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Literary tourism: Readers, writers and being there

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Abstract:

This paper examines literary tourism in light of self-educational aspects of the European Grand Tour recorded by writers across four centuries. It considers travellers' developing notions of literary travel along with developing municipal understandings of literary tourist destinations. It goes on to apply ideas about literary tourism to travel undertaken by writers themselves, seeking to provide analysis and advice for writers visiting places of literary significance.

Biographical note:

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Literary tourism and the reader

The genre of travel writing – and the emergence of touristic travel itself – owes no small debt to the sub-genre of literary travel writing, i.e. that kind of writing associated with travel to the real-life settings of fictional literary works, or to places associated with the lives (and deaths) of their authors. Evidence shows how popular literature can inspire popular tourism: for example, Sir Walter Scott's poem 'The Lady of the Lake', set at Loch Katrine and published in 1810, generated a massive increase in the number of tourists visiting the Scottish Trossachs in the decades following, and is 'credited with single-handedly creating the Scottish tourist industry, now worth around £12 billion a year to the economy' (Campsie 2016). In recognition, the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, the local authority, supported the bicentenary edition of Sir Walter Scott's poem published by the Association for Scottish

Literary Studies in 2010 (Fraser 2012). In this case, as in many others, we see historical – and contemporary – recognition of the power of creative writing upon the impulse to travel.

‘Literary tourism’ is a relatively new term, but not a new concept. From the 17th century onwards, aristocratic young gentlemen (and later, women too) undertook grand tours and visited places they knew from reading classical literature and viewing classical artworks. ‘For centuries English and Scottish travellers ... gravitated to Italy, “the mother of arts” ... the fountain head and repository of culture’ (Massie 1988: 13). ‘[W]ealthy young Englishmen began taking a post-Oxbridge trek through France and Italy in search of art, culture and the roots of Western civilization’ (Gross 2008). ‘The strong influence of a Classical education and of a public ideology that drew strongly on Classical images and themes can be seen in the accounts of many [grand] tourists’ (Black 2018: 305). For these intellectual tourists, places of classical significance provided portals to greater knowledge. Contact via the senses – by actually being there – brought one closer to the artistic and cultural perfection of the past. Along with key sites related to classical painting, sculpture, music and architecture, known writing and writers afforded significant points of interest in the educative itinerary.

Jeremy Black, in *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (2018 [1992]), provides a list of places visited for their relation to classical writers and their works (Black 2018: 305-310). In 1717, George Carpenter visited Italy taking ‘a great deal of pleasure in comparing the descriptions that are given by the ancient authors of particular places as rivers mountains etc. with what they are at present’ (qtd in Black 2018: 306). In 1726 Edward Southwell Jr visited Rome and ‘filled 140 pages in [his] journal’ inspired by ‘the view of so many places not only renowned for the actions and fate of so many heroes, but by the pens of so famous writers’ (qtd in Black: 307). ‘Addison consulted Horace and Virgil when travelling between Rome and Naples in 1701’ while Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, Sir James Hall, Thomas Watkins, Sir Richard Colt Hoare and Charles Sloane, among others, referred to classical writings as they undertook their grand tour journeys (Black 307-308). ‘Acquiring knowledge of the arts was a reason to justify tourism’, Black says (309). He quotes James Robson who complained in 1787 that literary tourism provided such expectation that it could spoil the visit to a renowned site if there were ‘not a stone or monument to stamp it’:

How frequently the traveller and antiquarian are disappointed in their pursuits and expectations. We expected to feel as it were an electrical shock on approaching the sacred turf once pressed by the favourite poet of antiquity. (307)

That ‘electrical shock’ operated then and is still in play today. There is a frisson in visiting a site associated with an author or their writing.

Society, politics, religion and the arts were all to be studied on the grand tour, along with food, drink and sex. Chaucer, Milton and Byron expanded their educations by visiting Italy and its classical sites. Addison, Boswell and Dickens wrote detailed accounts of their European tourist experiences (see Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c. in the years 1701, 1702, 1703* [1705]; James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France, 1765-1766* [collected in Brady 1955]; Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* [1846]).

