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Torunn Selberg and Nevena Škrbić Alempijević: Turning Fiction into Reality: the Making...

TURNING FICTION INTO REALITY: THE MAKING OF TWO PLACES WITHIN LITERARY GEOGRAPHY

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The authors discuss the creation of literary places, based on people's perceptions of a locality arising from their relations to particular writers and their texts. The analysis is grounded on two case studies: Ogulin in Croatia, which is the birthplace of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, a renowned writer of fairytales, and Sel in Norway, the place where Sigrid Undset's heroine of the historical novel Kristin Lavransdaughter spent her youth. Both cases rely on materializing the writers' fictional universes within specific localities. Although they emerge in different contexts, these literary places exhibit common determinants that provide additional insight in the placemaking process.

Key words: *literary place, literary geography, festivals, Ogulin, Sel, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Sigrid Undset*

LITERARY PLACES AND PLACEMAKING: CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

In this article, we will discuss the making of two literary places, located in Croatia and Norway. We perceive a literary place as a particular aspect of a locality, one of its dimensions that emerges, or is emerging, from some people's experiences and perceptions resulting from their relations to certain writers and their writings. These attitudes are expressed through their narrations and practices. Such an approach has been inspired by the concept of literary tourism, developed especially by literary scholar Nicola J. Watson. She defines it as "the interconnected practices of visiting and marking sites associated with writers and their work" (Watson 2009:2).

Both terms, literary place and literary tourism, are related to a wider impulse of investing landscapes with literary meanings, for which we will use the term “literary geography” (cf. *ibid.* 2006:169). In this study, we are not only interested in literary places as finished products and recognizable tourist destinations branded on the basis of certain literary figures and their legacy. Rather, we are focusing on the processes of selecting a narrative, in this case a literary one, to make the place visible, “unique” and attractive within the tourist industry. Placemaking is, however, not only a question of making a place interesting for outsiders, but also an issue of local identity. We see tourism as a driver that makes people view their own surroundings through other people’s eyes.¹ The attaching of literary meanings to a place by cultural policy-makers can result in a change of perception among the people actually living there.

Our perspective is in line with current discussions resulting from the shift of paradigms defining space and place (see, for instance, Casey 1996; De Certeau 1984; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003a), in which Scandinavian and Croatian researchers have also taken a significant part (e. g. Čapo and Gulin Zrnić 2011; Frykman 2002; Selberg and Gilje 2007). All these authors in different ways and through diverse cases show that places are constructed by human experiences. One of the theoretical arguments we employ to analyze literary places is related to inscribed space. This concept draws our attention to how people create meaningful and dynamic relationships with a place, how it becomes theirs, how they invest space with meaning and thus constitute it, in what ways experience is tied to a place (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003b:13). Such line of thought is also noticeable among literary scholars and their approach to the relationship between writers and places. A similar shift has occurred in this subfield

¹ The production of a literary place is, thus, closely related to cultural tourism. For a more elaborate discussion on cultural tourism observed from an ethnological and cultural anthropological perspective, and based on both the Croatian and Norwegian cases, see Petrović Leš and Pletenac 2006. Also, in both the Norwegian and Croatian contexts researchers have been analyzing the links between cultural tourism, culture, heritage, history and identity through the prism of festivals and other public events (for instance, Biti and Blagaić 2009; Hjemdahl 2002; Kelemen and Škrbić Alempijević 2012; Potkonjak et al. 2006; Reksten 2008).

since “writers on places and literature have usually been more interested in the effect of place upon an individual author’s *oeuvre* (...) than in how an *oeuvre* might have shaped the subsequent history of a place” (Watson 2009:4–5). However, today’s literary scholars also start from the idea that “texts – or rather, readings of texts – make places in their own image” (Watson 2006:47). As ethnologists and folklorists we have an additional insight into placemaking since we can focus on how different individual agents understand, interpret, create and experience the relations among place, text, writer and people.² Along with narratives, practices represent a highly relevant field which enables us to analyze the construction of literary places. For this reason, we are concerned with certain contemporary events localizing literary national heritage. In our opinion, placemaking in general is often about claiming local ownership of widely shared cultural elements. As a rule, it is also an attempt to shift from “invisibility” to “visibility” and from “ordinariness” to “extraordinariness”.

The places we have chosen for our case studies are *Ogulin*, a town situated in the continental part of Croatia, and *Sel*, a community located in inland Norway. The reason why we have chosen these two places for

² In this article we are examining more closely the cultural production segment of placemaking. We focus on what strategies and actions different agents – local authorities, tourist boards and agencies, companies specialized in consultancy and management of cultural tourism, cultural centres, public institutions, festival organizers, art directors and so on – apply or take to spur the visitors’ experience of the literary place. Our aim is to find out how these actors select, interpret and present motifs related to the writers and their texts in order to reconstruct the image of the places along the lines of literary heritage. Their perception of the place and their approach to this process are by no means uniform. The scope of this paper did not allow us to engage in an analysis of the highly heterogeneous and diverse narrations and practices of visitors. The study of this aspect would also cast additional light on the question of how literary places are created and how they come to life. Our case studies are based on fieldwork, on participant observation of the cultural practices organized in Ogulin and in Sel (focusing primarily on local festivals) and on interviews with numerous individuals involved in the branding and promotion of the places. Nevena Škrbić Alempijević conducted her research in Ogulin on several occasions in the period from 2009 to 2011, and Torunn Selberg took her fieldtrips to Sel in 2005. Additionally, we have based our analysis on a variety of promotional materials, strategic documents, branding studies, tourist brochures and advertisements, media reports and monographs about the places.

