

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

Lieven D'HULST, Maud GONNE, Tessa LOBBES,
Reine MEYLAERTS & Tom VERSCHAFFEL
KU Leuven

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, "Littéraire 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 Frühneuzeitforschung, 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) H el ene 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 godsgeſchenk? 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

