Re-enacting a scrutinised past at the
Antwerp world exhibition of 1894

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On 5 May 1894, Leopold II inaugurated the second world exhibition in Antwerp. He entered the grounds through a most impressive entrance which exposed the fin-de-siècle taste for grandeur and glamour (Plate 1). This atmosphere persisted throughout the exhibition, certainly in the huge halls which covered 85,000 m², where more than 2,000 entrepreneurs and numerous nations presented diverse glories of modernity in the arts and sciences. With such impressive numbers, the Belgian newspapers emphasised that the exhibition did not have to stand in the shadows of its direct precursors in Paris (1889) and Chicago (1893). The rationale of this statement was not only founded on the exhibition halls. Most journalists presented Old Antwerp (Oud-Antwerpen), a reconstruction of a sixteenth-century city quarter, as the true pearl of the exhibition.

In Old Antwerp, many historical buildings (such as the Kipdorp Gate, Plate 2) were meticulously rebuilt, the exteriors as well as the interiors. Only few years before, several of these buildings had been demolished in the course of the modernisation of the city. The reconstruction was no end in itself. It functioned, rather, as a most exquisite setting to stage divergent re-enactments, from everyday events, such as the activities in a barber-shop (Plate 3), through open-air theatre and puppet shows to tournaments, processions, and ceremonial entries. Time and again, the organisers and journalists presented Old Antwerp as a locus of nostalgia, the ideal place to retreat after all overwhelming novelties had been viewed. An anonymous Dutch guide, Views of the Antwerp World Exhibition, writes: “A sixteenth-century city view in the middle of the jumble of a World Exhibition Anno Di. 1894! Already this contrast gives you a sense of well-being”.

Most recent studies thus define Old Antwerp as the antithesis of modernity and a place of escapism. More general research on the world exhibitions underlines a similar anti-

Plate 1: “The King of the Belgians came over from Brussels, with all the Royal Family, specially to open the Exhibition, Antwerp keeping holiday for the occasion; Flags and crowds filled the streets as the Royal procession drove in State to the principal entrance under the dome” (Text and picture in: The Graphic, 12th May 1894, p. 563).
thesis. For instance, in *Ephemeral Vistas*, Paul Greenhalgh writes that, in the world exhibitions in Europe, ‘an intention from 1851 onwards had been to suspend the harshness of reality. Up to 1880, this had been brought into effect through the promises of material progress for all. The visitor was encouraged to dream of an imminent better life. Towards the turn of the new century however, the exhibitions sought to escape reality not so much through the myth of progress as through the creation of a fantasy land’.7

However, Old Antwerp cannot be defined as a pure fantasy land to escape fin-de-siècle reality, for most journalists also saw the reconstruction of the renaissance quarter and its diverse re-enactments precisely as a triumph of modernity. In this article, we will use the term ‘modernity’ in a narrow sense as a mid- and late nineteenth-century phenomenon in which the idea of scientific and social progress had an important place. Old Antwerp was deemed as only possible thanks to this modernity. Most particularly, modern historical accuracy was presented as unparalleled. The Ghent newspaper *Le Bien Public* wrote about Old Antwerp: ‘Nothing clashes in this picture, in which all nuances are rendered with an infinite tact, where the historical exactitude is well observed’.8

Modern historical accuracy was praised; in the same breath, it was linked with art’s ability to hide its own artificiality, since the conviction was very often expressed that the craftsmanship of Old Antwerp — *Le Bien Public* speaks of “le génie de quelques artistes” — presented an accumulation of precise details that overwhelmed the viewers. They had to forget they were seeing reconstructions and actors, and believe that they were indeed witnessing a genuine past. *Le Bien Public* wrote that, even if Charles V had been
brought back to life and arrived in the quarter, he would not be surprised, since no anachronism could be noticed. However, the concealment of artificiality could not be completely overpowering, since the nineteenth-century viewers still had to be able to take the historical accuracy into account and laud the modern builders and performers. Ending its description of Old Antwerp, *Le Bien Public* emphasised that the quarter was ‘a reconstitution of the past, admirably conceived’.9

We will argue that the nineteenth-century authors dealing with Old Antwerp paradoxically urged the visitors to go along with the belief in the re-animation of an old city quarter, but also presented to these visitors Old Antwerp as an impressive sample of the new possibilities which the advancement of modern historical sciences had brought into being. To clarify what was expected of the beholder, we will use the concept of ‘divided consciousness’.

This concept originates in the field of psychology. In his *Divided Consciousness: Multiple Controls in Human Thought and Action* (New York 1977), Ernest Hilgard focused on the working of hypnosis. He pointed out that a central regulatory mechanism dominates our consciousness. However, one of the many subsystems (habits, attitudes, interests, abilities, etc.) can interact with this. The media historian Tom Gunning appropriated this term to discuss the impact of early nineteenth-century phantasmagorias.10 Gunning pointed to the fact that the beholder of these phantasmagorias was conscious of the modern technique, but was also overwhelmed by the assumed presence of monsters or dead people. This way of seeing is, of course, not only restricted to nineteenth-century spectacle alone, but is essential to all forms of illusionist spectacles, and marks their theatricality as an interplay between enchantment, on the one hand, and media reflection, on the other.11

Similarly, the visitors to Old Antwerp were urged to make themselves believe that they were witnessing Renaissance life in full. Paradoxically, they were also expected to be impressed by the modernity of the re-construction and its re-enactments. We will use this concept of divided consciousness, and with it, show that the belief in witnessing the past and admiring modernity cannot be divided as such. Authors writing about Old Antwerp say that they were confused by the urge to become part of the Renaissance quarter, on the one hand, and their own nineteenth-century consciousness on the other. Their experience of Old Antwerp was defined by a feeling of being constantly thrown back and forth. At first, the past appeared to overtake most of the visitors by surprise. But very soon modern awareness brought them back to nineteenth-century reality. A critical eye tested the historical correctness of the quarter. Whereas travel guides and articles acknowledged the inevitability of this modern gaze, they nevertheless urged the beholder to go back to the primal experience of being plunged into the past.

We will clarify that this divided consciousness was far from self-evident, nor was it harmonic in nature. It was (and is) not easy to find a balance in the experience of both past and present. We will discuss how, in Old Antwerp, the consciousness of living in the nineteenth century could hinder the illusion of witnessing the sixteenth century. Moreover, we will also discuss how the organisers of Old Antwerp refrained from re-enacting certain historical events meticulously, since they evaluated them as being too inappropriate for their own time. The balance between past and present was clearly questioned where nudity was concerned. It was a clear instance of where the consciousness of the present prevented a plunge into the past.

