



Audiovisual Tourism Promotion

A Critical Overview

Edited by Diego Bonelli · Alfio Leotta

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Fabulous Locations: Tourism and Fantasy Films in Italy

Giulia Lavarone

Introduction

Fiction films and TV series are used extensively for the purposes of tourism promotion, and their potential to induce tourist flows is widely recognized (Tooke and Baker 1996; Riley et al. 1998; Beeton 2005). Compared to non-fiction works, their handling of place is generally less concerned with the needs of verisimilitude. This brings challenges for their exploitation in terms of tourism promotion, as well as the development of tourist products and the sustainable management of heritage sites used for filming. The fantasy genre, free to reach the highest degree of fictionality, represents an interesting starting point to discuss some relevant questions related to the research on tourism induced by films, such as the search for authenticity in the tourist experience and the relationship of film tourists with the identity and heritage of the place. Since Beeton's (2005) seminal work on film-induced tourism, fantasy films and

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TV series have been widely discussed by the academic literature in this field, with a specific focus on film series such as *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson 2001–2003) (hereon *LotR*) in New Zealand, *Harry Potter* (Columbus; Cuarón; Newell; Yates 2001–2011) in Great Britain, and *Star Wars* (Lucas; Kershner; Marquand 1977–1983) in Tunisia, or the HBO television series *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) (hereon *GoT*), filmed across several European countries.

In the first part, this chapter will briefly introduce film tourism, defined as tourist phenomena linked to film and TV programmes, often stimulated by deliberate actions of audiovisual tourism promotion. It will then discuss some pivotal issues emerging within this interdisciplinary research field (Connell 2012), with a specific focus on the fantasy genre. Film tourism will be mainly discussed from a cultural perspective, as this chapter situates itself in the disciplinary framework of film studies, yet insights into tourist marketing and management will also be provided. The aim is to critically review selected academic literature in order to point out how specific genre features might impact the use of these films for tourism promotion, as well as their impact on product development, heritage management, and tourists' experiences.

The second part will provide an exploration of the relationship between tourism and fantasy films in the contemporary Italian context. After introducing the cases of two American fantasy movies used to promote local heritage in Italy, attention will be focused on Italian productions (and co-productions). Italian cinema has often been associated with a realist canon (O' Leary and O' Rawe 2011; Scaglioni 2020) and national fantasy attempts belong to a minority course, suffering from an endemic scarcity of resources and culturally perceived as a sort of foreign body in national cinema (Crespi 2014; Venturini 2014). In recent years, however, the global popularity of the fantasy genre has led some directors—counting on unusually high budgets—to try to find a balance between international models and the search for an 'Italian way.' The simultaneous increase of national interest in the film and tourism nexus, together with the exposure of fantasy-related international tourist phenomena, has generated high expectations for these films' potential within tourism promotion. This only occasionally led to the actual development of tourist products which, in some cases, brilliantly take advantage of the specific features of the genre for devising original tourist experiences.

Challenging Authenticity, Place Identity, and Heritage? Film Tourism and the Fantasy Genre

The term film-induced tourism (Beeton 2005) defines several possible connections between the world of cinema and television and that of tourism. It may refer to tourist visits to filming locations, or to settings declared in the narrative when they differ from the places used for shooting (*mistaken identities*) (Beeton 2005). It also includes visits to production studios, film-related theme parks, celebrity homes, Walks of Fame, film museums or exhibitions, and even tourist movements to participate in events like film festivals, film premières, and fan conventions (Beeton 2005; Beeton 2015). Broader terms such as screen tourism or media tourism aim at including other audiovisual products, such as videogames or web content (Månsson and Eskilsson 2013).

Film tourism can refer to participation in organized tours or to individual visits, either spontaneous or resulting from complex strategies of tourism promotion developed by institutional and commercial subjects operating at the destination (Beeton 2005; Connell 2012). Film tourists can show a high degree of fandom and purposely organize their trip, but they can also be tourists less interested in the movie and who just participate in film-related activities while at a destination (Macionis 2004). These tourists often include visits to film locations as part of broader itineraries, showing an interest in toured places that signal beyond their connection with media products (Roesch 2009). Film tourism is often integrated with other forms of tourism, such as adventure tourism (e.g., Leotta 2011; Çelik Rappas and Baschiera 2020) or heritage tourism, of which film tourism has sometimes been described as a possible form (among others: Schofield 1996; Martin-Jones 2014). Agarwal and Shaw (2018, 34) have identified a nexus between heritage, screen, and literary tourism, as they all entail “the consumption and production of a tourism landscape that is associated with people (real or fictional, living or dead), events (past or present, fact or fantasy) and/or place (real or fictional),” deeply involving the tourist in the co-creation of the experience. Film and TV production itself has been understood in relation to British period dramas of the 1980s as part of a broader “heritage industry,” aimed at

exploiting economic and symbolic profit associated with national heritage (Higson 2003). If historical accuracy is a distinguishing trait of the so-called heritage films (Higson 2003), the nonchalant treatment of history typical of adventure movies—particularly those featuring fantastical elements—generates sharper tensions between film tourism and heritage promotion, which might manifest in different ways. In the Cambodian archaeological site of Angkor Wat, the enhancement of “high quality, cultural tourism” pursued by transnational heritage bodies has clashed with the use of the site for filming *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (West 2001), favoured by a national government longing for increases of (any type of) tourism. The film has been accused of conveying an undesired image of the site, rendered as an Orientalist pastiche and virtually destroyed within a narrative centred on grave robbing (Winter 2002).

