

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Time and Place Identity in Pierre Magnan's Provence

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Abstract:

Geographers and others recognize the power of literary works to illuminate and crystallize ephemeral aspects of place and region, including place identity. Literary geographers exploring place identity have often hinged their studies on evocative visual imagery, but explorations of how literature captures other experiences critical to the formation of place identity are comparatively lacking and merit further examination. Principal among these under-examined aspects of place identity is the way that understandings of time can contribute to place identity. Literature's ability to articulate nuanced and multifaceted descriptions of temporal settings within a single text is one possible means of exploring the relationship between an awareness of time and the formation of place identity. This essay explores how place-defining novelist Pierre Magnan (1922-2010) incorporates temporal dimensions into his novels in ways that conveys ideas of time as plural and non-linear, thus imbuing Provençal place identity with a sense of timelessness; a sense of enigma; and a sense of historical rootedness in both Provençal and larger French historical contexts and consciousnesses. Through careful close readings of a selection of Pierre Magnan's texts, this essay offers a case study of how literature might fruitfully be explored to illuminate more nuanced understandings of place identity. Magnan's texts reveal how pluritemporal notions of time are infused into literature in multiple ways, including allusions to historical events, an awareness of geologic processes, the use of local dialects, and careful attention to the way past and present times are paired together within the structure of the text itself.

Keywords: Place identity; time; regional literature; place-defining novelists; Provence; narrative space.

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Introduction

Geographers have long recognized the power of literature to contribute to understandings of places and regions, for they understand literature as a source and shaper of geographic knowledge and as a means to explore place identity (Salter and Lloyd 1977; Tuan 1978; Mallory and Simpson-Housley 1987; Brosseau 1994; Lando 1996). Literature's ability to offer insights into geographical concepts that have subjective and ephemeral dimensions—such as a distinct place identity—is particularly important in literature's ability to form enduring understandings of place and region. As Sheila Hones notes, however, early forays into exploring geographical concepts through literature 'has so far tended to concentrate on the visible dimensions of setting and landscape description and the mapping of plots and themes' (Hones 2015a: 80). This focus on the visual dimensions of a literary work downplays other ways that place identity is understood to be developed and deepened, be it through literature's engagement with places through other sensory experiences (e.g., Porteous 1985; Hones 2015a) or recognizing the role of time in the formation of place identity.

This essay discusses how literary representations of time can contribute to a text's ability to crystallize place identity. After reviewing my use of this research's conceptual underpinnings, I introduce Provençal novelist Pierre Magnan (1922-2010) and establish him as a place-defining novelist who shapes the way readers understand Provence and its place identity. Magnan's works highlight how Provençal place identity is intimately linked to notions of history and deep time. This discussion achieves two principal goals. First, it illuminates ways that popular notions of Provence are developed and articulated in literature through the way that Pierre Magnan employs multiple temporal dimensions in his works. Second, it contributes to ongoing discussions of how literary geographers might better understand how literary spaces are constructed (Hones 2015b; McLaughlin 2016) through paying close attention to the way that representations of time are written into texts as a critical part of narrative spaces.

Disciplinary and Conceptual Underpinnings

Literary Geography

Literary geography is an eclectic field, and numerous scholars from across a wide array of disciplines, including geography, have explored it along numerous lines of enquiry (Tuan 1978; Brosseau 1994; Lando 1996; Sharp 2000; Hones 2015b; Alexander 2015). Within geography, literary geography has been defined in works that range in scope from humanistic geography's recognition that literature has value in exploring of place and region (Tuan 1976) to critical geography's forays into understanding literature as a material artifact set in particular social and economic contexts (Silk 1984; Sharp 2000). Recent discussions that aim to reconcile the disparate research foci of literary geography suggest that literary geography should be understood as a field concerned with examining literary spaces (Hones 2015b; McLaughlin 2016).

