

Transgenerational brokering. The case for symbolism and surrealism in Flanders

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

Successive symbolist and surrealist generations appear capable of being distinguished just as well in the major French¹ as in the minor French-Belgian literary field – which, according to Bourdieu, despite all resistance is dominated by the French field². Moreover, in the entire Belgian field, which also has a Dutch language field, these generations appear to consist of more members than traditional literary history ascribes to them. The most important explanation for this is that generations in literature can not only be defined on the basis of the 'we-feeling' expressed by the members at the time of their joining or a posteriori. Even if the existence of generations seems to imply the existence of a shared collective identity and sociologically speaking, this form of 'Selbstthematisierung'³ or intellectual *self-fashioning* is indeed very important for each generation, this does not exclude our ability to ascribe to such a generation all kinds of groups or individuals who did *not* see themselves as part of a generation or who were not recognised as such by that restricted literary generation. A second important element in our view of generations is that it is not primarily the shared decisive or, to use a buzzword, 'traumatic' experiences – to which great attention is paid in many generation theories⁴ – which are defining when it comes to distinguishing such a generation in

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

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

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

⁴ H.A. BECKER, *Toekomst van de Verloren Generatie*, Amsterdam, Meulenhoff, 1997 and other sociologists emphasise those decisive experiences that create discontinuity in the history. They do this in imitation of Mannheim (1928), who spoke about the importance of “gesellschaftlich-geistige Umwälzungen” (Karl

a broad sense, but even more the comparable and interconnected social relations⁵, in other words, the relationships that have arisen through a common socialisation.

In countries such as Belgium, in which two literary (sub)fields, or (depending on the perspective: opposing fields)⁶ appear to be active, one of which appears more focussed on the Netherlands and the other on France, the concept of generation has a particular advantage. It allows one to see that in the formation of national literatures forces are at work that bridge the language barriers and national borders. Here, we deliberately use this vague word 'forces'⁷ to stress what transcends the individual and also to indicate that the common features seem to come from within, even if they are determined by the socio-historical situation. Based on two Flemish case studies we show that especially language frameworks were broken through in the formation of a 'Belgian literature': multiple authors made themselves acquainted to two literary fields (the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Flemish, which is part of the Franco-Belgian). This observation leads to a double adjustment to the history of literature, which allows it to be excessively guided both by the national and by the generational sentiment that authors attribute to themselves. In particular we show that contemporaneous authors and criticism no less than in later literary history tends to homogenise and exclude. Especially with bilingual authors, their role in one field tends to be hypostasised to the detriment of their role in the other, or their role in the field is even seized upon in order to write it out of that history, while it can be unmistakably attributed to the same generation to which those authors who do become canonised belong, or who have counted themselves as belonging. It is on two of such 'cultural brokers'⁸ or middleman that we focus in this article: P.-G. (Gust) van Hecke (1887-1967) and Marc. Eemans (1907-1997). Both van Hecke and Eemans are associated with surrealism, but they belonged to different generations and both transcended them in many perspectives.

The theory of literary generations reconsidered

MANNHEIM, *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, Hg. von Kurt H. WOLFF, Neuwied/Berlin, Luchterhand, 1964, p. 550) and especially about "entscheidende Kollektivereignisse" (p. 552). Mannheim thought, however, that such events could take place but did not have to: "Ganz entscheidende Kollektivereignisse können hierbei „kristallisierend“ wirken" (p. 552). Edmunds & Turner interpret those "Kollektivereignisse" unilaterally as "traumatic historical events" (June EDMUNDS & Bryan TURNER, "Global Generations: Social Change in the Twentieth Century", in *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 56, 2005, 3, p. 560).

