

# Pirenne and Fredericq

## Historiographical ambitions around 1900

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Henri Pirenne and Paul Fredericq were very close acquaintances for forty years.<sup>2</sup> The two men's academic careers started at virtually the same time. After a career as a teacher, at the age of just 29, Fredericq gained his appointment in 1879 as extraordinary professor (and as ordinary professor from 1882) at the university of Liège, where his duties included teaching Dutch literature, contemporary history and the history of Belgium and where he joined his old friend from student days, Godefroid Kurth.<sup>3</sup> Among his students was Pirenne, his junior by 12 years, who had arrived in Liège in 1880.<sup>4</sup> In 1883, Fredericq received an appointment in Ghent, again for a combination of literary-historical and historical subjects.<sup>5</sup> Pirenne's career started another two years later in Liège, where he was entrusted with teaching palaeography and diplomatics in 1885. A year later, he joined Fredericq in Ghent, first as an extraordinary professor, then as an ordinary professor from 1889. This occurred with Fredericq's support, although it was also accompanied by a dispute between the two regarding the division of teaching duties (Lyon, 1974, 71-78). Thus in the space of barely eight years, between 1879 and 1886, both Fredericq and Pirenne had gained a coveted university post, in both cases first in Liège and then in Ghent.

For more than three decades, Fredericq and Pirenne were then to remain each other's *collegae proximi*. In the small academic community that was the university of Ghent at that time, they led an orderly existence, teaching, engaging in research, publishing and attending gatherings. They were on friendly terms. They would dine at each other's house when foreign

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<sup>2</sup> For biographical data on Pirenne, see Lyon (1974) and the portraits of B. Ebels-Hoving (1981) and Boone (2006). For biographical data on Fredericq, see Coppens (1990); for a short overview, see Coppens (1974, 296-305).

<sup>3</sup> For the professorship of Fredericq in Liège, see Vander Linden (1936, 317-319). On Kurth, see Gérin (2005, 212-219).

<sup>4</sup> On Pirenne's period in Liège, see Halkin (1986, 13-22).

<sup>5</sup> For the professorship of Fredericq in Ghent, see entry "Paul Fredericq" in: *Université de Gand. Liber memorialis. Notices biographiques* (vol. 1 Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres-Faculté de Droit) (1913, 199-208).

colleagues were visiting (for example in April 1908: "Dinner at Pirenne's house with Prof. Huyzinga [sic] from Groningen. Young, modest, quiet man, who speaks French very slowly and correctly"<sup>6</sup>) or would travel together when the possibility arose (for example in July 1909: "Trip with Pirenne to Hulst in Zeeuws Vlaanderen. (...) Fascinatingly blinkered"<sup>7</sup>).

The Great War put an end to this existence. But the fate that befell Fredericq and Pirenne only served to reinforce their involvement with each other: in March 1916, the two professors were imprisoned and deported to Germany because of their opposition to the reform of the university by the German occupiers. Fredericq ended up in the camp in Gütersloh, while Pirenne initially went to the officers' camp in Krefeld, and subsequently to Holzminden. The two were reunited – under supervision – in the small university city of Jena, after which they were separated once again: Fredericq was assigned Bürgel as his obligatory place of residence, while Pirenne was taken to Kreuzburg in Thuringia. Both men remained in exile until the end of the war. By the time they returned to liberated Belgium, Fredericq did not have much longer to live.

This lengthy period of their lives that had been shared led the two historians to comment on each other in occasional publications. In 1912, Fredericq publicly testified to his admiration for his colleague.<sup>8</sup> In 1924, Pirenne wrote a detailed obituary of Fredericq for the *Annuaire* of the Royal Academy (Pirenne, 1924, 311-374). But there was no profound discussion between the two during these long years. Intellectual disputes were not engaged in, despite the philosophical differences between them. In 1876, Fredericq had converted to Protestantism, which he regarded as superior to Catholicism. This had led him to attach great importance to religion – or to 'moral facts' – in the explanation of historical processes. By contrast, Pirenne attached little importance to such factors. In order to understand the course of historical development in, for example, his studies of urban history, he looked to economic and social factors. There was no open discussion of these divergent views of (historical) reality.

Nor did the two discuss politics. Fredericq and Pirenne shared a liberalism which could assume markedly anti-clerical forms. They were prepared to

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<sup>6</sup>. Ghent, University Library, Department of Manuscripts and Valuable Works: *Archief Paul Fredericq* [abbreviated henceforth as: *Archief Fredericq*], Ms. 3704/26: *Aantekeningen over mijn leven*, note of 23 April 1908. On Pirenne and Huyzinga, see, for instance, Boone (2008b, 27-51).

<sup>7</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/28: note of 21 July 1909. See the material in: *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3707: *Reisaantekeningen*.

<sup>8</sup>. *Manifestation en l'honneur de M. le professeur Henri Pirenne. Bruxelles 12 mai 1912* (1912, pp. 11-18).

engage in conflict "on the ground" with the Catholic authorities, and were capable of doing so together: in December 1898, for example, they co-authored a "bill of indictments" against the "inexcusable" preferment of Catholic candidates for posts in secondary education.<sup>9</sup> But there were also fundamental political differences between the two. Fredericq was involved in the Flemish Movement all his life. His militant Flemish loyalism resulted among other things in the struggle for the use of the Dutch language at the university of Ghent and in the publication – between 1906 and 1909 – of an extensive chronicle of the Movement.<sup>10</sup> Pirenne was certainly not the vehement pro-French Fleming (*franskiljon*) he is sometimes taken for, but any form of Flemish loyalism was alien to the man who in his work was the interpreter of the new Belgian nationalism of the late 19th century.<sup>11</sup> Fredericq would complain now and then about the "anti-Flemish and authoritarian attitudes" of his colleague, but there was no profound debate between them in this area either.<sup>12</sup>

This lack of intellectual and political debate has left later commentators on the relationship between Fredericq and Pirenne almost obliged to confine themselves to the biographical externals. Not that much has been published in this area: apart from the double biography, full of misplaced flattery, that Victor Fris (1919) wrote about his two Ghent teachers, only Fredericq's biographers have devoted a few systematically organised pages to the subject (Coppens, 1990, 167-177; Van Werveke 1979b, 49-55).<sup>13</sup> In this article we shall therefore attempt to go a step further: we shall consider Pirenne and Fredericq – on a comparative basis – as the personification of the new historiographical ambitions which were taking hold around 1900. In doing so, we shall draw among other sources on Fredericq's detailed, unpublished diary, *Aantekeningen over mijn leven* [Notes on my life] (Tollebeek, 2008c).

