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Legend-tripping in spooky spaces: ghost tourism and infrastructures of enchantment

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Abstract. This paper investigates the increasingly popular practice of ghost tourism comprising urban ghost tours and organised paranormal investigations. Set in the context of modern forms of enchantment, wherein audiences engage in a knowing and reflexive sense of 'delight without delusion', the paper explores the various infrastructures, (discursive, affective, and material) that engender a sense of supernatural possibility. I argue that practices of legend-telling, legend-tripping, ostension, and play produce affective assemblages of supposition and wonder that momentarily transform space into something charged with the strange and anomalous. This infrastructure relies on the engineering of dispositions that are both shaped on and brought to the tourist event itself. As such, those with deeply held beliefs in ghosts and the afterlife, as well as those for whom the infrastructures fail to generate wonder, place limits on the artifice of modern enchantment. The paper uses examples from participant observation on ten ghost tours across the UK, an overnight vigil in a Tudor mansion, and interviews with tour guides.

Introduction

As a way of understanding the multiplicity of space and place, and how differently formed revenants continually disturb the present, the spectral and notions of haunting have become increasingly popular in the social sciences and humanities in recent years (Bell, 1997; Buse and Stott, 1999; Dixon, 2007; Edensor, 2005; Gordon, 1997; Holloway and Kneale, 2008; Luckhurst, 2002; Maddern and Adey, 2008; Pile, 2005; 2006; Wylie, 2007). These analyses explore instances wherein the habitual and the seeming mundanity of the everyday becomes marvellous, strange, and uncanny, and where quotidian assurances tremor with enchantment and indeterminacy. This paper explores one arena through which this spectrality is produced, performed, and consumed, namely ghost tourism. This tourist industry engineers—through a relatively consistent performative infrastructure involving materialities, styles of legend-telling, and practices of ostension and play—affective charges of possibility and speculation. It is argued that ghost tourism enacts a sense of possibility and lends geographies an enchanted register through allowing the unknown and 'what if?' to transform the commonplace.

In what follows I examine how modern forms of enchantment are engineered. To this end I conducted participant observation on ten ghost walks in UK cities (comprising three in York, two in Edinburgh and Douglas on the Isle of Man, and one each in Manchester, Nottingham, and Oxford), semistructured interviews with five tour guides, and an overnight ghost hunt vigil. I aim to explore the ways in which ghost walks and ghost hunting are performed and some of the kinds of practice that order and are constituted in these performances. In particular, I investigate how sensations of wonder and delight are achieved and how affective charges of enchantment are given consistency. I begin in section 1 by describing and situating the ghost tourism industry. In section 2 I focus on ghost tourism as a contemporary variation of legend-tripping and the various ways in which enchantment is (sometimes precariously) engendered.

In section 3 I attend further to the affective charges and intensities involved in the ostension and play of ghost tourism and suggest ways in which these registers are moulded and sometimes challenged.

Situating ghost tourism

The commercial exploitation of ghosts is nothing necessarily new. For example, Davies (2007) records how historically it was common for crowds to gather at sites of alleged haunting and for local businesses to reap the rewards. Thus, he cites Horace Walpole's observation that the famous Cock Lane ghost of 1762 allowed "all the taverns and alehouses in the neighbourhood [to] make fortunes" (page 63). Inglis and Holmes (2003) also explore the 18th-century and 19th-century upper-class fascination with Scotland as a repository of ghosts and the supernatural. The widespread alleged haunting of pubs and inns in the UK has allowed many proprietors to market the opportunity to spend a spooky night in their establishment. However, Davies (2007) reveals that there are relatively few examples of the commercial marketing of haunted sites before the 20th century. Indeed, recently there has been a shift in how places and communities deal with alleged apparitions—in that ghost tourism is "a reversal of the historic[a1] position where communities desired to be rid of their spirits" to one whereby "the ghost is a desirable lodger rather than an unwelcome guest" (Davies, 2007, page 64). This has led places such as Edinburgh, Chester, and Derby to seek the title of 'most haunted city in the UK'. Yet York, with more than 504 recorded hauntings, often claims the crown with the (now seemingly defunct) Ghost Research Foundation International naming it the most haunted city in Europe in 2002 (BBC News, 2002). The honour of most haunted village in the UK is often awarded to Pluckley in Kent, with twelve to fourteen resident ghosts.(1)

There are at least three key elements to contemporary ghost tourism. First are the hotels that seek guests through claiming to be haunted. For example, Wills lists the top-ten haunted houses where one should not "expect a quiet night's sleep" (2007, page 1). A number of travel companies have sprung up offering lists of and breaks in haunted locations, including Haunting Breaks and The Haunted Hotel Guide. Second are the companies that offer the tourist the chance to go ghost hunting. No doubt drawing on the popularity of Living TV's *Most Haunted* and its ghost hunting exploits (which regularly gets viewing figures of 1 – 2 million) and representing a commercialisation of paranormal investigation undertaken by a plethora of 'amateur' groups throughout the UK, these companies allow visitors to enact paranormal investigations using group vigils, Ouija boards, séances, and different technologies (such as meters that measure electromagnetic frequencies) in the presence of mediums and psychics. Companies such as The Haunted Hotel Guide offer both normal breaks and special 'weekend haunts' wherein these spooky expeditions can be performed. Other firms such as Haunted Happenings, Paranormal Tours, and Eerie Evenings focus on the investigation itself with participants required to stay awake all night. The ghost hunt I undertook was organised by one of the longer established companies, Fright Nights.(2)

The third aspect of ghost tourism is ghost tours or ghost walks. These involve organised walks around cities and towns during which one takes in the sites of alleged hauntings, listens to ghost stories, and in some cases (such as Edinburgh) watches actors perform the narratives behind the spooky happenings. These tours have become

(1) In 2009 the parish council for the village officially cancelled all Halloween events after residents became "fed up of being invaded by hundreds of ghost-hunting revellers, causing vandalism and traffic chaos" (*The Daily Telegraph* 2009).