In this essay, I principally follow on from discussions put forth by Hones (2011) and others (Ryan 2010) and utilize the concept of narrative space in my considerations of Pierre Magnan's texts. In its most simple articulation, narrative space is understood as "the physical existing environment in which characters live and move" (Ryan 2010: np), but Ryan suggests that such a definition needs more nuance, writing that "just as, in the theater, we can distinguish the stage on which events are shown from the broader world alluded to by the characters, in written narrative we can distinguish the individual locations in which narratively significant events take place from the total space implied by these events" (Ryan 2010: np). Ryan goes on to distinguish five hierarchical types of narrative space: 1. spatial frames, 2. setting, 3. story space, 4. story world, and 5. narrative universe. In this essay, I largely examine the way Magnan develops the first three levels of narrative space, for I focus on ways that Magnan articulates the immediate locations of narrative action, the general socio-historical-geographical environment of the narrative, and the spaces that are relevant to Magnan's plots through characters' actions and thoughts. In using narrative space in this way, however, I do not intend to isolate Magnan's texts from the other two levels of narrative space (story world and narrative universe), which incorporate the readers' real world experiences and the characters' 'beliefs, wishes, fears...and fantasies' (Ryan 2010, quoted in Hones 2011). I also do not intend to isolate narrative spaces from their larger social and cultural contexts of production and reception. Narrative spaces within a text do not exist in a socio-cultural vacuum, because they are written and read in place and from a particular point of view. Texts' production and reception, then, is akin to a dialogue, where the discussants include the writer, the reader, and the text itself. This dialogue between writer, reader, and text allows texts to have the ability to shape the world "beyond the book" by representing and shaping particular ideas about places. Both the higher levels of narrative space and the wider circulation of texts are important to remember because they facilitate the construction and dissemination of particular ideas about places, which can then become entrenched in collective understandings and perceptions of place.

Given these insights into the relationship between narrative spaces and the construction and consumption of texts, I understand the narrative spaces of Pierre Magnan's works to be foundational to a more expanded literary space, where readers draw from not only the texts themselves but also their own intertextual experiences to craft deeply entrenched understandings of what it means to be in Provence. Understanding how narrative spaces can express non-linear time and contribute to place identity, then, is critical to gleaning further insights about the nature of literary spaces.

A classical, vibrant, and perennial strand of research within literary geography uses a humanistic approach to engage with texts. Humanistic geography's rise during the 1970s sought to renew an emphasis on examining human experience with the assumption that humans are first and foremost creative beings that in their complexity defy easy scientific explanation (Entriken 1976; Pocock 1983). Geographers and others working within the humanistic tradition looked towards the arts as a means of gaining insights into human experience. It is no surprise, then, that humanistic geographers swiftly turned their enquiring gaze towards literary texts as repositories of human knowledge. Such explorations yielded a rich body of geographic scholarship that sought

to explore how literature conveys otherwise ephemeral experiences of places and regions (McManis 1978; Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991; Hausladen 1996; Kadonaga 1998). This body of scholarship understands literature as a source and shaper of geographic knowledge, a means of understanding place attachment, an articulation of territorial consciousness, and a means of understanding sense of place (Lando 1996). Collectively, these understandings of literature point to its ability to crystallize *place identity*, defined here as the meanings of place to a group of people that strengthen a sense of shared belonging (Blake 2008).

Understanding Place Identity

Geography's humanistic leanings and the cultural turn produced a body of scholarship exploring the ways that places and identities intersect, and one of the enduring contributions of research in this area has been the concept of place identity (Claval 2008; Antonsich 2010). Definitions of place identity are numerous, interdisciplinary, and often contested. Nonetheless, geographic understandings of place identity hinge upon several qualities. First, place identity is a means by which people collectively define themselves (Larsen 2004; Blake 2008; Arreola 2012). Second, symbolic representations of places are driving forces behind the development of place identity (Salter and Lloyd 1977). Third, place identity has a narrative component, where understandings of places are deepened by an awareness of their temporal contexts. Place and history, then, are intimately bound together (Ryden 1993). This temporal aspect of place identity also suggests that place identity is a fluid construct that is prone to change over time as events transpire and as they are remembered or forgotten. In other words, place identity shifts as views and attitudes towards the past change through time (Schnell 2003). Most recently, geographers have made forays into how notions of plural, nonlinear experiences of time help contribute to place identity (Brettell 2016). Grounded in a phenomenological approach, Brettell's work highlights how nonlinear experiences of time contribute towards understanding the pluritemporality nature of places, and he suggests that these experiences help construct affective relationships with place that are widely recognized as foundational to the process of giving meaning to locations (Tuan 1976; Antonsich 2010).

