethoven and Mozart were their favourites⁽⁵⁴⁾ – and setting up organizations and events. Their main activities, however, involved writing, sometimes for themselves but quite often at the request of an organization, magazine or newspaper. They wrote articles, book reviews, columns, opening speeches, brochures and prefaces. Belpaire also made translations and Roland Holst wrote poetry. Very often they were asked to write about another writer or prominent figure they knew (anthology introductions, obituaries, etc.) because their network was extensive and they adopted a very approachable attitude. Through their correspondence, the writing process and their flows of productivity can be followed.

Besides writing, they were mostly busy with reading. As we have seen above, it was not always easy to gain access to certain works; the reason for not writing a review could be as simple as that. Especially women were limited in their access to science and education and the institutions and organizations that provided it and were forced to find different ways to acquire knowledge than men. The correspondence between Roland Holst and Belpaire reveals several of them. First and foremost, it shows that above all, personal contacts and networks allow women to access information that would otherwise be unavailable to them. A study of the shared reading of Roland Holst and Belpaire indicates as much. They were both exposed to texts they would not find in their own direct circle of acquaintances and that they wouldn’t have met during their education. Their correspondence gives an idea of the

(51) “Henriette lief, uw naam mag aan zijn naam niet verbonden worden. Hoe kan hij, een vroom priester, heulen met onze verdrukters, met de jodenbeulen, met de vijanden van alle godsdiensten en beschaving”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B1, 10 September 1942.

(52) H. BUZELIN, “Unexpected Allies”, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

(53) “[...] een groote korrespondentie en dagelijks bezoek”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 20 February 1939.

(54) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 15 February 1938.

content of their libraries and how their reading choices and suggestions were strongly motivated by their views and opinions. They function as mediators in the sense that they advertise the work of people they know personally and try to persuade one another to read more of their own favourites. Moreover, Latour's more general definition of mediator as a maintainer of "relations of such a sort that they make others do unexpected things"⁽⁵⁵⁾ also applies here. Regularly, works were sent to each other even before publication. Belpaire sent Roland Holst works from Johannes Jørgensen she translated⁽⁵⁶⁾ while Roland Holst supplied Belpaire with works from her friends Leonhard Ragaz that never got published in Belgium⁽⁵⁷⁾. Aside from texts, also radio broadcasts and music were elements of cultural transfer and often even more difficult to access beyond national borders. Between 1942 and 1945, for instance, Belpaire sent Roland Holst transcribed lectures of Pope Pius XII from radio broadcasts⁽⁵⁸⁾.

Their joint reading ranged from European canonical literature to contemporary Flemish and Dutch writers. Among the former group are Shakespeare, Dickens⁽⁵⁹⁾, Tolstoy, Balzac, Racine, Vondel and Goethe, the latter readings included the poetry of Jan Hammenecker, August van Cauwelaert, Guido Gezelle, Herman Gorter and the works of Schaepman, Pater Morlion, Pater van Gastel, Gijsen, Coolen, Durdan, Toller, Claes, etc. Special favorites are Paul Claudel, Grazia Deledda, Raymonde Vincent, Christina Rossetti, Henry Constable, Meister Eckhart, Augusta de Wit and John Henry Newman. Hilaire Belloc they find "very entertaining; witty and full of prospects, – yet mindlessly biased and fanatic"⁽⁶⁰⁾, Schendel's *De grauwe vogels* possesses "forced gloom"⁽⁶¹⁾, De Merode's work is "never entirely real"⁽⁶²⁾, Pearl Buck's level is going downwards⁽⁶³⁾ and Pater Vertenten's *Peerken* is "rather

(55) In BUZELIN, "Unexpected Allies", *op. cit.*, p. 106.

(56) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 6 November 1936.

(57) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 9 March 1933, 7 June 1933, 2 December 1933 and 25 April 1940.

(58) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B1, Belpaire to Holst, 21 July 1942 and 9 December 1945.

(59) Belpaire was a warm admirer of Dickens. Interestingly enough, the fact that he got divorced bothered her a lot. See Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B1, Belpaire to Holst, 4 July 1944.

(60) "[...] zeer onderhoudend; geestig en vol vergezichten, – maar blind-partijdig en fanatiek". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 12 October 1935.

(61) "[...] een beetje gewild somber". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 16 December 1937.

(62) "Hélemaal echt vind ik het nooit". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 26 June 1939.

(63) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 26 June 1939.

sugary” while his *Koppensnellers* is “pretty naïve”⁽⁶⁴⁾. The sometimes rather sharp critiques on these texts show a clear gap between their social or public position and the ethos they elaborate for themselves in their letters.

Nevertheless, taking into account their ideological differences, they also carefully positioned themselves with respect to one another and even take advantage of each other’s ‘weak points’. One of their pet subjects – religion – showcases this best. Roland Holst, who was experiencing a change in her religious thoughts, got bombarded with Belpaire’s catholic ideas and texts. In almost every letter Belpaire writes about the subject: “The bond of friendship among so many souls is so sweet! It results from the infinite love of God, our Creator and Redeemer. And sweet it is to see you Henriette continually come closer and closer to this source of all light and love”⁽⁶⁵⁾. In another letter she repeats how “it is an intimate joy [...] to see how religion grows with you”⁽⁶⁶⁾. Belpaire is very straightforward about her ideas on religion and sent Roland Holst critical texts on Protestantism or propagandistic Catholic works. Roland Holst handled this very diplomatically by never denying the evolution in her thoughts and in her work, but for Roland Holst her “socialism has always been religious”⁽⁶⁷⁾. However, Belpaire’s influence in her work and ideas is very much present. Moreover, some of Roland Holst’s poems were published in *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* but only after her poetry had changed from very dogmatic Marxism to more conventional (religious) socialism, which made it acceptable to the strongly catholic orientation of the publication. Before, the journal had pointed out the “prize blunder” Roland Holst had made by “turning against religion”⁽⁶⁸⁾. Nonetheless, she was never absent from the journal: her fictional and biographical works had been reviewed before but only from 1929 onwards she got her poems published and reviewed as well⁽⁶⁹⁾. In January 1942, when Roland Holst sent Belpaire a poem dedicated to the holy Mary confirming “the bonds between [them] through the essence of faith”, it shows that Roland Holst’s ever increasing commitment towards religion was genuine and on-going throughout the years⁽⁷⁰⁾.

(64) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, Holst to Belpaire, 19 March 1940.

(65) “Wat is die band van vriendschap onder zoovele zielen toch zoet! Hij vloeit uit de oneindige liefde Gods, onzen Schepper en Verlosser. En zoet is het ook Henriëtte gedurig nader en nader te zien komen tot die bron van alle licht en liefde”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B1, 26 January 1944.

(66) “Het is een innige vreugde [...] te zien hoe de Godgedachte bij U aangroeit”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B1, 18 November 1944.

(67) “Maar mijn socialisme is altijd religieus geweest”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 2 November most probably 1929.

(68) “[...] de groote flater zich tegen de religie te kanten”. In “Overzicht van Tijdschriften”, in *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*, vol. 24, 1, 1924, p. 188.

(69) ‘Zeven Sonnetten’ is published in November 1929 and ‘Liefdes geur in de dingen’ in March 1932.

(70) “Ik ben blij u dit voor uw verjaardag te kunnen zenden en mij aan u verbonden te weten in het wezen van het geloof”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 19 January 1942.

Roland Holst's shift in attitude towards religion is even more explicit in the non-fiction reading that both women engaged in, which could be very different because of their divergent interests. At first, the reading of works from the oeuvre of a writer such as Jean-Baptiste-Henri Lacordaire did not go down well with Roland Holst. She explicitly stated that "this 'devotional reading' reminds me a little too much of the sermons I had to listen to as a child in the great village church in Noordwijk"⁽⁷¹⁾. Later, Roland Holst is not irritated anymore by the catholic tone of texts such as those of Thomas More or Alexis Carrel's *L'homme cet inconnu*. Around that time, Belpaire provides Roland Holst with a copy of the New Testament, which becomes an important part of their joint reading. From 1935 onwards, attacks on Protestantism as propagated in Christopher Dawson's works *Progress and Religion* (1929) and *The Modern Dilemma* (1933) are a daily occurrence in their letters. Specifically about Dawson, they wonder why he is not known nor translated on the continent "while in our country truly anything mature or green is translated"⁽⁷²⁾. According to Belpaire that is because of his being catholic but Roland Holst does not agree, since another of their favourite writers on Catholicism, G.K. Chesterton, was indeed very well known at the time. But he has something other than that running for him of course, as Roland Holst explains, that "out-dated English humour in his style"⁽⁷³⁾.

Belpaire's constant influence on Roland Holst's religious ideas is dominant in the letters. Nevertheless, in mentioning Christ and catholic values Roland Holst for her part found Belpaire's Achilles heel. Roland Holst tried to change Belpaire's views on society and politics cleverly adding a religious tone to her philanthropy and charity statements and to the evaluation of the books she values. For Roland Holst, socialism means "a society with more justice, expected from people but only in so far and if God's spirit operates through them and in them"⁽⁷⁴⁾. In the war resisters' actions mentioned above Roland Holst saw "Christ's spirit"⁽⁷⁵⁾. It was, moreover, God who gave her her intellectual power and impulses to act, and he gave these to her "to use them"⁽⁷⁶⁾. In that same manner, Roland Holst discusses and propagates the

(71) "[...] deze «stichtelijke lektuur» mij iets te veel herinnert aan de preeken [*sic*] die ik als kind moest aanhooren in de groote dorpskerk te Noordwijk". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 11 March 1937.

(72) "[...] terwijl in ons land waarlijk rijp en groen vertaald wordt". With "our country" Holst refers to the Netherlands. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 22 July 1935.

(73) "Maar natuurlijk die heeft den ouwerwetschen engelsche humor in zijn stijl". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 9 August 1935.

(74) "(...) een maatschappij met méér gerechtigheid, verwacht van mensen dan toch alléén voor zoover en indien dóór en in hen Gods geest werkt". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 30 November 1931.

(75) "(...) ik zelf kan niet anders zeggen, dan dat ik geloof, dat uit zulke daden de geest van Christus spreekt". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 3 August 1933.

(76) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 22 July 1933.

