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Bruges as Symbolic Capital

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a new reading of the relationship between place and symbolic capital, arguing that certain loci are able to consecrate literary works through inspiration rather than reception, publication, and circulation. Taking the city of Bruges as an exemplar, it examines its representation by Baudelaire, Rodenbach, and Rilke, arguing that Rilke's poetic transformation enables it to transcend its status as a 'dead city' and Decadent trope. By combining the expressive possibilities of Symbolism with elements of the realist chronotope, Bruges can also be read as a future city that performs itself. It thereby provides a different illustration of Pierre Bourdieu's argument that habitus can function as a form of symbolic capital. If, as Pascale Casanova argues, Brussels was the 'capital of Symbolism', in this reading Bruges constitutes an alternative Symbolist capital: another example of the capital and its double.

KEYWORDS

Bruges, symbolic capital, Bourdieu, Casanova, Baudelaire, Rodenbach, Rilke, Symbolism, chronotope

In his 1979 study Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgement and Taste, Pierre Bourdieu uses the concept of 'habitus' to designate 'an objective relationship between two objectivities, [which] enables an intelligible and necessary relation to be established between practices and a situation'.[1] This relationship between activity and location combines elements of lifestyle, character, habit, milieu, and underlying principles; as John Speller has shown, habitus influences not only how we see ourselves and other people, but also our attitudes to available cultural goods and practices, summed up in Bourdieu's expression 'the space of lifestyles' ('l'espace des styles de vie').[2] In The Rules of Art (1992), Bourdieu's emphasis switches from the space of consumption to the space of cultural production. In this context he foregrounds 'the active, inventive and "creative" capacities of the habitus and the agent', proposing that habitus 'is acquired and it is also a possession which may, in certain cases, function as a form of capital'.[3] In terms of the habitus acquired by the agent (e.g. artist, critic, editor, publisher, etc.), this capital can be both economic and symbolic: Bourdieu uses the term 'symbolic capital' to distinguish between the value that accrues to critically acclaimed works of art and the economic capital bestowed by the market, which is measured in sales figures. The spatial conception of the art market is demonstrated by his diagrammatic representation of the French literary field at the end of the nineteenth century.[4] Here Bourdieu uses the term 'consecration' to refer to the bestowal of critical approval on a work of art, which depends on its recognition by a network of other artists, critics, publishers, prize-giving bodies, and various academies.

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, trans. by Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 95.

[2] John R. W. Speller, Bourdieu and Literature (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2011), p. 60.

[3] Pierre Bourdieu, The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 179.

[4] Ibid., p. 122.

The advantage of this approach to mapping the field is that it acknowledges that certain literary forms, particularly drama and the novel, are able to combine both symbolic and economic capital. The two types of capital do not exist in a fixed relationship: Bourdieu shows how the initial 'accumulation of symbolic capital' can in some cases lead to eventual economic profit, whereas economic capital can also be 'reconverted into symbolic capital' if the artist acquires 'the capital of consecration'.[5]

In terms of place, Bourdieu's seminal work has led to applications of field theory to different loci and also to the analysis of the literary and cultural fields on a transnational scale.[6] Pascale Casanova's The World Republic of Letters (1999) constitutes perhaps the most influential attempt to analyse the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century literary field from a transnational perspective, based on the assertion that Paris, as the centre of the international literary field or the 'Greenwich Meridian of literature', was able to consecrate literature with symbolic capital, be it through reception, translation, or publication.[7] Although Casanova has been criticized for her emphasis on the hegemonic role played by Paris in the consecration of literary modernity, her work also constitutes an attempt to provide 'une sorte de répertoire de stratégies littéraires potentielles' ('a type of repertory of potential literary

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[5] Ibid.**,** pp. 142 and 148.

