

**Adelheid Ceulemans**

**THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE**

**HISTORICAL HEROES IN FLEMISH LYRICAL DRAMAS  
OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1830-1914)**

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**Introduction**

In 1792 the Théâtre du Vaudeville opened its doors in Paris. The fact that a separate theatre house was built for staging (only) *vaudevilles*, illustrates this genre's immense popularity in France at the end of the eighteenth century. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, playwrights in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands slowly got acquainted with the phenomenon. From 1830-1840 onwards the genre of the 'lyrical drama', rooted in French *vaudeville* and *opéra comique*, flourished in Flemish theatre houses.<sup>1</sup> The staging of lyrical dramas drew full houses – it was a very popular kind of entertainment in nineteenth-century Flanders. The interdisciplinary nature of lyrical dramas (at the crossroads of poetry, music and drama) renders them highly interesting subjects for research. Until now, however, these genres have garnered little scholarly attention. In international research, lyrical dramas, especially French melodramas, have received attention from literary scholars, historians and musicologists in recent years.<sup>2</sup> The lack of scholarly attention for these genres in Flanders is remarkable, not least as the connection between music and literature was strikingly evident in nineteenth-century Flemish



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culture. The few studies into the matter corroborate this, as do the extensive correspondence between authors and composers (largely unexplored archival material) and the very existence of ‘mixed genres’ (such as lyrical dramas) on which authors and composers cooperated.<sup>3</sup> The dearth of scholarly interest for this genre is partly due to the widespread, markedly negative image of nineteenth-century culture, which has long constrained scholars from studying nineteenth-century (Flemish) music and literature in any unbiased, open-minded and effective way.<sup>4</sup>

This paper summarises the results of a literary-textual analysis of twenty-five Flemish music theatre works (or lyrical dramas) of the ‘long’ nineteenth century: from Belgian independence in 1830 until 1914, the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>5</sup> All twenty-five music theatre works (cf. Annex) are published in Flanders and written in Dutch by Flemish authors. The playwrights are, among others, Domien Sleenckx, Emmanuel van Driessche, Hippoliet van Peene, Julius Hoste, Karel Onderet, Napoleon Destanberg, Prudens van Duyse, Emmanuel Rosseels, Rafael Verhulst and Jacob Kats. The composers, not always mentioned on the title page, include Karel Miry, Jan van den Acker, Florimond van Duyse, Emiel Wambach and Peter Benoit. Furthermore, the selected lyrical dramas have in common that they are all set in the past: the protagonists are historical heroes, both political figures (as Jacob van Artevelde) and artists (as Anthony van Dyck). The present article investigates how these lyrical dramas contributed to the discursive construction of a national, Belgian identity and a subnational, Flemish one through the use (or manipulation) of the past, and how historical heroes were fit into nationalising strategies. Special attention will be paid to the use of stereotypes and clichés in characterising the historical protagonists, and to specific features of the lyrical dramas concerning style and content.

Not only does this paper focus on a genre that has been notably understudied (both in literary and music history); it also brings in a literary-textual approach into the still mainly historically oriented nationalism research of the nineteenth century (especially in Flanders). The methodological approach of nationalism research has, until now, generally remained sociological and historical: social scientists have

studied the conceptualisation of nationalism; historians have analysed the rise of nation states and of nationalist ideas, thereby examining concrete manifestations of nationalism, for example in the visual arts.<sup>6</sup> Recently, some international publications have tended to integrate new perspectives in nationalism research, such as a comparative and Europe-interdisciplinary point of view or music nationalism, a relatively new field in nationalism research.<sup>7</sup> In Flemish-Belgian nationalism research (concerning the nineteenth century), the historical perspective is still predominant.<sup>8</sup> Literature (especially poetry) and music have received less scholarly attention than historical subdomains.<sup>9</sup> The few studies into the matter have tended to concentrate on novels (especially those of Hendrik Conscience) and songs.<sup>10</sup> All these publications adhere to a mainly historical point of view, thereby limiting themselves to historical contextual facts and interpretations. As such, these studies lack any detailed textual, musical or (as concerns visual arts) aesthetic-technical analysis.<sup>11</sup> This paper approaches nationalism explicitly from a literary and textual point of view: it presents a discourse analysis of literary genres, including music.

## **Historical context and genre**

### *Belgium in the nineteenth century*

The period 1830-1914 was a crucial transition period in Belgian history, especially as concerns nationalism. After a period of French domination, followed by incorporation into the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-1830) under the reign of William I, the Belgian nation state was inaugurated in 1830. After more than a decade of tireless Belgian patriotism, the national fervour began to ebb. From 1840 onwards, a Flemish (sub)nationalism arose, spurred largely by the linguistic, cultural, social and economic divides between Flemish, Dutch-speaking Belgians on the one hand and francophone Belgians on the other hand – divides becoming increasingly apparent in public life. This cultural Flemish nationalism strove for a Flemish *Kulturnation*, for recognition of the

Flemish 'imagined community' within the Belgian nation state. However, it was not until 1912 that a political Flemish nationalism arose which explicitly sought an independent Flemish nation state.<sup>12</sup>

The present article concerns both Belgian patriotism and Flemish cultural (sub)nationalism. These two different manifestations of nationalism will not be distinguished, since the focus of this paper is on the nationalising impact of the lyrical drama, on its historical protagonists and on the strategies used to produce that nationalising effect, irrespective of the type of nationalism. In the selected lyrical dramas (and in the major part of nineteenth-century Flemish-Belgian literature) the Belgian and the Flemish (sub)national identity were perfectly compatible with one another; there was no contradiction.<sup>13</sup> In almost all of the selected music theatre works the Flemish subnational identity occupies a central place, though closely linked to the Belgian national identity: the pieces refer to a Flemish identity as part of the Belgian nation state.<sup>14</sup>

### *Flemish lyrical dramas of the nineteenth century*

A lyrical drama is a hybrid kind of theatre, combining dramatic text with music; the proportion of text to music varies considerably.<sup>15</sup> The genre is closely related to that of the opera, to the extent that sometimes the two cannot be clearly distinguished. Usually a lyrical drama contains more spoken text than an opera; in the so-called *zangspel*, a puristic Flemish term for *opéra-comique* or *vaudeville*, spoken dialogues are combined with arias, duets, ensembles and choirs, but the music is still subservient to the words. The opera can therefore be considered as a further stage in the development of a music-dramatic tradition – in Flanders, the lyrical drama was the breeding ground and even the *conditio sine qua non* for the evolution towards a fully-fledged opera tradition (in Dutch).<sup>16</sup>

