



HIGHLAND AND OTHER HAUNTS

Ghosts in Scottish Tourism

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Abstract: Ghosts and other paranormal entities exist neither in this world or the next, nor in one particular spatial and temporal location. However, ghostly qualities have been used within, and to create, particular sociospatial contexts. This paper traces the history of the parts played by spooks in constructing Scotland as a prime tourism location. Its landscapes, cityscapes, and habitations have been interpretatively re-created over the last two centuries producing conceptions of Scottish history which privilege the mysteriousness of a Highland and Celtic past. By interrogating the shifting relations between ghosts/haunted spaces and tourism, this paper reveals some of the mechanisms developed to stimulate the industry.

Keywords: Scotland, ghosts, ghost walks, Sir Walter Scott, heritage. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Les fantômes et les autres phénomènes paranormaux n'existent ni en ce monde ni au prochain, ni dans aucun temps ni dans aucune espace en particulier. On a pourtant utilisé des caractéristiques spectrales afin de créer certains contextes socio-spatiaux. Cet article suit la trace historique des rôles joués par des revenants dans la construction de l'Écosse comme un lieu touristique de premier choix. On a recréé l'interprétation de ses paysages, de ses panoramas urbains et de ses demeures dans le but de produire des conceptions de l'histoire écossaise qui privilègent le mystérieux du passé celte des Highlands. En interrogeant les relations changeantes entre les fantômes, les lieux hantés et le tourisme, l'article révèle quelques-uns des mécanismes qu'on a développés pour stimuler l'industrie. **Mots-clés:** Écosse, fantômes, promenades de fantômes, Sir Walter Scott, patrimoine. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

The economy of Scotland is to a large extent dependent on income from tourism. In 1998, some 10 million tourists from inside the United Kingdom spent about \$2,200 million on Scottish holidays. In the same year, about two million international tourists spent roughly \$1,340 million. Despite the preponderance of British tourists, over the last three decades most of the growth in the Scottish tourism industry has come from overseas markets, with great efforts being made to cultivate an expansion in the numbers of tourists from North America and the

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Far East especially. Moreover, in the same time span, employment in tourism-related businesses in Scotland is estimated to have increased from 112,000 in 1970 to some 177,000 in 1998, a significant proportion of the workforce in a total population of only five million people (Scottish Executive 2001). As the heavy industries of its central belt have gone into decline, with some such as ship-building almost completely eradicated, it has become increasingly the case that the health of the economy is strongly dependent on tourism incomes. As a result, how Scotland is sold as a destination to the wider world has become a critical issue.

This paper is concerned with the ramifications of one particular marketing strategy designed to sell Scotland to a global audience. A crucial characteristic to be found in the commodification of any destination for the purposes of tourist consumption is the representation of its heritage, a cultural tradition represented as being both unique and endlessly fascinating, a treasure-trove of quaintness into which the tourist may delve. For various historical reasons, Scotland's heritage is often presented to tourists today as involving paranormal and ghostly matters, with the presence of specters from the past being represented as continuing to haunt its contemporary landscape. According to much promotional literature, Scotland figures as one of the most haunted places in the world. Ghosts, specters, and every kind of odd entity from fairy-folk to the Loch Ness monster seem to be everywhere (Halliday 2000:109). Thus, its contemporary tourism sells the country largely through the use of ghosts and other supernatural phenomena.

GHOSTS AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The development of Scotland's landscapes as a repository of the mysterious and ghostly, and its emergence as a designation, has been thoroughly intermingled from the very beginning of modernity. The very earliest tourists, who began to journey to Scotland from the middle of the 18th century onwards, were English. They were drawn to this destination and its landscape in a search for extraordinary sensations and sights which they believed could not be found at home (Durie 2001). The apparently highly prosaic nature of life in England, as perceived by these elites, arose as a result of profound social structural and mental changes affecting English society in the period. (That such changes were also occurring at that time in Scotland, especially in the urbanized lowlands, was a fact largely ignored by these early tourists). The transition in England, as in most other European countries, from feudalism to modernity was experienced by elite groups of the time as involving the abolition of older modes of superstitious beliefs in specters, fairies, goblins, and the like, as the Western world became increasingly 'disenchanted' (Weber 1921, 1927). Through a mixture of scientific empiricism and the dawning of Enlightenment, attention was drawn to that which was previously dark, and the phantoms of the (primarily peasant) imagination were exorcised by the rationalizing mentalities of an enlightened aristocracy and a resolutely worldly bourgeoisie. Western European topography came at this period to be seen

