

# PROVENCE AND THE BRITISH IMAGINATION

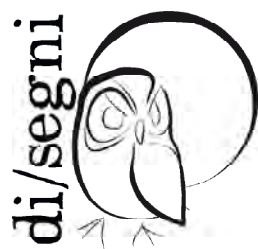
Edited by Claire Davison, Béatrice Laurent,  
Caroline Patey and Nathalie Vanfasse



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# **PROVENCE AND THE BRITISH IMAGINATION**

**Edited by Claire Davison, Béatrice Laurent,  
Caroline Patey and Nathalie Vanfasse**

**di/egni**  
Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere  
Facoltà di Studi Umanistici  
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## INTRODUCTION

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Mapping Provence – both the maze of its intricate history and the elusiveness of an unstable geography – is definitely no straightforward affair. While it is true the region has today a clear-cut institutional identity and unquestioned boundaries, such stability is relatively recent. And it has not yet eradicated the bewildering dislocation of a country born in Greek and Roman times around Marseille but soon destined to include ample areas of Languedoc, the ‘western’ *Provincia Narbonensis* of Augustan times. An empathy and a coincidence, the one with Languedoc, reactivated in the Middle Ages by the Cathar heresy which inflamed the South of France, uniting East and West, Carcassone and Carpentras, Toulouse and the Cévennes in one single radical voice of political and religious dissent. In times and modes not unrelated to Albigensian culture and sense of subversion, the troubadour *koiné* fortified the image of a Provence bordering on the Atlantic Ocean, barred by the Pyrénées and comprising today’s Limousin and Auvergne – the very *Occitania* that would one day play a foundational part in Ezra Pound’s poetics.

Disputed between feudal lords, much desired by Spanish Moors, attached to other provinces and detached from them on the wave of dynastic and matrimonial convenience, endlessly contested, dismembered and reconfigured, Provence finally passed under the rule of the French King Louis XI in 1481; without, however, surrendering formally its legal independence nor forfeiting some residual privileges – fiscal or else. Needless to remember, the rule of Paris did not apply in Avignon and the surrounding Comtat Venaissin, property of the Pope, nor did it concern Nice, a town that had vanquished Valois authority for the kingdom of Savoy. Revolution and

Empire later reshuffled alliances and redesigned frontiers, with the final annexation of Avignon to France in 1791 and a dangling situation for Nice, frenchified during the brief Napoleonic season only to be restored to Piedmontese/Sardinian administration until 1860.

Such turbulence in spatial determination and political status is an appropriate *incipit* to the complexities entailed by the deceptively familiar toponym ‘Provence’: Historical entity or *locus* of the mind? Wide Mediterranean area roughly coinciding with the South of France or territory constrained on the contrary between the Rhône delta and the Alps? And what about the idiom spoken there? Dialect, *patois* or language in its own right and literature? And if so – since of course it is so – whose language? A medium common to many Occitanian and therefore non strictly Provençal speakers and writers, including the Troubadours? No wonder, therefore, if the few British travellers who braved the combined hardships of horrendous roads, Rhône navigation and the danger of frequent robberies found it hard to form a coherent image out of the scanty and fragmentary information concerning the area.

For these rare adventurous spirits, moreover, spontaneous perception and free-flowing reactions were somehow informed by the predominantly anti-catholic and anti-papist attitudes common in post-Reformation England:

L’Anglais protestant, et qui s’enorgueillit d’être un citoyen libre, regarde la France catholique comme un pays d’intolérance religieuse et de despotisme politique. Le citoyen anglais dont le pays a entamé sa révolution industrielle, considère la France comme un pays sous-développé qui a des prétentions politiques sans commune mesure avec son état économique réel. Dès lors, les voyageurs anglais vont souvent aborder leur voyage en France avec des idées préconçues et des grilles de lecture qu’on retrouve presque chez tous. (Goulemot, Lidsky et al., 687)

For instance, John Locke’s considerations during his stay in France (1675-1679) are disseminated with the philosopher’s perplex remarks on the many examples of exalted popishness he was witness to. From relique to relique, from St Maximin to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon or Tarascon, in whose charterhouse he noted “much prostration and kisseing the ground” (Lough [1953] 2008, 85), the English visitor watched superstition with amazement and amusement:

St Martha allowd us but a short apparition. For the priest that shewed us these sacred things, first producing the arme in silver guilt, the fingers whereof were loaden with rings with stones of

value on them, & holding it out to us, & discoursing upon it, but finding we paid not that reverence was expected, he approachd it very near the mouth of one of the company [...] which not prevailing with the hardened heretick for a kiss he turned about in a fury, put it up in the cupboard, drew the curtain before all the other things...(Lough [1953] 2008, 87)

Locke's mode, however, was less playful when he came to the condition of Protestant communities whose fate, it should be remembered, was – in years preceding the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes – infinitely less grievous than it would soon become. Still, the English philosopher showed concern for the signs of mounting intolerance he perceived everywhere: “And this week the Protestants there [Uzès] have an order from the King to choose noe more consuls of the town of the Religion, and their Temple is ordered to be puld down, the only one they have left there, though  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the town be Protestants” (Lough [1953] 2008, 23). On another hand, true to his enlightened eye, he was also quick to observe the rare examples of interreligious concord, as in Montpellier, where “[The Protestants] and the papist laity live together friendly enough in these parts”(Lough [1953] 2008, 28).

In its anti-absolutistic and reformed stance, therefore, Locke's French trip articulates some of the recurring motives of many Anglo-Provençal (and Anglo-French *tout court*) encounters to come. These significant political reservations were intensified by a linguistic barrier difficult to overcome; no easy idiom to grasp, the *langue d'oc*, or Occitan made communication with the natives especially difficult, reinforcing therefore ingrained prejudices, as emerges from Nathaniel Wraxall's curt 1776 comment: “‘Their language, so famous in ancient romance, is a corrupt Italian, more intelligible to a Neapolitan than to a Parisian’” (Lough 1987, 7). An objection shared by many: “[n]ot one person in sixty that speaks French’ exclaims Arthur Young during his forced confinement at Aubenas” (Lough 1987, 6); to which may be added another irritated remark suggested by unsatisfactory accommodation in Avignon: “Not one time in forty will a foreigner, as such, receive the least mark of attention” (Young 1793,1: 364). Another excellent visitor, Laurence Sterne, an ill-health exile between Montpellier and Toulouse in the years 1763 and 1764, seemed highly relieved to take his leave from the country: “That insipidity there is in French characters has disgusted your friend Yorick,” he writes from Montpellier to an unnamed correspondent; complementing his impression with a satiric note on “The states of Languedoc [...], a fine raree-shew, with the usual accompaniments of fiddles, bears and puppet-shews” (Perry Curtis 1935, 210).

And yet, in spite of its evils and imperfections, Provence is not deprived of saving graces. Even Locke's stern economic glance let itself be charmed



by the unexpected beauty of nature, felt with particular intensity and sensuousness in the area of Hyères:

Below the towne the side of the hill is covered with orange gardens, in one of which we gathered and eat very good, ripe china oranges which were there in incredible plenty and grew sometimes 9 or 10 in a bunch [...] The colour of the fruit, leaves & flowers mingled entertained the eye very pleasantly as well as their smel & tast did the other senses, & it was one of the most delightfull wood I had ever seen. There are little rivulets of water conveyd up & downe in it to water it in summer without which there would be little fruit. (Lough [1953] 2008, 79)

In this case, the usually matter-of-fact prose of the philosopher betrays the aesthetic emotion suggested by a landscape of almost paradise-like plenitude, a feeling conveyed here by the use of parataxis to depict

the richest [valley] in Provence, fild with fruit trees, as wall nuts, pomigranets, figs, pears, cherrys, vines and some apples above all olives [...] The bottom had, besides corne and vines & some flax more and better meadows than I had seen anywhere in France (Lough [1953] 2008, 80, 83).

Similarly, though a century later, the enquiry of another economically-minded traveller, Arthur Young, revealed equally mixed feelings. On one hand, his observations ring with the semantics of deprivation – barren, naked, meagre, miserable – and are full of derogatory remarks on the “bad husbandry” and the “scandalous conditions” of many areas (Young 1793: 372, 380); yet, he is also quick to register the not many examples of “excellent irrigation”, the flourishing silk industry in Nîmes and the “sublime” vision of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, its rock, water and association with literary talent (Young 1793, 1, 366, 367).

As Nathalie Bernard shows in her analysis of Smollett’s *Travels through France and Italy*, the all-too well known bad temper and valetudinarian obsession of the novelist should not obscure the interwoven levels of perception and analysis at work in *Travels* nor conceal the polyphonic quality of the narrative. While for instance the traveller pointed repeatedly at the revolting misery of so many peasants – in Arthur Young’s guise, poorly clad, meager and diminutive (Lough 1987, 51) –, he was undeniably happily surprised by Marseille, “indeed a noble city, large, populous and flourishing. The streets, of what is called the new town, are open, airy and spacious; the houses well-built, and even magnificent.” (Smollett [1766] 2011, 366). Some visions of rare beauty even lead to almost lyrical accents, such

as the Pont du Gard, enough to keep at bay for a while the moaning about “French foppery”:

[t]he whole is admirably preserved, and presents the eye with a piece of architecture, so unaffectedly elegant, so simple, and majestic, that I will defy the most phlegmatic and stupid spectator to behold it without admiration [...] It stands over the river Gardon, which is a beautiful pastoral stream, brawling among rocks, which form a number of pretty natural cascades, and overshadowed on each side with trees and shrubs, which greatly add to the rural beauties of the scene (Smollett [1766] 2011, 113).

True, Provence was difficult to reach and even more to understand, its hospitality often drab and its roads appalling. However, there is no denying that, long before the age of popular tourism, English visitors often felt a sort of subterranean and unformulated attraction for the region.

Some towns of course were deemed especially desirable, as Montpellier, served by the reputation of its university and medical culture. To visual artists, the quality of light, climate and picturesque sights available soon became a powerful magnet and a marketable product, as Frauke Josenhans explains in her pages on William Marlow’s late eighteenth-century paintings. Not to forget the appeal of Roman ruins, inevitably pitted against the misery and decadence of today. But beyond the consolidated Grand Tour routine, the seduction of the country infiltrated as it were more subtle levels of apprehension and transpired in the unresolved tensions of travellers’ chronicles. In front of the exceptional landscape, the most deeply rooted habits of commonsense and the British inclination for understatement had to surrender: The Mediterranean profusion of fruit, flowers and vegetables, for one, proved endlessly fascinating and triggered unexpected accents of enthusiasm; even when counterbalanced by the usual pictures of desolation and waste, these cornucopian images pointed to a generosity of nature unknown in the North and hinted implicitly at forms of pleasure and desire absent at home. A century or more before Henri Matisse gave *Le bonheur de vivre* its colourful and adamitic translation (1906), the (dangerous?) sensuality of southern France had been captured, albeit fleetingly and perhaps even reluctantly, by British visitors.

Even more important, perhaps, and yet again in silent ways and in the blank spaces between lines, Provence proved particularly enticing, if in contradictory and oxymoronic modes, for the singularity it deployed under the eyes of visitors. Listening for example to the ‘incomprehensible’ jargon stigmatized by Young and Smollett among others, the more acute British travellers would have remembered that Provençal language was also the result of strenuous resistance to the centralizing authority of Paris and

to the iron rule of its *Académie*; and that local culture had, ever since the days of Troubadours and King René, struggled, sometimes unyieldingly, sometimes indeed heroically, for its independence and survival. Similarly, the plight of Protestant communities created empathy between visitors and local population: “Travellers were almost always extremely sympathetic towards the French Protestants,” confirms John Lough (1987, 174). From Locke to Young, the sorrows of the Huguenots were centre stage; the *églises du désert*, for instance, those celebrations performed in the open air for fear of repression or lack of churches, caused no little surprise: “Passed a congregation of Protestants, assembled, Druid-like, under five or six spreading oaks [...] Is it not a worthier temple than one of brick and mortar?” (Young 1793, I, 360). Smollett’s vision is more down-to-earth and close to facts: “[c]ertain it is, the laws of France punish capitally every protestant minister convicted of having performed the function of his ministry in this kingdom; and one was hanged about two years ago, in the neighbourhood of Montauban” ([1766] 2011, 138). Criticism of French intolerance and sympathy for its victims flared up when Jean Calas was prosecuted and executed in Toulouse (1762): a cause that would have famously prompted Voltaire’s attention and successful campaign for rehabilitation. The French philosopher’s *Essai sur la tolérance* was published in 1763; a title, to an English ear, redolent perhaps of Locke’s own works on toleration and sympathy for the persecuted?

Considered as part and parcel of the French territory, therefore, Provence exhibited the evil consequences of mishandled and arbitrary authority, bad husbandry, dirt and poverty, a country whose economy, in the absence of any planning or investment, was doomed to ruin. In virtue of the contrast with their own country, it became easy for visitors to praise the English constitution and offer it as a model (Young 1793 I., 376) and to glorify, in alternative to fruit groves, the heaths and moors in which “you will find butter, milk and cream; and let oranges remain to Provence” (Young 1793 I., 389). On the other hand, Provence was home to a people who had tried, sometimes successfully, to resist hegemony, annexation and uniformity. In its wild nature, Ventoux or Alpilles, on the paths of *transhumance* or on those trodden by so many immigrants and caravans of Gypsies, on the stones of modern and ancient dwellings or monuments, it was not hard to discover traces of the untamed spirit of the old *province*.

Repeatedly forced to bow its head, to Charles the Great and Francis I or to Cardinals Mazarin and Richelieu, to name only a few, and without insisting on the worse of them, Louis XIV; compelled in 1534 to renounce its dialect and to live, love and die in the French idiom only; scarred by the unleashed violence of religious intolerance, from the Lubéron hills to Aigues-Mortes, and yet at the same time true to the French Revolution and even to the Paris Commune: the distinctive identity of Provence is carved in

its memory and in its landscape. And although it may be today obfuscated and perhaps threatened by the increasing commodification and museification of the place on one hand and by the waning of its traditionally bilingual culture on the other, the country still speaks its own words in its own voice and articulates the paradox of a French identity coexisting with rebellion to France, vindicating its solidarity with the nation and attached at the same time to its own unconquered difference. As Jules Michelet wrote in *Le tableau de la France* (1833) and in a century of exasperated nationalism, “la vraie France, la France du Nord” has little to do with the “rude pays,” with the roughness and angularities of Provence (Busquet, Bourilly *et al.* 1972, 110). ‘*Rude*’ of course because it accommodates extremes, mellow seaside and stark mountains, bitter cold and fiery heat; but I would suggest that Michelet was also pointing his finger at the constitutive fracture of Provence, French and un-French, hugely ‘local’ and intimately cosmopolitan, familiar and enigmatic. A shibboleth.

Similar to Provence itself, British visions and perceptions cover a wide range of hues and intensity: often un-reconciled or somehow to double business bound, they may be critical, suspicious, intrigued, admiring, hostile, thus giving form to a variety of emotions and interpretations. The two essays of this collection which take us into Scotland are a case in point of such diverging attitudes. In her pages on Robert Burns, Karyn Wilson-Costa lifts the veil on the poetical web of affinities existing between medieval Languedoc and enlightened Edinburgh, where the troubadour *rime* morphed unpredictably into the local Standart Habbie, leaving its mark on Robert Burns’ serious and satirical verse. Versatile and subversive as it was, the Provençal rhyme pattern was therefore informing, in late eighteenth-century Scotland, another type of insurgent poetry and bearing witness to the lively survival of its aesthetics. Conversely, when, some twenty years later, Walter Scott incorporated in *Anne of Geierstein* modes and characters of 15<sup>th</sup> century Avignon and Aix including King René, he chose rather the formulaic route to represent a culture and a region he hardly knew, casting its heroes in ironic cameos and its rural culture into a fake Arcadia. But – and this is the gist of Laurent Bury’s essay – other artists were behind the corner, ready to revisit Provence in an entirely different light and to reclaim an identity between its medieval ethos and their own Pre-Raphaelite stance.

Unsurprisingly, Victorian culture was quick to give these dichotomies an extra emphasis. Open again to visitors – as the rest of France – after the Napoleonic parenthesis, Provence was also made closer by the modernization of technology thanks especially to the gradual development of the North-South railway line from the mid-fifties onward. For many of those who chose it as a destination, however, easier and quicker communication did not necessarily lead to a better understanding of the local popula-

tion nor did it dispel the all too frequent stereotypes. In her exploration of many generations of Murray's *Handbooks*, Nathalie Vanfasse shows how the budding tourism industry was construing a highly conventional image of the country, praised of course for its medical virtues and antiquities, but altogether mistrusted and misunderstood: a territory in which one could enjoy some pleasant postcard panorama, not enough in truth to redeem the ghastly climate, unhygienic conditions and impossible dialogue with the natives. Curiously, Catholicism is a recurring issue in the guides while, in contrast with earlier accounts, both Protestant memory and communities go unmentioned and unrecorded. A bias shared by Charles Dickens, who no doubt was travelling with a Murray *Handbook* during his 1844 trip and indulged in fancifully morbid visions of "*Oubliettes*", "*Cachots*" and prisoners fastened in iron chains, in resonance with the Gothic taste of the *Handbooks'* style, and his own as well (Dickens [1846] 2013, 18). Gone the Simone Martini frescoes of the Popes' Palace, to leave room for a "Goblin" guide and gloomy images harking back to the Inquisition or to the almost perverse contemplation of the *ex votos*, treated by the novelist as one of the "many compromises made between the false religion and the true when the true was in its infancy" (Dickens [1846] 2013, 16). Just as Avignon, Marseilles offers Dickens the pictorial opportunity of strongly contrasted lights and vivid chromatics interlaced with more sinister clichés of the "common mad house; a low, contracted miserable building [...] where chattering mad-men and mad-women were peeping out through rusty bars" (Dickens [1846] 2013, 24). Provence is also approached in a strikingly dark manner through the character of Hortense in *Bleak House*:

[b]orn somewhere in the southern country about Avignon and Marseilles – a large-eyed brown woman with black hair ; who would be handsome, but for a certain feline mouth, and general uncomfortable tightness of face, rendering the jaws too eager, and the skull too prominent [...] she seems to go about like a very neat She-Wolf imperfectly tamed. (Dickens [1853] 2008, 180)

Fated by her Provençal origins to be an evil woman, it would seem, untamed Hortense has certainly no happy destiny in Dickens's novel. One is intrigued, though, by the 'She –Wolf' image: it makes Hortense a metaphor of her 'barbaric' country of origin, naturally, but also resonates with an important character in troubadour lore, *La Louve*, another She-Wolf who "treated with disdain the advances of the great singer Peire Vidal" (Ford [1935] 2009, 64). There is no telling whether Dickens was aware of the medieval association but the coincidence is all the same bizarre; and though he may not personally have liked the little Provence he knew, there is no doubt that it made its way into his novelistic dramatic imagination, tools and palette.

While Charles Dickens hastened to leave, other eminent Victorians were happy to congregate on the Riviera, headed by the Queen in person, a lover of Grasse and Hyères where she holidayed in various occasions in the 1880s. Thanks to archival research, Gilles Teulié draws the vivacious portrait of the Grasse British community, quick to appropriate the more airy *quartiers* and keen to leave its stamp on the urban fabric. British aristocracy and middle class thus brought to the coast of the Mediterranean their own culture, architecture, gardens and social customs, showing little or purely exotic curiosity for the locals and somehow replicating between Nice and Toulon the ‘orientalist’ moods and modes of imperial England. Prejudice was not only on the British side: “Des Anglais poitrinaires et des Anglaises à la moelle épinière endommagée forment le gros de la population de Nice” complains Alexander Herzen in 1847 (Bosio 1934, 114). And although he was introduced in their circles, foreigners do not fare better in Prosper Mérimée’s opinion: “Il y a ici une quantité innombrable d’Anglais et de Russes de pas trop bonne compagnie. Cette avalanche d’étrangers et le chemin de fer qu’on nous fait et qui dérange un peu nos promenades a gâté ce joli pays” (Hanotaux 1934, 85).

If differences, social, ideological and linguistic, raised barriers between the local communities and *these* Victorians, others were delving fervently into the cultural heritage of Provence and discovering a wealth of similarities and common goals: not only did troubadour motives invade the visual world to become a staple of Pre-Raphaelite existential and artistic concerns, as King René’s *Honeymoon Cabinet* makes clear in the 1850s; but the love poetry of Provence would soon have occupied a significant space in Walter Pater’s aesthetic laboratory and expanded well beyond scholarly interests and away from academia, towards Swinburne, Morris and others. Anne-Florence Gillard-Estrada explores the many aspects of Walter Pater’s medieval passion, in which senses and beauty coincide and ultimately conduct to the Greek dimension of Provence. Interestingly, the thread of Greece would be taken up again by younger and avant-garde lovers of the country, such as Roger Fry celebrating in 1924 its “continuous references to the Greek spirit. [...] Yes, surely, Provence is still, not only Pagan but decidedly Greek” (1926, 173). Insisting, moreover, on the ‘antinomian’ nature of Provençal poetry, Pater also retrieved the old unconquered and subversive quality of troubadour lives and works, an essential facet of their inheritance for Modernists Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford.

To late Victorians, however, Provence was more than the fascinating archive of *langue d’oc* verses and revitalized literary models, and its contemporary face had the traits of Frédéric Mistral whose *Félibrige* had taken by storm the sunny and sleepy streets of Maillane and St Rémy in the mid-fifties. Béatrice Laurent’s essay charts the interactions existing between the

boisterous group gathered around the author of *Mireille* and its British interlocutors, Holman Hunt and Rossetti in particular, and, more importantly, the Irish poet William Bonaparte-Wyse who came to be a central figure of the *Félibres*. Having built an unforeseen bridge between the Alpilles, London and Dublin, Bonaparte-Wyse emerges out of forgetfulness as an important Anglo-Provençal voice. And surprisingly so does Alphonse Daudet, whose Tarascon roots and affiliations prove especially attractive for an occasional traveller in Provence. Henry James, Simone Francescato explains, found in the author of *Tartarin* a congenial alternative to the aggressive Paris naturalism and a comrade-in-narrative.

In more than one way, therefore, the cultures of Provence, classical or medieval, Renaissance or contemporary, operate as a ‘colonization in reverse’, an antidote to the ‘imperial’ overtones attached to the conquest of the Riviera. Indeed, to some, as Robert Louis Stevenson, this South, long before he found the other one, offers the exalting and melancholic possibility of a home. Jean-Pierre Naugrette analyses the many implications the word has for Stevenson and how this particular home stretching between Mentone and Avignon related to the form of his writing and to his position as a crucial go-between, in aesthetic transit from Victorian age to modernity.

Alone in the chorus of prevailing male voices, the record of a woman, and one, for that matter, who had an uncommon knowledge of both French and English culture and language. For Mary Robinson Duclaux too, Provence was a home, combining the beauty of Greece and the glory of Rome, and she praised the “taste of poetry” as “a form of patriotism” (Duclaux [1892] 1903, 203); a place so close to home, indeed, that in her vision the outline of Avignon “rises out of the plain on the water like an island, much as our own little Rye stands up out of the Sussex marshes” (197). To Mary, Provence was a familiar country, for its past and for its modernity. Can we imagine that she was aware of the part played by women in the politics and culture of the place? Did she perhaps remember the *troubairitz* (female Troubadours) of centuries gone by, Marie de Ventadorn or the Countess of Die? Was she aware of the equal status of women in the ‘heretical’ theology of the Cathars? Perhaps not, but her travelogue invites us to bear in mind that women had sometimes enjoyed in Provence a social dignity and a literary respectability not easily granted elsewhere (Vasilev 2008, 44-46).

How *les jeunes*, as Ford had it, artists of the canvas and artists of the page, found food for thought in the atelier of Paul Cézanne and following the trail of Van Gogh or impressionist painters from Arles to L’Estaque, this is a tale told many times (Fry 1927, Caws 2000, Patey 2006).

Colour was essentially an addition, an ornament and embroidery of the linear design calculated to make it more attractive

but not more expressive. From that day to this, one may trace a gradual tendency towards a view of colour as an inherent part of the expressive quality of forms, a tendency to recombine into a single indissoluble whole all the aspects of form instead of proceeding by the schematic division into line, shade and colour. (Fry 1926, 214)

Although light, colour and the revolution of perspective performed in Aix-en-Provence have contributed their huge lot to shaping new ways of painting and writing in Britain – let us heap in one unholy group Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Edward M. Forster, Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry – it seemed important for this volume to scout into territories as yet not entirely explored. The ones offered for example by the gypsy trope, investigated in Francesca Cuojati's study of Augustus John, which moves from the artist's early passion for the Romany language to his stay in Martigues and the subsequent travelling to Milan with a gypsy caravan. Nothing to do with the trite cliché of the bohemian artist which must be disentangled from the sense of vagrancy pervading John's early art, of course, but, more generally, British culture at large. Not only were many artists ready to cast multiple gypsy characters in their novels and paintings (John Singer Sargent, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, David Herbert Lawrence) but, more important, they were keen to investigate the aesthetic challenges offered by the open routes of homelessness.

Gypsy culture, so intimately associated with Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and Camargue, full of esoteric and nomadic intimations, delineated radical alternatives to the sense of paralysis and stagnation that had beleaguered late Victorian and Edwardian intellectuals. Massimo Bacigalupo's essay on Ezra Pound follows the American poet on the paths of Languedoc and Provence in 1912 and discusses the literary geography of Pound's early and mature poetry, endlessly interlaced with troubadour lines reborn to new and experimental life. Somehow blending the Albigensian heretics and the medieval *jongleurs* in the same *persona*, Pound clearly found in Provence a role model of the modern poet and an image of himself which stayed with him to the end: unsubdued, ready to experiment with sounds, words and rhymes and to wage war on authority, literary and political alike. As to Ford Madox Ford's Provence, disseminated in many of his novels, from *The Good Soldier* to *The Rash Act*, it inherits in many ways Rossetti's, Walter Pater's and Ezra Pound's; but, Christine Reynier argues, Ford reveals a dimension of Provençal culture as yet untouched by British visitors: the ethics and values of popular life and the strong sense of community, historically part of a country where once existed une "république des villages" (Chabert 2006, 240). Uniquely, Ford was aware of the 'reasonable utopia' of a group-life to be led between 'cercles' and



*cafés*: “Cette habitude de se réunir est très ancienne et existait déjà au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle [...] les cercles sont les héritiers directs des assemblées de village” (Chabert 2006, 6). A social structure which is today on the brink of disappearance but was still alive in the thirties; and, to Ford, a possible model offered by Provence in a time of mounting violence a intolerance.

I am grateful to Antony Penrose for having generously offered his contribution to the volume with a cultural biography of his parents and the copyright of his father’s paintings. Roland Penrose’s and Lee Miller’s adventurous life lead us from Cassis to Mougins, via Barcelona, Cairo and Paris and finally to East Sussex where they died. More crucially, his life as an artist and a critic and hers as a photographer write an entirely original page in British relations with France and Provence. Another Provence, this time, defined by Surrealism, by the closely-knit group formed by Pablo Picasso, Paul and Nusch Éluard and Man Ray among others. And in many ways, Roland Penrose was a perfect incarnation of the Provençal sense of community and solidarity. With his rare understanding of group and communal values, he supported and promoted his friends in a Great Britain often deaf to aesthetic novelty and, as his son writes, managed to transplant the light, colours and free languages of Provence in the wonderful Farley Farm, weaving some sort of indissoluble link between Mediterranean Cassis and the shores of the English Channel.

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## EARLY ENCOUNTERS



## PROVENCE AND THE BRITISH IMAGINATION IN TOBIAS SMOLLETT'S *TRAVELS THROUGH FRANCE AND ITALY* (1766)

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From 1763 to 1765, Tobias Smollett travelled through France<sup>1</sup> and Italy. On his return to England he used his private correspondence as a basis for a semi-fictional book<sup>2</sup> that was an immediate bestseller in Great Britain: *Travels through France and Italy* (1766). *Travels through France and Italy* have remained famous for drawing British attention to Nice and its surroundings. As the full title puts it, the text contains “a particular description of the Town, Territory, and Climate of Nice: To which is added, A Register of the Weather, kept during a Residence of Eighteen Months in that City”. As a matter of fact, the book contributed to turning Nice into a winter health resort for the British upper classes in the nineteenth century, and the city later thanked Smollett for his attention by giving his name to a street.

But the emphasis on Nice and its region<sup>3</sup> should not make us forget that the text provides many details about other towns of Provence, such as Marseilles, Avignon, Nîmes or Montpellier, to give just a few examples. However, we must be aware that Nice was not strictly speaking part of Provence in 1763 and 1764. The county of Nice belonged to the kingdom of Sardinia, and the town was therefore not French. Moreover, some of the towns mentioned above, such as Avignon or Nîmes, were not part of the French

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<sup>1</sup> Smollett had already stayed in Paris in the summer of 1750 (Joliat, 1935, 100-10).

<sup>2</sup> For discussions about the semi-fictional nature of *Travels*, see Kelley (1985, 101-22) and Miles (1982, 43-60).

<sup>3</sup> Among the 41 letters that make up *Travels*, 13 deal with Nice and its surrounding region, which are described at length from Letter XIII to Letter XXV and again in Letter XXXVII.

province of Provence. Avignon and the surrounding Comtat Venaissin were ruled by the papacy: they would not become French territories until the Revolution. Nîmes was a French town, but one of the major cities of Languedoc, a province which Smollett's traveller explicitly sets apart from what he calls Provence (Smollett [1766] 1979, 107). Other towns now located in "Drôme provençale" belonged to the province of Dauphiné (Smollett [1766] 1979, 336). Provence in *Travels* is therefore quite different a geographical area from what it is nowadays. Nevertheless, this article will rely on a broader definition of Provence as a synonym for what the traveller calls "the South of France" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 75, 110, 331).

Now, if Smollett's *Travels* are easily associated with Provence, we must admit that, at first sight, they seem to leave little space for imagination. As its full title suggests, the book has all the appearance of a detailed travel guide providing the British reader on his Grand Tour with "Observations on Character, Custom, Religion, Government, Police, Commerce, Arts and Antiquities". The word 'observations' indicates that the traveller is a post-Lockean eyewitness who relies on first-hand experience to instruct his reader: the emphasis is on 'sightseeing', not on those visions of the mind which the word "imagination" immediately calls forth.

However, the two letters "M.D." below the title and the epistolary nature of *Travels* signal that observation and point of view are inseparable notions. Like Smollett himself, the semi-fictional traveller is a doctor, that is to say a learned man with a specific approach to the countries he visits. Moreover, the travel guide is actually made up of his private correspondence with family and friends. The peculiarity of the traveller's point of view is further enhanced by the first letter, which informs the reader that the doctor is an ill, cantankerous man travelling south to recover from both serious lung disorders and "domestic calamity" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 2).

Hope and melancholy could have offered fertile ground for the free expression of the traveller's imagination, but *Travels* is not a lyrical narrative in the romantic vein. The first section of this article aims to show that the traveller's anticipation and perception of Provence are in fact subordinated to a satirical intention which contributes to forging Great Britain's image as a nation. Thus Provence as it appears in *Travels* is shaped by 'British imagination' and provides a foil for the definition of the traveller's native country. However, the last section of this article suggests that the text at times expresses another type of imagination – one that goes together with a genuine aesthetic appreciation of Provence's natural landscapes as well as a more tolerant approach to its people.

The itinerary followed by the traveller through the South of France is mainly determined by his health problems. From the start, he has planned to spend the winter of 1763 in Nice, a little town whose mild climate he hopes will

cure his lung disorders.<sup>4</sup> Nice is also supposed to have lower living costs than many locations in the South of France. The reason why the traveller makes a detour to Montpellier on his way to Nice is mainly because he longs “to try what effect the boasted air of Montpellier would have upon [his] constitution” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 73). Each step of the traveller’s itinerary in Provence is carefully recorded: in Letter IX, he leaves Dauphiné and enters Languedoc. On his way to Montpellier, he visits the Pont du Gard and Nîmes (Smollett [1766] 1979, 73). Dissatisfied with Montpellier’s climate, he then sets off for Nice and passes through a series of towns and villages: Beaucaire, Tarascon, then “a wretched place called Orgon” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 107), Brignoles, Le Luc, Muy, and Fréjus. He then travels through the Esterel Mountains and stops in Cannes, which he describes as “a little fishing town, agreeably situated on the beach of the sea”: he passes through Antibes, “a small maritime town, tolerably well fortified”, and reaches the village of St Laurent, or “the extremity of France” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 112). Later, he crosses “the Var, which divides the County of Nice from Provence” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 113) and finally settles in Nice in December 1763. A few months later, the traveller goes on a tour of Italy (Smollett [1766] 1979, 202) then returns to Nice to spend his second winter there (Smollett [1766] 1979, 308). Finding his health greatly restored, he leaves Nice in April 1765 and visits several towns of Provence on his way back to England: Antibes, Cannes, Fréjus, Toulon, and Marseilles are portrayed in Letter XXXIX, while Letter XL gives a long account of Aix-en-Provence: “the capital of Provence [...] a large city” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 333); it also evokes the history of Avignon and Orange, before the traveller enters Dauphiné again and leaves the South of France.

Based as it is on the traveller’s first-hand experience of Provence, which is closely inspired by Smollett’s own stay in this region, *Travels* provides the contemporary British reader with a wealth of details concerning every aspect of life in the South of France. The climate, but also the quality of the soil and type of agriculture, and the architecture in cities are among the many subjects which are described in *Travels*. From his careful observations the traveller draws general conclusions: for instance, having noticed that the vegetables sold in Aix-en-Provence markets are not so good as those found in Nice, he explains that people in Aix are poor gardeners because they focus their efforts on the fabrication and commerce of olive oil, wine and silk. Silk he calls “the staple of Provence, which is every where [*sic*] shaded with plantations of mulberry trees, for the nourishment of the worms” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 335). Among the various subjects which attract the traveller’s attention are the peculiarities of the ancient Provençal “from which the Italian, Spanish, and French languages, have been formed. This is the lan-

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<sup>4</sup> See Letter XXXVII, pp. 315-17 for details about the climate of Nice.



guage that rose upon the ruins of the Latin tongue, after the irruptions of the Goths, Vandals, Huns, and Burgundians, by whom the Roman Empire was destroyed" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 181).

This linguistic comment reveals the traveller's interest in Provence as a territory formerly colonized by the Latins and before them by the Greeks. He is very careful to remind the reader of the ancient Latin and Greek names of each town that he visits in Provence: for example we learn that Nîmes was "antiently [*sic*] called Nemausis" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 82) while Fréjus is introduced as "the Forum Julianum of the antients" and Antibes is defined as "the Antipolis of the antients, said to have been built, like Nice, by a colony from Marseilles" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 111). Yet the traveller's interest in antiquities is never more manifest than during his visits to the Pont du Gard and Nîmes,<sup>5</sup> whose famous classical monuments have motivated his detour to Montpellier at least as much as his health problems did.<sup>6</sup>

The Pont du Gard on the one hand and the Maison Carrée and amphitheatre in Nîmes on the other do not fall short of the traveller's expectations. His great admiration is conveyed in Letter X (Smollett [1766] 1979, 80-85) by the recurring use of the adjectives "noble" and "magnificent" which express the "awe and veneration" that cannot fail to strike even the most indifferent spectator of such "majesty and grandeur". The traveller is impressed by their perfect preservation, since they stand "entire like the effect of enchantment" and defeat time. Another reason for the enduring beauty of ancient monuments is their architectural style, which conveys the "simplicity and greatness of the antients [*sic*]" and is "so unaffectedly elegant, so simple and majestic".

The traveller's reverence for the antiquities of Provence, however, stands in stark contrast to the contempt which he expresses towards its modern architecture and inhabitants. First, the ornate style of modern buildings seems even more tasteless when compared with the simplicity of ancient architecture, and the traveller is disgusted with what he calls the ornaments of "French foppery" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 82). Moreover, the modern inhabitants of Provence show no respect for their ancient heritage. For instance, the citizens of Nîmes are said to remove the stones from the Roman amphitheatre to build their own houses. The traveller is so shocked that he denounces the "Gothic avarice" and "sacrilegious violation" of the citizens who everyday "mutilate" the venerable monument (Smollett [1766] 1979, 84).

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<sup>5</sup> *Travels* also provides a very detailed description of the antiquities in Cemenelion or Cemenelium, nowadays known as 'Cimiez', an elegant district of Nice (Smollett [1766] 1979, 122-27).

<sup>6</sup> "I had a great desire to see the famous monuments of antiquity in and about the ancient city of Nismes [*sic*], which is about eight leagues short of Montpellier" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 73).

Because of its prestigious origins as a Greek and Latin colonial territory, the South of France provides the traveller with a double analogy: France becomes a synonym for barbarism, and Great Britain becomes the only legitimate heir of the Roman Empire in the Augustan age, which is actually the period when the Pont du Gard was built. The Pont du Gard acquires a symbolic status in this double analogy precisely because it is an aqueduct, that is to say one of those buildings which the Romans used to supply towns with clean water. As a matter of fact, the Romans' fondness for clean water, which their aqueducts and public baths testify to, is offered as proof that Great Britain is the new Roman Empire. Indeed, in the last letter of *Travels*, the traveller sings the praises of Great Britain as "the land of cleanliness"<sup>7</sup> of the body and the soul. Conversely, the traveller regularly represents French people, and people from the South of France, as filthy creatures lacking basic hygiene, in particular regarding their use of water.<sup>8</sup>

For instance, the condition of the sewers in most inns near Orgon and Beaucaire is the subject of a long development about the "beastliness" of the inhabitants of Provence (Smollett [1766] 1979, 107-108), a beastliness which, as the traveller puts it, "would appear detestable even in the capital of North Britain". Clean water is such a fundamental of good health in the traveller's opinion that its absence in the diet of the peasants in the South of France, where wine is drunk instead, is supposed to explain why they are "half starved, diminutive, swarthy, and meagre" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 75). Admittedly, the traveller may be clear-sighted when he claims that too much of the soil of Provence is lost on vineyards and that it should be used to grow corn instead. Nevertheless his nationalistic bias becomes obvious when he adds that the benefits of clean water can only be matched by those of the "strong, nourishing [...] small-beer of England".<sup>9</sup> The commendation of the native English ale was actually one of the *topoi* of British patriotic discourse – one thinks for instance of *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*, two prints that were

<sup>7</sup> "I am attached to my country, because it is the land of liberty, cleanliness, and convenience" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 341).

<sup>8</sup> For example, see the traveller's following remark on his stay in Nîmes: "It must be observed, however, for the honour of French cleanliness, that in the Roman basin, through which this noble stream of water passes, I perceived two washerwomen at work upon children's clout and dirty linnen [*sic*]" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 83). Interestingly enough, the traveller does not praise the restoration of the baths in Aix-en-Provence, though he describes them in detail in letter XL (see p. 335 in particular). He is among many British travellers who complained of the dirtiness of French people, as Eugène Joliat reminds us in *Smollett et la France* (1935, 124): "Horace Walpole, Arthur Young, Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Montagu, Jos. Palmer, le docteur Burney, tous se plaignirent des odeurs intolérables et des immondices que l'on trouvait partout."

<sup>9</sup> "It must be owned that all the peasants who have wine for their ordinary drink, are of a diminutive size, in comparison of those who use milk, beer, or even water; and it is a constant observation, that when there is a scarcity of wine, the common people are always more healthy, than in those seasons when it abounds" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 329).

issued by William Hogarth in 1751, in which the inhabitants of Beer Street look happy and healthy, whereas those in Gin Lane fall victim to their addiction to the foreign spirit of gin.

The satirical intentions behind the travel guide are therefore revealed: the aim of the book is not so much to advise British travellers on their journey through the South of France<sup>10</sup> as to promote the image of Augustan Great Britain. In the process the text launches attack on the flaws of France – its main cultural and economic rival, and indeed the country with which the British were almost constantly at war in the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The description of Toulon, for instance, betrays the patriotism that underlies *Travels*: after a few words in praise of the arsenal,<sup>12</sup> the traveller draws attention to the weak state of the fortifications, which is in keeping with the “imbecility [...] weakness and neglect of the French administration” that maintains in Toulon “two thousand pieces of iron cannon unfit for service” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 330).

But as the satirical discourse becomes manifest, so do the traveller’s prejudices: after all, the only natives whom he actually meets are shopkeepers, innkeepers, and coachmen.<sup>13</sup> Even if his insularity extends to his countrymen and is presented as a defining trait of the true British man,<sup>14</sup> it progressively discredits his point of view. Admittedly, the many quarrels which he has on the road over the price of his lodgings, for instance in Brignoles or in Muy (Smollett [1766] 1979, 109–11) point to the “imposition” which, he argues, “prevails all over the South of France, though it is generally supposed to be the cheapest and most plentiful part of the kingdom” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 331). It must be added that such imposition was a known fact which

<sup>10</sup> Le Chevalier de Chastellux, who wrote a contemporary review of Smollett’s *Travels*, went as far as saying that the book had been written “pour servir de préservatif contre cette maladie incompréhensible qui fait sortir tant d’Anglais de leur bienheureuse patrie, qu’ils adorent, pour aller se désennuyer chez ces peuples barbares et frivoles, qu’ils méprisent” (quoted in Joliat 1935, 149).

<sup>11</sup> No fewer than six wars were fought over the period 1688–1815: the Nine Years’ War (1688–97), the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), the War of the Austrian Succession (1739–1748), the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), the War of American Independence (1776–1783), and the French Wars (1793–1815).

<sup>12</sup> “Toulon is a considerable place, even exclusive of the basin, docks and arsenal, which indeed are such as justify the remark made by a stranger when he viewed them. “The king of France (said he) is greater at Toulon than at Versailles” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 329).

<sup>13</sup> As he prepares for his journey back to England, the traveller draws the following conclusion from his stay in Nice, “a place where I leave nothing but the air, which I can possibly regret. The only friendships I have contracted at Nice are with strangers, who, like myself, only sojourn here for a season” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 316).

<sup>14</sup> “This sort of reserve seems peculiar to the English disposition. When two natives of any other country chance to meet abroad, they run into each other’s embrace like old friends even though they have never heard of one another till that moment; whereas two Englishmen in the same situation maintain a mutual reserve and diffidence, and keep without the sphere of each other’s attraction, like two bodies endowed with a repulsive power” (Smollett [1766] 1979, 144).

even Laurence Sterne complained about on his stay in the South of France in 1763.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the traveller's defensive tone and his suspicious mind finally betray his own intolerance and suggest that he may not be such a reliable witness after all.

One of the episodes which best signals the traveller's exaggerated prejudices takes place as he crosses the Alps on his way to Turin. Having heard that these mountains were "infested with *contrabandiers*, a set of smuggling peasants, very bold and desperate" the traveller "did not doubt that there was a gang of these free-booters at hand". Consequently, on seeing two travellers coming his way he "resolved to let them know" he was "prepared for defence" and he fired one of his pistols. But the snow on the mountains provided no reverberation and the sound was "no louder than that of a pop-gun". Finally, one of the threatening strangers turned out to be an acquaintance of his, "the Marquis M. whom [he] had the honour to be acquainted with at Nice" (Smollett [1766] 1979, 319-20).

The satirist, therefore, becomes the object of his own satire, and the reader is invited to reflect on the combination of prejudices and first-hand observations in the traveller's text. Because it weaves together two satirical voices, *Travels* provides an example of the 'dialogism' defined by Bakhtin: the dialogism of *Travels* paves the way for the polyphony Smollett experimented with in his last novel, *Humphry Clinker* (1771),<sup>16</sup> a fictional epistolary text which displays the contrasted points of view of five characters on their tour of Scotland.

It should be remarked that *Travels* also anticipates *Humphry Clinker* in its praise of rural landscapes,<sup>17</sup> as can be seen for instance in this passage set in Brignoles:

When I rose in the morning, and opened a window that looked into the garden, I thought myself either in a dream, or bewitched. All the trees were cloathed [*sic*] with snow, and all the country covered at least a foot thick. "This cannot be the South of

<sup>15</sup> "I had purposed to have spent the winter months with my family at Aix, or Marseilles. We have been there, and found Objections to both – to Marseilles especially from the dearness of Living & House rent, which last was so enormous, I could not take the most miserable Apartments under nine or ten Guineas a month – every thing else in proportion [...]" (Letter to Lord Fauconberg, Montpellier, September 30th 1763, in Sterne 1935, 200-201). As a consequence, Sterne stayed in Montpellier and Toulouse.

<sup>16</sup> "In Bakhtin's terms, the narrative 'stylizes' the polemical discourse of the angry traveller and so sustains a dialogic tension between Smollett and already existing discourses (on Italy, France, arts, inns, travelling)", (Viviès 2002, 62).

<sup>17</sup> See for instance pages 286, 295 and 297 in *Humphry Clinker* ([1771] 1967) in which the beauties of the "Arcadia of Scotland" or "Scotch Arcadia" are praised by both Matthew Bramble and his niece Lydia Melford.

France, (said I to myself) it must be the Highlands of Scotland!’  
(Smollett [1766] 1979, 110).

But the appreciative description of “rural beauties” conveys no satirical intention in *Travels*, whereas it is part of a satirical opposition between town and country in *Humphry Clinker*.<sup>18</sup> That is why the enchantment that the traveller feels as he observes natural landscapes in *Travels*<sup>19</sup> is different from the ‘enchantment’ that classical monuments inspire in him. The traveller seems to open up to a world of aesthetic perception that is disconnected from the patriotic discourse that prevails elsewhere in the text, as we can see in this long description of the Esterel mountains:

The mountain is covered with pines, and the *laurus cerasus* [sic], the fruit of which being now ripe, made a most romantic appearance through the snow that lay upon the branches. The cherries were so large that I at first mistook them for dwarf oranges. I think they are counted poisonous in England, but here the people eat them without hesitation. In the middle of the mountain is the post-house, where we dined in a room so cold, that the bare remembrance of it makes my teeth chatter. After dinner I chanced to look into another chamber that fronted the south, where the sun shone; and opening a window perceived, within a yard of my hand, a large tree loaded with oranges, many of which were ripe. You may judge what my astonishment was to find Winter in all his rigour reigning on one side of the house, and Summer in all her glory on the other. Certain it is, the middle of this mountain seemed to be the boundary of the cold weather. As we proceeded slowly in the afternoon we were quite enchanted. This side of the hill is a natural plantation of the most agreeable ever-greens, pines, firs, laurel, cypress, sweet myrtle, tamarisc, box, and juniper, interspersed with sweet marjoram, lavender, thyme, wild thyme, and sage. On the right-hand the ground shoots up into agreeable cones, between which you have

<sup>18</sup> In spite of their differences, both *Travels* and *Humphry Clinker* represent travelling as a way to improve physical and psychological health. As can be seen in Lydia Melford’s letter ([1771] 1967: 297) the beauties of the landscape are among the best “remedies” for melancholy, an opinion which is certainly shared by Smollett’s traveller through France and Italy.

