

seen as mirrors of our very own subliminal desires, created by a bricolage of maritime motifs in an urban aesthetic of popular culture.

Notes

- 1 For linguistic support I would like to thank Dr. Silke Meyer very much! This paper presents some aspects of my PhD thesis, for more details see Timo Heimerdinger, *Der Seemann. Ein Berufsstand und seine kulturelle Inszenierung (1844-2003)* (Köln/Weimar 2005), 178-284.
- 2 See also Timo Heimerdinger, 'Everyday Culture Research and the Challenges of Immediacy. Theoretical and Methodological Approaches from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology / Volksskunde', in Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Christopher P. Scholtz (eds.), *Religion: Immediate Experience and the Mediacity of Research. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Objectives, Concepts and Methodology of Empirical Research in Religion*. (Göttingen 2007), 61-75.
- 3 Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'From Theatre to Theatricality. How to Construct Reality', in *Theatre Research International* 20 (1995), 97-105. Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Theatricality. A Key Concept in Theatre and Cultural Studies', in *Theatre Research International* 20 (1995), 85-89.
- 4 <http://www.lisa-bassenge.de/info.html> – 27.03.2008.
- 5 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcForgPR1pY> – 30.10.2008.

- 6 http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-J_Day_in_Times_Square – 27.03.2008.
- 7 <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/0,1518,431872,00.html> – 27.03.2008.
- 8 Cf. Robert Kuhn, Bernd Kreutz, *Der Matrosenanzug. Kulturgeschichte eines Kleidungsstücks*. (Dortmund 1989)
- 9 Cf. Eckart Goebel, 'Distant objects of desire. Die schönen Matrosen. Der Seemann als Ikone der Homoerotik im Film', in *Mare* 4 (oct./nov. 1997), 80-86.
- 10 Christoph Wulf, 'Der performative Körper. Sprache - Macht - Handlung', in Hans Belting a.o., (eds.), *Quel corps? Eine Frage der Repräsentation* (München 2002), 207-218, here 207.
- 11 Sybille Krämer, 'Sprache - Stimme - Schrift: Sieben Thesen über Performativität als Medialität' in Erika Fischer-Lichte and Doris Kolesch (eds.), *Kulturen des Performativen, Sonderband Paragrana, Internationale Zeitschrift für Historische Anthropologie*, Volume 7, H. 1, (Berlin 1998), 33-57.
- 12 'Wo aufgeführt wird, ist die Iterabilität, die immer ein Anderswerden des Iterierten einschließt, bedeutsam. Gegenüber der gerade in der Sprachtheorie gepflegten Betonung des Kreativaspektes ist daran zu erinnern, dass alle Sinngebung auf Prozeduren des Wiederholens beruht, die immer auch Wiederholungen der Form nach sind. [...] Die produktive Kraft des Performativen erweist sich nicht einfach darin, etwas zu erschaffen, sondern darin, mit dem, was wir nicht selbst hervorgebracht haben, umzugehen.', quotation from Krämer, 'Sprache - Stimme - Schrift', 48.

The Belgians: a bi-maritime people. Belgian maritime identity and its representation in everyday life¹

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Introduction: The paradox of Belgium's relationship with the North Sea

The sea, and in this case the North Sea, has without doubt played an important role in the carving out of the national identities of its coastal states and a rapid tour along the North Sea's shores will soon establish this fact. No one trying to understand the British will omit its naval might and island status and whoever wants to explain the Dutch national identity will have to bear in mind their formidable maritime mercantile expansion. The Scandinavian peoples can link their identity to the sea by remembering their forefathers, the bold seagoing warriors who established trading lines, and in a less distant past brave and daring fishermen. Even semi-continental nations, like France and Germany, have regions and provinces whose inhabitants claim to be maritime people.

To a greater or a lesser degree, the North Sea has influenced the way people along its shores think about themselves. At first sight the identity of the Belgians does not seem to have been affected by the North Sea at all, though this apparent lack of maritime identity does not appear to bother the Belgians unduly, as the whole question of their national identity remains at best a tricky issue. Belgian identity does indeed create something of a problem, some will despond-

ently agree, while others will say, with utmost satisfaction, that no such thing exists. It is easy to understand why some say there are two regional (or national) identities in Belgium, as the Dutch speaking Flemish and the French speaking Walloons from time to time express their mutual contempt for each other and their dislike at continuing to cohabit in the same nation. Nevertheless, others claim that Belgian identity is bi-national (or bi-ethnic), consisting of a Belgian-Flemish and a Belgian-Walloon component.² As this endless debate rages on it does not help us regarding Belgian maritime identity. Neither the unitary Belgian, the Flemish, the Walloon, nor the bi-national identities seem to be tinged by any maritime feelings at all.³

Nevertheless a paradox remains, as Belgium had, and still has, very strong ties with the North Sea which have persisted since the early Middle Ages. From then on, Belgium, or its predecessors, have hosted one, or more, of Europe's major port cities. Situated along the shores of the North Sea, one of the most navigated seas in the world, Belgium is highly dependent on maritime trade. Bruges, Ghent, Ostend, and especially Antwerp, are household names for every maritime or economic historian, ports which in 2007 together handled about 258,000,000 ton.⁴ Its added value to the Belgian economy in

Map 1: Belgium



2006 amounted to 13,997,600,000 Euros⁵ and it is clear that Belgium maintains a very important relationship with the sea, albeit a rather odd one. Odd, because it does not seem to appear in the country's complex maze of identities. Nevertheless, the North Sea has certainly left an imprint on the way the Belgians see and experience their country. To understand the maritime component of Belgium's identity, and the way it is represented in the country's national symbols, monuments, works of art and everyday life,

we must first solve the paradox of Belgium's strange relationship with the North Sea. To decipher this we will have to go back in time to find the clues for understanding Belgium's maritime heritage.

From one to two coasts

When Belgium regained its independence in 1830, its policymakers were very well aware that they were the continuation of the old Southern Netherlands. Not surprisingly, the borders of the new Kingdom of Belgium co-

incided to a large extent with that of its *Ancien Régime* predecessor annexed by the French in 1795, and then by the Dutch in 1815. Nevertheless most policymakers in Brussels feared that the great European powers, involved in establishing the border between the Dutch and the Belgians in the years following the Belgian revolution, would give away territory that had formerly belonged to the Southern Netherlands. They were quite right to have such fears, as both the eastern part of the provinces of Luxembourg and Limbourg were set outside Belgium's borders in 1839 (see map 1).⁶

Belgian decision makers had nurtured various territorial ambitions and in 1830 they claimed the area that formed the southern shores of the Scheldt estuary, nowadays known as Zeeland-Flanders. This area had been firmly Dutch since the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and as with the eastern parts of Luxembourg and Limbourg, Belgian diplomacy failed to have it incorporated into their kingdom.⁷ These territories were however not forgotten and several attempts were made to annex them during the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁸

Such plans were not new, as these same territorial takeover schemes could be traced back to early modern times. Both the Spanish and the Austrian monarchies, which successively ruled the Southern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tried to incorporate Zeeland-Flanders into their dominions. Even the French waged a short war against the Dutch after having annexed the Southern Netherlands in 1795 and at the Treaty of The Hague (1795) the Dutch were compelled to cede Zeeland-Flanders to the French, who united it with the newly created *Département de l'Escaut*, the current Belgian province of East-Flanders.⁹ The doggedness of the Belgians and their predecessors to annex Zeeland-Flanders cannot be

explained by the attractions of the area's most obvious geographical features, a multitude of wetlands and a few minor towns. Zeeland-Flanders' significance is mostly geopolitical, since possession gives the opportunity to control, at least partly, the Scheldt estuary, and thus the shipping lanes between Antwerp and the North Sea. This geopolitical opportunity, which the Dutch managed to seize in the past, has had tremendous consequences for the Southern Netherlands and later for the economy of Belgium.¹⁰ It also plays an important role in the Belgians' maritime identity.

