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Marjet BROLSMA & Francis MUS

A failed cultural transfer? Literary internationalism after the First World War and the transnational construction of 'Europe'

Abstract

In this article we analyze the misunderstandings and asymmetries in cultural transfers by exploring the (nationalist-)internationalist intentions behind the production and reception of the volume *Europas Neue Kunst und Dichtung/De Nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren* (1920). This German-Dutch-Italian-English-Belgian collaboration aimed at a climate of international understanding by informing the European audience about literary developments abroad. The initiators, among them the German art historian Friedrich Markus Huebner, the Belgian journalist Paul Colin and the Dutch literary critic Dirk Coster, believed that a reconciliation of war-torn Europe could be established through a cultural transfer between national literatures, that each in their own, unique way reflected a 'new European spirit'.

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous analysons les malentendus et asymétries dans les transferts culturels en explorant les intentions (nationalistes-)internationalistes derrière la production et la réception du volume *Europas Neue Kunst und Dichtung/De Nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren* (1920). Cette collaboration entre intellectuels issus d'Allemagne, des Pays-Bas, d'Italie, d'Angleterre et de Belgique aspirait à un climat d'entente internationale en informant le public européen des développements littéraires en cours dans les pays européens voisins et étrangers. Les initiateurs, parmi lesquels le critique d'art allemand Friedrich Markus Huebner, le journaliste belge Paul Colin et le critique littéraire néerlandais Dirk Coster, pensaient qu'une réconciliation de l'Europe déchirée par la guerre pouvait être établie par un processus de transfert culturel entre les littératures nationales, qui reflétaient chacune à leur manière un « nouvel esprit européen ».

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A FAILED CULTURAL TRANSFER? LITERARY INTERNATIONALISM AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF 'EUROPE'

1. Introduction: The case of "The New European Spirit in Arts and Literature"

After the guns had fallen silent in November 1918, pacifist and cosmopolitan artists undertook many initiatives aimed at bringing about European reconciliation. Some well-known examples include the PEN Club, established in London in 1921, the Clarté movement, founded by (among others) the French war veteran Henri Barbusse in the spring of 1919, and Romain Rolland's influential *Déclaration d'indépendance de l'esprit* from the same year, in which Rolland called upon Europe's intellectuals and artists to unite and maintain their moral independence from national, political or class interests. However, the vibrant artistic internationalism of the early 1920s was fairly short-lived. Many initiatives were ephemeral or soon lost sight of their original goals, political neutrality and international openness. In hindsight, this post-war literary internationalism could even be seen as naïve and doomed to fail.

This article focuses on *The New European Spirit in Arts and Literature* project, an exemplary case of the ill-fated artistic internationalism that emerged in the aftermath of the First World War. In what follows, we examine the transnational dimension and aspirations of what at first sight appears to be a failed cultural transfer. *The New European Spirit* project initially involved five men of letters from various national backgrounds: the German cultural mediator and journalist Friedrich Markus Huebner, the Dutch literary critic Dirk Coster, the Italian lecturer and founder of the Dutch branch of the Dante Alighieri Society Romano Guarnieri, and two ambassadors of the Clarté movement: the English novelist Douglas Goldring and the Belgian journalist Paul Colin. The aim of their cooperation was to divulge and disseminate a "new European spirit", and to enhance international understanding by appraising European audiences of literary developments abroad. The initiators believed that each national literature reflected the salutary "new European spirit" in its own, unique way and that reconciliation in war-torn Europe could be established through cultural transfers between national literatures and other artistic forms of expression.

The project started out as a series of lectures held in the Dutch town of Delft in 1919. The lectures, which were later published in a number of journal articles and three edited volumes, covered literary developments in Germany, Holland, Italy, Britain and France.[1] A first volume was published in Dutch in June

[1] 'The New European Spirit' project is described in more detail in: Sjoerd VAN FAASSEN, "Dirk Coster en *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*", in: *Eigenbouwer*, 2015, 4, 26-45; Hubert ROLAND, *Leben und Werk von Friedrich Markus Huebner (1886-1964). Vom Expressionismus zur Gleichschaltung*, Münster, Waxmann, 2009, 78-83.

1920 under the title *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*. The book contained a chapter on each of the five national literatures, and an introduction by Dirk Coster. Two months later *Europas neue Kunst und Dichtung* appeared. This German edition, which had a slightly different title, included German translations of the five chapters – presumably made by Friedrich Markus Huebner himself – as well as a foreword by Huebner. In 1923, a Czech translation of the German version (including Huebner's foreword) was published in Prague. The book also included a chapter by its translator, Miroslav Rutte, a Czech playwright, about the literature of Czechoslovakia.

These translated versions should not be seen as a form of consecration (a proof of a successful afterlife of the book) because the idea of cultural transfer was at the core of the project *from the start*. Although strictly speaking the term 'cultural transfer' was not used, the authors regularly emphasized that their texts were explicitly intended to be translated and disseminated across borders. In his introduction to the Dutch version, Coster underscored that his essay "niet voor Holland geschreven is, maar bedoeld werd als inlichtingsbericht voor landen, waar men omtrent de Hollandsche litteratuur in de meest onverschillige onwetendheid verkeerde" [was not written for Holland, but aimed to inform countries that still were indifferently ignorant of Dutch literature].[2] Huebner (optimistically) announced in his foreword that the volume was to appear simultaneously in five languages.[3] Although the English, Italian and French editions he envisaged never materialized, separate chapters were translated into French and published in various periodicals.[4]

Despite these efforts, several factors hindered the cultural transfer the group sought to stimulate. The utopian aim of restoring European unity and solidarity through cultural transfers between national literatures was first of all complicated by the project's incompleteness and partiality. In spite of their ambitious titles, the volumes were not genuinely "European". "Only" six countries were represented, with a Belgian (Paul Colin) speaking on behalf of France, and the volumes appeared in no more than three languages. The chapters differed considerably in focus and length; the chapters on Dutch, French and (especially) Czech literature were much longer than the chapters on German, Italian, and British literature. Moreover, the volumes' reception clearly reflected national preoccupations. Sjoerd van Faassen points out, for instance, that Dutch reviewers were mainly interested in discussing the biased way Coster represented Dutch literature abroad and ignored any lessons to be learnt from literary developments in Germany, Italy, France or Great Britain.[5]

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[2] Dirk COSTER, "Voorwoord", in: Dirk COSTER, Paul COLIN, F.M. HUEBNER, Douglas GOLDRING and Romano GUARNIERI, *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1920, 11.

[3] Friedrich Markus HUEBNER, „Einführung", in: Friedrich Markus HUEBNER, Dirk COSTER, Paul COLIN, Douglas GOLDRING and Romano GUARNIERI, *Europas neue Kunst und Dichtung*, Berlin, Ernst Rowolt Verlag, 1920, 10.

[4] Dirk COSTER, « Panorama d'une littérature inconnue », in : *La Revue Européenne* 1927, 153-168 and 253-263; Friedrich Markus HUEBNER, « Le mouvement de l'art nouveau en Allemagne. 1. Généralités ». *L'Art libre* 1920, 1, 3-4 ; Ibid., « Le mouvement de l'art nouveau en Allemagne. 2. Le développement jusqu'à la guerre ». *L'Art libre* 1920, 2, 16-17 ; Ibid., « Le mouvement de l'art nouveau en Allemagne. 3. Les années 1914-1918 ». *L'Art libre* 1920, 3, 33.

[5] VAN FAASSEN, 37-38.

Secondly, the nation remained an all-important frame of reference for the authors, despite their internationalist aims and orientation. All chapters were informed by the essentialist and nationalist idea that a nation's literature and poetry reflect its national character. Therefore, one could even argue that the volumes *enforced* rather than transcended existing national boundaries and divisions. That nationalism lurked beneath the surface of this literary internationalist project seems to be confirmed by the personal histories of Huebner and Colin, both of whom became progressively active supporters of the Nazi regime in the 1930s.[6]

2. A change in perspective: The transnational construction of "Europe"

In other words, the New European Spirit project did not live up to its own ambitious Europeanist goals; instead, it confirmed the national differences it sought to overcome. In what follows, we will reconsider this case of alleged failed cultural transfer and suggest a change in perspective. Instead of holding the authors to pre-set spatial categories, such as the level of "Europeanness" they did or did not achieve, or the "national affiliation" that may or may not have influenced their practices or writings, we will instead shift the focus to how the authors contributed to the construction of these categories. How did they discursively articulate "Europe" vis-à-vis "the nation"? The answers expand our understanding of the significance of the project's cultural transfer. By focusing on the agency of the authors in the discursive and transnational construction of Europe, we take inspiration from Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann's *histoire croisée* as well the work of Kiran Klaus Patel and others on the history of the idea of Europe.