Fantasy is a genre potentially more inclined to move away from the ‘reality’ of a place, even if this varies from one film to another, since in some cases the most accurate portrayal of the ‘ordinary’ is creating a contrast with fantastical elements. The move away from reality is apparent at both the narrative level—even more so if the setting is an imaginary world—and the visual level. The introduction of the extraordinary, in fact, often requires an extensive reliance on special and digital effects, sometimes deeply affecting the representation of places. During the tourist experience on-site, spatial discrepancies between actual locations and filmic spaces (due to multiple reasons, e.g., framing choices, use of certain lenses, and non-existing topographies created through editing), are usually recognized by film tourists (Couldry 2000; Roesch 2009; Reijnders 2011). This may either produce disappointment or additional pleasure, as it generates a “restless movement” between actual and virtual worlds which finally “provide the [film and] TV tourist with his/her destination” (Torchin 2002, 250). These discrepancies become even more apparent in the fantasy genre. According to Carl et al. (2007, 58) disappointment in the *LotR* tours is due to unmet expectations often concerning the feeling that “landscapes did not match the grandeur of those featured in the films” precisely because of digital “enhancements.” Roesch (2009) reports diverse reactions generated by different kinds of alterations: disappointment, provoked by the on-site absence of spectacular statues digitally added to movie images; indifference, for the presence of

‘disturbing’ buildings which had been removed digitally; or excitement, for the discovery of digital flippings of some shots (i.e., when a film image is reversed 180° across its axis).

Digital alterations obviously concern fantasy narratives set both in the real world and in imaginary universes. In respect to the latter, the choice of location filming often derives from the desire to physically anchor the fictional world in the ‘real’ world in order to make it more believable or, using Wright’s (2000, 53) words about *LotR*, “enable an ‘authentication’ of the illusion by the very real presence of the spectacular New Zealand landscape.” Landscape itself is so inextricably linked to the imaginary world, that it becomes per se more appreciated by film tourists than any remaining pieces of the actual film set, especially if the latter is not well preserved (Carl et al. 2007; Roesch 2009).

The explicit ‘falseness’ of fantasy universes appears particularly apt to exemplify film tourism’s questioning of the notion of authenticity in the contemporary tourist experience. These fantasy worlds evidently challenge a simplistic idea of authenticity of the toured objects, measured through objective criteria, but an understanding only in terms of existential authenticity, that is, the existential value assumed by the tourist experience (Wang 1999), does not appear satisfying either. According to Buchmann et al. (2010), who have studied the *LotR* tourist experiences, authenticity results from a complex relationship between these two understandings of the concept because the place itself must be recognized as the ‘authentic’ one where the shooting was made. Moreover, it must provide an ‘authentic’ encounter, both physically and socially, as a result of apparently sincere relationships with other tourists or with the guide. Somehow paradoxically, the ‘authentication’ of the tourist experience and its successful bridging to imaginary worlds passes through the physical encounter with the actual place, enhanced by discomfort, as for the bad weather conditions in *LotR* tours, the extreme heat in a *Star Wars* canyon in Tunisia (Roesch 2009), or the staging of an exhibition in the Italian Caserta Palace visited by *Star Wars* pilgrims (Boni 2010). At times, by contrast, this same physical encounter might inhibit the immersion into the desired atmosphere. As an example, tourists sleeping above the Tasmanian bakery connected to Hayao Miyazaki’s *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (1989) sometimes complain about the noises of the actual baking

activity, making the place different from the “idealized version of a bakery” provided by the film (Norris 2013).

Interestingly, the “restless movement” between actual and virtual worlds at the core of the film tourist experience has been described using metaphors borrowed precisely from science fiction and fantasy. Brooker (2007), in his analysis of *X-Files* (1993–2002), *Smallville* (2001–2011), and *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) fan pilgrimages in Vancouver, uses the metaphor of parallel universes. He understands fan tourism as a potentially carnivalesque use of spaces, like office buildings meant for everyday work subversively employed by media pilgrims as “gateways into alternative worlds” (442). This also happens when fantasy movies are set, and not only shot, in those same places, which are given an extraordinary value through the embedding of fantastical narratives. A famous example is that of King’s Cross Station in London, chosen by J.K. Rowling as the site of *Harry Potter’s* 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ platform: in this case an ordinary place therefore ends up hosting the ultimate gateway into a magical world (Lee 2012).