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

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

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

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

To remove from the term 'generation' its noncommittal figurative use, which is still very common in literary history, we reach back to a number of sociological interpretations of the concept⁹. In sociology, the term generations is used to designate groups of people who do not necessarily know each other but are characterised by an identical socio-historical setting (in Mannheim's terms: *Lagerung*)¹⁰ and belong to the same birth cohort. Karl Mannheim, the patriarch of the theory of generations, spoke in *Das Problem der Generationen* (1928) of 'Geburtseinheiten' to designate the segments of a society that compete with each other within a 'Geburtszusammenhang'¹¹. He distinguished these 'Geburtseinheiten' from 'konkrete Gruppen'. In that, he had in mind the example of the liberal and romantic-conservative youth who fought each other for dominance in the first half of the nineteenth century. Groups of writers, intellectuals or politicians in all kinds of relationships may therefore, strictly according to Mannheim's view, not be described as a generation¹². However, writers and politicians are grouped by the sociologists of today, such as Henk Becker, into a 'partial Generation', since the effects of discontinuous changes that are elicited by decisive experiences, apply to "certain categories of contemporaries" and not to the generation as a whole¹³.

In more than one aspect, Mannheim's theory causes one to think of Pierre Bourdieu's. Also with Bourdieu, there is a power struggle; the dispositions arising from internalising the (common) objective conditions and which form the *habitus*, resembling the "ererbten Lebenshaltungen, Gefühlsgehalte, Einstellungen" about which Mannheim speaks and which then at a later stage in life, around the seventeenth year of life, are called into question¹⁴. Bourdieu saw in the intergenerational struggle for cultural and symbolic capital an important explanation for social change, just as Mannheim saw the 'generational shift' as an explanation

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

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

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

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

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

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

for social evolution¹⁵. Yet there are also differences. The great importance which Bourdieu placed on social origin in the formation of cultural capital cannot be found in Mannheim. A second difference is that less emphasis comes to be placed on individual authors (which in Bourdieu, despite his field perspective, is still often the case) and also not on specific groups, for which, in the sociology of literature, different approaches are being developed¹⁶, but more on links that override groups. Literary and artistic generations go wider than literary groups, also follow each other diachronically and do not necessarily manifest themselves as a group, although, in retrospect, mostly (but not necessarily) a 'we-feeling' can be construed¹⁷.

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

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

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

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

¹⁸ In this connection, Corsten talks about "discursive practices of cultural circles of adolescent age groups". See CORSTEN, "The time of generations", op. cit., p. 268.

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

In a study on the emergence of 'global generations', June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner combine insights of Bourdieu and Mannheim in order to be able to explain social change. Their central point is that passive generations alternate with active generations “when they are able to exploit resources (political/educational/economic)”²⁰ to innovate in various fields. Generations become active when there is a “co-incidence of incentive and means”²¹. The marginal note that must be placed alongside this is that within one and the same generation, multiple generation units or concrete groups that are representative of a generation can compete for cultural hegemony, or – as Bourdieu would put it – dominance and that thus usually only one will eventually be labelled as active²².

It is not so difficult to make the theory of generations suitable for transnational research, since generations are not necessarily restrained by borders. In this way, we can also use the field concept, to which not necessarily a nation but usually a linguistic area is linked, without falling into a narrow nationalism. If nowadays one can speak of the emergence of global generations – global 'lost generations' – then the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century is the period in which transnational generations sought and found a collective identity. Before then, that was limited to a very small group. Transnational generations were united in correspondence networks, periodicals and various other forms of informal and formal sociability. We do not go so far in avoiding a 'methodological nationalism' with these transnational generations that we no longer take the 'roots' of cosmopolitans into consideration²³.

In any event, the history and sociology of intellectuals (including writers) is a domain in which generation theories have been successfully applied. In the wake of Wilhelm Dilthey, Michel Winock, in his article “Les générations intellectuelles”, substantiated the idea that generations which are formed by relatively small groups in their formative years (a notion of Dilthey which was adopted by Mannheim)²⁴ are receptive to the same 'esprit de temps'²⁵. The

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

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

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

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

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

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

generations that Winock, with a blunt historical brush, identified for each decade (starting with the Dreyfus generation), were not reducible to the experience of a shared historical event (e.g. the First World War) or belonging to a demographic cohort – although these certainly play an important role – but their members do share an ideological system in which several contradictory answers to major historical events were possible²⁶.