Marxist Nikolaj Berdjajev's works, Panait Istrati's *Vers l'autre flamme* (1929) and G. Bjelych and L. Pantelejew's *Schkid, Republik der Strolche* (1929). In the case of Victor Serge's biography *Portrait de Staline*, published in France in 1940 but immediately banned from distribution, Roland Holst, after having gained access to it through her left-winged circle of acquaintances, sent the book to Belpaire for discussion⁽⁷⁷⁾. Roland Holst also advertised Indian philosophy and mysticism. In doing so she carefully mentions Indian religious poetry together with her readings from the gospels and Meister Eckhart's works⁽⁷⁸⁾ and adds that the person who supplies her with this kind of poetry is very devout⁽⁷⁹⁾. These reading domains were clearly situated beyond the conventional genres suggested for women and even beyond the religious and political recommended literature for any sex. In addition, it is clear that also between these two women, carefulness was needed over particular topics, especially Catholicism with regard to Belpaire and Marxism as regards Roland Holst.

Next to discussing texts, Roland Holst and Belpaire also literally produce texts together and ask each other for suggestions while writing lectures. In trying to understand the properties of networks, Michel Callon's⁽⁸⁰⁾ argument stating that networks both structure the product (by providing its meaning and outlets) and is structured by it, holds true in the following example. After Richard (Rik) Roland Holst's death, Belpaire made inquiries about the publication of the poems Henriette made for him. A few days earlier, the same sister Gabriël that was mentioned above had asked access to these poems via Belpaire, a fact that surprised both women: "Is it nowadays allowed to read love poetry in monasteries, Mamieke? That is rather broad-minded"⁽⁸¹⁾. Roland Holst eventually decided that her cousin, the poet Adriaan Roland Holst, was allowed to compose a volume of these poems five years after her death. Henriette Roland Holst, however, was not aware of the fact that Rik had already sent Belpaire some of these poems that she had made for him through the years. Belpaire on her part was honest enough to keep them from publication and gave Adriaan Roland Holst complete freedom to compose the volume.

Often, direct situational and biographical elements have activated production processes that in turn were made possible through networking and instigated the expansion or consolidation of these networks. Roland Holst was always eager to send suggestions for *Dietsche Warande en Belfort*. She sent Belpaire reviews and essays on Augusta De Wit, her own poetry and

(77) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 25 April 1940.

(78) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 20 November 1935.

(79) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 22 June 1935.

(80) Michel CALLON, *La science et ses réseaux: genèse et circulation des faits scientifiques*, Paris, La Découverte, 1989, p. 14.

(81) "Mag men tegenwoordig in de kloosters liefdesverzen lezen, mamieke? Dat is wel heel ruim". Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 6 May 1937.

the last speech of Rik, which was “a kind of spiritual testament”⁽⁸²⁾, for publication. Roland Holst called the journal “a pleasant magazine” because it was “so concise. We Dutch people are often too long-winded”⁽⁸³⁾. During the war she expressed her regret on the suspension of *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* at the end of the year 1941 and she repeated her fondness of the Flemish people: “I am so sorry, dear Mamieke, to hear that the *Dietsche Warande* has been suspended; the content was always interesting and it links me to my Flemish friends and readers”⁽⁸⁴⁾. In the Netherlands most magazines escaped the publication ban during the occupation, but circulation is limited and Roland Holst could not get access to any of them⁽⁸⁵⁾. Her efforts in creating the resistance magazine *De Vonk* (cf. *supra*), however, she did not mention to Belpaire, most likely because of the fact that these letters could get intercepted but it also shows a recurrent reserve Roland Holst kept on in her letters with respect to the more progressive or leftist actions she undertook.

Conclusion

Roland Holst’s connections to Flemish cultural mediators and her love for Belgium were neglected far too long. Time and again she explains how refreshed and satisfied she felt when coming from Belgium: “The Flemish nature is less stiff than ours, more generous with warmth and appreciation, and that does good to us northerners”⁽⁸⁶⁾. The exchange of letters between Roland Holst and Belpaire reveals the importance of transnational networking during the interwar period and the sometimes simple but often complicated processes of cultural mediation between countries – even without language barrier – and within them that result from these networking activities.

The more private nature of correspondence showed us the conveyance of new discursive images different from the ‘prior ethos’ imposed on these women by the institutionalized and social gender conventions. The relations maintained between Roland Holst and Belpaire left room for an unexpected strong-willed and witty attitude. Also, the network of people they both knew

(82) “(...) die een soort geestelijk testament is”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 2 February 1939.

(83) “Ik vind het zoo’n prettig tijdschrift omdat het zoo bondig is. Wij Nederlanders, zijn vaak zoo langdradig”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, date unknown.

(84) “Het deed mij van harte leed, lieve Mamieke, te hooren dat de Dietsche Warande weer stopgezet is; ik vond den inhoud altijd belangwekkend en voelde het als een band met mijn Vlaamsche vrienden en lezers”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 9 January 1942.

(85) Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 9 January 1942.

(86) “De Vlaamsche aard is wat minder stug dan de onze, wat guller met hartelijkheid en waardeering, en dat doet onze noorderlingen goed”. Antwerp, Het Letterenhuis. Het Geheugen van de Vlaamse Literatuur, Archives Marie-Elisabeth Belpaire, B 417 / B2, 28 November 1933.

or introduced to each other, how they managed that and why on the one hand and their poetics and reading on the other show us two women who travelled way beyond the literary and social borders they were confined to. By following the actors, by studying networks from the inside and focusing on the process instead of the product, we can highlight the tensions and struggles in social relationships between persons who have differential access to resources, the strategies they use to stir this imbalance and the creative, situational and thus unpredictable character of cultural transfer.

Nevertheless, on account of their very different socio-political and religious background carefulness was needed to sustain their ideological harmony. Roland Holst and Belpaire also positioned themselves with respect to one another and even took advantage of each other's 'weak points'. One of their pet subjects – religion – showcases this best. This article only touched the discourse analysis pathway but further research down that road could offer a more comprehensive view with respect to the preceding conclusions.

Looking to these data through a gendered point of view shows us that material or ideological support of leading figures such as Roland Holst and Belpaire but also many other women cannot be neglected any longer. As McFadden⁽⁸⁷⁾ explains so well, despite the fact that these women did not always focus on gender debates explicitly or were neutral or even negative towards women's causes, they still contributed to it: the visions they adhere, their willingness and possibility to travel the world, their ways of drawing a variety of influential people to themselves and to their movements and their ways of gaining access to texts and knowledge helped to create a new image of what was possible for women.

ABSTRACT

Dorien DE MAN, *Mothers of the Matrix. Intercultural Transfer Activities of Henriette Roland Holst and Marie Elisabeth Belpaire*

This article studies the relations maintained between Henriette Roland Holst and Marie Elisabeth Belpaire and points out how the more private nature of their correspondence conveys new discursive images different from the 'prior ethos' imposed on these women by the institutionalized and social gender conventions. The network of people they both knew or introduced to each other, how they managed that and why on the one hand, and their poetics and reading on the other, show us two women who travelled way beyond the literary and social borders they were confined to. By following the actors, by studying networks from the inside and focusing on the process instead of the product, we can highlight the tensions and struggles in social relationships between persons who have differential access to resources, the strategies they use to stir this imbalance and the creative, situational and thus unpredictable character of cultural transfer.

Henriette Roland Holst – Marie Elisabeth Belpaire – interwar period – intercultural transfer – real and virtual networks – correspondence – habitus

(87) M.H. MCFADDEN, *Golden Cables*, *op. cit.*

SAMENVATTING

Dorien DE MAN, *Moeders van de matrix. Interculturele transferactiviteiten van Henriette Roland Holst en Marie Elisabeth Belpaire*

Dit artikel bestudeert de relatie tussen Henriette Roland Holst en Marie Elisabeth Belpaire en toont aan hoe de meer private aard van hun correspondentie nieuwe discursieve beelden van deze vrouwen opwerpt die sterk verschillen van het 'prior ethos' dat hen opgelegd werd door geïnstitutionaliseerde en sociale genderconventies. Het netwerk van de mensen die ze beiden kenden of aan elkaar hebben voorgesteld, hoe en waarom ze dat deden enerzijds, en hun poëtica en leesactiviteiten anderzijds, tonen ons twee vrouwen die ver voorbij de literaire en sociale grenzen traden waarbinnen ze geacht werden te blijven. Door het volgen van de actoren, het bestuderen van netwerken van binnenuit en het focussen op het proces in plaats van op het product, kunnen we de spanning en strijd in sociale relaties tussen personen die een ongelijke toegang tot middelen hebben aantonen alsook de strategieën die ze gebruiken om dit onevenwicht te roeren en kunnen we het creatieve, situationele en dus onvoorspelbare karakter van culturele overdracht blootleggen.

Henriette Roland Holst – Marie Elisabeth Belpaire – interbellum – interculturele transfers – reële en virtuele netwerken – briefwisseling – habitus

RÉSUMÉ

Dorien DE MAN, *Mères de la matrice. Les activités de transfert interculturel de Henriette Roland Holst et Marie Elisabeth Belpaire*

En se basant sur la relation épistolaire entre Henriette Roland Holst et Marie Elisabeth Belpaire, notre article introduit des images discursives de ces deux intellectuelles qui diffèrent de l'« éthos préalable » établi par les conventions institutionnelles et sociales, qui déterminent aussi les rôles attribués à chaque sexe. L'étude des larges réseaux de Holst et Belpaire, de la façon dont elles se sont introduites l'une l'autre dans leurs réseaux respectifs et de l'échange de lectures et de conceptions poétiques, nous montre à quel point ces deux femmes ont voyagé bien au-delà des frontières littéraires et sociales dans lesquelles on les croyait confinées. En suivant les acteurs, en étudiant les réseaux de l'intérieur et en mettant l'accent sur le processus (plutôt que sur le produit), cet article veut mettre en évidence les tensions et les luttes inhérentes aux relations sociales entre acteurs ayant un accès inégal aux ressources, les stratégies utilisées pour ébranler ce déséquilibre et l'aspect créatif, situationnel et donc imprévisible du transfert culturel.