[6] See inter alia Anna Boschetti (ed.), *L'espace culturel transnational* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2010), and Jeremy Ahearne and John Speller (eds), 'Bourdieu and the Literary Field', special issue of Paragraph, 35/1 (2012). See also Christophe Charle and Daniel Roche, eds, Capitales culturelles, capitales symboliques: Paris et les expériences européennes XVIIIe-XXe siècles (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002); Christophe Charle (ed.), Capitales européennes et rayonnement culturel XVIIIe-XXe siècles (Paris: Editions rue d'Ulm, 2004); and Christophe Charle (ed.), Le Temps des capitales culturelles européennes (XVIIIe-XXe siècles) (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2009).

[7] Pascale Casanova, The World Republic of Letters**,** trans. by M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 21.

strategies'), which, as with Bourdieu's field theory, can be transposed to other areas of the world and other periods.[8] Hence she also acknowledges the significance of other loci at different periods, such as London, New York, Barcelona, and Frankfurt, as well as the importance of Brussels in the late nineteenth century, as an alternative to Paris with a greater openness to artistic modernity.[9] Her argument is also nuanced by the consideration of alternative centres existing within national or linguistic spaces, exemplified by Edinburgh and Glasgow or by Barcelona and Madrid, with reference to the 'rivalry between two capitals', as well as to the specific importance of port cities and university towns.[10] Casanova's analysis of the transnational literary field is based on loci of production and consecration which are associated with the development of a particular habitus and the related acquisition of the two types of capital. Certain places possess symbolic capital because of the habitus that they provide, which becomes in turn a self-generating source of further capital.

The aim of the present essay is to offer a new reading of the relationship between place and symbolic capital, by focusing not on places of publication, circulation, reception, and consumption, but on places of inspiration that offer an alternative form of consecration. The example analysed here is the Flemish city of Bruges, a topos of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature. The appeal of the city as both topos and trope can be attributed to a number of factors. One of these is both historical and geographical: the city of Bruges was established as a major mercantile centre in the early Middle Ages, a link between northern and southern Europe with a sophisticated system of economic exchange that dates back to the

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[8] See the preface to Pascale Casanova, La république mondiale des lettres, rev. edn (Paris: Seuil, 2008), p. xiii. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

[9] Casanova, The World Republic of Letters, p. 133.

[10] Ibid., p. 246.

late thirteenth century.[11] In 1400 census figures suggest that the population of Bruges was estimated at 125,000, making it the sixteenth largest city in the world and the third biggest in Europe (after Paris and Milan and just before Venice and Genoa).[12] As of 1500, however, its economic importance began to decline, partly due to the silting of the Zwin channel that connects Bruges to the sea and the gradual shift to Antwerp as the regional trading centre.[13] This decline lasted for several centuries; despite the creation of the lace industry, the population continued to dwindle and Bruges became an impoverished backwater. In the nineteenth century Bruges underwent a renaissance, due partly to the influx of British, Dutch, and French residents in the decades following the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the creation of the independent state of Belgium in 1830; it became a place of pilgrimage, which led to the restoration of many of its medieval buildings during the Gothic Revival in Flanders during the 1850s.[14] The city's rebirth also resulted in its attractiveness for the growing tourist industry, manifest in guidebooks such as W. H. James Weale's Bruges et ses environs in 1862 and Adolphe Duclos's Bruges en trois jours in 1883.[15] This type of tourism constitutes in itself a further reconversion of capital: the symbolic capital gained by the initial economic capital of

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[11] See James M. Murray, Bruges, Cradle of Capitalism 1280-1390 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Raymond de Roover, The Bruges Money Market Around 1400 (Brussels: Palais der Academiën, 1968).

[12] Tertius Chandler, Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth, rev. edn (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989), p. 315.

[13] By 1530 the population of Bruges had shrunk to 60,000, overtaken by both Antwerp and London, each with a population estimated at 76,000. By 1800 it had dropped to as little as 31,000; by 1900 it was estimated at 53,000, which testifies to a slow renaissance throughout the nineteenth century (Chandler, pp. 318, 325, and 333).