Werner and Zimmermann have stressed that scholars should refrain from using predetermined spatial categories, as it is often not possible to trace these categories back to a clear source or target culture. Rather, they advise a pragmatic, inductive approach starting from a concrete object of study and then introducing spatial categories as they become relevant. They argue for multiperspectivity and contextualisation: researchers should be aware of their own spatial and conceptual frameworks, be cognisant of the changing and sometimes conflicting spatial and conceptual frameworks of their research subjects, and take care to contextualize them in their varying, historical contexts.[7] These insights are particularly useful for our case. The New European Spirit project is a typical transnational entanglement with no clear starting point or ending point. It involved the construction, exchange, contestation and appropriation of a large variety of European and national spaces.

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[6] Hubert ROLAND, *Leben und Werk von Friedrich Markus Huebner (1886-1964). Vom Expressionismus zur Gleichschaltung*, Münster and New York, Waxmann, 2009, 79.

[7] Michael WERNER en Bénédicte ZIMMERMANN, „Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen" in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 2002, 28, 606-636; and Idem, "Beyond comparison: histoire croisée and the challenge of reflexivity" in: *History & Theory* 2006, 45, 1, 30-50.

Werner and Zimmermann's emphasis on multiperspectivity and flexibility ties in with Patel's plea to study "Europe" as the outcome of processes of transfer and negotiation across borders. Patel has stressed that Europe should not only be regarded as a place in which transnational entanglements and transfers throughout modern history have been particularly strong, but that Europe – as it is a social construct, rather than a historical, cultural or geographical given – should also be seen as the *product* of transnational interactions and cross-fertilizations. According to Patel, researchers should explicitly focus on the perceptions of historical actors, and analyse how, why and at which particular moments in time they exchanged, adapted and rejected ideas of Europe transnationally. In Patel's view, this focus on historical actors serves as an antidote to the tendency of some historians to retrospectively construct "Europe" as a new space of reference in order to overcome the fixation on the nation state – regardless of the actual scope of the transfer or entanglement or the spatial framework of the historical actors involved.[8] Patel's plea for a more constructivist approach when studying transfers across borders is supported by Pierre-Yves Saunier, who has also argued that scholars should refrain from using pre-given categories and hierarchical conceptions (such as the notion that the local, the regional, the national, the continental, and the global are "nested into one another as Russian dolls").[9] According to Saunier, this not only obscures our view of how historical actors have simultaneously operated across various spatial categories, but also prevents us from seeing how they have played a role in the creation of these categories. Like Patel, Saunier suggests paying more attention to the agency of historical actors and to distance ourselves from the oversimplified notion that these actors were only subjected to the spaces in (and in between) which they operated. Instead, he proposes studying how historical actors, through their discourses and practices, have actively contributed to the construction of various spaces.[10]

Bearing in mind these methodological insights from Patel, Saunier, and Werner and Zimmermann, we will now shift the focus to the six authors of the project and examine the ways in which they imagined "Europe", taking into account their biographical backgrounds, institutional trajectories, and historical contexts. Furthermore, we will complement the analysis with a sample of (international) contemporary reviews of the book project. Analysing how and why critics adopted, appropriated, neglected or denounced their visions of "Europe" enables us to better understand the international dimension and aspirations of this literary transnational entanglement and to situate it in the broader intellectual discourse about Europe in the inter-war years.

[8] Kiran KLAUS PATEL, "Transnational History", in *European History Online (EGO)*, published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2010-12-03. URL: http://www.ieg-ego.eu/patelk-2010-en.

[9] Pierre-Yves SAUNIER, *Transnational History*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 122.

[10] Ibid. 122-123.

3. The regenerative vitalism of Europe's spirit: Huebner and Coster

Friedrich Markus Huebner (1886–1964), the initiator of the project, was a versatile cultural mediator. Before the war, he had worked as a journalist, art critic and writer in Munich, and had published in the internationally oriented, German expressionist magazines *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*. However, in August 1914, like many other writers and artists, Huebner saw the prospect of renewal in the outbreak of the First World War. In his view, the war had unleashed an irrational, vital energy that could save Germany from the prevailing rationalism, sclerosis, and fragmentation.[11] In the following months, Huebner co-edited the literary magazine *Zeit-Echo*, which was founded to document the 'vigorous' artistic and literary creativity that had emerged after the outbreak of the war. He left the magazine in the beginning of 1915, moving from Munich to Brussels to work for the political department of the German occupation administration in Belgium. In Brussels, Huebner became involved in cultural propaganda in support of the so-called *Flamenpolitik*, aimed at fostering pro-German sentiments and separatism in Flanders. He promoted literary and cultural ties between Flanders and Germany in both Belgian and German periodicals and translated various works for the "Flämische Reihe", published by Anton Kippenberg's Insel Verlag.[12]

After the war, Huebner moved to The Hague, where he worked as a correspondent for various German newspapers and published about German art in the Dutch newspaper *Haagsche Courant*. The Netherlands appealed to Huebner for pragmatic as well as idealistic reasons: it was easier to make a living as an independent writer in the Netherlands (which had remained neutral during 1914–1918) than in war-torn Germany, but it also seemed a well-suited base for his post-war literary internationalism. In the years after the war, Huebner strove to foster international reconciliation and renewal of Europe's culture by building a European network of like-minded intellectuals, artists and writers. It is not known whether Huebner joined Henri Barbusse's Clarté Movement, which was founded in 1919 to reconcile Europe's intelligentsia and reform the social and political order. However, it is clear that he was sympathetic towards and in contact with this left-wing movement.[13] Hubert Roland has already pointed out the remarkable continuities between Huebner's pro-war essays from 1914 and his literary internationalism after 1918.[14] In both cases his commitment seems to have been motivated by the idea that Europe's artists and writers were destined to play a guiding role in society, as well as by a vulgar form of the "philosophy of life" ("Lebensphilosophie"). Central to this heterogeneous, anti-rationalist philosophical movement is the belief that an affirmation of all-encompassing, instinctive, vital power – which possesses a

[11] ROLAND, *Leben und Werk von Friedrich Markus Huebner*, 50-53. For more information about Huebner as a "forgotten" writer, critic and cultural mediator, see Hubert ROLAND, "De l'expressionnisme à la 'mise au pas': 'communauté' et ambivalences chez Friedrich Markus Huebner", in Barbara MEAZZI and Jean-Pol MADOU (ed.), *Les Oubliés des Avant-Gardes*, Chambéry, Université de Savoie, 2005, 279-299.

[12] ROLAND, *Leben und Werk*, 57, 61-64 and 68-69.

[13] Ibid. 84-86.

[14] Ibid. 51-53 and 81-82.

destructive, as well as a regenerative potential – would bring about a new unity and cultural rejuvenation.

