‘This Is What We Share’

Co-branding Dutch Literature at the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the joint guests of honour at the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair, Flanders and the Netherlands – a rare case of two government organisations representing separate national groupings (Flanders and the Netherlands) coming together to present the literature of a single language (Dutch) on the international stage. It recounts how the two delegations' shared status as guests of honour for 2016 came about through a collaboration between the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Flemish Literature Fund (now known as Flanders Literature) and analyses the branding decisions made by the 2016 organizers. Conceptually, the chapter engages with perspectives from field theory and the sociology of translation to elaborate branding as a form of position-taking and guest of honour presentations as important mechanisms of transnational capital conversion.

Keywords: Dutch literature in translation, Frankfurt Book Fair, guest of honour, Flemish Literature Fund, Flanders Literature, Dutch Foundation for Literature, sociology of translation.

Introduction

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the publishing world's largest, most important trade fair. It attracts thousands of book professionals from around the world and hundreds of members of the German and international press. A role of special prominence in this rarefied transnational space goes to

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the guest of honour, which 'sets the tone' for the year's fair and occupies a 2300-square-metre pavilion designed to be its 'beating heart' (Weidhaas 2007: 217). With a few notable exceptions (the present case included), invitees have been individual nation states and exhibitions have been produced by these states' cultural policy deputies, often in collaboration with national book trade associations. In the four decades since the first focus of interest in 1976 – Latin America, in the midst of the Boom – being the guest of honour has become a coveted platform for governments seeking to promote their literatures and cultures on the world stage.[1] It now holds a place alongside other fora at international (cultural and sporting) mega-events as an occasion for what Kerr and Wiseman (2013: 354) call 'nation branding', or 'the application of corporate marketing concepts and techniques to countries, in the interests of enhancing their reputation in international relations'. But how to brand a guest of honour at Frankfurt when the invitee is not a single, culturally homogenous nation state?

In this chapter, I focus on the Frankfurt Book Fair's most recent exception to the single nation state norm: the jointly organized guest of honour presentation by Flanders and the Netherlands in 2016.[2] It marks only the second time in the history of the fair (after Flanders and the Netherlands' first joint appearance in 1993) that two organizations representing two separate governments have partnered to present at Frankfurt. While there have been instances of countries within a given language area presenting under a single banner ('the Arab World' in 2004, for example), such constellations are rare. Add to this the fact that Flanders is not a nation state proper,[3] but rather, like the 2007 invitee Catalonia,[4] a stateless nation that postures

1 The focus of interest/guest of honour platform was initially conceived as a forum for sharing books about pressing social and political questions of the day, its programming curated and funded by the fair's organizers, the German Publishers and Booksellers Association (*Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels*). The focus alternated yearly between a special topic and a guest country or region, chosen, in the words of long-time fair director Peter Weidhaas, 'to bring together and stimulate discussion of global problems in one building' (Knapp). In 1988, fair organizers switched to a new, bid-based guest of honour concept similar to those used for major international cultural and sporting events: prospective guests submit bid books with detailed budgets, strategies for reaching out to German publishers (including generous translation subsidies), the press and the general public, and plans for the guest of honour pavilion.

2 2016 marked only the second time that a guest has presented twice. India was the first, in 1986 and 2006. France, the 2017 guest of honour, became the third country to present twice, its first appearance being in 1989.

3 By 'Flanders' I mean the Flemish Community, a sub-sovereign entity within the federal Belgian state with full autonomy in the areas of culture, language, education, and regional economic affairs.

4 For more on the nation branding strategies used by Catalonia, see Woolard.

itself among nation states, and one begins to get a sense of the challenging branding task faced by the 2016 organizers.

The chapter is divided into two parts: in the first part, I discuss how the 2016 guest of honour invitation came about through a collaboration between the Dutch Foundation for Literature (DFL) and the Flemish Literature Fund (FLF).[5] These two governmental organizations are charged with supporting Dutch literature in the Netherlands and Flanders respectively, and have mandates that include both talent nurturing at home and promotional activities abroad. In the second part, I analyse the branding decisions made by the 2016 organizers: to what extent can their branding of Dutch literature be understood as a reflection of their position in the transnational literary field? The organizers clearly opted for pluriformity in their branding decisions, avoiding markers of national distinction and hierarchization between the two partners while taking great pains to underscore commonalities. This branding strategy is epitomized by the promotional campaign's baseline: 'This is what we share.' I argue that this collaborative type of nation branding, which I call 'co-branding', is borne out of a shared strategy of combining limited resources in order to overcome an otherwise hyper-peripheral position – a transnational version of the so-called 'polder model' that has been a dominant mode of socio-economic (and cultural-political) policymaking in the Netherlands since the 1980s.[6] While capturing a stage as high-profile as the guest of honour spot at Frankfurt would probably not have been possible without such a strategy, it is neither politically innocuous nor guaranteed to be effective when translated into a brand identity. I conclude by examining the implicit legitimizing effect that co-branding affords Flanders as a stateless nation, standing alongside its bona fide nation state neighbour to the north.

