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## Fashioning ‘Belgian’ Literature and Cultural Mediatorship in the *Journal littéraire et politique des Pays-Bas autrichiens* (1786)

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# Fashioning ‘Belgian’ Literature and Cultural Mediatorship in the *Journal littéraire et politique des Pays-Bas autrichiens* (1786)

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## ABSTRACT

The present study re-examines the underexplored region of the eighteenth-century Southern Netherlands as a multilingual contact zone, one that is open to and affected by numerous transfers from neighbouring, more established cultures through the mediation of various actors. Embedded in a larger project on (literary) journals and their role in the shaping of a proto-Belgian literature before 1830, this article presents the case study of a short-lived Brussels periodical, founded by the French émigré Jean-Baptiste Lesbroussart (1747–1818). With his *Journal littéraire et politique des Pays-Bas autrichiens* (1786), Lesbroussart created a literary journal that presented itself as fundamentally reader-oriented. By taking into consideration Lesbroussart’s agency as a cultural mediator, we lay bare three levels of mediation informing his *Journal*: (1) his institutional mediatorship, or the entanglement of the networks in which he was involved, his intended readership, and the didactic goals of his journal; (2) his aesthetic and ideological mediatorship, meaning the structure and composition of his journal as well as the editorial strategies revealing a reader-oriented strategy; and (3) his cultural mediatorship, or his self-defined role as translator and the emphasis he puts on transfer and translation as means of cultural identity construction. By doing so, our case-study provides a first stepping-stone towards a more encompassing study, and thus it enables new insights into the circulation, production, and networks of eighteenth-century literary culture in the Southern Netherlands.

## KEYWORDS

journal, eighteenth century, cultural mediator, poetics, networks

Ce n'est pas cependant que les arrêts d'un écrivain périodiste mettent le sceau de la réprobation ou de la gloire à la réputation d'un ouvrage. Il arrive souvent au contraire que le Public éclairé appelle des jugemens portés par la flatterie ou la mauvaise foi des critiques mais ces jugemens, quand ils ont l'impartialité pour base, [...] servent au moins à guider le lecteur dans celui qu'il doit porter de l'ouvrage dont on lui révèle les beautés ou les défauts.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt is taken from the prospectus of the *Journal littéraire et politique des Pays-Bas autrichiens*, one of the first literary journals to be published in the Southern Netherlands, a region that roughly coincides with Belgium today. Despite its brief existence – it ran for a mere six months in 1786 – the journal is a unique document that provides insight into an hitherto underexplored domain: literary culture and the role of the press in the development of a proto-Belgian imagined community.<sup>2</sup>

The journal appeared at a time when Belgium was part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire, a few years before the Brabant Revolution of 1789 would lead to a (brief) period of independence (1790).<sup>3</sup> In a period of growing opposition and political unrest, it was supportive of the Austrian regime and, perhaps because of this, only ran to twenty-seven issues. As the journal's title indicates, it aspired to be *politique* as well as *littéraire*. In the absence of strict divisions between the disciplines of intellectual activity, many journals of that time were hybrid in composition, with sections devoted to *belles-lettres* appearing alongside political, legal, or scientific information. In the prospectus, the statement of intention which provided readers a preview of what was to come, the *écrivain périodiste* Jean-Baptiste Lesbroussart (1747–1818) demonstrated an acute awareness of literature's malleable and multifarious role.<sup>4</sup> In the midst of a political, social, and cultural revolution, he founded one of the region's first literary journals, with a clear sense of how his self-proclaimed *ouvrage périodique* could nurture, even define, the cultural interests of his reading public.

Of course, the story of Lesbroussart and his attempts at creating a platform for cultural promotion is anything but exceptional against the backdrop of the European Enlightenment and an international periodical press that had significantly impacted

- 1 'However, it is not the judgment of a periodical writer who puts a seal of disapproval or glory on a work's reputation. On the contrary, it often happens that the enlightened public calls for judgments made by critics' flattery or bad faith; but these judgments, when they have impartiality as a basis, [...] serve at least to guide the reader in what they should take from the work, of which the beauties and flaws are revealed to them.' (Prospectus, p. 1–2) All translations into English are ours.
- 2 Jerom Vercruyse, 'Journalistes et journaux', *Études sur le XVIIIe siècle*, 4 (1977), 117–27; Jerom Vercruyse, 'Journal littéraire et politique des Pays-Bas autrichiens', in *Dictionnaire des journaux, 1600–1789*, ed. by Jean Sgard (Paris: Universitas, 1991; digital edition 2015–21).
- 3 The term 'Southern Netherlands' refers to the southern part of the Low Countries, roughly corresponding to present-day Belgium. As for most of the eighteenth century they were part of the Austrian-Habsburg Empire, they were also called 'the Austrian Netherlands'. We will use both terms as synonyms. For an overview of the formative events that solidified a sense of national awareness in the Southern Netherlands before 1830, see e.g. Janet Polasky, *Revolution in Brussels 1787–1793* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 1985); Johannes Koll, *Die belgische Nation: Patriotismus und Nationalbewusstsein in den Südlichen Niederlanden im späten 18. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Waxmann, 2003); Sébastien Dubois, *L'Invention de la Belgique: Genèse d'un État-Nation 1648–1830* (Brussels: Racine, 2005); and Jane Judge, *The United States of Belgium: The Story of the First Belgian Revolution* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018).
- 4 On Lesbroussart, see in addition to Vercruyse also e.g. Ferdinand Loise, 'Jean-Baptiste Lesbroussart', *Biographie nationale*, 15 vols (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1892–93), xii, pp. 31–32; Jozef Smeyers, *Vlaams taal- en volksbewustzijn in het Zuidnederlands geestesleven van de 18e eeuw* (Ghent: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, 1959), pp. 270–72; Tom Verschaffel, *Historici in de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden (1715–1794): Proeve van repertorium* (Brussel: FUSL. Studiecentrum 18e-eeuwse Zuidnederlandse Letterkunde, 1996), pp. 67–68.