Anyone with means could tour continental cities and landscapes, and benefit as a better-informed literary and arts connoisseur. While writers published reflective and often idealised tour journals, some like Byron and Dickens stored up memories of European places visited and incorporated them into poetry and fiction produced during a lifetime: see for example Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818) based on his 1809-11 tour (Lansdown 2014); and Dickens' *Little Dorrit* (1855-1857) and other works based on his various travels on the Continent (Leroy 2013).

About the literary tour in recent times, Lorraine Brown says:

Literary tourism is considered a niche, but an increasingly important market within the field of cultural and heritage tourism ... the idea of the literary pilgrim has existed for some time. The literary pilgrim is defined as a dedicated scholar prepared to travel to experience places linked with favourite writers; the pilgrim is well educated and has the cultural capital to enjoy literary places. (Brown 2016: 4-5)

In contrast to Brown's assertion that literary tourism is mainly enjoyed by the 'dedicated scholar', a 2017 survey by tourist authority VisitEngland found that 'more than half of British holidaymakers would visit a literary attraction on holiday in England':

Findings also show that one in four Brits visited a literary location in England during a holiday break in the last year. The same amount had read literature relating to a place they had visited in the country... Sites associated with luminary writers Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare were the most popular among the English authors the research asked about, with half of respondents expressing an interest in visiting. Also high on the wish-list were locations associated with Roald Dahl, JK Rowling, Beatrix Potter, JRR Tolkien and Arthur Conan Doyle. (VisitEngland 2017)

Surprisingly, this 2017 survey of 1200 respondents was VisitEngland's 'first ever research into literary tourism' (VisitEngland 2017).

The model of the specialised 'literary pilgrim' is less appropriate now than previously. Pilgrimages belong as much to ordinary people as to scholars. The idea that literary tourism is dominated by the highly educated is challenged by popular-culture phenomena. Harry Potter book fans flock to Platform 9¾ at King's Cross Station in London to experience fiction-become-fact departures of the Hogwarts express in a specially-built arcade. Admirers of JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) – and subsequent movies – make pilgrimages to 'Hobbiton' in Matamata, New Zealand, 200 kilometres south of Auckland, to visit the 'Shire' film-set homes of the Hobbits as interpreted from the books. A 'Hamlet Tour', which departs Copenhagen regularly and visits 'Hamlet's castle' in the town of Helsingør (Elsinore), 50 kilometres away, attracts not just Shakespearean scholars, but any tourist with €100 to spend on a day-long literature-inspired adventure (Enjoy the Tours [2018]). Take a short ferry trip from Marseille to Château d'If fortress island, a kilometre off shore, and see the Mediterranean prison cell Alexandre Dumas' protagonist Edmond Dantès was held in – and from which he escaped – in *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844). You might also catch a video projection depicting scenes from the novel.

While commercial sites have developed to cater to mass tourism, local governments have enhanced their methods for signalling literary associations in their districts. Plaques placed on walls in places with links to literary and arts celebrities have been common for decades. Such signs ('So-and-so writer was born here on...'; 'So-and-so writer died here on...') speak to a notion of recording history. More recently – with the 'photo opportunity' in mind – councils have increased the drama and immersive quality of the experience of being in the place where the great writer lived and wrote, by installing sculptures aimed at interaction. The following three photographs indicate the shift of thinking from simply monumentalizing authors, to producing an immersive encounter with them as part of literary tourism.



Figure 1 © Manu Lieter Zaguirre

Figure 1 shows the Hemingway monument in Pamplona, where the Running of the Bulls event (San Fermin festival) occurs each year. Hemingway published his famous nonfiction work on bullfighting – *Death in the Afternoon* – in 1932. However, the Pamplona event was so significantly recorded in his novel *Fiesta* (aka *The Sun Also Rises*) in 1926 that his fiction's contribution is recognised as the most significant populariser of the town and its festival. 1.45 million tourists attended the event in 2017 (Muela 2018). The Hemingway monument in Pamplona – depicting the author's head and folded arms – is awkwardly approached in a carpark. It has a forbidding appearance, and is aloof from the passing trade. Erected in 1968 (Palmer 1987), it is a museum piece placed out of the way of traffic and interaction, although crowds pass by it during the festival when the surrounding roads are closed.