Projecting Place Identity through Literature

Given academic understandings of place identity and humanistic geographers' assertion that literary texts can effectively articulate specific place identities, questions surrounding a text's reception and impact is an important consideration within literary geography, for it offers insights as to how literary spaces help contribute to the world existing beyond the text. Cultural geographer James Shortridge's concept of the place-defining novelist is one means of assessing the potential shaping impact of an author. According to Shortridge (1991), place-defining novelists produce works marked by critical acclaim, local popularity within the regions and places they are writing about, and/or a geographically far-flung and numerically large audience. These insights have inspired

scholars to consider ways place-defining novelists represented places, and their findings offer powerful reminders that literature plays an important role in shaping place perception. Geographer Kevin Blake, for example, considers how Zane Grey's wildly popular dime novels fueled deeply entrenched and persistent visions of the mythic West (Blake 1995). Similarly, geographer Dydia DeLyser (2003) examines how Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel *Ramona* inspired a romantic vision of southern California that subtly inscribed itself onto tourist landscapes well into the twentieth century. Blake (1995) and DeLyser (2003) showcase literature's power to convey cultural landscapes that then write themselves into being, regardless of whether or not these imaginative landscapes are historically accurate. In his study of Ivan Doig's literature, meanwhile, historical and cultural geographer William Wyckoff (2013) builds and expands on Shortridge's framework through suggesting that place-defining literature also emerges from an author's ability to accurately convey their own experiences of a place. Authorial authenticity, then, matters in the way a novel may be understood to be place-defining — and the experientially based, raw creative power to capture place through literature is a critically important facet of the place-defining novelist.

Considering the Confluence of Literary Geography, Place Identity, and the Projection of Place

Anglophone literary geographers working within a humanistic tradition emphasize how literature crafts visual descriptions of the landscapes they represent, often through the use of evocative regional imagery. Although these visualizations are a primary component to the way readers construct a particular place identity through engagement with a text and have the potential to reach a large audience if the author exhibits qualities of a place-defining novelist, a focus on what can be visualized in a particular literary landscape often means that other fundamental factors of place identity's formation remain underemphasized and obscure within literary geography. Most recently, literary geographers have attempted to address these gaps in the literature through exploring ways that other sensory experiences, such as sounds and smells, are reflected in literature (Porteous 1985; Hones 2015a). One type of experience that remains obscure, however, is that of an individual's experience of time. In the following sections, I examine the works of Provençal novelist Pierre Magnan to illuminate literature's potential to articulate time in a way that helps further consolidate a Provençal place identity.

Pierre Magnan: Place-Defining Novelist of Provence

Critically acclaimed and locally popular Bas-Alpin writer Pierre Magnan fulfills all of the qualities of a place-defining novelist outlined by Shortridge (1991) and expanded on by Wyckoff (2013). Born in 1922 and raised in the former Basses-Alpes *département* of southeastern France, Pierre Magnan identified himself as “the last true singer of Provence,” and his local community recognized him as a premier ambassador of Provençal history and culture (Spagnou 2008). Magnan wrote about the landscapes and

people he knew best through longtime direct experience of Provence's landscapes, and he recognized the power of literature to shape perceptions of place and region, ultimately using his own writing as a means to promote his understandings of what it meant to be in Provence (Magnan 2005). Magnan's writing career was celebrated by literary critics and the local Provençal communities where he lived, and he enjoyed popularity amongst a numerically large and geographically far-flung international community. His works define particular visions of Provence through crystallizing a distinct regional place identity.

Magnan's first novel, titled *L'Aube Insolite* and published with Editions Julliard when Magnan was twenty-four, was critically acclaimed but did not garner much public attention. By 1950 Rene Julliard, head of Editions Julliard, ceased printing *L'Aube Insolite*, sending Magnan a letter that read 'You will write good books when you are sixty,' (Spagnou 2008). Magnan kept writing, submitting three further novels for publication, though all were rejected. Magnan's writing was a hobby until his forced retirement from a refrigeration company, when he took up writing full time. It paid off: in 1977, at age 56, Magnan fulfilled Julliard's premonition and published *Le Sang des Atrides*.

Le Sang des Atrides was well received among the public and critics alike. Its first year sold over 100,000 copies, and in 1978 it received the *Prix du Quai des Orfèvres* for its mass popularity and critical acclaim. Set in the city of Digne-les-Bains, *Le Sang des Atrides* establishes several hallmarks of Magnan's subsequent works. It tells a story about a series of murders where intrigue is made more complex by local resistance to speak out against neighbors and a plot that is driven and deepened by its connections to local history. Significantly, Magnan writes about the Provençal landscape in a way that gives it agency, for it plays a major role in driving the plot. *Le Sang des Atrides* also introduces Commissaire Laviolette, one of Magnan's central protagonists who appears in nearly every one of his mystery novels. Bas-Alpin by birth, detective by trade, and deeply in love with the Bas-Alpin landscapes with which he is intimately familiar, Laviolette captures readers' imaginations, and the character is central in many of Magnan's later novels (Vitaglione 2000; Macke 2013).