The divided consciousness and the problems and discussions it entailed will be put
into context by relating them to other late nineteenth-century media that represented the Renaissance. To this end, we will look at The Entry of Charles V into Antwerp in 1520 of the Viennese painter Hans Makart, that was put on display in Brussels in 1880 and launched a discussion on the relation between the need for historical accuracy and modern appropriateness. Next, we will relate Old Antwerp to the Maria Stuart production by the Meininger company that toured in Antwerp and Brussels in 1888. This production, with its minute historical research, made a strong and lasting impression on the cultural climate from which Old Antwerp arose. Finally, by relating Old Antwerp to Nietzsche’s Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben (1873), we will question whether this ‘antiquarian’ dealing with the past is indeed a ‘malady of history’ that immobilizes modern man, as Nietzsche suggests.

To sum up, in this essay it is our aim to show that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the past was scrutinised to create a diverse range of spectacles that urged the onlooker not only to be an eyewitness to events long gone, but also urged him to admire the inherent modernity and even imagine his future.

**Michelet meets Ranke**

To define Old Antwerp’s modernity as a consequence of modern historiography, we should first have a look at nineteenth-century historiography and its position within the Belgian academic milieu. In the nineteenth century, historiography needs to be understood in a broad sense. It did not restrict itself to academic articles and books alone, but was also concerned with novels, drama, painting, sculpture, and spectacle. In *The Spectacular Past*, Maurice Samuels shows how, already at the beginning of the century, the romantic ekphrastic historiography of the French historian Jules Michelet, to give one example, acted, along with diverse shows — wax displays, phantasmagorias, panoramas, and dioramas — to enliven history. Since history was an important instrument in the imagination and creation of nationhood, its spectacular expressions and its ideal of rendering history present continued to fulfill this function throughout the nineteenth century.

Since Belgian independence in 1830, Belgian historians had been inspired by this French romantic historiographic tradition with its emphasis on visual power as an ideal means of evoking the ‘centuries-old urge for independence’, and thus to legitimize the new state. The reader of the historical essays and novels with their long evocative descriptions, but certainly also the spectator of historical drama, spectacle, and art works, had to go along with the fiction by letting themselves be plunged in the past. Consequently, the Belgian readers and spectators could experience the highlights of their national history as a rightful claim for the nation’s independence and existence.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this romantic historiographic tradition in the Belgian academic world, as well as in popular media, underwent a change towards a more professional attitude. This change was clearly marked by the successes of the German historicist school and its attempt to reconstruct the past *wie es gewesen*. A crucial role was played by the Liège professor of medieval history, Godefroid Kurth (1847–1916). After studying with Leopold von Ranke and Georg Voigt in Leipzig and Gustav Droysen in Berlin, he advocated in Belgian academic circles a meticulous use of source material to attempt a more ‘objective’ reconstruction of the past.

The urge for historical accuracy and objectivity led not only to an increasing professionalization within Belgian historio-
graphy, it also started to mark grand and official spectacles of history. There was a close connection between Belgian historical scholarship and the organisation of such events. The Ghent professor of medieval history, Paul Fredericq (1850–1920), is exemplary for this connection. In 1876, the young Fredericq organised a historical parade in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the Ghent Pacification. Fredericq, who was a life-long friend of Kurth’s, adopted his principals of historical accuracy and the meticulous study of source material as the starting point for the historical reconstructions for commemorative festivities.

In the historical reconstruction of the Pacification parade — carefully written down and documented in a festive album — Fredericq’s former teacher and mentor Max Rooses (1839–1914) was involved, as a member of the advisory Committee of Art and History. Rooses would later become the chief organiser of Old Antwerp, but already in 1892 he applied the same principles as Fredericq for his re-enactment of the entry parade of a famous competition of the Chambers of Rhetoric, the Antwerp Landjuweel of 1561. Both the Pacification parade and the Landjuweel parade show a clear historiographical innovation. Previous parades staged highlights from different periods of national history. Now, one historical event was chosen and re-enacted as accurately as possible.

The re-enactment of the Landjuweel parade was only a starting point for Rooses. He wanted to make re-enactments even more effectual by erecting a complete setting for them. The plan to create Old Antwerp as a historically accurate environment, in which the past would be made present, was born. Rooses, together with his chief designer, the painter and academy teacher Frans Van Kuyck, carefully saw to it that the plans of the quarter were drawn according to historically authentic examples. Rooses writes in the official catalogue, *The Quarter of Old Antwerp (De wijk Oud-Antwerpen)*, that, with this attempt, he and the other organisers wanted ‘to re-awaken the celebratory Antwerp of the sixteenth century, assured that the extraordinary lustre of their feasts and the picturesque environment in which these were celebrated would have a powerful appeal to the visitors of the Exhibition of 1894’.

The reconstruction of Old Antwerp was a thing quite unseen before. At previous World Exhibitions, there had already been historical quarters. At the Paris World Exhibition of 1889, the exterior of the Bastille was rebuilt and at the Chicago Columbian Fair of 1893, a sixteenth-century street from Old Vienna was recreated. Also, old interiors had been imitated before, such as the seventeenth-century Dutch interior shown at the Amsterdam World Exhibition of 1883. This corresponds closely with the rise of so-called ‘period rooms’ in late nineteenth-century museums, where the impression was created that one could step into a room unaffected by previous or later eras.

However, the combination of in- and outside reconstruction, the accuracy of it, and the large scale were new. This rebirth was not, in itself, the goal. What struck most visitors to Old Antwerp as the most alluring novelty was the performance of its burghers. Carefully dressed in historical costumes, the inhabitants of the quarter re-enacted sixteenth-century life as well as possible. They were generally seen as the driving force to make visitors believe they were in a genuine past. For instance, *Le Bien Public* acclaimed: ‘The illusion is completed by the life which dominates everywhere in the fantastic city one has before oneself.’

The actors were mostly retailers, but also several of the organisers of Old Antwerp, such as Rooses himself, Van Kuyck, and prominent Antwerp residents and industrials were involved. During the six months...
of the exhibition, they plunged themselves into late sixteenth-century city life. Old Antwerp had its own city government, with a mayor and its own city guards. In line with the fact that Antwerp was the birthplace of the first newspaper, even an Old Antwerp newspaper appeared, written in pseudo-Old Flemish. It not only reported the news from within Old Antwerp, but also ‘informed’ the inhabitants of Old Antwerp about what was happening in New Antwerp, accentuating the differences between the two. As such, Old Antwerp became a foreign country lying in the past, where ‘they do things differently’. Thanks to modern historiography, however, this foreign past could be visited.