Henriette Roland Holst – Marie Elisabeth Belpaire – entre-deux-guerres – transferts interculturels – réseaux réels et virtuels – correspondance – habitus

The Same Blood Works in Us. Wies Moens as a Cultural Mediator in Times of War

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Introduction

The Second World War and the years leading up to it provide an interesting setting for the study of discourse on identity, nationalism and xenophobia. During wartime, national identities are often the object of fierce struggle and confrontation: a nation's attitude towards neighbouring countries and international relations in general becomes the stake of a sharp ideological debate. Studying cultural mediation can provide insight into extreme standpoints on nationalism and internationalization, and also into the process of identity building. In this paper, I will discuss the role of one specific cultural agent, mediating between Flanders and Germany during the Second World War: Wies Moens. I will mainly focus on his work as a translator, although it will become clear he combined that with other forms of cultural mediation.

Translating in times of war

During World War II translation was a crucial instrument in the cultural-political struggle. Many adhered to the Humboldtian idea that "each language carries a world peculiarly its own"⁽¹⁾. Language and ethnicity were thought of as being one and indivisible. Language issues therefore always had a political dimension. National Socialism particularly encouraged the belief in the bio-racial, genetic character of language⁽²⁾. The Germans ran an essentialist language campaign, which was also reflected in the translation policy. In such an ideological context, texts are often read in an ethnographic way, namely as representatives of a specific culture⁽³⁾. Translations from 'Nordic' and 'Germanic' languages were encouraged in order to overcome 'Latin' and

(1) Emily APTER, *The Translation Zone. A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 111.

(2) E. APTER, *The Translation Zone*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

(3) Gisèle SAPIRO, "Normes de traduction et contraintes sociales", in Anthony PYM, Miriam SHLESINGER & Daniel SIMEONI, eds., *Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. Investigations in Homage to Gideon Toury*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2008, p. 200-208.

especially French influences. The latter were historically very widespread in Belgium (neighbouring France as well as Germany), but during the Second World War they were regarded as morally depraved and culturally alien.

During the Second World War Belgium was ruled by the German army, the *Militärverwaltung*. This organisation issued a missive that stated that cultural relations between Belgium and Germany had to be consolidated by suppressing French influences. In August 1940, the *Tätigkeitsberichten* – the occupier’s newsletter – reported: “Das kulturelle Leben in Belgien wird nach dem Kriege in erster Linie von Deutschland aus beeinflusst werden müssen.” According to Hanns Johst, the president of the Reichsschrifttumskammer in Berlin, “(d)ie Beschaffung deutscher Bücher (is) vordringlich. Die Volksbüchereien sind in den letzten Jahren durch deutschfeindliche und Emigranten-Literatur verseht worden”⁽⁴⁾.

The translation policy of the German *Propaganda Abteilung* (Propaganda Division) was strict. In September 1941 a list of unwanted literary works was published, “Against Instigation and Chaos”, containing about 1456 books⁽⁵⁾. The preface to this list contended that intellectual life in Belgium was too strongly influenced by French and that this pernicious cultural influence had to be stopped in favour of a German orientation. According to Michel Fincoeur, the Germans founded new publishing houses to that end⁽⁶⁾. Translations from German or from Northern European languages were licensed more quickly and a translation project was automatically granted a licence if the text had already been translated into German earlier⁽⁷⁾. This implies that translations were considered as important (and dangerous) vehicles in the transfer of ideas and ideologies.

However, translation was also regarded as a way to fill a gap in national cultures, namely by domesticating cultural products that were not considered harmful but crucial to the process of identity building. In this article, three cases of such translations will be discussed. All three texts were translated by the Flemish-nationalist poet Wies Moens. A recent evolution in the field of Translation Studies is marked by an increased interest in the agency involved in the process of cultural transfer. Reine Meylaerts, among others, has shifted the focus from translations to translators, by looking at them as enactors of structures and norms that we tend to study as if they were independent and external⁽⁸⁾. In other words, she observes the translator in the light of his intercultural habitus: “Under the influence of social position and individual

(4) Ernst BRUINSMA, Hans RENDERS, Lisa KUITERT & Brigitte SLANGEN, eds., *Inktpatronen: de Tweede Wereldoorlog en het boekbedrijf in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2006, p. 27.

(5) Michel B. FINCOEUR, “De uitgeverwereld tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog”, in Dirk DE GEEST, Paul ARON & Dirk MARTIN, eds., *Hun kleine oorlog*, Leuven, Peeters & Brussels, SOMA, 1998.

(6) M.B. FINCOEUR, “De uitgeverwereld”, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

(7) Elke BREMS, “A Case of ‘Cultural Castration’? Paul de Man’s Translation of *De Soldaat Johan* by Filip de Pillecyn”, in *Target*, vol. 22, 2010, 2, p. 212-236.

(8) Reine MEYLAERTS, “Translators and (Their) Norms. Towards a Sociological Construction of the Individual”, in Anthony PYM, Miriam SHLESINGER & Daniel SIMEONI, eds., *Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies*, *op. cit.*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2008, p. 91-102.

and collective past, every cultural actor thus develops (and continues to develop) a social identity: a certain representation of the world and of the person's position therein"⁽⁹⁾. Or as Theo Hermans phrases it: "Intercultural traffic, then, of whatever kind, takes place in a given social context, a context of complex structures, including power structures. It involves agents who are both conditioned by these power structures or at least entangled in them, and who exploit or attempt to exploit them to serve their own ends and interests"⁽¹⁰⁾.

Thus, as a translator, Moens was conditioned by his environment, i.e. the very active (and repressive) power structures during the Second World War, but at the same time he also attempted to exploit these structures for his own goals. By selecting precisely these literary works for translation during the Second World War, he tried to converge the literary history of Flanders, Germany and the Nordic countries. As Rigney states: "Memories of a shared past are collectively constructed and reconstructed in the present rather than resurrected from the past"⁽¹¹⁾. As a cultural mediator, Wies Moens engaged in constructing elements of a shared (literary) past.

A cultural mediator at work

Wies Moens (1898-1982) was a Flemish writer who became famous as an activist during the First World War. Activists were a section of the Flemish nationalists who collaborated with the Germans because they believed the Germans would back the Flemish Movement. The movement strived for Flemish emancipation (first culturally, then also politically) within the kingdom of Belgium. For instance, the Flemish had been trying to establish a Flemish (i.e. Dutch-speaking) university for quite some time, but that goal could only be achieved in 1916 with the support of the Germans. Wies Moens was one of the first students to attend that university. A few years later he started to gather fame with his poetry. In the 1920s he became very well-known as a so-called humanitarian-expressionist poet, alongside Paul van Ostaijen, as part of the literary avant-garde. His political beliefs at that time implied a strong and independent Flanders. During the 1930s his literary fame diminished: he was no longer considered a member of the avant-garde, but instead became known for poetry that intended to enhance the link between literature and the people, often with an exalted and militant undercurrent. His political ideas had also evolved and he now favoured the concept of a Great-Netherlandic State (comprising both Flanders and the Netherlands, and even parts of France and South-Africa). In 1931, Wies Moens and Joris van Severen, founded Verdinaso (*Verbond van Dietsche Nationaal-Solidaristen* – *Union of Diets National Solidarists*), an authoritarian and fascist-inspired

(9) R. MEYLAERTS, "Translators and (Their) Norms", *op. cit.*, p. 93.

(10) Theo HERMANS, "Norms and the Determination of Translation. A Theoretical Framework", in Román ÁLVAREZ & M. Carmen-África VIDAL, eds., *Translation, Power, Subversion*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 1996, p. 25-51 (27).

(11) Ann RIGNEY, "Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory", in *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 35, 2005, 1, p. 11-28 (14).

political party. Then, during the Second World War, he became intrigued by the idea of a Great-German Empire in which each ‘region’ (*‘gouw’*) would be allowed to express the Germanic essence in its own specific way. It is important to keep in mind that he did not envisage this Great-Germanic empire as one-way traffic: he believed that Germany could also benefit from Flemish cultural influences.

As a key cultural-political figure during the 1930s and 1940s, Moens always made his beliefs perfectly clear by producing a number of essays. In 1939 Wies Moens published a lecture he gave at the Volksuniversiteit Herman van den Reeck in Antwerp. This leaflet is entitled *Nederlandsche letterkunde van volksch standpunt gezien* (Dutch literature seen from a ‘*volks*’ point of view)⁽¹²⁾. In this leaflet he fulminates against what he calls ‘international art’ with the following words: “We call international art an absurdity. Only those that have been uprooted or those that believe they have to replace the natural and necessary division of human kind into races and peoples by an abstract, bloodless notion of humanity could try to ‘fabricate’ something like this”⁽¹³⁾. Moens sees translation as an act of respect from a *volkse* poet towards the character and creativity of any *volk*. According to him, the *volkse* translator differs from the ‘normal’ translator, because the former is aware of the deceptiveness of dictionaries. He knows that if a literary work is very pure, it also becomes very hard to translate the spirit of the original without losing a certain quality of truthfulness and authenticity.

To illustrate his point he uses a line by Hölderlin: “Deutschland, du Land der Liebe”. Moens claims that if you say this in French, it no longer refers to Germany. “The same goes for ‘Geist’ and ‘esprit’, for ‘Ehre’ and ‘honneur’ (...) One could compile a long list of such cases, for German and French alone”⁽¹⁴⁾. It is of course no coincidence that he uses French and German examples and stresses the untranslatability between these two languages. At that time, they were cultural and political antipodes. Moens would never have used Dutch-German examples, since he claims that these two cultures (and, consequently, the languages as well) are related. Thus, translation between these languages had to seem evident and natural, because both languages expressed the same essence, the same race.

In his essay on Germanic peoples, *Onze volksche adel* (Our *volks* nobility, 1942), published by the VNV (Flemish National Alliance),⁽¹⁵⁾ Moens clarifies his beliefs regarding this kinship. According to him, Flemish culture

(12) ‘*Volks*’ is an ideological term here and cannot be translated by ‘popular’ or ‘common’. The nazi term would be ‘*völkisch*’. I consider the term to be ‘untranslatable’ into English.

(13) “Internationale kunst echter noemen wij een onding. Alleen ontwortelden, of dezulken die de natuurnoodzakelijken werkelijkheid van de verbijzondering der menschheid in rassen en volken meenen te moeten van kant zetten voor een abstract, bloedloos, menscheidsbegrip, kunnen poogen zoo iets te ‘fabriceeren’ ”: Wies MOENS, *Nederlandsche letterkunde van volksch standpunt gezien*, Antwerpen, Volksuniversiteit Herman van den Reeck, 1939, p. 24.

