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Chapter 8

The Castle Imagined: Emotion and Affect in the Experience of Ruins

Duncan Light and Steve Watson

In this chapter we focus on the experience of visiting one type of heritage place: the ruined medieval castle. Whilst architectural styles vary, castles are common throughout Europe where they have become emblematic not only of the middle ages but of ruins in general, and the way they are represented and experienced as cultural objects. We begin with two scene-setting vignettes based on our own experiences:

Steve – I grew up in a landscape with castles: Northern England, close to the border with Scotland is full of ruinous and restored fortifications. My first memories of them, from the 1960s, are of glimpses from my parents' car – in the Yorkshire Dales, travelling over to the Lake District or on day trips to Northumberland. Even their names seemed to evoke feelings of something stirring and powerful: Richmond, Middleham, Castle Bolton, Warkworth, Dunstanburgh, Bamburgh – strong, sturdy names that seemed to reach back into an unknowable but romantic past. From the passing car distance lent enchantment and a sense of mystery. My yearning to explore was, if anything, fuelled by the limited prospects of doing so as a child whose parents had better things to do.

When opportunities did appear, they were in the course of family outings when, after surreptitiously consulting maps and guidebooks, the castle had to be somehow worked into the itinerary. I have memories of each visit: the rich mixture of excitement and discovery, the melancholy of rain-swept stone, the physical presence and scale, the rough textured and fragmentary senescence. Even the weather seemed complicit in the experience and created what felt like a mood, a disposition of some kind that weighed on me, affected me. The iron safety railings, installed by the Ministry of Public Building and Works in the 1920s, and the ubiquitous cast iron plaques drawing attention to obscure architectural features and warning of the danger of slippery surfaces, only added to the ‘atmosphere’. It has long occurred to me that castles, either up close and personal or as distant prospects, are there to be felt as much as seen.

Duncan – It’s 1987 and I’m at Carew Castle in Pembrokeshire on a wet day in late spring. I’m in the first year of my PhD which is about how visitors make use of interpretive facilities at ancient monuments. I’m on a reconnaissance mission to identify sites where I can collect data later that summer. The department where I’m based has a very quantitative ethos so it’s assumed that my main method of data collection will be questionnaires – and lots of them. As I walk round this castle I become aware that I’m not paying any attention to the interpretive facilities. It also dawns on me that there are lots of things about this building that are more interesting than the interpretation. I *like* this castle. There’s lots to do and see here – it’s full of intriguing rooms, long dark corridors and treacherous staircases. I’m enjoying exploring it, finding new rooms, coming across dead ends and retracing my steps, climbing up the

towers. I'm relishing this building – and the sense of excitement and challenge that it offers me. It becomes clear that the experience of visiting this place is a complex entanglement of the cognitive and the emotional – and interpretation often has very little to do with it.

Over the following weeks I start to think about how I could 'capture' the excitement of the 'visit experience' at castles. My supervisors are sceptical. The only theoretical perspective that seems to offer any promise is humanistic geography (this was in the days before the cultural turn). I spend about a month ploughing through the phenomenology literature but I can't understand most of it, still less see how I could apply it to the heritage experience. Reluctantly I return to the safe option. Urged on by my supervisors (and their warnings about the importance of a representative sample) I undertake more than 1500 questionnaires at seven sites over two summers. I master SPSS and do thousands of Chi-Square tests to explore how the characteristics of visitors are related to the ways that they interact with interpretive media. I submit a thesis and successfully defend it.

And yet...I'm well aware that my research has completely overlooked a whole 'other' dimension of the experience of being in castles and other ruins.

Moreover, this experience probably has a major influence on the ways that visitors interact (or don't) with interpretive facilities. In other words, there's a lot that happens when visiting a castle that my research didn't even come close to capturing. Nowadays I would recognise this as being the emotional and affective dimension of the visit experience.

Our experience of castles is thus found and received, represented through a variety of cultural expressions but also encountered, experienced and constituted *in situ*. There is no doubt that as tourists we are both culturally equipped to visit castles and at the same time open to their affordances as objects and physical spaces (see Figure 8.1). In the latter guise they address our sensory capacities and evoke the kinds of responses that are recorded in these vignettes. But in the end what makes them interesting is the interplay between what we know and what we feel, what we expect and what we encounter: castles, as an experience, and ‘castleness’ as an evocation of that experience are the products of these subtle reciprocities. In this chapter we look at the cultural and experiential framework that ‘organises’ castle visiting: its cognitive content and the accumulation of affects and emotion that is registered in these heritage encounters.

INSERT FIGURE 8.1 SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE

Figure 8.1: Landscape with castles: Dunstanburgh, Northumberland

Castles for us, are affective-discursive assemblages of the sort proposed by Wetherell (2012 pp.53 & 76) where representations form the core of affective practices. Edensor (2011) argues that the material properties and capacities of buildings as assemblages shape the ways in which they affect (and are affected by) other entities and agencies (both human and non-human). In addition, building assemblages are not fixed and stable but instead are open and dynamic, fluid and in a process of emergence, often in unpredictable ways (Waterton and Dittmer, 2014). This is especially the case for castles which have been used and appropriated in diverse ways at different times, something that has not only shaped

their materialities but also the ways in which they are represented, experienced and imagined.

