

Haunted Löfstad Palace: Spectacular Sensations and Educational Aids in the Wake of Castle Ghosts

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Introduction

This study takes as its starting point 12-year-old pupils' imagination when they take a tour and learn about past events at Löfstad Palace, a historic house museum in Sweden. The guide stimulates affections and haptics -- sensory dimensions such as hearing, seeing, and smelling (Ludvigsson et al 2021: 1) by telling ghost stories when mediating the past to the pupils.

Most research about dark tourism and ghost tourism starts with analyzing the special guided tours in which paranormal elements characterize the event. This essay examines the use of paranormal features on a regular tour at Löfstad Palace to learn more about the past. The premise of this essay is that authenticity is not created solely by historical facts or by material traces of the past but rather by people's ability to collectively imagine (Trenter et al. 2021). Imagination is fundamental in the assumption that ghost experiences create authenticity.

The essay proceeds in the following way: after presenting paranormal tourism's relation to heritage and the past, I will briefly introduce affective and haptic aspects in history learning followed by how this pedagogical research can be connected to critical heritage studies' focus on how visitors collectively encounter the past. Thereafter, these perspectives are combined with how the paranormal contributes to the affective and haptic dimensions. The paranormal element as a means of communicating cultural heritage is here understood in terms of how emotions and bodily senses, such as sight and hearing, as well as materiality, affect visitors' experience of the past. The theoretical standpoints are accompanied by a presentation of the design of the project and method. Finally, tourist guides' use of paranormal stories during a guided tour and the pupils' subsequent reactions is explored.

Paranormal tourism and the past

A common feature for ghost tourism, fright tourism, gothic tourism, and ghost tourism—several names are used for this niche tourism industry—is the connection between the past and the present. In this type of tourism, the macabre is at the center, highlighting the paranormal as it relates to past tragedies and dramatic deaths. Much like the idea of ghosts themselves, ghost stories contribute to bringing the past to life. So-called haunted places are associated with urban geography (e.g. commercial ghost tours), ruins, castles,

monasteries, and cemeteries, usually infamous houses and castles frozen in time, as when used by the “ghosts” when they were alive (Holzhauser 2015: 184-185). The history of the site is established during the tours and transforms into ghost places. The historical place is created by liminal spaces and times such as underground vaults, candlelight and darkness, and supported by the guide's stories about experiences of ghosts which not only concretize the ghostly space but additionally connect the tourists with former tourists' experiences. The experiences at the ghost tourist site are marked by juxtapositions, such as the present and the past, darkness and light, and the living and the dead (Holzhauser 2015: 74-76, 81).

The complex branding of paranormal ghost sites is based on both history and cultural heritage, such as that of “gothic Scotland”. Here, paranormal cultural heritage becomes an important part of the Scottish brand, where its historical roots and folkloric traditions provide the background for the paranormal phenomena (Inglis & Holmes 2003; Holzhauser 2015: 38-42; Light et al. 2020). The “ghosts” function as conduits for the local stories about the heritage site, and thereby condense and materialize values and external memories into the site (Edwards 2020: 1320-1323). The ghost's “presence” sheds light on temporalities where the present—here and now—is tied together with the past—there and then (Holzhauser 2015: 66)—making the encounter with the past at the site seem more authentic than it would have without the paranormal effects (Inglis and Holmes 2003: 66).

The paranormal experience requires not only imagination but also an understanding of the past. When engaging with the past, imagination is crucial, but what is imagined is not necessarily historical fact. The paranormal experience, then, can be considered an epistemological stance based on beliefs and jointly negotiated fantastic experiences. Therefore, imaginations that are sparked collectively during a guided tour can be experienced as authentic in a cultural heritage environment without being grounded in historical fact. The authenticity of the tour has been interpreted as a kind of double authenticity, stemming from the emotive tourist experiences and the tour itself (Wang 1999 in Holzhauser 2015: 127-128). Holzhauser introduces the concept of “subverting authenticity” to overcome the traditional interpretations of authenticity as born out of “the real”. She argues that authenticity is created during these kinds of tours in the co-performing and co-production of the participants, and furthermore, that it is only the visitor who controls the authenticity (Holzhauser 2015: 131). The subjective experience is central to creating the feeling of authenticity, and this authenticity is strengthened through communication with others. Bristow discusses the liminal phase as a “created communitas”, in other words, a group of strangers collectively experiencing manufactured terror and fear at the site (Bristow 2020: 324).

