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## Adapting Pagnol and Provence.

Jeremy Strong

### *Abstract*

This chapter examines Marcel Pagnol's novel *L'eau des collines* (comprising *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*: 1962) and their film adaptations (Dir. Claude Berri, 1986). It places particular emphasis on the construction of the adaptations as a major French cultural event and as constitutive of what would come to be termed 'heritage cinema'. The role of the films – in particular their lush cinematography and representation of the Provencal countryside – in the subsequent explosion of tourist interest and second-home ownership in Provence will also be discussed. Drawing on texts as diverse as Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence* (1989) and the critical literature of Travel and Tourism Studies, the chapter examines the role of books and their screen adaptations in shaping attitudes to places and people.

**Keywords: Adaptation, Provence, Tourism, Travel, Adaptation Tourism, Psychogeography, Marcel Pagnol, Peter Mayle.**

### Introduction

It is nearly impossible to commence this chapter without remarking upon the coincidence that Marcel Pagnol's birth in 1895 in Aubagne, Provence, was in the same year that his countrymen Auguste and Louis Lumière held the first public screenings of their cinematograph in Paris. Yet Brett Bowles reminds readers that this pleasing accident of chronology was not necessarily 'a sign that Pagnol's fate was somehow cosmically intertwined with cinema' (Bowles, 2012a. 10). Bowles indicates that while Pagnol's family history did not readily suggest a nascent facility for any particular art-form, including the newest, what was to prove remarkable was his success across *several* media and roles. For Pagnol would achieve acclaim as a novelist, playwright, film producer and director, becoming one of France's leading cultural figures of the Twentieth Century. Unusually for an instance of adaptation, the films examined in this chapter have not followed the familiar trajectory of novel-film, but rather film-novel-film; an adaptive journey which reflects Pagnol's identity as a multimedia author. Responding to Pagnol's original 1952 film, itself a version edited down significantly from his desired vision of the story, Andre Bazin wrote that 'in *Manon of the Springs*, with his inspiration finally at its peak – he gave Provence its universal epic.' (Bazin, 1995. 204) Hence, even before the novels which gave rise to the adaptations examined here, Pagnol and this story were inextricably associated with Provence. Pagnol later novelised his own *Manon* into *L'eau des collines* (*The Water of the Hills*) in 1962. Finally, in 1986 – eleven years after his death - the constituent stories of *L'eau des collines* were adapted as the films *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*. They achieved both critical and commercial success, nationally and internationally, though it was domestically that they achieved their greatest box office success, running for 70 and 58 weeks

respectively, and selling 7.2 and 6.6 million tickets, making them the most popular films of that year (Bowles, 2012a. 237) Importantly, the films were also a notable example of a concerted effort on the part of the French government of the time to support and promote cinema that foregrounded French history and culture, especially in the face of competition from Anglophone filmmakers.

The opening credits of both films emphasise their place in a national cultural and literary tradition. “d’après l’oeuvre de MARCEL PAGNOL de l’Académie Française” precedes any of the other major acknowledgments and works to assert the films’ credentials as quality adaptations, and – in turn – vouchsafes the adaptive source with the imprimatur of his being one of ‘les Immortels’; member of a preeminent French cultural institution that has included such major literary figures as Voltaire, Alexandre Dumas, and Victor Hugo. Equally, it should be noted that Pagnol’s election to the Academy in 1946 rested essentially on his achievements as a filmmaker and playwright; the first filmmaker ever elected to the Academy, at that time his work in the forms of the novel and the memoir were still to come. Bowles argues that Pagnol’s ‘legacy as a French cultural icon depends largely on the enduring appeal of his trilogy of films set in Marseille – *Marius* (1931), *Fanny* (1932) and *César* (1936), the first two co-directed adaptations of his hit plays of the same name.’ (Bowles, 2012b, 371) In the context of this particular chapter it is also worth noting the Academy’s role in policing the French language, in particular its opposition to English loanwords, to the use of feminine equivalents for conventionally masculine nouns, and to the affording of constitutional protection for regional languages. In defending its own rightness, the Academy has frequently revealed itself as unfriendly to neighbours and new arrivals.

