ABSTRACT: From a language planning point of view, Flanders at the end of the 19th century was faced with the problem of trying to find a new equilibrium between three different linguistic varieties, viz., the Flemish-Brabantic written language, as handed down from the Middle Ages, the Dutch Standard language, and French, the language of culture of the upper social strata. The part played by the so-called “West-Flemish particularism of the second generation” in this debate has been, so far, scholarly misinterpreted and misrepresented. Close examination of the internal documents of the particularist “Guild of Sinte Luitgaarde” revealed that neither language planning nor the advancement of the position of Dutch against dominant French has ever been the underlying motivation of their endeavors. A religious fundamentalist striving to perpetuate the predominance of Roman Catholic Ultramontanism in West Flanders was the real, yet mostly hidden intention of the movement. Their so-called particularist action appeared to be their part of the tactics to achieve the broader goal mentioned by means of language planning methods and discussions.

1. Introduction

1.1 From a language planning point of view the situation in Flanders at the end of the 19th century was extremely interesting, mainly because desperate attempts were displayed to find a new equilibrium between three different linguistic varieties, viz.:

— the Flemish-Brabantic written language, handed down from the Middle Ages and mainly used by authors of literature, cultural associations and, to a restricted extent, by the national and regional administrations;

— the Dutch standard language as it had developed in Holland. Although strongly advocated by language activists, the lack of direct
and frequent contact with the Netherlands made the implementation of the Northern norm a precarious and difficult problem;

—French, the language of culture of the upper social and educated strata, also the de facto official language used by the national, the regional, and the city administrations.

These three varieties were competing for the support of the middle classes and their advocates were pursuing quite opposite political and linguistic goals. The spoken everyday language for most of the Flemings, though, was the regional dialect, the habitual means of communication in all but the most formal domains. The Flemish intellectual elite, however, experienced that Dutch as it had been preserved in Flanders after the political split of the language territory in the 17th century did not fit the needs of modern written communication. For language political reasons as well they felt that it was necessary to unify and modernize the language. This explains their interest in standardization (Willemyns 1995).

Meanwhile, the so-called "Flemish Movement", aimed at linguistic, cultural, and political emancipation, gradually secured a more extensive use of the mother tongue of the Flemings in the administration, cultural activities, and instruction. Consequently, the variety which was than often referred to as "Flemish" (the name is a gallicism actually) was gradually taking over more and more language functions formerly performed by French. As a result we witness a double and simultaneous language conflict between "Flemish" and French on the one side, the Belgian and the Dutch variety of the Dutch standard language on the other side.

1.2 In the province of West Flanders both conflicts acquired a specific flavor, mainly through the endeavors of the so-called "West Flemish particularism of the second generation", a movement not effectively researched until now. Scholarly preoccupation with this movement has, so far, misinterpreted and misrepresented their activities as well as their underlying motivation.

Close examination of an extensive body of texts written in Brugge, West Flanders' capital city, during the last third of the 19th century and pertaining to three different domains (cultural associations, workers unions, and the city administration) has allowed for new insights in the linguistic development of Dutch during that period and, more particularly, in the role played by the
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particularist movement mentioned above. It stresses a dimension of our understanding of language evolution and language planning underestimated so far, viz., the influence of religious fundamentalism and the use it made of linguistic means to achieve its goals. This paper aims at contributing to an innovating analysis of standardization mechanisms during the period in question in the region studied.

2. Historical overview

2.1 Flanders, together with Holland, constitutes the Dutch-speaking language community in Europe. De facto since 1585 and de jure since 1648, this community has been split up as a consequence of the revolt of the Netherlands at large against the Roman Catholic Hapsburg monarchy (Van de Craen and Willemyns 1988), which had a decisive impact on the evolution of Dutch. From the 17th century onward the Low Countries were divided into two separate parts (more or less present-day Holland and Belgium), each with its specific political, cultural, religious, and social development. These events had a dramatic impact on the evolution of the standard language. While the north went on to become one of the leading economic nations of the 17th century, the southern regions stagnated culturally, economically, and intellectually. In the north, the standardization of Dutch, strongly influenced by the southern writing tradition and the numerous immigrants who had fled the south, gathered momentum. In the south, on the other hand, where French became more prominent, the elaboration of the Dutch standard language decreased and eventually stopped.

