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CHAPTER 14

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James S Holmes and *Delta*

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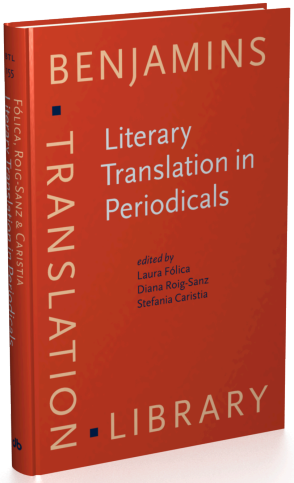

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CHAPTER 14

The polyphony of periodicals

James S Holmes and *Delta*

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This chapter introduces the concept of polyphonic voice to investigate the soundscape of a translation-rich periodical. Using the anglophone Dutch periodical *Delta* and one of its principle editors and translators, James S Holmes, as a case, it shows how the "silent voice" of a periodical's patron can create dissonance among the voices inscribed in its text; how a periodical's collective voice can be gleaned through paratext such as editors' notes and manifestos; and how paratext can be analyzed to hearken an individual editorial and translatorial voice within a translation-rich periodical's collective soundscape.

Keywords: polyphonic voice, translation, *Delta*, James S Holmes, Dutch literature, public diplomacy, periodical

Introduction

> A smaller linguistic area is at a disadvantage compared to a country whose language is widely known. […] That is why most major countries do not need a voice like *Delta*'s in order to be heard. […] (T)hey are also far less dependent on the services and devotion of translators. Hence further thanks are due not only to the many authors who have written for *Delta*, […] but also scores of translators […] and the handful of copy editors who have served the review. It is their combined efforts that have made it possible for the editors to carry on through the years. (Van Marle 1974: 4)

This quote is taken from the farewell essay of the anglophone Dutch journal *Delta, a Review of Arts, Life and Thought in the Netherlands*, which published its first issue in 1958 and its last in 1974. It emphasizes the importance of authors, translators, copy editors and editors for the functioning of a translation-rich review like *Delta*. The quote also explicitly uses the term "voice": it says *Delta* has a voice, that this voice is given shape through the services of translators, and that its purpose is to

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share a perspective with the world that would otherwise be inaudible given its source in a smaller language. In this chapter, we pick up on the concept of voice and work it out using *Delta* and one of its more notorious editors and translators, James S Holmes, as a case study. How useful can voice be for studying translation in periodicals?

A periodical's polyphonic voice

Voice has been instrumentalized in Translation Studies by Cecilia Alvstad, Jeremy Munday and Theo Hermans among others (Alvstad 2013; Hermans 1996, 2014; Munday 2007). We take a 2014 article by Hermans, "Positioning translators: Voices, views and values in translation", as our starting point here. With regards to voice and translation, Hermans writes:

> (W)hen we are dealing with translations, the overarching communication that takes place consists in a translator addressing an audience by promising the performance of translation and then, as part of this discourse and therefore embedded in it, proceeding to quote the original across the relevant languages. The translator lets the author speak in a tongue the audience can understand. On this view, at least two simultaneous utterances reach the audience. One is the translator's statement offering a translation. The other is the quoted discourse. Since the latter is an inset in the former, it is bound to be affected by the frame surrounding it, even if that frame consists of no more than the label "translation" on the title page of a book. (Hermans 2014: 293)

Hermans isolates two specific and interrelated aspects involved in the "overarching communication" that takes place in translation. One is "the quoted discourse" which is the result of a double-voiced and dialogical interaction between the original and its translation, mediated by the translator, who does the work of rendering the source text in a language the reader can understand. The other is "the frame surrounding it", the paratext, which is the text that functions to present the translation *as* a translation, however that may be. In this chapter, we aim to show how paratext can be marshaled to investigate voice in a translation-rich periodical.

We agree with Hermans that translation is double-voiced discourse and that there are two main discursive elements – the translation itself and the paratextual framing of it – affecting the message. Translators often play a central role in determining how a translation is presented as such, either through explanatory footnotes or prefaces in the text itself, or through statements made about the translation outside the text. However, we argue that when a translation is published in a periodical, its paratextual framing becomes more complex and a

new collective voice becomes audible: that of the periodical itself. Furthermore, it quickly becomes clear that a periodical, particularly one that relies heavily on translations, is polyphonic: echoes of many individual voices can be traced within it, some of which may be discordant with others. Voices include that of the translator, as Hermans points out, but also the editor, the proofreader, the copy editor, the layout designer, etc. All of these voices are inscribed in the final product in various ways and can play an important role in the "overarching communication" between source and target, for which a translation-rich periodical is the vehicle. There are also voices that are *not* inscribed in the text but that are nonetheless impactful in a periodical's coming-into-being. These voices are audible only insofar as we are able to reconstruct how they amplified some voices and stifled others. Often, the inaudible voices that speak the loudest are those holding the purse strings.