The extent to which the films are further anchored in a context of national structures, and work to promulgate a politically-endorsed version of cultural patrimony is further revealed by the credit “avec la participation du CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINEMATOGRAPHIE et du MINISTERE DE LA CULTURE”. Through funding and other forms of promotion and acknowledgment – for example the attendance of Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, at a special pre-release screening – the French state stood squarely behind what was at the time the nation’s most costly film project. Governmental involvement continued into the year after the films’ release in the shape of a large project to screen them in schools and colleges across France (Frodon & Loiseau, 1987. 218). Italy’s broadcaster RAI may have been one of the movies’ co-funders, but the credit to Guiseppe Verdi as the original composer of the “theme de Jean de Florette” scarcely diluted the Gallic heft of what audiences were offered. Indeed, for British audiences the Italian connotations of the musical theme were further diminished through the 1990s by a series of award-winning television adverts for Stella Artois beer

inspired by *Jean de Florette* that used the Verdi leitmotif and were set in an idyllic French countryside closely modelled on the films. The first advertisement was titled 'Jacques de Florette'.

### The Story

A brief summary of the events of *L'eau des collines*, common to the book and films, is germane to the discussion that follows. In *Jean de Florette* Ugolin Soubeyran conspires with his uncle César to obtain the property 'Les Romarins' where Ugolin intends to grow carnations. Although the land in question ostensibly lacks a water source, there is a neglected spring known to César and other older villagers. Ugolin and his uncle approach the owner Pique-Bouffigue to buy 'Les Romarins', but his angry refusal sparks a fight in which he is accidentally killed. Leaving the body so it appears the result of a fall, Ugolin and César plug and cover the spring, intending to purchase the property for a depressed price. However it is inherited by Jean Cadoret, a hunch-backed tax-collector from another village, Crespin. Jean is the son of Florette, a childhood friend of César's and fellow villager.

According to the local custom he would be called Jean de Florette, but the Soubeyrans deliberately do not reveal his connection to Florette, and to their own village, telling other locals that he is simply from Crespin. This manoeuvre is intended to ensure that the villagers are not motivated to help him, but to treat him with the indifference or outright antipathy traditionally afforded to outsiders.

Arriving at 'Les Romarins' with his wife and young daughter Manon, Jean reveals that he intends to farm the land himself despite his inexperience. Although he experiences initial success, and with Ugolin presenting himself as a friendly neighbour, Jean's enterprise fails because of the lack of water. He takes out a mortgage and is eventually killed when he attempts to dynamite a new well. Finally acquiring the property, a gleeful Ugolin and César unplug the spring as the family are leaving. Unseen by them, this act is witnessed by Manon.

*Manon de Sources* takes up events several years later. Ugolin's carnation business is thriving, while Manon has become a beautiful young woman, living half-wild as a shepherdess in the countryside around 'Les Romarins'. After glimpsing her bathing in a pool Ugolin becomes infatuated with Manon and hopes to marry her. She is disgusted by his clumsy approaches and, of course, recalls his role in deceiving her father. At the same time a new schoolteacher, Bernard, arrives in the village and a mutual attraction develops. Overhearing a conversation between two villagers Manon realises that others knew of the spring but did not help her father by telling him. This coincides with her accidental discovery, high in the hills, of the source of the water that serves the whole village and its surrounding farms. She takes her revenge by secretly blocking the source and driving the village to near collapse. César and Ugolin's crime is exposed by another villager and the pair are publicly shamed. Rejected by Manon, Ugolin hangs himself and seemingly ends the Soubeyran family line.

Bernard persuades Manon to unblock the source. They marry and she becomes pregnant. A childhood friend of César's returns to the village and reveals that Jean was in fact César's son, conceived before he went on military service in Africa. The letter in which Florette told him of her pregnancy had gone missing in Africa and went unanswered, leading her to marry the Blacksmith in Crespin, though only after taking dreadful measures to lose her unborn child; measures which, though unsuccessful, result in his being born hunch-backed. Broken, César dies in his sleep, leaving his property to Manon, his granddaughter.