2.2 As a result of the Spanish Succession War (1702-1713), the “Belgian” territories were passed on from the Spanish to the Austrian Hapsburgs. Throughout the 18th century the consolidation of French as the more socially acceptable tongue continued. Dutch had almost no official status, except at a local level, and certainly did not have the functions of a standard language. The language situation deteriorated even more when in 1795 the “Belgian” territories were annexed by France. Their inhabitants were considered citizens of the newly created French Republic, and for the first time in history there was a massive official attempt to change the linguistic habits of the masses by suppressing the Dutch language (Willemyns 1997).

2.3 As far as linguistic evolution is concerned, the brief reunion of Belgium and Holland as one United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1814-1830) was a
spectacular event. This union, although short-lived, was of the utmost importance to the Flemings, who suddenly rediscovered their language for administration, politics, the courts, and education, areas where it had not been used for almost two centuries. Yet it must be stressed that many Flemings had great difficulty in recognizing the language now used by the Dutch as their own, and for many people the linguistic situation was hardly affected by this new turn of events. However, a small group of cultural leaders and intellectuals were strongly influenced by both the Dutch standard language and the new linguistic opportunities. In this way the short period of reunion was decisive for the future foundation and success of the Flemish Movement (Willemyns 1995).

2.4. In 1830 Belgium became an independent constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system dominated by the bourgeois elite, which secured its position by adopting the poll-tax system. For the bourgeoisie, French was a natural choice as the language of the state, and although the constitution proclaimed that the use of language was to be free, in reality French was the only language used in administration and indeed in public life in general (Lorwin 1972). Moreover, the government appointed only civil servants who spoke French (Witte et al. 1990).

3. Brugge during the last quarter of the 19th century: the cultural, political, economic, and social framework

3.1 In 1874, the year the Gilde van Sinte Luitgaarde was to be founded, Belgium was governed by the so-called "moderate" wing of the catholic party (Witte et al. 1990:63). In Brugge the majority of the liberal party in the city council was to be replaced in 1875 by the catholic party (Allossery 1930:241). Socially the situation in the country at large was characterized by the desperate condition of the industrial proletariat. Even "well to do" workers during that period used to spend 85% of their income for elementary needs. Half of the families lived in only one room, life expectancy was extremely low (ca. 45 year), the death rate accordingly high. "The standard of living of the working class during this phase of the industrial revolution had reached an absolute low as had never been experienced during the preceding centuries" (Witte et al. 1990:68).

Brugge, West Flanders' capital and major city, at that time must have been the poorest city of Belgium (Steevens 1985). Between 1870 and 1880 29% of
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its 50,000 inhabitants were officially without means of existence and had to live on welfare.

3.2 In 1874 Belgium was still governed almost exclusively in French (the law that recognized both Dutch and French as the official languages of the country was not to be voted until 1898). Yet, as most of the other Flemings, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants had no French at all. According to the census figures 1.93% was monolingual in French, 15% claimed to be bilingual (the explanatory notes for the census agents specified that, for someone to be considered bilingual, it was not necessary to be able to write the second language, nor to be familiar with its grammar or with “the majority of its words” [Vandenbussche 1995]). Even so 80.5% declared to be proficient in no other language than “Flemish” as it was then called. On top of that, 48.2% of the population was illiterate, a percentage that amounts to 60% if only the Dutch-speaking lower social class is taken into consideration.

4. Particularists and integrationists

4.1 In 1830 several linguistic problems had emerged simultaneously, one of them being that the Dutch language as it had been preserved in 19th century Belgium was not at all prepared to assume the functions its advocates had in mind. It needed standardization, it needed to be transformed into a tool fit to perform all the functions a language has to perform in a modern, industrialized state. The situation, therefore, was theoretically favorable for language planning activities, because linguistic systems have a tendency to adapt to changing communicative needs, brought about by societal change. Since, however, similar adaptations usually occur with some retardation there is plenty of room and time for language planners to try to interfere (Willemyns 1997a).

Among those who displayed this willingness two factions may be discerned (Willemyns 1993): those advocating a standard language development on the basis of the local varieties, i.e., domestic standardization, called particularists, and those insisting that the northern model should be followed and that, in other words, the Flemings should take over as much as possible the standard language as it had developed in the North. They were called the integrationists, and after a few decades of struggle it clearly appeared that the integrationist solution was victorious, a victory that was never to be challenged again. One of the reasons for this victory was undoubtedly a political one: the
only possibility for successfully repelling the competition of French—it was felt —was the elaboration of a language that could be accepted as being the same as the one used in The Netherlands, in order to profit domestically from the prestige the language had acquired abroad (Willemyns 1995)!