Conversely, the history of intellectuals and writers is of importance because they form the 'concrete groups' that are decisive and representative of broader societal generations. Or as Mannheim himself put it: "The unity of a generation does not consist primarily in a social bond of the kind that leads to the formation of a concrete group, although it may sometimes happen that a feeling for the unity of a generation is consciously developed into a basis for the formation of concrete groups"²⁷. 'Concrete groups' formed around typical sociability structures²⁸, leading figures and mentors. Mentors need not personally be part of the concrete groups and may also belong to another linguistic and culture area and a different generation. In other words, the identification of examples, leaders and mentors situated in another literary field, gives access to a transnational, a transregional and transgenerational approach.

The case of symbolism: Gust van Hecke

In the self-definition of writers and literary critics, it is not uncommon for literary 'movements' and 'generations' to be used as synonyms. This is also the case with symbolism. "Symbolism has been used to describe a movement which, during the last generation, has profoundly influenced the course of French literature", wrote Arthur Symons in 1899. Most studies conceptualise the symbolist 'generation' as nationally bounded entities but symbolism as such is recognised as one of the first (if not the first) international literary movements. Yet, already at the 'birth' of symbolism itself, particularism was not avoided²⁹. In the famous literary survey of 1891, Edmond Haraucourt (1856-1941) was asked whether symbolists represented "les tendances de la jeunesse littéraire". He replied that they only represent a

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

²⁷ Karl MANNHEIM, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1952, p. 288.

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

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

portion of his generation: “Ils représentent une partie de notre génération”³⁰. He did see them as a well-defined group, but not as a generation.

“What distinguishes the Symbolism of our day from the Symbolism of the past is that it has now become conscious of itself”, says Symons³¹. Within symbolism itself, new self-conscious literary generations were soon distinguished, just as national and regional variants crystallised³². The first generation of Belgian Symbolists (Verhaeren, Van Lerberghe, Maeterlinck and others) and their special relationship with the French literary field have been well studied in the meantime. The Belgian offshoots of what was termed by Décaudin as the 'naturist' generation, the second generation of Belgian symbolists³³, was the group associated with the Franco-Belgian magazine *Antée* (1905-1908). The Belgians formed one of the many neo-symbolist groups on the eve of the First World War identifiable in literature in both the French language and elsewhere, and who preached, above all, a return to life³⁴. Common literary characteristics are an integration of naturism, symbolism and regionalism in the form of bucolic simplicity. The reception of Francis Jammes and André Gide in the French-speaking part of Belgium took place at the same moment that, in France, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier and Maurice Le Blond tried to incorporate Jammes and Gide into the naturist movement³⁵. *Antée* is on record as the precursor of *La Nouvelle Revue française*, the most important inter-war French magazine³⁶. It is immediately also clear that this magazine was strongly oriented towards France. *Antée* was founded by Christian Beck (also known as Joseph Bossi), Henri Vandeputte (1877-1954) and the still young socialist journalist Louis Piérard (1886-1951)³⁷. They may also be referred to as the 'leaders' of their group. Banker and poet André Ruyters (1876-1952) later joined the editorial staff. When, in 1906, the magazine *L'Ermitage* ceased to exist, Ruyters suggested to Gide that they start up a French-Belgian magazine: “l'Antée enrichi”. He hoped that Gide would agree to be the editor-in-chief. It never got that far. *Antée* had to wait until the moment that *La Revue blanche*, published in Paris, also threw in the towel for Gide and his friends to begin publishing increasingly in the magazin.

Antée however, was not able to overcome the bankruptcy of the publisher (also publisher of Arthur Symons). Through the mediation of Verhaeren and with the financial support of the French symbolist pivotal figure Francis Vielé-Griffin (1864-1937) a new series

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

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

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

³³ They were also called post-symbolists.