Sensations and affections when encountering the past

Scholars within the research field of critical heritage studies highlight the notion of performativity to understand what happens when groups encounter heritage sites (Smith 2006; Smith 2021, Harrison 2013; Divya et al. 2018; de Nardi 2021). One such scholar, David Crouch, coined the term “heritaging” to refer to the activity at heritage sites (Crouch 2010). In addition, Martin Selby uses the term “stock of knowledge” to refer to the knowledge that is activated during the tour in order for the tourists to make sense of what is happening (Selby 2016). When the happenings at the heritage site contradict what has been relayed to them by others, the visitor attempts to reconcile the new experiences. This means that part of the stock of knowledge that is activated in a collective experience at a tourist site rumored to be haunted consists of comparing the experiences of others. The testimonies from previous visitors about the paranormal experiences are important components for creating authenticity within the visitor group (Hill 2011; McEvoy 2014).

Emotions and the connection between the expression of phenomenological experience in body and mind is operationalized in research on cultural heritage as dynamic practices (i.e., encounters between people and cultural heritage that evoke emotions and affective registers such as pain, loss, joy, nostalgia, pleasure, belonging, or anger) (Smith, Wetherell & Campbell 2018). Emotional engagement has been found to stimulate people’s historical understanding by bringing a past world to life, and the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in museums play important roles in creating these holistic encounters where emotions and cognition are stimulated (Brooks 2008; Kohlmeier 2006; Spalding 2012; Martinko & Luke 2018; Endacott, & Brooks 2018; Harris & Bilton 2019; Ludvigsson et al. 2024).

Method and design

The guided tour and the interviews at Löfstad Palace were conducted as part of the project, *Schoolchildren Relate to Historical Sites* (The Swedish National Heritage Board 2017–2019). The project investigated the encounter between school and cultural heritage by following elementary school classes as they visited historic sites located in the region of Östergötland in southeastern Sweden to, among other things, study the interaction between the pupils, the site, and the guide. The methodological starting point is that the visitors should be seen as “co-producers” of the guided tour (Larsen & Widfeldt Megedt, 2013; Ludvigsson et al. 2024). The visit to Löfstad Palace took place in May 2018 and included a visit to the Swedish Air Force Museum in Linköping. The pupils had been taught about Swedish history up to and including the 1800s and therefore had a certain understanding of the eras that the palace represented. In semi-structured interviews, the guides and pupils described what happened during the excursion. The interviews with the individual guides were conducted directly after the tour, and the interviews with the pupils, in groups of four or five, took place at school a week later.

The emphasis was placed on the pupils' pre-understandings and expectations of the tour. With the guides, individual interviews (about 30 minutes long) were conducted that were designed to include more general questions about all the tours on offer and the location, as the guides conducted many more tours than solely the tour observed for the study. David Ludvigsson, a fellow researcher, accompanied the field trip and conducted the interviews. Parts of the observation and the interviews with students and the guide is published in *Here and now at historic sites: pupils and guides experiencing heritage* (Ludvigsson et al. 2024).

Löfstad Palace: The historic house museum

Löfstad Palace, located 170 km south of Stockholm in the region of Östergötland, is a historical house museum, originally built in the 1600s but was given its current design during the 1700s. Emilie Piper, who was the last owner to live there, transferred the palace to Östergötland Museum for preservation in 1926. Inside, the palace is fully furnished and looks much as it did the day Emilie died. In addition, it contains objects belonging to those who lived there in the centuries before her. Through the décor and these objects, Löfstad Palace gives a good insight into the kinds of homes that were inhabited by the nobility, the very highest social circle in Sweden. The material consists of objects and artefacts organized in a contemporary staging that corresponds to Emilie Piper's interior design of the home from the 1920s, which includes wallpaper, furniture, utensils, clothes, and textiles. The layout of Löfstad Palace is focused on the narrative of Emilie Piper's time there and her ambition to stage earlier eras in the palace's history (Sylvan 2010; Ludvigsson et al 2024).