To understand this, we must see that Antwerp was one of the largest and wealthiest commercial port cities in Europe in the sixteenth century. It was without doubt the most important city in the Low Countries under the rule of Philip II (1555-1598) of Spain. Goods not only from the Low Countries themselves but also from all over Europe, Asia and the Americas, were gathered and redistributed to the known world from Antwerp's 'Wharf'. Antwerp was unquestionably the major maritime hub of the Low Countries, although a multitude of small or medium-sized harbours dotted the North Sea coastline in Flanders, Zeeland and Holland. The majority of ships that carried goods to and from Antwerp belonged to shipmasters and merchants from Holland and Zeeland harbours but nonetheless, even the Antwerp merchants maintained a medium-sized fleet of small and sometimes larger vessels, that kept the city's maritime sector, such as shipbuilding etc, very much alive.¹¹

Antwerp's 'Golden age' did not last, since the Low Countries entered an intense period of distress in the second half of the sixteenth century. New religious beliefs, economic hardship in the widespread and very important textile sector, rising taxation and the infringement of the population's local rights

and privileges by Philip II brought social unrest. Slowly this unrest grew into civil strife, then into civil war and then finally it turned into a fully fledged international war, as two new nations emerged out of the once united (albeit loosely) Low Countries. The northern half became the mercantile protestant Dutch Republic, while the southern provinces, nowadays Belgium, remained faithful to the catholic Spanish monarchy. Between what were now called the Northern and Southern Netherlands a border was drawn by the flux and reflux of their respective armies.

By 1600, it had become patently obvious that the Scheldt estuary would remain in Dutch hands. On the other side of the border, Antwerp, which had been recaptured by the Duke of Parma's Spanish army in 1585, had been thoroughly re-catholicised. It was clear that it would become very difficult to budge either army from their respective entrenched positions but in the meantime, the Dutch had seen the opportunity to give a telling blow to the Spanish by closing down the Scheldt to all vessels. It seemed like the end of Antwerp's maritime activities, however, the Dutch politicians in The Hague had not foreseen that by closing down the trade on the river Scheldt the province of Zeeland, one of the most steadfast focal points of the Dutch revolt would experience a strong decline in its maritime commerce. Not surprisingly really, since Zeeland's commercial enterprises were grafted onto Antwerp's maritime trade.¹²

A new *modus vivendi* had to be found, one which secured Zeeland's major economic and commercial activities on the one hand, while maintaining Antwerp's commercial subjugation to the new Dutch Republic on the other. In the early seventeenth century the maritime trade on the Scheldt was resumed, albeit all the goods going to Antwerp coming from the North Sea (or moving in

the other direction) had to be transhipped in a Dutch port.¹³ Another new feature on the Scheldt was the levying of customs duties by respectively The Hague and Brussels and the mandatory transshipment and the expensive customs duties meant the end of Antwerp's maritime and commercial hegemony in Europe.¹⁴

This was indisputably a hard blow for Antwerp's economy, nevertheless the city continued to be the foremost port of the Southern Netherlands, since most of the exports and imports left or entered the country by way of the Scheldt on Dutch ships.¹⁵ The reason why Antwerp maintained its position as the Southern Netherlands' main gateway was that it was ideally located to gather, distribute and redistribute goods to large parts of the country. By using the river Scheldt and its tributaries, barges could easily service major cities and influential centres, like Brussels, Louvain, Mechlin, Ghent, Tournai and Mons. This situation would remain unchallenged until the last decades of the eighteenth century, when another Southern Netherlands' maritime hub would take over Antwerp's gateway position.¹⁶

Notwithstanding its fundamental role as the country's major harbour, Antwerp was not the one and only maritime hub in the Southern Netherlands. In the west, the North Sea coastline of the County of Flanders gave the Southern Netherlands another window upon the world. This coastline stretched from Dunkirk in the south (lost to France in 1662) to Sluis in the north (captured by the Dutch in 1604) and in between laid the harbours of Newport, Ostend (recaptured from the Dutch in 1604) and the fishing community of Blankenberge, where the fishing boats had to be beached.¹⁷ From 1640 on, Bruges, which had lost its waterway connection to the Dutch, was reconnected to the North Sea by a set of canals accessible to small or medium

sized seagoing vessels, first by way of Newport, and later by way of Ostend (1664).¹⁸ In the seventeenth and eighteenth century Bruges, and especially Ostend, became quite active seafaring communities with maritime ties stretching from Spain all the way to the Baltic. Although the Flemish ports had an enormous advantage because of their unrestricted access to the North Sea, their commercial activities remained quite modest in comparison with Antwerp. The main reason for this modest growth can be explained by the restricted hinterland of these Flemish ports, much more constricted than Antwerp's inland distribution network. So from 1585 onwards, the Southern Netherlands had to take into account two separate and very different maritime hubs. Because both maritime hubs, the Flemish coast along the North Sea, and the Scaldian coast (named after the river Scheldt) had very distinctive features, both coasts evolved quite differently a situation that leads us to classify the Southern Netherlands as a bi-maritime state.¹⁹

The choices of bi-maritime status

A bi-maritime state can best be described as a country with two or more separate coastlines separated from each other by the territory of another country. The best known examples are the United States (Atlantic versus Pacific), Germany (North Sea versus Baltic), France and Spain (Mediterranean versus Atlantic), but other illustrations of this bi-maritime nature can easily be found. To be a bi-maritime state it is necessary that the maritime routes linking these two stretches of coastlines make a considerable detour and/or that they are controlled by another state. The United States are bi-maritime because ships going from one coast to the other have to make a considerable detour around Cape Horn or through the Panama Canal. Spanish ships do not have to make such a long detour but Brit-

ish Gibraltar controls the sea route between Madrid's Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. Finally, the French must not only make a long roundabout way around the Iberian peninsula but they also have to endure British control when navigating through the Strait of Gibraltar.²⁰ Most bi-maritime states do not experience this condition in a positive way, since it halves their naval power and often makes them subservient to other states. The bi-maritime state also has to make a choice between its coasts, for instance when it comes to maritime investments and instead of having one major naval base, a bi-maritime state requires at least two of these. The bi-maritime states have to try to come to terms with this geopolitical status.²¹

The Southern Netherlands can be seen as a bi-maritime state because it does have two coastlines, the Flemish and the Scaldian coast, and because the maritime route between these two coasts, the Scheldt, is controlled by the Dutch. Like most bi-maritime states it has sought to end its bi-maritime status and Southern Netherlands, and then Belgium, have tried several times, but to no avail, to annex Zeeland-Flanders.²² The Southern Netherlands and its successor, has had to cope, like other bi-maritime states, with the strenuous question of where to make their maritime investments. The choice Brussels made in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was an awkward and singular one. Instead of spreading its maritime investments along both its coasts, the central government decided that Antwerp, regardless of the fact that it did not have free access to the North Sea, would become the Southern Netherlands' maritime focal point.²³ Of course, Antwerp had several very interesting and enticing assets which explain this choice. It was the foremost commercial and industrial city of the Southern Netherlands, and it was well connected to the country's other

major cities and political centres. Along with Dutch shipping Antwerp could still participate in world trade and Antwerp's merchants were also powerful enough to defend its indirect maritime activities against competition from the various harbours along the Flemish coast.²⁴

Although the Flemish ports, like Newport, Ostend and Bruges, had unlimited access to the North Sea's open waters, the Southern Netherlands' central institutions did not consider turning any of these harbours into a major maritime hub. Several reasons can be given why Brussels ignored the vast array of possibilities the Flemish coast had to offer. The Flemish coast's remoteness *vis-à-vis* the country's major cities and markets, the ongoing political strife between the coastal cities and the high cost of the greatly needed investments could not be remedied by an ailing Spanish monarchy in the seventeenth century. Therefore the harbours along the Flemish coast could not take over Antwerp's commercial and maritime gateway functions. Maritime activities along the Flemish coast continued at a low level and were peripheral to the economy of the Southern Netherlands.²⁵

A good example of how the Flemish ports drifted away from the Southern Netherlands' heartland and the Scaldian coast, is the central government's attitude towards its military navy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Soon after the Dutch closed down the Scheldt, Brussels split its navy into two admiralties or fleets, one for each coast. The Scaldian fleet was based in Antwerp where it was effectively imprisoned but continued to exist until the end of the *Ancien régime*. During the eighteenth century its main function was to please the aristocratic classes with the sought-after title of admiral!²⁶ The Flemish fleet, first based in Dunkirk and then in Ostend, had a much more important strategic

task to fulfil, since the Southern Netherlands were constantly at war with the Dutch and the French during the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the central authorities in Brussels and in Madrid decided to give the Flemish fleet to the States of Flanders in 1682 and, not too keen to take over the war at sea, this body discontinued naval activities over the following years. Privateers, or private enterprise with little state control, completely replaced the navy of the Southern Netherlands, reducing the central government's control of naval warfare to almost zero.²⁷