The Castle Assembled

Castles and fortifications are major heritage objects in Europe and Asia, and as such have become significant tourism resources which are – despite their lack of contemporary functionality – readily recognized for what they are. In many countries they receive statutory protection of some kind, depending on their age, condition and historical or architectural significance and their size and commanding position in the landscape or in urban settings endows them with a visibility that contributes much to their contemporary role as tourist sights. Architectural and historical interpretations support this role, providing a cultural dimension that is of increasing importance in a tourism industry for which heritage has become a valuable commodity (Light, 2015). How then have castles, which might otherwise be seen as the redundant capital of an earlier age, come to play such an important role in the cultural production of heritage, and how do we experience them as such?

Other buildings that have long outlived their original function have found their way into contemporary life through adaptations and new uses. Power stations and warehouses have become art galleries and redundant churches have become, amongst other things, homes, community centres, offices and even bars and restaurants. Castles have also experienced such transformations, but they present another dimension that has extended their existence as objects of tourism: they are one of the most striking signifiers of the European medieval period and its historical and mythical associations, something expressed clearly in various ‘revivals’ and the continued culture of *medievalism*, in the centuries following the renaissance (Workman, 1985).

Unlike other medieval buildings, however, the survival of castles as real estate, preserved ruins, film sets (real and purpose-built) and tourist attractions has endowed them with a unique physical and cultural presence in contemporary culture. In England, English Heritage is responsible for the care and presentation of a portfolio of 400 buildings, monuments and sites, of which 66 are castles. The attraction value of this estate can be measured in visitor numbers – over 10 million per year – of which the majority are to castles and ecclesiastical sites (English Heritage, 2015). Latterly the organisation is expected to become self-financing from a mixture of visitor admission revenue and donations, a ‘visitor economy’, in other words, that trades on a naturalised sense of what *the* heritage is and what it represents as an authorised discourse about the national past (Smith, 2006; Waterton, 2010). But to understand castles as an assemblage is to understand the various ways in which these buildings have been perceived over the centuries since their defensive role ceased and their cultural trajectory began, appearing and reappearing at various times as signifiers of the medieval and the pre-modern, and symbols of the mystery and imagination of another time (Watson, 2001).

In fact, the castle as a military structure had a relatively short lifespan, and its decline in the face of gunpowder, the consequential need for a new architecture of fortification and relative political stability (in the UK at least) made its defensive role more or less redundant. After this time castles were either remodelled for domestic use, as at Belsay and Chipchase in Northumberland (UK), or were abandoned altogether and fell into ruin. Sometimes, as at Castle Howard and Harewood House in Yorkshire, and Hardwick in Derbyshire (UK), they were abandoned for more comfortable and fashionable accommodations built close by, the abandoned structure being either dismantled or left to decay. Whatever its specific circumstances, any castle standing today is likely to have devoted only a fraction of its lifespan to the needs of defence. The cultural significance of

castles, therefore, must rely on some other value, and to understand that we must follow their socio-historical trajectory and the story of their assemblage as cultural objects from the end of their period as functional buildings.

The wholesale destruction of castles in England received its most dramatic impetus in the activities of the Parliamentary forces under Cromwell after the Civil War. At the end of hostilities many of the castles that had played a part in the war were deliberately demolished or 'sighted'. Conventional opinion is that this was to save the cost of garrisoning them and to prevent their further use by any remaining Royalist forces, although more recent interpretations stress the social and economic context of their destruction, and not least the financial gain from salvaging materials such as glass, metal and timber, especially where cheap labour could be employed to do the work (Rakoczy 2008). Either way, the demolition was so extensive that many castles, save for a few that were restored, remained ruinous until their material value was transformed into cultural capital as objects of antiquarian and ultimately touristic interest, a role that was confirmed when so many of them eventually came under the guardianship of successive government agencies responsible for their preservation, conservation and presentation to the public (Thompson, 1981). This, together with the equally fortuitous activities of Henry VIII in destroying the nation's abbeys and monasteries, has provided English Heritage and others (such as the National Trust) with a portfolio of ruined splendour that now lies at the heart of the heritage tourism industry. As ruins, rather than simply as old buildings, castles offer a particular kind of engagement and experience, although not all castles are ruins, and not all ruins are castles. So we also need to consider what it is about the castle *as a ruin* that adds to the assemblage experience we have already discussed.