(2) Most of the larger companies offer private investigations for groups and businesses, thus tapping into the profitable sphere of corporate tourism and events.

an international phenomenon and can be found in most major cities in the US, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. In the US, Savannah, Georgia, is often said to host the most tours (Savannah Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2008; see Gentry, 2007; Glanton, 2007). In the UK approximately twenty-eight UK cities and towns host ghost tours, with York having at least four regular tours and Edinburgh boasting four major tour companies each running two to five walks. It is difficult to provide accurate numbers of people going on these tours. However, in a survey of 7051 visitors between 2005 and 2008, 3656 people 'spent time in York in the evening' (52%). Of these, nearly 8% (on average) went on a ghost walk (Visit York, 2008). One tour guide in York estimated that 10 000 to 15 000 came on his walk in 2008. Further evidence of popularity can be found in their frequency (many run on a nightly basis all year round), the amount of visitors on specific tours (with numbers of 200 not uncommon on Halloween), and the relatively intense rivalry between the tours in the same city. As one tour guide put it to me, "There's a lot of ghost wars out there."

There are a number of other pertinent trends and contexts in and through which the development of ghost tourism must be understood. First, despite having a popularity with some longevity (see Briggs, 1977; Holloway and Kneale, 2008; Kneale, 2006; Owen, 2004; Warner, 2006), fascination with ghost stories, paranormal investigations, and the supernatural seems to have had resurgence of late. Indeed, a recent survey of 2000 people found that 39% believe in ghosts (Theos, 2008). Furthermore, interest in ghosts is evidenced in the popular media: the aforementioned *Most Haunted* (Living TV, 2002 onwards) is approaching its 13th series, and its spin-offs *Most Haunted Live* (Living TV, 2002) and *Derek Acorah's Ghost Towns* (Living TV, 2005 – 06) are joining the ranks of similar shows such as *Dead Famous* (Living TV, 2004 – 06), *Ghost Hunting with ...* (ITV2, 2006 – 08), and *Fear* (MTV, 2000) in this growth of broadcasting the ghostly. These investigative shows are in turn part of a broader sustained series of drama programming that deals with ghosts and the spirits of the dead, including *Afterlife* (ITV, 2005 – 06), *Sea of Souls* (BBC1, 2004 – 07) and BBC4's revival of the Christmas ghost story with adaptations of M R James's, *A View from a Hill* (BBC4, 2005), *Number 13* (BBC4, 2006), and *The Crooked House* (BBC4, 2008). In terms of film, Hollywood has in recent years turned back to the supernatural horror genre particularly after the success of *The Blair Witch Project* (USA 1999) through Western remakes of South and East Asian supernatural films such as *Ring* (Japan 1998; USA 2002) and *The Eye* (Hong Kong 2002; USA 2008).

The second context for ghost tourism is that of dark tourism, or thanotourism, hence the commodification of, travel to, and experiencing of sites and places associated with death, dying, and disaster (Foley and Lennon, 1996; Lennon and Foley, 1999; 2000; Sharpley and Stone, 2009; Stone, 2006; Stone and Sharpley, 2008). Much of the literature on this kind of tourism concerns different typologies of attractions and travel activities, or the various 'shades' of dark tourism along a spectrum (Stone, 2006; Strange and Kempa, 2003).[3] Aligned with this wider development in the tourist industry and with echoes of Dracula Tourism (Light, 2007), ghost tourism tends towards the 'lighter' end of the dark tourism spectrum, with entertainment being a key orientation, especially for ghost tours. Yet, as we shall see, and as Gentry (2007) points out, this does not preclude moments of sombre reflection and genuine belief and

[3] For example, Seaton (1996) suggests five types of dark tourism, including travel to: witness public enactments of death (less common in recent centuries in the West); sites of mass or individual death (for example, battlefields, Ground Zero, or sites of assassination); sites of internment or memorials (for example, mass graveyards); sites of symbolic representations of death (at unconnected sites); or sites of simulation or reenactment of death (see Crang, 1996).

attempts at providing historically accurate portrayals of haunted activity, all of which are usually associated with the 'darkest' form of dark tourism.[4]

The third, wider context for ghost tourism is the challenge it represents to the so-called disenchantment thesis. Broadly conceived, this thesis takes it as axiomatic "that wonders and marvels have been demystified by science, spirituality has been supplanted by secularism, spontaneity has been replaced by bureaucratization, and the imagination has been subordinated to instrumental reason" (Saler, 2006, page 692).

Therefore, for some commentators, belief in ghosts and the supernatural would be erased with modernisation and replaced by rationality and materialism. For others this belief would be relegated to the position of a residual Other or at least discursively positioned and marginalised to 'primitive' and nonmetropolitan spaces. As such, modernity's disenchantment is enacted through, as Saler (2006, page 696) argues, the 'binary' approach, in which ghosts, the occult, and magic do not disappear completely but are "marginalized in various ways as residual phenomena both subordinate to and explicable by modernity's rational and secular tenets", and the 'dialectical' approach of Marxism (for example, Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002) in which modernisation is an ideology of enchantment in itself, and popular culture a delusion to be uncovered as false consciousness.

Yet the disenchantment thesis has been found to be wanting in a number of significant ways, not least because of the critical limitations placed (under a putative postmodernity) on science and rationalism's dominance. Indeed, what Saler calls 'antinomial' accounts—wherein magic and science, the occult and rationality exist in multiple and contradictory relations to one another, and where such oppositions are seen as inherent to modernity—have taken hold. As McEwan puts it (2008, page 30):

> "Enchantment can be a state in which ghosts, spirits, and spectres exist within a melange of other marvels, including magic, myth, monsters, witchcraft, sorcery, voodoo, vampires, and zombies ... . Such marvels are no longer thought to have been exorcised by the rational and secular processes of modernity; far from being extraneous to modernity, they are intrinsic to what are increasingly recognised as thoroughly enchanted modernities."

The line between disenchantment and enchantment has thus become increasingly blurred. Modernity produces its own enchantments through, for example, the apparent 'wonders' of science (see Bennett, 2001); the persistence of the occult and belief in the supernatural, as with 19th-century spiritualism and mesmerism (see Holloway, 2006; Oppenheim, 1985; Winter, 1998); and the coexistence of magic, urbanism, and globalisation (Pile, 2005; 2006), all of which reveal the constant tension between and interrelation of magic and modernity and the magic of modernity itself (Pels, 2003). Furthermore, the widespread belief in occult forces and the alarming rate of accusations of witchcraft in Africa point to the disenchantment thesis being at odds with experiences in nonmetropolitan, postcolonial contexts (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993; Geschiere, 1998; McEwan, 2008).