(14) “Zoo is het met ‘Geist’ en ‘esprit’, met ‘Ehre’ en ‘honneur’. Men zou (...) een lange lijst van dergelijke gevallen, uitsluitend voor het Duitsch en het Fransch, kunnen aanhalen”: W. MOENS, *Nederlandsche letterkunde, op. cit.*, p. 15.

(15) It was a speech delivered in Mechelen on November 25th, 1941.

represents “the Nordic-Germanic genius” in its own, unique way⁽¹⁶⁾. “Thus we have become a people with our own distinct nature, related of course to the nature of other Germanic peoples (and in the first place to that of the German people)”⁽¹⁷⁾. However, Moens also adds that since the efforts to ‘Latinize’ the Flemish have failed, there is also no point in turning them into Germans now (“Besides, there are enough Germans in the world”)⁽¹⁸⁾. According to Moens, the Flemish should establish an eternal friendship with the Germans, because “the same blood works in us” and both groups need to serve what they have in common, i.e. their Germanic roots, but “each one [should do this] according to their own *volkse* nature”. Moens is walking a thin line here and sometimes gets entangled in his own vocabulary: he talks about the same blood, a distinct nature, the same *volk*, not German but Germanic, the same roots, etc. In his essays he keeps defining and redefining the complex relation of autonomy and heteronomy he claims for the Flemish within the German Reich: he tries to mediate in a discursive way between the desire for togetherness and a sense of individuality.

His translation activity also serves as a way to define that relationship. In the section below three examples will be analysed.

The Finnish Kalevala

During the nineteenth century many nations made a claim for autonomy and cultural identity. One of the tools that served as leverage for this claim was literature. Ancient manuscripts were dug up (or falsified) and published in order to construct a national literary tradition; folk songs and other oral genres were collected and distributed in writing. “(F)or cultures without an established literary tradition, the possession of a proto-epic oral tradition was a powerful trump card in their bid for national status. It is for this reason that, in some cases, balladry collected in folklore-style fieldwork was subsequently arranged or manipulated to give it an epic cohesion. This is the case for the Finnish Kalevala”⁽¹⁹⁾.

The collection of stories called *Kalevala* was compiled by the nineteenth century philologist and medical doctor Elias Lönnrot and was based on folk poetry that he collected on his journeys through Finland. Plourde says that Lönnrot can be considered as a translator, because he unified and standardized the idiolect of the rune singers⁽²⁰⁾. Lönnrot combined the poems and the songs he heard and published a new compilation that could serve as a Finnish

(16) “t Noordsch-Germaansch ‘genie’” Wies MOENS, *Onze volksche adel*, Antwerpen, Volk en staat, 1942, p. 10.

(17) “Zoo zijn wij geworden tot een volk met een onmiskenbaar eigen wezen, verwant weliswaar aan het wezen van andere Germaansche volken (in de eerste plaats aan dat van het Deutsche volk)”: W. MOENS, *Onze volksche adel*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

(18) “Er zijn trouwens Duitschers genoeg in de wereld”: W. MOENS, *Onze volksche adel*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

(19) Joep LEERSSEN, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006, p. 198.

(20) Eric PLOURDE, “Kalevala Through Translation: Continuity, Rewriting and Appropriation of an Epic”, in *Meta*, vol. 51, 2006, 4, p. 794-805.

national epic. Lefevere states that Lönnrot used the analogy of the classical epic as a successful model. This is typical: small literatures need to adopt the successful models of dominant literatures and “new, hitherto unrecognised national literatures that wanted to be admitted to the fellowship of world literature would considerably advance their case if they were able to produce an epic of their own”⁽²¹⁾.

Leerssen calls this strategy ‘internal ethnography’, i.e. “a search for the cultural mainspring of the nation, old, primeval, untainted by foreign or modern admixture, by exchange or by cosmopolization”⁽²²⁾. This purity (no exchange, no foreignness) is of course an illusion, especially if taken into account that Lönnrot, as he mentioned in his preface to the 1835 edition, was influenced by Greek and Icelandic examples. Moreover, the epic he created became the most translated Finnish text: it was a popular subject of cultural exchange. Nationalist movements in other countries, lacking an epic of their own, often took recourse to translating this national epic. Plourde observes that “translation of a book like the Kalevala probably functioned as a lever for minority cultures, and even for linguistic emancipation”⁽²³⁾.

As a consequence, it seems almost evident that Flemish nationalists in the 1930s would be interested in translating the Kalevala. They fit the profile: they belong to a minority culture emancipating itself within the nation of Belgium, which was predominantly francophone. Their (Dutch) literature was still young, and not very impressive internationally. Schooling in French had made many authors insecure about writing in their own mother tongue. Quite a number of Flemish authors published in French (among which the 1911 Nobel Prize winner Maurice Maeterlinck). In order to boost the emerging Dutch literary production, the Flemish looked for international examples, e.g. Charles Dickens who served as an important model for the Flemish realist novel in the 19th century⁽²⁴⁾. With the exception of the historical novel *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen* (The Lion of Flanders) by Hendrik Conscience, there were no epics available to support the identity claim. Conscience’s book functioned as an epic and a kind of ‘internal ethnography’. Due to the lack of other Flemish epic stories, translating foreign epics was a good option from an emancipatory point of view. It also fits within the National Socialist ideology, which had by then been embraced by the Flemish nationalists. When Leerssen calls the epic “untainted by foreign or modern admixture, by exchange or by cosmopolization”, this very much resembles National Socialist beliefs.

Van der Hoeven states that the epic, and the Kalevala in particular, tied in with the convictions of those who expected new impulses of an idealistically

(21) André LEFEVERE, “The Gates of Analogy: The Kalevala in English”, in Susan BASSNETT & André LEFEVERE, eds., *Constructing Cultures. Essays on Literary Translations*, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 1998, p. 76-89 (78).

(22) J. LEERSSEN, *National Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

(23) E. PLOURDE, “Kalevala Through Translation”, *op. cit.*, p. 800.

(24) Elke BREMS, “‘Engelse toestanden’. De vertaling en receptie van Charles Dickens in Vlaanderen in de negentiende eeuw”, in Nele BEMONG, Mary KEMPERINK, Marita MATHIJSEN & Tom SINTOBIN, eds., *Naties in een spanningsveld. Tegenstrijdige bewegingen in de identiteitsvorming in negentiende-eeuws Vlaanderen en Nederland*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2010, p. 187-199.

coloured art, based on a national, 'rural' tradition and realism. This new form of art was expected to function as an antidote to the international, modernistic, 'urban' schools of thought that were experienced by some as incomprehensible and uprooted. Even if these views as such were non-political, they nevertheless held a certain currency until they were finally absorbed into the National Socialist theories of art, thus contributing to and strengthening this doctrine⁽²⁵⁾.

Furthermore, it was obvious that importing an epic from a Germanic or Nordic country was preferred to importing from France or England. Nordic or Germanic peoples were supposed to share a common cultural heritage, which made translating between the languages seem like an intracultural transfer rather than an intercultural transfer.

However, in this cultural network, Germany and the German culture and language took up a central position, whereas the others, e.g. Dutch and the Scandinavian languages, were peripheral. Translations between the latter were scarce; they all went through the centre, i.e. Germany. That was also the case for Moens' translation of the Kalevala. Finland, although neither Scandinavian nor German, was defined as 'Nordic'⁽²⁶⁾. Adriaan Van der Hoeven has written extensively on the translation history of the Kalevala in Dutch. He writes that "three more or less complete Kalevalas were published at the outbreak of the Second World War, one reprint and two new translations, as well as one that only consisted of an extensive summary with background information"⁽²⁷⁾. The two translators, Wies Moens and Jan Eekhout, as well as the preface-writer Jan De Vries were on the 'wrong' side during the war and were convicted for it.

Van der Hoeven claims that Moens' translation is not really a translation at all: "From the perspective of the original epic, the word pastiche would in this case probably fit better than retelling, let alone translation"⁽²⁸⁾. However, this is due to the fact that Moens's text is an indirect translation: it is based on a German edition by Arthur Luther from 1936 and that version had already altered the Kalevala rather thoroughly. Luther's translation has two prefaces. The first one is written by the Finnish writer Maila Talvio who stresses the importance of the Kalevala for the Finnish people: "Dieses Volksepos ist der festeste Eckstein, aus dem das selbständig-kraftvolle finnische Volk seine Kultur aufbaut". Talvio continues: "Wir Finnen freuen uns auch immer

(25) Adriaan VAN DER HOEVEN, "Kalevala in The Netherlands on the Eve of the Second World War", in *Yearbook of European Studies*, vol. 10, 1997, p. 183-209 (206).

(26) On Germany and Finland during the Second World War see Pekka KUJAKÄMI, "'Of Course Germans Have a Certain Interest in Finland, But...'. Openness to Finnish Literature in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s", in Anthony PYM, Miriam SHLESINGER & Zuzana JETTMAROVA, eds., *Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, p. 41-52.

(27) 1) 1928/1938 Maya Tamminen (from Finnish, with photographs from Gallén), prose and poetry; 2) 1938 Wies Moens (from German, version of Arthur Luther 1936, with illustrations by Désiré Acket), prose and some poetry; 3) 1939 Jan Eekhout (from German and Dutch, version of M. Buber/A. Schiefner (1921, 1852 and of Tamminen 1928) illustrations by Nico Bulder, poetry. A. VAN DER HOEVEN, "Kalevala in the Netherlands", *op. cit.*, p. 184-185.

(28) A. VAN DER HOEVEN, "Kalevala in the Netherlands", *op. cit.*, p. 191.

unendlich, wenn unser Kalewala hinaus in andere Länder dringt, ihnen unsere Grüsse zu bringen. Da Deutschland und sein Nibelungenvolk stets gut Freund mit Finnland und den Finnen gewesen, sind wir ganz besonders froh, dass unser Kalewala jetzt in die Hände deutscher Leser gelegt wird”⁽²⁹⁾. Luther, the translator, added another preface in which he emphasises that the Finnish people “seine Freiheit und Selbständigkeit zu grossem Teil den deutschen Waffen verdankt”⁽³⁰⁾.

