

6. — Walking in Cary Grant’s footsteps: the *Looking for Archie* walking tour

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3 Abstract

This chapter offers a critical reflection on *Looking for Archie*, a walking tour of actor Cary Grant’s Bristol, UK, speaking to the themes of “fandom communities and engagement” and “embodied experiences.” The first section outlines the tour and its relationship with my wider curatorial practice as director of the *Cary Comes Home Festival*, situating it within the context of cinematic tourism, fan practices and star studies. The chapter draws these strands together to explore the concepts of “emplaced interaction” and “magic moments”². The chapter then examines the festival’s online audience engagement via the website, mailing list and social media and how it relates to wider online Cary Grant fan communities and the ways in which his image circulates more generally in the digital sphere. Finally, the chapter explores what propels visitors to move beyond this virtual “communitas” to actually visit the location of Grant’s birth and “walk in his footsteps” through an analysis of audience feedback from various iterations of the walking tour and an evaluation of its impact on participants’ understanding of both Grant and Bristol.

Keywords:

4 Introduction

Looking for Archie: Cary Grant’s Bristol is a guided walking tour of Hollywood actor Cary Grant’s hometown Bristol, UK, where he was born as Archibald Leach in 1904. “Archie” emigrated to New York in 1920 with a troupe of acrobats and was signed by Paramount in 1931 when he changed his name to Cary Grant.¹ The locus for the tour originates from my wider curatorial practice as director of the biennial *Cary Comes Home Festival*, established by myself and Anna Farthing in 2014.² The festival aims to celebrate Grant’s Bristol roots, develop new audiences for his work and recreate the golden age of cinema-going by programming immersive cinematic experiences in significant locations which featured in Grant’s life and work. These include a gala screening at Bristol Hippodrome, where Archie worked backstage as a lad; a cream tea at the Avon Gorge hotel where he often stayed; and a screening of *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), in which Grant plays palaeontologist David Huxley, next to the dinosaur exhibit in Bristol Museum. These aims “hinge on the embodied, haptic,

¹ Throughout this chapter I will refer to him as “Archie” (as he refers to himself in his autobiography (Grant, 1963)), when referencing the period before he had become Cary Grant, and Grant when referencing the period after he had changed his name.

² See Cary Comes Home Website for documentation of past events, <https://www.carycomeshome.co.uk>

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located experience of attending in person,” with the “festival’s stimulus to cinematic tourism and pilgrimage and the importance of place and ‘emplacement’ are pivotal^{3, 4}

Originally developed in 2017 with funding from the *Being Human Festival*, the theme of which was “Lost and Found”, we framed the tour around uncovering Bristol’s “hidden cinema history” through the lens of one of the city’s most iconic figures.⁴ The tour has since had several iterations, but for the purposes of this chapter I base most of my discussion on the original 2017 tour and point towards how it has developed and changed in response to audience feedback.⁵ A souvenir guide of the live walk was produced (see Figure 1), one side mapping the points of interest: and the other providing a brief description and image of each map point.

The process of creating the map involved identifying key points that could be navigated within walking-distance of Bristol city centre. There are many other significant points in the city that could not be accommodated, such as Grant’s birthplace in Horfield, the Glenside Hospital in Fishponds, or the Avon Gorge hotel in Clifton, because they are too dispersed across the city and not navigable within the timescale of a walking tour. As well as the process of selecting points on the map, there was also the job of scripting a narrative for use in the tour, which would enable these disparate locations to be joined up in an emotionally satisfying way. According to Rebecca Solnit the act of mapping itself creates meaning, imagining “the particulars of place” makes it “much more immediate, visceral and affecting⁶.” Mapping both Archie’s and Grant’s locations across the city centre not only illuminates the intersecting geography of his biography and stardom, but also the shifting identities of the city itself.

³ Charlotte Crofts, “Bristol Fashion: Reclaiming Cary Grant for Bristol – Film Heritage, Screen Tourism and Curating the Cary Comes Home Festival²²,” *Open Screens* 4, no. 2 (31 December 2021): 17, <https://doi.org/10.16995/OS.8018>.

⁴ *Being Human* is a national festival promoting public engagement with humanities research led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy. Being Human, *Lost and Found Festival Programme*, 2017, 56, https://issuu.com/schoolofadvancedstudy/docs/being_human_2017_low_res_proof_for_/58.

⁵ The tour was reprised at the 2018 festival where it sold out and was featured on BBC Online, “Bristol Cary Grant film festival celebrates third year” (23 November 2018) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-46178044> and ITV West Country News (23 November 2018) <https://vimeo.com/505041536>. We then partnered with Bristol WalkFest in May 2019. After a hiatus due to the Pandemic, in December 2021 we ran the tour as part of our 20th anniversary celebration of the unveiling of the Cary Grant statue in Millennium Square and in May 2022 we again partnered with Bristol WalkFest.

⁶ Chris Gondek, “Infinite City – Interview with author Rebecca Solnit and UC Press Art Director Lia Tjandra”, UC Press Podcast, 8 December 2010. <https://soundcloud.com/uc-press/infinite-city-interview-with-author-rebecca-solnit-and-uc-press-art-director-lia-tjandra>.

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As the immediate, the visceral and the affective are foundational to this chapter, it is essential for a deeper conceptual and theoretical dive into them beyond surface level. Please note that emotion is not the same as ‘emotion’.

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Figure 6.1 The Looking for Archie map, designed by Eleanor Elliot-Rathbone. Photograph Eleanor Elliott-Rathbone.

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This fascination with site-specific content has been a sustained feature of my previous practice research around local screen heritage, in particular two place-making heritage apps, the *Curzon Memories App* and *The Lost Cinemas of Castle Park App*, both of which explore the relationship between contemporary physical geographical locations and the past.⁷ Both smartphone applications were developed for the Apple iOS platform using Calvium's AppFurnace platform that harnesses the affordances of (then emerging) pervasive media including QR codes and GPS to automatically trigger context-sensitive content in significant locations.

