

ReMa Literary Studies

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# HAUNTING ATMOSPHERE OF EDINBURGH

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Walking the City with Ghosts



By Antonina Chertash  
Radboud University Nijmegen

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *1.1. Spooky Edinburgh*

In February 2004, on a compost heap, at the back of one of the shared gardens of central Edinburgh, the body parts of a man were discovered. The man was later identified as Alan Wilson. Mister Wilson was married with two children and used to be known in Edinburgh as a passionate historian, a talented teacher, a writer, and an enthusiastic city guide. He published a few books with collections of Edinburgh's dark tales, one of them (*Ghostly Tales and Sinister Stories of Old Edinburgh*) is still in print and available for purchase in most of Edinburgh's book stores and touristic shops. Wilson was a co-founder of "Mercat tours", one of the first companies offering ghost tours in Edinburgh and taking people to the South Bridge Vaults—reputed to be one of the most haunted locations in Europe.

Already in 1685 Edinburgh had some reputation for its haunted locations. Long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century boom of Gothic fiction, a Scottish mathematician and philosopher from the college of Glasgow, George Sinclair, published a curious volume which he elaborately titled *Satan's Invisible World Discovered, or, A Choice Collection of Modern Relations Proving Evidently, Against the Atheists of This Present Age, That There Are Devils, Spirits, Witches, and Apparitions, from Authentic Records, and Attestations of Witnesses of Undoubted Veracity: to Which Is Added, The Marvellous History of Major Weir and His Sister, with Two Relations of Apparitions at Edinburgh, The Witches of Bargarran, Pittenweem, Calder, &c.* At least four "modern relations", as the author calls the stories, are set in Edinburgh. One of these stories describes a ghostly encounter in Mary King's Close, which obtained a reputation as a haunted location at least as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and still holds it to this day (Sinclair, 158). Later on, when in the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the Old Town slums were cleared, a dozen books were published. All of them tried to capture the fleeting dark magic of Edinburgh's Old Town<sup>1</sup> as a scene for tales "not only of the old life, but of the very constitution of built nature in that part, and singularly well qualified to add horror to horror" (Stevenson, 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Among those are Robert Chambers' *Traditions of Edinburgh* (1868), Daniel Wilson's *Memorials or Edinburgh in the Olden Times* (1872), William Ballingall's *Edinburgh: Past and Present, its Associations and Surroundings* (1877), *Old and New Edinburgh* by James Grant in 6 volumes (1880), *The Perambulator in Edinburgh* by James Bone (1911), *Historic Stones and Stories of Bygone Edinburgh* by J. Stewart Smith (1924), *The Romance of the Edinburgh Streets* by Mary D. Steuart (1925), *Haunting Edinburgh* by Flora Grierson (1929).

Modern-day Edinburgh keeps cultivating the same dark atmosphere of mystery. The Royal Mile, the central vein of the Old Town, is filled with banners and meeting points for ghost tours. They read “Auld Reekie’s Haunted Underground Experience”, “City of the Dead”, or “Edinburgh’s Ghosts and Ghouls”. Book shops sell volumes of contemporary and old ghost stories. The city seems to maintain connections between places and haunted narratives that lend it a particular atmosphere. In the vein of Karl Bell’s *Supernatural Cities Project*, which aims to show ‘how stories become a way of mapping and imagining the urban environment, imbuing its mundane spaces and functional places with a sense of supernatural alterity’ (Bell 2018), the underlying motivation for this thesis is to explore how the atmosphere of haunting alters urban places.

The focus of my interest is how present-day Edinburgh’s haunting atmosphere is constructed through a set of performative cultural practices. As it is beyond my means to collect objective data on how the public at large experiences Edinburgh and its haunting atmosphere, I intend to analyze it through the lens of Edinburgh’s touristic ghost walks, which are my object of research. Therefore, this thesis will explore how ghost walks conducted in the Old Town mobilize the area’s haunting atmosphere through embodied practices and how this atmosphere relates to the commodification of heritage sites in the age of mass tourism.

To answer my research question, I am going to analyze self-conducted interviews with guides and visitors of Edinburgh’s ghost walks. In doing so, I intend to trace the intricacies of this touristic phenomenon and, consequently, its mechanism of mobilizing a haunting atmosphere. Above all, I am interested in the interplay of heterogeneous elements that come together in ghost walks as cultural practices rather than in the accuracy or authenticity of the narratives used. Thus, my focus is on what people do and feel while interacting with a historical urban environment in the context of ghost walks.

Edinburgh ghost tours are a well known and well-marketed kind of touristic entertainment. They are primarily evening guided tours that take attendants through the city center to one or two ‘haunted’ locations; guides retell some dark history, describe grizzly everyday practices of the past, narrate urban legends, and mention allegedly real modern ghost encounters.

Expert in Gothic studies, Roger Luckhurst, analyzes the limits of the ‘spectral turn’ (a strain of research which employs the notion of spectrality as an analytical tool)

and points out that, in order to avoid universalization and oversimplification, any work on haunting needs to rely on circumstances and specifics relevant to each separate case. Thus, scholars should be looking at “the grounded manifestation of communities in highly delimited locales” (Luckhurst, 536). In this regard, my decision to pick the ghost walks as a research object has several important reasons. Firstly, they present a case of embodied urban experience in a specific location and context, which weaves together different elements of the urban landscape and ways of exploring space. Secondly, they include activities (walking, listening, performing) as well as objects and narratives: urban heritage, scenery, and folklore. Besides, a ghost walk is ultimately a (multi)sensorial experience, one that engages not only one’s cognitive abilities but also triggers sensations and bodily reactions.

## *1.2 Theory*

The notion of atmosphere is tied to human experience, which, in turn, is the result of various practices performed in a specific spatial, social, and cultural context. To bring all these together, I employ Actor-Network theory and then, as I define the main actors, I supply them with further theoretical support, focusing mainly on non-representational strands and tendencies, such as performativity, materiality, affect, and emotions. Following the ideas of Judith Butler, I pay attention to performative practices that shape the atmosphere of ghost walks and perpetuate it. I also dedicate a large part of my theory to historical places and their specific roles in shaping atmospheres as well as containing additional value and meaning both aesthetically and semantically (Rowe and Koetter 1978, Nora 1989, de Certeau 1980).

### *1.2.1. Atmospheres*

First of all, I am going to address the phenomenon of atmospheres because it is central to my research question. To understand how an atmosphere might be mobilized, it first needs to be established what it is and how it is understood in relation to places or cities. Research on atmospheres has intensified only over the last decade (Edensor, 2012, Edensor, 2015, Buser, 2013, 2017, Sørensen, 2015, Pallasmaa, 2014). Atmospheres are usually conceptualized in relation to space and place, as another way of transforming the latter by enhancing them with more dynamism. Böhme suggests that the urban world “enters our disposition through the impression it makes” (Böhme, 48). Atmosphere is primarily understood as a “complex multi-sensory fusion of countless factors which are immediately and synthetically grasped as an overall ambience, feeling, or mood” (Pallasmaa, 230). They are “experienced emotionally before they are understood intellectually” (Borch, 12). Experience is thus an indispensable part of any atmosphere. Both experience and atmosphere can be seen as part of the non-representational shift in the humanities, which, mooted by landscape studies and cultural geography, corresponds to the 1990s ‘affective turn’ and ‘material turn’ whereby there is a re-turn to the emotions, the body, the material and experience (Clough 2007). It signifies an attempt to break away from a cartesian, speculative, representational way of looking at things and come back to a more “down-to-earth” perspective, which is closer to practices. The main theorist of the non-representational approach, Nigel Thrift, states that non-representational research is concerned with the performative manifestations of everyday life in cultural geography, with “mundane

everyday practices that shape the conduct of human beings towards others and themselves in particular sites” (1997: 142).

Structural heterogeneity and the general intangibility of the phenomenon of atmospheres call for a specific approach that could weave together various elements, not limited to texts and other kinds of representations. This is why the non-representational approach is well suited for my research. It can operate as an umbrella principle. Non-representational theory (Thrift 2008, Cadman 2009, Colebrook 2000) appeared as an opposition to traditional representational approaches, arguing that “the basis of meaning [is] commonly situated in actions, interactions and bodily experience” (Buser 2013, 230). In general, within non-representational theory, meaning is created through experience. “Experience” – is one of the main concepts here, and it can be defined as a subjective sequence of bodily sensations and impressions appearing in response to some external stimuli. Such responses glue seemingly unrelated phenomena into one constellation. The body and mind of a person who experiences something can be seen in purely operational terms — as a productive mechanism, some sort of industrial machinery that assembles, connects and glues various elements together.

Atmospheres are elusive and have the potential for transformation and change as they depend on many variables. Yet atmospheres can outlive specific events, or they can be an accumulation of past events, when material artefacts and emotional resonances linger in the present. In other words, atmospheres present a temporal uncertainty which crucially depends on practices of cultural memory (Edensor 2012, 1115-1116). This uncertainty is present in scholarship on the atmospheric qualities of ruins or allegedly haunted sites where the past has not been fixed by a unifying narrative (Edensor 2011, DeSilvey and Edensor 2012, Gallagher, 2015, Buser 2017).

### *1.2.2 Ghosts*

Ghosts are rather important figures for the ghost walks. Many spots in local touristic narratives are directly linked to certain spirits, which have their own pattern of behavior. The possibility of their manifestation during the tours is both feared and expected. Their presence in the narratives is crucial for the experience. After all, the atmosphere is branded haunting because of their alleged presence, metaphorical or otherwise. Ghosts are generally a hard-to-grasp category, and in the case of the walks, they are both liminal and affective: they are not defined in any metaphorical or physical

way, not all participants are into mysticism and yet they are said to affect visitors on a physical level (pushing, scratching, whispering). Thus, I choose to examine this element primarily via Derrida's ideas of *hauntology*, which he first introduced in his essay *Spectres of Marx* (1994). Hauntology implies a situation in which elements from cultural, social and historical past return or persist in the manner of a ghost. In the context of ghost walks, I consider the fictional figures of ghosts as a dark past hanging in the present and affecting this present while being invisible and undetectable for the onlooker. Derrida calls this feeling of the unseen presence the *visor* (199), because the one looked at cannot identify the one watching them. In the British tradition, ghosts are often place-bound and mark a spot with a memory of the past, creating a certain temporal in-betweenness (Heholt, 2016). Haunted places (places associated with the supernatural through ghost stories and legends) also correlate with what Pierre Nora calls *lieux de memoire* (1989). A lieu de memoire is a site, a place, a concept or any other entity that is primarily employed for the memory practices and out of practical use. This concept can be perfectly applied to haunted urban landscapes, explaining their prominence and creating a link between places, heritage, memory and haunting.

### 1.2.3 Place

The concept of 'place' holds an important meaning for touristic practices. It is not simply an empty grid for walking, but it also defines the route and the narratives, and it presents specific affective zones, allowing for a variety of cultural practices. Speaking metaphorically, it is a stage with a lot of props, waiting for a performance, actors and audience. Thus, places should be understood as multidimensional systems defined not only by their geographical or quantitative characteristics but also by the way they are enacted. The meaning and the complexity of places became the main subject of the so-called "spatial turn", as exemplified by the works of such notable researchers as Michele de Certeau (*Practices of Everyday Life, 1980*) and Henri Lefebvre (*Production of Space, 1974*).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most cities underwent a massive change and either lost their historical texture or were expanded and rebuilt in a completely new way. Functionalism in urban architecture became the main principle which transformed entire cities, ridding them of old structures. One of the well-known revolutionary architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Le Corbusier, was a pioneer of this new approach, he did

not only compare the house to a machine but he also said that architecture should “establish emotional relationships by means of raw materials” (Le Corbusier, 140). The prefab buildings called 'Khrushchyovka', in part representative of his ideas, are to be found in great numbers all over the former Soviet Union. These gray-block neighborhoods often dominate suburban areas, making them look monotonous and indistinguishable from each other. Starting from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, similar standard houses can be seen almost anywhere around the globe. Theorists such as Gernot Böhme (2017), Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980), and Steen Eiler Rasmussen (1959) argued that historical locations, in contrast, hold more character, ease identification and ensure the sense of continuity. These properties of historical quarters can be realized through a number of performative practices such as walking and learning, especially getting in touch with local stories. Practices allow for the establishment of connections between physical objects, materials, landscape, city structures and its past, its character. They are woven together into one constellation by human actions and the subsequent effects of these actions.

#### *1.2.4 Practices and affect*

Practices play an important role in cultural geography. They are not simply some actions happening somewhere. On the contrary, practices shape places and relationships, and they create connections and contexts. De Certeau calls space “a practiced place” (117), Lefebvre (1974) introduces '*espace vécu*' – representational space, to which meanings are assigned through the everyday activities of its inhabitants. They can be thought of as a glue that connects and actualizes constellations of objects and meanings over and over as long as certain activities last and are repeated.

During ghost walks, the urban environment is performed in a certain context. A historical environment allows for a rich context of both stories and routes, which usually go hand in hand with touristic experiences. Walking in this case creates more than a physical set of points on the map, for “streets are repositories of stories and specters that may suddenly be actualized in the present” (Pinder, 18). Thus, walking may also actualize a number of different stories, including urban legends, a genre that is impossible to “isolate [...] from their situational and sociocultural environment” (Degh, 2) and which is often contextualized by the ritual visitation of fear-inspiring locations (17). These two activities lead to the third one, sensational affect. The term

‘affect’ in cultural geography “has come to name the aleatory dynamics of experience, the ‘push’ of life which interrupts, unsettles and haunts people, places or things” (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 16). Steve Pile notes that it is a “transpersonal capacity” which is also “pre-cognitive” (2009, 8) and can be represented in emotional group reactions such as laughter, fear, etc. During ghost walks, attendants and guides perform certain practices which allow them to interact with the city and its stories and experience a certain affect as a result. In this case, I use affect interchangeably with unusual emotion, reaction or feeling, as it finds its expression in a number of well-identifiable emotional reactions, albeit they do not always explain, describe or express the essence of the affect. Most often affective reactions include fear or anxiety coming from physio emotional unrest which consequently are lived by retelling old or new urban legends.

### 1.3. Methodology

In my methodology I relied on instruments that could reflect the actual experience people have while participating in ghost walks. First of all, I needed first-hand accounts that could describe the experience. Starting with the cultural turn in the social sciences in the 1990s, researchers focused on the subjectivities attached to people's "lived experiences that challenge (and reject) the objectivist and constructivist ideologies that form the basis for quantitative scientific approaches" (Holton). I employed the method of qualitative semi-structured interviews (Dunn 2016, Longhurst 2016) and conducted live interviews with guides and set up an online questionnaire with some open questions for attendants. These choices (face-to-face interviews with guides, online questionnaire for attendants) were dictated by both the ethical difficulties with questioning customers after tours and the guides' varied emotional and professional investment in their job and urban context. This varied investment and varied views on the subject of haunting allowed me to assume their relative independence from any marketing strategy. Even if some answers were commercially motivated, they still were inside a collection of quite diverse individual responses.

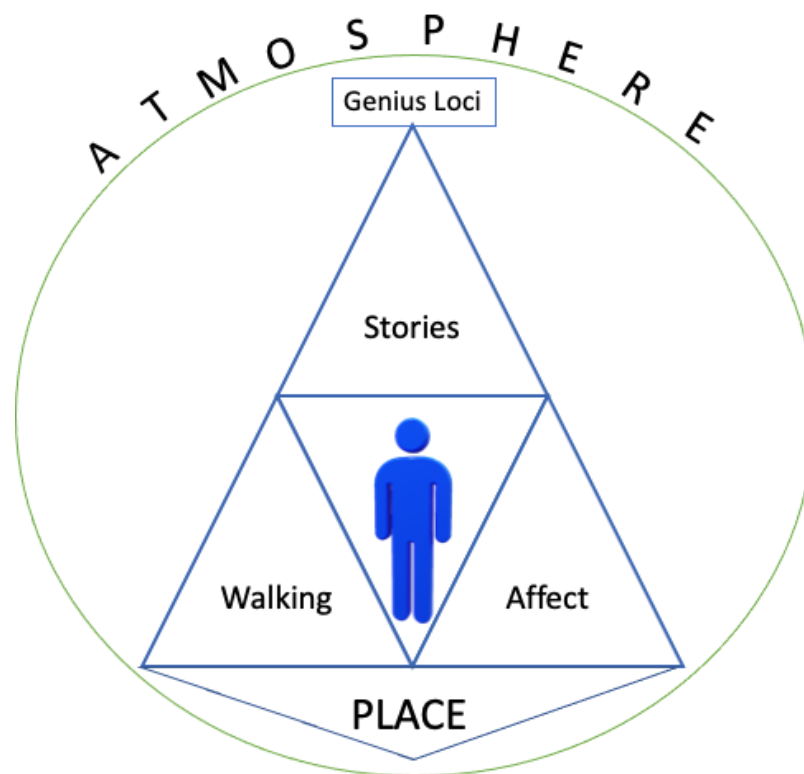
Following the first stage of gathering information, I aimed to outline the assemblage of elements that constitute the experience of ghost walks and also find their reflection in collected interviews and questionnaires. For this purpose, I employed a body of Bruno Latour's, Michele Callon's and John Law's Actor-Network theory (Callon 1990; Latour 2005; Law 2007) and Karen Barad's concept of intra-action (2007). ANT is defined by John Law as

The actor-network approach describes the enactment of materially and discursively heterogeneous relations that produce and reshuffle all kinds of actors including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, 'nature', ideas, organizations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and geographical arrangements. (2007,1)

Therefore, within ANT, phenomena exist as assemblages of various actors or actants. These assemblages are relational and depend on the connections between actors. Karen Barad, drawing on the ideas of Latour, introduced the concept of *intra-action*, which

seeks to describe events borne out of a dynamism of forces (Barad, 141), those that do not always rely on human agency or intentionality. Such intra-actions might result in volcano eruptions, chemical reactions, and so on. However, intra-action might as well be applied to cultural geography to explain experiences that appear as a result of a mix of various external factors.

Taking ANT and the concept of intra-action as my basic methods, I created a raw visualization of the main elements that constitute the experience of ghost walks and mobilize the haunting atmosphere as a result. I am introducing this scheme now but will come back to it once more before my case study, when it is substantially supported with theory and thoroughly explained so that the reader does not get lost.



Within this methodological framework, I looked at the phenomenon of ghost walks as a performative activity which assembles a network of human and non-human actors, operating in a series of intra-actions.

At the basis of the scheme illustrating the atmosphere lies the physical place, which serves as a stage for practices and as a container for the mass of “inward-turning stories” (de Certeau). Place here becomes an anchor and a reservoir holding a multitude of elements, qualities, stories and events, some of which can be animated through practices. As people perceive and perform the place (seeing, listening, feeling,

walking), they are simultaneously being affected by it. In the center of the scheme, I placed a human who, through practices and affect, perceives a certain image of a given place. In the case of ghost walks, the focus on the scary, the gloomy and the strange leads to a set of affects which, when reinforced by the storytelling, may be interpreted by attendants or guides as a ghostly presence. Therefore, as a result of an experience (performative and affective at once), figures of ghosts become associated with the place as their personification, guardians, much like the Roman *genii loci*. Ghost tours employ all the gloomy aspects of Edinburgh's urban environment to provide an embodied experience of the dark Edinburgh underbelly – thus, mobilizing a haunting atmosphere. The haunting atmosphere network is a mechanism in which elements depend on one another and reinforce one another in accordance with the principle of ANT networks. Although performative and affective elements are organized as a triangle in the scheme, there is no clear hierarchy between them, they should rather be seen as ribs of the pyramid, forming around a person and from the base-place. The top of this pyramid is crowned by the *genii loci*, they appear as a certain conceptualization of the experience. The haunting atmosphere is born from all the intra-actions happening within the scheme.

#### *1.4 Case study*

Both in interviews and questionnaires, I was looking for performative (controlled and space-related) and affective (uncontrolled bodily and emotional reactions) elements of the experience. Thus, my intention was to follow the major constituent parts of this touristic experience so that the gathered information could reflect the mechanics of a haunting atmosphere's actor network. I have grouped the information gathered from interviews and questionnaires as follows:

- 1) the remnants (performing Edinburgh's past);
- 2) behind 'the visor' (theorizing urban ghosts);
- 3) ghost language (sensational/bodily aspect);
- 4) living with ghosts (felt haunting atmosphere);
- 5) urban spectacle (staged nature of touristic experience).

These groups of statements feature the actual opinions, reactions and experiences, which represent intra-actions within the network, animating the haunting atmosphere in Edinburgh Old Town. The first group represents how urban architectural structures and city engineering solutions push certain routes and invite certain stories. The second

group shows how ghosts are manifested within the Edinburgh Old Town and how they affect whom. The third group describes specific encounters with Edinburgh's ghostly *genii loci*, non-human actors employed in a process of place signification, which becomes manifest through the "language" of affect. "Deciphered", this language becomes a part of the city's haunting atmosphere in the form of urban legends. The fourth group presents overall impressions people have of Edinburgh's atmosphere, which they largely connect to the heritage, as well as to historical and architectural aspects. Finally, the fifth group serves as a counterweight; it simultaneously gives space to the opinions testifying to the general awareness that ghost experiences are largely staged and related to heritage commodification but also to the fact that, because of the ghost walks, storytelling and urban folklore remain an actual modern phenomenon in Edinburgh. All in all, Edinburgh presents an interesting case of an affective haunting atmosphere preconditioned by a unique urban context and cultural tradition as well as well-established touristic practices which reinforce it.

Ultimately, the thesis presents an example of how a haunting atmosphere can function and be reproduced in the particular context of commercial ghost walks in one specific city. The generalized scheme with a human as a transmitter in the center (a subject to affect and also an active participant of the network) and a net of actants, connected by intra-actions, is applied to the touristic practice of ghost walks in Edinburgh and interpreted through field-gathered interviews and questionnaires.

### *1.5. Summary*

I open Chapter 1 with an overview of the general non-representational approach that I am taking in my thesis because atmospheres are a phenomenon closely connected to human experiences and physical, material premises. After that, I give a general overview of how atmospheres are understood in academia, specifically in the field of cultural geography by authors such as spelling Pallasmaa, Gernot Böhme, Christian Borsch, Buser and others.

Once it is clarified that atmospheres depend on many variables which comprise human experience, I move on to my main theoretical basis – Actor-Network Theory, which allows to weave heterogenous actors into one “organism” and re-assemble a network, which allows for a unique atmosphere to appear as a result of their interactions, or in the case of inanimate objects, narratives or practices, of their intra-action.

I then move onto Chapter 2, which I use to sketch, theoretically support and give context for a rough actor-network scheme of ghost walks. To do so, I separately identify and address different actors important for mobilizing the atmosphere of hauntedness. I start with notions of space and place, as the urban landscape is where atmosphere appears, it is a stage crucial for the experience. However, it is not an indifferent grid. In the case of ghost walks, we are dealing with a multilayered historical city, a quarter of old buildings and structures, most of which are under protection and preservation policies. I briefly address the “spatial turn”, a complex of ideas which allowed to rethink space and place as complex social phenomena rather than facts of geography. And then I move on to the changes cities underwent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how they were influenced by ideas of functionalism and a prophetic approach to city planning. Those changes in turn made some theorists (Christian Norberg-Schulz, Yu Fu-Tuan and others) speak of the special atmosphere some places hold or used to hold, and the importance of the past ingrained in historical places.

After that, I address the concept of performativity in relation to space and place because practices are also an important part of ghost walks and they are inseparable from the cityscape. The cityscape must be performed in a certain way in order to create the needed impression and correlate with certain information. I picked walking and story-telling as two primary performative practices and discussed them separately. I considered walking as a special way of physical interaction with the city, which animates some specific aspects and allows for other sensory impressions to appear:

seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling in passing. Storytelling also plays an important role in ghost walks because it sustains the tradition of urban folklore, helps to preserve stories, spread them and create new ones. In the case of ghost walks, these stories could be called urban tales or urban legends in accordance with Laura Degh's classification.

One of the most important elements of ghost walks is the ghosts that stories are told about. To include them in my scheme, I first discuss place-bound ghosts and give some historical and cultural context regarding ghosts in Britain – how they are perceived, how wide-spread is the idea of haunted places and how they manifest in various literary and other creative accounts. I then move on to their connection with heritage-sites and how they can be understood as *lieux de memoire* (the concept of Pierre Nora). After that, I introduce Jaques Derrida's idea of *visor*, which ties together ghosts' relation to the past as well as the fascination and fear with which people anticipate visitation of supposedly haunted places. In relation to encounters with ghosts and general trepidation experiences such as ghost walks might bring, I also briefly discuss the notion of affect and its influence on the appearance of new ghost stories.

