

Laurence Binyon and the Belgian Artistic Scene:  
Unearthing Unknown Brotherhoods

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On September 11, 2008, at 10:11am, at a New York City ceremony honouring victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, New York former mayor Rudy Giuliani concluded his speech with a quote from the poem “For the Fallen.” Mr. Giuliani spoke the words with a certain flair, respecting the cadence, stressing the right words, and honouring the pauses:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.<sup>1</sup>

“For seven years,” Mr. Giuliani continued, “we’ve come back here to be together, to feel how the entire world is linked in our circle of sorrow. And mostly to remember, those we lost, who are never lost. The poem reminds us how brightly their memories burn.”<sup>2</sup> Ever since Laurence Binyon wrote these four lines in north Cornwall in 1914, they have been recited annually at Remembrance Sunday services worldwide, and people will keep on doing so to commemorate tragic events, even those still to come because they capture the right feelings unerringly. But, ironically, if the lines have become immortal and they are there to commemorate the dead, their author, Laurence Binyon, is all too often unknown. Binyon, poet and art historian, was born in Lancaster on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, 1869, to an Anglican clergyman, Frederick Binyon, and his wife Mary. Laurence received a classic education at St. Paul’s in London, Milton’s old school. At St. Paul’s, Laurence Binyon started writing poetry. He received several prizes for his work, and William Sharp printed one of them in an anthology, praising sixteen-year-old Binyon for his talent. The next step in Binyon’s poetic development was Oxford. Only a few weeks after his arrival at the university, one of his

poems was printed in the *Oxford Magazine*, but the acquaintance with the poet Lionel Johnson was perhaps even more important for Binyon's poetic career.<sup>3</sup>

Johnson introduced Binyon to Herbert Horne, who in his turn introduced him to the architect and founder of the Century Guild, Arthur Mackmurdo, and the artist Selwyn Image. Over the years he met everyone he needed to know to make his way in the London art scene. Mackmurdo invited Binyon to one of the Century Guild meetings. The little magazine the *Hobby Horse* was the group's outlet, and Binyon contributed two poems and two articles between 1890 and 1893. When Mackmurdo purchased a large house at 20 Fitzroy Street in London, Binyon truly became a member of the London artistic scene. Everyone was at Fitzroy, from Walter Crane, Walter Sickert, Roger Fry, and William Rothenstein to writers such as Bernard Shaw, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons, and Ernest Rhys.<sup>4</sup> Binyon left Oxford in June 1892 and applied for a position at the Department of Prints and Drawings of the British Museum. For this vacancy he came in second, but a year later he landed a post in the Museum's Department of Printed Books. Again, just like at Oxford or when staying at Fitzroy, it was the perfect environment to meet the right people. Thus, it provided the opportunity for him to meet W.B. Yeats, Charles Holmes, Augustus John, Thomas Sturge Moore, and Henry Newbolt, among many others.<sup>5</sup> The artists he did not meet in the print room he managed to meet in London's fashionable restaurants and bars.<sup>6</sup> Binyon seems to have been the networker *par excellence*.

By the middle of the 1890s Binyon became interested in studying the artistic production of the Low Countries, but he had also developed an interest in Asian art. His growing interest and expertise in those fields were to serve him well when he started building up the British Museum's collections of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian art. He became the first head of the museum's department of Oriental prints and drawings—a department which he helped establish—in 1913. His

two interests, Northern European art and Asian art, were to be the basis for his links with Belgium and his Belgian friends, which are our concern here.

The correspondences and the publications by the writers and artists under consideration in this article show there was an intense and lively cultural exchange between Belgium and Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century. It was important for writers of both countries to publish essays in periodical publications across the border. Continental artists published in British magazines and vice versa. This was also the case with the Belgo-British network, but has so far been neglected because most research interest has been directed towards the Belgo-French connection or the French-British connection at the fin de siècle. In this essay we intend to focus on the Belgian artists Fernand Khnopff, Olivier Georges Destrée, and Raphael Petrucci, and the international dimension of the Binyon network, which was of huge importance for pre-war artists.