Field Theory, Branding, and the World Market for Translations

It is useful to first situate the 2016 organizers' respective positions in the social sphere in which they operate: the world market for book translations. Sociologists of literature have recently begun to shed light on the structure of this market and the motivations of its producers and intermediaries.[7]

5 In Dutch, *Nederlands Letterenfonds* and *Vlaams Fond voor de Letteren*. The Flemish Literature Fund is now known as Flanders Literature, or *Literatuur Vlaanderen* in Dutch. Because this research was conducted before the name change, I retain the former name in this chapter.

6 See Hendriks and Toonen 2018.

7 See Thompson 2012; Sapiro 2008; Sapiro 2010; Sapiro 2012; Sapiro 2015; Sapiro 2016; Heilbron and Sapiro 2016.

Several have drawn inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the French publishing world, in which he uses a field-theoretical model to explain its oppositional structure (Bourdieu 2008 [1999]). Bourdieu starts from the assumption that any social sphere organized around a common pursuit can be approached as a field. Actors (individuals and organizations) in any given field are endowed with unequal resources (capital) and struggle to advance their position through the strategic pursuit and use of these resources, pursuant to that field's 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1996). In the French literary field, as in all fields of cultural production, capital can be subdivided into economic capital (wealth) and symbolic capital (prestige) (Bourdieu 1993). Bourdieu found a homologous relationship between agents' market position in terms of scales of production and distribution on the one hand (small-scale versus large-scale), and their logics of valuation (aesthetic versus profit-driven) on the other. Agents situated at the large-scale pole were mainly interested in finding bestsellers that turn a quick profit (the accumulation of economic capital), whereas for agents at the small-scale pole this economic logic was 'reversed' (Bourdieu 1983): they sought to publish books that earned the recognition of respected arbiters of literary quality (the accumulation of symbolic capital) above – and even sometimes in diametric opposition to – commercial success.[8]

I follow Thompson in including an additional form of capital in the analysis: social capital, which is derived from and determined by 'the networks of contacts and relationships that an individual or organization has built up over time' in the industry (Thompson 2012: 6). An actor's social capital is reflected in the extent to which it can make use of networks of autonomy and indebtedness to improve its position in the field.[9]

In an effort to include geopolitical factors in the sociological analysis of world literature, Bourdieu's pupil Gisèle Sapiro superimposes a version of his national model onto the contemporary world market for books. Her 'transnational literary field' concept retains Bourdieu's structural oppositions and his emphasis on economic and symbolic capital accumulation, which she uses to understand Anglo-American-led globalization and conglomeration and its effects on the world market for translated books.[10]

8 See the introduction to this volume for a discussion of the opposition between economic and symbolic capital.

9 See Bourdieu 1985.

10 Sapiro observes that economic constraints have become more pressing for all book producers in the era of globalization. She reports decreased diversity in terms of source languages in the world market for translated books and a tendency toward repertory standardization among publishers of translations, or publishing only 'books that sell' (Sapiro, 2016).

She augments her conceptual frame with an additional, interrelated form of capital borrowed from Pascale Casanova: literary capital, or the accumulated prestige of a given language as determined by such things as the number of Nobel laureates it boasts (Casanova 2004; 2010). Following her colleague Johan Heilbron, Sapiro furthermore sees the incoming and outgoing flows of translated books between languages as a supplementary indicator of a language's dominance: languages that export more and import less are central while languages that import more and export less are peripheral (Heilbron 1995; Heilbron 1999; Heilbron and Sapiro 2016). In today's world market for translated books, English is hyper-central, German and French are semi-central, and all other languages, including Dutch, are peripheral. At the actor level, this implies that each individual or organization in the transnational literary field possesses a certain amount of *de facto* literary capital depending on the language(s) out of which they work. An actor working out of German, French, or English will generally marshal more literary capital than one working out of Dutch.

