**Georges Rodenbach** (1855-1898)

Georges Rodenbach was a Belgian symbolist poet and novelist. Though born into a Flemish family, he wrote in French, the language of the educated bourgeoisie in his native country at the time. After studying law, Rodenbach moved to Paris, where he befriended Stéphane Mallarmé and Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, among others. He published his first volume of poems in 1878 and became famous with the 1886 collection *La jeunesse blanche*. Although he spent most of his adult life in France, Rodenbach’s main subject always remained the sleepy medieval towns of his native Flanders. His 1892 novel *Bruges-la-Morte*, about a widower who leads a melancholic existence in the decaying town of Bruges, until a chance encounter with a woman who is the mirror image of his dead wife upends his life, started a minor vogue for “dead city novels.” The theater adaptation of this novel inspired Erich Korngold’s 1920 opera *Die tote Stadt* and may have also influenced the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958). *Bruges-la-Morte* was also one of the earliest works of fiction to include photographs; in this, it became an important influence on the work of W.G. Sebald.

**Key Works**

*La jeunesse blanche* (1886)

*Burges-la-Morte* (1892)

**References and further readings**

Mosley, Philip (1996) *Georges Rodenbach: Critical Essays*, Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP.

<Image 1: 1895 portrait of Georges Rodenbach by Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer. Painting is owned by the Musée d’Orsay: http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/graphic-arts/commentaire\_id/portrait-of-georges-rodenbach-2110.html?tx\_commentaire\_pi1%5BpidLi%5D=848&tx\_commentaire\_pi1%5Bfrom%5D=845&cHash=823ef5a970>

<Image 2: Photo of Bruges in the nineteenth-century, taken from the 1892 edition of *Bruges-la-Morte*. Image is in public domain>