[14] See Lori van Biervliet, 'Bruges, Cultural Crossroads in 19th-Century Europe', in Valentin Vermeersch (ed.) Bruges and Europe (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1992), pp. 385-403.

[15] Ibid., p. 397.

the Middle Ages – the canals, streets, bridges, houses, inns, churches – is reconverted into the economic capital of tourism, as other UNESCO World Heritage sites might attest.

Bruges also became a source of symbolic capital due to its literary representation, as the subject of poems and prose by writers including Wordsworth, Longfellow, Rossetti, Huysmans, D'Annunzio, Verhaeren, Mallarmé, Rodenbach, Zweig, Rilke, and a host of others.[16] These writings are characterized by a predominant trope: the medieval city seems to belong to the past, to the extent that visitors often have the uncanny sensation that it has 'died'. This spectral quality was identified succinctly by Baudelaire, who had gone to Brussels for financial reasons in 1864. The notes he made for an unfinished book project on Belgium, posthumously called Sur la Belgique, contain a brief sketch entitled 'Promenade à Bruges':

> Ville fantôme, ville momie, à peu près conservée. Cela sent la mort, le Moyen Âge, Venise, en noir, les spectres routiniers, et les tombeaux. – Grand Béguinage; carillons. Quelques monuments. *Une œuvre attribuée à Michel-Ange. Cependant, Bruges s'en va,* elle aussi.[17]
>
> (Phantom town, mummified town, just about preserved. It smells of death, the Middle Ages, Venice, dressed in black, ghosts set in their ways, and the tombs. – Large

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[16] See the appendix to the Belgian edition of Georges Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte, ed. Christian Berg (Brussels: Labor, 1986), pp. 139-61; also online: http://www.ae-lib.org.ua/texts/rodenbach__villes_mortes_contextes_fr.htm [accessed 1 May 2016].

[17] Charles Baudelaire, 'Sur la Belgique', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), II, 817-978 (pp. 952-53).

béguinage; bells. Some monuments. A work attributed to Michelangelo. However, Bruges is leaving as well.)

The personification of the city here constitutes an interesting variation on the trope of the dead city: the mummified corpse of Bruges seems to be both dead and alive, hence akin to a zombie or ghost, but it is not a ghost town because it is still inhabited, although paradoxically by ghosts. It might therefore be seen as comparable to a necropolis, or city of the dead. The final sentence here suggests however that this town of spectres is itself leaving, or disappearing, which seems ambiguous: does it suggest that this preserved medieval city will eventually disappear completely, perhaps underwater in a fate similar to that predicted for Venice, or rather that even the ghosts are leaving? Baudelaire's sketch suggests an affinity with the image of the inhabited cemetery as a metonym for the city itself, familiar from the first of the four 'Spleen' poems in Les Fleurs du Mal: 'Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière/ De son urne à grands flots verse un froid ténébreux/ Aux pales habitants du voisin cimetière' ('Pluviôse, irritated by the entire city/ From his urn pours out great waves of shadowy coldness/ On the pale inhabitants of the cemetery next door').[18] In the case of Bruges however, the city combines the universal presence of death with the omnipresence of the past; unlike other cities where the realms of the living and dead and the present and past co-exist, Bruges seems to belong wholly to an earlier time.

The characterization of the dead city sketched out in Baudelaire's notes reaches its apotheosis in Georges Rodenbach's short novel Bruges-la-morte, initially published as a serialized novella in Le Figaro between 4 and 14 February 1892 before its publication in book

[18] Charles Baudelaire, 'Spleen (I), Les Fleurs du Mal', in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 72.

