

**Ostend through the eyes of British writers (1830-50): A seaside resort abroad as a home for the British genteel poor**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes how the British writers Frances Trollope (1779–1863) and William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) described the Belgian coastal resort Ostend in the 1830s and 1840s. A special focus is placed on both the British travelers passing through Ostend and the British resident communities at Ostend. The article will highlight how the assessments of Frances Trollope and William Makepeace Thackeray of Ostend as a coastal resort frequented by the British can be unpacked fruitfully within two overarching themes: the theme of “genteel poverty” and “respectability” on the one hand, and the theme of “national identity” and “religious identity” on the other. These assessments by Frances Trollope and William Makepeace Thackeray are contextualized against the background of contemporary British guidebooks and travel accounts on Ostend, and against some statistics on the British traveller and resident communities in mid-nineteenth century Belgium. (PF)

**KEYWORDS:** travel, Ostend, genteel poor, national identity, Frances Trollope, William Makepeace Thackeray, resort

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Belgian coastal resort town Ostend played an integral part in how the British imagined the Continent as a travel destination. Many elements of the British perception of Ostend are well known; these include Ostend as a

port of arrival, a center of bathing culture, a town boasting a casino, and Ostend as a home for a small British resident community. Political events and changes in the world of travel, including the emergence of the middle class in the late eighteenth century with mass tourism in its wake, or the outbreak of the First World War, which resulted in changes in the popularity of these specific elements and thus in the overall British vision of Ostend. Situating Ostend exclusively within the landscape of other Continental travel destinations is, however, not the most powerful lens through which to understand better the British view of Ostend. Instead, a fuller picture unfolds when the scholar places Ostend at the intersection of a comparative Continental fold and, in line with the topic of the special section of this journal, resort culture within Britain itself.

This article combines British and Continental perspectives to highlight how a British push factor, most prominently the relatively low cost of living in Ostend and the expectations set by British coastal resorts shaped British life at Ostend and, as a consequence, the British Ostend image. Some of the themes present in this special section are also reflected upon, but they are placed in a foreign context to allow for a better insight into what Frances Trollope (1779–1863) and William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) thought of Ostend in the 1830s and 1840s. A number of recent topics from the field of travel studies are also addressed, including the call for a greater integration of our understanding of domestic and foreign travel, or the effects potential observations of the “other” might have on the study of the home culture of the observer, in order to contextualize these phenomena within a mid-nineteenth century Ostend context. In addition, the article highlights the productive intersection of literary and travel studies. Finally, in a somewhat novel approach, it calls for a greater integration of the focus on studying national identity and the one on respectability.

## **British travel to Belgium in the nineteenth century**

The rise of British middle class travel to the Continent in the first decades of the nineteenth century forms the immediate background for Trollope's and Thackeray's assessments of Ostend. Already from 1815, and especially after 1830, Ostend was a popular port of arrival for British travelers. For many of them it was the first encounter with Continental Europe. The growing popularity of Ostend is clear from Foreign Office numbers reported in *The Times* on 9 February 1849. In 1843 the total number of arrivals in Ostend from Britain stood already at 13,857, and by 1846 this had risen to 35,748.<sup>1</sup> Although it is not known how many of these arrivals can be classed as travelers, it is safe to assume that both the high level of arrivals and the spectacular increase in these numbers are closely linked to Belgium becoming a favourite travel destination of the British during the 1830s and 1840s. On the back of Ostend becoming a major port for British travelers touring the Continent, it also developed further as a resort town and thus attracted the British in its own right, increasingly providing "health and leisure functions, including pleasure boating, as well as those related directly to bathing beaches," which form the basis of Peter Borsay and John Walton's definition of coastal resorts (Borsay and Walton 3). The two major drawing cards were its proximity to Britain, which allowed for shorter stays, and the possibility to communicate in French without being in a French city. In the 1830s and 1840s Belgium was increasingly seen as a "Little Britain on the Continent," with a positive imagery centering around Belgium's liberal attitude, charming townscapes and scenery, its advanced industrialization and trade, and the close links between the British and Belgian monarchies (Francois, 2010). Ostend and Belgium were therefore considered as easy entry points into both Continental travel and resort life. Ostend, together with a number of French resort towns, due to the same argument of proximity and the fact that it was not French (the historical

aversions of the English to France cannot be disregarded), became very much part of the travel menu English families chose from when determining their next stay at a resort town.

