



Artistic and literary places in France as tourist attractions

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As heritage and cultural tourism assume greater significance, the variety of 'tourist places' covered by that description has become more evident. Places associated with writers, painters and others can use those connections to promote a specific kind of image and to attract visitors. There is a general assumption that such artistic or literary places will attract the more discerning visitor and this is tested with reference to three small towns in France. The evidence presented here suggests that the visitor group is more diverse and includes both 'generalist' tourists and those who come to a place with a very specific purpose in mind. Among the influences upon the tourist perception and expectation are the ways in which the place is promoted, the nature of the link with an artist or writer, and the other attractions which the place has to offer tourists and visitors.

Keywords: heritage, literary places, artists' towns, place promotion

This paper addresses several themes which are of current interest in tourism. Its main subject-matter concerns the development of places which have literary or artistic connections as visitor attractions. There are many places of this kind and they invariably find mention in general travel guides and similar publications which seek to identify points of interest for visitors.^{1,2} One theme therefore concerns the kinds of visitors which are attracted to such places and the extent to which the literary or artistic connection features in their decision to visit. There is also a theme which revolves around the purposes of the place-promoters, who seek to attract visitors, and the type of image which they try to portray. Finally, there is some consideration of the range of literary and artistic places and the extent to which they might be regarded as specific or general visitor attractions. The study is thus concerned with cultural and heritage tourism and its development at selected places.

Literary and artistic places

Places associated with writers and artists have several kinds of attractions for visitors. First, they attract people who have an intrinsic interest in the personal life histories of writers or artists. The visit allows contact with places closely associated with admired

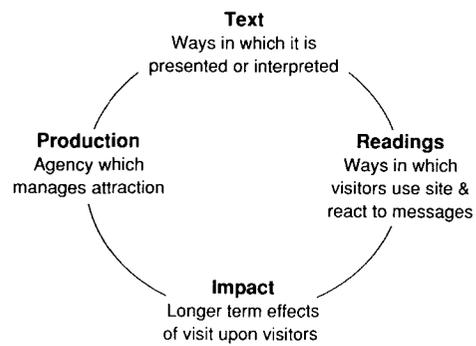
individuals, allows sight of, and perhaps the chance to touch, artefacts or memorabilia; the setting enhances the experiential quality of these contacts. The foreword to the book by Marsh,³ which offered a detailed guide to some 50 former residences of British and Irish writers, expressed this point well:

In these places, a visitor can still today walk out of a house and into landscapes which have barely changed since the writer drew breath from them and breathed literature into them . . . We walk in our writers' footsteps and see through their eyes when we enter these spaces.³

A second attraction of such places is that they have connections not just with the life of the writer or artist but also with the works which they created. There is a merging of the real and the imagined which gives such places a special meaning. Pocock^{4,5} studied visitors to what he termed 'Brontë country' and 'Catherine Cookson country'. In both places visitors were encouraged to encounter the worlds of the writers and of the novels but it was frequently the latter which became the most pervasive. Visitors to Brontë country were strongly affected by the moors and the imagery attached to them but emotions in crossing the moors were suffused 'less with the excitement of treading in the Brontë's steps, than with the thought that Heathcliff might appear'.

p 138). If visitors seek an imaginary place and its association with fictional characters, questions of authenticity arise in an unfamiliar form. It is, however, a form which is increasingly addressed by cultural geographers. Daniels and Rycroft⁶ argued that there were no simple dichotomies of objective and subjective, real and imaginative but 'a field of textual genres – the novel, the poem, the travel guide, the map, the regional monograph – with complex overlaps and connections'. Cosgrove and Domosh⁷ stated 'When we write our geographies we are not just representing some reality, we are creating meaning'. A literary or artistic place can be regarded as a place to which visitors attach meaning and it is the value of this meaning to them which draws them there. Meaning can be derived from reading a novel or seeing a work of art as much as from knowing about the life of the writer or artist. Discussion has focused on literary places but the homes or known environs of artists can be equally influential in attracting tourists. At Giverny, Normandy, the former house and gardens of the painter Monet attract visitors and many of them will also associate his paintings, such as the studies of water-lilies, with that place. Daniels⁸ noted that by the 1890s there were coach tours to 'Constable country' in the Stour Valley in Suffolk, attracted by landscape paintings such as the Haywain which had come to symbolize the 'essential England'.