Figure 2 © Alpha College of English

Figure 2 shows the James Joyce statue in Dublin, erected in 1990 (Cahill 2017). It is a street sculpture placed in the pavement in a busy part of the CBD, near the historic General Post Office. Joyce claims this space because his novel *Ulysses* (1922) does not just describe the city of Dublin brilliantly, it literally maps it. Its plot follows the meanderings of main character Leopold Bloom as he works through a day of his complicated life going from location to location in the city. Millions of readers have followed Bloom fictionally on his personal walking trip while reading the book. The novel is celebrated each year (on 16 June, the calendar day covered in the novel) with an actual procession through Dublin's streets which follows the novel's setting-points. Additionally, this street procession has been 'replicated' in other cities around the world on Bloomsday: creating, for example, re-placed tourist events in Toronto and Melbourne (see Ana Livia Productions 2018; Bloomsday in Melbourne 2018). There are spin-off books and maps advising the tourist on how to follow Bloom's trek – some of them written for the dedicated scholar (e.g. Gunn & Hart 2004) and others for the more widely-focused cultural traveller (see many maps available on the internet, including those produced by the James Joyce Centre 2018). Dublin city has realised the importance of the literary heritage created by its most famous author, and has set out to enhance the experiential visit to the city for the aware reader, by making this Joyce statue part of the crowd, an element in the moving throng of the city – a frozen moment of literary history captured for passers-by to acknowledge.



Figure 3 © Jane Johnston

While I have visited Pamplona and Dublin specifically for their literary associations, and have enjoyed the statues depicted in these figures, the photograph in Figure 3 relates to a trip I made to Lisbon in search of a writer who does not have the global outreach of Hemingway or Joyce. Fernando Pessoa, author of *The Book of Disquiet* (published posthumously in 1982), interested me because during his lifetime (1888-1935) he wrote under more than 70 pseudonyms, or ‘heteronyms’ as he called them. For this reason alone, he is a shadowy figure, rarely able to be pinned down. But in representing so many characters in one place and one lifetime – Lisbon in the early 20th century – he embodies not just a single experience of a city, but the attempted involvement of many perspectives on an intellectual, cultural and spatial experience.

Compared with the accessible legacy endowed upon other cities by established authors, the relatively unknown Pessoa provided Lisbon authorities with a challenge in terms of tourist appeal. The city moved to attract and enhance the experience of the literary tourist in a particularly interesting way. In 1988 a major statue of the author – the work of the artist/academic Lagoa Henriques (Mário Soares Foundation 2018) – was installed in the street outside the still-operating 1905 Art Deco Café A Brasileira which Pessoa frequented. Henriques’ sculpture was fashioned not as a forbiddingly cold city monument, nor as an *I-am-here-among-the-crowd* indicator of the city’s significance. It was presented as an inviting interactive site. It includes: a bronze of the author seated and seemingly engaged in discussion; a bronze table across which contact and debate might occur; and a vacant bronze seat for anyone to sit on and experience the drama of imaginatively talking with the author. It’s a set-up for superficial photo opportunities; but also, it’s a portal into an enriching embodied relationship with the Portuguese literary past. ‘Meet the author!’ this sculpture says. ‘Sit and talk with him. He wants to engage. Bring to the table any thoughts his works may have conjured in you.’ My only regret now, after sitting for a time with Fernando, is that I did not buy him a glass of wine.