form as a roman later that year.[19] The book version contains two extra chapters and thirty-five photographs, predominantly views of the city of Bruges, but also of the nave of the Sint-Salvator Cathedral, two reliquaries, and a painting depicting the city's béguinage.[20] The photographs are stock images taken from two commercial photographic 'image banks' that catered partly for the growing market for postcards; no photographers are credited.[21] The paucity of people in the chosen views of the city gives the images a peculiar timelessness, as if they are simultaneously photographs of the past, present, and future. Consequently these examples of technological modernity assume a paradoxical status when they are placed in the text: they are late nineteenth-century photographs of Bruges depicting churches, canals, and houses that seem to have been frozen in time for centuries. As Jean-Pierre Bertrand and Daniel Grojnowski have noted, the photographs provide an interesting variation on Roland Barthes's observation in Camera Lucida concerning the relationship between photography and death: their apparent atemporality suggests that they elude the notion of 'Ça-a-été' ('That-has-been'), enabling the text to exist in a deathless present.[22] Herein lies the paradox of the dead city, which continues to exist long after its death, as Baudelaire's reference to mummification attests.

The reason for Rodenbach's choice of the city of Bruges as the setting for his novel is evident from its title, which plays on the double meaning of 'Bruges-la-morte' as a dead city or a dead woman, encapsulated in Fernand Khnoppf's frontispiece for the first edition. This

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[19] Jean-Pierre Bertrand and Daniel Grojnowski, Introduction to Georges Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1998), pp. 7-46 (pp. 12-13).

[20] Paul Edwards, 'The Photograph in Georges Rodenbach's Bruges-la-morte (1892)', Journal of European Studies, 30/117 (2000), 71-89.

[21] Ibid., p. 73 and p. 87, n. 6.

[22] Bertrand and Grojnowski, p. 19.

ambiguous title both personifies the city and aligns it with the deceased wife of the protagonist, Hugues Viane, who moves to Bruges because he deems it to be the ideal place for mourning. In the brief preface to the book version, Rodenbach explains how the introduction of the photographs reinforces the idea that the city exerts an influence on the novel's characters and on its readers:

> C'est pourquoi il importe, puisque ces décors de Bruges collaborent aux péripéties, de les reproduire également ici, intercalés entre les pages : quais, rues désertes, vieilles demeures, canaux, béguinage, églises, orfèvrerie du culte, beffroi, afin que ceux qui nous liront subissent aussi la présence et l'influence de la Ville, éprouvent la contagion des eaux mieux voisines, sentent à leur tour l'ombre des hautes tours allongée sur le texte.[23]
>
> (That is why, since the scenery of Bruges is directly involved in the story, it is important that they should be reproduced here, interpolated between the pages – quais, deserted streets, old houses, canals, the Béguinage, churches, liturgical objects, the belfry – so that our readers, too, may come under the influence of the Town itself, feel the pervasive presence of the waters from close to, experience for themselves the shadow cast over the text by the tall towers.)[24]

The influence of the city is manifest not only in the photographs but already in the text itself, evident in the diurnal rhythms demarcated by the church bells and the references to the

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[23] Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte, p. 50.

[24] Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte, trans. by Mike Mitchell (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2005), p. 21.

reflections of the buildings in the canals, which suggest that the city transcends its function as realist setting. Bruges is depicted as a particular kind of chronotope, both present and past, so that visitors have the impression that they are travelling not just through space but also through time. Rodenbach's text exists in a symbiotic relationship to the city: the text draws inspiration from the city's idiosyncratic characteristics, and in turn it contributes further to the reputation of the city as both actual and mythical.

In one respect Bruges-la-morte exemplifies Bourdieu's view of the economic capital accrued by the short story and the novel: the double publication as serial in Le Figaro and subsequent book constitute two sources of income. However, the disappointing initial sales figures (14,000 copies sold after four years) and its subsequent and current status as a canonical work of the fin de siècle show that its lasting capital was primarily symbolic rather than economic, although this symbolic capital has itself led to sustained if modest financial success.[25] The enduring popularity of Bruges-la-morte has fixed the trope of Bruges as a dead city, reinforced by Erich Korngold's 1920 opera Die tote Stadt.[26] The city has thus proved to be a source of both symbolic and economic capital for Rodenbach, Korngold, and their publishers, translators, directors, designers, and performers. Yet at the same time it can be argued that this familiar depiction of moribund Bruges has limited the potential of its symbolic capital as a locus and source of inspiration.