the spread of news and ideas from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>5</sup> Also, much has been written about the role of literary journals as 'agents of change', with a focus that gradually widened from France and England to more peripheral regions.<sup>6</sup> What makes Lesbroussart's *Journal* particularly interesting, however, is that it attests to a burgeoning literary field in a cultural contact zone.<sup>7</sup> The traditional, yet restrictive monolingual and nationalist approach to literary history has discouraged specialists of early Dutch and Francophone literature from addressing the inherent cross-cultural and multilingual nature of the proto-Belgian literary landscape. More recently, research conducted by Lieven D'hulst and Reine Meylaerts, among others, has successfully unfolded the complex intersections and mediation techniques informing Belgium's literary history. Although their research has convincingly demonstrated the relevance of a cross-cultural approach (focusing on intra- and intercultural transfers) for nineteenth- and (early) twentieth-century Belgian literature, the question of literature's forms and functions before the country's independence remains largely unexplored.<sup>8</sup> Most specialists of Belgian literature have set 1830 as an official, institutionalized *terminus a quo*. Yet, it is equally important that we study the relationship between language, literature, and cultural identity before Belgium became an independent state.

This article provides the first in-depth case study of Lesbroussart's journal, focusing on his role as a cultural agent and mediator with the self-declared ambition to present his local readers with regular updates on cultural events and literary publications. As appears from the excerpt mentioned above, this role implied a particular perspective on journalism as both an informative ('révèle') and formative ('guider') practice which will also be further clarified. By way of introduction, we will first describe the political and cultural context in which Lesbroussart operated, as well as provide some theoretical background on the concept of the 'cultural mediator', before analysing the multiple levels of mediation in more detail. As such, this study should serve as a first stepping-stone towards a more encompassing study, and thus enable new insights into the literary production of the Southern Netherlands more generally.

5 Brussels witnessed an unprecedented growth of French-language press between 1753 and 1770, presumably caused by the targeted intervention of cultural agents active in government circles and the book trade. See Marion Brétéché, 'L'utilité publique des journaux au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (ou comment un ministre autrichien a gouverné par les médias entre 1753 et 1770 à Bruxelles)', *Revue d'histoire culturelle*, 2020.

6 For recent projects on the formative role of periodicals, see e.g. the ERC projects [WeChangEd](#) led by Marianne Van Remoortel at Ghent University and [MapModern](#), led by Diana Roig-Sanz at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. For a focus on other European regions, see e.g. Ellen Krefting, Aina Nøding, and Mona Ringvel, eds, *Eighteenth-Century Periodicals as Agents of Change: Perspectives on Northern Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

7 See Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession*, 91 (1991), 33–40, where the term was coined in the context of post-colonial research, referring to 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (p. 34). Although the Southern Netherlands (and their relationship with other, more established European cultures) functioned differently, the concept is useful in uncovering the presence of multiple zones within a region that is difficult to delineate, while also emphasizing their interconnectedness.

8 See also our previous research on nineteenth-century Belgium in e.g. Reine Meylaerts, Lieven D'hulst, and Tom Verschaffel, eds, *Cultural Mediation in Europe, 1800–1950* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018). For a long time, Jozef Smeyers' 'De Nederlandse letterkunde in het Zuiden', in *Geschiedenis van de letterkunde der Nederlanden. Vol. 6: De letterkunde in de achttiende eeuw in Noord en Zuid* (Antwerp: Standaard, 1975), pp. 329–598 was the only extensive overview, until Tom Verschaffel, *De weg naar het binnenland: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur, 1700–1800: de Zuidelijke Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2017).

## A Multilingual Contact Zone

First, it is important to recall that the Southern Low Countries' borders and political regime were subject to significant changes in the eighteenth century. The War of the Spanish Succession caused the rule over the country to shift from the Spanish to the Austrian branch of the Habsburg dynasty. While the rule of Maria Theresa (1748–80) was a period of peace and prosperity, her son Joseph II's rule, which began in 1780, marked the beginning of almost half a century of political turmoil and successive regime changes. Whereas Maria Theresa had introduced moderate reforms, Joseph soon followed a much more radical and rationalist approach. This provoked protest first in 1787 and later during the so-called Brabant Revolution in 1789, which led to the establishment of a short-lived independent state. The restoration of Austrian-Habsburg rule did not last long either, as the Southern Netherlands were conquered by Revolutionary France for the first time in 1792, then reconquered by Austria, before they fell back under Napoleonic rule in 1799.

This period of political turmoil was characterized by the gradual development of a national consciousness in the Southern Netherlands. Such an awareness was already present in intellectual circles, which were at that point supportive of the Austrian regime and its enlightened representatives in Brussels. Most of these proto-Belgian intellectuals shifted to the opposition against the autocratic rule of Joseph II. Political debate intensified and a broader public opinion took shape, which also resulted in the publication of an immense number of pamphlets, and the permeation of political content and debate in literary texts (such as theatre and poetry). Therefore, the development of literature cannot be disconnected from these societal and political changes. In addition, these shifts, although regionally anchored, were at least partially informed by the region's proximity to France on the one hand, and of the Northern Netherlands, which went through a similar transition, on the other. Despite the Southern Netherlands' long-time dependence on the Habsburg regime, sociocultural and literary life was indeed largely defined by the ideas imported from their close neighbours.

Likewise, the Southern Netherlands' multilingualism was clearly informed by it being a cultural contact zone. When Lesbroussart's *Journal* was published, the Southern Netherlands already were a multilingual region. The educated knew various languages, generally French and Latin (which still was the language of higher education) and, in the Northern part of the country, Dutch. Therefore, analysing processes of cultural transfer in the literature of that time and day implies not only looking at translation practices, given that the consumption of 'foreign' literature did not necessarily involve translation, but could also refer to the implementation of original (French or Dutch) texts from adjacent regions.