For me, this clever and insightful 3-piece sculpture symbolises a key point in recent developments in literary tourism, and the way it will continue in the future. Some inferences are:

- authorities will re-evaluate their understanding of the importance of reading and viewing – and of literary culture/mass culture in general – in managing the places under their control;
- travel has become so available across the globe that the reasons for tourism are now significantly multiple, and they include people's desire to experience in real life not just the real, but also things they have experienced 'virtually' in novels, films and other media;
- generally, tourists still travel to visit relatives and friends, to 'see the sights' (landscapes, cityscapes), as they always have done, and to engage with the conventional foci of tourism (museums, galleries, historic re-enactment sites), but they now travel also to 'be there' in places they know not as history, but as fiction.

One deduction from this is that tourist travel beyond simply making ideational contact with established realities and participating in places previously visited fictionally, involves the idea of thinking that you know a real, unvisited place already. This used to be seen rationally as a product of reading, hearing about, or viewing real-place informational material. People said: 'I read about that place in a brochure, or I saw such-and-such a documentary, and I wanted to go, to experience it with my own eyes'. The concept that places of the imagination – those experienced via place-creating fiction – actually existed was not a significant part of that rationalist thinking. Things changed in the 1990s when Virtual Reality technology was touted as seemingly capable of replacing the real – because in VR, your senses told you, you were already there (see Penn & Hout 2018; Rubin 2018). In 2005, when Google Maps was introduced, users could visit places photographically in ways not previously available. Thus today, 'with my own eyes', I can go virtually to Pitcairn Island or the Left Bank in Paris and get a seriously good feel for the place. I can experience the landscape, the city layout, the vegetation or buildings, the traffic or the lack of it. I can move through these places with mouse-clicks. So, why should I want to go there personally?

The answer lies for me in the liminal space between the representation and the real thing (if we can indeed say anything is 'real'). While place is a sort of fiction anyway, because we carry to it our own meanings based in autobiographical memory and others' interpretations, famous places are mainly coded by history such that they conjure in us particular base-line emotions and perceptions. For example, Port Arthur in Tasmania, as a tourist destination, was for years associated with the suffering of early convict Australians, not to mention the suffering of the indigenous Tasmanians. In 1996 a new coding was laid down when Martin Bryant massacred 35 tourists there. Going to the site now, you feel the pain from both time-frames; you carry with you a 'book' called History – it's your reading of official views of the place and your personal deductions. This 'book' guides you in how to 'see and feel' things from the past.

Elsewhere, a drab castle comes alive as a stage for siege and conflict. You see hot oil poured on invaders from above the open portcullis gate – it was definitely closed at the time 400 years ago – because you have read about the action, or the tour guide recounts it to you. Just which side you support, the besieged or the invaders, depends on your personal history book. In an old cathedral, you stand by the ancient font and witness the water lifted to the brows of the first six Indigenous Americans brought back to Europe – as the sign carved in stone informs – and you see either a world triumph, or a world disaster, according to your book. The past comes alive with tourism, especially today when so many tourist sites employ light shows acting out historic events, or indeed have real actors doing it. But you need your own understanding and insight to guide you.

Talking about John Steinbeck's literary landscapes, Susan Shillinglaw says:

Today's tourists are drawn to Cannery Row to retrace Steinbeck's map of the street. They yearn to find Steinbeck's Cannery Row intact, decades later. They want to meld fiction and fact. Past and present, dream and reality. And this may, in fact, be close to what Steinbeck intended – immersion in reality as a first principle. *Cannery Row* is a novel about seeing... It moves from concrete and delightful reality to abstract and sometimes puzzling reflection. Fact and fiction blend seamlessly in Steinbeck's novel as well as in the place that is today's Cannery Row, Steinbeck's imprint intact. (Shillinglaw 2018: 122-123)

The power a writer can have over a place – and the coding that literary works do – is significant. When writers travel today, they have in mind historical and literary associations. But also, if their intention is to use the destination as a setting, they have specific writerly requirements for the visit.