It is clear that maritime activities, both military or commercial, were not deemed important, or even necessary enough, by the landlocked aristocratic decision makers in Brussels or Madrid. The possibilities of Ostend's harbour and the Flemish coast were only discovered in the second half of the eighteenth century by the then enlightened central government in Brussels. The new spatial reorganisation process, the so-called 'transit policy', which sought to reconnect the Flemish coast and the economic heartland, came to an end with the annexation of the Southern Netherlands by the revolutionary French Republic in 1795. Both this annexation, as in the following one in 1815, which incorporated the *departements belgiques* into the former Dutch Republic, resulted in the removal of the Southern Netherlands' previous bi-maritime status, as the traffic of the Scheldt now flowed unhindered to the sea.²⁸

The economic coast versus the romantic coast

As a part of the French Republic/Empire (1795-1814) and as a part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-1830), Antwerp had free access to the North Sea once again. The French invested heavily in Antwerp's harbour, because it was, as Napoleon said, a gun pointed at England's heart.²⁹

New docks were dug, shipyards and warehouses were built, new maritime facilities were created, to turn Antwerp into France's major North Sea commercial and military harbour.³⁰ It was especially under the Dutch king, William I (1815-1830), that Antwerp regained its position as one of Europe's foremost harbours. The post-war maritime expansion and William I's dynamic and successful economic policy towards his southern provinces were of great importance for this renewal. He finished several projects the French had started and he steadfastly continued to invest in new maritime infrastructure. This policy secured new commercial relations between Antwerp and its rapidly industrialising hinterland in the provinces of Liège and Hainaut and within a few years, Antwerp competed with the other Dutch harbours of Rotterdam and Amsterdam to become the nation's major port.³¹

The Belgian revolution of 1830 put an end to the Dutch government's benevolence towards Antwerp. Europe's great powers decided that the border between the divided Kingdom of the Netherlands and the newly created Kingdom of Belgium would be the one previously drawn at the Treaty of Munster in 1648. With the restoration of these borders Belgium regained its bi-maritime status, as once more the Flemish or North Sea coast was separated from Antwerp by Dutch territory but the great European powers nevertheless stated that the Dutch had to guarantee freedom of navigation on the river Scheldt.³² It was not because maritime trade to and from Antwerp was now free from Dutch interference, that Belgium's bi-maritime status had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist. More importantly, Brussels was now ignoring its bi-maritime status which had ostensibly been renewed, and instead automatically followed the earlier French and Dutch examples. It vigorously

continued to develop Antwerp's profitable maritime expansion and the Belgian government even improved Antwerp's proximity to consumer markets, the political centre and to the coal mines and steel mills of Wallonia and the Rhineland, by way of the continent's first railway network in 1836.³³

It was not however because the government in Brussels ignored the country's bi-maritime nature, that the typical problems around this issue were not apparent in Belgian politics during the following years. One of the major differences between the people living along the Flemish coast and those in Antwerp was their differing perception of maritime activities. Used to the Scheldt's closure in the last two centuries and relatively far away and separated by Dutch territory from the North Sea, the inhabitants of Antwerp had become expert in handling incoming and outgoing ships and inland distribution, but did not invest much in shipping activities or seafaring enterprises.³⁴ On the other hand the inhabitants of the Flemish coast had, with a few exceptions, never endured a ban on their maritime activities and were therefore much more aware of the multitude of possibilities the sea had to offer.³⁵ From the end of the eighteenth century until the early 1820s, the port of Ostend had even surpassed Antwerp as the major port in the Southern Netherlands and this resulted in a considerable growth of the maritime sector along the Flemish coast.³⁶

Most ship-owners were thus active on the Flemish coast and they consequently urged the government to increase the subsidies of the merchant fleet in the years following Belgian independence. They were supported by Léon de Foere (1787-1851), a priest from Bruges and a member of the Catholic Party.³⁷ As one of the delegates for the province of West-Flanders in the national parliament, he waged a campaign to obtain more protec-

tive measures to safeguard the merchant fleet from foreign competition. Subsidising the merchant fleet would, according to de Foere, create opportunities for Belgian industries, and he used the well-known English axiom that 'trade follows the flag' to gather support.³⁸ De Foere's crusade was badly timed, as most Western European countries now began to adhere to the free trade ideology and most entrepreneurs and industrialists feared that if Brussels took protective measures for its merchant fleet, foreign countries might raise their import duties on Belgian products.³⁹ Their spokesman was Auguste Orts (1814-1880), a Brussels lawyer and a member of parliament for the ruling Liberal Party. As a staunch supporter of free trade, Orts believed that the Belgian entrepreneurs and industrialists needed above all 'des transports à bon marché' and that Belgian ships were not necessary at all, because: 'on exporte fort bien sous un pavillon étranger'. Everything else concerning maritime trade was 'insignifiant' according to Orts⁴⁰ and the ruling Liberal Party, which had its stronghold in Antwerp and Brussels, radically opted for free trade in the 1850s.⁴¹

Within a few years the Belgian merchant fleet lost 42 per cent of its units and a couple of years later, in 1862, the government abolished the Royal Navy because there were barely any Belgian ships left to defend. This drain on maritime activities was especially felt on the harbours along the Flemish coast, but not in Antwerp, which witnessed an unprecedented growth of 147 per cent in shipping tonnage due to Belgium's strong economic growth. In the following decades, Antwerp developed into one of the largest ports of the continent, catering to large parts of the European hinterland. It was, and still is, without any doubt, Belgium's window on the world and one of the country's foremost economic powerhouses⁴² therefore, the Bel-

gians see Antwerp as their main harbour, and the Scaldian coast as its 'Economic coast'.

After parliament's decisions in the 1850s and 1860s, it became utterly impossible to initiate a maritime policy for the harbours of the Flemish coast. Badly connected to the Belgian heartland and the European hinterland, maritime activities remained more or less unchanged, fishing and some coastal navigation. Only the use of steamships on the cross-channel lines to Dover, from 1846 on, gave a little dynamism⁴³ and so instead of maritime activities the Flemish coast developed tourism. Soon the Belgian and European aristocracy and high bourgeoisie, encouraged by the frequent visits of King Leopold II (1865-1909) flocked to Ostend. The 'Queen of the Seaside resorts', as the city was soon known, offered its upper-class visitors a broad range of activities like bathing, golfing, tennis, but also offered more mundane activities like dancing, horseracing and gambling.⁴⁴ One of the favourite leisure activities was to stroll along the harbour and watch the fishermen repairing their nets and rigging their boats. These fishermen embodied the everlasting and unchangeable traditional connection between mankind and the sea, a reassuring fact in a fast changing and increasingly industrial world.⁴⁵ Artists like James Ensor (1860-1949) and Guillaume Vogels (1836-1896) captured the fishermen's hard life on canvas, painting them on rough and unforgiving stormy seas.⁴⁶ Not only did it give the upper-class a feeling of nature's power, it also thrilled them to be standing on the edge of this dangerous and mysterious watery domain. Modern aspects also made the Flemish coast enticing to the romantic mind, as the new steamships to Dover slowly plied their way beyond the horizon. A spirit of travel was engendered among the bystanders, as they waved at the outgoing ferries leaving the port of Ostend. Quite

quickly the Flemish coast became a place of great romance, where nostalgic and traditional maritime activities of bygone days, like fishing, still took place and where ferries departed to discover 'unknown worlds'.⁴⁷ Old historic cities like Bruges, extolled by Georges Rodenbach's (1855-1898) romantic novel *Bruges-la-morte* (1892), were a reminder of a bygone era, when the maritime activities in coastal Flanders still mattered to the rest of the world.⁴⁸ Of the two Belgian coasts, the Flemish coast, without any doubt, can be called the 'Romantic coast', a perception that became more and more widespread, as in the twentieth century seaside holidays became available to middle-class and lower-class families.⁴⁹

The majority of Belgians might see the Flemish coast as the 'Romantic coast', a coast devoid of 'serious' and 'modern' maritime activities, but this does not mean that the people living along the North Sea were not aware of the great number of opportunities the sea has to offer. In 1907, the harbour of Zeebrugge (Bruges-by-the-Sea) was built against the wishes of Antwerp's establishment and some sixty to seventy years later it was, still against the wishes of Antwerp's maritime fraternity, modernised and enlarged to accommodate the largest category of ships. It is now Belgium's second largest harbour, handling around 42,000,000 ton a year.⁵⁰ Zeebrugge is just one example of the fact that maritime awareness is still present in the people living along the Flemish coast. Nevertheless, there is a clear dualism present in the Belgian mind concerning their two maritime hubs or coasts. The maritime activities along the Flemish coast are perceived as historic, nostalgic and traditional, while along the Scaldian coast they are seen as essential economic activities.