While sociologists of literature working at the transnational level have focused mainly on publishers of translated books, another category of agent quickly becomes visible, too: state agents.[11] That is, government-affiliated individuals and organizations involved in the cross-border mediation of (translated) books. This is no surprise. As the term itself conveys, the transnational literary field is structured by national literatures. Or rather, by 'the well-founded fiction of the existence of national literatures' (Sapiro 2015: 341), which, in step with the rise of nationalism beginning in the late eighteenth century, helped to transpose the lines of nationally delineated imagined communities onto the geopolitical map (Anderson 2002). Today, these national borders also largely determine the contours of book markets, copyright law, and policies supporting book producers. State agents have historically played a central role in mediating which books travel across political borders, be it through ideology (projecting ideas and ideals globally), censorship (dictating what books are deemed acceptable for import and export), or cultural diplomacy (presenting a particular image of a country or nation through its cultural products). Many governments also fund the translation and international promotion of works by 'their' authors, thereby activating literature as a marker of geopolitical status (Von Flotow 2007).[12]

11 See Heilbron and Sapiro 2018.

12 The German Publishers and Booksellers Association lists 39 such organizations on their website. Translation support schemes can also be found at the supranational level (e.g. translation projects supported under the European Commission's 'Creative Europe' programme) and at

The question remains, however, of how to situate the concept of cultural branding within a field-theoretical perspective. Put differently, what does branding add to the sociology of literature? I would like to briefly explore two possible (and interrelated) answers in relation to the case at hand: branding as position-taking and branding as a strategy of capital conversion.

Field theory as it has been applied to the world market for translations conceives of translated books and their makers as conjoined in a relational space structured by national and linguistic boundaries. Following Bourdieu, we can draw a distinction between an actor's underlying *position* in this space on the one hand, which is objectively determined by its combined social characteristics and the structural (political, economic, linguistic) constraints of the field, and its *position-takings* on the other, which are the prerogative of that individual actor as expressed through its habitus-informed practice (Bourdieu 1993). This implies an intermixture of objective and subjective factors, or of structure and individual agency, and enables an understanding of the transnational literary field as both a 'field of forces' and a 'field of struggles' where people and organizations go about a whole set of 'doings' within a shared space of structures and powers (Bourdieu 1986). Within this framework, an actor's branding decisions can be conceptualized as position-takings based in a relational struggle for distinction. These position-takings are partly realized, because they have been made materially and semantically manifest through actual marketing materials and messaging, and partly idealized, because they speak to and of an implied position that does not exist outside the material and message itself. The categories used for grouping distinction tend to be binary and inherently oppositional for Bourdieu (high culture versus low culture; autonomous versus dependent; small-scale versus large-scale; aesthetic versus commercial, etc.). For the present analysis, I frame distinction using binaries most relevant to the transnational literary field (without assuming an inherent oppositional relationship): state versus market; cooperation versus competition; nation state versus stateless nation.

Whereas individual branding decisions can be seen as (partially realized and partially idealized) position-takings, an actor's overall 'brand

the transnational level in various forms (e.g. PEN International and its national chapters). In a recent development, representatives of 22 publicly funded organizations from 19 countries and regions in Europe met on the margins of the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair to formally establish the European Network for Literary Translation (ENLIT), indicating a new level of cooperation among national literature organizations in Europe. The network came about at the initiative of Koen van Bockstal, director of the FLF, and Tiziano Perez, managing director of the DFL, and has its headquarters at the FLF offices in Antwerp.

identity' – the sum total of its branding decisions – can be conceptualized as a manifestation of its 'ideal position' in the field. What Bourdieu's framework obliges us to see, however, is that an actor's ideal position and its actual position are two very different things indeed, since actors' positions are not independently (self-)assigned but rather relational and objectively determined.

The conceptual space between an actor's actual position and its ideal position in the field is where the heuristic of *strategy* belongs, which brings me to the second point: branding as a strategy of capital conversion. Here, it is pertinent to distinguish between the mechanisms of capital conversion themselves and branding as a means to capture and, once captured, exploit these mechanisms. Let me begin with the mechanisms themselves. How do (state) agents in the transnational literary field convert one form of capital into another? What mechanisms accomplish this? In his influential book *The Economy of Prestige*, James F. English identifies perhaps the most effective and impactful of these mechanisms: international literary prizes. He calls prizes 'the single best instrument for negotiating transactions between cultural and economic, cultural and social, or cultural and political capital' (English 2005: 10).[13] Following English, when a work is consecrated through the awarding of a prestigious prize like the Nobel or the Man Booker International, it triggers at least three types of capital conversion: a boost in sales (symbolic-to-economic), a boost in credibility to the title's producers (symbolic-to-social), and a boost in the status of the language and literature in which the work was originally written (symbolic-to-literary, which, as we have seen, is political in aspect). Sapiro highlights two additional mechanisms of capital conversion, focusing on publishers of translated books: the acquisition of prestigious titles from other literary fields through the purchase of translation rights (economic-to-symbolic) and the exploitation of a steadily earning backlist of prestigious translated titles (symbolic-to-economic) (Sapiro 2012a; Sapiro 2012b; Sapiro 2015). I would posit that guest of honour platforms such as Frankfurt's perform a capital conversion function as well: they enable state agents to exchange their accumulated stores of social and economic capital for the privileged opportunity to present their (officially sanctioned) literatures to industry peers in the hopes of drumming up interest, exposure, and new book translations (which they often also subsidize). This hopefully leads to a