## Les XX

The artistic scene in the 1880s in Belgium paved the way for cultural exchange in the subsequent decade. *La Jeune Belgique*, *L'Art Moderne*, and *La Wallonie* were the three most important Belgian periodicals. They had a significant influence and championed avant-garde movements and artists.<sup>7</sup> Turquet-Milnes also mentions *la Société Nouvelle* and *la Basoche* as important magazines. Belgian writers were slowly making a name for themselves across the channel and showed the coming generation the importance of internationalization. In the “Prefatory note” to *Some Modern Belgian Writers*, 1916, Edmund Gosse wrote,

there were some of us who for twenty years and more have been aware of the riches and the complexity of Belgian literature; there were many who recognised the value of individual Flemish writers, such as Maeterlinck, and of later years Verhaeren.

But the world at large did not perceive the importance of the literary art of Belgium

as a whole, until the anger and pity of civilisation concentrated its gaze upon the moral qualities of that heroic nation. Then, by a very remarkable unanimity of critical opinion, the characteristics of Belgian literature began to be studied and observed.<sup>8</sup>

Gosse was one of the “many who recognised the value” of Belgian literary art long before the war would put a spotlight on Belgium, and Laurence Binyon was another such connoisseur. Binyon’s correspondence with Belgian artists such as Olivier Destrée and Raphael Petrucci shows not only his friendship with the Belgian artists but also testifies to his support for their work and his encouragement for them to write in English and publish overseas.

Belgium was undergoing a cultural change in the 1880s that was later labelled as Modernism, the movement that would equally pervade Britain and the rest of Europe. The Brussels art group Les XX played a central role in this process. In her book *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism 1868-1894*, Jane Block states that “Les XX was composed of a group of artists sympathetic to anarchist ideas who detested established art and sought out *les apporteurs de neuf* [harbingers of what was new] both at home and abroad.”<sup>9</sup> Les XX, literally twenty artists from Belgium and abroad,<sup>10</sup> reacted against tradition in Belgian art and any official or bourgeois influence and were focused on renewing Belgian art long before Modernism conquered London and Paris. Their support of the avant-garde magazine *L’Art Moderne*, founded by Octave Maus and Edmond Picard, was an important factor of their success.<sup>11</sup> Les XX acquired national and international fame mostly by inviting foreign artists to show at their exhibitions, a custom which also provoked criticism. Thus Antwerp artist, Gustave Lagye, stressed the “superiority of the invites vis-à-vis the Vingtistes” by saying that the members of Les XX appeared as ‘potatoes ... surrounded by beefsteaks.’<sup>12</sup> The

founders were said to have gained fame not on the basis of *their* art, but mainly on the basis of art of the *invités* who showed at their exhibitions.

Several of these *invités* Laguye mentions were friends of Laurence Binyon: Walter Sickert visited Belgium in 1887 to show his work, Walter Crane in 1891, Selwyn Image in 1892, and Ford Madox Brown in 1893. Sickert and Crane were both part of the Fitzroy Street group, whose composition partly overlapped with that of the group behind the *Hobby Horse*.<sup>13</sup> As previously mentioned, Binyon also attended those evenings, and it was there that he would meet Destrée in 1895. But Binyon had his own little network, a group of young men known as the “Anglo-Austrians.”<sup>14</sup> The group had lunch every day at the Vienna Café in London, hence the name. Selwyn Image, a fellow-student of Binyon’s at Oxford, was also one of the “Anglo-Austrians.” These two friends were to travel quite regularly to Belgium together to meet with kindred spirits there.

#### Fernand Khnopff

One of those spirits was Fernand Khnopff, a symbolist painter, avowed anglophile, and one of the founding members of Les XX in 1883. Belgian artists no longer only looked towards France for inspiration but also towards Britain. Khnopff was one of the first Vingtists to acknowledge this and invest in his career overseas. There are interesting parallels between the artists on both sides of the Channel. Khnopff was a great admirer of the Pre-Raphaelite artists, and like them, he also saw his visual art in terms of literature or narrative. Apart from contemporary British poetry in general and Christina Rossetti’s work in particular, he was also interested in myth and medieval legends, again very much like the Pre-Raphaelites. In a recent article for a Fernand Khnopff catalogue, Laurent Busine lists the many references to Khnopff’s so-called English characteristics. The Brussels symbolist painter went to Britain for the first time

in 1891, when he was already 33. This was just a year before he gave a lecture on English art in 1892. The lecture started with the words, “At the moment there can be no doubt that there is no art more exciting than English art.”<sup>15</sup> Knopff felt ready to expand his horizons and aspired to a career in Britain.