## 1. AN AVANT-GARDE

Pirenne and Fredericq felt themselves to be the embodiment of a form of historiography that was new, a modern historiography that had a revolutionary character. They sensed that they belonged to an academic

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<sup>9</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/16: note of 17 December 1898.

<sup>10</sup> The literature about Fredericq's involvement with the Flemish Movement is extensive. See, for example, Prevenier (1998, 1204-1205).

<sup>11</sup> See the balanced judgment in Boone (2008a, 295-296).

<sup>12</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/15: note of 15 June 1898.

<sup>13</sup> On Fris: Verhulst (2003, 142-143).

avant-garde. One of the main reasons was the introduction of the 'seminars' – *cours pratiques* – in the training given to would-be historians. In these seminars, originally a German product, students were not presented – in contrast with the traditional lectures – with panoramic overviews of history.<sup>14</sup> Rather than *ex cathedra* instruction, they received 'practical' training: using source material they engaged with historical problems themselves. For both Fredericq and Pirenne, this represented a break from an antiquated form of education: teaching now became research-oriented. Both of them therefore eagerly set up *cours pratiques* themselves. Fredericq in fact became the apostle of the new practice in Belgium; in 1898 he published a survey of what had already been achieved in this area in his country (Fredericq, 1898, 3-149).

That survey was presented on the occasion of the tribute to Kurth, who had organised Belgium's first seminar in Liège 25 years earlier, in 1874. Pirenne, who chaired the presentation ceremony, and Fredericq recalled the first *cours pratiques* that they themselves had attended. They depicted a striking contrast: the lectures were given in auditoria and lecture theatres, whereas the (very modestly advertised) *cours pratiques* were located in an attic room, with nothing more than a stove, a few decrepit benches and a single chair.<sup>15</sup> The implication was clear: in this simple setting, no standard, panoramic views of the past were presented, but small-scale yet serious work was done.

In this rhetoric, the seminars also became intimate occasions. In the almost domestic setting in which they were organised, the students sat at a long table, with the professor in their midst. On the table lay the tools: archive documents, reference works, monumental editions. The discussions between master and pupils, who knew one another well, were informal; all sense of time was forgotten. The seminars were also regarded as closed events: the company of people involved was small, and its members learnt the secrets of their trade during weekly sessions (*séances*). The pupils – almost members of a brotherhood – were inducted into the profession. They were "novices" who were "initiated". That initiation related to the rules of source criticism, but also to the magic names and titles (Mabillon, Du Cange, the *Gallia Christiana*, the *Monumenta*, etc.) that were handed down in the trade. Once these rules, names and titles had been mastered, the "gates to the temple" were opened. The pupil entered – as one of the elect – a new world: in such terms Pirenne recalled the conclusion of his own novitiate (Pirenne in *A Godefroid Kurth*, 1898, 160-161).

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Pandel (1994, 1-32).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Pirenne (in *A Godefroid Kurth*, 1898, 155, 157-158, 167).

The students who attended the *cours pratiques* accordingly believed that they belonged to an 'elite corps', which refused to be hampered by the traditions and conventions of *ex cathedra* teaching, or be seduced by the superficial appeal of that form of instruction.<sup>16</sup> This sense of belonging to an elite which was breaking with the prevailing norms and championing new ambitions was all the stronger among those who – like Fredericq and Pirenne – oversaw these students. In both Liège and Ghent, a new science was taking shape.

## 2. THE NEW HISTORIOGRAPHY

Both professors were – along with colleagues such as Kurth, Léon Vanderkindere and Alfred Cauchie – indeed key figures in the *nouvelle histoire* which emerged in the second half of the 1870s in Belgium, as in many other European countries.<sup>17</sup> What ambitions and practices – including the everyday practices which are of interest to the anthropologist – characterised this new historiography?<sup>18</sup> Where did it place its emphasis? What were its epistemological convictions, its ethical values and standards, its notions of style, rhetoric and explanation?

In the first place, the new historiography was a vocational activity: it became a profession. Its personnel were a fast-growing group of middle-class professionals, graduates who started to occupy the new institutional structures and appropriate the new system. The leading role in this process was played by academics: university professors, who now started to take over from a wide variety of scholars and intellectuals *avant la lettre*, of librarians, learned monks and aristocrats at the centre of the historiographical endeavour. They presented themselves as 'specialists' – a term which, in the years around 1900, did not yet have any negative connotations. Pirenne stated in 1898:

"The amateurs are starting to understand that there are things which have to be left to the specialists" (Pirenne in *A Godefroid Kurth*, 1898, 166).

Fredericq spoke with pleasure about his own *spécialités* (Pirenne, 1924, 323, 337).

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<sup>16</sup>. See, for example, Fredericq 'and his pupils' (1922, IX).

<sup>17</sup>. See, for example, Gérin (1987, 64-103).

<sup>18</sup>. See, for example, Müller (2004, 415-433).

In order to increase the number of 'specialists', it was necessary to train pupils as proper researchers. This realisation was closely connected with a crucial conviction of the *nouvelle histoire*: the conviction that the story of the past had not yet been told, that the historian had something to do other than recite the existing 'handbook knowledge'. History, the modern historians knew, is the product of a long, difficult and methodologically sound research process. It is not there for the taking: it has to be made. It followed that pupils could no longer be passive spectators, who equipped their minds with overview knowledge in the large auditoria and lecture theatres. The training of pupils was the business of the seminars, which were therefore regarded as – in the words of Kurth and Pirenne – "*incubators*" (*pépinières*) for researchers.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the professionalisation process and the training of pupils as researchers, the modern historiography was also characterised by community building. This was primarily a matter of learning a method: anyone who had mastered the historian's method could regard himself as a member of the historical community. This did not just involve an approach to source criticism which was justified by notions of objectivity and impartiality (codified in manuals such as the *Introduction aux études historiques* by Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, published in 1898). Certain virtues were also required: the method had to be nurtured, but also required moderation (so as to avoid the excesses of the Germans, admitted Fredericq in a letter to his Leiden-based colleague Robert Fruin (Smit & Wieringa, 1957, 289)) and patience. However, in the modern historical discipline, community building was not just a question of a shared method (or of teaching that method). It was also about forging often emotional bonds of loyalty. For example, pupils (or former pupils) were expected to belong to the professor's 'party' and to remain loyal to him.