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One of the key aims of these locative heritage apps was to bring cinema history to life in the places where it actually happened, using "digital culture to enhance the public's relationship with the physical, material world of the cinema and its history by encouraging them to visit

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⁷ Charlotte Crofts, *Curzon Memories App*, 2012 (which won Best Multimedia Award, Learning on Screen, 2013) celebrates the Curzon Community Cinema, Clevedon, UK; and Charlotte Crofts, *The Lost Cinemas of Castle Park App*, 2013, uncovers 17 hidden Bristol city centre cinemas. See also Charlotte Crofts, "City Strata", Poster at the *Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association Annual Conference*, 2013.

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the site and experience it anew through creative media technologies⁸.⁸ These projects emphasised “thinking about heritage in terms of material experience, not just digital archive”, and the importance of real life geographical locations to the experience.⁹ Both apps have an ‘arm-chair’ mode where the content can be experienced remotely. However, based on the iterative design process and user evaluation feedback, it became apparent that the apps were most compelling when used in situ: cinema history truly comes alive when experienced on location.

Another of the key research findings was the need to factor the visitors’ imagination into the user experiences: namely the necessary oscillation between hearing about the past whilst being immersed in the present location and having to make that imaginative leap to fill in the gaps between what was, and what is. For example, writing about their GPS-triggered “Mediascape”, *Riot 1831*, Calvium’s Jo Reid et al. discuss those “magic moments that are deemed to be both moving and memorable¹⁰.”¹⁰ This relates to the location-based frisson of being there where history unfolded, triggered when the experience hits that sweet spot in which imagination, media and real life intersect. This is something that is at play in *Looking for Archie*, bringing Grant’s Bristol to life and encouraging people to experience on site.

For Reid et al., “one of the magical aspects of mediascapes” is “their relation to the physical world, the process of walking through that digital layer and interacting with digital media which can take you into a parallel world¹¹.”¹¹ This is equally valid when using low tech ways to bring the past to bear on the present, such as simply holding up a photograph in situ, or looking at a physical map (See Figure 2).

⁸ Charlotte Crofts, “Technologies of Seeing the Past: The Curzon Memories App,” in *Electronic Visualisation and the Arts (EVA 2011) (EVA)*, July 2011, 164, <https://doi.org/10.14236/ewic/EVA2011.29>.

⁹ Crofts, 2011, 164.

¹⁰ Reid, Josephine, Richard Hull, Kirsten Cater, and Constance Fleuriot. “Magic Moments in Situated Mediascapes,” in *Proceedings of the 2005 ACM SIGCHI International Conference on Advances in Computer Entertainment Technology*, 290 (emphasis in the original). New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2005, <https://doi.org/10.1145/1178477.1178529>.

¹¹ Reid et al., 2005, 290.

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Figure 6.2: Participants looking at maps next to Bristol Cathedral on College Green. Photograph by Eleanor Elliott-Rathbone.

The tour covers two and a half miles of the city centre, both featuring places that young Archie used to frequent growing up, as well as the locations at which Grant was photographed by the *Bristol Evening Post* on his many visits home after he had become famous. Although many people are aware of his Britishness, Grant is still most often figured as an American actor. Whilst it is common knowledge that he was born in Bristol, fewer are aware that he continued an enduring relationship with the city, returning often, well into his seventies. The tour aims to raise awareness of these long-lasting connections to the city of his birth. In an audience feedback survey conducted in 2017 most participants already knew that Grant was from Bristol (91.4 percent), but fewer were aware of his ongoing relationship with the city (74.3 percent). 22.9 percent had not realised that he returned regularly to Bristol until well into his old age, and 2.9 percent were only partially aware of this.¹² Another participant claimed, “the tour has made me appreciate how special a place Bristol is and how little I know about it”¹³

5 Stardom, celebrity and star-induced tourism

¹² Charlotte Crofts, “Looking for Archie Being Human Evaluation Report” (January 2021), there were 36 responses (out of roughly 40 who attended the two walks).

¹³ Anonymous participant, Personal email to author, November 20, 2017.

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The emphasis of most academic literature about film-induced and cinematic tourism is on how film and TV *texts* stimulate the tourist impulse,¹⁴ but stardom, celebrity and fandom can also inform the impetus for travel. Rather than set-jetting, and the desire to relive the fantasy of film locations, this is motivated by the yearning to experience an “auratic”¹⁵ co-presence, with the object of adulation, what I term “*star-induced*” tourism. Indeed, Grant’s star identity and his associations with the city are used as a call to visit the city both on the VisitBritain and Visit Bristol websites and he is cited as one of the things that makes Bristol a UNESCO city of film.¹⁶ In their analysis of tourists’ motivations to visit film sites, Niki Macionis and Beverley Anne Sparks found that some participants’ personal motivations were highly influenced by wanting to “feel close to my favorite (sic) actor”¹⁷

Returning to the festival from the United States of America for the third time in 2018, superfan Colleen Zwack described her desire to “get a closer connection to Cary... Seeing and being in the actual places that were important to a young Archie Leach and later, Cary Grant, is just something extremely special.”¹⁸ Another participant in the 2018 tour, visiting from the United States for the first time, enjoyed the way in which the tour played with the “juxtaposition of who he was in life and on film.”¹⁹ The ethos behind *Looking for Archie* is the importance of recognising this productive tension between Cary Grant and Archibald Leach in our understanding of Grant’s star persona. Grant himself often drew attention to his former identity: ‘I have spent the greater part of my life fluctuating between Archie Leach and Cary Grant; unsure of either, suspecting each. Only recently have I begun to unify them into one person.’²⁰

Richard Dyer emphasises the “structured polysemy” of the star image, “the finite multiplicity of meanings and affects they embody.”²¹ Grant’s star identity is both complex and fascinating, oscillating as it does between the suave, debonair, global film icon, and the working-class Bristolian boy. This duality between Archie and Grant and the different

¹⁴ See Sue Beeton, “The Advance of Film Tourism,” *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development* 7, no. 1 (1 February 2010): 1–6; Lucilia Cardoso, et al., “Film-Induced Tourism; a Systematic Literature Review,” *Tourism and Management Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 2017): 23–30.

