



LITERARY PLACES, TOURISM AND THE HERITAGE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: Literary places can be defined in various ways, but principally they acquire meaning from links with writers and the settings of their novels. Such places attract tourists and form part of the landscape of heritage tourism. Several key concepts involving heritage are applicable to literary places, and empirical studies allow a greater understanding of their relevance. Research questions of this paper include how much awareness of literature tourists possess and what kinds of satisfaction they derive from their visit; how many literary pilgrims, and more general tourists, there are; and how relevant issues of authenticity and conservation are to this experience. **Keywords:** literary place, heritage tourism, cultural competence, production/consumption, imaginative literature, sense of place. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Hauts lieux littéraires, tourisme et expérience du patrimoine culturel. Les endroits associés à la littérature sont définis de différentes façons, mais ils deviennent significatifs principalement par leurs liens avec des écrivains et le cadre de leurs romans. Ces endroits attirent des touristes et font partie du paysage du tourisme culturel. Plusieurs concepts clé au sujet du patrimoine culturel peuvent s'appliquer aux lieux associés à la littérature, et les études empiriques permettent de mieux comprendre la pertinence de ces concepts. Les questions de recherche de cet article comprennent le degré de conscience littéraire des visiteurs, les sortes de satisfactions qu'ils tirent de leur visite, combien d'entre eux sont des pèlerins littéraires et combien sont des visiteurs plus ordinaires, et quelle est l'importance des questions d'authenticité et de protection à cette expérience. **Mots-clés:** lieu associé à la littérature, tourisme culturel, compétence culturelle, production/consommation, littérature de l'imagination, sens du lieu. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

There is a fascination about places associated with writers that has often prompted readers to become pilgrims: to visit a birthplace and contemplate the surroundings of an author's childhood, to see with fresh eyes places that inspired poems or books, to pay homage at a grave side or public memorial (Eagle and Carnell 1977:v).

The idea of literary pilgrims has existed for some time. It engenders the image of the dedicated scholar prepared to travel long distances

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to experience places linked with writers of prose, drama, or poetry, including the cemetery in Rome where the remains of Keats and Shelley lie or Rupert Brooke's grave on the Greek island of Skyros. Literary pilgrims in this sense are well educated tourists, versed in the classics and with the cultural capital to appreciate and understand this form of heritage. For Bourdieu (1984), such people belonged to the "dominant classes" with tastes and preferences that served as markers of their social position and with patterns of consumption that set them apart.

The growth of heritage tourism has required the re-appraisal of this representation of the literary pilgrim. There are now many more literary places attracting a greater diversity of tourist types. Literary places are no longer accidents of history, sites of a writer's birth or death; they are also social constructions, created, amplified, and promoted to attract visitors (tourists hereafter). There are still literary pilgrims but those who visit such places out of curiosity and general interest rather than a single-minded sense of dedication outnumber them. That these latter types may gain pleasure, enjoyment, and perhaps enrichment is not contested, but the experience will be different in kind from that of the literary pilgrim. In these respects, there are common features with other kinds of heritage places and in the diverse landscape of postmodern attractions, literary sites have their place:

Indeed the way in which all sorts of places have become centers of spectacle and display, and the nostalgic attraction of "heritage", can both be seen as elements of the postmodern (Urry 1990:93-94).

This paper identifies some of the key issues that relate to both literary and heritage tourism and discusses them with reference to two empirical case studies. One such issue is the meanings attached to literary places and their role in the wider practice of heritage tourism. Another is the reflexive relationship between those who develop and present sites and those who visit and consume them. The question of authenticity and its place in this experience has general relevance in heritage studies, but here the particular interest is in understanding the relative attractions of information on the lives of the writers or the settings for the fictional characters and events of their creation.

Following a brief review of the theoretical concerns, the paper will report on findings from two literary places in the United Kingdom, Chawton and Laugharne. The choice of these two writers and the places most closely linked with them was in part governed by the fact that they were parts of a wider ongoing project. There are other reasons that can be offered. Jane Austen and Dylan Thomas come from very different times and social backgrounds. There are differences in gender, lifestyle, class, and also in the type of literary genre and its appeal. The polite society novels of Jane Austen are worlds apart from the complex poetry and vigorous prose of Dylan Thomas. Chawton and Laugharne are both places that have been developed for tourists and are unambiguously connected with major literary figures. As with all samples, there is an element of subjective judgement, but the comparison is valid and as good as any other. The empirical case studies reported in this paper have sections on the types of tourists, the kinds

of prior knowledge that they possess, and their reasons for making the visit. There is some discussion on whether they relate their experience at the literary place to real or imagined worlds. Forming a bridge between the theoretical concerns and empirical evidence is an elusive goal, but this analysis offers some steps in that direction.

HERITAGE AND LITERARY TOURISM

The “users” of heritage attractions are overwhelmingly drawn from what has been termed the “service class” of professional and business people and others in white-collar occupations; “a separate class ... opposed in part to both capital and labor” (Urry 1995:94). As a broad group, the service classes enjoy superior work situations and have educational credentials that distinguish them from other groups. Thrift (1989) argued that it was this service class of white-collar workers and their families who visited heritage attractions, and Prentice (1993:74) found empirical evidence to support this proposition.

Taking the British census socioeconomic groups of professional, managerial, and intermediate non-manual, this service class comprised 44% of the adult workforce in 1971 and 53% in 1993 (OPCS 1995). A group of this dimension has some common features, including occupational status and educational competence, but there will be significant differences of taste and preference. Urry described these as “reflexive modernization” or “the proliferation of images and symbols operating at a level of feeling and consolidated around judgements of taste” (1995:145). These structured attitudes need embedding in an assessment of who values what sort of knowledge, what kind of literature and what type of day out. Lowenthal (1985) regretted the passing of the age of elite travelers versed in the classical and scriptural past who were, in his view, able to appreciate heritage.

People visit literary places for a variety of reasons. First, they are drawn to places that have connections with the lives of writers. Former homes, in which a writer lived and worked, may create a sense of nostalgia and inspire awe or reverence:

In these places, a visitor can still walk out of a house and into landscapes which have barely changed since the writer drew breath from them and breathed literature into them... We walk in our writers' footsteps and see through their eyes when we enter these spaces (Marsh 1993:xi, xv).