Unity in diversity. Geography as a representation of national identity

The argument that Belgium is an artificial state created *ab nihilo* can easily be refuted, but it certainly cannot be denied that the Belgian authorities enthusiastically assembled a new national identity in the decades following its independence. The creation and fixing of a Belgian identity was needed in order to tie its citizens feeling to its new national institutions.⁵¹ It was indeed necessary, because separate French and Dutch national sentiments had to be erased and those of the Southern Netherlands had to be reinstated albeit in a way befitting the modern liberal-bourgeois and unitary state that Belgium became after 1830.⁵² Unlike this new entity, the Southern Netherlands had been a loose confederation of independent 'provinces' (duchies, counties and lordships), all ruled by the same absentee Spanish or Austrian monarch.⁵³ The patriotic identity, or rather identities, in the Southern Netherlands were made up of a complex grid of bonds of loyalty directed towards the Habsburg monarchy, the Catholic religion, the particular social group to which one belonged (a guild, the nobility, etc.) and of course towards one's native soil (city, province, etc.).⁵⁴ By 'nationalising patriotism', as Belgian historian Sébastien Dubois described it, these allegiances were turned into important national symbols, for instance the monarchy. The new national symbols reminded the population of its old patriotic bonds of loyalty, and individuals could thus fit themselves more easily into the new national identity. For the authorities the genuine enthusiasm of the Belgian population for these national symbols, and thus its national identity, meant the general acceptance of the nation's sovereignty.⁵⁵ This overall acknowledgement enabled Belgium not only to eradicate post-revolutionary movements, like pro-French Réunionism or pro-Dutch

Orangism, but also to affirm itself as an old, established and historic nation amongst the other historic nations of Europe.⁵⁶

So in Belgium, the national identity focussed mainly on its history. History was thought not only to be glorious, but also to be instructive. The past was an example, and the Belgians were thus stimulated to follow in the footsteps of their illustrious forefathers. To encourage just that, the government ordered a large series of statues of historic countrymen to be sculpted in the 1830s and the national pantheon was extended with numerous paintings and publications in the following years. Not only did the unitary Belgian state create its national pantheon, but its example was also avidly copied by a large number of local administrations, in cities and provinces, who built their own pantheons of local heroes.⁵⁷ Besides these and other national symbols like flags and anthems, the authorities also organised grand festivities to glorify the nation. National celebration days were therefore an inherent part of the range of symbols⁵⁸ which created the national identity. The parade was one of the important elements in these Belgian national days, and usually consisted of a series of highly decorated floats, showing, amongst others, *tableaux vivants* of historical episodes. Local authorities not only held their own celebration days to exalt their local heroes, they also participated in these national celebrations. In the parade given for the 25th jubilee of the accession of King Leopold I (1831-1865) to the throne, there were tableaux hailing the Belgian nation but also nine floats representing Belgium's nine provinces.⁵⁹ The latter glorified their provinces finest hours and their immortal heroes, for example Antwerp portrayed painter Pieter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) to show its artistic primacy in the Baroque age, while the province of Luxembourg displayed its distinguished medieval

past through one of its knights who led the First Crusade (1096-1099).⁶⁰

It might strike us as odd that a unitary nation-state seeking to rally all its citizens around a new national identity should allow the local authorities of the provinces to create an identity of their own. This apparent anomaly is however perfectly understandable given the nation's fascination with its own history. Belgian history was looked upon in those days as a conflict between those sovereigns who respected the Southern Netherlands' numerous privileges, such as emperor Charles V (1515-1555), the archdukes Albert and Isabella (1598-1621) and empress Mary-Theresa (1740-1780), and those rulers who wanted to curtail local autonomy, like Philip II and Joseph II (1780-1790). The Belgian revolution of 1830 was the final apotheosis of these tensions, as the nation, symbolised by its monarch, now guaranteed through its modern liberal constitution the rights of the various local authorities.⁶¹ Municipal and provincial freedom was thus not so much seen by the Belgians as a dilution of the national identity but on the contrary as the local authorities' contribution to it.⁶² The Belgian people's attachment to its native soil, to its villages, cities or provinces, was recognised by its constitutional lawmakers in 1831 and it has accordingly been translated into fundamental laws in the constitution which give local authorities a large amount of autonomy.⁶³ Considering the importance given to territorialism, it can be stated that geography, like history, is also a representation of Belgian national identity.

So far little has been written on the national identity's focus on geography. Dubois recalls the population's affinity and affection for their native soil during the *Ancien regime*, but, for the period following Belgian independence, geography as defining the nation has not received much attention.⁶⁴ Neverthe-

less, geography was an aspect predominantly present in the national parade of 1848. Of the thirteen floats that took part in the parade, four represented Belgium as a whole, while the remaining nine were allotted to the provinces. Each of these provincial displays symbolised the physiognomy or the geographical features of its respective province.⁶⁵ For instance, Luxembourg has traditionally been described as the nation's most mountainous province, a land of forests and valleys teeming with game. The provinces of Hainaut and Liège were usually depicted as industrial powerhouses while Brabant, on the other hand, was portrayed as the cradle of the nation, the home of Brussels the country's capital and its institutions. The specific geographical features of every province were not only represented in national parades but also reproduced over as part of the nation's iconography, like provincial maids on national monuments or in engravings in books. Geographical representations were also very popular in post offices and railway stations, as the function of these buildings emphasised even more the bonds of loyalty between the nation's provinces.⁶⁶ The purpose of these territorial pantheons was to show the nation's geographical wealth and through this pantheon the nation could boast that it extended all the way from the North Sea coast to the Ardennes highlands, encompassing rich farmlands, romantic wastelands and bustling and industrious cities, etc. In this way, the geographical representation of the national identity praised Belgium's unity, by stressing that the city dweller, the farmer, the forester, the North Sea fisherman, etc. were all Belgians. At the same time as this geographical representation showed the diversity of the nation it also emphasised the numerous differences that existed among the Belgians and between the different regions, cities and provinces of the country. Therefore the geo-

graphical component of the national identity exemplified in national symbols, is an ideal medium to look at how the romantic, traditional and nostalgic Flemish coast and the intense economic activity of the Scaldian coast were, and still are, represented.

The geographical representation of Belgium's bi-maritime identity

The maritime identity of Belgium can of course only be portrayed in national symbols and geographical representations depicting maritime features, and above all distinguishing the two different Belgian coasts. Therefore, these symbols and representations also need to have a territorial component able to embody both Belgian maritime hubs. The Flemish coast can be incarnated by the province of West-Flanders, by its old capital Bruges and by some of its coastal cities, like Ostend or Blankenberge. Antwerp, both the city and the province, stand for the Scaldian coast. We will therefore analyse the 1848 national parade, several national monuments, engravings in books, murals in railway stations, children's games and tourist signposts along motorways.

The 1848 national parade opened with the floats of the forested province of Luxembourg and the agricultural province of Limbourg.⁶⁷ West-Flanders was the third province to display its economic activities and geographical physiognomy to the festive crowd. Pulled by several horses the front of the cart staged a *tableau vivant* of farmers harvesting the province's rich soil. Agriculture was not however West-Flanders' sole economic activity and the rear of the cart was dominated by a small smack or cutter, wherein actors dressed as fishermen proudly hoisted a sail bearing the names of the four Belgian fishing communities: Ostend, Blankenberge, Newport and Heist while around it fishmongers praised the yields of the sea and

West-Flanders' traditional maritime destiny, fisheries.⁶⁸ The last provincial display was from Antwerp but unlike the other provinces, Antwerp did not build a regular cart, but simply put some wheels under a little three-masted boat. This represented Antwerp's new maritime and commercial renaissance and its significance for the Belgian export-minded economy (see figure 1).⁶⁹

National celebrations were not enough, the Belgian government and the monarchy also erected quite a number of monuments to glorify the nation. The most important and well-known national monuments are the *Colonne du Congrès* and the *l'Arcade du Cinquantenaire* in Brussels.⁷⁰ In 1850 the government decided to commemorate the National Congress, Belgium's revolutionary parliament of 1830, by building a 47 metre high column topped by a statue of king Leopold I. The *Colonne* was designed by a famous architect Joseph Poelaert (1817-1879) and decorated with allegorical statues, representing the Arts, the Sciences and the four constitutional liber-