The position of re-enactments such as Old Antwerp within late nineteenth-century innovations of historiography is of particular interest, since it anticipates the birth of modern theatre studies, as traced by the German scholar Max Herrmann. The interest in re-enactments of spectacle, together with re-enactments of theatre plays, corresponds to Herrmann’s choice not to restrict the new discipline to dramatic theatre alone, but also to pay attention to diverse forms of spectacle. Only then could the performance culture of a certain period be fully understood and ultimately brought to life. Therefore, in the new discipline of theatre studies, historical ceremonial entries, for example, received much attention. Decades earlier, this had already been evident in the case of Old Antwerp.

Moreover, in the new discipline of theatre studies, visual enlivenment and Rankean accuracy were also being used as combined forces. In his major work The History of German Theatre (Forschungen zur Deutschen Theatergeschichte) of 1914, Herrmann writes: ‘We set ourselves the task of making a theatrical performance of the past live again in such detail that, if the financial means were made available, one could indeed present it to a modern audience without fear of provoking offence’. Here, ‘offence’ has to be understood as ‘historical inaccuracy’. To avoid this, Herrmann developed a scientific method for the modern theatre historian. The main purpose of the new critical approach was to reconstruct historical performances precisely as they were once performed. A similar purpose can be retraced already two decades earlier in the Old Antwerp project, albeit with the difference that the Antwerp project aimed at educational entertainment, whereas Herrmann wanted to develop a new academic field of research.

### How to Experience the Past?

Many journalists dealing with Old Antwerp discuss the success of the plunge into the past by relating it to the organisers’ scrupulous art and its hidden artificiality. In an article in the Gazette van Gent this is expressed as follows:

Old Antwerp is a wonderful resurgence of the old and picturesque city. There the visitor will find himself among the façades of three centuries ago. (…) How well has that wizard Geefs [next to Van Kuyck, the chief designer of the quarter] created picturesque corners! What picturesque light and dark! What an accuracy in the details of the wood and stone façades! What a harmonious fantasy in the ordering of the parts and the whole! One has to be deeply affected by the period’s soul to be able to render everything so truly.

Here, we can place our concept of divided consciousness within the perspective of the journalist reflecting on the quarter. On the one hand, the journalist speaks of its ‘resurgence’ (herleving) as ‘true’ (waar). On the other, he praises the creators of Old Antwerp for their craftsmanship, which shows ‘accuracy’ (nauwkeurigheid) and ‘harmony’ (harmonie).
By contrast, in his retrospective *A View of Old Antwerp*, the Flemish writer Pol De Mont relates the awareness of experiencing both past and present to the beholder visiting Old Antwerp. He even gives the visitor the primary responsibility for creating the belief in the animation of the past. Following De Mont, this inevitably goes along with the consciousness of the present. However, he sees this combination as problematic, as he emphasises that the consciousness of one’s own time hinders the overwhelming effect of Old Antwerp.

De Mont describes how he himself as a visitor was, time and again, torn between being the critical beholder evaluating modern historiography by trying to find anachronistic negligence, and desire for total self-renunciation of being that critical beholder. De Mont emphasises that entering the quarter creates the impression that ‘from the cosmopolitan present one is taken back to a world of primitive simplicity all of a sudden as if by magic’. However, directly afterwards, he quotes Goethe, saying that art is a beautiful lie which beguilingly imitates the truth. According to De Mont, this deception completely typifies Old Antwerp: ‘Ye there everything — as surprisingly plausible, and natural, and authentic as it may be — is as false and deceitful in its material realization as in its systematically planned design’.

At the first moment, Old Antwerp completely convinces the beholder, who can believe he is actually sojourning in a Renaissance quarter. However, shortly afterwards, the fin-de-siècle viewers find it hard to lose themselves completely in the past. According to De Mont, modern man wants to get hold of the magic by deconstructing it and thus rationally understanding it. The late nineteenth-century beholder started concentrating on how this wonder was created, looking for imperfections, such as the façades painted too brightly to look truly authentic. So here we see that Rankean historicism was not only a driving force for creating Old Antwerp. Historicism was also the attitude the visitor used to evaluate it.

Whereas the meticulousness of the creators encouraged the imaginations of the visitors, the visitor’s own meticulousness threatened to destroy the effect of Old Antwerp. The representational aspect of the reconstruction and its re-enactments was considered all too closely. To avoid the dominance of the critical gaze, De Mont exhorts visitors to Old Antwerp to put aside all their legitimate, yet impeding doubts: ‘Renounce your modern doubtfulness and your historical knowledge when you enter this ground (. . .). To enjoy fully what this unique “creation” has to offer, one has — using the words of Hugo — *admirer comme une brute*, or even to look at it as a cow does the beautiful sun going down in purple and gold’. Thus, De Mont points to an awareness of the beholder which we could relate to the concept of divided consciousness. However, he does not see this awareness as self-evident and harmonious. De Mont emphasises that the late nineteenth-century visitors to Old Antwerp are involved in an inner conflict. On the one hand, they want to imagine themselves as being in the fiction of the reconstruction and its re-enactments, and to believe they are experiencing genuine events directly from the past. Who would not want to make an effort to be an eye-witness of Renaissance Antwerp? However, on the other hand, there inevitably is also modern doubt and suspicion. The fin-de-siècle beholders found it hard to completely surrender their disbelief. Being immersed within the image space of Old Antwerp, they could not help but question the observations by which the illusion of experiencing genuine past turns into a reflection on the mediality of historical reconstructions. As detailed as the reconstructions might be built, and as fine as the re-enactments might be performed, modern man puts everything to the test, again and again, to find anomalies.
Charles’ Ceremonial Entry

The fin-de-siècle beholders not only felt the urge to find anomalies, as De Mont described. They could also be shocked by those visualisations that called up the past too bluntly. Thus, besides modern man’s problems with too little historical accuracy, there were also problems with too much historical accuracy. To clarify this position, we will concentrate on the discussion of whether the need for historical accuracy in the representation of the past was enough of a justification to show nude or semi-nude bodies.