our analysis is their strong link to two acclaimed female writers, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić (1874 – 1938) and Sigrid Undset (1882 – 1949), whose world-wide known works were produced in the same historical period, and who are still widely read and re-edited. Ogulin is the birthplace of Brlić-Mažuranić; Sel, on the other hand, is the place where Undset's most renowned heroine, Kristin Lavransdaughter, spent her childhood and youth. The Croatian author is famous for her children's books and fairytales, especially for the collection *Priče iz davnine* (*Croatian Tales of Long Ago*), whereas the Norwegian writer is known for her historical novels, particularly for her trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter* (in the English editions known as *Kristin Lavransdaughter*).³ Ogulin and its surroundings have been reinterpreted as the Homeland of Fairytales, in the light of Brlić-Mažuranić's fantastic writings that hold no reference to a concrete historic period, while Sel, as the homeplace of the medieval heroine Kristin, is branded as a locality with traditions dating back to the Middle Ages. In both places, the celebrating of these two authors and their literary heritage takes place in the form of festivals: in Ogulin as the *Ogulinski festival bajke* (the Ogulin Fairytale Festival), initiated in 2006, and in Sel as the *Kristindagene* (the Kristin Days), established in 1999. The motifs that are reinterpreted in the festivals are not related directly to the authors' lives, but they evoke the fictional world of their works. This leads us to the following issues: do these festivals manage to materialise the literary universe and thus turn fiction into reality? Furthermore, since they bring fictional motifs and characters to life outside book covers, is reality fictionalized through this process? In this sense, since the embodying of literary narratives represents one of their objectives, both festivals are closely related to literary tourism. Another argument for approaching literary places through the prism of festivals is that literary tourism and public events have an additional common feature. They both make cultural production, which is considered to be reserved only for the chosen few, visible and accessible to all who want to take part in it. Thus, they transpose domains often viewed as exclusive (literature, culture, history) into inclusive contexts.

³ Both books have been translated into English, and many other languages. Further in this article we will refer to them by using their English titles.

As indicated by Nicola J. Watson, the rise of literary tourism, that is, a more organized and mobilizing realization of people's inclination to visit certain places out of literary interest is a product of the 18th century, while Western Europe saw its heyday in the 19th and early 20th centuries (2006:5). She depicts several types of literary sites, in which different links to writers and their texts are established, and places them along a chronological historical line. The range of literary tourism has gradually widened: from the travellers' tendency to pay homage to poets' graves, over a desire to learn about the writers' origins and working conditions by visiting their birthplaces, homes and haunts, to the "discovery" of settings of fiction. This final form of grounding locations evoked or created in texts within an actual landscape has led to the reinventing of whole literary territories, closely tied to national mapping and the construction of national identity (Watson 2006:5, 15). In our opinion, such extension of travellers' practices shows that they less and less need the physical, bodily presence of writers to root them and their texts in the land and thus make a literary place. This presence ranges from actual bodies and bones in the authors' graves, over objects they touched and views they admired from their empty homes, to the materialisation of the worlds of their imagination.

In both case studies we are dealing with the embedding of the fictional in specific localities. Our main aim is to discuss and compare two different literary places, based on the works of two rather different literary personages, in two different countries and constructed in different contexts. As researchers, we are interested in these variations, since they point to diverse means and ways in which places are brought into being. At the same time, we will attempt to show what these places, or rather these placemaking processes, have in common. Hopefully, when we find out what is common, we can discuss what a literary place is, how it is created and how it is brought to life by various actors.

TURNING A PLACE INTO A FAIRYTALE: THE CASE OF OGULIN⁴

The area of Ogulin, with approximately 14.000 inhabitants, situated some 110 kilometres from Zagreb, along the highway connecting the capital with the Dalmatian seaside resorts, offers a variety of natural and cultural resources which diverse agents have been trying to use to brand the town. Some of them have focused on the town's founders, the noble family of Frankopan, some on the region's archaeological heritage, related primarily to the fort of Modruš, some, again, on popular traditions, beliefs and folklore, and on the rich musical tradition of the area. Others have opted for the nearby skiing resort of Bjelolasica and the long history of mountaineering and alpinism in the town's surroundings. Furthermore, certain groups and individuals have singled out the timber industry and agriculture as important sources of income and employment for local people, which led to the idea of promoting Ogulin as the town of cabbage. However, those initiatives have not been so publicly noticeable at national level. "[Previously it was] just another little town in the hinterland, and to me they all seemed very similar", a visitor to the Ogulin Fairytale Festival from Zagreb explained.