Fig. 1 The provincial floats of West-Flanders (fishermen and fishmongers) and Antwerp (a ship) represent respectively the Flemish and the Scaldian coast during the 1848 national parade.
(from : *Les fêtes de septembre illustrées*, p. 17-18)



ties. One of the many decorations comprises an allegorical representation of the nine provinces, each one represented by a young woman. The 'Maid of West-Flanders' does not show any maritime attributes, but she firmly clutches, as does the 'Maid of Limbourg' a plough, thus highlighting its agricultural destiny as in the 1848 parade. Antwerp's Maid does not display any maritime properties either, but she is portrayed with Mercury's caduceus indicating Antwerp's role as Belgium's maritime gateway represented by its economic and commercial activities.⁷¹ Another important national monument is the *Arcade du Cinquantenaire*, which also boasts statues of the provincial maids. This triple triumphal arch was financed by Leopold II's African revenues and built in 1905 to celebrate the 75th birthday of the Belgian revolution.⁷² On top of the 42 metre high arch stands the Brabantine Maid, as the *primus inter pares* of the Belgian provinces she commands a quadriga while raising the nation's flag. The other eight provincial maids can be found on the base

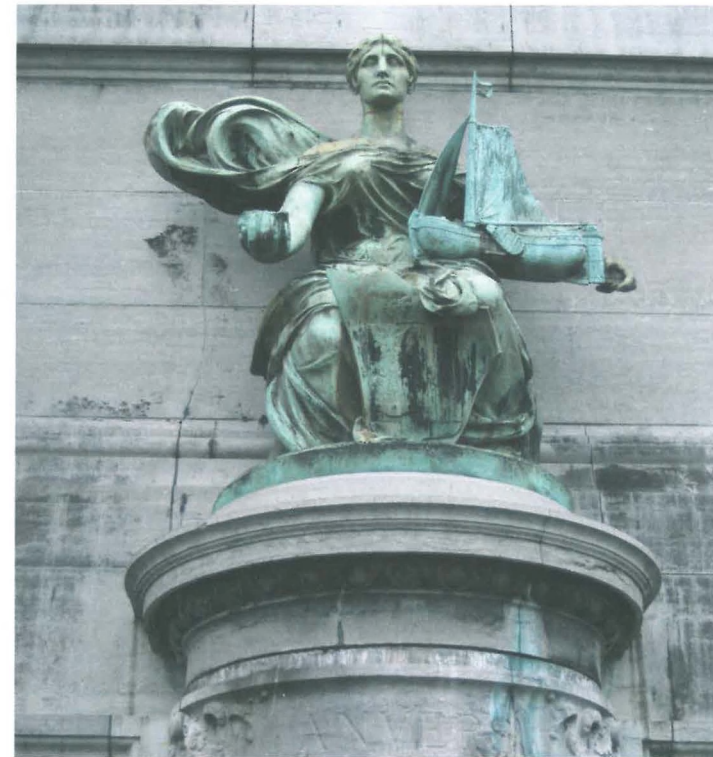


Fig. 2 Michael-W. Serruys, Charles Van der Stappen's provincial Maid of Antwerp at the 'Arcade du Cinquantenaire'. The maritime activities of the Scaldian coast are represented by the little boat in the maid's left hand.

of the arch's eight pillars. Accompanied by a lion and a bear, respectively the symbol of Flanders and of its capital Bruges, the West-Flemish Maid is not very helpful in establishing Belgium's bi-maritime status and Jef Lambeaux (1852-1908), her sculptor, did not represent her with geographical or economic attributes. Much more interesting is the provincial 'Maid of Antwerp', sculpted by Charles Van der Stappen (1843-1910), who holds a little boat in her left hand and clearly demonstrates the maritime activities of the Scaldian coast (see figure 2).⁷³

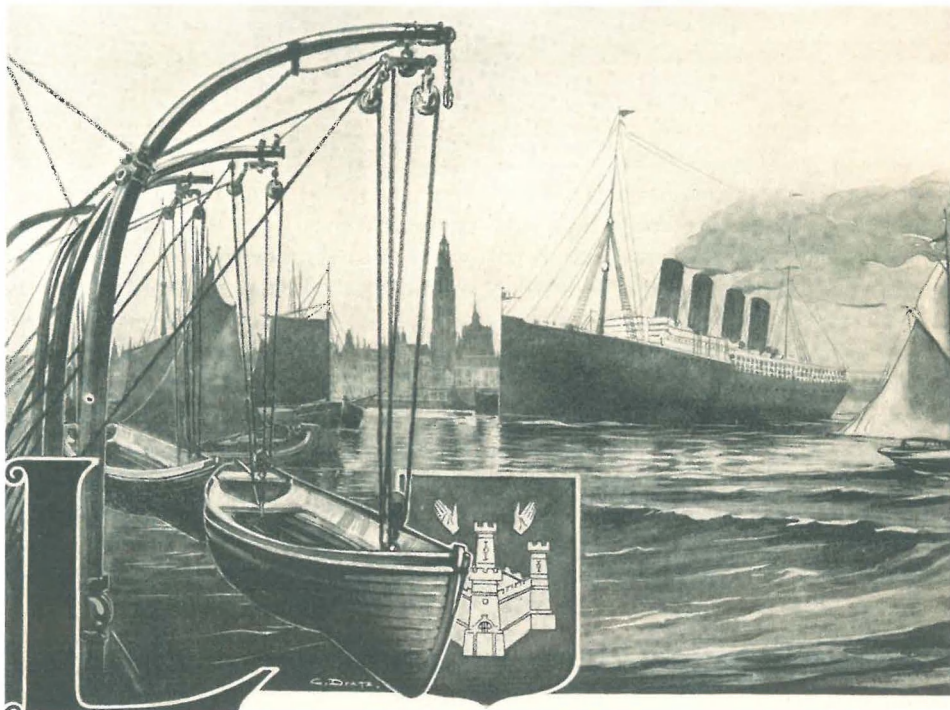
Provincial geographic representations are not only found in national parades or as allegorical maids on national monuments they are also seen in books dealing with Belgium, in which each province has a section describing its particular character, often summed up

in an engraving on the first page of each chapter. Of course such engravings are to be expected in books treating on Belgian geography, but they also turn up in books dealing with totally different subjects, like art or World War I. Printed in 1891, *La Belgique illustrée, ses monuments, ses paysages, ses oeuvres d'art* describes works of art (architecture, sculpture, paintings, etc.) in all the Belgian provinces. The engraving announcing the chapter on West-Flanders reveals Ostend's sunlit and crowded beach, its casino and its luxury hotels along the promenade while in the corner of the engraving can be discovered, fishing boats (with sails), fishing nets and a lighthouse.⁷⁴ This illustration, proclaiming the Flemish coast's traditional maritime undertakings and romantic leisure activities, can be compared with the maritime



Fig. 3 Left: W. Brown Sc, *The Flemish coast. Seaside tourism and fisheries* (engraving in *La Belgique illustrée* II, p. 1, 1891) and Below: C. Dratz, *The Scaldian coast. Antwerp's harbour* (painting in *Cuvelier: L'invasion allemande*, p. 348, 1924).

scenery on the engraving for the province of Antwerp. Here one sees a quay laden with crates, bags, barrels, and other kinds of merchandise and in the background a clipper is plying its way on the Scheldt, while a steamship, emitting dark puffs of smoke, is getting ready to raise its anchor. This representation tells the viewer that maritime activities were paramount on the Scaldian coast.⁷⁵ More or less the same conclusion can be drawn from the second volume of *La Belgique et la guerre*, printed in 1924, *L'invasion allemande*, recalls the atrocities of the German invasion of Belgium in World War I, province by province. West-Flanders' agricultural tradition is



brought out again, as the engraving shows rich pastures with grazing cows. The North Sea looms in the distance, tranquil and placid, as if maritime activities had yet to be discovered.⁷⁶ The contrast with the maritime activities represented in the engraving announcing the chapter on the German invasion of the province of Antwerp is immense. The numerous ocean steamers, freighters and barges describing an elaborate minuet on the river Scheldt, undeniably demonstrate that Antwerp's harbour is one of Belgium's economic powerhouses (see figure 3).⁷⁷