This brings us to one of the most praised results of Old Antwerp, the re-enactment of the ceremonial entry of Charles V into Antwerp in 1520 (Plate 4). The sixteenth-century artist Albrecht Dürer witnessed the original entry and expressed his enthusiasm in a conversation with the humanist scholar Philipp Melanchthon:

Amongst the actors on the stages stood the most beautiful and charming maidens. They were almost totally nude, only covered with a thin veil. The emperor entering the city and arriving at the place of the stages did not pay attention to the maidens (...). However, I have to add that I myself was very willing to go closer to them. I wanted to discern what precisely was taking place and I wanted to properly consider the perfection of the beautiful maidens, declaring that I, as a painter, examined them with a fair amount of modesty.36

This comment was published in full length in Rooses’ The Quarter of Old Antwerp. There, Dürer was put forward as a privileged historical witness to the 1520 event.37 However, Rankean rigour forced Rooses to say that there were not enough primary sources to reconstruct the 1520 parade as such. Therefore, a pastiche had to be made by joining together descriptions of other Renaissance parades in the Netherlands.38 One can wonder why the organisers chose to reconstruct a parade so poorly documented and why they did not focus, for instance, on the much better documented Antwerp entry of Charles V in 1549.39

The answer might be found in the fact that the 1520 entry had become part of the late nineteenth-century image repertoire, thanks to a painting by the Viennese painter Hans Makart of 1878 (Plate 5). This tableau was internationally celebrated as a triumph of historical painting, thanks to its magnificent display of colour and its excellent drawing, but certainly also because the artist achieved perfectly the visualisation of what Dürer was supposed to have seen. Makart’s masterpiece travelled throughout Europe. In 1880, it was on display in Belgium. Here, we will focus on a Brussels notice (booklet) by an anonymous author (most probably used as a guide to visit the painting) to reconstruct how far the painting can be related to modern problems with too much historical accuracy.

At the very start of the Brussels notice, the author introduces his elaborate description of the painting as follows: ‘Let us look at the way Makart has understood and executed the subject taken from Dürer’s account’.40 Thus, the primary source is explicitly called upon to legitimate the work of art. Historical accuracy is once again put forward as an important parameter to evaluate a representation of a sixteenth-century event. However, this precision is not unanimously lauded, for the author of the notice refers to critics of Makart’s painting. They objected to the ‘scandalous’ nudity of the girls preceding Charles. According to Makart’s critics, these girls draw too much attention, pushing the young emperor into the background.

But there were also defenders of Makart’s painting, such as the author of the Brussels notice. He relies on Dürer’s comment quoted above, and does not agree with the preponderance of modern sensitivity, but gives
Plate 4: The Entry of Charles V into Antwerp in 1520, in: Max Rooses, De wijk Oud-Antwerpen in de wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Antwerpen 1894, title page.
precedence to historical accuracy. Just as Rooses did, the anonymous author also publishes Dürer’s passage on the 1520 entry literally. He continues as follows: ‘Could Makart find a more seductive subject for his artistic temperament? Preferring to paint the female nude, he has occasion here to push his art to the utmost limit. And what setting better fits the artist’s intentions than the brilliant and sumptuous life in the Flemish cities of the sixteenth century?’ The Brussels notice thus uses two related arguments to laud Makart’s painting. Next to the artistic genius, there is also the artist’s historical accuracy. The latter is presented as more important than modern sensitivity.

The parade in Old Antwerp can be linked with Makart’s painting and modern man’s problem with too much historical accuracy. We can start with the depiction of the 1894 re-enactment by Van Kuyck, which was used for the cover of Rooses’ The Quarter of Old Antwerp (Plate 4). As in Makart’s work, in Van Kuyck’s picture girls hold a most prominent place. Moreover, in both depictions Charles is represented as literally and figuratively superior to everybody. Just as Dürer described, the young emperor is not looking at the abundance of feminine charm. However, compared with Makart, Van Kuyck gave far more attention to the architectural setting of the parade, thus showing how the re-enactment was improved owing to the detailed reconstruction of the Renaissance quarter.

Another difference is even more revealing. In contrast to Makart, Van Kuyck represents the girls as fully dressed. Although the organisers of Old Antwerp went to extremes to attain as much historical accuracy as possible, the pictures reveal a clear distance from the past. It is striking to read, in Rooses’ book, the detailed account by Dürer, full of admiration for the maidens’ almost nude appearance, and then to see the front page of that same book, where the female bodies are conspicuously wrapped up in a manner reminiscent of the famous Art Nouveau draperies in the posters of Alphonse Mucha. The viewer is not even permitted to
see a décolleté dress, let alone the transparent veils of Dürer’s description. Nineteenth-century morals prevail over the nineteenth-century urge for accurate re-enactment. A complete historical re-enactment was deemed improper, as it would contradict bourgeois etiquette. On this crucial point, one had to admit that the hands of the clock could not be turned back without difficulty. Certainly, a step back into the past was deemed a clear example of historiographical skill, but it was not to harm the many other successes of contemporary time, certainly not the generally assumed progress in the field of social decorum.

Thanks to a retrospect on Old Antwerp by the journalist August Monet, we can see that not only Van Kuyck’s picture reveals prudishness; the re-enactment itself must have done so, too. Monet even explicitly makes a comparison between the 1894 re-enactment and Makart’s painting. He protests against the predominant discourse of prudery and regrets that the organisers did not follow Makart’s example: ‘Even if it were only the three Antwerp graces on the Viennese painting, sauntering in gold-blond, dew-fresh nudity, as if competing for the golden apple of the youthful Paris, — in much the same way that they must once have been seen in reality’.

Meininger’s Maria Stuart

In this antithesis of modern sensitivity and taste versus Rankean accuracy, it is interesting to look at the productions of Duke George II of Saxe-Meiningen, leader of the famous Meininger company. In several reviews of their performances, a difference was made between the terms Meiningtum and Meiningerei. Meiningtum was related to the company. It was believed to excel in re-enactment defined by thorough historical research. By contrast, Meiningerei goes no further than mere sensuous display of the past. In his monograph on the Meininger company, John Osborne mentions that several critics saw Makart’s Entry of Charles V as part of the latter group. Following the reviews, a middle course had to be found between past and present. A meticulous representation of the past was absolutely necessary, but the visualisation of the past could not be exploited only as a reason to show subjects in a way not acceptable to contemporary ideas of decorum.

A fine example of the Duke’s Meiningtum is the production of Schiller’s Maria Stuart. With its 89 performances during the European tours, it was one of his international successes. In 1888, the play was performed three times in Antwerp and four times in Brussels, and was considered a major success. In the Antwerp art journal The Flemish School (De Vlaamsche school), Pol de Mont expressed his enthusiasm for Maria Stuart: ‘Never before, in whatever city I had visited a theatre house, had I been able to satisfy my eye with such a wealth of decorations and costumes’. And even a decennium later, the Flemish theatre critic Rudelsheim still referred to this performance as a clear example of how to stage historical plays.

In the reviews of the Maria Stuart production, most journalists explicitly mentioned how the Duke’s prominent assistant,
Ludwig Chronegk, did his utmost best to obtain as much historical information as possible. A preliminary review in the Antwerp newspaper *Le Précurseur*, for example, said that research lasting several weeks had been carried out in London by Chronegk and scholars of the British Museum. They received special admittance to the secret archives. There, they found a previously unknown plan of the castle of Fotheringhay in which Mary Stuart was imprisoned and executed. Moreover, they discovered the text of a sixteenth-century song they thought had been sung during the execution. It was a true Rankean delight to find such new historical sources. Moreover, both sources were eagerly used for the actual Meininger production.