The complication of the disenchantment thesis has given rise to what have been called 'modern enchantments'. In particular, Saler [via the work of During (2002) on conjuring and stage magic] discusses how "the discourse of disenchantment itself fostered secular and rational enchantments aimed at the imagination—and at how the imagination itself has become a central source of modern enchantment" (2006, page 713). These modern enchantments charm and conjure a sense of imaginative wonder, yet do so

[4] Gentry (2007) highlights how ghost tourism often involves movement through public space. As we shall see, and as Wilbert and Hansen (2009) have explored in terms of Jack the Ripper tours in the East End of London, this gives rise to strange juxtapositions where everyday geographies and nontourist populations coincide with the performance of tourism.

with a degree of self-reflexivity and ironic distance producing 'magic assemblages' "that delight one's reason and imagination without deluding them" (Saler, 2006, page 713). Here an awareness of contingent and provisional meaning allows enchantment to flourish in modernity: one is entertained and thrilled through being given a chance to wonder and revel in a mixture of indeterminate meaning and possibility. It is precisely in the context of these modern enchantments that this paper is placed. I begin the next section with an example of a ghost tour.

Legend-tripping and enchantment

The Shambles, the famous Medieval Street in the centre of York, is the appropriate meeting place for The Ghost Hunt of York. Around seventy adults and half a dozen children gather. A hand bell rings, and the guide, resplendent in Victorian cape and top hat, walks slowly down the street. We are led through darkened alleyways into courtyards not visible from the street and down unfamiliar lanes. The first apparent performative register of the ghost walk emerges through a series of multiple and intersecting rhythms that lend a sense of emergent temporal order to the tour (Edensor and Holloway, 2008): there is the steady and familiar pace of walking, perhaps slowed somewhat by the sheer number of people on the tour and the rhythms of a typical Saturday night—the rush of revellers hastily making their way to pubs and clubs, the interruption of a car stereo blasting techno with its own tempo. Yet, the rhythmic particularities of the ghost tour emerge through the pauses, the stops, and the stillness as the location is reached and the ghost story is told—like the following at Stonegate, in York:

"The story concerns a tiny stone house and the ghost of a small child. The ghost is often seen at this tiny window with tears in her eyes and scratching at the glass. The house has come to be known as the plague house and the story goes back to 1604. The family that lived there were scared of catching the plague. They would stay inside as much as they possibly could. They had a small daughter who they sent out to the market for provisions. One night, when her mother was tucking the child into bed, she noticed the daughter had developed large...black...boils ... underneath her arms.

She said nothing to the child except 'good night'. But that night, as she left her bedroom, she locked the door behind her and she went down to her husband and together they decided to leave their home—to leave York and to leave behind their only child. And that is what they did. But before they left, they painted a large red cross on the door to warn people that the building was infected. Well no doubt, when the child awoke the next morning she'd have gone to her bedroom door, but she would have found it...locked. And no doubt she would have called out to her mother, but there would have been...no...answer. And surely she would have gone to the tiny window to try and attract the attention of passers-by? We can be sure many people did see her, but they would also have seen the large red cross on the door and would not have dared to enter. For the poor child had been deserted by her parents, left a prisoner in her own bedroom and left to die in pain and all alone.

She is one of York's most frequently seen ghosts—seen up to ten times a year. Sometimes during the day, sometimes at night, people will see a small child with blond hair crying and scratching at the tiny window. And of course nowadays people will go to the front of the house, they will knock on the door and they will say 'Don't you know there is something wrong with your child?' But of course the people who live there now just say...'I'm sorry...but we have...no... children'."

Stories, such as this, are central to the performative make-up of ghost tours. In addition to the pacing of the tour are the recognisable rhythms of the stories told: the historical and circumstantial detail is rushed, and the mysterious is lingered upon, with the pace quickening again when the climax of the story is reached. Performative consistency also emerges through familiar tropes of content involving, for example, restless spirits somehow wronged in life or revenants with messages to pass onto the living (Davies, 2007). Here the ghost stories can be aligned with legends and legend-telling in general (see Hall, 1973, page 167). Yet, as Ellis asserts, "if all is content and there is no art of legend telling, then the thing as verbalized is nothing in particular" (2003, page 10). As such, the rhythm and pacing are combined with stylistic markers, in particular the forcible intonation of the story's climax or sudden rises in volume, to produce a seemingly generic form of ghost story performance (Bakhtin, 1986).

The performative force of legend-telling is achieved through style, content, and pacing. Furthermore, these are dialogical events where teller and listener are produced and drawn into relation and where aesthetic expectations in the audience, derived through intersemiotic and intertextual translation, are drawn upon and sustained. The tale is thus not the product of one single stage of performance but of multiple and resonating (mediated) sites in which "cultural memories are played out, thereby shaping meaning-making processes at play within these walks" (Wilbert and Hansen, 2009, page 197). Participants, as they wander between the stops, discuss horror films or supernatural novels they have read and watched, emphasising the mediated legend and its telling. Often audience expectations remain implicit—although on some tours, in expressing disappointment with the walks, tourists reveal the expectation of entertainment value. Indeed, tour guides can be explicit about how they draw upon audience expectations and how they reproduce generic ghost-storytelling markers: discussing the exuberant and knowing exaggeration of his storytelling style, one guide remarked to me, "Well everybody loves a bit of hamminess don't they?"