There are other dimensions to literary and artistic places. Squire^{9,10} studied the reactions of visitors to Hill Top Farm, the former home of the writer Beatrix Potter, in the English Lake District. For many, the visit evoked meanings and emotions which were less connected with the writer and the content of her Peter Rabbit stories than with a nostalgic memory of childhood and family bonds, together with notions of Englishness, rurality and former lifestyles. The place acted as a 'medium through which a range of cultural meanings and values can be communicated'. In this sense the visit to a 'literary place' can correspond to that of a former home or the location of an intensely personal experience which evokes memories and allows them to be relived. A final attraction may be the place itself. Such places are commonly very attractive settings which, even without the literary or artistic connection, might draw visitors; the duality of general and specific attraction has to be recognized. There are also many heritage places which acquire specific meaning only because of a person or event associated with them. Without that connection, the place may be indistinguishable from any other. There are, for example, many churches in small towns and villages in the Paris region, but that at Auvers-sur-Oise is made exceptional by the Van Gogh painting. Sites of historic battles, such as Waterloo, are indistinguishable from surrounding landscapes but their role in some historic event



Source: adapted from Johnson, 1986

Figure 1 Promotion and interaction at tourist places

marks them out. These are the specificities and they are likely to attract specific types of visitors, those who have some extant knowledge of the connection and are, in Urry's¹¹ term, more discerning tourists of the *romantic gaze*. Other heritage places do not stand alone but are integral components of some wider setting. Notre Dame receives millions of visitor each year but for the large majority it is but one part of sightseeing in Paris; a *collective gaze* which has generalist purposes.

A further dimension is the role of the 'place-promoters'.¹² There is considerable recent interest in the theme of social construction of heritage or what Crang¹³ termed 'its process of creation' and part of that debate has relevance for the promotion of literary and artistic places. Huges¹⁴ stated that places are being fashioned in the image of tourism and place-marketing for tourism is widespread. The promoters of visitor attractions 'endeavour through the rhetoric of their visual and verbal communications to position readers and viewers so that they interpret meanings in the ways intended'.¹⁵ Both Burgess¹⁵ and Squire¹⁰ adopt Johnson's¹⁶ 'circuits of culture' model to theorize ways in which meanings are *encoded* by the producers or promoters of visitor attractions and *decoded* by visitors. Figure 1 offers a simple model of this process which has four stages. The point of *production* is where decisions on promotion, image and development are made; *text* is where these decisions are put in place; *readings* is composed of ways in which visitors use and react to their visit on site; *impact* relates to the longer term effect of their visit on their attitudes and values both with reference to the specific cultural feature and to more general issues of heritage or conservation. Each attraction is a 'text' which can be 'read' in various ways but the producer 'writes' the text with specific purposes in mind. Huges¹⁴ argued that places were being fashioned by a culture of consumption in which historical 'truths' were being manipulated to suit a particular image. For modern tourists the Scottish Highlands are presented in

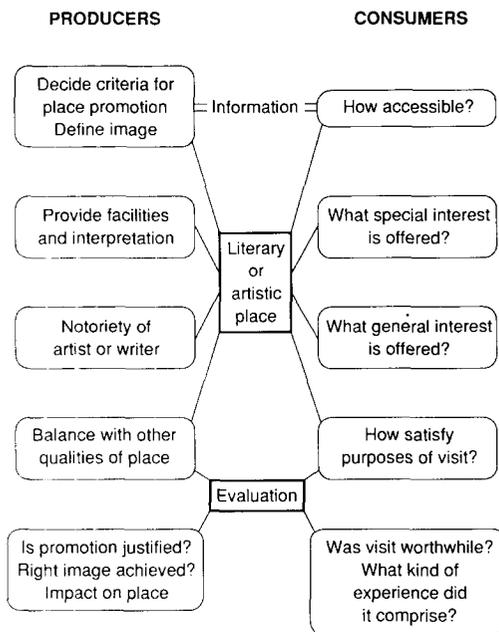


Figure 2 Promoting literary and artistic places

picturesque, romantic ways, yet they are landscapes which embody a history of rural poverty and human suffering. Place promoters have strong incentives to create what they perceive to be ‘good’ images or those which will attract visitors; recent comment on the attractiveness of ‘dissonant heritage’¹⁷ suggests that the word ‘good’ can be variously interpreted.