³⁴ DECAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes*, op. cit., p. 161 and passim.

³⁵ For naturism, see DECAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes*, op. cit., p. 58-80.

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

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

was started in Paris in 1908, but it got no further than one issue³⁸. It would eventually take until 1910 before the group around Gide, of which Ruyters was now also a part, started with *La Nouvelle Revue française*³⁹. According to Albert Mockel, friend of Gide and together with him the mentor of young Belgians, *Antée* was the best Belgian magazine: “Les autres sont ou trop spécialisés, ou trop peu littéraire ou encore infectées de ce particularisme belgeois qui est la forme bruxelloise du nationalisme”⁴⁰. Gide was at that time present everywhere in Belgium and frequently spent time there⁴¹. He was allied to Ruyters and others by Nietzscheanism⁴².

A little later on, this French-speaking generation was to gain a following of younger Dutch-speaking authors, the so-called 'Boomgaardgeneratie' (The Orchard generation), named after the magazine *De Boomgaard* (1909-1911). After a series of failed magazine projects, at the instigation of André De Ridder (1888-1961), the initiative was taken to create a “simultaneously broader and more closed grouping”, which after months of financial uncertainty eventually resulted in the formation of *De Boomgaard*⁴³. In Paul-Gustave van Hecke (1887-1967), De Ridder found his most important 'compagnon de route'. The authors of the journal managed to 'fashion' themselves as an open, cosmopolitan group⁴⁴ and had clearly identifiable leaders and mentors. Their first mentor was the somewhat older Karel van de Woestijne (1878-1929), perhaps the only true representative of Dutch speaking literary symbolism in Flanders. As regards year of birth and poetics, he strongly resembles the *Antée* authors. De Ridder and van Hecke constituted the 'leaders' of *De Boomgaard*. They sought their literary examples abroad, including in Gide and Jammes and decadent prose writers such as Huysmans and Wilde.

Van Hecke and De Ridder never lost their epigonic place in Dutch speaking literature and came to be irrevocably associated with *De Boomgaard*. Easily ignored is the fact that shortly after the war they started writing in French and that they acquired prestige mainly through promoting modern art⁴⁵. As a gallery owner and director of the magazines *Sélection*

³⁸ DECAUDIN, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes*, op. cit., p. 221.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and *Variétés*, van Hecke even played an important role in the emergence of surrealism in Belgium, a role that could count on considerable attention in the past decade⁴⁶. From a would-be leader in the Dutch speaking Belgian literary subfield and a passive actor he evolved into a model and mentor for a new generation in the broader Belgian intellectual field, thanks to a translinguistic artistic legitimacy he acquired. He was a cultural broker and a model in the sense that he facilitated the genesis of a new, active generation: that of the surrealists. *Mutatis mutandis*, Henri Vandeputte would, for that matter, play a comparable role later on. Vandeputte (who contributed to *Variétés*) could fall back much more than van Hecke on good contacts in Paris for his activities as a gallery owner and art promoter. The last author for whom he acted as mentor was the young Hugo Claus⁴⁷.

The authors of *De Boomgaard* and *Antée* are never related to each other in Dutch-language and French-language literary histories. Indeed, separately, the Boomgaarders and the *Antée* generation do not seem to form any literary generation. Together, however, we can ascribe them to the same historical-sociological generation thanks to their common socialisation in the Belgian literary system and especially through their common admired predecessors (Verhaeren, for example). Additional research would be able to clarify the extent to which this generation is also identifiable in other linguistic areas and whether they have become dominant everywhere after the Great War in the literary-artistic system⁴⁸. In order to achieve that dominance, these figures had to be able to acknowledge the vision of the post-war youth. Thus, in van Hecke we can see a mentor who was educated by his own disciples.

