

PROVENCE AND THE BRITISH IMAGINATION

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





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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 politique 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 plentitude, a feeling conveyed here by the use of parataxis to depict

the richest [vally] 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, 1, 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 1., 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 1., 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’s 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 15th 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 *trobairitz* (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 XVIIIe 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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