in a new light. From the spook-haunted forests and troll-infested mountains of the dim and distant past, Europe was felt to have moved, starting in the later 18th century, towards a condition resembling a landscape of geometrical order. European space increasingly was seen by elites as a terrain of straight lines and trimmed symmetries where unreason and mysticism had been banished, and into which only material bodies susceptible to the investigation of positivist science might enter. As a result of such developments, ghost beliefs diminished in England and other advanced capitalist nations throughout the century. As Thomas notes, people in general and elites in particular had “stopped seeing ghosts” in their own lives and locales (1991:724). As rationalism became the primary mode of elite perception of the world and the entities that existed within it, the ghost was banished to the peripheries, both mental and geographic.

The worldview of the English upper classes in the later part of the century was more prosaic and matter-of-fact than that of their ancestors. Arguably this view of everyday life as determined by primarily commercial, money-driven considerations, created an absence in the life of the English elites of the more ineffable aspects of experience. The longing for an obscure object that would fulfil the lack of the ethereal and spiritual dimensions of human existence was turned upon Scotland, partly for reasons of geographical proximity, and partly for political reasons. By the Act of Union of 1707, Scotland had become part of the United Kingdom, and thus part of an aggressively expansionist state, fuelled both by a burgeoning capitalist economy and by growing imperialist ambitions (Devine 2000). But at the same time, it was not quite part of the nation-state thus constructed, in part because the natives (or rather, certain elites among them) had put up an often bloody struggle against the territorial expansion of English elites. With the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie’s rebellion in 1745, Scotland came to figure as a highly ambiguous site as far as English elite perception was concerned. It was part of the same political entity as England, and thus to a degree “familiar” territory, and yet unfamiliar too because it had before 1707 been a separate country. Therefore, Scotland was perceived to be in important ways “different” from England, particularly in terms of its cultural habits and practices.

For an admixture of reasons, the English upper classes looked to Scotland to meet their needs for something beyond the prosaic matters of everyday life. They traveled there in search of what they believed could not be found at home. Thus, it is to a large extent the “tourist gaze” (Urry 1990), viewed in the context of English/Scottish relations over several centuries, a juxtaposition which has played a very important part in the creation of Scotland’s distinctively ethereal international reputation. The landscape was being read from the very beginnings in ways that fitted with the outsider’s demand to be stimulated both by unusual sights which life “back home” did not furnish, and by experiences that were out of the ordinary.

Eighteenth century English tourists were attempting both to glimpse aspects of human existence beyond those accounted for by science, and to catch the past experientially before it was exorcised and Scot-

land, in line with England, was catapulted into the conditions of modernity. A famous early English tourist, Samuel Johnson, while himself not very interested in the Scottish physical landscape, traveled around the Highlands and Western Isles in 1775 in search of odd and unusual phenomena (Keay and Keay 1994). Like other English tourists, Johnson came to witness what he felt was the passing of an older traditional way of life into the new commercial order prevalent in England, and to witness its last evanescent glimmerings before it disappeared forever. He was sceptical about the possibility of the existence of the powers of second sight which supposedly enabled Highland seers and oracles to predict the future through their glimpses of ghostly doubles of living people (Thompson 1997). Nonetheless, he heard enough convincing stories to make him write that: "I never could advance my curiosity to conviction; but came away at last only willing to believe" (Johnson 1775:112). Thus, Scotland's reputation for the strange and literally super-natural could be found, even by a sceptic like Johnson, to at least have some justification.

Johnson was not alone in his capitulation to the apparently paranormal nature of Scottish life. Mystical and fantastic qualities were widely ascribed by late 18th and early 19th century English tourists to the Scottish landscape, partly as a result of their having read stories of an apparently mystical Celtic past. The popularity of Celtic-inspired tales in England at this time was part of a general Romantic reaction against the rationalist modes of thought associated with the intellectual project of Enlightenment. While Romanticism is notoriously difficult to define (Berlin 2000), part of this cultural tendency clearly involved an interest in the irrational, with Romanticism's offspring, the Gothic movement, possessing a particular fascination for the ghostly. Romantic attitudes were particularly espoused by poets and painters, searching for the sublime, beautiful phenomena that stood above and against the prosaic concerns of a rapidly industrializing society from which they were increasingly alienated (Holloway and Errington 1978).

