

Fecha de recepción: 20 mayo 2018  
Fecha de aceptación: 15 septiembre 2018  
Fecha de publicación: 31 diciembre 2018  
URL: <http://oceanide.netne.net/articulos/art11-4.pdf>  
Oceánide número 11, ISSN 1989-6328

## On Why the Grass was Greener on the Other Side (of the Channel)

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### RESUMEN:

Este artículo aborda el fenómeno de la migración bidireccional a través del Canal de la Mancha, su motivación y su materialización. Centrado tanto en aspectos contemporáneos como en importantes acontecimientos históricos, el artículo hace referencia a la relación fluctuante entre Francia y Gran Bretaña, con especial mención a los flujos de intercambio de migrantes a lo largo de los siglos. Según Chovanec (2010: 74) los franceses se erigen como un exogrupo contra el que los ingleses despliegan su identidad nacional, debido a la intensidad de las relaciones históricas, políticas y culturales de los últimos mil años. La migración francesa hacia Gran Bretaña ha tenido lugar en diferentes momentos de la Historia y por diversas causas, aunque centrada hoy en día en motivaciones económicas. La migración británica hacia Francia, por el contrario, no estaba basada generalmente en la búsqueda de una mejor situación económica, sino más bien un estilo de vida idílico. En la actualidad, un tercer tipo de migrante se ha unido a los movimientos: ciudadanos extracomunitarios a la Unión Europea, potenciales pobladores que ven la orilla norte del Canal como una solución a su pobreza. En este artículo la migración bidireccional se examinará para analizar las expectativas transculturales, la integración y la adaptación a la realidad.

**Palabras clave:** migración bidireccional, franco-británico, motivación, expectativas, integración

### ABSTRACT:

This article addresses the phenomenon of two-way cross-Channel migration, its motivation and materialisation. Focused both on contemporary issues and important historical events, it will address the fluctuating relationship between France and Britain, with special reference to an interchange of migrants over the centuries. According to Chovanec (2010: 74) the intense historical, political and cultural relations over the past one thousand years have been so intense that the French stand as an out-group against which the English act out their national identity. French migration to Britain has occurred at different times in history and for varying reasons, but today mainly for economic motives. British migrants to France, however, were generally not looking for economic advantage; rather, they were searching for an idyllic life-style. At the present time, a third kind of migrant has joined the movement: non-EU would-be settlers viewing the northern side of the Channel as the solution to their poverty. In this article the two-way flow of migration will be examined in order to discuss cross-cultural expectations, integration and adaptation to reality.

**Keywords:** cross-Channel migration, Anglo-French, motivation, expectations, integration

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article will address the phenomenon of two-way cross-Channel migration, its motivation and materialisation. Focused both on contemporary issues and important historical events, it will address the fluctuating relationship between France and Britain, with special reference to an interchange of migrants over the centuries. According to Chovanec (2010: 74) the French serve as the most prominent reference group for the English: "The English-French historical, political, social and cultural relations over the past one thousand years have been so intense that the French—disliked in some respects and admired in others—stand as an out-group against which the English act out their national identity."

French migration to Britain has occurred at different times in history and for varying reasons. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant Huguenots moved to London, fleeing from religious persecution in France, and in the eighteenth century French aristocrats and intellectuals sought refuge in London in order to escape from the horrors of the French Revolution. During the Second World War, the Free French established their base in London. In recent years, young people have settled in the capital as economic migrants seeking employment opportunities not available in France. In fact, the number of French residents in London now amounts to a figure higher than the population of certain French cities, causing London's French residents to be classed as France's sixth biggest city in terms of population (Ash, 2012: n.p.). A French parliamentary commission of inquiry was established to look into what some sectors call an exodus of France's "lifeblood". In contrast, contemporary times have seen the attempts of migrants from non-EU countries camping at Calais in the hope of hitching a ride into Britain. Violent episodes like the one taking place in February 2018 highlighted once again the desperate desire among migrants to search for what they consider would be a better life on the northern shore of the Channel (Calais migrants, 2018: n.p.). This phenomenon is being used as a bartering issue between the two countries, and has had a major impact on everything to do with Brexit, formally requested in March 2017.

In contrast, the British who have moved to France until now were generally a different kind of migrant. They were not looking for economic advantage; rather, they were searching for an idyllic, often (semi-) rural

return to a simpler life, though with the added bonus of French food and wine, and often a somewhat better climate. In addition, British residents in France incidentally found a lucrative vein in writing about their experiences, and establishing a particular literary genre.