Finally, I address the issue of heritage commodification, as ghost walks are essentially a touristic business that capitalizes on different forms of heritage and the resulting atmosphere or impression might be considered as inauthentic, shallow and commercially constructed. I then present and explain my actor-network scheme, which represents the way the atmosphere of hauntedness can be mobilized during ghost walks.

In Chapter 3, I move on to my case study. I first give a brief overview of Edinburgh Old Town to explain why ghost walks became so popular in this specific city. Then I give an overview of the different ghost walk companies I contacted and worked with. After that, I present the analysis of interviews I conducted with the guides and questionnaires I asked to fill in the visitors and show how the scheme I sketched finds its reflection in people's answers, which demonstrate the scheme's mechanisms and intricacies.

## 2. ATMOSPHERES THROUGH THE LENS OF A NON-REPRESENTATIONAL APPROACH

### 2.1 *The non-representational turn*

The present work tackles the subject of ghost walks and haunted urban atmosphere from a non-representative point of view, from the point of view of practices rather than generalized concepts. It is an important nuance because the very idea of atmosphere loses its power if the immediate context is taken out of the equation. If there is no subject interacting with a specific environment or situation, there is no atmosphere. Walking itself turns into a simple mechanical exercise if there is no specific place to walk. There are many theories and methods paying tribute to the immediate material and everyday contexts, however, non-representational theory plays the role of an umbrella principle, motivating theoretical and methodological choices I have made. Non-representational theory was first introduced by British geographer Nigel Thrift (2008), who defines it as «a mode of thinking which seeks to immerse itself in everyday practice»

(Cadman, 2009: 456). This body of theory was actively developed in the mid-1990s, born partly out of a concern “with the explanatory limitations of social constructivism and a critical engagement with how we understand social worlds” (Buser 2013: 229). Following the ideas of Deleuze on representation, which he describes as “a unique and receding perspective [which] mediates everything, but mobilizes and moves nothing” (Deleuze, 1994: 55–56), non-representational theorists advocate for “the basis of meaning [to be] commonly situated in actions, interactions and bodily experience, rather than discourse, semiotics and representation» (Buser 2013: 230). This approach underlines the fact that knowledge and language are not only semiotic phenomena but also performative in nature, inseparable from life, action and human experiences (Colebrook, 2000). It allows us to look at heritage, touristic and commercial activities from a less critical generalized point of view and more in their own right.

This set of ideas was especially productive for cultural geographers, as non-representational theory is best described as “the geography of what happens” (Thrift, 2). Movement becomes its main element and living turns into a “succession of luminous or mundane instances” (ibid., 5). Cultural geographers Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (2010) continue this idea by suggesting that “the root of action is to be conceived less in terms of willpower or cognitive deliberation and more via embodied and environmental affordances, dispositions and habits” (7). Dewsbury argues that

non-representational theory is an ontology of sense which only exists as a “bodily event” (147). Therefore, the capacity to cognize eventful geographies is not possible without a sensing body. Sense comes before making sense. The principal aspect of non-representational theory is a humble position of thought – it is ignited by feelings, by impulses and by contexts. Thought is not a primary mode of knowledge or learning with feelings and emotions as its corollary. On the contrary, scholastic thinking gives way to responses born deep within the body or psyche, which are later interpreted as thoughts. Dewsbury (2010) describes it as a thought placed between the spaces of sensing and making sense.

The important note, however, is that, although I adopt the non-representational approach and focus on experiences and practices, I do not mean that any representation has to be excluded from research or be condemned. After all, it is impossible to speak of any phenomenon or analyze anything without a text or an image. Moreover, for my case study, I rely on interviews and questionnaires, which, albeit being personal testimonies, are still texts representing subjective experiences. Experience, in this case, is a multisensory activity through which human beings engage with the world in a variety of contexts and these contexts, in turn, influence them. The non-representational stance I take is about addressing the experience in its complexity, relying on immediate participants and their impressions and reactions.

## *2.2 Atmospheres in scholarship*

Atmospheric is a word used to describe the unique character of a place, a gathering, or an event. To describe this hard-to-grasp category, we mostly use adjectives: magical, unusual, relaxed, busy, oppressive and so forth. Urban and architectural atmospheres, in other words, atmospheres tied to a place, have been a subject of academic research since at least the 1960-s.

Herman Schmitz (1969) and Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) were the first to develop the philosophy of atmospheres. Norberg-Schulz considered character or atmosphere as one of the crucial properties of a place that facilitates identification and makes the environment meaningful for its dwellers. The notion of the importance of atmospheres in how people perceive their environment is also present in contemporary research on the subject. The Swiss architect Peter Zumthor claims that quality in architecture is to be judged in atmospheric merits (2006), which are experienced through “emotional sensibility – a form of perception that works incredibly quickly”

and amounts to “immediate appreciation of a spontaneous emotional response” (2006: 13). Juhani Pallasmaa, a Finnish architect and theorist, explains architectural atmosphere as: “the overarching perceptual, sensory, and emotive impression of a space, setting, or social situation [which] provides the unifying coherence and character for a room, space, place, and landscape, or a social encounter; it is “the common denominator”, “the colouring” or “the feel” of the experiential situation» (Pallasmaa, 20). It is perceived not on an obvious visual level but rather “in a diffuse and peripheral manner,” which projects “a temporal process, as it fuses perception, memory, and imagination” (Ibid.,19).

Since I am going to speak of the Old Town of Edinburgh, there is one important point to make about the atmospheres of historical cities as compared to relatively newly built places. Pallasmaa suggests that there are atmospheric and non-atmospheric architecture. The latter he calls «the architecture of an eye» (12, qtd in Borch) – distant and made to be perceived visually from afar, in contrast with haptic and atmospheric architecture, it lacks tactility and intimacy and the weight of materiality. He suggests that images arising from matter create deeper and more profound experiences than images arising from form. Norberg-Schulz also notices that environmental character or atmosphere is determined by the totality of “concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and color” (7-8). Gernot Böhme, German philosopher, speaking of urban atmospheres notices that “the multicultural world of our large cities [...] no longer has a symbolism that is understood by the community as a whole” (51). He suggests that the intuitively perceived «historical depth of a city» (ibid.) can be a universal impression, understood and shared among all people. The historical depth can be felt when we, for instance, see churches that «are, as it were, rooted: they rise, so to speak, from the ground, like trees» (52).

To conclude, there are several traits of atmospheres that are important for my research. First of all, atmosphere will be understood as an overall impression that one gets of a specific place. Second of all, the materiality of one’s environment will be taken as a factor contributing to the intensity of the experience, as well as the capacity of these materials to contain and indicate «historical depth», since the ghost walks I am exploring are conducted in a historical town, known for its atmosphere of hauntedness. Moreover, the material aspect and its importance correspond with the non-representational approach I take and lead me straight to my methodological choices.

### 2.3 “Material turn”: the atmosphere as a heterogenous network

The role of matter in culture and everyday life is explored within a strand of research known as the “material turn”. The material turn is a reaction to the so-called “discursive turn” triggered by the crisis of representation widely theorized among poststructuralists, and ultimately, research focuses on “the importance of artifacts, natural forces, and material regimes to social practices and systems of power. It looks at how material forces affect the conduct of everyday life, discusses how and when non-humans have agency, and explores the methodological value of studying materiality for illuminating under-examined forms of social life” (Mukerji 1).

The «material turn» can be understood as a shift towards materiality that exists not purely in its utility but as a self-affirming force. One of the main theorists of the “material turn”, Bruno Latour, in cooperation with Michel Callon (1992) and others, introduced the so-called Actor-Network theory (ANT) (2005). It is a theoretical and methodological approach to social theory in which all elements in the social and natural worlds exist in constantly reshaping networks of relationships. Ideas, practices, objects and other elements are taken into account as no less important in creating social situations than humans. ANT can technically be described as a «material-semiotic» method – it explains relations that are simultaneously material (between things) and semiotic (between ideas). Network here denotes a system of interconnected actants which, in turn, denotes human and non-human actors. Social situations and experiences, thus, are especially interesting for this approach as they can be looked at as one organism, where a certain event, activity, or practice presents a whole set of different actants.

Following Latour’s footsteps, Karen Barad, a theoretical physicist, feminist theorist and author of theory of agential realism (*Posthuman Performativity: Toward an understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*), introduced the concept of intra-action to the field of humanities. This is a term used to replace «interaction,» which requires pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces (Barad, 2007, p. 141) in which all designated «things» are constantly exchanging and diffracting, influencing and working inseparably.

I am going to apply both Latour’s and Barad’s ideas about non-human actors as active contributors to unique (because the form and content of a network is different

in every given case) social situations in my research with one important objection. Langdon Winner fairly criticizes ANT, pointing out the fact that things and ideas cannot be attributed equal agency with humans as they lack intentionality, which stands as an exclusively human quality (1993).

Thus, a place and its properties can be understood as a specific scene where various intra-actions take place, forming multiple connections between human and non-human actants – people, objects, routes, natural forces, functions, relationships, emotions, etc. Human body animates this scene by not only intentionally taking part in certain activities but also by registering and expressing their experience.

Experiences like ghost walks can be seen as networks that involve multiple heterogenous actants. Place operates here as a scene; it is the most stable actant pulling others like gravity. Its dominant position is secured by its immobility and reluctance to change: streets, buildings, architectural styles, the lie of the land, are not likely to dissolve or be transformed fast. To people and a place, we can add walking (as a practice), history and stories or urban legends (as ideas), ghost sightings (as a phenomenon) and performance (as a practice animating certain aspects of space and creating connections). As a whole, this network creates a ghost walk, but most importantly, it mobilizes an atmosphere associated with it.

### 3. MODELING THE ACTOR NETWORK FOR HAUNTING ATMOSPHERES

#### 3.1 Atmospheric places

In order to answer my research question, I am addressing its constituent parts first. A haunting atmosphere must be placed; it belongs in a physical existing locale, be it a house, a city or a forest. It thus must be determined what is understood as a place and which context can make it allegedly haunted.

We know from experience that places hold the power to attract, repel and be remembered. It is such a popular concept, as traveling is all about getting experiences in new environments. Places matter because they differ; they always exceed a collection of facts assigned to them – geographical, natural, historical and others.

#### 3.2 Rethinking space

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a radical change in city planning and architectural styles: some cities were growing and expanding, others had to be rebuilt after WWII; urban environments started to look and feel very different from what they used to be. This change triggered a number of theorists to rethink space and redefine it as it became clear that places are more than simply a passive backdrop; the subsequent works in various fields marked the so-called «spatial turn» in humanities. Its main idea is that the environment and culture are deeply interconnected on different levels.

A few of the most notable names would be French philosophers Henri Lefebvre, with his magnum opus, “*Production of Space*” and Michel de Certeau with “*The Practice of Everyday Life*.” They both underline that the Cartesian mode of thinking, with its privileged position of the image and vision, “has led to an impoverished understanding of space, turning social space into a fetishized abstraction”, as Neil Leach puts it, in a discussion of Henri Lefebvre (Leach, 132). De Certeau contrasts “the panorama-city, a “theoretical” (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short, a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices” (93) and labyrinthine space that walkers interact with. Lefebvre distinguishes between spaces of representation and representational spaces, developing a similar juxtaposition. He introduces “a conceived space («*espace conçu*», space of representation), a place for the practices of social and political power” which is “designed to manipulate those who exist within them” (Lefebvre, 222) and a lived

space («*espace vécu*», representational space) to which symbolic value is attributed by its inhabitants and visitors spontaneously. While de Certeau sees place as an indifferent abstraction of language versus the intimacy of concrete space as individual, unscripted speech and Lefebvre lists different types of production of social space which have different goals, they both focus on the fact that one place can have many facets, corresponding with different aspects of modern life. Space/place is thus produced by different agents and actions: social interactions, everyday routine, larger political and economic forces transform and bend environments and thus experiences. The problem both de Certeau and Lefebvre formulate while discerning different types of space/place is the growing power that political, economic, and ideological forces hold over environments. In other words, environments seem to be becoming more and more supplementary, meant to provide the best possible transition or commute. De Certeau says in relation to this that we live in “places in which one can no longer believe in anything” (de Certeau, 107).

Something has indeed changed in urban environments in the last century. Newly built cities and neighborhoods have very little in common with the way historical places look and feel. This idea runs closely to Pallasmaa’s thoughts on atmospheric and non-atmospheric places, as well as it corresponds with Böhme’s idea of felt historical depth.

### *3.3 Historical vs modern cities*

The evolution of ideas leading up to this radical change explains what and why modern urban environments differ from historical ones. More precisely, it clarifies how different environments make people feel.

After WWII, Swiss architect and theorist Le Corbusier proclaimed that “a house is a machine to live in” (Le Corbusier, 89). He was one of the most well-known practitioners and theorists of functionalism, a movement in architecture in which “ornament must justify its existence by means of some tangible or practical function, [it] must articulate the structure, symbolize or describe the function of a building, or serve some useful purpose” (Zurko, 4). The Russian philosopher and cultural theoretician Mikhail Yampolsky considers the turn towards functionalism an answer to historicism, which burst in the 19th century and provoked the disappearance of organic styles of the past :

When everything is infested with historicism, it becomes obvious that no historical style is possible, that modernity is unable to produce any historical style. In my opinion, this inability is a result of historicism. Everything becomes historicized; modernity disappears. And this disappearance is a part of an important process of the formation of a new modernity that emerges through the decomposition of styles and liberation from them. When style becomes ornamental, it can be simply attached to a façade. (Yampolsky 2013; translations from Russian are mine unless indicated otherwise)<sup>2</sup>.

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, in their book, *Collage City* go further in their inquiries and argue that the root of the urban changes are to be found in utopias known from the antiquity and middle ages. During the enlightenment from metaphors and parables, utopias were reformulated as instructions: the environment should be organized in such a way that will provide transparency, simplicity, and equality.

The main troubles that this approach entail are «disregard for context, distrust of the social continuum, the use of symbolic utopian models for literal purposes, and the assumption that “the existing city will be made to go away” (Rowe and Koetter, 38). As an alternative to it Rowe and Koetter bring an example of gothic cathedrals as «mnemonic devices», buildings created to «articulate thought by assisting recollection» (ibid., 48). Memory, in this context, stands as the common ground, uniting element enabling interaction between people. «If without prophecy there is no hope, then, without memory, there can be no communication» conclude Rowe and Koetter (Ibid). Memory ingrained in historically developed cities thus stands in opposition to functionality of the modern suburbs.

### *3.4 Atmosphere as a crucial urban element*

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<sup>2</sup> Когда все пронизано историзмом, выясняется, что никакого исторического стиля быть не может, что современность не в состоянии выработать никакого исторического стиля. Я думаю, что эта неспособность как раз и является продуктом историзации. Все становится историзированным, современность полностью исчезает. И это исчезновение современности — часть важного процесса становления современности, которая рождается через разложение стилей, освобождение от них. Стиль становится орнаментальным, он просто навешивается на фасад здания.

The prevalence of functionalism, inspired by a certain architectural prophetism, created a division between historical quarters (or cities) and modern urban environments built in the spirit of functionalism. The principal difference between the two became one of the subjects in phenomenology of architecture, a strain of research in the theory of architecture inspired by the ideas of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger introduced the concept of “dwelling” as an existential process of finding deep connections with a place where one lives and builds (1971). Following this idea, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, a Danish theorist, in his most famous work, *Experiencing Architecture* (1959), researched architecture (its proportions, rhythm, and light) as a source of moods and sensations and criticized architecture of his own time for losing “quality”. In his opinion, built environment started lacking the existential depth as the gap between functionality and art (that used to come together in architecture) widened. Chinese-American human geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, also focuses on the experiential part of environments in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977). His ideas are running quite close to Rasmussen’s, he insists that «the geographer [...] and the architect-planner tend to assume familiarity — the fact that we are oriented in space and at home in place — rather than describe and try to understand what «being-in-the-world» is truly like» (200-202 Tuan).

Christian Norberg-Schulz follows a similar line of thought in his book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980). He develops Heidegger’s concept of dwelling, which he alternatively refers to as an “existential foothold”. Architecture should provide this foothold; it should be a facilitator in the process of recognizing life as meaningful. Place, for him, is a “total” phenomenon, [which cannot be reduced] to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight» (Norberg-Schulz, 7-8). More precisely, a place consists of space (as a three-dimensional organization of elements) and character (the general atmosphere). Places, thereby, cannot be treated only pragmatically as abstract spaces containing impersonal infrastructure, where “blind forces of economy and politics may have free play”(182).

To sum up, the very need to define and redefine space and place has come from the radical changes in urban environment and its functions, which had an impact on people. All these works imply that historic (build before IIWW) places and modernized urban spaces (especially suburban areas) started to develop striking

differences. The very principle of building and city planning has changed. Thus, the «character» and, consequently, the atmosphere started to differ significantly. While historical areas keep emanating some meaning beyond utility, modern buildings are meaningful insofar as they signify late capitalism's need to turn living into a reproducible commodity.

Meanwhile, historical quarters are used for dwelling less than they used to; these days historical buildings largely serve as museums, hotels, shops, offices, often their use is replaced by preservation policies and restrictions. In urban locales, most of private life takes place away from the center, in modern neighborhoods (in some countries, such as Russia, for example, those areas are called «sleeping communities» to refer to the fact that people work and live in different areas). There is a split here between the types of urban spaces and their use. This split makes an individual a visitor, a passerby in historical environments, which potentially complicates identification and connection with the past ingrained in places. People primarily spend their personal time in modern standardized apartments and their attempt to relate to the past by interacting with heritage sites and historical areas takes the form of tourism, a practice often criticized for its shallowness. Suburban examples of functionalism operate as a counterweight to the popularity of historical cities due to their striking differences.

A historical area of Edinburgh Old Town – by Norberg-Schulz definition, a geographically limited space with a defined «character», which can operate as a «mnemonic device». At the same time, this place primarily hosts hotels, shops, restaurants and businesses rather than being used for dwellings. It can thus be seen as a part of a large atmospheric actor-network which includes a range of touristic practices that enable interaction with the past of the place, such as ghost walks.

### *3.5 Performative and embodied urban practices*

Guided walks involve two types of participation – the guide and the guided. A guide acquires a position of authority as the one who knows the route and who chooses which aspects to cover and which details to focus on to create a memorable experience, and the guided consumes the information and reacts to it. It is not, however, fair to say that the whole experience is limited by the guide's decisions and script. In accordance with the non-representational principles of research, less obvious practices must be noted as they contribute to the experience just as much as the script of the walk. I, thus,

consider such, the practices of walking the city and urban storytelling (stories people recall in the aftermath of their experience).

To incorporate these practices into the atmosphere, actor-network, I will appeal to the concept of performativity. First described by a philosopher of language, John L. Austin, «performativity» means a capacity of speech to act or to consummate an action. Common examples of performative speech include making promises, betting, etc. (Austin 1962). It is, however, not limited to speech. Most notably, in the 1990s, Judith Butler employed the concept of performativity to show how gender is constructed and enacted.

### *3.5.1 Walking the city*

Walking is performative for it is an embodied way of learning about a place and, more importantly, a way of shaping it.

For Lefebvre, for example, subversive representational spaces which relate “to the clandestine or underground side of social life” (33) are created through a series of performative acts, acts of mental appropriation completed by local communities (murals, new names, subtle decorations, etc). Speaking of walking, Christine Boyer says, that “we are compelled to create new memory walks through the city, new maps that help us to resist and subvert the all-too-programmed and enveloping messages of our consumer culture” (28). Rebecca Solnit, in her book *Wanderlust*, notices that many locations are now explored on foot and testifies to the “pedestrian renaissance” (Solnit 2002) that cities are currently witnessing due to the increasing speed of modern life as a result of modern technologies and as a reaction to “the disembodiment of everyday life” (Ibid, 267).

Commenting on Benjamin’s ideas of *flânerie*, Susan Buck-Morss points out that “it is the material culture of the city, rather than the psyche, that provides the shared collective spaces where consciousness and the unconscious, past and present, meet” (Buck-Morss, 110). Thus, a walk can perform more than connecting a set of points on a map; a walk can weave together meanings, ideas, and events; it may express a conflict or resolve it.

The French philosopher Michele de Certeau describes the modern practice of walking as a creative act in the quest for meanings. Although de Certeau’s stroller is not a tourist as we think of them now, he is infected with a similar longing as modern travelers: he is desperate to find something that has not yet been consumed by

“functionalist totalitarianism”. He tries to connect with places by picking debris of what made them habitable, by creating “trees of gestures” not organized by anything but a hunt for continuity, for a story (107). De Certeau claims that “travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different”, it produces “an exploration of the deserted places of memory,” the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places, and the “discovery” of relics and legends” (ibid).

Walking is not only a travel through space, it is also a travel through time. Steve Pile points out that: “the networks of streets both produce and contain memories”. At one and the same time, one can travel in time and move through space. Each new angle, each new experience on the streets, could produce another memory – in a flash, the past, the present and the future are combined and recombined» (Pile, 115). David Pinder describes walking as a practice which can uncover stories buried in the city texture as spectres: «the shifts in times and places are also like the recall of memories, triggered by the passage through space, where the city and its streets are repositories of stories and spectres that may suddenly be actualized in the present (18 Pinder).

Walking, thus, is an embodied practice which possesses the performative power to shape, transform and appropriate spaces. It is simultaneously a spatial and temporal experience in which the past, present and future collide. It is especially so for ghost walks, which are designed to experience the spectral, to feel the anachrony, the web of intersecting stories from now and then.

### *3.5.2 Affect*

All the practices integral to ghost walks lead up to a culmination point – to an experience of hauntedness. This experience is much anticipated and, at the same time, feared by those who attend the walks. Those who experience something strange struggle to explain their sudden panic, paralysis, inability to speak, or other complexes of feelings that might be hard to identify or explain. Or, in case people do not experience anything strange, they still get an impression from the walk – a specific feeling associated with the route, the lights, and the tales.

In the mid-1990s, the subject of emotions and affect became topical in the social sciences and humanities. Patricia Clough coined the term “affective turn” for this strand of research. The principal focus of this turn is the ambiguous connection between mind and body, the complex causality of their interactions and the outer

stimuli because affects, as Michael Hardt points out, “illuminate both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers” (Hardt, ix). Clough herself explains affectivity as “as a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness” (Clough, 2), affect thus “constitutes a nonlinear complexity out of which the narration of conscious states such as emotion are subtracted” (Ibid). In the context of this work, affects stand exactly between body and mind, emerging in the middle, Steve Pile calls them “pre-cognitive” (2009, 8). However, understanding the complexities regarding definitions of this term and the related ongoing discussion, I must note that in the present thesis affect would be understood as a state of uncertainty appearing as a result of visiting supposedly haunted locations. James Hanton, who also researched Edinburgh ghost tours, came up with the term “affective enchantment” (Hanton2021) in relation to the crafting of this specific experience “which is described in affective terms and permits an escape from normal life” (Ibid). Thus, I mean the psycho-emotional state of alarm and emotional sensitivity provoked by a certain experience, which can express itself in a range of emotions and reactions.

### *3.5.3 Urban storytelling*

Another important performative practice that has become a part of Edinburgh ghost tours is storytelling. Both guides and attendants have their own stories about ambiguous or uncanny experiences in one of the locations on the walk route. These experiences, when described, either have to do with the historical/fictional tales associated with a place and/or take the form of an urban ghost story that happened to them.

Within cultural geography, stories are now understood “as fundamentally implicated in the production of cultural, economic, political, and social power” (Cameron, 573). Storytelling “can move, affect, and produce collectivities” (Cameron, 574).

Urban ghost stories are called urban legends among ethnographers. Those stories are specific in form and appear as a result of intra-action between affect, place, its history and its ghosts. They are themselves performative: when told, they become a part of a corpus of stories already surrounding a certain location, solidifying its reputation.