The growing popularity of Belgium and Ostend can also be seen in the increased production of contemporary travel accounts. Shortly after 1815, and thus before Murray published his first *Handbook* in 1836, the publication of “little-known and unknown guidebooks” and travel accounts on Belgium started flourishing (Francois 2012, 72). These nineteenth-century accounts and guidebooks were, to a large extent, stereotypical in nature. Observations on local people, customs, and foods often included a number of stock phrases. However, as historian Marjorie Morgan argues in her *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, the fields of travel history and book history demonstrate that these stereotypes, and the changes behind them, can nevertheless be analyzed successfully for new knowledge on both the society of the traveler and the host society. Morgan lets the accounts speak especially for how travelers juggled multiple identities and how the domestic or foreign contexts of travel shape national identity. Similarly, historian Rudy Koshar highlights how an analysis of guidebooks can be leveraged to go beyond the stereotypical, and how they can become a source on both political and publishing history.

For a case study of mid-nineteenth-century British travelers to Belgium, the guidebooks and travel accounts can be fruitfully queried by relying on a framework with a strong focus on national identity, and on how this national identity is strongly intertwined with religious identity (Francois, “Little Britain”). Observations of Belgian Catholicism often resulted in reflections by the British travelers on their own national and religious identities. Expectations also played a key role. My own previous research revealed that some “travelers became genuinely confused by this situation: they expected Belgium to be Protestant, but they were confronted by an omnipresent Catholicism” (Francois, “Belgium—Country” 672). Although such a focus on the intertwinedness between national and religious identities

presents a productive area of research, it does not tell the whole story. An equally interesting, albeit initially less visible and more shadowy side of the traveling world is also worth considering. Traveling to the Continent, and especially residing there for a longer period of time, could also be motivated by a desperate attempt to run away from debt in Britain (and from debtors' prison before the 1869 Debtors Act brought an end to incarcerations), or by the desire to avoid social scrutiny. The contemporary image of the British resident was, therefore, often one of "an impoverished gentlemen or lady who had fled Britain to avoid a public downfall" (Francois, "Henry Addison" 67).<sup>2</sup> More generally, the British world on the Continent was not only a contact zone with anything "foreign," but also a space where class norms and requirements were more fluid. A level of uncertainty regarding social expectations, the difficulty to enforce these expectations, and the desire by some travelers and residents to actively exploit this ambiguity have resulted in a more powerful lens through which the concepts of "respectability" and "genteel poverty," as well as what Ostend meant for the British, can be better understood. What these twin focuses on national and religious identities, on the one hand, and on genteel poverty and respectability on the other, have in common is that they bring together the aspects of the domestic and the foreign. It is from these angles that the experiences of Trollope and Thackeray in Ostend and their travel writings are examined. The focus on Trollope and Thackeray can be justified by a number of reasons. Trollope and Thackeray were not only the most renowned British writers visiting Ostend in the 1830s and 40s, with their sojourns public knowledge at the time, their work was also, as will be seen, picked up and commented upon by future British travelers. Furthermore, their writings are of interest as they form, simultaneously, a part of the tradition of guidebooks and travel accounts, including the already mentioned stereotypical concepts, and go, at the same time, beyond them. In Thackeray's works, this is made evident by the mocking tone he resorts to, while in those of Trollope's, it is mainly conveyed by the much broader range of topics and

“sights” observed and commented upon. The breadth of topics covered by Trollope in recording her impressions of Ostend is different from that of most contemporary travel accounts. Her stay of ten days in Ostend, however brief this might appear, allowed her to go beyond a “these are the key highlights” approach.

### **Frances Trollope**

As the writer of thirty-five novels and six travel books, Frances Trollope (1779–1863) enjoyed a notable popularity with her contemporaries, a popularity which is no longer matched by her literary reputation today. From 1832, when she published her first work *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, until the mid-1850s, she was one of Britain’s most popular writers and, as Neville-Sington notes, during the mid-1840s even Charles Dickens saw her as “a serious rival” to his own popularity (Neville-Sington, “Trollope”). The primary motivation for Trollope to write was to earn a living. Financial trouble runs as a thread through her biography. For example, Trollope’s decision in 1827 to join the Nashoba community experiment in Tennessee was taken with the hope of reducing the cost of living. Similarly, her choice to move the family to the Sint-Andries neighbourhood of Bruges, a city 17 miles from Ostend, was made to escape debtors’ prison. Frances Trollope’s stay in Belgium, therefore, has to be seen in the framework of the genteel poor residing on the Continent. Writing numerous guidebooks, travel accounts, and novels was one way to earn a living in a respectable manner. This tension between coming from a respectable background, partaking in genteel cultural practices, with access to the elite circles, while having diminished financial means is central to her life and needs to be taken into account when her work is analyzed. Her situation was far from unique and, especially on the Continent, Trollope tapped into existing networks of the British genteel poor.