Despite this meticulous research, the Meininger company were regularly accused of displaying a purely outward show. The charge of *Meiningerei* was levelled against them at such times. Even the Meininger were repeatedly seen as being unable to escape making mistakes, against the difficult background of the relationship between re-enacting history as accurately as possible and satisfying nineteenth-century taste. Here, the accusations did not so much concentrate on too much explicit bodily display, as in Maartens’ painting, but on modern dramatic conventions.

Repeatedly the criticism could be heard that too much luxury was displayed; most often the second act was attacked for this. There, the English court was shown in all its glory welcoming a French envoy. Critics argued that the display of opulent luxury at the English court diverted attention away from the dramatic action of Schiller’s play. In the Antwerp art journal, *De Vlaamse Kunstbode*, this criticism was explicitly discussed, but also countered. There, writer and theatre critic Edward Van Bergen wrote a passionate article on the ten productions which the Meininger showed on the Antwerp stage in April 1888. Van Bergen was most enthusiastic about *Maria Stuart*, which he describes as ‘the play of which we preserve the best memories and which has affected us the most profoundly’. He mentions the criticism of the scene where the French are welcomed, but in the same breath he defends it with arguments which the Meininger themselves had put forward:

It gave the occasion to display much glamour and riches in costumes and scenery and nothing was spared. Worth mentioning is especially the second act, the reception of the French ambassador at the English court. There, the customary ceremonies are shown in their smallest details. Some find that the Meininger have gone too far in their theatre setting. However, their own answer was, first, that it is historically accurate, and second, that by doing so the simplicity and the desolation of Maria’s situation could be placed all the better in the foreground, and the interest in her become far greater.

The dividing line between an approved and a tasteless visualisation of history was narrow when it came to the re-enactment of past events. Some contemporaries thought that the Meininger company crossed that line in *Maria Stuart*. The Meininger company themselves maintained that this was not the case, since the production was historically and dramatically accurate, even the much-criticised second act. The Antwerp theatre critic Van Bergen agreed with the German theatre company. In his general considerations, he repeats the historical and dramatic excellence of the famous court theatre: ‘The performances of the Meininger can be seen as practical lessons for the people, which initiate them into the mores, customs, dresses of the different periods in time, and which acquaint them with time, place, and action’.
Salutary Immersion

We have referred to other late nineteenth-century visualisations of the Renaissance to show that Old Antwerp was no isolated experiment in using historical accuracy in an attempt to revive the past and stage it in front of the beholder’s eye, and to clarify that these experiments were certainly not always deemed unproblematical. However, the re-enactment of Old Antwerp also differed from many other late nineteenth-century historiographical experiments. Whereas in the painting by Makart and in the theatre performance by the Meininger company the spectator was excluded from the representation, in Old Antwerp the audience was part of the representational space. The reconstruction drew on a strategy of immersion, in which the viewers transgressed the borders between reality and representation by becoming part of the representation and thus writing, each one, their own ‘scenario’. Immersion enforces a divided consciousness, since the historiographical achievements of one’s own time could be admired all the more, along with the make-believe of being taken back in time. As the visitors were able to walk in Old Antwerp, talk with sixteenth-century burghers, and even drink and eat in Renaissance taverns, they could thoroughly test the accuracy of the reconstruction and its re-enactments, but were paradoxically urged to let themselves be overwhelmed by all evident vividness of the past.

Whereas the ambiguity of bringing together past and present was certainly seen as an essential characteristic of the experience of Old Antwerp, the effect of this media reflection was often minimalised. We already saw how Pol de Mont stated that, in Old Antwerp, a critical evaluation is inevitable. However, we also saw that de Mont urges the visitor ultimately to let him- or herself be overwhelmed by the past. The visitor has to ‘renounce his modern doubtfulness and his historical knowledge’ to be totally immersed in Old Antwerp. This was because, first and foremost, only then could the visitor experience the beneficial effect of the past:

I cannot better express the impression which — so to speak — seizes the visitor to Old Antwerp, than to say that the air of fairy-tales blows in his face from the moment when he is taken by the past. And his lungs are filled with the fresh and youthful, no, refreshing and rejuvenating, invigorating and purifying air of fairy-tales, an air which is filled with the strongest aromas of an uncorrupted national past. Even the most doubtful son of this fin-de-siècle feels powerfully that the ideal bond which joins the present with the past, is braided with the best and noblest elements in us.

After being immersed in Antwerp’s past, the late nineteenth-century visitor could leave the quarter, returning to his own time completely purified. This catharsis was possible owing to a special contact with the past. Old Antwerp regenerated, since it brought back an undistorted past that showed an exemplary society. Being totally gripped by that society made it possible to call on its most righteous characteristics as a cure for one’s own fin-de-siècle. Thus, re-enactment not only strengthened the bonds with an idealized past, it was believed, in particular, to reshape modern society for a better future. Amidst the World Exhibition and its ideology of progress, the continuity between past and present seemed not to be endangered. The hopes for a future grounded in tradition ran high.

Following this line of thought, the rest of this article will look at late nineteenth-century ideas concerning the relation between re-enacting the past and defining the future. Performing the past to fashion future society was not typically fin-de-siècle. We have already indicated that, in the decades directly
following Belgian independence, historical novels, paintings, theatre plays and performances, parades, and other spectacles were used to form and propagate the new national identity. In the words of Tom Verschaffel, these re-enactments ‘aimed at convincing the viewer of the continuity between past and present, and of the personal alliance with the national history and with the nation itself’.

However, in contrast to the decades following 1830, Old Antwerp was not so much concerned with the construction of a new Belgian identity. Antwerp’s identity was re-enforced. De Mont, among others, reported that nothing that referred to the period after 1585 could be seen in Old Antwerp. The Fall of Antwerp and the resulting loss of economic and financial importance were entirely left out. Only Antwerp’s heyday was brought to life. Bringing back the first, legendary bloom of the city accentuated its contemporary bloom, and certainly a bright future. Thanks to the many colonial activities, the port flourished once again and was even believed to be able to emulate its sixteenth-century wealth. It was auspicious that Antwerp could create such a magnificent reconstruction and could abundantly re-enact the rich moments from its past. The divided consciousness that went along with the re-enactment and at the same time evaluated that re-enactment paid off precisely because the city thus showed its prospective capacities.