<sup>19</sup> Besides the natural landscapes of Provence, *Travels* also praises the ‘enchanted’ countryside of Burgundy (Smollett [1766] 1979, 121). It is interesting to notice that the adjective “enchanted” is also present in the evocation of rural landscapes in *Humphry Clinker*, for example, p. 286: “I have seen the Lago di Garda, Albano, De Vico, Bolsena, and Geneva, and, upon my honour, I prefer Lough Lomond to them all, a preference which is certainly owing to the verdant islands that seem to float upon its surface, affording the most inchanting [sic] objects of repose to the excursive view” (Matthew Bramble to Dr. Lewis). The adjective ‘enchanted’ also appears in Lydia Milford’s description of Lough Lomond (Smollett [1771] 1967, 297): “We went accordingly to Lough Lomond, one of the most enchanting spots in the whole world”.

delightful vistas of the Mediterranean, which washes the foot of the rock; and between two divisions of the mountains, there is a bottom watered by a charming stream, which greatly adds to the rural beauties of the scene (Smollett [1766] 1979, 112).

Calling the traveller or Smollett 'romantic' would be anachronistic and inaccurate,<sup>20</sup> but *Travels* undeniably reveals the traveller's sensitive heart at times, in a way that is independent of the satirical intentions of the text.

Finally, if the landscapes of Provence are among many that prompt the traveller to praise rural beauties in *Travels*, it is only in Provence that he comes closer to claiming friendship with a foreigner, a French coachman named Joseph. The traveller meets Joseph on his way from Dauphiné to Provence and, against all odds, they are brought together near Orgon:

In the middle of the plain, betwixt Orgon and this river, we met the coach in which we had travelled eighteen months before, from Lyons to Montpellier, conducted by our old driver Joseph, who no sooner recognized my servant at a distance, by his musketoon, than he came running towards our carriage, and seizing my hand, even shed tears of joy. Joseph had been travelling through Spain, and was so imbrowned by the sun, that he might have passed for an Iroquois. I was much pleased with the marks of gratitude which the poor fellow expressed towards his benefactors. He had some private conversation with our voiturier, whose name was Claude, to whom he gave such a favourable character of us, as in all probability induced him to be wonderfully obliging during the whole journey (Smollett [1766] 1979, 337-38).

Admittedly, it is Joseph who cries tears of joy on seeing the traveller, but the phrase "the poor fellow" conveys the Briton's friendly feelings. And while the mention of Joseph's travels through Spain and his resemblance to an Iroquois further enhance his status as a foreigner, the "wonderfully obliging" attitude adopted by the other coachman, and the mention of his first name – Claude – suggest that hostility based on ignorance can be replaced by mutual respect and gratitude.

To conclude, at first sight the book provides a description of Provence that is based on observations, not imagination, particularly since it is inspired by Smollett's own experience on the Continent from 1763 to 1765. We soon realize, however, that the representation of Provence provides a

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<sup>20</sup> Commenting on the descriptions of Nice in Smollett's *Travels*, Joliat indicates: "un amour de la nature quelque peu romantique chez ce réaliste endurci du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle" before qualifying his statement: "Smollett est cependant bien du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il remarque les fleurs et les douces pentes fleuries, mais ne trouve rien à dire sur la majesté des hautes cimes des Alpes ou sur la grandeur de la mer" (1935, 141).

perfect foil for the patriotic image of Great Britain: it enables the traveller to denounce the flaws of Great Britain's main cultural rivals – France and Italy (when Nice is concerned). But as the text unveils its satirical intentions and reveals the traveller's prejudices, *Travels* appears as a book *about* the British imagination, and about imagination in general – about the combination and interplay of inherited stereotypes and individual perceptions that make up the traveller's observations. A very rich text, *Travels* proves both a detailed source of information about Provence and a highly subjective representation of this region. It aims to instruct the reader about the visited country but its emphasis on the traveller's point of view also paves the way for Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*,<sup>21</sup> published two years later.

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<sup>21</sup> There is no mention of Provence in Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) but the region is evoked in the last chapters of *Tristram Shandy*, Book 7, from chapter XLI to chapter XLIII: Tristram stays in "Avignon," [sic] then travels to "Baucaira," "Tarascone" [sic] and "in the road betwixt Nismes and Lunel" he meets "Nannette" and other joyful peasants.

## CONTRASTING LOOKS ON SOUTHERN FRANCE: BRITISH PAINTERS AND THE VISUAL EXPLORATION OF PROVENCE IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES<sup>1</sup>

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With the increase of travels in Europe and beyond in the nineteenth century, tourists and artists started to explore further remote regions, outside of the traditional routes of the Grand Tour, which led them to Italy. Provence in particular became more and more popular with travellers who started to make it into a destination in its own right. In the eighteenth century, although many travellers merely crossed what is now southern France on their way to, or back, from Italy (Black 2003a: 26-27), the artistic interest in Provence started to rise. French artists, who were native of southern France, such as Claude-Joseph Vernet, Jean-Antoine Constantin and François-Marius Granet, were pioneers in the representation of Provence (Pomarède 2005: 2-5). They were followed in the nineteenth century by foreign artists, in particular British and German painters,<sup>2</sup> who were eager to explore visually new territories outside the conventional circuit of the Grand Tour. Gradually, Provence became a genuine substitute for Italy, offering less known landscapes, a light different from the warm Italian one and possessing a similar rich heritage of ancient Roman remains. However, the visual attraction of this region for painters has long remained neglected whereas the presence of British painters in other parts of France,

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Olivier Bonfait, my PhD supervisor, for his counsel as well as Roland Courtot, who gave me numerous indications on Turner's travels through southern France.

<sup>2</sup> The presence of German landscape painters is the topic of my PhD dissertation, *Avant le Sud, la Provence vue par les peintres allemands (1760-1860)*, supervised by Olivier Bonfait, at the Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille I.



and more particularly in Normandy, has been studied extensively.<sup>3</sup> The English landscape painter Richard Parkes Bonington became famous in the first quarter of the nineteenth century for his landscape paintings and watercolours, among them many views of Normandy, and his sojourn in the north of France had an important impact on the fascination this region exerted on artists in general.<sup>4</sup> British painters crossing the Alps have equally been studied, especially from John Robert Cozens in 1776 (Sloan 1986: 109-25) to William Turner's journey through the French and Swiss Alps in 1802 (Wilcox 1998; Hill 1992, 25-43). Thus, it seems appropriate to look more closely at the presence of British painters in Provence and to examine, from an aesthetic and technical point of view, the particularity of their approach to nature and culture in Provence. Indeed, British painters visited the same places as German or French artists, lured as they were by the ancient remains of the Roman Empire as well as by the shimmering Mediterranean sea near Marseilles and Nice, but they brought their very own sensibility and perception of nature to their depiction of southern France. This paper aims to focus on a few painters who illustrate the increasing interest in Provence and its changing aesthetic impact: William Marlow was one of the earliest British painters to travel to southern France in the 1760s and to depict its most remarkable monuments, such as the Popes' Palace in Avignon or the Pont du Gard near Nîmes. The famous landscape painter William Turner as well, on his second trip to Italy in 1828, instead of going directly to Rome chose a route which allowed him to visit southern France. The painter and lithographer James Duffield Harding not only travelled extensively through but also provided many illustrations for publications on southern France. In the 1830s and 1840s more British artists went to Provence, notably those who spent a long part of their career in France, such as William Callow and William Wyld who lived and worked for several years in France and participated vividly in the French art scene.

#### PROVENCE AS PART OF THE GRAND TOUR

The visual exploration of Provence is very much linked to the history of the Grand Tour (Black 2003, b and c). Travelling to the continent was an essential part of a nobleman's education; indeed many British travellers crossed the Channel and traversed France on their way to Italy. After landing at

<sup>3</sup> Dorbec 1912, 257-81; Guillaud 1981; Pointon 1985; Noon 1991 and 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Noon 1991, 22-23. Several books on Normandy were published in the 1820s in England and on the continent, among which: Cotman and Turner (1822); Ostervald (1823-25).

Calais, they would ride on to Paris, their first major stop. From there they would head south to Italy, either choosing to cross the Alps or to travel by sea, taking a boat at Marseilles or Antibes and landing at Genoa or Livorno. These travels to Italy had an important cultural and economic impact; the Grand Tour generated indeed a whole new artistic market and in order to respond to the related demand for visual souvenirs, many late eighteenth-century artists, such as Pierre Jacques Volaire and Jakob Philipp Hackert in Naples, would specialise in these kinds of subject and make a living out of it (Beck-Saiello 2010). In the eighteenth century the South of France became more and more popular, thanks to the French painters Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789, see Pomarède 2005, 2-15) and Hubert Robert (1733-1808). Both were among the earliest painters to represent southern France and its very distinctive monuments in official paintings. In 1786, Robert was commissioned by the Comte d'Angiviller to execute a series of paintings showing the ancient monuments in Provence and Languedoc, such as the Arc de Triomphe in Orange and the Pont du Gard by Nîmes destined to decorate Louis XVI's new dining room at the palace of Fontainebleau. The finished paintings were shown at the Paris Salon in 1787 (Radisch 1998, 97-116). It was as a matter of fact the presence of numerous vestiges of classical architecture which appealed to connoisseurs and painters. Most of the British travellers in the late eighteenth century were thus familiar with the works of Hubert Robert through visits to the Salon in Paris and reproductions of his works.

Claude-Joseph Vernet's fame reached far beyond the Channel and his artworks were collected in Great Britain. A native of Provence, he was born in Avignon and he received his first training in Aix-en-Provence. Vernet spent the years 1734 to 1752 in Rome, where he studied classical landscapes in the tradition of the classical French painters Claude Lorrain and Gaspard Dughet, as well as the dramatic paintings of Italian Baroque artist Salvator Rosa. Vernet was considered one of the century's most accomplished marine painters who excelled in the representation of dramatic storm and shipwreck scenes. These themes responded to the idea of the 'Sublime', as it had been developed by the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke in his treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which had a tremendous impact on literature and painting in eighteenth-century Europe.<sup>5</sup> After his return to France, Vernet received in 1753 the important royal commission for a series of large canvases representing the

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<sup>5</sup> The Irish philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) defends in his treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (1757), an aesthetic concept of the sublime, initiated by the grandeur or magnificence of certain objects in nature, as opposed to the pleasure due to beauty.

ports of France, including among others those of Antibes, Toulon and Bandol (Conisbee 1976). He achieved international fame with his topographical paintings and serene landscapes and he had many English clients and admirers in Rome, including Richard Wilson, whom Vernet is thought to have encouraged as a landscape painter (Conisbee 1976, 17). His series of the *Ports of France* as well as his other paintings had a huge impact on painters all over Europe, including William Marlow.

Following in the footsteps of their French colleagues, British painters started to visually ‘discover’ Southern France as early as in the eighteenth century, bringing their own aesthetic and technical approaches to it. Among them was the British painter William Marlow (1740-1813) who became acknowledged for his painted souvenirs of the Grand Tour; but his work was soon forgotten after his death and his paintings were replaced by those of the younger generation. Still today the major part of his oeuvre remains unnoticed by the general public and the last exhibition of his work took place in 1956.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the numerous landscapes showing French and Italian subjects (kept in various public and private collections) which he had studied during a visit to the continent in 1765 rarely attracted the attention of art historians, until the research undertaken by Michael Livesidge (1980, 547-51, 553; 2000, 83-99) provided a better insight into Marlow’s life and work. Marlow was a successful artist and presented his paintings on numerous occasions at the Society of Artists and at the Royal Academy in London. He was a pupil of the marine and landscape painter Samuel Scott from whom he inherited the topographical tradition (Morris; Livesidge 2000, 84-85). Following the example of other British painters who went to Italy, such as Richard Wilson whose Italian landscapes were extensively collected by British patrons (Solkin 1982), Marlow left in 1765 for the Continent. He followed the conventional route through France – from Paris to Châlons, down the Saône to Lyons, along the Rhône to Avignon, and then on to Nîmes and Marseilles, to sail probably to Livorno. While the exact dates of his travels are uncertain, an inscription on a drawing of an English landscape by him, dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 1765, indicates that “William Marlow the Author of this Drawing... is now studying in Italy”. In 1766, Marlow was still recorded to be in Italy, figuring on John Hayward’s list of artists’ in Rome (Stainton 1983, 13). During his sojourn in Italy he visited most of the principal cities and sites and then travelled back to England, crossing the Alps. The itinerary of his tour in 1765-66 can be tentatively reconstructed from the drawings, often summary sketches which he made while travelling. Indeed, his works are characterized by their topographi-

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<sup>6</sup> *An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by William Marlow, 1740-1813, 1956*, London, Guildhall Art Gallery.

cal character, with very identifiable landscapes from Italy as well as from France. As Liversidge pointed out, the primary purpose of Marlow's tour of Italy and France was to assemble a body of material which he could exploit after returning home (2000, 85), thus satisfying British patrons who wanted souvenirs of their own travels to Europe. Indeed, Marlow became very popular after his return to Britain because he supplied 'souvenir' pictures to patrons who had made the Grand Tour, and his careful rendering of topographical details responded to their demand. Marlow's work is composed mainly of seascapes, river scenes and landscapes in which he inserted carefully rendered architectural elements, such as bridges or castles.

In order to distinguish himself from other painters presenting views of the Grand Tour, Marlow composed his paintings with easily identifiable views from Italy and Provence or even England, and picturesque landscapes in the manner of Claude-Joseph Vernet. Marlow most certainly saw paintings by the French seascape painter at the Paris Salon in 1765 where Vernet exhibited 25 works or, at least, he could have seen reproductions which circulated on the art market. Marlow chose the picturesque sites and monuments of Provence which were visited by British tourists (Black 2003b, 174), such as the Pont du Gard in Nîmes or the cities of Avignon and Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (Liversidge 2000, 89), as motifs for several of his paintings. These 'inventions' became particularly popular with amateurs and his commercial success is evidenced by the numerous autograph versions of particular compositions, especially his views of Lyons and Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, which he represented several times either in oil or in watercolour (*An Exhibition* 1956, 17-19). The medieval cityscape of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon became *de facto* one of his most popular motifs, which Marlow depicted in several paintings: both dated 1775-1780, one may be seen at the Musée Calvet in Avignon while the other is part of the collection at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. One reason for the success of Marlow's paintings was the use of classical antiquities and the famous, very recognizable buildings they include, for instance the Popes' Palace in Avignon, the old castle in Villeneuve, or the Pont du Gard, which give these painting a historical component although the represented sceneries suggest a timeless atmosphere. After his return to Great Britain, Marlow showed 134 pictures between 1767 and 1795 at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists and at the Royal Academy. The major part of these paintings, nearly two thirds as Liversidge remarked, was constituted by French and Italian views as is indicated in the catalogues (2000, 88). Marlow's two most repeated compositions of Avignon and Lyons recur more regularly than any other subject in his *œuvre*, only matched by views of Naples. Marlow undeniably excelled in these views and his French landscape paint-

ings, from Lyon along the Rhône to Avignon and Nîmes further south became signature works, making a very individual contribution to Grand Tour imagery. By 1795 there seems to have been rather less demand for works of this kind. The war with France prevented English travellers from venturing abroad and the demand for souvenirs therefore decreased, and there was less interest than previously in Grand Tour subjects such as those in which Marlow had specialized.

#### JMW TURNER'S VISION

The presence of foreign painters in Provence was very much dependent upon the political and social history of the time, and the on-going wars made travelling between the Great Britain and the continent difficult for long periods of time. When the conflict between Britain and France had come to a temporary end with the signing of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, a brief period of cross-channel travel allowed British painters to come to France. But with the resumption of war this soon stopped and it was only after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the exile of Napoleon that travelling between France and Great Britain started again. Among the British travellers coming to France after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 was the famous landscape painter William Turner (1775-1851). Turner had first come to France in 1802, during the Peace of Amiens, but this journey only brought him to Paris and to the Dauphiné and Savoy, as he headed towards the Alps. His first travels to Italy took place no earlier than 1819. Turner took the coach from Paris to Lyons and went through Chambéry to Modane and then traversed the Mont Cenis to Turin. He continued his journey via Venice, Bologna, and Rimini until he arrived in Rome where he stayed for several months, undertaking excursions also to Tivoli, Naples, Paestum and Florence (Finberg 1961, 256-72). But when Turner returned to Italy in 1828, he chose a different route from the one he had taken in 1819 and which had led him through the Alps. This time round he chose to cross southern France, making drawings of each different station of his journey in his sketchbooks (Guillaud 1981, 257-96). Turner left Paris on August 24<sup>th</sup> and headed south via Orléans, then along the Loire and Allier valleys to Clermont-Ferrand. According to Roland Courtot, in his study of Turner's travels from a geographical point of view, the British painter passed through Lyons and then went down the Rhône by boat, arriving in Avignon in early September, where he sketched several views of the city and of the neighbouring Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (2006, 71). On the way he visited the famous cities and sites in Provence and Languedoc, besides Avignon, the cities of Arles, Nîmes, and Marseilles and recorded what he saw in two sketchbooks, entitled *Orléans to Marseilles* and

*Lyons to Marseilles* (Finberg 1909, vol. 2, 702-704 and 705-707).<sup>7</sup> Turner drew many sketches in pencil in order to capture quickly the views of the towns he visited and the architectural details of buildings. He executed several drafts for instance of the old Roman ruins in Nîmes, such as the arena or the famous *Maison Carrée* (Guillaud 1981, 274-76).

The very distinctive cityscape of Marseilles obviously inspired him and he executed several drawings while in the Mediterranean port (Courtot 2009, 71-80). Although there are no known oil paintings of Marseilles, he painted two watercolours, either directly on the spot or more likely from his sketches soon afterwards (Courtot 2009, 71-80), *The Lighthouse at Marseilles from the Sea* and *Marseilles: In the port* (Courtot 2009, 75). It was in particular the port and its immediate surroundings which captured Turner's attention and which he rendered in his drawings, almost completely disregarding other parts of the cities such as the *Grand Théâtre* or the Opera, only represented in one sketch (Courtot 2009, 73). In many of his drawings the artist quickly renders the harbour animated by various ships and deeply connected with the neighbouring urban space. According to Courtot, Turner then travelled along the coast, taking the boat to go from Fréjus to Nice (2008), sketching the cities of Cannes and Antibes from the sea. Turner continued his route by land towards Genoa relentlessly sketching the coastline. In his views of Marseille or Antibes and Cannes, one can see how much attention Turner paid to the description of the seacoast. Indeed, his particular interest is the description of the relation between the sea and the mountains or between the sea, the architecture of the city and the mountains. In his letters, Turner expressed an interest for the South of France for its own sake. Thus, in a letter sent to his friend George Jones on his arrival in Rome in October 1828 he wrote:

Two months nearly in getting to this *Terra Pictura* [...]; but the length of time is my own fault. I must see the South of France, which almost knocked me up, the heat was so intense, particularly at Nîmes [sic] and Avignon, and until I got a plunge into the sea at Marseilles, I felt so weak that nothing but the change of scene kept me onwards to my distant point. (Thornbury [1861] 1970, 101)

The numerous drawings done by Turner during his trip through Provence, Languedoc and along the Mediterranean coast testify to his authentic interest in the region. They were apparently made for their own sake, since he

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<sup>7</sup> The drawings of the sketchbooks are visible on the Tate Gallery website with the following reference numbers: D20905-D20989; D40999-D41000 and D20990-D21015; D21018-D21132; D41001-D41003.

seemingly did not use them afterwards for his paintings. In the highly finished watercolours of Marseilles, Turner used blue paper; the use of tinted ground was not in itself very new since it has been used in landscape drawing before. But these drawings show him exploiting the blue ground of the paper to give atmosphere to the scene, using fluctuating touches of colour upon it to suggest masses, objects and figures. He used vivid colours in order to recreate the sensation he felt there and to increase the atmospheric mood. Thus, he went beyond realism or the exactitude of topography in search of the poetic effect of the scenery.

Turner travelled again to southern France between 1835 and 1840 on his way back to Great Britain after another trip to Italy. Although his second journey through Provence remains difficult to date, Roland Courtot managed to identify his itinerary. He discovered that the painter travelled along the coast from Genoa to Nice and then from Cannes to Sisteron through Provence and the Southern Alps up to Grenoble (2006, 91-101). Once again Turner used a sketchbook (Finberg 1909, vol. 2, 952-56), in which he recorded his journey with views of the bay of Nice, Cannes and the Cap d'Antibes and the distant Esterel.

#### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

After the triumphal reception they were given at the 1824 Salon in Paris, more and more British artists worked in Paris. The most notable among them were the landscape artists John Constable (1776-1837) and Richard Parkes Bonington (1802-1828), who were acclaimed by the public and by an entire generation of young French Romantic artists. One of those painters who came to work in France was the landscape painter and engraver James Duffield Harding (1798-1863). He first trained with his father, a pupil of Paul Sandby (1731-1809). Harding also took lessons in watercolour painting from Samuel Prout (1783-1852) who was famous for his architectural landscapes in watercolour (Cordingly). He also learnt with the engraver John Pye (1782-1874) and became one of the first British painters to use the newly introduced medium of lithography. Harding frequently contributed to the exhibitions of the Watercolour Society, of which he became an associate in 1821 and a full member in 1822. He started to travel frequently in Europe from 1824 and also went to southern France (fig. 1). Harding was also very largely engaged in teaching, and published several books developing his views on art. He furthermore contributed to several publications, notably travel literature such as *The Tourist in Italy* (London, 1831) and *The Tourist in France* (London, 1834) by Thomas Roscoe for which he provided illustrations. Harding participated also in the famous *Voyages pittoresques et*

*romantiques dans l'ancienne France*, by Baron Taylor (1789-1879), published between 1820 and 1878, a celebrated collection of lithographed drawings and paintings in which many British painters were involved, such as Bonington or Thomas Shotter Boys. Harding contributed to the *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France consacrés au Languedoc* and made several illustrations of Nîmes for instance (Adhémar 1997, 36, 120). Although he produced various oil paintings both at the beginning and towards the end of his career, he was mainly a watercolour painter and a lithographer. The use of watercolour was particularly adapted to his views of British and European seaside towns allowing him to render quickly the agitated sea and the changing light effects. Besides representing southern France, Harding travelled extensively through the region; he was a friend of the French artist Jean-Joseph-Bonaventure Laurens (1801-1890), a native from Carpentras who later became secretary at the École de médecine in Montpellier. Laurens represented his home region in various works and often invited other painters to join him in excursions through Provence. The two artists maintained a regular correspondence<sup>8</sup> which testifies to their shared interest in each other's countries, their curiosity for contemporary artists, such as JMW Turner, and travelling in general. Harding visited Laurens in Montpellier several times and worked together with Laurens in the surrounding nature (Laurens 1849, 250, 388).

Another English artist working in France was the English landscape painter, engraver and water colourist William Callow (1812-1908). Callow became an apprentice to the engraver Theodore Fielding (1781-1851) at the age of eleven and learned from him the technique of watercolour drawing and aquatint engraving (Reynolds 1980, 2-5). Callow travelled to Paris in 1829, in order to work for the publisher Jean-Frédéric d'Ostervald (1773-1850) and with Newton Fielding (1799-1856), a younger brother of Theodore, who had established himself as a successful engraver in France. In Paris he discovered the work of Bonington who had died the year before and was encouraged by Thomas Shotter Boys (1803-1874), a close friend of the latter, to concentrate on watercolour work (Reynolds 1980, 9-12). Callow became more and more popular for his work and he shared a studio with Boys in Paris. He participated in the Paris Salon in 1834 and was appointed drawing-master to the royal family of Louis-Philippe the same year (Reynolds 1980, 15-16) whilst his own works rapidly found favour in England. He travelled extensively in France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. During his stay in Paris he undertook a walking tour through France which led him also to southern France in 1836. In the diary he kept during this journey he wrote down the places

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<sup>8</sup> These letters are conserved at the Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine in Carpentras, together with other personal papers of Laurens. Carpentras, Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine, Ms 2770.



he visited, among which Avignon, Orange, and Marseilles. He depicted the Mediterranean coast (fig. 2) as well as the inland and small Provençal towns with their typical architecture. The places he visited during his travel inspired several paintings and even decades later he continued to use some of these motifs for his works. Another version of the *Entrance to the Port of Marseilles* was executed by Callow in 1884 and exhibited at the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours in 1884. The picture is today part of the collection of the Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museums, Burnley. He also participated regularly with his watercolours in the Paris Salons in the 1830s. Elected a member of the Old Watercolour Society, the painter returned to London in 1841, he continued to exhibit his work, among which several views of southern France, at the Society of Painters in Watercolours. Callow was still appreciated in the beginning of the twentieth century and his drawings of southern France count among his most admired works (Emanuel 1926, 23-24).

William Wyld (1806-1889) is one more English artist who spent almost all his working life in France. As a result he has often been excluded from the group of English watercolourists by art historians and considered a member of the French school. Wyld held a position at the British Consulate in Calais and later worked in the wine trade (Pointon 1985, 68-72). He became acquainted with the work of Bonington, but it was only later, in 1836, that he abandoned his professional career and turned entirely to his art. Wyld travelled extensively during his career, through France and Italy, but also to Northern Africa. He used the medium of watercolour during his various travels, which enabled him to make rapid sketches of sites and landscapes encountered on his way. Several watercolours of southern France, such as *The Pont du Gard*, a loosely executed watercolour probably done on the spot, exemplify his technique and mastery of the medium, capturing the fugitive light and colour effects (Pointon 1985: 78). Frequently showing his works at the Paris Salon, he became quite appreciated in France and he won a gold medal at the Salon in 1839 and a second one in 1841, before being awarded the Legion of Honour in 1855 (Lacroix 1860, 73) for the role he played in encouraging French watercolour painting (Mallalieu 2002, 282). He also presented views of southern France at the Paris Salon such as the painting *Le Pont du Gard* in 1853 (Sanchez & Seydoux 2002: 205) and *Une rue de Villefranche, près Nice*, a watercolour exhibited at the Salon in 1869 (Sanchez & Seydoux 2004: 448). Provence inspired many of his works; indeed several watercolours of Provence feature in his posthumous sales catalogue (Chaîne and Simonson 1890).<sup>9</sup> More examples of British artists discovering Provence could be evoked, such as the marine painter Edward William

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<sup>9</sup> Several watercolours of Monaco, a market in Nîmes, two watercolours of Menton and a street in Toulon.

Cooke (1811-1880) who produced over 20,000 travel sketches throughout his career. He specialised in coastal views of England, Northern France and the Mediterranean coast (AKL, 54) but he also made sketches of Avignon and the Vaucluse valley.<sup>10</sup>

These few examples of British painters attracted by Provence and the French Mediterranean coast emphasize the impact this part of France had on artists before the days of Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cézanne or Impressionists such as Auguste Renoir and Claude Monet. By following the traces of these painters, from William Marlow to Callow, it becomes clear how the perception of Provence changed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the early stages of this visual exploration, artists such as Marlow were still attracted by its resemblances with Italy and focused on the Roman antiquities, thus responding to the demand of Grand Tour patrons. But little by little Provence was seen and appreciated for its very distinctive character, as defined by its rugged topography and local culture and also for its very particular light. Although British painters were still drawn to these famous sites in Provence, they were less interested in the exact topographical rendering, and more in the atmospheric description and the transcription of the vivid light, than their predecessors had been. The use of watercolour, a medium of choice for English artists while German painters were much more accustomed to pencil drawings and French artists to oil sketches, allows a subtle rendering of the light effects of the southern sun (Josenhans 2011). One also notices through these examples that British painters were particularly lured by the French Mediterranean coast, with Marseilles and its port in particular as a frequently depicted motif. These few examples also emphasize the attraction of Provence for foreign artists, the British as we have seen, but also for German painters, whose presence and artistic works have not yet been sufficiently analysed by art historians.

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Fig. 1 - James Duffield Harding, *Nice*, 1824, Pencil, 26,7x 37, 1 cm, The Huntington Library



Fig. 2 - William Callow, *Entrance to the Harbor of Marseilles*, ca. 1838, watercolour with touches of gouache, overtraces of graphite, and scraping, on off-white wove paper, 207x297 cm, Art Institute Chicago

OF BARDS AND TROUBADOURS:  
FROM *RIME COUÉE* TO THE ‘BURNS STANZA’

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[...] *In my flowerbed  
Most plants and shrubs aren't native but have crossed  
Seas, seasons, different climates, to be here  
Thriving in shaded Scottish horticulture.*

Douglas Dunn (English, A Scottish  
Essay, 25-28)

One such non-native plant that has flourished in the Scottish vernacular tradition is the Standard Habbie or ‘Burns Stanza’, the stave of some forty poems written by Scottish national bard Robert Burns (1759-1796) and used in some of his best-known and most-quoted verses. Although Robert Burns reused and perpetuated other traditional verse-forms such as ‘Montgomerie’s Stanza’, also known as *Cherrie and the Slae*, and the ‘Christis Kirk on the Greene’ and ‘Peblis to the Play’ stanzas, it was to Standard Habbie that he was to turn again and again. The stanza’s ‘fizz’ (David Kinloch, ‘Ode Tae a Hose-Fish’) fired the Scottish poetic imagination and Robert Burns’s poetic genius in particular. Don Paterson suggests the Standard Habbie measure was to Burns “what *terza rima* was to Dante or the ballad to Emily Dickinson” (2001, xvi). For T.F. Henderson, “His thoughts and fancies fell naturally into the pace which it imposes: as Dryden’s into the heroic couplet, as Spenser’s into the stanza of *The Fairie Queen*” (1901, 341). Arguably, the reasons why it was so perfectly suitable for the turn of his thought can be found in the medieval Occitan

origins of the stave, which lends itself so well to wordplay, irony and performance.

This 6-line tail-rhyme stanza rhyming *aaabab*, known generically in Latin as *rhythmus caudatus* ('tailed rhythm') and in French as *rime couée* ('tailed rhyme'), was, in fact, first devised by the 11<sup>th</sup> century Occitan troubadour, William IX Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine (1071-1127) who used it in five of his eleven extant poems. The Troubadours, founders of modern European vernacular poetry, were aristocratic poets writing for an educated audience. They wrote in Occitan, a language they themselves called *Lenga Romana*; William referred to it as *Romans*, his vernacular, his spoken, local speech, in contrast with the Latin of the Church: "Et il prec en Jezu del tron/ En romans et en son lati" ('Pos de chantar m'es pres talenz' 23-24) (Paden 1998, 3). Although the area where Occitan was spoken included Aquitaine it probably did not extend as far North as Poitou; however, since his first wife Philippa was the heiress of the Count of Toulouse, it is possible that William adopted the Occitan language for his poetry to emphasize his solidarity with his vassals to the South (Paden 1998, 24).

Nineteenth-century poet and critic T. F. Henderson posits that the stanza could probably have been brought to England by Eleanor of Aquitaine, granddaughter of William, who, after divorcing Louis VII of France in 1132, married Henry II Plantagenet, Count of Anjou and heir to the Anglo-Norman realm. It first appeared in English in a 13<sup>th</sup> century love-song and was used to write no less than four of the *York Mystery Plays*. Yet it was in 16<sup>th</sup> century Scotland that it began to flourish: Sir David Lindsay, in Part 1 of 'Ane Pleasant Satire of the Three Estaitis' (1540) and court poets such as Alexander Montgomerie and Alexander Scott all wrote verses in the stave (Henley; Henderson 1901, 338). After falling into disuse with the decline of popular poetry after the Reformation, it was revived by Robert Semphill of Beltrees in his mock elegy 'The Life and Death of Habbie Simson, the Piper of Kilbarchan' (c.1640). Destined to become the model for humorous elegy in the Scottish vernacular, it had a seminal influence on Allan Ramsay (1686-1758), who dubbed the stave the 'Standart Habbie', thus siting it "firmly within the poetry of the city, revealing an alternative Edinburgh that could be riotous and irreverent" (Baraniuk 2007, 74):

May I be licket wi' a Bittle,  
Gin of your Numbers I think little;  
Ye're never rugget, shan, nor kittle,  
But blythe and gabby,  
And hit the Spirit to a Title,  
Of Standart Habby ('Answer I to Hamilton, July 10<sup>th</sup> 1717', 20-25)

Ramsay and Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) employed it in a series of light-hearted, deflative mock-elegies written in vernacular Scots but it finally obtained a lease of mortality through Robert Burns. The bard “put it to all manner of uses and informed it with all manner of sentiments” (Henley; Henderson 1901, 341) in serious poetry such as ‘The Vision’; in addresses such as ‘To a Louse’, ‘To a Mountain Daisy’, ‘To a Mouse’, ‘To the Deil’, ‘To a Haggis’; in elegies like ‘Tam Samson’s Elegy’ or ‘Poor Mailie’s Elegy’; in a series of epistles to fellow poets, friends and benefactors in his brilliant satire ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’, and also in some of his more indecorous verses such as ‘Answer to a Trimming Epistle’.

Throughout the Victorian era the stave developed into an absolute stock-in-trade elegiac standard of early modern Scots poetry; outwith Scotland it was popularly known as the ‘Burns Stanza’ or the ‘Scottish Stanza’. Overused by a host of minor Scottish writers in mawkishly sentimental doggerel about Robert Burns, or in pale imitations of the latter’s poems, it soon degenerated into a folksy Kailyard cliché, part of the literary folklore rejected by Scottish Modernists such as Hugh MacDiarmid as an obstacle to modernity. Yet contemporary Scottish poets have begun experimenting again with this intricate, “infectiously cheerful” stanza form (Gifford 2009, 22) as they re-engage with Burns, “keeping faith with a persistent sense of poetic language, with Scottish accents, and with the art of verse” (Crawford 2009, 11).

The Troubadours cultivated a wide range of fixed and semi-fixed forms, with a preference for short, difficult forms in particular and a love of precise elegance: the Standard Habbie is a case in point. Most of their poems are based on the stanza, which, in Occitan, turns on a strict rhyme scheme that recurs identically throughout the song. André Berry has underlined the high craftsmanship of the way they planed down the words and filed them to make them fit the different measures (Berry 1930, 5). Arguably, the invention of such rigid poetic forms is a reflection of the fragility of Occitania in the XII<sup>th</sup> and XIII<sup>th</sup> centuries and an artistic response to the need to re-establish authority, and the decision to write in Occitan therefore both poetically and politically informed. Similarly, in eighteenth-century Scotland, the revival of what were considered to be indigenous poetic forms by poets Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns, was also a poetic and political choice made to claim the legitimacy of vernacular Scots in post-Union British poetry.

The troubadour tradition is viewed by most critics as a corpus of earnestly serious and confessional love poetry, more or less devoid of humour, yet this courtly poetry was permeated with irony: many troubadour songs were, in fact, often playful and satirical, laced with humorous sexual innuendo. The poems of William IX, including four of those written in the six-line *rime couée* stanza he invented, are no exception. The fact that this form was to become one of



those best-suited to the mockery and irony of eighteenth-century Scottish vernacular poets is arguably due to its phatic thrust, the way it apostrophises an interlocutor, its dramatic quality, the way it invites irony and encourages inventive rhyme and wordplay. The general effect of the stanza's pattern can indeed be said to be friendly to satirical verse: "The initial three rhyming iambic tetrameters permit an idea to be set out and apparently concluded in the following dimeter, but lines five and six, which echo the rhyme scheme of three and four, may be used for the addition of a satirical rider or cynical afterthought" (Baraniuk 2007, 74), as in the following lines from 'Address to the Deil':

An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkan,  
A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',  
Some luckless hour will send him linkan,  
To your black pit;  
But, faith! He'll turn a corner jinkin,  
An' cheat you yet. (115-20)

Furthermore, its capacity to convey a plethora of moods – from the satiric and the comic to the epistolary and the hortatory – provides the Scottish bard with "a vehicle for the expression of his own multi-faceted verse persona" (Baraniuk 2007, 76). It comes as no surprise therefore, that a number of Burns's verse epistles, occasional verse *par excellence*, should be written in the measure, whose informal nature Thomas Crawford finds "eminently suited to poetic gossip and conversational topics" (1960, 88). The self-dramatisations of the verse-epistles, in which the poet endorses a series of skillfully-adopted poses, illustrate how irresistible to him are the use of persona and the ironic use of voice, as evidenced for example in the following lines from the 'Second Epistle to John Lapraik':

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether  
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,  
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,  
Let time mak proof;  
But I shall scribble down some blether  
Just clean aloof (37-42).

The strict rhyme scheme *aaabab* used in the stave calls for the repetition of the same sound at least four times; with its six lines, but only two rhymes, the stanza thus invites the poet to find the most improbable rhymes, such as those ending in 'z' (Porée 2004, 4), thus testing his linguistic and poetic skills. When Burns writes "I rhyme for fun" ('Epistle to James Smith'), he is making both an ironic self-effacing comment on his poetic abilities and a frank statement of the delight he takes in polishing his rhyming skills. In 'Address to the Deil', for example, Burns rises to the challenge of finding

three rhymes in /iz/ to refer to Satan's temptation of Job, playfully juxtaposing a biblical reference, 'the *man of Uzz*' (Job 1:1), and words in Lallans: 'bizz' (flurry); 'gizz' (wig) and 'phiz' (face); the incongruous mix of low and high-brow lexical choices is a possibility inherent in the stanza that Burns exploits to the full:

D'ye mind that day when in a bizz  
Wi' reeket duds, an' reestet gizz,  
Ye did present your smoutie phiz  
'Mang better folk;  
An' sklent on the *man of Uzz*  
Your spitefu' joke? (97-103)

As critics have frequently remarked, the Scottish bard was fascinated with images of lowness. The originally aristocratic form of the rime couée became a demotic one in Scotland; the combination of Lallans, English and Latinate language and literary and colloquial diction in Burns's poetry gave it a flexibility and range that facilitated unexpected juxtapositions, elevations of the low, deflations of the high and clever rhymes, within the fixed form of the stanza. For Douglas Dunn, "Standard Habbie is the kind of verse in which the author takes it for granted that his readers will be predisposed to appreciate the naturalness and inventiveness of rhyme as well as the triumphant pursuit of an awkward stanza shape" (1997, 65). The Troubadours indeed followed set poetic conventions familiar to their audiences in writing their verses: the *gap*, or boasting song, and the nonsense poem are cases in point. The prototypes of both genres were written by William of Poitiers in the *aaabab* measure: 'Ben vuelh' ('I would well like') and 'Vers de dreit nient' ('Verses about nothing'). The game-like character of such poems is reflected both in the conventional generic features and the playful poetic invention and expression they demand. The dramatic quality of the stanza is admirably suited to the talents of Robert Burns the 'Rhymer', the 'Ironist' and the 'Performer'. Most of his poems in Standard Habbie are characterised by irony and a definite theatrical quality; no fewer than fifteen of the thirty-one poems published in the first edition of his work in 1786, known as the Kilmarnock edition, are written in the stave. This collection can arguably be seen as a virtuoso one-man performance, staged at the expense of the Scottish literati who fell hook line and sinker for the bard's ironic self-dramatisation as the "simple bard/ Untouched by rules of Art" in the epigraph, fit only for penning 'uncouth rhymes' in Lallans. The Standard Habbie measure, more than any of the other verse-forms he helped revive, enabled Burns to demonstrate how skilful in reality he really was.

Irony, suggests Simon Gaunt, is the ideal vehicle for criticism, enabling the poet to please one section of his public while ridiculing the ideas, be-

haviour and use of language of another section of his audience (1989: 32). Furthermore, since irony involves a careful and precise use of language the ironist must choose his words with care: enter Standard Habbie. The definition of irony given by Dennis Green in *Irony in the Medieval Romance* is equally apposite to a discussion of the poetry of both Robert Burns and William of Poitiers, in which irony relying on a disparity between literal and intended meaning abounds:

Irony is a statement, or presentation of an action or situation, in which the real or intended meaning conveyed to the initiated intentionally diverges from, and is incongruous with, the apparent or pretended meaning presented to the uninitiated. (1979, 9)

In ‘Compahno, farai un vers de dreit nien’, William employs an extended metaphor by which he describes two mistresses as two horses. In ‘Ben vuelh’, the *double entendre* between poetry making and love-making, relayed by the ambiguous use of terms such as *mester* (champion; occupation; master; trade) and *joc/ juec/ jogar* (game; board-playing; stake) underpins the whole poem, culminating in the extended metaphor of the gaming board. In the last verse, in which William slightly alters the rhyming pattern which follows the *aaabab* pattern in the preceding eight verses, he is ostensibly playing a game of dice, yet the dice are in fact a sexual metaphor for the male organs, ‘Don, vostre datz son menudier’ (Green 1979, 44); and the gaming table represents first the woman’s dress, then her sexual organs:

E quan l’aic levat lo taulier/And after lifting the board,  
Empeys los datz,/I threw the dice,  
E-ill duy foron cairat vallier/And the first two were good points  
E-L terz plombatz./And the third was loaded.  
E fi-l ben ferir al taulier,/And I had it hit the board well,  
E fon joguatz./And it was game.

Irony is an ideal vehicle for sexual innuendo, one of which Burns made frequent use; since in most cultures it is indeed to a greater or lesser extent taboo to explicitly designate a sexual organ or act, metaphor is used ironically. Thus, in ‘Answer to a Trimming Epistle’, in which Burns apostrophises the hypocritical elders of the Kirk in Standard Habbie, he suggests he be castrated using the *double entendre* of the word ‘member’. In ‘To Alexander Findlater’, a brief letter-epistle also written in his favourite stanza, Burns uses the extended metaphor of the farmyard, in which women are ‘Chuckies’ or ‘burdies’ and the poet the ‘generous Cock’. Once again, the wealth of diminutives in Scots provides the bard with some of his most improbable rhymes: by employing two different terms to describe the farm

girls' backsides, 'Chuckies' thus rhymes with 'dockies' and 'burdies' with 'hurdies' (4-6; 16-18). Ironically, Burns ends his poem by saying "But as this subject's something kittle, / Our wisest way's to say but little" (25-26), having, of course, already said far too much.

Dennis Green posits that the ironist implicitly divides his audience into two groups: the initiated and the uninitiated, in a deliberate attempt to create an elite, which makes irony therefore elitist. For Simon Gaunt, "the existence of an initiated and uninitiated audience is implicit in much troubadour poetry" and "the seeds of this desire to please only the discerning few can be traced back to the poetry of William IX" (1989, 23). In 'Farai un vers tot covinen' (4-5) he mocks those who do not understand his irony, in this case the rough, vulgar audiences: "E tenhatz lo per vilan, qui no l'enten/ qu'ins en son cor volontiers [res] non l'apren" ("And consider the man who does not understand it [the poem] or learn it willingly in his heart to be a rustic"). William's poetry is as double-edged as that of Burns: witness the way he divides his audience into initiated and uninitiated in the first verse of his boasting song 'Ben vuelh', in which he is leading his audience to expect a song about poetry:

Ben vuelh que sapchon li pluzor,/I would like most people to  
know  
D'un vers, si-s de bona color,/Whether a verse is well-crafted.  
Qu'ieu port d'ayselh mestier la flor,/Brought it forth from my  
workshop,  
Et es vertatz./And it is of good colour.  
E puesc en trair lo vers auctor,/And I can call as a witness this  
verse itself  
Quant er lassatz./When it is bound up.

The ironist's intended meaning must be inferred and in some cases some readers or listeners will fail to grasp it and be duped by the pretended meaning, as both meanings are possible. In his 'Epistle to John Ranken', Burns gives a metaphorical account of his impregnation of a young country-girl called Betty Paton, resulting in the birth of an illegitimate daughter: the poet is the poacher with his gun, and Betty the partridge:

'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,  
I gaed a rovin wi' the gun,  
An' brought a *Paitrick* to the *grun*,  
A bonie *hen*;  
And, as the twilight was begun,  
Thought nane wad ken. (37-42)

On reading the poem, Dr. Hugh Blair, one the most notable members of Edinburgh's literary establishment, was, as Andrew Noble puts it, "first uncom-

prehending and then horrified as understanding slowly dawned". Blair himself wrote: "The description of shooting the hen is understood, I find, to convey an indecent meaning tho' in reading the poem [...] I took it literally, and the indecency did not strike me" (2001, 151). Burns elevates the initiated among his readers – fellow poets and members of the rustic community in which he lived and who understood his Scottish diction and recognized the wordplay he used – above the so-called intellectual elite, the Edinburgh literati, who neither grasped his linguistic subtlety and ingenuity nor comprehended his criticism of the social, religious and political order of the day. The essential irony of other poems such as the 'Epistle to John Lapraik' is that "his apparent self-effacement is a joke at the expense of those who fail to notice the irony" (Dunn 1997, 75):

I am nae Poet, in a sense;  
But just a Rhymer like by chance,  
An' hae to Learning nae pretence;  
Yet, what the matter?  
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,  
I jingle at her (49-54)

It is now widely accepted that there is considerable interaction between parody and satire in troubadour poetry. A medieval tradition of facetious wordplay is discernible in the songs of the early Troubadours such as William of Poitiers, who intended their songs to be burlesqued in performance: the parodic intention for certain of William's poems is unquestionable (Monson 1999, 208; 205). Given their theatrical quality, the possibilities of reinforcing in performance the humorous or ironic effects of these texts are indeed obvious. The *rime couée*/ Standard Habbie measure is an open invitation to the comedies of imitation, be it pastiche, parody or burlesque. Where Burns is concerned, his parodies are on several levels: for instance, in the dramatic monologue 'Holy Willie's Prayer', he parodies form and language; the mock-elegy 'Poor Mailie's Elegy' is a parody of 'The Piper of Kilbarchan' and of Robert Fergusson's 'Elegy on the Death of Mr David Gregory', and furthermore, a parody of the genre of the elegy itself. Unsurprisingly, the poetry of Burns has also often been parodied, in particular the poems written in Standard Habbie. The one most often parodied is the one most often quoted: 'To a Mouse. On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough November 1785'. David Kinloch has written two parodies of the poem: 'Ode Tae a Hose-Fish', already quoted above, and 'To a Bardie fae a cockroach, on jumping out of a New York fridge and confronting him, July 1997'. Burns's famous opening lines: "Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie, / O, what a panic's in thy breastie!" thus become "Huge, baldit, chitterin, tim'rous bardie, / Openin the fridge wiz richt fuhardie!" Scotland's Makar Liz Lochhead has even rewritten Burns's poem from a woman's perspective in "From a Mouse":

But I'm adored – on paper – ever since  
 First ye got me at the schule, at yince  
 Enchantit – who'd aye thocht poetry was mince  
 Till ye met Rabbie,  
 My poor, earth-born companion, an the prince  
 O Standard Habbie (13-18).