Second, tourists may be drawn to literary places that form the settings for novels. Fiction may be set in locations that writers knew and there is a merging of the real and the imagined that gives such places a special meaning. Fictional characters and events often generate the strongest imagery. Pocock showed that tourists to Haworth sought out the moors but emotions in crossing them were suffused “less with the excitement of treading in the Brontes’ footsteps, than with the thought that Heathcliff might appear” (1987:138). Third, tourists may be drawn to literary places for some broader and deeper emotion than the specific writer or the story. Squire (1993, 1994) exemplified this with her

research into Hill Top Farm, a former home of Beatrix Potter, in Cumbria. Many tourists were evoking memories and emotions from their childhood: their recall was of the telling of the stories and their bonds with home and family. In a similar way, G. Davies (1995) recorded the significance of the story *Evangeline* to the Acadian people of eastern Canada. For them, she argued, the story, as depicted in Longfellow's poem, evoked memories of suffering and the loss of a home territory. The fourth reason may be less concerned with the literature than with some dramatic event in the writer's life. Van Gogh was an artist rather than a writer but Millon (Office de Tourisme, Auvers-sur-Oise, personal communication in 1993) commented that many people visited Auvers-sur-Oise near Paris because of its association with the manner of the artist's death rather than with his art.

These are the exceptional qualities of a literary place. In addition, there are more general qualities that may be used to promote its attractiveness. Literary places may become stopping points along a more general tourism itinerary. The appeal of such places is, at least in part, one of geographical convenience, a location that fits into a route encompassing cathedrals, churches, country houses, and gardens. Again, setting is important and scenic environments, views, and a range of facilities from afternoon teas to souvenirs are all part of the experience. Figure 1 demonstrates these various qualities of the literary place, the balance between the exceptional and the general, and the policy options which the attraction manager faces.

The diversification of literary tourists has been matched by a multi-

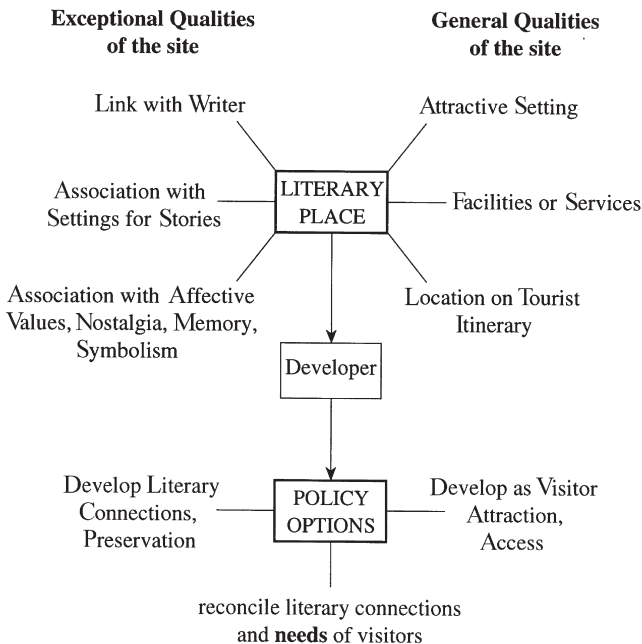


Figure 1. The Qualities of a Literary Place

plication of literary places. Such places are no longer confined to connections with the writers of classical literature. Modern, popular writers' places have also been added to the itinerary as Pocock (1992) has described the emergence of 'Catherine Cookson' country in South Tyneside (now within the Northumbria Tourist Board Region). Again, a wall plaque marks 221B Baker Street in London, even though that part of the street did not exist when Conan Doyle named it as the lodgings of Sherlock Holmes over the period 1881 to 1904. Stamford in Lincolnshire, where the television film of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* was made in 1994, became an instant tourism attraction even though it had no connection with either the writer or the book. Literary places are often developed, promoted, and marketed. The town of Cabourg in Normandy actively promotes its connections with Marcel Proust both as a place he visited and as a model for the "Balbec" of his novels. Igoe's (1994) *Literary Guide to Dublin*, containing walking routes and a list of pubs was described as "an essential companion for literary pilgrims".

In the latter half of the nineteenth century in Dublin, and within an area of a few square miles, were born some of the most famous names in the history of literature and drama in the English language ... a phenomenal record for a city the size of Dublin (Igoe 1994:xvii).

Managers of heritage sites, including literary places, will aim to portray a particular set of images. At their disposal are the physical attributes of the sites and a range of interpretive techniques that can be used to convey messages. A literary place is socially constructed, but there is no guarantee that messages are read and interpreted in intended ways:

Any presentation of landscape, whether popular or scholarly, is best thought of as a representation that is, a construction that is contingent, partial and unfinished ... a fabrication that depends in part on the position of the interpreter (Duncan and Ley 1993:329).

Figure 2 expresses this relationship between presenter and reader in diagrammatic form. In the construction segment of the diagram, the site is created or presented in a particular form by its developers and managers. In the consumption segment, the tourists form their attitudes and impressions that they may then transmit to others. This diagram is, in part, derived from Johnson (1986) and his circuits of culture model that theorizes ways in which meanings are encoded by the producers of attractions and decoded by tourists. Recent commentators have attached great significance to this process of decoding. Shields (1991) argued that meanings were given to texts by the readers, there was a reflexive circulation between subject and object. Samuel (1994) similarly believed that the key to understanding interpretation was readership and reception theory (Eagleton 1983), the "imaginary dislocations" that occurred as historical knowledge was transferred from one learning circuit to another. A first stage of social construction then involves the managers, a second involves the tourists and the diverse ways in which they read intended messages. Clearly this model is a circuit. As the developers create a text, so they are in turn influ-

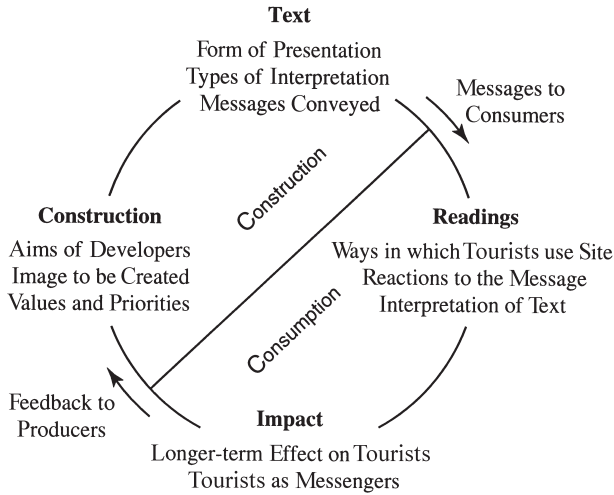


Figure 2. Construction and Consumption of Heritage Places

enced by the ways in which it is consumed. Tourists are not passive and developers need to be sensitive to their perceptions and needs.