Hence the narrative of *L'eau des collines* builds towards the revelation of a dreadful irony – generations in the making - that caps the successive tragedies of Jean's failed labours and death, and of Ugolin's doomed love and suicide. Believing himself childless, César has treated Ugolin as a substitute son and made him the vessel of his prideful hopes for the continuation of the Soubeyrans, assisting him in his business and encouraging him to marry and have heirs. The scheme to obtain 'Les Romarins' could never be conceived by the hapless Ugolin, but is the brainchild of the crafty uncle who, throughout the lengthy process of bringing about Jean's failure, deliberately keeps his distance from the family, using Ugolin to bring him reports. Not knowing that the man he systematically torments and whose death he precipitates is his own son, César at first experiences the success of his scheme – a thriving carnation business for his nephew, and the possibility of Soubeyran successors – but sees his hopes dashed in the loss of Ugolin, in public humiliation, and ultimately in the discovery of his enormous mistake. The narrative device of the 'incomer', used by many nineteenth century writers, is here deployed and adapted to great effect. Whilst César is fully aware that Jean is not quite so much of an incomer as he wishes the village to believe, he is wholly ignorant of the extent to which he is not an incomer at all. Although this bald summary elides many other features of the story - including the close observation of peasant life (by turns affectionate and critical), moments of comedy (though these are reduced in adaptation), and the developing romance between Manon and Bernard – it does little to explain why the story's countryside setting should figure so prominently and positively in critical and public responses, and why it should have played a part in making the region a popular destination for visitors. Considered purely in terms of *what* happens, *L'eau des collines* would induce readers/viewers to visit Provence to much the same extent that the events of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* would prompt anyone to visit Dorset. Which is to say, not at all. The explanation for the story's success in conjuring a desirable image of Provence evidently resides elsewhere.

#### A Sense of Place

In the novel Jean Cadoret's affection for 'Les Romarins' and its surroundings is expressed strongly in the phases soon after their arrival, before his dream of a country existence has begun to be seriously thwarted:

'For the first time in his life he had great pleasure in living. His mother had been born on this lonely farm. In her youth she had gathered the almonds of these almond trees, and dried her sheets on the grass under those olive trees that her forefathers had planted two or three centuries ago... He loved these pine woods, these junipers, these turpentine trees, the cuckoos in the morning' (Pagnol, 1988. 105-106)

Jean's delight in the place reflects a couple of decidedly contemporary responses to the countryside; both the holidaymaker's happiness in being away from the regular routine and the second-home owner's nostalgic desire to connect with the lives and places of rural forebears. Connections with 'places of childhood and family origin' (Hall & Muller. Eds., 2004. 10) are understood as common motivations for modern second home ownership; ownership which often endeavours to 'ground' modern mobile urban-dwellers through a location that is perceived to have a more enduringly significant bond. Although the novel and the adaptations develop the theme of how Jean's prior life experience and his bookish approach to farming do not serve him well in his agricultural ambitions, it is clear that the films invite us to share his view of the setting as essentially idyllic. When Jean's family arrive at 'Les Romarins' and the upstairs shutters are thrown open to expose the vista – the musical theme swelling in the background – character point-of-view and omniscient perspective are collapsed into a unalloyed celebration of the beautiful landscape. By contrast, the view of César tasting a purloined pinch of soil from 'Les Romarins', moistened with a little water from a carafe, is presented as meanly utilitarian, an appreciation of the land arising from very different motives. The desire of Ugolin and César for the land – for its productivity (when allied with the crucial spring), for the generation of wealth, for the restoration and continuation of a family name – is very different to Jean's, who explains his motives to a perplexed Ugolin:

'I need air, I need space to crystallize my thoughts [...] I want to live in communion with Nature. I want to eat the vegetables of my garden, the oil of my olive trees...' (Pagnol, 1988. 75)