A well-known theoretical basis for the aestheticization of ruins is the eponymous essay by Georg Simmel, (1958 [1911]) for whom ruins were interesting and appealing

because they represented the opposing powers of culture and nature. Here also was a source of fascination with decay and decadence, things that showed the look of age and were losing the battle against nature's inevitable onslaught:

This unique balance-between mechanical, inert matter which passively resists pressure, and informing spirituality which pushes upward-breaks, however, the instant a building crumbles. For this means nothing else than that merely natural forces begin to become master over the work of man: the balance between nature and spirit, which the building manifested, shifts in favor of nature. This shift becomes a cosmic tragedy which, so we feel, makes every ruin an object infused with our nostalgia; for now the decay appears as nature's revenge for the spirit's having violated it by making a form in its own image (p.379).

But ruins are not only evocative because of their apparent age. They also contain the sense of a lost future, of what might have been, and in their decay and irredeemable brokenness we might detect in what we see and touch and feel the sensuality of loss beyond hope, in a 'shock of vanishing materiality' and a 'visceral experience of the irreversibility of time' as Svetlana Boym (2011 n.p.) has described it. And yet over time these structures have mellowed into their landscapes until at last they address the senses aesthetically (Ginsberg, 2004). Rose Macaulay (1953) is perhaps the most well-known proponent of the 'ruin-gaze', with an emotional thread that she was happy to separate from the more intellectual engagements offered by archaeology and antiquarianism, in something of a stream of consciousness:

When did it consciously begin, this delight in decayed or wrecked buildings? Very early, it seems. Since down the ages men have meditated before ruins, rhapsodized before them, mourned pleasurably over their ruination, it is interesting to speculate on the various strands in this complex enjoyment, on how much of it is admiration for the ruin as it was in its prime – *quanta Roma fuit, ipsa ruina docet* – how much aesthetic pleasure in its present appearance – *plus belle que la beauté est la ruine de la beauté* – how much is association, historical or literary, what part is played by morbid pleasure in decay, by righteous pleasure in retribution (for so often it is the proud and the bad who have fallen), by mystical pleasure in the destruction of all things mortal and the eternity of God (a common reaction, in the Middle Ages), by egotistic satisfaction in surviving (where now art thou? here still am I) by masochistic joy in a common destruction – *L’homme va méditer sur les ruines des empires, il oublie qu’il est lui-même une ruine encore plus chancelante et qu’il sera tombé avant ces debris* – and by a dozen other entwined threads of pleasurable and melancholy emotion, of which the main strand is, one imagines, the romantic and conscious swimming down the hurrying river of time, whose mysterious reaches, stretching limitlessly behind, glimmer suddenly into view with these wracks washed on to the silted shores (1953 pp. xv–xvi).

The ruin-gaze thus engendered is Macaulay’s project and she provides at least the basis for an account of the *experience* of the ruins with which she has engaged. Ginsberg (2004 pp. 315–34) offers an even more experiential aesthetic and contrasts romantic and the classical theories as sources for such engagement. For the romantic, it is the sense of ruination in itself that frames engagement, reflecting the passage above from Macaulay: it speaks

mainly of irrevocable loss and the lessons for our own mortality. What Ginsberg calls classical theory, on the other hand, sees the ruin as a more cognitive experience, a resource from which an original might be reconstructed and understood. Here, the past is recoverable as an artefact and a source of knowledge and understanding, whereas for the romantic it is the mystery that is the thing. For the classicist it is construction or reconstruction that provokes engagement, for the romantic it is destruction and all that is implied by that melancholic process. Yet both are emotive in their provocations, one prompting curiosity and the other sadness and both, as Ginsberg makes clear, employ the imagination as a vector for their respective meanings (2004 p.325). The issue of imagination seems to be key to the understanding of these engagements. For Ginsberg, not only does it unify (to an extent) the romantic and the classicist (a seemingly impossible task) it also provides a locus for the embodied engagements that provoke our interest in castles as heritage objects. To the imagination, therefore, we will return.

If we go on to make the inevitable connection between the dualities of romanticism and classicism and those of affect and cognition, we find in the castle a physical and cultural space that will easily accommodate both. In doing so castles register feelings of both an affective and expressive sort, and moments of imaginative intensity that have not been lost on writers and artists who have contributed their representations to what is known and felt about castles. Turner's colour studies of Norham Castle and the major oil painting that he based on these are perhaps emblematic of this.

It is the gap between the demise of the castle as a fortification and its reappearance as a ruin in an aestheticized landscape, an orderly 'arcadia redesigned' (Schama, 1995 p. 530) that endowed it with a unique quality of antiquity, the physical sublimation of a 'time before' that was soon reflected in cultural production. In this sense the castle enters an iconography of landscape (Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988) part of the symbolic imagery that

constitutes a recognisable and empirically knowable past, perhaps best expressed in the cultural axis of the 'rural-historic'(Watson, 2013).

