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The Meta-Literary History of Cultural Transmitters and Forgotten Scholars in the Midst of Transnational Literary History

Petra Broomans

Abstract

The field of Cultural Transfer Studies is a relatively young discipline which developed against the backdrop of important events and theoretical and methodological “turns”, such as the crisis in literary historiography and the “cultural” turn in translation studies at the end of the twentieth century. It will be argued here that it also has forgotten roots in early comparative literary studies, one object of which was the possibility of writing a world literary history. The early comparatists also argued for more focus on cultural transmitters. This chapter starts from the assumption that a more complete history of Cultural Transfer Studies is required, one that includes the cultural transmitters and leads to a rethinking and finetuning of concepts. It will take the initial steps in this direction. It will become clear that unsuccessful cultural transfer processes and the lack of material complicate the writing of transnational/national literary history. In addition to this complexity, the histories of cultural transfer thus far have commonly relied on metaphors of trade and conquest when describing the literary field in which translators and translations take a visible or invisible position. In this regard, the historiographer will have to decide on the plot regarding the cultural transmitter: will it be one in which the protagonist is a leader and discoverer, or the silent worker and clerk? Throughout the chapter some cultural transmitters from Finland and Sweden will act as illustrative examples.

In his description of cultural translation in his widely read article, “Lost (and Found) in Translation: A cultural history of translators and translating in Early Modern Europe” (2005), Peter Burke uses expressions such as ‘negotiation’ (4), ‘balance of trade’ (9) and ‘a form of domestication of the alien’ (p. 4).¹ These metaphors of trade and conquest are commonly used when describing the

¹ Peter Burke, *Lost (and Found) in Translation. A Cultural History of Translators and Translating in Early Modern Europe* (Wassenaar: NIAS, 2005). cf. <https://nias.knaw.nl/books/lost-and-found-in-translation/>

literary field in which translations take a visible or invisible position, depending on the symbolic power of the foreign author and literary text or the translator herself/himself. These expressions reflect the plot chosen by the author to narrate the story. In this regard, the scholar Hayden White elaborated a theory of discourse within the field of history in his seminal study, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (1973), in which he demonstrated that historians use narrative discourses in their history-telling and that these historical accounts, therefore, do not reflect objective reality or offer analytical representations. As in fictional texts, the historical narrative uses metaphors, a plot, and other features that hold the story together. According to White, this story assists the historiographer to explain the meaning of events. White points out three explanatory strategies: the 'mode of emplotment', the 'mode of formal argument' and the 'mode of ideological implication'. Before setting up a story, the historian gains an overview of the historical field in a process of prefiguring. According to White, this often occurs in an unconscious way: 'the historian both creates his object of analysis and predetermines the modality of the conceptual strategies he will use to explain it'.²

In my analysis of texts in literary histories of Swedish women writers, it became apparent that the most often used mode of emplotment was the romantic one (2001), in which, after much trial and error, the author finds her own style, triumphs, and is canonized. Other plots include the tragic (offering an explanation of the failure of the author), the comic (reconciliation), and the satirical (an insight into the inadequacy of human being).³ I also observed that the argument and the plot are supported by 'strings' which form an associative chain that holds the narrative together. These 'strings' consist of adjectives and metaphors that appear throughout the text (Broomans 2001, p. 59).

In addition to Hayden White, who represents the linguistic turn in the field of history, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu could be regarded as the initiator of what we might call a turn to a "conflictual" paradigm within sociology. In his field theory, various actors (whether individuals or institutions) play out their conflicts in different fields in society, based on their "symbolic capital" and "habitus". The trade and conquest metaphors used by Burke and others might well have been inspired by Bourdieu, as his terminology has become widespread in many disciplines. Scholars within the field of the sociology of literature, such as Pascale Casanova, have in fact used and adapted field

2 Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 31.

3 Petra Broomans, *Detta Är Jag. Stina Aronsons Litteraturhistoriska Öde* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2001), pp. 61–65.

theory to the literary field and the spaces in which different national literary fields meet.

3.1 Development of Cultural Transfer Studies

The meeting of national literatures has been an object of study since the beginning of the nineteenth century and the rise of comparative literature studies. One of the aims of the comparatists was to compile a world literary history or international literary history. In the later decades of the twentieth century, “transnational literary history” also became a common phrase. The aim of this transnational literary history, closely connected to transnational history or “*histoire croisée*” (entangled history), was to move beyond traditional national frames and reveal a broader literary history that crossed borders. The concepts of transnational history and *histoire croisée* were coined by scholars who were critical of the fixation on and confinement within state borders in nationalism studies. Moreover, the creation of these new perspectives was accompanied by the development of Cultural Transfer Studies

As Michael Espagne has pointed out, the field of Cultural Transfer Studies aims to advance a transnational history and should be regarded as an opportunity to unlock new ways of writing transnational history itself.⁴ Espagne and Michael Werner first coined the term ‘cultural transfer’ (“Kulturtransfer”) in their article, “Deutsch-Französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen Interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S.” (1985).⁵ In this article they argued, as many before them did and many after have done, including Peter Burke, that more attention should be paid to the individual ‘cultural transmitter’:

Selbstverständlich wird ein interkultureller Transfer nicht nur von abstrakten Konjunkturen und geistigen Konstellationen bestimmt: er ist zuallererst das Werk realer Vermittlerpersönlichkeiten.