A strategy that is becoming more and more conspicuous in public is the branding of the town and its surroundings along the lines of the "Homeland of Fairytales" (cf. Škrbić Alempijević 2012). The main argument that its promoters use is in close relation to the production of a literary place. The basis for this reinterpretation is the fact that Ogulin is the birthplace of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, acclaimed writer of fairytales. She was a highly esteemed author already during her lifetime. Several times she was considered for the Nobel Prize in Literature and became the first female corresponding member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. Her most famous children's book, *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, first published

⁴ A more elaborate analysis of the Ogulin case study, primarily focused on the Ogulin Fairytale Festival, is presented in the book *Grad kakav bi trebao biti. Etnološki i kulturnoantropološki osvrti na festivale – Towns as they should be. Ethnological and Cultural Anthropological Reflections on Festivals* (Kelemen and Škrbić Alempijević 2012). Ogulin is the theme of the chapter dealing with the relationship between memory and the festival (Škrbić Alempijević 2012).

in 1916, combines original fantastic plots with motifs and characters from Slavic mythology.

Brić-Mažuranić herself laid the foundations for re-imagining Ogulin through her image, or rather in the light of her creations. Although her family left the town shortly after she was born, she stressed that her visits to her birthplace played a significant role in the formation of her as a writer. In her autobiography she wrote:

“Ogulin is my birthplace and 18 April, 1874 is the date of my birth. My parents (Vladimir Mažuranić, a state barrister at that time, and now the retired vice-president of the Viceroyal Board in Zagreb, and Henrieta, born Bernath) were transferred to Karlovac in 1875. – But already at the age of six, and again when I was twelve, I got an opportunity to spend some time in my birthplace, Ogulin. The first strong impressions I can recollect originate from there. During my first stay I remember some curious excitement spurred by the peculiarity of the surroundings and the folk costumes of the area. The second stay resulted in my first notes and, soon after that, my first poem, *To the Star of My Homeland*. The amazing and aggressive shapes of the mountain of Klek and the romantic features of the Dobra River fed my imagination with so much material that deep into the night I played in my thoughts with most wondrous images and fantastic plots of what was going on in the dark night around Klek. In some extraordinary way my imagination was placing tremendous, turbulent and unceasing scenes, played by fantastic, mostly heroic, either historic or biblical figures, not at the top of Klek, but rather in its inside; they were all interrelated and had an indistinct patriotic goal. Moreover, I did not hold that these images appearing to me were creations of my imagination, but rather some sort of revelation, sent to me from a distance to reflect the true inner life of Klek.” (Brić-Mažuranić 1968:175–176)

The promoters of the brand “Ogulin, Homeland of Fairytales” use this quotation to stress the formative potential of the environment in the making of a literary genius. In their narrative, the writer, or rather her fictional universe, was largely shaped and transformed by this landscape. Therefore, if the environment played such a vital role in triggering the author’s creativity, perhaps visitors could undergo a similar transformation

by simply being in the place. On the other hand, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić herself has transformed Ogulin – her writings serve as lenses through which many read the town today. The locality, or at least one of its faces, has been remade in accordance with the imagery from her fairytales as interpreted nowadays.

The construction of this literary place reflects the efforts of the local Tourist Board and the Karlovac County Tourist Board to provide Ogulin with visibility by selecting the town's literary heritage as its crucial marker. "Ogulin, the Homeland of Fairytales" is a sustainable development project initiated in 2006, aiming at making a shift in the town's undefined status in national tourist promotion materials, media discourse and popular perception. Two main cultural and tourist products are seen as the project's results. One is Ivana's House of Fairytales, which should be open throughout the year. This museum and multimedia centre for visitors has not yet been established, but reconstruction is under way since European Union funds have been raised. The other is the Ogulin Fairytale Festival (Ratković 2006/2007:313–314).

In order to produce a destination grounded on fantastic imagery, the fruitful and multilayered literary tradition of the region has been evoked. In this project, oral literature, specifically local legends and folk stories about supernatural creatures, and the works of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, are described as two sides of the same coin (*ibid.* 308–309). The argument used to explain the intertwining of these two literary corpuses is that they emerge from the same source – from Ogulin as the cradle of fairytales. Concrete points in the landscape function as generators that ignite literary inspiration. For instance Klek, addressed in the writer's autobiography, is the scene of numerous fantastic tales, well-known at national level. According to them, this mountain of a striking shape represents the gathering spot of witches or fairies, who travel long distances to reach it to join in a circle dance and to hold their council there. Thus, literary narrative is locked to the landscape. At the same time, the literary place is thus provided with a sense of continuity. In this discourse, the sparkle of literary creativity dates back not only to the time of Brlić-Mažuranić's birth, but to some undefined temporal strata in which allegedly anonymous creators transformed impulses from their surroundings into oral literary forms. The line of continuity is drawn

from those ancient times, over the second half of the 19th century – when the writer was born – up to the present. It is used by festival organizers to explain that the status of Ogulin as a contemporary story-telling centre is the prolongation of a long tradition.

