'Shadows and Silence Under Glass'

On the British Lineage of Fernand Khnopff, Henri Le Sidaner and Frank Brangwyn's Fin-de-Siècle Depictions of Bruges

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Dedication

To my wife Fran, who encouraged me to pursue a Master of Research degree in art history and who has supported me unstintingly throughout the last four years.

Abstract

The thesis proceeds from two observations. The first is that, at the end of the nineteenth century, three artists Fernand Khnopff, Henri Le Sidaner and Frank Brangwyn - who were from disparate backgrounds and different artistic traditions - all depicted Bruges using a strikingly similar aesthetic. The second is that, in the first instance, this aesthetic derives from Belgian Symbolist conceptions of Bruges; to the extent that main motifs adopted and even some of the artistic methods used were effectively proposed by the writer Georges Rodenbach in his extensive writings on Bruges (as eloquently encapsulated by the phrase, 'shadows and silence under glass' from his novel, *Le Carillonneur*). The argument proposed in the thesis is that Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's images of Bruges, although Symbolist in character, owe much to earlier British ideas of Bruges. And, furthermore, the means they utilised to realise their images were informed by the practices of certain British artists and art photographers. In consequence, the Bruges works of the three artists can be said to have – at least in part - a British lineage.

The thesis traces, elucidates, and contextualises this lineage. It describes successive encounters with Bruges by British poets, writers, architects and scholars and it examines how the city came to be viewed by them an as an exemplary place. It looks at the reception of these ideas in Bruges and it examines how they influenced Symbolist conceptions of the city - as expressed in Rodenbach's writings and as embodied in the Bruges works of Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn. The thesis further considers how the distinctive aesthetic used by the artists in these works was informed by the work of Edward Burne-Jones and James McNeill Whistler and it uncovers the previously unremarked influence of British Pictorialist photography, especially on the work Khnopff.

The thesis demonstrates how Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's twilight images of Bruges were the product of a series of extended, varied and shifting cultural exchanges throughout the nineteenth century in which the British played a prominent part. And it places their works within a wider discourse, in which Bruges was construed as an antidote or an alternative to the dislocation and disruption associated with rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Bruges as it was imagined at the end of the nineteenth century has been proposed as an 'anti-Paris' but, according to the thesis, it might equally be characterised as an 'anti-London' or an 'anti-Manchester'.

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Abbreviations

Works by Georges Rodenbach

BLM-MM. English translation of *Bruges-la-Morte* by Mike Mitchell, with an introduction by Alan Hollinghurst, Dedalus, Sawtry, 2005.
AV. English translation of 'Agonies de villes' by Will Stone, with an introduction by the translator, as included in the above publication.
BLM-Fac. Facsimile of first edition of *Bruges-la-Morte,* introduced and annotated by Jean-Pierre Bertrand and Daniel Grojonowski, Flammarion, Paris, 1998.
BLM-PM. English translation of *Bruges-la-Morte* by Philip Mosley with an introduction by the translator, University of Scranton Press, Scranton, 2007.
LeC. English translation of *Le Carillionneur* by Mike Mitchell, with an introduction by Nicholas Royle, Dedalus, Sawtry, 2007.

Other key sources

FK-JH. *Fernand Khnopff: Writings on Art and Artists,* edited and translated by Jeffrey Howe, Boston College, Boston, 2016. This compilation is of all Khnopff's published writings. It can be accessed at https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir%3A107203/datastream/OBJ/view
OMA. *The Octave Maus Archive*, Archives of the Museum of Fine Art of Belgium, Brussels. A unique collection of reviews, essays and writings on every exhibition held by Les XX (1883-1893) and by La Libre Esthétique (1894 -1914). Octave Maus was a prime mover behind Les XX and La Libre Esthétique and this collection compiled by him and his wife is organised in 31 annual volumes with the material in monthly date order. There are no page numbers, hence references are to dated volumes only. The archive was accessed between June 24th and June 26th 2019.

Introduction

In 1897, Georges Rodenbach (1855-1898), a leading member of the Belgian Symbolist movement, published his final novel, *Le Carillionneur*. The novel is set in Bruges and, in one episode, an artist named Bartholomeus, shows his friend Borluut - the eponymous bell-ringer - one of his latest paintings of the city. Borluut sees

> *something other than a painting, and more…it combined everything: charcoal with colour highlights, a skilful chemistry of pastels and pencils, of dust and mysterious cross-hatchings…*
>
> ***as if shadows and silence had been placed under glass.***[1]

Rodenbach's description of Bartholmeus's approach to image-making is highly suggestive of the work of many artists, active in this period, who depicted the medieval buildings, streets and canals of Bruges at twilight, silent and empty of life.[2] Two of the artists most closely associated with this way of depicting Bruges were Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921), a leading Belgian Symbolist painter and close associate of Rodenbach, and Henri Le Sidaner (1862-1939), a French painter who turned to the subject of Bruges in the middle of his career. Another artist who worked in this manner was Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956), a British painter who was born and spent his early childhood in the city.

[1] Georges Rodenbach, *Le Carillionneur,* Éditions de Boucher, Paris, 2008, 57. 'C'était autre chose que de la peinture, et plus…se combinaient tous: du fusain, avec des rehauts de couleur, une chimie savante de pastels, de crayons, de poussières et de hachures mystérieuses…C'était comme de l'ombre et du silence mis sous verre'.

[2] Maya Langouche, Bruges-la-Morte: The Bruges Cityscape in Symbolist Painting 1880-1914, unpublished master's degree thesis, University of Ghent, 2016. This thesis provides a catalogue of almost 200 paintings and drawings of Bruges by 73 artists held in various, mainly Belgian, collections. Most, but not all, of the 78 paintings illustrated in the thesis show Bruges in this manner.

Argument and Approach

Khnopff and Le Sidaner's celebrated Bruges works, and Brangwyn's less well-known works clearly embody Symbolist conceptions of the city, not least those of Georges Rodenbach. However, in my thesis, I argue that Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's realisations of the city owe much to British ideas of Bruges - which foreshadowed those of the Symbolists - and their imagery draws significantly on explorations of twilight effects by British artists and art photographers. In other words, their distinctive works can be said to have a British lineage and they can be related to a stream of ideas and perceptions that flowed from British writers, artists, architects, and scholars in response to Bruges during the nineteenth century. In uncovering and interpreting this lineage, I recognise that there are many other lines of enquiry that have been pursued in recent years - and I examine some of these below - but I am confident my research has yielded some new and worthwhile explanations and insights.

The introduction opens with an initial description of the artists' images of Bruges and an analysis of the characteristic aesthetic they employed. The three artists were not members of a movement, nor did they have a shared agenda. Their paths might have crossed, probably in Brussels, where they exhibited at Les XX and La Libre Esthétique, but it seems that they would have limited awareness of each other's work as only Le Sidaner exhibited his paintings of Bruges extensively. Rather, their depictions of Bruges embodied widely expressed views of the city that developed throughout the nineteenth century.

To better understand the context in which these works were produced, the thesis examines a series of accounts of the British presence in Bruges in the nineteenth century and evaluates how art historians and literary critics have located Bruges within Symbolist thinking. Underpinning these lines of thought is the notion that Bruges in this period might be seen as an 'anti-Paris' - a place that represented an alternative to the dislocation and alienation associated with rapid modernisation. My research draws on these bodies of scholarship and

on the interplay between them to shed new light on the Bruges works of Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn. Dominque Marechal, who has written several accounts of the art and culture of Bruges in the nineteenth century and who is the author of monographs on Khnopff and Brangwyn, has stated the importance of examining international influences on Symbolist conceptions of Bruges.[3] He asserts that 'the field of research is still far from fully explored' and elsewhere he highlights the pivotal role played by British writers and artists and in the 'rediscovery' of Bruges'.[4]

The Artists and Their Bruges Works

Fernand Khnopff spent his early years in Bruges but in 1864, aged six, he moved with his family to Brussels, where he was educated and trained as a painter. He was part of group of young writers and artists at the forefront of Belgian Symbolism and Bruges became an important motif in his work. In his first images of Bruges, produced between 1889 and 1892, the city provided a backdrop to various contemplative female figures. Khnopff's drawing for the titlepage of Rodenbach's influential novel, *Bruges-la-Morte,* published in 1892, is a variation on this (Fig. 1). This morbid image shows the dead wife of Hugues Viane, the novel's protagonist, lying Ophelia-like on a funeral bed set before the canal and bridge that leads to the Béguinage in Bruges.[5] Khnopff returned to the subject of Bruges a decade later and, in a two-year period, he produced a series of haunting pastels in which the ancient city stands alone, silent and deserted, even 'abandoned'. His *Des Souvenirs de la Flandre (Un canal)* of 1904 is typical of these later works - it shows the rear facades of Bruges Town Hall and Law Courts

[3] Dominique Marechal, "'And the clouds stagnate, on the water's face": Bruges as a Crossroads of European Symbolism', Jeffrey Howe (ed.), *Nature's Mirror: Reality and Symbol in Belgian Landscape,* exhibition catalogue, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Boston, 2017, 81-94.
[4] Dominique Marechal, 'Bruges Painting and Europe', Valentin Vermeersch (ed.), *Bruges and Europe,* Fonds Mercator, Antwerp, 1992, 359 -384. On page 374, Marechal states 'The British were the first to rediscover Bruges'.
[5] BLM-MM, 33. 'In the muted atmosphere of the waterways and deserted streets' of Bruges, Hugues finds that 'his thoughts of his dead wife are less painful'. He recalls 'the face of his departed *Ophelia'* and hears 'her voice in the thin, distant sound of the bells'.

mirrored in a canal (Fig. 2).[6] The scene seems trapped in time, silent and immutable. Bruges appeared for the last time in Khnopff's work the following year, but for the rest of his career his reputation was strongly associated with the city.

Henri Le Sidaner was a French artist, whose early work was strongly influenced by Claude Monet. After a period in an artists' colony in Étaples, he moved back to Paris in 1894. He was introduced into Symbolist circles, and in 1898 this inspired him to settle in Bruges for two years. Most of his Bruges pictures are of quiet, unremarked corners of the city, as in *Un Canal à Bruges au crépuscule* (Fig. 3). This shows a small canal flowing beneath a group of houses; a single window is lit above the dark opening of the canal tunnel; its glow is reflected in the still water below. The scene is bisected by the thin trunk of a tree and framed by its autumnal leaves. As the evening light fades, all seems tranquil - the only indication of life is the light behind the window. In the two years Le Sidaner spent in Bruges, he produced around forty paintings in this vein. This body of work marked a turning point in his career and, arguably, it represented a high point in his practice.

Frank Brangwyn, a British artist, was born in Bruges in 1867. He spent his first seven years there and maintained links with the city for the rest of his long life. Brangwyn trained briefly in London in William Morris's studio before launching a successful career across Europe as a painter, printmaker, muralist, and interior designer. He returned to Bruges in the early years of the twentieth century and he produced many sketches of the city, one of which he worked up as an oil painting. *Predikheren Bridge* (1907) is a night-time scene of barges floating on a canal in front of a bridge - a group of buildings looms behind, their facades partially illuminated by a single wall light, while three small figures scurry along the quayside (Fig 4). Brangwyn's paintings generally involved people, sunlight, and luminous colours but his

[6] BLM-Fac, 131. Khnopff's drawing is clearly based on a half-tone photograph from the first edition of *Bruges-la-Morte.*

images of Bruges were untypically restrained and introspective. He returned to the subject of Bruges in 1919 when he reworked some of his earlier images of the city as woodcuts, working in partnership with the Japanese artist, Yoshijiro Urushibara.

Bruges at Twilight

Despite the significant differences in their backgrounds, training, and practice, Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's ways of depicting Bruges have much in common - they are based on a common aesthetic. What do I mean by this? It encompasses both the effects the artists sought to capture in their depictions of Bruges and the ideas that inform their images. Their Bruges works invariably show the city at various stages of twilight.[7] In Khnopff's *Des Souvenirs* the sun is setting, there is a golden glow in the sky and a misty, grey light suffuses the scene; in Le Sidaner's *Un Canal*, the sun has set and shadows envelop the houses and the garden; and in Brangwyn's *Predikheren Bridge* night has fallen and the darkness is penetrated by a solitary wall lamp. These tenebrous paintings evoke the insubstantial and the liminal; buildings dissolve into the shadows, the colours of the day fade and disappear, and the dying light is captured in reflections in the canals.

The artists employ various signifiers to convey silence and stillness. Evidence of life or human activity is limited; in *Des Souvenirs* there is no sign of life at all, in *Un Canal* life is suggested by the lit window, and in *Predikheren Bridge,* although three small figures can be discerned, they are insignificant. The reflections on the surfaces of the canals (particularly in Khnopff's work) are undisturbed by the slightest ripple. The skies above are cloudless and leaden. Time seems to have been suspended. Rodenbach's phrase 'shadows and silence' captures all these qualities, and he further suggests how such effects might be realised by

[7] Peter Davidson, *The Last of the Light,* Reaktion, London, 2015. On pages 23-25, Davidson outlines the science of twilight and the three stages it passes through; 'civil twilight' when the sun has just set, 'nautical twilight', when the sky darkens and 'astronomical twilight' when darkness sets in.

using 'a skilful chemistry of pastels and pencils, of dust and mysterious cross-hatchings', which is an insightful description of Khnopff's later methods, in particular.

Rodenbach's most interesting turn of phrase is when he describes Bartholomeus's images as being 'mis sous verre' or 'placed under glass'. This merits closer consideration. Glass when placed over a picture (generally for protective purposes) subtly changes how the image is perceived in several ways. Reinhold Heller writing on Khnopff's use of glass suggests that it has 'the function of generating a second surface for a painting' and it thus 'proclaims the artificiality of the image'.[8] Glass creates a boundary between the viewer and the work; although this boundary is intended to be imperceptible, it nonetheless places the work and its meanings on the 'other side'. Thus, Rodenbach's expression 'placed under glass' conveys the duality and ambiguity of the Bruges works of Khnopff and Le Sidaner and, perhaps to a lesser extent, those of Brangwyn. Works such as Khnopff's, *Des Souvenirs de la Flandre (Un canal),* Le Sidaner's, *Un Canal à Bruges au crépuscule* and Brangwyn's, *Predikheren Bridge* are infused with nostalgia for a world that is passing but one which offers respite and escape. They are the product of a complex and sophisticated aesthetic.

Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's works were undoubtedly informed by ideas about Bruges that were prevalent amongst poets and painters associated with Symbolism at the end of the nineteenth century in Belgium. But I contend that they drew extensively on earlier British ideas of Bruges that developed during the century.

Britain and Bruges During the Nineteenth Century

At the onset of the nineteenth century, Bruges was a provincial backwater in a country that had been annexed by France. In 1815, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Bruges was

[8] Reinhold Heller, 'Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface', *Art Journal,* Summer 1985, Vol 45, 146-153, 151.

incorporated in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1830, following a popular revolt, the state of Belgium was formed. Britain was a sponsor and guarantor of the fledgling state, their newly installed monarch, Leopold, was related to the British royal family, and the British invested heavily in Belgium's fast-growing economy.[9] And as Bruges emerged from its isolation, the British played a prominent role.

The nature and extent of Britain's engagement with Bruges is described in two essays published in 1992.[10] Patricia Carson outlines the historic ties between England and Bruges during the 'Golden Age' of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and shows how these ties were renewed in the nineteenth century. Carson concludes that 'the city has, indeed, been rejuvenated with a significant contribution by the British'.[11] Lori Van Biervliet's essay adds more detail, beginning with the arrival in Bruges of British Romantic poets and artists in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. She outlines the development of an English colony in Bruges, and notes the role played by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and his followers - both British and Belgian - in promoting the Gothic Revival in Bruges, which led to the transformation of the historic centre of Bruges into an essentially neo-gothic space between 1850 and 1910.[12]

Marechal brings some of these threads together in his recent essay on the cultural history of Bruges. He describes the response of British poets and painters to the city, citing William Wordsworth, J.M.W.Turner and Richard Parkes Bonington; he highlights the impact of

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[9] Samuel Humes, *Belgium: Long United, Long Divided,* Hurst & Co, London, 2014, 136, 144.
Pieter François, 'Belgium - country of liberals Protestants: British view on Belgium in the mid nineteenth century', *Historical Research (Journal of the Institute of Historical Research),* Vol 81, No 214, November 2008, 663-678. Humes provides a factual description of Britain's role in supporting the establishment of Belgium and in facilitating its development, whereas Francois provides a more nuanced and complex analysis of British attitudes to Belgium, which fluctuated between sympathy and suspicion through the nineteenth century.
[10] Patricia Carson, 'Bruges and the British Isles', Lori Van Biervliet, 'Bruges, cultural crossroads in 19th century Europe', Valentine Vermeersch (ed.), *Bruges and Europe,* Fonds Mercator, Antwerp, 1992, 128-145 and 384-403.
[11] ibid. 142.
[12] ibid. 388, 389, 393.

Bruges on Dante Gabriel Rosetti, William Holman Hunt, and William Morris; and he notes an etching of Bruges by James McNeil Whistler.[13] By way of contrast, he records Charles Baudelaire's disdain for Bruges as a 'mummified city, vaguely preserved' that 'smells of death'.[14] The term 'vaguely preserved' presumably refers to the work of the Gothic Revivalists, whose restoration work was in progress when Baudelaire visited in 1864. Marechal does not refer to them, even though their notions of Bruges as an ideal city were surely instrumental in shaping later conceptions of Bruges. Nor does his essay reference the ground-breaking work of William Henry James Weale, who catalogued and promoted the work of 'Flemish Primitives' and who played a leading role in establishing Bruges as an important destination for cultural tourists.

Taken together, the writings of these scholars establish the importance of the British presence in Bruges through the nineteenth century, but their accounts fail to adequately explore how the British fashioned an idea of Bruges as an exemplary place, nor do they consider how British ideas informed Symbolist views of the city.

Symbolist Bruges

From the 1880s, Bruges became an important motif for the emerging Belgian avant-garde, based mainly in the rapidly expanding capital of Brussels. The place of Bruges in the Symbolist pantheon was ensured in 1892, when George's Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* became a publishing sensation.[15] According to Emile Verhaeren, 'Rodenbach sang the praises of Bruges because of all the cities in the world he considered it most in tune with his sense of melancholy'.[16] Rodenbach's characterisation of Bruges as 'une ville morte' is a complex

[13] Marechal, *And the Clouds Stagnate*, 81-82.
[14] Joanna Richardson, *Baudelaire,* John Murray, London, 1994. A short account of Baudelaire's visit to Bruges in August 1864 is given on page 405.
[15] BLM-PM, 4. In his introduction Philip Mosley writes, '*Bruges-la-Morte* was the most successful literary publication of 1892'.
[16] ibid. 4. Verhaeren as cited by Mosley.

and multi-layered one, in which Bruges is much more than a mausoleum. In trying to get a better understanding of the different meanings given to Bruges in this period, it is instructive to consider how successive scholars have located Bruges within their theoretical schemas.

By the mid-twentieth century, Symbolism had largely been reduced to a footnote in the onward march of modernism.[17] It was not until the 1960s, when Phillipe Jullian and others began to champion Symbolism as a significant artistic movement, that the place of Bruges as a Symbolist emblem began to be examined. In *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890s,* published in 1969, Jullian locates Symbolism firmly within a world of mystical and transgressive ideas, which he describes as 'chimeras'. According to Jullian, Bruges was 'another dead city (like Venice) criss-crossed by canals' in which "'the dreamers of the North" set their chimeras free'.[18] Jullian considers Khnopff's celebrated image of Bruges, *Une Ville abandonée,* and describes it 'as a sort of mixture between Bruges and the (mythical) city of Ys sinking beneath the waters' (Fig 5).[19] Jullian viewed Symbolism as an arcane and esoteric movement and he emphasised its exclusivity; 'the art we are studying was the prerogative of a very small number of people'.[20]

Since then, scholars have increasingly seen Symbolism as a broader phenomenon, associated with wider developments in the pan-European avant-garde. In 2005, Rodolphe Rapetti defined Symbolism 'as an artistic movement that adopted various forms of *idealism'*.[21] He too cites Verhaeren, who in 1887 wrote that Symbolism is an art in which 'the "idea" is imposed',

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[17] Mario Praz's ground-breaking work *La Carne, la morte et il diavolo nella letteratura* of 1930, translated in 1933 as *The Romantic Agony,* is an exception to this. It was an account of what he called 'dark romanticism' which encompassed Symbolism. However, it is principally concerned with literature - it had a considerable influence on literary studies but less so on art history, until Phillipe Jullian's work (see below).
[18] Phillipe Jullian (Trans. Robert Baldick), *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890s,* Pall Mall Press, London, 1971, 143.
[19] ibid. 138. Caption to Fig. 72.
[20] ibid. 20.
[21] Rodolphe Rapetti (Trans. Deke Dubinerre), *Symbolism,* Flammarion, Paris, 2005, 12.

an art that embraces 'thought, reflection and wilfulness'.[22] Rapetti argues that Symbolism was part of the widespread rejection of naturalism by secessionist movements from the middle of the nineteenth century.