Integral to the process of social construction is also the issue of authenticity. Questions commonly asked of literary places, and of heritage places in general, include whether they are genuine and whether they faithfully represent reality. From the discussion on social construction, the answer is at best ambiguous. Literary places may start from some unequivocal fact, such as the place where Thomas Hardy was born, but thereafter presentation and interpretation may deal as much with myths as with realities. Authenticity becomes a subjective experience, a combination of the developers' intentions, the consumers' interpretation, and the interactions among them. Wang's (1999) concept of existential authenticity allows this subjectivity and reflexivity to be seen in a theoretical context and to good effect.

Samuel (1994) recognized the problematic nature of authenticity but suggested that it was not particular to the heritage sector and that there was no such thing as the authentic past; memory changes and is historically conditioned; "like history, memory is inherently revisionist" (iv). Samuel argued that historians, in common with heritage managers and conservationists, re-invent the past, reconciling past and present, memory and myth, written record and spoken word. Again, tourists may not question what they see; they

... are not primarily looking for scientific historical evidence. They may even be only partly interested in the historical reality as such. Visitors to historic sites are looking for an experience, a new reality based on the tangible remains of the past. For them, this is the very essence of the heritage experience (Schouten 1995:21).

Figure 3 summarizes some of these ideas and centers on the proposition that interpretation is the product of the interaction between

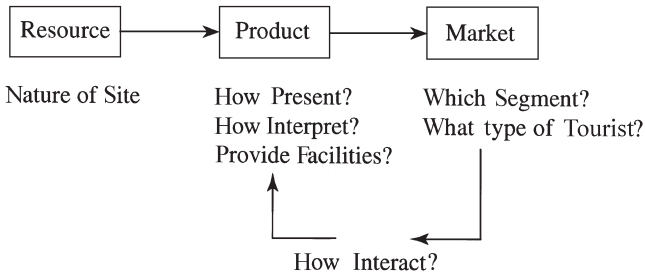


Figure 3. Heritage as a Product

the promotional aspirations of the developer and the diverse subjective reactions of the consumer. Such debates are relevant to the broader area of heritage tourism, but literary places also have exceptional qualities. There are “real” characters and places and also fictional characters and places with linkages between them. Daphne du Maurier recorded a personal testimony of one of her links between real and fictional worlds:

I had determined to write a light romance. But I go for a walk on the moor, and see a twisted tree and a pile of granite stones beside a deep, dark pool and Jamaica Inn is born (Frost 1995:7).

Places acquire meanings from imaginative worlds, but these meanings and the emotions they engender are real to the beholder. Stories excite interest, feelings and involvement, and landscapes can be related to their narratives. Literary places can be “created” with these fictional worlds in mind and tourists may be less concerned with distinctions between fiction and reality than with what stirs their imaginations and raises their interests. Shields (1991) noted Foucault’s lack of interest in the distinction between reality and fiction and his belief that both were products of a continuing discourse. Daniels and Rycroft argued that there were no simple dichotomies but “a field of textual genres—the novel, the poem, the travel guide, the map, the regional monograph—with complex overlaps and connections” (1993:460).

To explore some of the above ideas, Laugharne and Chawton are examined. It was in both of these places where writers spent formative years of their lives. Dylan Thomas lived at Laugharne intermittently from 1938 to his death in 1953 and it is with the Boathouse, standing on a sea cliff overlooking the Taf estuary, that he is most associated. Dylan Thomas died in New York in November 1953 but is buried at Laugharne. Chawton is a village in Hampshire where Jane Austen lived from 1807 to 1817 in a cottage on her brother’s estate. It was in this cottage, now the Jane Austen House, that she wrote or completed several of her novels. She died in 1817 and was buried in Winchester Cathedral. Both the Boathouse and the Jane Austen House are now small museums, the former administered by Carmarthen District Council and the latter by the Jane Austen Trust.

Figure 4 shows the locations of Laugharne and Chawton. Both places are located in pleasant settings and possess the general qualities to attract tourists. Hampshire claims to have over 180 attractions. In 1994, 13 million tourist nights were spent in the county (Hampshire Web Site: hants.gov.uk). South Wales recorded 5.5 million tourist trips and an estimated 15 million leisure day visits in 1995 (Wales Tourist Board Web Site: tourism.wales.gov.uk). Laugharne retains many of its traditional features as a small fishing town in rural Wales and for many it is the model for Under Milk Wood’s “Llaregyb”. The Boathouse has a spectacular setting and the surrounding Welsh countryside has a rich heritage that includes small market towns, castles, and religious sites. Chawton remains a small village in rural Hampshire but is within easy reach of the London metropolitan area. It is close to other notable Jane Austen sites such as Winchester and Steventon; and the surrounding area has significant historic sites, including a large number of historic houses.