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Translated by JA Underwood, Penguin Books, 2008.

¹⁶ Visit Bristol, “The Best of Bristol – discover the city’s Oscar-Winning connections” <https://visitbristol.co.uk/blog/read/2016/02/the-best-of-bristol-discoverthe-citys-oscar-winning-connections-b241> and VisitBritain, “Visit Bristol Before the Year Ends” <https://www.visitbritain.com/au/en/8-reasons-visit-bristol-year-ends-0>; Bristol City of Film, “What Makes Bristol A City of Film?,” <http://bristolcityoffilm.co.uk/about/what-makes-bristol-a-city-of-film>.

¹⁷ Niki Macionis and Beverley Anne Sparks, “Film-induced Tourism: An Incidental Experience Article”, in *Tourism Review International* 13 (October 2009): 97. <https://doi.org/10.3727/15442709789604598>.

¹⁸ BBC Online, “Bristol Cary Grant,” 2018.

¹⁹ Cary Comes Home. “Cary Comes Home 2018 US Visitors’ Vox Pops”, <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/505034998>.

²⁰ Cary Grant, “Archie Leach”, *Ladies Home Journal*, Part 1, January/February; Part 2, March; Part 3, April 1963. Accessed June 8, 2022, <http://www.carygrant.net/autobiography/>.

²¹ Richard Dyer, and Paul McDonald. *Stars*. Bloomsbury Academic, 1998, 3.

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Bristols that they inhabit is drawn out in the *Looking for Archie* tour, which uncovers layers of interlinked and little-known local history through a place-based journey of discovery.

Each layer offers new perspectives on and engagement with the **complex interpresent relationship between the present and historic physical environment, and Grant's persona, his life and the tour participant's lived experience.** For example, this overlapping of Grant's biography and his star image is brought into focus by a publicity shot of Grant on the roof of Bristol Cathedral in 1965, helping to raise funds for the repairs. This photograph was shown outside the cathedral, which was the starting point for the first edition of the tour in 2017;²² the venue deliberately chosen to tie in with the Christmas screening of *The Bishop's Wife* (1947) the following weekend. In that film, Grant plays Dudley, a guardian angel who answers the prayer of Reverend Henry Biggs (David Niven) to help him build a cathedral. **The realisation that life has imitated art, with the plot of the film so closely paralleling Grant's later support for the real cathedral, has the potential to provide an affective thrill where the intersection between Grant's biography and star persona is foregrounded.**

Another "magic moment" occurred sharing a photo of Grant on College Green in front of City Hall, taken shortly after it was built in the 1950s when he was at the height of his stardom. These magic moments can be intensified if there is an "unexpected connection between physical and the virtual worlds" or when "the shared context evokes a gesture or feeling of social bonding giving a shared private movement within a public space."²²

For the participants, standing on College Green in exactly the same spot as Grant creates a frisson between these different palimpsestic layers: imagining the Bristol Archie grew up in, before City Hall was built; comparing the freshly-planted saplings in the photograph to the fully-grown trees now obscuring the municipal architecture. Later in the tour, participants are asked to observe how Grant's confident stride in the photograph has been used as the template for the pose of the Cary Grant statue.

In both examples, the experience of encountering site-specific knowledge about Grant can also have a defamiliarizing effect, resulting in participants "looking at the world with new eyes."²³ In the 2017 audience survey, over half of the respondents agreed that the walk had changed their view of Bristol (60 percent), with an additional 25.7 percent saying their view of Bristol had partly been changed. A large majority of people felt that the tour had changed their understanding of Grant (74.3 percent) or partly changed (11.4 percent) it.

The most significant way in which participants' view of Grant changed was in gaining a better understanding of his ongoing connections to Bristol, and the warmth and affection he felt for the city of his birth (38.5 percent). **19.2 percent of respondents learnt that he was more "down to earth" than they had realised, saying the tour "made him more human" and 11.5 percent learnt that his life was more "complex" than they had realised.** The tour also gave participants a new perspective on Grant's early life, his family and mother in particular (34.6

²² Reid et al., 2005, 291-2.

²³ Reid et al., 2005, 291.

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percent), his marriages (7.7 percent) and the possibility that he may have been bisexual (3.9 percent). People learnt about “places of significance” and his connections to Bristol theatres (7.7 percent).

In her discussion of the Manhattan TV Tour, Leshu Torchin outlines how the tour director “overlays a series of landscapes over the physical terrain . . . causing each site to resonate with a compounded spatial complexity”²⁴.²⁴ *Looking for Archie* similarly explores the ways in which we experience the city as a palimpsestic layered space: Archie’s childhood growing up in Bristol, contrasting with his experience returning as an adult having found fame; the contemporary landscape, overlaid with the traces of how the built environment has developed and changed through time.