One particularly important example of Romantic interest in Scotland centred on the figure of Ossian, who was supposed to have been a Celtic bard of the Dark Ages. Ossian wrote Homeric-style epic lays, combining the magnificence of Highland scenery with grand tales of chivalry. It was not until much later that it was proven that the works of Ossian were forged by James McPherson, a minor poet of the later 18th century. However, in the second half of the century, the popularity of Ossian's poetry was immense, not just in England but all across Europe (Stafford 1988). The Ossian phenomenon was also one of the first instances of "literary tourism", whereby tourists made pilgrimage to places apparently mentioned by Ossian, and seemingly touched by the magic associated with his mystical vision of the Celtic past (Squire 1994).

The "picturesque" landscapes of those and other locales were subjected to highly romanticized representations, both in literature and painting of the period (Butler 1985). These artistic representations of Scottish terrain had a profound effect on how Scotland was viewed by tourists. It is partly as a result of Romantic notions of landscape (as

intimating that which exists above or beyond the human) that specifically *Highland* landscapes became synonymous with the *whole* of Scottish territory (Holloway and Errington 1978). The arable farmlands of lowland areas such as Dumfries-shire or Ayrshire, and the burgeoning industrial towns and cities of central Scotland, were conveniently ignored in favor of the vast and often pleasingly threatening vistas provided by the territory in the North and far West (Gold and Gold 1995). The emotional lack felt by English tourists, who dwelt in prosaic, primarily urban landscapes, and Romantic notions of how the Highlands were a magical and untamed place, propelled them on past the familiar urbanity of industrial Glasgow. Tourists were hungry to get to the Highlands where the “real”, that is to say the *mysterious*, Scotland began.

The Spectres of Sir Walter Scott

This dramatic, edifying landscape vision was a version of Scotland many English tourists learned of through the work of Sir Walter Scott. His prodigious talents as novelist and Tory propagandist had ensured that he had become, by the first decades of the 19th century, one of the greatest figures of the Romantic Movement worldwide. Scott was to a very large degree responsible for subsequently highly influential views of Scotland as misty-mountained Highland territory, peopled by tartan-wearing noble savages, products of the mythical past and yet still living out its inheritance in the present. Scott was responsible for the state visit of King George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, and had a hand in the creation of the designs for the supposedly “traditional” Highland garb worn by the participants (Nairn 1975). It was from this source that the Victorian upper class mania for all things authentically “Highland” was born (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). The desire to experience Scotland as a repository of an ancient past that had all but disappeared in England spread to the middle classes on the basis of the images that Scott had provided and disseminated through his hugely popular fictional writings.

Scott shared with his Romantic contemporaries a desire to resurrect the past against the dullness and spiritual vacuity of the present. As the Marxist literary critic Lukacs has argued, the ways in which Scott’s fiction highlights dramatic incidents and represents mystical phenomena, were part of the general Romantic project to rebel against the “aridity and emptiness of the prosaic nature of bourgeois life” in the early 19th century (1950:149). An important aspect of Scott’s re-creation of medieval Scotland as a land of heroic deeds and spiritual encounters was his deployment of phantom folklore. He populated his fictions of Scotland with ghosts not so much because he believed in their existence, but because he desired to keep folk traditions alive in the present-day. A near contemporary remarked apropos of Scott that Scotland was “where the spirits of history, summoned up by his enchantments haunt visibly its mouldering temples and ruined castles” (cited in Gold and Gold 1995:65).