In the preface to his own translation, Moens states that the Finnish people had collected the story material throughout centuries, but that it was Lönnrot who selected it and created the work “which meant the same for his mother country as the Iliad for the Greek and the Nibelungensong for Germany”⁽³¹⁾. Luther had made a prose adaptation, interrupted by a few sections in verse, and Moens adopted the same practice.

Whereas Luther did not include illustrations, Moens’ version did. The illustrations were made by Désiré Acket (1905-1987). Acket used the wood engravings technique, an older technique that had turned obsolete after the invention of photography but was rediscovered in the 20th century “when it functioned as a counterbalance to modern art from which all craftsmanship seemed to have disappeared. Thus the renewed interest in wood engravings followed the trend in art and literary theory which, particularly during the 1930s, focused on craftsmanship and community, tradition and technique”⁽³²⁾. The first engraving already recalls National Socialist iconography. From the first ‘rune’, Acket chose the eagle (and not, for instance, the duck) to illustrate the story of creation. The eagle very much resembles the *Reichsadler*.

Moens’ translation drew critics’ attention. On 9 March 1939, *De Tijd* published a very sharp review entitled ‘The Finnish Homer’ by Anton Van Duinkerken⁽³³⁾. He refers to Moens’ work as a cheap little prose-translation and believes it was disrespectful of him to choose Luther’s ‘mutilated’ text as the basis for his translation. According to Van Duinkerken, Moens had not conducted any preliminary study and had actually translated a work that he did not really know. This critic, an influential Dutch Catholic anti-Nazi intellectual, was especially disappointed because, like Luther, Moens left out important sections of the tale that added to the Christian character of the Kalevala. In his review, Van Duinkerken states that it is dangerous to rely on a third party that might not be completely objective. Luther’s version consists of “a short summary of biased selections of the text”⁽³⁴⁾. Van Duinkerken also deplores the loss of stylistic beauty in the pale prose in which Luther’s as well as Moens’ translation is set. Van Duinkerken wonders why Moens

(29) Kalewala. *Das heldenlied des finnischen Volkes, Erzählt von Arthur Luther, mit einem Geleitwort von Maila Talvio*, Leipzig, Esche Verlag, 1936, p. 10.

(30) *Ibid.*, p. 11.

(31) Kalewala. *Het epos der Finnen. Naar de Duitsche bewerking van Arthur Luther door Wies Moens*, Antwerpen, De Sikkell, 1938, p. 5.

(32) A. VAN DER HOEVEN, “Kalevala in the Netherlands”, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

(33) Anton VAN DUINKERKEN, “De Finsche Homerus”, in *De Tijd*, 9 March 1939.

(34) “een korte samenvatting van eenigermate partijdig gekozen deelen van den tekst”: A. VAN DUINKERKEN, “De Finsche Homerus”, *op. cit.*

decided to translate this tale: “Because it is the national epic of a ‘Nordic’ people? But even then it is important to be meticulous!”⁽³⁵⁾. Van Duinkerken suggests that Moens preferred this germanified version of the Kalevala to the source text. He also remarks that lately many epic stories have been translated into Dutch and interprets this as a reaction to individualism (as expressed in the lyrical genre) and as a sign of the revival of nationalism, which requires heroes and tends to allegorise human existence. With this review, Van Duinkerken proved that he was acutely aware of the stakes of Moens’ translation.

When Russia invaded Finland at the end of 1939, Moens’ publication gained political importance. National Socialist newspapers and journals gave it renewed, positive attention. Ferdinand Vercocke (1939) in *Volk en Staat* (People and State) defined it as typical for Moens’ current work: manly, heroic and tough. By applying these terms to Moens’ Kalevala, Vercocke, a leading man in Flemish-nationalist circles, connected the text with war rhetoric. The masculinity of this type of rhetoric is confirmed by a review in *Nele*, a journal for National Socialist women, which dedicated an essay to the Kalevala and Moens’ translation of it. For the female readers the term epic is explained in a footnote. Instead of giving an opinion of her own, the critic eventually turns to the opinion expressed by Marnix Gijsen, a male Flemish writer, who believed it was a fluent translation⁽³⁶⁾.

A special kind of critical reception of Moens’ translation is the peculiar book by Joz. Theys, *Het land van de Kalewala. Finland, voorpost der Westersche kultuur* (The Land of the Kalewala. Finland, outpost of Western culture)⁽³⁷⁾. This book was published by a collaborationist publishing house (*Were di*). It is a remarkable blend of travel guide, history book and fiction. The author writes about Finland, inserting poems from Wies Moens’ Kalevala translation. Theys prefers to get his information from poets rather than from travel guides. He actually sees and interprets everything he sees and everyone he meets in Finland as a reflection of the Kalevala. This is a peculiar reversal of things: he sees reality as an expression of literature. As a motto he uses a poem by Goethe, thus also inserting German culture into the equation.

Moens’ translation enterprise can be and was interpreted as a cultural-political statement for a variety of reasons: his choice of genre (the epic), his choice of source culture (Finnish, i.e. Nordic), his choice of mediating culture (German), the link between text and image, the authority and cultural position of the agent (Moens himself), and the translation strategy. The latter consisted mainly of taking no responsibility himself and leaving the explanation to Luther.

(35) “Omdat het een nationaal epos is van een ‘Noorsch’ volk? Maar ook dan heeft het belang nauwkeurig te zijn!” : A. VAN DUINKERKEN, “De Finsche Homerus”, *op. cit.*

(36) N.D.P., “Finland”, in *Nele*, vol. 9, 1939, 3, p. 119-121.

(37) Joz. THEYS, *Het land van de Kalewala. Finland. Voorpost der Westersche Kultuur*, Antwerpen, Were di, 1943.

The domestication of Hölderlin

In the year 1943 it was the centenary of Friedrich Hölderlin's death. On that occasion no fewer than three translated anthologies of his work were published in Dutch, two in Flanders and one in the Netherlands⁽³⁸⁾. All three of them were undertaken by Nazi-friendly people and institutions. It is well known that the Nazis embraced Hölderlin because he expressed their ideology *avant la lettre*.

Wies Moens was one of the three translators who made a translation of Hölderlin's poetry that year. His anthology, containing only ten poems, was published by the publishing house *Wiek Op* (Fly Away) in Bruges. *Wiek Op* was owned by Martha van de Walle (1902-1980), an intellectual woman who played a remarkable yet unremarked role in Flanders' literary field during the Second World War. She was an admirer of the Flemish-nationalist priest and poet Cyriel Verschaeve (1874-1949), who was sentenced to death in 1946 for his collaborative role during the Second World War. In 1934, she founded a society called *Zeemeeuw* (Sea Gull), after Verschaeve's pseudonym, in order to publish Verschaeve's *Collected Works*. A year later she founded the publishing house with the double name *Zeemeeuw-Wiek Op*. Verschaeve's oeuvre would be published under the name *Zeemeeuw*, while all other works would be published under the name *Wiek Op*. She published 83 books by 45 different authors under this name, most of them during the Second World War. Van de Walle clearly had no trouble obtaining paper. It has to be noted though that not everything she published can be called fascist or National socialist. Van de Walle was accused of collaboration at the end of the war, but in 1947 the charges were dismissed.

Wies Moens worked for the publishing house as an editor and had a decisive influence on the composition of the fund⁽³⁹⁾. Moens also published five of his own works at *Zeemeeuw-Wiek Op*, one of them being the Hölderlin translation, which cost 45 francs (i.e. one euro) and was printed in one thousand or two thousand copies (sources disagree on this)⁽⁴⁰⁾. The publication of Wies Moens' Hölderlin-translation was supported by the Flemish-nationalist network. In 1944 *Zeemeeuw-Wiek Op* published a speech delivered on 10 June 1943 by the afore-mentioned Cyriel Verschaeve on the occasion of Hölderlin's centenary. Verschaeve gave that speech on *Zender Brussel* (Channel Brussels). This was actually the former Belgian radio station NIR, but after the Germans took over they renamed it and appointed Wies Moens as the head of the broadcasting station. As a consequence, Moens did not only decide what was published by *Zeemeeuw-Wiek Op*, but

(38) 1) *Hölderlin 1770-1843. Tien gedichten vertaald door Wies Moens*, Brugge, Wiek Op, 1943; 2) *Friedrich Hölderlin. Een portret van den dichter uit zijn leven en werken*, Amsterdam, Wereldbibliotheekvereniging, 1943; 3) *Friedrich Hölderlin, Gedichten en fragmenten*, Antwerpen, Die Poorte, 1943.

(39) Jan STUYCK, "Een lichtend spoor. Wies Moens en uitgeverij Wiek Op", in *Zuurvrij*, vol. 18, 2010, p. 78-85.

(40) In 1949 Wies Moens published another Hölderlin-translation, at *Nederlandsche Boekhandel*. It was a part of Hölderlin's Hyperion, called *Hyperion of De eremiet in Griekenland*. Moens, by then sentenced to death and living in exile, used the pseudonym G.L. Dijkman.

he also selected what was broadcasted on Belgian radio. His access to a range of channels of cultural mediation allowed him the means to coordinate the Flemish-nationalist collective memory of Hölderlin.

In the radio speech Verschaeve emphasised the fact that Hölderlin's 'Greece' is now represented by 'Germany'. "In Hölderlin's vision, Germania seems to be the country predestined to regenerate Greece. (...) What dithyrambic ardour would light Hölderlin on his centenary, if he could see his people experience this heroism as an ideal?"⁽⁴¹⁾. Verschaeve explicitly linked Flanders to Germany by using Hölderlin:

"Whoever celebrates Hölderlin, celebrates poetry (...) I like to do it for deeper reasons that concern Germany and Flanders. Germany calls itself 'das Volk Hölderlins', it dreams what he dreamed. And, for centuries, Flanders has also been dreaming about what Hölderlin wrote: a world in which it can live freely and fully. How could Flanders not celebrate this poet?"⁽⁴²⁾.

Verschaeve connected Flanders' future to Germany's by referring to a shared cultural heritage, or at least, he wanted there to be a shared cultural heritage, he professed it. He also played a role in this himself, as did Wies Moens and his translations.