Although Jean's grandiloquent account of an 'authentic' existence and Ugolin's bafflement (believing 'orthentics' to be a new-fangled crop Jean seeks to cultivate!) are ripe for a comic interpretation on page and screen alike, it is clear that Jean's dreams largely anticipate popular urban fantasies of decades later; of escaping the rat-race, returning to nature, and of engagement in a type of Utopian agriculture that will not prove back-breaking or precarious. In their study of contemporary second home ownership Hall and Muller observe that 'removal or inversion from everyday urban life appears to be a main attraction of second homes' (Hall and Muller, eds., 2004. 12) and it is apparent that Jean too seeks not merely a relocation in this move to his mother's childhood home, but a

transformation. Whilst the term 'lifestyle' is not anachronistically deployed within the text(s), what Jean rhapsodises about is recognizable to any modern reader or viewer as just that. Texts as varied as the cookery-focused *River Cottage* series of books and television programmes (1998 – 2012), the property programme *Escape to the Country* (2002 – present) or – far more closely connected to the specific Provençal setting of *L'eau des collines*, Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence* (1989, adapted for TV in 1993) – would seek to seduce readers and audiences with accounts of the rejection of city lives and the adoption of new lifestyles in attractive rural settings; lifestyles in which local foods and customs, seasonality and landscape would loom large. Jill Forbes discerned other intertextual chimes in the adaptations of *L'eau des collines*; finding in 'the lush colour, the sounds and scents of the countryside before it was destroyed by intensive farming, the peculiar mix of Van Gogh and Elizabeth David that so excites the British middle classes' (Forbes in Vincendeau, Ed., 2001. 105-106). In identifying a familiarity with British Cookery writer Elizabeth David – author of *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (1950), and *French Country Cooking* (1951) - as a likely shared connection between UK viewers of *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des sources*, Forbes also served to emphasise the connection between the adaptations and Mayle's works, given the extent to which Mayle's Francophilia and his rapturous accounts of meals and associated lifestyles appear influenced by David. In the opening sentence of *Mediterranean Food*, David's reference to, and enthusiasm for, the 'colour and flavour of the South' (David, 1950. 1) seems a phrase equally applicable to Mayle (one could easily imagine this on a book jacket quotation!), to Pagnol, or to Berri's adaptations. As David's biographer, Lisa Chaney, observes, the writer 'was gifted with a consummate ability to evoke time and place and – significantly for the English, enticed by it for centuries – this place was the Mediterranean.'" (Chaney, 1998. xviii).

Whilst the adaptations were especially notable for their pictorial qualities, with Bruno Nuytten's BAFTA-winning cinematography attracting particular acclaim, it would be inaccurate to interpret this aspect of the films as simply an adaptive invention. Pagnol's lyrical, nostalgic, rendering of the Provençal landscape is strongly present in his autobiographical account of his childhood, *My Father's Glory & My Mother's Castle*, first published in 1960 before the publication of *L'eau des collines* but after the original film. With many of its incidents and locations clearly identifiable as the inspiration for parts of *L'eau des collines*, *My Father's Glory & My Mother's Castle* offers the reader a view of the country landscape as seen by Pagnol as a child that maps in many respects onto the idealising vision of his character Jean. Described by Pagnol as 'the most beautiful days of my life' (Pagnol, 1991. 83) his holidays there are marked by a close and sustained engagement with the landscape – walking, watching, listening, picking – and his account pays close attention to topography, geology, flora and fauna. Summarizing the influence of those holidays on Pagnol, Bowles observes that 'the

young Marcel's vacations in the countryside instilled in him a strong sense of regional identity and underscored the contrast between rural and urban culture.' (Bowles, 2012a. 11) Those same Provençal landscapes would also be used by Pagnol as a filmmaker, along with performers with marked regional accents, in many of the films he made through the 1930s. The inherently scenic potential of Pagnol's Provence, and of *L'eau des collines* in particular, comprised an opportunity and challenge for Berri to "faire du spectacle", as the director announced in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, rather than merely a village comedy (quoted in Ostria, 1986. 62)

One outcome of the massively successful adaptations of *L'eau des collines* was an increased interest in Provence as a tourist destination, particularly for British visitors. Abetted by Peter Mayle's *A Year In Provence* and its TV adaptation, which both centred on the rural and culinary charm of the region and emphasised a cast of quaint local characters, the effect of a type of tourism and property ownership inspired in part by literary and screen influences was becoming apparent by the early 1990s. Writing in *The Times* in 1992 Dominic Tonner observed how wealthy and trend-setting Britons were eschewing Tuscany – a perennially popular destination – for France; 'forsaking chianti for champagne'. In particular he noted that 'the burgeoning popularity of Provence is thanks, in part, to Peter Mayle-inspired fantasies of summer months spent sipping pastis in a café in Menerbes.' (Tonner, 1992) A year later, French writer Philippe Seel would explicitly link Pagnol and Mayle in a strident article in *The Guardian*, adapting the figure of the ubiquitous French aperitif to characterise Mayle in Provence as 'the happy Englishman who floats there like a blob of crème anglaise on a pool of pastis.' Responding angrily to the phenomenon of many local properties being snapped up by British buyers, renovated, and profitably let to other UK holidaymakers, Seel's criticisms centred on the inauthenticity of Mayle's view of Provence and its people. In particular, he pointedly described Mayle's Provence as an incompetent ersatz of that originally rendered by Pagnol:

'Mr Mayle, your Provence, so touching in its simplicity, is on the verge of being ridiculous. It does not exist. No more than the Provence of Brigitte Bardot and her likes in Saint-Tropez, or this pastoral Provence of Marcel Pagnol that you so clumsily try to recreate. Please understand that Provence is not for sale, and neither are we.' (Seel, 1993)

Describing relations between the transplanted English and locals, Seel asserts that 'it must be said that relations have slowly deteriorated and we are doing nothing to repair them: beneath our friendly and welcoming appearance, we southerners are in fact naturally suspicious.' (Seel, 1993) It does not require any great leap of imagination to discern, in this account, echoes of the relationships between villagers and the family of Jean Cadoret in *L'eau des collines*. Ugolin's mixture of friendly overtures and sabotage, and the village's studied silence in the face of Jean's travails – when a hint of local knowledge would make all the difference – may be traced in Seel's description of wily



Provençal contractors who factor into their costs the time they may spend feigning friendliness or sharing a drink with their English clients. Hall and Muller observe that antipathy to second home households, who may be perceived as ‘outsiders and even as invaders’ (Hall & Muller, eds., 2004. 3) is not uncommon, and Seel’s pointed reference to the Hundred Years War between England and France works to place the matter in a specifically adversarial context of conflict, conquest and occupation.

These intersecting, and sometimes clashing, interpretations of Provence reveal the extent to which what is at stake here is a ‘cultural landscape’ socially constructed out of textual representations. In *Society of the Spectacle* (orig. 1967) Guy Debord argued that real social life has been displaced by the ‘spectacle’, a social relationship between people that is profoundly mediated by images. Employing Debord’s concept in the context of forms of tourism motivated by moving image texts, Joanne Connell argues that a ‘distinguishing feature of film tourism is spectacle, and a landscape or setting made into a spectacle through film transforms into a cultural landscape that may be created, manipulated, reinforced, and contested’ (Connell, 2012. 1013). Equally, the construction of conceptions of landscapes and of the desire to visit them may also be identified in pre-film media, including, but not limited to, the novel. Jewell and Mckinnon (2008) point to the creation of new cultural landscapes through ‘literary tourism’ that both prompted the intention to visit and shaped the very identity of the place visited. Connell (1010-1011) gives the example of Walter Scott’s narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake*, (first published 1810) as an early instance of a text prompting literary tourism. Selling 25,000 copies – a record-breaking figure at the time for a work of poetry – the work was popular both in the UK and the US and is credited with launching commercial tourism in the Trossachs in central Scotland.

The ‘film tourism’ connection postulated here between the viewing experience of *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* (and/or of *A Year in Provence*) and the desire to visit or purchase property there is not proposed along the lines of a ‘magic bullet’ effect. Rather, the texts are seen to be operating in a busy media landscape, along with other competing and complementary forces, to generate both awareness and a positive impression of a place greater than that which existed previously. Fernandez-Young and Young contend that the ‘binary classification of visitors into film tourists or non-film tourists’ (Fernandez-Young and Young, 2008. 208) is not an especially helpful way to understand how films may encourage us to visit a particular place. A whole spectrum of activities with greater and lesser degrees of connection to film may fall under the rubric of film tourism. A visit to Disneyland, with its many film-specific attractions, may be said to be more deeply

imbricated in the phenomenon than, for example, tossing a coin into Rome's Trevi fountain (which might, or might not, be done with an awareness of the 1954 picture *Three Coins in The Fountain*<sup>1</sup>).