Löfstad Palace is a tourist destination that offers a wide range of thematic guided tours and events. It has a reputation for being the site of paranormal phenomena, and the ghost stories form part of the palace's value as a tourist destination; however, the palace is not a ghost tour destination per se. Unlike commercial ghost walks, Löfstad is first and foremost a historic house museum. The paranormal aspect—when Löfstad turns into a haunted site—is marketed and practiced as a special tour. The ghost hunt and the Halloween tour are examples of how the museum's educators tell the dramatic history of the palace through paranormal narratives that bridge the present with the past by introducing the visitors to past inhabitants through paranormal phenomena. The ghost tours are divided by age group: the family ghost tours are for children, and the adult ghost tours are for adults. The following is how the ghost tours are presented on Löfstad Palace's website:

Löfstad Palace is notorious for the many ghosts and exciting stories. We start in the basement and finish in (ghost) room number 13. The hike takes place in the evening, right at nightfall. The Palace is completely darkened, only the guide and his assistant carry lanterns. This show is not for the faint-hearted (Löfstad website Spökvisningar, own translation).

Branding by using ghost stories takes place in other media as well and is commonly connected to popular culture's use of the paranormal and macabre. Tourism research shows that the destination's branding of the paranormal is created through traditions, history, and portrayals in the media (Holzhauser 2015, Johnston 2015, Hanks 2016). The visitors become participants by commenting on, discussing, and witnessing the ghost story experience after having heard more about it in podcasts, sites, and blogs (Hill 2011).

Löfstad is well represented in Swedish media as a haunted place with several "famous" ghosts. Understandings of ghosts can, roughly speaking, be either named characters who represent canonic pasts, which is the common strategy when museums and tour producers use ghosts in uncontested presentations of the past, or they can be unnamed spirit beings used as counternarratives or alternative interpretations of the past (Hanks 2016: 29-30). Löfstad Palace's ghost branding belongs to the former. The ghosts are named and have a place not only in the palace's history but also in Sweden's national history. For instance, Löfstad Palace features prominently on the website, "Hemsökta platser" (Haunted places). The site gives details about sensory traces that connect the present with the past through supernatural ties: unexplained sounds and voices, doors that inexplicably open, and objects that have been moved around, also without explanation.

The ghost stories also refer to named people who represent different eras in the history of the palace: The first lady of the Palace, Christina Mörner (1610–1663), is said to walk around with her keys rattling and crisp skirts rustling, the fire that was caused by a maiden who committed suicide still haunts us (1750), and the ghost of Sophie von Fersen (1757–1816) still mourns her murdered brother. The temporal distance between then and now is highlighted by paranormal events that remind us about the palace reconstructions: a figure has been seen at night polishing weapons in a corner where a weapons cabinet once stood. The most famous material remains is a bloodstain in Room 13 that, according to legend, cannot be washed away no matter how hard one tries. The bloodstain is the result of a duel that arose from a jealous drama that took place in the early 1800s. One of the men died of his injuries in the room now known as No. 13. (Hemsökta platser). The site is part of a group called Nordic Ghosts on YouTube that hunts ghosts at famous haunted sites. They visited Löfstad Palace's park at night and used various techniques and measuring instruments to try and detect paranormal activity in the area.

At the time of the tour and the project, one of the most popular Swedish YouTube channels was created by Jocke and Jonna, two so-called influencers. Jocke and Jonna often posted videos of them visiting houses known to be haunted and attempting to contact ghosts. The interviews with the pupils as well as comments during the tour show that the pupils share prior knowledge about Jocke and Jonna's ghost tour at Löfstad. The guided tours are primarily aimed at school classes for pupils of different ages, and the ghost tours are

not normally part of the educational package for schools. However, as one guide explains in an interview, the pupils wanted to visit Room 13 with the bloodstain, so she decided to include the "ghost room" in the tour.

The tour, the guide, and the ghosts at Löfstad Palace

The interview with the guide revolves around the goals and purposes she defines in her assignment. She has a clear view of what is significant in history, and knows what the most important dimensions are:

[...] to explain a social structure – because that is what interests me and made me want to study history. Because when I went to school, I thought I could do without kings and wars, it's too abstract, and I am probably not alone in thinking so. There are many visitors who come and have relatives who once worked here, and then we must apply a worker's perspective, and I make that part of the tour. Then they get to see themselves in a context and it has meaning. It is so easy to be seduced by a beautiful environment, but you must understand where it comes from. (Interview with the guide 2:02)

The guide comments on the ghosts of Löfstad as part of the palace's image and how the pupils started the tour with questions about the ghosts at Löfstad.