13 English uses the term 'cultural capital' in roughly the same way I use 'symbolic capital' in that both denote *prestige*. Additionally, his notion of political capital aligns roughly with my understanding of literary capital. The two sets of terms can be considered synonyms here.

payoff in symbolic and literary capital later down the road once processes of international dissemination, reception, and canonization have run their course. Investing public funds in this way not only serves a cosmopolitan mission of sharing books that would otherwise be lost to the rest of the world; it also fulfils the dual purposes of elevating the international status of a literature and language and of enhancing the international reputation of the nations that claim them.

Let me now turn to how branding was strategically deployed by the joint FLF and DFL team tasked with securing and executing the joint guest of honour invitation for Flanders and the Netherlands at the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair. What do the branding decisions made by this team tell us about the ideal and actual positions of these two actors in the transnational literary field? What can we learn about how Dutch literature is branded internationally?

The Road (Back) to Frankfurt

Mounting a successful bid for the guest of honour platform nowadays is a competitive, long, and expensive affair that starts years or even decades before opening day. For Flanders and the Netherlands, the journey to becoming the 2016 guests of honour began as soon as their first joint showing at Frankfurt in 1993 ended. Helped along by some 130 book translations into German published in the lead-up to and aftermath of the fair, the 1993 *Schwerpunkt* unleashed a *niederländische Welle* across the German-speaking world, which would flow over into other language markets as well. Since 1993, the number of translated Dutch and Flemish authors has substantially increased, as has the number of languages into which their work is translated.[14] The event is widely seen as a breakthrough moment for Dutch literature in the world – a literature that, up to that point, had remained largely undiscovered beyond its borders despite a rich tradition at home (Heilbron and Van Es 2015: 48). It also played a key role in the elevation of several Dutch and Flemish writers to international stature, of which Cees Nooteboom is probably the most renowned (despite his initially tepid reception at home) (Zajas 2014: 3).

On an institutional level, the experience of jointly organizing the 1993 fair helped to solidify the strategic partnership between Flanders and the

14 See Heilbron 1999: 437. The translation database maintained jointly by the DFL and FLF lists 13,837 book translations out of Dutch into 81 languages since 1993.

Netherlands in the area of the international promotion of Dutch literature. The groundwork for this partnership was laid in 1980 with the founding – in the midst of the Belgian federalization process – of the Dutch Language Union (*Nederlandse Taalunie*), a treaty-based, intergovernmental organization representing the Netherlands and the Flemish Community with a mandate to jointly promote the Dutch language and its literature in Dutch-speaking areas and abroad. For Flanders, the Union was also a way to strengthen the position of Dutch within a multilingual Belgium and to lend a measure of legitimacy to its fledgling government. Cooperation between the FLF and the DFL is further facilitated by the fact that both organizations have a similar structure and mission. Indeed, the FLF owes much of its current policy toolkit to the DFL and its two legacy organizations, the Foundation for Literature (*Stichting Fonds voor de Letteren*, established in 1965) and the Dutch Literary Production and Translation Fund (*Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds*, NLPVF, established in 1991). This policy toolkit combines domestic literary production supports (including support for incoming translation) with support for outgoing translation and international promotion.