In this article the two-way flow of migration will be examined in order to discuss cross-cultural expectations, integration and adaptation to reality.

## 2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Norman Conquest of England in A.D. 1066 is a useful starting point in the discussion of cross-Channel movements. Although the invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy was not, strictly speaking, an invasion by France, the influence exerted by the Norman French-speaking invaders had an enormous effect during the following centuries on daily life, administration, property rights, territorial conflicts, language and many other aspects of culture and history involving England (later Great Britain, and later still the United Kingdom) and its nearest continental neighbour France. The Normans took possession of land, ousting Anglo-Saxon barons, and they were given all the most important positions in the country, including leadership of the church. The Anglo-Saxon language and culture were marginalised until their revival in the fourteenth century. By this time, the Normans had married Anglo-Saxon women and their language was in decline although it had left its mark on the development of English. When Henry II ascended the throne of England in 1154, his kingdom stretched from the Scottish border in the north to the Pyrenees in the south, covering all England, half of Ireland and the western half of France. There was, therefore, often friction between the successive kings of France and England during the Middle Ages, precisely because English kings owned more territory than the French sovereigns, with frequent escalation into open hostilities (Keen, 2011: n.p.). Little by little, English possessions in France were lost, until the very last one, Calais, was ceded in 1558. In a parallel way, between the extensive French territories of the mid-twelfth century and the loss of the last foothold in France in the mid-sixteenth, English language and culture freed themselves from French dominance. The period was a mixture of rivalry for influence over other countries, diplomatic and military struggles, and the gaining of ideological allies in the form of French Protestants who found support in Elizabethan England.

After the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day (1572), in which thousands of French Protestants (Huguenot Society: n.d., n.p.) were killed, London and the south-east of England provided a place of refuge to those fleeing from religious intolerance and the successive Wars of Religion. In the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries about 200,000 Huguenots left France, settling in several non-Catholic countries, and of these some 50,000 went to England (Huguenot Society: n.d., n.p.). In London, some thirteen thousand settled mainly in Soho and Spitalfields, where they put their skills in silk weaving to good use, setting up their trade and thus earn a living, since many of them had escaped from France with almost nothing (Spitalfields: n.d., n.p.). In March 1593 the House of Commons voted to extend their privileges on the basis of their being Protestant allies. However, they became the target of xenophobic attacks as a result of the so-called Dutch Church Libel of May 1593, when an anonymous poem was posted on the wall of the immigrants' London church, telling them to leave and never return. Their presence in London is well documented and even illustrated by British artists such as William Hogarth. In his *Modern Moral Series*, *The Four Times of Day*, Hogarth takes viewers on a walking tour through four areas of the city (Tate Britain: n.d., n.p.): in the morning he shows us Covent Garden, at noon we see Soho, in the evening we are shown the bourgeois area of Islington, and finally at night he introduces spectators to the taverns of Charing Cross. In the second picture, at noon in Soho, he depicts the presence of its French Protestant community. On one side of the painting, a "soberly dressed congregation spills out onto the street" from a church doorway, but in the very front are "a lavishly dressed couple, their posturing probably meant to indicate that they are French" (Tate: n.d., n.p.). The pious churchgoers, and the well-off French couple contrast sharply with the poorer class of English characters visible on the other side. Hogarth is famed for his caricatures, which is why the couple are dressed in such a seemingly exaggerated and even inappropriate way, and why they are "posturing" to show that they are different. This is his way of criticising through humour anything and anybody who is not representative of English culture. Even so, the visual clues also show that this pair of refugees are obviously living comfortably: they dress well, with their French fashions, which have ample sleeves and folds, using large quantities of expensive silk. What is also apparent is that they can afford to go to church in the middle of the day rather

than having to work all hours to make a living. The painting and its engraving date from 1736 and 1738, respectively, and show not only visual information (the church in the background is identifiable as St. Giles-in-the-Field) but also echo the attitudes of Londoners such as Hogarth. Not everybody was happy to accept French refugees, and many predicted that they would take away natives' jobs and housing; people complained that they ate strange dishes, or dressed in a peculiar way, but the fact that they were Protestant gave them compensating merits, and they were finally tolerated and considered respectable (Emsley: n.d., n.p.). The concentration of French-speaking immigrants in well-defined communities, rather than assimilation and acculturation among the natives, ensured that their culture and language survived for several generations. Though some Londoners complained that in some areas of London one could hardly hear a word spoken in English, many English gentlemen who were about to set off on the Grand Tour made a point of visiting the East End precisely to polish their language skills (Emsley: n.d., n.p.).