Arguably, it is this jocular form of playfulness, the clever, complicated rhymes and wordplay that are inherent in the *rime couée* measure, which link Robert Burns and the Scots vernacular tradition and William of Poitiers and the Troubadours. As Don Paterson so aptly puts it: "The Habbie carries a far more self-conscious sense of its own artifice than other verse-forms, and it is a grand stanza for the natural show-off" (2001, xvi). In other words, to quote Seamus Heaney:

For Rabbie's free and Rabbie's big,  
 His stanza may be tight and trig  
 But once he sets the sail and rig  
 Away he goes  
 Like Tam-O-Shanter o'er the brig  
 Where no one follows. ('A Birl for Burns' 25-30, in Gifford 2009)

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“MY VERY DREAMS ARE OF PROVENCE”:  
*LE BON ROI RENÉ*, FROM WALTER SCOTT  
TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

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In one of his later novels, *Anne of Geierstein*, Sir Walter Scott (1781-1832) contrasted his main setting, Switzerland, with a very different region: Provence, under the rule of count René d'Anjou (1409-1480). Some thirty years later, William Morris decorated a piece of furniture which his collaborators had baptized *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet* (fig. 3). How could 'le bon Roi René' become such an inspiring figure for the second Pre-Raphaelite generation? Which part, if any, did Scott and Provence play in their decision to honour the memory of René d'Anjou? These are some of the questions I will try to answer.

In August 1827, some twelve years after his literary fame reached unprecedented proportions thanks to his first novel *Waverley*, Scott decided to add one last title to his series of Waverley Novels: *Anne of Geierstein; or, the Maiden of the Mist*, situated during the War of the Roses. It was actually a commission from his publisher, Robert Cadell, who wanted to capitalize on the success of *Quentin Durward*, situated in France during the reign of Louis XI. It seemed a good idea to offer the public a kind of sequel, so as to finance the costly project of a new illustrated edition of Scott's works. The novelist conceived a story starting in Switzerland, a country whose history he did not really know and whose landscapes he had never seen, but Cadell provided him with the necessary documentation. In 1829, the book met with the expected success, being one of Scott's most popular works after 1825. It attracted favourable reviews, but the historical ingredient was judged more interesting than the plot itself, the two being less happily intertwined than usual.



*Anne of Geierstein* mainly takes place in Switzerland, then in Burgundy, but the last quarter of the book is set in Provence, a region of which, once again, Scott had no first-hand knowledge. He was helped by his friend James Skene of Rubislaw (1775-1864), with whom he had studied law some twenty-five years before. An amateur painter, Skene gave him valuable help which went well beyond a few details. Apparently, the inclusion of Provence in *Anne of Geierstein* was largely due to Skene's touristic stay in that region:

Upon his describing to me the scheme which he had formed for that work, I suggested to him that he might with advantage connect the history of René, King of Provence, which would lead to many interesting topographical details which my residence in that country would enable me to supply, besides the opportunity of illustrating so eccentric a character as '*le bon roi René*,' full of traits which were admirably suited to Sir Walter's graphic style of illustration, and that he could besides introduce the ceremonies of the *Fête Dieu* with great advantage, as I had fortunately seen its revival the first time it was celebrated after the interruption of the revolution. He liked the idea much, and, accordingly, a Journal which I had written during my residence in Provence, with a volume of accompanying drawings and [Abbé Jean-Pierre] Papon's *History of Provence* was forthwith sent for, and the whole *dénouement* of the story of *Anne of Geierstein* was changed, and the Provence part woven into it, in the form in which it ultimately came forth. (Scott 2000, 504)

This version is confirmed by Scott, who adds in his *Journal*, 17 February 1829: "Something may be made out of King René, but I wish I had thought of him sooner" (Scott [1829] 2000, 414). And yet the presence of René d'Anjou in the novel is far from being incongruous. *Anne of Geierstein* starts a few years after the battle of Tewkesbury, a victory for the House of York, a defeat for King Henry VI and the House of Lancaster. Scott's two British heroes, who have remained loyal to their vanquished sovereign, come to the Continent in order to obtain the help of the Duke of Burgundy (hence the title that was given to the French translation, also published in 1829, *Charles le Téméraire, ou Anne de Geierstein, la fille du brouillard*). In the third volume, while in Strasburg, the two travellers meet King Henry's exiled widow, Margaret of Anjou (1429-1482), who was in fact King René's own daughter.

As we shall see, Provence is introduced in the novel for three main reasons: as a strategic element in the negotiations with the Duke of Burgundy; as the setting for part of the plot, Scott having used several different sources to describe the sites which he had not seen with his eyes; and through the colourful figure of King René, whom he unashamedly caricatured.

On a geopolitical level, Provence appears in *Anne of Geierstein* as a bargaining chip, a territory which is doomed to be bartered to the highest bidder. For the Duke of Burgundy, this might be an excellent opportunity to increase his domain. If Charles the Bold agrees to send a military contingent across the Channel to reinforce the Lancaster army, the former Queen of England promises to convince her father: King René will bequeath Provence to the heir presumptive supported by Margaret of Anjou. Charles's ambitions thus reach a climax: "Burgundy joined to Provence – a dominion from the German ocean to the Mediterranean!" (Scott [1829] 2000, 282). The cession of Provence is therefore at the heart of the talks led by the Duke of Oxford with continental powers, and the diplomat's art consists in advancing the most adequate arguments:

Here is Provence, which interferes betwixt you and the Mediterranean. Provence, with its princely harbours, and fertile corn-fields and vineyards – were it not well to include it in your map of sovereignty, and thus touch the middle sea with one hand, while the other rested on the sea-coast of Flanders? (Scott [1829] 2000, 281)

The negotiator paints a portrait of the Duke of Burgundy as master of the Western world, a kind of giant overcoming all obstacles, easily straddling across Europe to extend his sprawling authority. Besides, Charles the Bold is not the only one who has designs over King René's territory: "I am satisfied that France and Burgundy are hanging like vultures over Provence, and that the one or other, or both, are ready, on [René's] demise, to pounce on such possessions as they have reluctantly spared to him during his life" (Scott [1829] 2000, 289). There we meet again Louis XI as a rival for the Duke of Burgundy, the sentence also reminding us that most of René's lands were arbitrarily shared between those two rulers, exactly at the time when Scott's novel is supposed to take place. Indeed, Anjou and Provence were soon to be pocketed by the French king. While the crown's ambitions are anything but disguised, the Duke of Burgundy hides his own behind more poetical motives: "'Provence, said you?' – replied the Duke, eagerly; 'why, man, my very dreams are of Provence. I cannot smell to an orange but it reminds me of its perfumed woods and bowers, its olives, citrons, and pomegranates'" (Scott [1829] 2000, 281).

As a setting for the novel, Provence hardly conforms to such an idealized vision. Once again, James Skene was opportunely there to provide Scott with fodder for his descriptions. From his stay in France, Skene had brought back several watercolours showing the sights of Aix and its region, where he had spent six months, and they came in handy for the novelist: "Calld

on Skene and saw some of his drawings of Aix,” writes Scott in his *Journal* on 19 February 1829 (Scott [1829] 2000, 414). The Edinburgh City Library holds some two hundred works by Skene, painted between 1817 and 1837. In 1829, the same year as *Anne of Geierstein*, Skene published a book entitled *A Series of Sketches of the Existing Localities Alluded to in the Waverley Novels*. A second volume was planned but was never printed, unfortunately: five pictures should have been devoted to our novel, including two Provence landscapes (‘St. Victoire’ and ‘La Garagoulle’, after the watercolours now housed at the National Gallery of Scotland; Skene also painted ‘Le cheminè du roy Rénè’ [sic]).

Only in Chapter 29 (there are 36 in the novel) does one of the protagonists arrive in Provence.

It was late in autumn, and about the period when the south-eastern countries of France rather show to least advantage. The foliage of the olive-trees is then decayed and withered, and as it predominates in the landscape, and resembles the scorched complexion of the soil itself, an ashen and arid hue is given to the whole. Still, however, there were scenes in the hilly and pastoral parts of the country, where the quantity of evergreens relieved the eye even in this dead season. (Scott [1829] 2000, 320-21)

Provence pales in comparison with the splendours of Switzerland or the sublime heights of the Alps. A sense of gloomy sterility prevails in the rapid sketch offered by Scott, to which a few words are occasionally added to increase the feeling of drought and danger in a wilderness which remains hostile to man (Scott [1829] 2000, 334). Provence is ironically depicted as “the Arcadia of France” (Scott [1829] 2000, 323) on the occasion of a ludicrous pastoral scene, with a flock of sheep whose bleating improvises variations on their shepherd’s tune.

As we can see, the region hardly imposes on a tourist’s attention by its natural beauties. Nevertheless, Scott does mention the Sainte Victoire, “a mountain three thousand feet and upwards in height, which arose at five or six miles’ distance, and which its bold and rocky summit rendered the most distinguished object of the landscape” (Scott [1829] 2000, 330). The novelist improves the occasion by recalling the highly anachronistic legend according to which the Roman general Gaius Marius had a monastery built there, to celebrate his victory over the Cimbri and Teutons. But there’s the rub: the aforesaid victory took place in 102 BC, which makes it difficult to associate it with a Christian institution.

The Sainte-Victoire also includes, in a cavern under the monastery, a place which could satisfy the Romantic taste for the sub-

lime, for those landscapes where untamed Nature offers those frightening chasms which send man back to his own minuteness within the universe.

In the middle of this cavern is a natural pit, or perforation, of immense, but unknown depth. A stone dropped into it is heard to dash from side to side, until the noise of its descent, thundering from cliff to cliff, dies away in distant and faint tinkling, less loud than that of a sheep's bell at a mile's distance. The common people, in their jargon, call this fearful gulf, Lou Garagoule. (Scott [1829] 2000, 339)

As we said before, Scott had no personal knowledge of Provence, hence the "somewhat overdrawn" description (Baring-Gould 1905, 62). Scott had even less knowledge of the Provençal language. The chasm is actually named 'lou garagai', and nowadays it is known that, far from being unfathomable, it is 120 meters deep. To describe it, Scott had used his imagination, starting from the scanty information given by Anne Plumptre in her book *Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in France* (1810), completed by Skene's watercolours, of course.

Some less negative depictions were inspired by the city of Aix, especially its monuments which had already vanished by Scott's time, like King René's palace, uniting Gallo-Roman vestiges with a medieval structure: "It is not more than thirty or forty years since this very curious remnant of antique art was destroyed, to make room for new public buildings, which have never yet been erected" (Scott [1829] 2000, 328). The novelist seems to denounce the incapacity of the governments which had followed one another in France since 1779, the year when the palace was pulled down. The Cathédrale Saint-Sauveur fares hardly better: it is very briefly mentioned on the occasion of the funeral of Margaret of Anjou (who in fact died several years later in Angers): "[t]hat beautiful church in which the spoils of Pagan temples have contributed to fill up the magnificence of the Christian edifice. The stately pile was duly lighted up, and the funeral provided with such splendour as Aix could supply" (Scott [1829] 2000, 366).

As can be seen, the true reason for the presence of Provence in *Anne of Geierstein* is King René's fascinating personality. An early-twentieth-century guide of Provence introduced him as "that most unfortunate Mark Tapley of monarchs" (Baring-Gould 1905, 62), and indeed René d'Anjou seems to have always preserved his good spirits in the face of adversity, like Martin Chuzzlewit's companion in Dickens's novel. Scott quotes Shakespeare, who had already opened the doors of British literature to King René without naming him in so many words: in *Henry VI*, the duke of York fights the wife of King Henry. York calls her 'She-wolf of France' (like Isabelle, Edward II's queen), and addresses her in the following manner:

Thy father bears the type of King of Naples,  
Of both the Sicils and Jerusalem,  
Yet not so wealthy as an English yeoman.  
Hath that poor monarch taught thee to insult?  
(*Henry VI.3*, 1.4.121-24; Scott [1829] 2000, 325)

Actually, it seems that Scott directly referred to Shakespeare's source, the *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* published in 1577 by Raphael Holinshed, which does not mean that his testimony is historically more reliable.

At the time when *Anne of Geierstein* supposedly takes place, the real René d'Anjou was 65; he was therefore not "a king, eighty years of age" (Scott [1829] 2000, 324), but this is just one of the many liberties which Scott allowed himself. The novelist had to fight in order to impose this character, whom neither his publisher nor his printer liked; in a letter to Cadell, dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 1829, he defended him notably as a foil for Charles the Bold, whose wild temper he set into relief: "I retrenchd a good deal about the Troubadours which was really *hors de place*. As to King René I retained him as a historical character. [...] After all K. René is a historical [figure] highly characteristic of the times" (Scott [1829] 2000, 417). From the historical figure, Scott only retained the most ludicrous aspects. A king without a kingdom, René is indifferent to political questions, he only cares for art, hence the passage about Provençal Troubadours which Scott had to reduce, but where he still denounces their poetry that was "too frequently used to soften and seduce the heart, and corrupt the principles" (Scott [1829] 2000, 318).

In the novel, René is a ridiculous old man, who only thinks of arranging parties and costumed pageants with mythological pretexts, while all around him worry about the fate of the region over which he still rules. A frivolous creature, always ready to make a show of himself, dancing or singing, he is there to introduce an element of comic relief. However, even though "his head was incapable of containing two ideas at the same time" (Scott [1829] 2000, 354), he is somewhat redeemed by the last words concerning him: "René is incapable of a base or ignoble thought; and if he could despise trifles as he detests dishonour, he might be ranked high in the list of monarchs" (Scott [1829] 2000, 369). The most severe judgment is in fact that passed by Queen Margaret, for whom no words seem to be harsh enough to describe him, when she explains that she chose to run away from her contemptible father's court. She eventually reaches a less biased opinion of him:

I have thought on the offences I have given the old man, and on the wrongs I was about to do him. My father, let me do him justice, is also the father of his people. They have dwelt under their vines and fig-trees, in ignoble ease perhaps, but free from

oppression and exaction, and their happiness has been that of their good King. (Scott [1829] 2000, 338)

Nevertheless, King René's reputation was certainly not improved by *Anne of Geierstein*. And yet, it was probably Scott's novel which, a few decades later, inspired the creation of one of the greatest collective endeavours of the second Pre-Raphaelite generation, *King René's Honey-moon Cabinet*. This piece of furniture, one of the gems of the 1862 International Exhibition, brought together William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, and their elder Ford Madox Brown, among others.

In the mid-Victorian period, Walter Scott's novels were still the staple of any good collection of British fiction. William Morris had started to read them when he was four; by the age of seven, he claimed to have read them all: "Scott, he used to say, meant more to him than Shakespeare" (McCarthy 1994, 6). But it was not only through the latter's *Henry VI* or the former's *Anne of Geierstein* that the Pre-Raphaelites knew of King René. In August 1852, the young painter Thomas Seddon wrote to Ford Madox Brown: "I hope to become a *passé-maître en chevalerie*. I have got the Roi René's book on *Tournois* to read. He is such a courteous old gentleman, a perfect connoisseur of the olden time, who, if he lived now, would buy Hunt's pictures, and write the book of ball-room etiquette" (Seddon 1858, 21). The *Traité de la forme et devis comme on fait les tournois* was written by René d'Anjou and illustrated in the mid-fifteenth century by Barthélémy d'Eyck, the 'Maître du Cœur d'Amour épris', from the name of another superbly illuminated manuscript, also commissioned by King René.

Thomas Seddon's younger brother, architect John Pollard Seddon (1827-1906), designed a massive cabinet to house all his plans and drawings in 1861. He had it manufactured by the family firm, Seddon & Sons. Author of a book on gothic ornamentation written in 1852, a member of the Medieval Society since 1857, J.P. Seddon left a few buildings, such as the University of Aberystwyth (1864-1871), and many more projects, like the Imperial Monumental Halls and Tower (1904), a mausoleum to all British subjects who died for the Empire which, if it had been erected, would have dwarfed the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey into nothingness.

In June 1860, William Morris and his wife moved into the Red House built for them by Philip Webb, entirely decorated in an original brand of neo-medievalism, with pseudo-Gothic embroideries, wallpapers, furniture painted by Morris himself or frescoes by Burne-Jones. Less than one year later, having found his vocation, William Morris created his own business, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., with seven partners beside Morris himself: painters Edward Burne-Jones, D.G. Rossetti and Ford

Madox Brown, architect Philip Webb, and two non-artist friends, Charles Faulkner and Peter Marshall. In the prospectus which was then circulated, one could read:

These Artists having been for many years deeply attached to the study of the Decorative Arts of all time and countries, have felt more than most people the want of some one place, where they could either obtain or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character. They have therefore now established themselves as a firm, for the production, by themselves, and under their supervision, of:

- I. Mural Decoration, either in Pictures or in Pattern Work...
- II. Carving generally, as applied to Architecture.
- III. Stained Glass...
- IV. Metal Work in all its branches, including Jewellery
- V. Furniture, either depending for its beauty on its own design, or on the application of materials hitherto overlooked, or on its conjuncture with Figure and Pattern Painting. Under this head is included Embroidery of all kinds, Stamped Leather, and ornamental work in other such materials, besides every article necessary for domestic use. (McCarthy 1994, 172)

J.P. Seddon knew the Pre-Raphaelites, as his recently deceased brother Thomas had been very close to the group and a pupil of Ford Madox Brown. In 1861, he was effortlessly drawn to the idea that his cabinet could be advantageously decorated by the recently opened Morris & Co. He apparently left the choice of the subject to the artists. According to Seddon, Brown himself decided: "The idea was to counter the presentation of René in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Anna von Geierstein*, where the historical figure of King René of Anjou appears as a ridiculous fop" (Bendiner 1998, 179).

King René, whom Scott had caricatured, was vindicated by the Pre-Raphaelites, but only through certain new distortions of historical truth. The allegorical scenes painted on the panels of the cabinet did not aim at being exact representations of episodes from René's life, but rather an evocation of the atmosphere created in Provence by a king who had favoured the flourishing of art. This neo-medieval object did not show the king himself, but claimed to look like the furniture which René could have commissioned for his own honeymoon (fig.3).

The four scenes decorating the big rectangular doors of the cabinet, corresponding to the major arts, were shared between three artists. 'Architecture' was attributed to Ford Madox Brown, 'Music' to Rossetti, 'Painting' and 'Sculpture' to Burne-Jones (fig. 4). On six smaller square panels are

shown some minor arts: on the left, 'Gardening', by Rossetti, and 'Embroidering', by Val Prinsep; on the right, 'Weaving', by Burne-Jones, and 'Pottery'; on the sides, 'Glasswork' and 'Ironwork', by unidentified artists (the latter craftsman does look very much like William Morris).

The presence of 'Architecture' is easily explained by the function of the cabinet and by its designer's profession. Ford Madox Brown, who had chosen that allegory for himself, justified it in the following words: "Of course, as soon as married, [King René] would build a new house, carve it and decorate it himself, and talk nothing but Art all the 'Honeymoon' (except indeed love)" (Bendiner 1998, 141). This Ruskinian ideal of the versatile artist does not appear in *Anne of Geierstein*, but Scott allows René to express some enthusiasm for his own palace, "the stately grace of which may be compared to the faultless form of some high-bred dame, or the artful, yet seeming simple modulations of such a tune as we have been now composing" (Scott [1829] 2000, 327-328). The image designed by F.M. Brown shows a melancholy monarch being kissed by his queen (fig. 5). However, the king's attention seems to be turned towards the plan of his future castle, lying on the floor. The building does not bear the least resemblance to René's real palace, such as Scott described it. Following his habit, Brown produced several versions of the motif initially conceived for Seddon's cabinet, with the characters' feelings changing little by little: the queen no longer kisses, but simply touches the king's cheek with her own, and the smiling king looks pleased. The artist gave his own features to the monarch, whose ambiguous attitude to his wife recalls Brown's masterpiece, *The Last of England*, whose protagonists – Brown and his wife, disguised as emigrants – contemplate a much more uncertain future than that of the builder-king. The moonlight added to some versions was justified by Brown's indication: "It is twilight when the workmen are gone" (Bendiner 1998, 141).

Music, with which René compared his palace, is very present in *Anne of Geierstein*. On his first appearance, the king is surrounded by Troubadours playing various instruments, "his mind seeming altogether engrossed with the apparent labour of some arduous task in poetry or music". When he meets the young hero, he rejoices in having found "an acolyte in the noble and joyous science of Minstrelsy and Music" (Scott [1829] 2000, 325, 326). In Scott's novel, King René sounds rather like the bard in *Astérix*, whom everybody else tries to prevent from singing (or dancing). To illustrate 'Music', Dante Gabriel Rossetti took up an idea which he had already used a few years earlier, in an illustration for Tennyson's 'Palace of Art', where Saint Cecilia receives the fiery kiss of an angel. From his first sketches, Rossetti decided to have his royal pair kiss much more voluptuously than Brown's, in spite of the rather cumbrous obstacle separating the lovers: an organ on which are inscribed the names of the lands over which King René ruled in



theory ('Hierusalem, Sicilia, Neapolis, Cyprus' or 'Cyprus, Navarre', depending on the versions). Like Brown for 'Architecture', Rossetti produced an oil painting after this somewhat acrobatic composition, despite the hostile criticism which it attracted (fig. 6):

On one side is seated the lady, her fingers on the keys; on the other King René. They are kissing over the organ stops. It is, of course, natural for the lady, in order to be kissed, that she should stretch her arms out, so she touches the highest and lowest of the notes on the organ board. Still she is an exceedingly awkward and dumpy looking person, with her waist quite under her arms. The kissing man looks as if he were in a swoon, while the lady takes the salute in quite a matter-of-fact way. Though granting that Rossetti was all that is in opposition to realism, still, women never could have such swan-like necks as this painter presented them. (*New York Times* 1883)

The allegories of 'Painting' and 'Sculpture' were allotted to young Burne-Jones, who was still at the very beginning of his career. In *Anne of Geierstein*, King René mentions painting, "an art which applies itself to the eye, as poetry and music do to the ear, and is scarce less in esteem with us" (Scott [1829] 2000, 327). Sculpture was not included among René's preoccupations, according to Scott. On the other hand, those two arts did feature in the programme defined for Morris & Co, and that is probably why they were given pride of place. Like Brown and Rossetti, Burne-Jones also resorted to couples, but in much more modest positions. Behind the artist-king yielding the brush or the chisel, a devoted wife stands admiring his work: "None of the artists in question would have allowed that!" noted May Morris in her biography of her father (Morris [1936] 1966, 33).

As for the smaller square scenes, they bear no relation to King René, but they offer an idealised vision of medieval craftsmanship, mainly through female figures (Rossetti left a splendid preparatory drawing for 'Gardening', and a not so splendid oil painting). On the cabinet, all those allegories are unified through their background: a monochrome panel under a pointed arch like in the oldest religious paintings, a golden grid which was painted by Morris himself, "with his usual keen decorative sense," explained Seddon. The aim was to summon "the old spirit of chivalry" while reaching "the unity of the several fine arts and their accessories" (Banham and Harris 1984, 135). In other words, the goal was to realize the dream of King René, the patron of the arts caricatured by Scott or the multifaceted craftsman idealized by Ford Madox Brown, the poet, musician, dancer, architect, painter and sculptor. Such was also the dream formulated by William Morris in *Art and the People* (1883):

In those times when art flourished most, the higher and the lower kinds of art were divided from one another by no hard and fast lines; the highest of the intellectual art had ornamental character in it and appealed to all men, and to all the faculties of a man; while the humblest of the ornamental art shared in the meaning and deep feeling of the intellectual; one melted into the other by scarce perceptible gradations: or to put it into other words, the best artist was a workman, the humblest workman was an artist. (Bendiner 1998, 75)

This utopia seemed to have come true in René's Provence, a fantasy Provence, of course, since none of the artists involved had visited the region. Yet, confronting this purely imaginary work, which never claimed to be a historical reconstruction, the Victorians believed themselves transported back to the Middle Ages:

As ever with these young artists, there is a certain quality in all this work that one cannot define in a single word – an intensity of vision, and a simplicity of setting down, that make the scenes of medieval life they picture, however fanciful, a bit of life as it was lived; we are looking through a peep-hole at a medieval town; it may not have been exactly thus and thus, but the invention is vivid and human, and looking from afar, the twentieth century can greet the fifteenth century with understanding and fellowship. (Morris [1936] 1966, 33)

Having been delayed because of political troubles in Italy, the South Kensington International Exhibition planned for 1861 finally took place in 1862. Like ten years before in the Crystal Palace, one of its attractions was the 'Mediaeval Court', where Seddon displayed his neo-gothic furniture. Morris & Co invested some £25 for two stands, one devoted to stained-glass, the other to furniture. There, people could admire the *St George Cabinet*, a very simple object designed by Philip Webb and painted by William Morris, and the much more complex *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*. A few hostile or sarcastic voices were heard in the newspapers, but the operation was a commercial success, with excellent sales and new customers.

The story of *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet* did not stop there, however. Beside the oil paintings and watercolours produced by the artists, Morris gave a new lease of life to the allegories conceived for the cabinet by transforming them into stained-glass windows, in different versions. The first set was apparently commissioned by Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899), a well-known landscape painter who, despite his much more conservative art, was interested in the innovations of his pre-Raphaelite contemporaries. Birket

Foster asked Morris & Co to decorate The Hill, his house in Witley, Surrey. This included some stained-glass inspired from *King René's Cabinet* (Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10), and in 1882 one of those windows was in turn immortalized by Birket Foster himself in a watercolour entitled *The Crockery Seller* (sold in 2000 by Christie's as "The Old Curiosity Shop"). Surrounded with china vases and other works of art which Victorian aesthetes passionately collected, the window manufactured after Ford Madox Brown's *Architecture* occupies the exact centre of this work. Towards the end of the century, John Pollard Seddon devoted a book to his exceptional cabinet, and this may well have been one of the last occasions when the name of King René was submitted to the attention of the British public, before the rise of mass tourism allowed them to come and visit Aix-en-Provence, where they can see the statue sculpted by David d'Angers and walk along the Boulevard du Roi René...

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Fig. 3 - John Pollard, Ford Madox Brown, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, Edward Burne - Jones, Edward Coley, Val Prinsep, Seddon and Sons, *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*, 1861, oak, inlaid with various woods with painted metalwork and painted panels, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Fig. 4 - John Pollard et al., *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Fig. 5 - Ford Madox Brown, 'Architecture', panel for John Pollard et al., *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*, 1861



Fig. 6 - Dante Gabriel Rossetti 'Music' panel for John Pollard et al., *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*, 1861



Fig. 7 - Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Music', *King René's Honeymoon*, 1863, stained and painted glass, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Fig. 8 - Ford Madox Brown, 'Architecture', *King René's Honeymoon*, 1863, stained and painted glass, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London





Fig. 9 - Edward Burne-Jones and Edward Coley, 'Painting', *King René's Honeymoon*, 1863, stained and painted glass, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Fig. 10 - Edward Burne-Jones and Edward Coley, 'Sculpture', *King René's Honeymoon*, 1863, stained and painted glass, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## VICTORIAN VARIATIONS





“SILENT, BURNT UP, SHADELESS AND GLARING”:  
PROVENCE SEEN THROUGH VICTORIAN EDITIONS OF  
MURRAY’S *HANDBOOK FOR TRAVELLERS IN FRANCE*

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The starting point for this paper will be the surprising opening remarks of Section VI of Murray’s first *Handbook for Travellers in France* published in 1843:

The Englishman who knows the South of France from books; who there finds Provence described as the cradle of Poetry and Romance, the paradise of the Troubadours, a land teeming with oil, wine, silk and perfumes has probably formed in his mind a picture of a region beautiful to behold, and charming to inhabit. These anticipations may probably be strengthened by Mrs Radcliffe’s well-known, but perfectly unfounded, descriptions of scenery in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Nothing however, can differ more widely from the reality. (Murray 1943, 429)

Murray’s 1843 *Handbook for Travellers in France* thus opens with a very negative view of Provence which hardly encourages travellers to go there, let alone sojourn in the area. The guidebook discards traditional views of Provence as the birthplace of courtly love and professes to offer its readers a more authentic view of the area, distinct from the deceptive images conveyed by famous English writers. But exactly how authentic is this new image of Provence? Guidebooks are a somewhat manipulative genre in that they unavoidably offer a selective and prescriptive view of the scenery.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> For further information regarding manipulation by travel guides and narratives, see Vi-viès (1999) and Adams (1962).

this respect they can be seen as ways of constructing the landscape rather than as mere mirrors. They filter and rearrange the landscape for their readers and, when widely consulted, convey representations that contribute to the shaping of a collective imagery, which readers can either accept or discuss.<sup>2</sup> Bearing this in mind, this paper will examine the filtering and shaping of Provence through a selection of guidebooks edited by the British firm Murray from the 1840s until the end of the nineteenth century. It will endeavour to find out whether or not *Murray Handbooks for Travellers in France* reveal a quintessentially British perception of Provence and it will consider whether this perception can be considered as typically Victorian.

This investigation will be based on editions of Murray guides broadly covering the second half of the Victorian period – in other words the 1843, 1858, 1869 and 1881 editions. To measure the possible imprint of the British imagination on Murray guidebooks, we will compare their descriptions of Provence with those of famous French guidebooks of the same period, namely the Joanne guidebooks, also called *Guides diamant*, published by Hachette. However, this comparison can be misleading in so far as guidebooks of the time often copied one another's contents. It can be supposed nonetheless that they all, to some degree, attempted to answer their reader's expectations and that in that respect, Murray's guidebooks catered more specifically for their British readership. Moreover, these volumes were written by British authors. When it mentions the descriptions of Provence featuring in chapter 3 of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in its opening statement of the 1843 edition, Murray's *Handbook* provides an example of the use of British references to capture Provençal scenery. In spite of its Englishness, this reference paradoxically conjures up a picture of Provence which was not only largely fictional but even entirely fictitious, since Ann Radcliffe never visited France. Radcliffe's novel nonetheless gave rise in Britain to a widely spread, though completely invented, representation of the area, which the 1843 Murray guidebook professes to stand against. Interestingly, this British reference disappears in later editions of the *Handbook*, which no longer mention Ann Radcliffe's descriptions.

While Joanne guidebooks allude to Provence only in passing when analysing the South of France, and take for granted that their readers know what the word refers to, Provence features explicitly in every edition of Murray's *Handbooks for Travellers in France*, first published in 1843. This difference enables us to distinguish guidebooks written for the French population from guidebooks written about France for British readers. The word

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<sup>2</sup> This idea of collective and often national representations projected by travellers upon the scenery of foreign countries and conveyed and projected by their travel narratives has been developed by Hartog (1986), Pemble (1987) and by Buzard (1994). It is also tackled in Vanfasse (2009a) and in DeVine (2012).

'Provence' appears in the very title of section VI of part two of Murray's *Handbooks*. It is first associated with Languedoc in the 1843 to 1860 editions and then with Languedoc and Nice – after Nice became French again in 1860. Although the word 'Provence' is defined more precisely in Murray's *Handbooks* than in the Joanne guidebooks, the boundaries of Murray's Provence are delineated somewhat vaguely in the British guidebook. The whole of the route stretching from Lyons to Avignon strangely comes under the heading 'Provence'. On the other hand, parts of Provence are mentioned in the section devoted to the region of 'Dauphiné'. Similarly the route running from Marseilles to Ventimiglia appears under the heading 'Provence' until the 1890 edition of the guidebook distinguishes Provence from the Riviera *per se*. The Riviera becomes the subject of an entirely separate volume in 1892. The boundaries of Provence set by Murray's *Handbooks* thus vary for historical and commercial reasons.<sup>3</sup>

A comparison between Murray's *Handbooks* and Hachette guidebooks from the mid-1860s onward reveals an interesting cultural difference in geographical representations of Provence. By then, the railway system had developed sufficiently to enable travellers to reach Provence by train. The Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée, or PLM line, reached Marseilles by the mid-1850s and ran on to Monaco by 1869.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Murray's *Handbooks* continued, even after the construction of the railway, to present the area as being

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<sup>3</sup> Section VI provides a map of the areas broadly situated along the Rhône river, starting from Lyons, which seems to imply that Provence is contained within this zone. The section itself is intriguing inasmuch as the whole of route 125 from Lyons to Avignon, by Vienne, Valence, Orange and Sorgues bears the heading 'Provence'. The heading 'Provence' is applied more appropriately to route 127 which goes from Avignon to Marseilles, via Tarascon and Arles, or to route 129 leading from Avignon to Aix, via the Rognac station and the Roquefavour aqueduct. However frontiers again become unclear when the heading is again used to frame route 128 stretching from Marseilles to Ventimiglia, through Toulon, Hyères, Cannes, Nice and Mentone. The main body of the text explains this geographical extension by qualifying this area as "the Garden of Provence" (Murray 1881, III). Such is therefore the broader conception of Provence spread by Murray guides. However, from the 1890s onward a specific volume of Murray's *Handbooks* is devoted to the Riviera, and its subtitle distinguishes Provence from the Riviera *per se*. The second edition of this *Handbook for Travellers on the Riviera* does away with Provence altogether and focuses only on the area stretching from Marseilles to Pisa. Moreover, in spite of their broad conception of Provence, the *Handbooks for Travellers in France* published from 1843 until 1892 miss parts of Provence, which appear in section seven of the guidebook under the heading 'Dauphiné'. These parts cover some of the southern areas between Grenoble and Marseilles – described in route 134 which goes through La Croix Haute, Veynes Junction, Sisteron and Aix as well as parts of route 135 going from Sisteron to Nice via Digne, Castellane, and Cannes, if one bears in mind the extensive definition of Provence previously mentioned. The definition of Provence thus fluctuates considerably in Murray's guidebooks for historical reasons – like the inclusion of Nice, which extends the region – and for commercial reasons, as the Riviera develops into an attractive zone in its own right and is separated by the editor from the rest of Provence to form a different volume.

<sup>4</sup> For more details regarding the history of the PLM railway line, see Get et Lajeunesse (1980).

structured around the River Rhône axis, as was the case when travellers only used steamboats and coaches to journey from Lyons down to the Camargue region or to Marseilles. Though increasingly crisscrossed by railway lines, their maps still bear the caption: “The River Rhone, from Lyons to the sea” (figs. 11 and 12). On the other hand, the Joanne guidebooks follow the PLM line, as their very title *De Paris à la Méditerranée* – which echoes the very name PLM – indicates, and the places of interest they mention are in the vicinity of railway stations along the line. Of course one might object that the PLM line ran mainly along the Rhône axis, but the French guidebook’s choice of a man-made construction as opposed to the British choice of the river as the structuring element of the landscape, emphasised by the caption of Murray’s maps “The River Rhone from Lyons to the sea”, is nonetheless striking.

In the French guidebooks, the word ‘Provence’ does not always appear clearly in the general volume devoted to France, but a section is devoted to the region in the more specialised guidebooks entitled *De Paris à la Méditerranée* which were published from 1854 onward, with the opening and extension of the PLM line. Murray’s *Handbook to France* on the other hand alludes to Provence from its very first edition. Section VI of Murray’s *Handbooks for Travellers in France* offers a short introduction almost exclusively devoted to the area. It purports to describe the main features of the region, especially its climate and inhabitants. Provence, according to the guidebook, and as has already been pointed out, is anything but the ‘paradise of the Troubadours’ imagined by would-be travellers. Instead of this, the *Handbook* contended, actual travellers experienced arid conditions, unbearably dry heat and suffocating dust. The mental picture conveyed here is that of a scorched and dusty landscape under a glaring sun. The *Handbook* even compares the area to “the dry bones of a wasted skeleton” and states that “the inhabitant of the North would not readily purchase the clear cloudless sky of Provence with the verdure of misty England” (Murray 1843, 429). Copper-coloured and dry Provence is contrasted with the freshness and verdure of British landscapes, and Provençal vines, mulberry and olive trees – described as squat, scanty and often leafless as well as powdered with dust – are set against English forests of oaks, ashes and beeches. Readers are invited to conjure up images of Britain, the better to appreciate the contrast with Provence, and all these distinctions explicitly or implicitly emphasise the pleasanter and more picturesque qualities inherent to British landscapes.

Murray’s *Handbooks* apply a widespread climate theory, which claims that the character of the inhabitants of Provence is in keeping with the landscape and climate of the area. According to this theory, the Provençal temper is as fiery as the sun and soil, which account for the lack of self-control and moderation of the people of the region. The resulting disposition is

depicted as "hasty and headstrong," and this leads, according to the *Handbooks*, to extreme religious and political behaviour and to "the committal of acts of violence unknown in the North" (Murray 1881, 109). Similarly, the rude quality and coarseness of the landscape is considered to have spread to the character and appearance of Provençal people, "rude in manner" and "harsh in speech". And the guidebook remarks that their patois is "unintelligible, even to the French themselves" (Murray 1881, 109). These extreme qualities, deemed intrinsic to Provençal character, are seen as simply mirroring the extremes of the region's climate, which fluctuates between torrid and scorching heat in summer and piercing cold in winter. However, this violence may sometimes only be a sign of what the guidebook defines as southern exuberance. The *Handbooks* point out that the inhabitants of Provence often seem to be quarrelling when they are, in fact, merely conversing vivaciously.

Besides its harsh climate and uncivilised inhabitants, Provence is, according to Murray's guidebook, plagued with two other major scourges, namely the mistral wind and mosquitoes. Complaints about the mistral were by no means specific to British perceptions of the area. They can also be found in the French guidebooks. Nevertheless, the long paragraph devoted by Murray *Handbooks* to mosquitoes, reveals a British hypersensitivity to southern insects. It dwells on their "venomous bite," sufficient, according to the guidebook, to spoil any visit to the area. The insects are described as downright "pestilential" and are said to inflict "excruciating torments" on the "worn-out traveller" (Murray 1843, 430). The *Handbook* describes mosquitoes literally pouring into well-lit bedchambers, causing fever and madness to unfortunate sleepers not only by the pain of their sting but also by the "tingling and agonising buzzing which fills the air". The only protection is a well-constructed mosquito curtain, only to be found in England of course and, even more precisely, at Waterloo House in London. For any British traveller not yet discouraged from setting foot in Provence by the nightmarish pictures previously drawn, the guidebook adds that another scourge lies in wait, namely scorpions who can be discovered even "in the folds of the bed-curtains or sheets" (Murray 1843, 430).

The *Handbook's* introductory remarks on Provence are surprisingly negative and unattractive. They hardly encourage anyone to visit the area, which is somewhat paradoxical for a guidebook. Clearly, during the Victorian period, Provence still was not an area where the British wished to linger. The only parts of the region considered worth seeing by the *Handbook* were the fertile and more humid zones. The guidebook seems impervious to the interest and charm of dryer landscapes and focuses instead on the irrigated areas of Provence, where mulberry trees, corn, vines, fruit and vegetables and even chestnut trees grew.

The foregoing description of Provence and Bas Languedoc has been limited to the dark side of the picture: it remains to mention the resources, fertility, and curiosities of the country. Its valleys, and lowlands accessible to irrigation, are most fertile; and the earth, where it can be sufficiently supplied with moisture, teems with varied productions all the year round. Before the spring is over, the mulberry trees, which line the roads and cross the fields, are stripped of their juicy foliage to feed the silkworm. [...] Early in summer comes the corn harvest, the crops having grown, for the most part, under the boughs of the mulberry or vine; sunshine and soil sufficing for both. Autumn is the season of the vintage. [...] Chestnuts on the higher grounds are another crop collected in the same season. [...] The winter has set in before the olives are gathered and pressed. A visit to the market place in every town will show with what abundance the earth brings forth fruit and vegetables of endless variety. (Murray 1881, 111)

The *Handbooks* also see a few redeeming features and possible attractions in the Roman remains Provence has to offer:

No traveller should omit seeing the *Pont du Gard*, between Avignon and Nîmes, and the walls of the *Théâtre* at *Orange*, stupendous and most impressive structures perfectly characteristic of the great people that raised them; the *Amphithéâtres* of *Nîmes* and *Arles*, though less enormous than the Colosseum, are more interesting on account of their better preservation. The *Maison Carrée* is a gem of architecture: the monuments at *St Rémy*, and the *Arch* at *Orange*, are also of great excellence, besides many other curious relics. (Murray 1881, 112)

This emphasis on Antiquity and Roman architecture reveals that the guidebooks were arguably intended for a wealthy and cultivated British elite accustomed to the Grand Tour. This is confirmed by frequent references in Latin and Greek, which the British guidebooks consider unnecessary to translate whereas the French guidebooks do. In this respect, it appears that Murray's *Handbooks to France* were not written primarily for the Meagleses or the Dorrits of Victorian society<sup>5</sup> but rather for the educated upper classes.

The Roman sites mentioned by the British guidebooks were compared to equivalent monuments in Italy – which once again seems to indicate that

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<sup>5</sup> The Meagles and the Dorrits are satirised by Dickens in his novel *Little Dorrit* for the lack of culture and open-mindedness they display during their travels. Dickens depicts them as comic ignoramuses. They do not have the cultural background of traditional Grand Travellers, familiar with ancient languages, with Greek and Roman art and with the Old Masters.

the readers of these *Handbooks* were seasoned Grand Tour travellers with corresponding classical knowledge. The importance of antiquity in the region is accounted for etymologically and even genetically. The 1843 edition of the *Handbook* states that the Roman features of Provence are especially worth seeing because the very region derives its name from the Roman word 'Province' (432). The guidebook also traces the exceptional beauty of "women of the lower-classes" to the Greek presence in the region, thereby building on the well-known stereotype of Greek profiles (110).

Another feature of Provence considered worth seeing by Murray's *Handbook* was "Christian architecture" and the guidebooks recommended "the churches of Arles and its vicinity, of St Gilles, of Aix, of Avignon [with its] stupendous Papal Palace" (Murray 1881, 112). Catholicism and traces of the Papal past of Provence clearly appealed to the British imagination, and frequent comparisons were drawn between British and French religious architecture – the style of the main entrance to the cathedral of St Sauveur in Aix is likened to "perpendicular Gothic overloaded with ornament" (Murray 1881, 200). The guidebooks dwell on the religious past of such buildings and particularly on its dark sides. They emphasise the "luxury, profligacy and venality" (125) of the Papal Court in Avignon rather than its splendour, and they indulge in details on the horrors of the Inquisition and the chamber of torture rather than on particulars about the rooms of state:

The chamber of torture (*salle de la question*) adjoining, is built with funnel-shaped walls, contracting upwards, in the manner of a glass-house, a form devised, it is said, to stifle the cries of the miserable victims. In the thickness of the wall, in one corner, are the remains of a furnace for heating torturing irons, according to the tradition. Near it are holes to which was attached the instrument called *La Veille*, a pointed stake, upon which the condemned was seated, suspended by cords from above, so as only to prevent his falling, but allowing his whole weight to bear upon the point. (Murray 1843, 448)

Such accounts were bound to appeal to British travellers because they implicitly reinforced the idea of Anglican superiority while also awakening a mixture of horror and fascination. Among these travellers, Charles Dickens was so inspired by the gruesome stories narrated by the guidebook and by its description of the 'dark ages' of Avignon that he repeated some of this information almost word for word in his travel narrative *Pictures from Italy*.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the dark ages of Provence's Papal past, the *Handbooks* also dwelt on description of sites and stories related to the violence of the

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<sup>6</sup> This has been analysed by McNees (2007) and by myself (2009).



French Re-volution or the Napoleonic Wars. Such allusions reinforced British identity by implicitly contrasting the moderation and balance of the British political system with regimes depicted as tyrannical and blood-thirsty. The French Revolution gave rise to many hair-raising descriptions depicting a variety of atrocious crimes, and the guidebooks even implied that the natural ferocity of Southerners turned into downright madness during the Revolution:

Bedouin is a miserable village rising from amidst the ruins of a town destroyed at the Revolution. There is no darker spot in the black history of that period than the burning of Bedouin and the massacre of its inhabitants by the revolutionary committee, on the pretended plea of the tree of liberty being uprooted. Their agent, the apostate priest Maignet, directed the atrocious crime, and Suchet, afterwards so eminent a general, with his soldiers, carried it into execution, setting fire to the houses, blowing up the public buildings, hurrying the peaceful inhabitants to the scaffold, and picking off with musketry those who tried to escape, until 180 had perished. (Murray 1881, 122)

Along the same line of thought, the people of Orange were said to have “a character for ferocity” which led them to execute 378 people by the guillotine in the space of three months (Murray 1881, 121). The guidebooks also alluded to the atrocities perpetrated by Provençal royalists on receiving news of the battle of Waterloo:

In the Place Crillon [...] Marshal Brune, in passing through Avignon, in 1815, furnished with Lord Exmouth's passport, was murdered by an infuriated mob of Provençal royalists, who, on receiving the news of the battle of Waterloo, and instigated by hatred of Napoleon, rose upon their adversaries and committed all sorts of excesses and atrocities (Murray 1881, 123)

Not only did the *Handbooks* concentrate on the past, they also described more modern features of Provence such as agriculture – for instance the cultivation of garden flowers or the growing of olive or mulberry trees – and industry – like the perfume distilleries or the silk industry, as well as the soap factories and dockyards. They also depicted various remarkable feats of nineteenth-century engineering like the aqueduct of Roquefavour built in the 1840s or sundry railway bridges. However, one kind of engineering was considered inferior to anything that could be found in Britain and that was, unsurprisingly, the Provençal sewage system. This observation reinforced deep-rooted British preconceptions about southern dirt as opposed to English cleanliness.

So far, much of the attraction attributed to Provence by the *Handbooks* paradoxically stems from a degree of attraction mixed with repulsion, but one part of the region is unreservedly depicted as truly remarkable. This part is

a narrow strip in the Dept. of the Var and Maritime Alps, bordering on the Mediterranean, extending from Toulon to Nice, stretching inland to Grasse and Draguignan. It commences to the E. of Toulon, and includes the towns of Cannes, Hyères, Antibes, Fréjus and Nice, sometimes styled 'les villes d'Hiver' (Murray 1881, 111).

This area corresponds to the French Riviera but until the 1890s, Murray's *Handbooks* included it in Provence and even called it the 'Garden of Provence'. The use of the word 'Garden' is telling when one remembers the English passion for gardening. The area appealed to British travellers not just because of its mild and balmy climate but also because it was seen as a wonderful and somewhat exotic garden-like landscape. The *Handbooks* marvel at "the aloe, the cactus, the Aleppo and umbrella-pines, the pomegranate, the orange, and even the palm-trees" (Murray 1881, 112). British travellers were charmed by the variety of flowers grown in the area and which the *Handbooks* enumerated: "heliotropes, orange flowers, jasmines, &c." (Murray 1881, 112). In this light, it comes as no surprise that the more arid parts of Provence must have seemed very off-putting to British travellers. In fact, the sites deemed most agreeable by the *Handbooks* were those which resembled the English landscape and enabled the guidebook to use descriptive categories familiar to British readers. The *Handbook* thus praises the "exquisitely limpid waters" of the "sparkling" Sorgue river near Avignon, whose banks are covered in a "luxuriant mantle of green moss" (Murray 1881, 129). It dwells on the picturesqueness of the fountain of Vaucluse with its "gushing cataract, tumbling over the moss-clad stones" (130). The aridity and the heat of the rest of Provence disconcerted Murray contributors who were at a loss to find categories to describe them accurately. One of the solutions they fell back on was to use terms normally applied to the African continent. L'Isle sur la Sorgue, a town in the neighbourhood of Avignon, is accordingly depicted as "a green oasis in the desert" (Murray 1881, 129) and the Camargue is compared to the Nile with its fauna of ibises, pelicans and flamingos. The guidebook points out that there "as in the deserts of Africa, the mirage constantly occurs during the heats, transforming the arid plain in appearance into a wide lake" (Murray 1881, 152).

