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## The Search for the ‘Authentic’ in the Context of Narrative-Inspired Travel

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### Abstract

The article discusses the concept of authenticity in relation to literary travel and other forms of media-induced travel. Focusing on the power of fictional narrative to draw members of the audience to locations associated with a story, the paper aims to find out what exactly visitors are expecting to find when journeying to locations with literary and media associations. An overview of previous research demonstrates how the concept of authenticity has been understood in connection with travel inspired by literature, films and TV productions. An analysis of recent research, focusing on literary and screen-induced travel, demonstrates that perceptions of what is authentic varies between individual visitors based on their level of dedication to fictional narratives and the meanings they attribute to them. There is a number of ways in which visitors seek for and encounter different types of authenticity at sites with media connections.

**Key Words:** literary travel, literary tourism, media tourism, transmedia narrative, authenticity

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### Introduction

This article approaches the theme Narrative and Authenticity by focusing on instances when fictional narratives inspire readers to search for the origins of the stories by visiting places with connections to literature or screen productions. Conventionally, modern narratives are found in literary texts, often in printed form and sometimes between the covers of a book. Recent technological advancements have not only changed our modes of literary consumption by providing an assortment of electronic devices on which one can read but have made it possible for narratives to reach audiences through a variety of media, including but not limited to film, TV and video games. Regardless of whether narratives appear in textual, cinematic or any other form, not every narrative engages imagination in a similar manner and not all stories induce readers or viewers to go searching for the ‘real thing’ behind the text or screen (Laing & Frost, 2012).

Visitation of sites with literary associations, generally referred to as book travel, literary travel or literary tourism, is the earliest form of media-induced travel. The latter phenomenon, also termed media tourism (Reijnders, 2011) or media-related or media-inspired travel/tourism

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is used to signify visits to sites associated with literary works, film, TV and, of late, also video games (Busby & Klug, 2001; Sandvik & Waade, 2008). This paper centers on narrative-inspired travel, referring to the power of a narrative (also referred to as a story) to fascinate audiences to such an extent as to motivate individuals to travel to associated sites.

For the purpose of this article what is meant by literature is creative writing, mainly fiction prose, but also poetry and drama. The term media comprises texts as well as audio, visual or audio-visual productions that are based around a fictional narrative. Alternatively, I will use the term fiction, in contrast to fact-based literature and screen productions. Travel writing, guide books, documentaries, news and biographies are largely excluded, despite their potential impact on visitors' motivation. While writers' biographical narratives often inspire readers' interest, and the role of historical narratives is hard to overlook (Herbert, 1996), they are of secondary interest in this paper, with primary focus being on fictional narratives.

Based on previous research, published on the topics of literary and other media-induced travel (Robinson, 2002a, 2002b; Watson, 2006; Reijnders, 2011; Laing & Frost, 2012), it appears that personal search for 'reality' behind the narrative can take different shapes depending on the story itself, on individual and collective interpretations of it, as well as on the reader's or viewer's personal interests and engagement with the narrative. Visitors' quest for authenticity can take them to writers' houses and burial sites (Robinson & Andersen, 2002; Watson, 2006) to look for a way to connect with esteemed storytellers. It can lead them to landscapes which served as inspiration for fictional places, or to locations which were used to portray imaginary sites on screen; or even to purposefully created attractions, such as theme parks, which are meant to serve as a setting to facilitate immersion into a fictional world.

Audiences' longing for authenticity behind text and screen obviously does not go unnoticed by those involved in tourism industry. Travel organizations, often in cooperation with local authorities, businesses and communities, take to actively promoting sites with literary, film or TV connections (Herbert, 2001; Busby & Klug, 2001; Reijnders, 2011). Attempts at visitor management are made by various stakeholders by either encouraging visitation or, in some cases, trying to curbe the numbers of visitors, at various locations around the globe.

Debate around authenticity in tourism studies has been going on for several decades, with different points of view – often contrasting – emerging throughout the years (Knudsen & Waade, 2010). However, the concept of authenticity in relation to media-induced travel is a rather perplexing issue due to the exact fact that if fiction motivates people to travel, then fiction also often serves as a point of reference – visitors will essentially compare the reality that they see to the products of imagination (Reijnders, 2011; Bom, 2015). Even the most accurate textual description or depiction of a place or an object on screen goes through the prism of storyteller's imagination; the resulting representation is then appropriated by readers or viewers based on their own interpretation of it (Jenkins, 1992; Reijnders, 2011).