The stories born out of this haunted urban experience have some specific qualities. Linda Degh, an American folklorist, in her book *Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre*, makes a general distinction between a tale and a legend. While the tale usually looks like a coherent story and belongs to the world of fiction, the legend “touches upon the most sensitive areas of our existence, and its manifest forms cannot be isolated as simple and coherent stories; rather, legends appear as products of conflicting opinions, expressed in conversation” (Degh, 2). Legends, she continues, is a genre in which it would be a mistake to “isolate the manifest texts from their situational and sociocultural environment” (Ibid). Unlike tales, which “represent invention”, urban legends represent knowledge and within them is cocooned “a built-in anticipation of contradiction” (6). Most importantly, “the fantastic world of the legend cannot be separated from the real world” (6). Often, the narration of legends is contextualized by a fascination with the ritual visitation of fear-inspiring locations (17). Degh summarizes the definition of a legend as follows:

The legend is a story, a narrative, a communicative act, a social event, a performative genre, a narrative response to a stimulus, a cultural universal, an emergent form, a poetic response. [...] The meaning of the legend has been characterized as elementary thought, as a human reaction to threatening conditions, as «fear and overcoming fear» and a psychological need. (24)

All in all, urban legends are a multifunctional phenomenon. Drawing from Degh's research urban legends: (1) might be tied to a specific place, often fear-inspiring, (2) they are a consequence of an experience, (4) they include a contradictory encounter with the supernatural, (5) they contain a conflict, a doubt, and demand to take a side of believers or non-believers, (6) they require a sociocultural frame of reference. Degh insists that in the case of legends, the task of a researcher is not to speculate on whether or not it is truthful but rather to seek “the subjective truth, the emotional truth”, for truths and beliefs are generally biased and culture-specific. Thus, urban legends may contain and describe elements of actant network which mobilizes the atmosphere of hauntedness.

### 3.6 *Genii Loci*

With the aspects of atmosphere and place covered and performative practices covered, there is one important thing left in my research question – namely, ghosts themselves. Ghosts are a complex cultural and social phenomenon frequently met in the multitude of contexts including academia, art, media and modern folklore. In my case, I look at ghosts simultaneously as a part of affective experiences, urban folklore and city heritage. Tied to the city, ghosts are an integral part of the place, its haunting atmosphere and the process of experiencing it. This subchapter gives a general understanding of urban ghosts within these contexts.

#### 3.6.1 *Urban ghosts in Britain: historical context*

Within the cultural tradition, ghosts take a multitude of forms. They are described as apparitions or invisible presence, sometimes they appear as sounds or smells. The descriptions differ from country to country. Place-bound ghosts of Edinburgh is a central part of ghost walks, thus, this discussion requires a small detour to the history of this phenomenon in British isles known for the heightened interest in ghosts and haunted locations. Susan Owens, an art historian from the UK, explains this fascination as follows:

Can the dead really return to haunt the living? No one knows for sure. But the idea that they just *might* appears to be hard-wired into the British frame of mind. Ghosts are woven into the fabric of our lives: every village, town and great house has at least one spectral resident, sometimes a whole host of them. (7, Owens)

In Britain, the ghosts that we think of today took shape around the 18th century, which marked the period of heightened interest in ruins and secluded dark spaces. The first touristic expeditions to haunted places in Britain are attributed to this period as well<sup>3</sup>. Later on, with the rise of romanticism and the eruption of gothic novels, architecture became a primary source of horrors<sup>4</sup>. Towards the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ghosts started losing their distinctive shapes: there were no shrouds, decomposing bodies, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> A play by Joseph Addison *The Drummer, or the Haunted House* (1716), in which a butler describes how he is going to set up a ghost manifestation for a guest who has come to see a haunted house.

<sup>4</sup> See for example *Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, *Monk* by Gregory Lewis, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe, *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen

Instead, the art became filled with hints and provocative implications. Ghosts meant buried secrets and forgotten deaths: Henry James, in 1872, described his visit to Haddon Hall as follows: «... if there had been a ghost on the premises, I certainly ought to have seen it. In fact, I did see it, as we see ghosts nowadays. I felt the incommunicable spirit of the essence of the scene with the right intensity. The old life, the old manners, the old figures seemed present again” (James, 51). In 1907, Ford Maddox Hueffer wrote in his book *The Spirit of the People: An Analysis of the English Mind* that ghosts are not «a matter of race but one, quite simply, of place – of place and of spirit, the spirit being born of the environment» (qtd in Owens, 220).

An English fin de siècle writer Vernon Lee suggested that in writing about hauntings a reader needs the combination of a richly suggestive atmosphere with a narrative that is sufficiently compelling but not too definite, in a piece titled «Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art» she wrote:

the ghost ... is the damp, the darkness, the silence, the solitude; a ghost is the sound of our steps through a ruined cloister, where the ivy-berries and convolvulus growing in the fissures sway up and down among the sculptured foliage of the windows, it is the scent of mouldering plaster and mouldering bones from beneath the broken pavement [...] ... Each and all of these things and a hundred others besides, according to our nature, is a ghost, a vague feeling we can scarcely describe, something pleasing and terrible which invades our whole consciousness. (Lee 2006, 310)

Lee equals ghosts to Genii Loci (Lee 1898, 6) – to keepers of the land emerging from it, from the sum of its qualities. In other words, haunted places are not necessarily those where one can see an apparition but where there are historical and cultural, physical and symbolical predispositions for a place to be perceived as haunted.

Owens concludes in her book that ghosts as a phenomenon “personify [the] past by replaying it” (12) they are “externalized memories, reminding us of the layers of history beneath our feet, of the old stories that refuse to be erased” (Ibid). All in all, in Britain, ghosts transformed over time and, in most cases, became inseparable from their suggestive habitats, personifying their past.

### 3.6.2 Ghosts as lieux de memoire

What kind of past is it and what kind of stories does it imply? If it is simply history or historical anecdotes, what would be the difference between a normal city tour and a ghost walk? History/memory opposition answers these questions.

The appearance and proliferation of ghosts in Britain as we know them (apparitions, haunted houses), according to Susan Owens, goes back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which matches with the epoch of enlightenment and related changes in city planning and architecture that were discussed above (Rowe and Koetter, 1978). This is where historicism starts off as well, which means that modernity does not develop any specific all-encompassing style anymore (such as gothic, baroque, etc), but constantly looks back to identify and adopt styles of the past, or to collect various things from the past epochs in museums, archives or antique shops (Mikhail Yampolsky, 2013). French scholar Pierre Nora builds his argument along the same lines in his work *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, dedicated to the eradication of communal memory in France. He ties it in part to the emergence of historiography and the subsequent rise of remembrance practices like archiving and conservation: “as traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged assiduously to collect remains, testimonies, documents, images, speeches, any visible signs of what has been”(13). He first coined and described *lieux de mémoire* – places of memory that appear as a result of an opposition between history and memory:

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. [...] Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; [...]. History, because it is an intellectual and secular product, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. [...]. History belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. (9)

*Lieux de memoire* thus are: “the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory

because it has abandoned it” (Nora, 12). They are produced by a push-and-pull motion – memories torn from the flow of official history and put under protection, put to forceful commemoration: “no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded” (ibid). Unless collected, protected and observed, they are threatened by inevitable forgetting. *Lieux de mémoire* work as anchors for memories, they are «natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration (...); they are mixed, hybrid, mutant, bound intimately with life and death, with time and eternity; enveloped in a Mobius strip of the collective and the individual, the sacred and the profane» (Nora, 19). *Lieux de memoire* must combine three qualities at once – they must be material, symbolic, and functional. If a ghost is a memory, then the place it haunts could be a *lieu de memoire*. Those haunted places that are a part of the touristic experience are functional – they are in use but a different use from the initial one (like an old graveyard, for example, where people are not being buried anymore); material – they stand as a locale, can be seen and visited; and symbolical – labeled as haunted. They are environments existing on the verge of memory and history, life and death. Thus, ghost walks are organized around *lieux de memoire*, which within the walks operate as liminal spaces fallen out of the grand historical narrative.

Of course, when writing about *lieux de memoire*, Nora did not mean specifically historical towns, dark tourism or haunted places. While other places or phenomena which fall under this category might often have one or several narratives revealing what it is (phenomenon) and what meaning it encapsulates (for instance, a war monument would have to commemorate fallen soldiers) with places, the meaning is often obscure.

The cluster of a place and its memory or its ghosts is alike a time machine because a place exists in the present as well as in the past; we assume that a place was a witness to many more things than we know or that anyone could register. This ambiguity of places and their ever-present references to perished things and people fascinate and attract. Michele de Certeau describes urban areas with «presences of diverse absences» as the most lively and valuable:

What can be seen designates what is no longer there: "you see, here there used to be...", but it can no longer be seen. Demonstratives indicate the invisible identities of the visible: it is the very definition of a place, in fact, that it is

composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers. [...] There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can "invoke" or not. (108)

For de Certeau, hidden, silent memories, the absences, are the keys to transforming a space into a livable place. Memories and spirits in his writing merge to haunt and to dwell, they exist like a mental cloud of debris connected to a certain spot.

Present absences meanwhile are one of the most common characteristics of ghosts, Ruth Heholt notes, for example, that ghosts «whilst being the very definition of in-betweenness are caught in-between in the liminal spaces of here and not-here» (8). Ghostly presence-absence is something French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls “hauntology” in his book *Specters of Marx*. His ideas present an interesting way of dealing with these silent spirits. The logic of haunting Derrida opposes to the logic of being. Ontology “speaks only of what is present or what is absent; it cannot conceive of what is neither. Within this logic of the present haunted by a multitude of pasts, Derrida introduces the concept of *visor*. In the opening pages of *Specters of Marx*, Derrida discusses Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet* and the disconcerting effect that Hamlet’s late father’s spectral presence has. Horatio tells Hamlet in the third scene of the play that an apparition resembling his late father has been stalking the battlements, wearing his armor (Shakespeare, 77). Derrida is concerned with the invisible gaze of the ghost hidden inside the visor: “This thing, meanwhile, looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there. A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity.” (Derrida, 6–7). “We will call this the visor effect”, he states: “we do not see who is looking at us” (ibid). This “visor effect” allows the ghost “to see without being seen” (8). It is something that is intently present, that imposes its presence on us, but what it is – we do not know exactly. It is the past that we are not aware of, that we did not witness – yet it is close by. This past without a face, this apparition wearing a visor of a place possess a power of a gaze that we cannot meet and answer. The visor effect is what makes us “feel ourselves seen by a look which it will always be impossible to cross” (7). This confusion is, of course, eerie. It creates an urge to identify the gaze and decipher it. If we apply this idea to haunted places, we might speculate that the past that we are surrounded by (physical city: buildings, turns, streets, bricks, passages, smells and sounds) is ultimately silent, uncertain, untold and when it «speaks» it

employs a language we cannot recognize or immediately decipher because it does not consist of words or possess intelligible logic or orderly plot.

### 3.6.3 Behind the «visor»

Ghost walks are ultimately a touristic experience and touristic activities, it could be claimed, function as a “form of re-establishing our relationship to the past through the experience of place” (103 Plate). People travel and spend money on visiting distant places to fulfill their thirst, in part to interact with the past (Huysen, 2003). Thomas Metzinger (2010) suggests that the embodied nature of experiences like ghost walks evidence the phenomenological construction and reconstruction of our sense of self through our interactions with our environment, offering a (neurological) model of how place memorializes itself in us through affective interactions. If memory making and remembering are physical (Kleinman and Kleinman 1994, Connerton 1989), then ghost walks exemplify this, “demonstrating how tours create avenues for «lived» experiences that make history a «felt» sensation, something «real», tangible and present in the landscape” (Weston et al, 46). Ghost walks constitute activities in which spectral narratives are not merely recounted by the guide but re-enacted and experienced by participants through direct, co-participatory interaction with specific locations.

Museums and heritage sites often offer safe and cohesive narratives to accompany the embodied experience. Ghost walks are slightly different though, because there is “dialectical tension between knowledge of the past and knowledge of the occult” (Hanks, 14), the narratives are often less straight-forward and include all kinds of sources (historical anecdotes, literary fiction, guides» accounts, previous attendants» experiences recounted, etc). This patchwork of facts and fiction – simultaneously old and new, far and close – breaks the boundary between the real and imagined, past and present.

In this regard, ghost walks remind us of de Certeau’s stroller, who finds bits and pieces, fragments, which produce “anti-texts, effects of dissimulation and escape” (107) on his walks through the city. The places for Certeau are filled by «spirits» who we might say wear *visors* because they are «broken into pieces» and «do not speak any more than they see» (Ibid). Places thus become «fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state» (108).

This fragmentary nature is apparent in ghost walks» narratives. Ghost walks combine the embodied experience of walking the city with narratives about the supernatural, which are not simply retold by the guide but enacted and often re-enacted by attendants through spontaneous interactions with haunted locations (when “attacks” happen). That means that people sometimes have or think that they have had haunted experiences during tours and they recount these stories to guides or to other people, simultaneously perpetuating the belief and the reputation of a place. Importantly, more often people recount feeling ghosts rather than seeing them, which they interpret as a response from the physical environment (French and Wilson 2007) and as a claim to it from those who haunt it. People sense the unseen presence (Holt et al.,128) and assume that it comes from the resident ghost, the owner, who guards the territory – unseen and unknown Genius Loci who is concealed by the visor of time and death. The language they «speak» is the one of sensations and sensory illusions – cooling the air, giving headaches, whispering, knocking, banging, calling, pushing and in some cases choking, scratching and biting. It is an experience as intense as it is subjective – always on the verge of imagination, overthinking. Yet a verbalized experience like that requires a frame of reference and it is inevitably recounted and attributed to a specific entity whose story is assembled from the location, scarce historical facts, the choice of victims and the nature of the “language” (tapping to touching hands or violent attacks). Ghost walks narratives are largely de Certeau’s “anti-texts”, assemblages made of debris. They express the anxiety in the face of untold and lost history, lost tradition, fear related to the violent and powerful flow of time and uncertainty about the past. And those stories, because of their ambiguity and their uncanny potential, do not live exclusively in touristic scripts – they multiply and change while staying attached to a place, not a person. Weston et al., relying on Alfred Gell’s ideas on “distributed mind” (1998), make a point about associations between ghosts, places and narratives that they can be seen similarly to the products of creativity, which adopt the agency of a creator and hold the power to affect the minds of others independently from their creator. Consequently, this constellation of heterogeneous phenomena creates an overall feeling of hovering over the city, especially at night time, which we could call a haunting atmosphere.

To sum up, hosts and hauntings in the context of the present work are place-bound and understood as manifestations of the quest for communal memory, where a haunted site functions as *lieu de memoire* and silent memories of the past (inward

turning stories) condensed within, taking on ambiguous and phantasmagoric shapes that are hard to decipher or restore – they are behind the *visor*. Thus, the «language» employed by a ghost needs to be translated into a mix of modern urban folklore, historical facts and a touch of fantasy. Those constellations of stimuli and phenomena are solidified, reenacted and distributed via ghost walks, which by walking and narrating, create a psycho-cultural structure, bringing together old and new stories, material sites and various sensory stimuli created by the environment.

For this structure to work, the environment must meet a few requirements (1) it must be a «lieu de memoire» – physical and symbolical place (2) it must feel as atmospheric, with «symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body» (Certeau 108) (3) it should evoke “uncanny”(Freud 1919) affect, which in turn should encourage (4) the tales of haunting, to which historical and folkloric contexts could be attached.

### *3.7 Capitalizing on haunted places: the doubleedged sword of tourism*

In line with my research question, the commercial aspect of the ghost walks aspect is to be addressed, as it is their essential part. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, for example, claims that “heritage and tourism are collaborative strategies, heritage converting locations into destinations and tourism making them economically viable” (151). Experience in this paradigm is the necessary corollary of heritage and a part of «experience economy» (Pine and Gilmore1999). Dutch scholar Liedeke Plate argues that so-called “cultural tourism” exploits “deeply ingrained longings in contemporary western society” (103) by offering a variety of experiences, including those attributed to the phenomenon of the “Disneyfication” of culture. Overall, a critical approach to touristic experiences and heritage is rather common because they are thought to stifle cultural creativity and encourage reactionary longing (McCrone et al. 1995; Brett 1996; Lowenthal 1998; Choay 2001; Knecht and Niedermüller 2002; Gable and Handler 2003). Along come critiques about the sanitization of history for the sake of tourism revenue and the emphasis on historical titillation as a form of tourism experience (Smith, 40). These questions are followed by the problem of authenticity, which seems to be twofold: authenticity, which tourists seek in on-site performances and authenticity in scientific terms (accuracy of historical representations, factual accuracy) which is paradoxically supposed to undermine the former. Researchers within tourism studies have suggested that tourists may understand authenticity

entirely differently than it is traditionally understood within the authorized heritage discourse, with its emphasis on inherent material qualities. Instead, they have begun to stress the idea of emotional and experiential authenticity (Prentice 1998, 2001; McIntosh and Prentice 1999, 2004).

Smith points out that while the heritage industry critique is concerned with some shallow and reactionary uses of heritage, its limits in debates about the nature of heritage are obvious. One of the main issues seems to be an assumption that heritage invokes longing for the unattainable past, which is commonly perceived as something intrinsically conservative (Smith,43).

This approach to heritage as either an academic matter or a commercially inspired enterprise eliminates the wider audience as an active agent and subject from the picture. Public interest in heritage and use of it is considered totally passive and orchestrated either by pre-established museum discourse or heritage industry (Samuel, 267). Thus, if people are not under the direct supervision of historical or other intellectually sanctioned expertise, they are unknowingly manipulated by tourism marketing.

To overcome this approach, we need to look at tourism wider and as a more intellectually inclusive phenomenon. Crouch states that tourism and traveling are not purely about a destination or a product. It can be understood as an embodied practice, an encounter with materiality that is constructed and understood through our engagement with it - tourism is a practice of ontological knowledge, an encounter with space that is both social and incorporates an embodied “feeling of doing” (211). This falls under the notion of experience that was discussed above and it is indeed often used in tourism for marketing strategies. However, although the sense of experience in tourism has been criticized for its tendency to commodify or Disneyfy the past, «it nonetheless demonstrates the importance of «doing» and «being» at a «place» (Smith, 71).

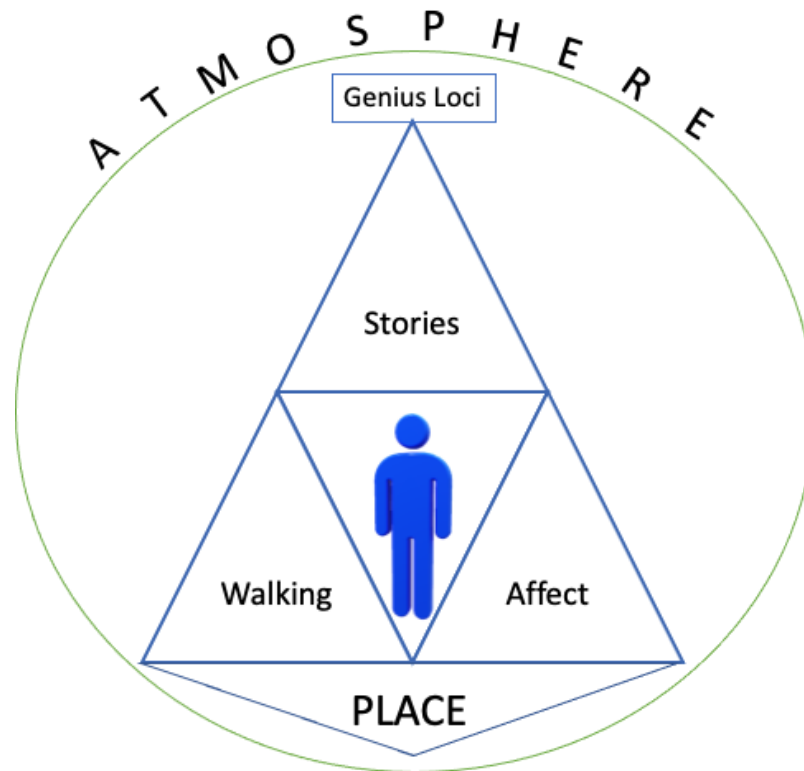
Thus, if one wants to explore a place that is considered to have heritage aspects, its commodification and marketing strategies surrounding it do not immediately render the whole experience false, staged or inauthentic.

Smith concludes that extremely critical focus on commodification of heritage and related to it notions of «experience» and heritage performativity lead to a certain blindness because the intricacy of associations, values and memories becomes completely obscured.

All in all, the commodification of heritage and its commercial use do not cancel the process of negotiating and creating meanings of place and space individually. Marketing strategies indeed create a certain discourse, but this however does not make neither the one operated for commerce nor others emerging from or along it immediately invalid, inauthentic and hollow. Heritage status should not lead to an elitist assumption that the place becomes enslaved by dominant discourses only.

### *3.8 The matrix of a haunting atmosphere network*

Up until now, my aim was to cover major aspects of ghost walks to show how they contribute to mobilizing and creating a haunting atmosphere and now I am going to sum them up before moving to my case study. Ghost walks are a touristic activity present in many historical cities. This activity is ultimately an experience, an embodied practice, which I will consider as such. Urban atmosphere in the present research is understood as an affective phenomenon which arises as a result of the work of a constellation of heterogenous actors (activities, phenomena and material objects). This network includes a place which must refer to its own past (by style and age) and contains contested spots of lieux de memoire, the guide and the guided, performative embodied activities like walking, performing, narrating, listening, gazing and narratives themselves – told and produced. Ghosts during these walks most often manifest themselves as an overall feeling or sensory effects occurring in specific spots. Since place-bound ghosts might be understood as Derrida's visor, as a bulk of half-forgotten unretrievable past, and as I have shown, they are often portrayed in popular culture as an evil veil or specific feeling, residua of the past event. Here I turn to Vernon Lee and borrow her Genii Loci concept – urban ghosts as place-keepers, phantasms attached to one locale and dominating it which personify, «guard», and force to reproduce whatever can be seen from «inward turning stories», forcing the circulation of urban folklore and communal storytelling.



Above there is the rough scheme representing an overall theoretical framework and an actor-network, designed for the present research. At the base of the pyramid is a place: while being a complex structure co-constructed by and existing within social, political and cultural contexts, it yet also presents a material platform which allows activities, events and experiences to, quite literally, take place.

At the center of the pyramid is a human body, which operates as a transmitter, simultaneously receiving stimuli, interpreting and retelling them. Around it are crucial parts of the ghost walk experience, which can be said to happen somewhat in a circular way, creating a causal sequence. The embodied practice of walking the city and thus performing it creates a bodily affect, which, in turn, can create a story or resonate with an existing one. A corpus of stories marks places, pushing people to visit fear-inspiring locations; these visits affect them and so on. On the top of these intra-actions appear ghosts, which I denoted as *Genius Loci*, as a personification of recurring location-specific affects expressed in stories.

This experience, connecting different actors, creates and allows to conceive a certain mental image of a place, an atmosphere.

The scheme above is not a universal exhaustive matrix for the atmosphere in question or any other atmosphere. An actor network consists of multiple elements and can always be expanded to take more actors into account.



#### ***4. THE HAUNTING ATMOSPHERE OF EDINBURGH OLD TOWN***

##### *4.1 Preface*

As was outlined previously, the present research employs the non-representational approach, which allows to focus on experiences as an alternative way of exploring places. The primary idea behind this research lies in the fact that cities are not homogenous structures that can be analyzed by means of vision; they are unique in their atmospheres, which are constituted by complex constellations of agents, forces, meanings, and things. These, in turn, do not exist outside human cognition and can be verbalized only by individuals affected by a place and an experience in all their complexity.

Such a subject requires a collection and analysis of specific data – not only descriptions of the way the city looks, not only its history, but the way it is experienced. Atmosphere is subjective and sensory; it is perceived individually, so it has to be collected individually. Thus, for the following reasons I chose the method of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires for my case study:

- 1) In my theoretical framework, the human body is in the middle, processing all stimuli, thus it was necessary to engage with personal experiences;
- 2) Since I am employing the ANT and intra-action to define and follow the work of a constellation of things and phenomena which could mobilize a haunting atmosphere, I need to look at them within one bulk of data and not separately;
- 3) My own experience is irrelevant and subjective thus I cannot rely on it for the purpose of research;
- 4) Literary accounts will be missing the touristic and heritage aspects as well as the consequences of a direct impact on a personal level;
- 5) Tour scripts also cannot express the sensory and affective impact of the experience in general and of haunted places in particular (and if they do it is not very reliable);
- 6) Oral accounts and questionnaires are spontaneous testimonies and their number allows for making generalizations;
- 7) The methods of interviews and questionnaires also allow for the unique field-gathered first-hand data to be collected, making the case study more grounded.

Thus, my data consists of interviews with guides where they talk about their experiences during the walks and their relationship with the ghostly side of Edinburgh; and a survey with open questions filled in by attendants of such walks. Both types of data are subjective verbal statements reflecting respondents' experiences. Questionnaires and interviews with guides were designed in a similar fashion, but as the interviews were conducted orally, I followed the natural flow of the conversation, letting guides speak about what seemed more important to them.