Early contributors to this iconography were the illustrators Nathaniel and Samuel Buck, who had begun to publish engravings of the most notable buildings in the English landscape in the early eighteenth century. The prints are somewhat naïve in style, with faltering perspectives and excessive formality yet they do, for the first time, indicate the venerability of castles and, perhaps more importantly, the families who owned them. Gilpin, another early tourist of the medieval, published his *Observations Relating Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* in 1786. For Gilpin, the picturesque was expressed in the scopic regime of contemporary painting and the furnishing of the English landscape, with a good many decorative ruins (real ones and 'follies') supported these aesthetic principles (Brett, 1996). Important to Gilpin's concept of the picturesque were the qualities of roughness and asymmetry and the effects of these on creating variety and effects of light, shade and contrast, the essential characteristics of the romantic ruin:

But among all the objects of art, the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the elegant relics of ancient architecture; the ruined tower, the gothic arch, the remains of castles, and abbeys. These are the richest legacies of art. They are consecrated by time; and almost deserve the veneration we pay to the works of nature itself (Gilpin, 1794 p.46).

From this period can be derived the first thematic meanings that have come to be significant in the contemporary experience of visitors to castles, and which are thus contributory to the assemblage of what is received culturally and what is understood *a priori*, and taken to the castle to connect with embodied experience: notions of power and

grandeur, the look of age, monumentality, the built semiotics of the medieval and its cultural assemblage.

In the eighteenth century, the 'k' in 'gothick' seemed to reflect an embellished and more fanciful form of medievalism, but whilst the mock ruins and Strawberry Hill fripperies of the mid-eighteenth century provided a backdrop for picturesque excursions, the interest in its aesthetics came to provide the castle with a new impetus as a cultural object. As the Gothic sensibility gathered pace in the latter half of the century, Horace Walpole's novel *Castle Otranto*, and the spate of novels that followed in the gothic genre, present the medieval castle as a mysterious, menacing place full of half-light and moonbeams, a place of malaise and of horror, replete with affective and emotional affordances. The castle is never fully achieved descriptively, we see it only in fragments, and this adds to its oppressive atmosphere and a sense of brooding apprehension (see Potter, 2005). As such, it controls and encompasses the dramas that unfold within it and imbues them with the sense of horror and terror necessary to stir the reader's imagination.

The medievalism of the nineteenth century saw a movement from the picturesque aesthetic to the romantic and sublime where the perception of the untamed natural environment evoked wonder and awe as well as fear and apprehension. The tendency for castles to be perched for defensive purposes on top of precipices reinforced such feelings. Edmund Burke's (1757) *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* contrasted beauty, as something aesthetically pleasing, with the sublime, as something powerful and dangerous, a delightful horror (Schama, 1995 p.447). Mountains in particular – the Alps visited by Grand Tourists and the Lake District by more domestic souls - offered much to the sublime sensibility where great block-like structures, reflected Burke's doctrine that 'irregular symmetry was to be shown in dark and massive forms'

(Schama, 1995 p.447) and where a well-placed and well-ruined castle could easily and perfectly complement such a scene.

At the same time, a keener interest in the historicity of the medieval was engendered by a desire to locate the new industrial society within a framework of the national past that neutralised its uncertainties, offered re-assurance in a sense of permanence and depth, whilst reinforcing nationhood and supporting the social and economic relations of emergent capitalism (see Figure 8.2). At its most brutal this movement led to the ‘great hulking castles’ that Robert Smirke designed for Lords Lowther and Somers (Lowther and Eastnor castles respectively); physical manifestations of the siege mentality of the aristocracy in the wake of the French Revolution (Mandler, 1997 p.14).

INSERT FIGURE 8.2 SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE

Figure 8.2: The castle (re-)assembled, Bamburgh, UK, Norman with later restoration.

Lowther, now a spectacular ruin, ‘quotes’ and almost parodies the medieval with its exaggerated battlements, scale and monumentality, and whilst as a whole it bears little resemblance to an authentic medieval castle, its purpose is clear, which is to impress in a way that goes beyond the mannerisms of the earlier ‘gothick’ revivalists. Nearby, the Citadel at Carlisle was built as the county’s law courts and as such they dominate the centre of the City in a way that its real Norman castle simply does not afford. The medievalist main hall is thus a setting within which the power of the law, derived largely from medieval precedents and the Common Law, is exercised.

As exercises in the semiotics of power, these buildings might present quotations of medieval detail, but they do so in a way that is exaggerated and idealised. The turrets are a

little higher, the design a little more fanciful than a faithful rendition or copy would be. And yet in their enhanced visuality they eventually begin to stand in for the real thing, an impulse that found its fullest expression in Ludwig II's late nineteenth century Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria which, significantly, required the demolition of an existing medieval castle ruin before its construction could begin. It is perhaps also significant that Neuschwanstein began its life as a tourist attraction almost immediately upon the death of its owner in 1886, its affordances as a place of wonder all too obvious in its wowing visuality and its inspiration for Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* Castle. The castle newly built must reflect and re-constitute medieval splendour, a restorative and peculiarly Anglo-Saxon version of classicist order, just as the castle ruined evoked romantic awe.