Film tourism, it is suggested here, exists – to varying degrees – in an amalgam with other forms of tourism, enacted as a cultural practice in ways that commonly do not reveal distinct fault-lines. Equally, it is clear that since the 1986 Berri-directed adaptations the intervening years have seen a more explicit acknowledgment by the tourist industry internationally of the capacity of film (and in many cases its antecedent literature) to develop a propensity to visit. In 1990 Butler argued that the influence of screen-related tourism would increase (Butler, 1990) and those expectations have largely been met. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001 – 2003) saw explicit endeavours to encourage travel to New Zealand in the years following, emphasising the country's unspoiled natural landscapes as the setting for Tolkein's fictional Middle Earth, and resulting in an increase in overseas tourist visitors approaching 23 per cent from 2001 – 2004 (Phillips in Fish. Ed., 2007. 150). The 'Braveheart Country' tag sought to promote Scottish tourism on the basis of the success of the 1995 film, while Cephallonia was the beneficiary of increased visitor interest following the publication of Louis de Bernieres' *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994) and its adaptation in 2001. Given the number of movies associated with film tourism that derive from literary sources, one might also speak plausibly of the phenomenon of *Adaptation Tourism* in which visiting is allied to an experience of both a book and a film. If film and literary tourism are understood as the desire to re-experience aspects of a favoured text, then adaptations afford the opportunity for its triangulation, including – for example – the opportunity to connect with places/locations that may have been elided in the inevitable compressing of events that occurs in most instances of the transit from page to screen. A corollary of this understanding is that film and literary tourism may themselves be understood as inherently adaptive; a deliberate engagement – like Cos-play and fan-fiction – that takes a source text as the inspiration for a new experience. Adaptation tourism might also be taken to encompass other forms of inter-medial activity. *Brunetti's Cookbook* (2010), a compendium of dishes from Donna Leon's Venetian detective novels (1992 – present), is precisely the type of text that could operate in the context of the Leon aficionado seeking to extend and augment their pleasure from the crime novels through a process that might involve 'primary' reading (the novels), 'secondary'/peripheral reading (the cookbook) as well as visits to specific Venetian restaurants, bars and markets named in the texts. Equally, the multi-textual and trans-media experiences afforded by spin-out texts allied to long-running series (for example Andrea Camilleri's Montalbano crime novels

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<sup>1</sup> Actually wading in would probably be done with a fuller consciousness of the famous scene in *La Dolce Vita* (1960).

(1994 – present), their Italian TV adaptations (1999 – present) and the now-predictable cookbook<sup>2</sup>) may also be said to be so comprehensive as to afford a type of ‘virtual’ adaptation tourism experience, similar to the non-visit to London undertaken by the narrator of Huysman’s *A Rebours* (orig. 1884).

The concept of ‘mental’, as opposed to actual, travel is firmly associated with Xavier de Maistre’s late Eighteenth Century book, *A Journey Around my Room*, written while under house arrest, as well as with the verb ‘robinsonner’, invented by Arthur Rimbaud and referring, in turn, to Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Incorporated into the inchoate field of psychogeography – a domain associated, though not exclusively so, with Guy Debord – the figure of the endlessly re-invented Robinson summons both the concept of the mental traveller on an imaginary adventure as well as the actual *flâneur* or urban wanderer traversing Paris or London. I Q Hunter specifically invokes psychogeography in his account of fan responses to the cult film *The Wicker Man* (1972) in which devotees visit numerous locations around Scotland which comprised the movie’s fictional setting. ‘The film has inspired considerable such cult tourism or psychogeography, by which fans invoke the ghostly historical valences of the film’ (Hunter, 2016. 15). In an earlier paper Hunter had also acknowledged the potential dual nature of the psychogeographical ‘visit’, in which participants’ involvement may be as either a ‘sofanaut’ or could actually involve ‘taking our cue from online guides to the film’s locations, reading up on some Iain Sinclair and J.G. Ballard, and scooting off to the M3’. (Hunter, 2013) Relatedly, Douglas Cunningham refers to the ‘cinophilic pilgrimage [which] is born of love (for the diegetic world of the film), loss (the apparent absence of that diegetic world within the realm of the real) and a longing to occupy/influence a space-time somewhere between the index and the referent.’ (Cunningham, 2008. 123) Evidently the type of responses to films discussed above, and especially the desire to experience film locations, intersect (if only to a degree) with the practices of tourism and second-home ownership analysed in this chapter. They share a sense of being an ‘excessive’ response, one that – in seeking a deeper grounding in a physical site - transgresses the bounds of viewer involvement planned by the makers of the texts. Equally, significant differences may also be observed. In terms of ideological orientation it seems likely that a not inconsiderable gulf would separate the second-home owner motivated in part by the Berri films, and the edgier peregrinations of the cult film psychogeographer drawn to grittier locations and frequently (though not always) to the elevation of relatively ephemeral or obscure movies.