From 1792 to 1796, French Catholic aristocracy, intellectuals and clergy became exiles in order to escape the horrors of the revolutionary executions in France, and about 32,000 French refugees settled in London in this period. They mixed with the Protestant artisans and their descendants in established French-speaking communities, and received financial support from prominent Britons, many of whom were relatives. The influx of French migrants from this time onwards responded to "the rhythm of European politics rather than to the click clack of the weaver's shuttle" (Emsley: n.d., n.p.). However, many émigrés set themselves to work offering activities and trades in demand: French, dancing, and fencing lessons; they became tailors, hat-makers, or dressmakers; and they opened restaurants and lodgings. In this way, British culture, gastronomy and social life were enriched with the contributions of the French immigrant.

The next notable influx of French migrants occurred some two hundred years later. During WWII, the Free French fled to London to set up their organisation and to coordinate from there the Resistance in occupied France. A plaque outside their wartime headquarters in Dorset Square commemorates the achievements of those who played a crucial role in liberating Europe. The building, appropriately, now houses the Alliance Française. The Free French in London were led by General

de Gaulle, though for technical reasons his authority could not be recognised at that time by the British government because Britain had not officially broken off diplomatic relations with the existing French government. Nevertheless, he and his colleagues enjoyed full financial and logistic aid from the authorities and a positive response from the population. In the context of this wartime support, it is easy to see how, in the 1960s, when both of Britain's requests for admission to the Common Market were met with vetoes by De Gaulle, Britain never forgot the irony of being barred by France, the country they had helped to liberate, and whose leader had sought refuge in London when his country was occupied (Woodward-Smith, 2014: 228). This episode is part of the long history of fluctuating relations between the two countries over the centuries, alternating between being allies and enemies. Though differences of opinion are no longer resolved through military encounters, France and England still occasionally engage in wars of words or "slanging matches" (Henley, 2011: n.p.), especially with regard to the concept of European unity and each country's role in world affairs.

### **3. CONTEMPORARY EXCHANGES. DESTINATION: LONDON**

Today London is a focus of migration for a different kind of French "émigré", that is, young people seeking new opportunities not available in their homeland, and other types of economic migrants. The steady influx of motivated French citizens began to be noticeable in the last two decades of the twentieth century and has continued into the twenty-first century. The French Consulate in London estimated in 2012 that about 300,000 French citizens resided in the UK, mainly in the South-East and London, but also in other large cities, though precise statistics were unavailable, due to freedom of movement between EU countries, and the lack of obligation to register. This phenomenon led commentators to calculate that there were probably more French people living and working in London and the South-East than in cities such as Bordeaux, Nantes or Strasbourg, thus making London's French population a kind of sixth French city in terms of size (Ash, 2012: n.p.). However, more important than numbers were the reasons for this migratory movement, and a French parliamentary commission of inquiry was formed to report on this exodus. Due to political tensions within the French parliament there were differing opinions

as to the causes: Centre-right deputies maintained that the "lifeblood" of France was leaving because of the perception that it was impossible to succeed in France, that there was "an anti-work mentality, absurd fiscal pressure, a lack of promotion prospects, and the burden of debt hanging over future generations" (Penketh, 2014: n.p.). This negative view was refuted by the Socialist party, in power at the time, who believed that their opponents were trying to link the situation to the economic policies of François Hollande, President from 2012 to 2017 (Penketh, 2014: n.p.). Whatever the reasons, it seemed that the rise in the number of emigrants affected all sectors of society, not only young people but also entrepreneurs, and even pensioners. According to the delegate-general of the Union of French Citizens Abroad, young people were migrating to find interesting jobs (the unemployment rate in France was around 10.5 per cent, while in the UK it was 5.6 per cent in July 2015); businessmen complained that the French labour code was complex and that they were taxed before they began working; and even pensioners found they could also pay less tax by living abroad (Penketh, 2014: n.p.). A rather sensational and ironic item in *The Times* in 2014 reported how a high-profile entrepreneur had chosen exile in London, in spite of its reputation for bad weather and poor gastronomy, comparing the phenomenon precisely to the arrival of the Huguenots:

#### **Fashion tycoon and his star wife join the French exiles in London**

(...) the French are invading Britain in greater numbers than at any time since the Protestant Huguenots took refuge from persecution in the East End of London. Now one of the biggest beasts of the French fashion industry has decided to settle on the north side of La Manche, bringing not only his \$15 billion fortune but a glamorous film-star wife to spend it on the King's Road in Chelsea rather than the Champs-Élysées. (Kidd, 2014: n.p.)