In literature, the castle becomes the stage set of the great medieval and chivalric drama. From his earliest works to his last, such as *Castle Dangerous* published in 1831, Walter Scott used real places as the settings for his novels, some of them already famous, others quite obscure, but to which reference was readily made by early tourists. For example, Walter White (1858), in describing Teesdale, quotes extensively from Scott's poem, *Rokeby*, and especially its references to the castles of Raby and Ravensworth, and Mortham Tower. Whilst it is difficult to estimate the effects of Scott's medieval epics on the development of tourism in the nineteenth century, it undoubtedly contributed something to the assemblage that became the castle as an object of cultural heritage and, as such, a semiotic landscape within which this assemblage is combined with the immediacy of experience.

Later, John Ruskin and William Morris (the latter responsible for establishing the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877) were even more influential in the gathering pace of preservation (Hunter, 1996). All of this culminated in an acceptance that

the state had a central role in preservation and the 1882 *Ancient Monuments Protection Act* enabled forty three monuments to gain statutory protection over the following twenty years, and through that, practical measures to preserve them. Morris, much influenced by Ruskin, was disturbed by the gothic revival of the nineteenth century which had seen a great deal of 'restoration' at the hands of architects such as Anthony Salvin, Augustus Pugin, George Edmund Street and George Gilbert Scott. For Morris, the emphasis lay in preservation rather than restoration, with minimal impact on the original. This 'preserve as found' ethic is largely responsible for the unaltered state of ruins in England, although it might also be criticised for a later tendency towards a certain primness in their presentation by the succession of statutory agencies that were responsible for them (Thompson, 1981).

But even these new institutional measures could not undo the centuries-old assemblage that was now the castle and the connection between gothic medievalism and later touristic experiences that depended to a large extent on the feelings these associations evoked in the body and mind of the visitor. For example, Riley, an early motorised tourist, makes the following observation on Castle Bolton in Yorkshire:

That Dungeon has a horrible fascination for me. ...The floor is wet, and in one corner there is a ring in the rock to which prisoners were chained. They tell a gruesome story of how the bones of a human arm were found in that ring when the dungeon was opened out; but one's own imagination can supply the dismal pictures without the help of facts (Riley, 1934 p.96).

Dungeons provoke particularly strong imaginative and emotional responses and we often find ourselves wondering what it might have been to be a prisoner thrown into one. Castles are often haunted by ghosts (Edensor, 2011) and dungeons are the places where we

are most conscious of hauntings and of the past disturbing the present. Here we might experience the affective thrill of the spooky, the spectral, the mysterious and the absent (Holloway and Kneale, 2008). In fact, some castles do have their own ghost stories (often enthusiastically recounted in the place's promotional or interpretive materials). Knowing this enchants the building in all sorts of unexpected ways (Holloway, 2010), producing an affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009) rich with tension and excitement.

The castle assembled in contemporary culture is transformed, again, as a place of leisure and recreation: a place to play, an imaginary of all we know about castles recast as the backdrop to a family picnic, a day out, and at the same time offering a connection with a past that is assembled in moments of engagement with stone fragments, audio-guides, narrow spiral-staircases, damp under-crofts, and arrow slits. And the assemblage works in the way that visitors bring to that materiality a medieval imagination that has been fed by the image of the castle as it has developed over the centuries, bristling with turrets and machicolations, the model of Camelot in all those Hollywood films.

The castle as a contemporary heritage object is thus an assemblage of its historical and cultural trajectory, often reproduced now as the context for a medieval otherness associated with proto-mythologies and the fantasy genre in movies and other media. 'Real' castles, either preserved as found or restored, are very much the material of the heritage tourism industry. As attractions they present and represent the cultural assemblages of the medieval and the medievalist tradition that emerged from it. In a reverse projection, they materialize, in their stony reality, the cultural assemblage that they now represent in the eyes of the visitor, a cultural assemblage that took on a life of its own when the castle as an idea detached from the castle as a building.

Castles, then, provide a richness of experience and intensities that illustrate well the affective nature of heritage encounters, not least because as objects and as spaces they are

an assemblage that has changed, uniquely, the ways in which they are engaged. When castles reappeared after their dormancy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were shorn of their militaristic functions (which were in any case redundant) and invested with the aesthetics of the picturesque and later the sublime and the romantic. In this guise, they gained their capacities as places of intensity and affect, where emotion could be mobilized and expressed in both representational practices and in the direct experience of engagement with their materiality, setting, and the sensual affordances that they possessed. A 'feeling of knowing' (Hart, 1965) is what people bring with them as contemporary castle visitors, the genealogies of what is known and experienced of the castle as a cultural assemblage and what in turn this contributes to the reproduction of that assemblage in further experience and representation. The castle is now transformed again, through heritage practices and tourism, as a place of recreation and of play as well as quiet contemplation, reflection and exploration. It is to the experience of the contemporary visitor to which we now turn.