Arguably, ghost tourism has the capacity to successfully disorientate and open up a sense of the possibilities of the city (see Jansson and Lagerkvist, 2009). For example, in York our orientation in the daytime, and on previous visits to the city, becomes something unfamiliar as we traverse the artificially, partially lit streets and alleyways at night. We become disorientated, our sense of direction is transformed, and once combined with the tales of the spectral, movement is coloured with a sense of the extraordinary and indeterminate. Further, a differentiated temporality emerges: the past and history are brought to bear on the sites visited, and a narrative and heritage of the strange is performed. As Powell has it: "The past impregnates the present in a haunting which seeks to block the flow of present into future ... time loops back and refuses to progress as earlier periods insist on their equal, or superior, validity to the present era" (2005, page 11). Yet this ordering of possibility is a precarious endeavour, as the familiarity of a night out in a city, plus the often banal practices of being a tourist, threatens to overwhelm inventive ghostly speculation (Edensor, 2007). This uncertainty was underlined in Douglas when we passed a patron smoking outside a pub shouting, "There are no ghosts on the Isle of Man. You're all being conned again", or in Manchester where a group of teenagers on bicycles taunt and question the guide between stops.

Importantly, the materiality of the buildings and architecture is allowed to bring forth imaginative conjecture. At Stonegate in York we strain to see the ghost of the small girl at the window (see figure 1). No ghost appears. If it did, on that cold January night, our normalised and habitual worlds would have been shaken and overturned. The materiality literally frames the opportunity for supposition offering the tourists a site to wonder at, a site to gaze at in hope for the extraordinary to make itself known.

Figure 1. Haunted window? Stonegate, York (source: author's photograph).

The window, and the ghost story that animates it, acts as a literal and discursive frame that produces a sense of spectral possibility—a sense that the window *could* reveal the supernatural. That the ghost has appeared before produces a feeling of unease mixed with excited speculation as the empty window orders the lure of possibility.

Ghost tours are performed in a way that situates knowledge and understanding as interstitial. The common use of doorways, openings to alleyways (particularly in Douglas and Manchester), and windows as storytelling locations adds an architectural emphasis to the focus on thresholds between worlds (Kneale, 2006). This 'what if?' quality resounds with questions of 'what lies beyond?', and a register of possibility allows matter to speak in diversely imaginative ways and with creative inquisition. The ghost story thus has the capacity to present supernatural possibility. Here the story narrative should be read less for its representational qualities and more for what the tale enacts, how it allows space to show up and how it assembles a series of relations that coordinate the ghost tour (Carter and McCormack, 2006): as one guide declares, "I do the stories as if I'm scared by them myself. So hopefully people will empathise with me and think 'Blimey, he's scared maybe I ought to be scared as well.' "

Yet this is not a simple discursive layering of the possible supernatural upon the inactive stone of buildings or the material frames of doorways. Instead, one can suggest that the buildings, the stone, and the doorways act back upon the participants. In other words, materiality comes with its own affordance and capacities that contribute to the ordering of the tour. As Anderson and Wylie (2009) point out, matter

and materiality need to be rethought as multiple resonating fields of activity: this is realised on ghost tours through the active affordance and constitutive role of matter in ordering the emergent force of the possible supernatural. As such, architectural materialities are incorporated into and, in a sense, incorporate the tour as an assemblage of the possible: they gather a sense of possibility as much as they are gathered as sources of possibility through narrative production.

Ghost tours, then, are assemblages which seek to engender the *possibility* that the urban realm is haunted and that the dead can appear to the living. As Koven puts it, "entertaining 'the possible', even if ultimately discounted, is part and parcel of legend-telling" (2007, page 195), or as one guide expressed, "I like to think I'm the gatekeeper, if you like, to the unknown." Participants are invited to question the reality of the spectral, and as such ghost tours perform a "communal exploration of the boundaries of reality" (Ellis, 2003, page 106). This emphasis on possibility arguably overrides a simple dichotomy of belief or disbelief. Although many tour guides emphasise the reliability and 'authenticity' of their stories, generally it seems veracity is secondary to possibility, as the demarcation of reality and unreality is explored and questioned: what we think we know and what we ought to know is injected with a sense of unpredictability and potential irrationality. As two guides observed: "We're not here to say if ghosts exist or not. It's down to you as individuals to make your own mind up ... We're just saying open your mind up and just have a listen to these stories", and "We're raising awareness of possibilities. We hope to stimulate questions as to whether ghosts exist and if so what does it mean."

Another example: in the failing light of dusk, approximately twenty ghost tourists gather in the graveyard of St George's church (completed 1781) in Douglas on the Isle of Man. The guide, in frock coat and tricorne, stands next to a plain crucifix headstone bearing the words 'Cholera 1832–33' which commemorates the victims of the epidemics that hit the island, many of whom lie under the churchyard (see figure 2). He points to a renovated building opposite the graveyard and tells of an IT worker who, leaning out of the window one night to enjoy a cigarette, sees the figure of a woman dressed in a black cloak float towards the grave and vanish. The figure is potentially that of Eleanor Brennan who died in 1859 and dedicated her life to the sick in Douglas particularly during the epidemics. The story ends with an extended pause inviting the participants to share inquisitive glances and comments as to the likelihood of the events and the nature of the ghostly figure seen. We move on from the graveyard at pace. One tourist stays to take a quick photograph of the area as the group moves on. Catching up with the rest of the group, he claims to have captured an anomalous shape on the image—we strain to see the dark outline on the camera's LCD image viewer, and the possibility that something is there is shared. Here the tale, the gravestones, and the apparent anomalous image are active in the invitation of speculation: they allow "us to ask the question, but [they are] shy to give the answer" (Ellis, 2003, page 72). The event, the narrative, the photograph, and the materialities are, as Lindahl (2005, page 179) puts it, "straining for wholeness".

This ordering of possibility can be seen as a mode of enchantment. In Bennett's (2001, page 111) words, enchantment "consists of a mixed bodily state of joy and disturbance, a transitory sensuous condition dense and intense enough to stop you in your tracks and toss you onto a new terrain and to move you from the actual world to its virtual possibilities". As such, enchantment occurs where we are simultaneously excited and made to feel uneasy as the world we know, the mundane world in which we live, is suspended and affects us in unforeseen ways. Enchantment is often a mix, on the one hand, of excitement, awe, and wonder and, on the other, of unease, dislocation, and unpredictability. For Schneider (1993, page 3), enchantment is "the excitement

Figure 2. Cholera headstone. St. George's Church, Douglas, Isle of Man (source: author's photograph).