The strategy used to convince the population was quite simple and straightforward and indeed the same as the one used earlier to beat the particularist adversaries: if you want rights for your language (and for those who speak it) you should use the prestige variety which, in the course of centuries, has only been preserved in Holland. To adopt it now means only to gain repossession of the heritage which has always been there for you to collect (Willemyns 1994)!

Yet, both particularists and integrationists alike are generally to be considered to advocate the objectives of the Flemish Movement in its broadest sense, i.e., the promotion of the mother tongue of the Flemings by trying to reduce the influence and official usage of French in Flanders (Elias and Willemsen 1973).

4.2 West Flanders had always been a stronghold of the particularist movement, and religiously motivated aversion of the language variety of the protestant North had always been one of its underlying motivations. Yet, the difference between the first generation of particularists who used to operate in the third and fourth decade of the 19th century (Couvreur 1975; Geldhof 1960) and the so-called second generation, active in the seventies of that century, was not merely one of intensity, as it is accustomed to believe to date. My preoccupation with this movement has led me to the conviction that, on the contrary, there was a world of difference between those two movements, since, for the latter one, the language aspect was only a by-product of a religious fundamentalist movement. The main purpose of the second generation West Flemish particularists was to safeguard the ultramontane, catholic character of West Flanders. Language was involved, but only insofar as they believed that promoting West Flemish to the detriment of standard Dutch was a necessary weapon in that religious battle. The people who led the movement under consideration here had founded a fraternity called "De Gilde van Sinte-Luitgaarde" (The Guild of Sinte-Luitgaarde [SLG]) and, as will be demonstrated in this paper, their real motivation was not of a linguistic but decidedly of a religious-political nature. Duclos, its chairman, phrased it the
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following way: "... why is it we so dearly love our West Flemish language of old? It is because we are deeply convinced that to wrap the pure Flemish Virgin in the robe of that language is the only possibility to save her from the poisoning influence of wicked godlessness and moral corruption" (SLG 1:57).

The term "particularists" is not only used for those language planners advocating an internal standardization based on local, southern language usage or for those advocating a more extensive share of southern vocabulary in a northerly flavored standard language, but is also commonly used to designate people like the members of the SLG, mentioned above. All of this is very confusing, yet the usage of the term in all three meanings unfortunately remains very much a persisting habit (Willemyns 1995).

5. The Guild of Sinte-Luitgaarde

5.1 Four general assemblies of the fraternity have been held and four volumes of proceedings were published between 1874 and 1877 (SLG). They convey the image of an extremely paranoiac society, convinced that the fall of catholic West Flanders was imminent. At least 49 of the 77 founding members (i.e., 63.63%) and all of the members of the board were priests (Geldhof 1959); they all were religious fanatics. In all discussions and presentations the same themes prevailed: the Church and the Roman Catholic religion were under attack and in severe danger. Although Brugge was not only the poorest (Steevens 1985) but probably also one of the most catholic cities of Belgium, they must have sensed, although it was never clearly articulated, that a change in society was taking place and they considered it their duty to try to stop this evolution. Since a change in linguistic habits was one of the most "recognizable" characteristics of societal change, this might explain why language was going to play such a dominant part in their strategy. Intuitive feelings rather than scientific analysis kept them going and nostalgia for the "good old days" seems to be what underlies their complaints on the "persecution of the church" as well as on the "threatening" linguistic evolution. In the West Flanders of old they want to preserve, there is no room for intruders and surely not for what they considered to be a "new" language. That is why not only Northern Dutch but any attempt at some standardized language used to be characterized as "stiff and twisted, far-fetched, artificial and bombastic", without ever one single author being identified, or one single excerpt being quoted that could prove or exemplify why these language varieties would indeed deserve to be characterized the way
it was claimed. In keeping the discussion deliberately on an abstract level they hoped to be able to spread the “Feindbild” their strategy was based upon. The vagueness of their arguments, moreover, allows them to actually provide two different versions of their intentions: one for the outside world and another (very diverging) one for internal use in their fraternity.