4 Michel Espagne, ‘Jenseits der Komparatistik. Zur Methode der Erforschung von Kulturtransfer’, *Europäische Kulturzeitschriften um 1900 als Medien transnationaler und transdisziplinärer Wahrnehmung*, ed. by Ulrich Mölk (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), pp. 13–32 (p. 13).

5 Michel Espagne/Michael Werner, ‘Deutsch-Französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S.’, in *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 13/1 (1985), pp. 502–510.

(Of course, intercultural transfer is determined not only by abstract conjunctures and spiritual constellations: it is first and foremost the work of real cultural transmitters.)

ESPAGNE and WERNER 1985, p. 506⁶

Espagne and Werner also emphasized the importance of network analysis; what they called the 'Art Matrix' (ibid.). In another article, 'La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France: genèse et histoire (1750–1914)', they complemented their framework with research into the sociology of the cultural transmitter as well as the systems in which they are active (1987, p. 905).⁷

Later on, Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann (2002) pleaded for *histoire croisée* in response to the rise of Cultural Transfer Studies arguing for a transnational discourse rather than a national one, as they were of the opinion that Cultural Transfer Studies had taken the nation as its frame of reference.⁸ In 'Jenseits der Komparatistik. Zur Methode der Erforschung von Kulturtransfer' (2006), Espagne formulated an appropriate reply:

Was transferiert wird, ist im ursprünglichen Zusammenhang national definiert. Es ist der Transferforschung sehr zu Unrecht vorgeworfen worden, sie bleibe selbst in der nationalen Argumentation verankert, die sie aus der Welt schaffen möchte. Man muss zunächst betonen, dass der Ausgangskontext zwar mit nationalen, aber ebenso sehr mit religiösen, dynastischen, ethnischen, sprachlichen oder gar beruflichen Kategorien definiert werden kann.

ESPAGNE 2006, p. 17

(What is transferred is, in the original context, nationally defined. Cultural Transfer Studies has been very unjustly accused of remaining enshrined in the national argument, although it has wanted to get rid of it. Above all, it has to be stressed that the starting point may indeed be defined in terms of the national, but also in terms of religious, dynastic, ethnic, linguistic or even professional categories.)

6 All translations from German as well as from French to English by the author.

7 Michel Espagne/Michael Werner, 'La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France. Genèse et histoire (1750–1914)', in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 42/4 (Jul.–Aug. 1987), pp. 969–992. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27583612>.

8 Michael Werner/Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der *Histoire croisée* und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 28/4 (Oct.–Dec. 2002), pp. 607–636.

Espagne, who can be regarded as the most prominent Cultural Transfer Studies scholar, defines the task of such studies as “die Translation eines Kulturgegenstandes von einen Ausgangskontext in einen Aufnahmekontext in ihrem prozessualen Ablauf unter die Lupe zu nehmen” (p. 15) (“to take a closer look at the process of translation of a cultural object from a source context into a receiving context”).

In his 2006 paper, Espagne pointed out some developments within cultural studies that were important for the study of cultural transfer, particularly in relation to anthropology, philology, and the history of science (pp. 18–22). Speaking more broadly, the development of Cultural Transfer Studies can also be set against the backdrop of other significant events at the end of the twentieth century. In the following, I will demonstrate how these fields enabled the development of Cultural Transfer Studies and, in turn, how this field is related to its predecessors.

As I described in a previous article in Dutch (2012), one of the events in the field of literary theory that made the further development of Cultural Transfer Studies possible was the crisis in literary historiography in the 1980s and 1990s.⁹ This arose as the problem of whether or not it was possible to write a complete and true literary history, which was discussed in the forewords and introductions of several literary histories. In his study, *Is Literary History Possible?* (1992), David Perkins argued that it was no longer possible to compile a national literary history.¹⁰ A pessimistic and anti-national attitude to literary history was trending in Western literary historiography. The positive side of this was that cultural studies started to play a complementary role.

At the same time, however, a normative perspective was taken by Harold Bloom in *The Western Canon. The School and the Books of Ages* (1994).¹¹ Here, Bloom attacked programmatic literary histories such as the Marxist and feminist interpretations, arguing that these politically correct canons neglected the aesthetic standards that, in his opinion, were valid and valuable to the canon. He used tropes such as ‘aesthetic authority’, ‘creative power’ and ‘originality’; for Bloom, canonical writers ought to be strong and they are mostly male (Bloom 1994, pp. 10–11; p. 37).

Another counter movement to the pessimistic view of national literary history and alternative canons was the return to the national canon debates in

9 Petra Broomans, ‘Zichtbaar in de canon. Spelregels voor cultuurbemiddelaars’, in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde*, 128/3-4 (2012), pp. 256–275.

10 David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

11 Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon. The School and the Books of Ages* (New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994).

Europe after 2000. In the Netherlands and Denmark, this led to the compilation of lists of events, historical figures and books to be included in the national canon (Broomans 2012, pp. 256–257).

The development of the sociology of literature after the Second World War should be regarded as another event that enabled the rise of Cultural Transfer Studies. It resulted in studies of not only local contributions to the national literary field, but also the role of foreign literature and its reception. This research included the position of publishing houses and the role of networks and institutions. Itamar Even-Zohar's studies, in which he developed the poly-system theory starting in the 1970s, have also been of importance. The poly-system theory led to new insights in the description of national literatures and the description of relations between national literary systems. The basic mechanisms of literary contacts are also extensively studied in this theory. Even-Zohar was criticized by Edwin Gentzler and others for not including "agents and institutions".¹² Agents such as cultural transmitters play an important role in this process, although the focus in reception studies was often only on the author and text translated – not on the translator.