No less a personage than King Leopold II emphasised that the beholders of Old Antwerp could look at the re-enactments and their setting as living evidence for the famous past, and as a commendable nineteenth-century achievement, but also as a promising prospect for a thriving future. When Leopold II was officially welcomed in the quarter, he proclaimed in Flemish: ‘The Queen and I, we are happy to set foot in Old Antwerp. It bears witness to your past glory. It tells in an eloquent manner that your artists of the present are worthy of the glorious past. The future is yours’. It is telling that the king’s speech was in Flemish. The king seldom spoke the language. By speaking Flemish, Leopold II went along with the fiction of being in a genuine Renaissance quarter of Antwerp. The re-enactment was only complete if the burghers talked in their own, genuine language. Therefore, a pseudo-Old Flemish (a combination of sixteenth-century words and nineteenth-century Flemish) was used.

However, there was also a modern political agenda behind this re-enactment of sixteenth-century language. ‘Being a leader of the Flemish Movement’, Hans Vandevoorde writes, organiser Max Rooses ‘nationalist motives undoubtedly came into play’. Old Antwerp was a Flemish-speaking bastion which had to make evident to all visitors what the true language of Flanders was. This could also be seen in the Flemish nationalist journal De Vlaamsche Wacht, which praised the ‘far-reaching and affecting impression Old Antwerp made, and how it would ‘be so beneficial for the future of our Flemish national life, yes, for our Flemish national struggle’.

Use and Abuse of History

The idea that the re-enactment of the past might serve as an invigoration for the future was not shared by everyone. When plans were made to rebuild Old Antwerp for the Antwerp World Exhibition of 1930, the avant-garde writer Victor Brunclair vehemently dismissed the quarter as a ‘senile dream’ that was exemplary for the retrogressive attitude of the average inhabitant of Antwerp, who ‘eschews the future and fondles the past like a dead bride’. But we do not have to wait for the interbellum period to hear utterances that modern society is satu-
rated with reconstructions and re-enactments. Already in 1873, Nietzsche criticized, in *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, the modern taste for the past and for history. As what is understood as a direct attack on Rankean historicism, but also on the craving for representing long-gone times in the arts and architecture, Nietzsche characterized the nineteenth-century passion for the past as a ‘malady of history’.67

Nietzsche discerns three ways in which a culture can use history: a monumental, an antiquarian, and a critical way. The first supplies the ‘man of action and power (…) (with) role models, teachers, and comforters’ and inspires him to perform actions that are truly great.68 The critical way gives ‘man the strength to break up the past’. It urges man ‘to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it’.69 The antiquarian way reflects the conservative and reverend man who tenderly honours the past from where he comes, where he was educated, and to which he belongs. His main concern is to conserve those conditions that made his identity and to safeguard them for the future. As such, the small, but very concrete and almost tangible elements of the past become his main focus. Nietzsche describes the antiquarian veneration for the past in a manner that strikingly resembles the praises of Old Antwerp:

The history of his [the man of conservative and reverent nature] town becomes the history of himself; he looks at the walls, the turreted gate, the town council, the fair, as an illustrated diary of his youth, and sees himself in it all—his strength, industry, desire, reason, faults and follies (…). He greets the soul of his people from afar as his own, across the dim and troubled centuries.70

As an antidote to the contemporary and restless cosmopolitan desire for the new, the antiquarian model stresses the fact that modern man is firmly rooted in the past. In stimulating and constantly feeding the ‘historical consciousness’, the antiquarian model can build up a front against modernity. However, according to Nietzsche, what is seen as a cure for the problems of modern alienation, in fact reinforces that problem and threatens to suffocate modern man. With this predominance of historical consciousness, the antiquarian model does not conserve the past any longer, but mummifies it. It shows us ‘the horrid spectacle (…) of the mad collector raking over all the dust-heaps of the past’.71 As such, the historical consciousness that lies behind the antiquarian model is no rejuvenating force, but the true germ of the malady of history from which modern man suffers.

We can see the scrutinising reconstructions of Makart, the Meininger company, and Old Antwerp, with their aim of presenting an eternal past as a *wie es gewesen*, as clear examples of the malady of history which Nietzsche describes. In their fury to conserve the smallest details of the past, they transform history from a life-generating force into a gigantic spectacle that freezes the past in an eternal now, or, in the words of Nietzsche: ‘[He] is continually having a world-panorama unrolled before his eyes by his historical artists. He is turned into a restless, dilettante spectator, and arrives at a condition when even great wars and revolutions cannot affect him beyond the moment’.72 Modern man has become the captive of this spectacularization of the past, that was professed in reconstructions and re-enactments limiting his role to that of the passive spectator.

We can particularly observe this feeling at the time when Old Antwerp had to close down. One of the organisers of the puppet theatre in Old Antwerp, Gustave Delattin, compared the closure of the quarter to a funeral in which a part of his identity was taken along.73 The same feeling of being lost in the past is ascribed to Van Kuyck and Rooses. The journalist Auguste Monet wrote that,
after six months of living the life of Renaissance burghers, both men apparently could no longer detach themselves from the feeling that they had outlived themselves for more than three hundred years. Old Antwerp, which had been declared to be an antidote to modern ennui, and had been built to rejuvenate the most doubtful and cynical fin-de-siècle mind, was thought to prevent Van Kuyck and Rooses from returning to the present and directing their eyes towards the future.

To avoid this lethargic immobility of the antiquarian historical attitude, Nietzsche claims that one should try to feel un-historically or meta-historically. Modern man has to avoid the danger of contamination by which the Rankean historicist, the re-enactor, and the reconstructor cannot help but be paralysed. He has to avoid living the life of Des Esseintes in Joris-Karl Huysman’s decadent novel A rebours (1884). The true remedy to overcome the burden of history and to rejuvenate the doubting fin-de-siècle subject has to be to forget the past. In freeing himself from the burdening details of the past and focussing on the eternal to be found in art and religion, modern man will truly find a life-generating source that can cure the malady of history.

Although Nietzsche’s plea to forget the past was undoubtedly inspiring for the modernist avant-garde, with its discourse of a complete tabula rasa, the Dutch philosopher Frank Ankersmit argues that the idea of the suffocating force of history might have been given too much credit. Ankersmit states that it is precisely modern historicist culture, as it came so prominently to the foreground in the late nineteenth century, that formed the fertile ground in which the worst disasters of the twentieth century could grow. Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, in particular, both found their origins and legitimisation in a strong commitment to the past. They were both inspired by clear interpretations of history in which the purifying air of the past announces a victorious future. As such, concludes Ankersmit, ‘man of the twentieth century did not lack historical consciousness, but that has not paralyzed his capacity for action.’

The organisers of, and visitors to, Old Antwerp directed their gaze towards the Renaissance, but at the same time saw the quarter in the light of the bright future. Rooses and De Mont were far from paralyzed after their immersion in the past. They played an important part in the Flemish Movement. Until his death in 1914, Max Rooses remained not only an ardent advocate of Flemish art and literature. In 1896 he founded the Vlaamsche Hogeschool Commissie (Flemish Higher Education Commission) which strove for the use of Flemish at Ghent University. This was an ideal that would unite Flemish nationalists during World War I and lead many of them into collaboration.