This community was devoted to organised events. Around 1900, a remarkable culture of such events developed in the Belgian historical world, as it did in the literary and artistic worlds: there were festive gatherings in honour of Kurth (1898, to commemorate his first *cours pratique*, a quarter of a century earlier), Vanderkindere (1902, in honour of his 30-year tenure of the chair in Brussels), Fredericq (1904) and Pirenne himself (1912). At such events, the national historians would gather, sometimes supplemented by colleagues from abroad. Such meetings both confirmed and reinforced the *esprit de corps*. They were like family gatherings, and were even referred to as such, for instance by Kurth at the end of the event dedicated to him (Kurth

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<sup>19</sup> Pirenne and Kurth (Pirenne in *A Godefroid Kurth*, 1898, 160-161, 166, 195).

in *A Godefroid Kurth*, 1898, 191). If the organising committee, for example, had an excessive philosophical or political bias and this prevented all historians from participating equally in an event, it was seen as a matter for regret.<sup>20</sup>

As well as national events of this kind, there were also international networks: anyone who wanted to count in modern historiography had to be mobile. This meant that the modern historian had to maintain contacts with foreign scholars. Pirenne, who had studied in Paris, Leipzig and Berlin before gaining his appointment in Liège, consistently presented himself – up to the time of the Great War, at any rate – as a mediator between his French and German colleagues (just as his country was said to be a microcosm of the Romanic and Germanic civilisations) (Tollebeek, 1996, 225-247). Between 1881 and 1888 Fredericq undertook a number of 'academic pilgrimages' abroad in order to subject the organisation of higher education in history to thorough study; this resulted in an extensive network of foreign colleagues (Fredericq, 1899).<sup>21</sup> By now, conference-going was also becoming an essential element in the professional activities of the historian. Pirenne and Fredericq regularly travelled to the German *Historikertage*, but were also expressly present at the large international historical congresses which were organised in a variety of locations (such as Paris, Rome and Berlin) from 1900 onwards.<sup>22</sup>

The modern historical discipline which made its breakthrough around 1900 was thus one characterised by professionalisation and research-oriented training, by community building, a flourishing culture of organised events and the growth of international networks. But belonging to the avant-garde meant other things besides. One of these was an informal relationship with the students. At the seminars, relaxed discussion was combined with a specific form of sociability; the work was done in an atmosphere of camaraderie. Excursions followed by visits to the café drew the ties with the students closer. In the students' associations, academic studies and socialising were also combined, sometimes in the presence of professors. When an Academic Historical Society was set up in Ghent in 1887, Fredericq, Pirenne and the Latinist Paul Thomas immediately became honorary members (Looman, 1980, 60-61)

Even more surprising was the fact that the modern historical discipline also remained a domestic science to a large extent. The academisation of the subject, which involved the universities becoming the *hauts lieux* of

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<sup>20</sup>. See, for example, Kurth (1902, 241).

<sup>21</sup>. For the term 'academic pilgrimages', see Pirenne (1924, 327).

<sup>22</sup>. See Schumann (1975) and Erdmann (1987).

historiography and the professors its foremost exponents, did not prevent people's homes from remaining a vital site of knowledge production. The professors generally continued to perform research in their own *cabinet de travail*, where they also received colleagues. But they might also teach there. From 1890, Fredericq ceased to give his seminars in the university library, using instead the workroom in his own (new) house – a practice that he had come across in Germany, but which was also exemplified by scholars such as his friend Gabriel Monod in Paris and by Fruin in Leiden. The professor's house thus assumed a double significance: it had a private character, but as a professional space it also became a public place.

This ambivalence also acutely raised the question of gender relations in academic practice (Smith, 1998). The late-19th-century academisation of historical practice involved, as is now widely recognised, sexual segregation: initially, women could not play any role of significance in public institutions such as universities, archives and libraries.<sup>23</sup> But how about when the modern historical discipline assumed a highly domestic character? In the case of Fredericq, who remained a bachelor and shared his house with two of his – also unmarried – sisters, the women's contribution was confined to 'the hearth': Helena and Nica ensured that their brother was able to work comfortably, without bother, without any material concerns, and in a peaceful and orderly fashion. In the case of Pirenne, who in 1887 had married Jenny (-Laure) Vanderhaeghen, the daughter of a Ghent magistrate, things were more complex. In 1932 Pirenne declared that his professional tenacity was due to the fact "that his *cabinet de travail* had not become separated from his hearth": his wife had always ensured him the comfort and peace at home that his work required.<sup>24</sup> But Jenny did more: she wrote out all her husband's manuscripts "in her beautiful hand", so that they could go to the printer ([Gerardy], 1962, 21; Lyon, 1974, 83-84). As a copyist, she was an intimate inmate of the 'great master', her husband. It was reminiscent of the domestic workshops that were set up at that time by François Guizot and Jules Michelet with their wives and daughters.

### 3. SUCCESS IN THE DISCIPLINE

The *nouvelle histoire* which came to the fore in the first half of the 1870s was thus a complex field: at once professional and domestic, methodical, informal

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<sup>23</sup> For a detailed example, see Grever (1994, 94-152).

<sup>24</sup> Pirenne in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs* (1938, I, 42).

and community building, national and international. This was the field in which Fredericq and Pirenne had to operate. Anyone who surveys the results is forced to conclude that Pirenne succeeded in realising the new historiographical ambitions better than Fredericq on many counts.

First of all, there was the reception of their work: the *Histoire de Belgique* that Pirenne published with a reception, both within and outside professional circles, that was accorded to none of Fredericq's writings. Ironically, it was Fredericq who lay behind Pirenne's success: when Karl Lamprecht had asked him to write a history of Belgium for a series edited by him, he had passed on the offer to Pirenne ("He was the right man for it. Not me").<sup>25</sup> In 1900, the first part of the French edition then appeared, a year after being published in German. The 38-year old author immediately received the prestigious five-yearly prize for national history, which had been created by the Academy in 1845. This was partly thanks to Fredericq, who had been secretary to the panel of judges and had 'worked' hard to secure the award for his colleague.<sup>26</sup> Pirenne immediately became known outside the guild of historians as *notre historien national*. The various volumes of the *Histoire de Belgique* gradually followed, until the work was completed in 1932.

Things went considerably less well for Fredericq. His 'great' work was about the 16th-century Inquisition and its medieval predecessor in the Netherlands. Under the solemn title *Corpus documentorum Inquisitionis haereticæ pravitatis neerlandicæ* he attempted to compile all documentary evidence about these institutions which he despised as despotic. But progress on the work was difficult.<sup>27</sup> Eventually, five volumes of the edition of sources appeared between 1889 and 1906; the *Corpus* remained incomplete. The same was true of the study that Fredericq tried to write on the basis of this material: of the *Geschiedenis der Inquisitie in de Nederlanden* [History of the Inquisition in The Netherlands] two parts eventually appeared, in 1892 and in 1897, leaving this work likewise incomplete. His pupils followed the suffering. When two of them were included in the panel of judges for the five-yearly prize in 1911, they succeeded in having the prize awarded to Fredericq. But he reacted with mixed feelings: was his *Corpus* – for it was for this work that he received the award – really worthy of the prize? He had his doubts, and after quarrelling with a number of those who were close to him, soon came to regard the prize as a curse.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/14: note of 3 March 1897.