These are two specific literary places dedicated to the writers and their works. Both houses are maintained in the manner in which they

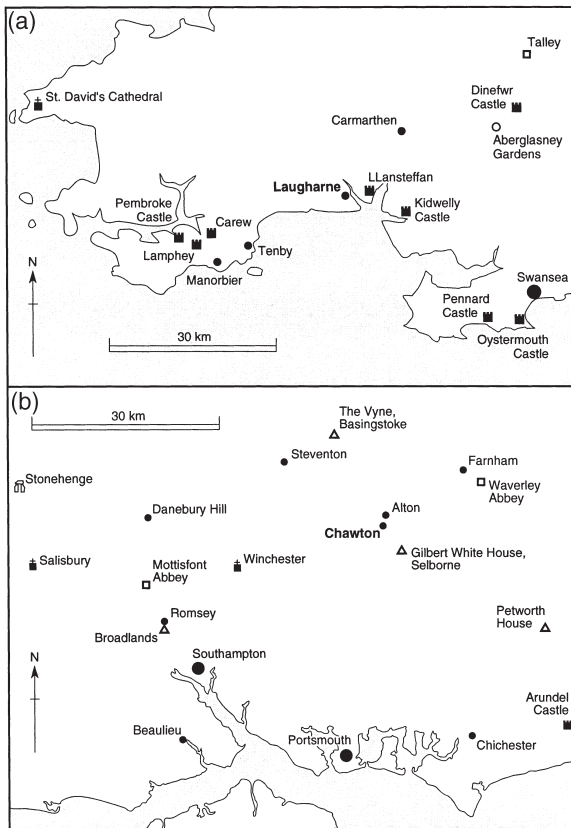


Figure 4. Literary Places in their Regional Settings. (a) Laugharne; (b) Chawton

were occupied, although there have been changes in structure and/or decor. Chawton includes displays of family memorabilia, a lock of Jane Austen's hair, the "creaking door" which warned her of visitors, details of the illness from which she died. At Laugharne, there is a recorded voice of Dylan Thomas reading his poetry, a video, family photographs, and copies of original manuscripts and letters. Experience of each literary place is largely limited to the dwelling and its immediate environs. This is especially the case at Chawton as none of Jane Austen's novels was set in Hampshire and there is no context for characters and events to which the tourists can relate. Chawton does, however, fit the images of place that Jane Austen created: "... such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in" (Wright 1953:15-16). Laugharne, the "setting" for *Under Milk Wood* with its strong images, the Boathouse, and the view over the estuary is rather different: "... important place of herons, cormorants (known here as billyduckers), castle, churchyard, gulls, ghosts, geese" (cited in W. Davies 1991:91); and glimpses of:

... the sloeback, slow, black, crowblack, fishing-boat bobbing sea
(cited in W. Davies 1991:102).

Apart from the Boathouse and the nearby "writing shed", there are other houses in Laugharne where the Thomases lived, Brown's Hotel is open for business, the castle overlooks the town and around these markers of reality is the sense of *Milk Wood*:

... this timeless, mild beguiling island of a town with its seven public houses, one chapel in action, one church, one factory, two billiard tables ... three rivers, a visiting sea ... and a multitude of mixed birds
(cited in W. Davies 1991:91-92)

Who the Tourists Are

The surveys reported here form part of an ongoing project. The initial ones were completed in 1993 and 1994; 223 completed interviews were obtained from Chawton and 218 from Laugharne. Reference will also be made to a 1998 Laugharne survey (Stevens 1998). Interviewers worked throughout the summers, including both weekdays and weekends in their schedule with the cooperation of the Jane Austen Trust and the Carmarthen District Council. The interviewers were all experienced, were employed as research assistants, and drew their sample from the available tourists on the survey days. As the flow of respondents was slow, the aim was as full a sample as possible, moving onto the next interview as soon as one was completed. Tourists were interviewed after they had completed the visit. Subsequent work between 1997 and 1999 has focused on site managers and place promotion. A SPSS program was used to analyze the survey data and some of the statistical findings are incorporated into the text.

At Chawton, 60% of tourists could be classed as managerial, professional, or skilled white-collar; at Laugharne 49% fell into these categories. A further 30% at each place were students, housewives, or retirees. The service class, as earlier defined, dominated both samples.

The largest single age group at Chawton comprised those aged 35 to 54 years old (40.5%), with 23.4% under the age of 34 and 10.4% over 64. Most Chawton tourists were residents in the United Kingdom, with 8.1% from North America, 4.5% from Europe, and 6.3% from other parts of the world. The very large majority (81.6%) was making their first visit to the Jane Austen House, though 68% had also visited Winchester Cathedral where the author is buried. Other places visited in the area included local towns, such as Chichester, Salisbury, and Portsmouth; monuments such as Stonehenge and Arundel Castle; and houses such as the Gilbert White House and the Duke of Wellington's former residence. Many were on holiday in the area and these amounted to just under 50% at Chawton and 80% at Laugharne. This probably reflects the differences in location. Chawton is highly accessible to southeast England and about 80% had traveled that day from Hampshire, Surrey, or London. At Laugharne, which is much further removed from large centers of population, 85% had traveled that day from southwest Wales and were mainly on holiday in the area. The fact of being in the area was important at both sites.

Among Laugharne tourists, 29.8% were normally resident in South Wales, a further 26.6% came from southeast England, and 5% from the United States. Just over three-quarters were first-time tourists but 11% had been at least twice before. In this sample, 48.3% were aged 35 to 54, 25.1% were under 35, and 10.9% were over 64 years old. Further, 28% had visited other places linked with Dylan Thomas and most of these were in the Swansea area. Among other places visited in the locality were St. David's Cathedral, Pembroke Castle, Tenby, and a number of other historic sites. Tourism in the area has more recently increased with the opening of the Aberglasney Historic Garden and the development of the Welsh Botanic Garden at Middleton. Many had read about Laugharne in local travel literature, some had seen road signs, and others had received recommendations from family or friends.

The shared features of the two samples were the dominance of higher social classes, of holidaymakers, adult and middle-aged groups, and first time tourists. Evident differences included the fact that Chawton tourists were particularly dominant in terms of higher social class and were non-local. Importantly for this study, there were indicators of a stronger literary awareness among Chawton tourists, a point which should be further developed.

Prior Knowledge about the Site

Studies that center on the idea of literary pilgrims stress the significance of cultural competence. As developed by Bourdieu (1984), this is not a simple concept but one interfaced with variations in taste and status. He argued that habitus had to be embedded in people's values, types of knowledge, and forms of enjoyment. Pleasure and education do not mean the same things to different groups and are not necessarily discrete. As a means of assessing the kind of literary cultural competence that tourists brought to the site, a series of questions was asked

about their prior knowledge of the authors and their literature. Both Prentice (1995) and Light (1995) examined the influence of prior knowledge on their experience of heritage. Prentice noted that even with prior knowledge much on site learning remained incorrect and Light showed that while many people visited historic sites with existing awareness and interest, few had specific and detailed prior knowledge.