Literary tourism and the writer

I quoted above Massie's (1988) account of Byron touring the Mediterranean in 1809. The educational context for the Grand Tour was, as Edward Gibbon wrote in 1805: 'According to the law of custom, and perhaps of reason, foreign travel *completes the education* of an English gentleman' (Gibbon 1805: 76, *my italics*). This view of education – which suggests that book-learning about foreign places provides incomplete knowledge, and going there provides a capstone course – was influentially expounded by John Locke in his 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding' (1690), in the chapter titled 'Of the Reality of Knowledge':

[O]f what use is all this fine knowledge of men's own imaginations, to a man that inquires after the reality of things? It matters not what men's fancies are, it is the knowledge of things that is only to be prized: it is this alone gives a value to our reasonings, and preference to one man's knowledge over another's, that it is of things as they really are, and not of dreams and fancies. (Locke 2018)

Although there were other reasons for doing a Grand Tour – which included to escape home or to indulge in the less scrutinised morality of the warmer climes – essentially, all motives

for grand tour travel boiled down to the importance of sensory experience, of being there and seeing/feeling for yourself.

The embodied experience has been analysed across a range of research fields in recent times: ‘anthropology, cultural studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and, more recently, neuroscience’ (Harris 2018); also in LGBTIQA+ studies (Eades 2018). Researchers recognise that the body’s record leads to understandings beyond what the mind alone produces, as Locke suggested in 1690. Pritchard et al (2007) drew this together when they said:

Until very recently “the body” has been a silent or indeed an absent entity in tourism research... But as more and more reflexive and embodied research(ers) have engaged with tourism scholarship we have begun to see a shift and work has foregrounded and conceptualized sensuousness and embodiment... As Osbourne (2002, p. 51) has written: “Like subjectivity, the body is the real, the immediate, the experienced ...”. (Pritchard et al 2007: 6-7)

For writers, this is familiar processual territory: going to a setting to experience its ambience supersedes, by far, sitting in the claustrophobic study trying to invent or reproduce that place in the mind. Especially, this is the case when authenticity is an objective. Just as Impressionist painters took their easels into the field to record the light, the weather, the cultural ambience and especially the interruptions to perception caused by local conditions, writers seeking accuracy – not just formalized ‘realism’, but also the impressionistic encounter – have travelled to places to confirm the validity of what they write. I can bring to this argument many years of travelling to places to extract from them, hopefully, their writerly significance for fiction, and also for my research writing.

My first literary pilgrimage as a writer in search of authentic place-as-setting was as a budding novelist in 1981 to the town of Winton and environs in Central Western Queensland. The place was the setting for ‘Banjo’ Paterson’s famous poem, ‘Waltzing Matilda’ (1895), and for his actual writing of it. I went there because these were the topics of my historical novel *Matilda, My Darling* (1983). I wanted to ‘live’ the novel that I hadn’t yet written; I wanted to see its setting through the eyes of my planned characters. I wanted to pre-live the novel’s action placed in its environment. And for that in 1981 I had to erase the ‘now’ from what I saw in order to make contact with 1895, almost a century previous, when the historical events took place. That was not so hard to do, it turned out. A key building – the house in Vindex St, Winton where Paterson’s fiancée stayed – still existed. And the Dagworth homestead near where the death of the swagman occurred, along with the North Gregory hotel where the song ‘Waltzing Matilda’ was first performed, had been rebuilt on their original sites. The countryside had undoubtedly lost more trees due to agriculture, but I re-grew them in my mind. By adjusting my perception, I felt I was walking where my main characters had walked and was seeing what they saw 90 years earlier. Even the railway line to Winton took the same tracks it did 90 years previously, and I jotted *en plein air* notes all the way. (For example, the train from Longreach to Winton carried fruit and vegetables from the coast 800 kilometres distant, stowed on the seats of the passenger carriage. I sat among greengrocers’ boxes piled on the seats. I presumed, rightly I think, that this was how produce always arrived in desert-

edge Winton, once the railway was built.) On that trip I built the strong conviction that fiction writers must visit the actual sites they purport to represent in their writing – even if they think they know the place already. Going there to check details in regards to making fiction out of a place is better practice than thinking one’s book-research alone will suffice.