Huebner's idea for "The New European Spirit in Arts and Literature" project arose in the summer of 1919 from personal contacts and "a sense of like-mindedness" between the five initial authors.[15] It is likely that Huebner met Romano Guarnieri and Douglas Goldring through his involvement in *The Word in the Service of an Understanding of all Mankind*. Guarnieri, who had returned to the Netherlands in 1919, was one of the contributors to this internationalist, trilingual periodical, whereas Goldring was invited by its editors for a short stay in The Hague, where the editorial board was seated. Huebner may have met Colin during the war in Brussels, or may have been introduced to him by Goldring, who was acquainted with Colin through the Clarté Movement and had published in Colin's journal *L'Art Libre*. After having met Dirk Coster in Delft in November 1919, Huebner's plans became more concrete, and the authors agreed to join forces for a series of lectures in the gallery *In die Coornschuere*[16] in Delft, which were to be published afterwards in a volume in various languages.[17]

In his introduction to *Europas neue Kunst und Dichtung*, Huebner explained the internationalist aim of the volume and expounded on his idea of Europe, which was strongly informed by his vitalist worldview and humanitarian expressionist ideals. The essence of "Europe", in his view, was a concealed, regenerative life force or "new European spirit", that had surfaced as a result of the misery of the First World War and had taken the shape of a love for a European fatherland. In his foreword, Huebner stressed that Europe's redemption was to emerge from the work of artists and writers, not statesmen or successful entrepreneurs. For him, it was Europe's artistic and literary elite that fully grasped what was at stake in Europe and would point the way to the envisaged renewal. Reality and art, he insisted, had never before been so closely intertwined and the "new European spirit" was most clearly reflected in literary works and art.[18] For Huebner, the war, the revolutions that had emerged in its wake, and artistic productions such as books, paintings and statues had undermined the existing bourgeois order and had stirred up the salutary potential of an awakening, instinctive, demonic power hidden in the deepest layers of Europe's soul. This incomprehensible, European spirit had been the driving force behind the Great War. However, after four years of fighting, its destructive power had made way for a regenerative potential. The horrors of the war, Huebner emphasized, should be regarded as a necessary evil because they had raised an awareness across nations of a concealed sense of solidarity and love for a European fatherland that

[15] HUEBNER, "Einführung", 10-11.

[16] *In die Coornschuere* was a vibrant, internationally oriented arts center that existed between 1918 and 1921. Until now, it has received only limited scholarly attention. In December 1919, when Huebner delivered his lecture on German Expressionism, the center hosted a large exhibition of international modern art that included the works of well-known artists such as Archipenko, Chagall, Kandinsky, Klee and Kokoschka. A year later, *In die Coornschuere* was involved in the organization of a travelling exhibition of contemporary Dutch art. With the help of Huebner, this exhibition of "Junge Niederländische Kunst" was on show in Berlin and other German cities in late 1920 and early 1921. For more information on *In die Coornschuere*, see: Alied OTTEVANGER, "Willinks vergeten start in Delft", in *De Witte Raaf*, 2008, 22, 132, 19-21 and Toke VAN HELMOND, *Bob Hanf 1894-1944*, Amsterdam, De Engelbewaarder, 1982, 55-68.

[17] VAN FAASSEN, "Dirk Coster en *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*", 32-33.

[18] HUEBNER, "Einführung", 8.

before 1914 had been hidden beneath the surface.[19] Becoming acquainted with artistic developments abroad would further enhance the now regenerative effect of this "European spirit", which had the power to reconcile former enemies and rejuvenate the corrupted European civilization. Moreover, (re)establishing personal contacts between Europe's artists and writers would allow the "secret" European spirit to "pulsate" in broader circles and intensify its redemptive power.[20] In Huebner's view, nations that had remained neutral during 1914-1918, such as the Swiss and the Dutch, were particularly fit to play a role as spiritual mediators and to reconcile the artistic and intellectual elites from the former belligerent states.[21]

Huebner's vision of Europe's cultural regeneration reflected his left-wing sympathies of the post-war years. In his introduction, for instance, he empathically praised Europe's artists for undermining "der Götze des bürgerlichen Ordnungsverlangens" [the idol of the bourgeois longing for order].[22] Moreover, he also expressed his admiration for radical left Dutch intellectuals, such as the antimilitarist Bart de Ligt, Henriette Roland Holst and the red minister Henri van den Bergh van Eysinga, who all initially had supported the Russian Revolution. Huebner believed these intellectuals played an important role in the envisaged cultural renewal. Although he emphasized that they were motivated by an inner drive and did not obey to external orders from Moscow, it is clear that Huebner, just like the Clarté ambassadors Colin and Goldring, advocated a left-leaning view of Europe's regeneration.[23] This particular view of Europe's rejuvenation seems to have appealed in much wider circles, and was well-received by the Soviet authorities. Probably the most influential review of the (German edition of the) volume was written by the first head of the People's Commissariat for Education of the Soviet Union, Anatoly Lunacharsky, who was also one of the main advocates of German expressionism in the Soviet-Union.[24] In his extensive essay that appeared in 1922/1923 in the journal Печать и революция [Press and Revolution], Lunacharsky praised the volume as symptomatic for the tendency among the 'Western intelligentsia' to join efforts and, motivated by a growing aversion against the bourgeois order as well as a hatred of the war, actively contribute to a better – socialist – world.[25]

In his chapter on literary developments in Germany, Huebner identified the regenerative, impulsive and unifying European spirit with expressionism, a movement that found particular resonance in his home country.[26] In his view, expressionism had the capacity to save Europe from fragmentation as it "führt die Geister unendlich brüderlich zusammen und macht aus Europa zum ersten Male

[19] Ibid. 9.
[20] Ibid. 10.
[21] Ibid. 12.
[22] Ibid. 9.
[23] Ibid. 12-13.
[24] Isabel WÜNSCHE, "Expressionist Networks in the Russian Empire, Soviet Russia, and the Soviet Union", in: idem (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context*, New York, Routledge, 2018, 113-133, here 125.
[25] Anatoly LUNACHARSKY, 'Западная интеллигенция' [Western intelligentsia], *Печать и революция* [Press and Revolution] (1922-vol. II), 13-19 and (1923-vol. VI), 9-18 and: http://lunacharsky.newgod.su/lib/ss-tom-5/zapadnaa-intelligencia/.
[26] Friedrich Markus HUEBNER, "Deutschland", in: Friedrich Markus HUEBNER, Dirk COSTER, Paul COLIN, Douglas GOLDRING and Romano GUARNIERI, *Europas neue Kunst und Dichtung*, Berlin, Ernst Rowolt Verlag, 1920, 95.

eine einzige, fast religös wie im Mittelalter geschlossene Gefühlszone" [fraternally unites the spirits and for the first time turns Europe into a single unified emotional sphere that resembles the religious unity of the Middle Ages].[27] Huebner considered expressionism to be a "worldview" or "an attitude towards life" (*Lebensgefühl*), rather than solely a literary and artistic movement. In the years before the outbreak of the First World War, expressionism had emerged as a response to the prevailing Naturalism of the nineteenth century. Naturalism, Huebner argued, had subjected man to nature, and led to the dominance of a positivist, rationalist and mechanistic worldview that suppressed men's individual freedom and caused an unparalleled mediocrity. As a result, Europe's modern civilization was characterized by decay, fragmentation, fossilization, and a lack of creativity in the arts. In the nineteenth century, Huebner complained, most artists strove to precisely render nature, and in doing so negated their creative powers.[28] The solution to Europe's problems was expressionism, a remedy that was indebted to the anti-rationalist thought of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and the trailblazers of *Lebensphilosophie*, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Even before 1914, German expressionists had tried to liberate man from his suppression by nature and sought to restore his individual, personal freedom. However, it was only after the war that the public showed interest in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's paintings, Walter Hasenclever's plays, or Kasimir Edschmid's novels. That expressionism now met with the widespread enthusiasm it deserved, Huebner emphasized, signalled that Europeans finally realized the devastating effects of rationalism, and had embraced their mutual destiny and future.[29]

While Huebner identified German expressionism as the designated remedy to revive the beneficial, regenerative potential of Europe's core – its "spirit" – and in this way to act as an antidote to Europe's cultural decay, disunity, and mediocrity, Dirk Coster (1887–1956) placed his hope in the literature produced by the Dutch Movement of "de Tachtigers" (The Movement of Eighty) and in the poetry of Henriette Roland Holst. Like Huebner, Coster strove to present himself, both in the Dutch literary field as well as abroad, as a transnational cultural mediator and promotor of humanist, internationalist ideals.[30] In the 1920s, Coster was a well-known literary critic, editor of the literary journal *De Stem* ("The Voice", founded in 1921), and promotor of the literary works and thought of Dostoevsky. According to Coster, who shared with Huebner an interest in the philosophy of life, Dostoevsky was a harbinger of renewal whose revitalizing message could cure Europe's spiritual need.[31] In Coster's perception, great works of literature, including Dostoevsky's novels, had the capacity to disclose to man the extraordinary, vigorous energy that had motivated the writer when he created his work. In his view, a person