<sup>26</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/18: note of 25 March 1901. On the prize itself, see Gérin (1987, 90-96) and Van Sweevelt (1991).

<sup>27</sup>. See his recurring complaints about his difficult progress in the letters (Tollebeek, 2004).

<sup>28</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/30: notes of 25 November 1911 and 13 January 1912.

As well as the reception of their work, there was the question of power and influence: Pirenne proved more effective than Fredericq at conquering the key points in the professional networks of his discipline (and in this way amassing social capital). The most important of these vital points were the Academy and the Royal Historical Commission (established in 1834), whose task it was to publish the sources of national history. Pirenne succeeded in colonising both institutions energetically. He became a member of the Academy in 1898, again with the support of Fredericq, who had organised a real 'campaign' for him.<sup>29</sup> He had already swiftly joined the Royal Historical Commission. When commission member Joseph Kervyn de Lettenhove died in 1891, he promptly contacted Kurth, who was himself a member of the commission, to ask for his support for the vacant seat. The matter was quickly settled, followed by a letter of thanks which demonstrated Pirenne's mastery of the rhetoric of gratitude which is associated with operations of this kind. However, this was not the end of the story. When Pirenne learnt 15 years later that Kurth, who had by now become secretary of the commission, would be leaving for Rome to become director of the Belgian Historical Institute there, he immediately asked him what would happen about the secretary's post. A few months later, in 1907, he was secretary – a position he retained until his death (Rion, 1986, 202, 204-205, 238-239).<sup>30</sup>

Fredericq had succeeded in entering the Academy in 1891. He was an active member: in 1900-1901 he was chairman of the Literature and Fine Arts Section. It was not his only management function in the professional networks: for many years, Fredericq was first deputy secretary, then secretary-general – and hence too the workhorse – of the Society for the Advancement of Philological and Historical Studies, in which professors and teachers from secondary education together defended the interests of their professions.<sup>31</sup> But with the Royal Historical Commission he was less fortunate. In 1899 he had refused to go to the – Catholic – minister, cap in hand, to ask for a seat. He then had to wait another eight years before he became a member. "I am already far too old, and will no longer be able to render it any service," he concluded in his diary.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/14: notes of 5 April 1897 and 10 May 1897, and Ms. 3704/15: note of 7 February 1898.

<sup>30</sup> See "Henri Pirenne" in: *La Commission Royale d'Histoire 1834-1934. Livre jubilaire composé à l'occasion du centième anniversaire de sa fondation* (1934, 314-316); for an overview of the commission's history, see the long article by Pirenne himself in the same book (1934, 9-68).

<sup>31</sup> See the brief sketch in *Mélanges Paul Fredericq* (1904, V-X).

<sup>32</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/16: note of 22 March 1899 and Ms. 3704/24: note of 26 February 1907. See Vander Linden (1936, 283-286).

Pirenne also proved the more successful with regard to the training of pupils: he became a true *chef d'école*. Herman Vander Linden, Alfred Hansay, Guillaume Des Marez, Henri Obreen, etc.: the list of Pirenne's doctoral students was long indeed.<sup>33</sup> As early as 1911, in the circular announcing the large-scale celebration that was to be organised in Brussels in May 1912 to mark the appearance of the fourth volume of the *Histoire de Belgique* and the 25th anniversary of Pirenne's appointment as professor, he was said to have formed *toute une pléiade d'élèves distingués* [a whole host of distinguished pupils] and in this way to have reinforced the fame of *la jeune école belge* [young Belgian school].<sup>34</sup> At the celebration, Vander Linden, by now a professor himself in Liège, praised his teacher for the way he related with his pupils: Pirenne had never been a cool, reserved man, but had always kept the holy fire burning in his students. Between master and pupils, it was said, there existed a mutual bond.<sup>35</sup>

Here too, things went less well for Fredericq. Yet he was a conscientious educational practitioner. Both in Liège and in Ghent he compiled the fruits of his students' labours at his seminars in his own publication series, the *Travaux du cours pratique d'histoire* [Works of the practical history course] (in which Pirenne also appeared) and the *Werken van den practischen leergang van vaderlandsche geschiedenis* [Works of the practical national history course].<sup>36</sup> He also set himself up as a *patron*, who 'placed' his pupils and assistants (in the educational system, for example) and 'launched' them (in the academic journals, for example). This worked up to a certain level. For instance, the Liège pupils Eugène Hubert and Henri Lonchay both obtained chairs, one in Liège, the other in Brussels.<sup>37</sup> But Fredericq did not form a strongly profiled school with a discernible theme. The early death of a number of his pupils – such as his promising first collaborator Julius Frederichs, or Jan Joris Mulder – added to the difficulties (P.F., 1900, 79-80).

Social standing, finally, something of which Pirenne was assured, was not gained by Fredericq. Yet he did not lack commitment: Fredericq was constantly active as a liberal Flemish loyalist and anti-clerical. Meetings, the press, the Willems Fund – no instrument was alien to him. He also liked to popularise (for "labourers and farmers", he said, somewhat optimistically) his

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<sup>33</sup>. *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs* (1938, II, 593-639).

<sup>34</sup>. *Manifestation Henri Pirenne* (1912, 1).

<sup>35</sup>. *Manifestation Henri Pirenne* (1912, 22 and 31). On Vander Linden: (Wyffels, 1990, 504-508).

<sup>36</sup>. See also *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 2936: *Travaux de mes élèves de Liège*, a bundle of offprints of articles by his Liège pupils.

<sup>37</sup>. For biographical data, see Demoulin (1970, 440-451) and de Sturler (1964, 455-459).

historical ideas – about the tyranny of Charles V, the corruption of the Roman Church and the 16th-century struggle for freedom, in impassioned, inexpensive publications. But none of this led to a high degree of social impact in the form of a political career. A term of office as member of the municipal council in Ghent, from 1891 to 1895, was all that was achieved, and Fredericq did not have many happy memories of that term.