In this article I aim to provide an overview, although by no means exhaustive, of how authenticity has been conceptualized in relation to media-induced travel in previous research and compare existing frameworks to the findings of recent research on the topic as well as to the findings of my own research. As I base this review on publications from the fields of tourism studies, cultural studies and human geography, differences in the use of terminology by different researchers and in different fields have been observed. While terms tourism and tourists enjoy widespread use by scholars in tourism studies, these terms tend to have negative connotations in the fields of cultural studies and sociology, as well as being perceived by some members of the public in negative light. In addition to being associated with the destructive force and collective gaze of mass tourism (e.g. Busby & Klug, 2001), tourist can refer to someone who has travelled a considerable distance from home and spends a certain period of

time at the destination; such definition excludes local residents who sometimes represent significant number of those visiting media-related sites. Therefore, more neutral terms travel and visitation and corresponding visitor and traveler will be used in this paper.

In subsequent sections the phenomenon of literary travel in the wider context of media-induced travel will be introduced; next, I will summarize the debate on authenticity in connection to media travel. The choice of recent articles as data will be explained, and the notions of authenticity in the findings will be reviewed and compared to previously proposed conceptualizations.

### **Media-induced travel: narratives across media – literature, film, TV and games**

Legends and folktales, which often lack identifiable authors, were (and still are) often transmitted by spoken word and have undoubtedly inspired people to visit associated sites. The practice of visiting the so-called literary places or literary sites is connected to the earliest known authors in Western literary tradition and can be traced back to early recorded history. In antiquity such visits were undertaken to honor the authors: to converse with and pay respects to the living, or to venerate the dead (Robinson & Andersen, 2002; Hendrix, 2009). While authors' personae and biographies seemed to have been more prominent in attracting readers' attention and motivating them to undertake journeys in the past, in later centuries stories themselves became of great interest. During the Romantic era, narratives – historical or fictional – were known to inspire readers to seek out the 'real' behind the text by travelling to places featured in literary works (Watson, 2006; Hendrix, 2009).

Literary sites are conventionally divided into writer-related and text-related, though oftentimes a site has connections to both the story and its author, since writers can use familiar surroundings as a setting for fictional events or draw inspiration for fictional places from actual places which they inhabit. In this manner, to draw a clear line between the two types might be difficult, and many literary sites present an intermixture of imaginary and real – including biographical facts and actual geographical locations (Herbert, 1996; Busby & Klug, 2001; Watson, 2006; Laing & Frost, 2012).

As was previously mentioned, since written text pre-dates other modern types of (audio-visual) media, literary travel can be considered the earliest existing type of media-induced travel (Reijnders, 2011). As a result of several decades of studying literary travel as a separate phenomenon, conceptual and empirical research has been produced on its history and nature (e.g. Watson, 2006), on the role of literary sites as part of cultural heritage (e.g. Herbert, 2001), as well as on the connections between travel and imagination in relation to literary works (Robinson & Andersen, 2002; Laing & Frost, 2012). In recent years, researchers studying literary travel have concentrated on different aspects of it, approaching it from different perspectives. A considerable number of case studies have been produced, focusing on specific literary sites; researchers have employed both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to analyze motivations, expectations and experiences of literary visitors. Some researchers have concentrated on specific genres of fiction that inspire readers to travel, such as children's literature (e.g. Squire, 1991; Gothie, 2016) or crime-detective fiction, while others have studied the activities of the members of enthusiast (or fan) communities dedicated to individual authors (e.g. McLaughlin 2016).

While in this paper literary travel is viewed as belonging to a wider category of media-induced travel, researchers have used proposed various categorizations: in tourism studies and cultural studies it is often viewed it as a sub-set of cultural and heritage tourism (Tetley, 1998; Herbert, 1996, 2001; Busby & Klug, 2001; Hoppen, Brown, & Fyall, 2014); Agarwal and Shaw (2017), for example, place it into joint category of heritage, screen and literary tourism. Placement of literary travel into media-induced travel category is supported by several

researchers (e.g. Busby & Klug, 2001; Reijnders, 2011, 2016) and especially suits the purpose of this article, as it focuses on fictional narratives, which can be encountered across a variety of media.

It can be argued whether the conceptualizations developed for literary visits can be used to understand travel inspired by other media than fictional text. People have increasingly been encountering narratives not only through written text, but also in visual and audio-visual media: from conventional book illustrations and fiction-inspired art, to comic books and board games, films and TV, video games and virtual reality devices. Over recent decades, places like literary theme parks and shooting locations of screen adaptations of literary works have attracted considerable numbers of visitors, even though these locations often lack direct connections to either authors or literary texts (Herbert, 2001; Busby & Klug, 2001). A well-known example of adaptation-related travel from the previous decade relates to *The Lord of the Rings* filming locations in New Zealand, which became popular among admirers of J. R. R. Tolkien and fans of the film trilogy (Beeton, 2006; Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010). Such film and TV-induced travel (or screen tourism) is currently a widespread international phenomenon and has been actively studied starting in the 2000s (Busby & Klug, 2001; Beeton, 2006).