Like the study of history, translation studies also underwent a cultural turn, also called a "social turn" by Wolf. This is meticulously described by Michaela Wolf in her introduction to the volume entitled *Constructing a Sociology of Translation* (2007), in which she focuses on contextualizing the translated text. Wolf discusses a large group of translation studies scholars, including Even-Zohar, Venuti, and Pym, as well as the approaches of Bourdieu, Heilbron, and Sapiro, and, in addition, Latour and Luhmann, who argued for the importance of networks and institutions. After this cultural turn, the background and motives of the transmitter became more important and an awareness that translation is a form of social agency took root. One year before, Mary Snell-Hornby published a study on turns in translation studies (2006) in which she discussed the different turns, starting with the cultural turn.

The last field I consider to have enabled Cultural Transfer Studies is Cultural Studies itself, with cultural historians such as Peter Burke providing the impetus. Burke, for example, wrote the short but influential essay mentioned above, "Lost (and Found) in Translation: A Cultural History of Translators and Translating in Early Modern Europe" (2005), in which he investigated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mapping what was translated and by whom. Other cultural studies scholars regarded cultural transfer as an interesting

12 Michaela Wolf, 'Introduction. The emergence of a sociology of translation', in *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, ed. by Michaela Wolf/Alexandra Fukari (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 1–36 (p. 7).

domain, not least because cultural studies is such a broad discipline and Cultural Transfer Studies is more defined and focused.

In summary, we may say that there were two apparently contrasting and overlapping discourses in the 1980s and 1990s: the transnational perspective and a renewed national discourse. Espagne attempted to combine the two (2006).

A Cultural Transfer Studies perspective is crucial to the study and compilation of a transnational history, as it requires a different approach to traditional “world literary history”, demanding greater focus on mediation and the cultural transmitters, more attention to material and, as Espagne points out, more focus on the space(s) in which cultural transfer takes place (Espagne, 2006, pp. 28–32).

3.2 Transnational Literary History

Before further discussing the theory, history and practice of cultural transfer studies we need to define transnational literary history. Or should we call it post-national literary history? And is it international or transcultural? I propose to define the act of writing transnational literary history as follows: Mapping and following flows of literary texts (translated or not) across national, linguistic, ethnic, and temporal borders and placing authors/texts/genres in global, national, and local contexts, while using this form of history as a tool to describe the influence of changing contexts on literary capital.

I use the term “mapping” as it is employed by Franco Moretti in his study *Graphs, Maps, Trees; abstract models for a literary history* (2005). According to Moretti, it is important to visualize the literary field with ‘graphs’, ‘maps’ and ‘trees’.¹³ In our context, what this means is that mapping includes the use of all the quantitative and digital instruments available to visualize the flows of cultural and literary mediation from, to and across borders. Moretti calls this ‘distant reading’, in opposition to close reading (2000, pp. 56–57).

Following the flows of literary texts does not always mean following translated texts. During some periods, a *lingua franca* might be used, such as Latin, with scientific and religious texts not always translated into the vernacular. Moreover, in societies with upper and middle classes that had reading skills in foreign languages, literary texts were read in the original. As Espagne

13 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees. Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London, New York: Verso, 2005); Franco Moretti, ‘Conjectures on World Literature’, in *New Left Review*, 1 (January–February 2000), pp. 54–68.

demonstrated, German was used as the *lingua franca* by scholars in the field of Slavic studies (2006: 21). Nevertheless, in general, cultural transfer entails the transferring of a literary text across national and linguistic borders. This transfer may also occur within state borders, with translations from a minority culture into the major culture, such as Sámi literature into Swedish or Norwegian for example.

Thus, there are still many borders to cross in transnational literary history, although not necessarily state borders. The issue of borders seems to be the political (and a powerful) point of departure for all thinking about and describing fields, whether economic, cultural, and/or literary.

In addition to national, state, or political borders, as suggested above, there are also linguistic borders within countries where various groups speak different languages, such as in Belgium and Finland. There are also ethnic borders in states with different ethnic groups, such as Denmark, with Inuit people who migrated from Greenland (part of the Kingdom of Denmark) to Denmark; or Canada with its First Nations population, its migrants from the Caribbean, as well as French-speaking Quebec and the Acadians.

The temporal border can be stretched across many ages or over a shorter period. Texts might be forgotten and translated much later, or they might not have been published immediately after the translation was done and be forgotten for many years. According to the discipline of literary historiography, authors, genres and texts are placed within periods and classified within global, national, and local contexts and compared with each other. When texts are transferred to a new context do they still have the same symbolic capital? A good example is the novel *Stoner* (1965) by John Williams (1922–1994). In the US, the author is known to a small inner circle, but in Europe the novel was read by many and was highly regarded. Thus, cultural transfer does not always entail general transmission; it may be limited to specific cultural and linguistic regions and not always be a worldwide event, such as the success of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* (2003).