As for the area stretching from Toulon to Nice, while being merely described by the *Handbook* as the 'Garden of Provence' until the end of the 1860s, in later editions it was also depicted as a 'Winter Resorts for In-

valids', an addition which explicitly stressed its medical attraction.<sup>7</sup> The guidebooks even delineated a geography of the area and of the city of Nice specially adapted to different ailments. For Nice, they told those suffering from chronic asthma and other respiratory diseases to avoid living near the sea shore and to prefer the "more removed quarters of Longchamp, St Étienne and Caracabel" (Murray 1881, 185). The *Handbooks* recommended the lower part of Longchamp to patients suffering from nervous diseases, and the Promenade des Anglais for children suffering from scrofulous affections or for patient with gout and paralysis. Regarding this part of Provence, the guidebooks catered for sedentary British residents and, what is more, primarily for residents suffering from various complaints. Consequently, they dwelled on details related to prolonged stays and medical treatment and they provided lists of boarding schools for British children, as well as lists of English churches and cemeteries, British doctors, banks and tradesmen.

In conclusion, apart from a few redeeming features and from the appeal of what was becoming known as the French Riviera, the image of Provence conveyed by Murray's *Handbooks to France* in the second half of the nineteenth century was a far cry from today's enthusiastic accounts of British writers and travel guides. Nothing in Murray's descriptions really induced travellers to linger in the region. They encouraged them instead to hasten to more attractive places. This shows us how much the image of Provence in the British imagination has altered since the mid-nineteenth century. Murray's *Handbooks* also reveal how much representations of Provence were pervaded with British cultural codes and how they often implicitly participated in the assertion of British identity and a British sense of superiority. At the end of the day, to paraphrase John Pemble in his book *The Mediterranean Passion*, the representation of Provence provided by Murray's *Handbooks* revealed as much about Victorian "longings and aversions, hopes and fears" (Pemble 1987, 274) as it did about the region.

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<sup>7</sup> In the 1843 and 1869 editions, it is merely described as the garden of Provence (Murray 1843, 431; Murray 1869, 479), whereas in later edition, for instance in the 1881 edition it is also depicted as "Winter Resorts for Invalids" (111).

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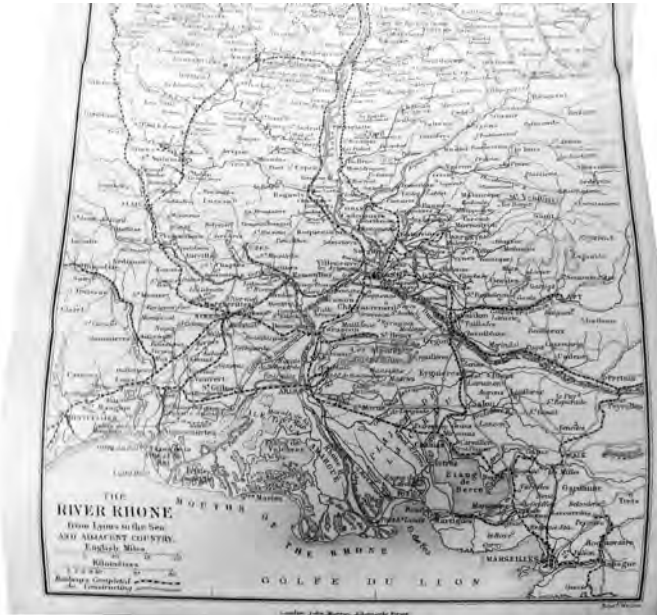


Fig. 11 - 'The River Rhone from Lyons to the Sea and Adjacent Country', 1869, A *Handbook for Travellers in France*, John Murray



Fig. 12 - 'The River Rhone from Lyons to the Sea', 1869, *A Handbook for Travellers in France*, John Murray



## WALTER PATER'S REPRESENTATION OF "THE CENTRAL LOVE-POETRY OF PROVENÇE"

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Walter Pater's construction of Provençal poetry is part of his larger project to uncover the Greek and pagan elements in the Middle Ages which to him announced the Renaissance. But Pater's discussion of the literature of the Troubadours also helps him legitimize contemporary Pre-Raphaelite and 'Aesthetic' artists in a context of criticism levelled against their works. Defending those recent trends in literature and painting is one of Pater's main concerns, and he considers Provence as a literary and aesthetic tradition that originates in Greece and comprises contemporary artists and poets such as William Morris and D.G. Rossetti.

Pater first mentions Provençal poetry in his anonymous review of *Poems by William Morris* (1868), the beginning of which he re-published in 1889 as "Aesthetic Poetry" in the first edition of the volume *Appreciations*. Comments on Provençal poetry alternate with appreciations of Morris's poetry, which he calls 'aesthetic Poetry' ([1868] 1889, 213). Pater stresses the combination of Greek and medieval elements at work in the culture of the Middle Ages – an eclecticism which is also a main feature of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic art. Discussions of the poetry of Provence are also central in *Aucassin and Nicolette*, an essay he specifically wrote for the first edition of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) and expanded as *Two Early French Stories* for the other editions of 1877, 1888 and 1893. Pater defines the "central love-poetry of Provence" as "poetry for the few, for the elect and peculiar people of the kingdom of sentiment" ([1873] 2000, 11) and in the second version of the article, he claims that the story of Aucassin and Nicolette "comes, characteristically, from the South and connects itself with the literature of Provence". ([1893] 1980, 12)



In his review of Morris's poetry, Pater establishes a typology of the different poetical genres of Provence. He for example mentions the "*nocturn*, sung by the lover at night at the door or under the window of his mistress," the "*serena*, or *serenade*" – "songs inviting to sleep" – or "the *aube* or *aubade*" – "waking songs." Yet, the general mood is disquieting:

Those, in whom what Rousseau calls *les fraveurs nocturnes* are constitutional, know what splendour they give to the things of the morning; and how there comes something of relief from physical pain with the first white film in the sky. The Middle Age knew those terrors in all their forms; and these songs of the morning win hence a strange tenderness and effect. ([1868] 1889, 219-20)

Pater seems particularly attracted to Pre-Raphaelite constructions of the Middle Ages as a period marked by fear and grief. He associates Morris's poems to that medieval tradition and sees a similar mood in both: "[t]he crown of the English poet's book is one of these appreciations of the dawn" ([1868] 1889, 220). Both Provençal poetry and Morris's poems tell of apprehension, expectation and desperate love, and these feelings affect the whole natural world around:

It is the very soul of the bridegroom which goes forth to the bride: inanimate things are longing with him: all the sweetness of the imaginative loves of the Middle Ages, with a superadded spirituality of touch all its own, is in that! ([1868] 1889, 220-21)

But this 'spirituality' is highly paradoxical since 'touch' evokes a physical dimension – a paradox which is at the core of Pater's aesthetics of the Middle Ages.

Another element of Pater's conception of the love-poetry of the Troubadours is its links with religious antinomianism, expressed here as a competing pagan religion: "In those imaginative loves, in their highest expression, the Provençal poetry, it is a rival religion with a new rival cultus that we see" ([1868] 1889, 215-16). He comes back to the subject in *Aucassin and Nicolette* and notes the revival of Greek culture in the Middle Ages:

Here and there, under rare and happy conditions, in Pointed architecture, in the doctrines of romantic love, in the poetry of Provence, the rude strength of the Middle Ages turns to sweetness; and the taste for sweetness generated there becomes the seed of the classical revival in it, prompting it constantly to seek after the springs of perfect sweetness in the Hellenic world. ([1873] 2000, 9-10)

Pater's definition of 'sweetness' and 'strength' is complex and varies during his career (see for example Inman 1990, 348-50) but here 'sweetness' refers to the classical tradition that influences medieval Provence and heralds the irruption of the Renaissance. The Middle Ages, therefore, are characterized by a synthesis of Christianity and paganism. Pater relates Provençal culture with such figures as Abélard and Dante as well as with religious dissenters, and Provençal poetry records a reaction against religion that takes the form not only of religious 'antinomianism' but also of a sensuous or physical liberation: "In that poetry, earthly passion, in its intimacy, its freedom, its variety – the liberty of the heart – makes itself felt" ([1873] 2000, 10). Drawing on Italian and French sources, Pater discovers the seeds of a 'renaissance' in the medieval period: it is that "profane poetry of the Middle Ages, the poetry of Provence, and the magnificent after-growth of that poetry in Italy and France, which those French writers have in mind when they speak of this Renaissance within the Middle Ages" ([1873] 2000, 10). The religious art of the Middle Ages too is crossed by rebellious counter-currents, and Pater draws a contrast between Christian art and profane poetry, which is concerned with love and the body. Provençal poetry is characterized by a 'spirit' of rebellion that includes a sensuous dimension, and it influences Abélard or other heretical figures and later reaches Dante in Italy:

[w]e see that spirit going abroad, with its qualities already well defined, its intimacy, its languid sweetness, its rebellion, its subtle skill in dividing the elements of human passion, its care for physical beauty, its worship of the body; which penetrated the early literature of Italy, and finds an echo in Dante. ([1873] 2000, 11)

This is what really interests Pater – antinomianism and the predilection for the body. The irruption of the Renaissance in the Middle Ages is seen in terms of an awakening that is both a physical liberation as well as a revolt against Christianity:

One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart in the Middle Ages, which I have termed a medieval Renaissance, was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the age. [...] The Albigenian movement, connected so strangely with the history of Provençal poetry, is deeply tinged with [...] this rebellious element, this sinister claim for liberty of heart and thought. ([1873] 2000, 16)

The conflict between the Christian and the pagan is propitious to the return of the exiled pagan gods in a Christian world and Pater provides his own variation

on the legend of Venus and Tannhäuser, which was a favourite theme in Pre-Raphaelite poetry and painting in the wake of Swinburne's *Laus Veneris* (1866): "It was the return of that ancient Venus, not dead, but only hidden for a time in the caves of the Venusberg, of those old pagan gods still going to and fro on the earth, under all sorts of disguises" ([1873] 2000, 16).<sup>1</sup> Abélard and "the legend of Tannhäuser" ([1873] 2000, 16) are therefore related to the new 'spirit'. The cult of the beloved and the worship of the body seem to supplant Christianity itself: "[i]n their search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination, in their care for beauty, in their worship of the body, people were impelled beyond the bounds of the primitive Christian ideal; and their love became sometimes a strange idolatry, a strange rival religion" ([1873] 2000, 16). The story of *Aucassin and Nicolette* is an example of such 'spirit' since their passionate love defies religion: it is "the answer Aucassin makes when he is threatened with the pains of hell, if he makes Nicolette his mistress" ([1873] 2000, 17). The lovers choose the body and the senses at the expense of their spiritual salvation, which brings Pater closer to the Rossetti circle, whose 'Religion of Beauty' and cult of love superseded Christian religion. Pater adheres to these artists' refusal to pass a moral judgment on physical passion or on adulterous love. His reluctance to highlight the spiritual dimension of the Middle Ages demarcates him from Ruskin who lauded the early phase of Pre-Raphaelitism precisely because it reflected that dimension. Pater's personal appreciation of the love-poetry of the Troubadours echoes the second-generation Pre-Raphaelite or aesthetic artists' appropriation of medieval courtly lore, which gave a central role to woman and to illegitimate love.<sup>2</sup>

However, the sensuous and physical liberation – a constitutive element of Provençal poetry – is associated with despair and unrest. Intense love is conducive to excess, despair or adultery. Aucassin's passionate love for Nicolette plunges him into some kind of subjection, while Nicolette is described as a strange and seductive enchantress – a "beautiful, weird, foreign girl, whom the shepherds take for a fay, who has the knowledge of simples" ([1873] 2000, 14). There is an atmosphere of disease and disorder – a "faint air of overwrought delicacy, almost of wantonness, which was so strong a characteristic of the poetry of the Troubadours" ([1873] 2000, 14); and this is because they "came to value a type of personal beauty which has in it but little of the influence of the open air and sunshine" ([1873] 2000, 14). Aucassin is a paradoxical figure: although he is "the very image of the Provençal love-

<sup>1</sup> For example, Edward Burne-Jones's oil painting *Laus Veneris* (1873-5) and William Morris's poem *The Hill of Venus* (1870).

<sup>2</sup> See, among others, Rossetti's watercolour *Arthur's Tomb: The Last Meeting of Lancelot and Guinevere* (1854), Morris's oil painting *La Belle Iseult* (1858), Burne-Jones's *The Madness of Sir Tristram* (1862) or the different versions of the story of *Paolo and Francesca* or of *The Blessed Damozel* by Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

god" ([1873] 2000, 16), under Nicolette's influence he forsakes his masculine vigour, "faints with love" and "weeps at evening" ([1873] 2000, 15). He "has the malady of his love so that he neglects all knightly duties" ([1873] 2000, 15). Love, in fact, enfeebles him.

In the Morris essay, the medieval world is characterized by frustration, mental anguish and confusion. Medieval religion and Provençal poetry are both marked by the irruption of 'the reign of reverie' which induces disquieting visions of 'earthly' love: "Into this kingdom of reverie, and with it into a paradise of ambitious refinements, the earthly love enters, and becomes a prolonged somnambulism" ([1868] 1889, 216). This, in turn, influences Morris: "Reverie, illusion, delirium: they are the three stages of a fatal descent both in the religion and the loves of the Middle Ages [...] The English poet too has learned the secret" ([1868] 1889, 217-18). The same themes of absence, unrequited love, alienation and sadness characterize Morris's works and Provençal love poetry:

Hence a love defined by the absence of the beloved, choosing to be without hope, protesting against all lower uses of love, barren, extravagant, antinomian. It is the love which is incompatible with marriage, for the chevalier who never comes, of the serf for the chatelaine, of the rose for the nightingale, of Rudel for the Lady of Tripoli. ([1868] 1889, 216-27)

The theme of love is marked by a similar sense of fatalism as found in works by Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones or Solomon. Pater states that "Provençal love is full of the very forms of vassalage" ([1868] 1889, 217), which reminds one of the Pre-Raphaelite theme of the lover enthralled by an unreachable *femme fatale* staged in a medieval context. While many contemporaries balked at such chivalric yet disempowering attitude to women, Pater endorses such poetical visions and that aesthetics of feminine remoteness. The type of beauty he notes in Provence evokes Rossetti's and Burne-Jones's androgynous or dream-like figures: "[u]nder this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them" ([1868] 1889, 217). Even Morris's visions of love and beauty are exclusive and outlandish. "It is in the *Blue Closet* that delirium reaches its height with a singular beauty, reserved perhaps for the enjoyment of the few" ([1868] 1889, 218). Once more, Pater asserts the empathy between man and nature, since even the sun and the moon reflect the general sense of oppressiveness:

[Morris] has diffused through King Arthur's Tomb the maddening white glare of the sun, and tyranny of the moon, not tender and

far-off, but close down – the sorcerer’s moon, large and feverish. The colouring is intricate and delirious, as of ‘scarlet lilies.’ The influence of summer is like a poison in one’s blood, with a sudden bewildered sickening of life and all things. ([1868] 1889, 218)

Nature itself seems to convey some form of intoxication and to mirror man’s experience of alienation.

Pater comes back to Provençal poetry in his essay of 1876, “Romanticism”, re-published as “Postscript” to *Appreciations*. To him, there are romantic elements not only in Greek culture but in all artistic traditions, so ‘romanticism’ is at work in Provençal poetry: “[t]he essential elements [...] of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty [...] In the over-charged atmosphere of the Middle Ages, there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of a strange beauty, to be won, by strong imagination, out of things unlikely or remote” (1910b, 248). Once again, he focuses on themes such as strangeness and madness:

Here, in the literature of Provence, the very name of romanticism is stamped with its true signification: here we have indeed a romantic world, grotesque even, in the strength of its passions, almost insane in its curious expression of them, drawing all things into its sphere, making the birds, nay! lifeless things, its voices and messengers, yet so penetrated with the desire for beauty and sweetness, that it begets a wholly new species of poetry, in which the Renaissance may be said to begin. (1910 b, 250-51)

‘Strength’ here is associated with what Pater sees as the strangeness of Romanticism, which in Provençal poetry blends with ‘beauty’. Furthermore, he describes a world in which nature reflects human feelings of insanity and uneasiness. Animals and elements convey the emotions experienced by man; they in fact ‘bend’ to the human mind – an idea that particularly interested Pater in the 1860s and 1870s. It is prominent in his conception of Provence in the Morris essay:

A passion of which the outlets are sealed begets a tension of nerve, in which the sensible world comes to one with a reinforced brilliancy and relief – all redness is turned into blood, all water into tears. Hence a wild, convulsed sensuousness in the poetry of the Middle Ages, in which the things of nature begin to play a strange delirious part. Of the things of nature the mediaeval mind had a deep sense; but its sense of them was not objective, no real escape to the world without us. The aspects and motions of nature only reinforced its prevailing mood, and were

in conspiracy with one's own brain against one. A single sentiment invaded the world: everything was infused with a motive drawn from the soul. The amorous poetry of Provence, making the starling and the swallow its messengers, illustrates the whole attitude of nature in this electric atmosphere, bent as by miracle or magic to the service of human passion. ([1868] 1889, 218-19)

The natural phenomena, in fact, reflect exacerbated feelings of madness, terror and distortion.

Such discourse is also present in the essays on Greek religion. Because of his universal poetical faculty, man has special affinities with nature and Pater insists on the imaginative and poetical faculties of the primitive mind. The making of the myth of Demeter, for example, originated in a poetical process. Fuelled by their poetical, religious but also sensuous temperaments, the ancient Greeks thought that the same life-spirit animated both the natural world and men:

[t]hat sort of poetry, which also has its fancies of a spirit of the earth, or of the sky, – a personal intelligence abiding in them, the existence of which is assumed in every suggestion such poetry makes to us of a sympathy between the ways and aspects of outward nature and the moods of men. (1910 a, 96-7)

Nature mirrors man's emotions – a process to be found in Greek religion, Provençal poetry, and also contemporary poetry. What Pater insists on here is the trans-historical presence of that poetic imagination in cultural history: such animistic conception of the Greek mind is related to his idea that both the medieval mind and Morris conceived of nature as "bent" to "human passion" ([1868] 1889, 219) and to an oppressed mind.

This discourse diverges from Ruskin's indictment of 'pathetic fallacy' in volume 3 of *Modern Painters* (1856). According to Ruskin, the natural elements could not reflect human feelings:

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the 'pathetic fallacy'. ([1856] 2000, 369)

To Ruskin, attributing human emotions to nature entails a kind of folly. Pater, on the contrary, praises the 'delirium' which to him characterizes the medieval atmosphere: in the poetry of Provence, nature reflects human feelings of gloom and insanity, and "the things of nature begin to play a strange deliri-

ous part” ([1868] 1889, 218). But unlike Ruskin, he relishes in this excess of temperament that attributes intensified feelings to nature. In so doing, he endorses the new course undertaken by some Pre-Raphaelite or ‘aesthetic’ artists, which Ruskin precisely regretted. Such ‘delirium’ is indeed also at work in Morris’s or Rossetti’s poems, and so Provence helps him defend contemporary works that would be criticized by Ruskin for their ‘pathetic fallacy’.

When Pater re-published his essay on William Morris for the 1889 edition of *Appreciations*, he re-wrote the end so as to make a transition with an essay on Dante Gabriel Rossetti which he had published in 1883. That he dedicated another essay to a Pre-Raphaelite artist and arranged the two pieces as sequels attests to their importance to him:

One characteristic of the pagan spirit the aesthetic poetry has, which is on its surface – the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it – the sense of death and the desire of beauty: the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death. But that complexion of sentiment is at its height in another ‘aesthetic’ poet of whom I have to speak next, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. ([1868] 1889, 227)

Pater in fact admires the typically Rossettian association of love, beauty and death in his essay on Rossetti, and he probably had in mind Ruskin’s *Art of England* lecture of 1883 and his regret that Rossetti lately “refused [...] the natural aid of pure landscape and lacerated his powers of conception with Chinese puzzles and Japanese monsters” (1884, 9). Pater implicitly posits himself against Ruskin’s rejection of the eclectic and ‘aesthetic’ direction of the artist’s late career and he associates Rossetti and Morris as two ‘romantic’ and ‘aesthetic’ poets influenced by the Provençal tradition, characterized by ‘artifice’ and sad love:

Love – sick and doubtful Love – would fain inquire of what lies below the surface of sleep, and below the water; stream or dream being forced to speak by Love’s powerful ‘control’; and the poet would have it foretell the fortune, issue, and event of his wasting passion. Such artifices, indeed, were not unknown in the old Provençal poetry of which Dante had learned something. Only, in Rossetti at least, they are redeemed by a serious purpose, by that sincerity of his, which allies itself readily to a serious beauty, a sort of grandeur of literary workmanship, to a great style. (1910c, 210)

There is something paradoxical in Pater’s claim that Rossetti has redeemed the legacy of Provençal ‘artifices’ by his ‘sincerity’. But this is be-

cause Rossetti's 'sincerity' was an important issue for Ruskin, who found it questionable, and so Pater probably contradicts him on that point. Furthermore, Pater links Rossetti to a deeper imaginative structure that is akin to the animistic spirit of the Greeks: "With him indeed, as in some revival of the old mythopoeic age, common things – dawn, noon, night – are full of human or personal expression, full of sentiment" (1910c, 210-1). The poet, stirred by his formidable imaginative powers, attributes human emotions to nature. Pater praises this new poetical version of the 'pathetic fallacy'.

Pater defends the poet's conception of love: "Throughout, it is the ideal intensity of love – of love based upon a perfect yet peculiar type of physical or material beauty – which is enthroned" (1910c, 212). Unlike critics such as Robert Buchanan or Harry Quilter who had vituperated against his poetry in the 1870s and 1880s, Pater paradoxically describes Rossetti's vision of love as both 'ideal' yet founded on a 'physical' and 'material' type of beauty. Throughout, he defends the poet-painter's 'peculiar' type of beauty, which he coherently inscribes within the same conception of love, beauty and the body he found in Provençal poetry.

Pater selects Provence on account of its peculiar representation of love and the body. But he also appropriates it and turns it into a poetical tradition that reflects contemporary aesthetic concerns and mirrors his own centres of interest – such as those anachronistic and personal 'romantic' themes on which he concentrates. Provence appears as a historical validation of that 'aesthetic poetry' and art he appreciated so much. Both Provence and contemporary poetry are concerned with physicality and passions, but these are ambivalently presented since the general mood is stifling. Not only does he define 'aesthetic poetry' as a poetry that mediates the past through other past cultures, but he also participates in that movement with these exercises in subjective 'aesthetic' criticism. Pater re-reads William Morris' re-readings of the Middle Ages through Provence and he recasts *Aucassin and Nicolette* as a text indebted to a vision of Provence that fits his project. When he states that the Middle Ages record the irruption of the Renaissance and of Paganism, he diverges from "those writers [...] who have said so much of the 'Ages of Faith' ([1873] 2000, 16), among whom Ruskin and Alexis-François Rio. Pater's love-poetry of Provence, therefore, is a defence of, and a contribution to, the eclectic and fleshly visions of the past as found in the works of his Pre-Raphaelite and 'aesthetic' contemporaries. Provence is the encounter of the medieval and the Greek, or of the Christian and the pagan, and this is why it is linked to his discourse on the irruption of the 'renaissance' in the Middle Ages, a renaissance which is seen as a liberation from religious constraints, a physical revitalization and an emotional regeneration. The medieval mind



who experiences that ‘renaissance’, is very much akin to Pater’s idea of a modern, tormented mind.

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## THE IRISH TROUBADOUR OF THE PROVENÇAL *FÉLIBRIGE*: WILLIAM CHARLES BONAPARTE-WYSE

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To a tormented fiery soul, born in the mists of Ireland and forever longing for the sunshine of the South, Provence, “a once independent kingdom occupying the southeast corner of France, where for centuries Troubadours sang of love” (Vitaglione 2001, 1x), Provence became a locus of adoration which William Bonaparte-Wyse celebrated in verse and from whose muse he begged a sign of recognition and motherly affection:

Ô belle, ô belle! Tu n'es pour moi qu'une marâtre, et naturellement tu ne peux m'aimer; mais je te poursuivrai sans relâche où que tu ailles. Peut-être, pauvre maladroit! Mes pieds fouleraient-ils et déchireraient-ils ta robe éclatante, et peut-être me regarderais-tu avec dédain, avec colère; mais pourtant, à la fin, en voyant mon amour et mes yeux pleins de langueur, tu me prendras dans tes bras, ô Reine! Et tu me montreras avec fierté à la nation Provençale comme à un de tes fils. (Thouron 1868, n.p.)<sup>1</sup>

The yearning for reciprocated love drove the poet to study, cherish, respect and celebrate Provence with a passion perhaps superior to that of her native children.

William Charles Bonaparte-Wyse's first acquaintance with the Provençal idiom in 1855 was recorded by his life-long friend Frédéric Mistral (1830-1914) in the foreword he wrote for Wyse's first volume of Provençal verse, *Li*

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations will be used throughout this paper: WBW for William Charles Bonaparte-Wyse, FM for Frédéric Mistral, GM for George Meredith.

*Parpaïoun blu* (1868, fig. 13). The author of *Mireio* depicts his fellow *Félibre* in the guise of a well-travelled dashing young poet of independent means:

Un beau jeune homme, de blonde et noble mine, s'arrêta par hasard à Avignon. Il avait beaucoup lu, beaucoup hanté et beaucoup vu: mais la longue lecture des choses d'autrefois n'avait point satisfait son appétit de vie; la hantise fastidieuse de la haute société l'avait rendu convoiteur et affamé de la nature; et dans tous ses voyages, en Angleterre, en Allemagne, en France ou en Espagne, et même en Italie, il n'avait trouvé lieu qui l'eût séduit assez pour y planter son bourdon. (Thouron 1868, n.p.)

Prematurely *blasé* with travelling, the Irishman landed in Avignon where his curiosity was triggered by an ancient tongue which, he soon learned, was being rehabilitated by contemporary young poets:

En passant dans la rue Saint-Agricol, il remarqua à la vitrine d'un libraire, du libraire et poète Roumanille, des livres écrits dans une langue qui lui était inconnue. Fort curieusement il entra et les acheta. C'était des livres provençaux. L'étonnement de rencontrer en France un idiome littéraire autre que celui de Paris, et d'avoir découvert une littérature s'inspirant, non des Grecs, ni des Romains, ni des Français, ni des Anglais, ni des Germains, ni même de l'Orient, et ni même des Indes, mais naturellement et seulement du cru, l'étonnement, vous dis-je et l'étourdissement et le transport [...] le saisirent. (Thouron 1868, n.p.)

Immediately he wanted to know more about the language and the poets who had assembled the previous year in a group known as the *Félibrige*. He met them all and solemnly declared that he was one of theirs, that their cause would be his cause, and that they could rely on him. He kept his word and twenty-eight years later, the marquess de Villeneuve-Esclapon-Vence wrote: "Presque chez aucun je n'ai trouvé, autant que chez vous, une compréhension large de l'idée Félibresque, un amour désintéressé de la cause, une ardeur toujours égale" (1882, vii).

The period was one of revolutions or at least rebellions against all signs of oppression, be they political, intellectual, artistic or linguistic. In the spirits of ardent young people throughout Europe, the resistance against tyranny had fostered several backward-looking associations. The usual form of expression of their wish to dissociate themselves from contemporary mainstream policies was to re-establish long lost, or at least partly forgotten connexions with a remote and nobler past, often located between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Such associations had been formed in Paris for example around Maurice Quay and the 'Barbus', a group of artists who

sought to renew the austere style of religious mural painters, or in England with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood whose seven original members also shared an admiration for early Christian art. These two predecessors were already well developed when the seven founding members of the Félibrige, who coined the name after the Provençal version of the biblical episode of Jesus among the doctors, '*li sèt felibre de la lèi*', swore among themselves in 1854 to dedicate their efforts to the renaissance of Provençal poetry in the tradition of the Troubadours. Their association was barely a year old when W.C. Bonaparte-Wyse walked into Roumanille's bookshop. He was an earnest, energetic, well-read young man, probably infused with chivalric ideals and in need of a noble crusade: the project of the *Félibres*, the 'Parnasse Provençal' (Thouron 1868, n.p.) as he called it, presented itself as the perfect outlet for his bold and righteous creativity. In later life, he remembered vividly the avenging impulse that he had felt as a young foreigner witnessing the agonising song of the ancestral language:

A ma première venue en Provence, quand, doublement enivré de la cigale, je buvais avec délice le vin nouveau de Mireille, le Félibrige m'apparut [comme] l'attitude magnifique d'une langue moribonde en face du français, le conquérant dédaigneux; il était pour moi le chant du cygne du Midi, vraiment mélodieux, au milieu de l'arrogant mélange des autres langues. (Flandreysy 1953, n.p.)

This is the popular version of the Félibresque crusade; yet, as Villeneuve-Esclapon-Vence (1882, xii) noted, the resuscitation of Provençal literature in 1855 is a poetic exaggeration, for the language was in no way moribund, nor were its poets totally extinct. Still, even if the bravery of the poetic seven was slightly less than the official account would make out, Bonaparte-Wyse's commitment to the cause is indisputable. He learned the language, translated Mistral, wrote his first poems in Provençal, started proselytising throughout the areas where the *langue d'Oc* was or had been spoken and kept a voluminous correspondence with his new friends when he was away from his Avignon home. When he was there, he entertained them liberally, and organised the social rituals that became emblematic of the Félibrige: sumptuous banquets ending with the semi-pagan Eucharistic 'Song of the Cup'. Indeed, the import of symbolically charged mottoes, emblems, chants and rituals to federate the new assembly is due to Bonaparte-Wyse's sense of ceremony:

Son influence [...] s'exerça sur l'esprit même des réunions félibréennes, sur leur sens, sur le symbolisme hautement significatif qui y fut adopté [...] Le poète d'Irlande apporta l'usage tra-

ditionnel anglais des toasts aux banquets, éleva la coupe et fit briller sur le Félibrige les mystiques et triomphants rayons de Sainte-Estelle. (Flandreysy 1953, n.p.)

So, what most *Provençaux* even today consider as a typically regional custom was in fact introduced by an Irishman:

Il inaugura la cérémonie de la coupe circulant autour de la table comme un vase mystique dans lequel chacun vient tour à tour puiser le courage et l'enthousiasme. Il fit ensuite adopter comme emblème la pervenche, 'la prouvençalo', fleur de l'espérance et de la fidélité; il assigna au Félibrige comme patronne poétique la 'Sainte-Étoile', qui peut être l'étoile des Mages, ou bien l'étoile des Baux [...] Enfin, le premier, il se leva à la fin d'un banquet pour dire son amour de la Provence. (Villeneuve 1882, xix)

Reciprocally, the *Félibres* welcomed him, encouraged his efforts to master the Provençal language and contributed all they could to make Bonaparte-Wyse known and respected as a Provençal poet in his own right, one whose name would be cherished by future generations alongside those of Mistral, Aubanel and Roumanille. Thus in a letter dated 21 October 1865, Mistral urged him to produce more Provençal verse:

Faites-nous des pièces Provençales, vous devenez forcément – chose étrange et inouïe – une des étoiles de la Renaissance felibrenco. Vous n'êtes plus un amateur, vous êtes un maître en gai-savoir, et les historiens de notre joli mouvement littéraire cueilleront votre nom et votre poésie comme les chroniqueurs des Troubadours ont recueilli les vers et le renom de Richard Cœur-de-Lion.<sup>2</sup>

He integrated his adoptive land and language so well that he became more popular in Provence than in London or even in Ireland and the author of *Mireio* declared: “[i]l est bien entendu que vous n'êtes plus irlandais, mais Provençal de cœur et de génie.”<sup>3</sup> In a letter of 1868 to thank the poet for his complimentary copy of *Li Parpaïoun Blu*, Amédée Pichot, the editor of the *Revue Britannique*, wrote: “Je ne m'étonne pas de la popularité que vous avez acquise dans notre midi et auprès de tous y compris les ouvriers d'imprimerie”; and lamented the local dimension of Bonaparte-Wyse's fame: “Je voudrais avoir

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<sup>2</sup> FM to WBW, 21 October 1865, Letter 57. Letters from FM to WBW are kept at the Palais du Roure in Avignon. A typed and referenced catalogue of them is accessible. I thank the curator and staff of the Palais's library who have assisted me in my research.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*

toutes les trompettes de la presse pour les emboucher en votre honneur,” for it seemed to him that “il y a dans votre volume, indépendamment de l’originalité d’un poète irlandais-Provençal, des sentiments qui parlent à tous les cœurs, des pensées qui parlent à tous les esprits”.<sup>4</sup> Even before he came to know Bonaparte-Wyse, Pichot, a native of Arles, had marvelled about the fame that the Provençal renaissance was enjoying on the other side of the Channel: “En Angleterre, le feu sacré de la poésie romane a aussi ses gardiens et, bien mieux, nous y avons un Félibre, un membre de la famille Bonaparte, – oui, un Bonaparte troubadour, M. W.C. Bonaparte-Wyse, qui chaque année enrichit l’*armana* d’une pièce nouvelle” (Pichot 1867, 541, fig. 14).

The aristocratic origins of the new member undoubtedly contributed to the fascination of the Félibres, and to their readiness to count him in their circle. All the biographical notices published on Bonaparte-Wyse stress his noble ascent: he was the son of Sir Thomas Wyse of Waterford, Queen Victoria’s ambassador in Greece, and Princess Letizia Bonaparte, the daughter of Prince Lucien. Amédée Pichot (1867, 272-73) also pointed to the fact that Bonaparte-Wyse’s ancestor had already played a significant role in Provence in saving the woods of Sainte-Baume from destruction by the revolutionaries. The legend was being written, and the smallest fact that could justify Bonaparte-Wyse’s unexpected inclusion in the Parnasse Provençal and that could prove in his family history precedents of heroic deeds for the southern community was carefully exhumed, revamped and communicated. Occasionally carried away by their enthusiasm, admiring biographers, including Mistral and Pichot, drew Bonaparte-Wyse’s literary filiation all the way back to Richard the Lionheart: “[d]epuis Richard Cœur-de-Lion, M. Bonaparte-Wyse est le premier poète né anglais qui ait rimé dans la langue dont se servit le royal captif de l’Autriche pour invoquer poétiquement la pitié de ses barons anglais, normands, poitevins et gascons” (Pichot 1868, 288). This remark subtly insisted on the poet’s aristocratic lineage, as well as it suggested a linguistic and political heredity. Just like his medieval forefather, it insinuated, Bonaparte-Wyse used the only ancestral idiom fit to voice opposition against the tyranny of usurpers. Even the somewhat unfamiliar Provençal expressions used by the modern troubadour were lauded as further testimonies of his literary merit:

M. Bonaparte-Wyse a retrouvé dans les anciens troubadours mainte expression qui a disparu de la langue populaire et qui mériterait d’y revivre. Ainsi en use l’auteur de *Mireille* lui-même, qui loue son frère anglo-Provençal de ce retour à l’archaïsme (Pichot 1868, 288).

<sup>4</sup> A. Pichot, letter to WBW, 17 May 1868, manuscript at the Palais du Roure, no ref.

Far from being philological curiosities, Bonaparte-Wyse's quaint verses in Provençal secured the link between the glorious age of the Troubadours and the nineteenth-century renaissance, with Raimbaut d'Orange, Folquet de Marseille, Guillaume des Baux, the Princesse de Die, and dozens of anonymous bards who contributed to the gay knowledge or *gai saber*, their ethics of love. As true descendants of the ancient troubadours, the *Félibres* were also concerned with the art of courting and love. This preoccupation was also shared at the same time in England by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and his circle.

Frédéric Mistral, who was given the name of 'Provençal Homer' especially after he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1904, was influential in modernizing the tradition of the Troubadours. His poetry spoke of passionate love and of unions made impossible by family feuds or social conventions: a popular theme in the nineteenth century which had caused the modern version of Boccaccio's tale of Lorenzo and Isabella to be written by Keats and illustrated by the Pre-Raphaelites. Mistral's long epic *Mireio* similarly evoked the tragic idyll between the rich eponymous heroin and Vincent, the son of a poor basket-maker. The plot, however, was not set in distant lands or times: it was a contemporary romance taking place in Camargue. In the same way as the English Pre-Raphaelites had decided to tackle modern subjects such as fallen women in William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) or D.G. Rossetti's *Found* (c. 1855-1882), the Provençal *Félibres* felt the urge to sing of love in the present tense. When Théodore Aubanel (1829-1886) published his volume entitled *Li fiho d'Avignoun* in 1885, the clergy's opprobrium equalled the wrath wedged against Rossetti by the author of the "Fleshy school of poetry" article published in *The Contemporary Review* fourteen years earlier (Maitland 1871). Aubanel gained the rank of *poète maudit*, according to one of his biographers (Liprandi 1955, n. p.), but in celebrating female beauty of flesh and blood rather than by means of metaphors and mythological figures, he renewed the real spirit of troubadour poetry.

Aubanel, poussé sans nul doute par une propension innée à la passion amoureuse, par son enthousiasme pour la culture de sa région et par le modèle exaltant des troubadours, s'est mis à écrire des poèmes brûlant de sensualité qui vantent les délices extatiques de la beauté féminine. Quand Paul Valéry a qualifié Aubanel de "seul vrai poète Provençal" [...] il ne songeait pas seulement à ses talents littéraires, mais plus précisément à l'élan lyrique de ses poèmes d'amour en parfaite harmonie avec la tradition des troubadours du Moyen Âge, considérés jadis comme des jouisseurs impénitents, à qui l'on prête souvent aujourd'hui de nobles pensées et même des aspirations spirituelles dissimulées sous des allégories complexes. (Lavin 2009, 35)

Aubanel's volume of poetry of 1860, *La miougrano entro-duberto* (*The Split Pomegranate*), inspired by his adulterous (and apparently unconsumed) passion for the beautiful and pious Zani (Jeanne-Marie Manivet, aka Jenny), brings to the mind Rossetti's numerous depictions of his muse Jane Morris as Proserpine,<sup>5</sup> holding the split pomegranate which suggested many various symbolical interpretations charged with mythological, religious and sexual connotations.

The artistic proximity between the English and the Provençal poets probably comes from their shared medieval source where both absorbed what the Marquess of Villeneuve-Esclapon-Vence describes as "ce mélange de mysticisme et de sensualisme qui est la caractéristique du troubadour" (1882, xv). This heritage was a literary one and both the Pre-Raphaelites and the Félibres admired early Italian poets for their beautiful universal love stories: "[l]'aspiration à l'idéal est en ce monde un supplice pareil à celui de Francesca de Rimini et de son amant dans l'enfer de Dante. C'est un tourment sublime et délicieux, une mêlée de rêves et de désespoir" wrote Mistral to Bonaparte-Wyse in 1874.<sup>6</sup> This heritage also legitimized the young masculine vigour which bourgeois society and the church condemned on both sides of the Channel. In their study of the Troubadours, Mistral, Bonaparte-Wyse and Rossetti equally exulted at the existence of a time when love was a religion and religion a form of art. A letter from Mistral to Bonaparte-Wyse, dated 7 March 1860 gives us a glimpse of their preoccupation:

Mon cher Cœur-de-Lion,  
Je suis ravi d'apprendre que le brave roi Richard est au nombre  
des saints. Mais ce n'est pas le seul troubadour qui ait reçu cet  
honneur. Guillaume IX, duc d'Aquitaine et comte de Poitiers  
chantait avant lui en Provençal et avant lui était canonisé.<sup>7</sup>

He then translated into French the biographical notice of the blessed gallant knight and concluded with mock prayer:

Heureux temps! Les troubadours étaient princes, les princes  
étaient saints, les saints trompaient les dames, et tous allaient  
gaiement au Paradis... Saint Guillaume de Poitiers priez pour  
nous.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Rossetti produced at least three versions of this painting, dated 1874, 1877 and 1880, and a sonnet related to it in English and Italian versions.

<sup>6</sup> WBW, Letter 178.

<sup>7</sup> FM, Letter 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.



As a faithful descendant of the troubadours, Mistral, who was then unmarried, was a formidable *bon vivant*, a trait he shared with Bonaparte-Wyse, and in 1861 he lamented Aubanel's recent marriage:

Aubanel [...] peut-être ressuscitera-t-il? Est-ce que l'Apollon, c'est-à-dire le Soleil, ce Dieu de premier ordre et d'éternelle jeunesse, ne devrait-il pas terrasser en trois jours ce petit demi-Dieu orléaniste qui s'appelle Hymen ou hyménée, si tôt fané, usé et décrépît! Comprenez-vous, mylord, Homère, Virgile ou Dante enchaînés pour la vie, comme le malheureux Socrate, à une épouse légitime? [...] A un poète il faut entière liberté d'esprit, entière indépendance, entier détachement. En résumé, au diable les chastes épouses qui châtent l'imagination de leurs maris poètes. Vive les belles maîtresses qui font de leurs amants des poètes comme vous!<sup>9</sup>

Mistral could have ended the sentence "comme vous et moi," for some of his letters allude to his mistresses: the one with whom he holidayed in August 1865, "mon Astarté, ma Callipyge [...] une femme de chair, oui, mais quelles ondulations divines, quel rêve de Polyclète, de Phidias et de Pradier!"; or his English sweetheart of 1866 who made him declare to his friend: "Franchement vos filles du Nord sont plus passionnées que les nôtres. J'en suis presque amoureux"; or again the young lady for whose sake he broke his engagement in 1871.<sup>10</sup> On January 1, 1874, Bonaparte-Wyse sent him a letter using the same arguments Mistral had used thirteen years earlier when he was commenting upon Aubanel's wedding:

Je ne suis pas trop sûr que pour une nature artiste comme la vôtre un mariage... serait une chose de bonne (sic) augure. Artiste et poète ne devrait jamais s'entortiller avec ces liens, j'en suis depuis longtemps terriblement convaincu. Le mariage est le tombeau de l'imagination et de la belle fantaisie aussi bien que de l'amour. Hymen est ennemi des muses.<sup>11</sup>

These are remarks to which D.G. Rossetti would have subscribed. By 1876, Mistral was married "avec une fillette [...] jolie, gracieuse, douce, bonne, intelligente, et aimant tout ce que j'aime... et pourtant je suis un peu déconcerté."<sup>12</sup> This is yet another statement Rossetti may have made after his long-delayed wedding to Elizabeth Siddal in 1860.

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<sup>9</sup> FM, Letter 28.

<sup>10</sup> FM, Letters 54, 62, 168.

<sup>11</sup> WBW, Letter 19.

<sup>12</sup> FM, Letter 209.

I have not yet been able to ascertain whether the Pre-Raphaelites and the Félibres knew of each other's existence but it is difficult to imagine that they did not. Mistral read English sufficiently to enjoy the *Athenaeum*, which regularly reported on Pre-Raphaelite art, and the Provençal poets were studied abroad thanks to J. Duncan Craig's *Handbook to the Modern Provençal Language* published in 1858. The interest of the British for the Provençal language and literature further shows for instance in a letter from George Meredith to Bonaparte-Wyse dated 16 June 1861:

Tell M. Mistral that Lady Gordon, an excellent critic, and one whose opinion I value more highly than that of most men, is astonished and delighted at the vigour and freshness of his poem. She has taught herself to read it in Provençal, and has now a fair appreciation of the beauty of the instrument M. Mistral touches so wonderfully. When known in England, *Mireio* is certain to be highly appreciated. (Meredith 1970, 104)

In a letter of January 1864, Mistral grants Bonaparte-Wyse the permission to translate his verses into English.<sup>13</sup> By 1872, *Mireio* had been translated three times, and the fame of the Félibrige had crossed the Atlantic thanks to Mistral's third translator, Harriet Preston.<sup>14</sup> In 1877, Frédéric Mistral mentioned Craig's work to Bonaparte-Wyse :

Vous devez savoir que M. Duncan Craig vient de publier un gros volume intitulé *Miejour or the Land of the Félibres* [...] il y est question de la plupart des Félibres et par conséquent de vous. M. Craig prépare des ouvrages destinés à apprendre le Provençal aux voyageurs anglais. Mettez vous en rapport avec lui, et revoyez, au besoin, ses épreuves, pour éviter les fautes de Provençal qu'il pourrait faire.<sup>15</sup>

In that book, Craig enthused about "the remarkable literary phenomena which the Provençal languages at the present day afford – in the great number of poems, some of exquisite beauty, which have been written in them by the Félibres of the South" (1877, v), and he devoted chapter LVIII to 'The Troubadours of our day'.

The Pre-Raphaelites and the Félibres had some common friends: a letter from the poet Emmanuel des Essart to Bonaparte-Wyse mentions Swin-

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<sup>13</sup> FM, Letter 40.

<sup>14</sup> FM, Letter 175.

<sup>15</sup> FM, Letter 219.

burne and Mallarmé,<sup>16</sup> one from Mistral encourages Bonaparte-Wyse to get in touch with Théophile Gautier,<sup>17</sup> another thanks him for introducing him to a Mr Marzial from the British Museum who had joined Mistral's subscription to support the publication of his dictionary.<sup>18</sup>

Their likeliest connexion, as far as I have been able to trace, could have come through the poet George Meredith, who was very close to Rossetti – he even lived at Rossetti's Tudor house, 16 Cheyne Walk in London, at the same time as Swinburne, after Rossetti's wife died and the poet took the lease for that 'mansion' where he indulged in a somewhat Bohemian lifestyle with his close friends. The editor of Meredith's correspondence ignores "when or how the two men first met" (Meredith 1970, II, 69), but he had come to know the Pre-Raphaelites as early as 1851. In his *Collected Letters*, the first addressed to a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is a note from May 1851 to J.E. Millais, whom the poet wished to congratulate for his paintings *Mariana* and *The Woodman's Daughter*, which he found "exquisite" (Meredith 1970, II, 15). George Meredith also happened to be a very close friend of Bonaparte-Wyse's and the two men exchanged information about the Provençal Félibrige. A letter from Meredith to Bonaparte-Wyse dated 31 May 1861 gives us a glimpse into their shared enthusiasm which later led Meredith to review *Mireio* in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

I send you the book of M. Aubanel's lyrics. They are intensely Southern, arid, monotonous, impressive. When you see M. Mistral, pray tell him that it is my earnest wish to be introduced to him. *Mireio*, the more I look at it, strikes me as a consummate work in an age of very small singing [...]. I read your translation of the portion describing the mares of the Camargue to Maxse, who was delighted. He spoke of the poem to the Duc d'Aumale [...] He seemed astonished to learn that France held a living poet unknown to him and admired in England.