Considering that screen productions have the potential to attract wider audiences in comparison to fiction literature, several researchers have underlined the importance of recognition of film/TV-induced travel and of studying this phenomenon (e.g. Busby & Klug, 2001; Beeton, 2006) as it can be expected that film/TV-inspired travelers will soon, if not yet, outnumber visitors for whom literature is an exclusive motive. With regards to adaptations in general, Jenkins (2011) admits that adaptations do more than deliver the story to the audience by a different channel: instead they add elements to the story, transforming the narrative – for, even with the most faithful adaptation, it is practically impossible to bring a literary text to the screen without having to recreate what has previously only existed in the imagination of authors and readers.

Not all academics, however, share this idea of bringing together literature and audio-visual productions under the umbrella term of media-induced travel. Laing and Frost (2012), for example, differentiate literary travel from other forms of media-induced travel; they emphasize the immersive nature of literature, which, they hypothesize, lead to more active use of imagination and produce more lasting impact on audience in comparison to film and TV productions. Furthermore, they view literary texts necessarily as the source of other media productions (Laing & Frost, 2012). Though this is common, as books often serve as origins of film and TV adaptations, this is not always the case. In fact, narratives can originate in other media – on screen, in comics and video games, (Jenkins, 2007): to provide one example, many superhero-narratives in the US have originated from comics and were subsequently developed into animations and films. TV series and video games have similarly made good use of storytelling (Jenkins, 2011), with some of them turning into transmedia franchises such as *The Elder Scrolls*, which now also includes novels set in the fictional universe first introduced in the game series. Reijnders (2011; 2016) points out that in many cases literary travel cannot be analyzed separately from other forms of media-induced travel, and isolating literature from newer forms of media can be, perhaps, counterproductive.

In this section, an interconnection between narratives from across different media was discussed. As was observed, different kinds of locations can attract dedicated readers and viewers who wish to find about ‘origins’ of their favorite fictional narratives. Most commonly locations chosen for visitation are related to writers, fictional texts and screen productions – whether or not the latter can be traced to literary texts. The next section will address how this search for ‘real’ behind fiction was conceptualized in previous research, mainly with regard to literary and screen-related travel.

### **Authenticity in the context of media-induced tourism**

Academic discussion centered on authenticity in travel/tourism has begun in the 1960s, and since then the issue has been actively discussed by researchers in the fields of cultural studies, tourism studies and human geography; however, there is still no commonly accepted understanding of the concept (Knudsen & Waade, 2010). Contrasting viewpoints were expressed already at the start of the debate: Boorstin (1964) was convinced that tourism experience is essentially inauthentic, while MacCannell (1973) believed that despite the tourists' search for authenticity, they are doomed to be presented only with staged authenticity. In addition, MacCannell (1973) saw the motivation behind this search for the authentic in shallowness and inauthenticity of people's everyday lives. Cohen (1988), on the other hand, pointed out that among tourists expectations regarding authenticity and their understanding of it differ significantly.

In later research a trend emerged to divide authenticity roughly into object-related and subject-related: the former relates to artefacts, sites and practices, and the latter to visitors and their personal experiences (Knudsen & Waade, 2010). Diverse criteria exist to judge the authenticity of objects; the same object can be perceived as authentic or inauthentic when applying different standards. Among other researchers who addressed this disparity, Wang (1999) notably suggested to divide object-related authenticity into objective and constructive (also termed symbolic). Objective authenticity implies museum-linked understanding of the concept and relates to verifiable genuineness of the originals, accuracy of reproductions and representations, while constructive authenticity is a quality attributed to objects by groups and individuals (Wang, 1999). Wang speculated that independent of the criteria used to establish objects' authenticity, such perceived authenticity can facilitate authentic visitor experience; to describe the latter, the concept of existential authenticity was proposed in relation to experience of individual visitors, drawing on existential philosophy, most notably the works of Martin Heidegger (Wang, 1999). In short, it was suggested that the act of travelling and interaction with objects encountered at visited sites, as well as with other individuals, can result in achieving the existential state of being – or being 'true to oneself' (Wang, 1999). Thus travel acts as a setting where – in limited space and time – such existential state of being can be experienced. Wang (1999) further divided existential authenticity into intra-personal (connected to bodily feelings as well as a sense of identity) and inter-personal (experienced in the context of social relationships).

In general, in recent studies it is often implied that all authenticity is socially constructed (Tetley, 1998; Herbert, 2001; Knudsen & Waade, 2010); furthermore, Wang's idea of existential authenticity has been subsequently developed by other researchers. Knudsen and Waade (2010) underline the importance of embodiment and performativity in visitors' experiences; in addition, they use the relatively new term emotional geography to emphasize the importance of feelings experienced by individuals towards a place (Knudsen & Waade, 2010).