Respondents were first asked if they could identify other literary places in the United Kingdom and the writers with whom they were associated. At Chawton, only 11 tourists (4.7%) failed to mention any such place, at Laugharne 46 (20.2%) failed. Taking the overall sample at the two sites, 86.2% mentioned at least one literary place and many identified more than one. Most frequent references were to Shakespeare and Stratford (49% at Laugharne and 35% at Chawton), the Brontes and Haworth (22% at Laugharne and 35% at Chawton), Dickens and London (14% at Laugharne and 40% at Chawton) and to poets, usually Wordsworth, and the Lake District (28% at Laugharne and 20% at Chawton). Generally, the sample showed a high level of awareness of literary places.

At Chawton, respondents were asked about Jane Austen and her novels. Out of the 223 sampled, 30 (13.5%) had read none of her novels. On the other hand, 28.2% had read six or more, and over 60% had read three or more. Of the individual novels, *Pride and Prejudice* was the most widely read (80.3%), followed by *Sense and Sensibility* (58.3%) and *Emma* (56.5). The question did ask about books read, but the frequent presentation of these stories on film and television undoubtedly raises awareness of them. There were also questions on the life of Jane Austen and the kind of society to which she belonged. Jane Austen was part of the gentry in the lower part of the middle classes, but had access to the leisured middle classes and moved easily in those circles; her brother inherited property, and Honan (1987) has suggested that she inherited a fine sense of class from her mother. Her novels reflect these influences: "She restricted her material to a narrow range of society and events: a prosperous middle-class circle in provincial surroundings" (Wynne-Davies 1989:332). Jane Austen was placed by 51% of tourists in a class termed "gentry", and a further 23.8% in a group called "leisured classes"; both of which can be regarded as accurate. It is important though to remember that the interviews followed the visits. SPSS results revealed significant chi-squared scores between social class and books read (.01), knowledge of her place in society (.01), and being "fans" of Jane Austen (.05).

Respondents were presented with a list of 10 topics or features and asked which of these they would think of in relation to Jane Austen's novels. About 90% of respondents identified qualities of "romantic relationships", "proper behavior", "good manners", and the "place of women in society". About two-thirds of those interviewed identified "wealth" and "southern England" but "politics", "economic matters", "changing times", and "poverty" were identified by only one-third or less. By and large, these responses confirm the idea of a well-read and knowledgeable group of respondents, able to identify the features most commonly associated with Jane Austen. There are nuances and hidden

meanings, as with any author, but tourists had good general awareness of Jane Austen's novels.

Extending this methodology to Dylan Thomas's work, 78.6% of those interviewed at Laugharne said that they had either read, heard, or seen a performance of *Under Milk Wood*, 43.6% knew the *Collected Poems*, 39% knew *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, and 27% knew *Quite Early One Morning*. Asked which poem they knew well, 12.8% said *Fern Hill* and 8.7% *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night*. This level of literary awareness of the specific writer is less impressive than that shown at Chawton. *Under Milk Wood* is by far the best-known single work and the frequency of its use in schools, on stage, and on radio, contributes to its popularity. Using the SPSS program, a number of tests were conducted to identify relationships with literary awareness at Laugharne. The numbers of books and poems by Dylan Thomas was again used as an indicator of actual knowledge of his work. There was no significant relationship with either the social class or the age of the tourists. Similarly, when the sample was divided on the basis of place of residence (Wales or non-Wales), there was again no significant chi-squared score. Yet there was a range in terms of the books read measure. About 60% had read two or less, but over a quarter had read four or more. Knowledge of Dylan Thomas as a writer was examined by a question seeking the word or phrase people would use to describe him in that capacity. This question generated 343 different words and three-quarters of the sample had at least one word to offer. Using a broad classification, four or five main types of response could be identified: 34.1% related to his ability to express emotions or insights with words such as "sensitive", "uninhibited", "nostalgic", "perceptive"; 30.3% were words suggesting technical skills such as "word-builder supreme", "phrasing of verse", "musical sounds", "image-builder", and "lyrical voice"; 17.2% referred to his international status as "brilliant", "genius", "profound", "inspiring", "magical", and 14% to his local consciousness, "understood environment", "loved people", and "regionalist". Therefore, there is good evidence to indicate that people were aware of Dylan Thomas as a writer and recognized distinctive features of his work. How much depth there is to their understanding and reading is more questionable. A 1998 survey conducted for the City and County of Swansea (Stevens 1998) concluded that knowledge of Dylan Thomas was more of a leisure interest than the outcome of formal study.

Laugharne tourists were also asked about Dylan Thomas as a person. This question generated 324 descriptions, which again bore testimony to awareness of a much publicized, and often-dramatic lifestyle. Again using a broad system of classification, several main categories of response could be distinguished: 36.7% picked out the darker side of his character with words such as "loud", "brash", "wild", "violent", "nihilistic", "dissolute", "sponger", "fraud", "drink problems", and "wasted life"; 25.3% regarded his weaknesses with a degree of sympathy, "easily led", "restless", "tormented", "unable to cope", "own worst enemy"; 17.6% picked out his likeable traits, "humour", "kindly", "lovable", "empathy with people", and "good bloke"; 15.4% saw his eccentricity, "heights and depths", "wanted to be loved", "rebel", "non-

conformist”; and 4.3% stressed his local connections, “loved Wales”, “loved Boathouse”, “different away from Wales”, and “a product of his environment”.

Biographers have commented on Dylan Thomas’s status as a writer and Tremlett, referring to D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, argued that “Dylan Thomas was in their league, a highly accomplished world writer who died in his prime” (Tremlett 1991:xxvii).

Dylan Thomas’s sense of place has been identified by many writers such as W. Davies (1991) who argued that he was the poet of suburban Swansea no less than he was the poet of rural Dyfed; he belonged to the two places in essentially different ways, and sometimes said that it was only in Wales that he could write. When Laugharne tourists were asked to identify features they associated with the work of Dylan Thomas, 61.9% said “a sense of place”, 57.8% humor, 57.3% nostalgia, and 48.6% sadness.