Since their nostalgic longing for the past and the opinions and options based on it were so very much contrary to the contemporary mainstream opinion of the advocates of the mother tongue in Flanders at large, it was considered safer not to unveil their real objectives to the outside world. Consequently, a strategy had to be developed allowing them to achieve their goals in West Flanders while at the same time spreading a misleading image of their opinions and activities in the country at large. For the latter purpose it was decided to try to convince outsiders that their aims were running parallel with the general objectives of the Flemish particularist movement. A letter by the guild’s chairman Duclos, with the assertion that the differences between them and their “adversaries” concerning “the use of some forms characteristic of our West Flemish” are “not fundamental”, is characteristic for this part of the strategy.

Yet, in their internal discussions, this strategy is abandoned altogether and the minutes of the proceedings demonstrate that no attempt is made to disguise the real intentions or the goals pursued. The linguists among the members took up the task of demonstrating why the influence and spread of the “half Jewish, half heathen High Dutch” (as the famous poet Gezelle labeled it) had to be energetically counteracted. This job was performed in various ways and the obsession with which it was done sometimes takes hilarious proportions.

One of the presenters, called De Carne, a professor at a priests’ seminary, appears to be well-versed in the historical grammar of the Germanic languages. His presentation “Over den invloed van het duitsch op de nederlandsche tale” ['On the influence of German on Dutch'] (SLG III:77-86) shows that he is well acquainted with the contemporary research (he quotes Franz Bopp and Moritz Heyne). Yet to what avail is no less than appalling: among other things he claims that the diphthongization of the long vowels in German is a devilish contraption because Luther, the “German antichrist”, is responsible for it. Before he wrote his bible, De Carne says, the German pronounced [wien]; Luther's Saxon changed that into [wain]: “From Luther’s times onward we see
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how the old, pure, full Swabian sounds of the Minnesänger and Heldendichter are replaced by the newly fashioned Saxon sounds:

—The Alemannic long i, pronounced the same way we West Flemings still do, changed into ei, which is some kind of diphthong i. Min lib, din wib, thie wile, sin rich, change into mein leib, dein weib, die weile, etc.

—Long ü (cognate of "our" uu) got an a or ä as a companion and became au or äu (the "hollandic" ui): rümen changes into räumen, lüten into lauten, hüs into haus.

—MHG iu was replaced by the new eu: fiur into feuer; niuwe into neue, etc.

The heathen character of a diphthong and the catholic character of a monophthong, he assures his audience, is also apparent in the Low Countries, where we see that the heathen Hollanders have introduced diphthongization: “Step by step the Hollanders have followed their neighbors on the other Rhine bank, and our old sounds underwent the same fate as the old High German ones: they were swept away by triumphant Saxon” (o.c.:80). De Carne also points out who in the Netherlands played Luther’s part: it was Marnix van Ste Aldegonde. From then onward, De Carne says: “the language was no longer a ray of sun coming out of the heart but an artificially shaped doll’s head” (o.c.:85).

Similar nonsense is provided by Leonardus de Bo, famous then as well as today as the author of a scholarly acclaimed dialect dictionary of West Flemish (De Bo 1873). His presentations in the guild, though, throw another light on the purposes of his scholarly ambitions. In a presentation on “Waarom er geene eloquentie in het letterkundig Nederlandsch is” [‘Why there can be no eloquence in literary Dutch’] he states the following:

Truth and Falseness inevitably have their own language. The language of Truth, which has nothing to embellish or to hide, is simple, natural, cordial and open-hearted; exactly the contrary applies to the language of Falseness. In Holland, as in Germany, Protestantism has been introduced and spread mostly by way of preaching. Yet, protestantism is a false doctrine and not the Truth and, consequently, the preaching of Protestantism could not...
simple, natural and open-hearted. The consequence had to be—as indeed it has been—that this language was stiff and twisted, that it became far-fetched, artificial, bombastic, full of wind and rhetoric. And isn't it revealing, that those who would like to introduce this language in Belgium, are indeed all people who don't think much of the truth themselves; instinctively they sensed that this language was theirs, this language of falseness and arrogant ignorance (SLG II:19-27).

Contributions of members without a linguistic background are as hilarious and revealing but I shall not elaborate on that here. Let it suffice to mention that they denounce e.g., spelling manuals in which the name of the Virgin is not repeatedly mentioned, newspapers not imbued with the orthodox ultramontane doctrine or historians who maintain that Galilei was right, that the "Bartholomy-night" was one of the atrocities of the Roman Catholic church or that the Inquisition would have struck victims who were not criminals anyway (Willeyns 1995a).