The initiators of the project “Ogulin, Homeland of Fairytales” insist on the “naturalness” of selecting this literary legacy for the town’s brand. They claim that the motifs connected with Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić already functioned as prominent symbols of local identity. The writer’s figure, they say, was firmly grounded in urban topography. Her monument was placed at the corner of the town’s central square in 1974. On the same occasion, for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of her birth, a memorial room was arranged in the County Museum (Dimitrijević et al. 2007:57). The local elementary school has been named after her. However, the recent actualization of the fantastic heritage of Ogulin cannot be viewed as an outcome of the common feelings and attitudes of local inhabitants who have simply joined together to make this dimension of their hometown generally known. The awareness of the writer’s value for Ogulin has not always been so clearly articulated. In 1952, the house she was born in was actually torn down and replaced with the regional Forestry Department building. The school was named after her as late as 1991, when the name of the local partisan fighter was erased from it, thus signalling the fall of socialism (*ibid.* 23).

The Ogulin brand is the result of the systematic strategic planning of a cultural tourism destination, developed by professionals in consultancy and project management in culture and cultural tourism, namely, by the company Muses Ltd. from Zagreb (Ratković 2006/2007). This image of Ogulin has been created within a web of different political, economic and social agenda of diverse social agents, both in local and national contexts. The project materializes a national (and international) literary figure in a local setting. It is concerned with claiming the town’s right to use her image as its symbol. What makes this strategy even more complex is the fact that the mainstream politics of memory regularly declares another Croatian locality to be “Ivana’s town”. This is Slavonski Brod, the place to which Brlić-Mažuranić moved after she married, where the house in which she lived, raised her family and worked is still standing in the main square. This is why the project leaders

have not selected data about the writer's life and work as the basis for the branding of Ogulin. In their narrative, Ogulin is not "Ivana's town" – it is the world of her imagination, a dreamplace, a fantasyland.

To experience Ogulin as the Homeland of Fairytales one should take a walk down the fairytale route. As stated by the town's Tourist Board, the route is designed to blend "the beauty and history of the Ogulin region with the fairytales of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić" and to combine "real facts with the imagination of the famous writer".⁵ This scenic route connects twelve points in the town and its surroundings, which are marked with interpretation plans, cut out of plexiglass in the shape of fantastic heroes and villains. The texts displayed on them point at the relationship of the stops with the *topoi* from the fairytales. However, the *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* are located in an unworldly, nameless and mythical landscape. So, to draw a fairytale route within the landscape means to translate abstract images into concrete locations. This is what Ivanka Dimitrijević, a local teacher of Croatian, did in her study entitled *Ogulin in Ivana's Tales of Long Ago* (2009). Her aim was to tie the fairytale motifs with the verifiable topography of Ogulin, with its architecture and environmental features, with local culture and history. In this study, Dimitrijević invites us to take a walk with Ivana, to step a century back, not in order to reconstruct the urban culture of the late 19th century, but "to create a new story – a true one – materialized on the walking paths of our tame little town" (ibid. 27). The town has not become the scene of Brlić-Mažuranić's works at the moment of writing. It represents a showcase of reversed interpretation of literary texts. Ogulin becomes the setting of her fairytales at the moment of reading, driven by motivation to spot familiar places in the texts. The town's literary dimension is thus embodied through the practices of each stroller who follows the footsteps of Brlić-Mažuranić herself or the fantastic creatures from her fairytales, that is, who takes a tour organized by local guides impersonating these historic or imagined characters.

The most prominent arena in which fictional characters are naturalised within concrete landscape is the Ogulin Fairytale Festival. Its main mission is "to celebrate fairytales" by combining the town's tradition and innovation

⁵ <http://www.tz-grada-ogulina.hr/en/discover-ogulin/thematic-routes/the-fairytale-r/> (accessed April 26, 2013).

(Ratković 2006/2007:314). Its duration varies from three days to two weeks in June. Street theatre performances and storytelling are the components that organizers put to the forefront. The festival regularly stages at least one of Brlić Mažuranić's fairytales, as well as the latest production of Croatian and international children's theatres. There is a whole range of additional programmes, such as exhibitions, cartoon projections, lectures, children's books presentations, competitions, a gastronomic offer, etc. The festival events occur on several scenes, some of them indoors, but mostly in the squares, streets, parks and courtyards of Ogulin. During the festival, the fantastic is practically conquering the urban space. Roads are closed for traffic since they are used as festival scenes; cars drive patiently behind the tourist train that connects different spots along the fairytale route; people crawl behind the stages in order to get to their working places. The festival is a context within which the town's fantastic heritage, reinvented according to contemporary needs, is embodied and put in practice. Through it, cultural-policy makers emphasize that it is not sufficient to *think of* Ogulin as a literary place – it is crucial that one *experiences* it as such.

MAKING HISTORY:

THE CASE OF SEL IN GUDBRANDSDALEN

Sel is a small community with about 575 inhabitants situated at the northern end of Gudbrandsdalen (The Gudbrand's valley) in inland Norway. The valley is surrounded by high mountains and national parks and is also known for its medieval farms with brown log houses along the valley's green mountainsides. These old farmhouses on the slopes of high mountains are to many an image of the typical landscape of Norway. Sigrid Undset's own home in Lillehammer, on the southern part of this valley, has been built following the model of such a farm, consisting of two wooden log-houses imported from Gudbrandsdalen (Selberg 2011).