How does one "detect" voice in a translation-rich periodical? We will focus here on ways to glean voice through the analysis of paratext, or what Hermans calls the frame. In defining paratext, we follow Genette (1997), who sees paratext as the sum of the peritext and the epitext, where the peritext consists of framing elements internal to the journal's text itself (titles, section headings, by-lines, prefaces, notes), and the epitext consists of framing elements outside the journal's text (interviews, speeches, correspondence and other documents detailing authorial and editorial matters related to the periodical). Of course, we are aware that our approach is metaphorical and interpretive in mode: we personify a periodical when we assume it has a voice and we choose to activate certain voices over others when we set that collective voice against its constituent individual voices. When we speak of the voice of a periodical, we are actually trying to say something about the combined voices of the people behind it *as well as* (and in contrast to) the way they present themselves as a collective. Leaving aside many others, we will

Figure 1. A selection of *Delta* covers designed by the graphic artist Dick Elffers. Source: Delta International Publication Foundation (now defunct)

focus on three voices in *Delta*: the inaudible voice of its government backer and funding source, the Dutch Institute for International Cultural Relations; the collective voice of its editorial board; and the individual voice of James Holmes, its co-founder, a longtime principal editor and a prolific contributor of poetry translations. How can we glean echoes of these three voices? How did they interact to give polyphonic resonance to *Delta*?

Giving voice to *Delta*

Delta sought to make the culture of the Netherlands known to the world by publishing highlights from the Dutch-language creative scene in English. It ran from 1958 to 1974, produced four issues a year (63 issues in total) and had a reported circulation of 6,500 copies.[1] The periodical was an initiative of the Dutch Institute for International Cultural Relations, part of the foreign affairs division of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It was published exclusively in English in order to break "through the language barrier" separating the Netherlands with the rest of the world (Sluizer 1958a: 5). The vast majority of *Delta*'s content consisted of translations out of Dutch and scores of translators collaborated over the journal's lifetime.

The decision to publish in English also reflected the strategic importance the Dutch government ascribed to fostering its cultural relations with English-speaking countries amid the tensions of the Cold War. This extended to the periodical's manifold purpose: from its conception, *Delta* was part public diplomacy tool meant to showcase aspects of Dutch industry, society and culture, and part literary magazine meant to circulate Dutch literature and art internationally. The periodical's dual purpose is reflected in the variety of texts brought together under its cover: it included essays on architecture, landscape, science, engineering, economics, and politics alongside poetry, prose and dispatches from the Dutch art world.

The work of creating a readership abroad and defending *Delta* to its government minders at home fell to *Delta*'s backer, the Dutch Institute for International Cultural Relations, and particularly to its secretary-general, the former *Vrij Nederland* radio presenter George Sluizer. His correspondence with Dutch business leaders announcing the new periodical and soliciting subscribers sheds light on the readership his Institute had in mind for *Delta*. It also shows the inherent

1. Published figures on *Delta*'s distribution vary. The Dutch Institute claimed a print run of 6,500 (Sluizer 1958a, 1958b). A government report has it at 6,000 (Schmid and van Dongen 1987: 73). An internal list of subscribers dated 8 December 1958 lists the total number of subscribers at 958. A 1958 article in *Neerlandia* estimates the readership at 2,000, 900 in the United States.

tension that existed from the start between the periodical's dual diplomatic and aesthetic *raison d'être*. In one letter addressed to the board of directors of the Amsterdam Ballast Association, dated 1 December 1958, Sluizer describes the periodical as being "intended for a relatively limited audience of influential and leading figures abroad, as well as intellectuals and artists" (Sluizer 1958b). In a similar letter to the director of the Veendammer Cardboard Company, dated 30 December 1958, Sluizer omits intellectuals and artists, mentioning only "influential and leading figures abroad" (Sluizer 1958c). Meanwhile, in a bulletin published around the same time in *Neerlandia*, a Dutch-language periodical geared toward Dutch-speakers abroad, *Delta* is announced as "a quarterly journal that aims to acquaint intellectuals and artists outside of the Netherlands with Dutch culture" (Anon. 1959),[2] omitting mention of any influencers and leading figures beyond the world of art. Evidently, the Dutch Institute presented *Delta* as a public diplomacy tool in some cases and an internationally-minded arts periodical in others, depending on who was listening.