In 1834 Trollope published *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833*, one of her early travel accounts, based on the travels she undertook whilst residing near Bruges. As Ostend was the port she and her family arrived at, this was the first city to feature in her book. Her account of Ostend is a mixture of stereotypical elements and more in-depth observations, and as such, it shows many similarities with most travel accounts published by British travelers on a week's tour through Belgium, but also differs from these accounts.<sup>3</sup> The origin of the differences is twofold. Firstly, Trollope was familiar with the small British resident community in Ostend and the friends she had there showed her a richer and more diverse side of Ostend. Secondly, Trollope was forced to stay longer than she originally intended, as her son had an accident, which allowed her to venture off the beaten track. As a result, Trollope devoted a full nine pages to Ostend and the surrounding countryside. This is nearly double the attention she gives to Bruges, despite the fact that she actually made this city in West Flanders the family seat during her residency in Belgium. Her depiction of Ostend also takes up approximately a seventh of the total number of pages dealing with Belgium as a whole. This contrasts sharply with how other British writers of travel accounts, published both before and after the release of *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833*, engaged with Ostend. For the majority of these travelers, Ostend was either not mentioned at all or simply referred to in a couple of lines as the place of embarkation. Robertson Noel expressed this view of mid-nineteenth century British travelers well when he declared: “[Ostend] where there is nothing worth looking at, and which is only interesting as being the spot at which you will take your leave” (Noel 65). Other travel accounts mention, at best, only the sights in the city center, conveniently within easy reach of the harbor, the canal to Bruges, and (after 1838) the train station. Trollope's description, however, covers much more than the usual must-visit places, such as the promenade, the Digue, the harbor, and the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Trollope also visits another church, a private collection, a farm, and a convent. Furthermore,

she engages in different activities, including attending mass, seeing a play, and witnessing a procession; she comments upon modes of transport and market life as well. This level of difference in Trollope's travel account can be understood well from her background as a "genteel poor" and her residency near Bruges. Exploring this difference from a gender perspective is harder as many mid-nineteenth-century female travelers actively sought for their accounts to follow the conventions expected from male travel writers.

### **William Makepeace Thackeray**

As William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) is primarily associated with his novel *Vanity Fair* (1847), although his extensive literary oeuvre has earned him great fame lasting to this day, it is easy to forget that his early career was much more checkered. Since gambling and a bank failure had taken care of Thackeray's inheritance, the years between 1835 and 1847 were marred by financial hardship for him and his young family. Prolonged residences on the Continent, especially in Paris, where he worked as a correspondent for the *Constitutional and Public Ledger* on "an income of 8 guineas a week," were motivated by financial reasons (Shillingsburg). As a journalist and freelance writer, between 1840 and 1847 he published no less than 386 magazine pieces, including articles for *Fraser's Magazine* and *Punch*. Not surprisingly, given the popularity of the genre, travel writing was also included in his repertoire.

In the early 1840s Thackeray made two trips to Belgium from his base in Paris. His travel experiences from 1840 and, especially, 1843 featured in two series of installments: *Little Travels and Roadside Sketches*, and *Papers by the Fat Contributor*.<sup>4</sup> The former is a conventional but streamlined travel account of Thackeray's visit of Belgium. (Ostend does not feature in this work.) The latter is a much more interesting document, as it brings together the installments Thackeray wrote for *Punch* on a fictitious travel journey through the Continent as



the “Fat Contributor”. His “Fat Contributor” starts his journey in Dover from where he takes the ferry to Ostend: the second and third installments recount his experiences there. These *Punch* articles are a good source for studying the British views of Ostend, as well as Thackeray’s own assessment of both the city and the British abroad. Although it is clearly a fictional account, the topics and stereotypes covered make it a pastiche of the burgeoning British guidebooks and travelogues.

### **Genteel poverty and respectability**

The British world in Ostend showed a great diversity. First of all, large groups of British travelers flocked to the city, either on a week’s tour in Belgium or on a ten-day journey along the Rhine. They stopped briefly at Ostend, spending, at the most, one night there before traveling on towards Brussels and Waterloo. Trollope was well aware that Ostend did not feature high on the list of must-see sights for these tourists, stating that “[f]ew tourists pause more than an hour or two at Ostend: it is passed through merely as a door-way, by which to enter the interesting country of which it is the frontier” (10).