Another reason that the term “transnational” is preferred, is because it is about opening up national borders to allow inspiration from outside, and crossing national borders to seek inspiration. To use the term “international” still implicitly suggests the maintenance of national borders. I endorse Édouard Glissant's argument, referring to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari¹⁴, that when we use the term “international” the singular roots are still implied rather than

14 Gilles Deleuze/Guattari, Félix, ‘What is a Minor Literature?’, in *Kafka. Towards a Minor Literature*, by Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 16–27.

the rhizome that is 'an enmeshed root system', a multiple, non-hierarchical rootedness that challenges the 'totalitarian root'.¹⁵ The act of mapping that aims to detect the transmission of literary texts can be combined with the act of tracing how the transmission took place and whether or not it has been successful, as well as the factors playing a role in an interrupted, unsuccessful, or successful transfer.

At the same time, it might be argued that the "national" is still found in the term "transnational". Another possible term could thus be "transcultural". Wolfgang Welsch developed the concept of "transculturality", arguing against Herder's 'traditional concept of single cultures' and the modern concepts of 'interculturality' and 'multiculturality'. According to Welsch, whether from an intercultural or multicultural perspective, culture is still regarded as folk-bound. One might correlate such a notion of a single and folk-bound culture with the notion of the nation as a singular entity: 'It still proceeds from a conception of cultures as islands or spheres' (3). Interculturality, however, reflects another understanding of cultures and how they interact with each other. For Welsch, cultures are never isolated or in simple conflict with each other but are in fact entangled. This perspective could be compared with a *histoire croisée* approach or as Jani Marjanen describes it, referring to Werner and Zimmermann, an 'interconnectedness in history'.¹⁶

Glissant and Welsch are not alone in their critique of the notion of the nation. How should we define it? The field of nationalism studies is immense, with several important studies in the field published in the 1980s, including Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). In his famous comparative study on small nations in Europe, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Patriotic Groups among Smaller European Nations* (1968, 1985), Miroslav Hroch formulated some essential characteristics of nation-building. These included, firstly, a memory of a common past; secondly, linguistic and cultural ties; and, thirdly,

15 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 11.

16 Jani Marjanen, 'Undermining Methodological Nationalism. *Histoire croisée* of Concepts as Transnational History', in *Transnational Political Spaces. Agents – Structures – Encounters*, ed. by Mathias Albert/Gesa Bluhm/Jan Helmig/Andreas Leuttsch/Jochen Walter (Frankfurt/Main, New York: Campus, 2009) (*Historische Politikforschung* 18), pp. 239–263 (p. 239).

a feeling of equality of all members.¹⁷ Hroch also emphasized the importance of literature and language for nations.

It is difficult to ignore the significance of nation, place, ethnicity, language, and identity to oral literature and storytelling, as well as to written and published/digitalized/performed literature. The meaning of mobility, migration and flight are also indispensable, with cultural transfer taking place in relation to all these markers of position.

3.3 World Literature

In a literary transnational space, shared memory of a common past, as well as linguistic and cultural ties, and the feeling of equality of all members of a nation exist in a mobile, transitional zone and might be transferred to other spaces. Is there a continuity of thinking in a transnational literary space and does world literature exist? According to Casanova, '[i]nternational literary space was formed in the sixteenth century at the very moment when literature began to figure as a source of contention in Europe, and it has not ceased to enlarge and extend itself since'.¹⁸ It goes without saying that the point of departure here is the European region and its geopolitical ties. Chinese literature, for example, has a tradition that began more than three thousand years ago, with poetry the dominant genre and many poets still remembered. For example, in a park in the city of Chengdu, a certain area is dedicated to the poetess Xue Tao (AD 768–831). Although Casanova describes China as a 'completely neglected area' (151), at least until the year 2000 when the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Gao Xingjian, she does not give more extensive attention to Chinese literature in her work. A reflection on the types of literature, whether philosophical Confucian literature, religious texts or historical texts, as well as a long era of imitation, could have added another dimension to the debate about what constitutes literature. The notion of world literature is thus indeed a highly Western-oriented concept.

17 Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 79.

18 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 11.

Other scholars have criticized the notion of world literature, arguing that there is a great deal of literature that has not been translated. In her challenging book, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), Emily Apter discusses several world literature perspectives, approaches and practices, and presents the hypothesis “that translation and untranslatability are constitutive of world forms of literature”.¹⁹ Apter endorses ‘World Literature’s deprovincialization of the canon and the way in which, at its best, it draws on translation to deliver surprising cognitive landscapes hailing from inaccessible linguistic folds’ (2). Apter thus takes translation as a point of departure; as a prerequisite for the concept of world literature.

The term “world literature” has its origins in the nineteenth century. Most famously, it was used by Goethe in 1827 in his diary and in an essay written while reading a translation of Chinese poetry.²⁰ It appears that Goethe’s notion of world literature was inspired by the increasing number of non-European works available in translation and was thus, according to Said, a “German” version of Orientalism (1978). As Yi Chen demonstrates in “Who is the Other? Goethe’s encounter with ‘China’ in his concept of *Weltliteratur*” (2015), Goethe’s perspective is complicated and ambivalent; nevertheless, on the basis of a comparative analysis, Yi Chen comes to the conclusion that Goethe still situates intellectual authority in the Western canon, ‘despite his insightful and intuitive understanding of Chinese aesthetic qualities’ (251). Thus, at the core of Goethe’s concept of world literature is ‘the realization of the West’s own classic exemplariness’ (ibid.).