The focus of this article is on Flemish, Dutch-language *zangspelen* or *vaudevilles* (although one *grand opéra* is included in the corpus: *Godfried van Bouillon*, 1895). There was also a tradition of francophone music theatre in Flanders. These music theatre works were, however, mainly operas. They usually addressed a more bourgeois (francophone) audience

than Dutch-language *vaudevilles* and were mostly staged in the official city theatres, the *Grand Théâtres* (e.g. the Théâtre Royal Français in Antwerp). Francophone *vaudevilles* (or *zangspelen*) were far less staged in Flemish theatre house (as the Groot Wafelhuys), which primarily aimed for the middle classes.<sup>17</sup> Illustrative in this regard is that Van Peene's music theatre work about Jacob van Artevelde (1863, with music of Bovery) is labelled a 'historisch drama met kooors' ('a historical drama with choirs') in the subtitle, according to the abovementioned definition of the *zangspel*. The subtitle of the French version, *Jacques van Artevelde* (1847, also with music of Bovery), is 'grand-opéra national'.

Investigating nationalising strategies – and the functioning of historical heroes in those strategies – in the specific genre of the music theatre is particularly interesting because of two reasons. The first reason concerns the inherently interdisciplinary character of the lyrical drama: the integration of an oral art discipline (music) in a written (dramatic) text increases its impact.<sup>18</sup> In the words of opera researcher Krisztina Lajosi: 'People did not start a revolution after reading a poem or a novel, but some uprisings did actually begin in theatres and opera houses.'<sup>19</sup> The second reason relates to the broad and various audiences this popular genre reached.<sup>20</sup> Illiteracy rates in nineteenth-century Flanders were very high: in 1843 they amounted to 51%, in 1850 to 44%.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore obvious that oral, dramatic art forms attracted a much larger audience than written media. Nineteenth-century (Flemish) lyrical dramas (especially comedies, melodramas and *vaudevilles*) played to full houses, according to nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources (like Domien Sleenckx and Amand de Lattin) and as verified by literary and historical research.<sup>22</sup> The genre of the lyrical drama attracted a broad, yet also quite varied audience.<sup>23</sup> In the Antwerp Théâtre des Variétés, for example, both aristocratic women and skippers attended the performances; in the theatre house Groot Wafelhuys (literally: Large Waffle House) there were artisans, craftsmen, clerks, lower-grade civil servants and also notaries.<sup>24</sup> This makes the genre highly suitable as case study for nationalism research. Novels, poems and other strictly textual literary media had very small readerships and circulated mainly in literary societies. Thus, nationalist ideas in novels and poems affected only a small segment of the

Flemish population – primarily literary or artistic colleagues of the authors, who shared the same nationalist concerns.<sup>25</sup>

### *Historical heroes*

As mentioned above, the lyrical dramas that constitute the corpus of this concise study (cf. Annex) all feature historical heroes. The protagonists can be divided into two ‘types’ of historical figures: political rulers and painters. They all occupy a significant place in the Flemish collective memory and history (except for Wolfaert, who left no traces in history).<sup>26</sup> A brief presentation of the political rulers: *Wolfaert de Nerviër*, probably a fictive personage, belonged to the German tribe of the Nerviens that stood up against Roman occupation (57 BC). *Godfried van Bouillon* (1060-1100) was one of the leaders of the First Crusade to Jerusalem. *Jacob van Artevelde* (c. 1290-1345) was a popular medieval leader, who stood up against the French occupier by resuming the wool trade with England, which was prohibited in Flanders. *Jan Breydel* (c. 1264-1328>1331) and *Pieter de Coninck* (c. 1255-1332>1333) were two prominent leaders during the legendary ‘Guldensporenslag’, the Battle of the Golden Spurs, in 1302; according to the myth, the Flemish army of ordinary footmen defeated the French cavalry in a glorious battle. *Boudewyn VII* (1093-1119), called ‘Hapkin’ (with the axe), was count of Flanders. He was popular amongst the people because he took a firm line against robber barons and villains on the rampage. *Nicolaas Zannekin* (end of the thirteenth century-1328) was the leader of the Flemish peasants’ rebellion against count Louis II of Nevers in the Flemish coastal region. Emperor *Charles V* (1500-1558) ruled over Spain, Italy, the Holy Roman Empire and also the Netherlands; he was quite popular amongst the Flemish and Dutch common men. Furthermore, there are the painters *Pieter Paul Rubens* (1577-1640), *David Teniers* (1610-1690), *Anthony van Dyck* (1599-1641), *Quinten Matsys* (1466-1530) and, less known, *Adriaen Brouwer* (1605/1606-1638). All political figures lived in the Middle Ages, except for Wolfaert (Roman Period) and Charles V (Early Modern Period). The painters should be situated in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, mostly the Baroque period, when art flourished in Flanders.



*Adriaan Brouwer* | ADVN, ANTWERP (VC543)

It is rather remarkable that the mentioned protagonists always perform in the same type of lyrical dramas. Political figures (Wolfaert de Nerviër, Godfried van Bouillon, Jacob van Artevelde, Jan Breydel and Pieter de Coninck, Nicolaas Zannekin, Boudewyn Hapkin) play a part in historical lyrical dramas; except for emperor Charles V, who plays the leading part in comedies. Painters (Van Dyck, Teniers, Brouwer) perform in comedies, except for Rubens and Matsys who always play a part in serious historical dramas (like Van Artevelde for example).