A representation of the city that offers a different interpretation can be found in Rilke's poem 'Quai du Rosaire (Brügge)', from the Neue Gedichte of 1907. Here, acknowledgement of the city's history is contrasted with an exploration of its present. Rilke's sojourn in Belgium

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[25] Bertrand and Grojnowski, p. 24.

[26] The libretto for Korngold's opera is actually based on 'Le Voile', a one-act play by Rodenbach published in 1894.

in the first two weeks of August 1906 included a trip to the Flemish town of Veurne (Furnes in French), at the time of the Kermes, its annual fair in celebration of a religious festival. This visit inspired the poems 'Der Turm' and 'Der Platz' from the Neue Gedichte,[27] as well as the 'uncollected' poem 'Marionetten-Theater (Furnes, Kermes)'.[28] Rilke's experience of the Kermes is also recounted in the short prose piece 'Furnes', first published in the Berliner Tageblatt on 1 August 1907, which can be classified as a piece of travel writing.[29] Here he argues that the best way for tourists to appreciate Bruges is not by coming straight from one of the coastal resorts such as Ostend or Blankenberghe, but by coming via the surrounding countryside, from towns such as Dixmude, Ypres, or Furnes. This experience allows the visitor to appreciate the successive influences of Burgundian, Spanish, and Habsburg rule on Flanders, manifest in its architecture and rituals. It prepares tourists for the experience of visiting Bruges, which can otherwise prove to be a disappointing day trip. Rilke attributes this disappointment to Bruges's 'reserve', which he associates partly with a misreading of Rodenbach:

> Brügge übertrifft nichts; es enttäuscht die meisten. Seine Zurückhaltung ist es, die ihm den Ruf des 'toten Brügge' eingetragen hat, und man benügt sich, sie zu konstatieren. Das Brügge Rodenbachs ist bekannt geworden; man vergißt, daß es ein Gleichnis war, von einem Dichter erfunden für seine Seele, and man besteht auf dem Wortlaut.[30]

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[27] Rainer Maria Rilke, Neue Gedichte (Frankfurt a.M. and Leipzig: Insel, 2000), pp. 60-61.

[28] See Rainer Maria Rilke, Selected Poems, trans. Susan Ranson and Marielle Sutherland, ed. Robert Vilain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 46-49 and 283.

[29] Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Furnes', in Sämtliche Werke, 10 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1966), VI, 1005-16.

[30] Ibid., p. 1006.

(Bruges exaggerates nothing; it disappoints most people. Its reserve is why it has gained the reputation of 'dead Bruges', and it is satisfying simply to confirm this. Rodenbach's Bruges has become familiar; if we insist on interpreting it verbatim, we forget that the writer invented this analogy for his soul.)

Rilke's reference to this common misreading of Rodenbach's Bruges-la-morte, combined with his emphasis on the need to appreciate Bruges in its regional and historical context, also provide a means by which to approach the poem 'Quai du Rosaire (Brügge)':

Die Gassen haben einen sachten Gang	The little streets stroll at a gentle pace
(wie manchmal Menschen gehen im Genesen	(dawdling like convalescents at a spa,
nachdenkend: was ist früher hier gewesen?)	halting to wonder–what was it stood here?)
und die an Plätze kommen, warten lang	they take long rests each time they reach a Place
auf eine andre, die mit einem Schritt	and wait; until another with one stride
über das abendklare Wasser tritt,	as evening falls and detail starts to fade
darin, je mehr sich rings die Dinge mildern,	leaps the canal which, silvered and fulfilled,
die eingehängte Welt von Spiegelbildern	sustains a saturated, liquid world
so wirklich wird wie diese Dinge nie.	Of mirrored things that never were so real.
Verging nicht diese Stadt? Nun siehst du, wie	The town is almost lost. Now you can feel
(nach einem unbegreiflichen Gesetz)	(by some strange law of reciprocity)
sie wach und deutlich wird im Umgestellten,	its paradox awaking, firm and clear
als wäre dort das Leben nicht so selten;	as if it lived a life that was less rare,
dort hängen jetzt die Gärten groß und gelten,	as if it prized its gardens, hanging there,
dort dreht sich plötzlich hinter schnell erhellten	while lighted windows suddenly declare
Fenstern der Tanz in den Estaminets.	that dancers circle the estaminets.
Und oben blieb? -- Die Stille nur, ich glaube,	And up above it all? Only the stillness
und kostet langsam und von nichts gedrängt	lingers in the air and takes its ease;