The Castle Experienced

In this section we focus on the experiences of visiting ruined castles and we seek to explore some of the emotional and affective dimensions of the encounter with such places. The starting point is our personal interest in such buildings, as enthusiastic visitors to castles, and not just with a professional interest in heritage and tourism. We have both been *affected* by them and, indeed, it was our discussions around this that prompted the conference paper that led to our writing this chapter. The vignettes at the beginning of the chapter express something of this feeling but now we would like to unpick this a little more and draw on our experience of castle visiting to explore the castle both as a cultural assemblage and as a direct experience. That said, our experiences are quite different:

Steve's experience is mostly in Northern England, with forays into Spain and Greece, whilst most of Duncan's castle visiting has been in Wales. Between us, we have visited hundreds of ruined castles, sometimes as researchers and sometimes for the pure pleasure of it. However, since we live and work at opposite ends of the country there are, in fact, very few that we have both visited.

In the following account, we use a form of autoethnography to critically reflect on our own experiences of visiting castles. Autoethnography is 'an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse...personal experience...in order to understand cultural experience' (Ellis et al., 2011 p.1). It aims for a synthesis of autobiography with cultural critique (Grant et al., 2013). As such, it allows researchers to use and foreground their own lived experiences to better understand some aspect of the contemporary world (Morgan and Pritchard, 2006). By definition, autoethnography is a subjective process and it makes no claim to produce universal or totalising accounts of a social phenomenon. Instead, it aspires to 'creatively written, detailed, local and evocative first person accounts of the relationship between personal autobiography and culture' (Grant et al., 2013 p.2). Autoethnography is relatively uncommon within tourism studies (although see Morgan and Pritchard, 2006; Noy, 2007a, 2007b; Scarles, 2010; Waterton and Dittmer, 2014) but it seems entirely appropriate to the present topic, where we are exploring a complex confluence of potentialities: the representational (through the assemblage), the personal-historical, the pre-personal-affective, the emotionally expressive and the cognitive. If it is in the ragged intersections of these registers, in between the representational and non-representational, or the embodied and expressive, that we hope to explore the experience of castle visiting, then something akin to a personal account seems methodologically apposite. And there are precedents, in the work of Denis Byrne (2013) and Russell Staiff (2012, 2014), both of whom employ more expressive modes of writing

to explore the somatic and sensory aspects of experience of places and objects and the ways in which those objects themselves become charged with affective and emotional potential. Research-theoretical precursors of such approaches have also begun to appear (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Clough, 2009) and to filter into heritage studies (Waterton and Watson, 2015; Crouch, 2015). This amounts to an extended repertoire of research methods as well as an openness to innovation and a more agnostic approach to any particular research paradigm.

But perhaps our enthusiasm masks a sensitivity to criticism for our use of this ‘unscientific’ method. Well, a lack of science in our undertakings bothers us very little and, in a way that we never anticipated, our methods reflected the aesthetic commentary offered by Ginsberg (2004) in his own engagement with ruins:

The ruin comes into its own by jumping into our space. In gardening, sculpture and architecture, we have to take into account the space between work and visitor. In these arts, the work may press upon the space of the visitor, but not every moment need be a springing forth, as is the case in the ruin. The ruin comes at once, without warning, because its aesthetic unity is taking place just at that moment in our space (2004 p.164).

So here is a subjective experience presented as an aesthetic one, but a subjective experience that is available collectively and brought together under a recognisable signifier – the ruin – and a collectively received cultural assemblage – the medieval castle. We are not making aesthetic judgements about castles, at least not in any systematic architectural-historic way, but we appear to be using the same frames of reference and the same registers that are available for aesthetic judgement as we make our explorations of the castle

experience. For us, what is important is the way these frames facilitate an exciting and potentially productive application of new approaches to our field.

The analysis that follows is thus a composite of our individual experiences and reflections. Following ethnographic tradition we use the first person to narrate our experiences. However this does not mean that our experiences of visiting ruins are identical (far from it!) so that the use of 'we' may, in fact, refer to something which only one of us has encountered. We are also aware that these subjective accounts are just one form of representation, and that they are as problematic as any other representation (Waterton and Watson, 2014). We are equally aware of the difficulties in attempting to represent subjective 'inner' life (cf Grant, et al., 2013), particularly since some aspects of individual experience – such as affect – seem to defy representation (Pile, 2010).