The same letter continues only three lines further down with news of Rossetti:

Yesterday I met in Fleet Street Dante Rossetti, the artist. I went with him to his studio, and there he gave me a translation he has been at work on many years, viz. *Poems from the Italian poets up to Dante*. Some are perfectly exquisite: as for the translation, it is

<sup>16</sup> E. des Essart to WBW, 17 March 1868.

<sup>17</sup> FM to WBW, 3 July 1870 "Vous êtes tout à fait à même de goûter Gautier, et vous devriez le lui écrire."

<sup>18</sup> FM to WBW, 18 February 1878. L. 226.

so good that he will rank as poet as well as artist from the hour of the publication. (Meredith 1970, II, 85)

As far as Bonaparte-Wyse's own verses were concerned, Meredith made sure they were read and reviewed: "The Reverend [Jessopp] received his copy of the *Parpaïoun Blu* and sends you enclosed acknowledgment. I shall give the other copy to Swinburne, I think". (Meredith 1970 II, 417) 'The two Brotherhoods shared the same respect for the Renaissance, and the same horror of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, the same yearning for freedom and the federation of like-minded spirits to resist the forces of oppression. That was the definition Mistral gave Bonaparte-Wyse in August 1865 of what Félibrige meant to him:

Félibrige c'est culte de tout ce qui est beau, grand et saint; Félibrige c'est respect du passé, et aspiration ardente vers l'avenir, c'est-à-dire conciliation et jeunesse; Félibrige c'est horreur des usines, fabriques, manufactures, bourses, etc. c'est-à-dire contemplation, élévation, isolement d'un monde impur, apostolat et sacerdoce... Félibrige c'est liberté pour tous, pour la Provence comme pour l'Angleterre.<sup>19</sup>

The leaders of both movements further shared a passion for the study of ancient symbols, hidden meanings and cryptography. In a most interesting letter dated 20 March 1868, Mistral invited Bonaparte-Wyse to join him in his campaign of research and elucidation of mythological and religious symbols, which were relevant to their movement: "[l]e gai-sabé, qui est la science du Félibrige," the cross, the Holy Mary, "c'est-à-dire le culte de la femme, pratiqué avec ferveur par les créateurs du Gai-Savoir," Christmas, Easter, S. Gent, S. Roch etc. He then suggested a sort of secret ceremony restricted to the initiates as a way of consolidating the solidarity between the members: "On pourrait formuler une sorte de catéchisme Félibren qui ne serait révélé qu'aux adeptes et qui serait un lien pour notre gaie compagnie";<sup>20</sup> and begged his friend to keep their findings absolutely secret. In the same way, the young Pre-Raphaelites had secretly devised their monogram. Both movements were the spontaneous effusions of very young men, and both dissolved when some of the members settled into adult responsibilities. Mistral's letter of 10 March 1869 announced the end of the first age of the *Félibrige*, and the beginning of a wider movement for the encouragement of regional studies.

<sup>19</sup> FM to WBW, Letter 50.

<sup>20</sup> FM to WBW, Letter 103.

Que vous dirai-je sur le Félibrige? Ce que vous avez déjà senti vous-même, c'est que la première période, la période de l'enthousiasme, de la vive amitié, de l'effusion poétique, est close... Les Félibréjades n'auront plus guère lieu, à cause des petites zizanies intérieures, etc... En revanche le mouvement semble changer de place. Il vient de se constituer à Montpellier une société de jeunes savants pour l'avancement des études romanes [...] J'en suis (comme auteur de mon dictionnaire). Tout cela est bon. Tout cela généralise l'idée. Les concours de poésie Provençale ne cessent pas.<sup>21</sup>

The following year, he reassured his friend about the continuing progress of the cause:

Si certains enthousiasmes sont éteints, certains enthousiasmes reviennent, et à preuve le développement continue, quoique latent, de l'œuvre sainte à laquelle nous vouâmes notre jeunesse. Les 7000 exemplaires de l'*Armana* sont vendus. La production littéraire est incessante et régulière. Nous avons enfin une Revue spéciale qui a eu beaucoup de souscripteurs, la *Revue des Langues Romanes* de Montpellier.<sup>22</sup>

By 1876, the original seven members' association had dissolved and turned into a much wider, better organised international academy: "Cette année nous allons nous organiser en académie sérieuse, composée de 50 membres, 29 provençaux et 21 catalans. Une assemblée générale aura lieu dans ce but le 21 mai à Avignon".<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, a large-scale ceremony was held on May 21, 1876, during which an improbable insect, la cigale d'Irlande (the Irish cicada), was first seen to shine its silver wings in the proud hands of William Bonaparte-Wyse. More than a hundred and thirty years later, the Félibrige still exists as an association for the propagation of Provençal language and literature, their meetings still regularly take place every May 21, the extraordinary exotic decoration has respectfully been transmitted to new worthy members, yet the name of the Irish troubadour of Provence has somewhat sunk into oblivion among the larger public.

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21 FM to WBW, Letter 132.

22 FM to WBW, Letter 150.

23 FM to WBW, 1st January 1876, Letter 200.

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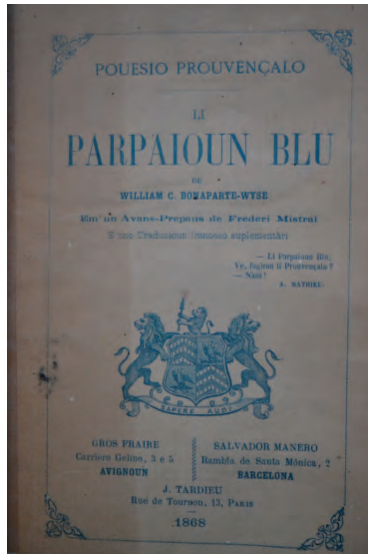


Fig. 13 - Title page of *Li Parpaioun Blu* (1868), with a foreword by Frédéric Mistral, published in Avignon, Barcelona and Paris, and Wyse's coat of arms. Palais du Roure, Avignon



Fig. 14 - Photograph of William Charles Bonaparte-Wyse c. 1870 with his signature and inscription in Provençal language: "A Frèdèri Mistral. Qu'ieu ame coumo un fraire" (to Frédéric Mistral, whom I love like a brother). Palais du Roure, Avignon

ECCENTRIC NATURALISTS:  
HENRY JAMES AND THE PROVENÇAL  
NOVELIST ALPHONSE DAUDET

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A SOFTENED MISTRAL: JAMES ON DAUDET'S PROVENÇAL HERITAGE

Provence plays a major role in Henry James's appreciation of Alphonse Daudet, the writer who immortalized the beauty of this region in famous works such as the collection of sketches *Lettres de mon moulin* (1870) and the picaresque novel *Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872). Both in his travel writing and in his literary criticism, James always referred to Provence as something that shaped and distinguished Daudet both as a man and as an artist. He wrote: "The bright light, the warm color, the spontaneity and loquacity, of his native Provence have entered into [Daudet's] style, and made him a talker as well as a novelist". As time went by, James further pondered, "the Parisian has been added to the Provençal, fortunately without crowding him out" (1984b, 216).<sup>1</sup> Although transplanted in Paris, Daudet (who was born in Nîmes in 1840) remained in fact for James exquisitely *provincial*, in the sense that he – very much like Ivan Turgenev, another outsider in the group gathered around Gustave Flaubert – preserved a certain independence and autonomy of thinking from

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<sup>1</sup> In his travel book *A Little Tour of France*, James often mentioned Daudet while commenting on his visit to various Provençal towns like Tarascon, Arles, or Nîmes. James wrote four essays on Daudet, which appeared in *The Galaxy* (1875), *The Atlantic Monthly* (1882), *The Century Magazine* (1883, repr. in *Partial Portraits*, 1888) and *Literature* (1897). He also wrote the Preface to Harper's English edition of *Port Tarascon: The Last Adventures of the Illustrious Tartarin* (1890), as well as a variety of letters where he discussed his appreciation of the French novelist. For an analysis of James's criticism on Daudet see Daugherty (1981, 66-70) and Jones (1984, 82-88).



the other naturalist writers who orbited aesthetically and philosophically around the French capital.

Daudet exerted a remarkable influence on the James of the so-called ‘middle phase’ and his venture into naturalism. James’s notebooks reveal that he derived the general outline for *The Bostonians* (1886) from Daudet’s novel *L’Évangéliste* (1883) and was inspired by Daudet’s *Numa Roumestan* (1881) for his short story *The Liar* (1887). These few brief notebook entries, however, do not reveal much about Daudet’s role in James’s reworking of naturalist style, and further information should certainly be looked for elsewhere.

In his 1882 essay, James wrote that Daudet was somehow more endowed than the common naturalist, as he displayed both great accuracy in the material observation – the typically French “faculty of seeing” – and an extraordinary sensibility to subjective impressions – described by James as “the faculty of feeling”. These two faculties blended so much in him that setting description and character construction often resulted as perfectly combined (Daugherty 1981, 66). In Daudet’s prose, James argued, “the ray of fancy, the tremor of feeling, always light[ed] up the picture” (James 1984 b, 217).

Daudet’s reluctance to leave aside ‘feeling’ to strictly adhere to the harsh tenets of the new French realism was particularly criticized by Émile Zola, who scolded his fellow writer for yielding to what he believed to be the trap of an old-fashioned sentimentalism. This was particularly evident when it came to Daudet’s description of his native land. As James noticed: “The Provence of Alphonse Daudet is a delightful land; even when the mistral blows there it has a music in its whistle. Émile Zola has protested against this; he too is of Provençal race, he passed his youth in the old Languedoc, and he intimates that his fanciful friend throws too much sweetness into the picture” (James 1984, 238).<sup>2</sup> Very much at odds with Zola, James definitely believed that Daudet’s best works were indeed those where the latter had not fully surrendered to the naturalist dogmas: his earlier and shorter things, so much infused with those delicate and pleasing descriptions of his land. For James, these works contained “the cream of the author’s delicate and indescribable talent” (1984, 217).

These opposing views on Daudet’s representation of Provence foreshadowed the much trickier question of a writer retaining *provincial* elements that contradicted the aesthetics theorized and practiced by Zola and his acolytes.<sup>3</sup> As James put it, at his best Daudet managed to add poetry

<sup>2</sup> In his 1882 essay James quotes a lengthy passage of Zola’s essay *Une Campagne*, where the latter explained his reserve against Daudet’s description of Provence in *Numa Roumestan*, a novel that he otherwise very much admired (James 1984b, 218–219).

<sup>3</sup> Vivien Jones pointed out that: “James frequently used his articles on Daudet to score unfair points against Zola” (1985, 85).

(‘the warmth of the Provençal element’) to a skilful representation of the crude aspects of reality. “M. Daudet,” he further argued, “never sees plain prose [and] discovers everywhere the shimmer and murmur of the poetic” (James 1984*b*, 217). This poetic element preserved Daudet’s works from falling into the boring and stifling prescriptions of metropolitan naturalism. In spite of criticizing an excessive tendency to flatter the reader at any cost with beautiful impressions (another Provençal trait, for James), the American writer concluded that Daudet’s works offered a larger perspective on life which, unlike Zola’s or the Goncourts’, was not ideologically tied and limited by the *banlieue*.

James’s appreciation of what we may define as Daudet’s *eccentric naturalism* is particularly evident in his critique of *Numa Roumestan*, a novel which he discussed quite extensively in two essays (in the *Atlantic Monthly* 1882 and in the *Century Magazine* 1883)<sup>4</sup> disclosing his predilection for this over other works by the French writer. For James, this novel successfully combined a merciless portrait of contemporary French society with an effective exploration of individual psychology, mixing the two tendencies that he recognized as constitutive of Daudet’s personality: Nordic reason (observation and analysis) and southern/Provençal temperament (poetic sensibility).<sup>5</sup> “The beauty of *Numa Roumestan*,” James wrote “is that it has no hollow places; the idea and the picture melt everywhere into one”. And again “[this novel is] a masterpiece; it is really a perfect work; it has no weakness, no roughness; it is a compact and harmonious whole” (James 1984*b*, 224 and Daugherty 1981, 67).

Daudet’s novel offers a characterization that is strikingly Jamesian. The ambitious protagonist – a rising politician who starts by marrying the daughter of a “distinguished member of the French judiciary” (James 1984*b*, 226) – is a provincial featuring the same hypocritical innocence displayed by James’s American (male) *parvenus* with all their clumsy pretensions (Christopher Newman, Adam Verver etc.). But it is the characterization of women to elicit the clearest analogies: the protagonist’s wife (Rosalie Le Quesnoy), for instance, features a psychological complexity and a moral endurance equalling those of James’s ‘Puritan’ heroines (Isabel Archer, Mag-

<sup>4</sup> This latter essay was reprinted in *Partial Portraits* (1888). After the publication of *Numa Roumestan*, James’s opinion of Daudet began to change. James did not like Daudet’s later work, finding it ‘base’. In a 1888 letter to Frederic William Henry Myers, he complained about having failed to give a more complete (that is, more negative) view of Daudet in his book *Partial Portraits* (Horne 1999, 210).

<sup>5</sup> James repeatedly mentions this as a distinctive trait of Daudet’s personality in his essays. He wrote: “[Daudet] has the advantage of being a Provençal converted, as it were – of having a Southern temperament and a Northern reason” (James 1984*b*, 232-333). Another passage: “With the light, warm, frank Provençal element of him, [Daudet] is, in his completeness, a product of the great French city” (1984*b*, 222).

gie Verver).<sup>6</sup> If we stick to the textual evidence of his 1883 literary essay, we notice that the American novelist was particularly impressed by Rosalie's sister, the young Hortense Le Quesnoy. This is of utmost interest as the appreciative remarks on this character seem to be first of all a way for James to discuss and affirm once again his divergence from Zola regarding the question of Daudet's sentimental element.

James dwells extensively on Zola's critique of the episode when the wealthy and educated young Hortense falls in love with the penniless and rather dull southern tambourine-man Valmajour. Zola called this episode "an example of the folly of a departure from consistent realism" on Daudet's part, deeming it an invention made to "please the ladies" and a downright "violation of nature". James had an entirely different view, and found this episode "perfectly conceivable, and [...] treated with admirable delicacy" (1984*b*, 227). To him, it was

much more natural that a girl of the temper and breeding that M. Daudet has described should take a momentary fancy to a prepossessing young rustic, bronzed by the sun of Provence (even if it be conceded that his soul was vulgar), than that she should fasten her affections upon a 'lyric artist,' suspected of pomatum and paint, and illuminated by the footlights. (1984*b*, 227).

James's reply to Zola occupies a lengthy part of the essay and is telling of his interest in rehabilitating Hortense as a well-rounded character, in the face of the naturalist's implicitly misogynist dismissal of the young woman as some sort of instinct-driven puppet, who should only be sensitive to money, fame and superficial status symbols. What Zola believed to be a flaw in Daudet's novel, became instead for James a strong point and an evidence of Zola's limited understanding of women's psychology and, more generally, of human passions.

#### "A CERTAIN INNOCENT PERVERSITY OF MIND": THE NATURALIST AS A CONSUMPTIVE YOUNG WOMAN IN DAUDET'S *NUMA ROUMESTAN*

James's defense of the plausibility of Hortense's attraction for Valmajour does not seem to be motivated only by an intention to expose Zola's prejudices, but also moves from a heartfelt admiration for Daudet's skilled construction of a *thinking* woman character. In James's words, Hortense retains

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<sup>6</sup> In *The Golden Bowl*, for instance, Maggie Verver is called to face a double disenchantment, involving both her fascinating husband and her beloved father – very much like Rosalie does in *Numa Roumestan*.

nothing of the innocent-girl-gone-astray type described by Zola, and features instead a complex and rather unpredictable personality. James describes her as “young, charming, imaginative, romantic, marked out for a malady of the chest, and with a certain *innocent perversity of mind*” (my italics, James 1984b, 226). Endowed with a “reckless and impulsive” temperament, in the novel Hortense is humiliated by sordid blackmailing (Valmajour’s sister decides to take advantage of a picture incautiously signed and given by Hortense to her brother) which leads her into a “rapid consumption”. No one would fail to recognize the relevance of such a plot outline for James, who immortalized the figure of the deceived ailing young woman (inspired by the death of his beloved cousin Minnie Temple) in some of his best works, including the late novel *The Wings of the Dove*, where the protagonist Milly Theale, a wealthy American girl suffering from an unspecified deathly illness, falls victim of the greed of those she believed to be friends.

While it is impossible to know whether Daudet’s Hortense had any sort of influence on James’s construction of Milly Theale,<sup>7</sup> the comparative analysis of the characterization and function of the figure of the ‘doomed young woman’ in the two novels (*Numa Roumestan* and *The Wings of the Dove*) seems to give interesting information about their authors’ similar dissociation from the tenet of strict objectivity theorized and prescribed by Zola. My intention here is to underline how, in both novels, this figure allows for a poeticization of an originally naturalist plot, which re-opens the question of human subjectivity and morality in a grimy world dominated by necessity and interest. More specifically, the recording consciousness of the young woman fated to a premature death becomes a fictional space which enables and fosters the subjective reflection on the final questions posed by a materialist and deterministic vision of reality.<sup>8</sup>

What makes Hortense particularly interesting in *Numa Roumestan* is the growing perceptiveness she develops along with the advance of her malady. This can be traced in the lengthy section in the middle of the novel (Chapters XI-XII) dedicated to Hortense’s experience in the Alpine sanatorium of Arvillard. By employing the first-person mode of the epistolary diary (which the young woman addresses to her sister),<sup>9</sup> Daudet gives the reader access

<sup>7</sup> There are no recent comprehensive assessments on Daudet’s influence on James’s fiction. For a general overview, see Lyall H. Powers’s ‘James’s Debt to Alphonse Daudet’ (1972), an article that focuses mostly on the comparative study of *L’évangéliste* and *The Bostonians*.

<sup>8</sup> For the contrast between the ‘objective’ Zola and the ‘subjective’ Daudet see Roger Williams (1981, 275). Olin H. Moore pointed out that “Not only was Daudet influenced, like the Romantics, by the glamour of the dead past, but he felt a certain antipathy toward the scientific determinism that is the very root of naturalism” (1916, 43).

<sup>9</sup> The reader does not know yet that Hortense is going to die within a year of the same phthisis which had previously killed her brother. The gravity of her illness is revealed only in Ch. XII by Dr. Bouchereau, a character who also appears in *Le Roi en exil* and *L’évangéliste* and

to Hortense's inner life and traces her transformation into an outstanding *observer* – capable of making extremely detailed and objective reports on the social microcosm at the watering place. See, for instance, the impressive classification of human types Hortense makes by comparing the various way patients make inhalations:

Je te dirai, ma chérie, que tout le monde n'inhale pas de la même façon. Ainsi le vieux monsieur que j'ai en face de moi en ce moment suit à la lettre les prescriptions du médecin, je les reconnais toutes. Les pieds sur un tabouret, la poitrine en avant, effaçons les coudes, et la bouche toujours ouverte pour faciliter l'aspiration. Pauvre cher homme! Comme il aspire, avec quelle confiance, quels petits yeux ronds, dévots et crédules qui semblent dire à la source: "Ô source d'Arvillard, guéris-moi bien, vois comme je t'aspire, comme j'ai foi en toi...". Puis nous avons le sceptique qui inhale sans inhaler, le dos tourné, en haussant les épaules et considérant le plafond. Puis les découragés, les vrais malades qui sentent l'inutilité et le néant de tout ça; une pauvre dame, ma voisine, que je vois après chaque quinte porter vivement son doigt à la bouche, regarder si le gant ne s'est pas piqué au bout d'un point rouge. (Daudet [1881] 1919, 186)

A sign of her determination to live, Hortense's extraordinary talent for inhaling ("Personne ici n'inhale autant que moi, c'est-à-dire que je suis un vrai phénomène", 186) also symbolizes her ability to *take in* and register an incredible amount of reality compared to what other people can do. The young woman is so methodical in observing and taking notes for her diary (which she refers to as "vrais journaux") that she almost rivals with the most scrupulous naturalist intent in compiling his infamous *dossiers*.<sup>10</sup> The metanarrative value of her apparently innocent note-taking becomes clear in a later entry of her diary, where she writes: "Ça, c'est mon banc, le coin où je m'isole pour rêver, faire mes romans car, chose étonnante, pour bien inventer, développer [...], il ne me faut pas des larges horizons. Quand c'est trop grand, je me perds, je m'éparpille, va te promener" (Daudet [1881] 1919, 200-201). By significantly referring to her *dossiers* as "my novels" ("mes romans"), Hortense implicitly acts as spokesperson for Daudet's particular aesthetics – an aesthetics which employs the young woman's physical and psychological isolation as a privileged point of view on the world that surrounds her.

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was probably inspired by J.M. Charcot, one of the founding fathers of psychology and modern neurology (Moore 1916, 33).

<sup>10</sup> Like Zola and the Goncourts, Daudet paid frequent visits to hospitals in order to collect information to rework for his writing (Moore 1916, 33).

The most impressive part of Hortense's diary is the report of a walk to the spring of the healing waters of the little Alpine village. If Zola found the description of the Provençal landscape in the book too sweetened for the standards of the naturalist, one has also reason to believe that the description of the surroundings of the small Alpine town in the Savoy might have matched his tastes. In this section, we find Hortense descending into a sort of dark gorge unexpectedly encountered in the midst of an idyllic place ("les Alpes bleues"). There, "at the threshold of several wretched houses," she sees "horrible male or female dwarfs with flat, stupid faces, with open mouths, muttering, and displaying a hideous goitre". This is a place where "nature is too strong for men" (Daudet 1919, 84) and which elicits a comparison with Dante's hell, clearly exemplifying, in a very naturalist fashion, a godless, materialistic universe where human beings desperately strive to survive.

Instead of running away from this spectacle of human suffering, however, Hortense lingers to study one of the little victims of goitre and his family, almost mesmerized by the reflection of a silver coin received as alms on the boy's forehead. The young woman is so impressed by the entanglement of physical suffering and material poverty that she almost starts questioning her own privileged position as a rich bather among the poor inhabitants of the Alpine village. In other words, she realizes that money is the great motor of human life, recognizing its power not only among the lowest of the lowest (the deformed inhabitants in the gorge), but also among all the other people around her in Arvillard.

À se demander vraiment ce que les habitants deviennent pendant la saison. Campent-ils en troupeaux sur les montagnes environnantes, ou bien vont-ils vivre à l'hôtel à cinquante francs par jour? Cela m'étonnerait, car il me semble terriblement rapace cet aimant qu'ils ont dans l'oeil quand ils regardent le baigneur – quelque chose qui luit et qui accroche. Et ce luisant-là, l'éclair brusque sur le front de mon petit goitreux, le reflet de sa pièce blanche, je le retrouve partout. Dans les lunettes du petit médecin frétilant qui m'ausculte tous les matins, dans l'oeil des bonnes dames doucereuses vous invitant à visiter leurs maisons, leurs petits jardins bien commodes, remplis de trous pleins d'eau et de cuisines au rez-de-chaussée pour des appartements au troisième étage, dans l'oeil des voituriers en blouses courtes, chapeaux cirés à grands rubans, qui vous font signe du haut de leurs corricolos de louage, dans le regard du petit ânier debout devant l'écurie large ouverte où remuent de longues oreilles, même dans celui des ânes, oui, dans ce grand regard d'entêtement et de douceur, cette dureté de métal que donne l'amour de l'argent, je l'ai vue, elle existe. (Daudet 1919, 200-201)

Unaware that she will never recover from consumption, Hortense has some sort of momentary glimpse of the deadly blow that the sordid blackmail carried out by Valmajour's sister will inflict to her, as she writes to her sister: "I have seen the metallic harshness that the love of money gives: it is real" (Daudet 1890, 85).

What is particularly striking is that, in spite of her extreme dislike for those (naturalist?) novels that crudely depict life as it is – she writes to Rosalie: "Quant à moi, tu sais que les romans ne sont pas mon affaire, surtout ces romans de maintenant où tout se passe comme dans la vie" (Daudet 1919, 186) – Hortense ironically ends up producing some very accomplished work of the same sort. Her detailed observations, however, are only apparently detached and methodical like the naturalists', as the young woman is continuously sidetracked by her juvenile vitality and openness to wonderment. Full of romantic enthusiasm, Hortense almost *flirts* with the horrible reality she is observing, showing at the same time the detachment of the scientist and the involvement of the participant observer. This complex entanglement of contrasting reactions anticipates the development of a plot, which sees the young woman herself becoming indeed part of the picture, doomed as she is to suffer and die of both physical illness (consumption) and human cruelty (the humiliation caused by Valmajour's sister's blackmailing).

My argument is that in *Numa Roumestan*, the merciless report on disease, poverty, and social injustice provided by Hortense's *dossier* resists the spectacularization often associated with naturalists' objective representation of reality, as this report is primarily used as a device to enhance the characterization of the young woman as a *thinking subjectivity* and to convey the feeling of her individual tragedy. Instead of dissecting the patient, in other words, Daudet has the patient dissect reality, playing with the boundaries between objectivity (the mere emphasis on biology, heredity and environment) and subjectivity (their elaborate reflection in a recording consciousness).

"HER ONLY COMPANION MUST BE HUMAN RACE ... THIS WAS THE REAL THING:"  
MILLY THEALE AND THE PLIGHT OF DETERMINISM IN *THE WINGS OF THE DOVE*

I will now compare Daudet's narration of Hortense's walk in Arvillard with James's narration of Milly Theale's walk in London in Book Five of *The Wings of the Dove*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> As James himself observed in the Preface to the New York Edition, this chapter represents the pivot of the novel, as it is the only one to provide full-fledged access to Milly's consciousness (1997, 15-16).

After a strange conversation on the status of her illness with her enigmatic doctor Luke Strett, which leaves her baffled and confused, Milly feels a sudden “impulse” to dive both physically and psychologically into a world entirely unfamiliar to her, and embarks on a first-hand exploration of what she describes as the “human race at large,” which she has never had the chance to know before. The young woman enthusiastically throws herself in what she now perceives to be her new element, the “grey immensity” of the British capital, exploring quarters made of long rows of houses where the light never arrives and taking “by-ways” and “side-streets,” where she could meet some real members of the lower classes (those more involved in the struggle for life) who stimulate her curiosity: “grimy children and costermongers’ carts, which she hoped were slums” (James 1997, 153-55).

Detouring from the respectable paths she has previously travelled with her overtly scrupulous friends, Susie Stringham or Kate Croy, who try for different reasons to preserve her from being in contact with the crudest aspects of reality and with the very fact of human suffering, Milly feels like facing some sort of military “initiation,” preparing herself to see “wonderments in truth”. Although short and quite uneventful, this detour stands out in the novel as the main episode where the protagonist ponders on the romantic delusion of a universe determined by free will (“the question of living [...] by volition”).<sup>12</sup> By penetrating into Regent’s Park, which she only saw from the outside riding safely in a coach with Kate, Milly has the impression of finally seeing “the real thing”: she suddenly realizes that hundreds of people live as if caged in a “box, their great common anxiety” and begins to feel part of this vast social body hampered by forces that go beyond human possibilities. She also realizes that, like many other people, she has “digest[ed] information” which nourishes the cruel illusion that to live one only needs the power of will. For a small precious instant Milly has an intense and piercing perception of human misery (“the blessed old truth”) and feels tied to the whole of humanity, but in an “inspiringly impersonal” manner, behind which we can recognize the common subjection to mortality – the only thing that binds all human beings together in spite of their differences. (James 1997, 153-155)

The absence of filtering agents (Susie, Kate) to sweeten reality for her in this scene leaves the heroine with a very “practical question” about the contradiction intrinsic to a deterministic vision of the world (“the grim-

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<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of naturalist characters as both observer and actors of determinism, see June Howard’s recent book on American literary naturalism. Rejecting Lukács’s distinction between the active observer (Scott, Balzac, Tolstoy) and the passive spectator (Flaubert, Zola), Howard argues that in many naturalist texts the active observer who attempts to intervene is doomed to lose his/her privileged position and to fall victim of deterministic impotence; such theory, however, does not include James (Howard 2009, 20 and 125-26).



breathing space”): how is one to live when actually deprived of the very possibility to (exercise one’s will to) live? While this existential question receives no answer, the novel comes up with an allusive, cynical anticipation about Milly’s future: in order to get a place among all those other people marked by necessity – in order to find the “company” she really longs for – she would have to pay a “fee,” perhaps a metaphoric allusion to the opportunist scheme conceived by Kate and Merton to get money from her after her death (James 1997, 153-55).

Now, similarly to Daudet in *Numa Roumestan* (and yet relying on a ‘more distancing’ third person narrative), in this novel James explores the consciousness of a doomed young woman who is desperately determined to live, while she is delving into human and material landscape fashioned in naturalist and deterministic terms. There are both analogies and differences which deserve to be discussed. While Hortense’s exploration of *how the other half lives* is characterized by an overtly visual emphasis on physical suffering (deformity), Milly’s remains decidedly confined to the dimension of a solipsistic adventure, where proper vision is replaced by a feeling of awkwardness and clumsiness which highlight the limits of her investigation.<sup>13</sup> Although the proverbial Jamesian reticence might have played a role here, the suspension of Milly on the very brink of an actual immersion (even only visual) into a naturalist-fashioned landscape seems to be principally used to enhance the sense of incorporeal solitude in which she is condemned to live.<sup>14</sup>

These two passages feature an important common denominator, however. They both undermine the very concept of objectivity by staging an experiment in observation, whose only purpose is that of investigating the observer’s recording consciousness (and of the individual tragedy it reflects) rather than the observed object. The emphasis is never on what these young women actually see, but on the elaborate representation they make. This aesthetics – whose melodramatic implications are skillfully kept at bay by both novelists, as they focus on these women’s extraordinary mental activity

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<sup>13</sup> Chris Brown has shown the futility of Milly’s walk, analysing it in both spatial and epistemological terms: “Her rough, unknowing circle is suggestive. It implies that her attempt to live by the volition that the walk represents is futile, will get her nowhere. [...] Her tour of the “unknown streets” of London’s poor [...] has flaunted her ephemeral strength; she now communes with the unemployed loiterers in the park, seeing her physical weakness as akin to their financial plight. [...]. It is one of the moving occasions of the novel as, for a brief period, Milly confronts rather than eschews the social facts of London” (1993, 219).

<sup>14</sup> According to Bell, Milly would represent an “anti-naturalist heroine” (1991, 302). For a masterful reading of the naturalist plot in *The Wings of the Dove* see her book *Meaning in Henry James* (289-323). In both James and Daudet the female heroines doomed to die are more or less directly involved in the resolution of the love-plots around them: Hortense’s death drives Rosalie back to Numa, while Milly’s death helps Densher and Kate in questioning the foundations of their relationship.

rather than on their sympathizing reactions towards the poverty and sorrow around them – seems to be specifically designed to dismantle the implicit hierarchical boundaries between the observer and the observed in naturalist ‘scientific’ approach. Even the subtle anticipation of their ‘fall’ seems to be used to further enhance this sort of dismantling.

‘The innocent perversity of mind’ James ascribed to Hortense and perhaps reworked for his Milly Theale, thus, would be nothing but the perfect definition of an eccentric sort of naturalism which holds the *subjective experience of the clash between hard facts and human desire* as the ultimate object of interest for the modern novelist who aims at giving the most accurate picture of reality. In Daudet’s *Numa Roumestan* James probably found a perfect exemplification of a novel skilfully balanced between deterministic underpinnings and humanist concerns.

To conclude, let us go back to James’s critical essays. James praised Daudet’s typically Provençal (and *provincial*) ability to ‘light up’ the representation of reality through poetry. His poetic touch consisted largely in a continuous attention to subjective impressions – something which set his work apart from that of the average metropolitan naturalist. In Daudet’s eccentric production James found inspiration to create a new narrative aesthetics, which privileged the subjective experience of determinism over its objective description.

For James, in fact, the task of the novelist was not to describe life, but to convey its feeling or impression. In the renowned essay “The Art of Fiction”, published at the beginning of his *middle-phase* period (1884), he wrote: “A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression” and “as people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it” (James 1984a, 50 and 58).

In the concluding lines of his 1897 essay, the American writer returned on the same subject, praising again Daudet’s impressionism as a higher instrument to explore reality, and wrote: “[Daudet] was as warm as the south wall of a garden or as the flushed fruit that grows there. Of all the consummate artists he was the most natural. Every impression he gave out passed through the imagination, but only to take from it more of common truth” (1984b, 257).

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“SUCH ECSTASIES OF RECOGNITION”:  
R.L. STEVENSON’S “ORDERED SOUTH” (1874)  
AS RIVIERA REQUIEM

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While it is well-known that Robert Louis Stevenson travelled in the Cévennes (*Travels with a Donkey*), to the United States and California (*The Amateur Emigrant*, *The Silverado Squatters*), to the South Seas and Samoa where he died in 1894 (*In the South Seas*), he is not usually associated with the French Riviera. And yet, he stayed four times there, especially at Mentone: twice in 1863-1864 with his family (4 February-31 March 1863, then 24 December-Late May 1864), a third and longer time in 1873, when he was ‘ordered south’ by Dr Andrew Clark for health reasons, and last but not least, for a longer time, in Hyères with his wife Fanny (February 1883-early June 1884). His stay in Mentone between 13 November 1873 and 31 March 1874 he recorded in his essay “Ordered South”, first published in *Macmillan’s Magazine* in May 1874, later to be collected in *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881). As opposed to previous stays, he was sent there alone, probably because doctors’ orders had not only to do with a form of tuberculosis (perhaps bronchiectasis) he had been suffering from since a child, but also with a nervous breakdown induced by his rebelling against the Calvinist religion embodied by his father. Between January and the autumn of 1873, painful conversations between Louis and his father took place, a “prolonged crisis” according to David Daiches (1973, 27) during which he was very much aware of the pain he was causing at home, as evidenced by a letter to his best friend then, Mrs Frances Sitwell:

We have had an awful scene. All my father had to say has been put forth – not that it was anything new; only it is the devil to

hear. O dear God, I don't know what to do – the world goes hopelessly round about me – there is no more possibility of doing, living, being anything but a *beast* and there's the end of it [...] I am killing my father – he told me tonight (by the way) that I alienated utterly my mother – and this is the result of my attempt to start fresh and fair and to do my best for all of them. (Stevenson 1994, 311-12)

Mrs Sitwell and her future husband Sidney Colvin, two obvious mother and father substitutes and figures at the time, would support Louis during this crisis, which prompted Dr Clark to order him south as a change from home. Once in Mentone, Louis would write to Charles Baxter: “I am away in my own beautiful Riviera and I am free now from the horrible worry and misery that was playing the devil with me at home” (Stevenson 1994, 369). The recurring ‘devil’ imagery used twice may be read as a symptom of his not being completely freed from a sense of religious guilt. It is against this chaotic family background and within this specific context that he reaches Provence in early November: first Orange, then Avignon, Marseilles, and Mentone, where he arrived on November 13, i.e. on his very birthday.

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS: “THE SHOCK OF WONDER AND DELIGHT”

His first impressions when reaching Provence are enthusiastic, as evidenced for instance by his description of Avignon, in a letter to Frances Sitwell:

Crossing the bridge and seeing the brown turbid water foam and eddy about the piers, one could scarce believe one's eyes when one looked down the stream and saw the smooth blue mirroring tree and hill. Over on the other side, the sun beat down so furiously on the white road that I was glad to keep in the shadow and, when the occasion offered, to turn aside among the olive yards...

Or of Orange, in the same letter:

My first impression was on rising at Orange and throwing open the shutters. Such a great living flood of sunshine poured in upon me, that I confessed to having danced and expressed my satisfaction aloud [...] Today has been one long delight [...] I hope this time to send you a weekly dose of sunshine from the south, instead of the jet of *snell* Edinburgh east wind that used to was. (Stevenson 1994, 360-62)

Crossing the bridge (as transition) or opening the shutters (as exposure) could be read as images which are fit to convey the sense of one's having crossed the borderline between North and South. What the invalid expects on his way to the South is:

The shock of wonder and delight with which he will learn that he has passed the indefinable line that separates South from North. And this is an uncertain moment; for sometimes the consciousness is forced upon him early, on the occasion of some slight association, a colour, a flower, or a scent; and sometimes not until, one fine morning, he wakes up with the southern sunshine peeping through the *persiennes*, and the southern patois confusedly audible below the windows. [...] There is something in the mere name of the South that carries enthusiasm along with it. (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 62-63)

A similar sense of transition expressed in terms of a shock is given by the narrator in Maupassant's story 'Les Sœurs Rondoli' (1884):

Le réveil eut lieu comme nous filions le long du Rhône. Et bientôt le cri continu des cigales entrant par la portière, ce cri qui semble la voix de la terre chaude, le chant de la Provence, nous jeta dans la figure, dans la poitrine, dans l'âme la gaie sensation du Midi, la saveur du sol brûlé, de la patrie pierreuse et claire de l'olivier trapu au feuillage vert de gris. (Maupassant 1984, 980)

If the borderline between North and South is difficult to make out, it is best expressed by "some slight association", or by a rush of sensations like "living flood of sunshine" pouring down (as opposed to rain, in Edinburgh), much in the same way as the narrator of Henry James's contemporary story "At Isella" (1962), published in 1871 in *Galaxy*, looks out for "premonitions" or "symptoms of Italy" in the Swiss mountains. He, too, repeats "To Italy!", whatever it means, as a mode of travelling, as if uttering the very name were enough: what matters for him, in this "grand absence of detail", is "the radiance of this broad fact" (James 1962, 158). But suddenly, "the growing warmth of the air, a fancied elegance of leaf and twig", "the gust of a mild climate" materialize into his coming "upon a sensation": "[a] little house painted a hot salmon colour" (James 1962, 164), *un petit pan de mur saumon* which is enough to epitomize Italy. In both cases, Italy and Provence are supposed to provide symptoms or signs which will enable the traveller to recognise them on his way. Better than a customs house, coming "upon a sensation" is the best way to make sure that you have crossed the Alps and reached Italy, or any specific town in Italy:

Il y a quelques semaines, j'ai fait un bref voyage en Italie. Le soir, à la gare de Milan, il faisait froid, brumeux, crasseux. Un train partait; sur chaque wagon une pancarte jaune portait les mots "*Milano-Lecce*". J'ai fait alors un rêve: prendre ce train, voyager toute la nuit et me retrouver au matin dans la lumière, la douceur, le calme d'une ville extrême.

This is Roland Barthes talking about his yearning for Lecce in the very last text he wrote – for a Stendhal Conference in Milan – entitled "On échoue toujours à parler de ce qu'on aime" (Barthes [1980 [1984], 335).

The very title of Barthes's essay raises a key question, which Stevenson, while staying at Mentone, was also faced with: to what extent is it possible to convey one's impressions and sensations? This is a recurring issue, especially in his letters at the time. A second issue is raised by what James calls "premonitions" or "symptoms", or what Barthes aptly describes as "me retrouver au matin", which implies that one has already found oneself "dans la lumière, la douceur, le calme d'une ville extrême": what Stevenson, in "Ordered South", describes as "ecstasies of recognition" (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 63).

#### CONVEYING IMPRESSIONS: "THE SKY WAS BLUE"

As soon as he reaches Avignon, Stevenson is aware of a major difficulty, which will haunt him throughout his stay in Provence, as he voices it to Mrs Sitwell:

I have just read your letter up on the top of the hill beside the church and castle. The whole air was filled with sunset and the sound of bells; and I wish I could give you the least notion of the *southernness* and *Provençality* of all that I saw. (Stevenson 1994, 359)

Right from the start, Stevenson indeed feels the inadequacy of writing when confronted with the almost impossible task of rendering "Such a great living flood of sunshine" pouring into his retina. Again, on 29 November, before closing yet another letter to Frances Sitwell:

I wish I could send it full of the splendid sunshine; sea and sky are as blue as they know how to be and the outline of hill and tree seems just on edge with joy to be so near the Heaven – you should see how the hills reach up their bald heads and make themselves as tall as they can, all for the love of the blue! (Stevenson 1994, 381-82)

The comparison – “sea and sky are as blue as they know how to be” – shows that Stevenson’s writing style is potentially undermined by the temptation of repetition and truism. Since “southernness” and “Provençality” are elusive, since colours cannot be adequately transcribed into compelling words, since exposure to the sun and the sea tends to blind or dazzle the observer, writing about the South and Provence will partly consist not only in admitting this inadequacy, but also writing about it. During a hot day when he has been “drinking in sunshine”, Stevenson goes for a walk near his hotel and looks up into the sky:

The white corner of the hotel, with a wide projection at the top, stood out in dazzling relief; and there was nothing else, save a few of the plane leaves that had got up wonderfully high and turned and eddied and flew here and there like little pieces of gold leaf, to break the extraordinary sea of blue. It was bluer than anything in the world here; wonderfully blue, and looking deeply peaceful, although in truth there was a high wind blowing [...] I repeat, as the grand result of my morning, ‘the sky *was* blue’. (Stevenson 1994, 384)

In fact, Stevenson feels the basic inadequacy of the phrase “sea of blue”, since the sea is “bluer” than the word ‘blue’ itself could suggest: symptomatically, the plane leaves are described as breaking “the extraordinary sea of blue”. The repetition of the phrase and of the colour smacks too much of clichés about the South and the sea, as in the Beatles’ famous song *Yellow Submarine* (1966) – Sky of blue, and sea of green/In our yellow submarine – in which, among the other colours mentioned, only the yellow submarine (or, for that matter, in Blake Edwards’ 1959 film *Operation Petticoat*, a pink one) does not fit in with the usual clichés about submarines. If Stevenson in his letters as well as in “Ordered South” is prone and doomed to using clichés partaking of what Barthes would call the ‘mythology’ of the South (1957), it is probably because the colours of Provence and the South tend to defy his writing palette:

And then, there is no end to the infinite variety of the olive-yards themselves. Even the colour is indeterminate and continually shifting: now you would say it was green, now gray, now blue; now tree stands above tree, like “cloud on cloud”, massed into filmy indistinctness. (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 65)

The ‘now... now’ kind of syntax corresponds to his inability to fix a permanent, adequate colour: hence also the somewhat disillusioned “the sky *was* blue”, as if this could not be proved, since, at the moment when he writes those lines, the sky has already changed colour. Again, in another letter to Mrs Sitwell:



The sea is blue, gray, purple and green; very subdued and peaceful; earlier in the day it was marbled by small keen specks of sun and larger spaces of faint irradiation; but the clouds have closed together now, and these appearances are no more. (Stevenson 1994, 413)

Part of the difficulty stems from the discrepancy between the moment of writing and the moment of seeing: “I cannot write while I am travelling; *c’est un défaut*; but so it is” (1994: 359), he admits to Mrs Sitwell, in the very same letter where he wishes he could give her “the least notion of the *south-erness* and *Provençality*” of what he sees. How can he write accurately about Provence if colours change all the time? Hence his kind of double bind: either he sticks to clichés, as he often does in the essay and then the sea or the sky, by definition, will always remain blue even if the word is inadequate, or he tries to follow up the ever shifting, changing and moving colours of Provence, and then the attempt is hopeless: *On échoue toujours à parler de ce qu’on aime*, in Roland Barthes’s words.

Another difficulty has more to do with aesthetics, or the potential relationship between literature and painting, at a time when John Singer Sargent, for one, spent part of the winter of 1874-1875 in Nice, before moving on to Capri in 1878, as exemplified by the London Royal Academy Exhibition *Sargent and the Sea* (10 July-26 September 2010). If Stevenson’s experience at Mentone is indeed pivotal in his literary career (Abrahamson 2009), it is, we would like to argue, because it enabled Stevenson to become acutely aware of an aesthetic predicament.

On the one hand, it is tempting to read the first part of the previous quotation about colour being “indeterminate and continually shifting” as corresponding to what would later be called literary Impressionism: after all, Monet’s groundbreaking *Impression, soleil levant* is dated 1872, i.e. just a year before Stevenson’s protracted stay on the Riviera. Sidney Colvin’s visit to Mentone in December 1873 might also be viewed in that light: Colvin, Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge, was indeed one of the first art critics who had an intimation of Impressionism as early as 1867, during the Paris Exposition Universelle. But the second part of the quotation about tree standing upon tree, “massed into filmy indistinctness”, could be also construed as an intimation of Cubism: the years 1872-1873 are usually considered as a turning-point in Cézanne’s career, when after having fully assimilated the lessons of Impressionism, he began to move away from it. In both his letters and “Ordered South”, it seems that Stevenson, in that respect, is aware of two different modes of rendering the South, i.e. two potential pictorial techniques of writing: one consisting in adding blue upon blue, “for the love of the blue”, in Monet-like, or pre-Matisse-like flamboyant, colourful brushstrokes, the other one having more to do

with geometry, volumes and structure, a more Cézanne-like or pre-cubist technique this time. Colour set against masses, pigment against volume, a difficult, uneasy compromise: when he mentions "[M]any a white town that sits far out on the promontory" as out of reach ([1874] 1926, 68), Stevenson seems to pre-empt Ford Madox Ford's famous description of Beaucaire in *The Good Soldier*, "beautiful Beaucaire, with the high, triangular white tower" (Ford [1915] 1997, 16), where colour is also pitted against geometry. After having evoked "towns with the blinding sun upon them; stone pines against the blue of the sky", Ford's narrator says on the next page "that the whole world for me is like spots of colour on an immense canvas" (17), a statement which Stevenson might have endorsed, if his writings on the South were not continually torn between the appeal of colour impressions and the need for a more abstract composition of landscape, as in the following:

Or perhaps he may see a group of washerwomen relieved, on a spit of shingle, against the blue sea, or a meeting of flower-gatherers in the tempered daylight of an olive-garden; and something significant or monumental in the grouping [...] will come home to him unexpectedly... (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 65).

In "Ordered South", Stevenson explicitly uses pictorial imagery when trying to define "the pleasure that we take in beautiful nature". Thus a place can be "transfigured" and stand forth "in a certain splendour of reality". Nature, like a first violet, "can be transmuted into colour so rich and odour so touchingly sweet": he then mentions Wordsworth's daffodils ([1874] 1926, 65). When he tries to define what the invalid might acknowledge as "the glad moment", "such moment of intense perception" which depends "on the harmonious vibration of many nerves", the pictorial comparison again creeps in: "[t]he whole fashion of the landscape has been changed [for him], as though the sun had just broken forth, or a great artist had only then completed, by some cunning touch, the composition of the picture" ([1874] 1926, 66).