Beere um Beere aus der süßen Traube	tasting the berries where its fancy falls
des Glockenspiels, das in den Himmeln hängt.[31]	from the ripe bunches of the ringing bells.[32]

Several echoes of Baudelaire's depiction of Bruges are evident here, especially the sense that the present is pervaded by the past, introduced in line 3: 'was ist früher hier gewesen?'/ 'what was here before?'. The question asked in line 10, 'Verging nicht diese Stadt?/ 'Did this city not perish?', recalls Baudelaire's reference to the departing city; the verb 'vergehen' denotes both departure and death, in the sense of perishing. As in Bruges-la-morte, the city is personified, here through the synecdoche of the streets, which seem themselves to be strolling though the town like convalescents, reflecting on what has previously existed. But the crucial difference between these references and Rilke's depiction of the city is that Bruges is no longer explicitly synonymous with death, despite the omnipresence of the past. Instead the poem emphasizes the transformation of the city at dusk, when the reflections in the canal appear to be more real than the objects that they reflect: 'so wirklich wird wie diese Dinge nie'/ 'becomes more real than these things ever were' (line 9). In line 11 the speaker addresses the self and the reader: now you see the transformation, as if following some incomprehensible law, of gardens, taverns (Estaminets), and the dancing within. The final stanza begins with a third question, 'Und oben blieb?'/ 'And what remained above?', which suggests that the eye, in a movement akin to a cinematic contre-plongée or low-angle shot, rises up beyond the reflections and the buildings into the sky, where the sound of the bells is visualized as bunches of grapes. This instance of synaesthesia closes the poem with an image of ripeness and vitality that transcends the city both literally and figuratively.

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[31] 'Quai du Rosaire (Brügge)', in Neue Gedichte, pp. 62-63.

[32] 'Quai du Rosaire (Bruges)', in Neue Gedichte/New Poems, trans. Stephen Cohn (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992), p. 107.

The form of the poem also expresses this sense of unexpected transformation: the two four-line stanzas at the start and the end provide a regular frame, but the second and third stanzas contain an irregular numbers of lines (5 and 7 respectively), emphasizing the sense of expansion created by the reflections. The variations in the rhyme scheme, which culminate in the repeated terminal rhyme in lines 12-15, intensify the impression created by the reflected images. 'Quai du Rosaire' begins like a sonnet, strolling gently towards its volta, but the journey takes an unexpected direction. It also offers Bruges a future through a recurring present, where the city comes alive each night when the lights come on, as if performing itself. Rilke's emphasis on the movement and vitality of the reflections also provides a counterweight to Rodenbach's emphasis on the stasis of the reflected buildings captured in the photographs: the cinematic drama invoked by Rilke's poem takes us beyond the still photograph into the realm of moving pictures and sound effects. These elements of theatricality and performance are also evident in Rilke's description of the town of Furnes, where he refers to the religious rituals enacted as part of the Kermes as a 'Maskerade'.[33] He argues here that the appreciation of Flemish history afforded by Furnes allows the visitor to appreciate fully Bruges: 'dem wird die Stadt mehr sein als ein Museum von Bildern und Spiegelbildern' ('to him the city will be more than a museum of images and reflections').[34] Viewed in this light, the distinctiveness of 'Quai du Rosaire' is that it finds a source of inspiration in Bruges that goes beyond the ritual enactment of the city's past, thereby creating a further dimension of its symbolic capital.