The case of surrealism: Eemans

In the first half of the twentieth century and still during a part of the second half, there was no question in Belgium of two autonomous literary fields: one Dutch-speaking and one French-speaking. The Dutch-speaking literary field had at the end of nineteenth century gradually emancipated itself from the French-speaking one, but at the heart of the linguistic area, the bourgeoisie clung stubbornly to French (never more than 3% according)⁴⁹, which produced a series of French-speaking Flemish authors. French still had more prestige than Dutch – the language of the majority of the population in Belgium – and was also the official language in large sectors of education into the thirties. After each world war, when part of the newly

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

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

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

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

created Flemish intellectual elite went into collaboration, Dutch again lost importance⁵⁰. That is why, after the First World War, many of the authors whose schooling had still been in French, switched linguistic group⁵¹. Alongside the unilingual French-speaking Flemish authors and the Dutch-speaking authors in Flanders, in the twenties, there was still a minority of bilingual writers who predominantly made use of French: the poet and painter Marc Eemans (1907-1998), of whom we will speak in particular, belonged to it. It should be noted that many Dutch-speaking writers were also able to use French as their medium of communication, not only for administrative purposes but also for speeches, texts on special occasions or even for (the translation of) their own literary work⁵².

Eemans is a forgotten figure in Belgian surrealism for two reasons. Firstly, surrealism was seen perceived as a 'Roman' phenomenon⁵³. Hence the affinity of Dutch speaking authors (Van Ostaijen) with surrealism is not seen, or the Dutch speaking work of someone like Eemans is not listed in the summaries of surrealism in Belgium. Secondly, Eemans has been written out of that history because of his collaboration during the Second World War⁵⁴. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, Dutch surrealism came to be extensively studied more rapidly, possibly because it was seen as an exotic phenomenon, while the 'natural' status of the French brought with it that Dutch speakers in Flanders could read (the Surrealists in) French and were thus better acquainted with surrealism than the average Dutch literature lover.

Piet Tommisen pointed out – not without Flemish nationalist motives – that Dutch was not entirely alien to the Belgian surrealists: there are the painters Frits van den Berghe (1883-1939) and E.L.T. Mesens (1903-1971)⁵⁵. The latter, from Brussels, debuted in *Ter waarheid*, an avant-garde magazine to which Joris van Severen (later pioneer of the far right Verdinaso) also belonged. Rachel Baes (1912-1983), the mistress between 1936 and 1940 of Van Severen, who was the son of a Flemish (French speaking) notary and very attracted by French culture, and who herself at that time was still doing expressionist painting⁵⁶, as well as Marcel Mariën (1920-1993) had Flemish roots – but were in fact French-speaking. We can

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

still add to this list the gallery owner and pub-owner Geert van Bruaene (1891-1964) as well as the aforementioned van Hecke and Eemans, who came to his 'surrealistic poetics' through Van Ostaijen⁵⁷.

The names cannot serve to suddenly make surrealism in Belgium into a Flemish phenomenon⁵⁸, but the age differences of the members point to the different generations that were involved with surrealism in Belgium. This generational perspective may provide more clarity about the neglect of Dutch speaking surrealism. In the first place, generations indicate a strong togetherness (we-feeling), which may also precipitate into similar forms of expression or styles. Thus the Belgian surrealists employed their own genre: the 'tracts' (pamphlets). "Le tract est au surréalisme belge ce que le manifeste est au surréalisme français", writes Michel Biron⁵⁹. After the first (Brussels) group – often described as a 'generation' - which surfaces simultaneously with the French surrealists, but from which it clearly wishes to distinguish itself⁶⁰, traditionally a second Hainault group is distinguished, that came to the fore in the thirties⁶¹. The Hainault group was dependent on the French surrealists and more politically militant. From a sociological standpoint the first and second groups belong to the same generation, most of whose members came from the petty bourgeoisie (of hatters, tailors and grocers). The age of Eemans, the Benjamin of the first group who gathered in the 'Société du Mystère', points to the unity of those first and second groups or so called 'generations': his year of birth leaning more towards that of the second 'generation' than the first. As a precocious boy, he was first involved in the abstract, constructive direction and then in 1925-1926 made the leap into surrealism. With the help of his friend Mesens he had his first exhibition in 1928 at P.G. van Hecke's gallery 'L'époque', who also allowed him to take care of front covers for *Variétés*. In 1930, whether voluntarily or not, he left the group, where he had for some time encountered resistance on account of his alleged epigonism⁶². The marriage of the *surréaliste* Irène Hamoir, who was his girlfriend, to