## **Textual analysis: nationalising impact**

### *Morality and nationality*

Each of these two subgenres of the lyrical drama – historical dramas on the one hand, comedies on the other hand – has a significant characteristic. In historical dramas with political figures playing the leading part, it is the discursive construction of ethnic-characteristic markers. French characters, both male and female, are all evil, lying,

wicked and dishonest. Illustrative in this regard are the stereotypical personages Jacques de Châtillon, the French governor of the county of Flanders who died during the Battle of the Golden Spurs; Philippe le Bel, king of France; his wife Johanna; and the Leliaerts, as the French or francophones were called during the Battle of the Golden Spurs. Flemish heroes like De Coninck, Breydel, Van Artevelde and also Gwijde van Dampierre (count of Flanders) and his daughter Philippa of Flanders on the contrary are virtuous, dutiful, honourable and courageous. In the studied lyrical dramas characters are either autostereotypical (Belgian or Flemish) or heterostereotypical (French).<sup>27</sup> Especially the negative (heterostereotypical) literary representation of the French language and culture and of francophone, Gallicised Flemings is rather remarkable because, paradoxically, many lyrical dramas were inspired and influenced by French *vaudevilles* (especially those of Eugène Scribe) and *opéras comiques*. In the literary process of characterising and typifying, characteristics of individuals (like Van Artevelde or De Châtillon) are linked to a national character (*the Flemish* or *the French* people) – nationality (Flemish or French) is associated with morality (good or bad). This is a very effective discursive strategy to appeal to the conscience and feelings of the audience. Good or bad are familiar notions; via this simple moral antithesis, linked to a national identity, the audience can gradually accept and adopt a national consciousness.

### *Recognisability: humour, Volkstümlichkeit and narrative templates*

In creating or conveying a national consciousness, the impact of comedies cannot be underestimated. Though the national-political message is put less explicitly put into words, the strategy used in these genres is not less effective, on the contrary. Both humour and *Volkstümlichkeit* (folksiness), characterising features of the analysed comedies, are very functional in the process of nationalisation and moralisation. These factors enhanced the spirit of the (common) people who recognised their social environment and habits on stage; in this way, humour and folksiness 'contributed to diminishing the gap between the stage and the audience'.<sup>28</sup>



International research shows that authors, poets and also playwrights often used humour to communicate a political message: it is an excellent *captatio benevolentiae*, capturing the goodwill of the people towards the message conveyed.<sup>29</sup> The *Volkstümlichkeit* of the studied Flemish lyrical dramas is comparable to the folksiness in the German *Singspiele* or in the French *opéras comiques*: the story is set in recognisable, local or rural settings, imitating village life and reflecting the local culture of the audience.<sup>30</sup> *De keizer en de schoenlappers* (*The emperor and the cobblers*) for example, written by Domien Sleenckx in 1848, is set in the workshop of a shoemaker; in other lyrical dramas about Charles V, the emperor often visits a hostelry or an inn. Another aspect of the *Volkstümlichkeit* is the vernacular spoken in the studied comical lyrical dramas. (E.g.: ‘Geen belet in ’t salet?’, ‘Sapperloot!’ or ‘Selderment! leve de vreugd en het koekelbergsche bier’ – all recognisable Flemish expressions, meaning ‘Can I come in?’, ‘Good heavens!’, ‘Well I’ll be damned! long live the joy and the beer from Koekelberg’).<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, nineteenth-century lyrical dramas are characterised by stereotyped intrigues, plot lines and personages. Illustrative examples are the narrative template of *l’amour champêtre* (‘the rural love’) and, particularly in the comedies with Charles V, the topos of the disguise: the emperor often acts and clothes like a common man to mingle with ‘ordinary’ people, to have a chat or drink a beer in the pub. The wife-husband and father-son relationships are stereotypical and caricatural in the analysed comedies: the personage of Lauwe is henpecked by his wife Kwaebette in *Keizer Karel by Kwaebette* (*Emperor Charles meets Kwaebette*); in *The emperor and the cobblers* Geert rises up against his conservative father, not wanting to succeed him as a shoemaker. Like the association of morality with nationality, humour, folksiness and conventional plot lines – recognisability, in another word – are very effective discursive strategies to predispose the audience for a national-political message.

### *Historical protagonists*

Equally stereotypical as the plot lines are the historical protagonists of the studied lyrical dramas, both the political figures and the painters. A brief introduction into their stereotyped characters: *Van Dyck* is a womaniser and always performs in the same narrative template. On his way to Italy, Mecca of the Arts, he falls in love with a beautiful Flemish peasant girl (or in one lyrical drama even with the wife of Rubens). Eventually, thanks to the right mentality, his qualities as a painter and the paternal admonition of his teacher Rubens, he resumes his journey to Italy. *Teniers* is a *bon vivant* and a welcome guest at fun fairs. *Brouwer* is a tippler. *Matsys* evolves from a simple blacksmith to a capable artist. Contrary to Van Dyck, he pays court to his beloved Aleide in a very honourable, gentleman way. In each of the studied lyrical dramas having painters as protagonists, the artistic hierarchy is clear: Rubens is the undisputed grandmaster and also a father figure to his students. Furthermore, his personage is the height of morality. The characterisation of these artistic protagonists matches with the genre in which they perform: Rubens and Matsys, the 'serious' characters, act in historical lyrical dramas, whereas the other 'comical' painters (Van Dyck, Teniers, Brouwer) feature in comedies.



*Peter Paul Rubens, self-portrait |  
ADVN, ANTWERP (VC543)*



Charles V | ADVN, ANTWERP (VC543)

The same goes for the political figures: *Charles V* always performs in a comical lyrical drama and always with the same characteristics. He is a good and democratic sovereign, a popular emperor who stands close to the common people; he is always in for a good laugh and has a weak spot for the female kind, especially pretty peasant girls. The other historical heroes (*Breydel* and *De Coninck*, *Van Artevelde*), protagonists in dramatic stories, are 'serious' personages. They sacrifice themselves for their home country, they are the human incarnation of moral goodness and they possess the virtue of wisdom.<sup>32</sup> All the

political heroes (except for Charles V) fit these criteria; they only differ from one another in small characteristic nuances. For example: *Boudewyn Hapkin* has a strong social conscience, fighting the bandits who mistreat the common people; *De Coninck* and *Breydel* are respectively the 'head' and the 'arm' of Flanders, the thinker and the doer.<sup>33</sup> This conventional representation is an important factor in the process of recognition and identification; identification, with figures from the past, is a proven manner to stimulate a collective consciousness of national identity. Through a feeling of recognition and remembrance, the audience is aware of a common past, of a common heritage – and such is crucial to developing a national consciousness, according to Ernest Renan.<sup>34</sup> The historical protagonists confront the (nineteenth-century) audience with the glorious past of the young nation state: the Flemish or Belgian history

is almost tangible in the historical heroes. National, recognisable symbols, legends and stories that frequently occur in the music theatre works (the myth of the 'Kerels', Reynard the Fox, the bell of 'Roeland', the Flemish Lion) reinforce this historicising effect.<sup>35</sup>