### Lesbroussart as 'Cultural Mediator'

Through its methodological focus, this article ties in with cultural transfer studies and their evolution towards a *histoire croisée* perspective to gain a more nuanced understanding of how concepts, ideas, and other literatures were received and embedded in the local

culture of the Southern Netherlands.<sup>9</sup> During the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a growing sense of awareness that the region's cultural identity was decidedly different from its neighbours, yet this identity remained complex and multi-layered. It is necessary, therefore, to examine transfer and mediation practices from a multipolar (rather than binary) point of view, analysing the fluidity of cultural identities and the agency of individuals.<sup>10</sup> This agency is perhaps best rendered by the concept of the 'cultural mediator', a term first coined by Taft in reference to a 'person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture'.<sup>11</sup> The term was introduced in Translation Studies and Cultural Transfer Studies during the 1980s. However, as Meylaerts and Roig-Sanz point out, the agency of cultural mediators has for a long time been studied as a single, non-complex role against the backdrop of 'monolingual national or local literary contexts'.<sup>12</sup> Only more recently have researchers begun to consider the mediator's potential as an agent carrying 'pivotal, multifaceted and interdisciplinary roles' across linguistic, artistic, and geographical borders.<sup>13</sup> Studying Lesbroussart's agency as a 'mediator' thus helps us move away from the traditional centre-periphery divide towards a more dynamic, multidirectional perspective on the circulation of texts and ideas as well as their formative potential for emerging literary cultures.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Lesbroussart's mediating activities bring into focus the connections between the different, (more or less) institutionalized roles he played within the wider network of his intellectual and cultural activities. Our research into the microhistory of cultural mediators thus also serves as a stepping-stone to a more nuanced history of the circulation, production, and networks of eighteenth-century literary culture in the Southern Netherlands.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, we will briefly present the journal's content and examine how Lesbroussart's intellectual and cultural background as well as his local networks informed his functioning as cultural mediator; next, we will look at how his mediatorship translates into the journal's literary programme, focusing more in particular on questions of aesthetics and composition; finally, we will demonstrate how Lesbroussart's mediatorship also takes form through a distinctive view on multilingualism and translation.

9 On analysing cultural transfers, see Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner, eds, *Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle)* (Paris: Recherche sur la Civilisation, 1988). On 'histoire croisée' or 'entangled history', see Michaël Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 30–50. The latter concept facilitates the integration of the role of cultural mediators in the study of transfers in that they are, themselves, at the crossroads of different languages and cultures and thus often the direct instigators of those transfers. *Histoire croisée* allows for a more hybrid, multipolar understanding of the literary field, rather than promoting the idea of mere 'influences' between one culture and another.

10 Lieven D'hulst et al., 'Towards a Multipolar Model of Cultural Mediators within Multicultural Spaces: Cultural Mediators in Belgium, 1830–1945', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 92 (2014), 1255–75.

11 Ronald Taft, 'The Role and Personality of the Mediator', in *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*, ed. by Stephen Bochner (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 53–88 (p. 53).

12 Reine Meylaerts and Diana Roig-Sanz, 'General introduction. Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators. Toward an Agent and Process-Oriented Approach', in *Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in 'Peripheral' Cultures: Customs Officers or Smugglers?*, ed. by Reine Meylaerts and Diana Roig-Sanz (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), pp. 1–37 (p. 8).

13 Ibid.; see also D'hulst et al.

14 See Meylaerts and Roig-Sanz, p. 5.

15 Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives in Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke, 2nd edn (Penn State University Press, 2001), pp. 97–119.

## Institutional Mediatorship

The *Journal des Pays-Bas*, published in-8, offered a weekly selection of cultural and political news, ‘tant étrangères que nationales’ [‘both foreign and national’] (Prospectus, p. 1).<sup>16</sup> Like many periodicals of the early modern period, there was little to no consistency in the titles of its different subsections: while some anecdotes were grouped under the heading ‘Anecdotes’, others appeared under ‘Traits Historiques’ or ‘Variétés’. These categories could also change over time. Articles were left unsigned, yet on many occasions Lesbroussart clearly expresses what could best be described as his authorial voice. The first issue came out on 1 January 1786. According to its title page, it was published in ‘Maestricht’. This is unlikely, however, considering that the prospectus, instructions for subscription, and announcements of new works that could be obtained from the printer Lemaire, all indicate that the work was more likely printed in Brussels. Although the journal appeared without privilege, it could not have been published without the explicit authorization of the government, indicating that Lesbroussart received the authorities’ tacit permission to publish his journal.<sup>17</sup> The print numbers and the geographical distribution of the journal remain unknown.<sup>18</sup>

Some information on the life and work of Jean-Baptiste Lesbroussart is necessary to interpret his functioning as a journalist. Although born in France, Lesbroussart left his native country in 1778 to pursue a career in education as a *professeur de rhétorique* in the Austrian Netherlands. He took an active interest in the educational reforms proposed by the government and in 1783, he published *De l’éducation belge*, a treatise in which he expressed his support of the government’s plans for secondary education reform.<sup>19</sup> Lesbroussart argued that education should be one of the government’s main concerns, allowing for the growth of patriotism from a young age and thus contributing to national unity.<sup>20</sup>

The same ideal of national awareness characterizes the *Journal*, which, according to the prospectus, aimed at being ‘un ouvrage qui, du centre des Pays-Bas autrichiens, se répandoit dans les villes & dans les campagnes’ [‘a work which would spread from the centre of the Austrian Netherlands to towns and the countryside’] (pp. 3–4). That centre was Brussels, the capital of the Duchy of Brabant and of the Austrian Netherlands as a whole. In the eighteenth century, the various provinces of the Austrian Netherlands were still formally autonomous, but they were governed by a single ruler, the Habsburg Empress or Emperor. Their policy opposed the remains of provincial particularism through administrative centralization and aspired to stimulate national awareness by means of culture and history. In their view, the Austrian Netherlands needed a history of their own, and so they actively organized the formal study of the country’s ‘national’ past among scholars.<sup>21</sup> As the idea of national unity slowly took hold, especially among

16 All quotations from the *Journal des Pays-Bas* are given as parenthetical references by page number. As was common in this period, loose issues were bound per year with continuous pagination.

17 See Brétéché. On the means of censorship in the Austrian Netherlands, see André Puttemans, *La Censure dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1935); Jerom Vercruysse, ‘Censure des livres et objections commerciales, Bruxelles, 1736’, *Lias*, 21 (1994), 249–56.