The success of *Le Sang des Atrides* gave Magnan the impetus to continue writing. In 1978 he published another Laviolette novel, *Commissaire dans la Truffière*. *Commissaire dans la Truffière* catapulted Magnan onto the global stage of mystery and crime writers. In 1983 it was translated into Swedish and awarded the prestigious Martin Beck prize as the best foreign novel of the year; by 2008 it had been translated into English as *Death in the Truffle Wood* and marketed as a mystery of Provence. In 1979 and 1980 Magnan continued Laviolette's detective work with *Le Secret des Andrónes* and *Le Tombeau d'Hélios* (Lanskin 1995). In 1982 Magnan published *Les Charbonniers de la Mort*, set during the 19th century in the Lure region of the Haute-Alpes *département* and introducing Laviolette's ancestors. After this novel, Magnan diverged from his Laviolette series to introduce a second series set in Provence (Vitaglione 2000).

La Maison Assassinée [*The Murdered House*] introduces Magnan's second major protagonist, Séraphin Monge. Set at the end of World War I, *La Maison Assassinée* follows Séraphin's attempts to avenge his family's deaths, who were seemingly murdered by their neighbors. With its twisted plot and rich, evocative descriptions of a Provence

steeped in mystery and violence, *La Maison Assassinée* was a popular and critical success, as it received the Prix RTL-Grand Public and initial printings sold over 500,000 copies. Magnan closed his Monge series with *Le Mystère de Séraphin Monge* (1992). Concurrent to writing and publishing his Monge series, Magnan expanded the Laviolette series when he published *Les Courriers de la Mort* [*The Messengers of Death*].

Magnan continued publishing mystery novels while expanding into other genres during the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. His writing remained fundamentally rooted in Bas-Alpin landscapes, and the power and mystery of Provence's natural landscapes are recurrent themes in his works. Autobiographies, travel guides, Provençal literary histories, and biographies marked his later writings, but Magnan never left behind his beloved Commissaire Laviolette, and he continued to write and publish Laviolette novels during the final years of his life. His later works include *Les Secrets de Laviolette* (1992), which received the Prix de la Nouvelle Rotary Club, *La Folie Forcalquier* (1995), and *Le Parme Convient à Laviolette* (2000). Pierre Magnan died on 28 April 2012 in Voiron, France, at age 89. His final novel had been published two years before: *Élégie Pour Laviolette*.

Magnan's biography reveals his status as a prolific place-defining novelist, which means that his works project a sense of what it means to be in Provence to a numerically large and geographically far-flung audience. Magnan's works showcase literature's potential to engage with readers and shape the way that they understand a particular place, for his writings are well received by Provençal and French readers alike and are projected onto a global stage through critically acclaimed translations into multiple languages. The net effect of this popularity is that the ways in which he writes about Provence critically (yet subtly) shape the ways that a Provençal place identity is constructed in the world 'beyond the book,' and are fundamental to the construction of a broadly conceived literary space. In other words, through the popular consumption of Magnan's narrative spaces, literary representations of Magnan's Provence are inscribed into larger collective understandings of Provence and its landscapes. Magnan's texts offer a case study revealing ways narrative spaces can articulate otherwise ephemeral aspects of place experiences, such as representations of time, in a way that can help crystallize a Provençal place identity.

Time and Place Identity in Magnan's Provence

Place identity is crafted from a 'deeply known and felt awareness of the things which happened there,' (Ryden 1993: 63). Ryden's insights about how past events influence place identity suggests that ephemeral, intangible experiences can shape place identity. Similarly, Lowenthal (1975) writes that a sense of historical continuity anchors identity. Significantly, through suggesting that history can 'live simultaneously on a number of levels,' Ryden alludes to the idea that time can be conceived of as pluritemporal or non-linear (Ryden 1993: 64). Recent works in cultural geography use the framework of memory studies to examine how understandings of a place's historical contexts contribute to that place's collective meanings (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004), but these

studies tend to place emphasis on the ways that the politics of remembering and forgetting play out through the presence or absence of tangible landscape features (Schein 2006). More recently, however, geographers have begun to investigate ways to understand how an awareness of pluritemporality and non-linear time in a particular place is critical in the process of formulating place identity, though their methods and conclusions are often difficult to project onto a public stage and defy easy assimilation into collective understandings of place (DeSilvey 2006; Brettell 2016).