In 1907, Pol De Mont became Director of the Antwerp Fine Arts Museum, preaching nationalism in art and literature, founded on a profound historical consciousness. He was strongly influenced by the pan-Germanic idea, that sought a historical linguistic and cultural basis to integrate Dutch and Flemish identity within a greater German entity. Although De Mont did not actively take part in any act of collaboration during World War I, he was nonetheless dismissed as director of the museum after the war because of his Flemish enthusiasm and activities. From 1919 until 1923, de Mont was chief editor of the Flemish nationalist De Schelde, and wrote articles for this newspaper until his death in 1931.

We can say that Old Antwerp, as a historical re- enactment, served several purposes, playing on the notions of the past, present, and future. First of all, the quarter expressed the wish to re-experience a glorious, but vanished past. Secondly, in its historical accuracy
it evoked a media reflection that gave testimony to the historiographical successes of the (contemporary) present. Thirdly, Old Antwerp was also a vehicle to stimulate Flemish emancipation in the future, to constitute an ‘imagined community’. A visit to Old Antwerp, then, can be seen as more than a mere melancholy and romantic trip to the past in the whirl of the World Exhibition. Going back to Antwerp’s past, as De Mont states, should first of all purify and rejuvenate the present and assure a powerful future. As such, the nineteenth-century longing for the past, expressed in spectacles such as Old Antwerp, was endowed with a very concrete cultural and political agency.

Notes

The authors want to thank Hans Vandevoorde for his continuous support during the preparations of this article. They also want to thank Nele Wynants and Luc Van Den Dries for the bibliographical help.

1 We will use the term fin-de-siècle in its literal meaning, to name the end of the nineteenth century. However, we will also use its dominant connotation of a cultural malaise in late nineteenth-century Europe. Of the many books and articles written on the subject, Shearer West’s chapter ‘The fin de siècle phenomenon’ from her book Fin de siècle (Woodstock NY 1994) offers a good introduction.

2 See, among others, the article ‘Ouverture de l’exposition d’Anvers’, in: Journal de Bruxelles, Vol. 74, Nr. 127, 6 May 1894: ‘Nos remerciements les plus chaleureux s’adressent à tous ceux qui ont contribué à mener à bien cette œuvre grandiose et hardie, semblait-il, après l’exposition universelle de Paris en 1889 et la Worlds fair de Chicago en 1893’. ‘Our warmest words of gratitude are addressed to everyone who has contributed to bring this enterprise to a favourable conclusion, an enterprise that appears grandiose and daring even after the World Exhibition of Paris in 1889 and the World’s Fair of Chicago in 1893’.

3 E.g. ‘A l’exposition: Le Vieil Anvers’, in: La Réforme, 4 May 1894: ‘La perle de l’Exposition sera le Vieil Anvers. Déjà tous les connoisseurs y sont allés et ont unanimement déclaré que jamais dans ce genre on n’avait atteint cette perfection’. ‘Old Antwerp will be the pearl of the Exhibition. Already all experts have gone there and declared unanimously that, in its genre, never before has such perfection been reached’. Journalists also referred to it as an enchanting dream and even a Flemish Pompeii. ‘Wereldtentoonstelling van Antwerpen’, in: Volksbelang, 5 May 1894: ‘Hier schijnt alles een droom te zijn. Nauwelijks heeft men enige stappen gezet binnen de aloude poort met ophaalbrug, die toegang verleent tot dit Vlaamsche Pompeï, of men waant zich enige eeuwen teruggevoerd’. ‘Everything seems like a dream here. One hardly has taken a few steps through the ancient gate with its drawbridge, which gives access to this Flemish Pompeii, and one thinks oneself carried back some centuries’.

4 Ironically, the demolition of several of these buildings was carried out to make way for Antwerp’s first World Exhibition in 1885.

5 Kijkjes op de Antwerpse Wereldtentoonstelling, Onmisbare handleiding voor de bezoekers der Scheldestad, s.l. 1894. 36: ‘Een zestiendeeeuwisch stadsgezicht temidden van het gewirwar eener Wereldtentoonstelling Anni Di. 1894! Reeds dit contrast doet iets van welbehagen over u komen’.


8 “Vieil Anvers” Le Bien Public, 6 May 1894: ‘Rien ne détonne dans ce tableau, dont toutes les nuance sont rendues avec un tact infini, où l’exactitude historique est bien observée’.


18 Paul Fredericq Feesten van den 300sten verjaardag der Pacificatie van Gent: werkzaamheden der verschillende commissiën ingesteld door het Gemeentebestuur der Stadt Gent. Manuscript preserved in the library of the University of Ghent (G6170).

19 See, among others, the correspondence between Fredericq and Rooses preserved in the Antwerp Archive and Museum for Flemish Cultural Life (AMVC).

20 Paul Fredericq [et al.]. Album van den historischen stoet der Pacificatie van Gent. Gent, 1876.


23 Rooses, o.c., 16.

24 Max Rooses. De wijk Oud-Antwerpen in de wereldtentoonstelling van 1894. Antwerpen, 1894. 3. ‘[…] het feestvierend Antwerpen der XVIIe eeuw heropwekken, verzekerd dat de eigenaardige luister dier feesten en het schilderachtig midden, in hetwelk zij gevierd werden, eene machtige aantrekkelijkheid voor de bezoekers der Tentoonstelling van 1894 zouden opleveren’.


26 See Wolfgang Kos and Christian Rapp (eds.). Alt-Wien. Die Stadt, die niemals war. Vienna, 2004. Also, later many historical reconstructions were built, e.g. Old Berlin was constructed two years after the Antwerp exhibition for the Berlin Trade Exposition, see Greenhalgh, o.c. 1988, 23.


28 Most research has been done with regard to American museums, see among others Diana H. Pilgrim, “Inherited from the Past: The American Period Room’. American Art Journal 10:1 (1978), 4–23.

29 See, for example, Pol de Mont. Een blik in Oud-Antwerpen met een keuze van aldaar meest gezongen oude en nieuwe Vlaamsche liederen. Antwerpen, 1894, 7.

30 “Vieil Anvers”. Le Bien Public. 6 May 1894: ‘Ce qui complète l’illusion c’est la vie qui règne partout dans la ville fantastique que l’on a devant soi’.