[that] comes from being lifted out of our mundane existence and situated on the verge of a new understanding of our world" and the "unease [that] derives from the assault upon our prior sense of how the world works—and thus upon our practical competence in dealing with it". However, enchantment is not always some seismic interruption of the ordinary; it depends in part on the performance of a "state of openness" to dislocation (Bennett, 2001, page 131). As we saw above, modern enchantment encompasses a knowing revelry in the indeterminacy of meaning accompanied by a reflective self-awareness of delusion and make-believe. On these ghost tours this modern mode of enchantment is evidenced through the palpable willingness and expectation to be enchanted—a simultaneous opening up to possibility and indeterminacy. This conscious mood *for* and *of* enchantment has a capacity to affect those involved and is an acute part of the performative make-up of the space. Indeed, this collective disposition becomes a contagious modality of consumption as the events proceed: often downright cynicism and rational commitment to debunking gives way to a willing and deliberate suspension of disbelief. Through a readiness for the unknown, tourists and participants enact a modern form of enchantment by becoming "willing collaborators in unreality" (Ellis, 1981, page 496). Yet this too is a precarious ordering that guides are aware of with one describing how "if people are really sceptical about it and are determined not to have fun then it's a bit of a pain."

In Oxford our guide Bill Spectre leads us down Brasenose Lane, a narrow road that leads to the Radcliffe Camera. We are told how, one late night in 1832, a fellow of Brasenose College was walking down the lane when he saw an undergraduate being

dragged out of a window by a tall and thin cloaked man. The window, covered in a wire mesh, belonged to the rooms of the Brasenose Hell Fire Club. Panicking, the fellow alerted the porter of the college, who rushed to the room to find Edward Trafford, the president of the club, dead in the room. Trafford's face was covered with wire mesh marks. That night they had been attempting to summon the devil. It is believed they succeeded, and Trafford's soul had been carried off by Old Nick himself.

The story is told in an exaggerated style. We are encouraged to ask for a sign to confirm the events of that night in 1832. As we repeatedly chant "give us a sign", the book that Bill Spectre holds bursts into flames (see figure 3). Here the bodies of the participants react to, or *turn onto* the flames with an affective and embodied sense of their danger and sudden eruption—the flames thus territorialise senses of shock in the moment of their conjuring as they coassemble the wonder of the ghost-tour event. Once again, therefore, we see the coagency of materiality as it precipitates the tourist event as a space of emergent possibility (Anderson and Wylie, 2009): the performance of wonder, emergent as we engage in the spectacle of the trick, is partly configured by the flames and their affective resonance. Furthermore, the atmospheric conditions that night colour the affective charge of enchantment yet in ways that direct attention and sensation away from wonder and enchantment: the night was a bright summer's evening, and the capacity of the event to engender a sense of wonder was blunted by the tangible lack of mystery that darkness brings forth and affords. Thus, despite the affective assembling of momentary wonder as the flames burst forth from the book,

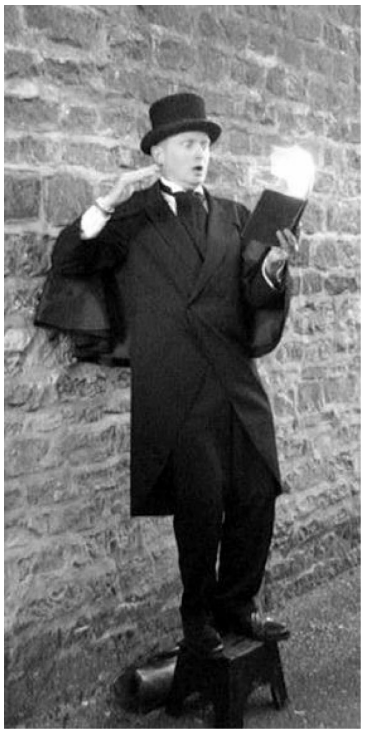

Figure 3. Bill Spectre's Ghost Trails, Oxford (source: author's photograph).

an affective collective disposition of possibility lacks duration as other (im)materialities gain precedence. However, the next night my partner and I return to Brasenose Lane. This time, as we retell the story in the damp, unlit, and empty lane, the site shows up differently and the architecture and conditions precipitate and intensify a sense of the spooky possibility. This time the dark lane, window, and the narrative of 1832 have the capacity to affect our experience as the place surges with enchantment and tense possibility (see figure 4). Achieving a state of modern enchantment thus depends on the affective assembling of a series of active infrastructural elements not all of which can be controlled.

Both trips to Brasenose Lane can be characterised as *legend-tripping*, which involves "travelling to a specific location attached to a legend in the hopes of witnessing some kind of phenomena *as if in the legend itself*" (Koven, 2007, page 186, original emphasis). These trips involve improvised drama and a desire for enchantment through legends particular to the site being acted out and retold. Whilst legend trips can be seen as performative exploration of local historical geographies, the aim is not to learn and dwell on the intricacies of the place (although most guides stress historical accuracy) but to enjoy and become engrossed in the extraordinary possibility of place: "The aim of the legend-trip is not to learn local history but to have the fun of a good 'scare'" (Hall, 1973, page 147). Legend-tripping thus involves and relies on the importance of legend atmosphere and the material or architectural setting for its effectiveness,

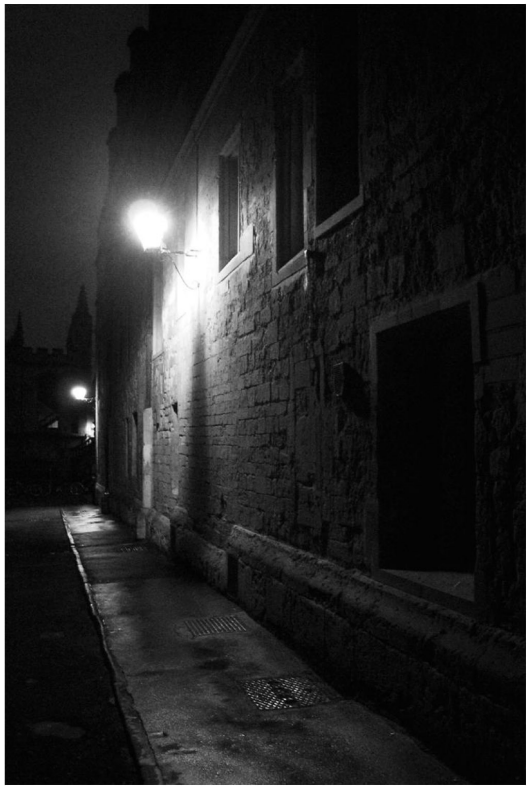

Figure 4. Brasenose Lane in the dark, Oxford (source: author's photograph).

particularly if the site travelled to has a foreboding appearance: a guide discussed how the mysteriousness garnered on tours comes from "being surrounded by the buildings and so on. So it's actually in that particular building where something has happened. It helps people's imagination to get going", with another stating, "we give a lot of time and thought to the atmosphere of where we get the group to stand. It has to be a location that is atmospheric and relevant to the story", thus underlining the affective capacity and affordance of materiality on the ghost tour.