Since 1993, Flanders' and the Netherlands' international promotion efforts in the area of literature have gradually become professionalized (Missinne 2018). This has gone hand and hand with the development of highly polished brand identities along two trajectories: careful differentiation between the distinctive positions of the DFL and the FLF, respectively, when the organizations brand themselves as promoters of 'Flemish literature' (referring to literature by authors from Flanders) and 'Dutch literature' (referring to literature by authors from the Netherlands) separately, and careful collaboration when the two organizations position themselves as co-promoters of Dutch literature (referring to literature in the Dutch language). The branding of Dutch literature for an international audience consequently reflects both trajectories at once. The FLF underwent a major rebranding in March 2017 with the launch of its English-language website flandersliterature.be, which is geared explicitly toward pitching books by Flemish authors to foreign publishers.[15]

At the same time, the DFL and FLF have jointly organized many guest of honour presentations at international book fairs since 1993: LIBER in Barcelona in 1995, Goteborg in 1997, Tokyo in 2000, Fiera del Libro in Torino

15 Likewise, the DFL has cultivated a clear brand of its own: for a discussion of 'Holland' as a literary brand, see Laurence Ham's chapter in this volume on the DFL-organized guest-of-honourship at the 2011 Beijing Book Fair.

in 2001, Salon du Livre in Paris in 2003, and, more recently, Festival International de la Bande Dessinée in Angoulême in 2009, the Feria del Libro Internacional de Buenos Aires in 2013 – and the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2016.

Frankfurt 2016

In their 48-page bid to be the 2016 guests of honour, which was submitted to fair director Juergen Boos in October 2013, the DFL and FLF framed the prospect of a second joint appearance at Frankfurt as a means to 'rekindle' interest in Dutch literature in Germany and, via Germany, the world (Aerts, Van Bockstal, Pauw, Perez, Rutten, and Steinz: 11). In the same breath, they pointed to the past success of the 1993 fair and the contacts it produced, which have since been cultivated and broadly expanded. By 'combining the networks of both funds', they argued, they could more effectively reach out to the German publishing world and reading public (19). They also emphasized the prudence of sharing costs for such an ambitious and expensive endeavour (41). Their pitch was successful: Bos accepted the bid in late 2014. This marked the culmination of a quarter-century-long process of accumulating capital on the part of the DFL and FLF. By jointly activating their combined stores of social and economic capital (professional relationships and networks, and public funds), they successfully put themselves in position to exploit Frankfurt's most coveted mechanism of capital conversion.

However, while the decision to work together may have made the 2016 appearance possible, it also necessarily meant that the DFL and FLF had to collaborate closely on its planning, execution, and branding. How did they go about this? The answer reflects a long tradition in the Netherlands and Flanders (respectively) of consensus decision-making based on a pragmatic recognition of pluriformity and cooperation despite differences. In the Netherlands, a form of this approach found currency under the 'polder model' of tripartite cooperation between employers' organizations, labour unions, and the government in the formulation of socio-economic policy (Hendriks and Toonen 2018). The term alludes to different communities living on land reclaimed from the sea (polders) that coordinate joint maintenance of dykes and pumping stations to avoid flooding. It evokes the dictum 'a rising tide lifts all boats', but inverted: a collectively stymied sea allows all polder communities to thrive. One can see the cooperation between the DFL and the FLF in similar terms, transposed here to a transnational, cultural-political context rather than a national, socio-economic one. (As

we will see, the water metaphor is also stylized in the two organizations' branding choices for Frankfurt.)

The cooperative model implemented by the DFL and FLF for Frankfurt was formalized in a memorandum of understanding signed by the two partner institutions in August 2014 (Van Bockstal 2014a). This document detailed burden-sharing provisions on the principle of 50/50 parity; staff arrangements (the regular staff of the DFL and FLF would be augmented for two years by seven additional temps, three based in Antwerp, four in Amsterdam); a decision-making structure with administrative leadership shared between the heads of the DFL and FLF; and a budget of €6 million financed by the Flemish and Dutch governments.[16] Bas Pauw, a senior in-house staffer at the DFL, was tapped to manage the project's financials.

The memorandum of understanding also laid out the role and responsibilities of the artistic director, who was to be given 'the freedom and the mandate' to determine the content and creative design of programming for the guest of honourship, alongside being the 'face' of the overall project (Van Bockstal 2014a). Interestingly, the memorandum also stipulated that the artistic director be Flemish. To narrow the search, the directors of each fund created a shortlist of candidates they (separately) deemed acceptable for the job. The two lists were then compared and deliberated over until a single candidate was selected. They settled on Bart Moeyaert, a Flemish novelist and writer of young adult fiction who, as a widely translated writer and fluent speaker of German, had extensive previous experience with the German market and the Frankfurt Book Fair specifically. The choice is unique in that guests of honour rarely select authors as artistic directors. According to Moeyaert himself, the decision to name an author to the position was made to avoid infighting between Flemish and Dutch state functionaries, a lesson learned from their previous guest of honour experience in 1993 (Reichenbach 2016: 5).