This contrasted strikingly with the rise of Pirenne... Politically, he was far less militant than his colleague, and far more cautious as well, although he too was talked into participating in the municipal council elections on one occasion (innocently: he was not elected, his son Jacques wrote later).<sup>38</sup> But his historical work made him suitable material for a ministerial position. Just before the national elections of 2 June 1912 he was sounded out by the liberals about becoming minister in a caretaker cabinet that would have to serve as a transitional government after the long period of Catholic rule. Nothing came of this scenario after the election results failed to live up to the liberals' expectations, to the "bitter disappointment" of Pirenne and his family.<sup>39</sup> But it was clear that Pirenne had a prestige that far exceeded the boundaries of his profession.

Thus Pirenne outshone Fredericq on many fronts. The reception of his work, his power and influence in the guild, his *pléiade d'élèves*, his social kudos: all demonstrated the success with which Pirenne forged his path in the *nouvelle histoire*. He even observed at the Brussels event of 1912 that he had been blessed with unusually good fortune in his life.<sup>40</sup> Five years later, Fredericq wrote in an overview of his life:

"I have never played first violin in the orchestra of mankind anywhere".<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. RECOGNITION, PUBLICITY AND RIVALRY

Fredericq had, as many passages from his diary show, no difficulty in acknowledging Pirenne's superiority. He admired his conduct:

"In every debate he dominates. He is a wonderfully gifted man, who would also shine as a minister, because for all his boldness he possesses an unequalled *doigté*".

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<sup>38</sup> See J. Pirenne, "Henri Pirenne" (*Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs*, 1938, I, 12-13).

<sup>39</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/32: note of 1 July 1912.

<sup>40</sup> *Manifestation Henri Pirenne* (1912, 52).

<sup>41</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3705: Algemeen overzicht van mijn leven, 20.

He generally found his lectures "delightful", often "brand-new" and "a dazzling display". Reading the *Histoire de Belgique* always elicited positive comments from him.<sup>42</sup> It seemed almost too fine. A historian of the next generation, who had known both Fredericq and Pirenne at close quarters, recalled:

"Fredericq acknowledged Pirenne's mastery frankly, although, as a sceptic, he enjoyed claiming with good-natured irony that Pirenne could explain anything" (Van Werveke, 2000, 105).

Moreover, Fredericq was ready to proclaim publicly what he acknowledged in private. Because this too had become an important aspect of historiography: the modern historian needed public and professional recognition. The ideal channel for this was the reviews in the 'special journals', in which there was a clear and growing tendency in the historical discipline to have the work of professional historians assessed by other professional historians (a peer review system). Fredericq, who referred to such activity simply as publicity, did what he was asked to do.<sup>43</sup> As each volume of his *Histoire de Belgique* appeared, Pirenne had asked him to announce the book in Monod's *Revue historique*. Fredericq did so in laudatory tones. On the occasion of the third volume, which covered the period from the death of Charles the Bold to the arrival of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, he wrote in 1908:

"The author excels in bringing clarity to everything he touches".<sup>44</sup>

But that was not all. Fredericq proclaimed the glad tidings everywhere. At conferences he would make a "short announcement" about Pirenne's "fine book".<sup>45</sup> He also encouraged the king to read the *Histoire de Belgique*. It was the start of a close relationship between Albert and Pirenne (in August 1914 Fredericq guessed that Pirenne was the author of the impressive proclamation in which the king reminded the population of the resistance that had been offered to foreign occupiers in the past – including at the Battle of the Golden Spurs and by the Six Hundred Men of Franchimont).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Archief Fredericq, inter al.* Ms. 3704/24: note of 28 December 1906; Ms. 3704/33: note of 31 March 1913; Ms. 3704/73: note of 8 January 1916; Ms. 3704/81: note of 29 February 1916 and Ms. 3704/82: note of 4 March 1916.

<sup>43</sup> Antwerp, AMVC-Letterenhuis, F 466/B: P. Fredericq to M. Rooses, 3 April 1884.

<sup>44</sup> Reprinted in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs* (1938, II, 277-283, quotation 278).

<sup>45</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/16: note of 28-30 August 1899.

<sup>46</sup> *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/29: notes of 14 June 1910 and 6 December 1910, and Ms. 3704/38: note of 9 August 1914. On the relationship between Fredericq and Albert I: Van Werveke (1979c, 63-72). For the proclamation, see, for example, Rottiers (1996, 75).

It is therefore not surprising that when the young Brussels archivist Leo Verriest sounded out Fredericq in 1911 about chairing the committee that would organise a great event in honour of Pirenne in May of the following year, he agreed to do so. Just as Pirenne had organised the homage to Kurth in 1898, so Fredericq presided over the feast in honour of Pirenne in 1912. Where he himself was concerned, Fredericq had always declined such an event: he would only accept semi-private tributes, such as the special session organised by the Society for the Advancement of Philological and Historical Studies in his honour in Brussels in 1904, or the modest party that the editorial committee of *Het Volksbelang* offered him in Ghent in 1908, to mark the fact that he had run the publication for a quarter of a century. But he threw himself fully into the organisation of the Pirenne celebration: it had to be a high profile ceremony, with a solemn session in the building of the Academy, a public full of important personalities and a whole series of addresses (*toute la lyre*).<sup>47</sup>

In his own opening address, Fredericq immediately set the tone of the event: Pirenne was honoured as a national historian, not as the 'specialist' in medieval urban history and trade economics that he also was. His praises were sung for the light that had been shed on the country's past in the *Histoire de Belgique*. But in his address Fredericq also presented his own brainchild, the Fondation Pirenne, a foundation, he said, to which the wealthy and the less wealthy alike had subscribed out of gratitude towards Pirenne, and which would give young Belgian historians the chance to study abroad for some time.

But modern historiography was not just about the desire for and allocation of recognition. The other side of the coin was the competitiveness which – quite apart from philosophical and political conflicts – arose within the academic community: professional rivalry. Fredericq realised this only too well. When in 1903 he was elected at the international historical congress which took place that year in Rome to speak on behalf of all foreign historians who were attending, he noted in his diary:

"What will Kurth, Pirenne and Thomas and Cumont and the other Belgians say? Only Thomas and Cumont will consider the matter with equanimity, of that I can be sure. But that is the price I will have to pay".<sup>48</sup>

This was a matter of competition, and it was such competition that Fredericq could not deny even with regard to Pirenne, with all his successes. Relations

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<sup>47</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/30-32: notes as of 31 July 1911.

<sup>48</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3707/LVI: note of 1 April 1903.

with his old friend Kurth had grown sour for political reasons (Van Werveke 1979a, 45-48). In Pirenne's case it was about something different: Fredericq knew that he had been overtaken by a colleague who was 12 years younger and had once been his pupil.