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<sup>2</sup> Campo, Stefania. (2009) *I segreti della tavola di Montalbano: Le ricette di Andrea Camilleri*

## Nostalgia and Heritage

A many-faceted nostalgia is at work in the 1986 Berri adaptations, in the audience responses they stimulated, and in the phenomenon of increased touristic interest and second home ownership in Provence which they – in part – encouraged. Beyond the general cinematic tendency in which ‘the countryside is outside of, and lost to, modernity’, (Fish, 2007. 6) several factors conspired to help the films provoke nostalgia for different types of viewer. For French audiences, Pagnol’s national standing, the fact that the novels to be adapted had been bestsellers two decades earlier, and, perhaps most importantly, the ubiquity of Pagnol’s films on French television, all meant that the new films were already in a dialogue with a national past that was not merely restricted to the early twentieth century setting of the story. As Bowles argues, ‘already a cultural icon at the time of his death in 1974, since then Pagnol’s legacy has continued to expand through regular dissemination of his films on television and home video.’ (Bowles, 2012b. 391) In short, French audiences had grown up with Pagnol, and these new adaptations offered them a recapitulative experience that combined the new and the deeply familiar. The desire of British second home-owners to buy in France may also be interpreted in the context of nostalgia. Buller and Hoggart contend that such buyers were endeavouring to find a replacement for a now-disappeared British countryside – lost to the outward creep of the suburbs, and to the steady modernization of agricultural practices and the landscapes they engender – by purchasing in rural France. (Buller & Hoggart, 1994. 13) France-as-Britain had a clear precedent in filmmaking too, again as a means of conjuring an earlier, vanished, species of British countryside. Roman Polanski’s 1979 adaptation *Tess* – itself a proto-Heritage picture, produced by Berri, with high production values and a canonical literary source – had eschewed the real Dorset/Wessex setting of Hardy’s novel for location shooting in Normandy, Brittany, and Pas-de-Calais. Whilst this move also avoided the risk of the director being extradited<sup>3</sup> to the USA from Britain, the effect was to film *Tess* in settings more accurate to the novel’s Victorian era than those that actually remained in the UK. As with *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*, the cinematography of *Tess* was well-received. With a conscious evoking of the agricultural landscapes of Courbet and De la Tour (Pulver, 2005) the film’s diffusely ekphrastic pictorial properties, its painterly compositions that foregrounded the wistful beauty of both its female lead (Nastassja Kinski) and the landscape, were allied to a tragic narrative to evoke the satisfying melancholy that underpins nostalgia.

Nostalgia may be understood as a key component of Heritage Film. Focusing on a particularly British context, Andrew Higson defines these as a ‘cycle of quality costume dramas’ (Higson in Friedman,

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<sup>3</sup> Polanski was, at the time, wanted in the USA following a conviction for sex with an underage girl.

Ed., 1999. 109) and it is evident that many of the texts that have come to be grouped under this term are decidedly British in terms of their setting, source material, participants and production. A range of screen texts have been bracketed under the 'heritage' term, including: the films of Merchant-Ivory<sup>4</sup>; movies as diverse as *A Passage to India* (1984) and *Another Country* (1984); and prestige television productions such as *Brideshead Revisted* (1981) and *The Jewel In the Crown* (1984), many of which have dealt with the waning of British Imperial power and associated lifestyles. For Higson, the representation of an English past 'as visually spectacular pastiche, inviting a nostalgic gaze' (ibid. 109) is their principal connecting element, as well as a tendency to 'reverential use of picturesque rural spaces' (Higson in Fowler and Helfield. Eds., 2006. 248). Equally, other critics have drawn attention to the 'increasingly pan-European' (Street, 1997. 113) phenomenon of the heritage film. John Caughie described both *Jean de Florette* and *Babette's Feast* (1987) as examples of 'Heritage Cinema in Europe' (Caughie & Rockett, 1996. 186) while Street discerned 'heritage themes and stylistics' in Martin Scorsese's adaptation of *The Age of Innocence* (1993). For Ginette Vincendeau heritage cinema is unequivocally a European phenomenon that 'emerged in the 1980s with the success of European period films' (Vincendeau, Ed., 2001. xvii); her list of examples including the French adaptations *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1990), *La Reine Margot* (1994), *Les Destinées sentimentales* (2000) and, of course, *Jean de Florette*.