When *Delta*'s dual purpose *was* presented as such, it was in modest and even somewhat sarcastic terms. In the opening essay of *Delta*'s inaugural issue, Sluizer writes that the periodical's creators were not so presumptuous as to imagine an untapped readership of "persons abroad […] anxiously looking forward to the opportunity of growing better acquainted with intellectual and artistic achievements in the Netherlands". Rather, *Delta* sought to give Dutch art and thought a "rôle (*sic*) of significance in the world constellation of valuable things" (Sluizer 1958a: 5). It was to be a shiny store window presenting the best creative work the Netherlands had to offer the English-speaking world.

Even so, not all Dutch officials were convinced that a government-sponsored periodical, no matter how shiny, would catch and hold the attention of its intended readers abroad. In a 7 July 1958 letter to Sluizer preserved in the Dutch National Archives, the cultural attaché at the Dutch embassy in New Delhi, J. E. Schaap, pronounced *Delta* dead on arrival:

> I have no qualms with the content or the presentation, but that is of no consequence. What matters is not my opinion but that of the foreign reader, the people receiving this periodical. I must admit, when I look at the amount of similar publications that pile up on my desk in the course of a month – some of which are as nice [as *Delta*], others less nice, some nicer – I doubt its chances of success. […] I myself have seen how these publications disappear unopened in the rubbish bins of newsrooms. And why would a Dutch publication be treated any differently?

2. All Dutch quotations have been translated into English by Jack McMartin. Dutch original: "een driemaandelijks tijdschrift […] dat intellectuelen en kunstenaars buiten Nederland wil voorlichten over de Nederlandse cultuur".

> Not even I am able to get through them all […] and it's my job. I simply don't have the time. And that is bound to be the case for many others in my position, exactly the people you intend your publication to reach.[3] (Schaap 1958)

For Schaap, *Delta* is clearly an instrument of public diplomacy meant to shape anglophone elites' opinion of the Netherlands. He identifies two types of (non)readers – newspaper editors and cultural diplomats – and concludes that neither would be well-served by a quarterly like *Delta*: they're a dime a dozen and no one reads them anyway. "Instead of a periodical, I require monographs I can send to those who have a professional interest in the subject addressed", he writes to Sluizer. "I must further insist that I be the one to decide the subjects treated in these monographs" (Schaap 1958).[4] The cultural attaché's criticisms suggest that *Delta* was not immediately embraced by members of the Dutch foreign service, and furthermore that some officials were uneasy ceding autonomy to its editors.

In response, Sluizer assures his compatriot that he would be happy to supply monographs *in addition to* the quarterly and that he had already received several positive responses from Indian readers. Exactly how sincere and qualitative these responses were is open to discussion. Several letters from Indian cultural organizations were perfunctory and no doubt prompted by protocolary courtesy. Another letter kept in the Museum of Literature in The Hague suggests *Delta* also dealt with its share of well-meaning amateurs trying to get themselves published. A certain G. P. Vimal from New Delhi writes he "consider(s) *Delta* a magazine of total culture" and says he has "a liking for Delta countries". He attached a short

3. Dutch original: "Ik heb noch op de inhoud, noch op de uitvoering kritiek. Dat wil overigens niets zeggen, want niet mijn mening is belangrijk, doch die van de buitenlander, die het blad toegezonden krijgt. Toch moet ik aan het succes ervan twijfelen, als ik de hoeveelheid soortgelijke publicaties – waarvan sommige even fraai, sommige minder fraai en enkele fraaier zijn – zie, die zich in de loop van één maand op mijn schrijftafel vergaren en die iedereen die daartoe een verzoek tot de betreffende Ambassade of instelling richt, gratis krijgt toegezonden. Ik heb hier zelf gezien, hoe op de redactie van dagbladen alle enveloppen die dusdanige publicaties bevatten, ongeopend in de prullenmand verdwenen. En waarom zou er, in het algemeen, ten aanzien van een Nederlands blad anders worden gehandeld dan met uitgaven van andere landen? Ik zelf, die toch wel uit hoofde van mijn functie als uit persoonlijke belangstelling kennis van al die geschriften zou moeten nemen, ik zie er geen kans toe. Daartoe ontbreekt mij eenvoudig de tijd. Ik kom er zelfs niet toe, om alle kunstperiodieken, die mij kosteloos worden toegezonden, te lezen. En zoals mij zal het ongetwijfeld heel velen gaan, juist diegenen, die men voor toezending van Uw blad in aanmerking meende te moeten brengen."