It is important to mention that the data has biases that I am well aware of; 1) most of the people who contributed tend to acknowledge that Edinburgh is rather haunted than not, although all of them mean slightly different things by it. This bias is not the point of great concern because considering that the present research is not concerned with the actual existence of ghosts or the paranormal, as long as the accounts are unique and self-collected, the credibility of any paranormal experiences is out of question. I look at experiences in their own right as things stimulating mobilization and perpetuation of the urban atmosphere. 2) the guides' interviews can be seen as biased and artificially constructed to fit their commercial agenda and sustain a certain image of the city and their business. There are several reasons behind my decision to use these interviews in my research. Firstly, the format of oral interviews was not available to me in the case of attendants of the walks because it could be seen as intrusive and the companies were hesitant to authorize them. Oral accounts are usually more personal and flexible in terms of structure than online questionnaires. Secondly, after conducting interviews with the guides, I discovered their undeniable diversity. Not only were those interviews different, they were substantive. None of the experiences or opinions were used during the tours or copied from one another. Moreover, among them were people with different opinions on the paranormal and Edinburgh's haunting atmosphere. Their stories were more detailed and coherent than those of the attendants and included "a built-in anticipation of contradiction" (Degh 6). Thus, their accounts seem to be no less valuable than the attendants' especially given the fact that guides know the city better as well as the way the walks are designed. And although it is fair to assume a certain level of professional bias, judging from the diversity of answers, it is not greater than for biased attendants. This second bias is inevitable; however the general message of these interviews is doubt and a sense

of wonder. In several cases, guides claimed that Edinburgh is not more haunted than other cities and openly admitted that they capitalize on the city's reputation.

#### *4.2 Collection of data*

Edinburgh offers a variety of different ghost walks. Usually, they consist of

1) a short walk through the city center with a general introduction into a gore history of the Old Town; 2) visit to one or more of the underground/haunted locations with some historical overview and tales of haunting.

Companies in their marketing strategies often focus on “real supernatural” experiences people can get in these historical locations. One of the companies has a disclaimer on their website which warns: “This tour goes into two of the most haunted places on the planet – the South Bridge Vaults AND the Covenanters’ Prison in Greyfriars Graveyard - lair of the infamous Mackenzie Poltergeist. WARNING: Can cause genuine physical and mental distress. You join this walk at your own risk” (cityofthedeadtours.com). This warning is accompanied by the documented evidence of poltergeist attacks – the entity is said to cause fainting and inflict minor injuries like bruises, scratches and bites (McAlpine).

These tours and locations (South Bridge Vaults and Greyfriars graveyard) are quite famous for various paranormal reports – people hear knocking, singing, yelling; they get pushed and suffocated; they see apparitions, etc. Multiple investigations were conducted, documentaries were shot, and even a few attempts at exorcism took place<sup>5</sup>. The phenomenon of haunting in Edinburgh is closely tied to the violent history of the city and perhaps to its forgetting – the accidents in the graveyard became blamed on Mackenzie Poltergeist with a reference to infamous covenanters’ imprisonment; happenings in the South Bridge Vaults were assigned to their former inhabitants, whose names history did not save for us. These places – the cemetery and the vaults – have been left untouched for at least the last hundred years and at the same time, in the eyes of the visitors, they are swarming with the past events that have not been properly documented, written down or explained.

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ARgVb22f-s>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw7ai787cyE>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgaYoVWTftI>

While in Edinburgh in February 2018, I attended three different tours operated by different companies. These are “The City of the Dead”, “Mercat Tours” and “The Real Mary King’s Close”. These are all businesses running tours for profit, however, they are of different sizes and matters are taken differently in these three enterprises capitalizing on heritage. The phenomenon of “Disneyfication” was previously mentioned in regards to the tourist industry and to architecture as an artificial, oversimplified, entertaining way to engage with history. I found out that experiences are staged differently and create a different effect depending on the scale and approach. I will now give a short description on how tours are organized in these three establishments. I will start with the most efficient and business-like approach and finish with a more makeshift enterprise.

1. “The Real Mary King’s Close” is Edinburgh’s close that has been hidden beneath other buildings for over a century, it has been operating as a touristic attraction since 2003. On the website, it is advertised as an experience:

Explore Edinburgh’s biggest underground experience.

Learn authentic truths about the city’s dark past.

Follow in the footsteps of former residents.

Meet the Plague Doctor and relax in his outdoor courtyard.

Step down into Edinburgh’s hidden history on a one-hour fully guided tour.

([realmarykingsclose.com](http://realmarykingsclose.com))

This location has been given for development to a large company specializing in «touristic experiences» called *Continuum Attractions*. They also run “York’s Chocolate Story”, “Oxford Castle & Prison” and “GreenWood Family Park”. “The Real Mary King’s close,” thus is a part of a large-scale entertainment business. Their office occupies the building above the close with banners and fitting interior, there are a row of cash windows, museum gift shop and a café. Tours run every half an hour, guides are dressed in 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century costumes and play roles of inhabitants of the close. They have a full script according to their assigned personage. The tour has a defined route and timing. Each room contains props and special effects – there are animated portraits, fake chests, recorded voices, expositions with mannequins (plague victims’

room). Other groups are seen and heard during the tour. During the tour, historical facts and urban legends about murders and epidemics are mixed with stories about ghosts.

2. “Mercat Tours” was founded in 1985 and was one of the first companies to offer ghost city walks. Currently, they have a range of tours, both historical and ghost walks. The company has an exclusive access to a section of the South Bridge vaults on Blair Street. It was initially run by a group of history teachers but later turned into a family enterprise. Tours are run every day and can be booked online. Groups are gathered in the heart of the Old Town at Mercat Cross (hence the name). Guides are accompanied by a manager who accepts payments and registers attendants via a tablet. All the guides are wearing black silky cloaks and company badges. The motto on their website says: “History is a damn good story. What it needs is a damn good telling” ([mercattours.com](http://mercattours.com)). The company’s office is located near the entrance to the vaults. Ghost walks include a short stroll through the Old Town and a visit to the vaults. Storytelling is mixed with historical facts. There is no compulsory script. The office near the vaults includes one “museum” room with a few banners, a list of ghosts residing in this section of vaults, things uncovered from the vaults (bottles, tools, pieces of clothing, shells) and souvenir guidebooks on sale.
3. “Black Hart Entertainment” is a small company founded in 1999 by Jan Andrew Henderson, a writer and researcher. The office is located in a small building which used to be a funeral bothy in Greyfriars Graveyard. It is a tiny room containing a table, a few chairs, a collection of dolls and some books, souvenirs for sale as well as guides» change of clothes. They are the only company which is licensed to take people to The Covenanters Prison and a section of The South Bridge Vaults on Niddry Street. All guides are wearing different worn long leather cloaks and leather boots. Surprisingly, all documentation inside the office is led on paper; there is no computer. Administrative and other issues are handled remotely. The bothy hosts a makeshift giftshop with books and postcards» and photo albums with the evidence of poltergeist’s attacks: scratches, bites and bruises that visitors discovered after the tours.

I attended tours with every company and picked “Black Hart Entertainment” and “Mercat Tours” for further research as they were less commercialized and more personally invested in their product. I arranged a number of interviews with guides and set up a google-questionnaire for tour attendants of “Black Hart Entertainment” on their Facebook page. Because the survey was set up online, I had no control over the ratio of age or sex.

The questionnaire was designed as follows:

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Do you live in Edinburgh or are you a visitor ? (local/visitor)
4. Do you believe in ghosts? (yes/no/not sure/another option)
5. Does Edinburgh feel to you like a haunted city (enchanted, sinister, mysterious) (yes/no/maybe/another option)?
6. Did you feel scared, uncomfortable, or alert at any point during the tour? (yes/no)
7. Did you feel any physical or mental unease during the tour? (such as the feeling of unseen presence, unusual coldness, strange wind/breath, being watched, being touched, being scratched, being pulled or punched, etc.) (yes/no/not sure)
8. Please describe your experience in a few sentences if you answered "yes" or "not sure" to the two previous questions. (open question)
9. Where did you feel it? (Vaults/ Greyfriars Cemetery/ Covenanters Prison/ elsewhere)
10. Did the walk change your opinion on the paranormal? (open question)
11. Did the walk change your perception of Edinburgh? How? (open question)

There were 149 respondents (77% women and 23% men), with an age ranging from 14 to 67 years old. Out of this number, 130 were tourists and only 19 were locals. 57,4% claimed that they do believe in ghosts, 10,8% answered negatively and the remaining 31,8% were indecisive (answered «not sure» or suggested their own explanation). 71,5% think that Edinburgh feels like a haunted city, 23,6% are not sure and 5,4% answered that it does not. In terms of fear felt at any point during the tour –

61,5% reported to have felt it, while 38,5% claimed not to. 42,3% of respondents answered «yes» to the question 7, admitting to having experienced one of the effects associated with incidents of haunting.

So for the analysis, I divided and mixed the fragments from my data set to restore the original network, at least those actants and their intra-actions that could be traced in oral accounts. I split the whole corpus of statements into five categories. Those five categories do not correspond with one aspect of my framework each but rather represent intra-actions between them. In other words, they show segments of the network which animates the haunting atmosphere. It is important to point out that the actant network and all intra-actions within it are reflected in personal accounts unevenly because certain actants are less noticed by participants and they tend to emphasize the affective aspects more than anything else.

For instance intra-action between walking and the city is not reflected in most statements, however the whole experience of ghost walk would not be possible without moving through the city because, as a cultural geographer Natalie Djohari claims, «if we evoke the city as actor, we see that what is remembered, the narrative, is chosen by the tour guide, but what can be remembered through the performance is dictated partly by the cityscape itself», guides follow «the availability of visual and sensory cues within the environment» (Weston et al, 47). As the walk continues, it collects different spots in urban cityscapes and stories associated with them, beading a number of impressions into a sequence. This is intra-action between the act of walking and the material mass of a cityscape with its textures, sizes, turns and shortcuts. But the embodied practice of walking the city as a part of an experience usually avoids consciousness because it seems like something very natural, something given. Experiences of the haunting atmosphere when described either have to do with the historical/fictional tales associated with a place and/or take the form of an urban ghost story that happened to them. Parts of the network and intra-actions are to be reconstructed from the descriptions of this affective experience. Such descriptions can be labeled “urban legends”, as I announced in the previous chapters, referring to Linda Degh’s definition.

Both types of data (interviews and questionnaires) partly belong to a genre of urban legends which encapsulate parts of the actant-network mobilizing haunting urban atmosphere in Edinburgh while at the same time being a part of this network.

I essentially divided all responses into active and passive modes of interaction with the environment (doing or getting), respectively, performative (space-related actants) and affective (bodily and emotional reactions) elements of the experience. These two groups are organized in accordance with the idea that a human plays the role of a “transmitter” (a being that reacts, processes and verbalizes external stimuli) and an active agent simultaneously and I detect the mobilized haunting atmosphere through this two-fold human experience (active and passive). I have further grouped the information from the interviews and questionnaires as follows:

- 1) the remnants (performing Edinburgh’s past);
- 2) behind «the visor» (theorizing urban ghosts)
- 3) ghost language (sensational/bodily aspect);
- 4) living with ghosts (felt haunting atmosphere)
- 5) urban spectacle (staged nature of the touristic experience).

Groups 1 and 2 represent active performative participation in maintaining and recreating the haunting atmosphere and groups 3 and 4 are showing primarily the affective aspect, which is about embodied experience and sensations. Both groups are intertwined in a sense that the active phase often follows the passive and vice versa. Thus, inside those groups, the examples would include various actants because it is impossible to separate one from the other since they create a whole.

#### *4.3 The Remnants*

The remnants (performing Edinburgh’s past) is a set of answers testifying to the fact that this place and its past are closely connected. A good part of any ghost tour is focused on the dark history of the place. Interestingly, though, in the case of Edinburgh, the focus is not just on the events and memories of the past but on urban structures themselves. The section shows the constellation of walking as a performative practice, material urban tissue (buildings, streets, landscape) and historical narratives.

Arriving to the Waverly train station one is presented with several peculiar spatial facts – as the visitor stands at what is called the New Town, he looks from a side to a long ridge rolling down with a grey fortress crowning its uppermost tip, the slopes are densely occupied by tall greystone houses with small windows. Between

his viewpoint and the hill lies a long green valley punctuated by several crossings – two are climbing up the slopes and the Northern bridge piercing the ridge somewhere in the middle, high above the station and the valley. The ridge stretches for about a mile, forming a so-called – crag and tail. At the foot of the tail stands Holyrood Castle, the valley around it is defined by Calton Hill to the north and Arthur’s Seat to the south, whilst Edinburgh Castle stands tall on that craggy summit to the west.

Edinburgh is one of the few capitals in Europe that was left almost intact after the destructive 20th century and has been an architectural cradle for spooky stories – and especially for dark ones – for a very long time. Robert Lewis Stevenson wrote a notable essay on Edinburgh, in which he emphasizes the city’s exceptional proclivity towards the weird and the eerie:

So in the low dens and high-flying garrets of Edinburgh, people may go back upon dark passages in the town’s adventures, and chill their marrow with winter’s tales about the fire; tales that are singularly apposite and characteristic, not only of the old life, but of the very constitution of built nature in that part, and singularly well qualified to add horror to horror. (Stevenson, 3)

The geography of the Royal Mile and the lay of the terrain, the engineering decisions, are the backbone of almost every event or tale. The place here indeed operates as what de Certeau calls an “inward-turning story” and as a “mnemonic device” in the sense that it refers to certain events, tales, or stories.

The historical remnants and notions of their importance were present in many answers. These notions were more simplified in attendants’ answers and more elaborate in guides’ answers. The latter often made unexpected connections and shared their opinions on how architectural elements of the past influenced the modern city. I picked out several traits which seem to grip the essence of how those elements contribute to a place and its atmosphere.

To explain the proliferation of ghost tours and haunted locations, Grant, one of the tour guides, points out a combination of gothic architecture and the city outlook with the human interest in inner darkness: “... and this is the side we have always been dwelling on, this dark side of ourselves, and people come looking for it. And you know, it has a castle. it has graveyards. One thing fits the other thing, you give people what they want” (Grant). By “we” Grant means Scots and he attributes the proclivity

to the supernatural to Scottishness also because Scotland is a “backward looking place”. Another guide, Gerry suggests that “there is a particular Scottish thing about identifying with the losers” and he explains his point by referring to material traces and their continuous significance for Scots: «I mean we are still fighting over things that people who died hundreds of years ago fought for [...]. I mean, people still leave flowers at the gates of Covenanters’ prison. There are two guys buried in St Giles church [who were] mortal enemies and they are buried across from each other and people still leave flowers on their graves” (Gerry). Gerry here refers to the infamous Covenanters (whose imprisonment in the southern part of Greyfriars kirkyard is sometimes considered as the creation of the first ever concentration camp)<sup>6</sup>. Both guides imply that the historical and architectural remnants provide a certain basis for identification with not only the local history but also its haunting and violent twists, which reflect the darker side of human life.

Others go as far as to suggest that buildings can record events not only metaphorically but physically and project them. A guide named Tonks proposes a hypothesis regarding why ghosts are seen and heard in Edinburgh and it has to do with the qualities of the material used for building: «chemical compounds that make VHS recording tapes are the same chemical compounds you find in old sandstone buildings and the catalyst for recording onto VHS is water. And in something like 80% of the haunted locations throughout Scotland, there is either an underground stream or a stream in very close proximity to it, so it’s like a scientific explanation for when you see a woman walking through a corridor but she doesn’t interact with anybody. [...] Edinburgh has a lot of these old sandstone buildings that we haven’t torn down and haven’t replaced» (Tonks). Her colleague Karston brings up the ability of material to soak up memories:

Well, for starters, the architecture is very gothic and uncanny. [...]. But then all these buildings, especially in the old town, are that old. [...] one theory suggests that a place is haunted because you’ve got all these spirits or just bloody history memories that have just been soaked into the stonework of the

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<sup>6</sup> In 1679, it was used to lock up over one thousand supporters of the National Covenant who had been defeated by Government forces at the battle of Bothwell Brig. For over four months, these men were held there without any shelter. Many of them died of hunger, coldness and exhaustion.

place and because these are still old original buildings from like 500-600-700 years ago, that's a lot of memories. (Karston)

Gerry, a guide who has been doing tours for over 10 years, directly links the presence of the old city structures to the fascination with the past and with ghosts:

bigger cities demolished their history. Edinburgh is very special because... it does make a difference. Whenever little bits of history are uncovered, it changes the perception of the whole area there. A big fire in Cowgate exposed some old ruins and a lot of artefacts that put a whole new interest in the vaults. [... ] I don't think the city would be the same without its ghosts and I don't think many of the historic sites would have stood if they didn't have that special bit of history that keeps people wanting to see them. (Gerry)

The famous South Bridge Vaults are a common point of reference in Edinburgh. Although invisible to passersby, they constitute a significant part of Old Town. The bridge itself is a nineteen-arch viaduct, piercing the Royal Mile midway. All arches except one were enclosed behind tenement buildings. The hidden arches of the bridge were then given extra floors to allow their use. In total, there are approximately 120 chambers beneath the surface of the South Bridge, ranging in size from two meters squared to forty meters squared. The vaults were used as storage space and workshops at first, but they operated as intended only briefly. The vaults began to flood, spoiling goods and disrupting the work. As early as 1795, the vaults were abandoned, businesses moved out. The abandoned complex became known for its countless brothels and pubs. Conditions inside were appalling. Crimes and diseases soon plagued the Vaults. Towards the end of the 19th century, as the slums were being cleared, the vaults were filled with rubble and sealed. They were rediscovered only in 1985 (Henderson 2008).

This idea of the material being able to soak up events and emotions sends us directly to the thesis of the new materiality, where physical objects serve as anchors for ideas, messages and connections. A place consisting largely of old structures, gothic in look, absorbs and preserves a certain kind of narrative.

Another trait related to the built nature of the city is the way it is structured and especially how much it is defined by its ancient routes and shapes. Edinburgh Old Town still sustains many of its ancient urban solutions. Ancient structures are still in

place and they are used. For centuries, the ridge of the Royal Mile was the heart of life (Coghill, 2). Life flourished on this volcanic rock and it was becoming more and more densely populated. For defensive and trading purposes, several successive stone town walls were erected starting from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century: King's Wall, Flodden Wall and Telfer Wall. They encircled the town from the east and south, while the west was covered by the steep rock surface and the north was secured by Nor Loch – man-made lake in the valley where Princes Street Gardens are now situated.

The Flodden Wall, built in 1513, enclosed an area of just under 57 hectares, and remained the limit of the burgh until the 18th century (Catford, 20). The town was claustrophobic, at the height of the Renaissance, some claim that as many as 40,000 people resided here (Youngson, 266). Because of the walls, the rock formation and the lake, because of the constant English threat from the south medieval and renaissance Edinburgh could not expand in width, instead it started growing up and under. Even today, tall buildings on the slopes might count different number of storeys depending on the side you look at. Basements, cellars, vaults, levels, layers, steps, stairs are the things that define the look and the feel of the Old Town, even in the 21st century.

An experienced guide Rebecca underlines that the structure of the Old Town and, consequently, most of the tours are still defined by the long-gone walls that used to mark the city's boundaries:

One thing that is interesting about Edinburgh – partly because of the old town – is that you are in this small place where people live right on top of each other and it also has some great dark stories. [...] And the fact that there was the Flodden wall makes a lot of interesting historic spaces to go to. So you don't go from one side of the city to the other, you walk around the old town, it's all there on the very practical level – that's why Edinburgh seems to have a lot of these ghost tours. (Rebecca)

Edgar goes further with this argument – if the city was surrounded by a wall people not only lived inside these walls they also died there and found their final rest there, the dead are not elsewhere they physically exist among the living: “You go to Glasgow and you cannot do this, impossible. I mean, you go to a parking lot next to St Giles (main Edinburgh's cathedral in the middle of the Royal mile) and there was a graveyard, there are still around two hundred graves under there, it's a bloody graveyard. You think of all these buildings and streets and there are probably graves

or bodies underneath. You're walking in a massive graveyard". There is an interesting aspect to Edgar's words. The graveyard he mentions used to reside on the flat tail of the Royal mile which means that on both sides of it there were and are passages and buildings sinking deep into the hillside, which makes its residents and visitors neighbors to the dead – they physically exist on the same level.

To sum up, the physical cityscape of Edinburgh plays a crucial role in the city's haunting atmosphere because: 1) grimly looking heritage sites largely related to violent history allow for identification with both the past and the darker side of life; 2) the old stonework having the past memories soaked in has the ability to replay them; 3) the old structures still define the routes of moving around town, and the topics to discuss, moreover they create spaces where the dead and the forgotten stay among the living (locations of old cemeteries, hidden in the middle of the old town caverns and streets). The «condensed» nature of urban engineering in the case of Edinburgh seems to be an overarching principle which allows the cityscape to remain so dominant. Guides» answers indicate that the bulk of the Old Town has an immense impact – it invites certain topics, assumptions and, importantly, routes. The latter easily reverse the time because not only the facades present a certain historical image but the sense and physical reality of depth (going down and climbing up) leaves no choice but to follow the paths created ages ago.

#### *4.4 Behind the Visor*

This is a set of opinions as to what ghosts are and what they might stand for. In this section, I collected guides' responses to the request to define a ghost or explain what «haunted» means. The variety of versions allows to establish a common denominator as to what Derrida's concept of «visor» might cover in the context of Edinburgh ghost walks. The section is meant to give flesh to the notion of Derrida's *visor* and acknowledge its presence and its ambiguity.

Within my research, respondents' definitions bore only vague, general similarities. Respondents seemed to struggle with the coalescence of general, widespread notions of ghosts and their own experiences. Some of them insisted on the existence of different kinds of specters while simultaneously distancing themselves from the practice of entertaining storytelling as shallow and primitive.

Karston defines a ghost somewhat traditionally, as «a soul of a dead person who hasn't moved on or they have unfinished business or somehow they are stuck

here», which can manifest differently: “it can be a particular aura of the place or it can be a visual thing that you see, or it could just be some random strange things happening. Glass moving across the table” (Karston). Rebecca, speaks of ghosts along the same lines: “People say it’s something left from the past. Shadow of the past. It often seems to be associated with stories of unfairness” (Rebecca). Kathy attributes ghost manifestations to the abundance of death in Edinburgh: “I think that [Edinburgh is] saturated with dead bodies. We’ve got a lot of people who’ve died in horrible circumstances. That is probably why people enjoy our stories and come to listen to them. We have had a lot of people who died in horrible ways” (Kathy). Grant ties ghosts to the existential fear of the past: « It’s fear. You know, on a tour, it’s not necessary that people are afraid of ghosts specifically. I suppose it’s an existential thing. People are afraid of bad things that happened in the past” (Grant). These answers reflect commonly known definitions of ghosts, which tie them to the past, violence, unfairness, and deaths. They offer a certain causality where ghostly manifestations suggest research to define the story behind them. In other words, the past behind the visor where «the time got out of joint» requires attention and establishes its presence in the present.

A few guides mentioned that ghosts could be a phenomenon that has yet to be uncovered by more advanced science. Edgar, while conforming to the fact that a ghost is «a man who is dead» theorizes that a human ear and eye detect a very limited range of colors and sounds, thus the paranormal is partly out of our sensory reach (Edgar). Tonks believes that apparitions operate as video recordings, but she distinguishes more than one type of ghosts: «I describe them as demons for the lack of any other name. I just don’t have the vocabulary for these things. I am not Christian. I don’t believe in heaven or hell, but I do believe there are other entities out there. And it’s like in life, some are light, and some are dark. In this line of business, I’ve yet to encounter any of the necessarily light ones» (Tonks). Gerry, following Tonks, also expands the traditional notion of ghosts:

I believe in the phenomenon, but I stopped saying I think I know what they are. I think the word ‘ghost’ is kind of like the word ‘UFO’. People think you mean a specific thing, whereas I do not. I use the word ‘ghost’ to describe an *affect* that there is no better word for. But I don’t think it necessarily means the soul of a dead person. [...] There are so many different types of hauntings, people

give them names and nobody really agrees on what the names are. My own personal kind of explanation would be that you get apparitions that are just visual, you get poltergeists, they tend to be violent and physical and you get possessions when people believe that someone takes over them, you get manifestations – which might be like music playing, like a piano that nobody touches, you get spirits, which I think most people would see as the soul of a dead person... I think it covers a very wide range of phenomena. [...] But at the moment, I think ghosts don't have a good definition. (Gerry)

These answers further the expand uncertainty and ambiguity of the phenomenon of haunting. They are less commonplace and suggest even more obscurity. To unify the range of different phenomena Gerry uses a word «affect» which in essence resonates with how I discussed it earlier and refers to a sensational subjective experience which puts a person in a predicament because it has no obvious causality. The visor, in this situation, becomes an affective quality of a certain environment, the environment is affective when something in it requires attention and reaction. And this something might not only fool around with time but with the very core human fears and beliefs, it can suggest the existence of different dimensions or demonic forces lurking around. This affect can ultimately be interpreted as a doubt which provokes fear, awe or shock.