The most common question, regardless of age, and even before entering, is whether the palace is haunted. They asked about Jocke and Jonna, the YouTubers, who wanted to make ghost programs, but as a museum we don't allow that kind of production. So, I replied [the visitors] that they [Jocke and Jonna] have been out in the park ... They wanted to get in, but we don't allow that, we have a kind of credibility as a county museum. And when we have our own ghost walks, we only tell you about the ghost stories that exist. After all, they are not so spectacular. (Interview with the guide, 9:20)

The guide dissociates herself from the more commercial ghost story told by the YouTubers Jocke and Jonna, even though the media attention constitutes an important experience for the pupils and the group. Her comment shows how important the ghosts at Löfstad are for the palace's brand, and that this brand should be protected from commercial interests.

The guide uses the branding from the ghosts of Löfstad but tries to keep the sensational aspects separate from the tour. When she refers to ghosts, it is consistently done with the addition that paranormal experiences are for people who believe in ghosts. She carefully points out that the ghosts do not exist in the same way as the visitors or the history that the palace's collections and stories convey—the choice to believe lies in the eyes of the beholder. The guide uses the references to ghosts during the tour to emphasize the emotions of people from the past and to create closeness between the visitors and these historical people.

Her first reference to the ghosts of Löfstad occurs when she tells of the lives of the servants at Löfstad, concretized through the story of Kajsa

Jönsdotter and the fire in 1750 that destroyed the baroque castle. The guide tells the story of this young maid who was suffering from the cold one night between January 7 and 8. The guide brings the plot to life by recounting how Kajsa decided to look for her mittens to warm her hands and needed to set alight a piece of tarred wood in order to see. She dropped a piece of the lit wood, and the castle, with its newly laid tarred roof, caught fire. The inhabitants tried to save as many valuables as possible from the burning building, but the disaster is a fact, and the palace burned down. The last glimpse anyone saw of Kajsa was when she ran down to Löfstad lake, where she drowned herself in despair. The guide adds that, as the pupils showed an interest in ghosts, she told them that those who believe in ghosts can see the spirit of Kajsa Jönsdotter running down to the lake every year on the night between January 7 and 8. However, the guide adds that they have never seen the ghost, “but a lot of weird things happen in this house, I can promise you that!” (The guide 4:56).

The spectacular ghost story of the former servant girl—nowadays a ghost—who caused the fire and drowned herself in the lake, serves as an example of the living conditions of servants at Löfstad during the 1600s. Both the magnitude of the catastrophe when the castle burns down and, consequently, the depth of despair of the girl who caused the fire, are amplified in the story. Her despair is heightened by her transformation from human to spirit being, although that the guide explicitly expresses that the paranormal experience is subjective for those who believe in ghosts.

When one of the palace's owners, Sophie von Fersen (married name Piper, 1757–1816), is mentioned, an extensive political history is required to place Sophie von Fersen in the right historical context. Sofie was the sister of Axel von Fersen, famous for being a close friend of the French queen, Marie Antoinette, for participating in the French royal family's failed escape attempt in 1792, and for being lynched by a mob in Stockholm after being accused of complicity in the murder of the Swedish crown prince. The guide tells about the political circumstances in Sweden, in Europe (the French Revolution), and the American Revolutionary War and thus places both Axel and Sophie von Fersen within the political drama of the time. The guide tells that Sofie erected a memorial at Löfstad Palace in memory of her brother. She concludes the exposé of the political development of events, which culminates with the lynching of Axel, by referring to Löfstad and Sophie's grief: “Speaking of ghosts, you can still see a gray lady mourning her brother” (Observation Löfstad Palace, 52). The emotionally tinged loaded image of the grieving and despairing Sophie expressing a universal emotion—grief over the death of a relative—is reinforced by the notion that the ghost may still mourning even today. The spirit of Sophie, in the form of the gray lady, reduces the distance between the people of the 1700s and the visitors at Löfstad Palace during the guided tour. The concrete connection between the existential dimension

finalizes the narrative about the von Fersen siblings' role in the political history.