Scott’s fictional work was to a large degree responsible for the creation of the cultural apparatus of “authentic” Scottishness: bagpipes,

tartans, clan chiefs and lairds, and so on. Ghosts and spectres were drawn upon to make this invention seem truly rooted in the past, with phantoms constantly appearing in his fictions to remind the reader that in Scotland the past is always present in the contemporary world. Thus, it is no surprise that spirit-haunted castles and other macabre places are central to Scott's literary imagination. In the *Waverley* series of novels (Canning 1879), for example, the past signals its presence in the present through the device of phantoms confronting the living to remind them of the call that their forebears continue to have on them. In these works, "eerie places may represent ancient but obscure wrongs, woes and frustrations channelled ... into the present" (Parsons 1964:124). The ghost comes literally to represent the bursting forth of the past into the contemporary world, where inhabitants of the present are forcefully reminded that escape from the call of history is impossible. This notion fits completely into Scott's highly conservative political stance, where tradition must be upheld against the disintegrating and disruptive forces of the present social order. Like other right-wing Romantics, Scott utilized the mysticism of the past both to criticize what he saw as the worst excesses of the emerging capitalist system, and to justify the traditional sociopolitical order based on regal power.

This conservative literary-political strategy turned out to be very successful indeed. As Nairn argues, "[t]o a surprising extent, [Scots today] are still living in the Scotland of Sir Walter Scott. He said nothing about 'modern' Scotland, in the sense of industrial or working-class Scotland. But he did show us what to do with our past" (1975:33). Much of Scott's vision has today been taken on not just by the tourism industry, but also by nationalist political groupings, seeking ways of vociferating their credo of Scottish political independence. Whether this has led to vibrant ways of thinking about Scotland's cultural inheritance, or into blind alleyways populated by irrelevant historical phantasms, is a matter of debate (Chapman 1992). But Scott's fictional Scotland is a phantom world, in the double sense that it is a spectral fabrication of the "real" Scotland, while being peopled with phantoms which are introduced to vouchsafe the authenticity of Scott's vision. Ghosts speak from, and of, the past and tradition, which for a conservative political imaginary is the *ens realissimus* of the life of a nation.

Scott did not single-handedly "create" Scottish tourism in the present day, but he was responsible for pulling together many of the aspects of previous English ideas about Scotland and yoking them together such that, at the level of cultural representation, it is in some senses "Scott-land" (Durie 1992). In particular, it is through his legacy that the articulation occurred of ghosts, Romantic images of Scotland, political conservatism, and English tourism. Scott's massive reputation among Georgian and Victorian readers was very important for the further stimulation of literary tourism. At the height of his influence in the early to middle decades of the 19th century, guidebooks commonly referred tourists to sites and locales mentioned in Scott's fiction. The influential firm of Thomas Cook and Son, for example, drew a great deal on Scott in their literature promoting tours to this destination (Gold and Gold 1995). Those areas associated with ghostly presences

would no doubt have provoked a particular *frisson* for the tourist, who was increasingly likely to be drawn from the middle to lower ranks of the English middle classes. By the end of the 19th century, even the lower middle classes had the financial means to escape the routines of English suburbia to come to Scotland by the then extensive railway network. Often they held in their hands guidebooks and other materials that were composed by copywriters imitating the style of Scott, presenting to view a ghostly Scotland opened up for consumption by those starved of mystery and the esoteric (Gold and Gold 1995:195).

Ghosts and Tourists in the Twentieth Century

The above trends continued to be characteristic of tourism in Scotland on into the 20th century, and particularly so in its last two decades. Spectres are today used to attract and entertain tourists from both inside and outside the United Kingdom. In line with the historical antecedents of Scottish tourism, ghosts and other paranormal entities are promised as enlivening visits to Scotland, thus providing hair-raising experiences that one could not hope to be exposed to back home.

If the ghostly was an important part of tourist perceptions of Scotland in the 19th century, in the context of the sophisticated marketing strategies developed by late modern industry, the spectral now figures as a crucial form of selling the country to a global audience. As a piece of promotional literature located on the new Scottish Parliament's website (2000) notes, "Scotland has more than its fair share of ghosts". The document adds that "practically every castle or tower house in Scotland can boast its own ghost". An advertisement then follows for the Scottish Tourist Board's list of haunted hotels. A ghostly past clearly is felt to sell, with government-backed agencies being very keen to stamp their official seal of approval on a representation of Scotland as a mystical and numinous terrain.