The title of the essay, "Ordered South", could thus be read not only in its literal sense, but also as a wish to find a South which would be 'ordered', i.e. visually harmonious, aspiring to the condition of painting, formally composed into a picture. Or, as James's narrator puts it in his story, "Nature refined and transmuted to art" (1962, 155). But this comparison should not be read as a *mise-en-abyme* of the writer's inability to 'paint' along the lines of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition, or along more modern lines: if Stevenson is indeed a contemporary of both Monet and Cézanne, and writes rather uneasily at this aesthetic crossroad, if he, himself, was to meet his future wife at Barbizon, his appeal to "a great artist" here is less literal than metaphoric. The wealth of pictorial imagery ushers in a more intellectual conception of landscape:

We admire splendid views and great pictures; and yet what is truly admirable is rather the mind within us, that gathers together these scattered details for its delight, and makes out of certain colours, certain distributions of graduated light and darkness, that intelligible whole which alone we call a picture or a view. (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 67)

“SUCH ECSTASIES OF RECOGNITION”: THE PREDICAMENT OF HOME

When staying in Mentone in 1873, Stevenson was also faced with another major problem. The fact that this was his third stay within ten years probably contributed to creating a sense of recollection and recognition, as expressed for instance in a letter to his mother from Monaco, which he had visited with Sidney Colvin: “I recollected having been there nearly eleven years ago, and my father throwing stones over the cliff and make me calculate the height” (Stevenson 1994, 417). Such words as ‘recollection’, ‘recognised’, ‘remembered’ are indeed overwhelming in the essay, as in the first paragraph: “It may be that we have kept in mind, during all these years, the recollection of some valley into which we have just looked down for a moment before we lost sight of it in the disorder of the hills” ([1874] 1926, 61).

But this is not a specific valley which could be spotted on the map or in a contemporary Baedeker. Provence is for him not so much a sea shore as a *hinterland*, the pretext for ‘An Inland Voyage’, what the French poet and critic Yves Bonnefoy would call *L’Arrière-pays*:

J’ai souvent éprouvé un sentiment d’inquiétude, à des carrefours. Il me semble dans ces moments qu’en ce lieu ou presque: là, à deux pas sur la voie que je n’ai pas prise et dont déjà je m’éloigne, oui, c’est là que s’ouvrait un pays d’essence plus haute, où j’aurais pu aller vivre et que désormais j’ai perdu. (Bonnefoy 1972, 7)

A similar, almost uncanny sense of homecoming is expressed by Stevenson when describing Orange in a letter to Mrs Sitwell:

Suddenly, as I was going forward slowly in this confusion of mind, I was met by a great volley of odours out of the lemon and orange gardens, and the past linked on to the present and, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the whole scene fell before me into order and I was at home. (Stevenson 1994, 361-62)

‘Fell before me into order’: the essay is about recognizing the link between past and present, in a kind of pre-Proustian experience – if the past sud-

denly barges into the present, thus giving order to present perceptions. As Alan Sandison points out, "Proust's considerable admiration for Stevenson" (2009, 147) is best exemplified by an extract from *À la Recherche du temps perdu*, in which Swann voices his admiration for Stevenson and describes him as "un grand écrivain [...] un très grand, l'égal des plus grands" (Proust 1954.3, 716). The French Riviera is a remembrance of things past: Stevenson's delight at revisiting Mentone coincides with the recognition that things have not changed, as he admits in a letter to his mother dated 13 November 1873, on his very birthday: "The hills, I am glad to say, are unaltered [...] The sea makes the same noise in the shingle; and the lemon and orange gardens still discharge in the still air their fresh perfume" (1994, 363). The polysemic repetition of the word 'still' as both adjective and adverb would correspond to his repeated use of clichés as far as colours are concerned: if the sea makes the same noise, if the lemon and orange gardens discharge the same perfume, then the sea is blue, the lemons are yellow, and the oranges are orange, which is quite logical in a city named Orange...

But this goes well beyond the mere recognition of a well-known, already visited country. The invalid, when reaching the South,

becomes as anxious to seek out beauties and to get by heart the permanent lines and character of the landscape, as if he had been told that it was all his own – an estate out of which he had been kept unjustly, and which he was now to receive in free and full possession. Even those who have never been there before feel as if they had been; and everybody goes comparing, and seeking for the familiar, and finding it with such ecstasies of recognition, that one would think they were coming home after a weary absence, instead of travelling hourly farther abroad. (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 63)

As in Bonnefoy's *Arrière-pays*, the sense of homecoming is not reduced to that of revisiting the same landscape. If the word 'home' or the phrase 'coming home' are used no less than ten times within nine pages, it is because Stevenson's "ecstasies of recognition" bear less on the South and Provence as an already visited country, "this beautiful home of my recollections" (1994, 433), than on the recollection of a metaphoric 'home' or 'estate' which the adult might recognize and acknowledge as his. The fact he should quote from Wordsworth's daffodils in the essay is not a coincidence here: he also quotes from the poet's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality, from recollections of early childhood', in a letter to Elizabeth Crosby dated 5 December 1873 (Stevenson 1994, 399). If scenes seen in the South keep on 'coming home' to the invalid ("[s]omething in the harmony of faint colour that is always characteristic of the dress of these southern women, will come home

to him”), it is because they are part and parcel of a poetic, metaphysical conception of recollection, not so much in Proust’s sense this time, as in Wordsworth’s, which might link not only the present with the past, but Man with the Child – if the second, as Wordsworth puts it in his poem, is the Father of the first. Hence the haunting sense of repetition, which has to do with recognition. “The sunshine is a glorious birth” (‘Ode on Intimations’, II, 7), the sea is metaphoric, as in Wordsworth’s famous lines:

Hence, in a season of calm weather,  
Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore (‘Ode on Intimations’, IX, 33-39)

While the invalid views his own body as perpetually mortal, his soul is apt to recognize a metaphoric ‘estate’ which he could call his by right, in which he would feel ‘at home, more ‘at home’ than the real ‘home’ which at times intrudes upon, and mars his enjoyment of the South:

[i]f but the thermometer fall a little below its ordinary Mediterranean level, or a wind come down from the snow-clad Alps behind, the spirit of his fancies changes upon the instant, and many a doleful vignette of the grim winter streets at home returns to him, and begins to haunt his memory. (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 64)

This is another double bind of sorts: while he was ordered South in order to flee from the problems at home, the invalid periodically suffers from bouts of homesickness which might jeopardize his newly regained health, and crowd upon his memory. How can the invalid be “homesick for the hale rough weather” (Stevenson [1874] 1924, 64) if this implies his own destruction? Instead, memory should be bent on “the home-land of the beautiful” (65). Coming home should have nothing to do with nostalgia, which, by definition, is always painful, but with the recognition of “that immortal sea” which might enable the soul to defeat the body, and enable us to bask in glory: “But trailing clouds of glory do we come/ From God, who is our home (‘Ode on Intimations’, V, 7-8).

Despite this Wordsworth-like kind of recognition to which he aspires, Stevenson is very much aware, in “Ordered South” as well as in his letters, of the elusive character of ‘home’. In a letter to Mrs Sitwell dated 16 December 1873, he writes: “I have no notion of your being alone at home. There’s no place like H – you know – which you may understand as you will” (1994,

411). "There's no place like home" could also be read as 'home is nowhere to be found'. In the essay, the intimation of immortality is pitted against, and debunked by, a permanent reflection on mortality. Stevenson's predicament of finding a potential 'home' on the Riviera is expressed, in the last pages, by an admission that "the life of the invalid resembles a premature old age". Thus, "to him the idea of mortality comes in a shape less violent and harsh than is its wont" ([1874] 1926, 68). It might sound paradoxical that this essay devoted to the South should end on a meditation about accepted death: "He will pray for Medea; when she comes, let her rejuvenate or slay" (69). Death is viewed as the ultimate and welcome means of solving a series of contradictions: between the "enthusiast" and the "stolid, indifferent tourist" who is "out of sympathy with the scene" (63), between the one who yearns for 'home' in the Wordsworthian sense, and the one who is homesick, between the immortal child and the old man-to-be, the traveller and the stay-at-home, between the 'polar twins' of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) embodied by the two Duries, as evidenced by the epitaph of the two brothers at the end of *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). In between the Wordsworthian conception of home as an immortal estate, and the grim reminiscences of the home he has fled, Stevenson tends to view home as the metaphor of the accepted grave. In a sense, the essay enables him to reach out for home as metaphor.

Thus, some ten years after his stay in Mentone, while he was staying in Hyères and thought he was about to die, he wrote the lines of his 'Requiem' (1885), which later were to be written on his grave in Samoa:

Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.

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## **LANDSCAPES OF MODERNITY**





## MONARCHY, SPIRITUALITY & BRITISHNESS: THE ANGLICAN DIASPORA IN GRASSE 1880-1950

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In March 2011, the British film *The King's Speech*, the story of King George VI's courageous fight against his stammering, was awarded 12 Oscars, including best film, and several acting honours. This came as a surprise to those who thought Americans did not care about British Royalties. Yet journalist Sarah Sands wrote in the *Evening Standard* of Tuesday 1st March 2011 an interesting article entitled "Royals are still our Best Sign of Being British". She states that "*The King's Speech* celebrates duty, ceremony, history and sacrifice, embodied in the monarch" adding: "Politicians have tried and failed to find any alternative symbol of being British" (2011, 15). Any given human group always, almost unconsciously, tries to define itself so as to root its existence on commonly accepted elements by the members of the group. Yet it is not the elements which are shared by a group which define it, it is the way the members look at themselves which shapes identity. British identity, or Britishness, as it came to be known during the seventeenth century, is naturally an old question. The very invention of the word British was not, and sometimes still is not, consensual among a diversity of population from various origins. Yet when a diaspora comes to exist, an unconscious need for a proper definition of one's identity becomes a *sine qua non* matter for its survival.

Among the many parts of the world where Victorians settled, the French Riviera attracted so many British people that, at one stage, there were 20,000 British residents living between Menton and Hyères, which might lead us to consider eastern Provence as an informal colony of the Empire. What I would like to argue is that in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the

imperial spirit that prevailed in Britain moulded British attitudes towards foreign lands, and whenever a British community shared a same dwelling place in foreign parts (whether located within a British territorial colony or not) they would unite and build what I would call a 'Little England'. The building of an Anglican church as well as the links to the Royalty were part of the process of rooting a British community in foreign soil and the pillar around which the community evolved and defined its identity.

#### BRITISH RESIDENTS, QUEEN VICTORIA AND THE RIVIERA

The British 'colony' has been present in this region known as the Riviera for decades. Historians usually date the history of the British discovery of the Côte d'Azur to the arrival of Tobias Smollett (1721-1771).<sup>1</sup> The famous novelist was also a doctor who suffered from a chest complaint. He stayed two years in Nice, which inspired his famous book *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), in which he explained that the region's climate had cured him of his pulmonary complaints. This very colourful narrative was important in promoting the Côte d'Azur, to whose coast more and more rich British citizens came. Other doctors took over, such as Dr John Brown (1810-1882) a Scotsman who suffered from 'melancholy' (depression). He invented the concept of *climate-therapy* and accompanied Queen Victoria during her visit to Menton in 1882, just before his death. Even more famous was Dr James Henry Bennett (1816-1891) who settled in Menton in 1859 in order, as he said, to die in peace after having caught tuberculosis from his patients in England and who was entirely cured thanks to the climate. He invited Queen Victoria and her daughter Beatrice to visit his garden in Menton. Bennett's influence was so great that many British citizens, sometimes in a critical condition, came to try to prolong their lives in Menton. The result is summed up in a famous saying: 'Cannes is for the living, Monaco for the playing and Menton for the dying'. The English diaspora wanted its own doctors, which led many to move to the South of France: there were five English doctors in Cannes before the end of the nineteenth century. Many Anglophone residents found their resting place on the Riviera as shown by the English corners in Menton cemetery or in Grasse, the English quarter of St Raphael's cemetery or the importance of the English 'Caucade' cemetery in Nice built in 1865. Even in death, English residents remained together. Through the impetus of their doctors, English aristocrats were invited to 'Go South'. Dynasties settled on the Riviera such as the Rothschilds. Theresa in Cannes, Alice went to Grasse and Beatrice Ephrussi to the Cap Ferrat. However the

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<sup>1</sup> See Nathalie Bernard's essay in this volume.

effects of the industrial revolution began to be felt in the nineteenth century and the occupation of the Côte d'Azur was no longer the prerogative of the aristocracy who had to make room for the rich bourgeoisie, as we shall see with rich middle class wool merchants, the Bowes, who lived next door to the Baroness of Rothschild in Grasse.

Queen Victoria's third visit to the Riviera – to Grasse (25 March-28 April 1891) – prompted *The British Medical Journal* (1891, 1583.1, 974), in an article entitled *The Queen's Visit To Grasse*, to seize on the opportunity by commenting upon the positive effect of the climate. Queen Victoria transformed the Riviera as she affirmed its position as an important holiday centre, rather than a centre for convalescence (Nelson 2001, 2). Rich people became known as *hivernants* as they stayed during the winter season and went back to Britain in the summer; one such case was Lord Brougham, who, in 1834, because of an epidemic of cholera in Provence, was forbidden to enter Nice and therefore forced to remain in Cannes. It pleased him so much he decided to stay. They built big mansions (Villa Eleonora), whole quarters such as Cimiez in Nice, Costebelle in Hyères, Garavan in Menton, la Croix de Marbre in Nice (nicknamed 'Little London'), the *quartier* de Malbosc in Grasse or the Suquet in Cannes which were virtually British property. Yet it was not just the aristocracy, as we saw previously; there were doctors who followed their patients and settled in the South of France, members of the rich middle class, people such as bakers and industrialists, but also dentists and shopkeepers. There was a 'British Pharmacy' in Menton and many other shops which bore an English name and were run by Englishmen. British people organized the place to their taste: they built cricket fields, tennis courts, race courses, great gardens and walking paths (the famous Promenade des Anglais). British tourists praised the beauty of the land, the charms of the southern cities and villages. It is recorded that 'English' became a synonym for tourist. A good example of the obvious existence of a British 'colony' is illustrated by Charles Yriate who wrote in 1867 in *Le Monde Illustré*, "Menton est un bourg anglais, les insulaires sont là chez eux, les enseignes sont écrites en anglais et les pharmaciens étalent des bœux de dimensions monumentales aux armes d'Angleterre" (An. 2008, 4-5).

As far as Grasse is concerned, many references were positive because of the climate, the view and the perfume industry. On April 2, 1765, Tobias Smollett distinguished Grasse as an excellent summer station far from the heat and mosquitoes of the coastline towns (Smollett, [1766] 1979). Margaret Maria Brewster explained that going on a day visit to Grasse with her father in 1856 was like going on a beautiful adventure (1998, 62). A magnificent palm tree on the outskirts of the town led her to write that it looked savage and oriental, evoking all sorts of thoughts and souvenirs of oriental tales, or passages from the Scriptures (1998, 62). Queen Victoria herself wrote in her

diary in 1891 that the surroundings of the nearby hamlet Le Bar-sur-Loup are “almost oriental” (Queen Victoria: 1891, 109). Reverend Hugh Macmillan in 1885 expressed the idea that the climate in Grasse was “remarkably mild and salubrious”, that from the terraces “the town commands the most beautiful and extensive views” (1885, 34). He was not devoid of Orientalism when he wrote: “The air of Grasse always smells as sweet as a conservatory: it is heavy with delicious odours and filled with murmuring sounds of fountains” (1885, 34). Rudyard Kipling was also sensitive to the smells in the twentieth century when he wrote: “[w]e can climb by car into the hills behind Grasse and smell the pines as the spring snow melts from beneath them, and the anemones begin to come out” (Jones 2009, 85). It is not surprising that, considering such attractive features, some former officers of the colonial army, who were used to the mild temperatures of India or Africa, preferred to retire on the Riviera rather than in England, as was the case with the late Colonel Harry Harvey Jones – Indian Army – in Grasse.

#### ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

The English Church, St John the Evangelist, in Grasse, owes its building to the Bowes and Booker families. They settled in Grasse in the early 1880s, and the members of these families were among those British citizens who had best profited from the industrial revolution. The Bowes became rich thanks to the wool trade. Members of the family are mentioned in the English decennial censuses between 1841 and 1901. Two of the six children, John and James Lord Bowes, started their own business with the added heading of ‘Lord’, their mother’s name. Their firm, based in Liverpool, was known as J.L. Bowes & Brother (the “J” could therefore denote either John or James). John Lord Bowes, his sister Isabella Bowes, his other sister Helen Booker and his brother-in-law Charles Edward Booker were registered in the March 1886 Grasse census. They acquired a large property on the Avenue de Magagnosc in the Saint Christophe quarter, known as ‘Haut Malbosc’. It consisted of 17,000 square meters, bought on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1885. John and Isabella lived in Villa Isabella, which housed fifteen people, of whom ten were servants, whereas the Bookers, who lived in Villa Helen had only one servant – to be compared with Alice of Rothschild who had 26 persons at her service. This quarter of Malbosc and the Rioubanquet is famous in Grasse for two reasons. There is a microclimate – as stated by doctor Sir Hermann Weber (1823-1918), specialist of open-air treatment for tuberculosis – which makes it the best part of town to live in (even today). Secondly, as a consequence of the first reason, it is where rich (Anglophone) people settled for the winter season. First the Grand Hôtel was

built in 1882 on what was to become Avenue Victoria and another hotel, The Victoria, was built on Avenue Riou Blanquet in 1905. Then, after 1888, Baroness of Rothschild built the house she called Villa Victoria (still existing on the avenue that bears the Queen's name). The Baroness probably had Villa Beau Site erected in the 1880s while the Bowes had Villas Isabella and Helen also built at the same time.

Marjorie Morgan states that Victorian "travellers were conscious of a British religious identity when they were in Catholic areas of Europe" (2001, 118). The *Illustrated London News* often had an engraving of each English Church that Queen Victoria visited: Menton in 1882, Grasse in 1891 and Hyères in 1892. This shows that the Queen had everything she needed when abroad including spiritual comfort. Rich people wanted to build their church in order to unite the English community, which would thus have a meeting place. This happened when Protestants felt threatened by the animated debates that took place around Darwinian theories of evolution, the Catholic revival triggered by the Oxford Movement and the process of de-Christianisation revealed by the 1851 census. The Protestant revival led Methodists, Wesleyans, Plymouth Brethren, Quakers etc., along with the Church of England, to evangelize Britain and Europe. Under the banner of the Camden Society, a program of church construction was launched on the Riviera.

Anglican worship thus became a vital issue. One example of this is in Cannes where Sir Thomas Robinson Woolfield and his wife Catherine had built Villa Victoria in 1853. They soon realized that to keep their compatriots in Cannes, they needed to build a church, which they did on their property in 1855. As for the Bowes, the English church was built on a piece of land next to their house, Villa Isabella. The municipal archives in Grasse reveal a request from Maître Bertrand, notary in Grasse, addressed to the Mayor of the town on 21st January 1884, indicating that "The Bishop of Gibraltar wished to build a church for the purposes of worship for the English who spent the winters in Grasse".<sup>2</sup> The Municipal Council confirmed its acceptance in the register of the minutes of 27<sup>th</sup> November 1884: Mr Hibert, landowner in Grasse, wishing to contribute to the installation of a foreign colony in this town, proposed to donate to the *commune* a piece of land in the area of Malbosc "in order to build a Protestant church". It is to be noted that the objective was to establish a community in the area, thanks to a religious building. John Bowes bought "a piece of land of triangular form being the remains of a property which the sellers possessed in Grasse, in the Malbosc quarter".<sup>3</sup> John declared a few months later that the work for the building of "a protestant church called St John's Church" started on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Archives of the French Reformed Church in Grasse.

<sup>3</sup> Deed of Maître Bertrand, 1st May 1890.

The architect was Liverpool-based. George Ashdon Audsley (1838-1925) built many churches and at least two synagogues in Britain and in the USA. A close friend of James Lord Bowes, he agreed to work on his only building in Europe outside Britain to please his friend who was probably consulted by his brother John Lord Bowes when the time came for him to find an architect. Audsley, though originating from Scotland, had immigrated at an early age to Liverpool. He and the Boweses were keen on the aesthetics of their local buildings. One of the characteristics of the area surrounding their city was then the important number of half-timbered buildings from the Middle Ages, the Tudor era and the Victorian period. Interestingly, St John the Evangelist in Grasse is quite unique as it is typically an Anglican Church, but among the fourteen Anglican churches built on the Riviera between 1822 (Nice) and 1910 (Vence), St John is moreover the only one to be a half-timbered church (figs. 15-16).

The church was finished at the end of February 1891, just three weeks before the arrival in Grasse of Queen Victoria who was coming to visit her friend the Baroness Alice of Rothschild. The appointment of Henry E. Gedge as Chaplain for British residents in Grasse was signed by Charles W. Sandford, Bishop of Gibraltar, on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1891. The Queen settled at the Grand Hotel (now the Grand Palais) on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1891 and went to visit her friend who lived a few hundred meters away on the present Avenue Victoria, quite close to the church. The Queen attended her first service at St. John the Evangelist on 27<sup>th</sup> March, Good Friday. One of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, Marie Adeane, recounted this event in a letter to her fiancé Bernard Mallet, explaining: "We went to church this morning, such a pretty little building only finished three weeks ago, and as the natives say, quite 'le style anglais'" (Mallet 1968, 43). Queen Victoria was more expansive in her diary: "We drove to the little English Church, which is close by. It is very pretty & was actually finished three years ago [*sic* 'weeks'], having been built by a rich gentleman, a Mr Bowes. A Mr Spencer Smith from Christ Church, Cannes, took the service, which he did very well, & preached a particularly nice and appropriate sermon. The singing was not bad but the lady who played the harmonium 'laissait à désirer'" (Queen Victoria, 1891, 109). Later, on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April, the Queen again attended the service in the "English Church on the road to Vence" which was taken by the "Reverend Clergyman" from St George's Church in Cannes, T. Aitken, noting that it was necessary to have an invitation to be able to attend divine service. She also devoted her time to visiting the town and its outskirts or to seeing Alice of Rothschild regularly. On 10<sup>th</sup> April she visited Mr. Chiris's perfumery and wrote that after dinner: "I saw Mr. Bowes, who lives near here and who built the little English church, and who came with his sister, an elderly lady" (Queen Victoria, 1891, 140). The Queen had actually entertained John

and Isabella as well as Charles Edward Booker, designated as the churchwarden. The Queen expressed her satisfaction to John for his generosity and her pleasure in attending the various services.<sup>4</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> April, the Queen wrote that she went to visit Mr. Bowes, who, she writes, had a charming villa, a little further beyond Miss Rothschild's. His "friendly" sister came outside and they went round the garden together, finding it beautiful and well maintained (Queen Victoria, 1891, 146). She then attended service on a regular basis until the end of her stay in Grasse. On the 27<sup>th</sup> the Queen left, not without a last visit to the Ste Brigitte cemetery as one of her chambermaid, E. Reynolds, had died of blood poisoning during her stay at the Grand Hotel. As we can see, the Anglican community in Grasse was close to its Queen thanks to its church.

After the Queen had left, the Bowes and Booker families must have been happy for the honour which had been done them. A great surprise occurred shortly afterwards; a Grasse newspaper records that the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Henry Ponsoby "had just written to Mr. Bowes, distinguished resident of the Villa Isabella, that Her Majesty wished to offer a stained glass window to the Anglican Chapel in our town".<sup>5</sup> This must have been the last satisfaction that John Lord Bowes had, for he died while journeying to London on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1891. Heaton, Butler & Bayne, a famous stained glass window company of the time, whose premises were in Covent Garden at 14 Garrick Street, was contacted by Richard Holmes, the Royal Librarian at Windsor. The latter had designed three stained glass windows, which Queen Victoria wished to offer to the Anglican parish of Grasse. This royal command was certainly carried out quickly and sent off to Grasse. It represents St George with St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist on either side, the latter having given his name to the church (fig. 17).

St George, famous for having slain the dragon, is represented as a knight of the Order of the Garter. He is the patron saint of England, who wears the flag of England on his 'surcoat' (St George's cross), has the garter and the knight's mantle of the order with the garter. He has his sword and lance to kill the dragon, and there are ramparts behind him meaning he is the bulwark of the nation. All the symbolism is British (as for example the oak in the background which evokes the *English Oak* thus suggesting that the saint, as the Royal Navy, is 'the wooden rampart[s] of Old England'). Beneath the three figures is the coat of arms of Great Britain with the text of the Order of the Garter in old French: *Honni soit qui mal y pense*. On either side there is Queen Victoria's coat of arms with the inset initials VRI (Victoria Regina Imperatrix). The text below recalls the visit of the Queen: "To the Glory of

<sup>4</sup> Reported by *The Times*, 13th April 1891

<sup>5</sup> *Le Commerce*, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1891.



God and in memory of her visit, Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India". To the right of the nave there are three other windows offered by the Bowes family when their brother John died in 1891. The dedication reads: "In memory of John Lord Bowes. Born 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1825, died August 1891" (the middle window was partly destroyed). There are other windows by Heaton Butler and Bayne at the back of the church (fig. 18). Very feminine in style, they were offered in memory of Mary Sands, in 1896. There are two powerful Biblical women on either side: Myriam, sister of Moses, and Ruth, the Moabite. They are accompanied by three allegories: Hope, Love and Truth. The text above is an elegy by the Poet Laureate of Queen Victoria, Alfred Lord Tennyson: "Twilight and evening bell/And after that the dark!/ And may there be no sadness or farewell,/ When I embark".<sup>6</sup> The other text is a hymn by the English clergyman, John Henry Newman: "Lead, kindly light, amidst th'encircling gloom,/ Lead Thou me on!/ The night is dark, and I am far from home,/ Lead Thou me on".<sup>7</sup> As these examples show, St John the Evangelist in Grasse was rooted in British culture right from the beginning. A common wish of the Anglican diaspora, shared by their queen, was to mark off some of the slopes of Grasse as being British ground by exposing to the *Provençaux* visible elements of their Englishness.

It would appear that the disappearance of the Bowes family, the First World War and the Wall Street Crash in 1929 reduced the Anglophone Grasse community. Next to the church is a house called Villa Beau Site given by Baroness of Rothschild to her god-daughter Alice Pearce. When the latter got married and became Mrs Jacot, she was still in the house and had the keys to the church. After the Second World War she wrote a letter to the Bishop of Gibraltar on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1946, which ended by saying that she and her family were to return to England, and that in her opinion there would not be much chance of seeing a new congregation in Grasse. She explained that two of the large hotels in Grasse had been converted into flats. There would, therefore, be no more British visitors. They themselves would come back less and less because they wanted their children to be educated in England, and there were no families with children living nearby. Some English would come back, she wrote, but they would be scattered throughout the territory of the town of Grasse. She concludes by saying that the death of Revd. Oliver in 1940 (a former Anglo-Boer War veteran and the last chaplain appointed to Grasse) was a great sorrow to the community for they were very fond of him. This letter marks the end of an era, that of the presence of a united British community, around its clergyman.

<sup>6</sup> Lines 9-12 of Alfred Tennyson's poem, 'Crossing the bar', 1891.

<sup>7</sup> Lines 1-4 of John H. Newman's poem, 'Lead, kindly lights', 1833.

We have a final letter from Mme. Jacot, written from Surrey on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1947 in which she explains that there was no longer a British colony, and the only residents in Grasse were invalids. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel finally gave up taking care of the church and gave it to the French Reformed Church in Grasse who was looking for suitable venues for their services but kept the possibility to perform Anglican services. When interviewed in 2011, Mrs Jacqueline Beoletto, a French citizen of Grasse, born in 1927, recalled that before the Second World War, Mrs Jacot-Pearce, her God-mother, used to invite the English community to her house (Villa Beau Site) next to the English Church, every Thursday afternoon. She herself attended and admired this English diaspora's meetings which included, among others, Reverend Oliver and Lord and Lady Fortescue<sup>8</sup> – John Fortescue being a former Royal Librarian, and Winifred Fortescue a former actress and then writer – who lived in The Domaine down the road towards the hamlet of Magagnosc. This was the heyday of the Anglican community in Grasse.

Marjorie Morgan writes in the introduction to her book that she felt a sense of what it meant to her to be an American only when confronted with 'otherness' during a trip to Great Britain (2001, 2). She also explained that it is confrontation that forces people to reflect on the familiar and makes them more aware of how it defines them individually and collectively. Within the imperial frame of mind, we can say that British dwellers on the French Riviera tried their best to reproduce a 'Little England' within 'Greater Britain'. The Riviera was not a British Colony, but there was a strong British colony living there. They had contact with local inhabitants but their attitude was somewhat closer to that of colonials who lived in the British Empire and stuck to their community. The fact that Queen Victoria was a regular visitor to the area led many aristocrats to follow in her footsteps. Their spiritual needs induced them to build English churches on the Riviera, their *Axis Mundi*, around which they gathered and elevated their souls, and legitimized their presence. The church, then, was a strong element of British identity along with shared admiration for their Queen and will to remain together. Today, although the French Protestants of Grasse call their church *un temple*, they still accept it to be nicknamed *chapelle Victoria*, thus bearing testimony to the memory to the Empress of India and the English diaspora.

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<sup>8</sup> See Christine Reynier's essay in this volume.

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Fig. 15 - The Church of St John the Evangelist in Grasse. Unidentified photograph



Fig. 16 - Panorama of the eastern side of Grasse in 1911. Unidentified photograph



Fig. 17 - St George, St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, 1891, stained glass window for The Church of St John the Evangelist in Grasse, Richard Holmes and Heaton, Butler and Baines Stained Glass Company.



Fig. 18 - Myriam, Ruth, and the Allegories of Hope, Love and Truth, 1891, stained glass window for The Church of St John the Evangelist in Grasse, Richard Holmes and Heaton, Butler and Baines Stained Glass Company.

## INTO GYPSYDOM: AUGUSTUS JOHN'S PROVENCE

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*John! John!  
How he's got on!  
He owes it, he knows it, to me!  
Brass earrings I wear  
And I don't do my hair,  
And my feet are as bare as can be;  
When I walk down the street,  
All the people I meet  
They stare at the things I have on!  
When Battersea-Parking  
You'll hear folks remarking:  
"There goes an Augustus John!"*

(Holroyd 1997, 610)

By the time Mrs Grundy and the John Beauty Chorus were singing this refrain at the Chelsea Palace Theatre, Augustus John's consecration as the embodiment of the British Bohemian *par excellence* was complete. It was 1917 and the singing and pantomime performance was part of a 'Monster Matinée' organised to raise funds in aid of soldiers at the front. The London event, subtitled *A Sage Revue of the Augustan Age*, was covered with a double-page spread of photographs and commentary in the supplement of the *The Sketch*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A reproduction of the 28 March *Sketch* coverage of the event can be found in Tickner (2000, 49-50). Tickner also provides a detailed description of the event programme; the Executive Committee included John himself together with Carrington, Sir Philip Bourne-Jones and William Nicholson among others. The text of the grand finale song 'Augustus John'



These were days in which John's larger-than-life gypsy demeanor in Chelsea and elsewhere was legendary. He had become a celebrity and when the largest exhibition of his pictures ever assembled was held at the Alpine Club in November,<sup>2</sup> *The Times* saluted him as "the most famous of living English painters" (Holroyd 1997, 425). By then, however, painting was only a secondary aspect of the unconventional way of life the artist was leading, and acclaim of John's achievement by avant-garde critics was on the wane: "One feels the virtuoso obtruding himself into a picture that ought to be as *naïve* in execution as it is on conception" (Holroyd 1997, 425), reported one critic of the show. Decades of remunerative portrait-painting and grand-scale, unfinished decorative-group-painting would follow: "The rest [was] a disappointing – and, year by year, a more disappointing – story" (Easton and Holroyd 1974, 23). It was John's turn, in 1952, to bestow a retrospective glance on that old bohemian *persona* of his own devise; his autobiographical words did not spare any irony to his theatrical self:

[a]s for clothing, according to my Golden Rule, the 'importance of appearances' insisted on at home already had made my neglect of them a duty. But now a new kind of exhibitionism was born; in its way, as exact and conscientious as my father's cult of the clothes-brush: a kind of inverted Dandysm. If my shoes were unpolished, they were especially made to my own design. If I abjured a collar, the black silk scarf that took its place was attached with an antique silver brooch which came from Greece. The velvet additions to my coat were no taylor's but my own afterthought, nor were my gold earrings heirlooms, for I bought them myself: the hat I wore, of a quality that only age can impart, might have been borrowed from one of Callot's Gypsies and was as a matter of fact a gift from one of their descendants. My abundant hair and virgin beard completed an ensemble, which, if harmonious in itself, often failed to recommend me to strangers. (John 1975, 307)

Even in his own memories, John's fame as vagabond, philanderer and dweller in Gypsydom had grown to be so overwhelming a stereotype to obscure the early originality of his artistic merits and the fresh modernity of his best 'gypsy' painting. If one thinks that John was simply not represented in the 1987 Royal Academy Exhibition *British Art in the Twentieth Century: The Modern Movement*, it becomes clear that his banishment from the world of fine arts and his confinement into that of fashionable extravaganza and excess lasted very long indeed.

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by Henry Graham was printed in full in the programme and can be read in Holroyd (1997, 610-612).

<sup>2</sup> November-February (1918), Alpine Club, *Pictures and Decorations* (67 exhibits).

The attributes of a studied spontaneity, the brass earrings, messy hair and bare feet of the 1917 refrain, supplemented by sandals, large black hats, leather boots and *vardos*<sup>3</sup> were the trappings of the 'gypsy trope', a mode which Lisa Tickner has thoroughly investigated and contextualized outside and inside John's life and work (Tickner 2000, 49-78). Together with Janet Lyon's (2004), Tickner's research into modernist utopias and counter-modern or open-air forms of sociability and communal life and art have focused on the Romany cult, according to her one among their most remarkable Edwardian antecedents and ingredients.<sup>4</sup> In the footsteps of Raymond Williams (1973) Tickner has observed that "[D]uring the 1880s and 1890s an increasingly urban population began nostalgically to consume idealized representations of a rural life that had, in fact, been in decline since the severe agricultural depression of the 1870s" (2000, 56). Sifting through long-forgotten publications advocating 'the simple life' of outdoor leisure pursuits in contrast to the unhealthiness of existence in the modern city, she has mapped out a social and cultural area in which the emulation of the gypsy way of life was ubiquitous: from the romantic cult of the path epitomized in George Borrow's books<sup>5</sup> to ethnographic and philological attention paid by the Gypsy Lore Society<sup>6</sup> to the ways and languages of Gypsies, not to forget the practical 'how to' concern with the proper construction and use of traditional tents for camping (2000, 54-59).<sup>7</sup>

Tickner's stringent cultural argumentation is substantiated by Baudelaire, Simmel and Benjamin and hinges on parallels and oppositions between the urban figure of the *flâneur* and that of the pastoral tramp. John's experience, however, has, according to her, its irreducible distinctiveness and a distinct complexity. Not only was John by no means the first to discover the "gypsy trope, the pleasures of tramping, camping and learning

<sup>3</sup> Caravan in Romany.

<sup>4</sup> See also Nicholson 2003.

<sup>5</sup> *Lavengro* (1851), *The Romany Rye* (1857).

<sup>6</sup> Founded in Edinburgh in 1888 by scholars with a semi-academic ethnographic and philological interest in Gypsies, the GLS was revived in Liverpool at the beginning of the new century thanks to John Sampson (1862-1931), R.A. Scott Macfie (1868-1935) and Dora Yates (1879-1974).

<sup>7</sup> In those days, Gypsyloists weren't the only ones concerned: "During the early years of modernism, images of Gypsy community were everywhere in the local and national press" (Lyon 2004, 532), and the community attracted the attention of enthusiastic philanthropists as well. Intent on documenting illiteracy, poor hygienic conditions and degenerated habits, visitors of the camps started calling for legislative measures to bring gypsies into the orbit of state regulation. Thanks to recent studies, the fact that the 'emulating' and 'civilizing' attitudes towards Gypsies were coexisting with more disturbing notions as race, purity and Orientalism, has been thoroughly investigated. Such issues largely exceed the scope of this article, though they remain in its background as inherent to the cultural and aesthetic process which fuelled primitivism in British culture and art. See Nord 2006, Trumpener 1992, Turrini 2007.



Romany" (Tickner 2000, 54), but he also did not really fit in the roles such model entailed: "He was not a gentleman gypsy: he had neither the money nor the inclination. And he was not a tramp: his Romany affiliations and identifications were too intense" (2000, 62). At the same time, as Tickner concedes, "he wanted on some level to *be* this thing" and "not just to visit camps, converse and carouse there but to live in this imaginary space and make of its tribe his identity and his art" (2000, 62).

Although she does consider in such context some 1905 "small, fresh and spontaneous oil sketches of [his] women and children" (2000, 53) and the gender issues stemming from John's patronising and patriarchal masculinity,<sup>8</sup> Tickner addresses John's gypsy camp as a site in which aesthetic and existential dimensions meet and merge. The artist's ambiguous modernity is then apprehended first by analyzing the dramatic quality of the 1909 oil *Woman Smiling* and then by illustrating the failed ideal in the grand scale *Lyrical Fantasy* dated 1913-1914. The cultural slant of Tickner's illuminating criticism therefore has left almost no room for the events, both personal and artistic, which befell Augustus John around 1910 in Provence. Events not inconsistent with John's previous joining in with the Romany in England, attracted as he was by their language and culture: This is why John's Provençal experience had a more intimate relevance for him and a greater impact on his visual imagination than for other British intellectuals – Bloomsbury – who would have followed in his steps.<sup>9</sup>

What are we to make, then, of John's Bohemian *persona*? Was his real brotherhood with the Gypsies truly meaningful to "the visual lyricist whose early accomplishment interpret[ed] English, French and Welsh landscape through poetic eyes" (Holroyd 1997, xxxii)? And if so, how? In the lapse of time contained between 1908, a year associated by Virginia Woolf with the 'time of John',<sup>10</sup> and its ironic dismissal as past history – the 'Augustan Age' of the 1917 *Revue* – a path will be retraced: along which John's personal restlessness and aesthetic quest would harmonise and coalesce for a short while. On this route, Provence will be discovered as both a home and a crossroad where the ever displaced gypsy painter could nurture his "magnificent beginnings" (Holroyd 1997, xxxii) with

<sup>8</sup> See also Tickner 1994.

<sup>9</sup> See Caws and Bird Wright 2000 and Patey 2006. John first travelled to Provence in 1910 while it was only in 1915 that Roger Fry reached Cassis in the steps of Derain and Matisse.

<sup>10</sup> Woolf's arch-famous drawing-room anecdote on how Bloomsbury came to plain speaking about sex in 1908 opens as follows: "It was a spring evening- Vanessa and I were sitting in the drawing room. The drawing-room had largely changed since 1904. The Sargent-Furse age was over. The age of Augustus John was dawning. His Pyramus filled one entire wall. The Watts portraits of my father and my mother were hung downstairs if they were hung at all" (Woolf 1978, 195).

new colours and shapes so as to create a unique visual language, however fleeting it was bound to remain.

#### GUSTAVUS JANIK

Biographer Michael Holroyd maintains that John's romance with Gypsies went back to his childhood in Wales. As a reaction to the suffocating Edwardian education imposed by his family, the "mutinous pupil" (Holroyd 1997, 19) felt a kinship with the gypsies which "arose not just from the fact that [his father] disapproved of them but from his having warned his son they might capture him and bring him up as one of their own. He longed to be kidnapped. At home he felt an outcast, and at school it was with the outcast he grew most sympathetic" (Holroyd 1997, 26). It was while in Liverpool, working as art instructor at the School of Art in 1901, that John made friends with John Sampson, librarian of the local University College and self-taught linguist who would later publish a scholarly classic, *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* (1926). The sense of a special friendship mixed with ethnographic fervour, twinned with the conviction of accessing an utterly mysterious realm, permeate John's recollections of that period:

Our visits to Cabbage Hall and other camping grounds were rich in incident. 'Cabbage Hall' for us denoted a large patch of waste ground, where the Boswells were in the habit of encamping during the winter months. Under Sampson's aegis I was made welcome in the tents and got to know their occupants, who bore such exotic names as Noah, Kenza, Eros, Bohemia, Sinfai, Athaliah, Counseletta, Alabaina, Tihanna, Simpronius, Saiforella... By showing a sympathetic interest in their speech and customs, and without neglecting the lubricative medium of liquor, the collusion with the men was assured: they admitted us into their confidence and disclosed their tribal secrets unreservedly. (John 1975, 70)

John then joined the Gypsy Lore Society under the new Romany name of Gustavus Janik, learned Romany, bought caravans, camped with Gypsies in North Wales and Essex, on Dartmoor and in the Grantchester meadows or again near Norwich, becoming also a contributor to the Society Journal.<sup>11</sup> His romance with Gypsydom, however, reached far beyond pseudo-scholar-

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<sup>11</sup> See Jenkins and Stephens (2004, 212) for a bibliography of John's contributions to the *JLSJ*: they mainly consist of long word-lists compiled in the camps, folk-songs noted down while carousing with Gypsies, stories heard in front of the fire.

ly ethnography; it came to articulate his life and work and proved to John a crucial site where disparate presences conflated: the visual and the literary, the ancient past and the modern, clacissim and the vernacular.

If Franz Hals and Jacques Callot were significant influences on his early artistic practice for their choice of subjects as well as their technique,<sup>12</sup> it was later the symbolist primitivism of Puvis de Chavanne, Gauguin and Picasso that he absorbed in his own, peculiar way. The gypsy motive was also in the air of the time: beside George Borrow, his literary contemporaries offered John a wealth of nomadic moods and motives, from Arthur Ransome's *Bohemia in London* (1907) to the pastoralism of the Georgian Poets and Rupert Brooke, who incidentally gladly welcomed the artist in Grantchester in 1909.

More was behind the corner: John's involvement with the Gypsies soon came to shape his family and private life as well. Married in 1900 to Ida Nettleship, a Slade School student, around 1903 John had started a relationship with Dorothy McNeill, a typist from Camberwell whose enigmatic personality and unique taste for dressing 'artistically' ignited his imagination to the point that he began fantasizing she had gypsy origins and decided to change her name into that of Dorelia.<sup>13</sup> He was soon teaching her Romany and entertaining an intense correspondence in the language with her. The ensuing *ménage à trois*, and the numerous children John had from both Ida and Dorelia thus turned the family into a real clan or tribe; and since the Gypsies usually did not want to sit for him or, if they did, he complained that "they immediately changed expression and look less intelligent" (Holroyd 1997, 310), he painted his family instead.

Beyond mere convenience, however, loomed a sense of identification with the Romany. Around 1905 John experimented with oil sketches like *Encampment on Dartmoor* and *Caravan: A Gypsy Encampment* (Jenkins and Stephens 2004, 18, 79), featuring his wife and lover attired in gypsy clothes, together with his children David, Caspar and Robin, himself looking out of the van: "The imagined viewer looks on from the interior of the tent, as if the more conventional critic is here being shown a new, ideal out-of-doors family" (Jenkins and Stephens 2004, 79). *Caravan at Dusk* and *The Woman in the Tent* (Easton and Holroyd 1974, 113, 115) date from the same period,

<sup>12</sup> See for example the etching *Lady with a Necklace* (Ida Nettleship), and the oil on canvas *Merikli* (meaning "jewel" in Romany), both 1902, featuring his wife as a seventeenth-century type to be often met in Dutch painting (Jenkins and Stephens 2004, 64, 65).

<sup>13</sup> See *Dorelia Standing before a Fence* c.1903-4 in the Tate Gallery <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/john-dorelia-standing-before-a-fence-tt1761>. "Dorelia John may have been seen in Babylon or in early Crete, but before her in this century no woman wore those clothes that are almost Indian and yet are entirely European, that are classical and yet have abstracted something from the gypsies" (Beaton 1954, 185). Photographed by Cecil Beaton in 1947, Dorelia still dressed the same unique way with Provençal fabrics <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw70961/Dorelia-McNeill?LinkID=mp63105&search=sas&sText=dorelia&role=sit&rNo=12>

when Dorelia's son Pyramus was born, probably in the tent of the title. The small size and quick colourful brushstrokes that make up those oils suggest they have been painted from life.

Notwithstanding Ida's death of childbirth complications in 1907, by 1909 John's tribe and convoy of caravans, carts and animals was still on the road. After camping near Cambridge, they moved to a piece of waste ground close to Norwich; Dorelia's younger sister Edie was with them and helped with the children. Charles Slade, who lived nearby, took snapshots now visible in the photograph collection of the National Portrait Gallery; far from the serene atmosphere of the 1905 sketches, they are powerful portraits of sombre, worn out and crouching women dressed in torn shawls and turbans; and feature a wild, dark-eyed man in sandals smoking a pipe and looking sideways.<sup>14</sup> The true hardship of life on the road is all there to be seen: according to Holroyd's reconstruction of events, the horses had begun to die off and the boys had caught whooping cough. Still, no sooner Augustus was back in London, having left some of his vans and sons with Slade, he started to speculate about new wanderings: "I wish I had the vans in France. Do you know how much it would cost to have them over the Channel?" (Holroyd 1997, 294), he asked.

#### TO PROVENCE

In the meantime, John had established himself as the most interesting English painter of the moment with the canvas entitled *A Woman Smiling* (1909), the portrait of a gypsy Gioconda which was to procure him an American patron, John Quinn, and various commissions among which that of decorating the walls of Sir Hugh Lane's house in Cheyne Walk, London, with three grand-scale group murals. Soon at work on them, he suddenly felt paralysed by the dull atmosphere of life in London and its rhythm. To Ottoline Morrell, John wrote: "I have serious thoughts of quitting this island and going somewhere where life is more stable and beautiful and primitive and where one is not bound to be in a hurry" (Holroyd 1997, 305). It was then he asked a gypsy girl to sit for him at Lane's house; when the sitter arrived accompanied by a whole band of noisy Romany that made merry around all rooms, Lane was scared to death by their invasion and John found a reason to break with him and leave with his canvases.