The bomb exploded, in his diary at any rate, when his fellow-Germanist André Bley told Fredericq in late 1915 that Pirenne had read out a few chapters from the newly completed volume of the *Histoire de Belgique* to him and Thomas. Why, he wondered with a sense of grievance, had Pirenne never shown *him* anything in advance? And why did he never talk with him about what *he* was writing?<sup>49</sup> Fredericq had noted on earlier occasions that his famous colleague was far from perfect: Pirenne always wanted to be friends with everyone, was a show-off and a chatterbox, and was susceptible to flattery. There could therefore be no genuine friendship between them (the mutual sympathy with Jenny was far greater).<sup>50</sup> The philosophical differences were now emphasised, although Fredericq had already alluded to them earlier – even in public: in his review of 1908 he had wondered how it was that Pirenne had been able to make the history of the 16th century, which was the century of religious conflict, dependent on the development of capitalism.<sup>51</sup> There were just as many hints that Fredericq did not find his colleague's success easy. But this did not alter the fact that Pirenne aroused admiration, while Fredericq at best inspired confidence.<sup>52</sup>

## 5. MODERN PRACTICES

In a recent assessment of Fredericq, little even of that confidence remained: the Ghent professor was now referred to as someone in whom "diligence was accompanied by mediocrity", and here too it was pointed out that he was overshadowed by Pirenne (Van den Eeckhout, 2009, 95-96). However, the fact can easily be overlooked that, from at least a number of viewpoints, the *less successful* Fredericq was *more modern* than Pirenne – or, in other words, that Fredericq came closer to achieving a number of ambitions that the

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<sup>49</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/71: note of 20 December 1915 (however, cf. Ms. 3704/14: note of 3 March 1897, in which Fredericq reports on a reading given by Pirenne).

<sup>50</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/45: note of 19 February 1915; Ms. 3704/68: note of 26 October 1915; Ms. 3704/72: note of 30 December 1915 and Ms. 3704/74: note of 15 January 1916.

<sup>51</sup>. *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs* (1938, II, 283).

<sup>52</sup>. See, for example, Van Werveke (2000, 41-42).

modern historical discipline has set itself more closely than his celebrated colleague. This was very clear in two respects.

The first is the significance that was attached to archive work in the modern historical discipline. It is hard to overestimate that significance: the modern historian was increasingly deriving his professional identity from his archive work. In the archives, he could not only dig out the new documents that he could then – using the method he had learnt – use in his studies; he could also enhance his professional profile in the process. This was accompanied with a sense of heroism: the search for the documents that would give the 'real' discipline its foundations was regarded as difficult – much more difficult than telling grandiose stories under the spotlights of auditoria and lecture theatres. Only when this fearless chivalric quest was complete, it was argued, could the *mise en œuvre* begin.

From this viewpoint, Fredericq was virtually the prototype of a modern historian. Day after day, he collected new documents for his edition of the sources of the history of the Inquisition, day after day he conducted systematic searches in national, provincial, municipal and monastic archives. He ran campaigns, was familiar with the sensational power of attraction that the original documents could exert over the historian, and had his discoveries copied out. He enjoyed *trouvailles* and was disappointed when the bundles he requested in the archive did not contain any documents that could be added to his *Corpus*, only to immediately proceed to other archives in order to collect new finds there. The result, however, was an ever more chaotic mountain of sometimes very uneven documents, which ultimately made the *Corpus* a hopeless enterprise. The commencement in 1900 of a second large editorial project – this time with regard to the history of the church's sale of indulgences – only redoubled the problem: the *Codex documentorum sacratissimarum indulgentiarum neerlandicarum* likewise became an historiographical *perpetuum mobile*. At the same time, the *mise en œuvre* of the Inquisition documents was jeopardised: Fredericq had so much archive data that they prevented him from tracing the outlines of a synthesis. Pirenne understood this, and he knew Fredericq's weakness: his yearning for documents and the associated eye for detail, he said discreetly in the obituary, had prevented him from performing great work (Pirenne, 1924, 336-337).

Conversely, Fredericq knew Pirenne's strength. "The author excels in bringing clarity to everything he touches," he wrote – as already quoted – in the review of the third volume of the *Histoire de Belgique*: his colleague was the man with a clear overview, the man whose insight enabled him to bring form to the apparently inextricable tangle of history. His work, Fredericq's address at the 1912 event implicitly concluded, owed its success to its

aesthetic qualities. Archive research had little to do with it. What was more, it was Fredericq who had opened up the goldmines of his own archive discoveries to his colleague and allowed him to take whatever he could use.<sup>53</sup> However, this involved no more than a 'rummage through': Pirenne would not jeopardise the clarity and recognisability of his synthesis. From this perspective – the lack of attention to archive work out of a desire to write an attractive overview of national history – the *Histoire de Belgique* represented the end of a long tradition which had started at the end of the 18th century rather than the triumphant clarion call of the *nouvelle histoire* (see Tollebeek, 1994, 57-74).

Fredericq was also more modern than Pirenne in a second respect: his collective approach to historiography. The modern historical discipline of the late 19th century was understood by its propagandists as an enterprise which had to be undertaken by many interlinked people, in a systematic, coordinated fashion. More concretely, this meant that the individual historian needed to make way for the modern academic workshop, in line with the model of the organisation established by the famous Californian historian Hubert Howe Bancroft in America. The division of labour was an important principle in this (see Tollebeek, 1999, 39-54; Tollebeek, 2004, XCIC-CII).

Such collectivist ideas and practices were also exemplified by Fredericq, who liked to regard his study as a "workshop". The most striking testimonial to this was his publication policy. The Liège *Travaux* and the Ghent *Werken* displayed an interest in establishing a school, just as they manifested a concern for corporate identity. But they also showed that Fredericq regarded his students' work as a common enterprise. One step further was the joint publications: each volume of the *Corpus* was explicitly published under the name "Paul Fredericq and his pupils".

The most radical change to the practice of history that collectivism entailed in the case of Fredericq, however, was the introduction of academic collaborators, assistants, or – the more customary term – secretaries. Between 1889 and 1907, Fredericq appointed eight secretaries, whose task it was to help him with copying archive documents, library work, the analysis of the documents, the compilation of registers. They received – in line with the management culture that Fredericq advocated – an employment contract, but were also subject to a set of rules to prevent them from neglecting their work (although this did not achieve much, as he continually found). Fredericq repeatedly asked the competent minister for funds with which to recruit more such secretaries. When doing so, he liked to refer to the staff appointed by the

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<sup>53</sup>. *Archief Fredericq*, Ms. 3704/23: note of 21 December 1905.

government in the laboratories, thus suggesting – sometimes very explicitly – that his 'workshop' bore all the characteristics of the modern academic institutions that were the laboratories. It was progressive rhetoric, which again was intended to emphasise that history-writing had become a matter of teamwork (Tollebeek, 2008b, 58-72).