No less important is the moral and ethical function of the historical protagonists: they incarnate nineteenth-century values, virtues and standards. The protagonists of the comedies (Charles V and the painters, except for Matsys and Rubens) are perhaps the most effective personages in that regard. Because of their whims, their amorous adventures, their follies and blunders, they are more flesh-and-blood people than unapproachable heroes like Van Artevelde, seemingly without weaknesses or shortcomings. Characters like Van Dyck or Charles V (protagonists of comedies) are recognisable and stand close to the common people; therefore the audience will be more inclined to follow and imitate their virtuousness and patriotism. It is far less evident to follow or incorporate the unreachable virtues of for example Van Artevelde – who is no doubt strongly admired, but who is almost inhumanely good, close to perfection.

### *Impact of the genre*

A music theatre work or lyrical drama is, as mentioned above, a symbiosis of three genres. The interaction of text, music and drama reinforces the impact of each genre separately. Opera as a multimedia art form enhances the dramatic effect and, more than traditional theatre, it mobilises the historical awareness because it has music and singing in its favour: 'Songs could spread ideas more effectively than pamphlets or political orations.'<sup>36</sup> The *musical* element in the studied lyrical dramas consists of simple musical numbers, inserted into the spoken dialogues, with a 'clichéd vocabulary': songs, choruses, arias and duets.<sup>37</sup> The tunes are well known to the audience, since they are often based on popular folk songs or recycled opera melodies, belonging to *le savoir partagé*.<sup>38</sup> Music supports the text and reinforces the dramatic action, for example in the expression of emotions or in the creation of atmosphere. The *text* in the lyrical dramas, their second characteristic, is typically dramatic: consisting of mostly short text passages, literary curiosities or stylistic firework are

very rare. There are some exceptions though: the dialogues on the first pages of *The emperor and the cobblers* contain very long text passages, rather unusual in drama, and *Rubens' menschlievendheid* (*Rubens' philanthropy*) proves that literary qualities (for example figures of speech) can also be smoothly integrated in a lyrical drama (for example the use of an anaphora to emphasise or dramatise, eliciting a reaction of the audience). The characteristics of both text and music are reinforced when performed on *stage*. A dialogue, a rhetorical question and an aside are obviously far more effective when aurally and visually represented, when put into words and shown on stage. Other typical features of the dramatic genre additionally enhance the effectiveness of text and music separately, especially the illustrative representation on stage (disguises, decors, *tableaux vivants* ...) and the direct contact with the audience. According to George Lukács the public character of drama and its direct effect on the audience was the great advantage of the historical drama over the historical novel.<sup>39</sup>

### *Impact of the past*

The function of the past in lyrical dramas – and that of historical heroes in particular – is comparable to the way art was used in the process of nation formation. A long and glorious past had to legitimise the mere existence of the nation state and had to strengthen the national consciousness and identity. This is why nineteenth-century artists, historians or writers did not feel the need to confine themselves to historical facts or certainties in their cultivation of the national past.<sup>40</sup> The more glorious, the longer and the more typical the history of a nation was, the more just, natural and evident its existence seemed to be. When filling in or even creating national history, authors often used their imagination, as is clearly shown by the studied music theatre works. The representation of historical heroes rarely corresponds to historical facts (and this also holds true for historical events, settings and locations): the lyrical dramas offer a very subjective and biased view on history, the protagonists are fit into a particular national-patriotic perspective. The sporadic references to historical sources are only *pro forma*: providing some authenticity and

historical credibility, they do not guarantee historical reliability.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the boundary between fact and fiction was very thin in nineteenth-century lyrical dramas.<sup>42</sup>

Besides this more rational factor – a nation merely exists by the grace of its history, in this case represented by historical heroes – there is also an emotional factor: history had to impress, had to arouse enthusiasm and even love for the motherland. Obviously these two factors (rational and emotional) complete one another, but there is an important difference. The first, rational function is one that is in fact attributed *post factum*. When watching a lyrical drama, one shall not all of a sudden realise that the nation is legitimate ('our nation has the right to exist because it has a history'). But what one will do is admire and even stand in great awe for the heroic deeds of Van Artevelde or laugh with the amorous adventures of Charles V. A direct consequence of this emotional impact is not so much the notion of the legitimacy of the nation state, but the consciousness of the mere existence of the nation. And that is the most important aim of these historical lyrical dramas: the creation (or strengthening) of a national consciousness and a national identity. The content, personages and structure of the lyrical dramas and also the characterisation of the historical protagonists are all focused on that objective. The playwrights, in one way or another, wanted to emotionally affect the audience – make them laugh with comical scenes or feel sorrow with the glorious death of a historical hero – and in that way make them susceptible to the national, patriotic message transferred from the stage to the audience. In this regard also inconspicuous elements can produce a substantial effect, for example *couleur locale*, local (recognisable) settings, local habits and practices, the Flemish vernacular or popular folksongs.<sup>43</sup> The impact of these subtle discursive elements on the shaping and strengthening of a national consciousness is often greater than explicit slogans ('Vlaenderen den Leeuw', 'Flanders the Lion'), patriotic hymns or outspoken love for the mother country. Subtle hints at the national past (or a national 'feeling') are more frequent in comedies (with Charles V, Brouwer or Van Dyck as protagonists) than in historical dramas (with Van Artevelde, Breydel and De Coninck or Rubens as protagonist).