In his introduction to Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production*, Randal Johnson writes that in order to be successful when changing fields “one must possess the habitus which predisposes one to enter that field, that game, and not another.”<sup>16</sup> Certain practical skills and dispositions are necessary for an artist to navigate within a foreign field. The most important requirement, however, is that the writer or artist trying to obtain a position in a foreign field must “possess at least the minimum amount of knowledge, or skill, or ‘talent’ to be accepted as a legitimate player.”<sup>17</sup> Khnopff’s success with Les XX had proven his artistic talent, and he already knew the British artists who had shown their work at Les XX exhibitions. After 1891 he travelled regularly to Britain.

Fernand Khnopff made friends there and wrote several articles for the *Studio*, a decorative arts magazine launched in London in April 1893, and the *Magazine of Art*, a much more upper-middle-class magazine. By writing for both magazines, the one much more resembling his progressive ideals, the other rather conservative, Khnopff clearly wanted to reach as broad an audience as possible. He was very familiar with Pre-Raphaelite art and became personally acquainted with Edward Burne-Jones. The two men exchanged paintings and would correspond on a regular basis. In 1894, Walter Shaw-Sparrow claimed that it would be absurd to think that Khnopff had not been influenced by Burne-Jones’s work. Four years earlier in the *Magazine of Art*, Shaw-Sparrow had already talked about the interesting parallel between Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and Khnopff.<sup>18</sup> Khnopff, who was brought up in Belgium but felt English, became more and more a part of the English art scene and started to exhibit his work in London after he had

achieved an important status in the Brussels art circles. His painting *Memories*, for example, was shown at the Hanover Gallery in London in 1890 as *The Tennis Party*. He rose to international fame when he was invited to show at the first *Sezession* exhibition in Vienna in 1898, where he displayed twenty-one works, including his masterpiece *Les Carresses*. Khnopff was clearly not just a potato “surrounded by beefsteaks,”<sup>19</sup> but at least a 72-pound steak.

When the *Studio* offered Khnopff the opportunity to do a monthly chronicle about artistic life in Brussels, he realized he could really make name for himself in Britain. The magazine’s intention was to “visualize a wide spectrum of artistic practice,” and rather than “dealing with the art of the past, it would show the work of its own time.”<sup>20</sup> They wanted “to spread awareness of developments in the English decorative arts through Europe and North America.”<sup>21</sup> Inviting a European artist to comment not only on the European art scene, but also the British, fit the magazine’s international image. For the April 1894 issue, Khnopff was asked to write an article about English art at a La Libre Esthétique exposition. Although Burne-Jones’s work was not on display, Khnopff seized the opportunity to promote his friend’s art. Thus, like a true art agent, he switched halfway through his article from the exposition to William Morris’s books and praise for the frontispiece of *A Dream of John Ball*. Burne-Jones’s frontispiece, he claimed, approached perfection. He writes that “one recognises the perfection of quality” in Morris’s books and that the “first appearance of these works of the Kelmscott Press before the Brussels public . . . has been a real triumph.”<sup>22</sup> In his other columns in the *Studio*, Khnopff wrote about the work of Walter Crane, Alma Tadema, William Blake, G.F. Watts and D.G. Rossetti, but he also wrote about Belgian art in Britain. Khnopff discussed the revival of ivory carving in Belgium, introduced artists from Liège, such as François Maréchal, wrote about architecture and decoration, and contributed several articles on the Belgian painter Leon Frederic, thus introducing contemporary continental art to Britain. In the June edition of 1902, for instance, he praised the Belgian water-

colour painter Henri Cassiers and wrote that his work displayed a “solidity of tone, an independence of execution, a profundity of sentiment, and what may perhaps be called an obstinate conscientiousness hitherto foreign to it.”<sup>23</sup> With these words, Khnopff may well have implied that Casiers’s work came close to what was being produced abroad and thus became comparable to British art, the “most exciting art” of the moment.<sup>24</sup>

All in all, it is clear that Khnopff needs to be mentioned in the context of the present essay because his work was very much the foundation on which the Binyon network could be built since he constructed the bridge between the Brussels art scene and the London magazine network, and he directed contemporary artists’ ambition towards what was happening on the other side of the channel.