Rapetti does not write at length about Bruges. He discusses the Symbolist use of places to suggest or infer 'states of mind' and he references Khnopff's, *Une Ville abandonée,* arguing that it reflects a longing for a lost past. In her book, *Symbolist Art in Context*, Michelle Facos follows Rapetti in the breadth of her approach. Facos, however, produces a fuller account of Bruges and its significance. She discusses Bruges in a section on 'Sickness and the City' in her themed chapter, 'Decadence and Degeneration'.[23] After a short account of how Bruges was viewed through the nineteenth century, she turns to *Une Ville abandonée.* In common with Rapetti, she describes it as a 'a silent, powerful symbol of loneliness and faded glory'.[24] However, Facos suggests that artists in responding to 'Bruges's timeless beauty and melancholic stagnation' were at least, in part, seeking an alternative to the chaos and confusion of the modern metropolis.[25]

This is one of the main premises of Sharon Hirsh's *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*. Hirsh explores 'the shaping of Symbolist artists by urban culture and the views of urban society in Symbolist art'.[26] She asserts that many Symbolist artists 'contrived an art that would positively seek to remedy one of the city's most deleterious effects…the loss of the inner life of the individual'.[27] In her introduction, Hirsh discusses the significant influence that the social thinking of Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and William Morris had on Symbolist views of the

[22] ibid. 15. Emile Verhaeren's quotation is from an article on Khnopff, 'Un Peintre Symboliste' in *L'Art Moderne,* April 1887.
[23] Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 2009. Chapter 3, 'Decadence and Degeneration', 65-89.
[24] ibid. 79-80.
[25] ibid. 78.
[26] Sharon Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, xiii
[27] ibid. 258.

city and, when she turns to the subject of Bruges in her final chapter 'The Ideal City, The Dead City', she references Carlyle and Morris specifically. Hirsh also mentions Pugin in passing, but surprisingly fails to acknowledge the direct influence that Pugin and his followers had on the regeneration of Bruges as their own version of 'an ideal city'.[28]

Hirsh argues that by the end of the century the Symbolists in casting Bruges as 'une ville morte' were moving away from the idea of Bruges as a practical alternative to the metropolis. Rather they saw it as an imaginary refuge. However, while Rodenbach and Verhaeren were describing Bruges along these lines, Hirsh observes that Bruges was in fact in the midst of being modernised - although she focuses on the rebuilding of the port of Bruges (as Zeebrugge) rather than on the extensive neo-gothic regeneration of the historic centre, which was also in progress at this time. Hirsh sees Khnopff's, *Une Ville abandonée,* in this light, a lament for a place disappearing in the face of modernity, as it had disappeared once before, in the fifteenth century, when Bruges was literally abandoned by the sea when the river Zwin silted up.[29]

In their surveys of Symbolism, Rapetti, Facos and Hirsh refer to British antecedents in one way or another. Hirsh pays attention to various British social reformers and their influence on Symbolist thinking on the perils of urbanisation. While Rapetti and Facos focus on the role of British artists as 'guiding spirits' or 'precursors' of Symbolist art: Rapetti references Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Morris while Facos highlights William Blake and Whistler. However, these scholars fail to explore how British ideas foreshadowed Symbolist notions of Bruges. Nor do they consider the effect that British artists had on representations of the

[28] ibid. 85-86 and 258. Hirsh does not include Pugin in her list of British social reformers, but in her chapter on 'The De-Structured City', she comments on Pugin's polemical drawing from *Contrasts* of a 'Catholic Town in 1440' and 'The Same Town in 1840'. She does not connect this drawing to Bruges, something I discuss in Chapter One.
[29] ibid. 265-266. In her notes 31 and 32 Hirsh refers to Lynn Pudles' advocacy of this interpretation in her essay 'Fernand Khnopff, Georges Rodenbach and Bruges, the Dead City', *The Art Bulletin,* December 1992, 637-654.

city by Khnopff and others. Although, Rapetti does assert that 'Symbolist (artists) seeking…a return to the ideal (were) inspired above all by the example of English painting'.[30]

Bruges as an 'Anti-Paris'

'Disillusionment with the modern metropolis…permeated Belgian art and literature of the *fin-de-siècle',* according to Frances Fowle.[31] And, in response, we have seen how both Facos and Hirsh argue that the Symbolists saw Bruges as a place of escape from the tumult of modern life. As Donald Flannell Freidman puts it, 'spatial paradigms for the inner worlds are recurrent throughout Belgian Symbolism and often take the form of actual cities, no longer sites of community, but the poet's private realm of introspection'.[32] And Patrick McGuiness, in 'Belgian Literature and the Symbolism of the Double', takes this further and argues that 'Bruges…may be read as a Symbolist "anti-Paris", or even - in a world obsessed by doubles – 'as the static double of a vibrant fast-moving metropolis'.[33] He is describing the views of the Belgian Symbolists, who divided their time between Brussels and Paris. But, if British views of Bruges expressed earlier in the century are taken into consideration, the city could equally be described as an 'anti-London' or an 'anti-Manchester'.

Various scholars have examined how places like Bruges came to be viewed as an antidote to the ills associated with the 'fast-moving metropolis'. James Buzard recounts how British (and American) travel writers constructed a view of the purposes and benefits of continental travel for the jaded city dweller. He analyses the work of several writers (and they include eminent figures such as Charles Dickens, Henry James and William Hazlitt) and describes their search for 'authentic' travel experiences. He identifies four characteristics of such an experience.

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[30] Rapetti, *Symbolism,* 28.
[31] Frances Fowle, 'Silent Cities', *Van Gogh to Kandinsky: Symbolist Landscape in Europe*, exhibition catalogue, Thames and Hudson, London, 2012, 105-125.
[32] Donald Flannell Friedman, *An Anthology of Belgian Symbolist Poets,* Peter Lang Publishing, New York, 2003, 2.
[33] Patrick McGuinness, 'Belgian Literature and the Symbolism of the Double', Natahlie Aubert, Pierre-Phillipe Fraiture and Patrick McGuinness (ed.), *From Art Nouveau to Surrealism,* Legenda, London, 2007, 8-22.

'Chief among the motifs, and often embracing the others, is *picturesqueness*' in which a place can be seen as 'a work of pictorial art in its own right, a composed aesthetic whole'.[34] He uses the terms *stillness, non-utility* and *saturation* to describe subsidiary qualities. These terms are not entirely satisfactory but they refer to, the elevated feelings that derive from quiet contemplation of a beautiful place or artefact (stillness), the experience of detachment from the crude and demeaning worlds of business and commerce (non-utility), and a state of complete absorption in the place or object that imprints itself on the mind and in the memory (saturation).[35] Among the places that inspire such elevated feelings, he cites Bruges and quotes one of Wordsworth's sonnets on the city (this sonnet is examined in the first chapter).[36] British responses to Bruges begin with Wordsworth and Southey, and through the nineteenth century Bruges came to exemplify all of the qualities that British travellers in search of 'authenticity' were seeking.[37]

Buzard is concerned with the views of the cultural elite based mainly on literary sources. He does not offer a deeper analysis of what lay behind such thinking. Nicholas Green provides a socio-cultural explanation of 'the ways the countryside was imagined and experienced in the early nineteenth century' under what he terms the 'metropolitan gaze'.[38] Starting with Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci's theories of cultural hegemony, he argues that 'the material and cultural fabric of the metropolis…set the terms for the production of the countryside'.[39] When Green uses the term 'countryside', he is speaking of certain places that

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[34] James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture 1880-1918,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, 187-188.
[35] ibid. 177, 181, 189.
[36] ibid. 188.
[37] Leo Culvelier, Dirk Michiels, Ludo Vandamme, Hilda Van Parys (ed.), *Bestemming Brugge (Destination Bruges),* Openbare Bibliotheek Brugge, Bruges, 2014. This book which accompanied an exhibition charts the growth of cultural tourism in Bruges from the late eighteenth-century until the early twentieth century, using materials from the archives of the city library.
[38] Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France,* Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1990, 2, 9. As in the title of Part One: 'The metropolitan gaze: Parisian urbanism 1820-1850'.
[39] ibid. 6, 11.

came to assume special significance to the urban bourgeoisie; many of these places are 'natural' but he also suggests that historic towns and villages or even seaside resorts could be part of the 'countryside'. Green is writing about France but if his work had been focussed on Belgium then it is likely that he would have considered Bruges as part of the metropolitan hinterland of London as much as Brussels. And when Green writes about the 'production of the countryside', he is describing how a series of developments brought the countryside 'into the city' as an extension of urban life - notably, the increasing availability of images of the countryside (in the form of prints and later picture postcards), journalistic accounts of the countryside in newspapers and guidebooks, and organised visits and excursions to the countryside accelerated by the arrival of the railways.

Schema

My thesis approaches the British lineage of Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's fin-de-siècle depictions of Bruges from a variety of positions. The first chapter describes how Bruges - once the capital of the Burgundian Netherlands, which had experienced three centuries of isolation and decline - was 'rediscovered' by British visitors travelling to northern Europe at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.[40] It examines how a succession of British writers, artists, architects and scholars formed a view of Bruges as an exemplary or even ideal place and it describes the key role that the British played in the restoration the city. The British did not, of course, act alone, they worked closely with their Belgian counterparts. And, as the century progressed, writers and artists of other nationalities also contributed to the growing interest in Bruges.[41] British responses to Bruges had a mixed reception from its citizens but I argue they had a formative influence on Symbolist conceptions of the city, notably those

[40] Marechal, *Bruges Painting and Europe*, 374.
[41] From the mid-nineteenth century several prominent French writers visited Bruges, attracted by its growing reputation; they included Charles Baudelaire, Joris-Karl Huysmans and Marcel Proust, all of whom wrote about their experiences.

of Rodenbach. The chapter ends by contrasting Rodenbach's fully realised version of Bruges with the more tentative early depictions of the city by his friend and collaborator, Khnopff.

The second chapter looks closely at how Khnopff (in his later works), Le Sidaner, and Brangwyn depicted Bruges in what can be described as a Symbolist manner. It considers how certain British artists and art photographers contributed to their realisations of the place. Notable amongst the artists were Burne-Jones and Whistler, whose works became widely known across Europe in the latter half of the century and who developed substantial reputations in Paris and Brussels. The chapter also uncovers the influence of British 'naturalist' or Pictorialist photographers on Khnopff's later images of Bruges and to some extent those of Le Sidaner and Brangwyn.

The conclusion summarises the outcomes of the research. In detailing how Bruges came to hold such an important place in the British imagination during the nineteenth century, in showing how this informed Symbolist conceptions of the city, and in showing how these ideas and the work of certain British artists and art photographers informed Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's depictions of Bruges, the thesis breaks what I contend is new ground. However, there is a need for further research and several areas for future study are proposed.

Chapter One: On British Ideas of Bruges During the Nineteenth Century

In 1787, an anonymous contributor to Walker's Hibernian Magazine described Bruges thus, 'You will find an irregular, old, ill-built town; the streets narrow and dirty and the houses to appearance nearly allied to poverty and wretchedness'. He advises against a closer study of the place before travelling on, for 'after having walked around the town for curiosities, there are none to see'.[42] Bruges in the eighteenth century was a quiet and economically depressed town, but it is surprising that our visitor felt that the city did not contain any noteworthy 'curiosities', as Bruges's splendid churches, grand civic buildings and impressive mansions built two or three centuries earlier would have been visible all around him - albeit many were in urgent need of repair and some were boarded up.

Almost thirty years later, another British traveller arrived in Bruges. Robert Hills' impressions of the city were dramatically different. In his *Sketches in Flanders and Holland,* he wrote that Bruges 'is one of the prettiest and most interesting towns I have seen'.[43] And, although he noted that many of the buildings of Bruges were in need of restoration, he felt that 'they are in perfect unison with this ancient place' and added 'the finely picturesque masses…with an appearance of immensity…produce sensations that have never been exceeded by the finest specimens of Grecian architecture'.[44]

The Bruges that Hills encountered in 1815 was relatively unchanged from the place that our earlier visitor saw - although some buildings had been further damaged or even demolished

[42] Anonymous, 'Description of Bruges, Ghent Etc.', *Walker's Hibernian Magazine or A Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, Dublin, August 1787, 397-398, 397.
[43] Robert Hills, *Sketches in Flanders and Holland,* Haines and Turner, London, 1816, 16. Hills reached Bruges sometime in July 1815, the battle of Waterloo had taken place only a month earlier outside Brussels on June 14th.
[44] ibid. 17. The suggestion that the 'sensations' produced by medieval buildings in the Flemish Gothic style might exceed those produced by 'Grecian architecture' epitomises changing tastes at the time.

during the recent French annexation.[45] However, their contrasting perceptions reflect the dramatic change in sensibility that took place between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, broadly described as Romanticism. The Romantics saw beauty in wild and untamed landscapes and in the picturesque decay of old places and ruins and this explains how the same place could be viewed as squalid in one century and uplifting a few decades later. Hills completes his hymn to Bruges by revealing - in a characteristic Romantic response - how the sound of the Carillion 'excited sensations of *the sweetest melancholy* I have ever experienced from music'.[46]

From British Ideas of Bruges to Symbolist Visions

In this chapter, I consider how British encounters with Bruges through the nineteenth century, beginning with those of writers like Hills, created a conception of the city as an exemplary place. Although the chapter is based on an historical account of how British poets, artists, architects, and scholars encountered Bruges, my prime interest is in the development and evolution of British conceptions of the city over the nineteenth century. British views of the city had a mixed reception from its citizens but, I argue they had a significant impact on Georges Rodenbach's essay 'Agonies de villes', written in 1889, three years before the publication of *Bruges-la-Morte.* In this period, Khnopff worked closely with Rodenbach, but Khnopff's first attempts at depicting Bruges in a similar manner to Rodenbach were tentative. It is only in his later images of Bruges that Khnopff developed an effective way of visualising the city. This is addressed in the second chapter, which considers a range of

[45] Noël Geirnaert and Ludo Vandamme, *Bruges: Two Thousand Years of History,* Stichting Kunstboek bvba, Bruges, 1996, 106. 'The gravest loss was the demolition of Saint Donation's Church…the process was long and drawn out, and Bruges entered the nineteenth century to the sound of sledgehammers smashing church bells…'
[46] Hills, *Sketches in Flanders and Holland*, 29. (My emphasis).

British influences on the aesthetic used by Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's in their tenebrous images of Bruges.

Romantic Encounters: Southey, Wordsworth, Turner and Prout

Robert Hills was one of the first English travellers to head for the Continent at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, which had effectively prevented travel for almost fifteen years.[47] In the eighteenth century, most British travellers would have advanced through France to Italy, but now some visitors decided to travel further north. Their initial purpose was often to visit the site of the decisive British victory over Napoleon at Waterloo, but beyond this many of them had a Romantic interest in the north and in 'northernness'.[48] And, whereas most earlier travellers had been wealthy aristocrats, now 'gentlemen and lovers of the fine arts' were able to embark on such tours.[49] Significantly, this included many writers and artists who for the first time were able to travel independently, in many cases financing their journeys through the accounts, guides and illustrated albums they subsequently published.

In May 1816, at the start of his self-imposed exile, Lord Byron passed through Bruges on his way to Waterloo. In Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Byron's epic narrative poem published between 1814 and 1818, Harold visits the battlefield and reflects on the futility of war. *Childe Harold* became an almost obligatory companion for discerning travellers in the following decades and, although Bruges does not feature in Harold's wanderings, Byron was

[47]Hills reached Bruges in July 1815, barely a month after the battle of Waterloo which took place on June 14th.

[48] John Ruskin, 'The Nature of Gothic', *On Art and Life,* Penguin Books, London, 2004, 7. Ruskin is the great theorist of 'northernness'. This essay, first published in 1853 as part of *The Stones of Venice,* contains Ruskin's famous description of the 'savageness' of Gothic architecture and of its essentially Northern character. He writes that that the 'architecture of the North is rude and wild' but that is not a reason to condemn it, for 'it is this very character that…deserves our profoundest reverence'.

[49] Charles Campbell, *Travellers Complete Guide Through Belgium and Holland,* Sherwood, Neely and Jones, London, 1817. The phrases is from the cover page, which also includes this instructive quote, 'Travelling is a custom visibly tending to enrich the mind, to rectify the judgement, to remove the prejudices of education, to compose the outward manners, and, in a word, to form the complete Gentleman'.

impressed with the place, 'The first thing, after the flatness and fertility of the country, that struck me was the beauty of the towns, Bruges first…'[50]

A few months later, a less controversial but equally celebrated British poet reached Bruges. Robert Southey was Britain's newly appointed Poet Laureate, and he was gathering material for his extended poem, *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo.*[51] In the first part, he describes his journey through Flanders to the battlefield of Waterloo. Like Hills, he admired the faded magnificence of Bruges, he writes, 'Fair city, worthy of her ancient fame' and continues, 'the season of her splendour has gone, yet everywhere monuments remain'. Southey reflects on Bruges's past glories and suggests that the city has now reached 'a beautiful old age'. In later verses, Southey describes the surrounding landscape as viewed from the top of the Belfry. He notes the contrast between 'rich gardens all around and fruitful groves' of Bruges and the 'sublime and rude' scenery of the Lake District of his youth. He admits that 'the Flemish scene (has) a charm for me, that sooths and wins upon the willing heart'. Later that year, Southey wrote that 'Bruges is beyond all comparison the most interesting place I have ever seen' and he extolled the timeless quality of the place; 'Bruges has stood still…'.[52]

Four years later, Southey's contemporary and fellow Lakeland poet, William Wordsworth arrived in Bruges, also on his way to Waterloo.[53] His *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent (1820)* contains two sonnets on the city.[54] The first sonnet begins with Bruges at dusk, 'attired with

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[50] Lord Byron, 'Letter to John Hobhouse, Brussels, May 1st, 1816', John Murray (ed.), *Lord Byron's Correspondence, Vol II,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1922, 7.
[51] Robert Southey, *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo,* Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1816. The full text of the relevant verses of the poem can be found in the Appendix.
[52] Robert Southey, 'Letter to John Rickens, October 1816', Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey (ed.), *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey Vol IV,* Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, London, 1850, 130.
[53] Wordsworth visited Bruges with his wife Mary and his sister Dorothy. They both kept journals of their travels and Wordsworth drew on their responses to Bruges when he composed his sonnets two years after his visit. (Pamela Woolf, *William, Mary and Dorothy: The Wordsworths' Continental Tour of 1820,* The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, 2008, 4.) Wordsworth returned to Bruges once more in 1828, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge after they had been reconciled and shortly before Coleridge's death. (Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections,* Harper Collins, London, 1998, 553.)
[54] William Wordsworth, *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent (1820)*, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1827, 2-3. The full text of both sonnets can be found in the Appendix.

golden light', he observes that twilight 'best suits (the city's) fallen grandeur' and he regrets that the gathering night will soon 'obscure these silent avenues of stateliest architecture'. The second sonnet is more introspective, he suggests that 'The Spirit of Antiquity - enshrined in [the] sumptuous buildings' speaks to the 'seat of grace within the mind'. He likens Bruges to 'one vast temple' that promotes harmony and mutual respect and that frees people from 'jarring passions' and offers them 'a deeper peace than that in deserts found'. However, at this time, according to Robin Jarvis, Wordsworth was far from certain that such peace could be lasting in a war-torn world. Jarvis suggests that in the *Memorials,* 'the poems are permeated with the consciousness of passing time, of the frailty of mental structures and processes and of human lives, and of the violent effects of historical process'.[55]

A year after Southey, the artist J.M.W.Turner visited Bruges on his 1817 tour to Waterloo and the Rhine.[56] He visited Bruges again in 1824 and 1825, which suggests that he found the place of significant interest. He completed 28 sketches of Bruges but, tantalisingly, he produced no finished works to compare with his atmospheric paintings of Venice, a place that Bruges frequently was compared to - as in the expression 'The Venice of the North'.[57] One of his most suggestive of his sketches is of the *Basilica of the Holy Blood*, which shows the curious double spire of the church in some detail, while below there is an outline of the arches and delicate gothic tracery that frame the entrance (Fig. 6). The basilica was one of the holiest places in Bruges, which would shortly attract the attention of British Gothic Revivalists.

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[55] Robin Jarvis, 'The Wages of Travel: Wordsworth and the Memorial Tour of 1820', *Studies in Romanticism,* Vol 40, No 3, Fall 2001,321-343, 328.

[56] Inge Herold, *Turner on Tour,* Prestel, Munich, 1997. Turner's tour to Waterloo and the Rhine is described on pages 37-43. Apparently, Turner consulted both Hills and Campbell prior to his travels.

[57] Comparisons between Bruges and Venice precede the nineteenth century. In the 14th and 15th centuries, Bruges and Venice were the largest trading ports in Europe, and they were closely interlinked, with Venetians forming the earliest merchant colony in Bruges. (André Vanderwalle and Noël Geirnert, 'Bruges and Italy', *Bruges and Europe*, 182-205.) Petu Tafur, a Spanish traveller, who visited Bruges in 1438 commented, 'It seems to me, however, and many agree with my opinion, that there is much more commercial activity in Bruges than Venice'. (Cited in André De Vries, *Flanders: A Cultural History*, Signal Books, Oxford, 2007, 123.)