The main purpose of this section of the survey was to explore the prior knowledge of the writers, their work, and their lives that the tourists brought to the site. It has also drawn out impressions formed during the visit and influenced by the content of the literary place and the ways in which it is presented. Particularly at Chawton, the amount of prior knowledge, measured by indicators such as books read, was considerable. It is likely that some of the respondents warranted the description of literary pilgrims and had established admiration for Jane Austen and her work. At Laugharne, this kind of detailed knowledge was less evident and most had a more general awareness about Dylan Thomas as a character. The contrast is helpful in pointing up the differing ways in which tourists, with various kinds of cultural competencies, can gain satisfaction from a visit. At Laugharne, the interest in the man and his excesses was a focus and a sketchy knowledge of his literary works did not diminish the value to the tourist of being there. The many judgements such as “sponger”, “drinker”, “own worst enemy”, “lovable”, and “good bloke” had meaning to those who held them and may well have been modified, strengthened, or formed by the experience of the visit.

There are other dimensions to the views expressed in these sections. The difference in literary genre may be important. Jane Austen wrote novels in a clear and accessible style and these have been portrayed in film and television. Dylan Thomas’s poetry is memorable but often difficult. Although Thomas had a reputation as a radio broadcaster during his lifetime, only *Under Milk Wood* has become a major media portrayal. There are ways in which the kind of sentiments identified by Squire (1993, 1994) affect the touristic experience at Chawton and Laugharne. Jane Austen’s novels are evocative of the social round of polite society with close attention to affective bonds and close human relationships. Her imagery focuses on enduring values, the quality of a rural lifestyle, and the place of women in society. Within her novels there are occasional sharp messages and strong biases, but they have romance, family, and a particular kind of society at their core. For Dylan Thomas, the sentiments and images are different. His Welshness was not that of traditional native-language Wales and in many ways he

became an icon for Anglo-Welsh literature. His lifestyle was the stuff of popular journalism, yet the power of his words was such as to create a legacy that had an international dimension. There is evidence for reactions to sentiments of this kind at Chawton and Laugharne.

The experience of such visitations is rich and varied (Beeho and Prentice 1997) and the meanings of the places encompass that reflexive variety. One argument is that tourists seek to relate their experiences of heritage sites to the values and meanings typical of their normal everyday lives (Bagnall 1996; Gruffudd, Herbert and Piccini 1999); literary places resemble what Stewart (1984) referred to as "objects" that envelop the past within the present. For Stewart (1984), tourists were involved in a search for the authentic experience, found beyond their present lives, where the antique, the pastoral, and fictional domains were articulated. Literary places resemble museums to which the past lends authenticity and whose elements evoke remembrance and fantasy. In this sense, presentations at literary sites are "good to think with" allowing memory and interests to interact and give visits special but easily assimilated meanings. Literary places serve as vehicles for different forms of pleasure.

Reasons to Visit

The question of why tourists come to a site raises wider theoretical issues relating to choice of destination, motivations, and forms of behavior. The emphasis here is upon the site-specific reasons for trips given by tourists, but some brief points from the wider literature serve as context. There have been many attempts to measure tourism motivation (Fodness 1994) and to model tourist behavior (Moore, Cushman and Simmons 1995). Yet, despite these advances, Crompton's (1979) statement that more is known about the "who, when and where" of tourism than about the "why", remains valid. Many of the models and taxonomies still appear to have a complexity that may not match the pragmatic decisions that tourists make. Fodness (1994) favored a functional approach that linked motivations and attitudes of tourists to psychological needs. He argued persuasively that this had an intuitive appeal as a means of understanding tourist behavior and also gave the possibility of effecting change. Of relevance to this particular project is Gartner's (1989) suggestion of the "benefit package" that any destination offered, appealing to a range of interests. Again, the concept of a multiple destination pleasure trip (Lue, Crompton and Feisenmaier 1993) has resonance for the survey experiences in both Southwest Wales and Hampshire. Their research showed that 30 to 50% of leisure trips were to multiple destinations.

At Chawton, there were no significant chi-squared relationships between purposes of the visit and either age or social class. Questions on purposes of the visit showed that 56.9% came to be informed or to be educated rather than to be entertained or to relax. The form of this question in particular invited categorized responses and there may well in reality be overlaps. For many respondents, pleasure and learning may be complementary rather than alternative reasons. Pressed for

further specific reasons, 31.8% said that they were “fans” of Jane Austen as their first-ranked reason for the visit. If first- and second-ranked reasons are taken, 46.1% were “fans” of the writer. This notion of “fandom” is in itself an interesting research theme in the cultural studies literature. Barker (1989), for example, explored its meaning to young readers of popular comics. Fans of Jane Austen are of a different order. They have developed their interest through a captivation with her literature and follow this through with an interest in her life. It is important to remember that the label “fan” was subjective and derived from self-perceptions. At Chawton, chi-squared tests did not show any significant relationship between age and the belief that one was a fan, but there was a score, significant at the 5% level, between social class and being a fan. Those people classifying themselves as fans of Jane Austen, were strongly familiar with her work. Using the indicator of numbers of books read, this chi-squared score showed a very strong positive relationship with being a fan of Jane Austen.

In a similar vein, 38.1% of those interviewed identified the wish to learn more about Jane Austen as a first- or second-ranked reason for their visit. Clearly many had a high level of interest in Jane Austen. Among other reasons mentioned, 32.8% had come just to have a day out, or had noticed the sign when passing. Others cited reasons of convenience, favorable weather for a trip, or the fact that they were on holiday in the locality.