Secondly, an increasing number of the British came chiefly to enjoy the bathing culture at Ostend. Although the highpoint of the town’s popularity as a bathing resort fell towards the end of the nineteenth century, its popularity and reputation did not grow overnight: the very first English bathers came to Ostend during the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783), when Ostend became a free port and, as a result, attracted quite a number of people from across the Channel. Until 1830, however, the bathing tradition had not fully been established; it took another two or three decades for it to rank higher as a tourist attraction. For the year 1835, for example, the historian Daniel Farasyn found only 173 foreign families in the records, although the actual numbers were presumably higher, as only the male “messieurs les étrangers” were registered (13). Still, by 1851, even this figure had

climbed to 3638. The 1850s and 1860s saw a twofold increase in the number of bathers. Farasyn's analysis, which focuses largely on the available infrastructure, demonstrates clearly that after 1830 a modest boom started in the tourist trade: new hotels sprang up in quick succession, while other accommodation facilities added variety and choice for holidaymakers of different financial standing. Most importantly, the years from 1852 onwards saw the inclusion of the western, much larger beaches of Ostend in the bathing infrastructure. The smooth shift of the resort industry to the western beaches allowed for meeting the demand for untroubled space in both the tourist and the fishing industry, while making way for more transparent port functions. This was Ostend's local answer to the tension between port and resort, as theorized by travel historians Peter Borsay and John Walton (1-8). In addition to the higher standards in accommodation and extended beaches, various amenities, such as a rich restaurant life, vibrant music and life performances, the kursaal, the casino, and horse races, also had their share in attracting more and more visitors. Finally, the decision of the Belgian kings to set up their summer residence in Ostend gave further impetus to cityscape improvements, increasing the prestige of the town. As Piet Lombaerde contends, the monarchy contributed directly to the architectural development of Ostend as a resort town.

Thackeray's comments on the bathers in 1844, at first glance, matched the moralistic tone British travelers employed when they described the bathers and, especially, their dresses. However, as can be expected, his descriptions quickly turn into mockery. However, Thackeray's conclusive observation—"[for] hours and hours the Ostenders look on at this enchanting sight"—underlines that the moral indignation about bathers and their costumes was often only paper thin ("Travelling Notes II," 83).

The last component of the British world at Ostend was the small, long-term British resident community, whose members, in the majority of cases, took up residence there for

reasons of economy, debt, or scandal, and tended to stay for much longer periods of time. British residents hardly mixed with the transient travelers stopping at Ostend.

Whereas Trollope wrote *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833* for a readership consisting largely of the first two groups of the British mentioned above, namely tourists briefly stopping at Ostend on their way to other places of interest in Belgium or elsewhere, and those who chose the seaside town for its beaches as their travel destination, she herself was very much part of the world of the resident communities on the Continent. When explaining her reasons for her planned stay of three days in Ostend, she stated:

It was my purpose to pass a few days at Ostend, both for the sake of enjoying the society of some friends residing there, and because my son had engaged to take a part in the representation of a comedy, which was to be performed by a party of English amateurs, who had amused themselves for some days before our arrival in preparing it.

(10)

The links she mentions were not new links picked up during her visit to Ostend, but older ones activated in advance of her stay. Her level of integration into the resident community became somewhat deeper as, due to an accident her son suffered, her stay in Ostend had to be prolonged to ten days. During that time, she was shown the sights of Ostend and its vicinity by one set of friends, whilst others visited her son, who was confined to bed. Finally, some of her friends went on to accompany her to Bruges at the end of her stay in Ostend (9-17).

Trollope's familiarity with the life of British residents on the Continent and their often meager financial means is also clear when she discusses the Ostend market. She notes that she has found the market to be cheap, which is an important determinant when choosing a

summer residence. Furthermore, she compares it to similar markets at British resort towns: “[I]t has a cheap and most abundant market for vegetables, fruit and flowers, which perhaps struck me the more, from my having so often experienced the want of these luxuries at our own watering-places” (10). To Trollope, situating Ostend within a comparative framework of resort towns in Britain came naturally. The relatively cheap cost of living at Ostend, and Belgium in general, was a well-known fact her readers would have been familiar with.