Other British landscape artists visited Bruges at this time. Among them was Samuel Prout. In 1820, Prout produced several drawings and watercolours of Bruges. Typical of these is *The Golden Fleece,* a line and watercolour painting of the crow-stepped gable and crumbling façade of an inn, with a crocketed steeple and tower behind (Fig. 7). According to a Victorian biographer of Prout, 'The Old Towns of the Continent, with their picturesque houses, time-worn churches and busy market-places were a constant joy to him and in the rendering of them he was unrivalled'.[58] Prout's watercolours and drawings of Bruges came to define how the city was viewed by British visitors, one of whom was the writer Frances Trollope who later settled in Bruges.[59] In *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833,* she writes, 'A walk through the fine old streets (of Bruges), with their high pointed mansions and richly carved ornaments, is like looking over *a portfolio of Prout's best drawings'.*[60]

Prout's work was greatly admired by the fourteen year old John Ruskin, who studied Prout's *Facsimiles of Sketches Made in Flanders and Germany* closely before his first tour abroad with his family in 1833 that took him to Bruges among other places.[61] In *Modern Painters, Volume 1* published in 1842, he wrote that Prout's work 'expressed that feeling…of the rent, the fissure, the lichen, and the weed, and from the writings on ancient walls of the confused hieroglyphics of human history'.[62] A few years later, he suggested Prout's method 'was adapted, in the first instance, to the mouldering and mystic character of Northern Gothic'

[58] Ernest Halton, 'Biography of Prout', introduction to, *Sketches by Samuel Prout in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Switzerland,* The Studio, London, 1915, 1.
[59] Johanna Johnston, *The Life, Manners &Travels of Fanny Trollope,* Quarter Books, London, 1980, 156-157, 162, 164. Johnstone describes the research for Fanny's Trollope's Belgium travelogue carried out in 1833. The book was published after she had been 'exiled' to Bruges in 1834.
[60] Frances Milton Trollope, *Belgium and Western Germany in 1883,* Philadelphia. Carey, Lea and Blanchard, Philadephia, 1834, 18. The emphasis is mine.
[61] Richard Lockett, *Samuel Prout,* Batsford, London, 1985. 76.
[62] Christopher Newall, *John Ruskin: Artist and Observer*, Paul Holberton, London, 2014. This quote from Modern Painters is cited on page 69 (Note 21).

and he argued that Prout's depictions of old buildings were as 'rich and interesting' as 'the darkness of thickets and the eminence of rocks'.[63]

Southey and Wordsworth's responses to Bruges exemplify the more conservative form of Romanticism that emerged in this period. In their early life, they had both supported the French Revolution, but in the upheavals which followed, they became disillusioned with radical politics and they were embraced by the British establishment.[64] However, they both remained critical of many aspects of British society and were increasingly anxious about the destructive impact of unchecked industrialisation and of rampant urbanisation. Instead, they were attracted to 'Rousseauistic dreams of a simple, primitive and uncorrupted life'.[65] The crumbling magnificence of Bruges, with its silent streets, still canals and pastoral surroundings, seemed to evoke such possibilities. At the same time, Bruges provided a warning; the decayed state of the city, once the glorious capital of the Burgundian Netherlands, was a reminder of the rise and fall of human empires, of the danger of hubris, a theme that seized the Romantic imagination at that time.[66] Looking ahead, Wordsworth and Southey seem to part company. In Wordsworth's first sonnet, he wants to hold on to his twilight vision of Bruges. He fears that when darkness envelops the city it could herald further 'desolating storms' of war that would destroy the city.[67] Southey, however, suggests that Bruges could have a benign future, in which good fortune might 'bring (the city) what fate denies to man…a second spring'. The idea of Bruges resurrected is prophetic, Southey

[63] John Ruskin, *Samuel Prout* (Private edition of an article first published in The Art Journal in 1850), Oxford, 1870, 7.
[64] Southey's embrace by the establishment is often marked by his acceptance the position of Poet Laureate in 1813, for which he was strongly criticised by Lord Byron. He was succeeded in this position by Wordsworth in 1843.
[65] M.A.R.Habib, *Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present,* Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, 2011, 146.
[66] Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* mentioned earlier, epitomised this concern with the vanity and senselessness of human ambition.
[67] Jarvis, *The Wages of Travel,* 334.

foresees the rebirth of the city. This is a sentiment that seems to have struck another significant British visitor, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, two decades later.

Pugin and the Neo-Gothic Restoration of Bruges

Pugin first visited Bruges in 1837. Although only 25, he was already a successful architect and polemicist; the previous year he had published his manifesto, *Contrasts,* which advocated the comprehensive revival of medieval Gothic architecture. Pugin, a Catholic convert, was clearly captivated by Bruges where he was made welcome by members of the growing British colony in the city, many of whom like him were ardent Catholics.[68] In the years that followed, he visited the city regularly and he developed important relationships with Belgian architects, religious leaders and politicians who embraced his architectural and social ideals.[69]

Pugin greatly admired Bruges's surviving medieval centre. He enjoyed exploring its churches, civic buildings and monuments and he studied Bruges's collections of early Netherlandish painting, tapestries, metalwork and jewellery, which were just beginning to attract the interest of scholars and connoisseurs. On his first visit to the city, Pugin produced a fine drawing of the Town Hall (Fig.8). He came to regard the city as an important 'sourcebook' of authentic fourteenth and fifteenth century architecture and artefacts that he could use to inspire and inform his own practice.[70] Pugin was drawn to the religiosity of Bruges, with its holy shrines and its time-honoured processions, with its monastic foundations and with its *béguinages* - communities of devout and celibate women that were peculiar to Flanders and which came

[68] Lori Van Biervliet, "'Dear Old Bruges". The English Colony in Bruges in the Nineteenth Century', *The Low Countries, Arts and Society in the Netherlands,* No 9, 1998, 55-57.
[69] Wim Kennes, Sieg Vlaminck, Piet Swimberghe, Bob Van Haeverbeke, Charles Vermeeresch, Denis Van Impe & Dirk Van Meyer, ' Building in Bruges - The Ultimate Hallucination', *Archipel,* January 1990, 1. https://archipelvzw.be/en/agenda/255/building-in-bruges-the-ultimate-hallucination
[70] A.W.N.Pugin, Stephen Ayling (photographer and editor), 'Photographs from sketches by A.W.N.Pugin - 1865', Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections, University of Birmingham. Includes 500 photographs of which 27 are drawings of Bruges, by far the greatest number of any one place. They include views of the city, drawings of individual buildings and an array of architectural details from churches, civic buildings and old houses.

to epitomise the spiritual life of Bruges. In an 1842 letter to John Bloxham, he singled out Bruges as 'by far the most Catholic city in the whole country'.[71]

The profound effect of Pugin's encounter with Bruges is, I believe, demonstrated by the additions he made to the second edition of *Contrasts* which was published in 1841, four years after his first visit. The first edition of *Contrasts* (1836) was mainly concerned with showing how 'authentic' gothic designs were superior to 'debased' classical alternatives. As its full title, *A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the 14th and 15thCenturies and Similar Buildings of the Present Day,* suggests it does this by contrasting the design of typical building types in the 'gothic' and 'classical' styles. Pugin was on a moral and spiritual crusade but in the first edition of *Contrasts* this was implied rather than made explicit. This changed in the second edition published in 1841, which contained two new plates designed to show the reforms that Pugin was advocating. The first plate compares a 'Catholic Town in 1440' with 'The Same Town in 1840' (Fig.9).[72] The lower image of a thriving Catholic town in pastoral surroundings protected by city walls and a surrounding canal is not a direct representation of Bruges as he found it. Bruges's city walls no longer existed at the time of Pugin's visit but he would no doubt have been familiar with Marcus Geerhaerts' celebrated medieval map of the walled city of 1562 (Fig. 10). Taken as a whole, his panoramic view is strongly reminiscent of Bruges, and it is reasonable to argue that the city provided Pugin with the prime model for his ideal city.

'The Same Town in 1840' shows the same place debased by industrialisation (with warehouses along the canal and with an iron smelter and gas works), by secularisation (with a 'socialist hall of science' and with non-conformist chapels in a neo-classical style) and by the erection of a forbidding prison in the foreground. The town has a similar layout to the

[71] A.W.N.Pugin, 'Letter to John Bloxham', Margaret Belcher (ed.), *The Collected Letters of A.W.N Pugin: Volume 1,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, 379.
[72] A.W.N.Pugin, *Contrasts (2nd Edition),* Leicester University Press, New York, 1969, 104.

earlier town, but it is evident that Pugin based his contemporary version on the industrial cities of the Midlands and the North of England. Tellingly, the prison is in the form of a panopticon, a building type first proposed by Jeremy Bentham, the unashamed atheist and advocate of utilitarianism, a philosophy that Pugin detested and adamantly opposed.

The second additional plate shows 'Contrasted Residences for the Poor' (Fig. 11).[73] The upper image is of a 'Modern Poor House', which is also in the form of a panopticon, with inset drawings of suffering inmates, fed on gruel and ruled over by a cruel and punitive overseer. The 'poor' are fated to be reduced to 'subjects' when they die, when their cadavers will be given to 'medical students' for study and dissection. This is contrasted with an 'Antient Poor Hoyse' which shows a splendid monastic foundation - with insets showing the poor and sick lovingly tended by monks, supplied with wholesome food, and receiving a full Christian burial on death.

Pugin's illustration of a medieval poor house has strong similarities to his design for St John's Hospital commissioned by Pugin's most important patron, the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1839. But Pugin must also have had in mind St. John's Hospital in Bruges, founded in the mid-twelfth century and still run by lay brothers and sisters at the time of his visit.[74] In 1833, Frances Trollope described the care patients received there; 'The pain, which the sight, or even the idea of human suffering must ever occasion, was a thousand times overbalanced by the pleasure of witnessing the tender care, the sedulous attention and the effective usefulness of those heavenly-minded beings, *Les Soeurs de la Charité.* It is they that are the only nurses…'.[75] It should also be noted that the curious archaic spelling of 'hoyse' seems to echo the Flemish word 'huis'.

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[73] ibid. 106.
[74] Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain,* Allen Lane, London, 2007, 215-216. The illustration of Pugin's design for St John's Hospital, Alton is opposite page 243.
[75] Trollope, *Belgium and Western Germany,* 21.

The same year that the second edition of *Contrasts* was published in 1841, Pugin produced his next volume of architectural and social writings, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture.* In this, he further bemoans the fate of his country; 'England is rapidly losing its venerable garb: all places are becoming alike…factory chimneys disfigure our most beautiful vales'.[76] He suggests that 'Catholic England was merrie England, at least for the humbler classes; and the architecture was in keeping with the faith and manners of the times - at once, strong and hospitable'.[77] Pugin's interpretation of medieval history bore little relation to the real life and conditions experienced by the 'humbler classes' in that period, but his belief that 'Christian Architecture' embodied principles of social justice and equality attracted a growing audience at home and abroad, not least in Belgium.

Pugin's great friend and supporter in Bruges was Jean-Baptiste Béthune, an aristocrat from a devout Catholic Flemish family of French origin. As a young man Béthune had trained as an artist, but he had become interested in the Gothic Revival and travelled to England in 1842 to study some of Pugin's buildings. Around this time, they began to correspond, but they probably did not meet until 1844 in Belgium. A year later, Béthune settled in Bruges and for the following six years Pugin treated Béthune's home as his base in the city. He became a tireless advocate for Pugin and his work and, according to Van Biervliet, it was Béthune 'who as a designer and architect gave shape to the theories of the English grand-master on a large scale'.[78] Pugin exchanged ideas and information with Béthune. He kept him informed on the Catholic revival in Britain and they collaborated on various schemes and ventures, including establishing a workshop to produce stained glass and ecclesiastical fittings in partnership with John Hardman, Pugin's long standing business associate.

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[76] A.W.N.Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture and An Apology for Christian Architecture,* John Weale, London, 1841, 56.
[77] ibid. 61.
[78] Van Biervliet, *Dear Old Bruges*, 57.

Another committed follower of Pugin, the English architect Thomas Harper King, moved to Bruges in the late 1840s and immediately became embroiled in a controversy over the design of Saint Magdalene church. Following his criticisms, he was appointed as an adviser to the original architect and the church completed in 1853 became the first newly built neo-gothic building in Bruges partly modelled on Pugin's principles. To guide future neo-gothic developments, King translated a selection of Pugin writings into French. His *Les Vraies principes de l'architecture ogivale ou chrétienne,* published in 1850, was an unauthorised anthology, drawn mainly from *Contrasts* and *True Principles* with King's own additions.[79] Pugin was disapproving but the work had a defining impact on the Gothic Revival movement in Bruges and in Belgium. The appointment of Jean-Baptiste Malou as Bishop of Bruges in 1849 provided the revival with further impetus. A year earlier, Malou had met Pugin at a large gathering of Ultramontane and English Catholics, when he attended the consecration of St George's Church in Southwark designed by Pugin.[80] Malou became an active supporter of Pugin and Béthune, who was his nephew.

An early example of Pugin's influence can be seen in the restored interior of the Chapel of Holy Blood, the upper chapel of the Basilica of the Holy Blood (Fig. 12). This project took place in stages throughout the nineteenth century. On his appointment, Bishop Malou, redirected the programme, after he had consulted Béthune and most likely Pugin.[81] In 1852, shortly after Pugin's death, Malou commissioned King to produce a comprehensive scheme to decorate the columns and walls of the chapel following Pugin's principles. After King left Bruges in 1860, the work was completed by another English architect, William Brangwyn

[79] Thomas Harper King, *Les Vraies principes de l'architecture ogivale et chrétienne – avec des remarques sur leur renaissance au temps actuel, remanié et développé d'après le texte anglais de A.W.Pugin,* Mayer et Flateu, Bruxelles, 1850.
[80] Lori Van Biervliet, 'The English Colony in Bruges and its Influence on the Gothic Revival in Flanders', Jan de Maeyer and Luc Verpoest (ed.), *Gothic Revival: Religion, Architecture and Style in Western Europe 1815-1914,* Universtit Press Leuven, 2000, 99-104, 102. St George's Church was consecrated as a Catholic cathedral in 1852, the year of Pugin's death.
[81] ibid. 102.

(the father of Frank). In 1870, Louis Delacenserie became Bruges city architect; he supervised the remaining work on the main chapel and the side chapel, and he commissioned Brangwyn to design the canopied platform for the veneration of the relic of the Holy Blood.

Towards the end of his life, Pugin's reputation in England waned, despite his role in designing the Houses of Parliament and his contribution to the Medieval Court at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Ruefully he wrote to Béthune regarding the latter, 'The modern men who exhibited are furious, they abuse me as a man opposed to advancement'.[82] Pugin died shortly after he wrote this letter, but his reputation on the Continent lived on, not least in Bruges, where Béthune, as his 'true disciple', worked with Delacenserie and others for the next fifty years on the comprehensive restoration and rebuilding of the city.[83]

Noël Geirnert and Ludo Vandamme assert that Pugin and Béthune's influence meant that Bruges became 'the ideal seedbed for the theoreticians, architects and decorative artists of the neo-gothic'.[84] Giles Maury, adds that Béthune's 'whole career can be seen as the application of (Pugin's) *The True Principles*, adapted to the Flemish, Belgian and French context'.[85] Pugin's work in Britain is now largely seen in terms of the individual buildings he designed and collaborated on. His worldwide influence is increasingly recognised and understood, but his pivotal role in initiating and inspiring the restoration and renovation of Bruges, although referenced by certain historians, has not been fully researched. And yet it can be argued that Bruges is the most extensive Puginian project ever undertaken, even though almost all the restoration and rebuilding work was undertaken after his death.

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[82] A.W.N.Pugin, 'Letter to Béthune. November 1851', *Collected Letters,* 471.

[83] Giles Maury, 'The True Disciple. Jean-Baptiste Bethune and A.W.N.Pugin: A Summary of a Complex Relationship', *A.W.N.Pugin's Global Influence, Gothic Revival Worldwide,* (Timothy Brittain-Caitlin, Jan De Maeyer and Martin Bressani (ed.), Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2017, 42-53.

[84] Geirnaert and Vandamme, *Bruges Two Thousand Years,* 109.

[85] Maury, *True Disciple*, 49.

For Pugin, Bruges was a place of rebirth and redemption. It was a place where he could feel fully at home as a Catholic, and, in return, it became a place that he and his followers were able to redeem, by returning the city to its former glory. In practicing his faith and in applying his principles, Pugin believed that he could create a better world. Many of his ideas may seem naïve and even reactionary, but his thinking had a profound influence on other Victorian thinkers and reformers, including Ruskin and Morris. Recent writers on the Gothic Revival have emphasised the extent of Pugin's influence. Paul Atterbury claims that *Contrasts* is 'a revolutionary book, whose outspoken text and polemical illustrations' laid down the basis for an authentic form of Victorian gothic architecture.[86] While Michael Clark notes the wider impact of Pugin and his fellow Gothic Revivalists; 'Like Marxism, which had also drawn lessons from mediaeval society, the Gothic Revival offered a comprehensive response to the dislocations and traumas of the industrial revolution' adding that 'in the broadest view, it is the story of Western Civilisation's confrontation with modernity'.[87]

Weale: Advocate of Pugin, Pioneering Art Historian and Promoter of Bruges

Another significant British figure arrived in Bruges in 1854. William Henry James Weale was a failed schoolteacher, who had an ambitious plan to compile an inventory of medieval brasses in northern Europe.[88] Weale had fallen under the influence of Pugin and John Henry Newman and converted to Catholicism a few years earlier. He immediately felt at home in Bruges and settled there with his wife later that year. Through his friendship with King, he embraced the neo-gothic restoration project. He was particularly exercised by the ruinous state of the medieval houses surrounding the historic centre and by the unsympathetic

[86] Paul Atterbury, *A.W.N.Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995, 9.
[87] Michael Clark, *The Gothic Revival,* Thames and Hudson, London, 2002, 2.
[88] Lori Van Biervliet, *Leven en werk W.H.J.Weale,* Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie, Brussels, 1991. This section draws heavily on the only full-length biography of Weale, which details his activities in Bruges and Belgium and his life and career before and after. On pages 179-185 there is a summary in English but regrettably the whole work has not been translated.

conversion works that were in progress. Although a newcomer, he took the lead in a prolonged battle to save these houses. He rebuked the 'modern renovators who, with no sense of true Gothic, were determined to 'improve' Bruges - beyond recall' and he advocated a coherent programme of restoration following Pugin's principles.[89]

Weale became a leading voice in the conservation movement in Belgium. As early as 1860 he was appointed to the Belgian Royal Commission for Art and Architecture and, a year later, he delivered a paper on the restoration of ancient buildings and artefacts to the Belgian Royal Commission for Monuments which 'was a landmark in the history of conservation' in Belgium.[90] Weale became an important disseminator of Pugin's ideas and with Béthune, he founded the Guild of Saint Thomas and Saint Luke to promote 'Christian art and architecture'. For fifty years, well into the next century, the guild ensured that neo-gothic architecture, in the spirit of Pugin, remained the preferred style in Belgium for religious and civic buildings, for schools and educational institutions, and for the restoration of old towns.

Weale remained in Bruges for seventeen years; his interests extended well beyond his advocacy of Pugin, and he was involved in many different causes - according to Van Biervliet, he 'left his stamp on Bruges to an extent equaled by no other member of the English colony'.[91] He was absorbed by Bruges's rich history and heritage and took a leading role in consolidating the city's extensive but dispersed archives and in recording various collections of paintings and artworks. In 1861, he produced a carefully researched catalogue of the paintings held by the Bruges Academy and began a detailed study of the works of Jan Van Eyck (and his brother), which culminated many years later in his comprehensive and authoritative *Hubert and Jan Van Eyck: Their Life and Work.*[92]

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[89] Maurice Brockwell, 'W.H.J.Weale, The Pioneer', *The Library,* Volume VI, December 1951, 200-211, 201.
[90] Van Biervleit, *Gothic Revival in Flanders,* 103.
[91] Van Biervliet, *Dear Old Bruges,* 57.
[92] W.H.J.Weale, *Hubert and Jan Van Eyck: Their Life and Work,* John Lane, London, 1908.

Weale's studies reflected the growing interest in the work of the early Flemish painters. In Britain, this interest had been stimulated by the National Gallery's acquisition in 1842 of Van Eyck's *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife* (1434). The 'fineness and precision' of this work astonished viewers and critics alike, and it attracted the interest of the young Pre-Raphaelites.[93] So much so, that in 1849 Dante Gabriel Rosetti and William Holman Hunt travelled to Bruges, which Rosetti thought 'this most stunning place' and where he was overcome by the 'miraculous works of Memling and Van Eyck'.[94]

The idea that Bruges was the birthplace of a Northern Renaissance equivalent to the Italian Renaissance began to gain currency, underpinned by Weale's rigorous research, his scholarly writings, and his tireless promotion of the work of Van Eyck, Memling and other artists. This culminated in a comprehensive exhibition, *Les Primitifs Flamandes à Bruges,* held in 1902.[95] Even though he had left Bruges thirty years earlier, Weale was one of the curators of the exhibition and he authored its catalogue. The exhibition occasioned a dispute between art historians about whether the works on show 'constituted a final flourishing of the late medieval style' (the view of Johan Huizinger) or 'something new?' (the view of Max Friedlander).[96] Subsequently, most art historians followed Friedlander and Bruges is seen as the crucible for a new form of art (or *ars nova,* to use Erwin Panofsky's term) but it is not always recognised that Weale's research was one of the foundations of this standpoint.[97]

Weale wanted to share his scholarly insights and his appreciation of the medieval splendour of Bruges with a wider audience. As early as 1859 only five years after his move to Bruges,

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[93] Carola Hicks, *Girl in a Green Gown: The History and Mystery of the Arnolfini Portrait,* Vintage, London, 2012, 164. Citation from an 1842 review of the painting by George Darley.
[94] Dante Gabriel Rosetti, 'Letter to the PRB, 23rd October 1849', *Pre-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters,* William Michael Rosetti (ed.), Hurst and Brackett Ltd., London, 1800, 24.
[95] Stephanie Porras, *Art of the Northern Renaissance: Courts, Commerce and Devotion,* Laurence King Publishing, London, 2018, 9. 'The show assembled some 400 paintings as well as sculpture, metalwork, tapestries, manuscripts and furniture'.
[96] ibid. 9.
[97] ibid. 48.

he published a guidebook, *Belgium, Aix-La-Chapelle and Cologne,* based on a series of journeys from one historic town to another taking advantage of the newly established rail network.[98] Weale announced it as 'An entirely new guidebook' containing 'numerous historical and archaeological notes' and '16 plans and 4 maps'. The motto on the cover was 'Discitur eundo' or 'One learns by going'; travel for Weale was a serious business and he expected much of those who travelled 'with' him. He makes this clear in the introduction, when he explains that his book is 'A faithful guide for the ordinary traveller but it also contains information as should enable students…of archaeology, architecture and painting to make *the best use of their time*'.[99]

The guide, as might be expected, contained a long section on Bruges, but in 1862 he produced a book entirely devoted to the city, *Bruges et ses environs.*[100] This book was published in Bruges and written in French; this is significant as it appears that Weale wanted to confine his English readership to 'gentlemen' who like himself would be fluent in French. This book with its 'description des monuments, objets d'art and antiquités. Précédé d'une notice historique' had an explicitly art historical purpose and it clearly found a market as it ran through several editions in the following thirty years. Weale had a high opinion of his guide. In his introduction he 'took a strong look at previous guides and books on Bruges' and he criticised Octave Delepierre's guide (first published in 1840) which "contains errors that are absolutely inexcusable".[101] He admits that his guide may contain some inaccuracies but adds that 'I am convinced it is more correct than any guide previously published'.[102]

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[98] W.H.J.Weale, *Belgium, Aix-La-Chapelle and Cologne,* W Dawson and Sons, London,1859.
[99] ibid. p.i (My emphasis)
[100] WHJ Weale, *Bruges et ses environs: description des monuments, objets d'art et antiquités. Précédé d'une notice historique,* (1st edition), Desclée, De Brouwer et Aie, Bruges, 1862.
[101] Leo Cuvelier et al, *Bestemming Bruges*, 27.
[102] ibid. p.i.