Although the numbers and motivations of recent French tax exiles are in no way comparable to those of the Protestants fleeing for their lives four hundred years ago, the influx is registered by the news source as noteworthy. Similarly, *The Telegraph* reported on a part of the chain reaction caused by the arrival of well-off French exiles: "Wanted: French-speaking plumbers for tax exiles" (Dennys, 2014:

n.p.). Although at first sight it looked like a joke, it referred to a real advert placed by a company experiencing difficulty in communicating in a specialized field with a growing number of wealthy French residents who lacked the necessary English vocabulary to understand plumbing techniques. Response to the advert was probably met by French workers capable of plumbing, rather than British plumbers with French language skills, although the owner of the company did not express a preference for one or the other type of candidate. In any case, here was another example of the creation of cross-Channel opportunities in the UK for French workers.

In 2011, *The Economist* published a report entitled "Paris-on-Thames. The French community in London" in which it examined the composition, motivations and perspectives of French Londoners. It observed that the City was keen on French workers because they were "mathematical whizzes", due to the preparation they received in the French education system, and that such migrants were drawn to London not by cultural affinity but by high salaries, lower taxes and the chance to raise bilingual children (Paris-on-Thames, 2011: n.p.). According to the French consul-general in London at the time, young French people saw London as a "gateway to globalization"; not all came looking for highly paid jobs, but instead worked as au pairs or waiters while improving their English, and, simultaneously, escaping from the rigid social codes and hierarchical corporate culture of France. He maintained that young French people's sojourns in London were comparable to the globe-trotting gap-years taken by their British counterparts, in that the experience provided contact with people, ideas and internationalism (Paris-on-Thames, 2011: n.p.). The diverse community formed by French-speakers thus continued to flourish, in many different areas of London and in many walks of life, just as it had been doing for centuries. French residents in London had no need to give up their life-style: Paris is only a couple of hours away by train, London has French magazines, cinemas, shops and cultural centres, which are also enthusiastically patronized by British Francophiles (Paris-on-Thames, 2011: n.p.). At the turn of the millennium, the situation seemed to be an echo of how eighteenth-century London interacted positively, in general terms, with the émigrés. However, since March 2017 when Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty was activated, there has been increasing anxiety among French nationals living

in the UK, and British citizens living in France, with regard to their future status and livelihood after Brexit: they fear they will be used as bargaining chips in the negotiations over the "divorce" settlement between the EU and the UK.

#### **4. CULTURAL EXCHANGES: EXPATS IN FRANCE**

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Paris was the starting point for the Grand Tour of Europe's cultural highlights. Affluent British families sent their sons, and sometimes daughters, to complete their education by contemplating works of art, monuments, ruins and museums. It was hoped that the young people would learn to appreciate different cultures, learn good manners and protocol, improve their command of foreign languages and return to their families ready to assume their roles in life. The Grand Tour could be shortened or lengthened, depending on the resources available, and also on the political situation, since in some periods it was impossible to travel across the continent due to wars and unrest, but without doubt, Paris was a must for every traveller.

With the opening of the rail tunnel underneath the English Channel in 1994, and with the wide choice of low cost flights to many destinations, France is now closer than ever for British travellers, and after the experience of holidays in idyllic settings, many decide to give up their jobs and homes in the UK in exchange for a house in semi-rural France, from which they can commute occasionally to their base in the UK, carry on their professional life via Internet, or develop new activities and livelihoods in their new location at a more leisurely pace. This social phenomenon has been studied by researchers such as Michaela Benson who looked into the motivations behind such migration and the final outcomes. Her findings reveal that the rural idyll is in fact an oversimplified explanation for why British people chose to migrate to rural France, and that the reasons are far more complex. Although people may have the money to turn their lifestyle dreams into reality, there are many variables which need to converge so as to convert "imaginings" into concrete action. Among the factors influencing the decision to migrate and its materialisation are economics, political change, social class and the power of the individual to achieve what they want (Benson, 2012: n.p.). Many British migrants in France often refer to the beautiful surroundings

as a reason for moving, or the fact that it feels safer and friendlier, a kind of Britain in the past. However, this is only part of the story, as the researcher reveals, because the move to France was usually motivated by a “watershed moment” —redundancy, retirement, children leaving home— backed up by the knowledge and skills of how to live abroad gained through overseas experience of working in other countries, in the military, in diplomatic roles or via tourism (Benson, 2012: n.p.).