In the first part of Undset's trilogy *Kristin Lavransdaughter*, we are told that Sel – or rather North-Sel – is the place where Kristin spent her childhood and youth. We are told that Kristin's parents moved to Sel in the year of 1306 with a small daughter. The farm where she lived was called Jørundgård and many have tried to find, among the old farms in Sel, the model of Kristin's home. This is how the historian Sverre Mørkhagen

(1995) in his book called *Kristins verden* (*Kristin's world. About the Norwegian Middle Ages at the time of Kristin Lavransdaughter*), describes the landscape and the village of Sel:

“A lot seems timeless and unchanged in this landscape. Even the farms seem rooted in the landscape. Many of the houses, meeting us with their grey-brown weather-beaten timber walls, have a quiet part of their soul turned towards earlier times. Each house is built of timber, which maintains the village's rootedness in earlier history, whether they are relatively new, or several hundreds of years old.” (ibid. 30)

Mørkhagen shares his impression that the place looks like a medieval village even today, which indicates continuity back to Kristin's times. The cultural landscape described here evokes images of medieval times.

Undset's biographers, among many others, state that Undset spent her summers in Sel and surrounding places where she found inspiration for the novel. It is also told that during her childhood she paid visits to neighbouring places (see, for instance, Ørjasæter 1996; Slapgard 2007). Tourist information about Sel and its surroundings often refer to connections among the surroundings of Sel, Undset and her famous novel.⁶ The fictional landscape and the village with its medieval houses and old farms are materialized in Sel; at the same time the landscape inspired the writer. In front of the church in Sel Kristin can also be seen in the form of a statue raised in 1982 as a donation from Undset's publishers, Aschehoug. Squares in front of churches are prominent places for monuments and are almost exclusively reserved for memorials of well-known persons who have done something important for the local and national community. In this case, a national literary heroine has been honoured in such a way but it can be said that she has also done something important for the locality of Sel.

The trilogy *Kristin Lavransdaughter* (*The Wreath, The Wife and The Cross*) was published in the period from 1919 to 1922 and is recognised as Undset's main work. It has been translated into 70 languages, still

⁶ For example, http://www.otta2000.com/SEL_HISTORIELAG/Severdigheter.htm (accessed April 28, 2013).

widely read and constantly appearing in new editions. Undset was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1928, “principally for her powerful descriptions of Northern life during the Middle Ages”.⁷ In the Amazon advertisement for the book (the latest Penguin edition of 2005) it is described as “the masterwork of Norway’s most beloved author – one of the twentieth century’s most prodigious and engaged literary minds”.⁸ Undset and Kristin Lavransdaughter hold a prominent place in the general public’s consciousness and may be considered part of the Norwegian cultural heritage. Undset’s home in Lillehammer, about 200 km south of Sel, was turned into a museum opened to the public in 2007.

In the 1990s the first part of the novel was made into a movie⁹. Sel was the scene of the movie, and a medieval farm was constructed for that purpose. The farm consisted of several houses and a stave church that was later consecrated as a place of worship. After the film was made, the buildings remained and were turned into the Jørundgard Medieval Centre. This movie-set farm is a concretisation of the relations among Sel, Kristin and Undset and has been used in the active branding of the village. A brochure about the place states that the farm is situated in an almost untouched cultural landscape. We are also informed that the medieval – now reconstructed – pilgrim route to Trondheim, which Kristin followed, goes right past the farm. It has been told that up to 15000 visitors have come to visit the place during one summer. Overnight accommodation is also offered, even in Kristin’s own bed, and those who choose to get married in the stave church can spend the night in the bridal loft – in Kristin and her husband Erlend’s bridal bed.¹⁰ The medieval farm that served as a prop during the making of the movie has been turned into a theme park with Kristin and the Middle Ages as the themes. People are invited for a sightseeing of

⁷ http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1928/undset.html?print=1 (accessed May 8, 2013).

⁸ <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Kristin-Lavransdatter-Penguin-Classics-Sigrid/dp/0143039164> (accessed May 8, 2013).

⁹ This movie was seen by two thirds of the Norwegian population, indicating the place both the novel and its writer hold in Norwegian contemporary culture.

¹⁰ <http://www.aktivioslo.no/presentasjon/jorundgard-middelaldersenter/>; <http://www.jorundgard.no/d4Wzn2lrYZ-.5.idium> (accessed May 14, 2013).

the “old” houses, to taste medieval food and try medieval crafting. The theme park materializes the Middle Ages through its connection to Kristin Lavransdaughter, both the novel and its heroine.

In 1999, the Kristin Days festival was established and has taken place every summer since then, with a short break around 2010. The purpose of the festival is to widen the knowledge about the links that Sigrid Undset had with the village of Sel, about the culture of medieval times based on the novel *Kristin Lavransdaughter* and about the medieval farm of Jørundgard. Every year the Kristin Prize – a miniature statue of Kristin made by the same sculptor who made the statue in front of the church – is given to a person who has made a special effort to realize the purpose of the Kristin Days through artistic or scientific work at national or international level. Undset’s biographers or writers who have dedicated their works to the medieval times have, among others, won the prize.