Weale's views on the state of Bruges in the mid-nineteenth century were qualified. In the introduction to the first edition of his guide to Bruges, he states that, 'In all of Flanders, there is not a town more interesting for its historical associations or richer in works of art and of antiquity than the town of Bruges'.[103] But in his earlier guide to Belgium, he had written that, Bruges's 'deserted and inanimate streets present a desolate aspect' and he bemoaned the fact that, 'The town is in danger of losing its quaint appearance (owing to) the utter want of taste of the Brugeois of the present day'.[104] In other words, Bruges was not safe in the hands of its own population; it needed to be saved by an educated elite, including British scholars like himself.

By the time of the fourth edition of his guide published over twenty years later, Weale is more optimistic. The cover of this edition is in full neo-gothic mode, with the title set in classic Blackletter typeface and with a drawing of the Belfry and market square framed by a Pugin style border (Fig 13).[105] Weale observes that 'For a few years, the facades of old houses have been restored in a suitable way and some new facades have been constructed in the local style of the 16th and 17th century', he is confident that 'The reign of bad taste is coming to an end and the city is starting to regain its picturesque appearance', but modestly he does not acknowledge his role in this transformation.[106] Weale continues that Bruges 'is no longer the shadow of what it once was' but he strikes a note of regret when he writes that 'traders no longer hurry along its quays', while welcoming the fact that in these formerly busy places, 'silence and solitude seem to have established their reign'. A comment that prefigures Symbolist views of Bruges.[107]

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[103] ibid. p.ii.
[104] Weale, *Belgium, Aix-La-Chapelle and Cologne,* 133 and 166.
[105] W.H.J.Weale, *Bruges et ses environs: description des monuments, objets d'art et antiquités. Précédé d'une notice historique*, (4th edition), Desclée, De Brouwer et Aie, Bruges, 1884.
[106] ibid. 15.
[107] ibid. 102.

Southey, Wordsworth, Pugin and Weale's ideas of Bruges - together with those of many other British writers, artists, architects and scholars - had a significant effect on how Bruges came to be imagined as the century progressed. And in the case of Pugin and Weale their work and influence had a material impact, leading to the sweeping neo-gothic transformation of the city. As might be expected, the British 'rediscovery' of Bruges and to - what might have been viewed as - the cultural colonisation of their city, provoked mixed responses from its citizens.

The Reception of British Ideas of Bruges

In 1815, when British visitors returning to the Continent after the hiatus caused by the Napoleonic Wars passed through Bruges, they found a place recovering from the French occupation and at low ebb, economically and politically. Most Brugeois were understandably proud of their city's past, but many feared for the future (echoing Wordsworth's thoughts on 'the spite of fortune'). Generally, they welcomed the British settlers and the business generated by cultural tourism. And, as we have seen, many leading figures strongly supported the neo-gothic transformation of the city centre. But through the century, a debate developed on the need to modernise and redevelop the town so that it could share in the economic development that was bringing prosperity to other Belgian towns and cities, including Bruges's near neighbour and rival Ghent. A major point of contention was the proposed restitution of the link with the sea that had fuelled Bruges's original growth as an economic and cultural centre. 'Many nineteenth-century intellectuals and politicians argued that the city would be able to regain its past glory by building a new sea port', whilst more conservative elements, including most British residents and visitors, felt that such commercialisation could destroy Bruges's special character fearing that, 'If the projected sea canal should fulfil the expectations of its promoters, there can be no doubt that Bruges will

lose much of her charm'.[108] In the end, plans for a port were agreed and Zeebrugge opened in 1907.

The controversy over the future of the city informs Rodenbach's last novel, *Le Carillionneur*. The central character, the city architect, Borluut, defends the medieval character of the city and believes that his work has 'saved it with his skilful restorations'.[109] He is opposed by his colleague Farazyn, a lawyer and Flemish nationalist, who is an ardent supporter of the building of a new port. Meanwhile, Bartholomeus, 'a painter and devotee of Flemish art', who initially is in sympathy with Borluut, rejects his doctrinaire revivalism and embraces a more mystical vision of Bruges as a dying city, a place of 'shadows and silence'. Borluut is disconsolate when he senses the port project is unstoppable. He wonders how the town can reject the 'notion of being *a city of the ideal*' in order to devote itself 'to the mean and common ambition of becoming a port'.[110]

Rodenbach's *Le Carillionneur* shows how well versed he was in the politics of Bruges. This is unsurprising as he had known the city since his childhood in Ghent; his father and grandfather both came from Bruges, and he visited the city throughout his life. Bruges loomed large in his work, as he acknowledged in a letter to the critic, Arthur Daxhelet in a letter of 1894; 'There is an atavism in works of art, and heredity also explains my love for the admirable Bruges, which I'd be happy to have assured a little glory in the French artistic mind'.[111] This letter is revealing as it shows that Rodenbach was anxious to promote his vision of Bruges to a French audience or perhaps more accurately a Parisian audience, as this

[108] Geirnaert and Vandamme, *Bruges, Two Thousand Years*, 119.
Ernest Gilliat-Smith, *The Story of Bruges,* JM Dent, London, 1901, 396.
[109] LeC, 81. The character of Borluut is reportedly based on Louis Delacenserie. This is implied by the statement in the book that Borluut was responsible for 'the reconstruction of the Gruuthuse Palace', which was one of Delacensarie's major projects. LeC, 101.
[110] LeC, 197. (My emphasis).
[111] BLM-PM, 5. In his introduction, Mosley cites Rodenbach's letter to Draxhelet.

was where he lived for the final ten years of his life. At the same time, it is apparent that many of Rodenbach's notions of Bruges had their origins in the 'British artistic mind'.

British Ideas of Bruges and Their Impact on Symbolist Thinking

Rodenbach first wrote about 'mournful Sundays' spent 'in the drowsiness of provincial towns' in his poetry collection, *La Jeunesse Blanche,* published in 1886.[112] These towns, with Bruges at the forefront, became a recurrent theme in his work. Rodenbach fantasised in the same volume, 'To live as in exile, to live seeing no-one/in the vast desolation of a town that is dying, /where nothing is heard but the vague murmur/of an organ sobbing, or the belfry tolling'.[113] Rodenbach collected his thoughts on Bruges and similar towns in his essay 'Agonies des villes', which he wrote in 1889 and which anticipated *Bruges-la-Morte.*

This essay demonstrates Rodenbach's debt to various British conceptions of the city, which he could well have absorbed in his childhood and on later visits. Rodenbach draws most obviously on earlier Romantic ideas of Bruges, which is unsurprising as most scholars share the view that 'Symbolism's foundations were embedded in earlier progressive movements - Romanticism, especially…'.[114] Rodenbach echoes the poems of Southey and Wordsworth in which Bruges is seen as a picturesque ruin that inspires melancholy reflection. In the opening section of his essay he laments, 'Bruges, now forgotten, all alone with her empty palaces…in another age a queen in Europe…home to a sumptuous court' and continues, 'Today there is a certain sweetness in walking around the lethargic town, through dreams and memories,

[112] Georges Rodenbach, 'Dimanches', Will Stone (trans. & ed.), *Poems - Georges Rodenbach,* Arc Publications, Todmorden, 2017, 25.
[113] ibid. 'Seul', 27.
[114] Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context,* 39.

down streets never straight, ever capricious, supplying at each step…a surprise or something unforeseen'.[115]

Bruges was a place of redemption for Rodenbach, but his version of redemption differs from that of Pugin and the British and Belgian Catholic revivalists. He did not share their religious zeal, nor did he welcome the neo-gothic regeneration of the city which they championed, and which was transforming the city during his lifetime. For Rodenbach, redemption lies in the mind, it is an inner experience. In *Bruges-la-Morte,* the main protagonist Hugues Viane, who has moved to Bruges so he can mourn the premature death of his wife, 'felt this pale and soothing influence of Bruges and through it (he came) to resign himself to living on memories alone, to relinquish hope, to look forward to a Good Death'.[116] Bruges offers Viane a desolate form of redemption, it enables him to accept his fate but it offers him no better prospect than 'a Good Death'.

Rodenbach accepts that, at times, Bruges can be restorative. He appreciates the charm and aesthetic appeal of the city, very much as discerning visitors with Weale's *Bruges et ses environs* in hand expected to. He writes of 'the great churches…Saint Sauveur and Notre-Dame, where one scarcely takes in the density of decoration, so sumptuous, the marbles and the rich carvings, the florescence of the stained glass, the accumulation of works of art, amongst which the Virgin of Michelangelo shines out'.[117] The city summons up youthful memories for Rodenbach. He recalls, 'These quais of Bruges, how in my pensive youth I followed, confessed and loved them: with secret places I alone knew about and consoled…' and he continues, 'And here, before this gentle lake strewn with water lilies…the dream (of love) is truly aroused…'.[118]

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[115] AV, 141-142.
[116] ibid. 93.
[117] ibid. 145-146.
[118] ibid. 149-150.

Ultimately, Rodenbach turns to darker visions of Bruges. Seventy years earlier, Wordsworth feared that Bruges was threatened by 'the injuries of time, the spite of fortune, the desolating storms of war'. These were external threats, but for Rodenbach, Bruges's anguish comes from within. Bruges is afflicted by 'centuries-old consumption' and 'stricken by death', accompanied by 'the eternal weeping, the streaming and dripping of the gutters…like a great euphony of sobbing and inexhaustible tears'.[119] Rodenbach gives Bruges a life of its own, in *Bruges-la-Morte* he casts 'the Town as an essential character, associated with states of mind, counselling, dissuading, inducing the hero to act' and he insists that the 'scenery of Bruges is directly involved in the story'.[120]

Rodenbach's multi-layered conception of Bruges undoubtedly draws extensively on earlier ideas of the city, but Rodenbach's Bruges is internalised as a state of mind imbued with fin-de-siécle fatalism and angst. Rodenbach wrote insistently about Bruges and in his poems, essays, short stories and novels he tested the boundaries of language and of literary expression. In *Bruges-la-Morte,* he went one step further by including thirty-five half-tone photographic images within the text, some of which are examined in the next chapter. They were not there as illustrations, rather, 'so that our readers too may come under the influence of the Town itself, feel the persuasive presence of the waters from close to, experience for themselves the shadows cast by the tall towers.' [121]

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[119] ibid. 141-142, 149.

[120] ibid. 21. From Rodenbach's prefatory note.

[121] BLM-Fac, p.50.This is the only current edition of *Bruges-la-Morte* that reproduces the photographs from the first edition, properly positioned in the text. The photographs were not especially commissioned, they were selected by Rodenbach from the collections of two Parisian 'image banks', J.Levy and Co. and Neurdein Frères, who produced postcards of popular tourist destinations across Europe, including many of Bruges. In most cases, the images are of places or artefacts referred to in the narrative but sometimes they seem to be there simply to provide atmosphere. It is often claimed that *Bruges-la-Morte* was the first novel to be produced with embedded photographs, a form that became increasing popular in the following century. There is extensive literature on this aspect of the novel; the work of Paul Edwards is particularly important, see his 'The Photograph in Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892)', *Journal of European Studies,* xxx 2000, 71-89.

Bruges-la-Morte also included a titlepage illustration by Fernand Khnopff; it was not the first time that the artist and writer had collaborated. In 1889, the year 'Agonies des villes' was published, Khnopff produced a small pastel and ink drawing entitled *Avec Georges Rodenbach. Une ville morte* (Fig. 14). The title of this work is revealing; the phrase 'With Georges Rodenbach' shows that Khnopff and Rodenbach had a shared fascination with the idea of Bruges as 'a dead city'. The drawing shows an androgynous woman staring intently at an ancient crown on a carved stone pedestal; behind her is a crumbling mansion alongside a canal, and in the evening sky we see the ethereal silhouette of the Belfry (which indicates the drawing is based on Bruges). The background is sketchily drawn, and the focus of the picture is on the woman, but what does she represent? She appears to be musing on the city's glorious history and she could be seen as the spirit of Bruges past.[122] And is the background in her imagination or, alternatively, is she a personification of what lies behind her?

Khnopff used a similar format three years later in the illustration on the cover of *Bruges-la-Morte* (Figs 1 and 15). In this drawing, both the recumbent woman in the foreground and the view behind can be identified with certainty. The woman is the dead wife of the protagonist Hugues Viane, with her long hair displayed on the pillow of her funeral bed which appears to be 'floating' above the Minnewater or Lac d'Amour with the three arched bridge leading to the Béguinage in the background. The image is counterfactual, as we learn in the opening of the novel that Hugues moved to Bruges 'following the death of his wife'.[123] By 'transporting' her dead body to Bruges, Khnopff is presenting the city as a metaphor for her death, a metaphor that underpins the narrative that follows. Khnopff's drawing provides a

[122] Pudles, *The Dead City,* 643. In Note 42, Lynn Pudles takes the view that female figure 'is an allegorical representation of the city' and that the crown she is contemplating is based in the imperial crown of Austria. The use of the crown would seem to reference the period when Bruges became part of the Austrian empire in 1713 and when it experienced its steepest decline.
[123] BLM-MM, 25.

visual preface to the book, demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between artist and writer. In an exhibition catalogue entry on both works, Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, notes that, 'Khnopff was passionately interested in literature and his friendship with Georges Rodenbach had a profound influence on the themes he tackled'. She continues that, 'This affinity between [them]…has to do with certain basic obsessions, such as the women who were the object of their passions, the mournfulness of urban landscape and a yearning for the unobtainable and the inaccessible'.[124]

Rodenbach enlisted Khnopff in his search for a synaesthetic language to convey their ideas of Bruges. However, whereas Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* represented the culmination of his vision, it was only the beginning of Khnopff's explorations. Khnopff's early images of Bruges, - with a symbolic female figure in the foreground - use the 'scenery of Bruges' as a backdrop, the city is given a supporting role. And even if these female figures are a vehicle for Khnopff's ideas of Bruges - as they seem to be - the use of a personification would seem to narrow and limit the allegorical potential of his background images of the city. Furthermore, the techniques used by Khnopff for portraying Bruges in these early drawings are sketchy and tentative and I would argue that from a Symbolist perspective they fail to convey the mystery of the 'dying' city.

In his search for a visual idiom equivalent to that of Rodenbach, Khnopff could not draw as Rodenbach did from British imaginings of Bruges. The interest of British Romantic artists in Bruges was described earlier but, of these, only Samuel Prout produced a body of work that could be said to uncover 'the confused hieroglyphics' of the place. And it is doubtful whether Khnopff or any of the other artists attracted to Bruges at this time would have been aware of Prout's work, still less of Turner's suggestive sketches. Nor could he draw

[124] Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, 'With Georges Rodenbach. A Dead City', *Impressionism to Symbolism: the Belgian Avant-Garde 1880-1900,* exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy, London, 1994, 144-145, 144.

inspiration from any Bruges-based artists whose paintings of the city were still firmly rooted in the academic tradition and did little to suggest the city's ephemeral qualities. The work of Anton Joostens, a leading member of the Bruges Academy, typifies the uninspired approach of these artists (Fig.16).

Some of Khnopff's Symbolist colleagues did produce suggestive images of Bruges in this period. In the late 1880s, Xavier Mellery, in whose studio Khnopff had studied, produced several shadowy and uncanny interiors set in Bruges. A decade later, William Degouve de Nunques produced a series of night-time townscapes; these were mainly of Brussels and Venice but there was one of Bruges (Fig. 17). This shows a grand house backing onto on a canal traversed by a bridge to the right. It is the deep of night; several windows are lit in the attic and main floors of the house and vague reflections are cast in the black waters of the canal below. However, the handling of the image is not entirely convincing, with the harsh outline of the window frames jarring with the rest of the scene.

From the middle of the century, however, certain British artists and photographers were exploring ways of capturing mystical twilight effects in towns and cities. And it seems that their practices had a significant influence on how Bruges was depicted by Khnopff (in his later work), by Le Sidaner, and by Brangwyn. The next chapter explores the various links and connections with the British artworld that informed the work of all three artists and the distinctive aesthetic they developed.

Chapter Two: On Fernand Khnopff, Henri Le Sidaner and Frank Brangwyn's Depictions of Bruges

On a visit to London in the late 1890s, Fernand Khnopff called on the artist Ford Madox Brown, who he regarded as an 'old master'.[125] On his stroll through Regent's Park to Primrose Hill, he recalled that,

> *The weather was overcast, and under that memorable London sky, that closed sky from a picture that has no shine and no depth, but which is so pronounced and mild, the wide velvety lawns of the park stretched up to a delicious pale blue mist in which the crowns of tall trees were blurred. On the pond the swans glided slowly along…*

Later, over tea, Brown

> *…spoke of his memories, memories of his childhood in Bruges, which the two of us had so intimately loved and which now seemed so far away in ancient times.*

Khnopff's description of Regents Park contains several of the motifs he associated with Bruges - the flat sky, the rising mist, the silent swans on the water. And his observations were surely heightened in anticipation of his meeting with Brown, a meeting at which they were able to share their memories of a place they so 'intimately loved and which now seemed so far away in ancient times'.[126]

As we have seen, Khnopff completed his first series of drawings of Bruges a few years earlier and, at this time, he might well have been pondering how to return to the subject, how he

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[125] FK-JH, 'A London Reminiscence', *Die Zeit,* June 1898, 185.

[126] In his 'reminiscence', Khnopff states that Ford Madox Brown shared 'memories of his childhood' in Bruges with him. In fact, Brown only lived in Bruges for a year in 1835-6, when he was fourteen. During this year he studied painting at the Bruges Academy. Brown continued his studies in Belgium at the Ghent Academy in 1836-8 and the Antwerp Academy in 1838-9.

could produce images of the city with the qualities of 'no shine and no depth' by drawing inspiration from the English artists he so admired and whose art he felt to be the 'most interesting at this moment'.[127]

Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn and British Modes of Expression

In the introduction, I describe how Bruges attracted the attention of many artists at the end of the nineteenth century, drawn there by its reputation as a place of intense melancholy and introspection. The challenge for Khnopff, and for Le Sidaner and Brangwyn was how to develop an artistic language that would depict Bruges in a way that conveyed such thoughts and feelings. In this chapter, a selection of their Bruges works is examined, the artistic techniques they used are analysed, and the ideas of Bruges they sought to evoke are construed. Their admiration for and association with certain British artists - notably Burne-Jones and Whistler - is considered and the less direct, but significant influence that British Pictorialist photographers had on their versions of Bruges (particularly in the case of Khnopff) is uncovered. Some of these links and connections were acknowledged by the artists themselves or commented on by contemporary critics but they have not, to my knowledge, been specifically examined in relation to their images of Bruges.

Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn would have had some knowledge of each other's practice. All three exhibited in Brussels - Khnopff between 1884 and 1897 with Les XX and La Libre Esthétique, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn at La Libre Esthétique in 1898 and Brangwyn again in 1899 and Le Sidaner in 1902.[128] And their paths may have crossed elsewhere, as all

[127] FK-JH, 'L'Art Anglais', *Annuaire de la section d'art de la maison du peuple,* E. Blondiau, Brussels, 1893, 30.

[128] Pierre Sanchez, *Le Salon des 'XX' et de La Libre Esthétique: repertoire des exposents et liste de leurs oeuvres – Bruxelles 1884-1914,* L'Echelle de Jacob, Dijon, 2012. This is a comprehensive catalogue of works shown at Les XX and La Libre Esthétique. Khnopff exhibited regularly with Les XX and then at the La Libre Esthétique (LLE) between 1884 and 1897, showing two of his early Bruges works in 1890 and 1891. But he didn't show his work again until 1908, 1909 and 1910 and it seems he didn't include his later Bruges works in these exhibitions. Brangwyn and Le Sidaner both exhibited at LLE in 1898, a year after Khnopff stopped showing his work, Brangwyn showed an Art Nouveau carpet and Le Sidaner showed some pre-Bruges

three participated in various cultural events and networks across Europe. They are likely to have had some awareness of each other's interest in Bruges, but their association was tenuous, and they did not have a common or shared programme for their depictions of the city. At the same time, I will show that British ideas of Bruges - which I traced in the previous chapter - and British modes of expression - which I examine in this chapter - were central to Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's images of Bruges.

Khnopff, Burne-Jones and Whistler

Fernand Khnopff first saw the work of Edward Burne-Jones at the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris where he was completing his training.[129] According to Michel Draguet, Burne-Jones greatly impressed Khnopff 'decisively orienting his development', and his devotion to the British artist was confirmed eleven years later when he visited the 1889 Exposition.[130] After the death of Burne-Jones, Khnopff wrote of the impact of his encounter with 'the exquisite beings who appear in the master's work…these legendary princesses…above, all these maidens…(with) virgin forms of delicate and pensive gesture'.[131] In the same year as the 1889 Exposition, Khnopff produced *Avec Georges Rodenbach. Une ville morte*, which features, as noted earlier, a woman displaying such a 'delicate and pensive gesture' (Fig. 14). The following year, Khnopff exhibited this drawing along with 21 other works in London at the Hanover Gallery and, from this time on, he visited London regularly. He was a frequent visitor at Burne-Jones's home and studio, the Grange, and in 1894 Burne-Jones gifted him a red chalk drawing, *Head of a Woman* (Fig. 18). It was one of Khnopff's most treasured possessions and he gave it a prominent place in the Blue Room of his self-

paintings, including a portrait of Camille Mauclair. In 1899, Brangwyn exhibited some of paintings from his 'colourist' period. Finally, Le Sidaner exhibited three of his Bruges works at LLE in 1902.

[129] Burne-Jones exhibited two works at the Exposition, *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872-7) and *Love Among the Ruins* (1873). It was the first time he exhibited on the Continent and marked the beginning of his rise to fame across Europe.