In the preface to his translation, Moens agrees that Hölderlin meant Germany when he wrote Greece. Furthermore, he writes that Hölderlin not only believed in words but also in deeds. This, Moens thinks, is why the poet is important to 'us' 'at this moment'. The 'us' refers to the Flemish people, the translation's target audience, but, simultaneously, 'us' also implies a shared community of Flemish and German people. In fact, the Hölderlin translation served as a means to establish such a community, to create an 'us'. The phrase 'this moment' is typical for this type of discourse: the idea that 'now' is a turning point in western civilisation. Often this idea of 'the moment' is also imbued with the idea of 'eternity': the moment as the emanation of a predestined time.

Examining the translation, it becomes clear that the selection of some of these poems was rather self-evident. For instance the poem '*Der Tod fürs Vaterland*' (Death for the Fatherland) seems an obvious choice, and so does '*Der gefesselte Strom*' (The Fettered River). The latter is a poem about a river, but more in depth it is about awakening and about the journey of a son towards a Father, leading him to the only place where he can be safe and where he can find the end of his journey towards eternity. The son might be

(41) "Daarom lijkt Germanië in Hölderlin's vizioen het voorbeschikte land om Griekenland te doen herboren worden. (...) Welke dithyrambische gloed zou Hölderlin in vlam zetten op dezen zijn honderdsten sterfdag, zag hij nu zijn volk 't heldendom zelf als ideaal beleven?": Cyriel VERSCHAEVE, *Eeuwige gestalten bij vijf gedenkdagen*, Brugge, Zeemeeuw, 1944, p. 79.

(42) "Wie Hölderlin huldigt, huldigt de poëzie. (...) Ik deed het gaarne om diepe redenen die Duitschland en Vlaanderen gelden. Duitschland (...) noemt zich (...) "das Volk Hölderlins", 't droomt wat hij droomde. (...) En Vlaanderen droomt eeuwen al wat Hölderlin dichtte: een wereld waarin 't vrij en vol leven kan. (...) Hoe zou Vlaanderen den dichter niet vieren": C. VERSCHAEVE, *Eeuwige gestalten*, op. cit., p. 84.

interpreted as a metaphor for Flanders, while the Father probably represents Germany.

The German interference is also visible in Moens' language. This is, of course, a normal tendency when translating from German to Dutch, but it also has the effect of germanifying the Dutch language. Additionally, it also stresses the kinship between the two languages (and cultures): translation between these two is evident, unlike translating between, for instance, French and German. Examples of this German influence are the over-frequent use of capital letters and the use of cases. Although there are still some occasional remnants of cases in Dutch, the use of cases here is rather striking. An example from the poem '*Menschenbeifall*' (Human Applause):

Line 5:

Hölderlin: "Ach! der Menge gefällt, was auf den Marktplatz taugt"

Moens: "Ach! den velen bevalt wat veil is ter markt"

(Hamburger: "The crowd likes best what sells in the market-place")⁽⁴³⁾.

Moens also uses some other German phrases. In the same poem for instance he uses the Dutch verb for 'to believe' in the same way as they do in German, namely with the preposition 'an'/'aan', which is not common in Dutch.

Line 7-8:

Hölderlin: "An das Göttliche glauben/ die allein die es selber sind"

Moens: "Gelooven aan 't godd'lijke, doen/diegenen alleen, die zelf goddelijk zijn"

(Hamburger: "In gods and godhead only he can/Truly believe who himself is godlike").

To sum up, similar to his Kalevala translation, this translation project can and was also interpreted as a cultural-political statement due to a range of factors: his choice of source culture (Germany), his choice of source text (Hölderlin), his poem selection, his translation strategies, the interpretation of the source text (e.g. Greece = Germany), the institutions involved (Fly Away-Sea Gull, Channel Brussels), the network that was activated.

War Poetry as a surplus value

In 1942 Wies Moens compiled an anthology of Flemish war poems (strijddichten): *Das Flämische Kampfgedicht*, published by Eugen Diederichs Verlag in Germany. The translations were made by Adolf von Hatzfeld, a blind German National Socialist author who was especially concerned with the relations between Flanders and Germany. The book appeared in the series 'Flämische Schriften', a new series published by this Verlag (publishing house) that wanted to expose the Germanic character of Flemish culture: "'Flämische Schriften' is the title of a new series by Eugen Diederichs Verlag

(43) Translations in English by Michael HAMBURGER, *Friedrich Hölderlin, Selected Poems and Fragments*, London, Penguin Books, 1998.

that brings out the Germanic character of the Flemish culture in individual representations”⁽⁴⁴⁾.

By publishing these Flemish writings, or rather, by translating them into German and publishing them in Germany, the publishing house intended to emphasise the resemblance between Flanders and Germany. The translation effort was considered to be almost negligible; the German language was already lingering in the Dutch language.

The type of poetry in this book is remarkable: all poems deal with Flemish people fighting oppression. This subject is a topos in the discourse on Flemish identity that still prevails: Flanders has always been under foreign rule and has always had to stand up to occupying forces. It is ironic that exactly this type of poetry should be used to show the Germans how ‘Germanic’ Flanders is. After all, the Second World War was another example of an occupying force ruling Flanders. However, that is not the way the Flemish-nationalists experienced it. They saw Germany as a liberating force, finally allowing Flanders to shed foreign influences and be itself. From a discursive point of view, one could say that the term ‘foreign’ no longer applied to Germany (and the Nordic countries). In Wies Moens’ preface to the book we can read that “the *Flamenkampf*, the struggle of a Germanic outpost in the West against the *Welsch*, against Romanization – has filled the entire medieval period (so one might say) with its clang”⁽⁴⁵⁾. The term ‘foreign’ is now reserved for ‘Latin’ cultures.

Although it might appear as if Flanders showed its submission to Germany by means of this translation, there is another way to interpret this as well. The translation of Flemish poetry into German also ties in with Moens’ belief that Flanders should not just become a subservient part of Germany, but that regions like Flanders could also offer a surplus value to German culture. By organizing a translation flow in the other direction (from periphery to centre) Moens expressed this belief.

A copy of a press report dating from 3 November 1941 asserts that Moens also held a speech about Flemish war poetry in Lübeck during the closing meeting of the German-Flemish Cultural Days⁽⁴⁶⁾. Thus, as was the case in the previous example, the cultural mediation did not only take place through translations, but was also supported by other activities, such as lectures, meetings, and conferences.

This example of a translation enterprise with cultural-political repercussions was important because of the choice of source texts (war poetry and the cliché image of Flanders that it is associated with it), the choice of target

(44) “‘Flämische Schriften’ betitelt der Eugen Diederichs Verlag eine neue Reihe, die den germanischen Charakter der flämischen Kultur in einzelnen Darstellungen herausarbeitet”: Anonymous, “Flandern und Wallonien”, in *Europäische Literatur*, vol. 5, 1942.

(45) “Der ‘Flamenkampf’ – der Kampf jenes germanischen Vorpostens im Westen gegen das Welschtum, gegen die Latinisierung – hat das ganze Mittelalter (so kann man wohl sagen) mit seinem Waffengeklitter erfüllt”: *Das Flämische Kampfgedicht*, Herausgegeben von Wies Moens, Übertragen von Adolf v. Hatzfeld, Jena, Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1942.

(46) This copy can be found in the House of Literature in Antwerp in the file on Moens (M6864).

culture/language (Germany), the translating direction (periphery to centre), the choice of translator and publishing house, the publishing series (Flemish writings), and the fact that the cultural transfer did not only involve translation, but travelling as well.

Conclusion

In the years leading up to the Second World War and during the war itself, Germany imposed itself as the cultural centre, side-lining France in the process. Germany attempted to enhance its own influence both as a political and as a cultural centre. National Socialist cultural actors in the periphery, e.g. Wies Moens in Flanders, used translation as a means to approach the centre (Germany) and lose their own peripheral position. The Kalevala translation, from one peripheral culture (Finland) to another (Flanders), passed through the centre (i.e. with the German Kalevala versions as a medium), mainly for pragmatic reasons of course, but also for ideological reasons: everything that had already been translated into German was considered ideologically safe. The translation of Hölderlin, one of Germany's greatest and a Nazi-darling, was a way to enlarge Moens' own role as an intercultural actor between Flanders and Germany, but it was also a way to share in Germany's glorious cultural heritage. The German translation of Flemish poetry was an ideological comment by Moens: the Flemish do want to belong to the German Reich, but they also have something unique to offer in return.

In this paper I have shown that Wies Moens was a full-blown cultural mediator: in his actions as well as in his discourse, he tried to mediate between cultures and peoples. For him, mediation was negotiation: both Flanders and Germany had to invest in the relationship, both had to contribute to the construction of common ground.

ABSTRACT

Elke BREMS, *The Same Blood Works in Us. Wies Moens as a Cultural Mediator in Times of War*

During the Second World War, the relations between the peoples and cultures involved were redefined, not only politically but also culturally. Cultural mediators between Flanders and Germany sought to clarify and strengthen the relationship between both cultures, aided by the German cultural policy that was explicitly anti-French. Wies Moens was a central figure in this process of cultural mediation as a writer, translator and public intellectual. His translation of the Finnish epic *Kalevala* fed the idea of kinship between the Germanic cultures. Also with his translation of Hölderlin he took a cultural-political position – one which exposed the scope of his network to boot. His translation of Flemish war poetry finally shows Moens' hope that the planned cultural transfer would not be exclusively unidirectional. Both his rhetoric and his actions during the Second World War show Wies Moens as a constant mediator and bridge builder between Flanders and Germany.

Second World War – cultural mediator – translation – Flanders – Germany – Wies Moens

SAMENVATTING

Elke BREMS, *Eenzelfde bloed werkt in ons. Wies Moens als cultureel bemiddelaar in oorlogstijd*

Tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog werden de verhoudingen tussen de betrokken volkeren en culturen scherpgesteld, niet enkel op politiek, maar ook op cultureel gebied. Culturele bemiddelaars tussen Vlaanderen en Duitsland trachtten de verwantschap tussen beide culturen te expliciteren en te versterken, daarbij geholpen door de Duitse cultuurpolitiek, die expliciet anti-Frans was. Wies Moens was een centrale figuur in die culturele bemiddeling; als schrijver, vertaler en publieke intellectueel. In zijn invloedrijke essays (her)definieerde hij de Vlaams-Duitse verhoudingen. Met zijn vertaling van het Finse epos *Kalevala* voedde hij het idee van verwantschap tussen de Germaanse culturen. Ook zijn vertaling van Hölderlin was een cultuurpolitieke stellingname, die bovendien de reikwijdte van Moens' netwerk over het voetlicht brengt. Zijn vertaling van de Vlaamse strijddichten ten slotte toont Moens' hoop dat de beoogde culturele transfer geen eenrichtingsverkeer zou zijn. In zijn retoriek en door zijn daden was Wies Moens tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog voortdurend bezig met te bemiddelen tussen Vlaanderen en Duitsland. Zo verstevigde hij meteen ook zijn eigen positie als brugfiguur.