The legend trip is produced through a general sense of receptivity to possibility and temporary communitas wherein all that is asked is that participants "do not disbelieve" (Koven, 2007, page 200). This emergent and shared sense of artifice is a "complex art", where "the trick to performing in such a context, then, is to say, 'This is for real', and yet imply exactly the opposite" (Ellis, 1981, page 505). Modern enchantments therefore rely on a movement away from belief or disbelief to a performance of not disbelieving. As we have seen, key to this movement are infrastructural forces and assemblages that build tension and sensations of anomalous possibility. Viewed in this way, the ghost tour as legend trip "embraces the flux of corporeal sensation and sensory perception in the 'machinic' connection of embodied spectator with the body of the text" (Powell, 2005, page 3) and can, through a desubjectified, affective melding with other material forces, succeed in a collective ordering that allows the familiar to bristle with the strange.

Ostensive play and ghostly affect

The affective milieu of the legend trip can assemble a sense of being engrossed in the supernatural possibility of the city. Central to the process of legend-tripping and its varied affective registers is the presentational and thus the doing of legend. In what Dégh and Vázsonyi (1983) denote as *ostension*, the presentational and presencing of legend trips is laid bare in that ostension is "presentation as contrasted to representation (showing the reality itself instead of using any kind of signification)" (Dégh and Vázsonyi, 1983, page 6). Thus the infrastructural assemblage of tours attempts to dramatically extend legend into the everyday spaces of the city through presentation, "making it real in the most palpable sense ... [and] bring[ing] the legend to life" (Lindahl, 2005, pages 164, 165; Ellis, 2003).[5] Here I wish to explore different modes of ostension and the coincidence of ostension with ideas of play. In order to achieve this, I wish to detail an example of an organised ghost hunt.

Ordsall Hall in Salford sits somewhat uneasily in its surroundings—a strange piece of Tudor history, with a housing estate on one side and industrial units on the other. The first part of the ghost hunt involves orientation, including introductions, schedules, and health and safety. We are led round the Hall and given a scant history of it by the resident warden—through the Great Hall with its intricate beams, upstairs to the Star Chamber, through doors normally closed to the daytime public, to other bedrooms, to the plaster room with its ornate but decaying ceiling, back down to the exhibition gallery and into the kitchen. The rooms are brightly illuminated and lack that sense of wonder and expectation that had occupied us on the journey to the Hall. Indeed, the Hall is imbued with the securing mundanity of a staged and themed heritage site—with 'mock-up' kitchens and kid-friendly exhibitions adorned with scribblings from previous field trips. As one group, we are led by the guide and the invited psychic back through the hall.

[5] As Ellis discusses (1989), most ostension is benign, but some can be antisocial or even sociopathic, by bringing a violent legend to life, ostension can become a map for violent action. I will return to the somewhat less than benevolent, although arguably not sociopathic, aspects of ghost tourism in a moment.

And then the lights go out ... .

Only recently travelled and manoeuvred space shifts and changes, and we are filled by a sense of unease as the layout and dimensions of rooms, doorways, objects, and artefacts lose their recently gained familiarity. Open doors leading to rooms just passed through become spaces of fascination, spaces without inhabitation, spaces filled with the potential for mysterious shapes, outlines, and noises. Space takes on a different luminosity. Rooms and staircases are strobed by handheld torches. The darkness alters sensory registers. Sight becomes strained as we look round rooms at objects and at other ghost hunters. Listening becomes more highly attuned to knocks, taps, breathing, and other noises.

We are split into two groups and led back to the exhibition galley. We are asked to form a circle and join hands for the first of many séances. Holding hands with strangers suspends normalised orders of embodied relations. Touch takes on a different and unusual quality. Eyes shut, and sight is closed down. Directed through the séance—breathing techniques, New Age references to light energy—the pace of the night slows (Holloway, 2003). The gallery takes on a new rhythm—one slowed down and brought to stillness. The apprehension of space is heightened and sharpened through nonvisual means. Only an hour previous I had been looking at some broken Tudor plates in cabinets. Now the room becomes a space of the possible and unknown, a space where strange things *could* occur.

Having stood listening intensely in various rooms and had the medium and others call out and sense spirit activity, we were given the chance at glass divination. Similar to Ouija boards, this is where an upturned glass is used to communicate with the spirit world. Participants place their fingers on the glass as lightly as possible, and through a series of questions and responses, communication with the spirit world is hopefully opened up. I helped carry the ordinary trestle table into the Great Hall and assisted in setting it up. We all placed our fingers on the glass and waited. Nothing happened for ten minutes, then ... .

A sudden movement of the glass.

Familiar spatial and practical fields of objects are made radically different, made unknown. The material affordance of a glass is transformed, is dislocated. No longer offering its normal course of practical action, no longer part of the familiar order of things, the glass registers something unknown. The glass acts back on the bodies of the divination circle; the glass transformed becomes active in territorialising affective registers of shock and wonder. Everyday object-spaces that endure through habitual action are made strange and mysterious (Holloway and Kneale, 2008).