#### Olivier Georges Destrée

Although not a painter and nine years Khnopff’s junior, Destrée may well have modelled his career as an art critic on that of Khnopff since he frequented the same network. Indeed, by 1896, Olivier Georges Destrée too was writing about English art in British and European magazines. Destrée was born in a Belgian family, that was important culturally and politically. His brother, Jules Destrée, became an influential socialist leader and at one time served as the minister for education, science, and the arts. The two brothers were very close and shared many interests. Both studied the law and both were highly interested in, and wrote on, literature and painting. They were part of the network behind the avant-garde artistic group *La Libre Esthétique*, set up by Octave Maus in 1894, as a continuation of the internationally acclaimed *Les XX*. Both contributed to the journal, *La Jeune Belgique*,<sup>25</sup> founded by the ambitious twenty-year-old Max Waller. Initially eight other congeners grouped themselves round him, among others Georges Rodenbach and Georges Eekhoud. Of the Destrée brothers, Jules joined first, soon to be followed by his younger



brother.<sup>26</sup> By joining the group, Olivier-Georges Destrée was to become friends with artists like Emile Verhaeren and Maurice Maeterlinck — the most famous of the magazine's followers — and the entire group of artists known as Les XX, with Fernand Khnopff amongst them.

In 1894 Destrée had been sent by the Belgian government to an arts and crafts exhibition in London. He seized the opportunity to visit Edward Burne-Jones, one of the artists he admired and of whose work he, like Khnopff, was extremely fond. This meeting was to change the course of Destrée's life for good. The Pre-Raphaelite painter told him about the life of that other Belgian admired by the likes of Burne-Jones and Robert Louis Stevenson, Father Damian. The now canonized Belgian monk had devoted his life to the care of the lepers on Molokai, Hawaii. Destrée, who had been raised as an agnostic, would thereafter turn to religion and eventually join the order of Saint Benedict in 1898. In her critical study of several Belgian writers, Gladys R. Turquet-Milnes gives another reason why Destrée joined the monastery. She speaks of an "extremist spirit which can but rarely stop at a happy mean, [and an] impetuosity which is the characteristic of men like Lemonnier, Eekhoud, Albert Giraud, Verhaeren, Gilkin, and Demolder, which led Olivier Georges Destrée to fling himself into the cloister."<sup>27</sup> In Destrée's case it was probably a combination of both a religious calling and what Turquet-Milnes calls the "extremist spirit."<sup>28</sup>

Before he immersed himself into the life of a monk, however, Destrée played an important role in the propagation of Pre-Raphaelite art in Belgium. From 1889 onwards he was translating and commenting on some of their works in *La Jeune Belgique*, and he wrote the first monograph on them introducing their oeuvre to his fellow countrymen: *Les Préraphaélites: Notes sur l'art décoratif et la peinture en Angleterre*, published in 1894. He also wrote about Belgian art for the benefit of British readers. Destrée's *The Renaissance of Sculpture in Belgium*

was published in London by Seeley and Co. in 1895, the same year Binyon's *Dutch Etchers, of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* was published by the very same publisher.