18 See Vercruysse, ‘Journal littéraire’.

19 On Lesbroussart’s role in secondary education reforms, see e.g. Sébastien Dubois, ‘Le premier manuel d’histoire de Belgique et l’enseignement de l’histoire nationale dans les collèges à la fin de l’Ancien Régime’, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, 80 (2002), 491–515, and ‘Essais sur l’éducation nationale et la réforme de l’enseignement secondaire dans les provinces belgiques à la fin du règne de Joseph II (1788)’, *Bulletin de la Commission royale d’Histoire*, 169 (2003), 163–290.

20 Jean-Baptiste Lesbroussart, *De l’éducation Belgique, ou Réflexions sur le plan d’études, adopté par sa majesté pour les collèges des Pays-Bas Autrichiens, suivies du développement du même plan dont ces réflexions forment l’apologie* (Brussels: Lemaire, 1783), pp. 16–17.

21 Tom Verschaffel, *De boed en de bond: Geschiedschrijving in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden 1715–1794* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), pp. 68–79, 169–73.

officials and intellectuals supporting the Habsburg regime, Brussels strengthened its position as the country's political and cultural capital. Lesbroussart's *Journal* was clearly inspired by his engagements in government circles. It supported the government's efforts and the impetus it wished to give to historical research: it drew attention to recently published dissertations on historical topics, the prizes awarded to (inter)national scholars or *litterati*, and more general information concerning the activities of the Academy.

While studying Lesbroussart's journal offers insight into the intricate connections between intellectuals and the establishment, it also sheds light on the presence of literary networks and *émigré* communities. The Southern Netherlands served as a temporary haven for journalists, writers, and intellectuals of all sorts.<sup>22</sup> The *Journal* reveals traces of a literary network of French authors, centred around the French poet Louis-Pierre Rouillé (1757–1844), whose poems appear in some of the *Journal's* first issues.<sup>23</sup> Rouillé was Lesbroussart's brother-in-law, and he would join him in the Southern Netherlands, closing off his career at the Université de Liège. In France, Rouillé had established friendships with French authors and intellectuals, including Jean-François Ducis, Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian, and Antoine Léonard Thomas, all of whom appear in the *Journal*.<sup>24</sup> Lesbroussart's son, Philippe (1781–1855), would become part of a literary, or rather journalistic, network as well: in 1817, he would go on to found *Le Mercure belge*, together with Frédéric de Reiffenberg (1795–1850) and Louis-Vincent Raoul (1770–1848).<sup>25</sup> Examining these social networks, and the (often foreign) authors that comprise them, helps us gain a more dynamic understanding of the history of (proto-) Belgian literature, as it took shape at the crossroads of other, more established literary traditions and through the personal and professional contacts between so-called cultural mediators.

The French origins of some of these journalists did not prevent them from actively shaping the literary landscape of the Southern Netherlands. The *Journal* was infused with the ambition to promote a sense of cultural identity, with Brussels as a primary centre of activity. In the prospectus, Lesbroussart expressed his regret that Brussels was 'privée d'un avantage dont jouissent tant d'autres villes qui lui sont de beaucoup inférieurs en grandeur & en opulence' ['deprived of a benefit enjoyed by so many other cities, much inferior to Brussels in size and opulence'] (p. 2). The journal's goal was to provide guidance, inspiration, and instruction for the readers of the Austrian Netherlands and to create what Benedict Anderson coined an 'imagined community'.<sup>26</sup> To this end, Lesbroussart shared descriptions of local monuments with his readers, included short biographies of prominent figures from the national past, and wrote anecdotes on the country's eventful history and political events. Far from restricting himself to 'high' literature, Lesbroussart filled the pages of his *Journal* with contributions on all kinds of topics and issues. The diversity of subjects covered was extensive, ranging from medicine and anatomy to pedagogy, history, philology, and the visual arts, to name but a few. The journal's large thematic scope, however, did not imply that all domains received an equal amount of attention. Its composition reflected Lesbroussart's intellectual

22 Beatrijs Vanacker and Tom Verschaffel, 'Cultural Transfer and Multilingualism: Periodicals and the Shaping of a "Proto-Belgian" Literature in the Eighteenth Century', *Interférences littéraires*, 26 (2022), 108–32.

23 For a close reading of one of Rouillé's poems, see Van Puyvelde's blogpost 'Veiled Meanings: Poetry as Ideological Intervention in the *Journal des Pays-Bas autrichiens* (1786)' [accessed 10 October 2022].

24 See the reference to a meeting of the *Académie française* in memory of Thomas (p. 175), a review of Florian's epic novel *Numa Pompilius, second roi de Rome* (p. 253), and a couple of verses by Ducis (p. 268).

25 Valentin Saint Jean, 'Le publiciste de la Belgique hollandaise: entre écrivain et journaliste', *Textyles*, 39 (2010), 17–26.

26 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).



background and supported his goal of creating a shared history for the people of the Austrian Netherlands. This explains the relatively ample space for historiography and related historical disciplines, as well as the large amounts of historical content in the section entitled 'Variétés', which contained anecdotes and brief notices of all kinds. Some entries even occupied the space of several issues, such as the French translation of Sepúlveda's chronicle on Emperor Charles V, featured in no less than eight issues. Even if the *Journal* was driven by a desire to spread knowledge and culture in all its forms, it was not without its bias.

### Aesthetic and Ideological Mediatorship

As a cultural product designed for a proto-Belgian readership, Lesbroussart's *Journal* was not an intellectual journal in the sense that Lesbroussart used it to actively participate in philosophical debates with colleagues abroad. Rather, it was designed in view of cultural mediation, advertising the works of others to guide his readers so that they, 'de concert avec le Journaliste' ['together with the Journalist'] (p. 1), would come to a better understanding of contemporary (inter)national debates. In what follows, we will examine how Lesbroussart's self-appointed role as mediator manifests itself both in terms of content (through his selection and readings) and on a formal level (through the journal's general structure and style).

The prospectus states that the journal was meant for 'l'homme de lettres & pour l'amateur', for 'ceux [...] pour qui la connoissance des nouveautés littéraires & des découvertes dans les sciences & dans les arts, est un besoin ou un plaisir' ['the man of letters and the amateur; those [...] for whom the knowledge of literary novelties and discoveries in the sciences and arts, is a necessity or pleasure'] (p. 2). The *Journal* thus, in theory at least, aimed for a large reading public, one that consisted not only of erudite and specialized readers, but also non-specialized amateurs.