History also refers to topical (nineteenth-century) events. Several of the analysed lyrical dramas were written for specific occasions. Hippoliet van Peene rewrote his first version of *Jacob van Artevelde* on the occasion of the inauguration of the Van Artevelde statue in Ghent in 1863.<sup>44</sup> *De*



*Jacob van Artevelde's statue on the Vrijdagmarkt in Ghent |  
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*Belgische natie* (*The Belgian nation*), written by Jacob Kats and composed by Peter Benoit, had to be performed during the celebrations for Leopold I his twenty-fifth regnal day – this lyrical drama had partly a contemporary setting (that is 1856). There are also intrinsic references to current affairs in the lyrical dramas, especially in *The Belgian nation*. The Belgian motto ‘Eendragt maakt magt’ (‘Unity makes strength’), for example, is quoted in *The Belgian nation* and also in *Wolfaert de Nerviër*, set in the Roman period.<sup>45</sup> Wolfaert even sees a vision of Leopold I, the first king of Belgium and, despite the Roman setting, actually represented on stage.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, in some music theatre works the situations, events or settings are so familiar that one could forget that the story is enacted in the past. The historical setting is often only a pretext to express a message of topical interest. Crucial for that matter are the protagonists that are in part the spokesmen of nineteenth-century ideas; the historical heroes and painters project a national-patriotic message and a nineteenth-century middle-class (bourgeois) moral. Popular and known historical figures, like Van Artevelde or Rubens, are very suitable to convey values and virtues to a nineteenth-century audience.

The moralisation in the studied lyrical dramas consists both in explicit statements and in implicit moral references: Wolfaert reminds his daughter about her ‘holy duties’; according to Van Artevelde envy and ingratitude poison the human heart; Van Dyck leaves the peasant girl Klaertje to fulfil his ‘duty’ as a painter; Brouwer comes to ‘reason’, thanks to Rubens.<sup>47</sup> Not only for the common men did the historical heroes function as models, nineteenth-century sovereigns equally had to follow the example of their illustrious predecessors: Charles V was very sympathetic towards his subjects, Van Artevelde was a paragon of virtue and patriotism – they hold up a mirror to nineteenth-century kings and rulers. The past is, in other words, the medium that serves a nineteenth-century goal.



## Conclusion

The recurrent characterisation of the historical heroes in different lyrical dramas proves that the representation and the image of these painters and political rulers were strongly anchored in nineteenth-century Flemish collective memory: Van Dyck is portrayed in the same way in a play about Teniers or Rubens as in lyrical dramas carrying his name; Teniers is a buffoon in *Teniers te Grimbergen* (*Teniers in Grimbergen*) and *Teniers*, but also in *Rubens' philanthropy*; Charles V is similarly characterised in *Teniers in Grimbergen* as in lyrical dramas about himself. The stereotyping (almost typecasting) of these figures creates a so-called *interdiscourse*; a set of stereotypical elements which are markedly present in different texts (in this case lyrical dramas) in a given place (Flanders) at a particular time (the nineteenth century).<sup>48</sup> The *interdiscourse* is in this case explicitly linked to the historical processes of nation and identity formation.

The content, structure and style of the studied music theatre works are to a large extent focused on the same nationalist and nationalising goal. Especially in the comedies, this objective is realised by relying on recurrent topics that are familiar and recognisable for the audience: plots draw on national history, contemporary local or rural settings are represented on stage, the language of the libretto is written in vernacular and the music incorporates folk tunes or well-known local melodies. In the 'serious' lyrical dramas the association of nationality and morality has to facilitate the process of national identity formation.

It is clear that in the studied lyrical dramas, a pragmatic poetics, oriented towards the audience, prevailed over an autonomous poetics, in which the artwork is the focal point of attention (and not so much the audience). This is why the intrinsic literary qualities are debatable (no psychological depth, poor plot elaboration, predictable humour, melodramatic love or death scenes) and why, on the other hand, the transfer of nineteenth-century values and norms and of a national identity to the audience is very effective.<sup>49</sup>

To conclude: the analysis of twenty-five Flemish lyrical dramas of the nineteenth century clearly shows that the genre *an sich* was crucial for the

realisation of the nationalising goal. The whole is more than the sum of its parts in this regard: the combination of music, dramatic text and presentation on stage produced a strong effect on the audience and was therefore very suitable to convey a national-political message, even to an uneducated or illiterate audience. In other words: the medium is the message.

## **Annex: corpus (twenty-five Flemish lyrical dramas)**

A.V. Bultynck (aut.) & P. d'Acosta (comp.), *Godfried van Bouillon. Groot opera in 3 bedrijven en een naspel* (Antwerp, 1895).

J. Crets, *De leeuw van Vlaanderen. Spel in 4 bedrijven 16 tafereelen* (Antwerp, 1913).

N. Destanberg (aut.) & E. Nevejans (comp.), *De dubbele jacht. Blyspel met zang in een bedryf* (Ghent, 1862).

G.H. Flamen, *Het groot vaderlandsch mimodrama van Groeninghe ofte van de Gulden Sporen in zeven tafereelen 1302-1902* (Bruges, 1902).

J. Hoste (aut.) & K. Miry (comp.), *Breidel en de Coninc. Drama uit de vaderlandsche geschiedenis in 6 bedrijven en 8 tafereelen met koren en liederen* (Ghent, 1889).

J. Kats (aut.) & P. Benoit (comp.), *De Belgische natie. Dramatische feesttafereelen in twee bedryven en vier tooneelveranderingen* (Brussels, 1856).

V. Lemaire, *Keizer Karel by Kwaebette. Anekdotisch blyspel met zang, in één bedryf* (Ghent, 1847).

K. Onderet (aut.) & N. Destanberg (aut.), *Boudewyn Hapkin. Lyrisch drama in vier bedryven* (Ghent, 1855).

P. Putman (aut.) & A. Verbrugghen (comp.), *Breidel en De Coninck. Historisch drama in 4 bedrijven en 5 tafereelen* (Waregem, 1892).

J. Roeland, *Antoon van Dyck. Blijspel met zang in twee bedrijven* (Waregem, 1866).

E. Rosseels (aut.) & J. van den Acker (comp.), *Antoon Van Dijck. Zangspel in één bedrijf* (Antwerp, 1866).

E. Rosseels & F. Muller, *Adriaan Brouwer. Zangspel* (Antwerp, 1861).

A. Schepens, *Wolfaert de Nerviër. Vaderlandsch berymd tooneelspel, in vyf bedryven* (Sint-Joost-ten-Node, 1860).

D. Sleeckx, *De keizer en de schoenlappers, of De gekroonde leers. Blyspel in één bedryf* (Brussels, 1848).

D. Sleeckx, *Zannekin. Drama in vier bedrijven, met een voorspel* (Antwerp, 1865).

M.J. Van Brée (pass. aut.) & E. Rosseels (ed.), *Brouwer's gevangenis op het kasteel van Antwerpen. Blyspel met zang in een bedryf* (Antwerp, 1849).