Destrée also wrote for French magazines. To the *Mercure de France*, for instance, he contributed an article about William Morris in 1896, the year of the English writer's death, praising him for his inexhaustible imagination, his translations of Homer and Virgil, and his idealism.<sup>29</sup> The article covers Morris's poems, novels, and art criticism, always with great respect and admiration. Morris may have been universally admired in England at the time, but his work had hardly been translated into French and was thus still unknown in France. Destrée was doing what Khnopff had done: he was spreading the fame of what he loved best, and he saw this mediating role as his duty: "car la faire connaître, c'est faire admirer et aimer celui l'a produite."<sup>30</sup>

When it came to publishing in English magazines, he could count on Binyon, who secured several publication possibilities for his Belgian friend. Two years his friend's senior, Destrée had a lot in common with Binyon, and so they became close friends after meeting for the first time in 1895 in Fitzroy Street.<sup>31</sup> Their friendship is reflected in an intense correspondence which stretched over more than twenty years from 1895 to 1918, closing with Destrée's death. They wrote about their work but also about which cities they visited or more personal matters such as the birth of Binyon's twin girls or Destrée's decision to become a monk.<sup>32</sup>

In 1896, Destrée wrote an article in the *Savoy* on the "stained glass windows and decorative paintings of the church of St. Martin's-on-the-hill, Scarborough."<sup>33</sup> *The Savoy* was short-lived, but it was of considerable influence. It was founded by Arthur Symonds, who later contributed to the *Dome* together with Laurence Binyon and who was also part of the Fitzroy Street/*Hobby Horse* evenings. Destrée was introduced to the Fitzroy Street group by Binyon, although Ernest Dowson, in one of his letters, claims the honour when he observes that he was

the first one to introduce Destrée to the Fitzroy Street group: “[to] Fitzroy, in succession to Mr Galton, I had the honour of introducing our foreign discoverer, M. George Olivier Destree, then editor of *La Jeune Belgique*, and now Father Bruno, into the charmed circle.”<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, it is safe to say that it was Binyon who acted as both an agent of consecration and legitimation for Destrée.

In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu explains that when an artist wants to enter a field or a circle, “legitimation” is of the highest importance to be successful and is provided by agents who can act authoritatively. As examples of such agents Bourdieu mentions “organizations which are not fully institutionalized: literary circles, critical circles, salons, and small groups surrounding a famous author or associating with a publisher, a review or a literary or artistic magazine.”<sup>35</sup> Destrée needed to be introduced to the Fitzroy Street group and no one was better-placed to do so than Laurence Binyon, a man with a considerable reputation in London at the time. Binyon’s influence would continue to grow, yet he always remained in the background. He also played a role in the career of Pound when the latter came to London in 1908 and was looking for influential people to support his literary career. Pound’s biographer Peter Ackroyd writes that Pound made contact with “important people like the poet and translator, Laurence Binyon,”<sup>36</sup> while looking for an agent of consecration. From the day Binyon started working in the Department of Printed Books at the British Museum, his position gave him a certain prestige. He was never a show-off but tried to use his influence where he could to support other artists. It was therefore most likely Binyon who suggested to Symons to let Destrée write a piece in his magazine. The suggestion surely contributed to the internationalization of the *Savoy*. Similarly, when Binyon became a right hand to Ernest Oldmeadow, founder of the *Dome*, he also secured publication there for his Belgian friend. Destrée published articles in the *Dome* on chryselephantine sculpture in Belgium, and in the November 1895 edition of the *Portfolio*, he

wrote a piece on the revival of sculpture in Belgium. Destrée's work was also advertised and commented on in a variety of journals ranging from the *Saturday Review* and the *Review of Reviews* to the *Athenaeum*. Binyon kept his friend informed of these publications and sent him copies.

Clearly, the London scene was very important for Destrée's short literary career. This was in part due to the indispensable help of his friend Laurence Binyon, who, as we hope to have shown, acted somewhat as an agent of consecration, by promoting his Belgian friend's work and by opening doors to his own network. French-born musician and historical instruments maker Arnold Dolmetsch<sup>37</sup> described the 1890s London group around Binyon as "creative geniuses" and mentions among others William Morris, Selwyn Image, Arthur Symonds, W. Yates [sic], Swinburne, [and] Sturge Moore.<sup>38</sup> Once Binyon felt established enough in that circle he made sure to introduce his own comrades in arms. And Destrée, in his turn, could rely on that network for his other Belgian contacts.