Actually, most of the presentations demonstrate that the members of the SLG did not really care how something was written. What they really objected to is what was written down. It is disagreement with the message that led to disagreement with the medium. This is the crucial point of the so-called West Flemish particularism, and it has been formulated in a surprisingly clear way by another member of the guild, the Reverend Johan Leemans de Montflin: "Our language, catholic in its origin and in its evolution, cannot prosper in a lost spirit, that has disengaged itself from the church".8

5.3 Also, and as a consequence of the above, the members of the guild were very suspicious of the Flemish Movement. Their romantic, yet also politically inspired adoration of their native, West Flemish dialect, has nothing in common with the aims of the Flemish Movement, trying to restore the language rights of the mother tongue of all the Flemings.

That the situation of the language of the people suffers from the Belgian linguistic situation is occasionally mentioned in a few presentations but is not really a topic during the debates of the guild. The frenchification of the Belgian state was indeed very favorable to the implementation of the very aims of the guild, viz., to keep the (West) Flemish people the way it used to be. "Every contact of the flock with the ‘world’ could only induce anti-religious
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contamination... In order to protect the parishioners against the worldly temptations, the church had decided to monitor their lives as much as possible", Reynebeau (1995:97-98) says, and the activities of the SLG are completely along these lines.

One of De Bo’s former students, G. Flamen, perfectly conveys the guild’s feelings in this respect in a presentation in which he characterizes the “wicked, i.e., those who hate religion" the following way:

they are using what they call the Flemish Movement in order to increase evil. They are creating theaters and succeed in wheedling money, our money, from catholic administrations in order to perform anti-patriotic and immoral plays under the cover of pro-Flemish feelings.

Also, he accuses:

the slaves of the official deity, i.e., the language swindlers, having their offices in city halls and state schools, who are desperately putting all of their wit together to create, out of a mishmash of Flemish, Hollandic, French and what do I know...that which they label the new Dutch, the official Dutch, the Dutch of the government.

5.4 Yet, the members of the guild do realize that, even if they were to succeed in their attempts to rule out the use and influence of Standard Dutch, it would still be hard to come up with a solution for the language used in more formal domains. They suspected that the West Flemish variety they advocated could not possibly function as a language of administration, education, etc., nor would it ever be accepted for use outside of the province of West Flanders. The solution they came up with is that for all higher and more formal language functions the use of French had to be propagated This is not only appalling, it is also another proof of how far they had moved away from the points of view of even the “regular" particularist faction within the Flemish Movement.

Duclos, the guild’s chairman and one of its main ideologists, who had previously stated that “to counteract ‘Hollandic’ as far as language as well as literature is concerned" is the main concern of the guild, publicly states his point of view in a letter to the “Dutch Conference" in 1879:
And do you really believe that we intend to abandon our language for a new so-called mother tongue? Forget it! Rather we'll learn to read and write French, French is what we prefer a thousand times to this kind of Flemish or whatever one likes to call it (Allossery 1930: 133). 

Gezelle's opinion is quite as unequivocal. This famous Flemish poet and priest did not believe in language planning and therefore never joined the guild. Yet, he completely adhered to and even shaped their fundamentalist religious convictions and has always been considered (now as well as then) as the figure-head of the West Flemish particularists. Gezelle writes:

I am perfectly sure that gradually time has come that we, Roman-catholic Netherlanders all of us, have to rely on each other rather than turning to the half Jewish, half heathen High Dutch for support or approval. We should get rid of that and even more of that than of our French enemy (C. Gezelle 1918:200-201).

Explaining why he feels that way, he portrays the linguistic situation and future evolution as follows:

What is it they (=the "integrationists") really want? The 'hollandification' of the people, for the people, as far as language is concerned and, consequently, as far as religion and customs are concerned. How is this to be prevented? There is only one way: that we who are from the people, who are with the people, who are the people make sure that our people is immune to those strangers by cultivating the language of the people, by honoring it, by making it popular. This is a protective barrier they won't be able to penetrate; this is the only thing they can't possibly accomplish and it is our only possible defense. Linguistic unity, as they call it, is linguistically as well as ethnologically and morally stupid and if this stupidity were to be carried through it would be a catastrophe and a contagious cancer! (C. Gezelle 1918:200-201).