4. Dutch original: "In plaats van een tijdschrift heb ik voor mijn werk monografieën nodig, die ik kan zenden aan diegenen, van wie ik weet dat zij uit hoofde van hun beroep of functie voor het in de monografie behandelde onderwerp belangstelling hebben. […] En ik moet daarbij nog vooropstellen, dat ik zelf de onderwerpen voor die monografieën wens te bepalen."

story and a poem "about the land and country which I have never visited" for the editors' consideration (Vimal 1971).

However, Sluizer's emphasis on the positive responses from Indian readers was really only a secondary part of his defense of *Delta* (and a flimsy one at that, as he must have realized). Rather, *Delta*'s ideal readers were elsewhere in the Anglosphere. In his response to Schaap he downplays the importance of India:

> Whereas interest among Indian readers may be limited, I would ask you to see the matter, at least as far as *Delta* is concerned, thus: this periodical is intended for the various countries (the United States, Canada, Australia, etc.) where a certain latent demand for this kind of publication is in fact present. We hope to meet this with *Delta*, today and in the future.[5] (Sluizer 1958c)

Sluizer is also eager to emphasize that *Delta* is not meant (solely) as an instrument of information sharing or propaganda, as Schaap sees it, but rather as a serious artistic publication serving a genuinely interested readership willing to pay for a subscription. (Half of *Delta*'s first print run went to paying customers, he claims.) It is clear from his response that Sluizer and his Institute stood firmly behind *Delta*, even in the face of skepticism from diplomats asked to distribute it in the field. He acknowledges that the interest of many readers "won't go beyond a quick browse, or a spot on the bookshelf, or even the rubbish bin" but that "a general-interest periodical like *Delta* can only find an audience if it is truly of superb quality" (Sluizer 1958c).[6]

Delta's collective voice

On this point, *Delta*'s co-founders and principle editors Ed Hoornik, Hans Van Marle and James Holmes surely agreed. However, that did not preclude a certain dissonance between what the Dutch government wanted *Delta* to publish and what its editors actually did.

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5. Dutch original: "Is in India die belangstelling geringer, dan zou ik U willen vragen de zaak – althans wat DELTA betreft – zo te zien, dat wij dit tijdschrift in de eerste plaats bestemmen voor diverse landen (de Verenigde Staten, Canada, Australië, enz.) waar een zekere belangstelling voor zulk een uitgave wèl latent aanwezig is en naar wij hopen in voldoende mate om de uitgave van DELTA ook in de toekomst te recehtvaardigen."

6. Dutch original: "Wij zijn er in de eerste plaats van overtuigd, dat voor een tijdschrift van algemene aard – zoals DELTA – slechts belangstelling gevonden kan worden als het werkelijk van voortreffelijke kwaliteit is. […] Maar ook dan zal de belangstelling bij velen niet verder gaan dan doorbladeren, of een plaatsje in de boekenkast, of soms zelfs de prullemand."

Hoornik, Van Marle and Holmes were firmly embedded in the Dutch literary world and were principally interested in serving the periodical's aesthetic (rather than diplomatic) mission. All three men came to *Delta* as well-respected literary figures. Hoornik, who was forty-eight at the time of the first issue, was an established poet. Holmes was a young transplant from Iowa who had become the first non-Dutchman to win the prestigious Martinus Nijhoff Translation Prize two years previous. Van Marle was Holmes' co-translator and close collaborator. Furthermore, all three were known for their outspoken opinions and willingness to criticize the powers that be. Their strongly held artistic and social sensibilities, coupled with their insistence on editorial autonomy for *Delta*, which they believed essential to guaranteeing the periodical's quality and credibility, would occasionally cause "difficulties" with the Dutch government (see Schmid and van Dongen 1987: 72–74).

Importantly, all three also had strong personal connections with a generation of young Dutch and Flemish creatives (Gerard van het Reve, Lucebert, Hugo Claus, Hans Lodeizen and others) who later came to be known as the *De Vijftigers* "Generation of the Fifties", or the Experimentals. Over the years, the Experimentals' poetry would find a strong voice in *Delta*, mediated especially through the editorial support and translations of James Holmes. Holmes' proximity to the group made for a situation unusual in the history of literary transfer from Dutch to English: much of the work of the Experimentals was published in English translation in *Delta* only shortly after it appeared in Dutch. This made the periodical an important international dissemination channel for the innovative work being done by the Experimentals – work that was seriously disrupting the Dutch and Flemish post-war literary scene.

However, as we will see, there is reason to believe that Holmes' embrace of the Experimentals did not always square well with *Delta*'s government stakeholders. This has to do with the group's aesthetic identity, which surely struck many in the Dutch political establishment as controversial. The group advocated a sensory perception of life: body first, then mind. They wanted to do away with classical standards and experiment with poetry that embodied the senses and a physical experience of the world through an abundant use of images, neologisms, metaphors and free verse. Not exactly the monographs the honourable attaché in New Delhi had in mind.