[130] Michel Draguet, *Fernand Khnopff: Portrait of Jeanne Keiffer,* Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2004, 4.

[131] FK-JH, 'In Memoriam Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bart. A Tribute from Belgium' *The Magazine of Art,* 22, 1898, 119.

designed villa.[132] Khnopff returned the favour two years later, when he inscribed his *Study of a Woman* 'To Sir Edward Burne-Jones from Fernand Khnopff' (Fig. 19).

Khnopff's debt to Burne-Jones and other figures associated with late Pre-Raphaelitism was evident to contemporary commentators. Writing in 1891, Georges Verdavainne claimed one of his portraits could 'well have been by Burne-Jones as it has the masterful quality of his compositions and their exquisite originality', whilst Emile Verhaeren admired the 'impeccable precision and finesse of his drawings, so reminiscent of the Gothic' adding that 'it owes a lot to Dante Gabriel Rosetti'.[133] As I noted in the last chapter, in his early Bruges works Khnopff places a single female figure in the foreground detached from the view of city behind. This differs from Burne-Jones whose figures fully inhabit the imaginary worlds in which he places them. Whereas in Khnopff's drawings the figure in the foreground and the scene behind (although clearly intended to be related) are separate, thereby creating a sense of disjunction. And while Khnopff's female figures are fully realised, his backgrounds are tentative and under-developed, as if he was uncertain as to how to convey the full mystery of Bruges at this time.

There was another artist working in London, James McNeill Whistler, who had developed a way of conveying the evanescent quality of places such as Bruges at twilight. In September 1866, Whistler returned from an extended stay in Peru with three paintings, one of which, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold, Valparaiso Bay,* signalled a new development in his work. This small

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[132] Maria Golvteeva, '"Des Esseintes of Brussels": Artifice of the Villa Khnopff', *North Street Review,* University of St Andrews, 2017, https://northstreetreview.wordpress.com/2017/03/29/des-esseintes-of-brussels-artifice-of-the-villa-khnopff/.

[133] OMA (1891), Georges Verdavainne, review of the eighth exhibition of the XX, *The Artistic Federation,* February, 1891. 'Son grand portrait de femme se rapproche étonnement aussi de la peinture anglaise contemporaine et Burne-Jones aurait pu le signer tant il a magistral aspect de ses compostions et leur exquisite originalité'.
Emile Verhaeren, *Journal de Bruxelles,* March 1891. 'La seul peintre symboliste des XX est Fernand Khnopff. Tout le monde s'accorde a louer en lui dessin d'une précision impeccable et d'une finesse qui rapelle les gothiques'…. 'M.Khnopff doit assurement a beaucoup de Dante Gabriel Rosetti'.

painting showed sailing ships moored at twilight, their masts and rigging silhouetted against the evening sky with their lamps glowing above their reflected images in the still water of the bay. The tones are muted, and the paintwork is fluid, a technique Whistler memorably described as like 'breath on the surface of a pane of glass'.[134] It was the first of many 'nocturnes' that he produced of London and the Thames and of various locations in Europe in the following thirty years.

Khnopff encountered Whistler's work in 1884, possibly for the first time, at the inaugural exhibition of Les XX, a secessionist group of twenty Belgian artists brought together by Octave Maus and Edmond Picard to promote 'intransigent art', according to Emile Verhaeren.[135] Whistler was the first foreign painter to be invited to exhibit with Les XX and among the works he showed was his *Nocturne: Blue and Silver - Chelsea* (1872) (Fig. 20). The critic Jules Destreé exclaimed 'Whistler is prodigious…His deep and calm Nocturne…displays the work of a powerful colourist and a temperament of rare originality'.[136] Whistler exhibited alongside Khnopff, as he did in two further exhibitions by Les XX in 1886 and 1888. Immediately prior to the first exhibition, Whistler had visited Amsterdam in 1883, where he produced several 'canal' pictures, including *Nocturne: Black and Red - Back Canal Holland* (Fig. 21). And in late 1887, on a tour from Ostend, through Bruges to Brussels, Whistler produced his only known etching of Bruges, a composite image that shows the marketplace, the lower section of the tower of the Belfry and the transposed image of the spire of Notre Dame (Fig. 22).

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134 Otto Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice,* Century Co, New York, 1909, p.31. Bacher quotes Whistler as saying that, 'Paint should not be applied thick. It should be like breath on a pane of glass'.

135 OMA (1884), Emile Verhaeren, *Belgian National,* February 1884. He writes, 'Edmond Picard could have titled his opening lecture "Intransigent Art", for the tendencies he defines and exposes in the art (of Les XX) are more than independent, they are actively opposed to influence, whether bourgeois, academic or official'. 'Edmond Picard aurait pu titrer sa conférence: l'art intransigeant, car avec les tendances qu'il a définies et exposés l'art, des Vingtistes apparait ne pas dégagé mais hostile a toute influence, soit officielle, soit bourgeoise, soit académique'.

136 OMA (1884), Jules Destreé, *Journal of Charleroi,* February 1884. 'Whistler est prodigieux…Son Nocturne profonde et calme…révèlent un tempérament de coloriste puissant, d'une rare originalité'.

It is fair to assume that Khnopff was interested in and impressed by Whistler, but surprisingly in his extensive writings on art he barely mentions him.[137] However, in 1886, a critic writing as A.C. asserted that, 'Several Vingtistes follow Whistler… [among them is] Fernand Khnopff'.[138] And Michel Draguet, is certain of Whistler's influence; 'In 1884, Whistler impressed several painters, chief among them Khnopff, both with his iconography and with his paint handling, which was dominated by the idea of musicality'.[139] He continues, 'In Whistler and Khnopff we find the same search for the ineffable, more in nuance than in dogma as if the "exterior modernity" - which Verhaeren also helped to define - was echoed by an "interior modernity" made up of sensation and ideas, of intuition and concepts'.[140]

Before I consider how Khnopff changed his approach and techniques when he returned to the subject of Bruges in 1902, I need to turn to another artist who was drawn to the city four years earlier and who found direct inspiration in Whistler - Henri Le Sidaner.

Le Sidaner's Stay in Bruges: 1898-2000

Until his mid-thirties, Le Sidaner worked in the Impressionist idiom but his move to Paris in 1894 caused him to reconsider his practice. Whilst there he met the critic Camille Mauclair, who became his lifelong supporter and advocate and Mauclair introduced him into Symbolist circles. In this period, Whistler was living and working in Paris, having moved there in 1892, and it is reasonable to assume that at some point Le Sidaner might have met him, possibly at one of Stéphane Mallarmé's celebrated Tuesday salons which they both attended.[141]

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[137] FK-JH. The index of Khnopff's writings has only two entries for Whistler as opposed to over forty to Burne-Jones.
[138] OMA (1886), A.C., *Reform*, March 1886. 'Plusieurs vingtistes poursuivant comme Whistler...nous aurions placer dans cette étude notre appréciation des oeuvres de Fernand Khnopff'.
[139] Draguet, *Jeanne Kéfer,* 18.
[140] ibid. 21.
[141] Daniel Sutherland, *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 2014, 264. Whistler moved between his main residence in Paris and London until the end of the century.

Between 1897 and 1898, Le Sidaner devoted himself to a series of paintings of 'ladies in white gowns' and at the Paris Salon of 1898 he exhibited the most notable of these works, *Le Dimanche* (Fig 23).[142] A group of reflective young women, all in flowing white dresses, gather in a garden at dusk with a distant view of Paris beyond. The scene is illuminated - *contre-jour* - by the golden glow of the sky, throwing the foreground into soft shadow and catching the figures in last rays of the sun. In his biography of Le Sidaner, Mauclair draws a direct parallel between this work and Whistler's three paintings of young women in white dresses, which he renamed as *Symphony in White, I, II and III* in 1867.[143] It is probable that Mauclair also drew Le Sidaner's attention to Whistler's nocturnes, which he greatly admired. He wrote of Whistler's *Nocturne in Grey and Silver* (c1874) that, 'At times, the surface is so delicate that it appears like steam on a mirror', echoing Whistler's own description of his work as 'like breath on the surface of a pane of glass'.[144]

Le Sidaner's work drew parallels with that of Whistler when he exhibited in Brussels for the first time with La Libre Esthétique in Brussels in 1898. Critics suggested that his 'dream figures are marked by a mystical morbidity' and that they were executed in 'a nocturnal green, that could be described as a Whistler green!' [145] The phrase 'mystical morbidity' in relation to Le Sidaner's work was apt, for it was at this time he absorbed himself in Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* - an interest likely stimulated by Emile Verhaeren, who befriended him in Brussels. And all of this probably inspired Le Sidaner to visit Bruges for a short stay in 1898, after which he moved there for two years.

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[142] Ingrid Mossinger, Karen Sagner, *Henri Le Sidaner – A Magical Impressionist,* exhibition catalogue, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009, 66. The heading 'ladies in white gowns' is used to describe Le Sidaner's output in the period 1897/8.

[143] Camille Mauclair, *Henri Le Sidaner,* Galeries Georges Petit/Henri Flouri, Paris, 1928, 25. Whistler's three 'Symphonies' were originally entitled *White Girl* (1862), *Little White Girl* (1864) and *The Sofa* (1867).

[144] Camille Mauclair, *De Watteau à Whistler,* E.Fasquelle, Paris, 1905, 157.

[145] OMA (1898), Anon, *XX Century,* February 1898. 'Le Sidaner dont les figures de rêve sont empreintes d'une morbidité mystique'.
A. Vanden Bergen-Dries, *The Public Good,* March 1898. 'Il est deux artistes [one of whom was Le Sidaner] qui voient les choses en verts, en vert nocturne, on dirait vert Whistler'.

These two years were the most productive of Le Sidaner's career. He seems to have painted Bruges almost exclusively and in his forty or so canvases he developed and refined a particular way of depicting the place, which synthesised his early Impressionism with the more recent influence of Whistler. He adopted a subdued and harmonious palette and used short, feathery brushstrokes, so that the soft outlines of buildings, the blurred reflections in the canals, and the graduated tones of the sky all seem to merge.

In my introduction, I discussed *Un Canal à Bruges au crépuscule* (Fig. 3). This portrayal of a quiet backwater of the city has a suburban feel, with a neat, cultivated garden in the foreground and with the autumnal leaves of a small tree framing the scene. The single half-lit window implies a human presence, whilst the only discordant note is provided by the dark and mysterious opening of the canal tunnel beneath the lit window. The narrative meaning of the painting is obscure and, although Le Sidaner at this time was inspired by *Bruges-la-Morte*, this image does not represent any particular aspect of the book.

Le Sidaner's *Le Quai* (Fig. 24) calls to mind of one of the quieter canals on the edge of the city, although the precise location is not specified. Hugues Viane, the protagonist of *Bruges-la-Morte,* makes 'his haphazard way' along such quaysides, finding solace for his grief in, 'The closed houses [that] exhaled a funereal atmosphere, windowpanes like eyes clouded in death throes, crow-steps tracing stairways of crêpe in the water'.[146] In its format and treatment, *Le Quai* is strongly reminiscent of Whistler's *Nocturne: Black and Red - Back Canal Holland* (Fig. 20). Like Whistler, Le Sidaner crops and flattens the image. The gables of the houses are cut off, the flat sky is broken by slender chimney stacks and the facades 'float' uneasily above the murky canal below, which occupies half of the picture plane. Two windows are lit, one on the second floor and one above a doorway. The reflection from the first is barely discernible on the canal, while the ruddy glow from the latter stands out from the vague

[146] BLM-MM, 33.

reflections of the houses. In most conventional townscapes there would be life and activity in the foreground, but in *Le Quai* there is only a shadowy emptiness.

The darker mood of *Le Quai* is heightened in *Le Belfroi* (Fig. 25). This painting of Bruges's medieval belltower rising above the market hall in front La Grand'Place is one of the few paintings of a specific location by Le Sidaner. In *Bruges-la-Morte* there is a commonplace half-tone photograph of this scene alongside a description of Viane passing swiftly through the square, scarcely noticing 'the tower of Old Market Hall, huge and black, which was defending itself against the invading night with the golden buckler of its clock face' (Fig. 26).[147] The composition of Le Sidaner's painting has a different, heightened viewpoint and, whereas in the book Vianne is in a hurry, Le Sidaner's image is virtually devoid of movement, with the tiny figures in the foreground lost in the enveloping darkness.

Le Belfroi is a skilful study of the various stages of twilight. The Belfry and the buildings below are silhouetted against a cloudless sky, the top of the tower catches the evening sun, the clock face beneath the octagonal upper stage of the tower appears to glow (as in Rodenbach's description), and to the right of the tower the evening star shines distantly. Above the horizon and behind the lower reaches of the tower, the sky is pale and luminous, but gradually, almost imperceptibly, it darkens to a deep azure above the tower. Below, the square and its surrounding buildings are in deep shadow, as if night has already fallen. The darkness is only broken by the faint lights of the shop windows and by two blazing lanterns that sit on either side of the entrance to the inner courtyard of the market hall. The painting has greater depth than *Le Quai* but as in that work the foreground is virtually featureless with the focus on the Belfry beyond. The painting is topographically accurate, with its viewpoint apparently taken from one of the buildings diagonally opposite across the square, and the

[147] BLM-Fac, 91. Most of the photographs included in *Bruges-la-Morte,* either do not reference the text at all or they are not placed close to the relevant text. However, in this case the text is aligned with the photograph. BLM- MM, 41.

size and scale of the tower is not exaggerated. However, the way the tower seems to loom over the darkened square induces a feeling of disquiet. Le Sidaner's images of Bruges owe much to earlier British ideas of the city as a place of reflection, best experienced ' in the sunless hour…(that) best suits with fallen grandeur'.[148] The mood of *Un Canal* is calm and reflective and, although *Le Quai* and *Le Belfroi* are inflected with some of the darker qualities found in *Bruges-la-Morte,* this gives them an air of melancholy rather than of angst.

Le Sidaner's Bruges works were an immediate critical and commercial success. He exhibited three of his paintings at La Libre Esthétique in Brussels in 1902, when he was probably still based in Bruges. One critic referred to his 'crepuscular vision' and commented on his technique, observing that 'not only the colour but the touch is expressive' as it speaks of 'the rain of silences and of old houses sleeping'.[149] Another described 'his impressions of a dead town…as the culmination of a lifetime's work', adding that his work 'Le Canal' is above all definitive'.[150] In the same year, Mauclair wrote an article for the London based *The Magazine of Art* called 'Idealism in Contemporary French Painting' in which he gave a short account of Le Sidaner's life and career culminating in an analysis of his Bruges works. Of these works, Mauclair writes, 'Le Sidaner has carried the theory of Impressionism to its utmost limits', explaining that 'there is no outline in any of his pictures; everything floats and runs into the adjacent object, the colour is fluid and mingles in endless, shifting hues'. He concludes, 'That these pictures are truly "nocturnes" quite as much in the sense ascribed to the word by Chopin as in that given by Whistler'.[151]

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[148] See Wordsworth's first sonnet on Bruges in the appendix.

[149] OMA (1902), P.S., *Thryse,* May 1902. 'Telle est un aussi des visions crépusculaires…du peintre français Le Sidaner…ici non seulement la coleur, mais la touche elle-même expressif…(ca parle) d'une pluie de silences, les vieilles maisons qui s'endorment'.

[150] OMA (1902), E.J., *The Brussels Journal,* April 1902. 'Ses impressions d'une ville morte…forment l'aboutissement de toute une vie de travail. 'Le Canal' surtout est définitif'.

[151] Camille Mauclair, 'Idealism in Contemporary Franch Painting – II', *The Magazine of Art,* London, Jan 1902, 25-27, 26.

Three years later, Le Sidaner had his first major exhibition in London at the Goupil Gallery. His work was well received, the critics praised 'his painted poems, mystical and lyrical' and suggested that his works offered 'an indescribable suggestion of things beyond dreams'.[152] Apparently, some critics found 'Burne-Jones' as well as 'Whistler' in Le Sidaner. His work proved popular with English collectors and some of these works were later donated to British art galleries.[153] In the same year, Le Sidaner had an exhibition at the Ixelles Gallery in Brussels. Mauclair wrote in the Introduction to the catalogue that in Bruges (and later in Venice, Le Sidaner produced 'his masterpieces of the analysis of twilight' adding that it can now be said there is 'an hour Le Sidaner'.[154]

Le Sidaner lived until 1939 and he continued painting in a similar manner to his Bruges works but none of his later works (except of those of Venice) were as effective as the images of Bruges he produced in two short years at the turn of the century. Mauclair continued to extol the virtues of his work and to compare him to Whistler. In his biography of Le Sidaner in 1928 he recalls that, 'When he first sent to the salons his Bruges paintings, we felt that Whistler's dream was prolonged but with the technical charm of a French Impressionist'.[155] And Le Sidaner himself, acknowledged his debt to Whistler in lectures he gave towards the end of his life - 'De la lumière et de la couleur'.

Khnopff Returns to the Subject of Bruges: 1902-1904

In 1902, when Henri Le Sidaner exhibited a selection of his Bruges works at La Libre Esthétique, Fernand Khnopff was not represented.[156] In this particular year, he was

[152] *Henri Le Sidaner: Souvenir Catalogue,* exhibition catalogue, Goupil Gallery, London, 1905. Copy of reviews from the Daily Mail and The Lady, 8-9.
[153] Works donated to galleries by British collectors include, *Un Canal á Bruges au crépuscule,* The Ashmolean Museum, *Le Belfroi,* Graves Gallery, Sheffield, La *Maison rouge, Bruges,* Paisley Museum and Gallery.
[154] Camille Mauclair, 'Introduction', *Exhibition of Works by Henri Le Sidaner,* Ixelles Gallery, Brussels, 1905, ii.
[155] Mauclair, *Henri Le Sidaner,* 124.
[156] Khnopff withdrew from La Libre Esthétique in 1898 and did not exhibit there again until 1908.

preoccupied by the move into his studio-house in Ixelles - 'The Castle of Dreams' - nevertheless, he found time to visit and review the exhibition for his English readers.[157] His review only gave Le Sidaner a passing mention.[158] This is strange given the critical acclaim that Le Sidaner received that year for his Bruges works and Khnopff's obvious attachment to the subject. Indeed, Le Sidaner barely figures in his writings, and it is possible that he might have been envious of the reception his work received. That same year, Khnopff travelled to Bruges once more; he had not visited the city for several years as he was reportedly dismayed by the restoration of the historic centre. What drew him back was the acclaimed *Les Primitifs Flamandes* exhibition (masterminded as we have seen by Weale). Khnopff was a great admirer of the great Flemish artists of the fifteenth century, particularly Hans Memling. According to Dominque Morel, Khnopff had 'a close affinity with Hans Memling…the two artists both favoured a clarity of line and design and they both sought to express a truth beyond the appearance of things'.[159] And, Khnopff was surely struck, once again, by Memling's exquisitely realised backdrops of Bruges, as in his *St Ursula Shrine* (Fig. 27).

All of this seems to have impelled Khnopff to return to the subject of Bruges, a decade after he had produced his frontispiece for *Bruges-la-Morte.* In 1902, he completed *Secret-Reflet;* it is a transitional work in the form of diptych which combines two delicate drawings in a gilt frame of his own design (Fig. 28). The upper, circular drawing (*Secret)* shows a hooded woman contemplating a mask, while the lower, rectangular drawing *(Reflet)* shows the side elevation of St John's Hospital and its reflection in the adjoining canal. This complex work marks a change in Khnopff's approach to depicting Bruges. The upper figure of a contemplative

[157] Dominique Morel, 'Le "Castel du Rêve"', *Fernand Khnopff, Le maître de l'énigme,* exhibition catalogue, Petit Palais, Paris 2018, 23-24.
[158] FK-JH, 'Studio Talk', *The Studio,* London, October 1902, 305.
[159] Dominique Morel, 'Un Rêve de Primitifs Flamandes', *Fernand Khnopff, Le maître de l'énigme,* exhibition catalogue, Petit Palais, Paris 2018, 78.

woman in muted colours recalls his earlier drawings with a view of Bruges in the background, but the lower drawing is of the city at twilight deserted and 'alone'. And, whilst the image of the woman shows the clear influence of Burne-Jones, the lower monochrome drawing of the façade and its reflection is in a notably different style, a vaporous form of illusionism.

Khnopff's admiration for Burne-Jones still provided a starting point for the lower drawing. In his 1898 eulogy, Khnopff not only exalted Burne-Jones's 'exquisite beings', he also praised the ambience of his paintings using Wordsworth's expression, 'The light that never was, on sea or land', itself response to a painting by Sir William Beaumont.[160] Khnopff suggests that this ethereal light 'irradiates the scenery' in Burne-Jones's works, a scenery that is 'composed of subtle reflections harmonised to exquisite twilight'. One of the paintings by Burne-Jones that Khnopff may have had in mind when he wrote this is *Love Among the Ruins*, which impressed him when he first saw it in 1878 (Fig. 29).[161] The lovers sit before a ruined castle, which combines conflicting architectural forms and details (some classical and some gothic) that collide and interpenetrate, distorting the conventions of naturalism.

Khnopff's *Reflet* features such 'subtle reflections'. In the drawing, Khnopff adopts a high viewpoint, this means that the reflected image of the façade of St John's Hospital occupies the greater part of the picture plane and this inverted image of the building with its blurred upper storeys, reveals more of the building than the actual segment above. The viewpoint further distorts reality by creating the disconcerting impression that the real building is subsiding into the canal, thereby uniting it with its own reflection. In *Reflet,* the insubstantial

[160] FK-JH, 'In Memoriam Sir Edward Burne Jones', *The Magazine of Art*, London, 1898, 119.
The phrase 'the light that never was on sea and land' comes from Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Stanzas' written in response to *Peele Castle in a Storm* (c.1805), a dramatic painting by his patron Sir William Beaumont of a ruined castle on a rocky outcrop with a shipwreck in the background.
[161] *Love Among the Ruins* (1873) was one of two paintings exhibited by Burne-Jones at the Exposition Universelle, the other was *Laus Veneris* (1873-8).

reflection becomes more 'real' than the material building, suggesting Khnopff's ambivalent thoughts and memories of Bruges, his personal 'reflections'.