These creative practices, nevertheless, are not always welcome by residents (Beeton 2005; Tzanelli 2007; Provenzano 2007). Many disadvantages of film-induced tourism, including relevant issues of over-tourism, will not be discussed in this chapter, while other concerns on cultural and social sustainability will be raised. Post-colonial readings of Hollywood films often point out local communities’ potential distress in the face of perceived stereotyping of landscape and culture by global simplified narratives, whose outreach is amplified when extensive tourism marketing or substantial film tourism phenomena appear (Tzanelli 2007; Buchmann and Frost 2011). Within the fantasy genre, the *LotR* case comes again to the fore for its complexity. Tensions concern, on the one hand, the Hollywood origin of the project and its New Zealand appropriation, and on the other hand, the image of the country conveyed through the fantasy transfiguration of actual places into mythical worlds. Despite being a Hollywood project based on English books and set in an imaginary Middle Earth, a sort of “national authenticity” has been fabricated in New Zealand through a complex cultural process, analysed by Jones and Smith (2005) through a survey of the movies’ media coverage, along with texts produced by the government and by the local tourism industry.

Film tourism had a pivotal role, because “national identity as established in the *LotR* project lend[ed] authenticity to tourism rhetoric, and [wa]s itself reinforced by tourism rhetoric” (927). Recurring arguments include Peter Jackson’s New Zealand nationality and his presumed “Kiwi character,” as the man who brought to New Zealand a Hollywood production to work with the local creative industries. The latter have realized ‘authentic’ artefacts and some sets were physically built despite the possibility of creating them through digital effects (935). All this, together with the same high-tech digital technologies, has marked the project with distinctive New Zealand creativity. This image of a high-tech New Zealand paradoxically contrasts with the pre-historical one conveyed by the typical fantasy narrative and by the use of natural landscape in the film itself (Jones and Smith 2005; see also Leotta 2011), a simplistic, exotic, mythical image “different to those which communities and governments would wish to disseminate” (Buchmann and Frost 2011, 52). More specifically, *LotR*, while contributing to New Zealand’s international reputation as the ‘Home of Middle Earth,’ erases any traces of the indigenous Māori population from the cultural geography of the country (Leotta 2011).

Momentarily putting aside issues of cultural sustainability, when it comes to tourism marketing, the main challenge of imaginary settings is the same as other cases of so-called *mistaken identities*, namely to connect the film to its actual shooting locations. Sue Beeton defines *mistaken identities* as instances of film tourism in which the movie is filmed in places different from the explicit setting (2005, 10). However, marketing strategies appear more effective when they aim at establishing a connection with imaginary worlds instead of places which physically exist elsewhere, as New Zealand has experienced with the different outcomes of the tourism marketing campaigns associated with *The Last Samurai* (Zwick 2003), set in Japan, and the *LotR*, set in the fantasy world of Middle Earth. While the latter’s effects on boosting tourism are widely recognized, *The Last Samurai* failed to induce tourism to New Zealand in the long term, mainly because of an ‘authentic’ Japan existing elsewhere. New Zealand landscapes in *The Last Samurai* lack any “sense of distinctiveness” that *LotR*, despite digital alterations and the imaginary setting, still safeguards (Leotta 2011, 157). In a similar way, an imaginary setting might allow an easier integration of local heritage in film-related tourist

products, especially if the fantasy film or series itself includes reworked references to history or traditions, like *Game of Thrones* (Waysdorf and Reijnders 2017). In Northern Ireland, the creation of *GoT*-inspired artefacts with local materials, like the tapestry exposed at Ulster Museum in Belfast weaved with linen coming from an ancient mill, or the pub doors carved with wood of the Dark Hedges trees felt down, represent fascinating attempts to integrate screen tourism with the promotion of natural and cultural heritage. This approach has the potential to produce a double advantage: on one hand, fostering a deeper connection between film tourism and the local context, aimed at prolonging its effects in time; on the other hand, injecting a new life to heritage, enhancing its attractiveness for larger groups of tourists (Çelik Rappas and Baschiera 2020).