[27] HUEBNER, "Deutschland", 80 and 89-90.
[28] Ibid. 80-82.
[29] Ibid. 91-92.
[30] More on this topic in: Mathijs SANDERS, "Een uurtje met Dirk Coster. De self-fashioning van een literaire informant", in *De Moderne Tijd*, 2017, 1, 2, 118-133; Marjet BROLSMA, '*Het humanitaire moment'. Nederlandse intellectuelen, de Eerste Wereldoorlog en de crisis van de Europese beschaving, 1914-1930*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2016; IDEM, "Utopia through Art. Building Bridges and Curing Culture in War-Torn Europe", in: David AYERS, Benedikt HJARTARSON, Tomi HUTTUNEN and Harri VEIVO (Eds.), *Utopia: The Avant-Garde, Modernism and (Im)possible Life. European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies* 4, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2015, 49-58.
[31] Dirk COSTER, *Dostojevski. Een essay*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1920, 12. Coster had first published his 'Dostojevski' in the literary periodical *De Gids* 1919, 4, 151-161 and 310-321.

who became intensely engrossed in a book was invigorated by the same salutary "vital power" that had aroused the writer. For this reason, it was his conviction that the quality of a literary work depended first and foremost on its "intensiteit" [intensity] and "menselijkheid" [humanity].[32] Although Coster did not consider himself an expressionist and rejected radical forms of modernism, in the early 1920s his *De Stem* provided a platform for many Belgian exponents of "humanitarian expressionism" with whom he shared the dream of establishing a pan-human brotherhood through literature.[33]

In his introduction to *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, which appeared two months before the German edition, Coster too had welcomed the emergence of a redemptive "new European spirit". Like Huebner, Coster understood Europe in cultural terms and believed that its essence was its spirit: a transnational vital power with destructive as well as creative capacities. According to Coster, this spirit had manifested itself in 1914 in an ardent nationalism and self-sacrificing heroism. However, stirred by the horrors of the war and the disastrous Treaty of Versailles, it had gradually transformed into a regenerative force that Coster associated with an urge for justice and no more war. Coster also stressed that Europe's artistic elite would pave the way to the envisaged renewal, as Europe's new beneficial spirit was above all reflected in its literature and art.[34] More explicitly than Huebner, Coster invoked the romantic, organic notion of a "Europe of nations" and emphasized the idea that Europe's immanent, vigorous spirit, albeit a pan-European phenomenon, manifested itself differently in different nations, as it was shaped by national histories, collective experiences and "characteristics".

Coster illustrated this point in his chapter on "The development of modern Dutch literature". In his view, the "European spirit" developed more slowly and steadily in the Netherlands than elsewhere in Europe, where the Great War had more intensely galvanized the urge for a regeneration.[35] The European spirit, or the urge for a renewal, had already been manifest in the mystic writings of Ruusbroec, Hadewijch and Thomas à Kempis. However, these medieval authors were "European" and not Dutch. In Coster's view, Dutch national literature was rooted in the rebellion against Spanish rule in the 16th century. He took the songs and poetry of the rebels (*Geuzenliederen*) as the first Dutch manifestations of the concealed, European spirit, characterized by an allegedly typically Dutch

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[32] Paul DE WISPELAERE, "Dirk Costers levensbeschouwing" in: *De Vlaamsche Gids*, 1958, 42, 580-581 and 585; J.J. OVERSTEEGEN, *Vorm of vent. Opvattingen over de aard van het literaire werk in de Nederlandse kritiek tussen de twee wereldoorlogen*, Amsterdam, Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 1969, 113-114. See also: Dirk COSTER, "De beteekenis der litteratuur voor het leven" in: *De Stem*, 1923, 3, 593.

[33] Among the young Flemish humanitarian expressionist poets and novelists that contributed to *De Stem* were: Wies Moens, Victor J. Brunclair, Eugeen de Bock, Marnix Gijsen and Achilles Mussche. However, in his chapter on "The development of modern Dutch literature" in *De nieuwe Europeesche geest*, Coster does not pay attention to these authors, nor to other contemporary Flemish writers.

[34] COSTER, 'Voorwoord', 5-12.

[35] Dirk COSTER, "De ontwikkeling der moderne Nederlandsche litteratuur", in: Dirk COSTER, Paul COLIN, F.M. HUEBNER, Douglas GOLDRING and Romano GUARNIERI, *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1920, 15-16. Coster's chapter can be considered as a preliminary study for his anthology of Dutch poetry in the years 1918-1923, *Nieuwe geluiden* (1924), that was inspired by Kurt Pinthus' humanitarian expressionist *Menschheitsdämmerung* (1919). For more information, see: VAN FAASSEN, "Dirk Coster en *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*", 38-43.

steadfastness and devoutness.[36] In the 18th and 19th century, the urge for a regeneration had disappeared in Dutch literature, but had, after almost two centuries of bleakness and "collectieve litteraire waanzin" [collective literary madness], resurfaced in the 1880s with the emergence of the Movement of Eighty. According to Coster, the works of authors such as Herman Gorter and Lodewijk van Deyssel, displayed a therapeutic, primitive, turbulence that was unprecedented in Europe and uniquely Dutch.[37] In more recent work, the European renewal seemed to be present in the poetry and novels of authors such as Henriette Roland Holst. Coster argued that Roland Holst was strongly affected by the First World War, as she was one of those "allergrootste zielen" [greatest souls] who endured "het verre lijden als hun eigen lijden" [the far-away suffering as if it was their own suffering].[38] However, he also emphasized that in contrast to the belligerent nations, no war literature had emerged in the Netherlands. Instead, during 1914–1918 the renewal or "levenskracht" [life force] continued slowly but persistently, and was reflected in the works of many young Dutch writers.[39] Coster concluded his chapter by emphasizing that precisely this – the manifestation of Europe's regenerative spirit in the Netherlands despite its neutrality – made the Dutch case significant for an international audience, as it demonstrated the "geheimzinnige noodwendigheid" [mysterious necessity] of the spiritual, pan-European renewal that so vigorously had surfaced after the end of the war.[40]

4. Youth versus elderly, nationalism versus internationalism, good versus evil: The binary argumentation strategies of Paul Colin

The second chapter of the book, written by Paul Colin (1895–1943), deals with "De jonge Fransche litteratuur" (The young French literature). Colin was born and raised in Belgium, despite the fact that he is identified as a Frenchman in the introduction of the (Dutch, German and Czech) book. Although he is almost entirely forgotten today, Colin was an important figure during the interwar period. He was outspoken about his left-wing opinions in the years immediately after the war but made of his journal *Cassandre* a still more conservative press organ at the end of the 1930s and would end up gravitating towards extreme-right convictions at the beginning of the Second World War, when he became the editor and leading journalist of the actively collaborationist newspaper *Le Nouveau Journal*. When *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren* was published, he was mainly known as the editor-in-chief of the magazine *L'Art libre* (1919-1922), which, despite its title, was more socially than artistically oriented.[41]

[36] Ibid. 20-21.
[37] Ibid. 25-29.
[38] Ibid. 54.
[39] Ibid. 54-55.
[40] Ibid. 62-63.
[41] For more information about Paul Colin, see Francis MUS, "'Vous êtes un fanatique, oui — j'en suis un aussi": The Position of Flanders within the Context of Internationalization in Post-War Belgium: The Case of L'Art Libre (1919–22)', in: *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 2018, 3.2

According to Colin, the aim of his chapter (and of the book as a whole) was to overcome ignorance: "wij [moeten] ons niet tot manifesten beperken. […] Nu moeten wij elkaar kennen, liefhebben, en achten." [We shouldn't limit ourselves to manifestos. […] Now [after the war] we have to learn to know, to love and to respect each other]. As a consequence, he considers himself to be nothing less than "de kroniekschrijver der hedendaagsche Fransche letterkunde[42]" [the chronicler of contemporary French literature] and his contribution should be seen as a thorough 'studie[43]' [study]. Van Faassen stresses rightly that Colin adopted a rigorous approach by organizing his text into four paragraphs (dealing with periodicals, poets, novelists, and essayists in France), in order to demonstrate the impact of the war on literary life. However, it should be noted that Colin's overview is highly selective, and his approach is clearly biased. As early as 1925, the Dutch critic E. Du Perron observed in a review:

> De heer Paul Colin, die zich volkomen blind gestaard heeft op de naar 't schijnt met hem bevriende *groupe unanimiste* en overigens twee soorten schrijvers schijnt te kennen: die vóór en die tegen de oorlog schrijven. De eersten hebben geen talent, de anderen wel. Apollinaire had, zegt hij, ook wel talent, vooral als dichter der *Calligrammes* (als een soort oorlogs-, d.i. anti-oorlogsliteratuur zeker); waar hij dan, in vijf of zes korte alinea's de werkelik-modernen, de werkelike pioniers van het werkelik-nieuwe, bespreekt geeft hij blijk van een inzicht, in het Frans aldus te kenmerken: *De la crétinerie, très pure.*[44]
>
> Mr Paul Colin has become completely obsessed with the Unanimism group with whom he appears to be friendly, and it seems he knows only two types of writers: Those who write in favour of the war and those who write against the war. The former have no talent, the latter do. Apollinaire had, so says Colin, some measure of talent, especially as the poet of the *Calligrammes* (as some kind of war literature, which actually means anti-war literature, I guess). When he discusses in five or six short paragraphs the true moderns, the true pioneers of the truly new, he exhibits an insight that one could call in French *de la crétinerie, très pure*.

Although Colin lists many names of literary magazines, movements and authors, he is not primarily interested in artistic forms of expression. Rather, unanimism and humanitarian expressionism are stepping stones to a social commitment and should serve to foreground notions such as pacifism and internationalism: the socialist vision on the renewal of Europe goes hand in hand with international fraternization. Literature is valuable only if it brings people closer together, across all national and

(Winter), 38–51 and Hubert ROLAND, "Paul Colin et la réception de l'expressionnisme en Belgique francophone dans l'entre-deux-guerres", in: *Textyles: revue des lettres belges de langue francaise*, 2001, 20, 33-45. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/textyles.912.

[42] Paul COLIN, "De jonge Fransche litteratuur", in: Dirk COSTER, Paul COLIN, F.M. HUEBNER, Douglas GOLDRING and Romano GUARNIERI, *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1920, 109.

[43] Ibid. 74.

[44] D.P. [Duco Perkens, pseud. E. Du Perron] "Boekbespreking. Nieuwe geluiden, bijeengebracht en ingeleid door Dirk Coster (2e vermeerderde druk), van Logum Slaterus en Visser, Arnhem ; De Sikkel, Antwerpen", in: *De driehoek*, September 1925, no page.

political borders. "Er bestaan geen grenzen tussen de menschen, de hoofden, de harten […].[45]" [There are no borders between the people, the minds, the hearts] When the signifier "Europe" is mentioned (which happens only on a few occasions), the social meaning takes precedence: the main goal is "den Europeeschen vrede[46]" [European peace], "de verbroedering van Europa[47]" [the fraternization of Europe], and by extension the fraternization of the whole world[48]: "Wij hebben geen ander ideaal dan onze broeders van heel de wereld te kennen, dan vertrouwelijk met hen om te gaan en ons te koesteren in de uitstraling van hun genie en in den gloed hunner liefde.[49]" [We have no other ideal than to know our brothers from all over the world, to deal with them in confidence and to cherish ourselves in the radiance of their genius and in the radiance of their love.] Consequently, any form of self-referential literature is considered reprehensible, placed between quotation marks[50], or paraphrased as "bespiegeling[en]" [reflection[s]] written by "holle redenaars"[51] [hollow orators] or "estheten" [aesthetes]." [52]

More generally, Colin's discourse is structured in a highly binary way. Whether it concerns literary-artistic currents or political views, each time there is a clear distinction between an ideal to be promoted and an alternative to be rejected univocally. This opposition manifests itself not only in different ideas, but also in a generational conflict. The "officieele grijsaards"[53] [official greybeards] and the "tweede-rangsmenschen"[54] [second-class people] are diametrically opposed to "de onzen" [those of us] or "onze beweging"[55] [our movement]. In short, the statement describing the chapter as a neutral overview of French contemporary literature contrasts sharply with Colin's evaluative style. Consider, for instance, this excerpt:

> Het eenvoudige dagelijksche leven wordt niet in zijn eer hersteld door de belachelijke, kreupele sentimentaliteit van een Coppée, noch door de zeer kunstmatige romantiek van een Jammes of de ziekelijke preciesheid van een Proust, maar door de eenvoudige vertolking van een dichter, die oprecht is en zich heeft losgemaakt uit de oude, beperkende vooroordeelen.[56]
>
> [Simple everyday life is not restored to its former glory by the ridiculous, crippled sentimentality of a Coppée, nor by the highly artificial romanticism of a Jammes or the sickly precision of a Proust, but by the simple rendition of a poet who is sincere and has freed himself from the old, restrictive prejudices.]

[45] Paul COLIN, "De jonge Fransche litteratuur", 90.
[46] Ibid. 85.
[47] Ibid. 73.
[48] Ibid. 90, 100.
[49] Ibid. 90-91.
[50] Ibid. 106, 112, 119.
[51] Ibid. 112.
[52] Ibid. 80.
[53] Ibid. 85.
[54] Ibid. 103.
[55] Ibid. 86.
[56] Ibid. 108.

Colin is referring here to Charles Vildrac. Among the many names he quotes, the poet Pierre-Jean Jouve is perhaps the most interesting, at least considered from a European perspective. In any case, the evaluation is extremely positive:

> Hij tracht de volken te begrijpen, alvorens hun toe te spreken, en in zijn prachtig gedicht "Pour l'Europe", gaat hij de zielsgesteldheid van ieder volk tot in bijzonderheden na en zoekt vervolgens de oorzaken vast te stellen van de algemeene aftakeling.[57]
>
> [He tries to understand the peoples before addressing them, and in his beautiful poem "Pour l'Europe", he examines in detail the state of each people's souls, and then identifies the causes of the general decline.]

Jouve occupies a special place in today's literary historiography as well. Geert Buelens calls him "een van de zeldzame Franse dissonanten in dit koor van beschavingsprofeten"[58] [one of the rare French dissonants in this choir of prophets of civilization], especially because he makes no distinction between "we" and "them". Yet, according to Buelens, this could not prevent his idealistic poetry from ever meaning more than "retorische hoop"[59] [rhetorical hope]. Moreover, he used the French language "bezwaarlijk een neutraal medium in 1915"[60] [hardly a neutral medium in 1915] to express his dreams. Jouve himself was also aware of this problem when he wrote (in French) that the reader should not worry about the language but listen to the pure song. Such self-reflexive statements make it clear that even for these writers, critics and cultural mediators, language was not a neutral medium. Despite the omnipresence of French culture and the French language in several chapters of *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, this may explain why a translation project was linked to the initial publication from the outset – not only to spread content as widely as possible, but also to give smaller languages and literatures more visibility.