In a number of ways ruined castles are a quite distinctive form of heritage place. By definition they are incomplete: rooms do not have complete walls and are often without roofs; doorways and windows are often damaged; and entire floors may be missing from towers. In addition, most of the site is open to the elements (unlike many heritage sites which are 'indoors'). Ruined castles are also among the least regulated and commodified of heritage places. Most have a small staff (whose main role is to sell tickets and souvenirs, normally at an entrance booth which may be some distance from the castle itself). This means that the custodians and other staff are not usually present within the main structure to monitor visitor behaviour (as in some museums or galleries) or direct the way in which they move around (as in country houses). Neither (unlike other types of heritage attraction) is there much use of volunteers at ruins. Indeed, some ruined castles have no permanent staff at all and are open to the public at all times. This all means that the encounter with a ruin is much less proscribed than at other types of heritage sites (such as museums or country houses). There is limited signposting and usually little attempt to direct the order

in which different parts are experienced. However, there are usually some parts (those that are unsafe) which are off-limits to visitors. Overall, ruined castles are sites of relative freedom which invite spontaneous and improvised performances among their visitors (Edensor, 2001). These performances are, in turn, associated with particular types of ‘feeling states generated in place’ (Duff, 2010 p.885)

The encounter with a ruined-castle is an open-ended one: such places present their visitors with multiple possibilities and opportunities, and we have already indicated our pleasure in these engagements. There is an expectation, therefore, as we approach the entrance, that this will be an enjoyable experience. They are places which invite flirtatious encounters that offer the continual prospect of the unexpected (Crouch, 2005, 2012). Often we find ourselves in a central courtyard (sometimes a quite substantial space). There are usually multiple exits: doorways to walk through (which often lead to further courtyards, wards or baileys); dark rooms to enter, and unfamiliar spiral staircases to challenge our coordination and stamina. There are multiple claims for our attention. At this stage, everything is unknown and open for discovery. The whole experience of visiting a ruin (particularly for the first time) is structured by a vivid sense of exploration, provoking emotional registers of excitement, curiosity and enjoyment of what awaits to be discovered. The larger the castle (and the more there is to explore), the richer the experience (see Figure 8.3).

FIG 8.3 SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE

Figure 8.3: The Castle Experienced: The remains of a staircase at Bolton Castle (UK)

Unlike many heritage attractions where the visitor's movement through the site is carefully determined, exploring a ruin is an improvised and disorderly process. Since there is rarely a defined trail to follow we have to devise our own routes through the building. We may enter a doorway or climb a staircase only to find it leads nowhere. On the other hand we may find ourselves following passageways, corridors or stairways for some distance into the heart of the structure. We pass doorways, rooms or staircases and make a mental note to return to them later. We frequently come to a dead-end and have to retrace our steps. We get fleeting and unexpected views through the windows (which are often very small) of the rest of the building and of other visitors. Exploring an unknown building in this way is exciting! We relish making our way through ruins, not knowing what lies ahead, what's in the next room, or what's round the next corner. The interiors of castles are usually poorly-lit and so the exploring them reminds us of playing hide and seek, and for one of us it brings back childhood memories of playing 'murder in the dark'. This is fun! It is an illustration of what Edensor (2012) calls the playful consumption of space. On the other hand, exploring a ruin can be confusing and disorientating (which can even lead to frustration). It's not difficult to get lost inside the structure, or to be unable to find our way back to something we noted earlier as worth looking at.

The very unpredictability of the encounter illustrates how the experience of heritage is dynamic and emergent (see Crouch, 2010; Staiff et al., 2013; Waterton and Watson, 2014) rather than pre-determined. Ruined castles gradually reveal themselves to their visitors (cf. Ginsberg, 2004) – who are also active co-participants in the creation of their visit experiences and their associated meanings. Experience and meaning here are fluidly connected. Meaning flows from previous experience and the current engagement, and together they combine with what is known from the cultural assemblage of the castle. 'Cold and creepy' thus recalls the gothic, while turrets and battlements recall something of

Hollywood movies, Robin Hood and knights of old. Uneven, slippery surfaces pose a threat and the signage tells us to beware. Modern walls and fences tame dangerous heights and stand between us and certain death. This is horror contained by a railing, scary but enjoyable, and recalling Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime and the dual emotional registers of fear and attraction.

Height is a particular characteristic, along with the feeling of ascent. Most castles have towers and indeed we might be disappointed if they do not. The whole experience of climbing a tower is framed by anticipation, eager expectation and the uncertainty of not knowing what is at the top. Sometimes the climb ends at a metal grille just below the summit – which remains tantalisingly out of reach. If visitors are allowed access to the very top of the tower then arriving there produces a sudden sensation of satisfaction and accomplishment. The controlled danger of height has already been mentioned, but other emotions can also come into play. The view from a tower (whether over surrounding countryside, or down on to the rest of the structure) can be enough to provoke a sense of awe, wonder and delight (see Robinson, 2012). We've noticed how often the first thing that we (and other visitors) say when we reach the top is 'wow', and some managers of the more commercial attractions will trade on this feature. Oxford Castle, with its heightened viewing platform, is typical, and the guide almost invites you to mumble a gasp before pointing out the various sights. And as we look down from the castle's summit we may also enjoy a sense of exclusivity: ('I'm the king of the castle and you're a dirty rascal!') and for a time we can feel masters of all we survey. If the climb is a particularly difficult one then we may also feel a sense of quiet superiority over those we can see on the ground who do not have the stomach for the challenge (see Figure 8.4).