Later, I approached the six novels I wrote or co-wrote in the same way: I visited settings to ensure authenticity. Often in the process I used old photographs as the way to see through the present and make contact with the past. I always found the past presented in black and white was inspiring: old photography took me back emotionally to times of, or well beyond, my childhood. The first photographs I had of myself were black and white. The thing about place is: progress may change it – even radically – but there are always aspects of its past available via what may be referred to as its *dynamic*. Often that dynamic is available in old photographs.

How to describe the dynamic of a place? In any one place there are multiple and diverse oppositions and adjacencies at work: topological, geographical, environmental, cultural. No street corner is exactly like another street corner. No valley aspect is unerringly replicated anywhere else. No coastal vista has its match precisely. It is true to say that every geographically plottable point on the planet is different. It has to be so, notwithstanding the ice wastes of the poles or the sand wastes of deserts, or even the watery wastes of the high seas. In each place the angle of the sun is different; the force of the wind varies differently; the animal or human usage is different. Overlaid across all of this, time and human history have left different cultural traces. These are the players in the drama of place, the forces at work: topology, geography, environment, culture and history. A writer’s basic task, I feel, is to describe this dynamic, as related to the setting of a particular creative work, faithfully in their own terms. For me, it requires going to the intended setting place and *being there* – opening up to it bodily, recording impressions, feeling the forces in operation, and meanwhile doing other forms of allied research that will enhance my sensual openness to the place.

I have made pilgrimages associated with writers and the settings they used for novels and poems and written about them (see e.g. Krauth 2003, 2010). Places I visited in search of my own fiction settings include:

- Central Western Queensland (Winton, Combo Waterhole, Shearers’ Strike camp site);
- Northern Rivers districts of Northern New South Wales (Ballina and environs);
- Thailand (Bangkok, North-Eastern and Southern areas);
- Mediterranean islands (36 of them in total).

Places I lived in and re-visited in order to set novels/stories there include:

- Port Moresby (and Hanuabada, Bootless Inlet);
- Bathurst and the Blue Mountains (Sunny Corner, Blackheath);
- Sydney (Manly, Manly beach).

I realise in developing the above list that a writer's fiction might indeed be circumscribed by the places their life experiences have sent them to. Possibly, it is easier for an author to write about places they have lived in, because they know them so well. But equally, when visiting a place for the first time, one gets that 'first impression' which the long-term resident has become inured to. I have always enjoyed, in researching a setting, the difference between what I thought about it on arrival, and what I then grew to know about it if I stayed longer. That is another aspect of the drama of a place: it tests how well you as observer pick up on the forces at work.

My investigations of place for stories and novels got me interested in how other writers transposed real places into their fiction. The first specifically 'literary' place I visited to research another novelist's writing was San Francisco in 1999. I wanted to immerse myself in the plot, and among the characters, of Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), a novel I was passionate about and was teaching at the time. I wanted to know where Sam Spade had his office, what mean streets he walked. I wanted to re-live the novel, but especially also, the writing of it. In San Francisco, I used street and underpass names from the novel as clues to find the settings. I arrived at the scene of the fictional murder and found, surprisingly, a plaque on the wall which stated:



Figure 4 © Craig Pittmann

I still recall the shock I had at seeing this. Never before had I witnessed municipal recognition of a fictional setting. Government authorities recognised the real, but here they acknowledged the fictional. The San Francisco plaque spurred me on to fictional and poetic literary settings around the world.