The fear of film tourists wiping out the actual identity of the place whilst pursuing only its fantasy counterpart, for example visiting the Croatian historical city of Dubrovnik merely as *GoT* King's Landing, is often expressed by scholars (e.g., Violante 2016). Nevertheless, research conducted on screen tourists' experiences both in Northern Ireland and in Dubrovnik highlights the coexistence of several readings of the place involving different types of imagination, either connected to the fictional world, to the series' actual production process, or to historical narratives of the site (Waysdorf and Reijnders 2017). This awareness influences the design of commercial tours and the speeches proposed by guides who intentionally provide historical information about the place (Waysdorf and Reijnders 2017). Managers of heritage attractions used for filming must face challenges in meeting different expectations, those of tourists more (or only) interested in the actual history of the 'real' location and those more (or only) interested in the film, and take delicate decisions concerning the "heritage interpretation" provided (Bakiewicz et al. 2017). During guided tours to Alnwyck Castle, used for the shooting of *Harry Potter*, historical and fictional accounts are assembled (Bakiewicz et al. 2017). The negotiation between the two sometimes expresses local communities' concerns about the protection of national narratives, like in the case of Dracula tourism in Romania (Reijnders 2011). In Lee's (2012, 58) words, "the imaginary geography," drawn by multiple, diverse literary and screen narratives, "adds further layers to the existing landscape," which is not merely "writ[ten] over (replacing one image with another)"

(61). This process, by the way, resonates with the specific functioning of fantasy (literary and filmic) texts such as *Harry Potter*, based on the coexistence of ordinary and extraordinary elements (Lee 2012).

When *Harry Potter* tour guides in the UK combine fictional stories with official history, legends, and folklore—providing an “enchanted” image of the country—they somehow “level” them “*as narrative*” (Lee 2012, 60). There is no need to recall that history itself is made of narratives which are often conflicting, as demonstrated in the aforementioned case of Dubrovnik. Its official tourist narrative based on the Old City heritage, in fact, underplays not only the *Game of Thrones* connection, but also the references to wars in former Yugoslavia and to the 1991 siege of the city—the historical fact of foremost relevance in the lives of residents (Joyce 2019). Essentialist approaches to place identity, counterposing a monolithic ‘authenticity’ to presumed ‘inauthentic’ fictional narratives, should be avoided, partly because “the ‘established’ real place is often already a site of contested interpretations as different interest groups struggle for control of the place’s meaning” (1389). In any case, what differentiates film tourists from other tourists is obviously the stronger influence played by the specific text on their “historical imagination,” as clearly stated by Waysdorf and Reinders (2017, 185):

historical imagination is never neutral. It takes a particular form depending on the text being de-mediated. This separates film tourists from ‘regular’ tourists, insofar that even if they are interested in aspects of the location that are not strictly part of filming process, the contours of their imaginative experience are shaped by a notion of history provided by popular culture. Just as *Lord of the Rings* fans see New Zealand as timelessly pastoral and spectacular, so *Game of Thrones* fans frame Dubrovnik and Northern Ireland as part of a mythic-medieval world.

The common features of fantasy films and TV series, heightening the narrative and visual discrepancies between actual locations and their filmic counterparts, may magnify some of the difficulties normally faced in tourism promotion through fiction films in the development of film-related tourist products and in the management of heritage sites used for shooting. Nevertheless, their specific features might also inspire creative

initiatives, giving new life to local heritage, without necessarily implying the demise of the multiple pre-existing identities and narratives of the place. In the next section, this opportunity will be explored within the Italian context, where recent attempts have been made to exploit the tourist potential of Italian fantasy films, dealing with a genre that is relatively unpopular within national cinema.

An Unfamiliar Taste: Tourism and Fantasy Films in Italy

Interest in the complex relationship between film and tourism has recently increased in Italy, both at a regional and national level. The 2016 national law on the audiovisual sector finally institutionalized film commissions, namely the public (or public-private) bodies in charge of attracting and supporting audiovisual projects, facilitating the relationships between audiovisual companies and host territories, and favouring audiovisual tourism promotion. In 2017, within the framework of the national Strategic Plan for Tourism, the website Italy for Movies was released. The latter represents a welcome attempt to create a national film location database, to collect information about regional funds and services, and to suggest tourist itineraries across film locations.

This interest in audiovisual tourism promotion originated from the exposure of several international and national cases of increased tourist flows in film and TV locations (for Italy, see Provenzano 2007). Before discussing Italian fantasy productions, I would like to focus on two relevant examples of tourism promotion and practices connected to American fantasy films shot in Italy, belonging to the two popular sagas *Star Wars* and *Twilight*. These cases provide interesting, additional examples of initiatives aimed at promoting local heritage through fantasy narratives.