Several researchers who studied literary travel agree that authenticity is especially problematic in relation to literary places due, firstly, to different interpretations of authors' lives and fictional works and, secondly, to blending of fact and fiction in authors' and readers' imagination (e.g. Herbert, 1996, 2001; Tetley, 1998; Busby & Klug, 2001). Readers and viewers are undoubtedly affected by textual, visual and audio-visual representations of places they encounter in fictional texts or on screen, in this way they become familiar with places through fiction without having been there (Laing & Frost, 2012); when the visit occurs, their

fiction-based perceptions and expectations create what Sandvik and Waade (2008) call a sort of augmented reality.

Writing about literary travel, Hendrix (2009) indicates that readers' wish to "go beyond" (p. 14) the text stems from, on the one hand, the pleasure received from the process of reading and, on the other hand, from the feeling of dissatisfaction and the want of a continuation. While such continuations might be available in the form of sequels or adaptations, some devoted readers essentially take matters in their own hands and attempt to trace the origins of the story at locations associated with it. According to Watson (2006), when readers-turned-travelers go 'out there' to look for spots featured in or having inspired a story, they are bound to – yet again – be dissatisfied, this time by being confronted with a setting which might not have much in common with what they expected it to be.

Considering, that for individual visitors either the writers' personae or fictional narratives can be of primarily interest and importance, it can predispose them to expect certain type of authenticity (Herbert, 2001; Laing & Frost, 2012). Tetley (1998) distinguished between factual and fictional authenticity at literary sites, to explain whether visitors are looking for facts – e.g. historical accuracy, biographical information about the author, genuineness of artefacts – or whether they seek for authenticity of fiction.

In relation to factual authenticity, literary places can be experienced through the prism of the author's life (Reijnders 2011). Writers' houses present a popular example of literary sites, allowing a possibility to temporarily be present in the same space where the author was often present (Robinson, 2002b; Watson 2006). Tangible evidence of writers' existence is also often found in their past dwelling places – whether houses are presented in a museum-like way or recreated as lived-in spaces – in the form of objects that were in writers' use, among which profession-related items, such as chairs and desks, are of highest interest to visitors (Robinson 2002b; Robinson & Andersen 2002; Watson, 2006). Another certain proof of author's existence can be found at his or her burial site (Robinson, 2002b; Watson 2006), as graves in general are important for commemorative practices in Western cultures.

In instances when visitors are looking for fictional authenticity instead, it can be argued that they wish to experience the atmosphere described in the texts, find proof of existence of fictional characters and, in a way, find their ways into the narratives by visiting associated sites (Busby & Shetliffe, 2013). Reijnders (2011, pp. 17-18) has presented a model to conceptualize the imaginary places in media-induced travel: he proposed that artistic representations of places in text and on screen stem from actual places that artists encounter; in the process of media consumption, these media representations are appropriated by audiences, and some dedicated audience members can seek out the original sites that inspired the imaginary places, thus completing the circle.

In case of narratives originated on screen and in relation to film/TV adaptations of literary works, the search for authenticity can manifest in viewers' wish to visit the filming locations (Busby & Klug, 2001). Filming locations may correspond to locations they are supposed to represent – such as when the fictional story set in London is filmed in London; or a filming location might be chosen as a stand-in for another actual location, or act as substitute for a non-existent location – which is often the case in fantasy and sci-fi genres.

The importance of visitors' characteristics has been emphasized by several researchers. Visitors' knowledge of authors' biographies or screen production details, their dedication to a fictional narrative and their personal engagement with it affect their motivations and expectations with regard to associated sites and influence visitors' perceptions of authenticity (Pocock, 1992; Squire, 1994; Herbert, 1996, 2001; Tetley, 1998; Busby & Shetliffe, 2013). Visit to a site with media connections can be a different experience for the so-called incidental

visitor and for a dedicated enthusiast or a self-proclaimed fan (Herbert, 2001), as their levels of dedication and personal significance of the place to them will differ greatly.

Squire (1991, 1993) and Herbert (1996, 2001) have underlined the importance of personal and collectively produced meanings which readers-turned-visitors attribute to literary texts and places with connection to these texts. Observations from recent studies (e.g. Hasebrink & Paus-Hasebrink, 2016) provide confirmation to this proposition: personal memories attached to books and films – such as that of shared reading or viewing with family members or friends, or an event or period in life – as well as meanings assigned to media products by individuals based on their interpretations make media products more important for dedicated members of the audience. In this way, visitation of related sites might become a symbolic and highly emotional experience. Based on his study of individuals' engagement with narratives, Reijnders (2016) has similarly observed that people have a 'treasure trove' of stories meaningful to them which are likely to motivate them to travel to related sites.