The prospectus also shows that Lesbroussart's view on journal-writing was strongly reader-oriented. From the very first sentence, Lesbroussart makes his intentions clear, stating that a journal, 'sous quelque titre qu'il soit annoncé, [...] est destiné à faire connoître les découvertes dans les sciences et les productions nouvelles de l'esprit' ['under whatever title it is announced, (...) is meant to make known scientific discoveries and new works of the mind'] (p. 1). The expression *ouvrage périodique* itself, with which he refers to his work, highlights its periodicity, emphasizing its status as a means of communication between author and reader. The *Journal's* periodicity thus supported Lesbroussart's role as a cultural mediator, allowing him to stay on top of political and literary events in the Southern Netherlands, even if many of these references remained rather implicit, entangled in his lengthy book reviews.

For Lesbroussart, it was a journalist's duty to balance opinions and to encourage public discussions on contemporary issues. To do this successfully, he ostentatiously defined a modest role for himself as a reporter whose judgment was placed under permanent scrutiny of his readers, who retained 'le droit imprescriptible de le juger à son tour' ['the imprescriptible right to judge it in turn'] (p. 2). The reader in Lesbroussart's mind was not just a passive receptor of information, but actively engaged with the material laid before them. He assigned an even more active role to his readership by publishing their letters (see below), including original poetry and personal commentaries. If some of these letters appear fictitious, they nevertheless contribute to the overall objective of creating a dialogue with active receptors of information. For Lesbroussart, this mediating role appeared under the aegis of Horace's *utile dulci* (the useful with the agreeable). This common rhetorical principle served as the journal's motto, and thus functioned as the didactic lens through which he encouraged others to read it. In a

way, the Horatian principle is invoked as a guarantee for the literary contract between journalist and reader outlined in the prospectus: it is a journalist's duty to guide the reader so that they can gain a better understanding of what the Republic of Letters has to offer.

It comes as no surprise that book reviews make up the bulk of the journal's content. With these reviews, Lesbroussart could present the content of recent publications, emphasize their significance for various kinds of readers, and develop his position as a mediator. Much like any author of the period, Lesbroussart wished to educate his readership without boring them, which also explains why he discussed a considerable variety of topics. Offering detailed reading of texts on science, art, politics, and even religion, the *Journal* covered many domains, striving to cater to the tastes of a diverse reading public. While some publications were considered to be more relevant for young people, or for 'tous les bons pères' ['all good fathers'] (p. 123) responsible for the education of their children, others were useful for 'ceux qui aiment la culture des fleurs' ['those who love the cultivation of flowers'] (p. 132), 'ceux qui aiment les arts' ['those who love the arts'] (p. 163), or 'les propriétaires, les fabricans' ['the owners, the manufacturers'] (pp. 23, 375). The underlying principle of variety and its usefulness for the reader is also acknowledged in some of the (fictitious) letters sent in by the journal's readers: 'En ne vous bornant point exclusivement aux productions littéraires, vous répandez dans votre Journal cette diversité qui doit en être l'âme & qui fait la devise de bien des gens' (p. 310).<sup>27</sup>

Precisely because he did not see himself as an active participant, but rather as a mediator, Lesbroussart hardly ever criticized the books he reviewed, nor did he attack their authors. In fact, his reviews were almost exclusively positive. Most of his comments were recommendations, put in laudatory terms. While one work was 'un des ouvrages du siècle qui ont le plus réussi' ['one of the most successful works of the century'] (p. 244), others were 'des bienfaits envers le public' ['blessings for the public'] (p. 406), 'un des meilleurs ouvrages dont la littérature allemande ait été enrichie l'année dernière' ['one of the best works to have enriched German literature the past year'] (p. 301), or characterized by (an) 'extrême utilité' ['utmost utility'] (p. 421). Occasionally, there was room for criticism on aesthetic or moral grounds, but even then it was generally put in cautious terms. In the prospectus, Lesbroussart emphasized that whatever could damage an author's reputation 'sera absolument exclu de ce Journal' ['will be absolutely excluded from this Journal'] (p. 3). He clearly did not consider it his task to viciously attack other authors or their books, since his reviews were primarily intended to support the didactic programme of his journal.

His predilection for positive and mild criticism could also be due to his wish to respect the principle of impartiality (see above), although his copious, idiosyncratic selection of anecdotes necessarily reveals a certain bias. Lesbroussart, for instance, included interpretations, usually at the beginning or end of a piece, to designate the anecdote's ideological purpose. When introducing a historical anecdote, for instance, he provided his readers with the moral lesson they should draw from it: '[L'évènement] que nous allons rappeler, sert à prouver combien les temps sont changés & combien la paix, dont jouissent les peuples sous un gouvernement sage & modéré, est préférable aux administrations orageuses des siècles passés' (p. 99).<sup>28</sup> The structure of his journal's literary section further enhanced this ideal of impartiality: by leaving out transitions and

27 'By not limiting yourself exclusively to literary production, you add a diversity to your journal that should constitute its core & serves as a motto for a good many people.'

28 '[The event] which we will now recall, serves to show how times have changed & to what extent peace, enjoyed by the people under wise & moderate government, is preferable to the stormy administrations of the past centuries.'

creating different sections that made for a coherent, seemingly objective textual space, Lesbroussart's judgment came across as self-evident, or even imposed by pre-established categories, rather than informed by his personal aesthetic views.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, Lesbroussart's structural and stylistic principles (see above) testified to his conviction that a journal functioned as an artistic work operating in accordance with its own internal logic. Hence, the *Journal*, much like other literary journals of the period, should not be studied as a historical document only. It was meant to be a stylistically pleasing, literary object, both on a macro- and a micro-structural level. From the outset, Lesbroussart showed his active engagement with his journal's internal logic, explicitly commenting on it in the fourth issue through an editor's note:

Pour ne point interrompre la suite des objets littéraires & historiques qui doivent entrer dans ce journal, nous nous sommes déterminés [...] à placer désormais, au commencement de chaque numéro, les pièces fugitives [...], comme nous réserverons, pour les dernières pages, tout ce qui appartiendra directement au pays. (p. 51)<sup>30</sup>

Lesbroussart visibly intended to offer a coherent text comprised of different sections, actively reflecting upon his journalistic stance and guiding his readership. To some extent, this self-referential nature of his *Journal* could be due to the fact that the literary journal at that time did not (yet) have any fixed format and thus provoked reflections and self-criticism from its creator. Yet, it was also another way of exerting his self-proclaimed mediating role and engaging with his readership.