Another tension is between absence and presence, between our physical experience of place as it is now, with our imagined understanding of how it used to be or might have been. Torchin identifies this experience as “a constant negotiation of space for the tourist”, acknowledging the complicated relationship between a location and its representation, as well as the affective labour of the cinematic tourist to make sense of that relationship.²⁵

6 Emplaced interaction and the Bristol Blitz

One of the key ways we can see this affective labour is in how the legacy of World War 2 plays out across the city and weaves its way through Grant’s life story. Throughout the walk we encounter evidence of the Bristol Blitz and its devastating impact on the Leach family. Bristol was the fifth most bombed city in the UK during the Second World War due to the strategic importance of its harbour as a major port for American supply ships and its aircraft factories. In the winter of 1940-41 there were six major bombing raids in which the city suffered heavy loss of life and destruction of the built environment, which is still visible today in the city’s eclectic architecture.²⁶ According to the *Western Daily Press*, Grant lost relatives in a direct hit in one of these raids: “Mr and Mrs John Henry Leach, uncle and aunt of Grant, the Bristol-born film star, their daughter, son-in-law and grandson were buried by a direct hit on their house in a recent air raid”.²⁷ An entire family was wiped out in a single incident.

We-Participants first experience this theme early in the tour when we encounter the Bristol Basin plaque on the centre, opposite the Bristol Hippodrome. This is a replica of the original plaque erected in New York City in 1942 by the ~~English-Speaking~~ English-Speaking Union (ESU) of the United States to “commemorate the sacrifices made by the people of Bristol,

²⁴ Leshu Torchin, “Location, Location, Location the Destination of the Manhattan TV Tour,” *Tourist Studies* 2, no. 3 (2002): 248.

²⁵ Torchin, 2002, 247-8.

²⁶ Eugene Byrne, “The Night that Changed Bristol Forever - by the People Who Were There,” *Bristol Post*, November 24, 2020, <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/night-changed-bristol-forever-people-4731571>.

²⁷ “Cary Grant Lost Relatives”, *The Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror*, 27 January 1941, 5.

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England during World War II²⁸. Rubble from the Bristol Blitz was used as ballast for returning US supply ships and dumped in the East River between 23rd and 34th Street as landfill forming the foundations for what is now Franklin D Roosevelt Drive. Stephen Vincent Benetto was commissioned to write a poem²⁹: “these / Fragments that were once homes / Shall testify while men love / Freedom to the resolution and / Fortitude of the people of Britain²⁹”.

The plaque ends: “And broad-based under all / Is planted England's oaken-hearted mood, / As rich in fortitude / As e'er went worldward from the island-wall²⁹” This last section is a quote from another poem called *National Ode* by Bayard Taylor, which was written for the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876, celebrating the Declaration of Independence, underscoring the long and complex relationship between Britain and the United States of America.

In December 1974, Grant re-dedicated the plaque when it was relocated due to the construction of the Waterside Plaza. In his speech Grant was clearly moved, stating “I have a deep-seated emotion about this ceremony²⁹”³⁰. He revealed that “a great part of my family were wiped out in the war²⁹”³¹. In May 2022, when the tour ran as part of Bristol WalkFest, one of the participants visiting from New York revealed that he had recently visited the original plaque at Waterside Plaza and had brought a fragment of rubble with him to return to Bristol. I photographed him holding up a selfie on his phone pictured next to the original plaque in New York City, standing in front of the Bristol replica (see Figure 3).

²⁸ Waterside Plaza, “Cary Grant Links Waterside to Bristol,” *Waterside Views* (April 2006), 1 http://www.watersidewire.com/residentservices/documents/NewsletterPDFApril06_000.pdf.

²⁹ Waterside Plaza, 2006, 1.

³⁰ Waterside Plaza, 2006, 1.

³¹ BBC Online, “How Bricks from Bristol were used to Build Part of New York,” October 21, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-bristol-41700547>.

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Figure 6.3. Participant holding up an image of himself in front of the Bristol Basin plaque in New York, next to the replica plaque in Bristol, UK. Looking for Archie, May 2022. Photograph by Charlotte Crofts.

Later we encounter the bombed-out ruin of St Peter’s Church in Castle Park, left standing as a testimony to the Blitz. A metal plaque is dedicated to the “Civilians and Auxiliary Personnel who lost their lives in the Greater Bristol Area during the air raids carried out between June 1940 and May 1944. They live in the memory of the living³².” Listed amongst the dead are several Leaches, including Grant’s uncle John Henry and aunt Rose, his cousin Dorothy Ellen Marsh and her husband Francis Richard Bruiss Marsh, the family mentioned in the newspaper, and another uncle, Frederick Leach. According to Mark Glancy, “the impact of the bombs was so intense that their bodies were never recovered³².”³²

The experience of encountering this memorial and seeing their names is affective. Earlier on in the walk we learnt about the Bristol Basin plaque and intellectually comprehend that he lost relatives, but there is something about recognising their names engraved on the plaque on

³² Mark Glancy, Cary Grant, A Hollywood Legend, Oxford University Press: 2021, p. 222.

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Further, there needs to be more balance between the *affective landscapes* of this tour and the details of Grant's personal life. At present, the chapter leans more towards providing details of the latter; some examples and descriptions will need to be excised, and in other cases the relation to the physical environment needs to be more clearly signposted.

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the ruin of a shell of the church that brings home this abstract understanding into a more embodied experience (see Figures 4 and 5).



<Insert "Figure 6.4-Plaque Wide.jpg" here>

<Insert "Figure 6.5-Plaque Close.jpg" here>

Figures 6.4 and 6.5. Participants looking at the plaque commemorating civilian loss of life with close-up of Leaches lost in the Blitz. Looking for Archie, May 2022. Photographs by Charlotte Crofts.

It is useful to turn to Aston's concept of "emplaced interaction" here, which is a useful paradigm with which to move beyond the mind/body relationship of "embodiment", reinserting us back into the physical world around us, and "bringing our bodies and minds into direct interplay with the wider environment"^{32, 33} Aston's argument for a new way of

³³ Judith Aston, "Interactive documentary and live performance from embodied to emplaced interaction," in *i-Docs: The Evolving Practices of Interactive Documentary*, edited by Judith Aston et al. (New York: Wallflower Press, 2018), 232-4.