In the twentieth century, early French comparatists such as Paul Van Tieghem took a step further, not only reflecting on the concept of world literature but also defining a new approach to world literatures as the study of comparative literature.

Elle ne prétendra nullement remplacer les diverses histoires littéraires nationales : elle les complétera et les unira ; et en même temps elle tissera, entre elles et au-dessus d’elles, les mailles d’une histoire littéraire plus générale. Cette discipline existe ; elle fait l’objet de ce livre; elle s’appelle la *Littérature comparée*.

VAN TIEGHEM 1931, p. 17

19 Emily Apter, *Against World Literature. On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York, London: Verso Books, 2013), p. 16.

20 Yi Chen, ‘Who is the Other? Goethe’s Encounter with “China” in his Concept of *Weltliteratur*’ in *Major Versus Minor? Languages and Literatures in a Globalized World*, ed. by Theo D’haen/Iannis Goerlandt/Roger D. Sell (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2015), pp. 241–252 (p. 242).

(It does not pretend to replace the various national literary histories: it will complement and unite them; and at the same time, it will weave between them and above them, the mesh of a general literary history. This discipline exists; it is the object of this book; it is called Comparative Literature.)

Van Tieghem calls for a general literary history. The term ‘tissera’ (literally ‘will weave’) reminds us of ‘croisée’, used in the notion ‘histoire croisée’ that was introduced in 2002 by Werner and Zimmermann in a similar context. In the chapter “Vers l’histoire littéraire internationale” (Towards an international literary history), Van Tieghem discusses similar literary histories that had already been published in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, such as Georg Brandes’ *Main Currents in the Literature of the Nineteenth Century* (published in four volumes in Danish between 1872 and 1875 and in English from 1901–1905) and *Europas litteraturhistoria från medeltiden till våra dagar I–II*, by Otto Sylvan and Just Bing in 1910 (202–203). He also presents an outline of what he regards as a true international literary history:

La combinaison des influences et les traditions avec les diversités irréductibles des esprits et des races fait jaillir des qualités d’âme demeurées jusqu’alors latentes. Et ce n’est pas un des moindres privilèges de l’histoire littéraire ainsi conçue, que de nous faire mieux connaître à nous-mêmes, d’agrandir et d’enrichir notre idée de l’âme humaine.

VAN TIEGHEM 1931, p. 17

(The combination of influences and traditions with the irreducible diversity of minds and races allows qualities of the soul to emerge that hitherto remained latent. And it is not one of the lesser privileges of literary history thus conceived that it allows us to better know ourselves, to expand and enrich our idea of the human soul.)

Thus, Van Tieghem sees the writing of a world literary history as a romantic, moralistic, and psychological undertaking. Another, later example of a comparatist working in another linguistic area is the Slovak Dionýz Ďurišin. In his study from 1972, he offers an overview of comparative literature studies, referring to Paul Van Tieghem as one of the scholars who attempted to understand ‘den eigentlichen interliterarischen Prozeß’ (the actual interliterary process).²¹ Ďurišin discusses the term “world literature” and presents three

21 Dionýz Ďurišin, *Vergleichende Literaturforschung* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972), p. 41.

basic interpretations: 1) world literature as a summary of the literature of the entire world and thus all the national literatures side by side; 2) world literature as the canon of the best literature produced by the separate national literatures; and 3) world literature as “irgendwie voneinander abhängige oder ähnliche Schöpfungen aus allen Nationalliteraturen” (somehow interdependent or similar creations that come from all national literatures) (1972, p. 39).

According to Ďurišin, the first interpretation is merely static in nature and does not include the idea of an interweaving of literatures. In this regard, it might be argued that Ďurišin expresses an early form of the *histoire croisée* idea. In the second interpretation, terms such as ‘übernational’ and ‘universal’ are used, and Ďurišin points out that from this point of view, the essential national characteristics of the literary works are not sufficiently considered. Thus, he argues that the third notion is the most appropriate for comparative literature studies because it includes all literary expressions that exhibit mutual relationships and connections, as well as being genetically and typologically related (p. 40).

Paul Van Tieghem and Ďurišin, as well as others, all argue for more focus on cultural transmitters. While Apter and Casanova present inspiring studies in this respect, they do not offer any deep insight into the cultural transfer process. What phases do literary texts pass through as they travel from the source area to the target area? What characteristics and skills does the cultural transmitter need? A micro-analysis of the cultural transfer process and the skills of the figures involved may give us valuable insight and serve as a supplement to the distant reading of the flows. Moreover, if the material is stored in databases, a more profound picture of the why and by whom might also be discerned.

In this respect, Espagne proposes the study of cultural transfer between places on the level of Mikroräume (micro places), arguing that this could create the foundations of a European cultural history (p. 31). I prefer to use the terms ‘phases’ or ‘steps’, which can be situated in certain places but might also include people and the temporal dimension. According to scholars like Matthias Middell (2014), Cultural Transfer Studies focuses on three moments: contact with another culture, research on the mediators (translators, institutions and media), and the new context of the text.²² This approach has been applied by Christine Mayer (2019) and others.²³

22 Matthias Middell, ‘The Search for a New Place for the 18th Century in Global History Narratives’, in *Cultural Transfers, Encounters and Connections in the Global 18th Century*, ed. by Matthias Middell (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2014), pp. 7–43.