There are many kinds of literary and artistic places which are the objects of place promotion to varying degrees. In Marsh’s³ study of former residences of writers, there is a gazetteer which lists facilities, hours of opening, price of admission and such details and, in effect, acts as a visitors’ guide. These are all literary places which may be promoted but the extent and nature of promotion is place-specific. Figure 2 suggests a simple schema of the factors relevant to place promotion. The decisions facing managers or *producers* are the criteria for promotion and the kind of image which they wish to portray. By advertising and use of media they convey messages to the *consumers* or potential visitors. Their decisions are influenced by the perceived ‘pulling power’ of the artist or writer and the balance to be struck between this and other qualities which the place has to offer. Types of facilities to be provided, including interpretation, will follow these decisions. *Consumers* or visitors will be influenced by ease of access, by levels of special and general interest offered by the visit and by their expectation of satisfaction. As a result of the visitor experience, managers evaluate the success of the promotion and impact on the place, whilst visitors evaluate the gains they have made from the experience. Interpretation is a key factor. This may vary from elaborate multi-media

displays to basic directional signs. Each site faces choices on the extent of promotion and interpretation, the forms which these take and the messages which are selected. Purposes of interpretation include economic considerations, the need to raise money by attracting visitors and ‘cultural’ considerations, the aim of widening knowledge and understanding of a writer or artist and his or her works. To be effective, promotion must allow the visitors to obtain some tangible returns from their visit:

Places, therefore, are marketed as desirable products; not necessarily as ends in themselves, but because visits to them and the seeking of anticipated signs and symbols, are a vehicle for experiences which are to be collected, consumed and compared.¹⁸

In summary, literary and artistic places can be tourist attractions in their own right or as components of some more broadly defined tourist place. Because of the varying forms which their attractiveness can take, literary and artistic places pose interesting conceptual questions which touch upon themes such as authenticity, representation and experiential meaning. The producers of literary and artistic places are increasingly being drawn into normal promotional practices and face decisions on ways in which they present their products which in turn affect visitors and the ways in which they ‘consume’ them. As its empirical content, this paper will draw upon studies of three French literary or artistic places. Such places are well documented in France^{19,20} and the esteem offered to writers in France is reflected in street names and other symbols: ‘Only France has a literary culture that elects the writer as spokesman and invests literature with such powers’.²⁴ The evidence presented will relate to promotion and consumption with an emphasis upon the kinds of visitors who are drawn to such places and the extent to which their expectations and needs are being met.

Case studies

Each of the examples chosen is a ‘place’ rather than an individual building. The distinction is important as there are many literary or artistic places which fall into the latter category. The Jane Austen House at Chawton, Hampshire, for example, where the writer lived from 1809 to 1817, is her former residence converted into a small museum, a very specific place. Similar places include Dylan Thomas’s Boat-house residence at Laugharne, Dyfed, and 8, Place des Vosges, Paris, which as the home of Victor Hugo from 1833 to 1848 is also a small museum. The three places used to illustrate literary and artistic places here are small towns in France (Figure 3): Cabourg, a seaside resort on the Normandy coast, is associated with the writer Marcel Proust; Pont-Aven in Brit-