'Railway termini [...] are to the nineteenth century what [...] cathedrals were to the thirteenth century' according to an 1875 edition of *Building News*.⁷⁸ Railway stations were not only tokens of human progress, they also united the different parts of the country. As such the Belgian railway stations were a very suitable place to represent the nation's geography on huge murals. Most stations did not depict the nine provinces, but rather the nation's major cities, or sometimes the station's own city. This is for instance the case for Antwerp's eclectic neo-baroque Central Station (1905),⁷⁹ where passengers, on their way out, all have to pass under Antwerp's coat of arms flanked by Neptune's trident and Mercury's caduceus. Antwerp thus presents itself as the economic maritime gateway of the country. Most Belgian stations however show representations of several cities, like the station of Ghent-St.Peter. Built in a medieval-oriental style for the 1913 World Fair, Ghent's main railway station (1912) hosts a series of wonderful sgraffiti depicting Belgium's major cities.⁸⁰ The image illustrating Antwerp not only shows this city's landmarks, but also its bustling harbour where ships load and unload goods. These intensive maritime economic activities are set off against the sgraffito representing the romantic, traditional and nostalgic Flemish coast exempli-

fied by Ostend with sunbathers enjoying a warm, ozone-filled summer's day, fishermen braving the North Sea in a small cutter and a ferry on its way to Dover.⁸¹ Another station showing the dualism between the two Belgian coasts is the main railway station at Bruges, built in the austere modernist style of the 1930s.⁸² Inside is a gigantic and playful map of Belgium which covers one wall of the main hall. The left and right walls respectively show the southern and northern parts of Belgium, while the remaining wall depicts West Flanders with Bruges and all the coastal cities. Ostend emphasises tourism, represented by sunbathing holidaymakers and card playing in the casino, and the fisheries personified by two fishermen carrying a creel. Maritime activities are shown on the North Sea itself, where a great number of boats can be seen. Antwerp, painted on the right wall, is easily recognised by its skyline (cathedral) and the politically very incorrect silhouette of a Jewish diamond merchant. Here, as on the Flemish coast, boats roam around on the Scheldt, but again Antwerp's intensive maritime activities can be discerned. Unlike the picturesque harbours along the Flemish coast, Antwerp boasts modern port infrastructure, that is cranes (see figure 4).

The geographical representation of Belgium's bi-maritime status in railway stations continued to be demonstrated after World War II (1940-1945), as can be witnessed in the main hall of Brussels' central station (1952).⁸³ A large mosaic on the wall shows the different cities and regions of Belgium, Bruges is represented with a historic boat, a reminiscence of its maritime grandeur in the middle ages, and Ostend with a mermaid, a fishing net and an old-fashioned fishing boat with sails. Such traditional maritime activities are certainly not the features of Antwerp. The mosaic and this city's clearly modern maritime activities are illustrated by ship-



Fig. 4 Michael-W. Serruys, *The main hall in Bruges' railway station*. Above, the Flemish coast with the seaside resort and harbour of Ostend, represented by sunbathing tourists, its casino (playing cards) and its fisheries (fishermen carrying fish). Below the Scaldian coast represented by Antwerp's skyline (cathedral, Jewish diamond merchant). Its intensive economic maritime activities can be recognised by modern cranes along the river.



building. A further proof that the really important maritime activities take place in Antwerp can be found on the floor of the central station's main hall where three tiles represent the three largest Belgian cities, Brussels, Liège and Antwerp. The one featuring Antwerp shows a ship (see figure 5).

The geographical representation of Belgium's bi-maritime status with its two separate and distinct coasts was not only reproduced on national monuments, in books or on buildings. It also appeared on trivial objects, for instance in a children's game like the game of 'goose'. In a 1923 edition of this game, a drawing on every square represented a different city, square number three showed Antwerp's skyline with its quays laden with goods and the river Scheldt teeming with freighters and barges. The squares numbering 48 to 51 portray the Flemish coast and, in contrast, leisure activities fill the first three squares with images of the beach of Westend

and the casinos of Ostend and Blankenberge. According to this game, maritime activities, did still take place, along the Flemish coast, albeit of a traditional nature, and square 51 portrays the village of Heist where fishermen are still beaching their little sailing boats.⁸⁴ The Flemish coast was thus, in the early twentieth century, still portrayed as a place of old fashioned maritime activities despite the fact that the Heist fishermen for instance, had already started to move to the brand new harbour of Zeebrugge in 1906, and by 1920 they all had gone over to motorised fishing vessels.⁸⁵

In Belgium, as in most Western European countries, state funded nationalism gradually disappeared in the second half of the twentieth century, especially from the 1960s onwards. The result of this was that the national identity was not promoted any more on monuments, in railway stations, etc., and the general public began to demand more contemporary works of art. These geographical representations continued to be reproduced, albeit not in a nationalist way. In the 1980s it was decided to put brown and white octagonal tourist signs along the motorways. These signs give concise informa-



Fig. 5 Michael-W. Serruys, *A tile on the floor in Brussels Central station's main hall*. It represents Antwerp's, or the Scaldian coast's, main activity, that is its harbour.



Fig. 6 Joost Hendrix, *Tourist signs along the Belgian motorways*. Above, the tourist sign 'Oostend' ('Oostende') along the E40 motorway Brussels-Ostend. The Flemish coast is represented by seaside tourism (horse racing and kingly beaches) and maritime activities of bygone days (sailing ship). Below, Antwerp, or the Scaldian coast, is represented by its cultural heritage (Rubens) by its famous diamond industry and by its modern harbour (the unloading of a container ship).

tion in the form of pictograms of important landmarks, significant economic activities and of great historic events that have taken place in and around the region or city that the driver is driving through. Anyone driving on the motorways to the Flemish coast encounters brown and white tourist signs announcing the 'Coast' (*Kust*) and/or 'Oostend' (*Oostende*). The first sign shows the sea, the beach, the dunes, beach cabins and a seagull, while the second emphasises Ostend's fine

beaches, sporting events (horse racing) and maritime activities (sailing ship).⁸⁶ Drivers on their way to Antwerp will come across a tourist sign which points out Antwerp's diamond trade, its historic heritage (Rubens) and of course its maritime activities. Again the pictogram representing the maritime activities on the Flemish coast, a nostalgic sailing ship, contrasts sharply with the pictogram depicting the intensive economic maritime activities of the Scaldian coast, the unloading of a containership (see figure 6).⁸⁷

Conclusion

Of all the peoples living along the North Sea's shores it looks like the Belgians are the least affected by the sea. While the other North Sea countries have incorporated their maritime awareness and heritage into their national identity, the Belgians seem to have forgotten to do this. Nevertheless, the Belgians have an intense relation with the sea through their harbours, which makes the absence of a maritime component in their national identity even more surprising.

To understand Belgium's relation with the North Sea one must go back to the end of the sixteenth century. During those years the nascent Dutch Republic occupied Zeeland-Flanders, thereby controlling the Scheldt estuary and the shipping lanes to Antwerp. The ensuing so-called 'Closure of the Scheldt' cut the Southern Netherlands' maritime façade into two separate stretches of coastlines. This resulted in the creation of two distinct maritime hubs in the Southern Netherlands, that is the Flemish coast along the North Sea (Ostend, Bruges) and the Scaldian coast at the end of the Scheldt estuary (Antwerp). This bi-maritime status confronted the government in Brussels, whether in Spanish, Austrian or Belgian hands, with a choice as to where it should concentrate maritime activities. Brussels decisively opted, with the sole exception

of the second half of the eighteenth century, to deploy its maritime activities in Antwerp on the Scaldian coast. With the shipping lanes between Antwerp and the North Sea controlled by the Dutch, most maritime activities focussed on handling incoming and outgoing goods. Thus the Scaldian coast, the country's major intensive economic maritime hub, did not itself invest in seafaring activities. At the same time the seafaring activities, the maritime awareness and know-how of the Flemish coast were neglected by the government, because of this area's geographically peripheral situation. The existing dualism between the two coasts thus explains Belgium's maritime paradox. Its bi-maritime nature with the distinctiveness of the two coasts, the intensive/industrial economy of the Scaldian coast and the romantic, traditional, nostalgic Flemish coast, has forged the Belgian maritime identity.