Gezelle tries to present his preference for French for formal language functions in a scholarly disguise in an article he publishes in the French language journal *Le Muséon* in 1885 (Boets 1970). Some of the most salient excerpts are the following:
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The Fleming uses the Flemish of his forefathers when and where it seems fit to do so. Yet, whenever his native vernacular does not suffice, for example when addressing the outside world, he does not use an imposed Flemish language or highbrow Dutch as his brethren in Holland do; no, he simply switches to French. In the past, and under similar circumstances, he would have used Latin, Italian or Spanish.

The existence in Flanders of two so very different languages as French and Flemish, far from being detrimental to the preservation of the latter, is, on the contrary, in its favor.

As a conclusion he again stresses that anything is better than standard Dutch:

In Flanders an official Flemish language, a language after the model of Dutch, which is usually called 'cultivated Hollandic' nowadays, is not in use and will never be used. This situation can be appreciated differently according to various points of view, but 'Flaminguistes' most certainly do not deplore it; quite the contrary, they consider it to be a very interesting field of research.

6. Gezelle: Fundamentalism without language planning

6.1 The members of the Guild, who considered Gezelle to be "their head and their master", desperately wanted him to join their fraternity. "We want to see you in our midst and to be instructed by you" Duclos let him know (Viaene 1965:374-375). Yet, not only did he not attend, he made it quite clear that he had not the slightest intention of participating. In a letter to Duclos (dd 20/8/1874), published in SLG I:86-89, he states: "To interfere in language evolution has always been the idea of those who convened the members of the guild" and he lets no doubt persist that he does not agree with this "idea". Using a metaphor he points out that they may be pulling the same car, but are not pulling by the same rope. If all those pulling really have the intention to make it advance, he says, it surely will advance. But then, he adds: "Everybody is free not to agree".

How is this to be understood? There can be no doubt whatsoever that Gezelle not only shared the Guild's religious and political views, he even inspired them. Yet, what he did not share was their trust in language planning.
Also, he profoundly disagrees with the guild on what language can be used for, since he did not think that is should be used as a weapon for ultramontane proselytism. Consequently, being so much in disagreement with the guild's strategy, the only arguments he could possibly use to explain his not taking part in their striving had to be linguistic ones.

Although Gezelle unquestionably wanted the West Flemings to linguistically behave the way the Guild had pointed out, he was not at all convinced that this could be achieved by language planning measures. "A language" he instructs Duclos, cannot be made, a language grows. Using yet another metaphor he points out that in the course of time the language evolves and "whatever language-smiths are trying to do with it is more likely to be harmful than useful."

Therefore, he adds, the only way he is prepared to contribute to the elaboration and propagation of a West Flemish written language is by using it! In doing so, he assures his colleagues, others will follow suit and understand that they have no need for Standard Dutch: "I have counteracted the Holland dialect by using our dialect, the West Flemish dialect and by making it known to the whole Dutch speaking community."

6.2 Gezelle consequently appears to have been, up to a certain point, an outsider in the particularism debate and that, of course, is no less than a paradox, since he has always been considered the showpiece of the movement, then as well as today. Gezelle clearly did not think very highly of what was happening in what has to be considered the headquarters of West Flemish particularism. Its major theoreticians definitely were De Bo and Duclos. Trying to formulate a theoretical foundation for a possible alternative to the much hated protestant language was exclusively their doing. Since, as far as Gezelle was concerned, this alternative was French, he had no use for a theoretical foundation. Yet, even so he has definitely used a West Flemish written language, not only in his poems but in prose as well. And although purposive research is still lacking here, it seems very much possible to me that in this respect we may be in the presence of a second paradox, viz., that the actual language usage of Gezelle is much more in accordance with De Bo’s theoretical model than De Bo’s personal language usage in many of his books. His grammar, e.g., (De Bo 1869), is not "West Flemishly" flavored at all and cannot even be considered "particularistic", not only because theoretical
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considerations are completely lacking but also because the rules and examples of usage listed, are simply in plain, regular Dutch.