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working with interactive documentary could equally apply to how we might think about screen tourism and affective landscapes in the digital age. As Aston suggests, it is becoming increasingly important to return to the physical, “to make us feel ‘alive’ through maintaining some direct physical contact with our fellow humans and with the world at large.”³⁴ In *Looking for Archie*, this “emplaced interaction” with the physical memorial and the specific example of Grant’s personal loss enables us to grasp the enormity of the lasting legacy of the Blitz on Bristol as a whole, resonating with contemporary historical events in deepening our understanding of the horrors of war and their impact on civilian populations.

One of the most emotional points on the tour is the moment when we hear about Archie getting lost in a Marks and Spencer department store as a young child, as recounted in Maureen Donaldson’s memoir.³⁵ When his mother Elsie finds him, she punishes him by saying “You see, Archie, nobody wants you. Nobody came for you, did they? I’m the only one – *the only one* – who cares about you. Nobody else. And don’t you ever forget it, because the next time you let go of my hand and wander off, I won’t come back.”³⁶ Elsie and Elias Leach had lost their first-born son, John, to septicaemia when he was a baby and Elsie never recovered from the guilt. Grant remembers her as a controlling mother, exacting in her expectations of his manners and aspirational in her hopes for his future.³⁷

This is a point of anagnorisis for Donaldson, as Grant’s lover, a critical moment of recognition about the effect that his relationship with his mother had on all his subsequent relationships with women. This resonates because earlier in the tour we have heard about how Archie came home from primary school in February 1915 to find Elsie gone. He was told she had gone to recuperate in a nearby seaside town, but she never came back, and he was led to believe that she was dead. She had been committed to a mental hospital, which Grant did not discover until over twenty years later after he had become famous.

The landscape of Castle Park creates an affective backdrop for this story. Participants are required to draw on their imagination to picture what is effectively now a concrete path through a grassy park as a bustling high street, and to imagine the anguish of Elsie thinking she had lost Archie and punishing him, and the adult Grant’s long-held pain because of that punishment. Indeed, that moment of anagnorisis is extended further because what used to be the busiest shopping street in Bristol was razed to the ground after suffering severe bomb damage during the War, so the pathos we feel for Archie and Elsie is once again mingled with a greater sense of loss for the city itself. According to the 2017 survey, people’s view of Bristol was changed by a better understanding of local history and buildings (6.7 percent), the effect of War on Bristol (13.33 percent) and Castle Park in particular (23.33 percent), as well as new knowledge about Bristol’s cinema history (23.33 percent). Several people felt that they had seen another side of the city either offering “a different point of view on familiar

³⁴ Aston, 2017, 233.

³⁵ Maureen Donaldson and William Royce, *An Affair to Remember: My Life with Cary Grant* (New York: Putnam, 1989), 152-4.

³⁶ Donaldson and Royce, 1989, 153. Emphasis in the original.

³⁷ Grant, “Archie Leach”, 1963.

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places” (10 percent) or introducing them to places that they had not seen before (23.33 percent).³⁸

In 2017, this was even more emotionally resonant because two separate branches of Elsie Kingdon’s family (Grant’s mother) met each other for the first time on one of the tours. One participant stated that the tour “renewed my interest in possible family connections”, and another asserted that as “Kingdons, put us in touch with another family member³⁹.” In a personal follow up email these family connections were further elaborated: “My sister... and I, thoroughly enjoyed the "Looking for Archie" walking tour and can't wait to attend the next event... Your passion and enthusiasm, definitely left us both wanting to learn more about Archie Leach, our family connection and the history of Cinema in Bristol^{39, 40}

73 Bristol as Port City: Transatlantic Travel and the Tourist Gaze

It could be argued that Grant’s trajectory, from Horfield to Hollywood, would not have been possible without, but also performs, what John Urry has coined the “tourist gaze⁴¹.” Indeed, Bristol has been instrumental in the development of transatlantic travel and globalisation, on which tourism itself is predicated. Italian navigator and explorer John Cabot (Giovani Caboto) sailed from Bristol in the Matthew, funded by Bristol merchants, in 1497 and discovered North America.⁴² Young Archie would have been well aware of this history, as Cabot Tower – a prominent feature of the Bristol skyline – was erected to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Cabot’s expedition in 1897, shortly before his birth.⁴³ Archie’s life, then, was shaped by his relationship to the sea, and Bristol’s role as a port town in the early twentieth century. He wrote about frequenting the docks, where he found solace from an unhappy childhood, fantasising about sailing away on one of the tall ships, which still sailed right into the city centre:

I regularly haunted the Bristol wharves where in those days, schooners and steamships came right up the Avon River into the center (sic) of town; and on weekends, when most of my school friends were playing cricket, I sat alone for hours watching the ships come and go, sailing with them to far places on the tide of my imagination, trying to release myself from the emotional tensions which disarranged my thoughts.⁴⁴

³⁸ Crofts, “Evaluation Report”, 2021.

³⁹ Personal email, 2017.

⁴⁰ Personal email, 2017.

⁴¹ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990) and John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage, 2011).

⁴² Evan T. Jones and Margaret M. Condon, *Cabot and Bristol's Age of Discovery: The Bristol Discovery Voyages 1480–1508*, (University of Bristol, November 23, 2016). The foundation stone was laid in 1897 and work was completed in 1898, just six years before Archie’s birth.

⁴³ Historic England, “Cabot Tower,” <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1202009>

⁴⁴ Cary Grant, “Archie Leach,” 1963.