5. Nationalism prevailing over Europeanism: Guarnieri and Goldring

The chapter on "the young Italian literature" was prepared by Romano Guarnieri (1883–1955). His contribution differs from Colin's text in its exclusive national and literary perspective, although he does share Colin's reticence towards the more extreme avant-garde movements, such as Marinetti's futurism.[61] When Guarnieri arrived in the Netherlands in 1907, his cultural and social ambitions, which were internationally oriented from the outset, preceded him. Because of his aristocratic origins and his professional activities in the Berlitz language schools, he soon had a broad international network at his disposal. In addition, his work was invariably

[57] Ibid. 96.
[58] Geert BUELENS, *Europa Europa! Over de dichters van de Grote Oorlog*, Amsterdam-Antwerpen, Ambo-Manteau, 2008, 132.
[59] Ibid. 132.
[60] Ibid. 133.
[61] His greatest merit, according to Guarnieri, is not his artistic work, but his qualities as patron of the arts through his editorial activities and impresario initiatives.

focused on concrete action rather than abstract reflections. Before 1907, he had taught Italian language courses in London and Liverpool. He continued this didactic work in the Netherlands, including at the universities of Groningen, Leiden and Amsterdam. Today, his name remains mainly associated with his direct teaching method ("il metodo Guarnieri"), which was predicated on immersing students in a language bath as quickly as possible. He is also known for his affiliation with the Italian cultural association Dante Alighieri, whose first Dutch chapter was founded in 1910 (and still exists today). He supplemented his didactic activities with lecture cycles, bringing him into contact with various intellectuals such as Albert Verwey and Bierens de Haan.[62]

Following Hubert Roland and Philippe Beck, who define a cultural mediator as "un agent culturel qui se distingue souvent de sa polyvalence"[63] [a cultural agent who distinguishes himself often by its polyvalence], Romano Guarnieri is indeed a cultural mediator par excellence. In his 1925 article "Bei giorni d'Olanda", a travel report published in the journal *L'Ambrosiano*, the literary critic Giuseppe Prezzolini sang Guarnieri's praises for the great number of initiatives he had set up to spread Italian language and culture. He compared "il miracolo di Guarnieri" [64] with those divine figures, "che hanno tante braccia e tante gambe, ed esprimono così bene la vitalità esuberante"[65] [who have so many arms and legs, and this way express exuberant vitality so well]. Two years after Guarnieri's death, M.E. Houtzager too described him as an enthusiastic ambassador of Italian culture:

> het onderricht in de taal voor Guarnieri slechts middel [was]. Zijn doel was zijn hoorders, zijn leerlingen, de weg te openen tot het begrijpen en genieten van de culturele en artistieke voortbrengselen van zijn land, dat hij bovenmate liefhad.[66]
>
> teaching languages was only a means to an end for Guarnieri. His goal was to pave the way for his audience, his pupils, to understand and

[62] The philosopher Johannes Diderik Bierens de Haan and the socialist minister Willem Banning were the editors of the volume *Europeesche geest. Inhouden en vormen van het cultuurleven der Europeesche wereld*, which was published in 1939 at Van Loghum Slaterus, the publishing house that had published *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren* nineteen years earlier. Just like Coster, Huebner, Colin, Goldring and Guarnieri in 1920, Bierens de Haan and Banning advocated a restoration and preservation of "the European spirit", which, in their eyes, was the designated antidote against the "onbeperkt machtsstreven" [lust for power] and "demonisch geweldsapparaat" [demonic apparatus of violence] that jeopardized "de Europeesche moraal" [European morality] in their day. However, unlike the authors of *De nieuwe Europeesche geest*, who shortly after the end of the First World War had believed that artists and novelists were the appropriate group to provide guidance to society and could point the way to a new culture, Bierens de Haan and Banning considered it their duty to downplay these high expectations, arguing that: "de beslissende strijd voor het behoud en de verdere ontwikkeling van den Europeeschen geest niet gevoerd wordt door intellectueelen in hun studeervertrek" [the decisive battle to preserve and further develop the European spirit is not fought by intellectuals in their study room]. In: Willem BANNING and J.D. BIERENS DE HAAN, "Ter inleiding", in: idem (Eds.), *Europeesche geest. Inhouden en vormen van het cultuurleven der Europeesche wereld*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1939, 7-8.

[63] Philippe BECK, Hubert ROLAND, "Imaginaire de l'espace et constructions identitaires. L'espace frontalier Meuse-Rhin entre nationalisme et internationalisme chez Josef Ponten et Friedrich Markus Huebner (1920-1940)." in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 2013, 91, 1239.

[64] Giuseppe PREZZOLINI, *Bei giorni d'Olanda*, Torino, G. Fedetto & C., 1925, 4.

[65] Ibid. 8.

[66] Maria Elisabeth HOUTZAGER, "Romano Nobile Guarnieri." in *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 1957, 109. [URL https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_jaa003195701_01/_jaa003195701_01_0016.php]

> enjoy the cultural and artistic productions of his country, which he loved more than anything else.

This appears also from the encounter between Guarnieri and *De Stijl* leader Theo Van Doesburg in May 1919. Around that time, Van Doesburg was also approached by Huebner to work together for a European rapprochement through art. In a letter to the experimental writer Antony Kok, Van Doesburg mentions the encounter with Guarnieri:

> Hij wil mij de Italiaansche taal leeren, waarvoor ik 1x per week naar den Haag ga, ten einde mij nog beter op de hoogte te kunnen stellen. De grondbedoeling van dit alles is: wisselwerking van geestelijke waarden, wederkeerig bevruchtende Kultuur gemeenschap.[67]
>
> He wants to teach me the Italian language, for which I go to The Hague once a week in order to be able to inform me even better. The basic purpose of all this is: interaction of spiritual values, regeneration of the culture community.

In short, both Guarnieri's international activities and his focus on practice can explain his commitment to the project of *The New European Spirit*. His war experience (he served in the Italian Army in 1914-18) also played a significant role in his activism. In 1920, however, Guarnieri's activities in the literary field – be it as a writer or as a critic – were rather limited. Despite Prezzolini's praises, Dirk Coster complains regularly about the poor quality of Guarnieri's chapter in his correspondence with the editor: "Het Hollandsch van 't Ital. stuk is ongelooflijk slecht, moet geheel omgewerkt, 't stuk zelf lijkt me onbeduidend helaas!."[68] [The Dutch language of the Italian text is really bad, and has to be revised completely; the text itself seems insignificant, unfortunately!] Guarnieri's style is indeed very archaic and his text is more a list of names than a thorough overview. He limits himself mainly to twentieth-century Italian literature and focuses on a number of writers and critics whom he met at a young age in Florence, such as Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini. Moreover, a real European perspective is lacking: the term Europe is not used at all. The only international point of reference is France. When Guarnieri mentions *La Voce*, for instance, he explains that the literary magazine had introduced French literature to Italian readers. And when he deals with the literary movement *I Crepuscolari*, he frames it as a product of French literature. If national Italian identity is put into a broader perspective, the epithet used is not geographical ("Europe") but temporal ("modern"). In doing so, Guarnieri does not *connect* Italy to other international contemporary movements but rather *disconnects* Italian literature from the (its own) past.

In comparison to Guarnieri's, the chapter written by Douglas Goldring (1887–1960) is more balanced. The reader gets a more comprehensive overview of English literature. As a correspondent covering English literature for the magazine *L'Art libre*, he was already somewhat familiar with this genre. Goldring indeed held various

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[67] Lieske TIBBE. *Een revolutie gaat aan gekijf ten onder: De Stijl en de 'Russische Kwestie', najaar 1919 : een briefwisseling tussen Theo van Doesburg, Chris Beekman, Robert van't Hoff, J.J.P. Oud en Antony Kok, met inleiding en annotaties*, 2006, 48.

[68] Coster to Van Loghum Slaterus, March 3, 1920, quoted in VAN FAASSEN, 34.

positions in the literary field – as a writer, but also as a mediator, that is, as a journalist, publisher and critic. As part of his commitment to the Clarté group (he was general secretary for the English Clarté department), he visited Germany shortly after the war. This enabled him to profile himself more prominently within the various Clarté publications and activities. He described Paul Colin as "an amusing and explosive young Belgian writer".[69] In one of his contributions dealing with "La vraie Angleterre", from 1919, he presents himself not as a European but as a neighbour: "[…] nous, Anglais, nous sommes toujours très imparfaitement compris par nos *voisins* d'Europe."[70] [we Englishmen are still very imperfectly understood by our European neighbours]. In his chapter for *The New European Spirit* authored one year later, there is little room for such explicit assertions, although the uniqueness of English literature, culture and civilization still goes beyond the European frame of reference indicated in the book's title. Goldring's overview starts at the end of the nineteenth century and focuses mainly on literature and, to a lesser extent, painting. The description is not neutral: the evaluation criteria do not so much concern the national/international (European) dimension of art, but rather the pre- and post-war generational conflict. Goldring talks about "de slavernij van het verleden"[71] [the slavery of the past] and the political orientation of the artists discussed:

> Het is onmiskenbaar, dat wij in een overgangstijdperk verkeeren. Bij de meest belovende jonge schilders en schrijvers valt overal een zekere onvoldaanheid met de oude kunstvormen te constateeren, een neiging tot proefnemingen en intellectueele ontdekkingstochten, een gretig zoeken naar dien nieuwen geest, welke de kunst van de toekomst een waarachtig leven geven zal.[72]
>
> It is undeniable that we are in an era of transition. Everywhere among the most promising young painters and writers, a certain dissatisfaction with the old art forms can be discerned, a tendency to experiments and intellectual explorations, an eager search for the new spirit that will give the art of the future a true life.