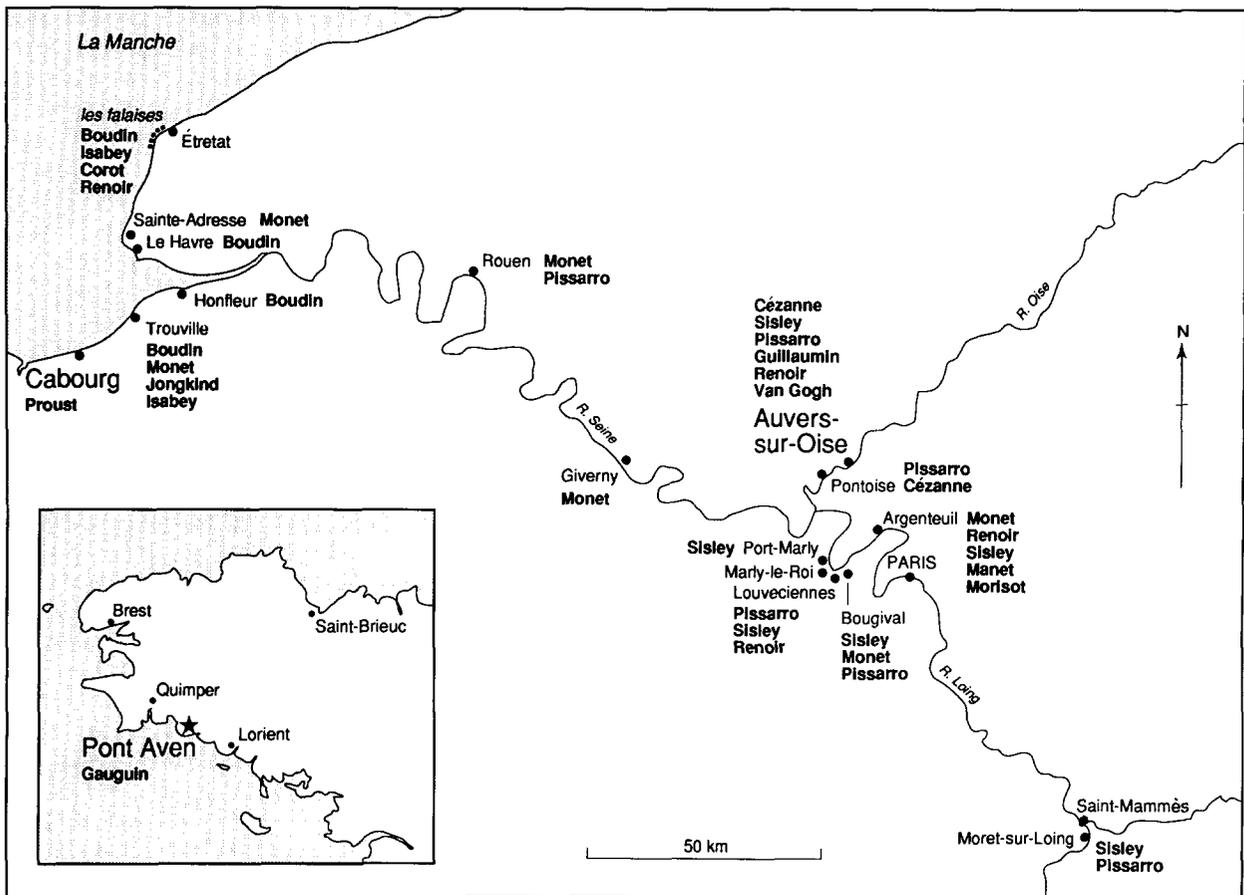


Figure 3 Literary and artistic places in northern France

tany has connections with the painter Gauguin; and Auvers-sur-Oise in the valley of the Oise north of Paris is linked with the painter Vincent Van Gogh.

In each of these locations, information on promotional activities by the tourism offices and other local agencies was gathered by correspondence and also by visits to the sites. Questionnaire surveys were conducted at each of the sites to provide information on visitors. At Pont-Aven, a single experienced interviewer was able to complete 35 interviews over a two-day period. At Auvers-sur-Oise and Cabourg, two groups of students, trained in social survey methods, conducted interviews over three one-day periods and obtained 203 interviews at Auvers-sur-Oise over two days and 151 at Cabourg during one day. Interviewers were asked to make estimates of non-response rates and these averaged at just over 30%. There was no reason to suppose that the samples obtained were not representative of visitors to the places on the survey days.

Cabourg and Marcel Proust

Marcel Proust spent several summer holidays at Cabourg between 1881 and 1914; coming initially as a child with his grandmother, he stayed at the Grand

Hôtel. There is therefore a real-life connection but equally powerful is the fictional connection as Cabourg claims to be 'Balbec', the resort which features strongly in his novel *Within a Budding Grove*, a component of his larger work *Remembrance of Things Past*.²² Most critics agree that Balbec is not one town but a composite of memories of Cabourg and other towns such as Trouville, Deauville and Honfleur. There is, however, a strong autobiographical thread in Proust's work and much does fit Cabourg. Certainly, of the Proustian places, Cabourg promotes the connection with greatest vigour and focuses both upon the setting and events of the novel and the life of the man. Marcel Proust in fact spent relatively little time in Cabourg and there are apartments in Paris and a house in Illiers-Combray far more associated with his real life. The promotion, which stems from the Office de Tourisme and La Société des Amis de Marcel Proust, has no explicit published policy but emphasizes qualities of the place, of the promenade, hotel and casino. Display boards outside the Information Centre contain quotations from the novel *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*²³ describing young men and women strolling on the promenade and the beauty of