F. Van den Weghe, 'Nicolaas Zannekin. Drama in vijf bedrijven en zes tafereelen', in: Idem, *Tooneelgarve van drie dramas. Excelsior. Studentendrama. Nicolaas Zannekin. Maatschappelijk drama in blanke verzen (2<sup>e</sup> bijgewerkte uitgave). Koloniaal. Drama in vier bedrijven* (Antwerp, s.d.) 63-137.

E. van Driessche, *De gek van keizer Karel. Tooneelspel met zang in twee bedryven* (Ghent, 1861).

P. van Duyse (aut.) & F. van Duyse (comp.), *Teniers te Grimbergen. Operette in één bedryf* (Ghent, 1860).

P. van Duyse, *Antoon van Dyck, of De reis naer Italië. Blyspel met zang in drie bedryven* (Antwerp, 1841).

P. van Duyse, *Rubens menschlievendheid. Oorspronkelyk tooneelspel met zang, in drie bedryven en zes tafereelen* (Antwerp, 1840).

E. van Even, *Quinten Metsys, of De zegeprael der liefde, Leuvensche legende van 1480. Tooneelspel met zang in twee bedryven* (Leuven, 1861).

H. van Peene (aut.) & J. Boverly (comp.), *Jacob van Artevelde, of Zeven jaren uit de geschiedenis van Vlaanderen. Historisch drama met koors in vijf bedrijven en zeven tafereelen* (Ghent, 1863).

H. van Peene, *Keizer Karel en de Berchemsche boer. Blyspel met zang in twee bedryven* (Ghent, 1850).

R. Verhulst (aut.) & E. Wambach (comp.), *Quinten Massijs. Zangspel in drie bedrijven* (Antwerp, 1899).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> J. Dewilde, 'Tussen Franse vaudeville en Vlaamse opera: het zangspel getoetst aan de spelen van Prudens van Duyse en Karel Onderreet', in: *Jaarboek Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Retorica 'De Fonteine' te Gent*, LIX/51 (2009) 85-115 (88). About the popularity of the opera genre in the nineteenth century, see K. Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people in nineteenth-century opera', in: T. Baycroft & D. Hopkin (eds.), *Folklore and nationalism in Europe during the long nineteenth century* (Leiden - Boston, 2012) 27-47 (o.a. 28, 35).

<sup>2</sup> P. Brooks, *The melodramatic imagination. Balzac, Henry James, melodrama, and the mode of excess* (New Haven - London, 1995); S. Hibberd (ed.), *Melodramatic voices: understanding music drama* (Farnham, 2011); J. Waeber, *En musique dans le texte. Le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris 2005). Cf. M. Murphy, 'Introduction', in: H. White & M. Murphy (eds.), *Musical constructions of nationalism. Essays on the history and ideology of European musical culture 1800-1945* (Cork, 2001) 1-15 (1).

<sup>3</sup> V. Bosmans, P. Couttenier & J. Dewilde, *De zingende dichter: Vlaamse en internationale liedkunst op poëzie van Guido Gezelle*, special issue of *Gezelliana, Kroniek van de Gezellestudie*, 19/1-2 (2008); A. Ceulemans, *Verklankt verleden. Vlaamse muziektheaterwerken uit de negentiende eeuw: tekst en representatie* (Antwerp, 2010); J. Dewilde, 'Tussen Franse vaudeville en Vlaamse opera'.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. Dewilde, 'Een naam als een klok, nog steeds onbekend. Het eeuwfeest van Peter Benoit voorbij', in: *Cultureel jaarboek stad Antwerpen* (Antwerp, 2001) 149-170; P. Gay, *Schnitzler's century: the making of middle-class culture 1815-1914* (New York, 2001); W. van den Berg & P. Couttenier, *Alles is taal geworden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1800-1900* (Amsterdam, 2009) 11.

<sup>5</sup> A. Ceulemans, *Verklankt verleden*. A list of the twenty-five lyrical dramas (corpus) can be found in the Annex. The First World War is not only a historical milestone: in the arts, modernism definitively breaks through after the First World War.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. A. Smith, *The nation made real. Art and national identity in Western Europe 1600-1850* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> The comparative approach is particularly strong in T. Baycroft, 'Introduction', in: Baycroft & Hopkin (eds.), *Folklore and nationalism*, 1-10. For music nationalism, see: Murphy, 'Introduction'. Cf. Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people'; B.C. Thompson, 'Music and the fight against confederation in 1860s Montréal', in: *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 13/2 (2013) 218-235.

<sup>8</sup> Ceulemans, *Verklankt verleden*, 10, 132.

<sup>9</sup> For literature, see a.o. A. Ceulemans, *Tussen Liereman en Literator: het poëtische oeuvre van Theodoor Van Ryswyck (1811-1849)* (Brussels, 2015); P. Couttenier, 'Nationale beelden in de Vlaamse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw', in: K. Deprez & L. Vos (eds.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000* (Antwerp, 1999) 60-69; M. de Ridder, *Staatsgevaarlijk! De activistische tegentraditie in de Vlaamse Letteren, 1912-1933* (PhD diss., University of Antwerp, 2009). For music, see a.o. P. Cordy, *Wij zingen Vlaanderen vrij. Het verhaal achter 75 jaar Vlaams Nationaal Zangfeest* (Leuven, 2012); Dewilde, 'Een naam als een klok'.

<sup>10</sup> For example Cordy, *Wij zingen Vlaanderen vrij* and the recent study about Hendrik Conscience by K. Humbeeck, K. Absillis & J. Weijermars (eds.), *De grote onleesbare. Hendrik Conscience herdacht* (Ghent, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Exceptions are Ceulemans, *Tussen Liereman en Literator*; De Ridder, *Staatsgevaarlijk!* (literature); Dewilde, 'Tussen Franse vaudeville en Vlaamse opera' (music).