Tweede Wereldoorlog – culturele bemiddelaar – vertaling – Vlaanderen – Duitsland
– Wies Moens

RÉSUMÉ

Elke BREMS, *Le même sang travaille en nous. Wies Moens comme médiateur culturel en temps de guerre*

Pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, les relations entre les peuples et les cultures impliquées dans le conflit ont été redéfinies non seulement sur le plan politique mais aussi culturel. Les médiateurs culturels entre la Flandre et l'Allemagne ont cherché à expliciter et à renforcer les relations de parenté entre ces deux cultures, aidé en cela par les politiques culturelles allemandes, explicitement anti-françaises. Wies Moens était une figure centrale dans ce processus de médiation culturelle: comme écrivain, traducteur mais aussi intellectuel public. Dans ses essais, qui auront une grande influence, il (re)définit les relations germano-flamandes. Par sa traduction de l'épopée finlandaise *Kalevala*, il nourrit l'idée de parenté entre les cultures germaniques. Sa traduction de Hölderlin aussi peut être considérée comme une prise de position politico-culturelle, qui nous éclaire également sur la portée du réseau de Moens. Sa traduction de la poésie de guerre flamande enfin montre l'espoir de Moens que le transfert culturel qu'il visait ne fût pas unidirectionnel. Par sa rhétorique et son action, Wies Moens fut constamment, au cours de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, engagé dans la médiation entre la Flandre et l'Allemagne. Ce faisant, il renforça également sa propre position comme figure d'intermédiaire.

Seconde Guerre mondiale – médiateur culturel – traduction – Flandre – Allemagne
– Wies Moens

Networks and Patchworks: Communication, Identities, Mediators

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Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

1 Corinthians XIV: 11

I

The articles in this issue all deal with Belgium, and there can be no doubt that this is no coincidence: a country like Belgium is notorious for its cultural fault lines within the country, and for its cultural overlaps and osmosis with its French, Dutch and even German neighbours. It makes Belgium a highly suitable test case for the study of complex transcultural interactions, where audiences are multiple and shifting, and where mediations and ‘brokering’ are more obviously necessary than elsewhere. The articles individually bear this out.

Yet one would not like to see Belgium as a special case requiring a special approach. On the contrary: what is so very noticeable in the Belgian case is in fact the visible, salient manifestation of the condition of culture everywhere. In a sense, we are all Belgians, but like them tend to be in denial about that fact. The notion of an untroubled, homogenous, zero-friction continuum linking cultural production and cultural reception is obviously an unrealistic idealization – yet we stubbornly continue to see it as the standard, default ambience in which culture runs its course.

The signal-to-noise ratio in real-world cultural transactions falls far, far short from the ideally smooth ambience. All societies are now ‘multicultural’, and culture as such consists of negotiations, misunderstandings and the constant need for interpreters and mediators. Belgium, is, in other words, not an anomaly but exemplary for the world at large. And the cases studied here tell us something about a more general development, above and beyond the Belgian themes. They exemplify the dynamics between a national-modular ‘patchwork’ approach to culture and a diffusion-oriented, communicative ‘network’ approach.

II

In recent decades, a quiet revolution has been taking shape in literary history. Its starting point lay in the demise of the philological ‘Lang & Lit’ paradigm, which saw the division of the literary (and by implication, the

general cultural) field as running primarily and naturally along linguistic lines. While this made (and still makes) sense in terms of the scholarly competence of the researchers involved – not everyone can move with equal expertise from Portuguese to Russian or from French to Japanese – it tended to reify a matter of academic method into a cultural taxonomy. Literary texts were seen as the artistic flowering of the linguistic plant, and their study required both linguistic and poetical expertise; and so scholars, on the basis of that requirement, studied corpuses of texts that they considered to fall naturally into organic groups called ‘national literatures’⁽¹⁾. In the social and historical sciences, this *a priori* subordination of corpuses to nationally demarcated competences and, hence, to nationally focused research perspectives and research choices, is now known as ‘methodological nationalism’⁽²⁾. To be sure, there were specialisms like Comparative Literature which were intended to counter this bias, but they remedied rather than prevented the problem; and in any case, Comparative Literature as a discipline suffered collateral damage from the demise of the Lang & Lit paradigm in recent decades.

By now, the expertise of linguists and literary scholars has drifted apart (except in the philologies of ancient and/or exotic cultures), and, as the result of a complex and tangled set of concurrent scholarly developments over the past twenty years, literature has de facto been redefined from a verbal art-form (cf. the title of Wolfgang Kayser’s 1948 classic *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*) to a praxis in social and cultural communication (cf. the title of the 2009 handbook by Brillenburg Wurth and Rigney, *Het leven van teksten*)⁽³⁾. The genetic emphasis on the relationship between author and text has shifted to a hermeneutic emphasis on the relation between text and audience(s). In the process, the specialism of Translation Studies has elaborated a robust set of theories and methods (linked to names like Bassnett, Even-Zohar, Lefevere and Toury)⁽⁴⁾, and is now in a position to address an entire spectrum of concerns that heretofore were the remit of Comparative Literature at large, revolving around the diffusion of texts to unintended readerships across a cultural distance.

(1) The assumption is by no means wholly groundless. Works sharing a joint language, by authors whose cultural focus is to no small engaged with their own native literature, will intrinsically have a substantial intertextual coherence that is lacking in random text aggregates such as “works by authors whose name begins with P”. Even so, language is only a necessary, not a sufficient condition for corpus cohesion: the common ground between Chaucer and Anthony Powell is less important than between Chaucer and Boccaccio, or between Powell and Proust.

(2) Andreas WIMMER & Nina GLICK SCHILLER, “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences”, in *Global Networks*, vol. 2, 2002, 4, p. 301-334.

(3) Wolfgang KAYSER, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk: eine Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft*, Bern, Francke, 1948; Ann RIGNEY & Kiene BRILLENBURG WURTH, *Het leven van teksten: een inleiding tot de literatuurwetenschap*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2008.

(4) Susan BASSNETT & André LEFEVERE, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 1998 (Topics in Translation, 11); Itamar EVEN-ZOHAR, “Polysystem Theory”, in *Poetics Today*, vol. 1, 1997, p. 287-310; Gideon TOURY, *In Search of a Theory of Literary Translation*, Tel Aviv, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1980.

If we want to see the diffusion of culture and literature as a communicative process, it may be useful to recall Claude Lévi-Strauss's classic definition of a society and its boundaries in terms of the distribution of communication density:

“A society consists of individuals and groups which communicate with one another. The existence of, or lack of, communication can never be defined in an absolute manner. Communication does not cease at society's borders. These borders, rather, constitute thresholds where the rate and forms of communication, without waning altogether, reach a much lower level. This condition is usually meaningful enough for the population, both inside and outside the borders, to become aware of it”⁽⁵⁾.

Obviously, language difference constitutes a very important, perhaps *the* most important, communication threshold, and Lévi-Strauss's definition by no means excludes corpus categorization by language. But his definition does draw attention to the fact that linguistic frontiers coexist with other communicative thresholds both within and between aggregates of people, and that like all thresholds they are not hermetic barriers. And finally, it seems fair to assume that mediators take on a more important role when cultural, or literary communication takes place across many, or ‘high’, thresholds or filters.

All that allows us to see mediators as ‘conduits across thresholds’.

III

In true structuralist fashion, Lévi-Strauss's definition, applied to literary communication, would replace ‘language’, as an enabling, unproblematically shared cognitive-cultural ambience, by ‘language difference’ as a communicative filter or ‘threshold’. This runs counter to a long-standing view of literatures as belonging to ‘communities’ defined in, drawn together by, and expressing themselves through, their shared languages. That correlation between language and nation has long roots; but it became a metaphysical doctrine in the early years of the nineteenth century, marking as it did the emergence of culture-based nationalism⁽⁶⁾. It was in particular a generation of German intellectuals who defined the Social Contract – that bond of interconnectedness, common interest and common purpose that defines a nation, as per Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Contrat Social* – in cultural and ethnic terms. Savigny's insistence that a society should be governed by homegrown laws breathing the *Volksgeist*; the similar emphasis of his pupil Jacob Grimm that languages and belief-systems were also organic outgrowths of the nation's shared culture; and Fichte's moral imperative that a nation should faithfully transmit its inherited language and identity to its future generations: all that defined the nation both as a cultural category and

(5) Claude LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology* (transl. C. Jacobson & B. Grundfest), New York, Basic Books, 1963, p. 296.

(6) In what follows, I recapitulate my *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2008 (second edition).

as a moral *numinosum* – something commanding quasi-religious awe and respect. In Romantic fashion, various human affects were cited in evidence for the existential human condition of belonging to one's nation. Fichte cited the natural love and piety that exists between parents and children; Grimm cited the universality of homesickness; and all of them drew attention to the transmission of language from parents to infants in the extreme physical intimacy and affectionate bonding of breast-feeding: the mother tongue is acquired together with the mother's milk. Both nature and nurture, all in one.

It is this generation of national-Romantic intellectuals who laid the foundation for the academic study of modern languages. The first Lang-and-Lit departments, the rise of the literary history as a critical genre: all this rose conjointly with the ethnolinguistic definition of the nation. The nation, thus defined, became the primary aggregate of human collectivities; not class, or gender, or religion, or age group, but nationality. Intra-national differentiations are *a priori* considered less meaningful than international ones; transnational similarities are *a priori* considered less meaningful than differentiations. Methodological nationalism arose conjointly with cultural nationalism.