In the middle of January 1910, made affluent by the first cheque received from Quinn, Augustus left London to explore French and Italian galleries. Dorelia, pregnant again, stayed behind with Edie, her friend Helen

<sup>14</sup> See the National Portrait Gallery online collections <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp68510/charles-slade?search=sas&sText=charles+slade>

Maitland and the children; she would join him later. By train, he set out to Provence, stopped at Avignon, caught a glimpse of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon which “looked like an illumination from a *Book of Hours*” (John 1975, 120), visited the Popes’ Palace admiring the fragmentary frescoes by Simone Martini and spotted Le Ventoux to the North. What excited him most, however, were not the works of art nor the cultural landmarks; “I get tired of museums”, he wrote to Dorelia (Holroyd 1997, 308). John then went to Arles and travelled in Camargue, visited Les Baux, where he was introduced to Mistral by a strange, mad character met on the road. The poet was not very welcoming and refused to sit for him when John asked permission to draw his portrait. More amused than offended by a denial, John sketched the poet all the same in a letter to Dorelia, wearing a broad brimmed hat.<sup>15</sup> But the noble Troubadour of old and the *langue d’oc* revival hardly impressed the painter; the true meaning of Provence resided among the Gypsies:

“Lačo dives,” I remarked to a Gypsy girl as she passed by: “Ker’la šil,” she replied in her beautiful dialect, thought by the learned to be long since extinct. [...] I drank cheap wine with ‘Le Marseillais’, a humorous vagrant whose acquaintance I had made ... I lingered in the company of *maquignons* and improved my vocabulary. (John 1975, 120)

According to Holroyd, “[John’s] travels took in more encampments than galleries” (1997, 308), and, in Provence above all, he was enthralled by the Gypsies he met almost everywhere – Spanish gitanos, Russian calderari, Balkan sinnte, free, intriguing people with whom he could talk Romany, share more than one meal, dance, sing, camp and collect materials for his contributions to the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*. What touched him deeply during this first stay in the region was a series of chance encounters with some Russian Gypsies. Started at Marseilles, where he spent one whole week in their company, and ended some weeks later in Milan, John’s communion with them is recorded in his article “Russian Gypsies at Marseilles and Milan” for the *JGLS* (1911), the core of the contribution consisting of a transcription of the vocabulary, with the songs and the tales he was able to collect during the journey.

Leaving drawing and sketching aside for the moment, John word-painted a sequence of descriptive vignettes interspersed with Romany expressions. By the end of the piece, his informants had all turned into powerful characters and perhaps even role-models:

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<sup>15</sup> See Lloyd-Morgan (1996, 44), plate IX. John’s letters of the period to close friends and to Dorelia abound in humorous pencil and ink sketches of himself on the road and of the people he met.

Opposite me, at the foot of the Porte d'Aix, lounged a group of Gitanos of Almeria, with bright *diklos* over the shoulder, their jetty black hair brushed rigidly forward over the ears and there snipped abruptly, their staves in their hands, and the instruments of the craft of the *tondeur de chiens* hanging at their sides in little bags. From time to time young *Romis* crossed the *Place*, aloof and enigmatic, like nuns of some unknown and brilliant order. [...] an even more remarkable figure [...] now hove in sight. It belonged to a tall and bulky man of middle age, attired in voluminous high-boots, baggy trousers decorated at the sides with insertions of green and red, a short braided coat garnished with huge silver pendants and chains, and a hat of less magnificence if of greater antiquity upon his shaggy head. This singular personage was making his way slowly across the *Place*, looking this way and that, while puffing at his great German pipe, and acknowledging with dignity as he passed the salutations of the loungers. (John 1911, 217)

There is a particular intensity in John's narrative, due no doubt to the accurate precision of gestures and attires and emphasized moreover by the vivid chromatism of the scene and its almost religious solemnity ("nuns," "enigmatic," "dignity").

A terrific *kelipen* was taking place on the evening of my arrival, and was continued the next morning when I visited the camp and took down the song *Šunta, Mimi, šunta!* from a youth named Putzardinka – no easy task amid the din of twenty hammers beating twenty copper vessels of all shapes and sizes, and the yelling and vociferation of the wildest crew on earth. In the tent of pleasure sat Todor, an elderly man, in a condition approaching frenzy, with the elders of the tribe on either hand. Todor had insisted on his wife assuming all her jewels, including a massive belt of elaborate metal-work, and dancing before him; and he hoarsely shrieked for his great gold mugs to be fetched, filled with wine, and placed on the *skafidi*. There they stood, a foot high, and elaborately chased. Todor in his Bacchic ecstasy would shatter his great German pipe, only to be handed another; to charm him, the surrounding *Romnia* lifted up their voices and sang wild songs, and a *šukar čai* danced with a grace that was antique. But Todor beat the time upon the table until the bottles leapt. Behind, three young men swayed in an extricable embrace, their countenances illuminated with sombre shining eyes. Without the tent, a crowd of *gâje* surveyed the strange scene in a state resembling hypnotic trance. The absolute isolation of the Gypsies seemed to me the rarest and most unattainable thing in the world. The music, which surged and died away

like some natural phenomenon, affected me strangely. “*Kerela te knmav te rovav*”, I mourned to my neighbour, and tore myself away with difficulty. (John 1911, 220-21)

John’s spiritual sense of belonging to a community and of sharing its rituals truly deserves an extended quotation, as does the synaesthetic and inebriating quality of this altogether exceptional experience. Engrossed with the view of being on the road with the Gypsies, John nonetheless had to comply with a first stop in Genoa, a town he much disliked for what he deemed its bourgeois and overcultivated nature when he compared it with the genuine roughness of Marseilles. In the following couple of weeks, however, John came to love the country, especially the Tuscan landscape, and in Siena, Orvieto, Perugia, Sansepolcro, Florence and Padua he could see works by Lorenzetti, Perugino, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli and Giotto that laid a basis for the eccentric primitivism he developed once back in Provence. In Marseilles again, where the “atmosphere [was] less charged with the accumulated glory of the past” (Holroyd 1997, 312), the Madonnas of the Italian primitives started conflating, in John’s imagination, with the Gitanas of the road: “One sees *beautiful* Gitano girls about with orange, green and purple clothes ... Hundreds of people to paint ... One of the women, without being very dark, is as splendid as antiquity and her character is that of the Mother of God” (Holroyd 1997, 313).

Yet, the picture was not complete until Dorelia, Helen Maitland and the children joined him in Arles and the tribe was finally reunited. From there they headed South by train and, skirting the Étang de Berre, arrived in Martigues, mesmerized by the changing colours around them. Martigues was then not unknown to painters “occupied in transposing with their palette knives the pearl-white and rose of the buildings into the more popular scheme of mustard and mauve” (John 1975, 122). Carefully avoiding their company, John rented the Villa Sainte Anne and in solitude produced small-scale studies which to him marked “an absolute technical step” (Holroyd 1997, 326) and would be useful for his Hugh Lane decorations.

*The Seventh Child*, an extremely enjoyable autobiographical book written in 1932 by Augustus John’s son Romilly, offers some telling recollections of Martigues and the family stay. Romilly was then very young and it is not unlikely that a few, at least, of the images evoked may owe to the studies painted by his father as much as to childhood memories:

A yellow cliff towering up above me: about half-way up it a woman, who consisted of three pyramids, one large and black, resting above its wide base, another white, not quite so large, inverted, and looking something like a top when it is spinning [...].

I doubtless tired of craning my neck upwards. The next image is a vast expanse of blue water [...]. We were at that time staying at Martigues, a small town near Marseilles, and the sea I have mentioned was really the Étang de Berre. Our house, the Villa Ste Anne, stood some way from the village, at the top of the yellow cliff, which, by the way, was nothing but a steep bank five over six yards high. It looked out over the lagoon. On our side of the water were rocky grey hills, covered with a million smelling herbs and with plantations of pine trees. (John R. [1932] 1975, 11-12)

The extraordinarily pictorial character of the landscape found an appropriate echo in the colourful depiction of its inhabitants:

The total effect must have been both strange and beautiful. The clothes worn by my mother were quite unlike anything to be seen elsewhere; they were long and very flowing, and she wore a broad-brimmed black hat with an enormous ostrich feather. [...] Besides dressing beautifully, she was the most beautiful person [...] ever seen. My father was also extraordinarily handsome; he was, as a personality, to say the least overwhelming; and it is more than possible that his clothes [...] were almost as unorthodox as Dorelia's. As for us children, our numbers as much perhaps as our get-up must have added picturesqueness to the whole effect; we had bright coloured pinafores and knickerbockers, and bobbed hair" (John R. [1932] 1975, 12-13).<sup>16</sup>

#### PROVENÇAL STUDIES

The technique appears to be, at its simplest, to make a pencil drawing on a small board covered with colourless priming, then the outlines are washed in with a generous brush loaded with pure and brilliant oil colour, the lines [...] are those of any John drawing, subtly lapping and rounding the volume they conjure up, but they are obliterated by the oils, and the result for effect relies in the inscape of colour, on contrasting colour, and the broad simplified pattern. (Wintle 2002, 252)

Conceived as steps towards completing the group murals for Hugh Lane, *Provençal Studies* reunited John's drawing and painting and were exhibit-

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<sup>16</sup> Given his parents' extravagances in both dressing and living, ironically, Romilly was soon to develop a kind of conformism that would grant him acceptance by his peers at school: "I became infected with the disease of school conformism. [...] I contracted a habit of inserting secretly after the Lord's Prayer a little clause to the effect that Dorelia might be brought by divine intervention to wear proper clothes" (John 1975, 52, 53).



ed at the Chenil Gallery, Chelsea, from November 1910, while the debate around *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* was infuriating. The art venue, in an old Georgian house on the King's Road, was itself a statement: in a way it "threatened to displace Bond Street, Pall Mall, and St. James as the leader in taste-making, but on its own terms – paying homage to Bohemian authenticity as opposed to the seductive glitter ascribed to the West-End" (Helmreich and Holt, 2010, 50). The Provençal studies proved how much the peculiar light and landscape of Provence had transformed John's palette and redefined his style. They celebrate outdoor life and Mediterranean primitivism and portray figures in which it is not difficult to identify Dorelia and John's children. Forty-eight or fifty altogether, like the Gypsies who concurred in their conception, their destiny was to be scattered around the world after Quinn decided to get rid of his Johns to buy works by either his sister Gwen or by the French Post-Impressionists:

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for each and every one of these fifty little paintings, some on canvas but the most characteristic on panel. Quinn's own enormous holding had been scattered to the four winds. Since Percy More Turner [proprietor of The Independent Gallery, in London], on this side of the Atlantic, had a great deal to do with their disposal, many found their way into British private and public collections. Others remained in America, or were carried across the border into Canada. (Easton and Holroyd 1974, 17)

Anna Greuzner Robins explains how the panels in John's show have not been conclusively identified (1997, 46-51) although the titles in the exhibition catalogue allow at least some association with the works now known as *Dorelia and the Children at Martigues*, *Study in Provence*, *Woman with a Daffodil*,<sup>17</sup> *Near the Villa Sainte Anne*, *Dorelia Seated in the Landscape*, *Children Paddling* and *Dorelia Wearing a Turban* (Jenkins and Stephens 2004, 108-110). Patches of pure red, blue and yellow build up the figures dressed in loose robes, pinafores and turbans, sitting or standing in a timeless landscape of earthy land, sapphire sea and green olive trees. Gestures are large, skies are clear. To understand the nature of such small, striking panels, their primitive simplicity verging on the abstract and their striking style, Janet Lyon's considerations and Ysanne Holt's critical analysis are helpful. In John's inability to paint picturesque scenes where individual Gypsies or the actual

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<sup>17</sup> These paintings are now in the Fitzwilliam Museum Collection in Cambridge and reproductions can be seen at the following links in the BBC Yourpaintings website, developed in partnership with the Public Catalogue Foundation: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/dorelia-and-the-children-at-martigues-4577>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/study-in-provence-4585>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/woman-with-a-daffodil-4568>

Martigues landscape would be recognizable, Holt recognizes an important clue to modernist landscape: "Crucially, then, John's ideal is delocalized; his is an imagined arcadia, his own edition of the 'universe of space' – made rather than found. His models are languid and inactive [...] they have cleared out and now possess the space and command the view. As figures they are in perfect harmony with the environment" (2003, 66-57). Lyon on another hand links John's serial encounters with the Gypsies and his contributions to the *JGLS* to what she calls "abstracted sociability" or "impersonal intimacy"; an attitude which gives sense to his way of "sustain[ing] community even as it disavows bourgeois emphasis on the 'character' or 'personality' that grounds modern possessive individualism" (Lyon 2004, 530). What is fresh and surprising in John's Provence is therefore 'gypsy' in its transposition to a dreamy, delocalised realm of Vagabondia, where individuals become the avant-garde figures of an impersonal community: paradoxically, the Gypsies have appropriated as a home the paths trodden by the ever displaced tribes of the people in transit.

It has been argued by Michael Holroyd and Malcolm Easton that the relevance, impact and radical originality of *Provençal Studies* can only be properly assessed if the reviews and reactions they provoked in the fated year 1910 are considered in relation with those of the Post-Impressionist exhibition organised by Roger Fry at the Grafton Galleries in the same days. To prove that "John was neither insular nor reactionary" (Easton and Holroyd 1974, 20), scholar and biographer have turned to the newspapers of the time and determined that John's small oil panels were received by traditionalists "with the same caterwaul of horror which greeted the exactly contemporary showing of 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists'" (Easton and Holroyd 1974, 20). Those who showed enthusiasm, instead, like critic, poet and dramatist Laurence Binyon, compared John's studies to Gauguin, Matisse and Van Gogh, all of them significantly represented in the controversial Grafton show.<sup>18</sup> Holroyd, moreover, has observed how convergent John's and Fry's developing conceptions of contemporary art were at the time: both associated to the Old Masters in their training, they had simultaneously and independently first experienced a new understanding of the Italian Primitives, which had subsequently led them to an insightful appreciation of modern French painters.

John's first reaction to Fry's exhibition has long been misinterpreted and misrepresented as harsh disapproval of and dislike for the works on show. When he defined the whole event "A bloody show", John was probably expressing his hostility to the hubbub caused by the scandal rather than criticizing the paintings exhibited (Holroyd 1997, 327, 361). It is important to

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<sup>18</sup> See also Greutzner Robins 1997 for press coverage of the Chenil exhibition.

stress that by then John's appreciation of the so-called Post-Impressionists was already an undisputable fact attested by his visits to Paris and his correspondence, from which we also learn, incidentally, that he had had the rare opportunity to see Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* and praised their power and bold primitive organisation.

Many factors accounted for John's absence from the 1912 Second Post-Impressionist exhibition where Clive Bell had nonetheless invited him to contribute: Indolence, a true loyalty to his gallerist Jack Knewstubb, allegiance to the New English Art Club and to Will Rothenstein, his impresario and Fry's rival on the London avant-garde art scene. John's process of isolation had started and it was completed by the 1911 move with his family to Alderney Manor, in Dorset; the loner with little tolerance for the deviousness of cultural politics and urbanity had found a home for the sixteen years to come, proving true his saying that "the artist is always an outsider" (Holroyd 1997, 372; Jenkins and Stephens 2004, 134).

#### EPILOGUE: *LES MARIES*

After the Chenil exhibition, John resumed his mural painting for Sir Hugh Lane. Long unfinished after Lane's death on the *Lusitania* in 1915, the large composition underwent several *pentimenti* and revisions over the years. *Lyric Fantasy* (c 1913-14),<sup>19</sup> *The Mumpers* (1911-13) and *Forza e Amore* (1911-13, subsequently overpainted) integrate the fruits of John's 1910 experience in Italy and Provence. At the core of these decorative paintings, the motives of motherhood and femininity. Commenting on the hovering presence of long dead Ida Nettleship in the compositions, which as always include John's women and children, Lisa Tickner has interpreted the works in terms of Kleinian reparation of the early loss of John's mother and wife. What is thus represented, according to her, is the universal loss of those closely knit communities, whether archaic and patriarchal or gypsy and exotic, disrupted forever by industrialisation and urbanization (Tickner 2000, 70-77). Ideal groups of women and children are projected in an arcadia endowed with restorative qualities and thick with symbolist undertones. John's provençal obsession for Madonnas, exemplified in his *Notre Dame de Martigues* (1910) – meek, monumental and primitive at the same time – resurfaces here in a more complex network of associations, recollections and influences. Strongly reminiscent of John's beloved Puvis de Chavanne, the timeless Madonnas of the murals also hark back to the Madonnas of Provence and in particular to the black Virgin visited in reiterated pilgrim-

<sup>19</sup> See the Tate Gallery website <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/john-lyric-fantasy-to1540>

ages to Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and of course to the Italian primitives: "Memory was fundamental to the process of John's paintings, which are themselves visualizations of accumulated imagery" (Tickner 2000, 67). Provence was to John the catalyst of the imagery he had stored in the camps of Gypsies, in their gatherings in Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and in the historical towns of Italy: he couldn't help but project it all on the members of his family whether alive like Dorelia and his children or dead and idealised like Ida.

It is no coincidence that John's last uncompleted grand scale project should have been an extreme and desperate attempt at paying a tribute to Provence: a mural based on *Les Saintes Maries*, a triptych conceived to commemorate the landing in Camargue of the legendary Maries with their servant Sara, who cared for the Gypsies and became the patron saint of the small town. Back in 1910, John had inquired insistently about Sainte Sara and the gypsy pilgrimage to Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer:

"This pilgrimage may be the last of the old pilgrim mysteries of the gypsies,' he assured Scott Macfie (14 May 1910). He ransacked the library at Aix; he reverently inspected the bones of the Egyptian saint at Saintes-Maries. [...] For though Sainte Sara was a problem to be solved by the Gypsy Lore Society, to Augustus she remained a symbol, and the annual fête at Saintes-Maries a renewed act of faith" (Holroyd 1997, 319).

And so it was that the life and works of Augustus John ended in 1961 with a last Provençal incursion into the gypsy community he had always felt part of and a vision of their *Sainte* and *Maries*; a vision he knew he could not complete, admitting, in tears: "My work's not good enough" (Easton and Holroyd 1974, 31). A study for the central panel of the triptych (pen, ink and wash on patched white paper) is reproduced in Easton and Holroyd (1974, 210); it shows the figure of an old Gypsy man in broad-brimmed hat holding a stringed instrument and surrounded by the Maries and Sara. After John's death, the unfinished, original mural was covered with graffiti and lashes of paint by vandals who broke into his studio at Fryern Court, Fordingbridge. But in spite of the dissemination of some works and of the damage done to it, the Provence of Gypsies stayed with John for his whole life, showing the impossible way of a utopian society but above all giving shape and power to his aesthetic thought and achievement.

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## EZRA THE TROUBADOUR

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*Let it stand in  
proof of my sanity –  
despite all  
opinions against it  
that I spent a week in Beaucaire,  
I wrote a great slice of this book  
there.*

Ezra Pound, ([1912] 1992, 71)

Ezra Pound introduced himself to the world as a twentieth-century Troubadour in his youthful collection *A Lume Spento* (1908), invoking from the start such figures as (the invented) Miraut de Garzelas and the more substantial Bertran de Born. He included translations and adaptations of Provençal poems in many of his subsequent books of verse and prose. He loved the romantic notion of the robust Middle Ages and posited them against decadent (or effete) modernity. In *langue d'oc* culture he sought a model for writing sparsely and musically; also the type of a society based on poetry and vision, even on arcane knowledge.

Fulfilling this troubadour ideal, young Ezra traipsed around southern France in 1912 with his backpack looking up the places mentioned or associated with the poets: Hautefort, Excideuil, Chalus, Arles, Ribérac... The latter was the birthplace of Arnaut Daniel, much admired by Dante and eulogized fulsomely by Pound, who remains permanently identified with Arnaut by way of Eliot's dedication of *The Waste Land*: "For Ezra Pound, *il miglior fabbro*". Pound's Provence is not a tourist haven, but a place to discover for



oneself and visit with one's beloved. For example, he had no interest in the modern revival of *langue d'oc* poetry – he was only concerned with pursuing his own geographic and mental itinerary (fig. 19).

After his momentous solitary walking tour of May-July 1912, Pound returned to the Midi after the war: in summer 1919 with his wife Dorothy Shakespear (this was the occasion when Eliot joined him at Excideuil), in January 1921 when he spent some time on the Riviera, at Saint-Raphaël, and in 1923 when he travelled with the musician Olga Rudge, soon to become the mother of his daughter.

The Provençal cult of the Lady was highlighted by the American Troubadour, who, despite his anti-Romantic and sometimes macho stance, ceaselessly celebrates (even in his major poetry) the physical and mental union of man and woman – the door to 'the mysteries'. In the end, Provence becomes one of the basic themes and myths of Pound's *Cantos* and their peculiar interpretation of history. It is by way of Provence that Aphrodite is reborn in the modern age (i.e. in the twelfth century and later).

#### AT THE BEGINNING

Pound discovered Provence at college in the United States. He pictured himself as a lonely singer and vagabond of many loves and many songs when he moved to Crawfordsville, Indiana, for his first teaching job as instructor in Romance languages. The position was terminated prematurely because of the young poet's 'Latin Quarter' attitudes. But in Indiana he wrote many of the poems which he printed in his first book *A Lume Spento*, published at his own expense in Venice in July 1908. Pound's frame of mind was influenced by his Victorian predecessors, notably Swinburne and Browning, and by his older contemporary Yeats, none of whom however were much if at all interested in Provençal poetry. The Canadian Bliss Carman and the American Richard Hovey published in the 1890s several volumes of *Songs from Vagabondia*, which to some extent set the theme for Pound's career as the permanent vagabond in mind as well as in body. But in contrast to this admiration for the open air and the open road, whose source is ultimately Walt Whitman, Pound was always steeped in bookish and medieval lore, and decorated his verses from the start with titles in many languages, living and dead, or in his own 'babylonish dialect' (as Milton's language was once called derogatively). Thus the frontispiece of his first book reads:

This Book was      LA FRAISNE  
                                  (THE ASH TRE)

dedicated                    *to such as love this same  
                                     beauty that I love, somewhat  
                                     after mine own fashion.*

But sith one of them has gone out very quickly from  
amongst us it [sic] given

A LUME SPENTO  
(WITH TAPERS QUENCHED)

in memoriam eius mihi caritate primus

William Brooke Smith

*Painter, Dreamer of dreams.* (Pound 1976, 5)

English, modern and archaic, mingles with archaic French (Fraisne is old Fench spelling for *frêne*, ash tree – however *frêne* is masculine, so it should have been LE FRAISNE); Dante’s Italian and Latin, and some of the foreign tags get to be translated. For Pound it was natural from early on to create these macaronic texts, and it would be interesting to discover if there is precedent for this method in his predecessors of the Nineties. Just as ‘LA FRAISNE’ looks like a mistake, so Pound’s first books begins auspiciously with an omitted word. Pound added by hand ‘is’ over ‘it given’ (which looks like an old-fashioned way of saying ‘it is titled’ or ‘it is given as’, ‘given with the title’).

Thus from Pound’s very first encounter with the reader much of his style is established. Open his later work and *The Cantos* at any point and you will find more of the same going on. Though there is always a presiding consciousness that ensnares the reader in its multilingual discourse, mixing private and public matters without notice, just as William Brooke Smith is brought up on the opening page of *A Lume Spento*. (I won’t go into the real meaning of these words from Dante, which if we see them in context are not – what Pound must have thought – an auspicious way to remember a deceased friend.)

‘La Fraisne’ is the title of the second poem in *A Lume Spento* (‘Scene: The Ash Wood at Malvern’), a soliloquy attributed in a prefatory ‘Note’ to one Miraut de Garzelas, maddened by love and married to an ash-tree. The prose ‘Note’ is again a multilingual pastiche of fact and fiction, Latin and English, with a reference to ‘Mr Yeats’ (whom Ezra was to meet only a few months later, but whom he was already laying his bait for with this display of esoteric knowledge and this mixture of Provençal and Celtic lore). ‘La Fraisne’ is followed by a self-portrait of a historical Italian poet, ‘Cino’. Though exiled for a while from his native Pistoia, Cino was a learned jurist who wrote on

law, as well as poems. Pound however presents him as a typical *jongleur*, carelessly travelling, *au courant* about the ladies in their castles, an eternal misfit: “I have sung women in three cities, / But it is all the same; / I will sing of the sun”. The next poem, titled ‘In Epitaphium Eius’, is in fact an epitaph for ‘Servant and singer, Troubadour’, and it claims that its subject “for his loving, loved each fair face more / Than craven sluggard can his life’s one love” (Pound 1997). The troubadour has many loves, but given his passionate nature has more to offer each woman than the man with whom she lives.

‘In Epitaphium Eius’ is followed by ‘Na Audiart’, another outlandish title, and a well-known poem in the Pound canon. It is an extrapolation from Bertran de Born’s address, ‘Dompna pois de me no.s cal’, in which Bertran constructs a composite lady, and says of Dompna Audiart: “I’d have her form that’s laced / So cunningly, / Without blemish, for her love / Breaks not nor turns aside” (“N’Audiartz, si be.m vol mal, / Vuoill qe.m don de sas faissos, / Qe.il estai gen liazos, / E car es entieira, / C’anc no.is frais / S’amors ni.s vols en biais”). That is, he wants her form, her ‘torse’, perhaps her breasts: “Where thy body laces start / As ivy fingers clutching thru / Its crevices”. Pound likes the fact that Bertran fancies Audiart’s fine torso, “Tho thou well dost wish me ill”, which is the first line of the poem. That is, he likes the image of the poet as scapegoat, vagabond, a hurt figure on a road, who however is also free of the world’s cares and unrepentant. Given his late Victorian upbringing, Pound’s translation of this poem is less outspoken than the original, “La fassa bon tener nuda” becoming in his later translation (published in *Lustra*, 1915), “Her robes can but do her wrong” (Pound 2003, 284; Capelli 2003, 144).

In any case, Bertran was an early major persona for Pound, who scored one of his first successes with his ‘Sestina: Altaforte’, an extrapolation from Bertran in the sestina form (which Bertran himself never used), and a vibrant invocation of war: “Damn it all! all this our South stinks peace”. It is remembered that Pound’s friendship with another *artiste maudit*, the French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, began when Gaudier heard Pound recite the ‘bloody sestina’ and understood the first line as ‘all this South stinks piss’! The poem was published in 1909. Gaudier died on the French front six years later. Decades later Pound cast himself as peace-maker – he believed crazily that he could negotiate between Roosevelt and Mussolini in 1939. Yet the ‘stirrer up of strife’ Bertran may be a more appropriate model for the contentious and litigious Pound, who spoke irately on the Italian radio what today we call ‘hate-speech’ during World War II.

Bertran was to figure in one of Pound’s most extensive pre-cantos exercises in history and fantasy, ‘Near Perigord’. Here he returns to the poem about the composite lady and suggests that the women named may func-

tion just as coded messages about certain castles in some warlike plan of Bertran. This would be confirmed by Dante's placing of Bertran among the 'stirrers of strife'. In 'Near Perigord' Pound gives us a portrait of Bertran which looks a lot like himself, including the red beard:

En Bertrans, a tower-room at Hautefort,  
 Sunset, the ribbon-like road lies, in red cross-light,  
 Southward toward Montaignac, and he bends at a table  
 Scribbling, swearing between his teeth; by his left hand  
 Lie little strips of parchment covered over,  
 Scratched and erased with *al* and *ochaisos*.  
 Testing his list of rhymes, a lean man? Bilious?  
 With a red straggling beard?  
 And the green cat's-eye lifts toward Montaignac... (Pound 2003, 305)

In fact Pound was called 'Old green-eyes' by one disciple of the 1950s. The list of rhymes is a telling detail. *Cal*, *vos* and *ochaisos* are the first three rhymes of 'Dompna, puois de mi no.us cal', a poem in seven 10-line stanzas all rhyming *abbcdddeeff* (with the same rhymes), plus a coda *eeff*. Pound wrote a whole book of *Canzoni* (1911) based on Provençal rhyme-schemes, later rejecting most of the rather insipid results, so he must have been familiar with 'lists of rhymes' (and I have seen other lists of rhymes in the manuscript of the Pisan cantos, for the rhymed section at the end of canto 80).

The Futurists, who also appeared on the European scene in 1909, would likewise preach war as 'sole hygiene of the world' (and Gaudier said the same when writing from the front, before he was 'hygienically' killed). In the Italian canto 72 written in early 1945, Pound imagines meeting Marinetti's ghost, who tells him: "Io cantai la guerra, tu hai voluta la pace, orbi ambedue! / all'interno io mancai, tu all'odierno" (Pound 1995, 426). That is, Marinetti was wrong in celebrating war, and Pound in pursuing peace; the Italian missed the inner man, and Pound missed the contemporary. I think Pound was sincere when presenting himself as a peacemaker, but writing in 1945, at the close of World War II, he suggests that war is not to be celebrated but necessary under the circumstances.

That Pound filled his texts with Provençal lore is nothing new. All of his readers are perfectly aware of this. His taking upon himself the character of the wanderer and Troubadour is less understood. He liked the open road, and the writing of musical and energetic verse which however should contain hidden meanings and intrigues. If we look through his work we can see various developments of Provençal themes. There is the identification with the Troubadours and their craft, and the interest in their biographies and locations. Thus in *The Cantos* we find Toulouse, Gourdon, Excideuil, Allègre – all places visited for their troubadour associations in which Pound

had some special experience or found some telling trace of the past. As we have seen, Pound actually walked across the Midi in spring-summer 1912 and made notes for an unpublished book, *Gironde*. These notes were capably edited in 1992 by Richard Sieburth and make fascinating reading. Out of this tour came the geographic details of 'Near Perigord', the long Bertran poem, and 'Provincia Deserta' (1915), one of Pound's most haunting lyrics, with a strange title as always – strange but striking. It is like a list of melancholy notes, written in the new terse style Pound developed in the London years. He is the new Troubadour in a Provence where the old Troubadours are no longer to be found, though the countryside speaks of them (fig. 20).

The other use Pound made of Provence is in connection with the Albigensians and their eradication. One of his early readings was Joséphin Péladan's *Le secret des troubadours*, which claims that the poets of Provence were associated with the secret doctrine of the Albigensians. An admirer of classic literature, pagan and erotic, Pound came to believe that the ancient myths and rituals of initiation had survived in the Albigensian cult, and that this led to the cultural flowering of the region, where great art and music was produced by people who had been initiated to the mysteries of the gods and sexuality or fertility. Pound suggests that Aphrodite, goddess of love, has a way of being worshipped, repressed and silenced, and periodically rediscovered in ages of artistic and social creativity. The fertility of natural process and human eroticism is inevitably connected with the creation of art – they cannot be severed. Hence the Provençal cult of the Lady, which is both erotic and quasi-religious. The hymn-like early poem 'The Alchemist', that Pound dated 1912, suggests as much:

Midonz, with the gold of the sun, the leaf of the  
poplar, by the light of the amber,  
Midonz, daughter of the sun, shaft of the tree, silver  
of the leaf, light of the yellow of the amber,  
Midonz, gift of the God, gift of the light, gift of the  
amber of the sun,  
Give light to this metal. (Pound 1976, 225)

In the occultist circles of London this theory that Pound derived from various sources found an audience. He expounded it in an essay, 'Psychology and Troubadours', written shortly after his 1912 wanderings in the 'Provincia Deserta' and later added to reprints of *The Spirit of Romance*, his 1910 book of essays on early Romance literatures, chiefly the Troubadours and Dante and his circle. Early 1912 also saw the publication of Pound's translations of *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*, Cavalcanti being one of his later *personae* – poet-warrior, friend and competitor of Dante. The Italian poets with Dante at the centre reprised the cult of the Lady of their Provençal forerun-

ners. In two poems Cavalcanti recalled a trip to Toulouse. Pound thus could argue that during his visit to Provence Guido learned some of the secrets that join poetry and love. And Pound suggested as much in *The Cantos*, of which the Albigensian-Troubadour-Tuscan poets association is one of the central myths. (Bacigalupo 1980, 21-32)

In middle age Pound persuaded himself that Fascism was a new revelation of Aphrodite within society, and when it was defeated by the Allies, he wrote its elegy in the Pisan cantos associating the ruined Italy of 1945 with Montségur, the ruined citadel of the Albigensians. This is all very solemn, and also tragic, though there is also a humorous side to it. When people discover a life of religious and sexual freedom and start making great art the forces of oppression and obscurantism will no doubt close in to spoil the fun. Something of the kind happened at Merrymount in the days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This simplistic interpretation of history provided a blueprint on which to found *The Cantos*, which are essentially a poetic interpretation of history, or if you like a travelogue through a landscape that tells a story.

Pound the new troubadour was most successful in expressing his wonder in front of the mystery of sexuality and womanhood, invoking the aid of benevolent goddesses who merge with the actual women in his life. And he had a fine touch in evoking the landscapes were civilization as he understood it had been destroyed but was still there to be recreated. His plan was nothing if not ambitious, and floundered in his contradictions and racist ravings, but he can still suggest the wonder of art being reborn as, in Canto 91, the Troubadour finds his voice, encounters once again the lost eyes of the lady:

that the body of light come forth  
                                           from the body of fire  
 And that your eyes come to the surface  
                                           from the deep wherein they were sunken  
 Reina – for 300 years  
                                           and now sunken... (Pound 1995, 630)

He wrote these lines in 1954 in an insane asylum in Washington, D.C. A jailed (and mad) Troubadour, like the forerunners he recalled, Walter Raleigh and Torquato Tasso. His incarceration was only further proof that the worshipper of 'Reina', the great goddess of love and poetry, gets into trouble with the powers that be.

Thus Pound took from Provence some of his basic myths and *personae*. The Troubadour, the Lady, the art of song, the tradition of the mysteries, the conflict between the free individual and society. After all, the Albigensian myth is but a restatement in large of the romantic revolt against conformity. As the Troubadours spoke of women, landscapes, and politics, so did

our erring modern American Troubadour. He didn't really change style or outlook from beginning to end. On the final page of *The Cantos* he is still walking "the roads of France," a solitary *jongleur* following his inspiration, recklessly and lovingly. In the background is "a field of larks at Allègre" which he remembered and associated with the most famous Provençal poem, Bernart de Ventadorn's 'Quan vei la lauzeta mover':

Or a field of larks at Allègre  
    'es laissa cader'  
so high toward the sun and then falling,  
    'de joi sas alas'  
to set here the roads of France. (Pound 1995, 823)

A few words of langue d'oc, a fragmentary translation – the same procedures that we found on the title page of *A Lume Spento*. Allègre is near La Chaise-Dieu, on the borders of Auvergne. In this little fragment one glimpses Pound's theme of 'joy' – he does offer recordings of joyous moments to counter so much 'falling' (and failing). One also sees his pervasive breaking of syntax, to annotate brokenly ideas, thoughts, intentions. 'To set here the roads of France'. These are the roads of the Troubadours, and along this road he exists, for once joyously even in old age. He can still walk and remember a bit of ancient song, for what good it may do him and us.

#### PERMANENCE

In Pound there is always a search for patterns and a poetic philology. The broken lines quoted above, from the final page (823) of the 1995 edition of *The Cantos*, are partly based on the association between the suggestion of 'allègre' as 'happy' and the 'joi' spoken of in Bernart's famous song of the lark. Pound is creating a kind of philological conceit. Another aspect that has not been given enough attention is how Pound's fragmentary autobiography is always filtered through a textual process of repetition and foregrounding. The names of places that haunt the poetry acquire significance because they have already become part of the Poundian text – they are words and sounds rather than indications of events. Take for example Allègre, the village in Auvergne whose chief monument are the ruins of a castle of which two towers, known as La Potence d'Allègre, stand out like a gallows against the horizon. Pound visited the village in July 1912 and described the Potence:

On first seeing Allègre back of Mt. du Bar one thinks the tower  
bridge has slipped its moorings by some freak of gravitation, a

free bridge of battlements still standing connects two of the fragments. The arch is well concealed.  
There is a great lake of landscape beneath the portal & the P.M. haze had mellowed it. The town is apparently built of cobble stones & would be amazing had not one seen Uzerche.

Allègre  
the joyous  
machicolée  
...  
July 16  
4.04 P.M.  
now should I be finally equipped for the indicting of true pastorals  
called Allègre  
Rossinhols in Limoges  
(Pound [1912] 1992, 73-75)

This already contains the association of Allègre and joy which was to return in the close of *The Cantos*. And Pound seems to have had an experience (unrecorded) enabling him to write pastorals (as he notes). He even gives the exact date and hour, and mentions not larks but nightingales ('rossinhols'), recollecting Peire d'Alvernhe's famous song 'Rossinhol, el seu repaire', mentioned in *The Spirit of Romance* of 1910 (Pound 1953: 49), as noted by Sieburth (Pound [1912] 1992, 121).

Allègre makes no further appearance in the Pound canon until the Pisan cantos (80) where it is brought in as part of a plangent description of the goddess (both Diana and Venus):

At Ephesus she had compassion of silversmiths  
revealing the paraclete  
standing in the cusp  
of the moon et in Monte Gioiosa  
as the larks rise at Allègre  
Cythera egoista  
(Pound 1995, 520-21)

So now the 'ideogram', to use Pound's own term, is composed of Allègre, joyful, compassionate and nevertheless tricky Venus, and a vision (memory?) of larks. It remained for the final fragment to add the quotation from Bernart, perfectly fitting the ideogram because of the presence both of joy and the lark – and of love. The writing in canto 80 is as usual based on suggestiveness for its effects, and mixes Italian, Latin and English. The interpretation is up to the reader, but what counts is the religious impression of the goddess. There may be an allusion to Montallegro, a shrine to the Vir-



gin Mary overlooking Rapallo where the Pounds often hiked. This becomes ‘Monte Gioiosa’, joyous mount, leaving the association with Allègre to the meaning rather than the sound. If ‘Gioiosa’ is an attribute of ‘Monte’, as the capitalization suggests, it should be ‘Gioioso’, just as the Rapallo shrine is Montallegro, not Montallegra. On the other hand, since the passage describes Venus, an extra feminine adjective does no harm. A similar process may have led the younger Pound to write ‘La Fraisne’ rather than the correct ‘Le Fraisne’.

In the final fragment of canto 76 not only Allègre, but also the line ‘To set here the roads of France’ is a repeat from the Pisan cantos, where it introduces memories (read place names) of the Midi and is immediately repeated, as if becoming a leitmotif at once after its first appearance and calling attention to its significant intent:

But to set here the roads of France,  
of Cahors, of Chalus,  
the inn low by the river’s edge,  
the poplars; to set here the roads of France  
Aubeterre, the quarried stone beyond Poitiers –  
– as seen against Sergeants Beaucher’s elegant profile –  
and the tower on the almost triangular base  
as seen from Santa Marta’s in Tarascon

‘in heaven have I to make?’  
(Pound 1995, 475)

The syntax is (as usual) floating. ‘To set here the roads’ sounds like Pound instructing himself, wishing to recover scenes of his young manhood, and also telling us, as is his wont, that we could do worse than follow in his footsteps. His writing in Pisa is notably forceful, full of striking details, like here “the inn low by the river’s edge,” and also brings in his actual surroundings in the U.S. Army prison camp (Sergeant Beaucher), so the pathos of memory mixes with humorous acknowledgment of his changed condition. Beaucaire (alluded to by Beaucher) and Tarascon were Pound’s last stops in 1912 before proceeding by train to Le Puy and thence by foot to Clermont-Ferrand by way of Allègre and La Chaise-Dieu (Pound 1992: 72). Tarascon brings to his memory Aucassin and Nicolette and the young lover’s protest “En paradis qu’ai-je à faire?” – he much prefers *this* world and Nicolette to the bliss of paradise. The quotation is duly noted by Terrell (1980, 394), but it is worth pointing out that Pound strangely translates the letter and not the meaning of Aucassin’s protest: “[i]n heaven have I to make?”. It is hardly credible that he didn’t know the meaning of the French, so we must take this as a sort of philological joke. Few will recognize the quotation, and

those few will see the meaning through Pound's crib. For him those days in France were paradise.

There is a similar unbelievable translation *au pied de la lettre* in Pound's 'Dieu! Qu'il La Fait' from Charles D'Orléans's 'For Music': "God! that mad'st her well regard her...". This rendering of the famous opening line is as hilarious as any howler in *Homage to Sextus Propertius*. As in canto 76, 'faire' is translated literally as 'make'. Pound's fixation on writing, literalness, words, appears to lead him to these strange textual events. Making poetry out of misconstruction, more or less intentional, as is the case in *The Cantos* from the very first page (which may be described as a misreading of a crib of the *Odyssey*).

The list of place-names with which Pound evokes in canto 76 'the roads of France' brings me to my other point – that Pound's reminiscences are largely textual. Of the five places listed in the passage quoted above, only Tarascon is new in Pound's canon and was to remain a hapax. Poitiers appears in cantos 4 and 8, associated with Cavalcanti as mentioned earlier. The most interesting fact is that Cahors, Chalus and Aubeterre had already been cited in 'Provincia Deserta', the poem that (with 'The Gypsy') grew out of Pound's 1912 tour. These two texts have a foundational function in the building of Pound's personal myth. As shown by the Table attached to this paper, of the thirty-three Provençal place-names in *The Cantos*, twenty-eight make their first appearance in 'Provincia Deserta', 'The Gypsy', and 'Near Perigord', thus entering Pound's textual and auditory memory. Here are a few lines from the former poem:

I have gone in Ribeyrac  
and in Sarlat,  
I have climbed rickety stairs, heard talk of Croy,  
Walked over En Bertran's old layout,  
Have seen Narbonne, and Cahors and Chalus,  
Have seen Excideuil, carefully fashioned...  
(Pound 2003, 298)

Cahors and Chalus are placed next to each other for the sake of the sound, and the whole poem really indulges in an epicurean feast of sounds evocative of a world and its memorable figures, like Bertran in his 'old layout' Hautefort (mentioned a few lines below). Hautefort is close to Excideuil, which was to play an important role in *The Cantos*, following Pound's later meeting there with Eliot (summer 1919), but is here again merely a sound to which the very vague qualification 'carefully fashioned' is added, again for a 'dying fall' sound effect. It is worth noticing that Cahors and Chalus return in the same position, next to each other, in canto 76. So Pound may be remembering his sentimental walking tour, but is actually quoting his

own poetic version of his travels. His travels in sound and writing have to some extent replaced his travels on the roads of France. This is how he constructed his personal myth, which can already be seen fully deployed in ‘Provincia Deserta’, with its claims for the special rapport the narrator has had with the Provençal past:

I have walked over these roads;  
I have thought of them living.  
(Pound 2003, 299)

As we have seen, a memory of walking these roads was to close *The Cantos*. The two final lines of ‘Provincia Deserta’ could serve as an epitaph for Pound’s entire oeuvre and life. He has travelled, and imagined, but also *written*. ‘To set here the roads...’ The words, once consigned to the page in a given order, take on a life of their own. They become the life and the myth.

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## EZRA POUND'S PROVENÇAL TOPOGRAPHY

The Table below lists the Provençal place names found in Pound's 1915-16 poems 'The Gypsy', 'Provincia Deserta', and 'Near Perigord', and in *The Cantos*, with references to Pound's 1912 *Walking Tour*. 76/475 = canto (76, p. 475, 1995).

Name	Walking Tour	'Provincia Deserta' [PD] 'The Gypsy' [G] 'Near Perigord' [NP]	The Cantos
Aliscans (Arles)	64 (16-7-12)		80/532
Allègre	73 (16-7-12)		80/521 fragment/823
Arles	64	G	80/528
Aubeterre	11	PD	76/475 80/429 101/743
Auvergne	72	PD	6/18 23/109
Auxerre			34/166 77/487
Avignon			21/96 78/497 80/529 97/689
Beaucaire	68	G	96/679
Brive[s]	34-35	NP	
Cahors	41	PD NP	76/475

Name	Walking Tour	'Provincia Deserta' [PD] 'The Gypsy' [G] 'Near Perigord' [NP]	The Cantos
Chalais (Dordogne, Aquitaine)	10	PD NP	101/743
Chalus	28	PD NP	76/475
Clermont	77 (19-7-12)	G	105/769
Corrèze [1919]			6/22
Croy	Croy (Prince de, 38)	PD	
Dronne		PD NP	
La Dourade (Toulouse)	45	PD ('Dorata')	
Excideuil	24	PD	29/145 80/530 107/778
Foix	48	PD NP	
Garonne	45		4/16 84/558
Gourdon	40	G	4/15
Hautefort	22	PD NP	80/529
La Tour-Blance	16	PD	

Name	Walking Tour	'Provincia Deserta' [PD] 'The Gypsy' [G] 'Near Perigord' [NP]	The Cantos
Limoges	3, 30		74/448
Malemort	[1919]	NP	6/22
Mareuil	15	PD	
Montaignac	22	PD NP	
Montségur	51		23/109 48/243 76/472 80/532 87/594 101/745
Narbonne	53	PD	96/673
Périgord (Périgueux)	18	PD NP	80/528
Poitiers	3-6	NP	4/14 6/21 8/32 76/475 87/592 90/625 100/741 105/770
Ribérac	12	PD	
Rochecouart (near Limoges)	30	PD NP	

Name	Walking Tour	'Provincia Deserta' [PD] 'The Gypsy' [G] 'Near Perigord' [NP]	The Cantos
Rodez	41		4/13
Roquefixade	50	PD	
St Bertrand de Comminges	[1919]		48/243 87/594
St Hilaire (Poitiers)			45/230 51/250
St Trophime (Arles)	66		45/230 51/250
Sarlat	39	PD	6/23
Tarascon	69-71		76/475
Toulouse	45-46 (« the ruined Dorata »)	NP	76/472 80/523 101/745 103/753
Ussel (Limousin)	[1919] [32]		74/448 74/456 76/472
Valcabrère	[1919]		48/243
Ventadour	[1919] [32]		6/22 27/132 74/448 74/456 80/529

### Ezra Pound among the Troubadours (1912)

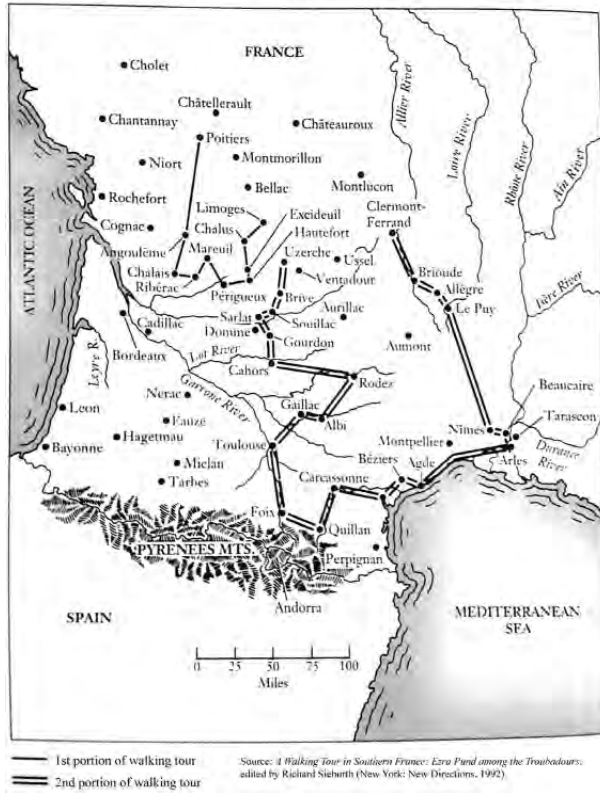


Fig. 19 - Ezra Pound's wanderings in 1912, in *A Walking Tour in Southern France*, ed. Richard Sieburth (1992)





Fig. 20- Ezra Pound in the neighborhood of Ventadour, summer 1919. Photograph by Olga Rudge, in Anne Conover, *Olga Rudge and Ezra Pound* (2001)

## MAPPING FORD MADOX FORD'S PROVENCE IN PROVENCE

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Very early in his life Ford Madox Ford became familiar with Provence through his father's work, *The Troubadours*, and his grandfather's paintings (Wiesenfarth 2005, 131), and later, through his own repeated travels to the South of France where he finally settled down at the end of his life. Ford Madox Ford alluded to Provence in several of his works, adopted it as a backcloth, especially in *The Rash Act* and finally, in 1935, devoted a travel narrative to it, entitled *Provence. From Minstrels to the Machine*.