<sup>12</sup> In August 1912 several manifestations and festivities were organised in Antwerp on the occasion of the hundredth birthday of the famous Flemish writer Hendrik Conscience (known for his historical novel *The lion of Flanders*, 1838). 200,000 spectators attended the festivities. The pursuit of an independent Flemish nation state was expressed for the first time during this commemoration. This ambition was manifestly present in the activism movement during the First World War (1914-1918); see M. de Ridder, *Ouverture 1912. Literatuur en Vlaamse Beweging aan de vooravond van de Grote Oorlog* (Antwerp, 2008); Idem, *Staatsgevaarlijk!*

<sup>13</sup> An exception is the poem *Antigonus, of De volksklagten* (1841) by Theodore van Ryswyck (Ceulemans, *Tussen Liereman en Literator*, 99 a.o.).

<sup>14</sup> The most 'Belgian' piece of the studied plays is, not surprisingly, *De Belgische natie* (*The Belgian nation*): the Belgian patriotic feeling is the focal point of attention, but also the Flemish subnationality occurs, as an indispensable part of the Belgian nation state.

<sup>15</sup> Dewilde, 'Tussen Franse vaudeville en Vlaamse opera', 85-86; Van den Berg & Couttenier, *Alles is taal geworden*, 469.

<sup>16</sup> In 1893 the first Flemish opera house opened its doors: the Nederlandsch Lyrisch Tooneel in Antwerp.

<sup>17</sup> Francophone *vaudevilles* were mostly performed in the southern part of Belgium (now the Walloon provinces) and in Brussels, so it seems. An example, with historical protagonists, is *Rubens et Van Dyck à Saventhem, Comédie-vaudeville en deux actes*, written by Louis Schoonen and published in 1845 - in Brussels. Until now, not much research has been done to the francophone tradition of music theatre (*vaudevilles*) in Flanders (and Belgium). Useful reference books about francophone theatre in Belgium (in general, not specifically about music theatre) are F. Faber, *Documents authentiques et inédits tirés des Archives Générales du Royaume et Bibliographie concernant le théâtre français en Belgique de 1830 à nos jours* (Brussels, 1880); Idem, *Histoire du théâtre français en Belgique depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours* (Brussels - Paris, 1878) 5 vol.; L. Renieu, *Histoire des théâtres de Bruxelles depuis leur origine jusqu'à ce jour* (Paris, 1928) 2 vol.

<sup>18</sup> Choral songs and music in general could successfully convey a nationalist message because of the specific characteristics of singing: this oral art form had some advantages over written art disciplines, like literature. Cf. J. Dewilde, 'The choir scene in Flemish Belgium in the first half of the nineteenth century: the Vlaemsch-Duitsch Zangverbond', in: K. Lajosi & A. Stynen (eds.), *Choral societies and nationalism in Europe* (Leiden, 2015) 130-151.

<sup>19</sup> Lajosi 'Shaping the voice of the people', 34.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', o.a. 35.

<sup>21</sup> A cultural and social process of democratisation (o.a. significant rise of the percentage of school-going children; abolition of the tax on newspapers) explains

the decline of the illiteracy rate in 1850. Cf. o.a. M. Mathijssen, *Het literaire leven in de negentiende eeuw* (Leiden, 1987); L. Simons, *Het boek in Vlaanderen sinds 1800. Een cultuurgeschiedenis* (Tielt, 2013) 18; E. Witte, 'De 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwse Vlaamse literator en de maatschappelijk-politieke aspecten van zijn tijd', in: A. Deprez, W. Gobbers & K. Wauters (eds.), *Hoofdstukken uit de geschiedenis van de Vlaamse letterkunde in de negentiende eeuw* (Ghent, 2003) vol. 3, 1-92 (57).

<sup>22</sup> Dewilde, 'Tussen Franse vaudeville en Vlaamse opera', 85; F. Peeters, 'Verstilde emotie: over enkele verdwenen Antwerpse theaters 1846-1926', in: A. Remael & K. Pelsmaeker (eds.), *Configurations of culture: essays in honour of Michael Windross* (Antwerp, 2003) 255-263 (259-260); T. Verschaffel, 'Leren sterven voor het vaderland. Historische drama's in het negentiende-eeuwse België', in: *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 113/2 (2008) 145-176 (151).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 28 ('What earlier had been the symbolic space of the aristocracy [opera houses, AC], in the nineteenth century became also inhabited by the "common people".'), 35 ('Until the nineteenth-century much of the control of musical creation and the possibility to hear certain types of music was restricted to the aristocracy, but in the course of the nineteenth century it became available to a large public.'). 47 ('There has always been some kind of cultural exchange between the different social classes. Nevertheless, the frequency, the mode and the impact of transfer was unprecedented in the nineteenth century.').

<sup>24</sup> Peeters, 'Verstilde emotie', 259-260.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ceulemans, *Tussen Liereman en Literator*, 667-669.

<sup>26</sup> This is also shown by the illustrations in this article, all drawn from the ADVN copy of the book *100 great Flemings, The glory and greatness of Flanders, represented in its most famous men* (English translation of the Dutch title: L. Elaut, R. Van Roosbroeck, A. Vermeylen e.a. (eds.), *100 groote Vlamingen. Vlaanderens roem en grootheid in zijn beroemde mannen* (Antwerp, 1941)).

<sup>27</sup> V. Heuberger, A. Suppan & E. Vyslonzil (eds.), *Das Bild vom Anderen. Identitäten, Mentalitäten, Mythen und Stereotypen in multiethnischen Europäischen Regionen* (Frankfurt, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 31.



<sup>29</sup> L.A. Vanchena, *Political poetry in periodicals and the shaping of German national consciousness in the nineteenth century* (New York, 2000) 211.

<sup>30</sup> Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 32.

<sup>31</sup> Quotes respectively taken from E. Rosseels & F. Muller, *Adriaan Brouwer. Zangspel* (Antwerp, 1861) 4, 17; P. van Duyse, *Rubens menschlievendheid. Oorspronkelyk tooneelspel met zang, in drie bedryven en zes tafereelen* (Antwerp, 1840) 4, 10; H. van Peene, *Keizer Karel en de Berchemsche boer. Blyspel met zang in twee bedryven* (Ghent, 1850) 3, 12. The linguistic nuances cannot be precisely translated in English.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. W.J. Goode, *The celebration of heroes. Prestige as a social control system* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London, 1978).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. J. Crets, *De leeuw van Vlaanderen. Spel in 4 bedrijven 16 tafereelen* (Antwerp, 1913); G.H. Flamen, *Het groot vaderlandsch mimodrama van Groeninghe ofte van de Gulden Sporen in zeven tafereelen 1302-1902* (Bruges, 1902).