Italian locations like the Caserta Palace and the Balbianello Villa on Como Lake were used to stand in for the enchanted land of Naboo in two episodes of the second *Star Wars* trilogy (*The Phantom Menace* 1999 and *Attack of the Clones* 2002, both directed by George Lucas). Tourist flows induced by the movies have been observed in both locations (Boni

2010), and, together with other connections between Como Lake and the movie world (like the purchase of a villa on the lake by the popular American actor George Clooney), induced the local chamber of commerce to finance, in 2012, the creation of *The Stars of Lake Como*—both a guidebook and an app aimed at film tourists. However, the main focus here will be on the other Italian location used for the *Star Wars* second trilogy, the Caserta Palace. In 2018, in the wake of the subsequent (third) *Star Wars* trilogy release, the MANN Archaeological Museum in Naples—which in the last years has frequently resorted to media such as films, music videos, and videogames for its promotion—set up an exhibition titled *MANN@hero* assembling archaeological objects and *Star Wars* memorabilia from private fan collections, and focusing on the iconology of the hero across time. This capitalized on the connection to the nearby Caserta Palace, where it was possible to watch content related to *Star Wars* filming through VR headsets as part of the exhibition. As was the case for the *Game of Thrones*' related tapestry and doors, the aim of the organizers was to both refresh heritage and make it attractive for new groups of tourists. This has been more systematically pursued by the Tuscan city of Volterra, the setting of the most emotional scene in *Twilight* saga's book and movie *New Moon* (Weitz 2009)—even if the filming took place in the near city of Montepulciano. Both Volterra and Montepulciano, already established cultural tourist destinations, have reported a significant increase of tourists after the release of the film. In 2010, between 15% and 20% of Volterra tourists were induced by *Twilight* (Larson et al. 2013). Compared to the American city of Forks, where most of the narrative is set and where the *Twilight* connection has been totally embraced in order to boost tourism, Volterra and Montepulciano have adopted a strategy of “guarding place authenticity.” They have, in fact, encouraged a socio-cultural sustainable tourism, introducing—albeit downplaying—the *Twilight* theme and finding creative ways to connect it with their heritage (Larson et al. 2013). At the time of writing, the tourist consortium Volterra Valdicecina, which manages the Volterra Tourist Board, is still organizing *Twilight* walking tours. Famous heritage sites, such as the Etruscan gate, or intangible heritage like the working of alabaster, are framed through their relation to the *Twilight* characters of Volturi and the leitmotif of mystery, assembling fictional and historical elements,

regardless of the lack of actual shooting locations (yet taking advantage of references coming from the book). Heritage is thus given new life and revealed to *Twilight* tourists, whose “historical imagination” of the Etruscan past will be mediated by the *Twilight* text.

In more recent years, the growing awareness of the tourism potential of films and TV series has led to an even prompter tourist exploitation of other American fantasy movies. Two of the most recent Marvel and DC superhero movies shot in Italy, *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Whedon 2015) and *Wonder Woman* (Jenkins 2017), have both been used for the creation of tourist itineraries, respectively in the regions of Valle d’Aosta and Basilicata (for Basilicata, see Colangelo 2018). However, the remaining part of this section will focus on the exploitation of fantasy Italian productions (or co-productions) for tourism purposes, where interest lies in their partial novelty and unfamiliarity in the Italian contemporary film landscape.

Fantasy as a screen genre has not flourished in Italian cinema, despite the abundance of fantasy elements in the Italian literature masterpieces since the Middle Ages (Crespi 2014). Although there are some exceptions, such as film adaptations of Collodi’s *Pinocchio* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (the latter limited to the silent era) (Crespi 2014) or Alessandro Blasetti’s *The Iron Crown* (1941), most of the fantasy movies produced in Italian film history date from the specific context of popular B-movies shot in the 1950s and 1960s. In that period, mythological films (the so-called *pepla*) often included fantasy elements (Brunetta 1991), and, more specifically, an actual Italian fantasy-horror genre was born thanks to the creativity of Mario Bava and a few other directors. Despite their international circulation and commercial success, these films have suffered from endemic low budgets and an enduring limited critical appreciation in Italy, while being perceived as a sort of foreign body in Italian national cinema (Crespi 2014, Venturini 2014, Nazzaro 2019). The latter has been largely identified with a realist canon, encouraged by the valuable outcomes of Neorealism (O’ Leary and O’ Rawe 2011; Scaglioni 2020).

In recent years, due to the increasing global popularity of fantasy amongst the Italian audience (on the Italian reception of *LotR*, see Trobia 2008), significant attempts dealing with the fantasy genre have been made by Italian directors, whilst borrowing elements from international

models. Among them, two films particularly stand out both for their production values and for being directed by two of the most renowned Italian authors: Gabriele Salvatores and Matteo Garrone. Salvatores tried to launch the first Italian superhero movie saga with *The Invisible Boy* (*Il ragazzo invisibile*, 2014) and its sequel *The Invisible Boy: Second Generation* (*Il ragazzo invisibile—Seconda generazione*, 2018); while Garrone set up an international co-production to adapt, with his *Tale of Tales* (*Il racconto dei racconti—Tale of Tales*, 2015), the Italian seventeenth-century collection of tales *Lo cunto de li cunti* by Giambattista Basile, before realizing a second fantasy literary adaptation with his *Pinocchio* (2020). All of these movies counted on extremely large budgets, particularly compared to the Italian standard (from *The Invisible Boy*'s 8 million euros to *Pinocchio*'s almost 15 million).