'Quai du Rosaire' is one of the poems analysed by Paul de Man in the section of Allegories of Reading entitled 'Tropes (Rilke)', which emphasizes the rich variety of Rilke's

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[33] 'Furnes', p. 1012.

[34] Ibid., p. 1007.

thematic interests and his employment of what de Man calls 'figural' language. For de Man, 'the determining figure of Rilke's poetry is that of chiasmus, the crossing that reverses the attributes of words and things'.[35] As a consequence objects take on the polysemic and ludic potential of words, which also allows their conventional meanings to be reversed. 'Quai du Rosaire' illustrates de Man's argument because it epitomizes this structural reversal: 'Taking advantage of a light effect at dusk, Rilke can, without seeming to be fantastic, decree that the upside-down world that is reflected in the still water of the canals is more substantial and more real than the ordinary world of the day.'[36] In de Man's reading this enables the poem to combine 'the realism of the local colour' with 'a somewhat uncanny and as it were surreal character'. To this one can add the term 'Symbolist': Rilke's ability to invest objects with semantic potential exemplifies one of the tenets of Symbolism as described by Jean Moréas in the Symbolist Manifesto, which also explains why the realist and surrealist elements co-exist with such harmony.[37] In this respect de Man's interpretation of the final image of the poem seems somewhat reductive: 'the seductive but funereal image of a temporal annihilation which is enjoyed as if it were a sensuous pleasure, "der süssen Traube/ des Glockenspiels" ("the sweetened cluster of grapes/ of the carillon"), which actually is the death knell that reduced the city to a ghostly memory.'[38] In my reading this final image connotes the celebration of a repeated present, a visualization of the sound of the bells that links Bruges's past to its future, as opposed to a sense of 'temporal loss and erosion'.[39] De Man argues here that 'Quai du

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[35] Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 38.

[36] Ibid., p. 40.

[37] Jean Moréas, 'Un Manifeste littéraire', Le Figaro littéraire, 18 September 1886, p. 1.

[38] de Man, p. 42.

[39] Ibid.

Rosaire' gives a different reading of Bruges from the one in the piece on Furnes;[40] I come to the opposite conclusion, namely that the poem transcends the trope of the dead city and that the description of the reflected images should not be interpreted simply as ephemeral respite. Reading 'Quai du Rosaire' as a Symbolist poem does not simply refer to acknowledging its semantic potential; it also allows Bruges to be read as a future city rather than as an alluring Decadent trope.

Rilke's poem shows that it is possible to interpret Bruges in ways that go beyond the familiar trope of the dead city. The reflected city seems to be more real than the city itself; de Man considers that Rilke's depiction of the city is both real and surreal, but we might also see it as a form of hyperreality, which combines imaginative possibility with a verifiable time and place. In the poem, Bruges comes to occupy a liminal place between the real city and the imaginary city, a notion exemplified by the fictitious cities described by Italo Calvino in Invisible Cities. Some of these imaginary cities share several characteristics with the trope of Bruges as a dead city. Zora, which belongs to the category of 'Cities and Memory', is a great source of knowledge, but 'forced to remain motionless and always the same, in order to be more easily remembered, Zora has languished, disintegrated, disappeared. The earth has forgotten her.'[41] Laudomia, which belongs to the category 'Cities and the Dead', is inhabited not only by the living and the dead (in its ever-expanding cemeteries) but also by a third, future Laudomia, 'the city of the unborn'.[42] Valdrada, which belongs to the category 'Cities and Eyes', is, built above a lake, where 'the traveller, arriving, sees two cities: one erect above the lake, and the other reflected, upside down'.[43] In Calvino's imaginary cities the link to a

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[40] Ibid., n. 22.

[41] Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities, trans. William Weaver (San Diego and New York: Harvest, 1974), p. 16.

[42] Ibid., p. 140.