In the end, Lesbroussart clearly saw his *Journal* as a highly personal work, one that he could modify at will. On multiple occasions, and despite his self-proclaimed impartiality, his own voice came through. As mentioned earlier, Lesbroussart regularly appended general remarks to his reviews to justify the selection of his material. These ranged from introductory comments on the genre of the text he would be reviewing, to short historical overviews of the subject at hand. He also often digressed, positioning himself as a guide who decides on the interpretative framework best suited for the work, be it ideological or aesthetic. In his review of *Le bonheur dans les campagnes*, for instance, Lesbroussart framed it by inscribing the book in the bucolic tradition through a long quotation from Virgil's *Georgics*. The book was then evaluated according to the appropriate genre conventions: 'Ce n'est point sous ce point de vue, qu'il faut considérer l'ouvrage que nous annonçons. L'auteur a vu, dans les campagnes, autre chose qu'une félicité imaginaire & poétique.' From his perspective, the *Georgics* was a bucolic 'rêve poétique' ['poetic dream'] (p. 73) that embellishes life. Based on this elaborate personal interpretative framework he then unfolded his critique of *Le bonheur dans les campagnes*. As a critic, Lesbroussart often inserted excerpts from other sources than the book he was reviewing, in order to provide the reader with a broader literary framework, thus accomplishing his didactic duty as a mediator all while pushing through his own aesthetic views.

29 Mostly in spectators, a periodical genre typical for the eighteenth century, transitions between different pieces of information were a way to create a personal, subjective and literary text. See, among others, Shelly Charles, *Récit et réflexion: poétique de l'hétérogène dans Le Pour et contre de Prévost* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1992). Lesbroussart, by distinguishing different sections without interlinking them offers a more fixed construction, creating the illusion of a more objective text, emphasizing its communicational values.

30 'So as to not interrupt the series of literary & historical events which should appear in this journal, we have determined, [...] from now on, to insert fugitive pieces [...] at the beginning of each issue, as we will reserve all that which is of direct interest to the country, for the final pages.'

Furthermore, the inconsistent alternating between 'dit-il' ['said he'] and 'dis-je' ['said I'] and the use of the present tense for both his account of a book's content and his own personal commentaries created a confusion of voices: that of the author and that of the critic. In a review on a travel journal, for instance, the voices of Lesbroussart and the author of the commented work gradually fused into a new discourse, seemingly in the rhetorical emulative tradition. After describing the beauty of Swiss landscapes, the emulator exclaimed: 'tous ceux qui ont parlé de la Suisse [...] n'ont pu voir, sans enthousiasme, le tableau sublime qu'[elle] offre aux yeux [...] Quel spectacle en effet!'<sup>31</sup> This confusion of voices did not go unnoticed by his readership, as appears from some of the letters, and even provoked comments on authorship and authority by Lesbroussart himself: 'tout ce que nous venons de dire des troubles civils de la ville de Gand, est *moins extrait que traduit* de Sépulveda; ainsi, nous ne sommes point responsable des circonstances qu'il a pu omettre.' (pp. 167–68, our emphasis)<sup>32</sup> To what extent was Lesbroussart speaking? Was he commenting on the author's ideas, or inserting his own? He was even forced to repeat this point later on: 'Dans toute la description que j'ai faite de ce triste démêlé, il n'y a pas un membre de phrase qui m'appartienne. *Je n'ai été que copiste & copiste fidèle*' (p. 220, our emphasis).<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, in these examples Lesbroussart used the argument of translation, in terms of a neutral rendering rather than a mediation of texts, in order to deny claims of subjectivity regarding his mediatorship.

The discursive interweaving of voices also shows us how different roles overlap, with Lesbroussart's profession as a journalist and as a *professeur de rhétorique* clearly intersecting in the *Journal*. Relying on rhetorical principles, such as translation, *aemulatio*, and *imitatio*, Lesbroussart allowed himself to transmit works and news, but also to create new literary texts in his journal. This play with different registers could also have served to please his readers. In his review of a text on Saint Teresa, Lesbroussart stated his admiration for the author's eloquence, praising the work's clarity of presentation, emotional veracity, and vigour of style: 'son éloquence est vraie, parce que les vertus qu'il célèbre sont pures, sincères et appuyées sur une base sainte & inébranlable.' (p. 71)<sup>34</sup> Yet, as a critic, Lesbroussart also relied on his own rhetorical sensibilities to recommend this work. He wrote parts of his review in verses, parodying odes by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, who, interestingly, was not cited as a source, although the trained ear would know the lines by heart:<sup>35</sup>

Il déploie toutes les ressources et toutes les richesses de l'art oratoire. Chez lui,  
L'éloquence des paroles  
N'est *point* l'art ingénieux  
D'amuser nos sens frivoles,  
Par des sons harmonieux. (p. 71)

Through this versified commentary, Lesbroussart underlined the qualities of the work he recommended, while displaying his own writerly skills.

31 'All those who have discussed Switzerland [...] could not see, without enthusiasm, the sublime picture that [it] offers the eyes [...]. What a spectacle indeed!' ('Voyage de M. De Mayer en Suisse', p. 7)

32 'All that we have just said of the civil unrest in the city of Ghent is less extracted than translated from Sépulveda; thus, we are not responsible for the circumstances which he may have omitted.'

33 'In the entire description I have just given, there is not a single phrase that is mine. I have been nothing but a copyist and a faithful copyist at that.'

34 'His eloquence is true, because the virtues he celebrates are pure, sincere, and built upon a holy & unshakeable foundation.'

35 Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1670–1741) was a French classicist poet and playwright, best known for his epigrams.