Khnopff returned to the subject of Bruges two years later in 1904 and during this year he produced a series of drawings of the city, which marked the culmination of his obsession with his childhood home. He worked in his villa in 'proud solitude', drawing on his memories and, as we shall see, relying to a great extent on photographs.[162] *Des Souvenirs de la Flandre* (Fig. 2) is described in the introduction and *Souvenir de Bruges. L'entrée du Béguinage* (Fig. 30) is another of his 'recollections'. The style of these later works is similar to *Reflet,* but there are some differences in their execution and composition. Whereas in *Reflet* the time of day is indeterminate, both *Un Canal* and *L'entrée du Béguinage* are set in Burne-Jones's 'exquisite twilight'. This is suggested by the small patches of golden sky in both drawings and by its reflection in the canals - feint in the former and more prominent in the latter, where it is interspersed by islands of green and white waterlilies. In both works, the viewpoint is less oblique, and this makes the images seem more grounded and less unsettling than in *Reflet.* The influence of Whistler (and of Le Sidaner) is more apparent in these works, with their warmer tones and blurred outlines, but they have a distinctive aesthetic of their own, which I believe derives from Khnopff's response to photography and in particular to the work of Craig Annan and other British Pictorialist photographers[163]

Khnopff and Pictorialism

[162] Helen Laillet, 'The Home of An Artist: Fernand Khnopff's Villa in Brussels', *The Studio,* Vol LVII, No 237, December 1912, 201-207, 202. The full quotation is 'Khnopff took refuge in "proud solitude" to listen to only the "voice of art" and to work "methodically at the development of his inner life" '.

[163] Peter Henry Emerson published his book 'Naturalistic Photography for Students of Art' in 1889. The influence of this work in Britain and across Europe was considerable and in England it led to the formation of the Linked Ring, a group of photographers who were committed the promotion of 'naturalistic photography' and 'the encouragement of pictorial ideals'. This movement became known as Pictorialism.

Khnopff was publicly dismissive of photography and of any claims that it might have to being an art. In 1897 he participated in a symposium in London entitled 'Is Photography among the Fine Arts?', when he debated his views with the leading art photographer of the day, Henry Peach Robinson.[164] Some years later, in an article entitled 'Concerning Photography Called Art', he restated his views asserting that 'There are essential differences between the *powers* of the artist and the *pretensions* of the art photographer. The artist creates: he is the master of his work…it is his creature' but 'The photographer, on the contrary, has a very independent collaborator in the subject he borrows from Nature, whose share…is far more important that his own artistic point of view'.[165]

Khnopff was being disingenuous. In practice he used photography extensively.[166] Privately, he valued its utility as an aid to composition and, on his death, a number of photographs taken as studies for his paintings were found in his studio. An example of this is the pose of the woman in *Secret,* which is based on a 1901 photograph of his sister Marguerite.[167] And, Khnopff's later drawings of Bruges relied heavily on his use of stock photographs of Bruges, not least because he was working at a distance. These photographs were produced on a large scale in the 1890s, to provide keepsakes for the growing number of visitors to the city and to fire the imagination of armchair travellers. As we have seen, Rodenbach used such photographs to augment the narrative of *Bruges-la-Morte,* and Khnopff, in turn, used some of the same photographs for his Bruges works. Although, it is important to stress that the

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[164] The symposium was organised by *The Magazine of Art* and as well as Khnopff and Robinson, it featured the English artist, George Storey, the English art critic, Alfred Lys Baldry and the French art critic, Robert de la Sizeranne. The proceedings of the symposium were published in *The Magazine of Art* the following year.
[165] FK-JH, 'Concerning Photography called Art', *Annexe au Bulletins de la Classe des Beaux-arts,* Académie Royale de Belgique, Brussels, 1919, 451
[166] Dominique de Font-Réaulx, *Painting and Photography - 1839-1914,* Flammarion, Paris, 2012, 282. See the section heading - 'Fernand Khnopff's guilty secret' - and the subsequent account of Khnopff's use of photography.
[167] This photograph, 'Marguerite posant pour *Le Secret*', was shown alongside *Secret-Reflet* in the exhibition, *Fernand Khnopff: Le Maître de L'Enigme,* and is reproduced in the catalogue on page 82.

images he created from them are not connected in an obvious way to the narrative of *Bruges-la-Morte.*

It is instructive to trace how Khnopff used a specific photograph in his two views of the entrance to the Béguinage. The first view from 1892 is his titlepage drawing for *Bruges-la-Morte,* as described in the introduction (Fig. 1). The second view from 1904 is *L'entrée du Béguinage,* as described above (Fig. 30). The basis for both drawings is a photograph by Neurdein Frères, which was used for a postcard (Fig. 31). The same photograph is reproduced in the first chapter of *Bruges-la-Morte* (Fig. 32).[168] The background of Khnopff's titlepage drawing is an almost exact delineation of the central section of the photograph, the only significant change is the omission of the tree trunk of that would have distracted from the lifeless figure in the foreground. But when he came to his second version of the same view, Khnopff - although still relying on the original photograph - substantially reworked and transformed the image. And the methods he used imitated the work of the very art photographers he disparaged in the 1897 symposium.

In the same year, Khnopff took different stance when he reviewed 'a most successful exhibition' of the work of the British Pictorialist photographer, James Craig Annan, organised by the Association Belge de Photographie, in Brussels.[169] In his review, he singled out Annan's 'various studies of reflected effects in canal scenes'; two of which were almost certainly *A Black Canal - Venice* and *The Riva Schiavoni,* both of 1894 (Figs 33 and 34). When he studied the former, Khnopff will have observed the careful framing of Annan's image, with the watery reflections in the canal taking up half the picture plane and with the upper stories and roofline of the buildings truncated. In the latter, he will have noted how Annan achieved a crepuscular feel by the softening and blurring of shapes and forms (including the

[168] BLM-Fac, 55. Curiously the image reproduced in the book (Fig. 32) shows slightly more of the view than the postcard (Fig. 31) suggesting that Rodenbach or his publisher had access to the original negatives.
[169] FK-JH, 'Studio-Talk, Brussels', *The Studio,* London, June 1987, 101.

double exposure of the ghostly figures) and through the sepia tones of the finished monochrome print. Annan was a pioneer of photogravure and his images relied on artful manipulation and subtle use of chemical agents.[170] The whole process recalls the *skilful chemistry* suggested by Rodenbach as an artistic method for producing images of Bruges. And in *Bruges-la-Morte* he writes that, 'In Bruges a miracle of climate has produced some *mysterious chemistry of atmosphere*, an interpenetration, which neutralises too-bright colours, reduces them to a universal tone of reverie, to an amalgam of greyish drowsiness'.[171]

Annan's methods are clearly observable in *L'entrée du Béguinage.* In this version of the view, Khnopff departs from the stock photograph; he tips the viewpoint down onto the canal and the varied reflections on its calm surface and, while the curved breakwater in the foreground is retained, he omits the quay and trees that it protects. He further distorts the image, by changing the angle of the quays on either side and he reduces the skyline by cutting off the buildings behind. As in *Reflet,* the picture becomes more about the ephemeral reflections in the canal than the enduring bridge and buildings beyond. Khnopff with his use of pastel, both mimics the actuality of the original monochrome photograph and transforms it, by blurring outlines and shadows and by adding discrete areas of colour. Thus, we can see how Khnopff's reworking of a photograph for *L'Entrée du Béguinage* has intriguing parallels with the work and methods of photographers such as Annan, despite his dismissive remarks on their 'irrepressible amateurism' and 'pretensions'.[172]

At this point, it is worth adding that Le Sidaner (and as we shall see Brangwyn) may also have been influenced by Pictorialism in his depictions of Bruges. An obvious example is Le Sidaner's treatment of the 'blazing lanterns' in *Le Belfroi.* Artists began to explore the effects of artificial lighting on nocturnal scenes from the middle of the nineteenth century and

[170] Annan travelled to Vienna in 1883 to study with Carel Klíč, the inventor of photogravure.
[171] BLM-MM, 61. (My emphasis).
[172] FK-JH, 'Concerning Photography Called Art', 449.

British artists led the way.[173] Whistler was a pioneer of this as can be seen in his *Nocturne: Blue and Silver* of 1872 but his lights and reflections are artful dabs of colour (Fig. 20).[174] In the 1890s, taking advantage of various technical developments, photographers began to examine nocturnal lighting effects more closely. One of these is 'halation', the way in which a bright source of illumination refracts outwards in a halo of scattered light. It was first captured by Paul Martin in a series of photographs of 'London by Night' that were exhibited at the Royal Photographic Society in 1896 (Fig. 35) and it is this effect that Le Sidaner used two years later in his visualisation of the lanterns in *Le Belfroi.*

Khnopff's final image of Bruges in 1904 might well have been *Une Ville abandonée* (Fig 5). In the introduction, I have shown how this image has been seen as emblematic of his conception of the city and there have been several detailed critiques of the work, as in Lynn Pudles' 1992 essay.[175] This haunting picture of a group of buildings to the rear of Memling Square with the sea lapping the empty square was surely based on a photograph, although the original has not been traced. However, Khnopff reconfigures this view and transmutes it in a way that goes beyond his other drawings. It becomes more than a memory, rather it is a troubled dream of Bruges deserted, with even the iconic statue of Memling absent from its plinth. In what way has Khnopff's Bruges been abandoned? The drawing might reference the decline of Bruges after the sea retreated in the fifteenth century or it might be about the proposed return of the sea through the development of a new port thereby threatening the integrity of the ancient medieval centre of Bruges.[176] A further interpretation, one which I

[173] This may be because gas street lighting first appeared in London in 1813 and reached Paris sixteen years later in 1829. Either way, it was still some time before artists responded to these changes.
[174] Lionel Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement,* Phaidon, London, 1996, 85. Whistler was not the first British artist to explore nocturnal lighting effects. Lambourne cites Whistler's remark made after visiting the painter Atkinson Grimshaw, "I considered myself the inventor of Nocturnes until I saw Grimmy's moonlit pictures".
[175] Pudles, *Bruges, the Dead City,* 637-654. We cannot be certain that this was his last drawing of Bruges in 1904 but it has the quality of a valediction. Bruges appeared in his work for a final time in *Bruges D'Autrefois* or *Bruges of Yesteryear* (1905), a triptych of views of Bruges, which is now lost. See Pudles pages 648-51.
[176] Pudles prefers the former interpretation and challenges the view that it is about Bruges being 'invaded' by the sea, 641.

find compelling, is that Khnopff himself felt abandoned by Bruges. Hence, *Une Ville abandoneé* can be seen as a lament for his lost childhood, which 'now seemed so far away in ancient times'. The ambiguity of the work is reinforced by its mythical and elegiac feel. This harks back to Khnopff's fascination with Burne-Jones and this work would seem to mark Khnopff's farewell to Bruges.

Brangwyn's Bruges: 1906-1907 and 1919

As Khnopff worked in his studio in Brussels dreaming of Bruges from afar, another more worldly artist was drawn back to the place where he had been born and where he spent the first seven years of his life. Although Frank Brangwyn was only nine years younger than Khnopff and five years younger than Le Sidaner, his development and career as an artist followed a more cosmopolitan path. His formal training was limited; following his return to England, his potential was spotted by Arthur Haygate Mackmurdo, an architect associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, who recommended him to William Morris in whose studio Brangwyn worked for two years. When he was only eighteen in 1885, Brangwyn exhibited a painting at the Royal Academy. Thereafter, he launched himself onto the European art scene, where he was an immediate success exhibiting in Paris, Munich, Amsterdam, Venice, and Rome in the next fifteen years.[177] He travelled widely in the company of other artists, most notably Arthur Melville, whose vibrant and colourful paintings of life under the Mediterranean sun had a strong influence on Brangwyn's early paintings.[178]

[177] Libby Horner, 'Frank Brangwyn: Tabulated Biography', www.frankbragwyn.org This biography contains a detailed chronology of Brangwyn's life and work

[178] ibid. In 1892, he travelled to Northern Spain with Arthur Melville, a member of the Glasgow Boys, who had a significant influence on the Scottish Colourists as well as Brangwyn.

Brangwyn was known not only as a painter and muralist, but also as a graphic artist and interior designer. It was as a designer that he first exhibited in Brussels at La Libre Esthétique, in 1898, where he showed a carpet probably designed for Siegfried Bing, an early promoter of Art Nouveau.[179] This was the same year that Le Sidaner first exhibited in Brussels but, whereas Le Sidaner's work gathered favourable mentions from the critics, Brangwyn's carpet received little attention. However, the following year when he exhibited some of his paintings, his 'glittering canvases of the sun-soaked South and East' were well received.[180] He was described as 'a strange artist, fiery and a little chaotic, but certainly original. His work has…few lines, details, masses…a lot of life and animation, but his composition can be a little incoherent if forceful…' [181] Brangwyn's paintings were far from Symbolist in character but, nevertheless, he became friendly with Emile Verhaeren and he planned to collaborate with him. 'I am going to do a book with Verhaeren', he wrote confidently at the time but in fact his illustrated versions of *Les Ville tentaculaires* and *Les Camapagnes hallucinées* were not published until several years after Verhaeren's death.[182]

In 1904, Brangwyn established his own art-school, the London School of Art. This was a short-lived project that was wound up four years later, but in 1906 it provided the stimulus for him to return to Bruges with his students for a summer school (six years after Le Sidaner completed his Bruges paintings and two years after Khnopff finished his Bruges drawings).[183]

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[179] ibid. In 1895, when he was only 28, Brangwyn was commissioned to produce the murals on the front of Bing's 'Maison de l'Art Nouveau' and he continued to have a close association with Bing.

[180] OMA (1899), 'Jovicar', *All Leuven,* Leuven, March 1899. 'Quelques toiles éclatantes des soleils du Midi et de l'Orient: de Brangwyn, des bataliers turcs, un marché arab, des ouvriers au bord de l'eau, toile grouillante de vie et de couleur'.

[181] OMA (1899), A.H., *The Artistic Federation,* Brussels, 1899. 'F.Brangwyn, un anglais qui connait le chemin de Paris, est d'ailleurs une artiste étrange, fougueux, une peu chaotique, mais assurément original'. 'Son art (has)… Peu de lignes, des tâches, des masses. Beaucoup de vie et d'animation. Un peu d'inchohérence, mais de virile solidité'.

[182] Libby Horner and Gillian Naylor (Ed.), *Frank Brangwyn: 1867-1956,* exhibition catalogue, Leeds Museum and Art Gallery, 2006, 17. Emile Verhaeren with illustrations by Frank Brangwyn, *Les Villes tentaculaires*, Helleu, Paris, 1919 and Emile Verhaeren with illustrations by Frank Brangwyn, *Les Campagnes hallucinées*, Helleu & Sargent, Paris, 1927.

[183] Horner, *Tabulated Biography.* The London School of Art held a summer school in Bruges in August 1906. It seems that this visit generated most if not all of Frank Brangwyn's original drawings, watercolours and

While in Bruges he produced a large number of water-colours, drawings and etchings of the city. These works had a notably different character than his earlier 'glittering canvases'. Instead, they were in a subdued and reflective style, which seemingly drew on his childhood memories and on his awareness of how Bruges had been imagined by others. His familiarity with Verhaeren's poetry was an obvious influence and he would most likely have seen some of Le Sidaner's pictures of Bruges and possibly some of Khnopff's early drawings, but not his later works.[184]

Jan Van Eyckplein exemplifies Brangwn's water colours of Bruges (Fig. 36). It is an imaginative study of the interplay between light and darkness at nightfall. At the centre of the picture, people are gathered around a curious fairground structure, late-comers stream along the quayside to the right and others gather in the streets behind. And yet these people seem almost incidental to the scene. In the foreground, they are dwarfed by the looming forms of the buildings that tower over them and by the intentionally elongated statue of Van Eyck on its plinth, all of which are in deep shadow. In the square behind, the shadows are dispelled by hidden streetlights, while the sky above glows in the light of the sinking sun. The reflections in the canal basin, which take up the foreground, invert the scene with shadowy shapes around the edge and a bright pool of reflected light in the centre. *Predikheren Bridge* (Fig. 4), which is discussed in the introduction, continues this exploration of contrasts between light and darkness, but this time at the dead of night. It is Brangwyn's only oil painting of Bruges, completed in 1907 from an earlier watercolour sketch. It shows a group of barges floating on a canal in front of a bridge and a quayside, with houses grouped round a small square. Most of the scene is shrouded in gloom, with the roofs and chimneys of the

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etchings of Bruges. There was another summer school in 1908 but Brangwn had stopped teaching at the LSA by then and there is no Bruges work extant from this date.

[184] Walter Sparrow, *Frank Brangwyn and His Work,* Keegan, Paul, Trench, Trübiner, London, 1910, 2. Brangwyn's memories of Bruges include: the visits he paid to his father's workshop, the enchantment of their garden, and his impression of the social realist prints by Charles Degroux that hung in their house.

houses and the thin masts of the barges barely visible against the midnight blue of the sky, whilst the hulks of the barges merge into one another. However, to the right of the painting, a single wall lamp mounted high on a wall shines brightly. It illuminates the building facade and the houses on the street; it creates dim reflections in the canal below, and it faintly touches three small figures hurrying along the quayside towards the bridge.

Jan Van Eyckplein and *Predikheren Bridge* are both 'nocturnes' in the tradition of Whistler. Brangwyn's exploration of the contrasts of light and darkness owes something to Le Sidaner (as in *Le Belfroi*) but his paintings have more signs of life than either Le Sidaner or Khnopff's depictions, hinting at the 'life and animation' that was more typical of Brangwyn's work. Brangwyn's etchings produced on the same visit are in this vein focussing on the everyday life of the city. One of these, *The Brewery Bruges - No. 2,* caught the critical attention of Walter Sparrow, who commented that it 'shows that [Brangwyn's] hand can be as light as Whistler's' and he observed that 'the softness of the smoke and the steely glitter of the water and the subtle beauty of the whole are very perfect' (Fig. 37).[185] More recently, Marechal noted that Brangwyn followed Whistler in his Bruges etchings and that 'As in Whistler we can discern the influence of Japanese prints' - an influence that becomes more direct, as we shall see, in his later woodcuts of Bruges.[186]

However, there was another less obvious influence on Brangwyn - the young American photographer Alvin Coburn Langdon, who created quite a stir when he first exhibited in London with the Linked Ring in 1900.[187] Four years later, Coburn moved permanently to London to join Brangwyn's London School of Art so he could learn etching from the master

[185] ibid. 118.
[186] Dominique Marechal, *Colletie Frank Brangwyn Catalogus,* Generale Bank, Bruges, 1987, 48.
[187] Mike Weaver, *Alvin Langdon Coburn: Symbolist Photographer 1882-1966,* Aperture, New York, 1986, 6. In 1907, George Bernard Shaw, declared that 25-year-old Coburn 'was the greatest photographer in the world'.

himself.[188] He left the school after a year, as his reputation grew, but during this time he worked on a series of atmospheric photogravures of foggy London, including *Regents Park Canal* (1904) (Fig.38). This photograph foreshadows Brangwyn's images of Bruges; two elements dominate, the silhouette of a bridge with its broken reflection in the canal below and the dark quayside merging into its shadow in the water beneath. A diagonal pool of light crosses the canal echoing the bridge above, while behind is a murky sky and shadowy buildings. The figures, although prominent, are blurred and indistinct. Brangwyn would have been familiar with this photo, produced while Coburn was studying with him, and Coburn's influence can be seen most clearly in *Predikheren Bridge*.

In 1914, Bruges was occupied by the German army, months after the start of the First World War. Brangwyn was appalled by the occupation of his hometown and throughout the war he produced a series of graphic posters highlighting the plight of the Belgian people. And when the war ended, his thoughts turned to Bruges once more. In 1919, he published *Bruges,* a portfolio of six woodcuts of Bruges accompanied by six poems by Laurence Binyon.[189] Brangwyn's woodcuts were produced in collaboration with Yoshijiro Urushibara, a Japanese woodblock artist he had worked with since 1910.[190] The six scenes were based on his sketches and watercolours from 1906, as they were reimagined and reworked by him and Urishibara. Their print of *Jan Van Eyckplein* differs markedly from the original; the sky and its reflection are in a deep blue and a much smaller section of the square at the rear is illuminated. In the foreground, most of the details are obscured by darkness, including the figures, while the façade to the left is given a ghostly bluish appearance (Fig. 39).[191] *Le Béguinage à Bruges* is

[188] In 1904, Coburn produced the best-known portrait of Brangwyn, which is now in the National Portrait Gallery.
[189] Frank Brangwyn (with Yoshhijiro Urishibara and Laurence Binyon), *Bruges,* Morland Press, London, 1919. This work only had a limited circulation as only 50 copies of this portfolio were printed.
[190] Brangwyn met Yorushijiro Urushibara, when he demonstrated printing techniques at the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition in London in 1910. Urishibara stayed on in London and he began a collaboration with Brangwyn which lasted thirty years until his return to Japan in 1940.
[191] The notes for the colour choices for the woodcut can be seen on the margin of the 1906 watercolour by Brangwyn (Fig. 36).

another woodcut by Urishibara from a sketch by Brangwyn, produced in the same year but not included in the portfolio (Fig. 40). It is an archetypal Bruges scene of a group of béguines returning, probably after an evening service, to their homes in a cluster of quaint buildings, which are part in shadow and part lit by the setting sun. The scene is divided by the slender trunks of the trees that stand on the green in the foreground, the sky darkens above, and a single window is lit just above the figures.[192] *Le Béguinage* has a serene and timeless feel that emphasises the redemptive quality of the city. It is both a meditation on Bruges's spiritual past and a symbol of the city's recovery from the horrors of the First World War and the German occupation.