Tourism, as a crucial part of the whole complex of leisure within late capitalism, relies on "staged authenticity", a presentation of the pure reality of the thing presented through a fabrication of its reality (MacCannell 1973). A ghostly guise assists the industry through mysticizing Scottish heritage as more glorious than the mundane everydayness of the present in which the tourist normally lives. Processes of *heritagization* convert cultural resources into products for consumption (Burnett and Holmes 2001; McCrone, Morris and Kiley 1995). The places where ghosts are held to live out their spectral non-lives are constructed as being authentic through the very presence of the ghost, which operates as a hallmark of the archaic nature of the locale in question. This ghostly fabrication involved in presenting certain locales as desirable products is well dramatized in Rene Clair's (1935) film "The Ghost Goes West". The film takes its cue from the real-life purchase of London Bridge by a US millionaire who had it sent back home bit by bit. In the film a haunted Scottish castle is relocated—stone by stone—to the United States. Its new owner buys the property once its authenticity as a site of "real" Scottish heritage is "proved" when it is

related to him that the castle has a ghost. After the castle is relocated within the grounds of its wealthy owner's estate in the United States, the phantom goes with it, thus authenticating the castle as a true product of the old-world within its inauthentic, new-world location. The ghost marks the castle as a "real" emblem of Scotland. If the ghost was not present, then the presence of the past would not hang over the site, and the castle would possess much less interest than it has, if it lacked the reassuringly unreassuring presence of the specter. As a result, the ghost no longer frightens people *away* (one of the purposes of ghost stories in traditional, oral cultures). Instead, the industry pledges the presence of the specter as a way of luring tourists and their spending-power *in* to a particular locale.

In other words, the threat of the phantom has been turned into a promise, and fear of the spectral has been transformed into *fun*. Thus, the phantom's appeal to the tourist is often represented in promotional literature as involving a truly scarifying form of pleasure. One such program, which is published on the World Wide Web, and can thus be accessed worldwide, makes the point:

The chance that one of them [a specter, in this case female] might glide gracefully across your path as you tour a palace or a stately home really puts the tingle into sightseeing. Bleak corridors and empty alcoves are a whole lot more interesting when ... [a ghost] is a possibility (Henderson 2000).

The slippage here is the admission that the castle or house may in itself not be interesting enough to tourists. Therefore, the ghost is invoked to encourage customers. If it is a female ghost, the marketing mission is helped if there is any chance she can be claimed to be that most romantic of all doomed heroines, Mary Queen of Scots. A number of sites claim to be haunted by her, often on the flimsiest evidence that the real historical person had any association with the locale in question (Anonymous 2000). Queen Mary's allure aside, female phantoms generally are readily employed to promote Scotland, sexualized images of women being a very popular way of selling all types of commodities, from haunted castles to automobiles. But new modes of selling this destination have emerged.

New Mechanisms of Haunting

In recent years, ghosts have been appropriated by the tourism industry in Scotland in the service of appealing to those from across the world. Practically every culture recognizes the idea of the ghost, and presumably there is a strong cross-cultural appeal in viewing the haunted places of a particular country. Nonetheless, there are problems with the deployment of irrational phenomena in the service of highly rationalized and bureaucratized forms of generating income from tourists. On the whole, ghosts do not make reliable employees. It is reported that it is a standing joke among Scottish tourism officials that "real" ghosts are liable not to turn up "on cue", when a party of tourists is being guided around the putatively "haunted" locale. The

lack of the revenant thus could potentially quite seriously spoil the experience.

Consequently, over the last decade particular attractions have been developed in Scotland which guarantee ghosts will indeed appear. "Ghost walks" have sprung up in many Scottish urban centers in recent years, and are rapidly becoming as much of a fixture for the tourist in Edinburgh as visiting the Castle. As the promotional material for one such tour reveals, the ghost walk is a trip where "history and the supernatural meet" (Mercat Tours 2000). On some tours, hired actors host the tour as famous phantoms. One particular tour of haunted locales operated by Matrix Hospitality (2000) of Edinburgh, offers guests the spirit of Sir Walter Scott himself as the tour guide. He reveals "ghostly secrets" of "a turbulent and enthralling bygone age", which in turn are part of "Scotland's rich and colorful past". Just like the actual Sir Walter Scott, contemporary tours such as this trade on the equation of Scotland with its history, while neatly side-stepping other, more contemporary, aspects of Scottish life. This occlusion is not in itself surprising. What is noteworthy is that the ghost Scott of today essentially performs the same service as the real Scott of 200 years before: they both are conduits of a creation of a sense of the past mediated and guaranteed by specters. This does suggest that history in Scotland, as it is interpreted in romantic and ultimately politically conservative ways, is something that refuses to be exorcised.