A main part of the guided tour takes place in donor Emilie Piper's apartment. The museum's website highlights Emilie Piper's presence at the palace to inform the visitors that the rooms look the same as when the donor passed away. She donated the palace and its furniture to Östergötlands Museum in 1926 with clear instructions to preserve the milieu exactly as it was: "The feeling is that Emilie has just gone out for a while and will come back at any moment (Löfstad Palace website, Emilie Piper, own translation). The guide talks about Emilie Piper, who she refers to with the contemporary title "Miss Emilie". During the part of the tour that takes place in Emilie Piper's private department, she mentions her own curiosity about the Emilie Piper. This frozen moment and the closeness to Emilie's everyday life, makes a perfect starting point for the guide's stories about the architecture and the era in which Emilie lived and worked. The group walks through Emilie Piper's private rooms, which serve as a kind of stage, creating the impression of presence, with flowers on the table, an inkbottle and paper on the desk, a knitted scarf on the chair, and so forth. The guide talks about Emilie's will and her wish to make her home a place for others to learn more about her time and the people who once lived in the palace. The guide also tells of how young women during Emilie's time were prepared for marriage, taught the importance of "learning to bend your neck", expected to converse in polite conversation, make music, and embroider.

As the group enters the bedroom, the guide approaches the personal and intimate sphere of Emilie Piper's life. She notes that there are not many sources available to draw from, so we must piece together the picture of who Miss Emilie was from what little exists. Not many of her letters or diaries remain because she had all her private letters burned upon her death. Photographs show that she was fond of dogs, and we know the names of her favorites. The group also learns that her private cabinet was a nursery when "Miss Emilie" was a child, prompting the guide to comment that, as haunted Room 13 is located directly above the nursery, the choice of location for the nursery was rather odd. The guide tells that when Emilie was asked whether she believed in ghosts, she replied that, of course, Löfstad is haunted, but only by friendly spirits and ghosts. The guide explains that she is aware of the significance of dramatizing the past and engaging the visitors during the tour.

I try not to drone on, it's the worst thing, I try to change my tone, I talk engaged, with my whole body (you get hot!). It can be a demanding situation for the listener, they are passive and just stand and listen. In that situation, when there is no object, it is the voice you are working with. It's almost acting, you're trying to catch people. (Interview with the guide, 21.35)

The guide performs this kind of acting in Emilie's bedroom. After showing some objects—a silver toothbrush and a toiletry bag with brushes and silver details—the guide dramatizes the presence of Miss Emilie:

In this room, you can experience strange things, I've done that myself. I'm going to start by saying that I don't believe in ghosts because I don't, but it's something that has happened to almost everyone who works here, sometimes (lowers her voice) you can smell Miss Emilie's perfume. It's not every day, for me it's happened once (lowers her voice further) so you get a little... a little wondering... "what's going on here?" For this perfume bottle, we know what perfume it is, is stored in a storage room one floor up. I can't really, really explain it, but it's cool. It is perhaps her kind spirit that is still here in the house and who thinks it is nice that we are here and that we show her home as she wanted.
(Observation Löfstad Palace 1:05:22)

By referring to her experience of smelling the perfume, the guide creates a new dimension of authenticity, which, until this point in the tour, has been based on the guide's stories about Miss Emilie and the material traces in her room. She tells of her own experiences of sensory traces of the past, for example, the smell of the perfume, and this authenticity is strengthened by the confession that she does not believe in ghosts. The lowered voice creates an intimacy in the communication, a whisper between the visitors. Lowering one's voice also forces a bodily reaction from the visitors. To hear what the guide is talking about, the pupils must stop talking to each other, lean forward, if they are some distance from the guide, and sharpen their senses through their hearing. The guide also speaks for Emilie by sharing a message from her, namely, that she is happy that the pupils and other visitors are sharing her legacy.