He wrote an undated letter to Binyon in which he told him about the writer Charles van Lerberghe, when the latter planned a lengthy stay in London. He explicitly asked Binyon to receive him well and to introduce him to some of his friends.<sup>39</sup> Charles van Lerberghe had been Destrée's colleague at *La Jeune Belgique*. In the rest of the letter he tells Binyon about van Lerberghe's publications and stresses the fact that he is from Ghent, just like Maeterlinck, whose career was very familiar to him. Sadly Van Lerberghe's visit did not quite work out. In the biography of Charles van Lerberghe, there is a passage describing the latter's stay in London. Upon his arrival in London on May 4, 1898, he found Binyon taciturn and reserved – according to his biographer Raymon Trousson.<sup>40</sup> So, although the letter from Binyon to Destrée promises that the former would welcome this Belgian visitor, it turned out differently.

When Destrée eventually decided to become a monk and retire to the abbey of Maredsous in 1898, Binyon was thoroughly upset, and the nature of their correspondence changed. A few explanatory letters ensued, and while Binyon still went to Belgium to visit his friend there was much less joy and playful camaraderie in his letters.

## Raphael Petrucci

The focus of this article is the connection between Laurence Binyon and Belgian artists such as Destrée, with whom Binyon had a direct link. We would like to conclude this essay by looking at Binyon's link with another Belgian friend, actually one who, we believe, stimulated and fed Binyon's other love, that of the East. The collection of Binyon letters on loan to the British Library contains a large number of letters to and from Raphael Petrucci. Petrucci is described by Binyon's biographer, John Hatcher, as the protégé of the French art scholar Edouard Chavannes. Chavannes was a French scholar working on Oriental art, through whose good services Binyon had an article<sup>41</sup> published in 1905 "on one of the Museum's better Chinese paintings, a Chao Mêng-Fu handscroll, in *T'oung Pao*, the sinology journal he edited with Henry Cordier."<sup>42</sup> Raphael Petrucci, who was mostly a Renaissance specialist, was also interested in Oriental art and religion and was in possession of an impressive collection of oriental artefacts.<sup>43</sup> The two wrote to each other not only about Orientalism but also about personal matters, as friends would. Petrucci went to London more than once and on those occasions, asked Binyon to take care of a hotel for him and his wife. In 1909 Petrucci recommends a villa in Knokke to Binyon for his stay in Flanders. He even reminds the English poet not to forget bedding.<sup>44</sup> A great deal of their correspondence deals with Chinese and Japanese studies, and the plan that was to pay for their trip to the Far East. Petrucci later translated Binyon's play *Attila* into French and had it produced in Brussels. On the October 6, Petrucci wrote to Binyon hoping to make lots of

money off the play. On October 17, however, Petrucci wrote that the deal was off because of a problem with the score, so nothing came of this plan.

Since Petrucci visited London quite regularly, one might surmise that he met Ezra Pound, another lover of the Orient, unfortunately, there is no account of their meeting. Even so, the relation between Binyon and Petrucci was beneficial to both. If Petrucci read the proofs of Binyon's book *Painting in the Far East*, published in 1908, Binyon, in his turn, arranged for Petrucci to be invited to Oxford for a series of guest lectures on Michaelangelo. The war, however, would bring the friendship to an abrupt stop. In 1914, Petrucci fled from his house in Brussels to the Netherlands and then to France. A letter of June 3, 1916 indicates one last meeting between the two of them when Binyon was working as a volunteer in a French hospital during his holidays.<sup>45</sup> A year later, however, Petrucci died from complications following an operation.

### Conclusion

This first analysis of the Binyon network in Belgium leads to a number of interesting conclusions. To start with, the correspondence and the publications on both sides of the Channel shows cultural interaction between Belgium and Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century. It was important for members of the Binyon circle to publish essays in periodical publications across the border and to encourage European writers and artists to publish in British magazines. This international dimension was of huge importance for pre-war artists, again both for Belgian coteries such as Les XX and English art groups such as the Binyon network. After the war in Belgium, the Dutch language became much more important as a medium in the north. Eventually it became the only official language, which may have been one of the reasons why the Belgium-Britain connections and joint projects seemed to decline during the Interbellum. Before the First World War, however, British artists were pleased to cross the channel to exhibit with Belgian art

groups such as Les XX, and the Symbolist painter Fernand Khnopff had prepared the ground for a fruitful exchange by writing about Belgian art in British periodicals, extolling British art, and exhibiting abroad.