These methodological difficulties in examining how pluritemporality and non-linear time shapes place identity represent a challenge that can be fruitfully explored through examining literature. Literature's ability to articulate time in a way that encourages readers to think of the places they read about with an awareness of multiple temporal settings occurring simultaneously within the narrative space of a text makes it an ideal medium through which geographers can consider place identity in a more nuanced way. Taken collectively, Pierre Magnan's works offer an ideal case study to explore the relationship between texts' representations of time and the development of a particular place identity, because he deliberately uses notions of temporality to develop Provençal place identity as a region imbued with timelessness and enigma. Magnan describes time in two primary ways, as he writes with an awareness of both geologic deep time as well as historical time. In doing so, Magnan treats time at a variety of temporal scales, all of which converge and overlap as his plots unfold and produce a pluritemporal and non-linear experience of time. Through this non-linear organization of time in his texts, Magnan produces an overarching sense of timelessness that comes to be inextricably bound into what it means to experience Provençal landscapes. Furthermore, Magnan's deeply felt awareness of human history as it is inscribed in his characters' thoughts and actions and articulated in omniscient 'views from nowhere' is an essential part of understanding Provençal place identity, as it connects Provence to a larger French identity as well as establishes its own local place identity.

Geologic Deep Time

Magnan defines the quintessential Provençal natural landscape as the interior mountains of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur administrative region. Dominated by the iconic peaks of the Montagne de Lure, Mont Ventoux, and La Tête de L'Estrop, Magnan's Provence is a harsh landscape where forces of nature dominate and shape the lives of the Provençaux who struggle to eke a living from its earth. Magnan's evocative descriptions of Provençal landscapes illustrate and rely upon his long familiarity with life in the region and produce a rich visual tableau upon which he sets his understandings of what it means to experience it. Significantly, Magnan shows familiarity with the landscape through writing with a keen awareness of Provence's topography and its geologic processes, including the concept of geologic deep time.

Many of Magnan's works draw on his understandings of geologic processes, including earthquakes (Magnan 1999) landslides (Magnan 2003), floods (Magnan 2005) and erosion (Magnan 2008). Although at times swift, such as a landslide that swallows a

character in *Beyond the Grave*, these processes are generally presented as cyclical and operating at time scales measured in centuries and millennia rather than years and decades (Magnan 2003: 54). In *Death in the Truffle Wood*, for example, Magnan writes that through flood, drought, landslides, and storm, the land ‘may have taken a thousand years’ to drive people from living in the countryside:

Everything spoke to him of love from the depths of this poor, harsh countryside: four gnarled apple trees in an abandoned garden, old hay spilling out of a barn, which no longer had a flock to feed. Sometimes it would be a hillside farm still being worked...Sometimes he would feel it going through a hamlet plunged in deep shadows...They were the feeble signs of life in a land that had slowly gotten the better of its inhabitants one after the other—it may have taken a thousand years—through bad harvests, bad treatments, landslides, flooding...a land that tried to get rid of them like unwelcome lice, through misfortune, death, and too many children. (Magnan 2006: 70)

Several critical insights about time’s role in Magnan’s understandings of Provence can be gleaned from this passage. Although the passage itself only explicitly references a time scale once (through suggesting that the landscape operates on a millennial scale), a sense of deep time is subtly inscribed in the rest of the passage. ‘Depth’ is explicitly attributed to Provence’s countryside, and this can be interpreted in two overlapping ways. First, there is the idea that Provençal landscapes have depth in their physical remoteness and inaccessibility, as supported by Magnan’s description of a landscape largely devoid of humanity save for the ruined farmsteads, abandoned gardens, and memories that they left behind. This same description, however, supports a second interpretation that brings the notion of depth into conversation with a sense of time.

The temporal dimension of the countryside’s depth is evident in Magnan’s discussion of human abandonment of the landscape. The passage shows that processes of abandonment are neither immediate nor instantaneous. Instead, this abandonment of farmsteads and gardens occurred through repeated cyclings of ‘bad harvests, bad treatment, landslides, and floods’ (Magnan 2006: 70), and natural landscape processes have slowly and methodically forced the decline of these humanized landscapes. Implied is that any single natural event might be overcome or weathered by those who experience it, but the repeated arrivals of poor harvests, overworked soils, landslides, and floods that come with the passage of time have all made the countryside’s abandonment almost inevitable: for those Provençaux who struggled to eke a living from the landscape, the cumulative effects of time is too much to overcome.