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This extract is heard near Pero’s bridge, named after Pero Jones, an enslaved African who lived in Bristol, within sight of a statue of John Cabot which overlooks the floating harbour, opposite the quay where the statue of slave trader Edward Colston was unceremoniously dumped into the docks in the summer of 2020. The River Frome, which used to run right into Bristol’s centre, is now culverted and the expansion of Avonmouth and Portbury Docks at the mouth of the River Avon, together with post-war redevelopment has transformed the working harbour into Bristol’s leisure quarter; cargo ships have been replaced by pleasure boats. Multiple layers of Bristol’s naval history and its relationship to the transatlantic slave trade coexist. The penultimate stop was the SS Great Britain, where we have photographs of Grant visiting the wreck shortly after it returned to Bristol in the early 1970s. Built in 1843 by another iconic Bristolian, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, she was designed as the first great ocean liner between Bristol and New York, demonstrating the longevity of the relationship between the city of his birth and the country of his future citizenship.

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Archie was not to cross the Atlantic until July 1920 when he emigrated with Bob Pender’s Troupe of Knockabout Boys to New York City, where he worked his way up from Vaudeville to Broadway, and then made his way to Hollywood and reinvented himself as Cary Grant. Archie’s first voyage on the RMS Olympic – the Titanic’s sister ship and an exact replica – epitomises the height of modernity and the “golden age” of transatlantic travel – with its stratified accommodation. As Urry argues, the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century is the period in which “mass tourism has become widespread within much of Europe and North America”.⁴⁵ Archie and the Penders travelled Second Class, whereas film stars Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford who he met on the voyage, travelled in First.⁴⁶ Seeing America in the movies propelled him on his transatlantic journey. Grant vividly remembers his first glimpse of the New York skyline, arriving at dawn on July 28, 1920:

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*Manhattan Island. That skyline in the early-morning July sunshine. New York City. There it was; but was I there? Was I actually there at the ship’s rail, neatly scrubbed and polished, standing with a small, solitary band of Pender-troupe boys—none of whom had slept all night for fear of missing the first glimpse of America? The excitement. Those skyscrapers I had seen so many times before. Oh my, yes. In England. In Bristol. In the films.*⁴⁷

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Not only did Bristol’s status as a port inform Archie’s desire to travel and escape from his difficult childhood, but so did the representations of ‘elsewhere’ in the films he watched on

⁴⁵ Urry, 1990, 4. Scrutinising the passenger manifests initially for Archie Leach, and later for Grant’s many transatlantic sea-voyages, it is instructive to note that the passenger records cease from the late 1950s when air travel takes over and transatlantic travel becomes more accessible.

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⁴⁶ Archie clearly somehow inveigled his way onto the upper deck: “Among the fellow passengers were newlyweds Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Mary Pickford, the world’s most popular honeymooners and the first film stars I ever met. They were gracious and patient in face of constant harassment, by people with cameras and autograph books, whenever they appeared on deck; and once even I found myself being photographed with Mr. Fairbanks during a game of shuffleboard.”

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⁴⁷ Cary Grant, “Archie Leach,” 1963.

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the Bristol cinema screens. Tourism is strongly motivated by the desire to experience locations that one has already seen in images. In his discussion of the ‘tourist gaze’ Urry suggests the “anticipation . . . of intense pleasures” is “constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos”⁴⁸.

It is useful to extend this concept to include what I call “film-induced migration”⁴⁹. Once in New York, Archie’s cinema-going continued to inform his trajectory, as Orry-Kelly attests, “whenever Archie had any spare money or time, he’d go to the movies to study technique”, learning from the likes of Stanley Lupino, Stan Laurel and Harry Langdon.⁴⁹ As Urry argues “the gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs”⁵⁰. Of course, Grant went on to play numerous naval characters, and boats feature in many of his films, from his first appearance as First Sailor in *Singapore Sue* (1932) to *Father Goose* (1964).

So, the tourist gaze comes full circle. Archie Leach watched movies in Bristol and studied them in New York, these in turn motivated him to travel to Hollywood and informed the cultivation of Grant’s paradoxical star persona, as a British-born actor who represented the apex of American masculinity. With his new-found wealth he was able to travel widely, returning to his hometown regularly to see his mother and even after her death. His many visits home were assiduously documented by *Bristol Post* – they were given exclusive photo shoots in return for leaving him alone for the rest of his stay. Images of Grant perpetually circulate on social media, pictured on glamorous cruise ships (both in life – he met his third wife Betsy Drake on a cruise and in art – as in his film, *An Affair to Remember* (1957)); his star image symbolises the golden age of transatlantic travel, in turn motivating cinematic tourism today.

8 From Virtual Communitas to Making the Pilgrimage

Given the contemporary ubiquity of Grant’s image circulating on the Internet and the accessibility of his films on Video On Demand platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, why do some fans still feel the need to visit his birthplace? Is there something even more compelling about physical pilgrimage in the digital age?

The concept of pilgrimage and the related concept of communitas has been explored not only in tourism studies, but also in fandom and celebrity studies, as well as in festival studies.⁵¹ As Urry argues, “like the pilgrim the tourist moves from a familiar place to a far place and then returns to the familiar place. At the far place both the pilgrim and the tourist engage in

⁴⁸ Urry, 1990, 3.

⁴⁹ Orry-Kelly, *Women I’ve Undressed* (London: Allen & Unwin, 2016), 93.

⁵⁰ Urry, 1990, 3.