The second way in which tourists can come face-to-face with ghosts is when actors are hired to jump out at a tour party from unexpected corners. In his novel, *The Fanatic*, James Robertson (2000) has provided a fictional portrait of a man hired to be a surprise ghost. In this account, the "ghost" is a well known historical figure from the time of the covenanters called Major Weir, a respected citizen who suddenly confessed to being a servant of the devil and was burnt at the stake. On the fictionalized tour, this ghost is a silent presence, chosen for his dramatic and otherworldly looks. He appears on cue as the guide is telling tall tales of Weir's life. The timely unexpected glimpse of a strangely dressed figure creates an extra thrill for the tourist. However, within the "real" trade, more established tour companies feel that use of these "jumper ooters", as they are sometimes known, "compromises the tone, effect and integrity of the tour". Ever ready to meet the customers' demands for a guaranteed fright, they will use them if asked, but appear to believe that authenticity is at risk if too much drama is involved. It is recognized that the guide is giving a "performance", the quality of which is key in the tour as entertainment. Still some tour operators are keen to give the impression that the past speaks for itself. It is "the vivid detail of the stories" which makes the tour "a lively, spine-chilling and accurate portrayal of Edinburgh's grisly past" (personal communication with Mercat Tours in 2001).

Of course, it is a very selective reading of that history, where, in this case, Edinburgh's past is pictured as comprising the history of an urban environment of "dark vaulted chambers" hiding "sinister secrets". To this end, the story of the 19th century "body-snatchers" Burke and Hare (Mercat Tours 2000; Thin 2001) is usually part of ghost walk

narratives. This is an entertainingly grim and gruesome tale of Edinburgh grave-robbing for the purposes of providing human bodies for medical research. It can be read as an allegory of the ways in which the Scottish tourism industry continues to dig up the past for present financially-oriented purposes. The ghost walk narrative attempts to prompt moral outrage at the thought of making money out of the dead—but ironically enough, this is what the ghost walks themselves are doing.

Ghost tours are more than happy to tell “grisly tales” of “dark deeds”, and to present a few selected, unpleasant details of 17th and 18th century life. An oft-used story concerns the whole lane in Edinburgh’s old quarter that was bricked up and blocked off, leaving the plague victims inside to starve to death. Other stories present similar tales, often of torture and punishment. Some Mercat guides, for instance, tell the story of the punishment of a man suspected of murdering King James I:

On the first day, he was placed upon a cart, on which a kind of crane, in the form of a stork, was erected. The ropes of the crane tied round his ankles, he was drawn up by pulleys and then suddenly let fall to the ground, by which he suffered the most excruciating pain from the dislocation of his joints. On the second day, he was elevated upon a pillory and crowned with a red-hot iron which bore the inscription “The King of Traitors”. He was then placed upon a hurdle, and drawn at a horse’s tail through the High Street of Edinburgh (Mercat Tours 2000).

Rarely are attempts made to relate such happenings to the social and political factors governing pre- and early-modern urban life. On occasion individual guides with a personal interest in sociopolitical history may attempt to inform their audience more fully. One ghost walk, which the present authors experienced personally, involved descriptions by the guide of general living conditions in 17th and 18th century Edinburgh. However, the extent of these descriptions was obviously constrained by the tour company’s framing of the walk as a *ghost* tour, a trip involving the presentation not of actual social history with its sober facts and figures, but of a deliberately grotesque and exaggerated account of the past.

Although no statistics are available as to the social and national composition of participants on ghost walks, it seems likely that in line with the proportions of UK and non-UK tourists visiting Scottish attractions, UK residents probably form the largest proportion of tour parties. Certainly from observations and enquiries, a number of overseas tourists (usually North Americans) are often present, but mainly the parties are comprised of English and Scots tourists, the latter usually from other parts of Scotland. All age groups apparently take part in such activities, although one company suggests its tours may not be suitable for children but should appeal to all people in the “18 to 500 years old” age bracket (Matrix 2000). Typically the appeal is designed to be broad, so that tourists of many types can be sold Scotland through its past.