We have listened in on the dissonant voices that surrounded *Delta*'s launch. How about within *Delta*'s own pages? Where to glean echoes of the periodical's collective voice? The most straightforward peritextual elements to scrutinize for collective voice are manifestoes and editors' forewords. It is here that editors publicly state editorial policy and put forward justifications for why they have chosen to collect and combine certain articles, illustrations, literary works, contributors,

etc. together in a single periodical and in a given way. In the case of *Delta*, manifestoes and forewords were rare. We can interpret this as an indication of relatively strong (albeit inaudible) voices in the Dutch government, many of which were implicitly resistant to a strong editorial identity for the periodical. Sluizer's introductory essay in the first issue of *Delta* (mentioned above) is a mission statement of sorts but it cannot be taken as a manifesto because it does not take a clear ideological or aesthetic position. Furthermore, Sluizer was *Delta*'s government backer, not a member of the editorial staff; his intervention originated outside and above the periodical's editorial core.

It is not until year seven, with the launch of a new column called the *Editorial View*, that *Delta* starts to speak as "we". The text maintains authorial anonymity, hence creating the illusion that the periodical itself is speaking. In describing the rationale for the new column, *Delta* says it is "conceived as a means of introducing each issue and of establishing closer contact between the editors of *Delta* and its readers" (The Editors 1964a: 4). However, instead of offering a window into editorial decisions or engaging readers' critiques, the column proves to be no more than a summing up of the articles in each issue, and it soon disappears again.

There are other authorless peritextual elements from which to glean *Delta*'s collective voice: the table of contents, the acknowledgments, etc. In our case, the disclaimer published on the front end of each issue also contributes to the voice of the periodical: "Inclusion of an article in this magazine must not be taken to imply that opinions expressed therein are necessarily those of the editors, the translator or the publisher". This quote functions to explicitly name and distinguish between the credible voices that can be heard in this periodical (namely, "the editors", "the translator", "the publisher"). It also claims that *Delta* is merely a hatch, a disinterested mediator passing the message along but not affecting it. This of course is not the case. Rather, the disclaimer must be seen as itself a Janus-faced framing device: it asserts impartiality and artistic autonomy on the one hand and creates distance from potentially controversial standpoints on the other. In this sense, the disclaimer reveals once again the tensions inherent in *Delta*'s dual purpose as an arts periodical and a public diplomacy tool.

The particular *composition* of peritextual elements – their graphic design – can be an important distinguishing characteristic of a periodical's voice as well. In our case, *Delta*'s distinct typography and cover design clearly indicate that the periodical sought to represent and present a modern view of the Netherlands to the world and avoid perpetuating a stereotypical image based on the Netherlands' Golden (seventeenth) Century. Throughout *Delta*'s existence its covers were designed by the graphic artist Dick Elffers, who received wide acclaim for his sixteen years of typographic and cover work in *Delta*. In an article dedicated to Elffers in the periodical's last issue, he is called "one of the most important modern designers

in the Netherlands" (Ovink, 1974: 22). His designs are labeled "very much of today" (*ibid.*) and clearly support the artistic mission of the review: accentuating the modern and contemporary over the traditional and conventional.

James Holmes' voice in *Delta*

James Holmes is probably best known to us today as one of the founding fathers of Translation Studies, but he was also one of *Delta*'s co-founders, a longtime principle editor, poetry editor and one of *Delta*'s most productive translators. He would pen some 220 translations for *Delta* over the periodical's sixteen-year existence.

How to define the contours of Holmes' individual voice in *Delta*? We draw a distinction between what we call Holmes' *editorial voice*, which can be studied by examining paratext related to his role as an editor, and his *translatorial voice*, which emerges from a personal and creative context that includes but also transcends *Delta* and can be studied by examining how certain paratextual elements relate to Holmes' wider translation praxis. Elsewhere, we look at how paratextual and textual aspects interact to reveal Holmes' translatorial voice in his translations of the Experimentals (Brems and McMartin, unpublished).

To what extent is Holmes' editorial voice inscribed in the pages of *Delta*? From the start, Holmes and his partner Hans Van Marle were intimately involved in the day-to-day editorial operations of *Delta*. Holmes was a principle editor for the periodical's first seven volumes, from 1958 through 1964, when he stepped back to focus on teaching translation at the University of Amsterdam. He remained on staff as *Delta*'s poetry editor and contributed translations until the final issue in 1974. Holmes and Van Marle were also *Delta*'s main copyeditors. The proofs preserved in Holmes' papers in The Hague's Museum of Literature attest to the two men's meticulousness: any given page bares countless minor adjustments, cues for the typesetter, spelling corrections and (characteristically pithy) marginalia in red and green ballpoint ink. Evidently, nothing went to press without first passing through Holmes and Van Marle. In this sense, Holmes' editorial voice resonates in every word of *Delta*'s first twenty-eight issues.