Table 1 Key statistics

	Cabourg	Pont-Aven	Auvers
Occupations			
professional/managerial	15.3	40.0	21.5
white-collar skilled	20.1	34.3	25.1
blue-collar skilled	5.6	5.7	5.2
semi-skilled/unskilled	10.4	2.9	8.9
unemployed	2.1	–	1.0
student	13.9	5.7	18.3
retired	26.4	11.4	17.3
housewife	6.3	–	2.1
Age group			
15–34	31.5	17.6	39.3
35–54	32.2	44.1	35.8
55–64	12.8	20.6	15.4
65 and over	23.5	17.6	9.5
First visit			
yes	25.9	51.4	48.2
no	74.1	48.6	51.8
General purpose			
to relax	90.2	41.2	46.9
to be informed	6.5	11.8	26.9
both	3.3	47.1	26.3
Approve policy			
for this place	83.8	82.8	93.6
for other places	88.0	88.2	96.5

All figures are percentages

the sea as the sun plays on its surface. The municipality of Cabourg instituted a Marcel Proust Literary Prize in 1972 and has identified tourist trails which explore 'Marcel Proust's Normandy'. There is a promenade Marcel Proust, a *place* Marcel Proust and the Pullman Grand Hôtel, the pivot of Proustian Balbec, is replete with reminders of his former presence. In 1987, the management of the Pullman Grand Hôtel reconstructed Proust's room as it was during his stay, with furnishings of the period and other embellishments intended to reinforce the fact of his patronage. Proust is used selectively as one who found charm, pleasure and romance in Cabourg and his presence, both factually and fictionally, is used to advance the image of Cabourg as a resort.

Reactions of visitors to this promotion of Proustian Cabourg are based on a survey conducted in September 1993 in which 151 people were interviewed in the town. The target population was that of tourists or visitors but about 15% were relatively local people who had come to visit family or friends or to transact business. Literary and artistic places as examples of cultural and heritage tourism can be expected to have a stronger appeal to higher-income and more educated groups. A study of the Jane Austen House at Chawton,²⁴ for example, showed that 60% of visitors came from groups A/B, professional and managerial, and studies of visitors to heritage sites in Wales²⁵ produced similar results.²⁶ The Cabourg sample revealed a much lesser dominance of the A/B groups, 15.3%, and a more

generalized visitor sample in terms of social class characteristics. *Table 1* summarizes selected characteristics for each of the three case studies. About one-quarter of those interviewed normally lived in Paris, one-quarter were from other countries and the rest were from other parts of France. All age-groups were represented with 31.5% between the ages of 15 and 34, 32.2% between the ages of 35 and 54 and 23.5% over the age of 64.

It became clear on analysing the responses to the questionnaires that, whereas the Proustian connection was understood by some of the visitors, most had come to Cabourg for other reasons. Most visitors had not come to a literary place but to an attractive, seaside town where they could spend some leisure time. The Proustian connection was a very significant factor for a small minority, a pleasant footnote to their visit for many, but a fact of little or no interest to the majority. Less than 5% had specifically come to Cabourg because of the Proust connection, and about 50% had felt like a day out and Cabourg offered an attractive and pleasant environment in which to spend a few hours. Asked about the general purposes of their visit, over 90% had come to relax and 6.5% said that they wished to be informed or educated.

Visitors to Cabourg could not be described as literary tourists and most of the evidence pointed towards a very limited awareness of Proust or his works: 6.8% had read a lot of Proust, 47.7% none at all. This compared poorly with the Jane Austen survey²⁵ where 86.5% had read at least one of her novels. There was also very limited awareness of other places in France which could be associated with Proust: 12% said Paris, 7.3% Normandy and 5.3% mentioned Illiers-Combray. The last figure is indicative as there are strong Proustian connections in both reality and fiction and the town actually changed its name from Illiers to Illiers-Combray to incorporate the name of the fictional town in the novel. About 30% could identify locations in Cabourg which they linked with Proust, principally the Grand Hôtel, promenade and the square which bears his name; 36.4% expressed the intention to visit these places.

Overall, the evidence for Cabourg suggests generalist tourists. They were principally drawn to the town by the more conventional combination of seashore, promenade, gardens, old buildings and an attractive shopping centre. Nonetheless, there was an impressive level of support for Cabourg's policy of promoting the link between the town and the writer: 78.8% supported the idea and 84% favoured similar policies, where appropriate, elsewhere. Cabourg offers an example of a resort which will attract visitors on its merits as an attractive place; the literary connection is a useful adjunct which conforms with the style of the place and is welcomed in a positive but indiscriminate way.