From the start, and working within the creative lines set out in the bid book, Moeyaert emphasized a need to organize the branding of the project around three themes shared between Flanders and the Netherlands (and Germany): a common history, shared dynamism, and the North Sea. These 'pillars' were

16 Initially, the DFL and FLF had each pledged €2.4 million each, with the remaining €1.2 million to be financed by private sponsors. When (virtually) none materialized, additional public funds were sought out and received. In the final balance, the project had a total budget of €5,880,440 and was financed thus: DFL: €2,595,077; FLF: €2,384,483; Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs: €721,600; Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: €171,780; commercial partners €7,500 (Reintjens et al.). Divided across Dutch and Flemish funding sources, this gives a Dutch-to-Flemish funding ratio of 59/41.

to be the guiding inspiration for the presentation's overall visual identity. Briefs were circulated to advertising agencies (for branding) and architecture firms (for the design of the pavilion) and bids were solicited. The choice to outsource branding and design to creative firms is in line with a trend of professionalization among recent guests of honour keen to present a polished product to industry peers. It also underscores the important (and understudied) role branding plays at Frankfurt. Relations with the German press were handled by an external publicity firm – a requirement imposed by the Frankfurt Book Fair as a condition of candidature.[17] Ultimately, the 2016 organizers chose the Amsterdam-based firm Dog and Pony to create its branding materials and the Rotterdam-based design cooperative The Cloud Collective to design and build the pavilion installation. Let us turn now to these materials.

Co-branding

In the remaining pages, I examine the branding of the 2016 guest of honour platform and consider the implicit legitimizing effect it affords Flanders as a stateless nation presenting Dutch literature alongside its larger nation state neighbour. What do the branding decisions made by this team tell us about the ideal and actual positions of these two actors in the transnational literary field? The chosen baseline immediately sets a collaborative tone: 'This is what we share.'

As it turns out, creative nods to the partnership between Flanders and the Netherlands are omnipresent in the project's branding. Take the colour scheme: the blues in the logo, which, Moeyaert (2015) explains, represent the blues of the Westerschelde, the mouth of the River Scheldt, where the two territories of the Netherlands and Flanders flow together. Complementing the blues is a yellow/grey, the colour of North Sea beach sand. The notion of fluidity between the two partners is further activated in a font style designed by Jo De Baerdemaeker especially for the fair, whose letter structure is inspired by the famous typographical collections of Plantin-Moretus of Antwerp, Johannes Enschedé & Zonen of Haarlem, and Lettergieterij Amsterdam. Ligatures have been added so that each letter runs into the next, illustrating again the 'dynamic flow' between the Netherlands and Flanders. We find a similar visual logic on the website: page templates are replete with a moiré effect where one pattern of lines is superimposed onto another to create the impression of waves. Waves are quoted again