Another way this passage reveals an articulation of time is in its subtle treatment of the abandonment process. The gradual abandonment of the humanized landscape is paired with an equally gradual process of natural reclamation, where what once was firmly under human control slowly becomes a part of a non-human landscape. The apple trees, untrimmed, grow gnarled; the barn and its stock of hay are exposed to the elements and begin to decay. Even the small hamlet described in the passage is in a sense reclaimed from human control, for its status as being ‘plunged’ into shadows hearkens

back to the idea of the landscape possessing a sense of depth. Furthermore, nature's reclamation of the landscape (and the associated time scales it takes for nature to reclaim it) is given a moral qualifier and gives structure to the relationships between humans and nature. Magnan's description of a landscape that 'had gotten the better' of its human inhabitants—which are further likened to 'unwelcome lice'—suggests that it is proper and right for the natural landscape to be a pre-eminent part of a Provençal place identity. Here, the links between deep time scales, natural processes, and human abandonment ('it may have taken a thousand years') are brought into high relief, and it is clear that not only will nature remain a powerful shaping force in Provence's place identity, but it will also retain power over those Provençaux who remain living there (Magnan 2006: 70).

Other instances of deep time occur throughout Magnan's works. In another passage, for example, Magnan likens the centuries-long cycles of erosion to a shrug of the landscape (Magnan 2008: 70-1). His descriptions of the Durance River and Provence's topographic relief take on even greater time scales, where the Durance River's stones are polished round over millions of years, and hills are simply described as being part of *l'éternité*, or otherwise suspended in time (Magnan 2005; 2008). In both these instances, the time scales involved are measured in a way that underscores the permanent presence of nature as a powerful shaping force in Provence's landscapes.

Magnan's use of deep time is significant for Provençal place identity because of the implied contrast it makes between human and natural time scales and the effect this has on human perceptions of natural landscapes. First, through emphasizing slow-moving geological processes and describing the landscape as being eternal, Provençal natural landscapes and their place identities are imbued with a sense of eternity or timelessness. When paired with the notion that natural landscapes are a dominant entity in Provence and central to its identity, this sense of a timeless landscape is critical to understanding what it means to be in Provence. Moreover, because Magnan's landscapes exist and operate at time scales far beyond that of an individual's life span, Provençal place identity is imbued with a sense of the enigmatic, for Provençal landscapes will always have more secrets than an individual can reveal through experiencing them directly. Provence's enigmatic landscapes are perhaps best captured and most explicitly referenced by Magnan through his character Laviollette, whose love of Provence's wild landscapes is grounded in contemplating its mystery and age:

Laviollette spent some time contemplating the elements of this stone enigma where sounds, colors, and shapes combined with the noise of the river to make a man understand what cold eternity might feel like. (Magnan 2008: 73)

In this passage, the deep place attachment found throughout Magnan's works (e.g. Magnan 2005; 2006: 70) is grounded in the idea that Provençal landscapes are fundamentally mysterious, and that, furthermore, only through experiencing and 'contemplating' these landscapes first hand and for 'some time' can an individual begin to appreciate the mysteries the landscape holds.'

Historical Time Scales

Four distinct historical time periods stand out in Magnan's writing. His Monge series finds its temporal focus in the first half of the twentieth century. *The Murdered House* finds its setting during the immediate aftermath of World War I (1918-1921), while *Beyond the Grave* picks up where its predecessor left off in 1921 and follows through the years leading up to the liberation of southern France in 1944. Its final chapters allude to events in the 1970s and 1980s, and offer epilogues for the characters' lives. While the Séraphin Monge series' setting is made explicit at major plot points, Magnan's other works have settings with temporal dimensions that are more difficult to establish. His Laviolette mysteries are set in the late twentieth century, but readers must use minor contextual clues, such as references to events of global and national significance, to fix their temporal setting in the 1970s and 1980s (Magnan 1977; 2008).