<sup>34</sup> A. Rigney, 'Epiloog', in: R. Hoozee, J. Tollebeek & T. Verschaffel (eds.), *Mise-en-scène. Keizer Karel en de verbeelding van de negentiende eeuw* (Antwerp - Ghent, 1999) 303.

<sup>35</sup> The myth of the courageous Flemish 'Kerelsvolk' ('Kerel' people) gained in popularity with Hendrik Conscience's historical novel *De Kerels van Vlaanderen* (*The Fellows of Flanders*, 1871) and, later on, with Albrecht Rodenbach's songs. In the original medieval 'Kerelslied' (part of the famous *Gruuthuse* manuscript) the 'Kerels' were boors, in contrast with the nobility. In the nineteenth century the social opposition between 'Kerels' and nobility was interpreted as an ethnic conflict (Flemish vs. French) (cf. J. Leerssen, *De bronnen van het vaderland. Taal, literatuur en de afbakening van Nederland 1806-1890* (Nijmegen, 2006) 156-161). Reynard the Fox is the main character of the medieval beast epic *Van den vos Reynaerde*; as a libertine crook he occupies an important position in the Flemish collective memory (Leerssen, *De bronnen van het vaderland*, 79-84). The bell of Roeland is a series of bells in Ghent, perpetuated in a song of Albrecht Rodenbach.

<sup>36</sup> Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 47.

<sup>37</sup> S. Hibberd (ed.), *Melodramatic voices: understanding music drama* (Farnham, 2011) 1; Lajosi 'Shaping the voice of the people', 39.

<sup>38</sup> R. Amossy, *L'argumentation dans le discours. Discours politique, littérature d'idées, fiction* (Paris, 2000) 97; Ceulemans, *Verklankt verleden*, 117, 120-121; Dewilde, 'Tussen Franse vaudeville en Vlaamse opera', 100.

<sup>39</sup> G. Lukács, *The historical novel* (London, 1989) 130. Also paraphrased in Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 36.

<sup>40</sup> See a.o. M. Flacke (ed.), *Mythen der Nationen: ein europäisches Panorama* (München, 1998); Leerssen, *De bronnen van het vaderland*, 11-12; A. Morelli, 'Het ontstaan van de "patriottische" symbolen in België, in de gewesten en de gemeenschappen', in: Idem (ed.), *De grote mythen uit de geschiedenis van België, Vlaanderen en Wallonië* (Berchem, 1996) 177-187; A. Rigney, 'De stiltes van de geschiedenis. De grenzen van de historische kennis als romantisch erfdeel', in: J. Tollebeek, F. Ankersmit & W. Krul, *Romantiek en historische cultuur* (Groningen, 1996) 129-146; J. Tollebeek & T. Verschaffel (1999), 'Natie, geschiedenis en legitimatie', in: Hoozee, Tollebeek & Verschaffel (eds.), *Mise-en-scène*, 17-23 (21).

<sup>41</sup> E.g. in Flamen's 'mimodrama' about the Battle of the Gulden Spurs (Flamen, *Het groot vaderlandsch mimodrama*, 136).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the narrative theory of Hayden White, o.a. H. White, *Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 31.

<sup>44</sup> The first edition was written in French and published in 1847: H. van Peene (aut.) & J. Boverly (comp.), *Jacques van Artevelde. Grand-opéra national en cinq actes et six tableaux* (Ghent, 1847).

<sup>45</sup> J. Kats (aut.) & P. Benoit (comp.), *De Belgische natie. Dramatische feesttafereelen in twee bedryven en vier tooneelveranderingen* (Brussels, 1856) 40, 67; A. Schepens, *Wolfaert de Nerviër. Vaderlandsch berymd tooneelspel, in vyf bedryven* (Sint-Joos-ten-Noode, 1860) 32, 40, 94.

<sup>46</sup> Schepens, *Wolfaert de Nerviër*, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Respectively Schepens, *Wolfaert de Nerviër*, 59; A.V. Bultynck (aut.) & P. d'Acosta (comp.), *Godfried Van Bouillon. Groot opera in 3 bedrijven en een naspel* (Antwerp, 1895) 11; J. Hoste (aut.) & K. Miry (comp.), *Breidel en De Coninc. Drama uit de vaderlandsche geschiedenis in 6 bedrijven en 8 tafereelen met koren en liederen* (Ghent, 1889) 94; H. van Peene (aut.) & J. Boverly (comp.), *Jacob van*

*Artevelde, of Zeven jaren uit de geschiedenis van Vlaanderen. Historisch drama met koors in vijf bedrijven en zeven tafereelen* (Ghent, 1863) 57-58; P. van Duyse, *Antoon van Dyck, of De reis naer Italië. Blyspel met zang in drie bedryven* (Antwerp, 1841) 56; Rosseels & Muller, *Adriaan Brouwer*, 50-51.

<sup>48</sup> Amossy, *L'argumentation*, 93; R. Amossy, 'Introduction to the study of doxa', in: *Poetics today*, 23/3 (2002) 369-394 (377-380); J.L. Dufays, 'Received ideas and literary reception: the functions of doxa in the understanding and evaluation of texts', in: *Poetics today*, 23/3 (2002) 443-464 (447, 445). The notion of *interdiscourse* is closely linked to that of *doxa*: 'common knowledge and shared opinions' (Amossy, 'Introduction to the study of doxa', 369) or, more specifically, 'le savoir partagé des membres d'une communauté [Flanders] à une époque donnée [the nineteenth century]' (Amossy, *L'argumentation*, 94). There are *doxas* concerning temporal contexts (e.g. Middle Ages), events (e.g. the Belgian independence), particular motives or general themes (e.g. poverty). This paper clearly focused on doxic, stereotypical elements concerning historical figures.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Lajosi's study of the *grand opéra*: Lajosi, 'Shaping the voice of the people', 31, 33.