

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

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De Vlaamse schrijver, tweetalige bemiddelaar en meertalige vertaler Frans Rens en de bescheiden transfer van Franstalige literatuur in het 19de-eeuwse België

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

### **Abstract**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Frans Rens as a Belgian/Flemish author**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Rens as a multilingual translator

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Rens as a bilingual mediator

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## APPENDICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

F. Rens

Gent, september 1844



## 2. Overview of translations by Frans Rens

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

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



## ABSTRACT

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

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

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

## RÉSUMÉ

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

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

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

## SAMENVATTING

**Liselotte VANDENBUSSCHE, *De Vlaamse schrijver, tweetalige bemiddelaar en meertalige vertaler Frans Rens en de bescheiden transfer van Franstalige literatuur in het 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse België***

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

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