[43] Ibid., p. 53.

real locus is lost. The literary representations of Bruges, however, allow the writer to combine the expressive possibilities of Symbolism with elements of the realist chronotope, always keeping one foot – or one eye – in the travelogue or tourist guide.

Returning to Bourdieu's notion of capital, it is clear that Bruges as a source of inspiration and consecration has provided symbolic – and sometimes economic – capital for numerous artists, with its apotheosis deriving from the late-nineteenth century interest both in the past and in the ambiguous (one might surmise that the gradual expansion of the tourist industry effectively killed off the notion of the dead city, as it were). Descriptions of Bruges can be found in the work of twentieth-century itinerant writers such as Henry Miller and Marguerite Yourcenar.[44] The city also makes a disguised appearance in Alan Hollinghurst's 1994 novel The Folding Star and provides the perfect destination for a pair of hiding hitmen in Martin McDonagh's 2008 film In Bruges. Of course any place can constitute a source of inspiration, as the numerous works inspired by London, New York, and Paris attest. Moreover, the great capital cities and centres of commerce are not simply the backdrops for realist representations: in The Waste Land, T. S. Eliot's reference to 'unreal' cities, illustrated by reference to Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, and London, reminds us of the imaginative potential inherent in all cities.[45] However, Bruges undoubtedly possesses a particular quality that endows it with a different kind of symbolic capital, which owes something to the sense of travelling back in time. Venice is the obvious other example, but other loci might be included here, particularly spa towns such as Karlsbad and Marienbad.[46] The symbolic capital of both Bruges and Venice derives from industry and trade; Venice was of course also an imperial power, which adds a

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[44] See the appendix to Rodenbach, Bruges-la-morte, ed. Berg, pp. 139-61.

[45] T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land and Other Poems (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 38-9.

[46] On this subject see B. D. Morgan, A Cosmopolitan Cure: Writing Resort Culture in an Age of Nations (Oxford: Legenda, forthcoming 2017).

further source of capital. Bruges itself can even be seen as a post-industrial city avant la lettre, which aligns it with Detroit in our time. Julien Temple's 2010 documentary film 'Requiem for Detroit?' questions whether the city's 'death' can be confirmed and commemorated; the answer is that the city is both dead and alive, slowly being reborn and creating different forms of capital, Temple's film included. Detroit may never become a tourist mecca, but Temple's film shows how some of its disused buildings and deserted public spaces are slowly being transformed into alternative forms of community, which similarly constitutes the conversion of lost economic capital into social and cultural capital.[47] Such loci are characterized by a particular temporality that endows them with a specific kind of symbolic capital; they constitute a particular type of chronotope, where the accentuated significance of the past casts a defining influence on the present, with regard both to the space of lifestyles and to artistic representation.

These reflections on Bruges as a source of symbolic capital suggest that literary communities around 1900 were not limited to places of production and consumption. Indeed, Bruges can be described as a kind of virtual community, available to all those who visited it: not a place of work, but a place for work, a habitus that inspired the Belgian and foreign writers who passed through it. Rodenbach may have grown up in Flanders, but his position as a Francophone writer and his eventual move to Paris meant that he also approached Bruges as an outsider, like Baudelaire, Rilke, and all the other writers inspired by the city. By extrapolation we can therefore see fin-de-siècle Bruges as an example of Bourdieu's view that the habitus can in certain cases function as a form of capital; in turn, Bourdieu's theory enables us to see Bruges as a dynamic space of generative possibilities. This reading also adds

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[47] See Julien Temple, 'Detroit: the last days', The Guardian, online version, 10 March 2010: < http://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/mar/10/detroit-motor-city-urban-decline > [accessed 21 May 2016].

a further element to Casanova's mapping of the world republic of letters: Brussels may have become the 'capital of Symbolism' in terms of production, circulation, and consecration,[48] but Bruges played a unique role in Symbolist creativity.

[48] Casanova, The World Republic of Letters, p. 132.