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

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

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

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

61 For the differences between the two groups, see for example DENIS & KLINKENBERG, *La littérature belge, op. cit.*, p. 186.

62 See the statements from letters of Goemans and Nougé that Mariën (Marcel MARIËN, *Autant en rapporte le vent*, Bruxelles, Marcel Mariën, 1973, p. 1) cites. Mariën writes that the surrealists removed him from the group "pour cause d'insuffisance intellectuelle et morale" (MARIËN, *Autant en rapporte le vent, op. cit.*, p. 1). Eemans defended himself by pointing to his own style that would speak from his earliest works – "Ik ben eerder lyrisch en elegisch, romantisch aangelegd. Magritte eerder prozaïsch en platvloers, met zijn bolhoed en zijn kefhondje" (JESPERS, "Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar", *op. cit.*, p. 11) – and by ascribing it to Mariën's jealousy over a women's

Louis Scutenaire would have played a role according to Eemans. But above all: “It was a matter of opposing sensibilities”⁶³. However, in terms of vision, his mysticism was more closely in line with his age-mates from the thirties. Unlike Paul Nougé, he defended automatism, for example⁶⁴. He shared his interest in the occult with the later Breton and some authors of *Le Grand Jeu* (and with the Belgians Marcel Lecomte and Camille Goemans). Viewed politically, he was receptive to the Trotskyism which was also implicit in Breton’s second manifesto (1929), but his tendency to the mythical primordial sacred rites of the Germans led him to National Socialist theories and collaboration in the Second World War⁶⁵. Pol le Roy, who did not allow surrealism to influence him until the war, is incidentally the same age as Eemans. The right-wing sympathies of the later Eemans (although initially revolutionary and according to the formulation of Mesens, a lifelong “sentimental anarchist”), Le Roy, René Braet and Baes are at odds with the leftist ideology on which most other surrealists prided themselves.

Secondly, the birth years just make us grasp all the better that there are relatively few surrealists of Flemish descent in the first generation surrealists (who belong to the second generation of avant-gardists)⁶⁶. To be sure, a number of core members (Nougé, Scutenaire) have French fathers or grandfathers. For the first time in Franco-Belgian literature, Belgians from Wallonia and Brussels were taking the lead, where up until the First World War, it was primarily French-speaking Flemings (from the cities) who were having a ball with literature. It is also with the advent of surrealism that, for the first time, European literature was being kept pace with: until then, Belgian avant-garde movements – even symbolism – were behind their foreign counterparts. This leads us to a strange paradox: just at the moment when autonomisation seems to have taken place, a tendency arises to blend into the broader (French or European)⁶⁷ context.

issue (Jane Graverol) (JESPERS, “Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar”, *op. cit.*, p. 13). Eemans always saw himself as a surrealist later. His definition of surrealism in later life indicates the specific *Lagerung* that he ascribes to it: “Het surrealisme is een geestesgesteldheid en de uitdrukking van een in een welbepaalde tijd etische revolte tegen al de taboes van onze kapitalistische bourgeoisie maatschappij. Het surrealisme vormt een gesloten gemeenschap waarin men kan opgenomen worden maar dan ook kan uitgestoten worden door een echte banvloek van de gemeenschap” (letter to Jos Murez, cited in Jos MUREZ, “Nog eens over het surrealisme”, in *Vooruit*, February 8, 1973). He considered himself just as much as a belated symbolist: EEMANS, *De Laatste Surrealist*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁶³ JESPERS, “Marc. Eemans, 90 jaar”, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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