Brangwyn remained committed to Belgium and Bruges and, in the following years, he marked this by giving much of his studio collection to the country of his birth.[193] Works from his first bequest were exhibited in 1919 in Brussels and Khnopff, in one of his last pieces for the Studio, welcomed this 'magnificent gift' referring to Brangwyn as a 'master'. He extolled his 'achievements in their many and varied aspects' and he praised 'his ardent sympathy' for Belgium, but he failed to mention their shared childhood in Bruges.[194]

Brangwyn's sketches, watercolours, etchings of Bruges created in situ in 1906, his oil painting of 1907 and his woodcuts with Urishibara of 1919 (based on his earlier works) have never been seen as a distinct body of work. His watercolours and sketches (and his later oil painting) all remained in his studio, whilst his etchings, although exhibited and sold to collectors, were viewed as part of his wider production.[195] Nor did his Bruges album, produced for a select group of collectors, reach a wider public. Consequently, the distinctive

[192] The colour register of the woodcuts varies, some are almost monochrome and some in comparatively vivid colours.
[193] Brangwyn made bequests of his works in 1919, 1927, 1936 and 1937, with a final proviso that a museum be established to house them in Bruges. He was made an honorary citizen of Bruges in 1936 by way of thanks and in 1937, the museum in the Arentshuis opened. It is now part of the Groeningemuseum and houses the largest collection of Brangwyn's work in the world.
[194] FK-JH, 'Studio-Talk', *The Studio,* 78, Nov 1919, 515.
[195] And these works fittingly passed from his studio to the collection of his work at the Arentshuis.

qualities of his Bruges works, which differ markedly from his other paintings, were not commented on by critics at the time nor were they compared to pictures of Bruges by other artists from this period. Nevertheless, Brangwyn's depictions of Bruges stand comparison with the more celebrated images of Khnopff and Le Sidaner and, in this chapter, I have shown how all three artists drew on the work of British artists and art photographers, in varying ways and with different emphases.

Conclusion

This thesis opens with two observations. The first observation is that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the medieval city of Bruges was depicted by certain artists in a highly distinctive manner. Fernand Khnopff and Henri Le Sidaner are two artists strongly associated with this way of envisaging Bruges, while Frank Brangwyn is another artist who adopted this manner in his less well-known Bruges works. The second observation is that the common aesthetic they used draws on Belgian Symbolist conceptions of Bruges; to the extent that the main motifs adopted and even some of the techniques used were described by Georges Rodenbach in his extensive writings on Bruges. The main elements of this aesthetic - as captured in Rodenbach's suggestive phrase 'shadows and silence under glass' - are identified and analysed in the introduction and expanded on in chapter two.

However, the proposition that the thesis seeks to establish is that Symbolist conceptions of Bruges as interpreted and visualised by Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn are, to a significant extent, grounded in earlier ideas of Bruges developed by a succession of British poets, artists, architects and scholars, and that many of the methods used by the artists to realise their images are informed by the practices of certain British artists and art photographers working in this period. In essence, the Bruges works of the three artists can be said to have a British lineage and it this lineage the thesis delineates and validates.

The first chapter starts from the position that it was the British who 'rediscovered' and 'rejuvenated' Bruges during the nineteenth century.[196] It charts successive encounters with Bruges; by writers and artists associated with late Romanticism (Southey, Wordsworth, Turner and Prout); by architects proselytising the Gothic Revival (Pugin and his British and

[196] As asserted by several Belgian historians. See page 8 of the introduction.

Belgian 'disciples'); and by scholars and devotees, notably Weale, the pioneering art historian, conservationist, and promoter of Bruges. Although Belgian historians have detailed the British presence in Bruges during the nineteenth century, there does not appear to have been an extended study that examines how British ideas of Bruges developed and coalesced into a widely held view of Bruges as an exemplary or even ideal place. A view that was shared by most British visitors and settlers and by many leading figures in Bruges at the time. Nor has the affinity between these British ideas of Bruges and those of the Symbolists, notably Rodenbach, been fully considered or developed.

The first chapter provides an outline of a such a study, which I believe is persuasive within the constraints of this thesis. However, there are several areas that require further research and elaboration. I would highlight three. Firstly, having highlighted the significance of Pugin's encounter with Bruges, there is a need for further work which I believe would add a further dimension to recent scholarship on his international influence. Secondly, the formative impact that Bruges seems to have had on the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Rosetti, and subsequently on Morris, which is touched on briefly, requires more attention.[197] And, finally, a more detailed examination of how the development of British ideas of Bruges and their influence on Rodenbach and Khnopff can be seen as an explicit 'pathway' from Romanticism to Symbolism could prove fruitful.

The second chapter seeks to establish the range of British influences the three artists might have drawn on. Khnopff was a noted Anglophile and his enthusiasm for Burne-Jones shaped his early Bruges works. However, I argue at the end of the first chapter that Khnopff's initial drawings of Bruges were hesitant and that it was only when he responded to wider influences

[197] I comment on Dante Gabriel Rosetti's first visit to Bruges in 1849 with William Holman Hunt on pages 31 and 32. Rosetti returned to Bruges with his brother, William, in 1863. Meanwhile, William Morris visited Bruges in 1854 with his sister, Henrietta and he returned in 1859 with his wife, Jane, on their honeymoon. In 1870, he visited Bruges with William Fairfax and finally, in 1874, he returned to Bruges with Jane and their children.

that he produced his later, fully realised works. The significance of this 'break' in Khnopff's production has not to the best of my knowledge been studied, and it is this break which seems to have opened Khnopff up to a wider range of British (and other) influences when he returned to the subject of Bruges.

Whistler and his nocturnes provided the most obvious model for Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn. Whistler's pervasive influence was acknowledged at the time, and in the case of Bruges his nocturnes can be said to have provided a template for all three artists, especially Le Sidaner. However, another significant influence that I have discerned is that of British Pictorialist photography. My close examination of Khnopff's later Bruges works shows his debt to Pictorialist methods. And Brangwyn's association with Coburn can also be seen in his paintings of Bruges, while Le Sidaner at times used Pictorialist effects. The significance of photographs in Rodenbach's realisation of Bruges has received extensive scholarly coverage, but the influence of Pictorialism on depictions of Bruges in this period has not attracted similar attention.

I am confident that my thesis makes a coherent case for a British lineage for Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwyn's depictions of Bruges. But in tracking this lineage, I would stress that it amounts to more than a series of simple causal connections. On the contrary, it was the product of prolonged, varied and shifting cultural exchanges. At one point, the thesis alludes to the cultural colonisation of Bruges by the British, but ideas proposed by the British were debated, contested and assimilated rather than imposed and many leading figures in Bruges and Belgium were equally enthusiastic about the idealisation of their city.

Finally, it is important to return to McGuiness's characterisation of Bruges at the end of the nineteenth century as an 'anti-Paris', a place that offered an antidote or an alternative to the dislocation and squalor associated with modernisation. I argue that, given the extended British interest in Bruges, it is equally accurate to see it as an 'anti-London' or an 'anti-

Manchester'. This perception of Bruges is made explicit by Pugin, when he contrasts the vibrancy of 'A Christian Town of the 1440s' that is similar to Bruges, with 'The Same Town in 1840' blighted by industrialisation. This line of thinking would have resonated with Wordsworth and Southey, given their growing dismay over the destructive effects of the Industrial Revolution. And the Belgian Symbolist poets and writers were equally despairing about the seemingly unstoppable transformation of Belgium from a rural to an urban society. They viewed Bruges as a psychological refuge from the unendurable alienation and anomie caused by these forces. It is in this light, Khnopff, Le Sidaner and Brangwn's artistic visions of Bruges should be seen; silent, restful, and suffused with a deep nostalgia for a world that was passing. A nostalgia that can be traced back to 'the sweetest melancholy' that overcame Robert Hills when he first encountered Bruges, a mere month after the momentous battle of Waterloo.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Fernand Khnopff, *Bruges-la-Morte,* 1892, ink on paper, 35.5 x 27.3 cm, private collection, Bruges. This drawing was for the title page of the first edition of George Rodenbach's novel.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Khnopff_-_Bruges-la-morte.jpeg)

Figure 2. Fernand Khnopff, *Des Souvenirs de la Flandre (Un canal),* 1904, crayon and pastel on paper, 25 x 41.5 cm, The Hearn Family Trust, New York.
(http://www.artnet.com/artists/fernand-khnopff/des-souvenirs-de-la-flandre-un-canal-)

Figure 3. Henri Le Sidaner, *Un Canal à Bruges au crépuscule*, c.1898, 49 x 65 cm, oil on canvas, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
(https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/a-canal-in-bruges-at-dusk-142263)

Figure 4. Frank Brangwyn, *Predikheren Bridge,* 1907, oil on panel, 55 x 44.8 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(Musea Brugge - Groeningemuseum. Objectfiche. Objectnummer: 0000.GRO0785.I)

Fig 5. Fernand Khnopff, *Une Ville abandonée,* 1904, crayon and pastel on paper, 76 x 69 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts Belgium.
(https://www.fine-arts-museum.be/fr/la-collection/fernand-khnopff-une-ville-abandonnee)

Figure 6. J.M.W.Turner, *Basilica of the Holy Blood,* 1817, ink on paper, 15 × 9 cm, Waterloo and Rhine Sketchbook, Tate Britain, London.
(https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-chapel-of-the-holy-blood-bruges-d12709)

Figure 7. Samuel Prout, *The Golden Fleece, Bruges,* 1820, pencil and watercolour on paper, 34 x 24 cm, Oldham Art Gallery.
(https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-golden-fleece-bruges-233003)

Figure 8. A.W.N.Pugin, *Town Hall, Bruges*, 1837, pencil on paper, size unspecified, Irish Architectural Archive, Dublin.
(https://iarc.ie/exhibitions/previous-exhibitions/pugin-revisited/)

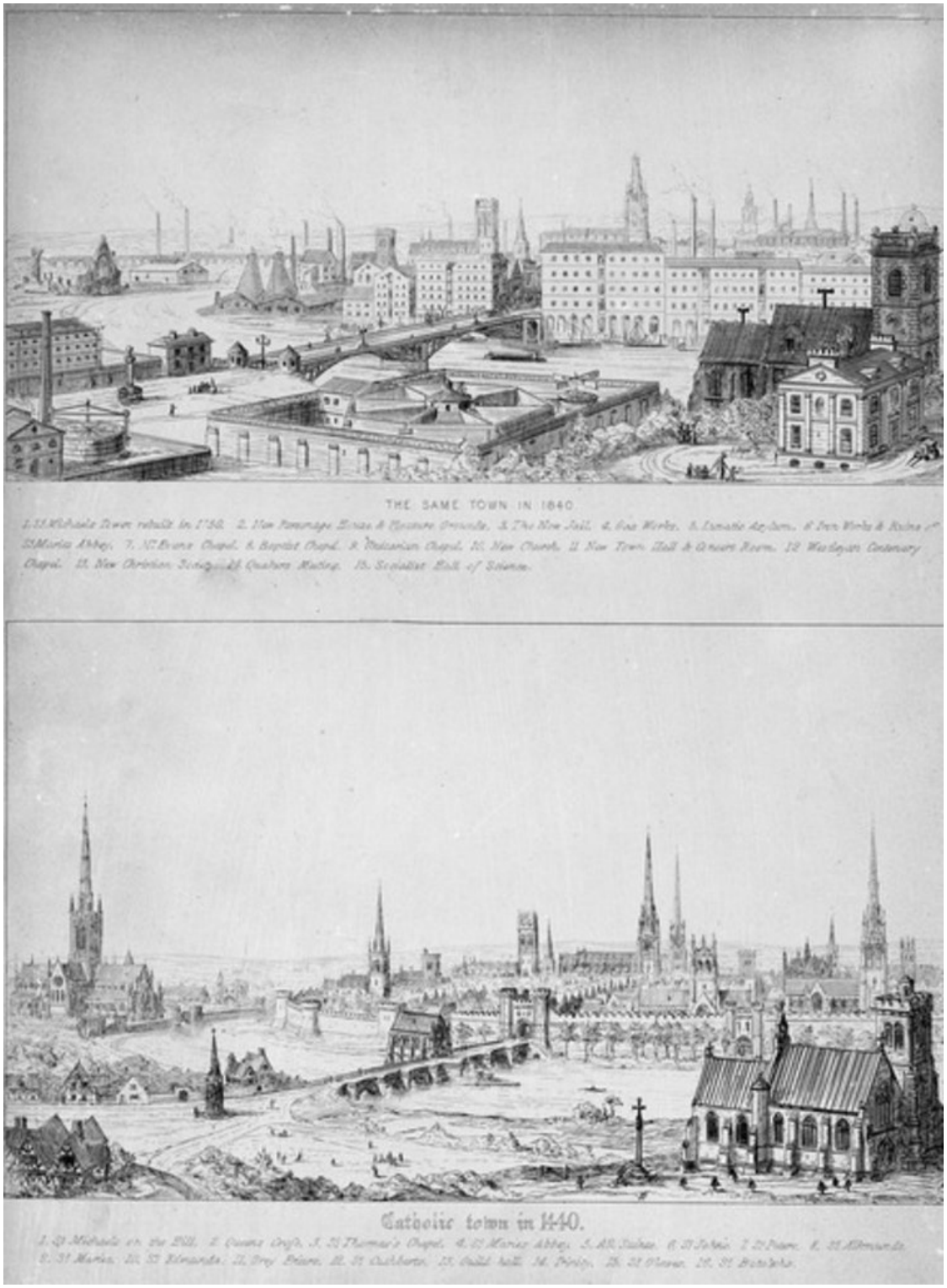


Figure 9. A.W.N.Pugin, 'Catholic Town in 1440' and 'The Same Town in 1840', plate from the second edition of *Contrasts,* 1842.
(*Contrasts (2nd Edition),* reprint of 1842 edition, Leicester University Press, New York, 1969.)

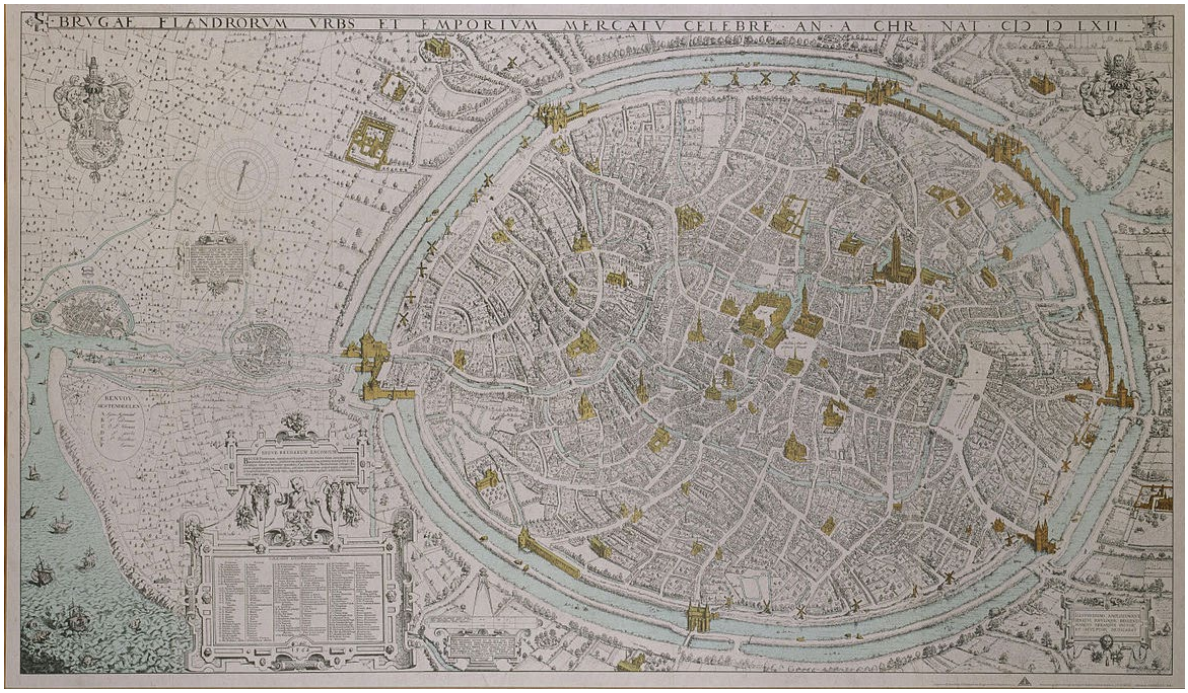


Figure 10. Pictorial map of Bruges, Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder, engraving on paper, 34 x 56 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_map_of_Bruges_by_Marcus_Gheeraerts_de_oude_in_1562_01.jpg)

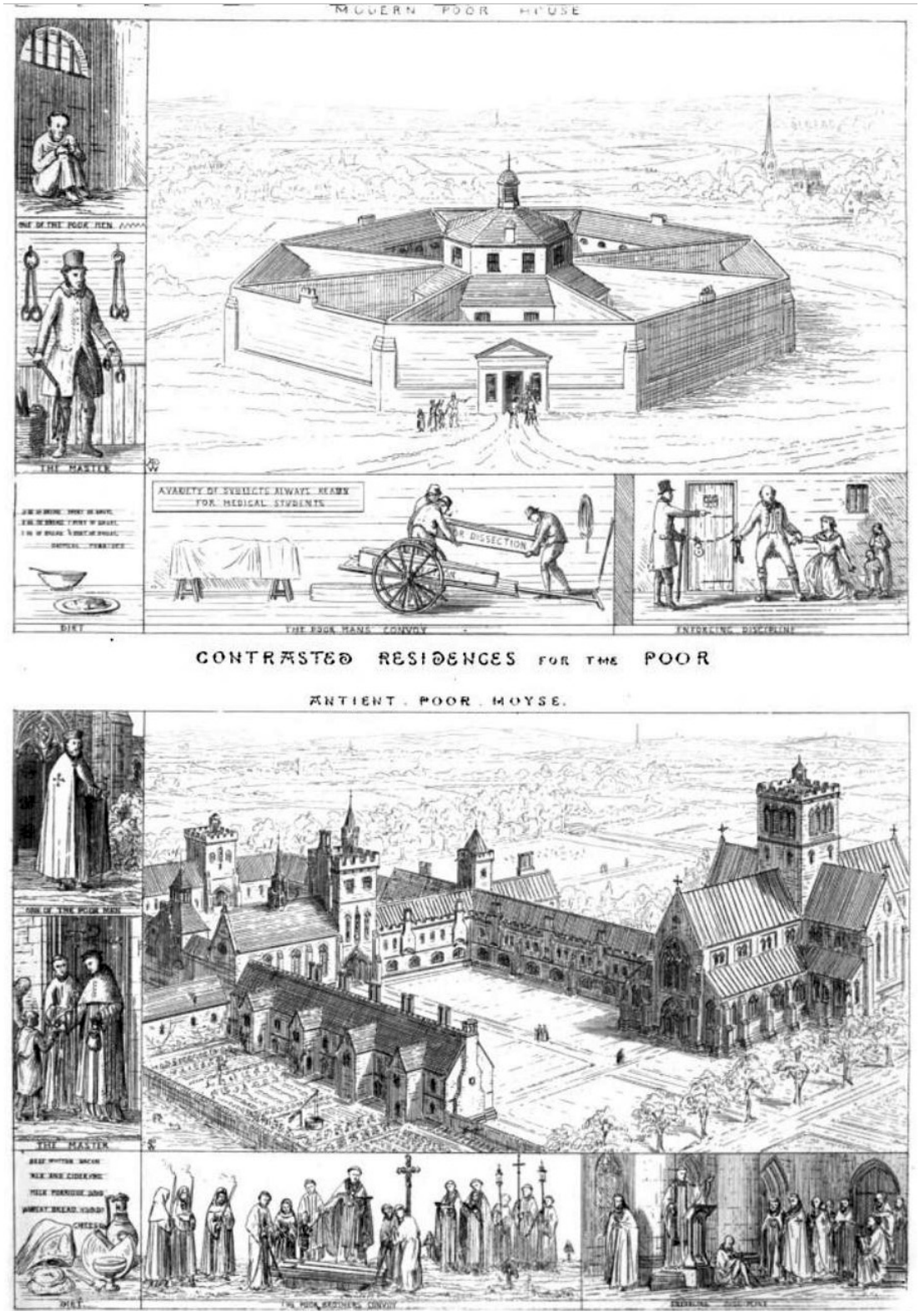


Figure 11. A.W.N.Pugin, 'Contrasted Residences for the Poor', plate from the second edition of *Contrasts,* 1842

(*Contrasts (2nd Edition),* reprint of 1842 edition, Leicester University Press, New York, 1969.)

Figure 12. Photograph of the interior of the Chapel of the Holy Blood with the main chapel to the left and the side chapel containing the relic of the Holy Blood on the right. (https://theculturetrip.com/europe/belgium/articles/the-story-behind-bruges-basilica-of-the-holy-blood/)

The rich decorative scheme for the columns and wall surfaces was started by Thomas Harper King and completed by William Brangwyn in the late 1860s. The dais for the veneration of the relic, with the crucifix and canopy above, was designed by Brangwyn about 5 years later.