This was not Pirenne's view. On the contrary, in his colleague's obituary he permitted himself a gentle joke about "Paul Fredericq and his pupils": it made him think of "Fredericq & Sons", in other words one of those modern industrial firms where teamwork was practised (Pirenne, 1924, 311-373). Pirenne was not interested. Perhaps this had something to do with his conception of what training in the discipline should be like, or must not be like. As one of his pupils put it: a *communauté d'école* must be a *communauté de méthode*, not a *communauté de doctrine*.<sup>54</sup> Along these lines Pirenne did wish to be a *maître à penser*, or even a proud *patron*. But a works foreman, like Fredericq? Certainly not. Rather than work with secretaries or publish with pupils, Pirenne maintained the domestic studio that he formed with the perpetually copying Jenny. Here too, he opted for the traditional approach. Here too, Fredericq – in all his "mediocrity" – opted for a more modern approach. Who was trying to achieve what ambitions?

## 6. THE POWER OF A LEGEND

The War was a dramatic event for both historians. It brought them closer together in an unexpected manner. The two concurred in their fierce dislike of the German occupiers and – much more painfully – in their disenchantment with the behaviour of German historians such as Lamprecht and Joseph Hansen, whose work they admired and with whom they had become friends, but who were now seen to be uncritically repeating the imperialist war rhetoric about Belgium.<sup>55</sup> It was agreed that they would no longer receive German historians who performed archive and library work in Belgium. Fredericq took a harder line about this than Pirenne. This was also the case during the long deportation years. Pirenne recorded in his *Journal de guerre* how glad he was in Jena to be reunited with Fredericq, but also how the wartime

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<sup>54</sup> See F.L. Ganshof, "Le maître" (in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs*, 1938, I, 38).

<sup>55</sup> For the relationship between Lamprecht and Pirenne (and Fredericq), and its termination, see Lyon (1966, 161-231); Sproemberg (1971, 375-446); Van Werveke (1972, 39-60) and Chickering (1993, 437-439). For a more extensive treatment see also: Warland (2011, 219-261).

experiences had taken their toll: Fredericq's uncompromising bitterness towards the Germans was so great that he frequently came into conflict with his guards (Lyon & Lyon, 1976, 13-14, 187-188). While Pirenne tried to study and explore European rather than national history (see Violante, 1997; Lyon, 1998, 507-516; Toubert, 2001, 317-320), his colleague, by now aged 66, was completely preoccupied by the letters that he received, the diaries that he wrote and rewrote, and the stories that he repeatedly told.

When the War was over, Fredericq returned to Ghent a broken man. He took up his chair again, but was unable to make any impression on the new generation of students: he was "little more than a shadow of the man he had once been", one of them later wrote (Van Werveke, 2000, 41, 105). The rectorship of the university of Ghent, which was offered to him in 1919 on account of his prestige, was no more of a success. After a few months, he had to hand over responsibility to Pirenne, whose star had continued to rise and who was now regarded as the embodiment of the reborn Belgium. When Fredericq died in March 1920, Pirenne spoke – as rector – at his grave.<sup>56</sup> The obituary that he wrote afterwards revealed a warm affection.

Pirenne survived his colleague by 15 years. In those 15 years, he achieved a string of academic successes. His work continued to receive widespread acclaim: in 1921 he received the five-yearly prize for national history for the second time, while in 1933 he was the first recipient of the Francqui Prize. Tribute followed tribute, usually connected with the progress of the *Histoire de Belgique* or with Pirenne's status as a national personality. In 1921 the *Ligue du Souvenir* organised an event in honour of Pirenne, five years later he was presented with two monumental volumes of *Mélanges* to mark the 40th anniversary of his appointment as professor, in 1932 the journal *Le Flambeau* organised a banquet to celebrate the completion of the *Histoire de Belgique*, and in the same year the National Committee of French Historians honoured Pirenne in Paris. Seventeen academy memberships and 15 honorary doctorates (from Leipzig to Toulouse) completed the picture of what Jan Dhondt, in a still valuable study of 1966, called "the Pirenne phenomenon" (Dhondt, 1976, 53-119).

All of this explained Pirenne's enormous dominance in his university, where he continued to add pupil after pupil to the medievalist 'Ghent historical school'. He ultimately supervised more than 30 doctoral students, the best-known of whom were François-Louis Ganshof, Hans Van Werveke, Gaston Dept, Charles Verlinden and Fernand Vercauteren. His last surviving student died recently, at the age of 101: Anne-Marie Bonenfant-Feytmans,

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<sup>56</sup>. *Paul Fredericq, ancien recteur, professeur ordinaire à la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres 12 août 1850-31 mars 1920* (1920).

whose publications included works about Philip the Good and the history of the hospitals of Brussels. Pirenne was on friendly terms with many of these pupils, as had been the case before the War. The early death of Des Marez was a severe blow to him (Lyon, 1999, 1051-1078). His pupils themselves always recalled Pirenne as the man who gloried in his seminars; the contrast between lectures and seminars remained a fixed topos in discourse about modern historiography right into the 1930s.<sup>57</sup> They also referred to the *relations affectueuses* that Pirenne had always maintained with them: the *communauté de méthode* was clearly also an emotional community.<sup>58</sup> Pirenne's grandiose funeral in 1935 was likewise an emotional occasion, as well as demonstrating that his social standing – six government ministers attended – had remained undiminished.<sup>59</sup>

After Pirenne's death his influence continued to spread. At the end of the 1930s, virtually all Belgian historians, it was noted a few years ago, saw themselves "more or less as children of Henri Pirenne". There was even a 'Pirennist model' of the historian: one who was a medievalist (by origin), with a strong methodological grounding, convinced of the influence of economic factors on history, and oriented towards both the French and the German historical world (Beyen, 2002, 287-390). Two decades later that had not yet changed. In 1955 Frits Quicke (1955, 1037) wrote that Pirenne's spirit was still very much alive, *en chacun de nous*. At the major international historical conference that was organised in Rome in the same year, the Belgian delegation might be said to have carried his effigy (Tollebeek, 2008a, 243-269).