In an unequivocal reference to Romain Rolland, Goldring, like Huebner, embraces the ideal of an expressionist-oriented communitarian art:

> Weldra moet de dag aanbreken, dat de Engelschen, die de schoone kunsten beoefenen in de overtuiging, dat het wezen der kunst 'expressie' is, zich zullen vereenzelvigen met het leven van de gemeenschap. Want voor een kunstenaar is het niet mogelijk 'boven den strijd' te staan.[73]
>
> Soon the day will come when the English, who practice the fine arts in the conviction that the essence of art is 'expression', will identify

[69] Quoted in VAN FAASSEN, p. 32
[70] D. GOLDRING. "La vraie Angleterre" in: L'Art libre, 1919, 12, 128, our italics.
[71] D. GOLDRING. "De nieuwe geest in Engeland" in: Dirk COSTER, Paul COLIN, F.M. HUEBNER, Douglas GOLDRING and Romano GUARNIERI, *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1920, 167.
[72] Ibid. 158-159.
[73] Ibid. 159.

> themselves with the life of the community. For it is not possible for an artist to stand "above the battle".

In this sense, he echoed what he had previously written in his contributions to *L'Art libre*:

> […] il est certain que l'Anglais né a un penchant très accusé vers l'internationalisme, le pacifisme, le socialisme et tout ce qui signifie la croyance que tous les hommes sont frères[74].
>
> [...] it is certain that the born Englishman has a strong inclination towards internationalism, pacifism, socialism and all that signifies the belief that all men are brothers.

Although Goldring is less focused on France, and although he talks about the new spirit in other texts of the same period as something "which is said to be animating the *world's* youth"[75], the focus here remains on national consciousness. Here and there, one can discern some attention to Europe and an openness towards other national literatures. For example, D.H. Lawrence is considered as a writer with a "Europeesche betekenis"[76] [European significance] whose latest novel *The Rainbow* "het Europeesch publiek door middel van vertaling behoort te bereiken."[77] [deserves to reach a European audience by means of translation]. In contrast to other contributors, Goldring also includes a brief overview of English painters, with the painter and writer Wyndham Lewis as his standard bearer, someone who has "denzelfden vizioenairen toekomstblik als de meest beteekenende zijner tijdgenooten van het overig Europa"[78] [the same visionary talent as other European figures]. When it comes to theatre, Goldring mentions not only G. B. Shaw, but also the role played by Russian translations in the English theatre.

Finally, just as Colin and Guarnieri were rather reticent about experimental forms of writing, Goldring is not enthusiastic either. He is unimpressed by James Joyce's writing style, for instance, "die toch niet meer dan excentriek verdient te heeten"[79] [which deserves to be called nothing more than eccentric].

6. Czech, Czechoslovak, European and world literature: Miroslav Rutte

As stated in the introduction, the broad cultural-historical lines of the New Spirit project have already been outlined by Sjoerd van Faassen, Hubert Roland and the undersigned. In this contribution, we want to study this complex case not only from a specific angle (that of cultural transfer), but also highlight a hitherto unexamined

[74] D. GOLDRING, "La vraie Angleterre", 128-129.
[75] D. GOLDRING, "The New Spirit", University of Victoria Special Collections and University Archives, 1922, 1 (our italics) [ref. code CA UVICARCH SC048-1994-109-1b-1.5.16]
[76] D. GOLDRING. "De nieuwe geest in England", 162.
[77] Ibid. 162.
[78] Ibid. 166.
[79] Ibid. 165.

part of this editorial project: the Czech publication, which was published by the Prague publisher Orbis three years after the Dutch and German versions. The realization of the book was made possible thanks to Miroslav Rutte (1889–1954). We have not found any evidence of contacts between Rutte and Huebner, nor between Rutte and any of the other authors. As a Czech edition was not part of the original plan, the most likely scenario is that Rutte appropriated "The new European Spirit" project in an autonomous way, relatively independent from the original book project. Like the other authors, Rutte played an important role as a cultural mediator, often through journals. He did not, however, become a canonical figure in national nor European literary history. From 1907 onwards, Rutte published in the journal *Moderní revue* (often under the pseudonym F. X. Benda), and between 1918 and 1941 was mainly active with the journal *Národ* (The People) and the newspaper *Národní listy* (National Newspaper). As a critic he specialized in theatre.

Nové evropské umění a básnictví contains the existing contributions on German, English, French, Italian and Dutch literature, and was supplemented by a discussion on "Československo". The chapter was placed in a separate part II and is very long (about 130 pages), as opposed to the 23 pages for Dutch literature, 19 for French, 11 for English, 18 for Italian and 20 for German, all of which were compiled in part I. The chapter on Czechoslovakia consists of eleven chapters,[80] which can be roughly divided into an introductory part followed by a chronological overview spanning the middle of the nineteenth century up to and including post-war literature. The period 1910–1923 is described in detail (about half of the contribution) by means of a discussion of different genres: novel, prose, poetry, drama, criticism & essay.

In 1923, a review of this Czech publication appeared in *Národní listy*. The book is appraised positively, but the reviewer, Miroslav Novotný, also formulates a number of critical remarks. These are especially interesting because they represent a historical, contemporaneous view, without interference from a retrospective vision. A first remark is obvious and applies to the other contributions as well: every overview is by definition lacunar, highly selective. Rutte is criticized for including some names and excluding others. A second criticism relates to the separate place Rutte's contribution occupies in the whole. The editorial trajectory of this collaboration makes it clear that Rutte is a maverick, and included in this new Czech version as a "guest" to the existing group of critics. While the other five authors, according to Novotný, were all western Europeans who rejected the war and were primarily concerned "with the whole of humanity", Miroslav Rutte, who spent the war years in Austria, in his view had "a different mentality" as he prioritized his own nation over humanity.[81]

The distinction Novotný makes here has to be nuanced, however. As discussed in previous sections, it was already clear that the plea for far-reaching

[80] The translation of the (unnumbered) chapters is as follows: The past and the present; A retrospective part; The generation of the Nineties; Desires and goals; New ways; Czech literature and the war; The birth of the novel; New directions in prose; For new poetry; New striving in drama; About the philosophy of contemporary literature.

[81] Miroslav NOVOTNÝ, "Literatura. Ceske Literature", in: *Národní listy* 1923 (March 23), 1-2. *NB. For the Czech citations, we only mention our English translation, without mentioning the source text.*

internationalism in the spirit of Romain Rolland's influential humanism was invariably accompanied by the preservation of national frames of reference and patterns of thought. Novotný's comment here has mainly to do with Rutte's choice to limit his overview to Czech literature and ignore Slovak literature, contrary to what the title of the second part suggests ("Československo"). This is also the third and most outspoken criticism of Rutte's contribution. Novotný's criticism is understandable: although Rutte does clarify his démarche in the introductory paragraphs of his contribution ("until the end of the war Slovak literature had different goals, originated in a different environment and with different conditions, and dealt with different questions"),[82] his choice remains remarkable, not only with regard to the title of his piece, but also with regard to the European ambition of the larger book project.