Despite the unfamiliar taste of national fantasy and the ultimately poor box office results, both *The Invisible Boy* and *Tale of Tales*, in different ways, have been explicitly intended as possible means of tourist promotion. This can be understood in relation to the recent enthusiasm for the tourism potential of films in Italy, as well as to the media exposure of the film-induced tourism phenomena connected to international fantasy works like *LotR*, *Harry Potter*, or *GoT*. The press discourses on the vast potential of audiovisual tourism promotion have involved, surprisingly, even an Italian *auteur* project like *Tale of Tales*, aiming at larger audiences than Garrone's previous films, yet unlikely to reach those of a blockbuster.

The Invisible Boy and *Tale of Tales* stand out as relevant case studies both because of their relevance and press exposure in Italy, and because they are exemplary of two different types of fantasy movies and of different types of related tourism promotion strategies. In one case the shooting location is given a fantasy aura by introducing extraordinary elements in a real setting (*The Invisible Boy*), while in the other case actual places are transfigured into imaginary worlds (*Tale of Tales*). Moreover, the two examples display different strategies and targets in terms of tourism promotion: *The Invisible Boy* has been used to develop tourist products aimed at promoting local heritage to national tourists and residents, while *Tale of Tales* aims at national as well as international audiences, to promote Italian heritage and national image at a broader level.

Tale of Tales is a fantasy movie set in entirely imaginary worlds devised by the writer Giambattista Basile. It was shot in around 20 spectacular natural and cultural heritage sites throughout Italy, carefully selected and eventually enhanced through visual and narrative strategies. The main aim is that of inducing awe in the eyes of the spectator, in order to visually achieve the effect of wonder pursued with literary means by Basile's stories. *Tale of Tales* has received financing from two of the regions involved in the production, Puglia and Lazio, whose funds aim at the economic benefits deriving from both hosting film productions and potential tourism spin-offs. The director Matteo Garrone, who often mentioned *Game of Thrones* as a source of inspiration, specifies nevertheless that his film should be described as *fiabesco* (fairy-tale) instead of fantasy, because it originates from actual shooting locations and does not create imaginary landscapes through studio shooting or digital effects, like many international fantasy films and series do (Garrone 2016). Both the press and the director himself continuously stressed this use of real (Italian) locations and never mentioned the digital effects employed to enhance the fantastic atmosphere, inspired by typically unrealistic Flemish landscape painting (Spaventa 2015). The other element highlighted by the press is the use of physical effects, created by Italian artists to realize the fantastic creatures, such as the dragon or the giant flea, instead of only relying on digital effects (for further details on the media coverage of the film, see Lavarone 2017). This has been described as a sort of 'Italian way' of doing fantasy, returning to the cliché of artisanal ability typically associated with the Made in Italy brand, but also highlighting the names of two Italian geniuses who worked on fantasy films. The first is Mario Bava, director of fantasy-horror B-movies known for their home-made special effects, while the second is Carlo Rambaldi, father of the alien creatures featured in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and Spielberg's *E.T.-The Extraterrestrial* (1982). This continuity with a presumed Italian tradition is often highlighted by the press, even if among the models acknowledged by the authors of the special effects there is also a reference from the other side of the world: that of Jackson's Weta and its work on *LotR* (Cosulich 2015).

Despite being an international co-production, shot in English and almost entirely casting foreign actors such as Salma Hayek or Vincent

Cassel, *Tale of Tales* has been described by the press as a totally Italian film, born of the courage of an Italian *auteur*, who has devised an Italian way for the unfamiliar genre of fantasy—and at the same time, has co-produced the film with his own money and managed to set up, and bring to Italy, a big international project. These arguments for the movie's Italian-ness have totally overtaken, for example, references to its literary origin. The press discourse thus testifies to a process of fabrication of a “creative authenticity” and a “national authenticity” strictly interconnected, partly reminiscent of the *LotR* case.

The project, targeted at international as well as national audiences, traces an enchanted image of Italy while celebrating Italian handcraft and creativity. The national and international press have explicitly read this movie through a tourist perspective, endlessly proposing lists of its numerous locations, and sometimes placing it in the ‘travel,’ instead of ‘culture,’ column (Lavarone 2017). It has often been compared to films which have induced dramatic tourist increases, in Italy and elsewhere, thus showing an enthusiasm that has, nevertheless, not been followed by an actual development of tourist products. The film is mentioned in the Tuscany and Puglia region tourist websites, and in itineraries proposed by the national portal Italy for Movies, but generally speaking, it has been poorly adopted for tourist promotion by public and private stakeholders operating at a local level. This limited exploitation of *Tale of Tales*' tourist potential, which also lies in its notable media exposure (see Roesch 2009) and has been confirmed by reported tourist increases in single locations (Lavarone 2017), may be due to several factors: on the one hand, the discouragement brought by its unsatisfying box office figures, and on the other hand, the general delay in commercial improvement of film tourism in Italy (di Cesare 2016), although the situation might be gradually evolving. Either way, the case of *Tale of Tales* and its media coverage reveals both the high expectations of the potential tourist use of fantasy films and an implicit awareness of the challenges that the genre might entail. The media discourse, in fact, has dealt with these challenges both on the narrative side—through the listings of locations aimed at connecting them with the movie's imaginary settings—and on the visual side, through downplaying the role of digital effects and stressing the high recognition values of the same locations. At the same time, it has