To describe him as successful and influential is something of an understatement, then. But there was more: Pirenne was also regarded as a quintessentially *modern* historian. This was partly because of the well-documented relationship between Pirenne and the *Annales* historians.<sup>60</sup> Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre held Pirenne in high regard, and when the plans for the journal were first being formed, even tried to persuade the *maître* in Ghent to become the first director of the (anti-German) publication. Precisely because *Annales* history was attributed such a radically innovative, modern role in 20th-century European historiography, the 'forerunner' of the *Annales* historians could also be regarded as modern. Inevitably, this created the

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<sup>57</sup> See the testimonials of, respectively, F. Vercauteren ("Henri Pirenne, professeur", 1935), J. Cuvelier ("Souvenirs", 1936) and Ganshof ("Le maître", 1938) in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs* (1938, I, 68, 59-60, 37-38).

<sup>58</sup> For example, see Ganshof, "Le maître" (in *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs*, 1938, I, 39).

<sup>59</sup> *Henri Pirenne. Hommages et souvenirs* (1938, II, 422-439).

<sup>60</sup> For example, see Lyon & Lyon (1991).

danger of a deterministic reading of Pirenne's work and historiographical practice. But the power of the legend was too great for this to matter. And Fredericq? He was forgotten by then.

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## Pirenne en Fredericq: over historiografische ambities omstreeks 1900

JO TOLLEBEEK

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### SAMENVATTING

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Henri Pirenne en Paul Fredericq hebben elkaar veertig jaar lang van zeer nabij gekend. Dat heeft niet tot een intieme band of tot openlijke intellectuele en politieke discussies geleid. In dit artikel worden beide historici dan ook vooral – vergelijkenderwijs – gepresenteerd als de verpersoonlijking van de nieuwe historiografische ambities die omstreeks 1900 opgeld deden. Pirenne en Fredericq voelden zich leden van een wetenschappelijke avant-garde, de propagandisten van een moderne geschiedbeoefening, die kon worden begrepen als een discipline waarin sprake was van professionalisering en een onderzoeksgerichte vorming, van *community building*, een bloeiende manifestatiecultuur en een groei van internationale netwerken, maar ook van huiselijkheid en complexe genderverhoudingen. In die *nouvelle histoire* kende Pirenne veel meer succes dan Fredericq. De receptie van het wetenschappelijke werk, de macht en invloed in het gilde en de bezetting van de knooppunten van de professionele netwerken die daarmee samenhangen, de schoolvorming, het maatschappelijk krediet dat de historicus kon verwerven: op al die vlakken overvleugelde de eerste de tweede. Pirenne was een zondagskind, Fredericq realiseerde zich dat hij nooit de eerste viool speelde. In de latere historiografie is dat beeld nog versterkt.

Daarbij is echter uit het oog verloren dat de *minder succesrijke* Fredericq vanuit verschillende perspectieven *moderner* was dan Pirenne. Fredericq belichaamde, veel meer dan Pirenne, de *archival turn* die de moderne geschiedwetenschap kenmerkte. Hij stond bovendien, veel meer dan zijn collega, voor de 'collectivistische' aanpak die deze geschiedwetenschap karakteriseerde: niet de individuele geschiedschrijver, maar de *workshop* waarin de meester met zijn leerlingen op een systematische manier aan grote historische projecten werkte, was voor hem de motor van de historiografische vooruitgang. Pirenne, die liever een *patron* dan een 'ploegbaas' wilde zijn, constateerde het zelf niet zonder ironie. Na de oorlog, waarin beide historici naar Duitsland waren gedeporteerd, groeide zijn faam verder. Er werd gesproken – ook na zijn dood nog – over een 'pirennistisch model' van de

historicus: een mediëvist (van oorsprong), met een grote methodologische onderlegdheid, overtuigd van de invloed van economische factoren op de geschiedenis, gericht op zowel de Franse als de Duitse historische wereld. Door zijn band met de *Annales*-historici verscheen Pirenne bovendien als een bij uitstek *modern* historicus. Fredericq daarentegen raakte steeds meer vergeten.

### **Pirenne et Fredericq: les ambitions historiographiques aux alentours de 1900**

JO TOLLEBEEK

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#### RÉSUMÉ

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Henri Pirenne et Paul Fredericq ont été très proches durant une quarantaine d'années. Cette situation n'a toutefois pas mené à un lien intime ou à des discussions intellectuelles et politiques ouvertes. Dans cet article, les deux historiens sont donc présentés – comparativement – comme la personnification des nouvelles ambitions historiographiques en vogue aux alentours de 1900. Pirenne et Fredericq se sentaient membres d'une avant-garde scientifique, les propagandistes d'un exercice historiographique moderne qui pouvait être compris comme une discipline dans laquelle il était question d'une professionnalisation et d'une formation orientée vers la recherche, de *community building*, une culture de manifestation captivante et un développement de réseaux internationaux, mais aussi d'intimité et de rapports de genre complexes. Pirenne a connu bien plus de succès que Fredericq dans cette *nouvelle histoire*. La réception du travail scientifique, le pouvoir et l'influence dans la gilde, l'occupation des plaques tournantes des réseaux professionnels qui s'y rapportaient, la formation scolaire, le crédit social que l'historien pouvait acquérir: le premier surpassait le second dans tous ces domaines. Pirenne était un enfant né coiffé, Fredericq s'est rendu compte qu'il ne jouerait jamais les premiers rôles. Cette image a encore été renforcée dans l'historiographie ultérieure.

Il a toutefois été perdu de vue que le *moins fructueux* Fredericq était en vérité plus moderne que Pirenne à de nombreux égards. Fredericq incarnait, bien plus que Pirenne, l'*archival turn* qui caractérisait la science historiographique moderne. Il défendait en outre bien plus que son collègue l'approche 'collectiviste' qui distinguait cette science historiographique: le *workshop* dans lequel le maître travaillait de façon systématique à la réalisation de grands projets historiques avec ses élèves et non l'historiographe individuel était pour lui le moteur du progrès historiographique. Pirenne, qui préférait être considéré comme un *patron* plutôt qu'un 'chef d'équipe', l'a lui-même constaté non sans ironie. Après la guerre, durant laquelle les deux historiens ont été déportés en Allemagne, sa réputation s'est encore renforcée. Il était question – aussi après sa mort – d'un 'modèle pirennique' de l'historien: un médiéviste (d'origine), doté d'une grande instruction méthodologique, convaincu de l'influence des facteurs économiques sur l'histoire, tourné à la fois vers le monde historique français et allemand. Grâce à la relation qu'il entretenait avec les historiens des *Annales*, Pirenne était vu comme un historien *moderne* par excellence. Fredericq, par contre, est de plus en plus tombé dans l'oubli.