Unfortunately, the Belgian members of Binyon's network either died young, like Petrucci, or withdrew from society before dying young, like Destrée, which makes it rather difficult to discuss the ways in which the network affected the careers of its members. Also, in this article we have only focused on a very small selection of members of the network. Future research may uncover more lines of influence and collaboration. We do know that the Belgian artists considered here helped promote British art in Europe and that Khnopff's potential influence on British art was noticed by British critics when discussing Rossetti or Burne-Jones. Laurence Binyon was not only a hub of cultural exchange but also a node across generations. Members of the Binyon network on the British side of the channel were already exchanging art in the 1880s with the members of Les XX. In the mid 1890s Binyon became the pivot of the Belgo-British cultural exchange, before becoming a central figure in twentieth-century London. Laurence Binyon lived on to enjoy a full and rich career but never to return again to his first love, the old medieval Flemish towns and their artistic inheritance. Maybe the memory of his dear friend, Olivier-Georges Destrée, was too painful, or maybe Belgium was just never the same again after the war.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> New England Cable News, "Giuliani Quotes 'For the Fallen' in 9/11 Ceremony" (news video), *NECN.com*, September 11, 2008, <http://www.necn.com/Boston/Nation/Giuliani-quotes-For-The-Fallen-in-911-ceremony-/1221142301.html> (Accessed October 28, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>3</sup> John Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon: Poet, Scholar of East and West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 24.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.
- <sup>7</sup> Jane Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism, 1868-1894* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), 9.
- <sup>8</sup> Gladys Rosaleen Turquet-Milnes, *Some Modern Belgian Writers: A Critical Study* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), vii.
- <sup>9</sup> Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism*, xv.
- <sup>10</sup> Founding members included James Ensor, Paul Dubois, and Fernand Khnopff. Later other artists joined or replaced other members of the group, including Henry van de Velde, Auguste Rodin, Robert Picard, and Paul Signac. For further detail, see Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism*, 79.
- <sup>11</sup> Jane Block writes that “for L’Art Moderne, Les XX was the embodiment of ‘l’art jeune.’ L’Art Moderne was in open rebellion against the academy, the salon, and the status quo in general” (*Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism*, 32). Les XX shared that strategy and wanted to rebel against the “octopuses who suck up all the money, esteem, and reputation for themselves” and “topple everything and put [their] poor bourgeois country back on the map” (*ibid.*, 21). Their do-it-yourself-mentality changed the Belgian art scene in the 1880s. Even their exhibitions looked entirely different, because “the placement of paintings were chosen by lot” (*ibid.*, 22), creating an artistic socialist system of which equality was the prime principles. The importance of Les XX cannot be underestimated; they were much better



known abroad than Gosse's prefatory note leads one to suspect. Not all members of Les XX shared the same innovating ideas, though it would take some time before the more conservative members felt out of place. When they left the group, this opened places for new artists to join. James Whistler, for instance, who had exhibited with the art group in 1884 and 1886 and was already famous at the time, was very eager to be part of the phenomenon. However, he was definitely not the only one who wanted to join the Brussels avant-garde. Several other major artists wanted in. Auguste Rodin, Henry van de Velde, and Georges Seurat, for example, were also soliciting to fill one of the five empty places.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism*, 27. Our translation.

<sup>13</sup> Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Newbolt, *My World As in My Time: Memoirs of Sir Henry Newbolt, 1862-1932* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), 209.

<sup>15</sup> Laurent Busine, "To Sir Edward Burne-Jones from Fernand Khnopff," in *Fernand Khnopff 1858-1921*, exhib.cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium, 2003-2004), 47.