In two respects, the ghost walk is an important new development in the history of relations between specters and tourists in Scotland. First,

it is a much more systematic mode of presenting supernatural phenomena to tourists than previous forms, such as guided tours round castles or stately homes. These latter types would probably only mention hauntings in passing, with ghosts not being the central focus of the trip. Ghost walks, on the other hand, are almost wholly centered on paranormal issues. Moreover, the walk in a certain sense guarantees face-to-face confrontations with “ghosts”, whereas the traditional guided tour round a castle or monument can scarcely guarantee anything in the way of the spectral. In some fashion, the ghost walk can assert itself as being good value for money, because it provides what it promises—an encounter with the fearful—one that other types of tour cannot fulfill. Therefore, it should be seen as an attempt by the industry to win tourists in a situation of often intense competition, through providing the guarantee of a certain type of entertainment.

The systematic nature of the ghost walk can be grasped even more clearly when considering the ways in which particular firms providing such tours have branched out into the realm of corporate entertainment. “We summon Ghosts from the mists of time and duly send them down to your venue. Whether it be a castle or a conference suite, a boardroom or a bar, our ghosts don’t mind” (Witchery Tours 2000). The Scottish specter thus should be seen as an increasingly malleable entity, able to tell spooky stories for the edification of business executives. Whereas the extraction of profits from ghosts was previously a rather haphazard operation, now no chances are taken in ensuring that money can be spun out of public taste for the spectral.

The second key way in which the ghost walk differs from other forms of phantom-themed activity in the Scottish context is that it is primarily an urban phenomenon. The legacy of Sir Walter Scott and others was to associate non-urban areas, especially the Highlands, with mysterious happenings, and to locate the ghostly in locales such as castles and lonely country houses. The ghost walk has brought the specter into the town, precisely the place where previous generations of tourists would not have expected to find it, for the urban areas of Scotland were felt to be too narrowly prosaic and similar to English towns. As already noted, English tourists would hurry through industrial Glasgow to get to the “real” Scotland of the Trossachs and beyond. But now even Glasgow has its own ghost walks (Mercat 2000). The Victorian city has been rediscovered as a place of haunted corners and ominous-looking graveyards. As the local economy has shifted from an industrial to a post-industrial base, the city has become in some senses as open to a “historical” reading as Edinburgh, an interpretation impossible even 30 years ago, when Glasgow’s industry equated it with modernity rather than the past, and its “rough” working class image made it very difficult to promote as a destination (Maclennan and Gibb 1988). Concomitant with, and a constituent part of, this shift in how Glasgow has been portrayed to tourists has been an invoking of ghosts, figures which seem to guarantee its credentials as an authentic object of perception, as a repository of mysticized history and tradition, rather than as the unacceptably “tough” face of modern Scotland. As a result, now even cities, previously impervious to spectral colonization, are

presented as being redolent with paranormal phenomena. Now the ghost seems increasingly to walk in every nook and cranny the tourism industry can find for it.

CONCLUSION

If the specter is an entity that conjoins the past and present through its haunting of certain spaces, then its Scottish manifestations carry out the same solemn task, lurking within a national space shot through with the marks of a history that tourism will not allow to go away. This paper discusses how within the Scottish context, its tourism industry of late capitalism makes the spirit talk, compelling it to act as the voice of a past that in some senses never was. The history of the heritagization of ghosts is one that essentially concerns a making tame of that which once inspired terror. The paper traced out the shifting social role of the ghost and its haunting of places, from the time when the first English tourists took their tentative steps into a country of the imagination, to today, when Scotland's whole being depends, to hitherto unheard of degrees, upon the whims of the exchange rate and the specter's enchanting of monies from the tourist purse.

Throughout the development of tourism in Scotland, the ghost has been used in various ways, both to set the parameters as to what the Scottish landscape *means*, and to authenticate such ways of seeing and knowing, thus rendering the experience more "authentic" than it would otherwise have been. By donating its fleeting yet powerful guarantee of the reality of that which is and was not real, the phantom transmogrifies the mundane landscapes of present-day Scotland. It drapes over these terrains a shroud through which the tourist can gaze out of the present and into the mist-covered past, the representatives of which are phantoms and ghouls. As Scotland's economy now depends to such a great degree on revenues generated from tourism, there seems every likelihood that the ghost will continue to stalk not only the traditional haunts of castles and aristocratic houses, but also increasingly in future the streets of the post-industrial cities too. **A**

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