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

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

⁶⁷ Just before the Second World War, we see the Groupe du Lundi emerging, seeking to link to Paris, or Achille Chavée who wants Walloon autonomy. For de Groupe du Lundi, see Jean-Marie KLINKENBERG, “Lectures du

But for the time being, we are still in a literary field where the contacts between the various Belgian subfields take place effortlessly, since French is used as the lingua franca. This French has led to the Dutch variant of surrealism in literature (Van Ostaijen, the bundle *Vergeten te worden* by Marc Eemans from 1930) has long been left out of consideration and if we look at the most recently published history of surrealism by Xavier Canonne⁶⁸, has even been made to disappear out of the history as if by magic. After all, in a minor artistic culture and literature⁶⁹, such variants threaten a homogeneous vision by critics. Belgian surrealism must be 'leftist-revolutionary' and 'in the French language'. Nonetheless, there is a generation that shared similar experiences, values and principles of form beyond the language barriers and ideology. The collective identity construction does not mean that exclusions of individuals are permitted, especially if we look through the eyes of today.

Conclusion

P.G. van Hecke started as an epigone that gladly defined himself as cosmopolitan, and ended as an avant-gardist who finally clung to cosmopolitanism even in practice. When van Hecke joined the larger movement of surrealism, he finally found the kindred spirits that he had earlier needed in order to prove himself as a model and mentor. With van Hecke, we have an older literary figure that reinvents himself through the avant-garde, wearing a modernistic French suit. With Marc Eemans we have a youngster emerging very fast like a meteor who, however, just as quickly grows prematurely old. Eemans quickly sidetracks himself or is quickly cast out. Only by focussing on the interplay between various literary fields and by looking through transgenerational spectacles we notice how both these figures have been erased by the history of literature. Although well studied in recent research, Van Hecke has disappeared for a long time from Dutch literary history after the venture of *De Boomgaard* and has achieved no real place for himself in the French; Marc Eemans is kept out of the French-language literature and more particularly art history, but has been able to prove himself even less in the Dutch literature. Only when we let go off the language and by looking

Manifeste du Groupe du Lundi (1937)”, in Raymond TROUSSON & Léon SOMVILLE, eds., *Lettres de Belgique. En hommage à Robert Frickx*, Cologne, Janus, 1992, p. 98-124.

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

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

at their brokerage, we see their position in relation to the surrealist generation (in a broad sociological sense) that becomes dominant in the twenties⁷⁰. Whether it is characteristic of minor literatures to homogenise more rapidly, we leave undecided. It is clear, however, that in minor literatures, the position of contemporaneous or postfactum neglected figures can be more easily revised. Both van Hecke and Eemans, as marginal bilingual authors – the one too old and the other too young for the Belgian surrealist group –, can, without much effort, be ascribed to the more-broadly based 'reconstructed' generation of surrealism, though they have played different roles: van Hecke as a self-appointed member of the surrealist movement fulfilled the role of a mentor, whereas Eemans was the youngest surrealist of all in the core group but was soon excluded. This surrealism appears to be not exclusively left-wing and French-speaking, but also has right-wing and Dutch-speaking representatives. It would be interesting to examine whether that hybrid quality can also be found in other minor or major literatures. By focussing on similar and interrelated social relationships that cross the boundaries of minor literatures but also help shape them, a start can be made in rewriting the history of literature in which linguistic boundaries and the self-definition of writers and literary critics still predominates.

Samenvatting

Transgenerationele bemiddeling. Het geval van symbolisme en surrealisme in Vlaanderen

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

Surrealisme – generaties – transnationale contacten

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

Abstract

Transgenerational brokering. The case for symbolism and surrealism in Flanders

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

Surrealism – generations – transnational contacts

Résumé

Médiation transgénérationnelle. Le cas du symbolisme et du surréalisme en Flandre

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

Surréalisme – générations – contacts transnationaux