Through the suspension of the normal, different modes of affect flow through the event. At the moment of its transformation the movement of the glass precipitates and reveals its capacity to orientate sensations of indeterminacy. My body registers this sudden shift in the configuration of things—nerve endings tingle round my spine, registering something unusual and out of the ordinary, seemingly without stable meaning. To a degree, at the very instance of transformation the sense of shock and confusion is more acute than that experienced on ghost walks: here, the immediacy and sheer viscerality of the unknown emerge with greater amplification due to a complete lack of the narrative or discursive framing to the event that is evident on ghost tours. In other words, the strange and unknown are assembled between bodies and materialities in an event that seems qualitatively distinct in its charge due to, for the most part, the lack of biography and story delivered by tour guides. Yet just as these sensations emerge and are registered as emotional states of fear and anxiety, astonishment and awe, others begin to be territorialised—the possibility of suspicious foul-play and incredulity, for example. In turn, dialogue between the participants

attempts to register the shock of the extraordinary: "Wow"; "Oh my word"; "That was amazing"; and "Jesus Christ!" We seek to represent and give meaning to the event experienced: "Did everyone feel that?"; "No-one's definitely pushing that?" Representation here becomes making sense of this performative presencing of the unreal and abnormal emergent from a dislocated materiality.

The glass divination reveals that "as much as we may prefer to think otherwise, we live in an imprecise and ambiguous world, which in its inexactitude allows for the awesome, the inexplicable, the wondrous" (Walker, 1995, page 1). Yet this does not necessarily mean the supernatural is a living reality. Indeed, the movement of the glass can be seen as a shift in normalised relations which does not have to lead to a belief or faith in the spirit world. There is then an 'other-worldly' sense to the event, but this might be understood in terms of hoax or more seemingly rational explanations, as well as more irrational realities. We must be aware then of different modes of ostension in the performance of legend. First, the acting out of ghostly Ordsall Hall via glass divination can be understood for some participants as *quasi ostension*. Here a prior belief in the spirit world, spiritualism, or ghosts will colour the experience of the ghost tour or hunt: a movement of an object in response to calls from the spirit world, whilst still presenting something extraordinary, will be understood by some of those present through a belief in spiritualism and the reality of the spirit world (Ellis, 2003; Hufford, 1995; Koven, 2007). Indeed, many of those at Ordsall Hall identified as practising mediums or, to varying degrees, holding a certainty that ghosts exist in some form or other. Second, the divination event could have involved *pseudo ostension*. This is where individuals will engineer the space and practices of the ostensive legend trip to perpetuate a hoax. Thus, someone was forcefully moving the glass in order to fool those present into believing that ghostly spirits exist and are in contact. Furthermore, in both of these scenarios the notion of modern enchantment as delight without delusion does not seem to hold. For example, the quasi ostension of spiritualist or paranormal believers was not enacted with a sense of ironic detachment from the phenomenon presented, despite the obvious delight the glass divination engendered. The hoaxing of pseudo ostension would lessen or cancel out the ability to willingly and knowingly not disbelieve if discovered.

However, despite these limits to modern modes of enchantment, the openness to possibility seen on ghost tours remains an acute part of the performative makeup of the ghost-hunt space. There is, then, a strong element of playfulness involved in the ostensive action of ghost hunts and ghost tours, particularly if we recognise that "playing is not (just) kids stuff" (Harker, 2005, page 59) and that play is more than just part of the teleological development of children towards the endpoint of adulthood (Aitken et al, 2007; Binnie et al, 2008; Katz, 2008). Describing this form of tourism as 'playful' stresses its transformative effects, affects, and role in wider contexts of modern enchantment but does not take away from the seriousness of the beliefs engendered when these events are realised through quasi ostension. Furthermore, as discussed above, these playful moments of transformation (irrespective of whether one is already a believer or one is merely fooled into becoming one) depend in part on willingness *to* play and thus an open sensibility to the chance of enchantment. Ostensive play, therefore, involves events which allow an opening to "becoming other" (Katz, 2008, page 98) through the intrusion of the supernatural on the seemingly 'natural', relying on a disposition to play which allows these moments to (sometimes) occur: without this disposition, ostensive play loses its force, the marvellous remains unactualised, and enchantment falters.

How then does ghost tourism generate playfulness? We have seen how the ghost tourism industry engineers an infrastructure which works on affective registers and

brings forth enchantment and a playful sense of the unknown—for example, a tour operator commented how "we do like to get the adrenalin running and entertain people... . We hope the tour is thrilling." In so doing, they are not alone in a wider capitalist economy that, as Thrift (2000) argues, has turned to the production of experience and intensification of affect (see Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Thrift discusses how firms (including those of tourism) seek to work on the affective background of practice to produce "new products, products which animate—'turn on'—the body by producing an engaging and compelling ethology of the senses" (2000, page 49). As such, ghost tourism attempts to produce experiences which "grip the senses" and "allow forces and intensities to be focused and channelled" (Thrift, 2000, pages 49, 44). This commodification of qualitative intensity can be seen to be successful when a disposition of "a potential for potentiality" and a playful openness to the supernatural emerges through the legend trip event (page 39).

However, the engineering of affective responses and states of anticipation must not be seen as working *only* on a preconceptual, practical, and unconscious intentionality. Barnett, in his discussion of Thrift and Connolly on the modulation of affect and intensity in the media and politics, rightfully argues that the engineering of affect can also work on a propositional or more conscious and reflective intentionality which "allows one to register a commitment to certain values without having to directly avow norms and principles or present arguments in favour of them" (2008, page 197). In light of the argument in this paper regarding modern enchantment and quasi ostension, we can see that propositional intentionality plays a role in the development of a disposition towards and willingness to be enchanted. Put differently, there is a "genealogical freight" of cultural practice that is brought to the tour or the ghost hunt which can modulate the intensity of the event (Thrift, 2000, page 39). This is applicable to both those with a serious belief in spiritualism *and* those who maintain a sense of delighted but knowing detachment from the proceedings.

Moreover, this argument moves us away from seeing the manipulation, commodification, and engineering of affect as building spectral infrastructures wherein tourists and ghost hunters are somehow duped into certain dispositional practices. Both those with prior deeply held beliefs in spirits and life after death and those with a willingness to believe (performed with a reflexive awareness) come to ghost tourism with premeditated dispositions. Thus, ghost tourism is "good at mobilising people to act in ways they are already predisposed toward" *and* "[good] at actually shaping those predispositions in the first place and then mobilising them" (Barnett, 2008, page 194). Dispositional practices, both preconceptual and intentional, are shaped before and during the tourist events described here in various ways.