⁵¹ On fandom see Will Brooker, “The Blade Runner Experience: Pilgrimage and Liminal Space,” in *The Blade Runner Experience: the Legacy of a Science Fiction Classic*, ed. Will Brooker (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 11-30 and Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); on festivals, see Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, 1st edition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007). <http://doi.org/10.1017/9789048506729>

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‘worship’ of shrines which are sacred, albeit in different ways, and as a result gain some kind of uplifting experience.^{52, 53} Drawing on Victor Turner’s theorisation of pilgrimage, Will Brooker outlines the concept of fan pilgrimage as a three-stage journey from “habitus” to the “promised land” and back again.⁵³

Brooker complicates this in his discussion of “inbetweeness” – that liminal space between the fantasy world of the text (or star) and the reality of the actual location, arguing that “pilgrims never quite make the sacred connection but instead hover on the borders between actual and fictional, holding both in a double-vision of alternate realities.”⁵⁴ This “double-vision” relates to the duality between Archie and Cary identified above; the frisson between then and now which has to be negotiated by the fan/tourist. Such sites, Brooker argues, “demand a significant amount of emotional commitment and imaginative work on the pilgrim’s part to even approach a sense of communion with the fictional text.”⁵⁵ This fan labour to transform the everyday into the sacred can also be applied to celebrity and stardom: “mundane houses that become special only when a fan drives past and projects upon them the knowledge that their idol once lived there.”⁵⁶

In *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, Urry and Larsen identify an “upsurge in ‘media pilgrimage’” in the digital age.⁵⁷ Cardoso et al. also note the impact of “information and communication technologies” in informing tourist expectations, their practices and the sharing of tourist experiences.⁵⁸ In the early days of the Internet, an email list for Grant fans, The Email Warbrides (named after *I Was A Male Warbride* (1949)) was established in 1996 and a website curated by Debbie Dunlap was set up in 1998. Members of the list held “Caryventions”, including a visit to Bristol in 1999, helped raise money for the Cary Grant statue and visited the city when it was unveiled in 2001.⁵⁹ Lincoln Geraghty et al. highlight how fan loyalty can also contribute to the cyclical development of tourism in the digital age of globalisation and mediatisation, through word of mouth and sharing on social media which “make it possible for them to exchange experiences and stories before, during, and after visiting tourist spaces.”⁶⁰ Indeed, two 2018 visitors from the United States were mobilised to visit via their membership of the Cary Comes Home Facebook group.⁶¹ Today Grant’s

⁵² Urry, 1990, 359.

⁵³ Brooker, 2004, 12.

⁵⁴ Brooker, 2004, 13.

⁵⁵ Brooker, 2004, 13.

⁵⁶ Brooker, 2004, 14.

⁵⁷ Urry and Larson, 2011, 116.

⁵⁸ Cardoso et al., 2017, 23-4.

⁵⁹ Email Warbrides, accessed June 9, 2022, <http://www.carygrant.net/warbrides.html>. A life-sized bronze statue of Grant by Graham Ibbeson was erected and unveiled by Grant’s fifth wife, Barbara Harris-Grant on 7 December 2001, following a world-wide campaign led by David Long which raised over £60,000. Cary Comes Home commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the statue with a tour in 2021 and an online event: “The Cary Grant Statue: 20 Years – a conversation with David Long,” <https://www.carycomeshome.co.uk/events/the-cary-grant-statue-20-years>.

⁶⁰ Lincoln Geraghty et al., “Guest Editorial: Exploring the Popular Culture and Tourism Place Making Nexus.” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 52, no. 6 (2019): 1241-4.

⁶¹ Cary Comes Home. “Vox Pops.”

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Commented [CL32]: This discussion on pilgrimage is important, and it should be appearing much earlier in this chapter.

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image spreads via social media platforms, engaging a new generation, with stan accounts and memes promulgating on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more recently TikTok, contributing to the longevity of his star image.⁶²

9 Dressing up, Selfies and Playful Fan Practices

However, the longevity of Grant as a star is not simply maintained by the passive circulation of his star image, but via the ongoing inter/active engagement of fans. Geraghty et al. argue that popular cultural tourism is motivated not only by the desire to escape everyday life, but also fans' desire to interact with "icons and symbols"⁶³. As Paul McDonald suggests, it is important to recognise the "many practical actions which stardom motivates in society"⁶⁴, calling for a "pragmatics of star practices" to supplement the "semiotics of star meanings."⁶⁴ Recognising the "social activity of stardom,"⁶⁵ enables us to think about the agency of the spectator or fan, actively negotiating the institution of stardom, rather than passively consuming it.

Similarly, Christine Geraghty calls for a re-examination of "how we understand the audience's activity in relation to stars" moving beyond Richard Dyer's emphasis on stars "as a means of exploring social identity" to an evaluation of the "extratextual work of fans."⁶⁶ Discussing "cult geographies", Hills describes this as an "affective-interpretative process."⁶⁷ This affective, extratextual work is emotionally loaded. Rebecca Williams suggests that "media fans often have strong emotional interests in finding and visiting sites related to their favorite (sic) films, TV shows or celebrities"⁶⁸. As Lincoln Geraghty et al. point out, fan practices are the expression of people's "deep involvement" with the object of adoration which often "permeates several aspects of their lives", including not only travel, but also other features, such as fashion.⁶⁹ This is borne out by the fact that some participants on the *Looking for Archie* tour emulate Grant in their choice of attire, wearing suits and hats in homage to Grant as style god (see Figure 6.6).

⁶² Lucy Bolton, and Julie Lobalzo Wright (eds), *Lasting Screen Stars: Images That Fade and Personas That Endure*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

⁶³ Lincoln Geraghty et al., "Guest Editorial: Exploring the Popular Culture and Tourism Place Making Nexus." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 52, no. 6 (2019): 1241-4.

⁶⁴ Dyer and McDonald, 1998, 200.

⁶⁵ Dyer and McDonald, 1998, 200.

⁶⁶ Geraghty, Christine, "Re-Examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, 105. London: Arnold, 2000. <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/49612/>.

⁶⁷ Hills, 2003, 210.

⁶⁸ Rebecca Williams, "Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage", in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, 98. Milton Park, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017.

⁶⁹ Lincoln Geraghty et al., "Guest Editorial: Exploring the Popular Culture and Tourism Placemaking Nexus." *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 52, No. 6 (2019): 1243.

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As discussed above, this shifts the focus here to Celebrity Studies, and away from screen tourism and affective landscapes.

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Figure 6.6. Participant dressing the part with tour guide Pam Beppard on the right. *Looking for Archie*, December 2021. Photograph by Charlotte Crofts.