While conflicting perspectives on authenticity as a concept exist and a variety of standards can be applied to evaluate whether a site or an object can be considered authentic, in this study I chose to address authenticity from the perspective of a visitor to a site with media connections. The notion of readers' or viewers' search for the 'real' had been found in a number of publications, both in theoretical and in empirical research (Robinson 2002a; Watson, 2006). The following sections introduce the material chosen as data for the study and examine how travelers' search for authenticity appears in recent empirical studies.

### **Data and methods**

Researchers have utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods when studying literary travel and, later on, other forms of media-induced travel. Because I aimed to concentrate on visitors' perceptions of authenticity, I have chosen to analyze the publications which used chiefly a qualitative approach to understand visitors' interpretations of their media-induced travel experiences as well as their motivations and expectations.

Six research articles and my own master's thesis were included in the analysis; the publications reviewed were published between 2010 and 2017, in English, and focused on literary, film and TV-induced travel. The articles were published in journals in the fields of culture studies, literary studies, media and tourism studies as well as cultural (literary) geography; they were authored by researchers from universities in Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK and the USA, and the studies concentrated on the examples of media-induced travel from Canada, Croatia, New Zealand, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the USA. The concept of authenticity appeared in five articles either in the title, abstract, as an author-supplied keyword, or was referred to repeatedly in the text of the publication. David McLaughlin's article (2016), though it does not include discussion of the concept of authenticity as such, examines an interesting interconnection between fiction and reality in the texts centered on places with connections to famous fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, and the readers' role in co-constructing literary places, and therefore was included.

Inclusion of material for analysis is based on my own background in cultural studies and tourism research, and thus this review of recent research is not by any means exhaustive. Content analysis of the publications was correlated to previously proposed conceptualizations of authenticity in relation to literary and other forms of media-induced travel. As for the research methodology used in the reviewed articles, a variety of predominantly qualitative approaches was utilized. Textual analysis was employed by McLaughlin (2016) in his study of literary texts produced by and aimed for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle enthusiasts; Bom (2015) and

Gothie (2016), in addition to ethnographic fieldwork at the respective sites, both employed textual and visual data analysis of online materials (Bom, 2015), promotional material for the sites and visitors' responses (Gothie, 2016) – these two studies provided insights on how authenticity is presented at literary sites. Kim's (2010) study used a mixed-method approach: along with observations and interviews, he notably employed visual research methods when analyzing photographs, taken by visitors at filming locations, placing it in the context of the TV drama and the meanings viewers attribute to it, to their visit and their scene re-enacting activities. Buchmann, Moore and Fisher (2010) used ethnographic fieldwork, with researchers accompanying groups of travelers on tours, as well as questionnaires and interviews. Waysdorf and Reijnders (2017) have similarly conducted participant observation together with personal or group interviews. In my own research, I conducted a narrative analysis of respondent-supplied textual accounts of the literary visits that had personal significance to them.

As a result of the analysis of the publications, while authenticity emerged in ways consistent with previous empirical research and theoretical conceptualizations, new notions were observed which had not been actively discussed in the past. In the next section the notions of authenticity, as they appeared in reviewed publications, will be identified and grouped into themes.

### **In search for the 'real' in media-induced travel: visitors' perceptions of authenticity**

Notions of authenticity, as they appear in the findings of the chosen publications, are categorized under several themes, as presented below.

#### **Fictional authenticity: getting inside the narrative**

As was observed, the visitors' desire to get immersed in the fictional narratives appears to feature prominently as motivation for visiting media-related sites in chosen publications. Reviewed research comprised studies concentrating on different types of media-induced travel at varied types of media-related sites. While the focus of the article is on narrative as a motive for travel, the storyteller's role is worth mentioning, considering that previous research (Herbert, 1996; Robinson 2002a; Watson, 2006) has recognized the central role of the biographical aspect at specific literary sites. Obviously, the biographical dimension was expected to appear in studies concerned with literary travel, though only in two articles is such a dimension detectable. Bom (2015b) and Gothie (2016) in their studies concentrate on sites related to Astrid Lindgren in Sweden and L. M. Montgomery in Canada respectively; both places have connections to authors as well as to fictional narratives, and the literary dimension is seen as the predominant one, although the role of cinematic adaptations (including live-action and animated films and TV series) in popularizing the narratives is difficult to ignore. However, fictional characters in both cases seem to be getting more attention from visitors and, consequently, the fictional dimension is brought forth by site developers.

Three visitors' accounts from my previous study (Amey, 2015) are in particular author-centered: consistent with previous studies (e.g. Herbert, 2001), viewing of and physically interacting with genuine objects that had been in authors' possession result in the feeling of being able to connect to admired authors as persons. In one specific case, a visitor frames the author's life as a narrative, albeit a tragic one featuring disgrace and exile, when travelling to Oscar Wilde's grave in Paris. Also worth mentioning is the fact that one of the articles (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010) and the thesis study (Amey, 2015) have utilized Wang's (1999) concept of existential authenticity to distinguish between authenticity of objects and authenticity of visitors' experience. In relation to several respondents' accounts (Amey, 2015),

it was observed that perceived genuineness of the objects at the sites can facilitate what can be termed existential authenticity (Wang, 1999).