Room nr 13 with the bloodstain is the last stop on the tour. The pupils are excited and talk loudly among themselves as they make their way to the room. The guide retells the well-known story about the gun duel in the park. The dying man who had been laid on the floor to await the doctor, promised he would return from the dead. The pupils are quite disappointed when seeing the remnant of the duel, the bloodstain. It does not look like how they expected. Some pupils say it looks more like a discoloration of the carpet than blood. Clearly, the bloodstain is the highlight of the tour for the pupils, although, at the same time, it is something of an anticlimax (Ludvigsson et al 2024: 44).

P1: I thought it would be bigger.

P2: More color.

P1: I thought that it would be brown, with a bit stronger color.

P2: Yes, I knew. I've heard from other people that it doesn't look like blood, but I thought it would be a bit bigger.

P3: It looks like it could be something else, it might not be just blood.

P1: It might be discoloration.

P3: It should have been bigger if you lie and bleed to death.

P1: Yes... (Observation Löfstad Palace 01.16.30)

The guide's dual relationship to ghosts and drama contains both insights into the fact that ghosts are important for branding and that they have a commercial bias. The guide comments on Room 13 and the famous bloodstain:

Yes, and the bloodstain is crazily famous. It's also part of the ghost tour. Once they see it, it's not so cool, they think it's supposed to be red, and sometimes you must explain why it's not. They've watched detective stories on television and seen red bloodstains!" [laughs] (Interview with the guide, 14:35)

Here, the guide refers to the pupils' presumed prior knowledge and experiences that have created unrealistic expectations of how they experience of the bloodstain.

The pupils, the paranormal experiences, and the past

Although the pupils asked whether Löfstad Palace is haunted, they state in the following interview that they do not believe in ghosts (Interview 3, 10:50). One pupil stated that he wants to return to the palace to participate in a ghost walk (Interview 1, 2). Whether or not they believe in ghosts is not revealed in the group interviews, which do not elicit that kind of confession, but what is revealed is that the only objects the pupils found "scary" were the portraits on the walls (Interview 3, 4:45). The visit was arranged in conjunction with the school class's primary destination, the Swedish Air Force Museum in Linköping. In the interviews, some of the pupils stated that the Swedish Air Force Museum was more fun. One pupil justifies this by saying that they were allowed to "do things"—that is, to touch and feel the objects at the museum, implying that this kind of haptic activity was not an option at Löfstad Palace (Interview 1, 12).

Despite the negative comments, the pupils noticed certain unusual objects in the palace. In the interviews, the pupils mentioned a long smoking pipe and a silver toothbrush as memorable objects. Although the pupils were not allowed to touch the objects, the haptic dimension of the experience was activated in other ways. For example, when the interviewer asked what they remember about the experience, they mentioned that the rooms that got colder and colder the further into the palace they went. They also mentioned Emilie's perfume. The pupils knew in advance that the palace was supposedly haunted, but the detail about being able to smell Emilie's perfume was something they only learned about from the guide. The pupils reflected on the so-called paranormal experiences in different ways. One group recall the supernatural element by referring to the guide's story:

P: In her bedroom ... you could smell her perfume even though it was in another room several floors above.
I: Yes, that's right, it was a bit strange. I didn't sense

any perfume when we were there. Could you feel it all the time or was it only sometimes.

P: Sometimes, she had felt it sometimes, the guide. (Interview 2, 6:40)

Another group referred to the explanation about the scent in the bedroom:

I: [Did you notice] A particular room?

P: Well ... the one I don't remember ... (the others fill in with "Emilie Piper")

They knew she had died there, it was one of those ghost things, that she had died there ... and that her perfume was still there.

I: Did you feel it?

P: No.

I: Why could you sense the perfume?

P: Because she had died there. (Interview 3, 3:30)

One of the pupils compares the guided tour to a ghost tour that she has previously participated in. The pupil recalls that, during that tour, she was told about blood flowing from the ceiling, but this detail was omitted during the school tour. She comments that the stories differ (Interview 3, 10:10). It is noticeable how the guided tour of Room 13 is not conducted through dramatized storytelling in the same way as the tour through Emilie Piper's private chambers. The pupils remembered the story of the duel, but the stain and the staging of Room 13 seem to create distance with the past. They are clearly disappointed and complain about what they perceive as a lack of authenticity both during the tour and in the following interview. The blood is not red but brown and is more of a shadow than a stain. The pupils are disappointed with the bloodstain. It is obvious that the encounter with the material remnant does not meet their expectations.