Evidence of the motivations and outcomes of the imaginings of British residents in France can be found in at least three sources: a particular kind of literature, online blogs, and the press. The first source consists basically of published accounts of the reasons for moving, the trials and tribulations involved, especially the red tape and the erratic building work, idiosyncratic local characters, the cultural, linguistic and social gaffes perpetrated by the migrants, and the final acceptance and adaptation to the new environment, all of which is narrated in the first person in a humorous, self-deprecating way. A rapid glance at some of the titles chosen for these works reveals the humorous intention, usually via puns or plays on words, and the incorporation of simple expressions reminiscent of elementary French from the authors’ schooldays:

*Grape Expectations: A Family’s Vineyard Adventure in France* (Feely 2013)

*A la Mod: My So-Called Tranquil Family Life in Rural France* (Moore 2014)

*C’est Modnifique!: Adventures of an English Grump in Rural France* (Moore 2015)

*Tout Sweet: Hanging Up my High Heels for a New Life in France* (Wheeler 2009)

*Tout Soul. The Pursuit of Happiness in Rural France* (Wheeler 2012)

*Toute Allure: Falling in Love in Rural France* (Wheeler 2015)

*C’est La Folie* (Wright 2007)

*Je t’aime à la Folie* (Wright 2011)

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it can be appreciated from the publication dates that this new type of narrative

emerged in the twenty-first century, coinciding with the increased migration of British expats to France. One of the most well-known and successful of these authors explains his motivations for leaving behind everything familiar in the following way:

I am not running away. I happen to think that England is a very good place to live, if one happens to like Marmite and hard cheese. But my London life is uncomfortably comfortable, and I need to create some proper problems for myself. I have had enough of living in a hamster’s sawdust-lined cage. I want a true adventure, instead of endlessly trying to gallop somewhere – anywhere – on my little plastic wheel. I want to have sheep and chickens and manly powertools, and to make friends in a foreign language. I want to watch the seasons passing, and to learn about things that matter, by looking and watching and digging my hands into the dirt. (Wright, 2007: 18)

The second source of narrative concerning these migrant ventures is to be found online in blogs which update readers on the author’s experiences, and also offer advice and tips on how to navigate the pitfalls involved in living in another country. An example is the following by Jennifer Greco, who writes under the name of “Chez Loulou” and offers: “... stories of life in France, including the ever-present challenge of French bureaucracy and practical advice about moving to France and the cost of living in France” ([http://chezlouloufrance.blogspot.com.es/p/about\\_20.html](http://chezlouloufrance.blogspot.com.es/p/about_20.html)). Another blog, by Catherine Broughton, who is also a published novelist, explains the reason for her original move to France, as well as subsequent house removals and their problems, her work as an estate agent for other expats, French culture and its idiosyncrasies: “At the beginning, 1989. Well, to be blunt, we were broke. We had been hit by the UK property crash in 1989 and we lost everything almost overnight. And that is why we moved to France. No other reason” (<http://www.lost-in-france.com/expat-blogs/living-in-france/itemlist/user/7403-catherine>). The third source of information relating to British expats in France is to be found in news items and articles which appear periodically in the British press. Success stories are illustrated by British citizens living in France and whose experiences are posted for the guidance or inspiration of prospective expats. Their background is typical of many couples who set out on such an adventure: they moved

to France for a different, easier way of life, they left their careers to escape from stress and city life, and at present are renovating a derelict house. They praise the quality of village life, the friendliness of the neighbours, the health system (once one is part of it), and the lower cost of living. They mix with the local people ("there is no 'them' and 'us' culture") and in order to do so they advise learning the language since "you are moving to France, your French neighbours are not moving to England" (Interview, 2013: n.p.).