Pont-Aven and Paul Gauguin

Pont-Aven is a small town in Brittany at the mouth of a large estuary between Lorient and Quimper. It became closely associated with artists in the last quarter of the 19th century and by 1880 two groups were established there. Eventually other artists came to Pont-Aven, such as Émile Bernard whose work was strongly influenced by Pissarro, and Paul Gauguin who arrived in July 1886. There was never a Pont-Aven school of painters (*école de Pont-Aven*) in the proper sense but various groups of artists lived there and the most important of these was that centred on Gauguin.²⁰ It was in Pont-Aven that Gauguin found new forms of artistic expression and a new style of painting.

After his return from Tahiti in 1894, Gauguin moved out of Pont-Aven to nearby Pouldu but many of his affiliates continued to live in Pont-Aven and to paint Breton life and landscape. Founded in 1985, the Pont-Aven museum contains a collection of these paintings and each year two exhibitions are held. The municipality has designated Pont-Aven as 'an artist's town' and has identified 'a painters' route' from Pont-Aven to Pouldu. There is now a clear policy to promote Pont-Aven in this way and Gauguin's 'Paysannes bretonnes', which depicts two peasant women in traditional working dress in a rural landscape, is the image most frequently used on promotional literature. It has the hallmarks of Gauguin in the faces of the women, the assemblage of fields, trees and buildings and sharp contrasts of colour.

Pont-Aven's policy has been most explicit since the founding of the museum in 1985, though the Town Hall was regularly used for exhibitions before that date (communication from Sylvie Bernardin, Office de Tourisme, Pont-Aven, 1993). Although there are specific locations within Pont-Aven which can be linked with painters, such as la pension Gloanec and Gauguin's studio, the municipality regards the whole town as an artistic place. As the inn and the studio invoke memories of the painters, the river, the hill of Sainte-Marguerite, the bois d'Amour, le moulin David and la chapelle Trémalo invoke memories of their works.

Although the key to Pont-Aven as an artistic place is its heritage from Gauguin, Bernard and others, it is home to many modern galleries and painters. Interestingly, the municipality believes that it attracts two kinds of visitor. First, there are those who are drawn by the reputation of Pont-Aven as a place and, second, those who already know about Breton art and Paul Gauguin and come to improve their knowledge. The artistic label clearly fits the image of an attractive, historic, Breton place.

A sample of 35 visitors was interviewed at Pont-Aven in July 1993. Results are reported as percentages though the small sample size needs to be borne in mind (see *Table 1*). Of those interviewed, 40%

were tourists from other countries; the rest came from many parts of France, and Paris, with 17.1%, was the largest single source. For about half of the group, this was their first visit to Pont-Aven though 47% of returnees had been at least three times before. Of the individual reasons given for the visit to Pont-Aven, 38.1% were related to art or artists. More commonly, the idea of general sightseeing was prevalent, often influenced by bad weather which drove tourists off the beaches and into towns. This interpretation was reinforced by responses to a question of the general purposes of their visit: 41.2% said that they had come to Pont-Aven to relax, 11.8% to be informed and 47.1% to do both. The way in which visitors used their time in Pont-Aven suggested something of this duality of purpose: 88.6% had visited the museum, 54.3% had been to other art galleries in the town and 17.1% had followed the 'route of the painters'. On the other hand, 71.6% had admired the views, 62.9% had looked at the historic buildings and 48.6% had just 'had a day out'. Asked which features they found of most interest, only about 20% mentioned directly painters or paintings. Aspects of the town such as the river, the port, the sights and the architecture featured more prominently. Only 2.9% thought that they had learned a great deal more about Breton painting as a result of the visit, though 51.4% thought that they had learned a little more. Again, 42.9% thought they had learned at least a little about Gauguin, and 65.7% at least a little about the Pont-Aven school of painters. Asked what the painters had portrayed, rural life (68.6%) and Breton landscapes (77.1%) were the strongest perceptions: people associated Pont-Aven with Gauguin (80%) and former painters (34.3%) rather than modern artists (5.7%).