As a poetry editor, Holmes had a relatively free hand in selecting which poems would be translated for *Delta*. From the outset, he was drawn to the Experimentals and was among the first to recognise (and champion) their literary significance. In the very first issue of *Delta*, Holmes penned an overview of contemporary Dutch poetry emphasising their work, and he continued to select and translate poetry by the Experimentals all the way up to the journal's final issue.

However, a discerning ear can hearken discord between the voice of the journal (present here in terms of its editorial formula) and the editorial voice of Holmes.

In an editors' note announcing Holmes' departure from the regular editorial staff in the winter of 1964, we read: "Throughout the seven years of *Delta*'s existence, Mr Holmes has been the pivot round which the entire production of the review has turned (The Editors 1964b: 4)". Holmes is then commended for his expertise in Dutch poetry *and* his willingness to accommodate the periodical's other genres:

> Though his own specific interest is in Dutch writing and Dutch art, [Holmes] has always adhered ungrudgingly to the *Delta* editorial formula, devoting unstintingly of his time and energy to make each number a balanced sampler of arts, life and thought alike. (The Editors 1964b: 4)

The allusion being that adhering to *Delta*'s broad editorial formula and ensuring a "balanced sampler" of texts from the three main categories treated in the journal (arts, life, thought) required extra effort from a principle editor whose real interests lay mainly in the arts, and particularly in poetry. Here, too, *Delta*'s dual character finds voice in its farewell to a major editor. In Holmes' archive at the Museum of Literature in The Hague we find a small piece of paper on which Holmes has listed the percentages of the three categories for the first years of *Delta* (1958–1960). He counts 41.5 percent for literature and 27.54 percent for the other arts, which gives a total of 68.95 percent for art. That leaves 18.1 percent for science and thought and 12.95 percent for life. The fact that he was counting proves that thematic balance was an important concern for Holmes and for *Delta*.

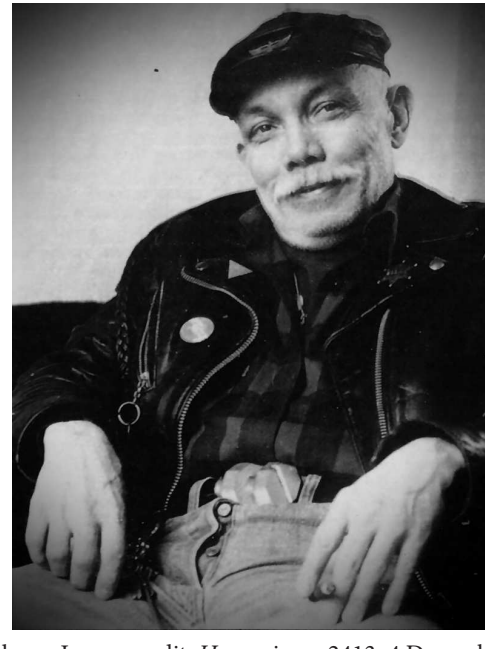

Figure 2. James Holmes. Image credit: *Humo*, issue 2413, 4 December 1986

What about Holmes' *translatorial* voice? Outside of his editorial role, Holmes was a poet himself, a Translation Studies scholar, an Iowa farm boy cum Amsterdamer, the partner of Hans Van Marle, a native speaker of English, a gay man. All of these aspects come through in his translatorial voice. For Holmes, poetry was intricately intertwined with his own sexual and creative awakening. In an interview with Raymond van den Broeck published in the Dutch-language literary journal *Diogenes* in 1984, two years before his death, Holmes says he turned to translating poetry as a way to overcome the creative block he experienced when trying to write his own poetry. He associates this block with an inner struggle to put words to his sexuality at time when doing so was taboo:

> When I started writing my own poems, in the 1940s, I quickly reached an impasse because I became more and more aware of my own sexuality, which was (and is) strongly homoerotic in orientation. In those days, that was a subject that was so taboo for most people that it wasn't acceptable to clarify in poetry. Insofar as I was able to process [my sexuality] *as* poetry, it led to really dark poems that could only be understood by a few insiders.[7] (Van den Broeck and Holmes 1984: 288–289)

It is not inconceivable, given how he used poetry, that Holmes the translator was in some ways a surrogate for Holmes the poet. We might even go so far as to say that translating the poems of the Experimentals, which tapped into a poetics of formal innovation, (male) sensuousness and physicality that resonated deeply with Holmes, helped him to express his sexuality in ways his own poetry could not. He goes on:

> In the course of the 1950s, I had the feeling that translating had provided me with a way out of this impasse. As long as I could use my poetic and technical knowledge in the service of bringing across the poems of others, I didn't have to solve that problem.[8] (Van den Broek and Holmes 1984: 289)

Of course, Holmes the editor and Holmes the translator are intertwined. Many of Holmes' poetry translations were published in *Delta* before they were collected elsewhere. A large part of his output for the periodical was of the Experimentals.