Dressing up in vintage style, or as characters from Grant's films, is positively encouraged during the *Cary Comes Home Festival*, with prizes for the best dressed at our gala screenings.⁷⁰ Dedicated fans take this further and dress up for the whole festival. For the walking tour, participants are encouraged to dress appropriately, whatever the weather. The fact that some participants choose to don outfits that would not look out of place in a Cary Grant film represents a playful approach to engaging with Bristol's screen heritage.

This playful, performative mode particularly comes to the fore in the way that participants engage with the Cary Grant statue in Millennium Square. All iterations of the tour traditionally end here. In November 2017, and in subsequent years, the statue was incorporated into the snug of the *Aprés Bar* as part of the Christmas Fair. We usually have an

⁷⁰ As documented on the Cary Comes Home Facebook photos albums.

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Again, it may be a case of being more selective in terms of what ideas/examples should be included in this chapter to ensure it has a clear focus.

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arrangement with the bar to secure the area immediately surrounding the statue and participants were invited to toast “our Archie” with a complimentary glass of prosecco, whilst filling in our audience surveys. Ending the tour at the statue with a toast contributes towards a sense of communitas and provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on their experience of the tour. But what is most fascinating is the way in which participants tend to spontaneously interact with the statue, touching it, even hugging and kissing it, posing for photographs which they then share on social media (see Figure 6.7).

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Commented [CL38]: This is a great example of the ‘embodied experience’ of the tour that draws on a plethora of other senses e.g. smell, taste, touch (beyond the visual), and the interaction between tourist, place and tour (subject). The haptic quality of the tour really does need to be more overtly signposted, and conceptually grounded when it is first mentioned in the introduction.



<Insert “Figure 6.7 Tweet.jpg” here>

Figure 6.7- Tweet of participant posing with a map in front of the Cary Grant statue in Millennium Square. Looking for Archie, November 2018. Photograph by Clare Sheridan.

Urry and Larsen note a “performance turn’ within tourist studies” which acknowledges the experience of place as embodied “in more multi-sensuous ways, touching, tasting, smelling,

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hearing⁷¹ This performative sense of play, this tactile, haptic engagement with Grant’s memorial demonstrates a shift from the tourist as audience to performer.⁷² It also speaks to the carnivalesque potential of fan practices, spilling out of the everyday and becoming transformative, creating what Urry and Larsen identify as a “‘liminoid’ situatio[n] where everyday obligations are suspended or inverted.”⁷³ Pilgrimage becomes a creative act in which, as Will Brooker points out “performance, disguise and carnival . . . symbolically transforms the location in question, temporarily inverting social structures and making the city into a liberating, playful space.”⁷⁴ By personifying the statue at the end of the tour, we give permission for “playful ‘non-serious’ behaviour and the encouragement of a relatively unconstrained ‘communitas’ or social togetherness.”⁷⁵ That “double-vision” between Archie/Cary is maintained right until the last.

10 Future Directions

The *Looking for Archie* walking tour has contributed to the wider audience development for the *Cary Comes Home Festival*. The challenge is how to continue to develop both the festival and the tour to reach a wider and more diverse audience. We are currently exploring how to enhance the tour, collaborating with Show of Strength Theatre company – who operate several Bristol-based “theatre walks” – to explore incorporating elements of itinerant physical theatre, such as circus performance, to pay homage to Grant’s acrobatic past.⁷⁶

There is also potential to develop a *Looking for Archie* app. A basic prototype has already been produced, but completion of the full app is currently on hold, partly because it was interrupted by the pandemic but also because, having experienced the short shelf-life of my previous iOS apps, I am reluctant to continue with a native mobile app (one that uses the device’s mobile operating system). Both *Curzon Memories* and *Lost Cinemas* are now no longer available on the App Store, having become defunct due to Apple’s ever-evolving Application Programming Interface (API) and the high cost of updating and maintaining them.

Instead, I intend to develop a web-based virtual tour using the ArcGIS StoryMap platform which will be accessible from any Internet browser.⁷⁷ This will not only enable the tour to expand to include further Bristol locations not accessible within the spatial-temporal confines of one walking tour, but also to incorporate other international locations pertinent to Grant’s life and work, such as New York. The advantage of a web-based online tour is wider-

⁷¹ Urry and Larsen, 2011, 14.

⁷² Urry, 1990, 10.

⁷³ Urry and Larsen, 2011, 12.

⁷⁴ Will Brooker, “Everywhere and nowhere: Vancouver, fan pilgrimage and the urban imaginary”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007): 423.

⁷⁵ Urry and Larsen, 2011, 12.

⁷⁶ Show Of Strength perform in ‘found’ spaces in and around Bristol, including itinerant “theatre walks” themed around local culture, such as *Treasure Island* and *Frankenstein*. <https://showofstrength.org.uk/>

⁷⁷ For a successful example of the StoryMap platform, see Lisa Stead, *Reframing Vivien Leigh: South West Star Histories*, <https://reframingvivienleigh.exeter.ac.uk/storymap/>

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audience reach and longevity. However, at present the StoryMap platform does not have context-aware functionality which means it would not be truly “locative”^{78, 79}

Future directions for this research could explore how screen cultures impact on tourists’ understandings of and engagements with place and the ways in which emerging technologies affect our relation to landscapes. How might the next evolution of the Internet drive cinematic tourism using XR (eXtended Reality) to enhance our view of the physical environment? However, whilst we have become so reliant on the Internet as a way to relate to the world, even more so post-pandemic, it is nevertheless important not to lose touch with the physical and tactile world around us.⁷⁸ Experiencing the tour remotely using the “armchair mode” or immersed through the lens of XR may detract from the affective, embodied and emplaced interaction with the physical landscape and the act of pilgrimage which makes the original walking tour so compelling.

⁷⁸ Aston, 2017, 233.

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