Another important part of the festival is the performance of *Kristinspelet* (the Kristin play). This is a dramatization of the first volume of the novel, *The Wreath*, originally by the dramatist Tormod Skagestad, and has been staged in the theatre. But now it is not performed at the Jorundgard Medieval Centre as a stage play but rather as a historical pageant. At the opening of the performance in the summer of 2004, the chairman of the local council said that their ambition was to turn the play into the most important medieval pageant in Norway. The setting of the medieval farm is now a unique arena for the performance of the Kristin play.¹¹ The play has been slightly transformed after 2011, and now “the success with Kristin in new dramatization will be continued and the summer night in the Sel village with darkness and flaming fires will frame the medieval longing and drama of lived lives”.¹²

The idea of the festival is to promote the village’s medieval past through accentuating its links to the writer and the novel and their relation to medieval times. Sel is the place mentioned in the novel and there is no possibility for other places to claim ownership of this fictional landscape. Moreover, when the director of the film – Liv Ullmann – chose to make the

¹¹ <http://www.aktivioslo.no/presentation/kristindagene/> (accessed April 28, 2013).

¹² <http://www.oigardseter.no/Hva-skjer/kristin-spelet.html> (accessed April 28, 2013).

village and the landscape part of the film, the connection between the novel and the community was even more emphasized.

Performing historical pageants to highlight a fascinating past or past events that occurred at a certain location but have national and even global meaning, is an increasing phenomenon in Norway, just like in other places around the world. In the last two decades, over 400 local spectacles have been staged all over Norway. Historical plays stage local events from a real or imaginary past; the plot can be taken from myths, legends, or real historical events, which are brought to life through a performance. As much as possible, the performance is supposed to coincide with the date of the event. The time and place of the historical play thus make the past events realistic. Historical plays are always staged outdoors, and buildings and landscapes are integrated in the action: it is often stressed that the surroundings are the same as they were at the time of the historical characters and events, which helps to create continuity between past and present. Such plays are performed on historic ground, but the ritual repetition of a historical play can also *create* a historical foundation, as is the case with the Kristin play. The plays have a ritual character, they are repeated at the same time and in the same place, and the spectators – or, should we say, participants – often come back again and again (e. g. Nygaard s. a.; Gran 1997). “Historical plays lie somewhere between an identity-creating ritual and an aesthetic theatrical performance”, writes theatre scholar Anne-Britt Gran, “they operate with an understanding that is both ritual and theatrical aesthetics [...] they are ritual for the initiated and theatre for the uninitiated” (1999). Another characteristic of the plays is that they are staged in collaboration between professionals and amateurs. The plays are supposed to be rooted in local and regional cultural life, with participants from the region itself. In the Kristin play, 100 persons take part, 80 of them local amateurs. The professionals, often in leading roles, ensure artistic quality while the local amateurs guarantee local connection and hence the play seems realistic and authentic (*ibid.*). Often old and “authentic” tools or weapons are part of the equipment. Living animals are not unusual – the saying goes that there is no historical play without a horse and a good horseman.

The Kristin play satisfies all the requirements of a historical play, except for one: the plot comes from a historical *novel*. The characters in

the play are literary, not historical figures. Moreover, the place where it is performed is a former movie set, built for the shooting of the film version of the fictional story. But the plot from the Middle Ages, the background looking like a real medieval farm, and the conventions of historical plays together create a local past that can be experienced as authentic. As such, the *Kristin* play fulfills the expectations of the audience to witness historical events. Figures from a literary universe, recreated in the framework of a historical pageant, thus become historical persons. The performance bestows an aura of past on the district. Historical plays are narratives and interpretations of past events on the site; they are, thus, places of memory that make us remember the past. In the case of Sel, however, a play based on a novel can also *create* the past. The transformation of the novel into a historical play turns the place into a medieval site, and *Kristin*, the heroine of the novel, becomes part of the social memory of the local community. Sel, through its reputation as a literary place, both as the source of inspiration for the great novelist and the homeplace of her most famous heroine, creates an interesting past for itself which, through the filter and conventions of a historical play, turns the novel into reality.

The novel is in many ways realistic. In her book, Undset herself defines the concrete time and place of the happening. This cannot be argued. She has also been praised for the way her historical and ethnological knowledge finds expression in the medieval novels (see, for instance, Berguson 2005; Bliksrud 1997; Mørkhagen 1995; Ystad 1982). Claudia Berguson states that *Kristin Lavransdaughter* presents the medieval landscape and history with such accuracy that the trilogy has gained its place in public sentiment as a key source of Norwegian origins, and she refers to the historian of ideas, Trond Berg Eriksen (1997), who writes that “in the Norwegian public sphere the memory of life in Norway’s age of greatness is almost exclusively kept alive through the works of Sigrid Undset” (Berguson 2005:344). It is therefore not controversial that the novel, through its transformation into a historical play, is perceived as a source of information on the local past. And it is not just the local past, as Berg Eriksen states above. The time, the 1300s, considered “Norway’s age of greatness”, is located in Sel through the connection of the place and Undset, thus defining the community as part of the national heritage. The village brands itself by claiming continuity back to what is now considered an important time in national history. The

village of the novel is “interacting with and blended into real-life local community and actually changing the identity of the actual place” (Sandvik 2010:142). Undset’s narrative is being interwoven with narratives of the place itself. The literary universe is moved to a genre that is associated with the interpretation of bygone local and national events and so a locality is created through aesthetic presentation and ritual experience.