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7. Dutch original: "Toen ik in de jaren '40 zelf gedichten begon te schrijven, kwam ik vrij gauw in een impasse terecht, omdat ik me hoe langer hoe duidelijker bewust werd van mijn eigen sexualiteit, die sterk homo-erotisch gericht was (en is). Dat was een onderwerp dat in die tijd voor de meesten zo taboe was dat je dat niet in poëzie duidelijk hoorde te maken. Voorzover ik het tot poëzie heb kunnen verwerken, leidde dat tot heel duistere gedichten die alleen voor de enkele insider te begrijpen waren."

8. Dutch original: "In de loop van de jaren '50 meende ik in het vertalen een weg uit deze impasse te hebben gevonden. Zolang ik mijn poëtisch-technische kennis in diest kon stellen van het overbrengen van gedichten van anderen hoefde ik dat probleem namelijk niet op te lossen."

Had *Delta* been shaped by another individual's editorial and translatorial voice, its poetry offerings would have undoubtedly been vastly different – less frequent, less controversial and certainly less interesting.

A retrospective manifesto

It is only in *Delta*'s last issues that the collective "we" turns up very explicitly again, each time announcing the journal's financial troubles and, eventually, its demise. Let us return now to where we started: Hans Van Marle's farewell essay in the final issue of *Delta*. In what amounts to a retrospective manifesto, Van Marle claims a clear voice for *Delta* and roundly rejects the idea that *Delta* was ever a mouthpiece of the government (he does thank Dutch taxpayers for footing the bill):

> (T)he editors have never owed allegiance to any official point of view. Themselves of quite different cultural and geographical backgrounds, and equally diverse social and political convictions, the editors have felt bound not to promote any national or factional interests, but to recount in frankness and honesty what they considered by common consent to be of lasting importance and what some, if not all, believed to be genuine attempts at experimentation and renewal in the rapidly changing Dutch society. […] If the account of several of the experiments may have caused misgivings, now among the Dutch establishment, now among sections of *Delta*'s readership, it is better to shock some of the people some of the time than please all the people all of the time. A society committed to openness and pluriformity, as that of the Netherlands is increasingly discovering itself to be, cannot be constricted by conformity. No society that is alive is one big, happy, industrious, well-behaved and what-you-have family. For is not Man born to be free? It is the Dutch version of the quest for a more perfect freedom that *Delta* has attempted, however inadequately, to impart to its readers. (Van Marle 1974: 5)

In contrast to the inaugural essay in its first issue of *Delta*, this statement takes a clear stand and even strikes a rebellious chord. It also betrays the need for us, the interpreters of its voice, to take readers' voices into account, as *Delta*'s editors clearly acknowledged that some readers were offended by some contributions. (We were unable to find any such reactions in the archives we visited, however.)

Some Dutch officials were offended, too, even decades after *Delta*'s demise. When the idea of relaunching an English-language periodical was floated by government officials in the 1980s, *Delta* was held up as a model. But the suggestion appears to have awakened old criticisms not only of the effectiveness of a periodical as a tool for shaping public opinion abroad, but more pressingly of the desirability of an autonomous editorial staff. *Delta*'s controversial content and strong-willed editors had not been forgotten. A 1987 report by the Netherlands

Scientific Council for Government Policy states that *Delta*'s editors had "regularly occurring disagreements with the government, which often found the content of the articles to be unrepresentative of Dutch society" (Schmid and van Dongen 1987: 73) and specifically calls out the editors' critical attitude towards the Dutch government and Dutch society.[9] However, the report stops short of advocating a more hands-on editorial role for the government in any future *Delta*-like publication, referring to an earlier 1970 report by another body, the Commission for Public Information Reorientation, that advised *against* censoring *Delta*, in spite of its provocative character:

> Within the department itself, as well as among its representatives abroad, some are of the opinion that certain issues [of *Delta*] or certain articles in them run counter, rightly or not, to the cultural trends existing abroad and that they therefore should not be distributed there. Even in cases where that evaluation was correct, not distributing an issue in a volume would give the impression of censorship. Additionally, the danger remains that some are using [the argument that *Delta* runs counter to] foreign cultural trends as a way to give their own preferences and dislikes a veneer of general validity. The committee therefore recommends that the government not deceive those abroad into thinking that, in the Netherlands, the waves of culture lose their whitecaps. That which is truly new is seldom orthodox and still deserves a place in the overall image of a culture.[10]
>
> (Commissie 1970: 192)

The insinuation here is that cultural diplomats in the field had refused to distribute one or more issues of *Delta*, thereby prompting a response by dissenting voices in the government who saw that refusal as censorship.