Writing about Provence was something his collaborator, Joseph Conrad had done in *The Rover* while Ford's other friend, Ezra Pound, had, like him, a close interest in the Troubadours' poetry.<sup>1</sup> However, when we read Ford's *Provence*, it is not Conrad or Pound who come to mind but, strangely enough, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry, the very Bloomsbury artists Ford disliked for their elitism. Indeed, Provence is for Ford comparable with Periclean Athens,<sup>2</sup> the very Athens Clive Bell revered in his 1928 essay *Civilisation* and Leonard Woolf – although somewhat differently – in his 1935 political essays *Quack, Quack*. Unlike the Victorian Matthew Arnold who held that if Greece was a model of perfection, England embodied that perfection (Arnold 2006), the Bloomsbury artists no longer believed that England could rival such a model of perfection, as Virginia

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<sup>1</sup> But Ford asserts in *Provence*: "I differ from Mr Pound [...], except for the matter of the Troubadour literature, I differ from him as to everything else" ([1935] 2009, 184).

<sup>2</sup> Ford writes: "Provence [...] if we except that of Periclean Athens, has been the only real civilization that the world has yet seen" ([1935] 2009, 164).

Woolf ironically pointed out in her short story, *A Dialogue upon Mount Pen-telicus*. And Ford himself clearly chooses to pit the new Athens, Provence, against England. Sunny Provence is pitted against grey, foggy London; the South is opposed to the North, Catholicism to Protestantism, freedom of expression to the English repression of feelings. So much so that one may wonder whether Provence is not a pretext for denouncing the blemishes of England and Englishness. Is not the opposition Ford makes too blunt and simplistic as well as too conventional? Does it not amount to an idealization of Provence that is somewhat suspect, recalling as it does the fascist promotion of all that is Latin? Is Ford's Provence the token of a reactionary mind? Only a close scrutiny of the text and the way Provence is represented can provide answers to these questions.

#### PROVENCE AS A GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL TERRITORY

For Ford, Provence is first of all a geographical territory, clearly circumscribed by the Alps, the river Rhône and the Mediterranean:

If you wrote a capital V upside down and divided the space between its arms by a descending straight line which would be the Rhone, the triangle on the right of the dividing line would be the true Provence with which we are concerned. That on the left of the line would be the sort of quasi-Provence that contains Montpellier, Béziers, Carcassonne and Perpignan and that finally merges into a sort of Catalan-Spanish territory. (Ford [1935] 2009, 93)

Such delineation enables him to take into account the role of the Mistral (the northern wind that blows down the Rhodanian valley), as a defining element of the territory and thus avoid the stereotypical representation of Provence as a warm, sunny place. The Mistral is, Ford writes, one of the three scourges of Provence – the other two being the floods of the Durance and Aix's Parliament.<sup>3</sup> Ford's 'true' Provence is barred on one side by the long impassable Alpine barrier and on the others by the Rhône and the Mediterranean which have always permitted goods and art to circulate and have always been part of "the Great Trade Route which, thousands of years before our day, ran from Cathay to the Cassiterides. Along the Mediterranean shores it went and up through Provence. It bore civilisation backwards and forwards along its tides" ([1935] 2009, 13). Set at the centre of a trading

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<sup>3</sup> Ford writes in French: "*Le Parlement, le Mistral et la Durance sont les trois fléaux de la Provence*" ([1935] 2009, 21).

network Provence is therefore presented as a crossroads, the very opposite of the island Great Britain which breeds, according to the author, “claustrophobia” ([1935] 2009, 289).

But the geography of Provence can only be apprehended in the context of its history, and the geographical territory of Provence soon becomes a chronotope where space and time merge into each other as the author tells us about the many invasions Provence has suffered throughout the ages: “There fought their battles [...] not merely Romans, Celts, Franks, Teutons, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Celtiberians, but Africans, Asiatics, Arabs, Moors and Levantines who became generally known as Saracens” (Ford [1935] 2009, 113). The complex history of Provence, little known at the time,<sup>4</sup> is reconstructed by Ford both with great accuracy and great freedom. He looks at the Albigenses and shows how their faith was used instrumentally both by Catholics and Protestants when this “doctrine, which spread like fire [from Albi] through all Provence” (Ford [1935] 2009, 128), was strictly speaking, neither one nor the other, and he confesses his “affectionate admiration” for these “Catharists” (Ford [1935] 2009, 129). Ford displays a clear desire to retrieve what has been silenced by various invaders, the French especially. But rather than underlining what these invaders have destroyed, he chooses to emphasise what they brought in their wake, the encounter between various peoples and cultures. Provence is therefore depicted not simply as a martyred country but as a fertilized one, a space of hybridisation. By foregrounding such impurity and claiming it as an asset in 1935, at a time when the Nazis were promoting theories of racial purity, Ford, who was himself of Anglo-German origin, is clearly committing himself and sending a political message. We could even say that he echoes Virginia Woolf who in 1933 published *Flush* which can be read as a eulogy of impurity and mongrelisation, since Flush, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s dog, is never so happy as among the mongrels of Italy. Presented as a cosmopolitan territory, Provence becomes a political ideal, the very antithesis of what the Barbarians – to use Leonard Woolf’s terms<sup>5</sup> – were trying to construct.

Provence also displays, according to Ford, an ideal economy. While most European countries are suffering from the Great Depression, Provence is faring well since it is based on a rural, agricultural economy. In Provence, Ford writes, there is “neither mass production nor the worship of mass-production” (Ford [1935] 2009, 66), there are no machines. The *Provençaux* lead a simple, frugal life; they like gardening and cooking. The simplicity of this rural world is worthy of the pastoral tradition. Provence,

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<sup>4</sup> “Provence,” Ford writes, “is the one country in the world of which no history has ever been written” ([1935] 2009, 164).

<sup>5</sup> Leonard Woolf published *Barbarians at the Gate* in 1939.

in a way, reads as a transposition of pre-Victorian, pre-modernist<sup>6</sup> England. Provence also seems to match a Marxist ideal, as the words ‘mass production’ suggest, and to owe something to William Morris’s utopia in *News from Nowhere*. It also reads in some ways as a denunciation of the Futurists’ dehumanised, mechanistic ideal, as defended especially by Marinetti, and which, in pre-war times, had appealed to Ford, as witnessed in his essay ‘On Impressionism’.<sup>7</sup>

Most of all, Provence is characterised by its beauty and its sensuality; as such it is the very opposite of England and Germany where, Ford laments, sensuality is repressed. In Provence,

[w]ith a tiny knife before the dawn is up you remove an infinitely tiny but superfluous leaf from a tiny plant; between clods the countenance of every one of which is as familiar to you as the face of your child [...], you lead with your hoe threads of water to the base of every plant that is as familiar to you as the clods” (Ford [1935] 2009, 110).

With these words and the beauty of the images he summons up, Ford renews what might have been a cliché and the authenticity of his experience of Provence is conveyed.

Provence in the end is a way of life and is best summarized by the art it has developed with great success: the art of conversation, the art that is practiced every day in the cafés all over Provence: “[a] café is a serious place where serious people discussing serious subjects mould civilizations – and if the Moralist frequented such places his occupation would be gone” (Ford [1935] 2009, 58). The Greek ideal of conversation<sup>8</sup> is retrieved and turned into an art of living.

Ford’s Provence hovers between reality and utopia, authenticity and fictionalization and reads as contradictory, or at least ambivalent, if we look at it as a geographical and historical territory. But Ford’s Provence exceeds such a territory. Provence is indeed further compared to an art museum, both reduced to a museum and enlarged to one, a move which may also seem paradoxical except if we understand this territory as a new ethical one.

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<sup>6</sup> The word is taken here in its technical sense.

<sup>7</sup> Ford writes: “And, indeed, those Futurists are only trying to render on canvas what Impressionists *tel que moi* have been trying to render for many years” (Ford [1915] 1995, 264).

<sup>8</sup> At least, Bell praises this art of conversation in *Civilisation* as being typically Greek and refers more particularly to Plato’s *Symposium* as illustrating it (Bell [1928] 1947, 8).

## PROVENCE AS A MUSEUM

Comparing Provence to a museum may first appear as a move towards the reduction of Provence to the size of a museum, and the static function of a museum, that would consist in celebrating the glory of the past – a museum as monument. But Ford's museum is different. Turning Provence into a museum amounts for him to enlarging it and enlarging its significance. Provence is, indeed, seen as a place where painting and the plastic arts developed in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries with the *atelier d'Avignon*: “[n]ot only did Avignon export pictures and altar-pieces all over France and Burgundy but [...] painters came from all over the western world, except perhaps from England, to supply those masterpieces” (Ford [1935] 2009, 221). The author also refers to Petrarch's poetry, written in Fontaine-de-Vaucluse; and what he writes about it provides a synthesis of his conception of Provence:

So it was in that Provençal valley that the language of Modern Italy was formed. That is only another instance of the backward and forward trend of civilization – backwards and forwards through Provence – but always with that country as its halting place, its shelter and its nourishment (Ford [1935] 2009, 156).

This is certainly true of the Troubadours – Peire Vidal, especially, whom Ford holds high – and their courts of love who have been influent both in and out of Provence, especially in the 13<sup>th</sup> century but also beyond it, one of the proofs being that English and American writers still read them, some with success, like Ezra Pound – “the greatest living authority [...] on the Troubadours” (Ford [1935] 2009, 169) –, others with more difficulty, like Walter Pater and Henry James who, Ford reminds us, tend to be shocked by “the wantonness” of their poetry (143). As a centre for the arts, Provence attracted artists while wielding its influence all over Europe and creating works of art that were born of a “cosmopolitan spirit” (Ford [1935] 2009, 225); it is “a centre radiating the loveliness that in the end civilisation should be” (Ford [1935] 2009, 98).<sup>9</sup>

Provence is also depicted as a place where high and low art thrive side by side: if one can see Quarton's *Pietà* in the museum of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon,<sup>10</sup> Simone Martini's fresco in “the porch of the Cathedral of the Popes in Avignon” (Ford [1935] 2009, 221) or Nicolas Froment's *Burning Bush*

<sup>9</sup> Ford actually uses the phrase to describe London, the only town in England that can, according to him, compare with Provence, and adds: “In that Provence much resembles London” (Ford [1935] 2009, 98)

<sup>10</sup> It is now in the Musée du Louvre.

in the cathedral of Aix-en-Provence – “the matchless Fromentin (sic) at Aix-en-Provence with the two wings, shewing as donors the Good King René in his cap of vair and his Queen in her steeple-crowned hat” (Ford [1935] 2009, 235), one can also see countless anonymous votive pictures in various churches<sup>11</sup> and buy *santons*, those miniature red clay figures representing “every condition of man and every craft” (229).<sup>12</sup> By indirectly defining Provençal art as being, like the Troubadours’ own art, both “aristocratic and democratic” (Ford [1935] 2009, 172), by including among artists not only famous ones but also unknown, anonymous ones, Ford opens up the definition of art and the space of art. The whole territory of Provence becomes a museum, a new type of museum, open to all and open to all forms of art – an art redefined so as to include humble art within its sphere. Such a move is reminiscent of Mistral, “the poet of little, unassuming people” (Ford [1935] 2009, 161), in Ford’s own words, and in some ways, of William Morris and his aesthetics of the everyday.<sup>13</sup> Alongside canonical works of art, unsigned art enters his open museum, just as it had entered Roger Fry’s Omega workshop a few years before.<sup>14</sup> Welcoming the domestic art of votive pictures,<sup>15</sup> anonymous paintings and sculptures (such as the *santons*), that is, what is usually regarded as crafts,<sup>16</sup> Ford redefines the museum and art itself as an open space where works of art belonging to the canon can enter into a dialogue with works of art that do not belong to it.

Through Ford’s re-definition of art as encompassing signed and unsigned art, famous and humble art, native and foreign art, Provence comes

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<sup>11</sup> Ford describes at length votive pictures – “the pictures having that air of superreality that marionettes have. A man is knocked down by a carriage and six; a child is hauled head-downwards out of a fountain basin ” ([1935] 2009, 230-31).

<sup>12</sup> Ford writes that “peasants will be offering for sale *saintons* (sic) such as their ancestors have made in these parts ever since the first Attic-Beotian colonists came to these parts from the Oropos three thousand years ago” ([1935] 2009, 228).

<sup>13</sup> Although Ford does not connect utility with art, as Morris does, he defends, like Morris, a society without standardisation and mass-production, a society the Provence of King René embodied in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, according to him ([1935] 2009, 257-58). Morris was connected with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was also familiar to Ford through his grandfather, Ford Madox Brown, and his ideas gave rise to the Arts and Crafts Movement.

<sup>14</sup> Fry’s Omega Workshop, in which such artists as Vanessa Bell and Wyndham Lewis worked for a while, did not sign the works of art it produced. But beyond their belief in unsigned art, Fry’s project and Ford’s vision of the museum are not exactly the same. Ford, indeed, further defines ideal art as an art which is, as he writes, “produced by small people” ([1935] 2009, 227) but also by all social classes, “the product of peasant-proprietors –and not of peasant-proprietors only. The sons of not too rich newspaper proprietors paint pictures; those of millionaire tanners write epics; naval officers paint water-colours from Cap Sète to Annam” ([1935] 2009, 230).

<sup>15</sup> Ford writes that they depict “domestic scenes” ([1935] 2009, 230).

<sup>16</sup> See Ford’s essay ‘On Impressionism’ and my own analysis of the artist as craftsman (Reynier 2009).

out not only as a shelter to the arts of the past but as a place where traditional arts and crafts are kept alive thanks to outside influence and hybridisation: in other words, Provence is gradually turned into a living museum. Such an opening of the territory of the arts and of the museum derives both from a democratic and an ethical impulse, a desire to welcome the others. In the end, Provence is prized not so much for its sunny weather and its privileged geographical situation as for its simplicity, impurity, conversational qualities and openness, i.e. mainly for its ethical values. Provence, according to Ford, is not so much a country as a “frame of mind” (Ford [1935] 2009, 64 and *passim*).

#### FROM ETHICS TO AESTHETICS

In order to capture this frame of mind, Ford devises a series of tableaux that focus on various topics – the weather, the Troubadours, Provençal history, art of living, cuisine, values, etc. – and make up a ‘psychogeography’<sup>17</sup> of Provence rather than a conventional travel narrative. Provence is seen now from London, now from Provence itself. The various vignettes, which adopt different perspectives, match, complement or even contradict each other and the reader is left in the end with a highly intimate and subjective portrayal of Provence: “I am giving you my Provence,” Ford writes ([1935] 2009, 138).

His fragmented narrative indulges in a plethora of information and subjective judgments; it reads now as a history book, now as a sociological treatise; it is interspersed with numerous humorous and delightful anecdotes and resembles, in Ford’s own words, an opera ([1935] 2009, 67). Provence comes out as multi-faceted – just as the Provençal is said to be “many-sided” (42) – complex and ambivalent, difficult to understand, challenging and most lovable. Ford shares his intimate knowledge of Provence and shows how deeply he empathises with it.

Such a position is best understood when compared with the position adopted by other travel writers of the time, especially Lady Fortescue who published at about the same time *Perfume from Provence* (1933). Fortescue’s book, unlike Ford’s, met with great success when it came out and was reprinted in 1992, in the wake of Peter Mayle’s *A Year in Provence* (1989). Lady Fortescue discovered Provence when she bought a *mas* there. Discovery, for her, rhymes with property. And the *Provençaux* are, for her, the workers, builders, gardeners and cooks she employs. She portrays workmen as ready to stop

<sup>17</sup> This term was first used by Guy Debord to refer to the way in which geographical place acts on people’s emotions. See “Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine”, in *Les Lèvres nues*, n°6, Bruxelles, 1955. It is used here in a looser way to refer to the ‘frame of mind’ or ‘psychology’ of a place.



working when she is not around, the maids as kind but wanting in cleanliness and politeness. On the whole, the Provençal is depicted as a sort of child badly in need of education. Even if she is eager to discover the codes of this new culture, her tone is mainly condescending. Her attitude is reminiscent of the coloniser's, as is her rhetoric which takes the superiority of her own culture and values for granted (Sharp 1999, 200-48). In her representation of Provence as a land of plenty, where flowers and plants grow of their own, we can read the Imperialist's nostalgia for a lost world. Fortescue's position is emblematic of the popular travel-writing of the time. Ford's is totally different.

Ford is not interested in buying the land but in observing 'the small people', in sharing their conversation in café, in helping Provence to retrieve its silenced history. Far from being paternalistic, he favours a humorous or provocative tone. Far from judging Provence and the *Provençaux*, he displays a form of empathy towards them. He comments upon the Troubadours' poems, makes us read Mistral's poetry in its original version, shares his pleasure in leading an ordinary life in Provence. The only form of appropriation he may be guilty of is an appropriation of the land through the senses, which may give a measure of the repression of sensuality in England at the time. His attitude and his rhetoric are not those of the coloniser but of the historian, at times, the anthropologist, and more often, the poet, the inheritor (in granting such importance to the senses) of Walter Pater and Joseph Conrad. While portraying Provence, Ford adopts a disposition in keeping with what he values most in it: its openness to alterity.

Such an ethical position is further enacted throughout the space of the book which Ford chooses to share with Janice Biala, his partner, who is responsible for the illustrations of the volume. At times, Biala simply enables the reader to visualise Ford's explanations (as in her map of Provence); sometimes she chooses to underline what is of paramount importance in his discourse (as in her drawing of the café in Tarascon, the *locus* of conversation); sometimes she selects one of the works of art Ford is describing (one votive picture, for example), bringing out the naiveté and amateurish quality of such a work as well as its ability to convey both a synchronic and diachronic form of representation, which challenges the conventional mode of viewing a picture just as Ford challenges the conventional artistic codes; at other times, Biala conveys the gist of Ford's words in such drawings as the *Boulangerie*, a place which is not described in the text: with a few lines, she depicts a shop nestling in the protective shade of the trees, the refreshing presence of the fountain and through the heart shape in the foreground, she presents the whole as a sort of cake in which the viewer inevitably feels like biting; the whole sensuality of Ford's text comes out beautifully in that drawing. She can also make Ford's anxiety palpable through the dark thick lines of a drawing like 'The Great View into Italy from Provence', evoking

Mussolini's Italy. In other words, the dialogue between text and image, between Ford and Biala, enacts the conversational ideal of Provence: ethics and aesthetics come together. In the end, mapping Provence reads as a way for Ford to map his own writing and his own aesthetic principles. *Provence* becomes an *ars poetica*. A travel narrative, a humble literary genre about a humble place, is thus put on the map of literary creation, which is in keeping with Ford's belief in the influence of place and climate on writing, somewhat reminiscent of Montesquieu's climate theory.<sup>18</sup>

Provence, which, as Lynn Withey explains, had long been side-stepped by the English travellers who headed straight for Italy in quest of a glorious past and authentic art objects, is at the centre of Ford's book and is valued for its very humble character. It is certainly idealised in some ways and Ford's discourse is not devoid of contradictions, his blunt attacks on Anglo-Saxon culture<sup>19</sup> jarring with the ethical disposition he is trying to defend. However, the political situation of the 1930s in many ways justifies his provocative tone and *Provence* finally reads mainly as a homage paid to the values that were then being threatened.

Most of all, *Provence* is a hymn to art and the essential function of art. Ford indeed, towards the end of his book, makes a reference to Haydn's so-called 'Farewell' Symphony (No. 45 in F-sharp minor), interpreting it not as a protest against Haydn's patron, as it is known to be, but as a warning against the coming of a dark age. He writes:

Do you happen to know Haydn's symphony?... It is a piece that begins with a full orchestra, each player having beside him a candle to light his score. They play that delicate cheerful-regretful music of an eighteenth century that was already certain of its doom ... As they play on the contrabassist takes his candle and on tiptoe steals out of the orchestra; then the flautist takes his candle and steals away...The music goes on – and the drum is gone, and the bassoon ... and the hautbois, and the second..violin... Then they are all gone and it is dark.... (Ford [1935] 2009, 255).

The musicians who retreat one by one and the concert room which is gradually engulfed in darkness read here as an allegory of the 1935 political situation and sound as a warning. However, the very existence of Ford's book is a sign of the power of art to fight back and to endure.

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<sup>18</sup> Ford underlines the influence on writing of the place in which one writes. According to him, Christina Rossetti's writing is cruel because she writes in London ([1935] 2009, 140-41). As for Montesquieu, he showed how climate can influence man's character.

<sup>19</sup> Such 'strong dichotomies' between England and the Mediterranean countries were quite common at the time among travel writers who, like D.H. Lawrence, Christopher Isherwood or Lawrence Durrell, left England. See Fussell (1980, 15-23): "I hate it here."

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## CODA



## ROLAND PENROSE AND THE IMPULSE OF PROVENCE

Antony Penrose

LEE MILLER ARCHIVE AND THE PENROSE COLLECTION

Roland Penrose was my father. He was a poet, a painter and a dreamer who lived by his love and desire for art. He was a Surrealist and a hedonist who shamelessly enjoyed the pleasures of life, a ground-breaking curator and the biographer of Picasso. In his youth, at the age of 24, he went to live in Cassis. It was 1924 and from this moment onwards Provence shaped his taste and perception, creating a prism through which the rest of his life was defined.

It is paradoxical that behind the pleasure seeker, there was a steel core of rectitude and industriousness directly traceable to his Quaker ancestry which was also the source of his wealth. Lord Alexander Peckover, Roland's grandfather, was a prominent East Anglian banker who lived at Peckover House<sup>1</sup> in Wisbech. As a Quaker, he was denied a university education; but he was a diligent self-educated scholar and assembled a library that contained a wonderful selection of rare books and incunabula. In this library, on the bottom shelf, Roland found a book which changed his life. It was Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, illustrated by William Blake.<sup>2</sup> Here he found images that were always stimulating although sometimes terrifying. He could not know their nightmarish quality of dreamlike violence and intensely erotic images presaged the works of the Surrealists.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly Bank House, now renamed Peckover House and a National Trust property.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Young, *Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*, illustrated by William Blake, c. 1795. Coll. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. The Roland Penrose Archive, Peckover section.

Lord Peckover had three daughters but only Josephine married. She became my grandmother. Her husband was James Doyle Penrose, a Quaker from Mitchelstown near Dublin, an itinerant portrait painter of considerable merit. Roland, the third of four brothers, was born in 1900. During World War I he served briefly as a driver for the Quaker organization 'The Friends Ambulance Unit', and after demobilization went straight to Queen's College, Cambridge. There were no fine art courses, so he studied architecture. He later said he found the place a cultural desert but fortunately he met fellow Quaker Roger Fry, an exciting figure in the arts who knew Picasso and had been responsible for bringing the works of the Post-Impressionists to England. Fry introduced Roland to Bloomsbury luminaries – Maynard Keynes, the famous economist, Clive Bell, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. Penrose also met Virginia and Leonard Woolf. It was these Francophiles who were to kindle Roland's own passion for France

After graduating in June 1922, Roland followed Fry's advice and went to Paris to study art. His father, reluctant to let his son loose in the 'sinful' city, made him promise to avoid studios where they used nude female models. Roland's first teacher was André Lothe whose studio abounded with beautiful naked young women. Roland later gratefully said Lhote had introduced him to the "startlingly heterosexual lifestyle of Montmartre and to Cubism".<sup>3</sup> Braque was the first major artist Roland met, and it was in part Braque's total absorption in his art that showed Roland that painting was far more than the Victorian decorative and religious art of his former surroundings.

#### THE YEARS OF CASSIS

After eighteen months in Paris, Roland settled in Cassis with Yanko Varda, a Greek painter friend. Cassis would soon become a hub for the Bloomsbury people, with Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant settling first in town and then in the adjacent valley of Fontcreuse. Roland bought Villa des Mimosas, a small Italianate villa on Chemin de St. Joseph. With Yanko's help Roland built a studio in the garden and settled down to live there happily as an expatriate. Roland first found a style that owed much to Cubism and a little to architecture. It showed great sensitivity and observation. His work *Pequod* (1923) also shows the influence of Braque's *trompe l'oeil* technique, but his work at this stage would never leave much of a mark in the world.

A catalyst was needed and one appeared in the form of Valentine Boué, a young poet already known to Paul Éluard and André Breton, who one hot afternoon in June 1923 arrived at Villa des Mimosas signalling a seismic

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<sup>3</sup> Private conversation.

change in Roland's life and starting a chain of events that caused Roland to deliver Surrealism to Britain 12 years later. Roland and Valentine married in 1925 and to begin with lived in Cassis, making frequent trips in Paris where they bought an apartment, Rue des Saints-Pères. Through Valentine, Roland met Paul Éluard and the then pope of Surrealism, Breton, who declared Roland Penrose was "Surrealism in friendship".<sup>4</sup> Breton bestowed sobriquets on those he regarded as part of the movement and in Roland's case may be he meant that it was surreal for a shy Englishman, a bit of an outsider in Paris, to have such intimacy with this highly select movement.

It was Éluard who introduced Roland to Max Ernst who became a close friend and often visited Cassis with his wife Marie-Berthe and a stream of other artists, poets, friends and relatives from England. Ernst became Roland's close friend and his tutor. He had just invented the technique of frottage: pencil or crayon is rubbed over the paper which is placed on a textured surface. The hidden surface is 'discovered' in this way, involving an element of chance. It was an ideal technique for Surrealism and Roland readily adopted it in many of his works on paper.

The relentless Mistral and the harsh light of Cassis irritated Valentine. Tensions had quickly begun to surface between her and Roland as expressed in his painting *Conversation between Rock and Flower* (c. 1930), where the flower hints at Valentine's identity. We see the profile of her beautiful torso; she is animated, her face filled with bright colours as she regards the rock but the reverse of her face is the very disagreeable profile of a witch-like demon, perhaps an allusion to the violent and unpredictable mood swings she was well-known for. This may tell us why Roland painted himself as the rock, finding the only answer to her rages was to become strong and solid. He is peeping up nervously but he has an olive branch ready in case she wanted to make peace. The lower surface of the rock shows an agonized face, perhaps an image of internal pent-up feelings. A stick leans against the rock face, perhaps connecting to Roland's deep knowledge of the Bible. He would have known the story of Moses striking a rock in the desert with his staff and water flowing out. Water, often occurring as the metaphor for emotion in his work, would have been under extreme pressure in Roland's rock (fig. 21).

The oil on board *Portrait of a Leaf* (1934) shows a gentler perception of Valentine. We can make eye contact with her but she is at the same time gazing sideways, a reminder that she was clairvoyant and could see things invisible to most. Roland loved Valentine passionately and tenderly, and seeing her dislike for Cassis he sold the house. In 1930, they moved to Château Le Pouy in Valentine's native Gers. For a while they were happy in Le Pouy,

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<sup>4</sup> Personal recollection.



and Valentine loved the place and its abundance of wildlife. But the enchantment of the place was not enough to dissipate the growingly strained situation. Valentine studied Sanskrit and Hindu religion at the Sorbonne, wanting a life of peace and a journey to Nirvana. In an opposite polarity, Roland gripped with a missionary-like zeal opted for the excitement of changing the world through Surrealism, an echo of his parents' desire to create a better world. Seeking reconciliation, Roland took Valentine to India. The style of his Indian works suggests he left Surrealism in Paris, perhaps as a peace offering. Valentine loved India; but on their return, the tensions resurfaced with increased severity.

In 1936 Paul Éluard invited Roland and Valentine to join him, his wife Nusch and his daughter Cécile for a holiday in Mougins with Man Ray and other friends. Picasso was already there with Dora Maar and the friendship between Penrose and Picasso began in this moment. It was a wonderful carefree surrealist romp but a dark shadow lurked in the background. The escalating Spanish Civil war alarmed everyone and Picasso above all. Wishing to join the Republican cause, Roland and Valentine went to Barcelona with Christian and Yvonne Zervos and the English poet David Gascoyne. During their six-week stay in Catalonia, they met the Republican forces and various members of POUM;<sup>5</sup> their purpose being to survey the works of art in Republican hands with a view of reporting back to England that, contrary to Franco's propaganda, the treasures were safe and well looked after. The following year Zervos published the chronicle of their findings.<sup>6</sup>

#### SURREALISM, FROM PROVENCE TO SPAIN AND BACK

Back in Paris later in the autumn and thanks to Éluard, Roland bought from Picasso his *Nu sur la plage* (1932), a painting probably related to the opposing personalities of the two key women in Picasso's life at the time, Marie-Thérèse Walter and his wife Olga. Its blatant eroticism and the fraught feelings of tension made it a painting that would not sell. Picasso recognized that the quiet, shy Englishman could, unlike any others, understand the difficult and significant painting enough to love and buy it. The friendship of the two artist endured 37 years until Picasso's death in 1973.

Valentine and Roland were divorced in 1938. In Roland's last picture of her, *Winged Domino*, her face is blue, the blue of infinity or perhaps Nirvana. Birds nestle in her hair and butterflies cluster around her eyes and lips. The

<sup>5</sup> Acronym of Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Penrose's essay "Art and the Present Crisis in Catalonia" was included in the book published by Zervos in 1937, *Catalan Art from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. London: Heinemann.

painting has a deep sadness about it: Roland thought he would never see Valentine again and with her gone from his life and the Villa des Mimosas sold, the physical connection with Provence came to an end though Cassis, the sea and the languages of the region were ingrained in Roland's art and imagination.

Now living in London, Roland worked with David Gascoyne to set up the first International Surrealist Exhibition at the New Burlington Gallery, Piccadilly. Surrealism was barely known in England and the show, opened in June 1938, created a scandal in the press and a sensation with the public: more than one thousand persons a day attended for 23 days! At the opening André Breton gave an impassioned speech in French which escaped the comprehension of most people. Even worse was Salvador Dalí's lecture, famously delivered in Catalan with the speaker dressed in a diving suit; a costume chosen to penetrate the depth of the subconscious which nearly provoked the artist's death by suffocation.

When the show closed, Roland went to Paris to visit Max Ernst. Hearing of a fancy dress party and impersonating beggars, they went along. Penrose was later to describe what followed as like being struck by lightning. He had met Lee Miller. Born in Poughkeepsie, upstate New York in 1907, she was famed for her beauty and already known for her surrealist photography perfected as the pupil and lover of Man Ray. Together they had discovered the technique of *solarisation* and a central part of Lee's style can be identified as *image trouvée*, the counterpart to the surrealist *objet trouvé*. Roland wasted no time in whisking Lee off to Cornwall where they were joined for a sort of surrealist summer camp by Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington, Paul and Nusch Éluard, Man Ray and his new lover Ady Fidelin, Eileen Agar, Joseph Bard and E.L.T. Messens. Then they returned to Mougins where Picasso and Dora Maar were residing in the Hôtel Vaste Horizon.

Picasso had set up a studio in his bedroom and everyday painted portraits of his friends. Nusch, flamboyant with her beautiful profile and small firm breasts; Paul, unaccountably dressed as an *Arlésienne* breast-feeding a cat, and Roland, also dressed as a voluptuous *Arlésienne*. But it was Lee on whom he bestowed the greatest attention, portraying her six times as an *Arlésienne*. Picasso's selection of *Arlésienne* women to epitomize female beauty and the power of seduction probably goes deeper than the well earned reputation the women of Arles have for their great beauty and their very becoming traditional costume. It almost certainly refers to Alphonse Daudet's short story, first published in 1866 before its inclusion in *Lettres de mon Moulin* (1869). The story is based on a real tragedy which had hit the family of Frédéric Mistral, the Provençal poet and folklorist and Daudet's friend. It casts the twenty-two-year old son of a farmer, Jan, in love with an *Arlésienne* against his parents' advice. On the eve of their wedding her lover of

two years turns up, acquainting Jan's family with the truth and leaving him broken-hearted and beyond consolation. Having apparently recovered, Jan seems ready to celebrate the festival of Saint-Éloi with the traditional gaiety. That night, however, he hurls himself to his death out of a window. His last words are for the woman he loves too much. Perhaps Picasso and the Surrealists took this story as a cautionary counterpoint to what Breton and his friends thought of *l'amour fou*, a parable of the danger inherent in falling for a beautiful woman with reckless abandon. It is also interesting to note that Lee Miller was at the time married to Aziz Eloui, known for his patience and saintly qualities, and whose name is strangely close to the Éloi of Daudet's festival, a coincidence which may have struck the Surrealists' love of puns.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the free holiday atmosphere was overshadowed by desperate news from Republican Spain. Only a few weeks before coming to Mougins, Picasso had completed the masterpiece of the twentieth century, *Guernica*. Roland, for whom peace, freedom and justice were irreducible values, undertook a tour to exhibit the picture around Britain, to raise both awareness and funds for the Republicans. Of the three venues, the first one was the New Burlington Gallery, where the painting was ignored. It did not fare much better when next exhibited in a car showroom in Manchester but the later showing in the working-class Whitechapel area of London drew an audience of 15,000 and brought the money and press attention Roland wanted.

During his enchanted holiday with Lee Miller, Roland had started making collages with picture postcards of Provençal scenes. Lee photographed him crouching on the floor of their bathroom while he was starting the first series. Unsurprisingly, one of the early collages depicts Lee with the title *The Real Woman* (1937). Her physical presence is shown on the frottage on the right; she is there, visceral, hot and sexy, in complete contrast to Valentine who was ethereal and not drawn to men. Lee's bird-like alter ego beside the torso is composed of brightly coloured local scenes. The postcard images stop being local scenes and merge like the tonal patches used in Cubist compositions clothing the bird with brilliant plumage and great vitality. Many Lee Miller-inspired works were to follow (fig. 22).

In the summer of 1938 Lee and Roland met in Athens and they set off on a journey through Greece and Romania in Lee's Packard which she had shipped from Egypt. Roland wrote an account of the journey as *The Road is Wider Than Long*,<sup>8</sup> a surrealist poem that conjures his remembrance of the places visited with Lee in lines redolent of his love and the uncertainty of their relationship. Roland put the original manuscript in his case when

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<sup>7</sup> With thanks to Michel Rémy for his contribution to this research.

<sup>8</sup> *The Road is Wider Than Long* First published by the London Gallery 1938. Currently in print with the JP Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

he visited Lee in Egypt in 1939. Aziz had long recognised how unhappy she was and how in spite of the ease of her Cairo existence she pined for the artistic life of Europe. Aziz had promised Lee he would let her go when she found someone who would look after her as well as he did and when he met Roland, he saw the moment had come to part.

Lee and Roland briefly toured Europe, visiting Picasso in Antibes before hurrying back to London. Lee moved in to Roland's house at 21 Downshire Hill, in Hampstead, on the day of the first air raid. Roland joined the ARP (Air Raid Protection Corps). By night he helped to rescue people from the bombs and the fires and by day he painted scary pictures to chase away the fears of the night. Lee enrolled as a free lancer at *Vogue Studios* and also did her own work, finding many *images trouvées* as she went around London.

#### CONFLICT

Early in 1942 David E. Scherman, already a distinguished *LIFE Magazine* photographer arrived in England. He and Lee met, two Americans in the blitz, and became lovers. Roland encouraged this *ménage à trois* because by now he was running the British Army Camouflage School in Norwich and wanted to be sure there was someone with Lee who loved her as much as he did and could be utterly relied upon to look out for her during the blitz. Roland published his definitive work on camouflage illustrated with his own drawings. His fascination with nature provided him with source material. Although his role was non-combatant, it still required a compromise with his pacifist principles as he wanted to make a contribution to defeating Hitler. At 41, besides, he was too old for active service. As to Lee's role in the war, it was becoming a source of anxiety.

In 1942 the Americans entered the war, which gave Lee the opportunity to become a fully accredited war correspondent for *Vogue Magazine*. She immediately began reporting on the work done by women in the armed forces as armourers, mechanics, searchlight operator, nurses, air transport pilots and signallers. Then came the Normandy landings and in July 1944 Lee was covering a field hospital at La Cambe, behind Omaha beach. A few weeks later, the only reporter around, she witnessed the siege of Saint-Malo, a scoop that established her as a combat photographer. All this made Roland feel a little inadequate, being in a safe rear position while she was taking risks in the front line. But what really got to him was Lee's arrival in Paris on the day of *Libération* to find Picasso in his studio Rue des Grands Augustins. Roland soon smuggled himself on a supply plane for a joyous reunion in Picasso's studio. He was horrified to discover how much his friends had suffered during the German occupation: Paul and Nusch Éluard had gone

through extreme hardship. Paul's poem, *Liberté j'écris ton nom*, had become the rallying cry of the French *Résistance*. Originally a love poem addressed to Nusch – *Nusch j'écris ton nom* –, it was re-written to become the haunting refrain of free and resistant France. The poem had been smuggled out of the country into England where Roland translated it and the War Office made it into a leaflet. The RAF dropped countless copies of *Liberté, j'écris ton nom* over occupied France. As a result, the Gestapo put Nusch and Paul very high on their wanted list, forcing them to spend the war on the run. Due no doubt to the privations endured, Nusch died in 1946 and Paul followed her in 1952. As many others, they died as peace-time casualties of war.

After the war Fernand Léger illustrated Éluard's poem and Roland framed a copy which hangs at Farley Farm House, his Sussex home. It was clearly of great importance to him but still raises the question of its consequences: Would Roland have translated the text and condoned the leaflet drop had he known it would endanger his friends' lives? The answer may be found in the last verse:

And for the power of one word  
I recommence my life  
I am born to know you  
To name you  
Liberty.

For many Surrealists liberty was more important than life, proving theirs was more than an artistic movement: It was a way of life, an ideal for which so many, including Robert Desnos, Max Jacob and the Éluards, paid for their lives.

Not even Picasso could keep Lee in Paris during the winter 1944-45. She covered the fighting in the Vosges during that bitter winter and was on the heels of the Allies when they crossed the Rhine into Germany. That was the moment in which the rumours became the awful truth. Lee visited four concentration camps in all, Ordurf, Pening, Buchenwald and Dachau, where she arrived on the day after its liberation (30<sup>th</sup> April 1945). By now the war had become very personal to Lee Miller. Many of her friends were Jewish and a large number of them were missing. What had happened was now obvious and Lee searched the faces of the dead and the semi-dead as she went around the camps. She cabled her editor at *Vogue*, "I implore you to believe this is true": American *Vogue* published many of her images in their 1945 issue.

The effect on Lee was catastrophic: She was overwhelmed by post-traumatic stress disorder and entered a downward spiral of depression and alcohol abuse. Then unexpectedly she found she was pregnant in the spring of 1947. Though I am evidence of a pregnancy gone full term, it was a difficult time for her. Roland painted her as she struggled with depression.

He shows her as a broken figure washed up on an inhospitable shore amid storm clouds. The internal radiance of her face fades into the hues of desperation and angers, orange and blue. Soon his career as an art historian, biographer and curator of exhibitions – Picasso, Miró, Ernst, Man Ray and others – would leave him no time to paint; but he never stopped making collages, particularly as birthday and Christmas presents for Lee.

#### PROVENCE IN EAST SUSSEX

Roland and Lee bought Farley Farm, in the East Sussex village of Chiddingfold, in 1949 and we moved here in March. In 1950, Roland painted the mural on the fireplace. The sun of Sussex had now replaced the sun of Provence but echoes of the heady pre-war days were to be found in rural England (fig. 23). Paul Éluard was one of the first visitors, followed by Max Ernst and his wife Dorothea Tanning and soon Man Ray and his wife Juliette. Picasso came to Farley Farm in 1950, and we later visited him at Villa la Gaule in Mougins and his other homes. As a child I liked his house because it was full of pets, wonderful tribal masks and musical instruments. Lee had virtually quit photography after 1954 but she still took many pictures of her friends Picasso and Sabartes clowning around. Braque came round during one of these stays. He and Picasso had not seen each other for some years but Pablo grabbed a handful of pottery doves and gave them to Braque in an ice-breaking gesture.

Roland's biography, *Picasso. His life and Work*, was published in 1958. Picasso had by now bought the Château de Vauvenargues and was very excited that he had a view of Montagne Sainte Victoire, Cézanne's favourite subject, which Picasso actually sketched on the flyleaf of the copy of Roland's biography he signed. There is a face in profile which is definitely Roland's with his furrowed brow, spectacles and thin lips. But why indeed should he have a naked woman fishing from his nose? A French scholar provided an answer: "It is easy," he said, "It is a pun on the similarity in French between fisher and sinner, *pêcheuse*".<sup>9</sup> But whose edict defines sin? Perhaps she is simply a libertine harking back to their enjoyment of beautiful women in Provence. Picasso did not read English, but emboldened by the opinions of others he designed the cover for the French edition of Roland's biography. Roland was nonetheless still apprehensive about the kind of reception it would elicit from Picasso. He need not have worried, Picasso greeted him very warmly: "I've read your book. It's good – In fact it is so good that it is as though we sat at the same table and wrote it together!"<sup>10</sup> His crayon dedication to Ro-

<sup>9</sup> Personal recollection.

<sup>10</sup> Personal recollection.

land on the first page reads “For Roland Penrose, his friend Picasso” above three dancers bearing flowers.

Lee’s career was in the doldrums but Roland moved ahead and was chosen by the Arts Council to curate the Picasso exhibition at the Tate in 1960. He had earned a reputation as a safe pair of hands, a trustworthy operator in an area where intrigue is rife. Also his Quaker qualities counted. He was known as a good negotiator, someone who built bridges and resolved conflicts, a fact that allowed him to accommodate a major paradox: A former opponent of the establishment, he had now become a figure of it, responsible for showing the art of revolution in institutions that were previously enemy territory such as the Tate Gallery. The Picasso retrospective was an outstanding success, regarded by many as the show of the century. Roland was never happier than when he had a big Picasso project on the go. For five years (1960-65) he was busy negotiating the purchase of *The Three Dancers* by the Tate for a price amounting to half the actual value of the picture. It is still in the collection today, bearing witness to the friendship between Picasso and Roland. And there was also the Picasso sculpture show which toured to Paris, London and New York, one of the first exhibitions to boast a fabulous book-like catalogue, a copy of which Picasso dedicated to Roland. For years Penrose was also at the heart of painstaking negotiations with the architect Bill Hartman who wished to commission a giant sculpture by Picasso to stand in Daley Plaza, Chicago.

But at times it was not easy to be the ambassador at the court of Picasso, as when Roland had to face his friend’s mixed anger and despair: “Once it was so easy! We sat on the beach with our women, we laughed, we swam in the sea. Now it’s one thing after another. There is no end to it. Everybody wants something from me”.<sup>11</sup> But of course things cooled off quickly and then straight on with the next project: another exhibition, another book, another instance of Picasso’s generous support for the ICA.<sup>12</sup> Picasso and Françoise Gilot had parted in 1951 and his new wife Jacqueline had a difficult time presiding over a complicated court often filled with intrigue; but she always had a special affection for Lee whose presence she appreciated. When Vauvenargues proved too remote from the sea, Picasso bought Notre-Dame-de-Vie, a large but secluded house in Mougins, his home to the end. His sudden death in 1973 took a huge chunk out of my parents’ lives and although Roland continued as a tireless promoter of Picasso’s work, the gap of his absence was unbridgeable.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Personal recollection.

<sup>12</sup> Institute of Contemporary Arts.

<sup>13</sup> Penrose kept working on Picasso. In 2006, Elizabeth Cowling edited the notes and letters he wrote during his visits, *Visiting Picasso*. London: Thames and Hudson. As to Roland’s books and papers, they were catalogued by Michael Sweeney for the Roland Penrose Archive, The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.

By the late Sixties, Lee had fought her way out of alcoholism and she became known as a gourmet cook written up in *Vogue Magazine* and *House and Garden*. By one of these miraculous coincidences dear to the Surrealists, Lee had bumped into Valentine during the London blitz, and they remained the closest of friends until Lee's death, in 1977. Valentine spent long periods at Farley Farm where she died in 1978. In the space of two years, Roland had lost the two women he loved most. Fortunately, my wife Susanna and our two daughters Ami and Eliza became a focus for his life. And there was another woman of special significance in Roland's life, Diane Deriaz. She had been his mistress since 1947 but played a much more prominent role in his life with Lee gone. Happily so, because things were getting more difficult for him, with failing eyesight and trouble with short-term memory putting an end to his writing. Diane, however, encouraged his working in the garden studio and the making of collages chronicling their stays in Paris or their travels. They went to Provence, visiting Roland's friend, the photographer Lucien Clergue in Arles and proceeding then to Camargue. And to Malindi in Kenya or to Sri Lanka, each time bringing home collages reflecting Roland's experience.

There were shows of his new work in 1982 and 1983, in London at the Mayor Gallery and in Paris at Galerie Henriette Gomis. And a much bigger exhibition was planned for 1984 in Brighton. In February 1984, on his return from the Seychelles with Diane, Roland suffered a massive stroke. He died on Lee's birthday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1984, a few days before the opening of his Brighton exhibition of recent collages. Farley Farm House, the home he died in, is now a museum dedicated to his work and his memory, and also that of Lee, Valentine and the many artists they counted as their friends.<sup>14</sup> Those who visit the collection or see exhibitions of my parents' work are often moved by the enduring strength of the friendship among the members of their group. Friendships in most cases forged in Provence and in a curious way true to its warmth, its sensuality and its cultural heritage.

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<sup>14</sup> It is possible to organize guided tours at Farley Farm House from April to October (tel. 01825 872856).





Fig. 21 -Roland Penrose, *Conversation between Rock and Flower*, 1928, oil on canvas. Roland Penrose Estate, England 2013, The Penrose Collection. All rights reserved.



Fig. 22 - Roland Penrose, *The Real Woman*, 1937, collage, coloured postcards, coloured paper, decalcomania, frottage and pencil on card, 43,3 x 69 cm. Roland Penrose Estate, England 2013, The Penrose Collection. All rights reserved.



Fig. 23 - Roland Penrose, Photograph of the fireplace in the dining-Room at Farley Farm House, 1950. Roland Penrose Estate, England 2013, The Penrose Collection. All rights reserved.

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