An analysis of Berri's adaptations of *L'eau des Collines* in terms of heritage film also connects usefully to the questions of place, property and ownership that have exercised this chapter. Michael Atkinson characterised many heritage adaptations contemporary with *L'eau des Collines* as 'entranced with the leisure of wealth' (Atkinson, 1998. 47) and even a cursory survey of heritage films points to the recurrence of desirable properties, fastidious attention to style and dress, characters who enjoy extended periods of recreational travel, and the general absence of work as either a topic or an implied means to fund characters' lifestyles. Rather, these pictorial/material pleasures are typically presented as the 'natural' purview of those who inhabit – and inherit – them, while an existence predicated on accumulated capital, interest, and rents is assumed, though rarely pursued as a theme. It is self-evident that the same cannot be said for the Berri adaptations. Even with the success of *Ugolin* and *César* at its height, with 'Les Romarins' secured and the carnation enterprise proving lucrative, this is nonetheless an existence in which the elderly César is required to work outside, and where coins are jealously hoarded in a hidden jar. At other times in the films work is presented, at considerable length, as onerous, debilitating and ultimately fatal. Yet the films' pictorial qualities also manage to out-gun this dimension of the narrative by presenting the physical

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<sup>4</sup> Though, of course, James Ivory and Ruth Praver Jhabvala were non-English members of that team.

context of the tragic story, the landscape of Provence, in a fashion that rendered it extremely desirable to viewers, helping to turn some of them into visitors. If *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* did not offer property fantasies on the scale of *Brideshead Revisited* or *Pride and Prejudice's* Pemberley, they certainly suggested - when allied to the depressed value of houses in the French country - more attainable dreams of Provencal holidays and second homes where one could enjoy the sunshine and vistas associated with the films, but without the unpleasant complications of their plots. This was not a phenomenon without a precedent; the 1972 film *Deliverance*, filmed in Rabun County, Georgia, was in almost every respect a very different film to *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* but also combined outdoor scenic pleasures with the theme of an unwelcoming response to visitors from a tight-knit rural community. A narrative of city-dwelling adventurers coming to the Chattooga river seeking white-water adventure but encountering sexual violence and a fight for their lives would not seem likely to prompt a 20 million dollar a year rafting industry with annual visitor numbers climbing from a pre-film figure in the hundreds to a modern day total in the tens of thousands. Yet *Deliverance* is widely credited with the effect (Welles, 2012).

### Conclusion

Connell describes how both literary and film tourism 'emphasise the interconnections between people, plot and place' (Connell, 2012. 1011). The longer term outcomes of the adaptations of *L'eau des collines* and of Peter Mayle's Provence-set stories, and of the audience responses they brought about, indicate how plots are not always subject to the control of their authors, how people and places can face unexpected change. Just as César and Ugolin discover that water cannot be turned off and on without incurring dreadful and unexpected consequences, so the interest in and popularity of Provence that was generated by these texts proved to have unplanned and undesirable results. Twenty years after the release of the films the owners of the real property used as 'Les Romarins' were still experiencing unwanted attention in the form of trespassers seeking out the house of Jean de Florette (Falconer, 2005), film tourists pursuing that specific physical connection with a cherished screen location. In the case of Peter Mayle, an excess of sightseers inspired by *A Year in Provence* led the author to relocate to The Hamptons in the USA in the mid-1990s (Steinbach, 1996), the very time his work was at the peak of its popularity.

"They're capricious, these springs!" (Pagnol, 1988. 330)

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