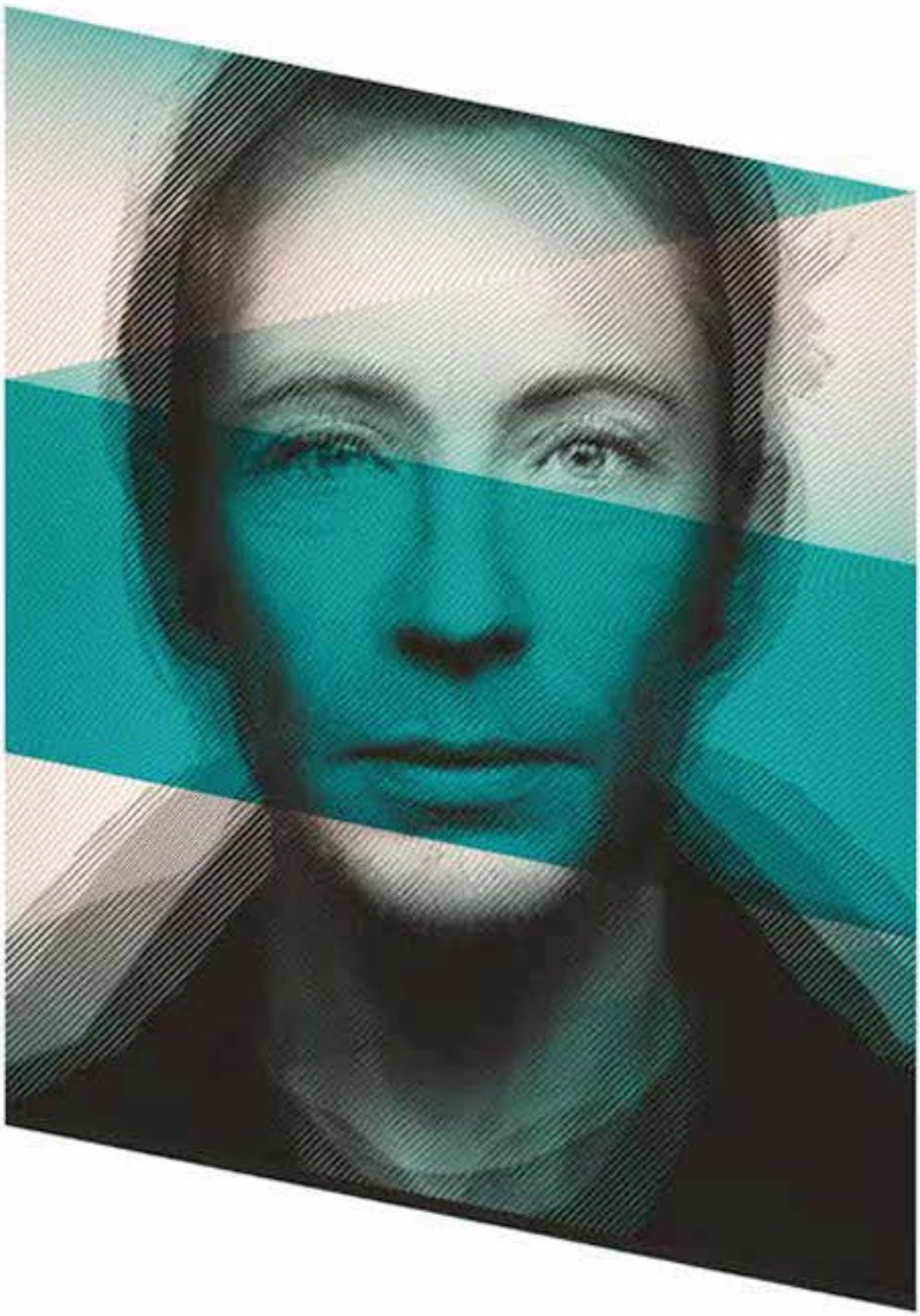
17 Press relations were handled by the Berlin-based firm Artefakt.

Figure 12.1

in the formatting of the (very popular) collector postcard sets produced for Frankfurt and distributed as teasers at various other book fairs on the 2016 circuit. They are printed as leporellos (an accordion-like format), the visual logic being that Flanders and the Netherlands are equal partners, with neither outsizing the other. (Making waves together is fine as long as one does not wash out the other!) And then there is the official poster featuring the work of Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren: portraits of different faces of the 70-member author delegation, each superimposed over the other to create one single, not-quite-distinguishable visage (see below).

This communal, egalitarian ethos is on display in the guest of honour pavilion as well. There is a clear emphasis on the process of writing and creating rather than on the specific writers and creators themselves (much less their nationalities): shadow boxes spotted throughout the pavilion contain pictures of the writing rooms of prominent Dutch and Flemish

Figure 12.2 © Stefan Vanfleteren



authors, but the authors themselves are absent; graphic artists are busy creating and printing a one-off comic in an actual, working atelier to be distributed at the end of each fair day, but it is the product fairgoers line up for, not the producer; on the pavilion stage, programming for the five-day

fair follows the same set schedule of mini-shows, each day circulating different Dutch and Flemish authors through them. The related theme of fluidity discussed above is carried over in the built space of the pavilion, too. Dividing each of the various open-concept spaces (the stage, several exhibition rooms, the atelier, a bookshop, a café, and a large space spotted with lounge chairs) are walls made of spaced, translucent plastic sheets stacked on top of each other to create a semi-transparent barrier through which to gaze. The entire salon is fringed by a semi-transparent white canvas against which a slow-dynamic seascape is projected. The faint outline of bookshelves (filled with recent translations of Dutch literature) can be made out on the other side of the canvas. It is reminiscent of the landscape paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Low Countries masters, but instead of the canvas being spotted with people going about their day, there are the spines of books.

The branding materials and pavilion are just as striking for what they do not contain: no callouts to specific marque authors, no claims of excellence, prestige, or singularity, and most striking of all, no national markers. There is no orange for the Netherlands, no yellow and black for Flanders. No windmills or recreated red-light districts. No poppies or pastorals. Be it on the guest of honour website, the programming on the pavilion stage, or the membership of the official delegation, authors' Dutch or Flemish status is never outwardly advertised. The trappings of state were limited to the opening ceremony, where representatives of the Dutch and Belgian (!) royal families made a grand entrance and were given a royals-only tour of the pavilion before disappearing for the rest of the fair. Quintessential symbols of Dutch and Flemish culture were really only *openly* evident during the happy hour receptions each evening: beer and chips from Flanders; *bitterballen* and cheese from the Netherlands. Contrary to the 'celebration of nationally and ethnically branded "differences" that have been niche-marketed as commercialized "identities"' one could have expected (Apter 2013: 10), the brand identity of the 2016 Guests of Honour was distinctive precisely because it was not.