Obviously, not everybody can offer a success story and so there are also accounts of British people who decided to pack up and move back to the UK. The problem is illustrated by headlines such as "Au revoir le dream...British expats in 'Dordogneshire' are now desperate to come home as the credit crunch hits France" (Rawstorne, 2009: n.p.). As pointed out above, the whole experience, both in its positive and negative aspects, is closely related with changing economics and perspectives. The fact that the Dordogne has apparently become 'Dordogneshire', due to saturation by British expats, could also be a factor in the unfulfillment of expats' imaginings: they did not move to France to live next door to other compatriots, but to take on the challenge of a new social and linguistic environment. In view of the prolonged negotiations involved, the uncertain aftermath of Brexit (including voting rights, and access to health services) is also an important factor for deciding whether to stay, or abandon the dream.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The title of this article asks why, metaphorically speaking, prospective migrants always find the grass greener on the other side, that is, why other places often seem to have more to offer than one's homeland. This article has examined the reasons for historical migration from France to Britain in urgent, life-threatening circumstances: religious persecution, revolutionary terror, and the Nazi occupation. With regard to contemporary society, it has been found that cross-Channel migration has taken place in both directions: French workers, professionals, entrepreneurs and retirees have moved to Britain to take advantage of better fiscal and working conditions, while British migrants have been moving to France for over two decades searching for a quieter life. The motivations of the French and the British migrants are different but complementary phenomena in the search for a better life.

However, movement of both types of expats is at present in limbo while negotiations continue in the post-Brexit referendum phase. Meanwhile, migrants from non-EU countries contemplate the English Channel as the last barrier between their past and what they hope will be a better economic future.

The expectations of the migrant groups of the past and present have enjoyed varying degrees of fulfilment. The Huguenots and those fleeing the French Revolution settled into life in England and thrived as a community, finally being accepted by the local population for different reasons, while being able to maintain their differentiating characteristics. Londoners are nowadays happy to frequent French cafés, restaurants or bakeries, and there are many clubs and associations formed by French-speakers who welcome British participants with an interest in their particular subject matter. The fact that they speak different languages is not a barrier, but rather an attraction and a cultural asset. The present wave of French economic migrants has built on this centuries-old stable situation and has enabled the Francophone community to flourish. However, non-EU migrants waiting for their chance in Calais do not have this positive situation to build on.

British migrants to France left home for other reasons than economic gain, although economics could play a role in the move. The initial driving force was often an idyllic lifestyle which only seemed possible in a place like France: good food, people who have time to chat to strangers and make friends, community spirit, the lack of stress, (usually) better weather and the opportunity to take on a self-imposed challenge. This task usually took the form of buying a run-down property for a bargain price, renovating it with care, and incidentally earning the approval of the locals who appreciated that their villages and traditional farmhouses were being rescued. The challenge also included learning enough French to be competent and sociable, and to be able to handle the intricacies of French bureaucracy, putting to rest the stereotype of the monolingual English-speaker abroad.

Those who completed the challenge found satisfaction and fulfilment in their new environment and recommended it to their compatriots in similar situations. Those who found they had taken on too much and had let their dreams perhaps be too optimistic packed up and headed back across the Channel, with disappointment,

but with no hard feelings for the locals or for the country who, they admit, are not to blame.

Throughout history there has been a flexible movement backwards and forwards across the English Channel. Each group of migrants saw something worth pursuing on the opposite shore. French people seeking better economic and labour conditions in Britain were not necessarily committed to staying forever, but rather until the situation at home improved. However, with Brexit on the horizon, prospective French migrants will now have to reconsider their options. UK migrants who sold up in Britain, gave up their jobs, and invested their savings in a property renovation in France were playing for higher stakes, and there was consequently a greater risk of failure and a greater degree of commitment. Nevertheless, judging by the number of expat writers in France and on the Internet who enthused about their adventures, it seems to have been, on the whole, more of a positive experience than a negative one, and certainly enriching from a personal and cultural point of view. Author Michael Wright's account of how he gave up a comfortable London existence for an uncertain new life in a dilapidated fifteenth-century farmhouse was probably an inspiration for many compatriots who empathized with what he called "one man's quest for a more meaningful life" (Wright, "La Folie": n.d., n.p.). In spite of all the inconvenience of moving, for both the French workers in London and the British house renovators in France, the grass did turn out to be, at least, a brighter shade of green on the other side.

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Título: Por qué la hierba era más verde al otro lado (del canal)