6.3 It is only as far as the masses of the population are concerned that even Gezelle prefers not to be outspoken: "The whole West Flemish [language] movement" he admits, "has, as a principle and from the very beginning, been nothing but a christian, even an ultra-montane movement [...] But it is crucial, I think, that we conceal our real purposes and our priestly considerations from the bulk of the population".20

7. The ultramontane movement

It is startling why the members of the guild, very well trained most of them and to be considered part of the intellectual elite of the country, not only tried to propagate their extremely odd opinions, but also seemed to believe in them themselves. The most plausible explanation probably is, that they were caught in the vivid controversy of that time between three different movements:

—anticlericalism as propagated by a politically strong liberal party
—the "moderate" Roman Catholic movement
—the ultramontane, fundamentalist Roman-catholicism

The working of the "Sinte Luitgaardegilde" has to be seen in the light of the battle of the ultramontane movement not only against liberalism, but against more moderate Roman-Catholicism as well. "To understand the response to and the impact of the ultramontane movement during the period 1857-1881" Witte et al. (1990:90) say, "one has to consider the constantly growing popularity of the modern, laicising state". Various other historians as well point out that the church was losing its grip on public life, mainly in intellectual circles and that one was witnessing a situation in which Roman Catholicism was at best one option one could take but no longer the only possible, the inevitable one it formerly used to be (Reynebeau 1995:143). The ultramontane doctrine held that the church is the dominating force in society, responsible for guiding the "sinning believer" from the cradle to the grave and, consequently, has the right and even the duty to directly interfere in political life, since the interests of the church prevail on those of the state. During the sixties and the seventies of the 19th century, the ultramontane movement, also claiming the supremacy of the pope as the ultimate clerical and worldly leader, was aggressively on the rise in Belgium. The Sinte Luitgaarde guild in Brugge was
part of that Church Triumphant movement and tried to contribute to its success by the means of language and language policy.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The strategy of the SLG was based on the following assumptions:

—the variety of Dutch used in the Netherlands had to be calumniated as a protestant, heretic language, the influence of which could only be detrimental to Roman Catholic West Flanders, since, being in contact with that variety would imply being exposed to the religious views such a language inevitably conveys;

—the elaboration and spread of any kind of supraregional Dutch, even one devised for Flanders only, had to be counteracted, since it might have opened a window allowing a larger portion of the population to establish contact with the world outside the screened cultural and political micro-structure of West Flanders.

8.2 In order to achieve these goals some very particular views had to be propagated, viz.:

—that using a variant other than a West Flemish dialect was contrary to the real character of the West Fleming

—that all other varieties were stiff, twisted, artificial, bombastic, etc., and, therefore, not only improper but, in fact, also useless

—that their opponents were using a strategy that mirrored their own one, viz., wanting to change society through the medium of language.

8.3 A curious inconsistency in the fundamentalist reasoning is the following: it is constantly repeated that, in order to keep the West Flemish population away from irreligious influences, one had to reach out to them in speaking and writing. In order to be properly understood, they warned themselves, they had to avoid the mistake of doing so in a “normalized, bookish language variety [read Standard Dutch], that the people would fail to understand.” Only using the native vernacular was to guarantee success, the more so since this variety was "so beautiful and so pure" (Allossery 1930:151-152). The strange and surprising thing in all this is that nobody saw fit to try to prove the obvious, yet improbable, assumption, that West Flemings would have problems
understanding a language variety no other Fleming obviously had any problems with. Moreover, as far as the written language is concerned, they also seem to completely disregard the fact that at least half of "the people" were illiterate anyway and, consequently, could not have read any variety at all.

8.4 The name "particularists of the second generation" for the group I am here reporting on, is, therefore, erroneous in every sense:

—unlike the particularists they were not interested in strengthening the southern contribution in a more or less standardized Dutch, since they strictly declined any standardized variety at all;

—unlike the advocates of the Flemish Movement they were not interested in reducing the official use and influence of French in Flanders. They were, quite on the contrary, in favor of a diglossic situation in which French is the H-variety, thus perpetuating the function of French as the prestige language of culture, education and administration etc. and at the same time barring forever an eventual usage of Dutch in H-functions.

Not only does this throw a different light on their activities, it is also the opposite of the kind of position attributed to the leaders of this West Flemish movement in the cultural history of Flanders and in many scholarly accounts of the external history of the Dutch language in the southern part of the Dutch language community.

8.5 From a language planning point of view the SLG constitutes an interesting example of a group trying to devise language planning measures to achieve political goals based on fundamentalist religious convictions.