Taken collectively, Magnan's works cover an exceptionally long period of historical time. Both of the World Wars, the 1970s, and the 1980s are all within living memory of Magnan's characters. Séraphin Monge, for example, is a veteran of World War I, and the war's consequences linger on in social memory because of the absence of young men, the extended mourning of families, and the horrific physical scars left on many of the veterans (Magnan 2010). Another significant character of the Monge series, Marie, grows up as a teenager during World War I, is a mother in World War II, and lives into her eighties or nineties during the latter half of the twentieth century. Provençaux social memory vis-à-vis the French Resistance of World War II is a significant point around which many of Magnan's plots revolve (Magnan 2003). Laviolette is a former *maquisard* who fights across France as part of the Resistance, and he is emotionally broken by the liberation of southern France in 1944 (Magnan 2010). Laviolette's character underscores the central position the French Resistance and World War II have in Provençal place identity, for his wartime experiences and memories often inform his investigations, help (or haunt) him at critical moments in the plot, and give him the social capital he needs to speak to reticent local Provençaux (Magnan 1977; 2003; 2008).

Magnan's temporal settings are made more complex through allusion to historical events far beyond the living memory of his characters. Particularly important are references to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for they contribute to Provence's historical continuity and Magnan's plots (Magnan 2003, 2006; 2010). In *The Murdered House*, for example, gold stolen during the eighteenth century provides impetus for the murder of the Monge family, setting off the events of the novel and its sequel (Magnan 2010). Even when Magnan's plots do not draw impetus from these eras, numerous references to them complicate Provence's contemporary cultural landscape. One character, for example, is repeatedly described as looking like 'Robespierre *mal poudré* [poorly powdered],' (Magnan 1977: 27) and wears a distinctive nineteenth century carrick coat (Magnan 2006). In another instance, Magnan likens Laviolette and a companion to Napoleonic soldiers moving through snow at the 1812 Battle of Berenzina (Magnan 1977). By interjecting these historical allusions into the course of the narrative, Magnan

momentarily destabilizes his spatial frames and settings with reference to others times and places.

These references to major historical events clearly illustrate how Provence's past informs its present and develops Provence's long historical continuity. More significantly, however, these historical events show how Provence is caught up in a larger French identity. Allusions to the French Revolution, World War I, World War II, the occupation of France, and the Napoleonic Wars all help establish the setting and are critical parts of Magnan's story space, but these events are widely recognized as foundational to the development of French national identity. In this way, Provence's place identity is intimately bound into understanding it as a part of France. Tempering this pan-Gallic identity, however, are temporal references intended to reinforce a distinctly Provençal identity, one rooted in understanding the temporal dimensions of both its cultural landscapes and its distinct linguistic identity.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate Magnan's development of a distinct Provençal place identity through landscape and language lies in his treatment of ruins. Magnan frequently references ruins as iconic parts of Provence's rural landscapes, serving as backdrops to his spatial frame and settings. In *Beyond the Grave*, however, Magnan gives a ruined *mas*, or Provençal farmhouse, a voice and point of view. The ruin bears witness to the lives of Provence's people and blends their stories into a continuous narrative that blends together past and present:

The only thing still intact from the farm I used to be is the big wash trough, the *bugadière*. ... I can remember. I can still see the last time the last woman piled all her winter sheets behind these planks to do her washing. We would whisper to each other on the wind at night, from one ruin to another. ... Listen! I've seen them [the people and their stories] all. (Magnan 2003: 198)

The ruins' narrative is significant for Provençal identity in three major ways. First, the ruin itself is a distinctly landscape Provençal feature, as a *mas* is an iconic component of southern French rural landscapes. Second, through having the ruin employ archaic Provençal words such as *bugadière*, Magnan highlights a Provençal identity distinct from that of a larger French identity. Other geographers (e.g. Wyckoff 2013) have recognized the power of using vernacular language in literature to convey a regional identity and to connect the past to the present. In Magnan's texts, vernacular language is deliberately used to heighten regional identity: in an interview Magnan states that he uses archaic and untranslated Provençal words to underscore Provençal identity and develop Provence and its culture as mysterious and impenetrable to outsiders (Gradeler 2001). Here, untranslated vernacular vocabulary heightens a sense of the mysterious because the meaning of Provençal words must be pieced together from the contexts in which they appear in the text. Thus, the readers experience a sense that they are "outside" a full understanding of what is occurring within the text's narrative.