32 “Oud Antwerpen’. Gazette van Gent. 12 April 1894: ‘Oud Antwerpen is eene prachtige herleving van de oude en schilderachtige stad. Men zal zich dáár teenemaal tusschen de gevels van vóór drie eeuwen begeven. (…) Wat heeft die toovenaar van eenen Geefs tekenachtige hoekjes en kantjes in de oude straten en huizen gebracht! Wat schilderachtig licht en donker! Wat al nauwkeurigheid in de bijzonderheden van die houten en steenen geveltjes! Wat al harmonievolle fantazij in de schikking van gedeelten en geheel! Men moet tot in de ziel met den tijd vereenzelvigd zijn, om dit alles zóó waar weer te geven’. For the meaning of ‘picturesque’ in the context of historical reconstructions in world exhibitions in the late nineteenth-century Low Countries, see Laan, o.c., 117–128.

33 De Mont, o.c., 1894. 2. ‘(…) alsof men uit het kosmopolitische heden bij tooverslag verplaatst wordt in een wereld van primitieven eenvoud’.

34 Idem, 3. ‘Hier toch is alles — hoe verrassend waarschijnlijk, én natuurlijk, én echt, én authentiek dan ook, — even valsch en logenachtig in de stoffelijke uitvoering als systematisch gewild in de opvatting’ (Italics in the original).

35 Idem, 4. ‘Verzaak uw modernen twijfelgeest en uw geschiedkundige kennis, als gij deze grond betreedt (…) Neen, om volop te genieten wat deze unieke ‘schepping’ te genieten geeft, moet men — volgens Hugo’s woord — “admirer come une brute”, er naar kijken als een koe naar de mooie in purper en goud wegzinkende zon’ (Italics in the original).


37 Rooses, o.c., 58.

38 Among others, Remy Dupuy’s account of the Bruges parade of Charles (1515) was used. Ibid, 58.

39 The official account of this entry is explicitly referred to in other parts of Rooses’ retrospect.


41 Idem, 5. ‘Makart pouvait-il trouver un sujet plus séduisant pour son tempérament artistique? Peignant de préférence le nu féminin, il avait occasion ici de pousser sa science jusqu’aux dernières limites. Et quel cadres répondait mieux aux intentions de l’artiste que la vie brillante et fastueuse des villes flamandes au seizième siècle?’

42 There is a close correspondence between the painting and historical re-enactments. Makart most probably had the idea of depicting a ceremonial entry after the Munich re-enactment of the 1530 entry of Charles into Augsburg (1876). (Wolfgang Hartmann. “Makart und der Wiener Festzug 1879.”)
Alphonse Mucha’s breakthrough was precisely in 1894, when he designed the poster for Gismonde with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role.

However, public nudity did not always disturb theatrical illusion. Only a few steps from Old Antwerp, the visitor of the World Exhibition could also see a Congolese village where the ‘living exhibits’ were almost completely nude, without this causing any problems or disturbing the illusion of reality at all. As such, we can see in the public display of nudity a part of the ideology of the continuing process of civilization in which the West was supposed to have its rightful pole position.

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We will concentrate on the Antwerp newspapers; for other criticisms, see Idem, 175.

Edward Van Bergen. ‘Het Hertogelijk Meininger Hoftheater the Antwerpen’, De Vlaamsche Kunstbode 18 (1888), 236. ‘(…)

Stijn Bussels / Bram Van Oostveldt
het stuk waarvan wij de beste herinnering bewaarden, dat ons het diepste trof. Hij is certainly not the only one in the Antwerp audience. *Le Précurseur* says: “The audience showed itself to be very enthusiastic. Every act was followed by one, and sometimes several curtain calls’. (*Le public s’est montré très enthousiaste. Chaque acte a été suivi d’un, parfois de plusieurs rappels*).

Van Bergen, o.c., 237. ‘Het gaf gelegenheid tot het ontplooien van veel pracht en rijkdom in kostumen en decors en niets werd dan ook gespaard. Noemenswaardig is vooral het 2 de bedrijf, de ontvangst van den Franschen gezant aan het Engelsche hof, waar tot in de kleinste bijzonderheden de gebruikelijke ceremonien worden in het oog gehouden. Sommigen vinden dat de Meiningers hunne tooneelschikking daarin te ver gedreven hebben, doch hun antwoord was dat het ten eerste historisch juist is en ten tweede dat op die wijze de eenvoud en de verlatenheid van Maria nog beter uitkwamen en de belangstelling in haar veel groter werd’.

Cf. Osborne, o.c., 26.

Van Bergen, o.c., 230. ’De voorstellingen der Meiningers mogen dan ook aanzien worden als praktische lessen voor het volk, waar men het inwijd in zeden, gewoonten, kleederdachten der verschillende tijdvakken en het volkomen op de hoogte stelt van tijd, plaats en handeling’.


Idem, 2. ‘Niet beter kan ik den indruk weergeven, die den bezoeker van Oud-Antwerpen — laat mij zeggen — bevangt, dan als ik zeg, dat sprookjeslucht hem, op een oogenblik als het veronderstelde, in het gezicht waait. En frisch en jeugdig, neen, verfrischend en verjuigdigend, verkwickend en louterend vult die sprookjeslucht, bevraagt met de krachtigste aromen van een onverbasterd nationaal verleden, de longen, en machtig voelt ook de meest twijfelziede zoon van dit eeuwende, dat de ideéele band, welke het heden met het verleden verbindt, is gevlochten uit het beste en edelste in ons’ (Italics in the original).

Verschaffel, o.c. 1998, 149. ‘(…) waren erop gericht de toeschouwer te overtuigen van de continuïteit tussen verleden en heden en van zijn eigen verbondenheid met de nationale geschiedenis en met de natie zelf’.

For the Antwerp world exhibition and Belgian nationalism, see Jan Van Gerven. “World Exhibitions as Expressions of National Pride”. Nauwelaerts, o.c., 100 – 111.

De Mont, o.c., 1894, 3.


Vandevoorde, o.c., 181.

“Oudt-Antwerpen’*De Vlaamsche Wacht*, 1 December 1894. ‘[W]ij willen wijzen vooral op den onuitwischbaren indruk, die, ingrijpend en voortwerkend, zoo helzaam wezen zal voor de toekomst van ons Vlaamsche volksleven, ja, van onzen Vlaamseksche volksstrijd. (…)’.

Translated in Thijs, o.c., 267.


Nietzsche, o.c., 5.

Nietzsche, o.c., 8.
70 Nietzsche, o.c., 7.
71 Nietzsche, o.c., 8.
72 Nietzsche, o.c., 12.
73 Gustaaf De Lattin. *Herinneringen over de Poesjenellenkelder van Oud-Antwerpen (Tentoonstelling van 1894)*. Antwerpen, 1901, 100–101.
74 Monet, o.c., 115.
77 Raymond Vervliet. “Pol de Mont” De Schry- ver, o.c., III, 2087–2093.