

CALL FOR PAPERS

Putting Translators on the Map

Literary (Self-)Representation in Translations from and into French Historical and Contemporary Strategies

International conference
Ghent & Leuven – November 4-5, 2025

Keynote speakers
Marie-Alice Belle (Université de Montréal)
Patrick Hersant (Université Paris 8)

This event is organized by the research groups [French literature](#) (Leuven), [TRACE-CLIV](#) (Ghent) and [CIRTI](#) (Liège)

In recent years, a multitude of initiatives to increase translator recognition have been launched across Europe. Examples include the online campaign *#noemdevertaler* in the Dutch-speaking region; *Raus aus der Unsichtbarkeit!* in Germany; and the *Translators on the cover* report (EU Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022). These calls to action stem from tangible commitments within the literary field itself and are rarely framed within the context of literary or translation scholarship. This is despite the increasing prominence of the translator's agency in recent research, both as an individual (e.g. Kaindl et al 2021; Bergantino 2023) and in relation to other agents (e.g. Jansen & Wegener 2013; Brown 2018; Freeth 2024). The increasing focus on translator studies is invariably linked to broader historical (Belle & Hosington 1998), sociological (Freeth 2024), poetical (Hermans 1996, Munday 2012) and ethical (Venuti 1995, 2019) questions. Indeed, as Hermans already argued in 1996, the translator's presence in a text extends far beyond the "names on the title page" and should thus be studied within a wider framework, analyzing, for instance, the power dynamics between the translator and other agents, or the strategic use of specific media. In this regard, one must also consider the considerable impact of technological developments. While these advances offer new opportunities for translators to gain visibility (e.g., via personal websites, promotional videos, online testimonials – see also Freeth 2024; Kotze 2024), the evolving interplay between technology and literary translation also brings pressure to bear on the visibility of translators.

Central to this research focus on the translator, several concepts, such as **agency**, **visibility**, and **paratextual (self-)representation** have been developed and operationalized. Rather than being the expression of individual action, "agency" has more recently been defined as "a relational concept emerging from the wider social, political, or cultural order" (Allen & Patel 2023; Brown 2018). As for "(in)visibility", Lawrence Venuti notably introduced the concept in his seminal work on the *Translator's Invisibility* (1995 [2008], 2019). Over the past decades, there have been critical responses to his propositions. From a historical perspective, Coldiron (2012) has, for instance, pointed out that visibility and invisibility are (historical) context-dependent concepts. More recently, Freeth has pointed at the "urgent need for further development and diversification of invisibility and its corollary visibility both as theoretical terms and operationalizable analytical tools" (2024). Also, several researchers (Belle & Hosington 2018; Batchelor 2018; Hersant 2018) have explored the paratextual auto/hetero-representations of translators, both within (peritext) and beyond the book (epitext).

For this conference, we invite contributions dealing with **(in)visibility** and **auto/hetero-representations of translators in translations and their paratexts**. To foster exchanges between the individual presentations, we will focus particularly on translations **from and into French**, from the early modern period to the present day. Through this approach, we aim to revisit some longstanding assumptions regarding the shifting value of French language in transcultural processes of visibility and authority construction, both in France and in the francophone world.

We welcome case studies highlighting specific historical and cultural contexts as well as theoretical and/or methodological contributions. Possible topics cover, but are not limited to, the following research axes:

- 1. RELATIONAL DYNAMICS.** Given that every process of identity construction is inherently relational, the analysis of strategies of self-representation should always be studied within a broader framework, considering the impact of other agents involved. Are there structural similarities and/or differences between the auto-representation and the hetero-representation of translators? How can these be explained? To what extent are cultural, political and/or linguistic arguments interwoven with their rhetoric of self-representation? How do peritextual (e.g. forewords, afterwords, notes, etc.) and epitextual (self-) representations (e.g. translator websites, performances, testimonies, interviews, etc.) relate? Do they reinforce or can they also contradict each other? Etc.
- 2. CONCEPTUAL DYNAMICS.** How can the binary distinction between visible and invisible be refined, for instance by discerning multiple stages (diachronically) or manifestations (synchronically) of (in)visibility? How do translators through history adopt (or are they attributed) different 'roles' and 'identities' (translator, critic, reader, author, specialist, etc.), through which they become more or less visible *as translators*? Are other concepts needed to analyse the (self-)representations of translators? Within literary studies, concepts as "ethos" (Amossy 1999) and "posture" (Meizoz 2007) have already proven to be particularly useful. To what extent can these concepts be applied to the study of translator's agency? Which other concepts are appropriate? Etc.
- 3. MULTIMODAL AND MULTIMEDIAL DYNAMICS.** Research on translator's (self-)representations has traditionally been confined to written language. However, other multimodal elements should not be overlooked. For instance, what is the role of visual and tactile modes: illustrations, layout of title pages, fonts, type of paper, etc.? In this context, one should also consider the technological developments and the material transformations of (para)texts (print type and format, binding...), which have radically diversified the look of contemporary literary (para)texts. Etc.

The conference will be organized at Ghent University (day 1) and Leuven University (day 2). Prior to the conference (on the 3rd of November), there will be an Early Career Researcher (ECR) event organized at Ghent University with both confirmed keynote speakers. Conference languages are English and French.

We invite contributors to submit an abstract of 300 words (in French or in English) to both francis.mus@ugent.be and beatrijks.vanacker@kuleuven.be. Please include your name, affiliation, e-mail address, and a short bio of no more than 100 words by the **31st of May 2025**. There will be a modest registration fee for presenters.

This conference is organized by the universities of Ghent (research group TRACE-CLIV), Leuven (research group French literature) and Liège (research group CIRTl), and is part of the KU Leuven project "Found in Translation. Translators and the Construction of Literary Authority in the 18th-

Century Low Countries” and the Ghent University project “The discrete translator. Strategies of paratextual self-representation in literary French/Dutch translations”.

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