Magnan's use of Provençal words, however, also shapes and understanding of Provence's historical continuity. Magnan's interview with Linda Gradeler, upon being asked if he spoke Provençal, is revealing:

Oui, je parle le provençal. Mais, attention, je ne l'écris pas. La langue que je parle est uniquement orale. C'est-à-dire que c'est une transmission de génération à génération [...] C'est une langue orale transmise de père en fils et qui n'avait pas des règles précises. Elle avait des règles autrefois, mais ces règles s'étaient perdues. Il n'y avait plus que l'oralité...(Gradeler 2001: 116)

Magnan's reflections on Provençal language helps connect his use of Provençal vernacular to his understanding of Provence's historical continuity. As an oral language, Provençal is transmitted across generations and from father to son—and furthermore, this transmission occurs gradually and with inevitable loss as the language's rules are forgotten through time. The occurrence of untranslated Provençal vernacular in Magnan's texts and his use of them to mark Provence's place identity, then, serve two purposes. First, they imbue Provence with an aura of mystery and impenetrability to outsiders. Second, Provençal vernacular language carries with it the temporal weight of intergenerational transmission through time, alluding to a distinct Provençal linguistic identity that has lingered on through a long history.

The third way the ruins' narrative helps link Provençal place identity to historical time scales is through the way it narrates the remembrance of past events. Multiple verb tenses appear in the passage and are linked to one another. First, there is the juxtaposition of present and past in the same sentence, for the ruin reflects on how the only material form 'still intact' from when it 'used to be' a farm is its *bugadière*. Here, the present status of its current material remains is inextricably bound to the past, complicating the notion of time as a linear phenomenon and alluding to the idea of multiple moments in history converging on one another. This convergence is further captured in the ruins' statement that it 'can remember' and 'can still see' events that have long since become a part of the past, such as the task of piling laundry prior to washing it. Again, the juxtaposition of present and past tenses within a single sentence captures and blends together two otherwise disparate moments in time and complicate the reader's understandings of time—and thus the ruin's narration effectively creates a sensation of pluritemporality.

Close reading of the passage describing the ruin deepens a sense of Provence's historical continuity while complicating the conception of time as a linear narrative. When considered together with the ruin's fixed geographical position in Provence's landscape, the story it tells reveals that time in Magnan's Provence is pluritemporal. Here, pluritemporality might be thought of as akin to a pool of water, in which the individual's experiences of pluritemporality represents a full immersion of self into place. The flowing and blending of events in the ruin's narration share a common fixed geographical location, yet the temporal distinctions amongst the events described are blurred and erased. In this way, along with the previously discussed historical references illustrating the convergence of the past with the present, Magnan establishes a narrative

space where readers are poised to experience non-linear time. In doing so, he reinforces notions of Provençal place identity as being intimately linked to notions of timelessness.

Final Comments

Within Anglophone literary geography, discussions range from examining literature as a valuable repository of place identity to understanding literature as an embedded artifact in a set of larger social and economic contexts. With the recent rise of cross-disciplinary scholarship falling under the banner of literary geography, however, there is an increasingly recognized need to create a common lexicon for practitioners of literary geography. Recent discussions highlight the concept of literary space as one that has the potential to unify literary geography's diverse scholarship. This essay attempts to contribute to that discussion through engaging with the concepts of narrative space and the way time is inscribed into narrative space as its primary anchors for analysis.

When wed to the concept of the place-defining novelist, the power of narrative space to shape place identity is subtle yet far-reaching. Place-defining novelist Pierre Magnan crafts a narrative space that relies heavily on descriptions of time to create a nuanced understanding of what it means to be in Provence. My examination of Magnan's works contributes to understanding how Provence's place identity is intimately linked to concepts of time by identifying ways that Magnan writes time into his works. In doing so, I illustrate how an author's treatment of a text's temporal dimensions are critical to the construction of narrative space, and I underscore the notion that one of the principal means that narrative space can contribute towards understandings of larger literary spaces is through the concept of place identity.

Magnan infuses his works with a temporal dimension in a variety of ways, some more subtle than others. Magnan destabilizes the temporal aspects of his setting and spatial frame with allusions to historical events occurring in French history, which serves to implicitly link Provençal identity to that of a larger French identity and serves to destabilize the idea of time as a linear phenomenon. Magnan's other treatments of time help construct a uniquely Provençal place identity and heighten a sense of pluritemporality. Magnan's treatment of both historical and deep time scales and their convergence in narrative space helps develop Provençal place identity. His use of vernacular language that defies easy translation, long lived characters, and lingering social memories of historical events build a sense of long historical and cultural continuity. When this cultural depth and obscurity is paired with and shaped by a powerful and enduring natural landscape, Provence's place identity emerges as difficult to fully understand and is subsequently imbued with a sense of the mysterious. Finally, through his creation of pluritemporal experiences that rely on the convergence of historical and deep time and the confluence of remembrance, language, and place within narrative space, Magnan inscribes Provençal place identity with a sense of the timeless.

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