constructed the national authenticity of the film, read as a paradigm of Italian creativity and a display of Italian tangible and intangible heritage, with the aim of marketing the country for international audiences.

The Invisible Boy project also originates from the will of ‘domesticating’ international models through the creation of the first Italian superhero: a 13-year-old boy who suddenly discovers his invisibility power. In order to further enable the identification of young Italian audiences—to which the film is targeted—with the main character, and to highlight the appearance of the extraordinary in everyday life, the film is purposely set and shot in an existing Italian city, Trieste. In the first scene, Trieste is described as the extremely ‘ordinary’ place where the magical baby, born in Russia, has randomly ended up. Even if the movie frequently relies on visual effects (supervised by Victor Perez, who had previously worked on digital compositing for the *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars* sagas), the locations generally remain recognizable. Among them, there is Porto Vecchio, a large area built in the nineteenth century to stock the goods arriving by sea to the port of Trieste. Fallen into disuse, its access is now forbidden to the general public and, in the later years, it has been the object of several discussions on possible redevelopment projects, as mentioned in the official website (portovecchio.comune.trieste.it). Because of its large empty spaces, it is often proposed as a film location by the Friuli Venezia Giulia regional film commission, having already been used in the past to film *The English Patient* (Minghella 1996)—where it stood for the Lybian city of Tobruk. Despite being used for *Invisible Boy* scenes set in Russia, Porto Vecchio also appears as itself in one scene within the second, and most exciting, part of the movie. This part includes thrilling rescue and fight sequences taking place inside a ship, and among the locations used there is also the floating crane Ursus (whose name is also clearly framed in a shot of the film)—a symbol of the city built in 1913, belonging to its maritime industrial heritage. Rather than proposing images of the city centre, the narrative and visual choices of the film highlight the importance of Trieste as a port and its industrial heritage, particularly apt to the fantasy turn of the film, thanks to Porto Vecchio’s dark shadows and colour of rust (Grando 2014).

This has led the Friuli Venezia Giulia Film Commission, in collaboration with the institution Casa del Cinema (including all the associations

dealing with film culture at a regional scope), to propose tours inspired by *The Invisible Boy* as one of the highlights in their limited yet interesting offer of movie tours, mostly targeted at residents and at national tourists. The itinerary also includes the rare opportunity to visit Porto Vecchio, often unknown even to the inhabitants of the city, during which the tour guide provides historical information about the site. These tours represent the only example in Italy of movie tours (by walking or by bus) realized with the additional support of VR headsets. Well beyond aiming at a mere novelty effect of surprise, VR technology is used in a highly functioning way with two objectives. The first one is to grant virtual access to places which cannot be open to the public, such as the interiors of the Ursus, which have thus been filmed purposely to insert the images into the VR headsets. The second one is to provide additional content concerning the technical details of film production, especially the perceived main feature of the film (namely special effects), but also the use of light in particular places—explained by interviews with the director in those same spaces. In all of the movie tours offered by the Casa del Cinema, particular attention is paid to the production process, through the direct participation of film professionals to the tours, or through providing additional filmed content such as interviews or images showing the work on the set. In the specific case of *The Invisible Boy*, typical fantasy elements such as the use of special effects thus become the core narrative of the tour, along with the discovery of places belonging to the industrial heritage of the city which are granted additional value by both the film itself and the tour. These both introduce extraordinary elements in ordinary spaces, like *Harry Potter's* 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ platform in King's Cross, stimulating the audiences' and tourists' imagination thanks to the specific mix typical of the genre, devising a highly sustainable film tourism initiative. The latter, in fact, managed by local cultural institutions, allows the rediscovery of a neglected heritage—far from being an overcrowded tourist spot—in the eyes of both residents and tourists, providing historical information about the place whilst reading it through the lens of a fantastic narrative and visual effects, which provide it with new, extraordinary values.

In this case, the challenges posed by the fantasy genre to tourist promotion were mostly unproblematic at the narrative level, as the film is predominantly set in Trieste's actual shooting locations (except for the

scenes set in Russia). By contrast, the challenges associated with the visual side, digital alterations which possibly affect the recognition of actual locations, have become one of the main components in the tour's narrative. An element of potential disappointment has thus been turned into a source of astonishment and pleasure, as per the aforementioned international examples.