In McLaughlin's (2016) study, focused on solely literary travel, devotee producers of the examined texts and their intended audience are clearly more interested in fictional characters than in Doyle as an author. McLaughlin observes that chosen locations are meant to be encountered while walking: these "readers on the move" (2016, p. 146), as he terms them, experience sites on foot, because walking as a physical activity is viewed as necessary to immerse oneself into a literary place. Similarly, the role of embodiment, such as bodily feelings (e.g. smell, and touch) and experiencing weather conditions, showed to facilitate the feeling of immersion in Buchmann, Moore and Fisher's article (2010) and in the thesis study (Amey, 2015).

Experiencing an atmosphere similar to that found in fictional narratives is viewed by visitors as highly significant. Even though some degree of staging can be found at the sites, either by visitors themselves (Kim, 2010; Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2017) or by site developers (Kim, 2010; Amey, 2015; Bom, 2015; Gothie, 2016), this was not found to intervene with the majority of visitors' experience. Two respondents from my previous study (Amey, 2015) described being attracted by the atmosphere found in the books; consequently, they encountered such atmosphere at the sites they travelled to. One mentioned site was purposefully enhanced to resemble the version of itself from the twelfth century, as it is described in the books, and featured narrative-related activities; it was noted to enhance the experience of the respondent. Another respondent encountered the desired atmosphere while visiting a country with landscapes similar to that described in fictional texts.

In her paper, Bom (2015) has developed a way to categorize media-related sites based on equilibrium between fact and fiction. Depending on whether the former or the latter takes prominence, different types of authenticity can be encountered. She also concludes that individual visitors can expect different types of authenticity simultaneously, such as when they wish to find out facts about the writers' personae and biographies, but at the same time expect to feel the atmosphere of fictional places.

### **Stories across media: importance of cross-media and transmedia narratives**

Robinson (2002a) has proposed to conceptualize reader-text relationships as possibly belonging to two categories: the first being a relationship between a reader and a fictional text itself, and the second one encompassing everything "beyond the text", including screen adaptations (p. 40). Notably, he placed the act of traveling to related locations in the first category (Robinson 2002a), while others (e.g. Jenkins, 2006; Reijnders 2011; Hasebrink & Paus-Hasebrink, 2016), perhaps, consider it to be in the second one, seeing such travel as expanding the story beyond the pages alongside other narrative-centered activities, such as online and offline discussions, scene re-enactment, merchandise collection and other expressions of fanship such as creation of fanart and fanfiction.

As was previously mentioned, due to technological developments taking place in two recent decades, for many people interaction with narratives is no longer related to just book reading, but involves cross-media and transmedia. While some use the terms interchangeably, cross-media can be described as a narrative presented through a variety of media such as text, film, TV or game (Jenkins, 2006, 2007, 2011); transmedia, on the other hand, is viewed as narrative not only developing and continuing through 'official' and fan-made media products, but as stories finding their way into daily lives of engaged readers and viewers (Hasebrink & Paus-Hasebrink, 2016).

Among chosen articles, Kim's (2010) research concentrates on a case of solely TV-induced travel, while visitation of filming locations, used in screen adaptations of literary works, is analyzed by Buchmann, Moore and Fisher (2010) and Waysdorf and Reijnders (2017). Interestingly, chosen locations in two latter studies represent purely imaginary places on screen: both J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, adapted into a film trilogy, and George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which reached wider audiences through its TV adaptation *Game of Thrones*, belong to the fantasy genre. Both Tolkien and Martin in their works present detailed fictional worlds, each with its own mythology, history, geography, and acting as a setting for multiple storylines. While locations authors had encountered could have inspired imaginary places (Reijnders, 2011), there are no exact locations to which these fictional narratives can be pinpointed with absolute accuracy.

Many Tolkien fans have accepted the film trilogy (2001-2003, directed by Peter Jackson) as 'canon': the landscapes of New Zealand, which played significant role in the films, became real-life Middle-earth for some Tolkien enthusiasts (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010). While some visitors were noted to have come for Middle-earth rather than for New Zealand, others were interested in the country itself, with fictional narrative providing an additional dimension to it.

Tetley's (1998) proposed distinction between factual and fictional authenticity is applicable when analyzing visitors' search for the 'real', alongside Sandvik and Waade's (2008) concept of spatial 'augmentation' by fictional narrative. It can be said that visitors were looking for factual authenticity – the exact locations where filming was conducted – in order to encounter fictional authenticity, using their imagination and remembering scenes from the films to conjure Middle-earth at the sites in New Zealand or imaginary continents of Westeros and Essos in Croatia and Northern Ireland (Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2017).