23 Christine Mayer, ‘The Transnational and Transcultural. Approaches to Studying the Circulation and Transfer of Educational Knowledge’, in *The Transnational in the History*

Espagne's 'prozessualen Ablauf' can in fact be divided into six phases, some of which may be skipped or combined depending on the actual steps taken:

1. The phase of introduction: After the "discovery", the cultural transmitter reviews a literary work, publishes interviews with the author or publishes other introductory texts. Proof translations might be made and the material may or may not be published. One example in this respect: the Finnish-Swedish literary critic, writer and translator, Hagar Olsson (1893–1978) stated that in the 1920s she read one poem by the Dutch writer and politician, Henriette Roland Holst-Van der Schalk (1869–1952) in Finnish translation. We still do not know which poem this was, who translated it, or the medium it took; this material is lost.²⁴
2. In the second phase, the selected author is "in quarantine". A cultural transmitter attempts to find an interested publisher or another way to publish the work and proof translations may circulate. The writer and lecturer in Dutch literature in Sweden, Martha A. Muusses (1894–1981), tried to introduce Henriette Roland Holst-Van der Schalk to the Swedish public but the poems she translated were only published in her own publications. A large publishing house such as Bonniers never published a collection of poems. (ibid.)
3. In the third phase, the author's work is translated. The translation is an important event in the process. However, it can also imply a new phase of "quarantine": will the translation be published? A fine example is the Swedish writer, Kerstin Ekman, whose international breakthrough came with the novel *Blackwater* (published in Swedish in 1993, in Dutch in 1994, and in English in 1996). Prior to this, in 1984 and 1985, two of her novels were published in Dutch and a third was translated, but because of a lack of commercial success the Dutch publisher decided not to publish the latter. After the bestselling success of *Blackwater* in the Netherlands, this novel from the 1980s was finally published in Dutch – translated anew by another translator – fourteen years later in 1998.²⁵

of Education. Global Histories of Education, ed. by Eckhardt Fuchs/Vera E. Roldán (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 49–68.

- 24 Petra Broomans, 'A Cultural Transfer History. Possibilities and Prerequisites. The Case of Henriette Roland Holst, Martha Muusses and Hagar Olsson', in *The Dynamics and Contexts of Cultural Transfers. An Anthology*, ed. by Margaretha Fahlgren/Anna Williams (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2017) pp. 79–99 (p. 91).
- 25 Petra Broomans/Ester Jiresch, 'The Invasion of Books' in *The Invasion of Books in Peripheral Literary Fields. Transmitting Preferences and Images in Media, Networks and Translation. Studies on Cultural Transfer and Transmission (CTaT)*, ed. by Petra Broomans/Ester Jiresch (Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing, 2011), vol. 3, pp. 9–21 (pp. 12–13).

4. The translation is published. Is the translator mentioned and visible?
5. The translation might be bought and read, but not reviewed. Cultural transmitters might actively inform journalists and reviewers. The material used might be letters, meetings, and conversations on social media.
6. In the final phase, the literary work undergoes a second phase of reception in the form of reviews, articles, lectures, and so forth. It is due to this follow up that we can speak of a successful cultural transfer. The transmitter might become visible and receive awards and/or translation prizes.

Henriette Roland Holst-Van der Schalk never came to be known in Sweden or Finland, although her cultural transmitters, Martha A. Muusses and Hagar Olsson, both had cultural capital. Hagar Olsson was as a central figure in the literary debate in Finland, while Muusses lectured in Dutch literature in Stockholm in the 1930s, in Gothenburg the 1940s, and, from 1947, in Uppsala. She acted as literary critic and historian, translator, and cultural transmitter (in both directions, Dutch-Swedish/Swedish-Dutch). Furthermore, she was regarded as an authority in the field of Dutch literature and was an advisor to the Swedish Academy. Muusses also wrote articles and essays on Dutch literature and compiled a Dutch literary history in Swedish and, in addition, she was also a poet. While cultural transmitters have not always been visible and active in the various phases of cultural transfer, it is clear that both Olsson and Muusses held various positions and were visible cultural transmitters. (Broomans, 2017: 91).

3.4 Forgotten Scholars

As mentioned above, both Paul Van Tieghem and Ďurišin discuss the concept of the cultural transmitter and the process of cultural transfer, emphasizing that literary mediators should be studied. So the development of Cultural Transfer Studies in recent decades has had some forefathers who have been forgotten. Naturally, we could also mention Madame de Staël, who wrote *De l'Allemagne* (1810) and introduced the ideas of German Romanticism to the French and European public. To a certain extent, she also paved the way for comparative literature studies. The example of Madame de Staël demonstrates that cultural transmitters are important to literary history, not only because they mediate and translate an important part of the literature that readers consume (sometimes not even aware that they are reading a translation), but also because they have profound knowledge about the society and culture in which the source text was produced.

Peter Burke has defined two different categories of cultural transmitters: groups and individuals. In the period he investigated – the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – translations were produced within professional groups: scholars translated scholars, lawyers translated lawyers, and so on. Other professional groups included diplomats and emigrants. Michel Espagne studied the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and observed that members of the merchant class, the Jewish community and language teachers also acted as cultural transmitters. In 2006 Espagne remarked once again that foreign cultural imports cannot be realized without mediators and that it seems to be ‘eine Konstante der Kulturgeschichte’ (an unchangeable feature of cultural studies) that this mediation is always neglected (Espagne 2006, p. 24).