These kinds of activities have been made possible, although they eventually failed, because of the entangled linguistic situation in the country at large. The then dominance of French in the Belgian state had created a vacuum as to the possible evolution and future function of Dutch, making it still very uncertain at that time which of various tendencies was eventually going to prevail.

NOTES

1. Currently carried out in the Dutch Department of the Vrije Universiteit of Brussels and made possible by a research grant of the National Science Foundation (FWO).
2. See Suffeleers (1979:148-164) for an overview of current opinions.

3. "...dragen wij ons oud Dietsch eene zoo vuerige liefde toe, 't is omdat het onze diepingewortelde overtuiging is dat het oude vlaamsche kleed het bekwaamste is om de zuivere vlaamsche Maagd te bevrijden tegen de verpestende invloed van goddeloosheid en zedebederf."

4. Lettre (1874) is to be regarded an official manifesto propagating these views.

5. Gezelle-Museum 8.11.1871

6. A Brabantic Calvinist, mayor of Antwerp before its capture by the Spaniards and presumably the writer of the "Wilhelmus", the current national anthem of The Netherlands. He was also a Bible translator and the author of one of the sharpest and wittiest parodies on the organization of the Roman Catholic church, the "Bienkorf der H. Roomsche kercke" (1569).

7. "En alzoo en is de tale geen straal meer uit het herte, maar een gekunsteld en getuitemantooid puppenhoofd."

8. In his presentation "Het drietal in de Vlaamsche Beweging" (SLG III:62)

9. "Elk contact van de kudde met 'de wereld' kon slechts tot antigodsdienstige besmetting leiden... Om de gelovige voor de verleidingen van de wereld te vrijwaren, besloot de kerk om diens levenssfeer zoveel mogelijk te controleren."

10. "'t uitgeven van een tweemaandelijksch tijdschrift voor Taal- en Letterkunde" (SLG II:65-75)

11. "nu gebruiken zij hetgeen zij de vlaamsche beweging noemen om het kwaad te doen aangroeien. Zij stichten schouwburgen en weten ons geld, bij een katholiek bestier, af te troggen om zedelooze en tegen de vaderlandsch liefde strevende toneelstukken, onder de dekmantel van vlaamschgezindheid op te voeren."

12. "de slaven van de officiële godheid of taalknoeiers, gezeten in stadhuiizen en in de kantoren van het staatsonderwijs, leggen al hun verstand te gare om allengskens uit een mengelmoes van vlaamsch, Hollandsch, Fransch en nog wat anders, dat geen name en heeft in geene der europische talen, dat wat zij het nieuwe vlaamsch, het officiële vlaamsch, het vlaamsch van 't gouvernement noemen, te doen opgroeien."

13. "En denkt men dat wij onze taal gaan verloochenen voor eene, 't zij welke, nieuwe, vreemde, zoogezelde moedertaal? Neen wij! Fransch, zullen wij liever leeren lezen en schrijven, fransch zullen wij zijn
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duizendmaal eerder en liever, als op zulken wijze vlaamsch of ‘t zij hoe men ‘t heeten wil.”

14. “Flaminguistes” is defined by Gezelle as “a group of researchers pursuing the task of scientifically researching Flemish, ancient as well as modern, academic as well as popular” (Gezelle 1885:114)

15. “In dien staat van zaken tusschenkomen, werkender hand, is van over lang het gedacht en de meening geweest van deze vier bedoelingen in den omzendbrief van Sinte Luitgaarden Gilde beschreven staan.”

16. “wij trekken gezaamder hand en gezaamder krachten, zoo niet aan het zelfste zeel, toch aan denzelfsten wagen.”

17. “Eene tale ondertusschen en maakt men niet, eene tale wordt.”

18. “De tijd is de smeltkroes waarin die wording plaats heeft, en de haastige hamerslagen, gelijk de nijdige vijlsteken van al de taalsmeden van de wereld zullen de nederlandsche tale, zoo zij ooit worden mag, vele af maar weinig toe doen.”

19. “Ik wil ronduit bekennen dat ik aan de wording eener toekomende algemeene nederlandsche of nederduitsche tale maar op mijne eigene maniere werkzaam geweest en ben. Ik heb namelijk de overstroomende en overweldigende macht van het hollandsch dialect tegengewrocht met ons dialect, het westvlaamsch, of het vlaamsch, zoo gij wilt, mond en sprake te verleen en, door den druk, de nederduytsche wereld kenbaar te maken.”


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