Pont-Aven clearly has a vigorous policy to attract tourists and the image of an artistic place conforms with the town's aspirations. The Office de Tourisme monitors numbers of visitors carefully and has organized a number of projects to develop Pont-Aven as a tourist attraction (Sylvie Barnardin, 1993, *op cit*). Numbers of visitors to the museum reached 100 000 in 1986, the first fully operational year, but have reduced since with, for example, about 70 000 in 1991 and 50 000 in 1992. Highest numbers of visitors are in July and August and other indicators, such as levels of water consumption and hotel bookings, confirm this marked seasonality. The Office de Tourisme plans to organize more events with the specific aim of boosting out-of-season tourism; it favours promotion of the Gauguin connection as a name which is known and has some notoriety. The hallmarks of the Gauguin group, principally its innovative and avant-garde qualities, are thought to be advantageous as well as the focus on Breton people and landscapes. Among the visitors there was strong support for the promotional policies: 57.1%

were strongly in favour and only 5.7% were against. As for policies for similar towns in France, about one-third favoured guided tours, poster displays and conservation measures.

Auvers-sur-Oise and Vincent Van Gogh

Auvers-sur-Oise is a large village rather than a town in the valley of the Oise, east of Pontoise and north of Paris. Auvers is only some 30 km from Paris and, although historic and rural in its setting, it is easily accessible to large urban populations. It has a church built between the 11th and 13th centuries, the restored Léry chateau and a morphology of stone-built houses and cottages. The Oise Valley was closely associated with the impressionist school of French painting and several key figures lived and worked for short periods at Auvers. Daubigny came to Auvers in 1854, Cézanne lived there for 18 months from 1872 to 1874 and was known to a patron of the artists, Dr Gachet, who also brought Pissarro, Sisley, Renoir and others on visits to Auvers. Most famously, Vincent Van Gogh came in 1890 and stayed for just over two months until his death on 29 July. During that time he produced 70 canvases many of which, such as the 'Portrait of Dr Gachet', the 'Church at Auvers' and 'Wheatfield with Crows', are among his most famous works. Auvers-sur-Oise promotes itself vigorously as an artistic place and it is above all Van Gogh who forms the focal point of this activity. There is a designated trail through the village, poster prints of Van Gogh paintings set against the views which he depicted, an exhibition at the Auberge Ravoux, where Van Gogh lodged and died, and both the artist and his brother Theo are buried in the village cemetery. This image of Auvers as the 'village of artists' and the 'cradle of impressionism' is promoted strongly by the Office de Tourisme with help from voluntary groups. Major recent innovations have been the reconstruction of the Auberge Ravoux as a Van Gogh exhibition and the development of a theme presentation 'Voyage au temps des impressionists' at the Chateau d'Auvers. In both 1991 and 1992 visitors to Auvers were estimated at around 40 000.

The survey of Auvers comprised a sample of 203 visitors (see *Table 1*) of whom 46.8% normally lived in Paris and a further 20% in the *département* of Oise. Another 17% were from other countries and the remainder were from other parts of France but Auvers clearly attracted a large number of day-trippers who had travelled from their normal place of residence. Of the reasons stated for visiting Auvers, 40.2% were directly related to its status as an artistic place and a large majority of these specified the Van Gogh connection. Some 42.4% were visiting Auvers as part of a day out which they might spend with family or friends, strolling and admiring the views of the village and the Oise Valley. Asked about the general purposes of their visit, 40.4% said

that they had come to relax, 23.2% to be informed, and 22.7% to do both. The connection of the place with painters had influenced the decision to come to Auvers: 39.9% said it was of great, and 43.3% of some importance. Once at Auvers, many had responded to the 'symbols' of the artist: 52.2% had followed the Van Gogh trail, 72.4% had visited his grave, and 68.5% had studied the display boards and admired the views they portrayed. About half said that they had 'enjoyed a day out' which suggested a generalist view of their visit. Asked which features they had found of most interest, the list of items mentioned was long and diverse but just under a quarter said 'the grave'. This fact supported a view held in the Office de Tourisme that visitors may be drawn less by the paintings than by the pathos in the life of Vincent Van Gogh and the way in which he died (C. Millon, 1993, *op cit*).