Figure 13. Front cover of the 4th edition of W.H.J.Weale's, *Bruges et ses environs,* 1884. (http://www.flandrica.be/items/show/1303/)

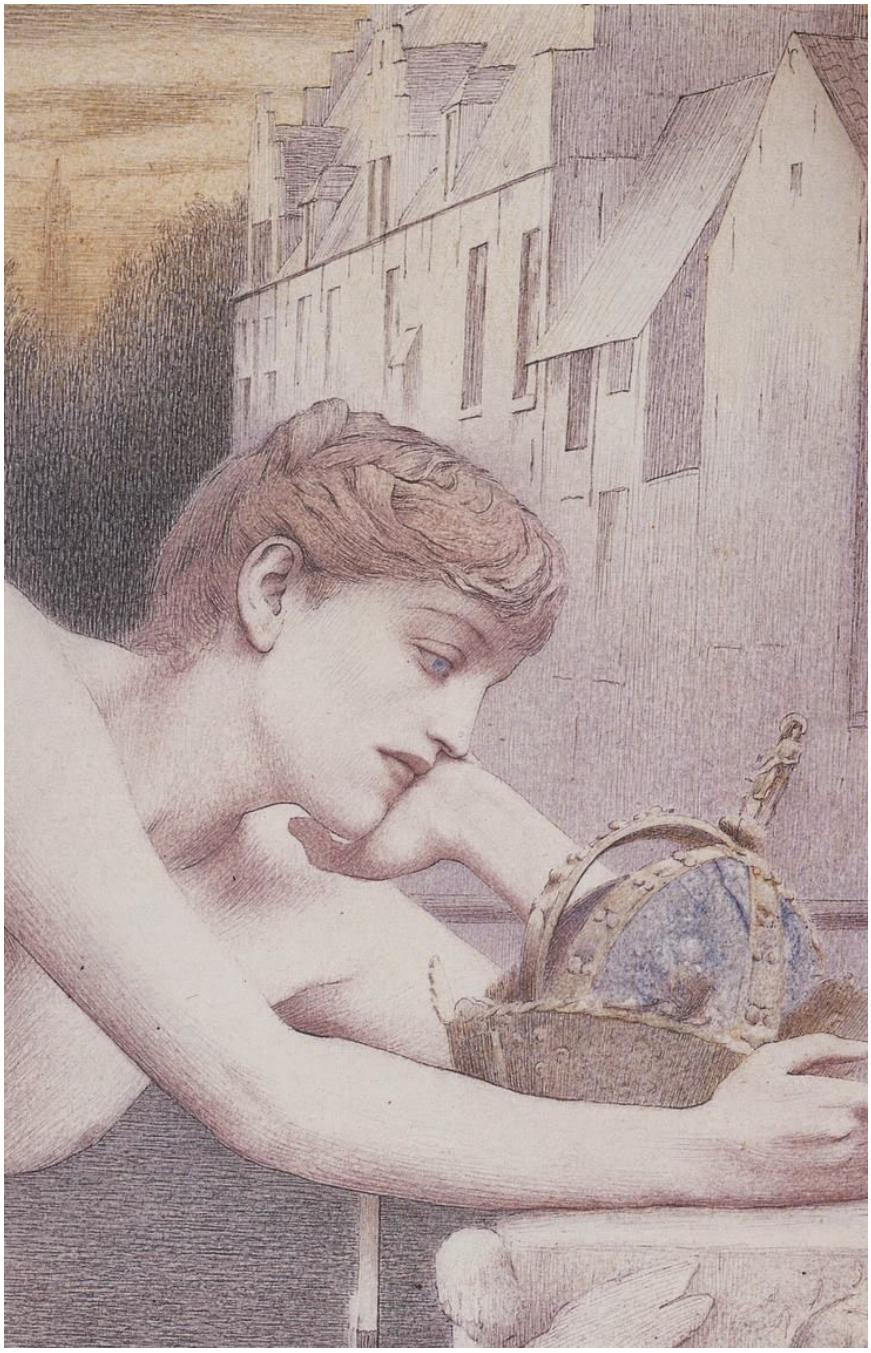


Figure 14. Fernand Khnopff, *Avec Georges Rodenbach. Une ville morte,* 1889, crayons and pastels with white highlights on paper, 26 x 16 cm, The Hearn Family Trust, New York. (https://spectacles-selection.com/archives/expositions/fiche_expo_F/fernand-khnopff-V/8-15-Khnopff-Une-Ville-morte-(avec-Georges-Rodenbach).jpg)

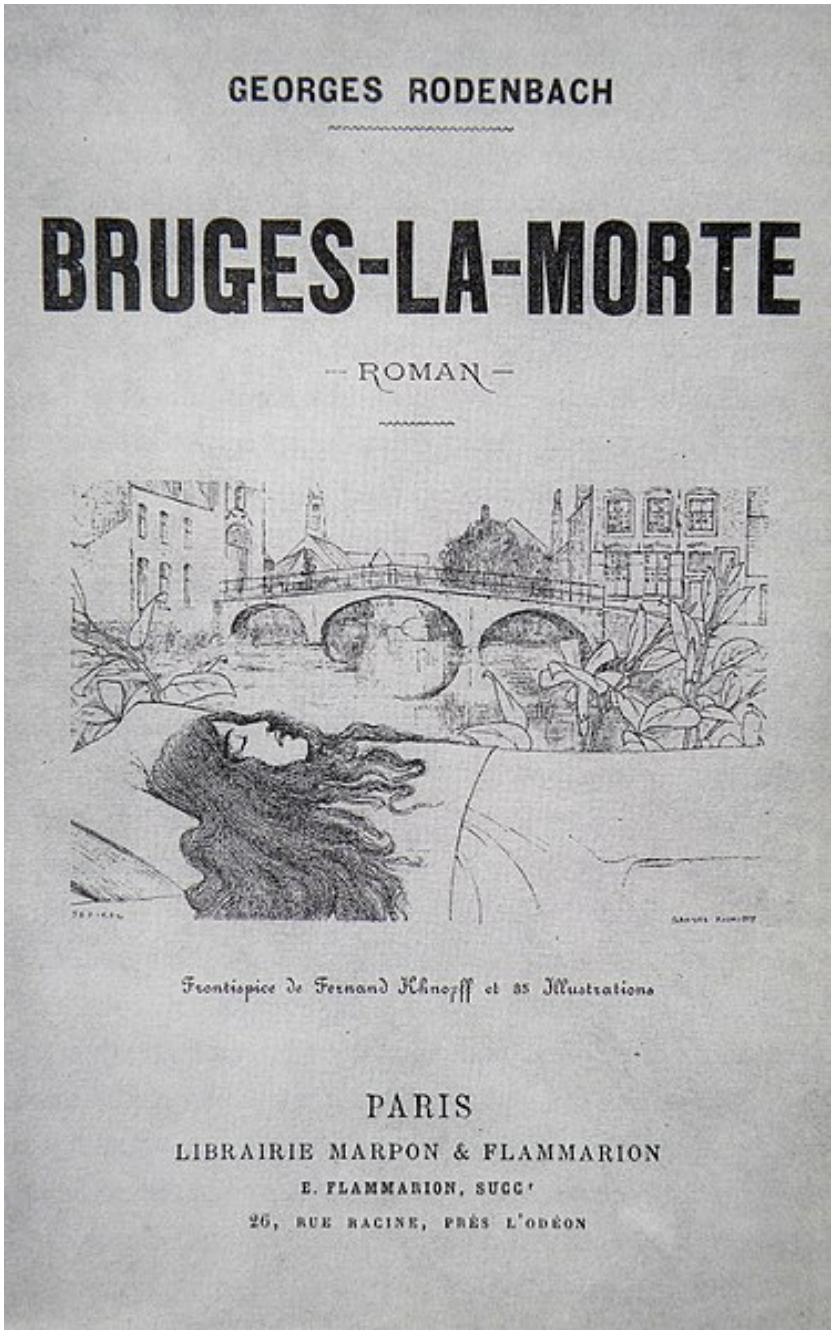


Figure 15. Fernand Khnopff, titlepage drawing for *Bruges-la-Morte,* 1892.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bruges-la-Morte_Frontispice_Khnopff_1892.jpg)

Figure 16. Anton Joostens (1820-1886), *Het Jan Van Eyckplein in Brugge*, 1865, oil on canvas, 126 x 257 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Het_Jan_van_Eyckplein_in_Brugge,_1865,_Groeningemuseum,_0040785000.jpg)

Figure 17. William Degouve de Nunques, *La Nuit à Bruges,* 1897, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 cm, private collection, London, 1897.
(http://www.artnet.com/artists/william-degouve-de-nuncques/la-nuit-)

Figure 18. Edward Burne-Jones, *Head of a Woman,* 1890, chalk on paper, 31 x 24 cm, private collection, London.
(https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTk4MzQ=)

Figure 19. Fernand Khnopff, *Study of a Woman (To Sir Edward Burne-Jones from Fernand Khnopff)*, 1896, pencil heightened with white chalk on paper, 23 x 15 cm, private collection, London.
(https://www.bridgemanimages.co.uk/en/search?filter_text=fernand%20khnopff&filter_group=all&filter_region=GBR&sort=most_popular)

Figure 20. J.M.Whistler, *Nocturne Blue and Silver - Chelsea,* 1872, oil on canvas, 50 × 61 cm, Tate Britain, London.
(https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/whistler-nocturne-blue-and-silver-chelsea-t01571)

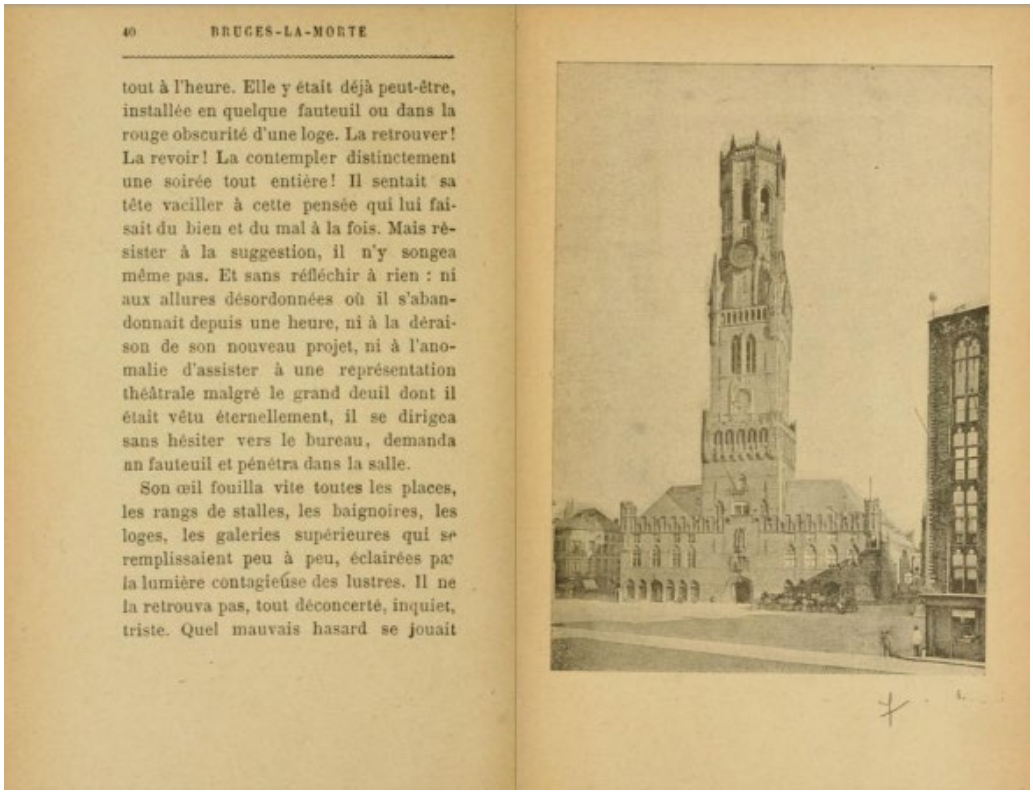
Figure 21. J.M.Whistler, *Nocturne: Black and Red - Back Canal Holland,* 1883, 22 x 28 cm, watercolour on paper, Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, Washington.
(https://asia.si.edu/object/F1902.159a-b/)

Figure 22. J.M.Whistler, *The Market Place, Bruges*, 1887, etching, 10 x 13 cm, Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.
(https://asia.si.edu/object/F1903.24/)

Figure 23. Henri Le Sidaner, *Le Dimanche,* 1898, oil on canvas, 112 x 192 cm, Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai. (https://henri.lesidaner.com/project/le-dimanche-1898/)

Figure 24. Henri Le Sidaner, *Le Quai*, c.1899, oil on canvas, 70 x 101 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henri_Le_Sidaner_-_Le_quai.JPG)

Figure 25. Henri Le Sidaner, *Le Belfroi,* c.1899, oil on canvas, 81 x 57 cm, Graves Museum and Art Gallery, Sheffield.
(https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-belfry-at-bruges-belgium-72082)



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tout à l'heure. Elle y était déjà peut-être, installée en quelque fauteuil ou dans la rouge obscurité d'une loge. La retrouver! La revoir! La contempler distinctement une soirée tout entière! Il sentait sa tête vaciller à cette pensée qui lui faisait du bien et du mal à la fois. Mais résister à la suggestion, il n'y songea même pas. Et sans réfléchir à rien : ni aux allures désordonnées où il s'abandonnait depuis une heure, ni à la déraison de son nouveau projet, ni à l'anomalie d'assister à une représentation théâtrale malgré le grand deuil dont il était vêtu éternellement, il se dirigea sans hésiter vers le bureau, demanda un fauteuil et pénétra dans la salle.

Son œil fouilla vite toutes les places, les rangs de stalles, les baignoires, les loges, les galeries supérieures qui se remplissaient peu à peu, éclairées par la lumière contagieuse des lustres. Il ne la retrouva pas, tout déconcerté, inquiet, triste. Quel mauvais hasard se jouait

Figure 26. Half-tone photograph facing page 40, *Bruges-la-Morte,* Flammarion, Paris, 1892, 1st edition.
(http://writingwithimages.com/georges-rodenbach-bruges-la-morte/)

Figure 27. Hans Memling, *St Ursula Shrine,* 1482-89, overall size 87 x 33 x 91 cm, oil on wood panels, St John's Hospital Museum, Bruges.
(https://www.flickr.com/photos/snarfel/6334648266)

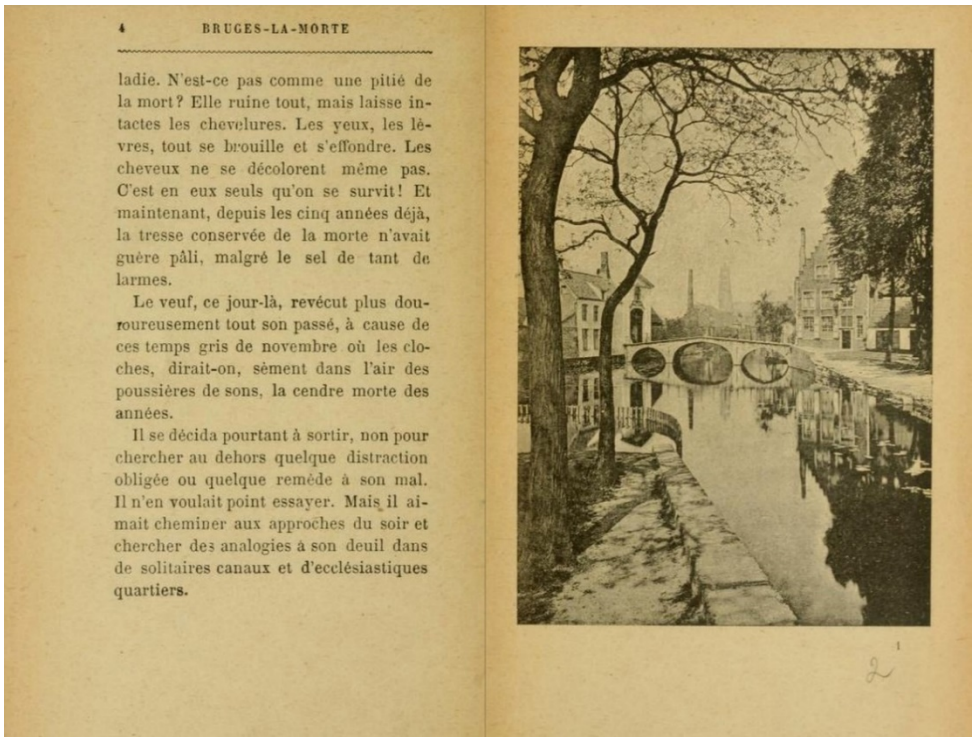
This sequence shows St Ursula and her companions arriving in Cologne (on the left), moving on to Basle (centre), before reaching Rome (on the right). But the whole can be read as a continuous panorama of a Flemish port, such as Bruges, where Memling spent the latter part of his career.

Figure 28. Fernand Khnopff, *Secret-Reflet,* 1902, 49 cm dia and 28 x 49 cm, crayon and pastel and on paper, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Secret-Reflet_(Geheim-Weerspiegeling),_1902,_Groeningemuseum,_0040174000.jpg)

Figure 29, Edward Burne-Jones, *Love Among the Ruins,* 1873, watercolour on paper, 96 × 152 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Among_the_Ruins_(Burne-Jones)#/media/File:Burne-jones-love-among-the-ruins.jpg)

Figure 30. Fernand Khnopff, *Souvenir de Bruges. L'entrée du Béguinage,* 1904, pencil and crayon on paper, 27 x 43 cm, Hearn Family Trust, New York.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fernand_Khnopff_L%27entr%C3%A9e_du_b%C3%A9guinage_(1904).jpg)

Figure 31. Neurdein Frères Paris, *Bruges. Le canal et le Béguinage,* early 1890s, 14 x 9 cm.
(Author's own copy.)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ladie. N'est-ce pas comme une pitié de la mort? Elle ruine tout, mais laisse intactes les chevelures. Les yeux, les lèvres, tout se brouille et s'effondre. Les cheveux ne se décolorent même pas. C'est en eux seuls qu'on se survit! Et maintenant, depuis les cinq années déjà, la tresse conservée de la morte n'avait guère pâli, malgré le sel de tant de larmes.

Le veuf, ce jour-là, revécut plus douloureusement tout son passé, à cause de ces temps gris de novembre où les cloches, dirait-on, sèment dans l'air des poussières de sons, la cendre morte des années.

Il se décida pourtant à sortir, non pour chercher au dehors quelque distraction obligée ou quelque remède à son mal. Il n'en voulait point essayer. Mais il aimait cheminer aux approches du soir et chercher des analogies à son deuil dans de solitaires canaux et d'ecclésiastiques quartiers.

Figure 32. Half-tone photograph facing page 4, *Bruges-la-Morte,* Flammarion, Paris, 1892, 1st edition.
(http://writingwithimages.com/georges-rodenbach-bruges-la-morte/)

Figure 33. James Craig Annan, *A Black Canal - Venice,* 1894, photogravure, 9 x 13 cm Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.
(https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/29693/black-canal-venice)

Figure 34. James Craig Annan, *The Riva Schiavoni,* 1894, photogravure, 14 x 20 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington.
(https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/269392)

Figure 35. Paul Martin, *London by Night -The Alhambra,* 1895, gelatin silver print, 16 x 21 cm, MoMA, New York.
(https://www.moma.org/collection/works/52413)

Figure 36. Frank Brangwyn**,** *Jan Van Eyckplein*, 1906, pencil and watercolour on paper, 51 x 65 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(Musea Brugge - Groeningemuseum. Objectfiche. Objectnummer: 0000.GRO1058.II)

Figure 37. Frank Brangwyn, *The Brewery Bruges, Bruges, No 2,* etching, 25 x 20 cm, Gronigemuseum, Bruges, 1906.
(Musea Brugge - Groeningemuseum. Objectfiche. Objectnummer: 0000.GRO1102.III)

Figure 38. Alvin Coburn Langdon, *Regent's Canal,* 1904, photogravure, 21 x 26 cm, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.
(https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/collection/30236-alvin-langdon-coburn-regent%27s-canal-london)

Figure 39. Frank Brangwyn and Yoshijiro Urushibara**,** *Jan Van Eyckplein*, 1918, woodcut, 38 x 50 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(Musea Brugge - Groeningemuseum. Objectfiche. Objectnummer: 0000.GRO00880.III)

Figure 40. Frank Brangwyn and Yoshijiro Urushibara**,** *The Béguinage,* 1919, woodcut, 40 x 51 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.
(Musea Brugge - Groeningemuseum. Objectfiche. Objectnummer: 0.2.GRO0058.III)

Appendix: Poems by Robert Southey and William Wordsworth on Bruges

Extracts from Robert Southey's *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo* published in 1816.

Part I - Flanders

Ere evening closed to Bruges thus we came,
Fair city, worthy of her ancient fame.

The season of her splendour is gone by,
Yet everywhere its monuments remain;
Temples which rear their stately heads on high,
Canals that intersect the fertile plain,
Wide streets and squares, with many a court and hall
Spacious and undefaced, but ancient all.

Time hath not wronged her, nor hath Ruin sought
Rudely her splendid structures to destroy,
Save in those recent days with evil fraught,
When Mutability, in drunken joy
Triumphant, and from all restraint released,
Let loose the fierce and many-headed beast.

But for the scars in that unhappy rage
Inflicted, firm she stands and undecay'd;
Like our first sires', a beautiful old age
Is hers, in venerable years array'd;
And yet to her benignant stars may bring,
What fate denies to man, . . a second spring.

…

Nor did thy landscape yield me less delight,
Seen from the deck as it slow glided by,
Or when beneath us, from thy Belfroy's height,
Its boundless circle me the bending sky;
The water smooth and straight, thy proper boast,
And lines of road-side trees in long perspective lost.

No happier landscape may on earth be seen,
Rich gardens all around and fruitful groves…

cont.

My lot have lain in scenes sublime and rude…

….

Yet hath the Flemish scene a charm for me
That sooths and wins upon the willing heart…

William Wordsworth's two sonnets on Bruges from *Journal of a Tour to the Continent (1820)* published in 1827.

I

Bruges I saw attired with golden light
(Streamed from the west) as with a robe of power:
The splendour fled; and now the sunless hour,
That, slowly making way for peaceful night,
Best suits with fallen grandeur, to my sight
Offers the beauty, the magnificence,
And sober graces, left her for defence
Against the injuries of time, the spite
Of fortune, and the desolating storms
Of future war. Advance not - spare to hide,
O gentle Power of darkness! these mild hues;
Obscure not yet these silent avenues
Of stateliest architecture, where the Forms
Of nun-like females, with soft motion, glide!

II

The Spirit of Antiquity - enshrined
In sumptuous buildings, vocal in sweet song,
In picture, speaking with heroic tongue,
And with devout solemnities entwined -
Mounts to the seat of grace within the mind:
Hence Forms that glide with swan-like ease along,
Hence motions, even amid the vulgar throng,
To an harmonious decency confined:
As if the streets were consecrated ground,
The city one vast temple, dedicate
To mutual respect in thought and deed;
To leisure, to forbearances sedate;
To social cares from jarring passions freed;
A deeper peace than that in deserts found!

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