On the basis of my investigations of cultural transmitters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I have formulated a working definition. I prefer the term “cultural transmitter” and not “literary transmitter” because, through literature, there is also a mediation of culture: translations are instruments that mediate ideas/ideologies/images from one cultural/linguistic area to another. Moreover, cultural transmitters are actors in a transnational space, and ideas and images travel through time and across borders. Thus, I propose the following definition:

A cultural transmitter or mediator basically works within a particular language and cultural area. She/he often takes on various roles in the field of cultural transfer: translator, reviewer, critic, journalist, (literary) historian, scholar, teacher, librarian, bookseller, collector, literary agent, scout, publisher, editor of a journal, writer, travel writer, counsellor, or even businessman. Transmitting another national literature and culture, and its cultural context to one's own national literature and cultural context is the central issue in the work of a cultural transmitter. Transmission often reflects a bilateral situation. Even the transmission of one's own literature and culture takes place. The motivation can be aesthetically, ideologically, politically and/or economically based.²⁶

All these different roles, functions and positions in different periods demonstrate that the concept of the cultural transmitter is dynamic. This is also apparent in Anthony Pym's description of translators: they do more than

26 I have elaborated on this working definition on the basis of previous articles (e.g. 2006, 2009).

translate, they have personal interests and preferences, they can move, and they have their own names that we should respect.²⁷

As mentioned above, Espagne argues for an interdisciplinary approach and that the material evidence, the space of transfer, and a focus on transmitters should be included in studies of cultural transmission. Regarding the material, cultural transmitters use it, produce it and leave it behind during the cultural transfer process. A study of such material might tell us more about the people who used it and about their position in networks; however, this material often disappears or is lost in archives. This can be regarded as a reflection of the neglected and underestimated position of the cultural transmitter. This concerns especially women cultural transmitters. Luise von Flotow (1997),²⁸ Susanne Stark (1999)²⁹ and Michaela Wolf (2005) among others, wrote about forgotten women translators in the past. To locate these 'lost' translators requires historical research and finding material.

There are also different categories of material: concrete and virtual. Concrete material consists of physical and visible objects, such as manuscripts, awards (medals), images. In this respect, for example, we still have no clear picture of Muusses on the basis of such material. Virtual material can refer to lost objects, whether hidden away in archives or destroyed, but also invisible elements, such as characteristics of transmitters, their language skills, knowledge of the culture, and so on. (Broomans 2017, p. 82). Thus, it is not only people, knowledge, and culture that are involved in transfer, but the material as well, and the rediscovery of unknown or not yet located material in archives is essential for Cultural Transfer Studies.

One example of figures lost to the discipline are the forefathers of Cultural Transfer Studies discourse itself. I have observed that in the works of Espagne, Werner, Sapiro, Pym and many others, including my own work to date, no references are made to early comparatists such as Paul Van Tieghem. Therefore, let us ask explicitly what they have written about cultural transfer, cultural transmitters, and world literature.

Paul Van Tieghem (1871–1948) writes about cultural transmitters in a chapter entitled, "Les intermédiaires", in his study *La Littérature comparée* (1931). Here he defines the following categories of cultural transmitters:

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- 27 Anthony Pym, 'Translators', in *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St Jerome, 1998), pp. 160–176 (p. 176).
 - 28 Luise von Flotow, *Translating and Gender. Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997).
 - 29 Susanne Stark, *'Behind inverted commas': Translation and Anglo-German Cultural Relations in the Nineteenth Century* (Clevedon, Philadelphia, Toronto, Sydney: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1999) (Topics in Translation 15).

1. “Les individus” (individuals): he mentions the traveller Xavier Marmier and Carl Chr. Gjörrwell, who started the journal of literary criticism, *Den Svenska Mercurius* (*The Swedish Mercury*), in the eighteenth century.
2. “Les milieux sociaux” (literary groups, associations, salons): he mentions the Swedish authors Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht and Anna Maria Lenngren, and Madame de Staël among others.
3. “Critiques: journaux et revues” (literary criticism: newspapers and journals).
4. “Traductions et traducteurs” (translations and translators) (152–167).

The wide range of names Van Tieghem mentions shows that he was familiar with both central and peripheral cultures (such as the Scandinavian). Van Tieghem states that we should learn more about the cultural transmitters, “il est souvent besoin de connaître les *traducteurs*” (it is often necessary to know the translators), we need to learn about their biographies, literary careers and social positions (166). This is what Espagne, Meylaerts, and Sapiro argued for much later. Reine Meylaerts argued for the need to study the ‘socio-biography’ of the cultural transmitter: their life, the linguistic and cultural environment and their networks.³⁰ Sapiro even suggests this is a new domain. However, it should be added that Meylaerts and Sapiro do not refer to early comparatists such as Paul Van Tieghem, or scholars such as Burke and Espagne. We might say that there was no “prefiguring” of the field of Cultural Transfer Studies to use White’s term. We pursued, perhaps unconsciously, the plot of neglect, as I would formulate it. Why Paul Van Tieghem was forgotten in the field of Cultural Transfer could be an interesting topic to examine in more detail. He published many works regarding international literary history which were often translated, yet he was not a professor at university, but a secondary school teacher. In the French context, this may explain why he found less recognition among scholars than he deserves.

If one was to present an overview of scholars who have dealt with cultural transfer, we would observe three groups. Interestingly, the first two groups do not refer to each other, nor does either refer to the third group.