There was evidence that visitors had some general familiarity with French painting at the turn of the century and with impressionism in particular. In response to a question on the kinds of subjects depicted in impressionist works, visitors produced some 64 different topics. Three main strands could be discerned: everyday life (21.8%), rural and countryside scenes (32.2%) and landscapes (28.4%). Some commented on the selective view of French life at that time with observations such as 'lives of pleasure, good living, wealth and leisure'; others recalled specific subjects such as the absinthe drinker, the dancers, the sunflowers, the haystacks and the church at Auvers, or picked out qualities such as light, colour, shade and harmony. Another question was designed to explore knowledge of French painters and other artistic places in France. Some 53 places were cited with clusters in Normandy, including Honfleur, Giverny, Rouen and Étretat; Provence, including Arles and Avignon; and Paris. Barbizon, south of Paris and near Fontainebleau, was also mentioned (8.6%) and Pont-Aven was identified by 3.5% of respondents.

Certainly the visitor group at Auvers had been influenced by Auver's image as an artistic place that was linked with Van Gogh. Effective use of interpretation at Auvers attracted the interest of visitors and drew them *into* the artistic connection. With a mixture of private enterprise and public endeavour, Auvers had built up its facilities designed to strengthen its image as an artistic place. At the same time, there are indicators that the attractiveness of Auvers as a place in more general terms, with its historic charm and beautiful setting, is a powerful factor in itself for visitor satisfaction. It is the link with Van Gogh, probably more the man and his life rather than the artist and his works, which distinguishes Auvers. Once people are drawn there, the place itself with all its attributes enriches the tourist experience. Of those answering the relevant questions, 77.1% wanted guided tours, 90.7% supported herit-

age conservation measures, 85.3% welcomed the museum and 72.8% wanted more information panels; 93.6% favoured this kind of development at Auvers and 65.5% strongly approved the idea of other places adopting similar policies.

Conclusions

This study has used the example of one literary and two artistic places in France to demonstrate some characteristics of cultural and heritage tourism.

The introductory section to this paper identified a number of general themes which were intended as context for the case studies. In summary, these were that artistic and literary places attract visitors because of the particular meanings or emotional values which people attach to them. These may derive from admiration for an artist or writer and his or her work, or have some deeper interpretation as Squire^{9,10} argued in her studies of Beatrix Potter. A second general theme was that of place promotion and the ways in which localities attempt to use a literary or artistic connection to attract visitors. The 'models' contained in *Figures 1* and *2* were intended to set out the promotional processes in the forms of schemata.

The case studies showed that for these places the concept of the dedicated artistic or literary 'pilgrim' found little support. Many kinds of people visit Cabourg, Pont-Aven and Auvers. They are by no means connoisseurs of literature or art and most have no detailed knowledge of the writer or artist. The evidence suggests that the large majority gain pleasure from their visit and although that pleasure derives from various sources, which include the opportunity to relax, to enjoy good company, to taste the ambience of a place and to 'gaze' at beautiful scenes, there is also for many the feeling that they have had some contact with a writer or artist and with the environments which they inhabited. Only minorities visited these places with a pre-existing sense of meaning or emotional attachment but many may have gained something of these attributes during their visit.

All three places have policies, principally implemented through their tourism offices, to promote literary and artistic connections as part of their image-building processes. They are trying to create a 'text' (*Figure 1*) into which the literary or artistic connection is clearly written. All three have succeeded in attracting visitors, though the precise contribution of the cultural dimension is difficult to estimate. Cabourg, with its baroque architecture and seaside location, was the least dependent on its cultural connection; many of its visitors were barely aware of Marcel Proust or his 'Balbec'. Yet the theme fits well with what Cabourg aims to be – selective and intellectual – and with no aspirations to cater for the mass tourist taste. Pont-Aven promotes

the image of Gauguin and the Pont-Aven school of painters and has made more substantial investments, particularly to its museum, to emphasize its artistic heritage. Again, the town has natural attractions and a generalist appeal but its 'town-of-artists' image sits comfortably with the kind of place it wishes to be. Auvers is the most dependent of the three on its images as an artistic place for tourism. Even though Van Gogh lived at Pont-Aven for a very short period of time, it has a unique claim as the place where he attempted suicide and died. Van Gogh's life and work is interpreted at Auvers in imaginative and memorable ways; there is a clear and legible text to which visitors can respond. Whatever the thoughts visitors might have on deciding to visit, the impact of the artist may well be the most powerful emotion which they experience at Auvers. Places which have these genuine links with writers, artists, musicians or other 'cultural' figures can develop them in sensitive and constructive ways to the advantage both of the place and its visitors.

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