However, these practices do not always and everywhere produce benevolence and wonder—one guide described how "[s]ome nights you get a real reaction, and there's a real energy to the event. Other nights it can be really hard work." A common theme across the ghost tours is torture and the suffering body. In both Edinburgh tours, tales of the supernatural and the ghostly are somewhat secondary to reports of witch trials, public executions, and murders (most famously the body snatchers William Burke and William Hare). So we are told about the execution of robber Robert Johnson on December 30, 1818, whose hanging was bungled at the first attempt as the rope was too long and his feet still touched the scaffold. Only on the second attempt, after a near riot by the crowd of onlookers and some hasty carpentry, does the guilty die. And we are beguiled by stories of the body of water Nor Loch (located approximately where Princess Street Gardens are today) where 300 witch trials took place and many corpses were dumped. Ostension of such narratives is performed through asking tour participants to try on thumb screws or to stand up against Mercat Cross and enact the public

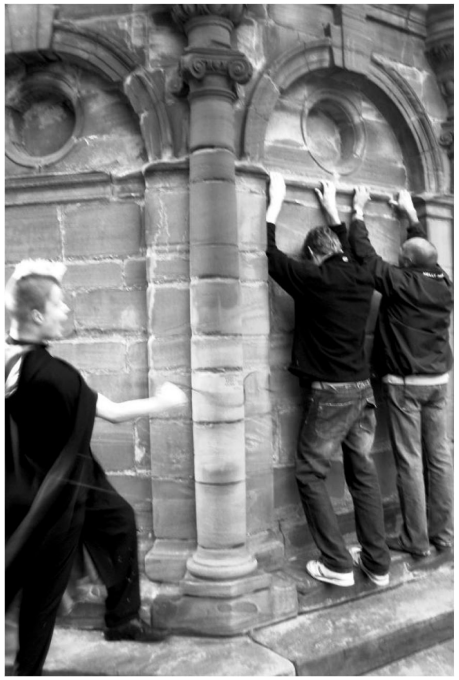

Figure 5. Ostensive play at Mercat Cross, Edinburgh (source: author's photograph).

whippings of the day (figure 5). Similarly, in Nottingham and Douglas the details of being hung, drawn, and quartered are acted out on willing volunteers.

Here the past impregnates the present as affective registers are assembled amongst the participants through thumb screws and other instruments of torture precipitating differentiated sensations of pain. Once again this ostension in the legend trip is performed in a state and atmosphere of unreality—a sense of playfulness pervades as most participants laugh, joke, and smile at the performances. Yet the visceral sensing of the torture reenacted points towards a different modulation of affect amongst the tour participants, one wherein on occasion delight and wonder are replaced by a sense of disgust, immorality, and injustice. Indeed, this becomes arguably problematic when some participants fail to see the entertainment value of the tour during these events. For example, as we moved between locations, a few tourists on the Edinburgh tour made concerned asides about the use of torture on the tour, especially in light of recent events at Guantanamo Bay. Here politicised and intentional dispositions are brought to and brought forth on the ghost tour. Such dispositions—how they are moulded and generated and how they affect sensation and reactions in more broader spaces of torture tourism (York, London, and Edinburgh dungeons come to mind here)—is a subject worthy of further research. If nothing else, however, the playful enactment of history and legends via torture ostension reveals that "playing isn't necessarily emancipatory" and can be realised as a sense of abhorrence or critical unease instead of marvel and delight (Harker, 2005). The affective attachments and assemblages evoked in ghost tourism are thus often extremely unpredictable and varied (Hemmings, 2005); they may enchant, or they may open up a sense of injustice and concern.

Conclusions

The notion of modern enchantment as something "that delights but does not delude" (Saler, 2006, page 702) has been explored in this paper through the widespread emergence of contemporary ghost tourism. For the most part, modern enchantment is an apt description of ghost tourism: a sense of reflexive openness to and pleasure in the spooky pervades the events discussed here. Whether this modern form of enchantment saturates other encounters with the supernatural or paranormal needs further attention. Thus, with the apparent increasing popularity of ghosts and visits to haunted sites comes the seemingly ever-present fascination with other phenomena, such as UFOs, vampires, religious apparitions, and the various cryptids, such as the Loch Ness Monster and the Sasquatch, that lurk in lakes and mountain ranges: the modalities of belief through which these and other monstrous forms are made (partial) sense of, whether through modern enchantment or more deeply held dispositions, needs exploration. Despite its more modest aims, this paper has sought to provide a possible framework for these studies by exploring the practice, performance, and assemblage of enchantment.

By developing and drawing on a wider spectral infrastructure, and utilising a whole series of techniques associated with the legend trip and ostension, ghost tourism operators seek to mould enchanted affectual registers in conjunction with different materialities that have the capacity to affect and act on tourists' bodies through the multiple modulation of intensity and enchantment. Thus, the performance of narratives and tales at spatial interstices with particular architectural framings and atmospheres enacts a relational assemblage of teller and listener where a disposition and willingness to be enchanted, comprising of a sense of wonder and awareness of entertaining deceit, leads to playful practices of engrossing possibility and indeterminate meaning.

The framework developed here, of modern enchantment as a contemporary modality of experiencing the supernatural and the paranormal, has also complicated the argument that these encounters always occur on an affective preconceptual background lacking in premeditation. Subsequently, for those with a prior assurance in the spirit world, propositional dispositions are brought to bear on ghost tourism, and delighted detachment is replaced by belief. For others with dispositions more attuned to the wonders and awareness of modern enchantments, tour operators engineer playfully spooky artifice that at once consciously draws on preformed dispositions and produces such affective backgrounds. Conversely, there are instances where the delight of sensing the extraordinary gives way to feelings of injustice and cruelty produced through already formed politicised dispositions of values and commitments. Here the playfulness of ghostly enchantment gets serious, delight turns to concern over the ethics of making a spectacle of torture, and the pleasurable deceits of modern enchantment fall away. The commodification of qualitative intensity found in ghost tourism must thus be understood as emergent through differing and sometimes conflictual moments of modern enchantment, genuine belief, or politicised reaction and critique.

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