FROM DIFFERENCES TO COMMON GROUNDS

These case studies show that here we are dealing with rather different examples of literary places. They have been created in two distant contexts and are driven by the diverse motivations of decision makers and sponsors; they encompass distinct types of performances and appeal to different target groups. As literary places, the two sites differ when it comes to what kind of literary heritage they chose to put to the forefront and in what ways. Ogulin is the birthplace of the writer herself, while Sel is the homeplace of a literary heroine. Through the Fairytale Festival, Ogulin celebrates the fantastic world created by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, while, during the Kristin Days, Sel is localizing a historical period of national importance.

However, there are also some intriguing analogies that have prompted us to analyze these two places along the same lines, hoping to be able to grasp some characteristic features of the placemaking process through such a comparison. Analogies can be seen if we look at the authors and their writing: Brlić-Mažuranić and Undset are both female writers who lived and worked in the same period and are known internationally. Their stories have been translated in many languages and also appear in other media (film, cartoons, theatre plays), so that they constantly find new ways of communicating with heterogeneous audiences. In both cases, the writers represent part of their countries’ literary heritage, exhibiting in their works a strong national feeling. It is not irrelevant to state that part of the literary elite of that time adopted a highbrow attitude towards the genres these writers were experimenting with by distinguishing between fairytales and historical novels on the one hand and “real literature” on the other.

However, what provides the most fruitful insight into the processes we are interested in are the places themselves, the narratives and practices

from which diverse experiences of a certain place are derived. Ogulin and Sel do not function as places to visit if you want to gain knowledge about the hard facts of the writers' lives. But, as promoted by the initiators of place branding in both cases, they are the places to visit if you want to see and experience what inspired the authors for their work. They are places incorporated in the fictional worlds of their writings.

Above all, the branding of these two literary places demonstrates the significance of *narratives* in placemaking. Such place narratives are constantly being produced, thereby re-shaping and re-evaluating ideas about the place, even the place itself. "Sites themselves are not passive", writes anthropologist Edward M. Bruner (2005:12), "they are given meaning and are constituted by the narratives that envelope them". But such place narratives are never constructed out of nothing. There must be some links to the landscape, to past events, be they of mythological or historical character, or to real people. In this case, the narratives are familiar and are about fictional, although well-known persons living in fictive or mythological pasts, but at the same time in realistic surroundings that can be identified in the real present. Certain details and descriptions in the stories can be used to brand the place and highlight aspects of the materiality and the past for contemporary needs. In these two cases, the "branders" have chosen, and in some ways claimed, ownership of already existing, well-known and outstanding narratives. They have turned the places linked to the writers and their texts into the homeland of national literary heritage. The narratives are not invented, but selected to brand the place and having been already told and being familiar, they infuse the places with meaning and significance at many levels. And even if the stories are fictive, their relation to the place cannot be questioned.

The usage of *landscape*, or rather the connection created between concrete landscapes and the writers' imaginary geography, is a valuable asset in today's placemaking. As demonstrated in the descriptions of Ogulin and Sel, the landscape can have many layers, and actualizing the fictional universe in the landscape leads to creating, or bringing to prominence, one of its cultural dimensions, based on people's reinterpretations of literary texts. The role that the landscape plays in the formation of a literary place reflects the need for verifiable geography. To follow the footsteps of writers

or their fictive characters, a visitor has to know which way those footsteps went and what scenes they met on their way. Naturalising Undset's fictions to the particular landscape is a somewhat less contestable errand, although not less complex. The author herself presents Sel as the scene of her novel. Her descriptions are realistic, which motivates people to trace specific literary motifs in the concrete surroundings. The farm constructed for the movie screening is of great help in that process: it is no longer a movie-set farm from the 1990s, it takes on age and is placed in the same timeless landscape that both Undset and her heroine once saw. On the other hand, in Brlić-Mažuranić's fairytales we are faced with an unnamed, mystical landscape that emerges from the "the Slavic soil and air, from the white vapours of Slavic waters and seas", glimpses of which one may trace in each territory occupied by "the Slavic tribe" (Brlić-Mažuranić 1964:188). Therefore, to turn the Ogulin area into the Homeland of Fairytales means to mark (by means of interpretation plans, guided tours, tourist brochures, etc.) firm and specific spots related to her fairytales in the landscape. Furthermore, to make the landscape literary in both cases means to populate it with fictional personages and events. The landscape serves as a scene where you can meet imagined characters in person. However, when it comes to placemaking, landscape is far more than just a stage. It is depicted as an active agent, as a formative environment, a source of creative energy fully exploited by the writers.