However, it would be short-sighted to interpret this lack of flag-waving as politically innocuous. For all the trouble the organizers went through to obscure national differences and emphasize sameness in their branding choices, one has only to look a little deeper to see the spectre of the nation. We have seen that the costs for the guest of honourship were split more or less half-and-half by the Dutch and Flemish governments. It turns out that there is a direct link between each partner's share of the burden and their share of representation at Frankfurt. Of the 70(!) authors in the official delegation, 36 are Dutch and 34 are Flemish. Of the 1,344 minutes

of programming prepared for the guest of honour stage, 52 per cent was allotted to Dutch authors and 48 per cent to Flemish authors. Flanders and the Netherlands were represented at the opening ceremony by Dutch author Arnon Grunberg and Flemish poet Charlotte Van den Broeck, who together presented a collaborative original work. And so on. This 50/50 partnership is far larger than Flanders' 22/78 share of the domestic book market or the 27/73 distribution of Dutch native speakers (Van Bockstal 2014b, p. 49). Could Flanders' willingness to invest so lavishly in the international promotion of Dutch literature be an indication of other (political) ambitions? Clearly it could. I finish with one final national marker that *did* manage to make it into the branding for Frankfurt: the official formulation of the name of the 2016 guest of honour, 'Flanders and the Netherlands': it is explicitly dual (Flanders *and* the Netherlands) and implicitly statist (*Flanders* and *the Netherlands*) rather than region- (the Low Lands) or language-centric (Dutch literature).[18] For Flanders, this confers a *de facto* nation state-like status, a legitimacy by association strengthened all the more by its being named before rather than after the Netherlands. In this light, the broader strategy of co-branding Dutch literature in a way that obfuscates national distinctions can actually be seen as a covert and clever strategy by Flanders both to 'top the bill' at Frankfurt and to ensure an outsized share of the stage. Whether this will result in a proportionate share of any future payoff (book translations, international recognition, or even eventual statehood) remains to be seen.

Conclusion

In securing the 2016 guest of honour invitation and carrying out its obligations, the FLF and DFL opted for a strategy of cooperation, and this was clearly echoed in their co-branding of Dutch literature. Conventional field theory would have us see these two organizations as competitors fighting a zero-sum battle for limited resources and influence. However, as this analysis bears out, the present case suggests that cooperation is best conceptualized as a competitive strategy that agents may or may not choose to (or be able to) activate. Indeed, similar efforts by Wallonia and Quebec

18 Interestingly, the original bid book took a region-centric tack: 'Low Countries. Deep Imagination'. The official logo of the 1993 guests of honour retained the names of the two national groupings but opted to alternate the order by language. Flanders was placed first in the English and German name. The Netherlands was placed first in the Dutch name.

to partner with the 2017 guest of honour, France, were rejected by *le pays de Voltaire*, which chose to claim the stage for itself (Sapiro 2018). Clearly, linguistic and regional kinship only go so far in fostering cooperation among agents in the transnational literary field, especially when the frontiers of language, nation, and state do not neatly correspond. What I have tried to do here is demonstrate how two state agents located on the periphery of the transnational literary field cooperate to their mutual competitive advantage, boosting their respective, self-serving profiles while also serving their common goal of elevating a shared language internationally – a transnational, cultural-political application of consensus decision-making that both deployed and stylized a version of the 'polder model'. The instrument by which this is made possible is the guest of honour platform itself: a coveted mechanism of capital conversion, alongside others like prizes and festivals, that neither the DFL nor the FLF could likely have secured on their own. The tensions that necessarily follow from such a cooperation were clearly and abundantly reflected in the organizers' branding decisions, which rather ingeniously emphasized commonalities over differences, production over producers, and communal identity over national identity. Conceptualizing these branding decisions as position-takings and their sum total as a brand identity opens conceptual space where cultural branding and field-theoretical perspectives of cultural production converge. In this space, the branding of Dutch literature by the DFL and FLF at Frankfurt can be understood as a manifestation of their ideal position(s) in the transnational literary field. When 'this is what we share' was dissected into 'this is how we shared', a picture emerged revealing the literary ambitions of both partners on behalf of their shared language on the one hand, and the political ambitions of a stateless nation standing alongside its larger nation state neighbour on the other.

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