I have done a 5-day pilgrims' walk to Canterbury in southern England, to trek the journey recorded in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). I found the solo walk exercising, but not arduous, particularly helped along by a walking tour company (walkawhile.co.uk) which provided me with excellent literary resources, medieval accommodation sites and

ploughman's lunches along the way. Then, I wanted to go to the Lake District in northern England to find the exact location where Wordsworth saw those daffodils in his poem 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' (1802). I went there in the flowering season, and walking along the banks of Ullswater I reckon I found it, a swathe of daffodils exactly as described. I went back to Dove Cottage, Wordsworth's home, and lay down on the couch immortalised in the poem (disobeying the tourist signs) to find out what the writing process was like for him. I sought out Casanova's locations as boy, preacher, and prisoner recorded in his writings (1822-29) in the maze of streets and buildings in the San Samuele and San Marco areas of Venice. They are still there, the buildings pertinent to Casanova's career, bristling with political and sexual tensions. I saw (across a fence now, sadly) the station platform in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants' (1927). In love with Hemingway, in love with his story, in love with the way he wrote it so brilliantly, I wanted to be there, to see those hills 'across the valley of the Ebro' (Hemingway 1967: 51), to order a beer at that station bar and see those damn hills. I wanted to gauge why and how he was motivated to write that story in that particular way – a story which influenced story writing thereafter. On one occasion, after researching and visiting – over several days – five houses associated with Gerald and Laurence Durrell along the Corfu coast, I offered my tour guide services to two New Zealand tourists and got to see the locations again at the happy New Zealanders' expense. We had a wonderful day.

I happen to think this is something writers should do for their education, if they can. Go and visit key sites among the settings of authors they admire. Go through the experience of being there and attempt to discern why a favourite author described a setting in a particular way. I could say much about the above literary sites I visited, and also others not mentioned, but I will focus on the special trip I took to Zaragoza in Spain, to that station platform which is the dramatic setting for Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'.

After finding by Google Maps that the station platform seemed not accessible, but the view of the mountains might be still accessible, I went there in reality and found that with the advent of Spain's fast train the old station had become obsolete and was turned into railway administration offices, but the view from outside the official fence still gave a relevant perspective on the hills like white elephants that Hemingway saw. Those hills hadn't changed, and the perspective on them was almost exactly what his characters had. He wrote in his story:

...The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade... It was very hot and the express from Barcelona would come in forty minutes... The girl was looking off at the line of hills... "They look like white elephants," she said...

[He said]: "I love you now. You know I love you."

"I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?" (Hemingway 1967: 51, 54).

The phrase 'hills like white elephants' is a potent simile, but one might ask: Why would a writer like me go to all the trouble and expense of visiting a place 17,000 kilometres away from home to find out whether or not it is used authentically, and to try to gain some sort of insight into how the other writer applied it? That's what I did. I think the answer to this

question lies behind an understanding of literary tourism. There is a significant passion involved. What I found was: the hills did indeed look like white elephants. But they weren't a white I had imagined. They were a much better white: a dirty, creamy, clay-y, sensual white. A white perfectly suited to the story. A white which still haunts me today.

Conclusion

Literary tourism is about authentication in physical terms of previous mental (reading) experience. It is about the reader confirming that the writer or artist has done a great (or otherwise) job in using/manipulating/adapting a physical setting. It is about re-experiencing the wonderful time had reading or viewing the creative product and comparing that with the actual perspective taken by the practitioner. It is about having been convinced by fiction or memoir, and then verifying that the experience transferred is somehow concomitant and accessible in real life.

Literary tourism is:

- *a readerly investment* – visiting literary sites can involve the reader wanting simply to re-visit a site enjoyed, particularly emotionally;
- *a passionate escape* – it can be the fulfilling of a VR-style passion where fiction has taken over the mind and the impassioned reader must make their way to the real place to experience how that reality was transposed into the fiction or memoir;
- *an excuse to go*, in a world where one can actually go travelling for no reason – literary tourism can make more sense of travel where one might otherwise be a tourist without a theorised cause, a lost soul looking for something to see or do;
- *an educational experience for a writer* – beyond the involvement of the regular traveller, travelling there can be a professional learning experience that informs practice for a writer or other arts practitioner.

I have visited more writerly sites than mentioned above. I can say that being in those places was among the most enjoyable and informative times in my writing life. I have written novels, stories and research articles inspired by those places, and I don't intend to stop this aspect of my writing process. I don't like writing from a garret without visiting the world.

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