Through the usage of landscape, *continuity* is created between the authors' times, the times of the narratives, and the contemporary era: as stated by local officials, present-day visitors can admire the same views Brlić-Mažuranić or Undset used to admire. And perhaps they can be inspired by the landscape in a similar manner. In Ogulin and Sel continuity is a spatial as well as a temporal category. Both placemaking processes rely heavily on images of the past. Continuity between the present and the past is created by evocations of selected historical fragments: of the period in which the literary texts were produced, but also of the times referred to in the literary texts. The continuity created in Sel goes back to medieval times; in Ogulin the past is more of a mythological character. But, although the fantastic dimension of Brlić-Mažuranić's *times of long ago* is more obvious, we may raise the question: are these pasts so different? Analysts of Undset's work have concluded that, in spite of the realistic details and

all her knowledge about medieval times, the past she was writing about is also a construction of a fictional universe filled with values she missed in her own times (cf. Bliksrud 1997). So, in both cases we are dealing with imaginary pasts that reflect the interests and intentions of the authors at the time of writing, and, by being read, were meant to meet the needs of their contemporaries. The usage of fictional pasts in branding projects is similar: the past we are faced with on festival scenes and invited to in Ogulin and Sel is *the past re-created for contemporary needs*. In these cases, the traditionalization of local culture and the reconstruction of fascinating pasts have been used to brand the places to meet economic needs, but they are also an integral part of local identity processes. Thus, history does indeed become a cultural playground (Hjemdahl 2002).

Cultural practices, that is, *festivals* in these concrete case studies, play a significant role in turning fiction into reality. During performances, the presence of Kristin Lavransdaughter or one of Brlić-Mažuranić's giants in the landscape is concrete and embodied, they occupy the same space as any other festival participant. Festivals and festival places are deeply intertwined; festivals have the power to attach new meanings to their locations (cf. Kelemen 2012). They are expected to and in many ways do democratize a variety of cultural expressions, from literature to food. From this perspective, they can be seen in relationship with literary tourism, which is also defined as a mechanism that exposes the intimate world of a writer, previously exclusive and approachable only to the literary elite, to the public eye. As pointed out by Watson, in academic discourse, literary tourism has been approached as a kind of embarrassment, since it brings together the high-brow and self-sufficient studies of texts with activities perceived as trivial, such as immersing oneself in mass tourism and popular culture (2006:6; 2009:5). The same can be said of festivals, which many scholars have found guilty of "staged authenticity", while "real authenticity" simultaneously happens backstage (MacCannell 1973) But to visitors of literary and festival places these arenas are not trivial at all; on the contrary, being in the landscape and participating in events invested with the writer's presence can be experienced as meaningful and authentic¹³ (Reksten 2008).

¹³ Authenticity in festivals is a complex and often debated issue, and the scope of this article does not allow us to analyze it in greater details. For a thorough discussion on this topic see Kelemen and Škrbić Alempijević 2012:64–78.

So, when people in Sel use “medieval tools”, eat “medieval food”, or even spend a wedding night in the bridal bed of Kristin and her beloved Erlend, for them the world of Undset’s novel is materialized and real. The same goes for Ogulin: by joining fairy storytelling circles or getting a driving license for their own witches’ brooms, Brlić-Mažuranić’s magical creatures and plots are embodied in the practices of festival participants.

Can these ways of creating localities also provide visitors with a *reason* to visit a place, a reason that is more than just “touristic”? Visiting a place for reasons connected to knowledge about, and preferences for writers and their work, wanting to experience the fictive world in new ways or to walk in their footsteps are ways to be – or feel – individual in a tourist culture. Even tourist metropolises like Paris and Rome¹⁴ can be visited in that way. Walking in the footsteps of famous persons or literary figures through these cities can make a trip more suited to individual needs, and make the visitors “different” from thousands of others strolling the same streets. That brings us to the conclusion that authenticity is not essentially connected to objects, places and landscapes; it depends on how people experience them.

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¹⁴ For instance, Rome can be visited in Undset’s footsteps (Selberg 2010), Paris in *Da Vinci’s code*, etc.

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KAKO FIKCIJU PRETVORITI U STVARNOST: STVARANJE DVAJU MJESTA U KNJIŽEVNOJ GEOGRAFIJI

Autorice raspravljaju o kreiranju književnih mjesta, zasnovanih na ljudskim predodžbama o lokalitetima koje proizlaze iz njihovih veza s piscima i književnim tekstovima. Dvije studije slučaja predstavljaju temelj za analizu: Ogulin u Hrvatskoj, rodno mjesto glasovite autorice bajki Ivane Brlić-Mažuranić, te Sel u Norveškoj, mjesto u kojem je mladost provela Kristina, Lavransova kći, junakinja istoimenog povijesnog romana spisateljice Sigrid Undset. U oba je primjera riječ o materijalizaciji fiktivnih svjetova tih književnica unutar konkretnih lokaliteta. Premda se konstruiraju u različitim kontekstima, ta književna mjesta pokazuju i zajedničke odrednice koje nam pružaju dodatan uvid u procese stvaranja mjesta.

Ključne riječi: književno mjesto, književna geografija, festivali, Ogulin, Sel, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Sigrid Undset