In the thesis study (Amey, 2015), the role of screen adaptation comes through as important in one particular response: the respondent noted that while actors dressed in era-appropriate clothing and involved in what can be considered as daily activities of characters in this specific fictional narrative, there was no main character present, which, she notes, was for the best because visitors who have watched the TV adaptation of the books had strongly associated the main character with the actor who portrayed him on screen.

### **Varied levels of dedication and personal meanings assigned to narratives**

One emergent theme found in several studies was consistent with previous research: among visitors, levels of dedication to fictional narratives vary significantly. Readers' and viewers' personal engagement with specific fictional narratives not only affect their motivation and expectations regarding the visit, but also influences their relationship with and experience of places related to media productions (Pocock, 1992; Tetley, 1998; Reijnders, 2016). For an incidental visitor who decides to visit a site associated with a popular TV series while passing by or since they are 'there anyway', and for a dedicated enthusiast who travelled there with a specific purpose, the experience of visiting the same site will differ significantly and, consequently, will their perceptions of authenticity.

Waysdorf and Reijnders (2017) notably encountered different types of participants in their study: these included visitors who participated in commercial tours, individual visitors not taking part in the organized tour and those who participated in a fan-organized tour as part of fan convention. Participants' personal levels of engagement with the *Game of Thrones* series varied significantly, with some being hardcore fans who have read the books and knew a lot about fictional universe, and others not having read the books, but having been inspired by the

TV series. Buchmann, Moore and Fisher (2010) have also observed different levels of involvement which affected the way in which visitors interacted with the site and other visitors.

Another issue that was indicated by researchers in the past and found in recent research was the importance of personal meanings visitors assign to narratives and to their experiences of traveling to related sites. Squire (1991, 1993, 1994) has previously noted the role of personal meanings, memories and values in relation to children's literature and literary travel; similar notions were found by Bom (2015) and Gothie (2016). Meanings assigned to media productions can often have a social dimension: stories can be associated with social connections established between family members, friends, similarly minded members of fan communities or romantic partners (Hasebrink & Paus-Hasebrink, 2016). Visitors at filming locations in New Zealand (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010) and fan convention participants at the sites in Northern Ireland (Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2017) placed importance on the sense of community and interaction with dedicated individuals who shared their knowledge about and interpretations of specific fictional texts and screen adaptations.

Notions of readers and viewers as active co-constructors of fictional narratives emerged in several studies. The next theme presents examples of activities undertaken by dedicated groups of individuals who co-create their favorite stories at locations with or without connections to fictional works.

### **Creating your own 'real': visitor performativity and expansion of fictional geographies**

Seaton (2002) conceptualized some instances of travelers' behavior as metempsychotic tourism: this relates to the traveler's attempt to repeat the journey undertaken by another person – historical or fictional – also sometimes assuming their personae as a sort of role-play. Advertisements of travel companies organizing literary tours often feature suggestions to 'walk in the footsteps' of a writer or fictional character. Gothie (2016) has observed related notions in her study in Prince Edward Island with relation to the fictional character Anne from *Anne of Green Gables*.

Visitors can 'become' Anne through performance by wearing straw hats with red braids attached – conveniently supplied by the souvenir shop – and by repeating the fictional character's journey. The idea of arriving to the island as an outsider, with a curious gaze and high expectations, hoping to be welcome, corresponds well to visitors' experience (Gothie, 2016). Visitors find their way into the narratives by adopting a persona of a fictional character: role-play complete with hats with braids and costumes seem appropriate at the sites, actively supported by visitors and personnel; furthermore, since Anne is a child in the first novel of the series – most often re-enacted by visitors – some degree of playfulness is allowed and not frowned upon (Gothie, 2016).

Not only fictional characters' journeys, but their actions can be re-enacted by visitors. From what I have personally seen online as well as in personal correspondence, many fans of the *Game of Thrones* series, lucky to have visited the filming locations, look to occupy the same spaces as actors and the production team had; these dedicated viewers stage photographs at the exact locations where filming was conducted, photographing from the same angles as featured screen and copying poses in which actors appear in the scenes. Re-enacting scenes from TV adaptations also feature in Kim's (2010) and Waysdorf and Reijnders' (2017) studies. Such performance is often encouraged by site developers and businesses who provide settings and props for such re-enactments (Kim, 2010; Gothie, 2016).