## Cultural Mediatorship

With the idea of Lesbroussart as cultural mediator in mind, we will consider how this confusion of voices relates to his functioning as translator. As mentioned earlier, the *Journal* presented itself explicitly as a national journal, providing an overview of what was published in the Southern Netherlands. Lesbroussart announced that his journal would provide ample space for works published in the Austrian Netherlands, ‘quand elles seront marquées du sceau de l’utilité publique & qu’elles pourront honorer la patrie’ [‘if they are marked with the seal of public utility & honour the country’] (p. 4). Both in the prospectus (see above) and his final editorial note, Lesbroussart’s focus lied heavily with the promotion and divulgation of *national* literature (‘je me promis d’y faire connoître sur-tout les ouvrages nationaux’ [‘I promised myself to discuss, above all, national works’] [p. 442]). Yet, when comparing these statements to the journal’s actual content, the exact meaning and scope of the selected works proves difficult to define. On the one hand, Lesbroussart repeatedly inserted accounts on historical anecdotes and events, adapted to the tastes of his intended audience and in which ‘les Flamands’ [‘Flemings’] were often allotted a dynamic role. Nearly every issue featured excerpts of poetry written in French, but occasionally these were written in Latin, in which case they were accompanied by French translations. These poems often focused on Brussels, though the journal also advertised books published elsewhere in the Southern Netherlands. His intended audience clearly transcended the Brussels-located, French-speaking elite.

To illustrate this, we can look more closely at the issue published on 4 March, which celebrates the prize-winning essay by the ‘Belgian Muse’ Marie-Caroline Murray, rewarded by the Theresian Academy. Murray was an accomplished writer and translator who was well-known in the Brussels *Beau Monde* and diplomatic circles.<sup>36</sup> Her work and career, in Lesbroussart’s words, are said to illustrate a more general transcultural evolution, one which witnessed a rise in female writers: ‘dans aucun temps peut-être, l’on n’a vu autant de femmes cultiver les lettres avec succès.’ [‘in no other period, perhaps, have we seen so many women successfully cultivate literature.’] (p. 163) At the same time, her success was connected to a ‘proto-Belgian’ genealogy of female writers, which curiously included both the famous Dutch scholar Anna Maria van Schurman and Anna Bijns, born in Antwerp. While Lesbroussart indeed directed his attention towards the Southern Netherlands in his prospectus, his understanding of the region’s cultural and language boundaries clearly varied significantly throughout the journal.

From early on, the promotion of what could be considered ‘proto-Belgian’ literature was also complemented with a particular interest in foreign literatures, regularly cited as models and, more generally, as sources of inspiration to local writers. To some extent, the intended focus on ‘national’ publications — which we discussed in previous sections — implies making a distinction between ‘local’ and ‘foreign’ cultural production. National consciousness, certainly in its early development, takes shape through an ambition to distinguish the ‘self’, in particular from neighbouring countries, with literary production then considered to be the specific outcome of a well-defined cultural identity. In the *Journal* this occurs increasingly, taking the form of lengthy articles devoted to overviews and assessments of the literary output of different countries: ‘Un coup d’œil, quelque rapide qu’il fût, sur les ouvrages accueillis ou seulement publiés chaque année, dans un pays, seroit peut-être le meilleur moyen de porter un jugement sur la marche

36 On Murray, see, among others Jeroom Vercruyssen, ‘Le Portefeuille de Marie-Caroline Murray: Lettres et vers inédits du Prince de Ligne’, in *Nouvelles annales Prince de Ligne*, 11 (1997), 55–139.

de l'esprit humain dans chaque contrée.' (p. 263)<sup>37</sup> Over the mere six months that the journal was published, Lesbroussart ends up discussing foreign literature from a great variety of source languages and genres: as for the *belles-lettres*, Lesbroussart includes reviews on English works (Pope, Fielding, Richardson), but also German (Klopstock, Goethe), Latin, and to a lesser extent Italian, Spanish, and (Northern or Southern) Dutch works. Even if these works were available in Brussels, most of them even in the journal editor's shop, they were still foreign. Possibly, the endogenous cultural production of the Austrian Netherlands was too limited or insufficiently interesting for Lesbroussart to fill his journal. The journal was thus less a periodical *about* the Austrian Netherlands than one *for* the Austrian Netherlands; it was primarily meant to be a service to domestic readers and nurture their cultural education.

More importantly, even if this focus on the innovative potential of foreign literature is shared with many other literary journals of the European Enlightenment, Lesbroussart's take on literary exchange stands out because of his particular interest in translation as a means for cultural transfer as such. His conviction that translation was crucial for the wider circulation of texts and ideas is illustrated in his review of Willem van Haren's epic poem *De Gevalen van Friso*, translated into French by Hendrik Jansen (*Les aventures de Friso, Roi des Gaugarides & des Prasiates*, 1785). Lesbroussart wrote an exceptionally enthusiastic account on the French translation ('une des productions les plus célèbres de la littérature moderne hollandoise' ['one of the most famous productions of modern Dutch literature'] [p. 88]), which he clearly valued for its beneficial effect in heightening the visibility and circulation of Dutch literature, similar to the import of German and English literature into French: 'en éveillant le gout de la littérature hollandoise, chez une nation active, & prompte à s'enrichir des richesses de ses voisins' ['by awakening a taste for Dutch literature in a nation which is dynamic & eager to enrich itself with the riches of its neighbours'] (p. 88). Lesbroussart's comments again illustrate his view on the crucial role of literature, and its 'circulation', in the building of cultural community. When reviewing the *Histoire des Allemands* by Michaël Ignaz Schmidt, for instance, he also highlighted that 'nous avons une origine commune: leurs pères furent les nôtres' ['we have a common origin: their fathers are ours'] (p. 427), explaining that 'les Provinces Beligiques ne peuvent séparer leur histoire de celle de l'Allemagne' ['the Dutch provinces cannot separate their history from that of Germany'] (p. 427). Interestingly, Lesbroussart also valued translation as a literary activity in itself: many texts were judged *as translations*, with the name of the translator being mentioned explicitly and with extensive comments on their 'faithfulness' towards the original, in terms of style or content. Regarding *Histoire des Allemands*, for instance, Lesbroussart praised the German translator for their knowledge of the source language, which prevented them from the common fault of misinterpretation of the author ('faire aucune méprise à l'Auteur', p. 428). Moreover, Lesbroussart also positioned *himself* as a translator, not in the least because he tirelessly provided French translations for the titles of the foreign (including Northern-Dutch) works he reviewed.