Henry Addison, another British resident in the country, published many works on Belgium, including *Handbook for Residents and Tourists in Belgium* (1838). He too lists the cheap cost of living as an important motive for residing abroad:

[T]o those who are seeking a temporary home, whatever be their motive, Belgium will offer inducements to the Englishman beyond any other country; the habits of her people approximating more closely with our own, the salubrity of her climate, the constant and immediate communication with Great Britain, the cheapness of living, the welcome we are sure to receive from her inhabitants, must strongly preponderate in her favour, as the spot where we may add to all our native comforts the luxuries of foreign living, on an income which would barely, in comparison, supply us with the common necessaries of life at home. (4)

Addison’s assessment of Ostend also boils down to the cost of living: “Considered as a residence, Ostend is remarkably cheap” (22).

Thackeray’s accounts in *Punch* focus on issues of genteel poverty and respectability in different, but equally prominent ways. As can be expected from *Punch* pieces, he mocks the less respectable reasons for a prolonged stay on the Continent. Already on the occasion of the “Fat Contributor” embarking for Ostend at Dover harbor, the theme of running away from

debt is touched upon. From the deck of the ferry the “Fat Contributor” notices his tailor standing on the Dover quayside, to whom he allegedly owes money, and shouts at him, “I shall be back in four years,” which is then followed by a “demonic yell of scorn” (“Travelling Notes I” 66). Similarly, the difficulty to ascertain a person’s social standing abroad, and how this uncertainty can be capitalized upon, is addressed, for instance, in the scene where the “Fat Contributor” engages in a conversation with one of the most respectable travelers on the ferry he thinks is Lord Muffington. It turns out, however, that it is not the lord but his butler he has been talking to: “But just when I thought he might be on the point of asking me to Muffington Castle, he got up suddenly, and said ‘Yes my Lord’ to a fellow I never should have suspected of a coronet. Yet, he was the noble Earl and my friend was but his flunky” (“Travelling Notes I” 67).

Both Trollope’s and Thackeray’s works contain references to the world of the British genteel poor on the Continent and to a vague set of social rules on how to move about in this world. The foreign setting makes it even more apparent how profoundly the domestic context shaped these rules, as well as the expectations of the British residents in Ostend.

### **National and religious identities**

A second key thread running through Trollope’s account of Ostend is the frequent comparison she makes between Belgium and Britain, between the foreign and the familiar. This comparative approach was especially used for describing everyday habits and customs, the touristic sights, the food, and the architecture of the buildings. When she sees a Belgian lady wearing a corset, for example, she records her impression as an “examination of this foreign wonder”(15). By labeling difference as either foreign or Belgian, Trollope follows the convention of mid-nineteenth-century guidebooks and travel accounts, in which this juxtaposition between Britain and the foreign was a key structuring element.

In Thackeray's writings for *Punch*, this juxtaposition between the familiar and the foreign is also a key structuring technique. Here, too the comparison includes aspects of everyday life. For example, when the Belgian food fails his British standards, the "Fat Contributor" questions why he has decided to travel in the first place: "Is it for this? To drink bad wine—to eat fried soles as though as my shoe—to have my nerves agitated about a passport—and, by way of second course, to be served with flabby raw mutton-chops? Away! I can get these in Chancery Lane" ("Travelling Notes II" 83).

Furthermore, Thackeray also makes a comparison between British and Belgian/Continental politics. A common trope in nineteenth-century British travel accounts is how the mechanisms and, indeed, the very nature of the state in Britain differs from Continental patterns. It is very common for travelers to comment on the allegedly oppressive Continental forms of state and juxtapose these with a much superior tradition of British liberty. Especially border crossings are popular triggers for launching into political observations. Thackeray picks up this trope mockingly by having the "Fat Contributor" conclude his first installment on Ostend with the express fear of ending up in prison for traveling without a passport. However, at the start of the second installment it becomes immediately clear that the "Fat Contributor" only had a very short and polite conversation with the border agents. By describing this painless experience, Thackeray makes fun of the convention in travel accounts to complain about "oppressive" Continental states. This is further emphasized by the protagonist adding, tongue in cheek, "I want to know how long Britons are to be subjected to such grinding oppression?" ("Travelling Notes II" 83).