Kim (2010) analyzes photographs taken by dedicated viewers at locations associated with *Winter Sonata*, a South Korean TV series, at Nami Island. He places photographs in the context

of a fictional love story that fans wish to re-create by re-enacting famous romantic scenes for photographs at the exact locations where the series were filmed. Such re-enactments, he concludes, are meant as a tribute to the series and fictional romance story, but are also connected to visitors' own relations and/or longing for what is perceived as a utopian relationship (Kim, 2010).

In the above cases, actual filming locations act as a setting for travelers' immersion into fictional narrative. While it can be argued that literary texts leave more for the reader to imagine and screen productions provide viewers with 'ready-made' visual and audio representations, film and TV as well as video games have been increasingly attracting diverse audiences, who often become active co-creators of fictional narratives (Jenkins, 1992, 2006), based on their own interpretation of it and their own life stories and memories. These visitors create their own 'real' and bring fictional stories to life with re-enactments.

Another way in which enthusiasts invent their own 'real' appears in McLaughlin's (2016) study. In his chosen data, literary texts meant to act as guidebooks for Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts invite readers not only to follow the routes of Doyle's fictional characters, but to expand the story beyond the pages by visiting a location which has no connections to either author or fictional character apart from being named after the latter. The text, written by a Sherlock Holmes devotee, constructs a hill in Tulsa (Oklahoma, USA) as a literary site. McLaughlin contrasts his findings with assumptions from previous research, namely that readers travelling to sites with literary associations are destined to be 'late' and to some extent disappointed (Watson, 2006); he questions the perception of literary visits as being somewhat inferior to the act of reading. The authors of the texts, which McLaughlin examines, and their implied readers are expanding literary geography instead of simply visiting places in search of literary ghosts. To describe this transmedial practice of dedicated readers, McLaughlin (2016) introduces the term 'expansionary literary geography': they create literary places by adding a fictional dimension to geographical sites – no matter if such sites lack any actual association with Doyle's crime fiction. Here once again, audiences are not just passively consuming stories, they actively engage with fictional narratives: sites are encountered not only through the prism of Doyle's literary imagination but, importantly, based on readers' own interpretation of the literary original. Thus, fictional authenticity can be created by audiences at the sites related or un-related to media productions.

## **Conclusion**

While the concept of authenticity in relation to travel has been discussed in academia for several decades, to date there is no shared agreement on what constitutes authenticity, and whether the concept should be applied to objects and sites or to human experiences. The aim of this article has been to explore how the concept of authenticity is treated in recent research centered on media-induced travel. It was established that individual visitors have different perceptions of authenticity with regards to sites with media connections, based on visitors' levels of dedication to specific fictional narratives. Personal engagement with narratives and meanings attributed to them by individuals affect the way they experience sites with media connections and influence their expectations regarding authenticity. As a result, different people might be looking for different types of authenticity. Genuineness of artefacts and sites related to authors is viewed as important by visitors who look for factual authenticity, as it can result in perceived personal connection with one's favorite author. Fictional authenticity is equally

sought after: visitors might wish to experience the atmosphere similar to the one found in fictional works, or to experience the feelings and emotions that fictional characters feel at the exact same sites. The findings confirm previous observations that visitors at literary and screen-related sites are a heterogeneous group, and motivations and expectations vary significantly between individuals.

It was also discovered that while specific objects and atmosphere can facilitate immersion into fictional worlds, some dedicated readers and viewers do not act as passive consumers of fiction: they appropriate fictional stories by creating and sharing their own interpretations; they assign personal meanings to narratives and connect them to their own lives. Several examples demonstrate how dedicated members of the audience aim to bring stories into life by discussing, re-enacting them or putting their own locations on literary maps. The audience's interpretations of media productions and practices of appropriation, such as activities associated with fan cultures, have been studied by a number of researchers, but are still frowned upon in some disciplines. Such negative perceptions of fandom in academia can hinder the advancement of theoretical understanding of media consumption and media-induced travel.

As new forms of storytelling emerge, more and more people encounter narratives through screen productions and other types of media. Engaged members of the audience, motivated to travel to sites with media associations, boost the growth of media-induced travel. Considering the role of cross-media and transmedia as it appears in reviewed studies and based on its growing influence on everyday life, it is evident that it could be limiting to view media productions (especially literary texts) in isolation from other forms of media.

The findings indicate that the concept of authenticity is actively utilized to analyze media-induced travel experiences. It was demonstrated that new approaches to authenticity are needed, considering the changes in how fictional narratives reach audiences and in view of the variety of ways in which audiences engage with narratives. Such changes pose new challenges for researchers looking to apply the concept of authenticity to media-induced travel, but also provide new possibilities to rethink the concept and its utilization.

Further research on the topic of media-induced travel can concentrate on the role of enthusiast (or fan) communities, as the social dimension of fiction consumption and media-induced travel is also important. Emergent forms of media-induced travel, such as video game-induced travel, are beginning to attract academic attention and are worth investigating.

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