Finally, there seems to be a formative relation between literature, translation, and language choice underpinning Lesbroussart's cultural programme: in several reviews, he unapologetically promoted the use of vernacular languages over Latin as *lingua franca*.<sup>38</sup> While often including more scientific and academic works in Neo-Latin, in the case of historical dissertations, for instance, he pleaded in favour of the use of vernacular languages: 'lorsque dans un ouvrage il faudra employer des termes

37 'One glance, no matter how superficial, at the works received or published each year in a country would perhaps be the best way to judge the progress of *l'esprit humain* in each region.'

38 See also Lesbroussart, *De l'éducation Belgique*, and Dubois, 'Essais sur l'éducation nationale'.

techniques, à demi barbares & créés par le besoin, les langues vivantes nous semblent devoir mériter la préférence.’ [‘when it is necessary to use technical terms in a work, half barbaric & created by necessity, we think modern languages should be preferred.’] (p. 14) He was also acutely aware of the linguistic reality of his local readers. Literature in the Southern Low Countries, as promoted by Lesbroussart, was not just variable in cultural and geographical terms. It was also decidedly, and perhaps necessarily, hybrid and multilingual. For instance, he valorized the emancipatory role of translation in addressing a local audience, a conviction clearly inspired by a profound familiarity with the (constantly evolving) multilingual reality in the Southern Netherlands. In several reviews focusing on works by local writers, he underlined the importance of addressing both the French-speaking elite and the wider public, whose knowledge of French, he implied, had become less refined: ‘l’auteur, pour mieux servir son pays, a donné deux éditions de son ouvrage, l’une en François & l’autre en Flamand.’ [‘to better serve his country, the author has provided two editions of his work, one in French & the other in Flemish’] (p. 38). This is best illustrated in his review of the *Chronyke van Vlaenderen*, which was first written in French but of which he praised the Flemish translation precisely for its orientation towards a more local reading public, thereby laying bare distinct levels of proficiency requiring consideration by authors:

Ceux qui entendent les deux langues, [...] sauront particulièrement gré au traducteur de son entreprise. Quelques-uns d’eux peu familiarisés peut-etre avec le vieux Style François, liront Oudegherst [the author of the *Chronyke*] avec moins de fatigue & plus de plaisir dans leur langue maternelle. Quant à ceux qui ignorent la langue [...], c’est un vrai présent que leur a fait le traducteur,

yet also adding that ‘on regrette néanmoins que les textes Latins & les épitaphes soient si mal soignés dans la traduction.’ (p. 371)<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Focusing on different, intertwining levels of agency in Lesbroussart’s work as a cultural mediator, this article provides a first contribution to a revised history of the literary culture of the Southern Low Countries, i.e. before Belgium’s independence in 1830. We aim for a history which, through its multilingual, multipolar, and transcultural perspective, seeks to complement and extend the rich secondary literature on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Belgian literature, while taking into account the particularities of its eighteenth-century context in terms of politics and aesthetics (and their inevitable intertwinement). Within eighteenth-century studies more broadly, shedding new light on the underexplored cultural contact zone of the Southern Netherlands will no doubt contribute to a further nuancing of a scholarly tradition which for a long time focused, and to a certain extent continues to focus, on France and England as epicentres of Enlightenment thought. In recent years, the centre-periphery divide has been increasingly challenged through an emphasis on so-called ‘peripheral’ zones, not just as active cultural transmitters of Enlightenment thought but also as breeding grounds

39 ‘Those who understand both languages [...] will be particularly grateful to the translator for his work. Some of them, perhaps unfamiliar with the old French style, will read Oudegherst [the author of the *Chronyke*] with less fatigue & more pleasure in their mother tongue. As for those who do not know the language [...], the translator has given them a true gift.’ ‘We nevertheless regret that the Latin texts & epitaphs are treated so poorly in the translation.’

for progress and innovation in their own right.<sup>40</sup> Within this wider research programme, our microhistory of Lesbroussart's agency as cultural mediator in the *Journal* provides nuanced, albeit selective, insights into literary practice in the Southern Low Countries, e.g. its evolving multilingual nature, its orientation towards foreign literatures, and, at the same time, its increasing focus on a literature 'of its own' which, for many reasons, remained difficult to delineate.

Evidently, one could easily set aside the relevance of such a limited sample, especially given the journal's short-lived nature (which in turn prompts us to question the effectiveness of Lesbroussart's mediation strategies). Yet, moving beyond the limited scope of Lesbroussart's *Journal* by including the intellectual and institutional networks informing his agency helps to widen the scope of our findings, indeed revealing a glimpse of the bigger picture and pointing at some key factors that remain to be further explored. At the same time, this very need for contextualization serves to remind us that any study with the ambition to thoroughly analyse this uncharted territory will require the researcher to move beyond the corpus of literary periodicals, to include the specific agency of other actors in the region and to chart the circulation of both foreign and local literary works more widely, be it in their original form or in translation.

Against this backdrop, our choice to focus on Lesbroussart's positioning, both in and through his journal, nevertheless allows us to uncover, and better appreciate, the informative value of his individual agency. As this article has shown, Lesbroussart's voice as a mediator is undoubtedly a key element of the *Journal*, through its constant oscillation between the individual and the collective, the reclaimed search for objective truth, and the celebration of personal engagement. The *Journal* testifies to its author's keen awareness of how a journal could be used to actively engage with, or even define the cultural interests of an emergent reading community. While Lesbroussart's views on literature and its functioning within a multilingual cultural community resonate perhaps most in his selection of historiographical sources and translated literature, it is also by examining these choices, and the roles (professor, journalist, editor, translator) which informed them, that we can come to a better understanding of the cultural, political, and institutional backdrop against which they took shape.

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40 See e.g. Richard Butterwick and Simon Davies, *Peripheries of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2008).



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