In the rest of Rutte's contribution, the national perspective is omnipresent, especially when he describes the "Czech national rebirth" as a "resurrection that is one of the most impressive events of the new-fashioned Europe".[83] According to Rutte, the creation of the Czech language played an important role in this process of becoming independent, particularly through the translation work of the most important Czech author of the time, Jaroslav Vrchlický, who translated Dante, Ariosto, Tasso, Camões and Goethe, among others. What Rutte describes here is a typical example of the consolidating role of translation in the formation of a national literature, as described in detail by Pascale Casanova[84]. One significant detail: Vrchlický is compared with Balzac. Here, but also later in the chapter, French literature and culture is and remains an important point of reference, which is also present in most of the other contributions (cf. supra). The other major national European literatures are mainly mentioned when they have had an influence on the formation of Czech literature. Rutte concludes with the observation that the present era is typical of more 'smaller' authors and poets who, although they work in different parts of the world, are all driven by a desire for human solidarity and spiritual unity.[85]

The tension between the national and the European frame of reference is most clearly expressed in the third chapter, on "The Generation of the Nineties", which Rutte describes as a group of writers who "have been brought up and refined by European criticism by reading both classical and modern world literature."[86] Rutte argues that interest in nationalism waned somewhat in the 1890s and that world ideas overthrew Czech idealism. The slogan of this generation of writers – Open the windows to Europe! – does not only reflect the cosmopolitan spirit that prevailed elsewhere in Europe at the time, but also refers to a well-known metaphor

[82] M. RUTTE, *Nové evropské umění a básnictví*, Prague, Orbis, 106-109.
[83] Id., 110.
[84] Pascale CASANOVA, *The World Republic of Letters* (tr. M. B. DeBevoise), Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2004.
[85] RUTTE, 248-249.
[86] Id., 115

that was also popular in the interwar period: Belgium as a balcony to Europe,[87] Russia as an open window to Europe,[88] etc.

As in the other contributions, the signifiers "Europe" and "European spirit" are indeed present in the text, but nowhere is explicit attention paid to them. Occasionally, Rutte invokes the notion of a European spirit as an immanent, transnational and potentially regenerative force – which is more dominantly present in the contributions of Huebner and Coster. Rutte, for instance, refers to a "collective will" in Europe, which seemed to herald a "new cultural period"[89] at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Rutte, this European "collective will" or "spirit" found a particular resonance across borders after the end of the First World War. In his view it was "certainly a joyful testimony to the common spirit of Europe that, at the moment when the borders between peoples were opening again, we felt that, out of our own need, we wanted to achieve the same goals and solve the same problems as thinking and creating spirits at different ends of the earth; that we are also factors of the worldly will for the cleaner and righteous tomorrow."[90] What this envisaged better future exactly entailed or how Europe's "collective will" and the "worldly will" were related, is, however, not further specified by Rutte.

7. Conclusion

"The new European spirit" project was conceived as a facilitator of cultural transfer from the outset. Despite its explicitly formulated goals, it did not meet its own ambitious aims: it was only partially successful in spreading knowledge about national literatures; furthermore, national frames of reference remained ubiquitous. This impression is not (only) a verdict formulated *a posteriori*, but (also) a feeling shared by contemporary critics. The Belgian author Eugeen De Bock summarized this very sharply in his review of *De nieuwe Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren*, published in the expressionist periodical *Ruimte*:

> Door de *verschillende* standpunten, de verschillende hoogten waarop de samenstellers van het boek zich geplaatst hebben, blijft het fragmentaries en brengt het nog geen karakteristiek van wat dan een algemene 'Europeese geest' zou zijn in kunst en letteren. [91]
>
> [Because of the different positions, the different heights at which the collaborators of the book have placed themselves, it remains

[87] F. HELLENS, "La Belgique, balcon sur l'Europe", in : *Écrits du nord. Revue mensuelle de littérature* 1922, 1, 34.

[88] Sophie Corbiau, "L'art russe", in : *La Nervie* 1927, 4. (special issue, "l'art russe"). The window metaphor is even older. It dates back to Francesco Algarotti, who used it in 1739 in his *Viaggi di Russia*, describing Saint Petersburg as a "window on Europe". Since Pushkin used this metaphor in his poem "The Bronze Knight" (1833), it has become a commonplace.

[89] RUTTE, 157.

[90] Id., 161-162.

[91] E. DE BOCK. Review of "De Europeesche geest in kunst en letteren" in *Ruimte*, 1921, 1-2, 17-18.

> fragmentary and does not yet convey a characteristic of what would then be a general "European spirit" in art and letters.]

On the other hand, however, the book should not simply be considered a failed transfer. The project was a typical case of a *histoire croisée*, and as such served as a transnational meeting place where ideas about Europe and Europeanness, as well as national self-images were created, negotiated and disseminated by authors who came from different national backgrounds, and held various, and sometimes conflicting ideological and artistic convictions. In this article, we have suggested a shift of focus from studying the cultural transfer of ideas between two or more pre-given territorial units, to the transnational construction of these territorial units or spaces. We hope to have demonstrated that the authors involved in this entangled history were not simply historical actors who were subjected to pre-set spatial categories, but versatile cultural mediators, who actively contributed to the transnational creation of ideas of and narratives about "Europe".

Although the national perspective was prevalent in every essay, almost every author, with the exception of Guarnieri, who remarkably hardly referred to "Europe" in his contribution, used Europe as a point of reference to signal the alleged uniqueness of their nation's literature as well as its contribution to Europe's reconciliation and renewal. While Coster extolled the importance of the poetry of the seventeenth century Dutch rebels against Spanish rule and of The Movement of Eighty for Europe's regeneration, Huebner and Goldring envisaged a guiding role in Europe for German and British expressionist art respectively. While Colin pointed at the significance of French unanimism for a lasting European peace and an international rapprochement, Rutte stressed that the spirit of the age was first and foremost reflected by the literatures of smaller nations, such as the Czechs. Moreover, "Europe" was not only used as a frame to distinguish certain national literatures, but also as a "quality label" to stress the broader relevance of certain writers and artists, such as D.H. Lawrence (Goldring) or Pierre-Jean Jouve (Colin).

Despite the fact that the term "Europe" was assigned different meanings and seems to primarily have functioned as a label or reference point to draw attention to the particular significance of one's own national literature, two shared conceptions about Europe come to the fore in "The new European spirit" publications. Central to the first conception was the idea stressed by Huebner and Coster in their introductions that a European reconciliation and a regeneration of Europe's culture were to be expected of Europe's spirit, its driving force and inner core, that manifested itself differently in different nations. This idea was not only echoed in Huebner's and Coster's essays, but also in Rutte's chapter on Czech literature, in which he pointed to a "collective will" in Europe that galvanized people across borders and would eventually bring about a better future. This vision of a "Europe of nations", which had already been articulated by nineteenth-century intellectuals such as Giuseppe Mazzini and Victor Hugo, came to the fore after the outbreak of the First World War and was prevalent in the transnational interwar debate about Europe's cultural decay and disintegration.[92] In their reviews, Dutch

[92] Joep LEERSSEN, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) 152; Matthew D'AURIA and Jan VERMEIREN, 'Introduction'. Notions,

and Czech critics barely reflected on this narrative about Europe and seem to have been more concerned with the imbalanced way in which Coster and Rutte had presented the literary achievements of the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia.[93]

The second conception of Europe was articulated in a more implicit manner: in the essays written by Clarté ambassadors Goldring and Colin, both authors emphasize that a European fraternization or international brotherhood should go hand in hand with a renewal of the social order. While Goldring argued that artists could only contribute to this transition in Europe if they exchanged their aloofness for political engagement, Colin stressed that literature should be put in the service of higher socialist and pacifist ideals. A similar vision of Europe's regeneration was articulated in the introduction of *Europas neue Kunst und Dichtung*, in which Huebner highlighted the significance of Europe's artists in the subversion of the bourgeois order, as well as the contribution of Dutch radical left intellectuals to the envisaged renewal. It is this image of Europe that was endorsed by the first head of the People's Commissariat for Education of the Soviet Union, Anatoly Lunacharsky, who had extolled the volume as an important manifestation of the post-war desire among the "Western intelligentsia" to bring about an international reconciliation, as well as a durable peace and a new socialist order.

In short, the transnational constructions of Europe of the authors involved in "The New European Spirit" project had an impact across borders. The project should not be regarded a failed cultural transfer between various national communities, nor in hindsight be labelled as a truly "European" phenomenon. Rather, it should be studied as a transnational entanglement or hub in which versatile cultural mediators constructed, negotiated and disseminated ideas of Europe, and in doing so not only reflected but also actively contributed to the various transnational debates about Europe's future and culture.

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[93] Miroslav NOVOTNÝ, "Literatura. Ceske Literature", in: *Národní listy* 1923 (March 23), 1-2. On the Dutch reception, see VAN FAASSEN, 37-38.