Trollope, but interestingly not Thackeray, also established the popular connection between national and religious identity. British travelers to the Continent often juxtaposed a Protestant British identity with a chiefly Catholic, Continental identity, merging the concepts of nation and religion into one set of images. As Trollope visited Ostend, which was a

predominantly Catholic city, she could fall back on these stereotypes. She did deviate, however, from the majority of contemporary British accounts by the strength of her anti-Catholicism. In fact, her aversions to Catholic churches, processions, relics, and believers dominate her accounts. For Trollope, Ostend was a town situated in a “so very Catholic a country” (16), “vexing to my reformed eyes,” and “childishly grotesque” (11). Her hostility towards Catholicism is no great surprise as she also wrote two anti-Catholic novels, *The Abbess* (1833) and *Father Eustace* (1847). Picking up on this intertwinedness between national and religious identity, the literary scholar Brenda Ayres, among others, argues that “she [Trollope] held to the established Church of England with a fierce allegiance that fermented into a political stance championed in her books, for Anglicanism was more than a religion. . . . [T]o Frances Trollope, to be Anglican was to be British; to be British was to be Anglican” (198).

Trollope’s criticism is most clearly articulated in the description of her visit to the main church at Ostend. Whereas she has some praise for the interior, she condemns the “idol worshipping” of a statue of the Virgin Mary. She does concede, however, that the earnest devotion by a worshipper makes it “impossible to witness the feeling, without losing all inclination to ridicule” (11). Nevertheless, in her description of a military mass she uses the words “ridiculous” and “grotesque,” and admits that she struggled to find a religious dimension to the ceremony. Trollope’s view of Catholicism as a fundamentally different and un-British phenomenon is also apparent in her rendering of the story of Saint Godelieve at Gistel, a small town just outside Ostend, and, less so, in her description of the religious procession at Ostend on the occasion of the *Fête Dieu* (12-13).

Trollope’s observations on Belgian Catholicism in her *Belgium and Western Germany in 1833* were so powerful that they were, although with a critical edge, picked up in another travel account. In the section on Ostend of *Steam Voyages on the Seine, the Moselle, & the*

*Rhine; with Railroad visits to the Principal Cities of Belgium* (1843), Michael Quin evokes Trollope herself: “It was in this church that Mrs. Trollope, when upon her late tour through Belgium, beheld, placed on one of the altars, what she is pleased to designate as a ‘profanation’ most vexatious to her ‘reformed eyes!’” (96-97). Quin pushes back hard on Trollope’s observations by stating that “Mrs. Trollope might have soothed down her vexation if she had dwelt more upon the effect she saw produced by the very image in question” (97).

The genre of nineteenth-century travelogues and guidebooks is marked by a pronounced separation of focus on foreign and on domestic travel. The historiography of travel in that era reflects to a large extent this distinction, although it also increasingly challenged as too hard a separation of these two travel worlds.

In conclusion, this paper on Ostend as a resort town frequented by the British has tried to bring to the fore the dual nature of travelers’ judgement of places and people in a foreign country. Both Frances Trollope and William Makepeace Thackeray, and indeed, the wider group of the British in Ostend, whether as one-day visitors, or temporary/permanent residents, juxtaposed their own Britishness and the foreignness of the resort town. Understanding Trollope’s and Thackeray’s views on Ostend from this perspective offers a rich conceptual framework. Yet, at the same time, Trollope’s and Thackeray’s worlds must also be understood from the perspective of Ostend looked at as an extension of the resort culture in Britain. This essay, therefore, while calling for a thorough comparative analysis of resort culture both in Britain and abroad, is also a reminder that travels reinforce and challenge national lenses. Furthermore, the study of the perceptions of Ostend of both Trollope and Thackeray sheds light on how the focus on national identity and that on respectability, are complementary factors, and their combination leads to a fuller understanding of nineteenth-century travel experiences.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This rise of Ostend as a port of arrival can partly be explained by a decline of Antwerp as a point of embarkation. The number of arrivals at Antwerp declined from 9,677 in 1843 to 5,635 in 1846.

<sup>2</sup> These push factors for leaving Britain were widely recognized during the nineteenth century and feature extensively in some of the advice manuals for British expatriates.

<sup>3</sup> The rise in the numbers of British travelers to Belgium during the 1830s and 1840s is linked to the growing standardization of the travel routes and the sights visited. The increasing number of travel accounts these travelers wrote also reflects this compared with older travel accounts.

<sup>4</sup> *Little Travels and Roadside Sketches* was first put in print in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1844 under the pseudonym Titmarsh. In 1879 it was published posthumously in a book format as part of Thackeray's *The Paris Sketch Book*. Similarly, *Papers by the Fat Contributor*, forty years after they appeared in *Punch* (1844), found their way into a collection of Thackeray's *Contributions to Punch* (1886).

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