A guide whose name is Ien also avoids straight-forward explanations, but he underlines the utter subjectivity of haunting:

A ghost is a memory of yesterday. It's an echo. It lasts a few moments in somebody's life. [...] And the problem with ghost activity is that people... If you have a full room of people, sometimes one of them will see it, sometimes five will see it. Sometimes the entire room will see it. And then you've got the other side of the coin. They think we've set up a special effect, which we haven't. So just because you've seen a ghost doesn't necessarily mean he will see a ghost. That's how it goes. It goes with swings and roundabouts. Why are they here? No idea. I've no idea. I am not in a position to guess. But I'm happy they are here. Cause if nothing else, it gives us a little window into the past. (Ien)

Not only is there an affect related to the presence of something or someone unexpected, but this experience can also be extremely subjective. There are a number of stories describing incidents which had only one or two people from the group heavily affected. The visor in this case operates in a more intimate way as the affect is selective. The intimacy of such an affect is uncanny for it provokes self-doubt but also implies that the thing that one cannot look back at is looking or interacting with one or two out of many.

To sum up, the palpable facet of a visor is an affect. This affect cannot be traced back to the cause but is usually associated with a certain location. Depending on the type of stimuli (sounds, visions, smells, touching, pushing, etc.) Edinburgh guides and residents are affected differently and based on that they come up with various interpretations. There is a large set of urban folk tales which in essence theorize the nature of the environment's affective qualities (Henderson 2001, 2008, Wilson 1991). In other words, they are an attempt to look through and behind the visor. Those tales mostly have to do with 1) forgotten deaths and their physical and emotional proximity to the living (horrible historical deaths), 2) the past manifesting itself in the present as an echo, and 3) evil forces which dwell around the areas associated with the past violence.

The diversity and ambiguity of the paranormal phenomena (many kinds of haunting) as well as its subjectivity (one person sees or feels something that others do not) answer the principle of Derrida's visor. There is something demanding attention within the historical cityscape, which is ultimately silent, shapeshifting and choosing to «give a look» to different people at different times for unknown reasons.

#### *4.5 Ghost language*

Edinburgh ghost walks are known for their encounters with the paranormal – the haunting experiences are in leaflets, newspapers, and on amateur and TV-documentaries. Allegedly, people, at times, become heavily affected by ghosts. There are reports of bruises, bites, scratches, cold spots, fainting, incidents of choking, strange sounds, etc. This block represents the affective quality of embodied experiences as well as the process of recalling and reproduction of urban legends. The principle of *visor* is also present here in a sense that ghosts are illiterate and non-verbal and if one wants to speak to them (as Derrida suggests), this person has to attempt to read the signs available; in other words, one has to try and decipher the ghost language

expressed in various forms of affect. Its deciphering seems to result in stories composed of old and new, facts and fantasies. The communication between the dark unknown past and haunted present «goes in swings and roundabouts» – new experiences are added to a core set of ideas and plots. Those stories seem to take the shape of urban legends.

Edinburgh has had tales of haunting for a significant amount of time. Stories about ghosts and damned people and places have flooded the city for ages. Many of those were based on real events: the story of Major Weir, for example, or Deacon Brodie, or bodysnatchers. Over the course of the last few decades, new plots were gradually developed with several characters personifying the hauntings. The Nineties coincided with the discovery of forgotten South Bridge vaults, the consequent construction of pubs and nightclubs in some sections and the first tours of the vaults. These events led to the emergence of rumors about weird paranormal occurrences inside the vaults, in adjacent bars and even in the Greyfriars cemetery. Jan Andrew Henderson, who organized Black Hart Entertainment in 1999, was one of the few people who decided to document experiences that started happening when the South Bridge vaults were first open to tourists. In 1999, he published *The Town Below the Ground* – a non-fiction volume which combined the history of the city, its growth over the centuries and recent strange happenings in «underground» areas of the vaults, bridges, blocked closes and Greyfriars cemetery. This book and following, *The Ghost that Haunted Itself* (2001), contain the chronicle of the most notable encounters and stories from witnesses/victims of ghosts starting from 1995 and until 2001. The way those books are constructed seems to represent an overall structure of urban legends that originated in Edinburgh: a new encounter was tied to a historical or half-fictional plot with a certain ghostly persona. For instance, Henderson describes «the Watcher» and «MacKenzie poltergeist» among others. The Watcher is a quiet man in 17<sup>th</sup> century garb who simply walks around in the South Bridge vaults» area. Mackenzie poltergeist seems to be a more violent entity who mostly haunts the area of Greyfriars Graveyard, where he regularly bites, scratches and knocks people out. Unlike the Watcher, Mackenzie is thought to be a violent spirit of George Mackenzie, who tortured defeated covenanters in the part of the cemetery known as the Covenanter's prison. Over the years, however, the number of personae behind violent attacks in the graveyard and in the vaults grew, varying from company to company, from guide to guide. As Adam Reed (2002) notes in his discussion of London walking tours, the

personification of place functions as a means of engaging with the city's collective and social history. The past thus can be experienced affectively via acts of embodied communication with "historically significant locales framed as (non-human) persons" (Weston et al, 47). The past here is a present absence, a massive bulk of gone events and people, which nonetheless reaches out as a single agent, which is attributed with intentions and even a form of consciousness.

It is a common belief that ghosts require justice and remembrance, just like Hamlet's father, who returned to warn his son about the betrayal. Edinburgh ghosts seem to "use" threats and violence as their main communication tool. Gerry says, for instance, "To some extent we are tolerated here. But some guides are – and even myself in the past, I sometimes pushed things a little too hard, I told a story that isn't quite entirely true and on occasions I've done that, I felt very much that there was something just taking a step towards me and saying "stop". Rebecca underlines that "it often seems to be associated with stories of unfairness". "Mercat Tours" guide Samuel elaborates that any ghost is "a residue of a previous memory. And it's staying there for a very specific reason – either due to being very angry or very sad essentially". Edinburgh ghosts seem to be either sad or angry and very perceptive to the truthfulness. Thus, the communication or affective kit differs depending on whether it is sadness or anger.

For instance, Kathy describes a ghost of a little boy named Jack, whom people keep seeing next to her in the vaults: "So there is a little boy. I believe his name is Jack and that's what people have been telling me. And because I've been going down to the vaults for more than 15 years, I met over 75 people who saw him standing on my left-hand side. That's the story of Jack, he is - I don't know any evidence of who he is – but he certainly stands beside me to my left-hand side. I've no idea why he is there. I think, personally, because I've been going there for such a long time, he feels safe when I am there. And maybe he thinks I'm a maternal figure. I don't know, but he likes to stand close to me when I'm there" (Kathy).

However, more aggressive language is in use in the majority of accounts. Those are attributed to violent entities for which I have heard two names: Mackenzie poltergeist and Mr. Boots. These names are used by two different companies and they register attacks in different locations, but the effects are quite similar. Tonks describes her experience as follows:

I've been doing this for 14 years and I've seen handfuls of people seriously injured on the tour. I've been injured myself a couple of times. I was choked at the end of one of the tours in one of the undergrounds. I finished the tour, the same way as every day, started choking, and I don't know if you've ever had a neck injury, but you cry. So I was standing there in front of my group, tears pouring down my face. And they are all like "thank you for the tour, it was great, bye". And as soon as the last person went "bye," it stopped. That was Wednesday night. And then on a Sunday night, I was in the last vault doing the talk and I felt something going on around my neck. I don't know what – it was like a hot prickly sensation. I got outside and the whole group kept looking at my neck. Ok, great, so I got back to the bothy, one of the other guides was there and he goes "What the hell happened to your neck?" I didn't know, so I looked in a mirror - inch wide crooked burn all around my neck.

Gerry's story about Mackenzie's experiences is also quite unsettling:

I've been here for twelve years and I've had a lot of very strange experiences, but the exploded electronics are the only thing that I can't find another explanation for. And the first phone that exploded, I took it to a shop the next day to have it looked at because I needed all my numbers on it. They said that the battery had boiled and exploded in the case. And the only explanation they had was that I put it through the microwave. So I asked if they could look up the sim-card. They said – no, the sim-card had melted, all the circeage had melted, it would never work again. I took it home, got a new phone, collected all my numbers, and at three o'clock in the morning, it started ringing. On a shelf. And I... I threw it out of the window. It might be explainable, but it was scary enough that I wasn't taking any chances. (Gerry)

Finally, Samuel's account on Mr. Boots' activities also represents a range of tools for threatening messages:

I did see it one time. So we have a final room at the very end. One of the main selling points of this tour is a very particular, quite aggressive ghost called Mr. Boots and once I had an experience where I was leaving the room in which he is most commonly encountered, and as I left I saw in a door frame there was a

nail and tied up over that nail by the laces were very thick, very dirty boots. And I remember seeing them and being very freaked out and I called to the rest of my group and they toured back and they were gone – the boots. I know that I saw them. And I don't know if it was a trick of my imagination or it was something that genuinely happens there. I saw a woman get shoved in the back, it was again quite a very freaky experience. I was just telling the tale of the stuff that went on there and then she suddenly jerked forward and then she had to leave because she felt that something was dragging her off in a different direction and she ran away from it as fast as she could and I had to guide her upstairs. she was probably under a panic attack at the end of it. It was very intense. (Samuel)

The accounts of the guides above present more coherent and longer stories. Attendants' stories<sup>7</sup> proved to be shorter and more vague. Those, however, show the violent affective experiences and its inevitable connection to a place. The forms of this affect-communication range from the feeling of being watched to coldness, nausea, scratching and pulling:

- In the vaults, I felt uneasy, especially when we all turned our lights off and there was a quick temperature drop;
- In one of the rooms, I swear it felt like something was watching me;
- I felt a “poke” in my back while in the Black Mausoleum. I turned to apologize (thinking I backed into someone). No one was there, I was about a foot away from the wall. Immediately after that, my left ear got all tingly & it ran down my neck;
- The group was standing and listening to the guide, and I felt as if someone had grabbed my wrist through the sleeve of my jacket. There was no draft and nobody was standing next to me. Then it happened again. I've also heard distant banging sounds 2 floors below street level, where nobody was supposed to be;
- Extreme nausea and almost fainted when standing inside one of the crypts in the Covenanters prison;

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<sup>7</sup> I preserved original grammar and spelling in the attendants' answers.

- It was probably due to the cold night (went on the double dead 10pm tour) myself and my friend felt very uneasy during the whole of the greyfriars kirkyard, oddly enough we had been on a tour the previous night and had no feelings of unease. It was like someone was watching us
- I was just curious and excited to be ON the tour after anticipating it for quite some time, but I worried about my sister throughout. She started feeling ill and faint as soon as we entered the vaults. [...] Towards the end of the tour, she just said, “GET ME OUT OF HERE. NOW!” It was all dark, so I couldn’t see how horribly pale and ill she looked. [...] A really weird experience that stayed with me for years (it’s been almost 6 years now) and my sister still won’t talk about everything she felt during the tour.
- Soon entering the covenanters» prison, i took a couple of steps in and had to physically stop i was overcome with this feeling of anger and despair. My chest suddenly felt really heavy and i couldn’t breathe. When I was stood in the black mosuleam it felt like something touched my right shoulder and then suddenly I had a really sharp pain in my shoulder. I didn’t think much of it but when i got back to the hostel i asked my friend to have a look as it was really sore. Turns out my shoulder was bleeding from what looked like a deep scratch. This would of been hard for any physical person to do as i was wearing a very thick puffy coat.
- Was very sceptical, laughing at others, then very suddenly thought I was going to pass out or be sick. Felt something touching my head.  
(Chertash, “Ghost Walk Experience”)  
:

The subjectivity and privacy of these experiences do not allow us to theorize about their actual meaning as real phenomena. However, since there are so many of them reported, we might try to look at them as an affect, suggestive state of mind, which might be an attempt to find the right way to communicate with the past and commemorate it. Heritage sites are often criticized for the lack of authenticity, be it the Disney-like approach or the prevalence of official museal discourses, which brings a patina of boredom. Both strategies partially strip places of their initial atmosphere. The vaults and Greyfriars graveyard, on the other hand, have not suffered any significant changes; no extra lighting has been put there; no manikins; no requisite; no

tables with information; no interactive learning gadgets. Moreover, those are essentially «subterranean» spaces; they are under and behind facades, secluded, forgotten caverns. The past of these places as an embodied experience manifests itself more or less freely as they belong to no one; they are only performed and walked during the tours. The violence and general discomfort of ghost walk experiences might have to do both with perceived injustice and violence of the past narrated by the guides and desecration of the past, which touristic practices with the inevitable aspect of entertainment involve. By desecration here, I mean interactions with darker history (deaths and suffering) in a form of sensational experience in a place which still belongs to the past: if the past is present and looking at us, it might as well be thought to be angered if not taken seriously or respectful enough. So violence and unease could be a response to the process of desecration and intrusion. This desecration practice essentially becomes a performance where every party knows their role; a guide functions as a mediator, a place is a stage and participants are simultaneously actors and affected audience who walk through a potentially dangerous path inside the city in order for the disbelief of modern rationality to be temporarily suspended. Repetitive performance seems to become an embodied practice of communication with the ghosts of the past, reinforced by the subsequent proliferation of urban legends.

Genuinely scary experiences are a marketed trait of Edinburgh walks. It has to do both with its past engineering decisions and its reputation. The vaults and the cemetery hold tales of disasters and tragedies of the past, of hundreds of people whose names and deeds will never be fully known except for the fact that they lived or died here, maybe what they ate or what occupation they had. Guides do not talk about their own experiences during the tour; they are mainly focused on history and they tell a few ghost stories to name some specters and tie them to specific locations. In the case of Edinburgh ghost walks, the language «ghosts» employ is affect. To translate the past into the present, the physical affect has to turn into a legend, where the sorrows or horrors of the past are enacted and retold. The affect ignites a chain of processing/translation which involves identification with the dark past of the place, with a specific figure personifying that past (like Mr. Boots, for example, who has a specific room and is blamed for specific attacks), stories about it and adding one's experience of being affected to the existing cluster of urban legends. Thus, the conversations with ghosts born out of the place, its tales and walking become a part of the city in the form of new legends.

#### 4.6 Living with Ghosts

This section represents the overall reception of Edinburgh's atmosphere as haunting for guides and attendants of ghost tours. Here heritage sites as Nora's lieux de memoire contain hidden, "inward-turning" de Certeau's stories. The haunting atmosphere does not need to be understood explicitly as the atmosphere created by paranormal experiences; their actual presence or absence is not crucial. What is important is a sense of presence formed by many different actants, as if the city belonged not only to the living and the present, as if it was an construction for remembering half-forgotten things. Vernon Lee describes haunting atmosphere as Genius Loci, which "can never be personified, we may yet feel him nearer and more potent, in some individual monument or feature of the landscape. He is immanent very often, and subduing our hearts most deeply, at a given turn of a road; or a path cut in terraces in a hillside, with view of great distant mountains... The genius of places lurks there; or, more strictly, he is it." (Lee 1898, 6, original emphasis). Genius Loci is the presence of something that is not wholly here and now, in our physical reality. Haunted means "super"-natural and "extra"-ordinary, Derrida's *hauntology* refers to the situation when "the time is out of joint" and absent presences fill the space. A haunting atmosphere can be understood as an overlap of realities where beyond the present one feels the flickering of the past. This feeling can be seen in the way tour attendants describe their unease: "often felt a presence and that something was definitely there"; "I could feel a presence at certain locations I had the feeling "something or someone" was there"; "It was like someone was watching us"; "felt on edge like someone was looking back at us"; "a sense of something more in the air". When asked about their perception of Edinburgh and whether a ghost walk changed it, the range of answers of attendants had mostly to do with the history of the city and with its past:

- More appreciation for the city and some of its dark history and how people lived.
- It gave Edinburgh this day and night contrast. A bustling, friendly city during the day, and a haunted, spooky, mysterious city at night.
- Gave me a deeper appreciation for the long & sometimes tragic history of the City.
- Yes, made me understand the grim history of the city better, it wasn't just a ghost tour, it was actually also very educational.

- I thought Edinburgh was a haunted city, but now I'm completely sure it is.
  - Yes, I learned something about the history of Edinburgh that I did not know in a way that it became more real to me.
  - Yes. It made me conscious of how creepy this city was and could be.
  - It didn't change, it formed my perception of the city.
- (Chertash, "Ghost Walk Experience")

Most of the attendants (71.1%) answered that they think of Edinburgh as a haunted city; 20,1% were unsure; and only 5.4% claimed that it is not haunted. However, in those 5.4%, some would specify that it is rather «historical» or «atmospheric» than haunted. Over half of the attendants felt alert, scared or uncomfortable during their tour (61.5%).

It is interesting to notice that quite a few guides, when asked about Edinburgh being haunted, insisted that it is not more haunted than other cities and that all cities can be considered haunted:

KATHY: "Yes, I think wherever you have lots of people, lots of stories and lots of histories, there are going to be ghosts in my opinion. I don't think it's any more haunted than Glasgow; it's just that Glasgow doesn't talk about its ghosts as much as we do".

GERRY: «I think most haunted places always have some forgotten history and I think it's a big part of what gives the place the kind of mystery that people interpret as a ghost. [...] Within this mile by a quarter of the Royal mile, almost all of the history happened. And I think there is a concentration in the Old Town of Edinburgh because it was compressed, but I think if you spread that out over the whole area, I don't think Edinburgh is more haunted than anywhere else.

IEN: We talk about it more, we definitely talk about it more. It's more publicized. Do I think it's more haunted than other cities? No, genuinely not. London has a fantastic battery of ghost stories behind it. A lot of people in London are too busy to learn and too busy to know.

Guides claimed that ghosts as such do not change the perception of the city (Kathie: «I don't think it affects the perception of anybody. People who believe in ghosts believe in ghosts and people who don't – don't believe in ghosts. I don't think we can change people's perceptions as easily). They insisted that Edinburgh had its atmosphere and its reputation because of its preserved heritage, its stories and the way it looks; in other words, because of actants which are put to work together as a network. In order to show that, I highlighted different actants which appear in their speech connected to each other:

GERRY: I think **storytelling definitely affects a lot more than people give credit for**. I think particularly **this graveyard is a good place for that** because of the number of stories that came from here and changed the world. Robert Lewis Stevenson spent time here, John Polidori based Vampire on Mackenzie and Mary Shelly took a lot of the knowledge about bodysnatching from this graveyard and the city around it. I definitely think **ghost stories have a special power** to change the world.

SAMUEL: I imagine every city has **the dark past to it but, in Edinburgh, I definitely have encountered more history than I have anywhere else**. It's just marvelous **for retaining its past and culture**, and does have such a **dark underlying history of all the torture and murders that used to go on around these areas**, that definitely if there's a location where ghosts could be real, you'd likely find them here. Most other cities in the UK are constantly being renovated and rebuilt, whereas Edinburgh is a city in which we have managed **to retain our history and our heritage**. I think that does grant to the **spooky atmosphere**.

IEN: Edinburgh has a touch of ambience anyway. **When it gets dark in Edinburgh, it looks totally different**.

GRANT: Ye, it's a natural ambience it has – **kind of a gothic feel to it. With the spires and with the castle rock. And you know the narrow closes**. I think it's naturally prone to it.

TONKS: Here we are like “come and look at all of our old stuff”. We have our history living and breathing with us because we have so many tours that have to make passionate guides to talk about that, it keeps our heartbeat alive. And I think it helps feed that energy.

REBECCA: There are a lot of stories and associations in people’s minds with this city, with things like ghosts, ghouls, the plague, witches. So it creates a reputation.

All in all, in these bits of data, the connections are made between different parts of the network – stories are related to places, and places contain specific pieces of history, which in turn echo in urban legends. These connections are possible because of the embodied experience of walking, which in the context of urban exploring becomes performative. A person walking is affected and through the affect they develop a sense of atmosphere. In the case of Edinburgh, this atmosphere can be characterized as haunted both because of ghost stories circulating in and about it and the way the city looks and was built (largely historical cityscape with a dark gothic look and peculiar engineering solutions).

#### *4.7 Commodification of Edinburgh Heritage*

There is no denial that Edinburgh’s heritage is largely commodified. And the haunting atmosphere is something that is widely exploited by different revenues. There are not only ghost walks but also *Edinburgh Dungeon* – an interactive walk-through with live actors and special effects. Almost every museum and pub has ghost stories, which are sometimes a part of their marketing (for instance, a few pubs on Grassmarket have their ghost stories written on the walls).

The fact that local businesses capitalize on the haunted aspect of the city is no secret to anyone.

In the case of ghost walks, a good part of the experience depends on how well the guides can do their job and how well they can use the tools at hand. Performance is a part of their working routine and it is meant to create a spooky atmosphere:

REBECCA: I enjoy it. Not necessarily the haunted part, but the performance aspect – what makes people laugh, what frightens them, how can you find a tune to make it work that way? The ghost part is out of my control, but I can tell stories and make the stories work for an effect.

GRANT: And here what I learned is a performance. So you can make someone pass out. Like I could make you pass out right now if you were uncomfortable enough. With eye contact and with the tone of voice. All of the effects you see there could be caused by that. Uncanny storytelling and setting – because it is a legitimate graveyard. You are there and you shouldn't be there and people become prone to that sort of things.

EDGAR: There are things that I obviously cannot explain, but the power of suggestion by the creation of the atmosphere is also very relevant. The tallest girl [from the tour], for example, was getting a little bit anxious and I was deliberately kind of feeding that because the atmosphere is one of the reasons people do these things; they want to get scared and they want to get some particular experience.

A certain sense of artificialness that usually arises around staged touristic entertainment should also be addressed. Staged experiences are usually repetitive and scripted, especially if a particular heritage site is monopolized by one organization or company. The example of *The Real Mary King's Close* is rather representative in these regards: a fully scripted and staged experience in authentic historical decorations with tours starting every half an hour. The discourse in there is always the same and the approach is very business-like. When asked about their ghost stories the employees redirected me to the company's PR-manager who explained that their venue is rather historical than anything else. The question of belief or disbelief or any kind of diversity could not be addressed there at all. Contrary to this approach was the state of things in *Black Hart Entertainment* and *Mercat Tours*. The interviews were easily set up, and in conversations with me, most of the guides appeared firm believers or hopeful sceptics. However, one of them, Grant, turned out to be a bigger sceptic than others and his answer reveals a peculiar doubt:

GRANT: A lot of the guides I know are going to say – It's hard to tell because they might be as dishonest to tourists as they are to me, their colleague (laughing) – most of them say they believe in ghosts. And when I listen to their stories as I'm waiting to jump, I don't believe they are true. But if you ask them, they would say that this really happened. And it's hard to tell, I always think that it's similar to professional wrestling when people appropriate a character and it's their character. And in wrestling, it's so important and you get used to maintaining a character to convince the audience that what you're doing is real. And I think that with a lot of tour guides, that's the case, they will confirm everything but it's hard to tell what they believe.

This statement reveals several things. Firstly, guides could speak their minds freely in the interviews. Grant did not hesitate to share his skepticism with an outsider, which means that there were no corporate guidelines involved. This fact leads to the conclusion that the data gathered from the interviews has higher validity since it shows a diversity in beliefs and opinions. Secondly, although Grant firmly states that he does not believe in the paranormal, the fact that he is unsure about whether his colleagues make things up or tell the truth shows that the guides and their attitude, skill, and experience contribute to the overall atmosphere.

Ghost walks, in contrast with bigger businesses, are more liberal in their method; they allow more creativity and freedom. The fact that they are a part of a competitive niche (there are half a dozen companies which offer ghost tours with somewhat similar routes) combined with the relative liberty gives an interesting outcome. Guides from competing companies often come to each other's tours to see, learn and sometimes steal good bits. This practice has an impact on stories, they change or receive a wider circulation:

GERRY: Those little things that are really easy to keep track of. Like the story of Greyfriars Bobby. When we began as a tour company in 1998, there was only one version of that story - and that was in the book of Eleonore Atkinson. Over the years, we've all done our bits of research into different things. And at one point, I accidentally said the wrong thing about the cause of death of the owner... And it just so happened that another tour guide was on my tour [...]. So they took that as a fact and went back with that on their tour and the rest of their tour guides did that. Three weeks later, Wikipedia changed the cause of death [...]. Words have tremendous effects, you can direct people to send all sorts of emotional input and energy into things.