Some form of literary interest motivated most tourists, but the sample was not uniform. A significant minority viewed the visit to Chawton as a leisure, rather than a literary, experience. Spending a few hours in a relaxing, pleasant environment may have been as important as achieving some empathy with the author and her works. If there is a dichotomy, however, its edges are blurred and as, already stated, the motives of education and enjoyment are not necessarily alternatives. There was a widely held interest in the literary connotations of Chawton. For some, this was the specific motivation for being there; for others, it was much more peripheral. Many were able to combine interest and relaxation in ways they found to be acceptable and pleasurable and these were not mutually exclusive features of the visit. This interpretation was partly confirmed by the information that 85% of those interviewed at Chawton had visited other historic or more general interest places in the vicinity. As already noted, Winchester, Salisbury, and Stonehenge were the most frequently mentioned places, though specific houses, such as that linked with Gilbert White, were often cited. Many patronize heritage sites in general and see literary places as part of that wider experience. The stated reason “day out” did show a significant chi-squared relationship with both age (.01) and social class (.05).

At Laugharne, chi-squared tests again failed to show significant relationships between purposes of visit with either social class or age. On this “general purposes of visit” question at Laugharne, only 13.8% of the sample said that they had come to relax, 64.2% had come to be either informed or educated. Asked for more specific reasons, 53.2% had come out of an interest in Dylan Thomas and 28.1% said

they were having a day-out. Of first-ranked reasons, 34.4% were there to learn about Dylan Thomas, 21.2% because they had read his work, 28% happened to be in the area, and 17.4% were having a day out. A significant number showed an interest in the writer and their assessment of features on display re-inforced this: 47.2% were impressed with the interpretive material and 15.3% by the sense of place engendered by the Boathouse. About three-quarters of the sample had seen the writing shed, most found it of interest, and about one-fifth expressed a sense of wonder. Most felt they had learned at least something as a result of the visit.

This summary of expressed reasons offers one insight, but the most significant fact may be the diversity of the visitor experience. Many people may arrive with ill-defined reasons, but the actual visit invokes and awakens a range of reactions that can include a sense of nostalgia or of longing for the particular kind of world they associate with the writer. Generalizations are valid but each visitor has some individual form of chemistry with the place, its presentation, and its associated characters and events, real-life or fictional.

Real and Imagined Worlds

Having established some of the characteristics of the tourists, the issue of whether they were drawn to Chawton or to Laugharne to explore the real lives of the writers or to have contact with the worlds of the novels was examined. Are they interested in questions of authenticity such as, "Was this the small table at which Jane Austen wrote?" "Is her room as she saw it almost 200 years ago?" Or, are they more concerned with whether any of her characters is placed in these settings? As already suggested, there is a strong supposition that real and imagined worlds fuse in the minds of the respondents.

Chawton is not likely to generate images such as that of Heathcliff at Haworth (Pocock 1987); the house and its setting have no obvious place in her novels. But there are real places in the novels: Box Hill where Emma spent time with her party and the Cobb at Lyme Regis where Louisa had her accident in *Persuasion*. Jane Austen's characters, however, lack the drama of a Heathcliff and her places are less imbued with incident and emotion. For example, while she used the Cobb as a setting for incidents in *Persuasion*, a tourist today looking down the Cobb is much more likely to have an image of Sarah Woodruff, from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (Fowles 1969) (or for some the actress Meryl Streep), as a figure who inhabits that place.

The suggestion that the tourists to Chawton had good literary awareness was supported by their responses to a question on which features of the house were of most interest. In total, 66 items were mentioned, ranging from the "atmosphere of the place" to the "creaking door" which warned Jane Austen that she should put her work to one side. Most responses were linked to Jane Austen herself rather than to any characters in her novels. Over half of the items mentioned were personal things such as letters, a lock of hair, her own room, and details of her illness; many others referred to her family and to the house.

Clearly, those who visited the house at Chawton were drawn there because of the links with Jane Austen and her family, but they also found the house of intrinsic historical interest. Hampshire and Chawton have no part in the writings of Jane Austen; there is no door here which opens to lead tourists into the imagined world of her novels. This view was confirmed when they were questioned on what they had learned most about during the visit: 91.1% felt they had learned at least something about Jane Austen, her family, and their lifestyle; 40.4% felt they had learned nothing about the settings for her novels, and 32.3% nothing about Jane Austen as an author.

There were questions about places where Jane Austen had lived, and also about places that appear in her novels. Responses to both of these questions were limited: 68.6% connected her with Winchester Cathedral; 37.2% with the house in College Street, Winchester; 52.5% with Bath; and 36.3% with Lyme Regis. These are the more obvious connections but only 5.8% identified Steventon as a place associated with Jane Austen, although it was her birthplace and she spent much of her life there. When tourists were questioned on places associated with the Austen novels, Bath, which features in *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*, was prominent, being identified by 76.2%. But thereafter, the highest scores were Hampshire (71.7%), which was not a setting for the novels, and London (37.7%), which features in several novels, though never prominently. More accurate were Lyme Regis (36.3%), in *Persuasion*, and Box Hill (19.7%) in *Emma*. All the evidence tends to point in the same direction; a visit to Chawton is a visit to the former home of Jane Austen and her family and not to the world of her novels. Tourists to Chawton had, at a detailed level, limited awareness of the world of the novels or even of the places linked with Jane Austen.

Laugharne differed in some respects as people clearly felt that they were in a place that inspired some of Dylan Thomas's writing and was also the setting for his best-known work *Under Milk Wood*:

Laugharne was supportive, spiritually and practically ... and through drizzly, sleepy days he wrote some good poems and began *Under Milk Wood*, his play about the place (J. A. Davies 1987:7).

Davies argued that many places such as the Swansea of the *Portrait* stories and the Laugharne of *Under Milk Wood* were all real but transformed by the author's imagination. Laugharne as a place to visit has also been touched by the drama in Dylan Thomas's life. His tumultuous relationship with Caitlin, his legendary drinking bouts, and his trips to Brown's Hotel all add to the meanings of the place. Whether people thought they were stepping into his imagined world is more conjectural, though some of the anecdotal comment pointed in that direction: "the spirit of the place", "atmosphere of the town", "place where so much happened", "Laugharne seems unchanged, wonderful", "spiritual experience of house and area", "evocative", "empathy", "breathing-in atmosphere".

Tourists came in their tens of thousands to visit the Boathouse ... Thomas found and kept an audience that does not usually read poetry, buy books of short stories, or quality papers (Tremlett 1991:2).