After the Belgian revolution, the authorities did their utmost to create a new national identity. This national identity not only had to fit Belgium's modern liberal-bourgeois and unitary constitution, but the country needed to affirm itself as an ancient historic nation amongst the other European nations. As a result of this the Belgian national identity revered and glorified its predecessor during the *Ancien régime*, the Southern Netherlands, a loose confederation of independent provinces. A lot of attention was therefore devoted to the provinces and their geographical representations, which could be found in a multitude of national symbols, for instance during national celebrations, on national monuments, in books, on railway stations, in children's games or on signs along motorways. By specifically looking at the geographical representations of the maritime provinces or cities it is possible to discern Belgium's maritime identity. The romantic, traditional and nostalgic representation of the maritime

aspects of the Flemish coast, has been customarily depicted as seaside tourism, fisheries (with sails) and Bruges medieval trading activities. In some cases only the agricultural undertakings of the Flemish coast have been portrayed on national symbols, demonstrating once more that the real maritime activities, i.e. hardcore economic activities, took place along the Scaldian coast. The national symbols representing this coast always portrayed Antwerp's bustling harbour or an allegorical image praising its mercantile activities through Mercury's caduceus. Forged by the distinctive nature of its two coasts, the Belgian maritime identity is not the expression of a single maritime people, but of a thoroughly bi-maritime one.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Joost Hendrix for his help in finding iconographic representations in Belgian railway stations; Dirk de Reu from the Belgian railways for showing me the sgraffiti in Ghent's St. Peter station and professor Jo Tollebeek (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) for his kind advice in 'identity' related matters.
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- 4 Jean-Pierre Merckx and Dirk Neyts, *Jaaroverzicht Vlaamse havens 2007. Feiten en ontwikkelingen, investeringen, sociaal-economische indicatoren en statistieken over 2007* (Brussels 2008), 89.
- 5 Merckx and Neyts, *Jaaroverzicht Vlaamse havens 2007*, 72.
- 6 Rik Coolsaet, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek 1830-1990* (Louvain 1998), 31-33 and 74.
- 7 Coolsaet, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek*, 3-33 and 74.
- 8 Coolsaet, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek*, 222-223 and 227; Maria De Waele, 'De geest van Munster. De botsende economische en commerciële belangen van België en Nederland en de invloed op de wederzijdse beeldvorming', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, CXV (2000), 46-49.
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- 11 Léon Voet, 'De Antwerpse haven vanaf de Gouden Eeuw tot en met de 18^{de} eeuw', in Francine de Nave (ed.), *Antwerpen, een geschenk van de Schelde. De Antwerpse haven door de eeuwen heen* (1993), 28-29.
- 12 Victor Enthoven, 'Een duivels dilemma: Zeeland en de beheersing van de Schelde, 1572-1609', in Maurits Ebben a.o. (eds.), *De Scheldedelta als verbinding en scheiding tussen Noord en Zuid, 1500-1800* (Maastricht 2007), 37-38.
- 13 During the Twelve Years truce (1609-21) and after the Munster Treaty (1648) Dutch ships and Southern Netherlands' ships were allowed to navigate between the Dutch harbours (like Middelburg, Flushing, Dordrecht, Rotterdam) and Antwerp. In years of conflict, that is from 1572 to 1576, from 1585 to 1609 and from 1621 to 1648, trade continued, but Southern Netherlands' ships could not enter Dutch waters and Dutch ships were not allowed to sail to Antwerp. Goods were transhipped at Lillo, the Dutch custom and toll station downstream from Antwerp. Between 1599 and 1603 and between 1621 and 1629 the level of trade was very low as it was officially forbidden. Bruno Blondé and Harald Deceulaer, 'The port of Antwerp and its hinterland: port traffic, urban economies and government policies in the 17th and 18th centuries', in Randi Ertesvåg a.o. (eds.), *Maritime industries and public intervention. The Fourth North Sea History Conference 18-20. August 1995 Stavanger, Norway* (Stavanger 2002), 24-25; Stanley Bindoff, *The Scheldt question to 1839* (London 1945), 83-143.
- 14 Blondé and Deceulaer, 'The port of Antwerp', 23-26.
- 15 Blondé and Deceulaer, 'The port of Antwerp', 28 and 35; Voet, 'De Antwerpse haven', 30-31.
- 16 Michael-W. Serruys, 'The Austrian Netherlands' transit policy and the port of Ostend: solving the crisis of the 'Closure of the Scheldt', in Lars Scholl a.o. (eds.), *Crisis and transition. Maritime sectors in the North Sea region 1790-1940. 8th North Sea His-*

- tory Conference, Bremerhaven 2005 (Bremen 2008), 152-155.
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 - 19 Michael-W. Serruys, 'The port and city of Ostend and the process of state consolidation in the Southern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a geopolitical approach', *International Journal of Maritime History*, XIX (2007), 327-329.
 - 20 Michael-W. Serruys, *La géopolitique maritime de la Belgique* (Unpublished DEA thesis, Université catholique de Louvain 2004) 107-112.
 - 21 Serruys, *La géopolitique*, 111-112 and 118.
 - 22 De Waele, 'De geest van Munster', 46-49; Serruys, *La géopolitique*, 112 and 119-131.
 - 23 Jonathan Israel, *Conflicts of Empires. Spain, the Low Countries and the struggle for world supremacy 1585-1713* (London 1997), 48-9; Serruys, 'The Austrian Netherlands' transit policy', 154 and Serruys, *La géopolitique*, 111-112 and 118.
 - 24 Serruys, 'The Austrian Netherlands' transit policy', 152-154; Serruys, 'The port and city of Ostend', 322-324.
 - 25 Serruys, 'The port and city of Ostend', 327-30.
 - 26 Gustaaf Asaert, 'Admiraliteiten (tweede helft 14^{de} eeuw-1794)' in Erik Aerts a.o. (eds.), *De centrale overheidsinstellingen van de Habsburgse Nederlanden (1482-1795)* (Brussels 1994), 489; Helma Houtman-De Smedt, Charles Proli, *Antwerps zakenman en bankier, 1723-1786. Een biografische en bedrijfs-historische studie* (Brussels 1983), 41; Henri Anrys a.o., *De Zeemacht. Van Admiraliteit van Vlaanderen tot de Belgische Zeemacht* (Tiel 1992), 63.
 - 27 Serruys, 'The port and city of Ostend', 330-331.
 - 28 Serruys, 'The port and city of Ostend', 336-339 and 346 and Serruys, *La géopolitique*, 160-171.
 - 29 Albert Himler, 'De Antwerpse haven vanaf de Franse periode', in Francine de Nave (ed.), *Antwerpen, een geschenk van de Schelde. De Antwerpse haven door de eeuwen heen* (1993), 35.
 - 30 Baudet, 'De Franse Scheldelopolitiek', 45; Himler, 'De Antwerpse haven vanaf de Franse periode', 33-37; Peter Van Iterson, 'Havens', in Frank Broeze a.o. (eds.), *Maritieme geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Bussum 1977) vol. III, 88.
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 - 32 Coolsaet, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek*, 45; Himler, 'De Antwerpse haven vanaf de Franse periode', 38.
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 - 34 Hilde Greefs, 'De terugkeer van Mercurius. De divergerende keuzes van de zakenelite in Antwerpen en het belang van relatienetwerken na de heropening van de Schelde (1795-1850)', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, V (2008), 57-58; 71 and 82.
 - 35 Serruys, 'The port and city of Ostend', 320-321 and 333.
 - 36 Jan Parmentier, 'Fishery and merchant shipping under the French and Dutch flag in the Southern Netherlands' (Unpublished paper, Seventh North Sea History Conference, Bremerhaven, September 2005).
 - 37 In the nineteenth century, political life in Belgium was dominated by two parties, the Catholics and the Liberals.
 - 38 Albert de Burbure de Wesembeek, *Une anthologie de la Marine belge* (Antwerp 1963), 121-122; Coolsaet, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek*, 83 and 144.
 - 39 Coolsaet, *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek*, 111-112; Els Witte a.o., *Politieke geschiedenis van België van 1830 tot heden* (Antwerp 1997), 69-70.
 - 40 Quoted by the *Le mouvement géographique. Journal populaire des sciences géographiques*, 28 August 1898.
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 - 43 Albert de Burbure de Wesembeek a.o., *Le centenaire de la ligne Ostende-Douvres 1846-1946: contribution à l'histoire des relations maritimes anglo continentale*