I: Had you heard of it [the bloodstain] before?

D: Yes, and I thought it would be red and big ... and it was tiny (Interview 2, 5:15)

They recall the story: the drama with the duel in the park and the doctor who arrived too late and could not save the wounded man who died on the floor in Room 13. However, the authentic blood does not create a closer connection between the pupils and the people involved in the duel but rather leads to source criticism. The pupils argued that a bloodstain that small could not possibly be the aftermath of someone's death; therefore, the story about the duel cannot be true. The pupils' meeting with the remains creates a distance to the past and causes associations that cause the group to break their connection between now and then (Interview 1, 6; Interview 2, 5:15; Interview 3, 7:10)

How does the encounter with the past, mediated by storytelling and material remains, affect pupils' relationship to the past? In the interview conducted a week later, the pupils question whether the duel even took place

because of the insignificant stain. In contrast, they retell the story of Kajsa Jönsdotter, Sophie von Fersen, and Miss Emilie, but without emphasizing the ghost stories (Interview 1, 5:30; Interview 2, 2:15; Interview 3, 1:30, 5:50). It seems that, after the guided tour, the stories about the historical actors remained with the pupils, but not the paranormal aspects to the same extent.

Encountering the past by using ghost stories: closing words

Using the paranormal in the heritage sector for marketing purposes has been criticized for playing with authenticity and making light of past traumatic events. However, the starting point of this study is that paranormal effects can be educational aids when the past is mediated. The challenge lies in integrating the paranormal with relevant history in an educational way. Imagination in collective encounters with the past and the ghosts is at center. The guide does not believe in ghosts or pretend to equate the spirits with the real world. However, her critical stance on ghosts does not concern their ontological status but rather the commercial interests of Löfstad Palace as a haunted site. Although the guide emphasizes a certain integrity about the palace's ghosts and the commercial use of ghosts both during the guided tour and in the interview, she uses the ghost stories to create emotional connections between the visitors and people from the past. Integrating named historical figures, historical actor who today haunts, and who during his lifetime has participated in complex political contexts, contributes to bringing the human being to life in political history. This approach was also used when the grieving Sophie von Fersen was presented. The paranormal element as a reinforcement of the historical content was made by the story about the servant girl Kajsa Jönsdotter. and the paranormal component contributed to the visualize and depict cultural and women's history from the turn of the century as in case of Emilie Piper. In addition, the perfume creates a sensory connection between the historical figure and the visitors of today, making the fact that she was once a living person somehow more "real". The supposed perfume scent confirms the female historical actor's agent; she has lived and left traces behind. Each individual visitor can be in touch with Emilie, while the bloodstain prompts distanced critical thoughts about whether the story of the duel is true or not, due to the unspectacular remains.

Every self-respecting castle has at least one ghost that can be used as an effective resource when (re)presenting the heritage site (Hanks 2016: 50). Entertainment mixed with learning in ghost tourism and dark heritage through so-called edutainment has been criticized for not being historically accurate (see Wyatt et al. 2021). However, studies about tourists at ghost destinations show that visitors are interested in learning about the history, events, and heritage of so-called haunted locations (Hanks 2016; Wyatt et al. 2021). I argue that mediation of the past by highlighting supposed paranormal phenomena is not per definition inappropriate. The appropriateness depends on how the guided tour handles the interplay between the visitors'

expectations, the material and spatial conditions, and the pedagogical design of the paranormal phenomenon. This interplay is grounded in the art of storytelling, as the visitors are guided through historic sites. Their imagination stimulated by affections and haptics can be used to deepen the understanding of the past. The importance of emotions and physical reactions to these cultural heritage experiences coincides with the importance of emotions in ghost tourism. The frightening and macabre element that characterizes destinations in the dark heritage industry, so-called fright tourism, and the combination of horror and fun has attracted researchers who want to explore the emotional reactions of visitors. Studies show how both positive and negative emotions, such as terror and excitement, amusement and fear, are experienced all at the same time (Weidmann et al. 2023). Nevertheless, more research is needed in heritage tourism on how emotions affect the experience (Prayag & Del Chiappa 2021). Thus, dark tourism is not only entertainment, but affects the interpretations of cultural heritage (Hill 2011: 101).

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