1. Translation studies scholars such as Venuti and Pym, and sociologists oriented towards translation studies such as Heilbron and Sapiro.
2. Scholars related to cultural studies who are also concerned with transfer, such as Burke and Espagne.
3. The early comparatists: the forgotten cultural transfer scholars such as Van Tieghem.

30 Reine Meylaerts, ‘Habitus and self-image of native literary author-translators in diglossic societies’, in *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 5/1 (2010), pp. 1–19.

The method Paul Van Tieghem proposes is “*mésologie*” (mesology), the study of how a culture receives literary works, ideas and forms that belong to another culture. As a son of the well-known botanist Philippe Édouard Leon Van Tieghem (1839–1914), Paul Van Tieghem derived the term from the discipline of biology, in particular its study of the interrelationships between creatures and their surroundings.³¹ His son, Philippe Von Tieghem, added “flair” as another skill that the cultural transmitter should have: the ability to discover new authors, to trace what should be transmitted, and what might provide a new impulse to the culture from elsewhere. The transmitter should thus have an open mind towards other cultures (1961, p. 4).

As his father pointed out, this sensitivity to something new also requires profound knowledge about one's own culture. The above-mentioned Ďurišin also argued for a more profound study of the role of the cultural transmitter (1972, 61) and divided cultural transfer into two categories: 1. “Einfach”, that is, not complex, such as academic studies and reviews; and 2. complex cultural transfer, that is, translations. Ďurišin regards a translation as an important expression of an ‘interliterary symbiosis’ (65) and focuses in his study on translations. His approach can be compared with Even-Zohar. Worth noting here is that both published their theories in 1972. Of interest are Ďurišin's remarks on national myths, quoting the Czech scholar, K. Krejčí:

Die Völker schaffen sich über sich, wie auch über andere Völker fiktiv komplexe Vorstellungen, die zwar aus der Wirklichkeit stammen und sie fragmentarisch erfassen, sie jedoch unter dem Einfluss verschiedener Umstände stilisieren, mehr oder weniger definieren.

ĎURIŠIN 1972, p. 55

(The people create fictionally complex ideas about themselves, as well as about other peoples, which, although derived from reality and presented in a fragmented way, are stylized under the influence of circumstances and are more or less defined.)

The myths and stereotypes of other cultures and nations are now studied within the field of *imagology*, developed by Joep Leerssen and Manfred Beller among others.³² Thus, we could also add the field of *imagology* to the disciplines that are relevant to Cultural Transfer Studies.

31 Margaret Dubois, *Algot Ruhe. Kulturförmedlare och europeisk visionär* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1989), p. 6.

32 Manfred Beller/Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters; a Critical Survey* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) (*Studia Imagologica*, 13).

Although the early comparatists such as Paul Van Tieghem argued that more attention should be paid to cultural transmitters, they did not develop a deeper instrument to analyse and investigate the positions and backgrounds of the actors and the process. As I have demonstrated, the field of Cultural Transfer Studies is interwoven with various disciplines: literary history, *histoire croisée*, the sociology of literature, translation studies, and cultural studies. We might, through Āurišin to Leerssen, now complete the list with imagology. Concerning methodology, the discipline will also benefit to a large extent from the instruments and opportunities offered by the digital humanities. In the light of this, where, then, do we position cultural transmitters in relation to transnational literary history?

3.5 Plots

It goes without saying that transnational literary historians will have to make a decision. Will they consider cultural transmitters as the invisible bridges between different languages or will they present them as a visible “power”? There are also other agendas. The rewriting of literary history with the aim of including women, as well as ethnic and minority groups, requires a critical rereading of the sources (the debates in various media, archives, etc.). This also demands the collection and digitalization of the material, and the design of databases is also of fundamental importance.

Another question is the position of the peripheral language versus dominant central literatures. As Olsson wrote, Roland Holst was unknown in Finland and Sweden; however, ‘if RH had written in a central language she would have become “famous” and “one of Europe’s leading intellectuals”’.³³ This is a fine example of the problem of cross language borders in a modern world and further evidence that it is always easier for writers of central languages. Digging through archives and scrutinizing journals makes it possible to map more of the connections between different peripheral languages as well as between central and peripheral languages. This would open up a more diverse and layered transnational literary history conducted in a contextualizing mode.

I would like to conclude with a note on the results of a meta-literary analysis of entries in two translators’ encyclopaedias, a genre within Cultural Transfer Studies that will generate material for transnational literary history. One of the goals of these translators’ encyclopaedias is to make forgotten cultural transmitters visible. The content of the entries in these encyclopaedias usually concerns an overview of facts; for example, a list of translations and the life story

33 Hagar Olsson, ‘Ljuset från Holland’, in *Samtid och Framtid*, (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1945), p. 15.

of the cultural transmitter. However, aspects such as “habitus” (Bourdieu), self-image, and “self-fashioning” (Stephen Greenblatt) are also important in the presentation of the motives of the cultural transmitter and their literary preferences. We need to understand why a cultural transmitter selects a certain author and why they translate certain texts and not others. On the basis of an investigation of the entries, I came to the conclusion that plots are used and they are supported by strings: the metaphors of the pioneer, the discoverer, and the explorer (Broomans, 2016). The clerk metaphor is not used. Without doubt, a meta-literary historical understanding is essential when writing transnational literary history.

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