Conclusions

Providing some of the most famous and discussed examples of film tourism, the fantasy genre represents an interesting case study to analyse this phenomenon. On the one hand, its very narrative premise, based on the creation of parallel universes (Brooker 2007) or the juxtaposition of ordinary and extraordinary elements (Lee 2012), strongly resonates with the “restless movement” between actual and virtual worlds (Torchin 2002) that underlies any film tourist experience. On the other hand, its typical features at both the narrative and visual level often magnify the discrepancies between movie images and shooting locations, whose perception is a pivotal element in this same experience. The evident detachment from the ‘reality’ of the place may also exacerbate the difficulties commonly faced in terms of heritage management and promotion when dealing with films shot on-site. The latter are often accused of conveying inaccurate images and of attracting undesired tourists, assumed to be careless of the historical value of the place. Actually, fantasy film tourists have often proved to be interested in the history of the destination, even if their “historical imagination” is strongly mediated by the film text itself (Waysdorf and Reijnders 2017), rather than other (historical) narratives, which would still not allow the definition of a monolithic, ‘authentic’ place identity. Fantasy films and TV series can thus inspire creative attempts at integrating local heritage in initiatives and products aimed at film tourists, as in Northern Ireland for *GoT*, as well as in the Italian examples of the MANN exhibition in Naples, or, in a longer-term perspective, *Twilight* tours in Volterra. The latter’s strategy of “guarding place authenticity” has been described, in this sense, as an example of socio-cultural sustainability in film tourism (Larson et al. 2013). However, the

potential communities' distress when facing stereotypical images conveyed by movies, enhanced by their extensive use in tourist promotion and tourist products, is also a potential issue. While not being a property of fantasy films, it must be acknowledged that the latter's typical transfiguration of living places into enchanted, pre-historical lands often raises problematic issues, as for New Zealand and *LotR* (Buchmann and Frost 2011).

The interest of exploring the Italian context lies in its traditional unfamiliarity with the genre, and in the desire to deal with it in the wake of its global popularity. The high-budget fantasy films by two of the most important Italian directors have arrived at the same time as the first strong signals of interest in film tourism by the national government. Despite their unsatisfying box office results, the awareness of the tourist potential for fantasy films and TV series—raised by the exposure of international cases such as *LotR* or *GoT*—has led to the use of both these films for the purposes of tourism promotion. Even an *auteur* project like *Tale of Tales* has raised high expectations for its tourist potential.

In both cases, the peculiar features of the fantasy genre, that is, its explicit move from the 'reality' of the place both at the narrative and visual level, are explicitly addressed in order to manage their 'otherness' in the Italian context, as well as their possible shortcomings in terms of tourism promotion. Two different communicative strategies are employed. The first one (*Tale of Tales*) consists of downplaying the presence of digital effects, stressing the high recognition values of the 'real' locations used. The second one (*The Invisible Boy*) consists, on the contrary, of emphasizing the choice of using digital effects and in placing them at the heart of the tours' narrative, thanks to a brilliant employment of AR and VR technologies to provide technical explanations. Both of these cases reiterate the potential of fantasy's typical creativity (in terms of narratives and visual effects) to confer extraordinariness to the shooting locations and to inspire original attempts of promoting heritage, without necessarily neglecting the multiple pre-existing identities of the place, which is particularly evident in the second case.

Tangible and intangible Italian heritage are on display in *Tale of Tales*, promoting an enchanted image of the entire country thanks to the visual and narrative strategies employed by Garrone to convey the sense of

wonder generated by Basile's original stories. Analyses of the film's media coverage reveal that the peculiar creative values of the genre are also used to achieve a combined cultural construction of "creative authenticity" and "national authenticity," such as in the *LotR* case (Jones and Smith 2005), turning creativity into a national asset which contributes to nation branding and tourist promotion at an international level. Nevertheless, in a context still mainly unprepared for the commercial exploitation of film tourism (di Cesare 2016), enthusiasm does not always result in the actual development of tourist products.

An original tourism product was instead developed through the *Invisible Boy* tours in Trieste, which focus their narrative on the creative values of the fantasy genre, digital effects included. Favoured by the film being mostly set in the city, the embedding of extraordinary elements into an ordinary world typical of the fantasy genre is replicated in the tour thanks to virtual and augmented reality, which allows both tourists and local residents to look with new eyes at the industrial heritage of Trieste. Narrative and visual elements perceived as 'foreign' in Italian culture are thus integrated into local neglected heritage, in order to give it new life. VR and AR technologies are used to virtually visit inaccessible parts of the sites, on which historical information is provided. Far from inducing undesired forms of tourism, the *Invisible Boy* tours, developed by local cultural institutions, have turned some specific features of the fantasy genre into a source of inspiration for a highly sustainable form of tourism promotion through films.

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