IEN: Other ghost stories are a little bit more fantastical. They grow arms and legs and teeth and wings. Like I said, I work for a ghost company, but we... each of the guides does something completely different. Some do tell a lot more stories, some tell a lot more factual history, I tell a lot more factual history. But I do it in such a way that unnerves people.

EDGAR: Somebody saw a worm while digging up a potato and suddenly it is already an anaconda in a grave. Just exaggeration and perpetuation. We are talking about a place which has a lot of grim history...

The spreading of the stories thus has a lot to do with touristic enterprises which create nets of «contamination» – stories travel, they are being retold and redecorated, details are missed and added creating different variants of the same plots. It is fair to say that such practice is scientifically and historically faulty. However, if it has to do with ghost stories, the oral practice of retelling bears a resemblance to the way folktales could be retold in the past in and between communities. In this sense, ghost tour companies are also an actant in a network which animates and sustain Edinburgh's haunting atmosphere.

Thus, although ghost walks flourish in Edinburgh as a part of the profit-oriented touristic industry and undoubtedly exploit various heritage sites, we need to look at this phenomenon from a wider perspective. Although it does not seem to contribute to educational or artistic purposes per se, the practice of ghost walks proves to be more than just a shallow form of entertainment. Their existence allows for the tradition of folklore storytelling to be active and have an influence on the city's atmosphere.

## 5. IN CONCLUSION

Klas Hyllen, a PhD, dedicated his dissertation *The Unconscious Life of Old Town: A psychoanalytic study of Edinburgh's historic city*. His work takes interest in the phenomenon of Old Town which still maintains its unique historical atmosphere but Hyllen looks at it from a different angle than I do in my research.

The main thesis of his work can be confined to the idea that Edinburgh's historic city became stagnant: "the Old Town has also lost its dynamism; it has been reduced to an idea of history that could be argued to be perfect which, in modern times, has become a question of restoring calm, a political motive that is also driven by power and control" (Hyllen, 97). He sees urban gothic narratives "primitive by nature simply offering opportunities for identification with the past" (34), and although he acknowledges that that "myths and folk-tales, nestled comfortably within the collective mind, quite literally put us in touch with ghosts" (47) he suggests to "exorcise a city's ghosts" (60) as a part of the healing process. I, on the contrary, consider tales of Edinburgh ghosts unique and valuable and oppose to their exorcism.

While Hyllen offers to deconstruct centuries old spatial practices even though one might be exposed to "the danger that all he might find is an empty space" (113), the approach that I have taken offers a different perspective where memory of the past ingrained in the city fabric is not "seen as a burden of the past, rather it is fundamental to becoming, and a key wellspring of agency, practice / habit, creativity and imagination, and thus of the potential of the performative moment" (Jones, 875).

Edinburgh ghost walks is a mass touristic entertainment, exploiting the structures and sites of the Old Town and ghostly narratives for commercial purposes. Yet, many tourists find Edinburgh and its ghost walks fascinating and atmospheric. Considering their experience as valuable, I researched how touristic practices of ghost walks mobilize the haunting atmosphere of Edinburgh through embodied practices. As a result of analyzing the data from interviews with guides and questionnaires with attendants with the help of the theoretical ANT scheme I discovered several things. First of all, in Edinburgh old urban structures and the whole geography of the Old Town (its small size, multiple layers, secluded spaces and gothic looks) combined with a corpus of the old and new dark urban tales invite certain experiences, because the materiality of the city and its stories are interconnected, hidden in each other and reinforce each other. Secondly, a combination of secluded historical locations, guides'

performances there and a corpus of various (old and new) ghost stories make tourists incredibly susceptible to the atmosphere created by these elements. They get affected in multiple ways, including what some people call “real supernatural attacks”. This affect (which I explained by the means of Derrida’s visor, as the past hanging in long abandoned historical spaces) allows for the atmosphere and the stories of haunting to perpetuate and spread; people share and recount their ambiguous experiences of interaction with the dark city past ; they connect those experiences to the existing stories about local well-known poltergeists and ghosts. Attendants become a part of the mobilizing network, who not only process the experience but passes on stories about their personal “supernatural experiences”. Thus, ghost walks by regularly mobilizing elements of the local actor-network of the haunting atmosphere create an interesting mechanism of modern urban storytelling which promote the said haunting atmosphere. By offering an affective experience of interaction with the city’s dark past, ghost walks of Edinburgh not only mobilize Edinburgh haunting atmosphere (by tying together its specific elements) but also contribute to its further proliferation.

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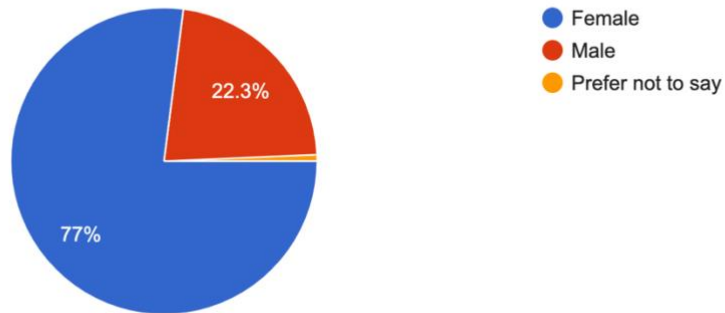
## Appendix

### Questionnaire

Questionnaire was set up online ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1\\_1-mYMVWdN4t\\_OxHhvARqXrryaAuU2Uc8CDiop09D6k/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1_1-mYMVWdN4t_OxHhvARqXrryaAuU2Uc8CDiop09D6k/edit?usp=sharing)).

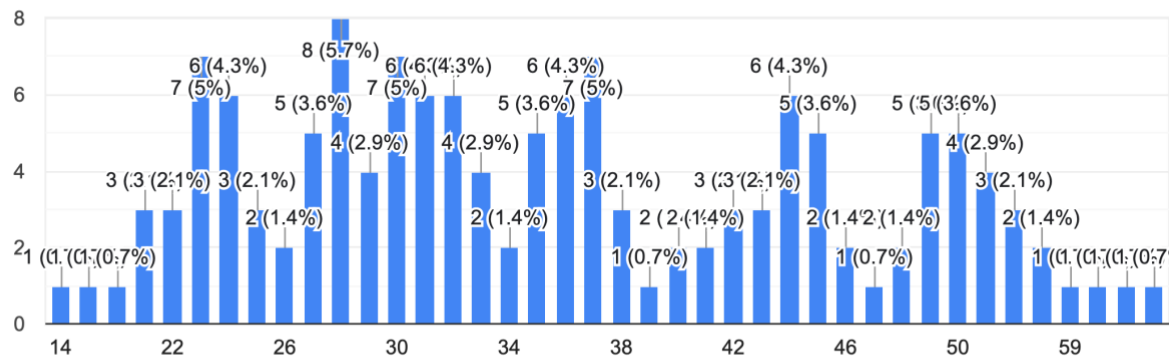
#### Sex

148 responses



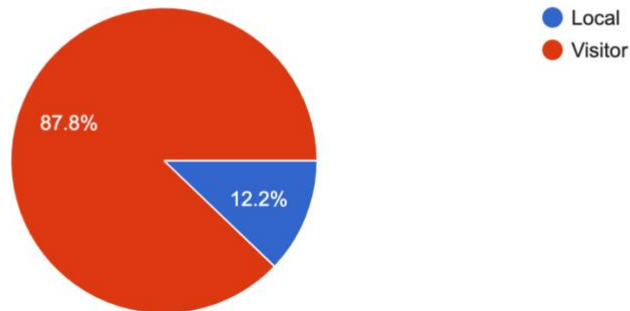
#### Age

140 responses



### Do you live in Edinburgh or are you a visitor ?

148 responses



### Do you believe in ghosts?

148 responses



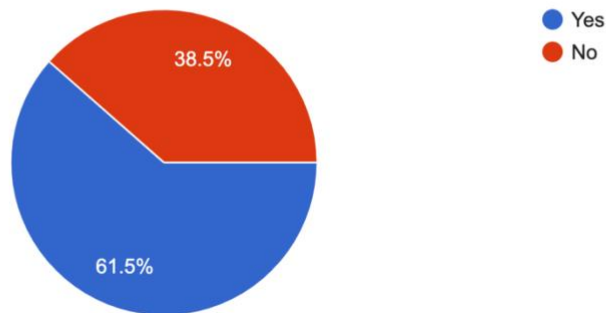
### Does Edinburgh feels to you like a haunted city (enchanted, sinister, mysterious)?

149 responses



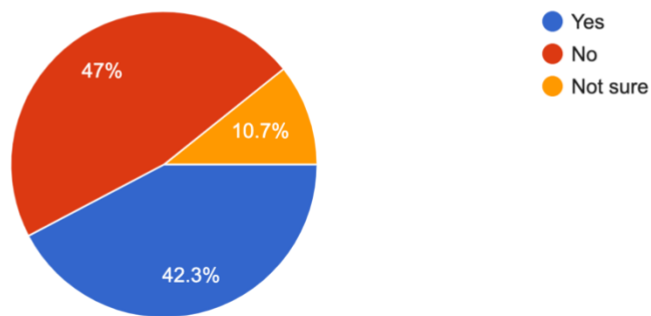
Did you feel scared, uncomfortable, alert at any point during the tour?

148 responses



Did you feel any physical or mental unease during the tour? (such as the feeling of unseen presence, unusual coldness, strange wind/breath, b...ouched, being scratched, pulled or punched, etc.)

149 responses



Where did you feel it?

106 responses



Please describe your experience in a few sentences if you answered "yes" or "not sure" on two previous questions.

1. In the vaults I felt uneasy especially when we all turned our lights off and there was a quick temperature drop
2. In one of the rooms, I swear it felt like something was watching me.
3. I felt anxious during the tour, crept out
4. Was feeling on edge like I was waiting for something to happen.
5. I felt a “poke” in my back while in the Black Mausoleum. I turned to apologize (thinking I backed into someone). No one was there-I was about a foot away from the wall. Immediately after that my left ear got all tingly & it ran down my neck
6. I went Double dead tour last October and only time I feared a little bit was when we were inside The vaults and our guide extinguish candles. There were we in pitch black listening her telling the stories.
7. Uncomfortable when they jumped out and scared us at end of the tour
8. I could feel a presence at certain locations but not to the degree that others in our group did. Unfortunately I am skeptical of the injuries that occur in McKenzies tomb. One lady claimed to have been scratched by the entity, and she had wounds to prove it, but with the popularity of the tour and the attention the wounds get, I can help but wonder about the legitimacy of the wounds. People do it for attention.
9. I felt cold and on edge, as if I could sense something.
10. My finger was inexplicably cut
11. The group was standing and listening to the guide, and I felt as if someone had grabbed my wrist through the sleeve of my jacket. There was no draft and nobody was standing next to me. Then it happened again. I've also heard distant banging sounds 2 floors below street level, where nobody was supposed to be.
12. Heard something whispering, I asked everybody around me if they were making a joke, but I only saw them panicking a bit to.
13. I had the feeling “something or someone” was there but we didnt't have any supernatural experiences
14. I felt my body temperature separated at the waist; the upper part of my body felt like boiling and the bottom part freezing.
15. Heard footsteps and arm was pulled
16. I felt like I was being watched and I became light headed.
17. Cold wind

18. I was very uneasy in the vaults, and I had two silvery scratches on my calf when I got back to our hotel
19. Extreme nausea and almost fainted when standing inside one of the crypts in the Covenanters prison.
20. Sort of stomach ache, definately unease.
21. I difinitely felt scared and I felt it getting very cold all of a sudden.
22. I was nervous at times that I would experience something but ultimately I did not. Even though my tour ended up being quite light hearted I was uneasy about turning off the lights in my hotel room afterwards.
23. In vaults. Noise in ears.person in group hearing aid then went high pitched too. Also saw spirit in cemetery ( psychic )
24. The only bit that made me feel scared was the jump scare which was added at the end of the double walk in the Covenanters prison, I felt there was another atmosphere that the quite times in the vaults were more atmospheric
25. I'm almost completely sure I saw something moving inside the Covenanters Prison while I was taking a picture. I was taking it from the outside and I perceived something moving at my left, inside the prison, but I didn't see it clearly because I saw it sideways. It could be a bird, I don't know, but I almost threw my camera and ran away from there, the feeling was very uncomfortable.
26. We almost got locked in the covenanters graveyard because I was busy taking pictures and when we were stood at the gates i couldn't stop looking behind me. Probably nothing more than just an odd feeling
27. It has a very atmospheric feel
28. Although no physical unease, at points over the whole night there was a sense of something more in the air
29. yes, but that was mostly caused by expectations and curiousness. I thought I heard a knocking on the wall next to me in the Tomb in Covenanters' Prison but then there was a fake scare arranged by the tour seconds later which totally killed the vibe. This was in 2012 or so, I hope they are not doing those anymore.
30. I have an active imagination and the storyteller is extremely good
31. It was probably due to the cold night (went on the double dead 10pm tour) myself and my friend felt very uneasy during the whole of the greyfriers kirkyard, oddly enough we had been on a tour the previous night and had no feelings of unease. It was like someone was watching us

32. I felt claustrophobic in the tomb at the end of the tour.
33. Feeling of overwhelming sadness
34. It wasn't me personally as I am not very perceptive when it comes down to paranormal phenomena or whatever u wanna call it, and MAINLY I was just curious and excited to be ON the tour after anticipating it for quite some time, but I worried about my sister throughout. She started feeling ill and faint as soon as we entered the vaults but I didn't know cos she's not the type who complains and I thought she was just being shy and/or annoyed with me for being so "up for it" asking questions and walking ahead of the crowd (cos we're quite the opposite and I'm used to her keeping her distance in situations like that, being the older one and all that, I didn't think much of it in the beginning). I learned later that she was very close to passing out on three separate occasions but of course she did well hiding it (anything to not draw attention to herself) and she's also not the type to have physical symptoms like that in ANY situation, she'd never felt sick and faint like that before and she's 30 years of age. When I caught up with u in the Covenanters Prison towards the end of the tour she just said "GET ME OUT OF HERE. NOW!" (in German, as that is our mother tongue) and I then apologised for abandoning her and staying closer to the front of the walk where I could understand everything being said rather than at the back with her. It was all dark so I couldn't see how horribly pale and ill she looked. And she didn't talk much until we got back to the hotel. Only then did I learn about her feeling physically unwell rather than annoyed with me but she refused to make any connection to the paranormal as she doesn't believe in it and only joined the tour because of me. But as soon as we left the graveyard she said she was feeling right as rain and by the time we switched off the light all the colour was back in her cheeks. The night that followed however was really tough cos the place we stayed at was eery enough as it was (without all the stories of hauntings in ur head) and the light we'd left on out of fear woke us up a couple of times as it started flickering and made funny noises. My sister put that down to dodgy wiring but I wasn't so sure. So yeah, all around a really weird experience that stayed with me for years (it's been almost 6 years now) and my sister still won't talk about everything she felt during the tour.
35. Intense stomach pain at same time as 2 others

36. It was due to the context and the guide
37. I felt there was something standing at my shoulder at several times during the experience, despite being at the back of the main group.
38. Felt like someone was near me
39. When we were in the vaults I felt like we were being watched and not in a nice way. Also felt we were being followed when in Greyfriars Churchyard and in the Covenanters Prison.
40. Energy changes
41. Unusual cold inside the body
42. It felt as though something was 'with' the group down in the vaults.
43. Gerry with a G created a great atmosphere and it was hard to know if it was the storytelling, someone in a mask, the chills or a combination of it all made it a great night. Definitely want to do the tour again.
44. Lovely experience for someone who works with the other world.
45. mental unease due to feeling watched
46. Vaults tour - fully charged battery on phone drained to nothing. Graveyard tour - Wandered slightly behind the tour after coming out of the Covenanters prison with a friend taking photos into the prison. Suddenly felt on edge like someone was looking back at us then heard a horrific laugh like noise from behind the locked gate. No one was there that we could see and the tour guide that night said there was definitely no one left in there.
47. Scared in an exciting way, and definitely felt like there's are other things there with you (not alive) 👁️
48. I think the atmosphere on the tour makes you hyper aware and sensitive so can't be sure I felt something or imagined it.
49. Uncomfortable
50. Creeped out, on edge and heightened senses. Breath on my neck.
51. The visit was very suggestive
52. Nauseous when on graveyard tour... went in at two different times and felt the same
53. My jacket was pulled three times from behind but no one was standing behind me
54. Soon entering the covenanters' prison, i took a couple of steps in and had to physically stop i was overcome with this feeling of anger and despair. My chest

suddenly felt really heavy and i couldnt breathe. When I was stood in the black mosuleam it felt like something touched my right shoulder and then suddenly I had a really sharp pain in my shoulder. I didn't think much of it but when i got back to the hostel i asked my friend to have a look as it was really sore. Turns out my shoulder was bleating from what looked like a deep scratch. This would of been hard for any physical person to do as i was wearing a very thick puffy coat.

55. Felt someone pushing me in the back in the black mausoleum. Husband swears it wasn't him. On another tour I could hear a scraping noise like stone against stone, husband also heard this however no one else seemed to hear it which was strange.
56. Scratching on my feet
57. Felt someone touching my hair and the back of my neck
58. Cold and chilly and as if being watched
59. Feelings of being watched, unexplained rushes of cold air
60. Always alert. Hoping for something to happen
61. In the Black mausoleum myself and a friend felt like something was trying to push us apart
62. I was scratched across my chest on part of the tour.
63. Felt like we were being watched a lot.
64. Felt like I was tapped on the leg
65. A sudden feeling of dizziness and nausea
66. In the vaults saw a shadow person
67. I felt uneasy in the covenanters prison. I did not want to move further inside than I had to. It felt like someone was behind me even though I was stood farthest back. I couldn't get out quick enough!
68. I am claustrophobic so was stressed when underground
69. Was very sceptical, laughing at others, then very suddenly thought I was going to pass out or be sick. Felt something touching my head.
70. Anxiety, probably not ghosts
71. Pretty sure that i imagined it but kept feeling tapping on my feet. Also kept hearing steps behind me but we were at the back.
72. Being a medium I was sensing sprit all over Edinburgh I was touched kicked at one point spirit of a male stood in front of me so I couldn't move.

73. Something messing with my necklace
74. While in the vaults it was noticeably colder, however when we were listening to the guide for about 30 seconds I felt an even colder breeze on my face. It didn't last long and then was gone again.
75. When the tour guide put lights off and went silent for minutes I felt uncomfortable and noticed that other people on tour did too.
76. I was being pulled to the back by something and I had a throbbing pain in my arm that stopped after we left the vault.
77. I felt like I had cobwebs over my face at times as if it was something tell me they were there
78. I felt that I was touched in the vaults.
79. I felt a bit faint/light headed inside the graveyard, but I didn't get any marks on my body.
80. At certain points it felt as though someone was watching or they were close by even though there was no one behind me.
81. It was the coldest on my arm
82. I've been on several ghost tours and have often felt a presence and that something was definitely there. On one occasion, in the Vaults, I actually saw a human shape, white, like mist, but definitely a human shape. There was no light source anywhere near it or any other reason or explanation for why it was NOT a ghost. I had already been a believer before that happened, but actually SEEING a ghost reassured me of their existence even more.
83. Going back to my teen days regularly seen some image in graveyard
84. I felt "unexplained" cold though I put that down to the vents and general air flow in underground caverns etc
85. Touched on arm
86. On a tour in the vaults felt a sudden coldness and an very eerie feeling
87. Heard a woman's voice - not part of the tour - in the Vaults. Always felt like I was being "watched" in the vaults, at Greyfriars, sometimes near Canongate Kirkyard.
88. Just scared and wanting to feel something

Did the walk change your opinion on the paranormal?

1. No
2. no
3. Yes
4. Not really
5. No
6. No as ive always believed
7. Stayed about the same.
8. No it didn't
9. No. I have been a long time believer in the paranormal
10. no
11. I've participated in more than a dozen ghost walks in Edinburgh, and I've become less scared and more realistic. I also learned a lot about the psychology of the paranormal, how people can be manipulated etc.
12. I always believed in ghost. I wasn't sure if my mental influenced my sensation or anything.... but it felt 100% real.
13. Made me believe even more
14. No as you are guaranteed to come across spirit activity, especially if you are not calling out to spirits and asking for things to happen etc. as this does not happen on the tour. The tour only makes reference to stories which have previously happened in the locations which are visited.
15. Not really, I already believed.
16. no. I'm a believer :-)
17. Not really. I an still unsure.
18. No, I already believed in this kind of stuff before.
19. No, even if there was any activity whilst on the tour there was a couple of Americans who wouldn't take it seriously i.e. picking up stones in the mausoleum
20. No just a really good informative evening
21. nope. only on the paranormal tours! Some of them use cheap tricks. IT was my first one and I have never took once since because of it. Not worth the risk!
22. Not sure
23. Sort of

24. No. I still believe in it.
25. Yes, much firmer belief in the paranormal
26. No always a believer
27. I will always believe in the paranormal.
28. Nope.
29. Something very strange did occur but there is the chance there was someone pulling a prank so staying open minded until I have more personal evidence.
30. A little bit
31. No. I believe in ghosts anyway
32. No, i still believe in the paranormal
33. Not really. I remain a hopeful skeptic.
34. Yes, was an unbeliever before the tour but can say I'm a definite believer now.
35. A bit, for a while after.
36. Sort of. Still unsure though.
37. It main me think more openly about the paranormal
38. definitely
39. Still unsure
40. I was taken aback, as I'd been very sceptical before.
41. No it made it stronger
42. It made it more solid
43. Yes, i did not belive that spirits could do something physically to me.
44. No as I already believe anyway
45. It made me even more interested in the paranormal
46. No, just strengthened and confirmed it.
47. Nope, if anything it decreased it slightly as it was naturally full of gags for tourists
48. No as I've seen a ghost before and sometimes see my brother and sister who are ghost in my house
49. a little believe there is something
50. No. I enjoy this. I dont see ghosts behind every door or demons lurking in every room. Ive had maybe 3 experiences in my whole life, so when something like this happens, it adds to my beliefs.

Did the walk change your perception of Edinburgh? How?

1. No
2. No
3. Yes, amazing history!
4. Not really, I was already fascinated by Edinburgh. But the walk took me through a part of Edinburgh history that I wasn't much aware of!
5. More appreciation for the city and some of its dark history and how people lived
6. It made me love it even more.
7. No - Edinburgh is a beautiful mix of old and new. I love it.
8. It solidified my love of Edinburgh. It was educational, entertaining and fun.
9. Brought to light the dark history
10. Yes, it made me appreciate some of the less savoury history
11. Not really.
12. No- it's my favorite city in the world! It did make me love it even more
13. Yes because I learnt a lot about the history of Edinburgh too.
14. exposed a historical side i heard about, but learned even more!
15. It gave Edinburgh this day and night contrast. Bustling friendly city during the day, and haunted spooky mysterious city at night.
16. Edinburgh became a place of adventure and exploration. I'm a mystic by nature and nowhere else in the world have I encountered as much mystery as in Edinburgh.
17. Gave me a deeper appreciation for the long & sometimes tragic history of the City.
18. Yes, made me understand the grim history of the city better, it wasn't just a ghost tour it was actually also very educational
19. Not particularly. It makes it even more mysterious and exciting!
20. Love edinburgh full of history & this tour with the vaults was one of our reasons for visiting
21. No still love Edinburgh
22. It took me to places/told stories about things I otherwise wouldn't have known about.
23. Yes- more fascinating and would like to know more

24. Believe there is more to the covenanters prison than meets the eye. Good that they keep it locked.
25. No.
26. It was very interesting to hear some of the history of the city. Edinburgh today is a lovely city and I was just happy to find out about its past, however unpleasant it may have been.
27. No, but it was great fun going out and seeing the sights at night, it's a great atmosphere, entertaining and the guides are theatrical, so fun
28. No.
29. Yes, I learned a lot of new, interesting things that I don't think I would've learned otherwise and weirdly enough it made me like the city even more by learning more of it's dark history, since it changed the atmosphere of the city.
30. Yes, understanding more about the history of the city and the darker past that it had
31. I thought Edinburgh was a haunted city but now I'm completely sure it is.
32. No, I already knew Edinburgh had a dark history
33. Yes taught me so much about the history of Edinburgh that I didn't know before
34. Made me love it even more
35. yes and no! I learned more about its history (which was the great part of the tour), especially about the Vaults. but no change in opinion about it being more haunted, for example.
36. Gave me history and chance to explore
37. Edinburgh has such a rich history that prior to the walk we did not know about! Especially to do with the vaults!!
38. It really opened my eyes to the city's history but I also loved but the tour handles a dark history in an entertaining way. It was done with humour and storytelling rather than being glib and it really brought it to life.
39. Yes, I learned something about the history of Edinburgh that I did not know in a way that it became more real for me.
40. The dark depth of human cruelty never fail to surprise me tbh but that's the same around the world I guess
41. Not really as i knew most of the history but some of the information given during the tour was new to me.