9. Dutch original: "regelmatige aanvaringen met de overheid, die de inhoud van de artikelen vaak niet representatief achtte voor de Nederlandse samenleving."

10. Dutch original: "Bij het departement zelf dan wel bij de vertegenwoordigingen in het buitenland kan, terecht of ten onrechte, de mening postvatten, dat bepaalde afleveringen of bepaalde artikelen daarin, strijdig zijn met de culturele patronen, die in het buitenland bestaan, en dat zij daar derhalve niet door de overheid zouden moeten worden verspreid. Ook in de gevallen waarin de evaluatie juist is geweest, zal het niet verspreiden van één aflevering uit een reeks de indruk wekken van censuur. Daarnaast bestaat er nog het gevaar, dat men het buitenlandse cultuurpatroon misbruikt om haar eigen voorkeur en afkeer een schijn van algemene geldigheid mee te geven. De commissie meent daarom de overheid de raad te moeten geven het buitenland niet in de waan te brengen, dat in Nederland de culturele golven een schuimende top zouden ontberen. Wat waarlijk nieuw is, is zelden orthodox; toch verdient het wel degelijk een plaats in het totale beeld van een cultuur."

Conclusion

By examining a periodical's paratext within the framework of polyphonic voice, a soundscape begins to take shape that resounds the tensions surrounding its stated aims, identity and editorial policy. Using *Delta* and James Holmes as our case, we have tried to show, first, how the "silent voice" of a periodical's patron can create dissonance among the voices inscribed in its text; second, how a periodical's collective voice can be gleaned through editors' notes, manifestoes and covers; and third, how one can go about isolating an individual editorial and translatorial voice within a translation-rich periodical's collective soundscape. *Delta* spanned two languages and served two interconnected purposes. It was part public diplomacy tool meant to showcase aspects of Dutch industry, society and culture to anglophone elites, and part literary magazine meant to circulate Dutch literature and art to the dominant anglophone cultural centers. The tension between these two objectives resonated in many of the paratextual elements we discussed: correspondence between *Delta*'s government backer and skeptical diplomats in the field; the disclaimer it ran in front of each issue; the loaded goodbye it bade one of its more controversial editors; the retroactive manifesto it issued asserting autonomy from government censorship in its final issue.

Against this dissonance, we sought to hearken the voice of James Holmes, "the pivot round which the entire production of the review has turned" (The Editors 1964b: 4). As one of *Delta*'s principle editors for its first seven years, Holmes' editorial voice came through in his meticulous attention to every aspect of *Delta*'s copy. Together with co-founders Ed Hoornik and Hans van Marle, he gave shape to *Delta*'s overall content and underwrote its bid for editorial autonomy. The extent to which his voice carried in this effort is evident in the robust presence in *Delta*'s pages of Holmes' preferred subject: poetry, and particularly the rebellious and sensuous poetry of the Experimentals. His affinity for this group can be traced back to his translatorial voice, which Holmes used to articulate his own inner creative and sexual awakening.

The voices we have resounded in this chapter have been limited to *Delta* and its principle makers. However, as a concept, polyphonic voice is also capable of capturing the complex way *readers*' voices interact with(in) *Delta*. We close with an anecdote, which doubles as a possible future direction for voice-based research: in the winter of 1960–1961, Holmes translated the Middle-Dutch verse "In mei had ik een bloemken" as a New Year's greeting for *Delta*'s readers. "I chose a flower" eventually found its way to the Australian town of Waroongha and the desk of University of Sydney carillonist John Gordon. Gordon was so pleased with the poem that he composed a four-part choral setting for his Lindfield A Capella Choir using some of its verses. On 30 May 1961, he wrote a letter to "The Editors" of *Delta* in which

he called his creation "an answering antipodean voice" to Holmes' translation. Not only did this reader perceive the review and a translation within it as voices speaking to him, but he also felt called upon to echo them with his own. By adding Holmes' and *Delta's* voice to his choir's repertoire and "sounding back" to them as he did, Gordon added his own voice to the periodical's polyphony in more ways than one.

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