IV

“*Rien de plus international que la formation des identités nationales*”, as Anne-Marie Thiesse put it⁽⁷⁾. The anti-Napoleonic resistance of the German intellectuals mentioned above did not remain restricted to their German circle; in fact it spread all over Europe, like wildfire, or ‘virally’, we would say nowadays (indicating a communicative diffusion where messages immediately turn their recipients into relaying transmitters). Nationalism was part of the Romantic vogue along with pursuits such as collecting folktales, or writing literary histories and historical novels. There is something contradictory in this: the capacity for ideas like nationalism (and methodological nationalism) to spread transnationally seems to disprove nationalism's very axiom: that the nation is a natural, self-enclosed communicative unit. The diffusion of Romantic Nationalism across Europe, in a very brief time-span (1810-1850) and across societies with very different languages, political regimes, and economic, institutional and social systems: all this shows that indeed “communication does not altogether cease at society's borders” (to recall Lévi-Strauss).

How did the message of nationalism disseminate so rapidly? We can envisage two answers. One is that the intellectuals involved constitute, between them, and across Europe, a ‘society’ of their own: a group with a very intense communication density. Indeed the intellectuals themselves saw it in those terms, albeit only metaphorically: they were imbued with the notion of the ‘Republic of Learning’ and indeed of the ‘university’ as a ‘civitas’ linking Salamanca, Oxford, Upsala, Jena, Prague and Bologna, with Latin and multilingual proficiency as a shared medium of communication. All

(7) Anne-Marie THIESSE, *La création des identités nationales: Europe, XVIII^e-XX^e siècles*, Paris, Seuil, 2006, p. 11.

that was, of course, merely a metaphor, and does not amount to something we can literally call a 'society'. But it does constitute what, decades after Lévi-Strauss, we would call a 'system'⁽⁸⁾ or (to the extent that the system in question does not have a centre-periphery structure) a network.

To be sure, academics and academically-trained intellectuals formed a highly connected network across the boundaries of the nations whose separate individuality they celebrated. (This was not the only paradox in cultural nationalism: the other was that they made tactical and eager use of the institutional innovations of modernity – newly organized archives, libraries, academies, universities, periodicals, cheap print – in order to defend the nation's time-hallowed authenticity against modern erosion.) The tightness of this network was manifested in intense correspondences (now mapped on the SPIN website, www.spinnet.eu), book reviews, corresponding memberships, etc. Even if not every single academic was in touch with all the other ones, he was usually so by one or at most two intermediaries: the intellectuals of 19th-century Europe are what in network analysis is called a 'small world', with at most two degrees of separation between any two individuals. In such highly networked systems, the potential for 'cascading events' (things going viral, spreading like wildfire) is very high, which accounts at least in part for the rapidity of information diffusion across the lines of these networks.

All the same, this can only account for the workings of an academic network as such – say, the community of astrophysicists worldwide. The *nationalizing* nature of this particular network involves yet another paradox among the early generation of nation-builders: the fact that all, though part of a transnationally networked elite, felt himself at the same time (unlike astrophysicists) to be functioning as an expert in, and a spokesman for, his 'native', demotic, vernacular, non-elite culture. The mode of communication, the 'medium', was universalist – but the message was nationally particular.

(8) What, precisely, is a system? The textbook definition is "a set of interacting or interdependent components forming an integrated whole". For literary systems, where Polysystem Theory is applied alongside the models of Niklas Luhmann and Siegfried Schmidt, we may outline the following commonsensical definitions:

A system is a set of elements linked in a structure (i.e. a non-random interconnection), which transforms input into output. The elements in the system may themselves be composed of multiple elements in a structural interconnection (i.e., the system's elements can be themselves systems); conversely, any system can function as an element in a larger system. If these nesting hierarchies of systems-comprising-systems are sufficiently involved, feedback loops are facilitated whereby one (sub-)system's output becomes another (sub-)system's input. The density of these feedback loops determines a system's complexity; the fact that in cultural (as opposed to natural or cybernetic) systems, human, sentient agents are involved, who reflect consciously on what they are doing, constitutes an immeasurably huge increment in complexity. Complex systems are capable of a certain amount of self-organization; their behaviour is non-linear to the point of unpredictability. Separately-functioning systems overlapping and interlocking through shared subsystems, or through input/output exchange, may be termed polysystems, but since in fact any complex system is a polysystem, the term is only useful to stress the composite nature of certain complex systems. The separate description of a given system must always fall short of accounting for its functioning in relation to the other (connected, neighbouring or superimposed) systems, with which each and every system is necessarily connected (if by nothing else, then by virtue of the fact that all systems share the same universe).

The academics might interact transnational academies and correspondences; but the substance of their interaction concerned Estonian dialects, or Catalan folkdances, or Greek oral poetry.

It is here that the importance of mediators comes in. To some extent the scholars themselves were precisely that: mediators. The Grimm brothers published a German translation of Crofton Croker's *Fairy legends and traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825, as *Irische Märchen*, 1826), which the Irishman had collected on the inspiration of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812). But in other cases an additional mediator was needed between the demotic world of popular culture and the elite world of academic learning: folktale collectors had their informants (thus the Grimms relied heavily on one Dorothea Viehmann, and Lönnrot, in compiling his Finnish epic *Kalevala*, used oral informants like Arhippa Perttunen). At the time, these tended to stay largely anonymous, in that they were seen, not as individuals with cultural agency, but as mere repositories of, or conduits into, the collective lore of the people-at-large. Only in rare cases does someone with a direct knowledge of vernacular culture become individually famous in this literary diffusion: the Ukrainian poet Taras Ševčenko, for instance, or the Serbian Vuk Karadžić.

The diffusion of the work of Vuk Karadžić shows a number of interesting variations on the role of networks and mediators. Vuk himself collected Serbian oral epic from the communities in which he had been born. He published these (1814), as well as a Serbian grammar (1824), through the patronage of a philologist who was part of the 'Republic of Learning': Jernej Kopitar, Slovene-born but based in Vienna as court librarian. Kopitar signalled the publication and its scholarly interest to Jacob Grimm, who learned Serbian in order to be able to acquaint himself with this important new material. Grimm translated Vuk's grammar into German (1826) and repeatedly reviewed his work in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* and elsewhere. Grimm also suggested the possibility of German translations to Goethe, who recommended that this task be entrusted to Therese von Jacob, who published under the pen-name (derived from her initials) Talvj. Talvj's German translation (*Volkslieder der Serben*, 1826) was in turn picked up, and translated into French, by Elise Voïart, who published her version (*Chants populaires des Serviens*, 1834) with a dedication to François Guizot, historian and statesman. Voïart's version, finally, was the basis for an English collection by Owen Meredith, *Serbski pesme, or, National songs of Servia* (1861). Thus, the diffusion of Serbian oral epic in Europe involved, besides the native intelligence of Vuk Karadžić, a literary superstar (Goethe), two philologists (Kopitar and Grimm), and three translators – whose roles and names have remained more obscure. (The gender dimension in this role division will be lost on no one.) This transnational network and the activities of various mediators were necessary to "translate" the literary material: to reformulate it from language into another in order to transport it from its own native audience to other, originally unintended audiences. Multiple thresholds were crossed; multiple mediations and mediators involved.

And, ironically, the net result of this transnational process was to present "National songs of Serbia" to the reading public: a nationalization of the literary map of Europe, which at the time was becoming a patchwork quilt of national modules. It took a network; it created a patchwork.

V

One of the results of this ‘networks into patchworks’ process – the birth of the national-modular system of literatures in Europe – was the marginalization of the mediators, of those who worked along the seams between the patches. They had been fully-fledged members of a communicative network; in the patchwork quilt their threads fell outside the fabric’s warp-and-weft. They were marginalized to background figures, in-betweeners in the system of national literatures, which was dominated either by the towering figure of the inspired author, or by the fiction of the anonymous-collective ‘folk’. Only in recent decades – as literary studies are moving back from a patchwork to a network approach – are the names of Dorothea Viehmann, Arhippa Perttunen, Talvj and Elise Voïart re-emerging (at different rates and to different extents) from obscurity.

Work on mediators is one of the great tasks facing literary and cultural historians today – not only in Belgium. Mediators are not merely the support teams of the Literary Greats in the established canon, but agents with a very specific function in the diffusion of literature and culture. By the same token, their retrieval from obscurity and the analysis of their activities is not merely a second-order task on the background minutiae of the Important Stuff – it is part of a new approach and a deep realignment, oriented towards reception rather than genesis, towards the dynamics of memory and recycling rather than the evenemential Birth of the New. And it is also about how texts and culture in their reception trajectory cross and link multiple audiences, rather than merely belonging to their context of origin.

SAMENVATTING

Joep LEERSSEN, *Netwerken en lappendekens: communicatie, identiteiten, mediatoren*

Recentelijk is een modulaire model van internationale literaire verhoudingen (waarbij men uitging van op zichzelf staande literaire tradities, waartussen vervolgens in tweede instantie de connecties werden bestudeerd) aan het verschuiven ten voordele van een netwerk-model (waarbij de literaire communicatielijnen voorop staan en de samenhang van ‘een’ literaire traditie wordt bepaald door de relatieve communicatieve dichtheid van dergelijke lijnen). In het licht van die verschuiving biedt dit artikel enkele beschouwingen over de opkomst van het modulaire model en het concept van de interculturele bemiddelaar.

Vergelijkende literatuurwetenschap – vertaalwetenschap – netwerktheorie – filologie – methodologisch nationalisme

RESUMÉ

Joep LEERSSEN, *Réseaux et mosaïques: communication, identités, médiateurs*

Récemment le modèle modulaire des relations internationales littéraires (partant de l’existence préétablie de traditions littéraires, entre lesquelles, en deuxième instance,

les connections sont étudiées) est en train de glisser en faveur du modèle réticulaire (mettant en avant les lignes de communication littéraires et déterminant la cohésion d' « une » tradition littéraire par la proximité communicative relative de ces lignes). À la lumière de cette transition, cet article offre quelques réflexions sur la naissance du modèle modulaire et du concept de médiateur interculturel.

Littérature comparée – études de la traduction – théorie des réseaux – philologie – nationalisme méthodologique

ABSTRACT

Joep LEERSSEN, *Networks and Patchworks: Communication, Identities, Mediators*

In recent decades, a modular paradigm of international literary relations (starting from pre-existing unit of literatures and tracing, in the second instance, exchanges between them) is giving way to a network paradigm (starting from the lines of literary communication and defining literary units only in terms of the uneven density distribution of such communicative exchanges). In the light of this shift, I offer some comments on the rise of the modular model and on the idea of the intercultural mediator.

Comparative literature – translation studies – network theory – philology – methodological nationalism