42. The bloody history
43. It did regarding being a lot more mysterious and having a much darker history than first assumed.
44. Stayed the same: mysterious city full of secrets
45. No, although it emphasised the history
46. Heard stories I hadn't heard before.
47. It's grim in Edinburgh, its history feels dark
48. Yes it made me love the city even more by knowing more on the history of Edinburgh.
49. Yes. It made me curious about other stories of the city.
50. The Vaults gave me a better understanding of one piece of Edinburgh's history.
51. no
52. Always loved visiting Edinburgh Old town but the tours have given another perspective that makes it more memorable and I'm now fascinated by the history and stories behind it.
53. Not really
54. Only that it informed me of Edinburgh and it's history
55. No change
56. Yes. It made me conscious of how creeper this city was and could be
57. It made me more aware of the tragic history of Edinburgh
58. Yes, it made the history of Edinburgh feel richer and more alive. I already loved the city but hearing about its darker aspects and the real lives of its people made me love it more.
59. Yes, learned more history of the city
60. No I love edinburgh
61. Loved it. Enjoyed the city, but the tour blew my expectations. We all had such a good time, during our 10 week traveling vacation Edinburgh was our favorite city.
62. Yes, especially the underground.
63. Just more insight into its incredible history
64. N/a
65. I learnt so much about the hidden gems of Edinburgh

66. No, I love the mysteries, history and old architecture and know the place it full of it :)
67. Yes the history makes it more interesting
68. No, I just found it educational
69. It made me love the city even more! I can't wait to visit again. It has so much history and character.
70. Yes. It was really interesting learning more history abtthe real people, not just the royals in the castles
71. No. Just reaffirmed how much I loved it their
72. Yes I want to come back again. I didn't realise it was totally raving. I didn't read up about it before we came as I like to see for myself.
73. Yes, being in the vaults was like being in a completely different world. It was nice to see the different side to edinburgh below the hustle and bustle.
74. Not really. I always thought the city was mysterious.
75. Yeah, I never new how dark some of its history was.
76. Nope, I thought it must be a pretty haunted city.
77. It gives you some information about the darker things that have happened in the past.
78. I came to realise what a unique and fascinating city Edinburgh is thanks to "history lessons" that came with the tour
79. I loved learning about the city's 'hidden' history and it was the most unique and memorable thing I did while in Scotland (I am American); I am curious to learn more about mysteries not only Scotland but around the world and even in my hometown. Maybe I have gained more of an appreciation for this type of untold story.
80. It didn't change, it formed my perception of the city.
81. It made me love Edinburgh even more! I love the atmosphere, especially in the Old Town.
82. Showed me places I had not previously seen plus, I created and conducted a Ghost Walk for a wheelchair user
83. Not particularly!
84. No because I've lived her all my life
85. I love Edinburgh and Scotland in general. Want to retire there!

## **INTERVIEWS (unedited transcript)**

*All interviews took place in February 2018 and were conducted orally before or after tours. For verification you can contact Jan-Andrew Henderson, the head of Black Hart Entertainment.*

### KATHIE (Black Hart Entertainment guide)

I: Do you think Edinburgh is a haunted city?

I firmly believe Edinburgh is a haunted city, yes.

I: Why?

Well, because I've been doing ghost tours here for 15 years and I believe in them so... It's a choice. I do believe in ghosts.

I: How do you think it affects the perception of the city for people who come here

I don't think it affects perception of anybody. People who believe in ghosts believe in ghosts and people who don't – don't believe in ghosts. I don't think we can change people perceptions as easily unless they come as a sceptic and their mind has changed. I don't think being a haunted city change people perceptions.

I: So you think there is no difference between a haunted city and city that is not haunted?

I don't think there are any cities in the world that are not haunted. I think if you believe in ghosts and people dying and their spirits staying there I don't think there is anywhere in the world that wouldn't be haunted.

I: What do you think so special about Edinburgh

I think because our stories are so ingrained into us. I mean our children learn these stories about Edinburgh – some of them – in school and we have a huge tourist .... So I think the fact is that we market our city is because great stories and lots of tourists and that made it a commercial venture for ghost tours but I don't think we are any more haunted than other cities.

I: So it is as haunted as any other but the tours give it additional...

Yes, I think wherever you have lots of people, lots of stories and lots of histories there is going to be ghosts in my opinion. I don't think it's any more haunted than Glasgow it's just that Glasgow doesn't talk about its ghosts as much as we do. I mean we love to tell our stories in Edinburgh and York does and London does and there are other cities... You know, there are places like Auschwitz that have huge stories about people who died and who suffered. I think if you believe in ghosts you believe in them everywhere, not just in Edinburgh.

I: But many people refer to Edinburgh as a phantasmal city. Is there anything that actually make it phantasmal?

I think that it's saturated with dead bodies. That's probably why. We've got a lot of people who've died in horrible circumstances. That is probably why people enjoy our stories and come listen to them. We have had a lot of people who died in horrible ways.

I: Could you tell me a little more about the boy from the vaults?

So there is a little boy. I believe his name is Jack and that's what people have been telling me. And because I've been going down to the vaults for more than 15 years I met over 75 people who saw him standing to my left hand side. That's the story of Jack, he is - I don't know any evidence of who he is – but he certainly stand beside me to my left hand side.

I: Did Jack appear before any story about him?

Yes, the reason i tell about jack is because there were so many people that told me they have seen him.

I: Why do you think he might be there ?

I've no idea why he is there. I think personally because I've been going there for such a long time, he feels safe when I am there. And maybe he thinks I'm a maternal figure, I don't know, but he likes to stand close to me when I'm there.

I: How would you describe an experience of being haunted?

I don't know how would I describe it. It's a strange feeling if you believe you have seen a ghost, isn't it? It puts you slightly on edge and tingles the hair on the back of your neck but I don't find it a frightening experience.

I: Could you say it's a bodily response to a place?

Ghosts appear in so many different ways. I'm quite skeptical if you ask about my personal opinion, I don't see ghosts very often. I've only seen this little boy four times. If you consider that I go there for over 15 years 3-4 times a week and I've only seen him four times I am not particularly sensitive to it. But I like it when I see him, I think it's nice that he feels safe enough to be near me.

GRANT (Black Hart Entertainment guide)

I: May this city be reenchanting by stories?

Maybe it's more about Prague. This is for people who are looking for enchantment.

I: Do you actually believe in ghosts?

No.

I: Why do you do this job?

I like the horrors. And I am a tour guide. I worked in bars and then I started tour guiding on buses. So I was always interested in history and learning more. That's how I got to learn about Edinburgh because I am from Fife. I found it a good way to familiarize myself with Scottish history and stuff like that. And I like talking and... You know, tour guides, they are show-offs. And I was looking for a job at some point and my girl found me this job, she was into ghost tours and she read all the books. That was two years ago. I don't believe in ghosts though.

I: So you didn't experience any of Mackenzie stuff?

I've seen strange things happen but none of them... couldn't be put on psych side of things. Like one thing I learned here – I wasn't a performer or an actor, I was a tour guide, so I narrated. And here what I learned is a performance. So you can make someone pass out. Like I could make you pass out right now if you were uncomfortable enough. With eye contact and with tone of voice. All of the effects you see in there could be caused by that. Uncanny storytelling, setting – because it is a legitimate graveyard. You are there and you shouldn't be there and people become prone to that sort of things. Like some people are looking for a confirmation of their existent beliefs on paranormal but I've never seen a ghost and I've never seen something that would make me believe.

I: Why do you think Edinburgh has this reputation of a haunted city?

That's always been for some reason again... But... With the United Kingdom I don't know specifically but people've always wanted Edinburgh to be a very narrow place in terms of... so it's always had these graverobbers, bodysnatching, Burke and Hare and kings decapitating people. Stuff like that. And I think this is how it had always been depicted even by Scottish writers, you know you read Scott... and this is the side we have always been dwelling on, this dark side of ourselves, and people come looking for it. And you know it has a castle, it has graveyards. One thing fits the other thing, you give people what they want.

I: Do you think Edinburgh has the spirit of the place so to say – the specific vibe that it gives off?

Ye, it's a natural ambience it has – kind of a gothic feel to it. With the spires and with the castle rock. And you know the narrow closes. I think it's naturally prone to it. Same as Prague, I'd imagine, if you go to Prague now. In Prague you'd see a similar economy. And you do. I've seen Prague. Even with the "C. U. Jimmy" hat shops here... They have bohemian crystal shops. But I would imagine that just like we do they have – you know – people wander in [...]. You know, they have the catacombs and palace. I don't think you can do ghost tours so well in a modern city. You know, like in Tokyo per say. People are not going to be scared by that. People are scared by - for whatever reason – by the past (laughing). And Edinburgh – because it's UNESCO World Heritage site – there are a lot of these buildings.

I: You think it's because of the past?

And here what I learned is a performance. So you can make someone pass out. Like I could make you pass out right now if you were uncomfortable enough. With eye contact and with tone of voice. All of the effects you see in there could be caused by that. Uncanny storytelling, setting – because it is a legitimate graveyard. You are there and you shouldn't be there and people become prone to that sort of things. you know – through us telling stories. But no, I don't believe in ghosts.

I: But if you had how would you define a ghost?

Metaphorically? It's fear. You know on a tour its not necessary that people are afraid of the ghosts specifically. I suppose it's an existential thing. People are afraid of bad things that happened in the past for some reason (laughing). But as a ghost tour guide you are doing various things to scare them that aren't to do with...

I: But they are longing for it?

They want it, aye. Cause fear is a powerful motivation. That's how governments work, they are just fearing the populace – people want fear. And like when I jump out there.

What I found out is that if I do a tour – and my tours are all [personal] and that’s the best thing you can say what you like with this company, for a lot of other companies it’s a script, and here as long as you are above their bar you can say what you like – but I find that if you do a tour and it doesn’t have a jump people don’t like that so much if you are just scaring them and there is no payoff. Because they get a kind of catharsis of a big fright. That’s what they like, that’s what they want. A lot of people come on tours who believe in ghosts, and they come to look for orbs, and you get psychics who come up to share: “that teenage boy you mentioned, I felt his presence”. But I think the majority of people just want to be scared – same as a horror movie. I don’t know, it’s fascinating. Have you been on the tours? That’s my perspective, I would make that clear. A lot of the guides I know are going to say - It’s hard to tell because they might be as dishonest to tourists as they are to me, their colleague (laughing) – most of them say they believe in ghosts. And most of them, like I listen to their stories as I’m waiting to jump and I don’t believe they are true, that did not happen. But if you ask them they would say that yes, this really happened as they tell. And it’s hard to tell, I always think that it’s similar to like professional wrestling – when people appropriate a character and its their character. And in wrestling it’s so important and you get used to maintain a character even in your worst matches to convince the audience that what you’re doing is real. And I think that with a lot of tour guides that’s the case, they will confirm everything but it’s hard to tell what they believe. I can’t imagine they’ve seen things and I haven’t seen them.

I: So do you think that the story comes first and ghosts follow?

Ye, people become convinced after they’ve heard the story. Most people that believe in ghosts they will speak to you. You can tell when they speak to you there is a kind of desperation – they are not looking for what you think about the ghosts, they are just wanting you to say “ye, ye”. And they will tell you about things they’ve seen and they will show you photos they’ve taken. And I think there are two sorts of people – they are moved by something else, probably to do with mortality, I think these people have a fixation on ghosts generally, that seems to be the root of it. And you see a lot of soldiers even, they will stay behind and talk to you about stuff... It’s fascinating but (laughing) none of it convinces me that ghosts are real.

I: But do you think that these stories change the way the city functions, the way it lives.

Of course it does. I mean should you be using a graveyard like that as a sight for... It's like religion, like faith. A lot of people... Particularly as you get older and you're not a child anymore you kinda get to stop in your ways. And if you believed in ghosts once... I don't even know what I would do if I saw one. A ghost. I would assume that I've gone mad. You've gotten mad finally (laughing). Some say people just have different sensitivity – like taste in food or drinks. The same with the paranormal, could be true, could be false. Some claim to be psychics and they are telling something. Again... you can take it at face value. But of course that sort of stuff changes the shape of the city. If you come to Edinburgh the only thing to do in the evening is a ghost tour and it gives you a certain notion of the place. That's what it's about.

#### TONKS (Black Hart Entertainment guide)

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

Yes. During these 14 years I've seen things and I've had things onto me so... When I started doing it I was quite naïve - like, ye, maybe ghosts exist, who knows. And now I absolutely 100 % believe that ghosts exist and other things as well.

I: Can you tell a few things from your experience?

So basically I started doing this and thinking ghosts existed and it's as simple as that but then the more I got involved into doing the tours... there were people like paranormal investigators coming to the tours. I am very skeptical, it's very hard to impress me so I started my own paranormal investigation group which was completely science-based so it was not valid just to say "oh, I feel cold" or "I saw a shadow". So if you felt something is happening you would record in a diary even the time when it happened. And then in the end of the investigation one of the girls took all of the diaries away and compared all the data again – like temperature fluctuations or emf recordings. And then we also started doing things like ghost fests (which we used to

do about 10 years ago) with various conferences and such. And one of the talks I went to discussed the fact that the chemical compounds that make VHS recording tapes are the same chemical compounds you find in old sandstone buildings and the catalyst for recording onto VHS is water. And in something like 80% of the haunted locations throughout Scotland there is either an underground stream or a stream in very close proximity to it so it's like a scientific explanation for when you see like a woman walking through a corridor but she doesn't interact with anybody. So I believe that in time science will be able to logically explain ghosts in that sense, in the sense of a recording, almost like a hologram. It's just a thing that's been recorded and simply exists, you can't interact with this and it can't interact with you, so that's how I sort of explain ghosts. But then there is something else I've seen attack people on tours. So that kinda made me think what else is there, cause there has to be something else.

I: Do you think Edinburgh is a haunted city for some specific reasons?

Edinburgh has a lot of these old sandstone buildings that we haven't torn down and haven't replaced. There is the argument there that this is still alive. Obviously we are very proud of our history, we talk of our history a lot. We have a lot of tourist attractions based on history of Edinburgh. And you know some other cities like Glasgow or Liverpool or Manchester they are all very modern cities – where you come for new exciting things whereas here we are like “come and look at all of our old stuff”. We have our history loving and breathing with us because we have so many tours that have to make passionate guides to talk about that, it keeps our heartbeat alive. And I think it helps feed that energy.

I: Make the city enchanted in a way?

- Yes. Exactly. [unclear]

I: You also mentioned something about cold spots and specific places where attacks happen.

I think some people are certainly more vulnerable than others and there needs to be something that has been passed on in generations. Or somebody mocked around and

they shouldn't have. Or opened the door that ought not to be opened so they made themselves more vulnerable. But also you know, if a large group of people were to come to my living room and someone is standing around I might get annoyed and give one of them a shove as well. So you know, it could be a place, it could be a person. I think a lot of times is an unfortunate combination of both. Especially with things like ghost tours. If you are already a vulnerable person and you put yourself into this situations – you are kind of asking for it.

I: How would you define a ghost which is not just a recording?

I describe them as demons for the lack of any other name. I just don't have a vocabulary for these things. I am not Christian, I don't believe in heaven or hell but I do believe there are other entities out there. And it's like in life some are light some are dark. In this line of business I've yet to encounter any of the necessarily light ones. But I've certainly encountered plenty of the dark ones. I've been doing this for 14 years and I've seen handfuls of people seriously injured on the tour. I've been injured myself a couple of times. I was choked at the end of one of the tours in one of the undergrounds. I finished the tour, the same way as every day, started choking, and I don't know if you've ever had a neck injury but you cry. So I was standing there in front of my group, tears pouring down my face. And they are all like "thank you for the tour, it was great, bye". And as soon as last person went "bye" it stopped. That was Wednesday night. And then on a Sunday night I was in the last vault doing the talk and I feel something going on around my neck, I don't know what – it was like a hot prickly sensation. Got outside and the whole group kept looking on my neck. Ok, great, so I got back to the bothy, one of the other guides is there and he goes "what the hell happened to your neck?". I don't know so I looked in a mirror - inch wide crooked burn all around my neck.

GERRY (Black Hart Entertainment guide)

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

Yes. I believe in the phenomenon but I stopped saying I think I know what they are. I think the word ghost is kind of like the word UFO. People think you mean a specific thing whereas I do not. I use the word ghost to describe an affect that there is no a better word for. But I don't think it's necessarily means the soul of a dead person. But I definitely believe there is something real we call ghosts.

I: Edinburgh is a haunted city, what makes it haunted?

I don't think it actually haunted compared to other cities. The thing about Edinburgh... I don't know if you are familiar with the stories we tell on our tours. The city walls were built – for the most part of history this place was very small. So within this mile by a quarter of the Royal mile almost all of the history happened. And I think there is a concentration in the Old Town of Edinburgh because it was compressed but I think if you spread that out over the whole area I don't think Edinburgh is more haunted than anywhere else.

I: So why there is such a proliferation of dark stories? Because of this compression?

I think there is a particular Scottish thing about identifying with the losers. Historically. And because we are identifying with the losers we tend to kind of enjoy the rascals a bit more. So you know smugglers are never considered bad guys in Scottish history. And illicit distillers never considered bad guys. Even Burke and Hare - there tends to be a little bit of affection for them. I think it comes from Scotland being used to being casters, kind of bad element. I think we identify and these stories are always more interesting. And they are also more real, because you have a lot of idealized historic stories – like Robin Hood – and its not interesting because good guys are too good and bad guys are incredibly bad. And that's not truthful. I think people are more interested in a truthful story. And the only stories we tend to tell the real truth about are the villains'.

I: So the haunted side of things has to do with the way history is perceived here?

History is very contentious particularly in Scottish history. In British history you can notice it takes a little bit more looking. If you look at the history of the IIWW, most

British people will say “we won”, whereas if you look at the facts America and Russia won and we survived. But in Scottish history there is so much more of that. The Presbyterian church, it kind of managed to win over the Catholics and the Anglicans, writes history its own way and its not generally true. And the oppressed Catholics would write history their way and it’s not strictly true. And in most countries I think a lot of these fights are settled down and people can be more objective. But in Scotland a lot of people are still very angry about the history. And they don’t let it go and they don’t look at it objectively.

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I: And it keeps ghosts awake?

Ye, I think it keeps them here. I mean we are still fighting over things that people who died hundreds of years ago fought for and whether you want to be very metaphorical about it - it doesn’t let them rest it doesn’t let them settle down and become peacefully appreciated for who they were. I mean people still leave flowers in the gates of Covenanters’ prison. There are two guys buried in St Giles church – there is James Gram of Cloverhouse and Angus (maybe) McGregor who was the lord of Argyle and they were mortal enemies and they are buried across from each other and people still leave flowers on their graves and hate the other ones because it still refers, a lot of these fights were never finished. So I think people keep them.

I: How would you define a ghost?

I wouldn’t. I think... There are so many different types of hauntings, people give them names and nobody kind of agrees on what the names are. My own personal kind of explanation would be that you get apparitions that are just visual, you get poltergeists, they tend to be violent and physical and you get possessions when people believe that someone takes over them, you get manifestations – which might be like music playing, like piano that nobody touches you get spirits which I think the most people would see as a soul of a dead person... I think it a very very wide range of phenomena. And we use ghost to try to explain them all but I think in years to come we will have much better definitions of what is what. But at the moment, I think ghosts don’t have a good definition.

I: Have you been affected in any ways by any of the aforementioned phenomena?

Yes. And again very open minded about it. I've had quite a lot of my electronics explode. I always have very old-fashioned phones because they tend to survive better but two of my previous phones blew up in the covenanters prison. Quietly exploded in my pocket. But a lot of guys have gone home and felt that something has gone with them or they have been disturbed by having strange dreams. I think with a lot of these things it is easy to find another explanation for them but that doesn't mean you should rule them out. I've been here for twelve years and I've had a lot of very strange experiences but the exploded electronics is the only thing that I can find another explanation for. And the first phone that exploded I took it to a shop the next day to have it looked at because I needed all my numbers on it. They said that the battery had boiled and exploded in a case. And the only explanation they had was that I put it through the microwave. So I asked can they look up the sim-card. They said – no, the sim-card had melted, all the circege is melted, it will never work again. Took it home, got a new phone, collected all my numbers, and at three o'clock in the morning it started ringing. On a shelf. And I... I threw it out of the window. Might be explainable but it was scary enough that I wasn't taking any chances.

I: If a place is haunted, do you think it gives physical effects?

Yes, I think. I think we are given instincts for a reason so I always trust my instincts. And certainly over the years here sometimes guides can outstay the welcome. Like to some extent we are tolerated here. But some guides are – and even myself in the past, I sometimes pushed things a little too hard, I told the story that isn't quite entirely true and on occasions I've done that I felt very much there is something just taking a step towards me and saying 'stop'. Mostly in the Covenanters prison but to be honest there are another few spots around the graveyard that I've felt I am making eye contact with something when there was nothing there. And one of the things that I am quite fond of saying to people is that people say they've seen a ghost but I've never physically seen a ghost but I've just been so sure that I'm making eye contact that my brain tried to put something there to explain it? And that's a perfectly reasonable psychological thing to do. But when you get more than one person thinking this all the same thing that means a different brain puts the same visual there and that saying to me that there's

got to be something making that impression. And around the graveyard I've often felt I am being... not stalked but things were paying attention and care about what I say.

I: Do you think that your stories or the fact that you keep telling them change the perception of the city for other people or for yourself?

Yes and... I think it's quite a hard thing to define. Those little things that are really easy to keep track of. Like the story of Greyfriars bobby. When we began as a tour company in 1998 there was only one version of that story - and that was the book of Eleonore Atkinson. Over the years we've all done our bits of research in different things. And at one point I accidentally said the wrong thing about the cause of death of the owner... And it just happened another tour guide was on my tour to try and see if he could pick up anything. So they took that as a fact and went back with that on their tour and the rest of their tour guides did that. Three weeks later Wikipedia changed the cause of death. It's silly but that actually almost changed history just because I said the wrong thing. Words have tremendous effects, you can direct people to send all sorts of emotional input and energy into things. I think storytelling definitely affects a lot more than people give credit for. I think particularly this graveyard is a good place for that because of the number of stories that came from here and changed the world. Robert Lewis Stevenson spent time here, John Polidori based *Vampire* on Mackenzie and Mary Shelley took a lot of the knowledge from bodysnatching from this graveyard and the city around it. Their stories changed the world. I definitely think ghost stories have a special power to change the world. Christmas carols probably the best example. That did change the history of the industrial revolution just through ghosts so ye. I think stories and in particular ghost stories have a lot of power.

I: Is there something about re-enchantment of the urban space

It can do. It does depend a lot... in the fact that bigger cities demolished their history. Edinburgh is very special because... it does make a difference. Whenever little bits of history are uncovered it changes the perception of the whole area there. Big fire in Cowgate exposed some old ruins and a lot of artefacts that put a whole new interest in the vaults. When Mary King's Close was uncovered there was a whole new interest in the history of the city and people were looking into the real historical facts in the old

stories and think where they came from. It definitely had an effect on the way that locals perceive the city as well as tourists. I think it inspires people to be a little more in touch and a little more respectful and a little more curious about the past. This connection is important, I think ghosts are most common when we lose that connection. I think most haunted places always have some forgotten history and I think it's a big part of what gives the place the kind of mystery that people interpret as a ghost. The fact that Edinburgh has kept its ghosts despite keeping its histories is fascinating but I don't think the city would be the same without its ghosts and I don't think as many of the historic sites would have stood if it didn't have that special bit of history that keeps people wanting to see them.

#### KARSTON (Black Hart Entertainment guide)

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

Yes and no. It's undecided. I've seen stuff which makes me think – okay, yes, there is something here - and the I've seen stuff that makes me think – okay its just psychosomatic, people working themselves up and its probably imagination playing tricks on them. You know psychosomatic symptoms can manifest itself as physical symptoms, like scratches, they end up scratching themselves and they are completely unaware of that or something else. But I've seen stuff in the graveyard, you know. It was years ago, I've been doing it a long time and I am walking through the cemetery and out of the corner of my eye I see a woman in a white dress, like a Victorian dress, but it's completely white like a nightgown. And I was like 'oh, that's weird' and I went and I did the jump. And then the following night I was walking through the cemetery and someone walks up to me and says "Is there a woman in a white dress walking around in the cemetery?". And I was like "You mean right now or ...." And he answer "Yes, I just saw her and now I can't find her, she went around the corner and then we didn't see her anymore". I was like ' You know what? I did see something last night but I wasn't sure if I did or not and now you freaked me out'. So you know stuff like that happens and you thin "ok, there is something to it". Maybe ghosts are real. And then I see other stuff and I think, meh. So it's hard, I don't know for sure.