- spar paquebots depuis leur origines* (Antwerp 1946), 72.
- 44 Marc Constandt, *Een eeuw vakantie. 100 Jaar toerisme in West-Vlaanderen* (Tiel 1986), 15-17; 58-9 and 78-85; Olivier Debacere, *Sedenatlas. Oostende. Een topografisch overzicht van de ontwikkelingen van een fel begeerde havenstad* (Ostend 2002), 137-146; Piet Lombaerde, *Leopold II. Koning-bouwheer* (Ghent 1995), 29 and 103.
 - 45 Alain Weill, *L'affiche de tourisme dans le monde* (Paris 1994), 20-21; Constandt, *Een eeuw vakantie*, 88 and 109; Guy Vanthemse, 'Het Interbellum, een scharnierperiode voor de Belgische spoorwegen (1919-1939)', in Bart Van der Hertten a.o. (eds.), *Sporen in België. 175 jaar spoorwegen. 75 jaar NMBS* (Louvain 2001), 167.
 - 46 Colette Souillard, *L'Art en Belgique du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Tiel 1985), 96-97; Constandt, *Een eeuw vakantie*, 20.
 - 47 Antony Mason, *Xenophobe's guide to the Belgians* (London 1999), 39-40.
 - 48 Constandt, *Een eeuw vakantie*, 123-124 and 127; Guido Peeters a.o., *La Belgique. Une terre, des hommes, une histoire* (Brussels 1980), 235.
 - 49 Constandt, *Een eeuw vakantie*, 28-31.
 - 50 Geert Laporte, 'De eerste wederopbouw', in Valentin Vermeersch, (ed.), *Brugge en de zee. Van Bryggia tot Zeebrugge* (Antwerp 1982), 263; Geert Laporte a.o., 'Wederopbouw en expansie', in Valentin Vermeersch (ed.), *Brugge en de zee*, 273; Merckx and Neyts, *Jaaroverzicht Vlaamse havens 2007*, 93; Robert Simoen, 'Technische infrastructuur', in Valentin Vermeersch, ed, *Brugge en de zee*, 294-303; Romain Van Eenoo, 'Het ontstaan van Brugge-Zeehaven', in Valentin Vermeersch, ed, *Brugge en de zee*, 226.
 - 51 Beyen, 'Belgium', 342; Jean Stengers, *Les racines de la Belgique jusqu'à la Révolution de 1830. Histoire du sentiment national en Belgique des origines à 1918* (Brussels 2000) vol. I, 229; Jo Tollebeek, 'Enthousiasme en evidentie in de negentiende-eeuwse Belgisch-nationale geschiedschrijving', *Leidschrift. Historisch tijdschrift*, VIII/2 (1992), 63-64.
 - 52 Today, Belgium is no longer a unitary state, as article 1 of the constitution of 1994 stipulates that Belgium is a federal state.
 - 53 Not all of Belgium belonged to the Spanish, and later Austrian Netherlands during the *Ancien régime*. Three more independent states covered the area of what is now Belgium: the Prince-bishopric of Liège, the Principality of Stavelot-Malmédy and the Duchy of Bouillon.
 - 54 Sébastien Dubois, *L'invention de la Belgique. Genèse d'un État-Nation 1648-1830* (Brussels 2005), 22-23 and 30-39.
 - 55 Dubois, *L'invention de la Belgique*, 424-426.
 - 56 Stengers, *Les racines de la Belgique*, I, 214-215; 221 and 227-228; Tollebeek, 'Enthousiasme en evidentie', 65.
 - 57 Jo Tollebeek and Tom Verschaffel, 'A Profitable Company'. Het pantheon als historisch genre in het negentiende-eeuwse België', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, CXV (2000), 223-230 and 240.
 - 58 Sébastien Dubois a.o., *La Belgique en scène. Symboles. Rituels. Mythes (1830-2005)* (Brussels 2005), 9.
 - 59 The nine Belgian provinces were Antwerp, Brabant, West-Flanders, East-Flanders, Hainault, Liège, Limbourg, Luxembourg and Namur. In 1994, the new constitution cut up the old bilingual province of Brabant in three parts, namely the province of Flemish-Brabant, the province of Walloon-Brabant and the autonomous region of Brussels. Today Belgium thus consists of ten provinces and Brussels (which does not belong to any province).
 - 60 Hendrick Conscience, *Beschrijving der nationale jubelfeesten te Brussel gevierd op 21, 22 en 23 juli 1856, ter gelegenheid van de 25^e verjaring der inhuldiging van Z.M. Leopold I als Koning der Belgen* (Brussels 1856), 80-81; 83-105; Tollebeek, 'Enthousiasme en evidentie', 74; Tom Verschaffel, 'Het verleden tot weinig herleid. De historische optocht als vorm van de romantische verbeelding', in Jo Tollebeek a.o. (eds.) *Romantiek & historische cultuur* (Groningen 1996), 298-305.
 - 61 Tollebeek, 'Enthousiasme en evidentie', 71-72.
 - 62 Verschaffel, 'Het verleden tot weinig herleid', 301.
 - 63 André Alen and Rusen Ergec, *Federal Belgium after the fourth state reform of 1993* (Brussels 1998), 4-5.
 - 64 Dubois, *L'invention de la Belgique*, 26-33.
 - 65 Jeroen Janssens, *De Belgische natie viert. De Belgische nationale feesten 1830-1914* (Louvain 2001), 48; *Les fêtes de septembre illustrées, ou description et pittoresque du grand cortège national, suivi du compte rendu des fêtes et cérémonies publiques. XVIII^e anniversaire de l'indépendance belge* (Brussels 1848), 1; 4-5 and 9-19; Verschaffel, 'Het verleden tot weinig herleid', 299-300.
 - 66 A sample of these national symbols or geographic representations will be discussed in the following paragraph.
 - 67 *Les fêtes de septembre illustrées*, 9-10.
 - 68 *Les fêtes de septembre illustrées*, 10 and 17.
 - 69 *Les fêtes de septembre illustrées*, 14 and 18.
 - 70 In Dutch respectively the *Congreskolom* and the *Jubelpark*.

- 71 *Le quartier Notre-Dame-aux-Neiges* (Brussels 1998), 9-10.
- 72 *L'Arcade du Cinquantenaire* stands on the 1880 jubileum grounds. During these festivities for the 50th birthday of the Belgian revolution another triumphal arch existed at the same place, albeit made of wood and staff. The actual triumphal arch which celebrates the 75th birthday therefore bears the name 'Cinquantenaire'.
- 73 Claudine Deltour-Lévie and Yves Hanosset, *Le Cinquantenaire et son site* (Brussels 1993), 3; 7; 18 and 20-21.
- 74 Émile Bruylant a.o., *La Belgique illustrée, ses monuments, ses paysages, ses oeuvres d'art* (Brussels 1891) vol. II, 1.
- 75 Bruylant a.o., *La Belgique illustrée*, I, 433.
- 76 Joseph Cuvelier, *L'invasion allemande* (Brussels 1924), 375.
- 77 Cuvelier, *L'invasion allemande*, 348.
- 78 Quoted in Luc Verpoest, 'Spoorwegkathedralen en netwerkknoppunten: twee eeuwen stationsarchitectuur in België', in Bart Van der Hertten a.o. (eds.), *Sporen in België. 175 jaar spoorwegen. 75 jaar NMBS* (Louvain 2001), 402.
- 79 Verpoest, 'Spoorwegkathedralen en netwerkknoppunten', 409.
- 80 André Capiteyn, *Gent in weelde herboren. Wereldtentoonstelling 1913* (Ghent 1988), 91.
- 81 At the moment of writing the sgraffito representing Ostend was hidden by a false ceiling above the station hall. After the restoration of the Ghent St. Peter railway station this sgraffito will once again be visible to the public.
- 82 Verpoest, 'Spoorwegkathedralen en netwerkknoppunten', 424.
- 83 Verpoest, 'Spoorwegkathedralen en netwerkknoppunten', 424-425.
- 84 Vanthemsche, 'Het Interbellum', 152.
- 85 Dirk Michiels, 'De visserij en de vissershaven', in Valentin Vermeersch (ed.), *Brugge en de zee. Van Bryggia tot Zeebrugge* (Antwerp 1982), 131; Gaston Desnerck and Roland Desnerck, *Vlaamse visserij en vissersvaartuigen* (Handzame 1974) vol. I, 59-60 and vol. II, 128; Jacques Mertens, 'Heist' in Hervé Hasquin a.o. (eds.), *Gemeenten van België* vol. I, p. 358; Jules Van Beylen, 'De Vlaamse schuit', in Valentin Vermeersch (ed.), *Brugge en de zee. Van Bryggia tot Zeebrugge* (Antwerp 1982), 141.
- 86 The tourist signs 'Coast' and 'Ostend' can be witnessed along the E40 (Calais-Ostend and Brussels-Ostend) motorway. A tourist sign 'Coast' can also be found along the E34 (Antwerp-Knokke) motorway.
- 87 The tourist sign 'Antwerp' can be found along the A12 (Brussels-Antwerp and Bergen op Zoom-Antwerp), the E17 (Ghent-Antwerp), the E19 (Brussels-Antwerp and Breda-Antwerp) and the E34/313 (Eindhoven/Liège-Antwerp and Knokke-Antwerp) motorways.

PART 4

Maritime People (Dis)appearing?