At Chawton there were no explicit questions on attitudes towards conservation or development of the site, nor of purchases of souvenirs. A small number of tourists thought that items displayed in the house might not be genuine. At Laugharne, over three-quarters said that they would prefer to see the house preserved as it was and thought the present balance was about right. These sentiments did not reveal any statistically significant relationship with the tourist type. Chi-squared scores between those classing themselves as fans of Dylan Thomas and support to preserve the house as it was did not prove significant; neither did the score between the same group and support for conservation. The high general levels of support for both the "preserve house" and "conservation" questions, well over 70%, probably accounts for the lack of variation among subsets in the sample. Over 95% of all respondents evaluated the quality of their visit as at least good and a similar number said that they would recommend the visit to a friend. The large majority of Laugharne tourists wished to see a policy that combined principles of conservation with those of some development. Asked what developments they would like to see at Laugharne, 60.1% would welcome informative displays, 52.8% live performances of Dylan Thomas's works, 46.3% an *Under Milk Wood* exhibition, 33.5% a Dylan Thomas trail, and 29.4% plaques to identify key buildings in the town. There was a stronger conservation attitude towards the Boathouse with only 25% expressing a wish to have more facilities developed there and just under 50% being explicitly against such developments. Of the requests for more facilities at the Boathouse, 58.7% were for more items of interpretation such as photographs, press cuttings, information on family, recording, readings, and guides; 26% were for more critical assessments of the Thomases and 12.5% queried the authenticity of displays. The Boathouse has catering facilities and some sales, and the value of these was recognized: it was a pleasant, sociable visit where you met people, took refreshments, and enjoyed the view and ambiance.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed some of the general issues relevant to the study of heritage tourism and has reported some empirical findings from two literary places. These issues were identified in the introduction, discussed in the context of the available literature, and investigated at the selected sites, Chawton and Laugharne.

The case studies confirmed the links between social class and the habit of visiting heritage sites. Literary places prove to be no different from the experience of other heritage places. Most tourists surveyed were drawn from what have been termed the "service classes" of managerial, professional, and white-collar workers. There were differences between Chawton and Laugharne, indicating that different literary sites may have varying forms of attractiveness. Managerial and professional respondents were more strongly represented at Chawton (32.3%) than at Laugharne (22.9%); semi-skilled and unskilled workers were more common at Laugharne (14.3%) than at Chawton

(4.9%). There are various ways in which these differences may be interpreted. Chawton's location in southeast England contrasts with that of Laugharne on the peripheries of industrial South Wales. Jane Austen as a female writer of romantic stories and doyen of polite society may appeal more narrowly than the more contemporary and problematic figure of Dylan Thomas. The Jane Austen House is a small museum with no amenities, whereas the Boathouse caters for tourists with a café/restaurant that provides views out over the Taf estuary. A further point to emerge was that the service class is diverse and its subdivisions warrant closer analysis. The social class indicator, based on occupation, did not prove to be a significant discriminator in key areas such as general purposes and more specific reasons for making the visit. It was of interest that age of tourists also did not discriminate on these topics.

The notion of a set of literary pilgrims was difficult to sustain at both Chawton and Laugharne. Using the strict criterion of those who, giving their main reason for making the visit, described themselves as "fans", expressed a specific interest in the writer, and had read his or her work, no more than 15% would qualify as literary pilgrims at either site. Some visitors to Laugharne actually used the phrase "making a pilgrimage", but they were a small minority. Larger numbers of tourists, 51% at Chawton and 39% at Laugharne, replied positively to the question as to whether they were fans. This set of responses in itself, though difficult to interpret fully, is at least encouraging for developers of literary sites as indicative of the fact that writers have their followings. Similarly, many were familiar with the published works of the authors. This was clearest at Chawton and may reflect the social composition of the sample, the greater accessibility of Jane Austen's works and their adaptations for film and television. The conclusion here is that both sites attracted some well-informed and interested tourists who brought with them a good general awareness of the writers and their works. Whether this is sufficient evidence to label them as literary pilgrims rather than more general fans is debatable. The question needs a different kind of approach, probably involving ethnographic methods or at least more focused interviews.

Figure 1 distinguished between the exceptional and general qualities of a literary place and offers a useful base for considering the significance of Chawton and Laugharne. For the large majority of tourists, the places and their contents had special meaning; it was the exceptionality that provided their main experience. They were transported into the worlds in which the writers had lived and the items on display strengthened that emotive experience. The informed and interested tourists derived most meaning from these affective qualities of the places; many of the unstructured comments referred to the atmosphere and the spirit of the place. These were feelings reminiscent of Marsh's (1993:xv) comment that tourists could walk into houses from which writers drew breath and into which they breathed literature. The Boathouse had this latter quality; it was part of the imagined world of *Under Milk Wood* as well as the real world in which Dylan Thomas lived. The Boathouse was closer to the experience of Haworth where, as Poc-

ock (1987) reported, it was the fictional world of the characters and events that gave power to the literary place.

The general qualities of the sites were relevant and a feature was the eclecticism of visiting behavior. Most of those interviewed had visited, or intended to, other attractions in the area. At Laugharne, 61.9% had visited at least one other local historic place, typically churches, castles, historic towns, country houses, and gardens, and the comparable figure for Chawton was 85%. The tourists to literary places, including those identifying themselves as fans of the writers, also visited quite different types of heritage site. The range of interest is wide and the ways in which leisure time is pleasurably used includes a variety of attractive sites, literary and otherwise.

Issues of authenticity were evident though rarely in explicit forms. At Chawton, many referred to significant items that they believed to be clearly authentic, such as the lock of hair, the quilt, and the creaking door. There was widespread support for preserving things as they were and for the general concept of conservation. Many of the comments, however, revealed a preference for "sensitive development" and better amenities. The visit needed to be pleasurable and the "package" was not being scrutinized in any detailed way to test its authenticity.

Issues relating to place promotion and social construction, although relevant, did not emerge as central features in these surveys. They will be the focus of ongoing research into both Laugharne and other places linked with Dylan Thomas. There are further insights to be gained from empirical research that will both clarify the academic concepts and guide the developers of literary places in their aims of attracting more tourists and creating a particular kind of heritage experience. ■

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