I: So nothing happened to you beyond the gates?

Sure. You know I've woken up in the morning with scratches on my back and stuff like that. Or... But you know, they are such fine scratches that maybe it was something else, you know it's not conclusive. It's not like I came in and then came out and my eyes were bleeding or something. Something that dramatic I would have been like yes, I've been attacked.

I: If you had to define a ghost how would you define it?

Well, the classic definition of a ghost is that it's a soul of a dead person who hasn't moved on or they have unfinished business or somehow they are stuck here. But for me it would be a spirit of a dead person.

I: How could it manifest?

Lots of different things. It can be a particular aura of the place or it can be a visual thing that you see. Or it could just be some random strange things happening. Glass moving across the table.

I: Do you think Edinburgh is a haunted city?

Definitely. For sure.

I: Why?

I guess because it has such a bloody history. Well, a lot of places have a bloody history but like it has a lot to do with not just how old a place is but also the buildings. Well, for starter the architecture is very gothic and uncanny. So that kind of gives it the look and people automatically associate it with medieval times or something like that and it adds to the 'this could be haunted'-kind of – perception. But then all these buildings especially in the old town they are that old. You know in Europe a lot of buildings were destroyed during ww2 and new buildings were built up so you know like one theory suggests that a place is haunted because you've got all these spirits or just bloody history memories that just been soaked into the stonework of the place and

because these are still old original buildings from like 500-600-700 years ago that's a lot of memories, that's a lot of people dying and spirits maybe not moving on. So that's why it haunted, there are still a lot of people that still live here who are dead.

I: Do you think telling stories about ghosts or jumping as a ghost does contribute to this ambience ?

Yes. Well, it affects it because it creates kind of reputation. Cause now there are a lot of ghost tours. At first it was just us and one other company, now there is the whole bunch of them and you know people associate Harry Potter with Edinburgh as well. There is a lot of stories and associations in people's minds with this city, with things like ghosts, ghouls, the plague, witches. So it creates reputation and I think in that sense it will attract certain types of people to the city as well as tourists, who come here for a very specific reason for like the whole niche. Now we have people that come from England just to join a tour. And that was their only reason for visiting Edinburgh.

I: If we talk about the feeling of being haunted, do you think you could describe it in terms of bodily reactions?

I think for the most part you know the place is haunted just through a feeling. It's nothing really concrete and sometimes people think a place is haunted or know a place is haunted and no one else does just because they know a story associated with that. I think it's your body, it's a sense of unease. Like if you walk in a room and immediately feel uncomfortable. It's this sort of the feeling. You could walk into an empty room and just sense that something is not right or maybe you feel that someone is in this room with you but you don't see them.

#### IEN (Black Hart Entertainment guide)

Haunting aspects mainly because of all the programs on TV that deal with hauntings. Rather sadly the majority of programs on television are low quality and they've been going on for far too long. And there is an element where people think the results just were fantastical but they just won't believe it. I think the fact that attracts people to

Edinburgh primary is its history to be honest with you, less than the ghost activity. The ghost activity is just a little bit extra. I am not saying it doesn't attract people but – and this is going by what we as guides get from speaking with the tourists – it's the historical aspect for people.

I: Is it related to storytelling?

Well, the story that we tell aren't from imagination, we are stories that based on facts. That's slightly different. Ghost stories are circumspect, that's up to interpretation. Like I said though, personally I can only speak for me at the moment, but 99% of people I speak to have come to Edinburgh because they haven't been here before, that's about fine. Because the history of Edinburgh has definitely captivated their imagination. The ghost aspect – yes to a point. But not as much as you might think. But that's just my interpretation. When I do my tours I don't really do the whole ghost story thing. Mines much are just our history. I guess in gets in the people's heads much better than ghost stories, it scares them a bit better than ghost stories. Anybody can tell you a ghost story. Anybody. You can go on to google and you can get a ghost story generally or programs. You type on a few key words and it will throw you a story... You know what I mean? Edinburgh's history is dark enough, and creep you enough and blood soaked enough. And that's the factual history, you don't need much ghost stories. You've got other companies... One of the companies I would recommend you to speak to is Mercat Tours because saying that we are mainly factual history but Mercat tours do predominantly ghost stories. Mary Kings is about Mary Kings. Auld Reeky hmm... But Mercat Tours is probably the best one to speak to cause their guides use a battery of ghost stories. They don't concentrate so much on the history and the ghost activity in itself.

I: But you take people to haunted places.

Yes, we do. We explain... We take people in to locations... personally I explain what happens in these locations... Like I said my tours are not ghost tours as they are dark history tours. It's easy to get someone in a dark room and tell him a ghost story and scare him. That's easy. The difficulty is to get somebody in a dark room and tell them history and scare them. And that is what we do.

I: So it's more about dark history?

Dark history, regular history. Personally me, yes, I tell one ghost story in my entire tour, which, like today. Lasts 1 hour 45 minutes. But it's not what you say it's how you say it. I tell people... I personally don't think anything I say is quite outrageous as in scary or whatever. But I do have people reacting in different ways. If you're looking for ghost stories you better talk to people from Mercat tours, they do tell a lot of ghost stories. That's your best people.

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

I do. I think – and I say this to a lot of people actually – the human soul – if you believe in a soul – a human spirit is a tremendous source of imagination and also a tremendous source of possibilities and power. We get people who believe in ghosts, who don't believe in ghosts and who kind of believe in reincarnation, who don't believe in reincarnation. There has to be something after this when you die, there has to be something. Whether that's moving on with something else, whether it is being trapped here for a while and doing your own thing – I have no idea. All I know is that's I've been doing tours for a long time to see some really weird things with my own eyes, stuff that I can't explain. And people who think that ghosts don't exist... I think they are really narrow-minded. People have to open their minds to possibilities. We get a lot of religious people on the tours and they often say that ghosts don't exist. It's like well you are claiming that's something that's not touchable feelable or seeable doesn't exist. It's like you've got the books that tell you all the things that you can't prove they exist. So it's two different faces of the same coin if you think about it. Do I believe ghosts exist? Absolutely. I wouldn't do it for a job if I didn't. I wouldn't waste my time. But I like to try and explain... People ask about ghosts all the time and I'm trying to explain it in as scientific way as I possibly can but I'm getting boring. I explain to them what science understands. And their interpretation is entirely up to them. But I do believe in them, 100 %.

I: Why then you don't like ghost stories, why dark history instead?

I don't know, I just... Ghost stories at certain point all begin to sound the same. In such a day somebody died here and this person is still here and... there is... a wise man once said that there is only six types of stories in the world. And every story is just a combination of different stories. And if people want to tell ghost stories that's fine. Some ghost stories go back thousands of years and I'm not saying that they are not true and... I am a great believer and every story – doesn't matter how ridiculous the story sounds – every story came from somewhere. Every story has truth behind it. Might not be a lot of truth. And ghost stories are usually connected to people and times and places. Famous ghost stories you can pinpoint an exact person. If you want to go really insane you can pinpoint the exact moment they died. That's how well written they are. Those are factual ghost stories. Other ghost stories not so much, you know. And you tend to find a lot in Mercat – their stories are a little bit more fantastical. They grow arms and legs and teeth and wings. Like I said I work for a ghost company but we... each of the guides does something completely different. Some do tell a lot more stories, some tell a lot more factual history, I tell a lot more factual history. But I do it in such a way that unnerves people. I push their imaginations.

I: Would you do it in any other city?

Would I? If I've got a chance yes.

I: Where?

I don't know. I worked in various sites over the years. I tend to always come back to this. I'd absolutely do ghost tours in other cities.

I: So you don't think Edinburgh is more special in terms of ghosts?

We talk about it more, we definitely talk about it more. It's more publicized. Do I think it's more haunted than other cities? No, genuinely not. London has a fantastic battery of ghost stories behind it. A lot of people in London are too busy to learn, too busy to know. London is touristy but not that touristy. They are there for different reasons – to buy things and commercial value. Edinburgh is more... they come here more to relax, they come here to take their mind of.

I: Talking about being busy in big cities, do you think tales about ghosts or dark history gives any special ambience in Edinburgh?

Edinburgh has a touch of ambience anyway. Edinburgh, when it gets dark Edinburgh looks totally different. I think it's up to interpretation personally. A lot of tourists that come here, they come on ghost tours but they are not expecting to come on a ghost tour, you know. They see us on the street and they wonder what's going on and they are like "oh, I'll do that". It's not a case of "we are only coming to Edinburgh just to do that". That's capsule tourism and I don't think we deal on that. We get people like that obviously. A lot of people just walk on. It probably does add to ambience a little bit. But we only see a very very small fraction of the tourists. I mean 99% of people come here for the zoo, for Britannia for the castle, for holidays. They never see us. Ambience possibly yes but a very small percentage. A lot of people come to Edinburgh because they've never been to Edinburgh. Other people come here because they know Scotland's history anyway and they are looking for relatives or family. We also get people who come here – and I would say that mainly because of Edinburgh architecture. Because it's a beautiful city. And they've heard about it they've seen it on TV and they want to experience that so we've got a very small percentage of people who actually want to do ghost tours. A lot of people come here and see us and they are like "what's this". It's nine o'clock at night, they are in a strange city, and they do that. And they have an amazing experience.

I: How would you define a ghost?

A ghost is a memory of yesterday. It's an echo. It lasts a few moments of somebody's life. Cause ghost stories you generally find that ghost doesn't vary... what it does for hundreds of years a woman walks across the hall disappears through a wall or... it's an echo of somebody's life. You discover it in ghost stories. In majority of stories you don't see the actual moment of person's death, you'll see them walk across the room and disappear through a wall or they walk out and light a candle. You never see the moment of their death. Some of them you do, but in 99 % you don't. So what you've seen is an echo of a few minutes of this person's life where they were comfortable or

familiar. They are dead all the time. There is a famous ghost story in London – a man who appears in front of the Buckingham palace and turns the key and disappears and they are not sure who he is but obviously he did that in life. So they refer back to what they enjoyed or what they are familiar with in life. That's the echo of yesterday. And the problem with ghost activity is that people... If you have a full room of people, sometimes one of them will see it, sometimes five will see it. Sometimes the entire room will see it. And then you've got the other side of the coin. They think we've set up a special effect which we haven't. So just because you've seen a ghost doesn't necessarily mean he will see a ghost. That's how it goes. It goes in swings and roundabouts. Why are they here? No idea. I've no idea. I am not in a position to guess. But I'm happy they are here. Cause if nothing else it gives us a little window to the past.

#### EDGAR (Mercat Tours guide)

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

I am a little skeptical like I mentioned earlier. But I like to think of myself as intelligent enough to keep an open mind.

I: So have you seen or heard something ghostly?

Oh yes. I wasn't joking about the things that I mentioned during the tour. The things like the bouncing ball and the lady singing – I wasn't making this up just to entertain the clients. I prefer taking a little bit of reality onto the tours than to make things up for entertainment purposes. I think if you are delivering something that really happened even if it is with a little skepticism it makes it more entertaining and far more enjoyable for the clients as well.

I: Do you think Edinburgh is a haunted city?

Edinburgh is a weird city to start with. I mean stuff happens all the time and... I don't know, it's such a weird city and it's so full of movement at the same time. If something completely out of the ordinary happens you might not even perceive it because you're

already expecting everything. Look at the Fringe for example – the biggest concentration of weirdos on the whole planet. So ye, It may be and it may be that people don't even notice it. There is no peace and quiet in the city – at least hardly any.

I: Why do you think it might be haunted?

Well. That's the thing... I don't know about the whole supernatural thing. I am a sound engineer and I am a musician as well. So thinking of the intangible as being something that has an actual impact on people - is something that for me makes a lot of sense. For example, if we talk about music... Those are just colliding particles in a certain order, but a song can make you sad or happy, can't it? But it's nothing more than physics but it still causes some emotions I think. The second thing is – our senses are very limited. Let's take hearing – we cannot hear anything below 20 hertz or over 20000 hertz even if your hearing 100 %. You cannot see anything under red or anything over violet which in the spectrum of light that's the highest and lowest colors which is why we refer to ultraviolet and infrared as frequencies you cannot perceive. Another thing – if you shout at the mountain it shouts back, it's called an echo. It's something that you can perceive. Now put all of these together and think about it. Considering that everything is energy is it so unrealistic to think that some energies can be still recurring and happen so often in the same place that they might echo throughout time and given that your senses are limited maybe at a certain point there is something that allows you to perceive it if it makes any sense. For me it's just a logical explanation of something that has no explanation whatsoever.

I: Why Edinburgh has this reputation?

Well, that's definitely historical. It comes from superstition more than anything else. It comes from times when the understanding of science was not a thing. You had witchcraft trials for example because witches could be blamed for everything they did not understand – the ghastly weather, the plague, for example which was for them evil energy floating in the atmosphere – the miasmas they called it. The whole thing was just superstition. The perpetuation of the same thing – just talking and talking and

talking of the same thing. That Chinese whisper – you know the expression right? – that silly game that kids play in which you come up with a sentence and you whisper it to someone’s ear and he passes it on to the next person and so on until it reaches the last person who says what the sentence was. And most often it’s not the same. It’s exactly It. Somebody saw a worm while digging up a potato and suddenly it is already an anaconda in a grave. Just exaggeration and perpetuation. We are talking about a place which has a lot of grim history... The body snatchers - those things are real – public executions and hangings and punishments. All of these things are real and all happened here, it’s just exaggerated. It’s like oh, but this man is still around cause he is vengeful and still angry cause his wife fled with another man. See what I mean? And it is being perpetuated and perpetuated. There is one really cool story which I didn’t tell tonight - the story of John Chisley, he ended up becoming one of the most famous ghosts here in Edinburgh because the way of his death was really hardcore and not only that. His body was stolen from the gallows afterwards and disappeared mysteriously... so all of these like wo-hooo. And a couple of weeks later everyone started seeing John Chisley dragging his legs and missing his arm – all that stuff. And that story not only has been kept alive for over 300 years but we still tell it today.

I: Have you had any scratches or bites?

No, I haven’t but I’ve seen them on other people. Many times. Myself, I sometimes feel a strange breeze coming from places where it shouldn’t come from. I’ve heard many things, felt strange drops of temperature.

I: How would you define a ghost?

I was asked once if I’ve ever seen a ghost and and for the definition of it I did – once. I used to drink over there (points to a bar) all the time. I have a lot of friends there, I used to go there all the time to spend some time with people there. It was mid-december last year, I remember that because I it was just before I went to Portugal and I was doing a tour so I was coming down the street with a group. Obviously if I’m with a group I won’t be talking to my friends who is like “hey, how are you doing” and stop there for ten minutes. No, I am a professional so I would take care of my group. But a

man that used to drink there as well, a friend of mine, was coming up the street as he always did. And I was coming from here and he was over there (indicates about 15 meters distance). I looked at him and nodded and he did the same thing. Then I carried on with the tour, did my job, went home after that like I always do, played some video games, had a few beers, checked facebook before going to sleep and that's when I realized that this friend of mine has actually died that morning. And I saw him in the afternoon. I am not joking about this and I wouldn't make this up just to entertain you, that really happened. I saw my friend over there and that day I was like – this is totally unexpected, I wasn't expecting this to happen. But once again that man has made this bloody way every week 3 times a week at the same time for what? 30-35 years? Always going to the same pub. For me it's just an echo, it's just a repetition of the same week. Have you seen a ghost? For the definition of it yes – the man who is dead. Was it scary or translucent? No, it was just how things are.

I: Do you feel like you are contributing to the ambience?

Down there? Definitely. The power of suggestion is very strong and obviously today as you've seen when there were things that I could explain like the sounds we heard at first – I said that it's our neighbors and you are fine. And there are things that I obviously cannot explain but the power of suggestion by creation of the atmosphere is also very relevant. The tallest girl for example she was getting a little bit anxious and I was deliberately kind of feeding that because the atmosphere is one of the reasons people do these things, they want to get scared and they want to get some particular experience. I am not going to lie to them and make things up just for their enjoyment. But if I can make it a little bit more intense and get them a bit nervous I will.

I: Do you think Edinburgh is more phantasmal than some other places?

Oh bloody hell yes. You go to Glasgow and you cannot do this, impossible. First of all the city itself is not as eerie and the history behind it is not either. I mean you go to a parking lot next to St Giles and there was a graveyard, there are still around two hundred graves under there, it's a bloody graveyard. You think of all these buildings and streets and there are probably graves or bodies underneath. You're walking in a massive graveyard.

REBECCA (Black Hart Entertainment)

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

I do believe in ghosts. I think it makes life more interesting

I: Have you had any memorable encounters?

I've once seen a ghost or an entity that was in the vaults. It was about ten years ago. And what I saw was traditionally ghostly. It was... I couldn't see any features, I couldn't see any clothing but it was like this pale mist but very clearly defined – the shape of a head, sharp shoulders, then all the way down to the ground and it seemed to be there the entire time I was in there with the group. I kept sort of trying to put the torch directly at it and I couldn't see it. But in the half-light I could see it. And there was a fellow who is a friend of a friend of mine on the tour standing right next to this figure and he suddenly felt he couldn't breathe, he felt real pressure on his chest and then when he moved away from this spot next to this thing, he said the feeling went – he felt okay again. So that's my main personal experience of ghosts. I've felt like cold air suddenly on my cheek and that's been in the vaults as well. I've seen a lot of things happen to other people in the tours. People suddenly collapsing and saying that it was unlike anything they've felt before, people saying can't breathe, people coming up with scratches, markings on their body, people saying one part of their body is suddenly really hot and people touching the gate in the tomb of the covenanters' prison and then suddenly get electric shock and there is no reason for that to happen. Had many people say they feel things touching them, pinching them, pulling their hair, many people say they've seen either lights or figures.

I: When you saw this figure was it just you?

I think so, I didn't say anything about it.

I: How would you define a ghost?

People say it's something left from the past. Shadow of the past. It's often seems to be associated with stories of unfairness. You know when people have been treated unfairly or when... because of the crime that spirit is unable to move on.

I: Do you agree with that?

I think that's a fair enough assumption, we do not know for sure of course but often it does seem to be places where the history is being forgotten that there are these ghost stories.

I: So it accumulates in certain spaces?

Yes.

I: Do you think Edinburgh is a haunted city?

Well, obviously it's a very old city and it's a city that has been continually inhabited. There's always been people here for a very-very long time, also people living in a very enclosed space. One thing that is interesting about Edinburgh – partly because of the old town – is that you are in this small place where people live right on top of each other and it also has some great dark stories. Burke and Hare, the witchcraft trials, deacon Brodie – all these stories help with the ghost tours and it means that there are these really historical stories that you can tell. And the fact that there was the Flodden wall that makes a lot of interesting historic spaces to go to. So you don't go from one side of the city to the other, you walk around the old town, It's all there on the very practical level – that's why Edinburgh seems to have a lot of these ghost tours.

I: When the place is haunted how do people perceive it?

Well, people say that they get a sense that there is another presence there. Some people describe sensations like heat or cold or tingling. People say you know that someone is

watching them behind the back of the group – that sort of things. I am not very sensitive to these things. This is what people feel on the tours.

I: Do you think that what you do makes the city more haunted or more enchanted?

Well. I am not sure about that one. Places where we work, we've been taking people there for many-many years and it doesn't seem to necessarily become more haunted. We don't necessarily get more sightings or attacks. That does happen that when you start to suggest something people start feeling or seeing things. I am not sure if it necessarily makes it more haunted. But ghost tours is a big attraction here, there are a lot of companies that do ghost tours. It's not necessarily more haunted than other cities but we make the most of it.

I: Why do you do this? Is it just a job?

I enjoy it. Not necessarily the haunted part but the performance aspect – what makes people laugh, what frighten them, how can you find tune to make it work that way. The ghost part is out of my control but I can tell stories and make the stories work for an effect. Some people say we shouldn't be messing with these things, I don't have any concerns about that – we go to these places, we talk about what has been happening but we are not necessarily being disrespectful in that way. Some say that if spirits hang around they want their stories to be told.

I: Do you believe in Mackenzie poltergeist?

I've seen people come out with scratches. I've seen people suddenly collapse when we were just having a laugh, having a good time. I've seen things happen to people and it's not always what you have suggested. Gerry in the end of his graveyard tour used to invite McKenzie poltergeist into the tomb. What he would do – it is different to other people – he would send his whole group out and then invite the poltergeist. This one night he was working and he was in here at night, just came back from the tour and he looked really quite upset or nervous. And he said that he was in the tomb doing the thing that he does and he had the sensation – he couldn't necessarily see it or hear it – the sensation of something moving around in the tomb and then he went out to his

group and the group themselves they also felt the sensation of something flying around their heads but couldn't see it. That genuinely happened to him and he looked quite freaked out by what did just happened.

SAMUEL (Mercat Tours guide)

I: Do you believe in ghosts?

Tough question. I was a sceptic, I wouldn't call myself a full believe, I am on the fence, Obviously for the job I have to really stress that there are ghosts seen in these locations but it's more of a recount on what other people have seen themselves. I will say that before I worked for this company I was a full-on sceptic. I didn't believe and now that I have been going into these locations I am just not sure. I think that's a power of places like that, it's not about whether or not it makes you believe, its about whether or not it makes you question your beliefs which it has done for me.

I: Have you seen something or heard something?

I did see one time. So we have a final room at the very end. One of the main selling points of this tour is a very particular, quite aggressive ghost called Mr. Boots and once I had an experience where I was leaving the room in which he is most commonly encountered in, and as I left I saw in a door frame there was a nail and tied up over that nail by the laces were very thick, very dirty boots. And I remember seeing them and being very freaked out and I called to the rest of my group and they toured back and they were gone – the boots. I know that I saw them. And I don't know if it was a trick of my imagination or it was something that genuineky happens there. That was the weirdest thing that ever happened.

I: Do you think Edinburgh is a haunted city?

I think if there is one city to be haunted in the UK that's Edinburgh. I imagine every city has the dark past to it and I definitely have encountered more Edinburgh history than I have anywhere else but it just marvelous for retaining its history and culture, and does have such a dark underlying history of all the torture and murders that used

to go on around these areas that definitely if there's location where ghosts could be real you'd likely find them here.

I think it's the way that it managed to retain its history so well. You look at other places – like London – I once had a job in London and I never knew when I am going to finish it because every time you go back there are these trains everywhere and everything behind like these billboards... you know. Most other cities in the UK that you visit they are constantly renovated and rebuilt whereas Edinburgh is a city in which we managed to retain our history and our heritage. I think that does grant to the spooky atmosphere.

I: How would you define a ghost?

I think it's a presence, a presence of someone that used to inhabit this world but no longer seems to but has not quite yet moved on to the other side. It's a residue of a previous memory. And it's staying there for a very specific reason – either due to being very angry or very sad essentially. That's why people are more scared of ghosts – if you do encounter a ghost there is a reason that imprint of a person has stayed and it is rarely going to be a good reason.

I: Why the Vaults are haunted?

Vaults are so haunted because there used to be essentially disgusting and horrific location. It was meant to be an engineering marvel of architecture but because they neglected to use waterproof clay all the filth that was coming down from above dripped down from the roads and into these underground cabinets' buildings which were just filled with all kinds of sloth and nastiness and all the nastier characters of history would lurk down there. It was a real slum, it was a really devastating location, because of that there is an impression that there are some of more malevolent sort of entities that were down there are sort of passed imprints of those who were struggling down there – that's why we consider it a slightly more spooky locations. The other very spooky one is Mary King's Close and that's cause of the plague. It's a sort of premade show though – a bit like Edinburgh Dungeon whereas with us it's quite simply telling tales of location. We do the general history tours too and that's how it originally started . But

people kept saying that they could feel the presence and because they could sense these things people start to freak out a little bit.

I: Have you seen people knocked out or affected strongly?

I did one time in the same room where I saw the boots I saw a woman get shoved in the back, it was again quite a very freaky experience. I was just telling the tale of the stuff that went on there and then she suddenly jerked forward and then she had to leave because she felt that something was dragging her off in a different direction and she ran away from it as fast as she could and I had to guide her upstairs, she was probably under a panic attack in the end of it. It was very intense. That was the weirdest thing I've seen, there were a few faintings and things like that but that was one thing when I've seen a person physically getting moved by something.