<sup>16</sup> Randal Johnson, introduction to *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, by Pierre Bourdieu. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "L'Art anglais paraît être le plus intéressant en ce moment." Quoted in Laurent Busine, "To Sir Edward Burne-Jones from Fernand Khnopff," in *Fernand Khnopff, 1858-1921*, exhib.cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium, 2003-2004), 45.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism*, 27.

<sup>20</sup> Gerry Beegan, "The Studio: Photomechanical Reproduction and the Changing Status of Design," *Design Issues* 27 (2007): 48.

- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Fernand Khnopff, “Some English Art Works at the Libre Esthétique at Brussels,” *The Studio*, April 1894, 32.
- <sup>23</sup> Fernand Khnopff, “A Belgian Painter: M. Henri Cassiers,” *The Studio*, June 1902, 13.
- <sup>24</sup> Busine, “To Sir Edward Burne-Jones from Fernand Khnopff,” 47.
- <sup>25</sup> *La Jeune Belgique* ran from 1881 until 1897.
- <sup>26</sup> Turquet-Milnes, *Some Modern Belgian Writers*, 19.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 129.
- <sup>28</sup> Turquet-Milnes, *Some Modern Belgiqn Writers*, 19.
- <sup>29</sup> Olivier-Georges Destrée, “William Morris,” *Mercure de France*, November 1896, 272.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 274. “Because to make known is to induce admiration and love for the person who has produced it” – our translation.
- <sup>31</sup> “Fitzroy” was Selwyn Image’s studio in a house at 20 Fitzroy Street, where Lionel Johnson, Yeats’s alcoholic friend, and others, painted and where the musician Arnold Dolmetsch gave clavichord recitals.
- <sup>32</sup> In 1914, when Louvain was attacked and destroyed by the German army between August 25 and 29, Binyon assumed his friend Dom Bruno was one of the many casualties, and the event broke his heart. In *The Winnowing Fan*, Binyon dedicated another poem to Dom Bruno, “Louvain,” that reads, in part,

I know not if I speak to living ears  
Or if upon you too is come the end.

Peace is on Louvain; dead peace of spilt blood

Upon the mounded ashes where she stood.

As a matter of fact, many priests were killed in the attack, but Destrée was not one of them.

According to Hatcher, one month after Louvain was destroyed by enemy fire, Raphael

Petrucci wrote a letter to Binyon to announce erroneously that their friend was dead. In a

letter to Binyon written on September 24, however, Petrucci clearly states that there is no

indication whatsoever that Destrée had been killed in the attack. He also writes that he

contacted the mayor of Bruges, who confirmed that Destrée was not on the list of casualties.

Destrée indeed survived the war, only to die a premature death one year after the armistice.

<sup>33</sup> Destrée, Olivier Georges, "Some notes on the stained glass windows and decorative paintings of the church of St. Martin's-On-The-Hill, Scarborough," *The Savoy*, October 1896, 76.

<sup>34</sup> Victor Plarr, ed., *Ernest Dowson, 1888-1897, Reminiscences, Unpublished Letters and Marginalia* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1914), 69.

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 121.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *Ezra Pound and His World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 19.

<sup>37</sup> Ezra Pound would later say that the sound of Dolmetsch's instruments was "undoubtedly derived from the Gods." Ezra Pound, "Affirmations. I. Arnold Dolmetsch," *New Age*, January 7, 1915, 247.

<sup>38</sup> Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon*, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Olivier Georges Destrée to Laurence Binyon, "first day of spring," Laurence Binyon Archive, Loan 103, vol. 9, *British Library*.

<sup>40</sup> Trousson, Raymond, *Charles Van Lerberghe: Le Poète au Crayon d'Or* (Brussels: Archives et Musée de la Littérature, 2001), 202.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon*, 169.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> One of his last letters to Binyon describes how he had to leave his cherished collection in his Brussels house unattended because of the brusque and violent invasion of the German army. It is not known what happened to it after the war.

<sup>44</sup> Raphael Petrucci to Laurence Binyon, July 28, 1909, Laurence Binyon Archive, Loan 103, vol. 9, *British Library*.

<sup>45</sup> Raphael Petrucci to Laurence Binyon, June 3, 1916, Laurence Binyon Archive, Loan 103, vol. 9, *British Library*.