FIGURE 8.4 SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE

Figure 8.4: Dizzy heights at Bolton Castle (UK)

However, exploring a ruin can also be associated with more negative emotions. The most common are disappointment and frustration. Indeed, disappointment has long been recognised as one of the most common emotions associated with the tourism experience (Rojek, 1997; Tucker, 2009; Robinson, 2012). Ruins have long been associated with solitude and the romantic gaze (Urry, 1990; Ginsberg, 2004), and when we visit castles we might secretly hope that we will be the only ones there. Occasionally we are lucky; more often than not, though, there will be plenty of other visitors around, much to our disappointment. But more mundane things can cause disappointment for the castle enthusiast. When we explore a castle we frequently find parts of it that are not open to visitors (with a bar or grille to prevent access). We are afforded tantalising glimpses of other parts of the ruin – intriguing passageways leading off to who-knows-where, or sometimes whole floors of towers that are seemingly intact – that are waiting to be explored but which are inaccessible. These often make us feel irritated, annoyed or even cheated. Sometimes we feel resentment about such unnecessary restrictions, we feel ‘controlled’ when we want to feel free to roam at will.

Some emotional responses can be more negative still: on occasions we find ourselves feeling disgust – itself one of the six ‘basic’ emotions (Ekman, 1992). Other visitors frequently drop litter in some of the most remote parts of the castle. A particularly common practice is throwing beer cans into dungeons or cellars. We ask ourselves irritably: ‘why do people do this?’ and ‘why don’t the site’s managers clear it up?’ Other experiences may be more unpleasant. For some reason there seems to be a part of every castle (often a remote, damp tower room) which smells strongly of urine. To judge from the smell, a lot of people

have relieved themselves there. It can get worse. Occasionally we have come across piles of excrement, sometimes in the most inaccessible parts of the building. We recoil, suddenly and acutely aware that the local youth have little difficulty breaking into the castle once the visitors have all gone home. Once we start to look around we can see plenty of evidence that they claim it as their own illicit social space – not only the excrement but also the empty beer cans, discarded joints and cigarette ends. We may feel distaste or disgust at such transgressive behaviour, but such responses also expose our normative assumptions about who castles are for and what is the ‘correct’ way to behave in them. While we may like to think of ourselves as viscerally engaged we realise that we have internalised, cognitively, the principles of visitor management.

Castles also present their own opportunities for transgression and disobedience – this time among their visitors! We mentioned earlier our frustration when we find a part of the ruin that is closed off to visitors, especially when we cannot understand why it is closed. But there is minimal surveillance within many ruins and, if we are visiting at a quiet time, we are not subject to the disciplinary gaze of other visitors (see Edensor, 2007). Hence it is not difficult to squeeze under bars or ropes to visit those elusive parts of the building that are off-limits. And sometimes it only requires basic climbing skills to get into those rooms and towers that are not open to the public. Such ‘resistant performances’ (Edensor, 2001 p.76) illustrate, in a heritage setting, the ways through which ordinary people can quietly elude and subvert an unseen authority (de Certeau, 1984). This is selfish and sometimes foolhardy behaviour but it produces an affective thrill and a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction at seeing what we were not supposed to see. It also produces a sense of exclusivity and distinction (at being more daring than the average visitor and getting to enjoy something that they will not).

Up to now we have focused on (some of) the emotional dimensions of the encounter with a ruined castle, but we are well aware that ‘emotion is located within the body’ (Crouch, 2005 p.30). The emotion-body relationship is a complex one. In all sorts of ways our emotional state (how we ‘feel’) is reflected in how we comport our bodies. For example, we would appear very differently to an observer if we were either elated or frightened. Similarly our embodied experiences of place can affect us – and shape our emotional states - in complex ways which often difficult to articulate. We now turn to consider such embodied dimensions of the encounter and the ways in which this is intertwined with the emotional and affective responses to ruined castles.

Ruins are open to the elements, meaning that the bodily experience is very different from other types of ‘indoor’ heritage attractions where the environment is more controlled and regulated. In fine weather visiting a ruin can be a pleasant experience (although even in bright sunshine the inside of a castle can be surprisingly cool and often damp). In poor weather (rain or strong wind) ruins are chilly and clammy which makes them uninviting and occasionally unnerving places. There is an immediate sensation of bodily discomfort. This is accentuated by the particular (not always pleasant) smells associated with such places: damp, mould, decay, wet vegetation and, in some places, urine. The whole matter of illumination also affects bodies and emotions. Edensor (2012 p.1106) has examined how engagement with light (and the absence of light) is a ‘deeply embodied experience’ (see also Waterton and Dittmer 2014). In the winter sun long shadows are cast and the texture of weathered stone is accentuated in the sharp relief light. The insides of ruins are often surprisingly dark and gloomy (even when there is bright sunshine outside) and, apart from at the larger and more popular ruins, there is rarely any artificial lighting. This modulates the way and the pace that we move through the building: we have often found ourselves stumbling along in semi-darkness, arms in front of us, ever conscious of potential hazards.

The absence of light recalls the gothic component of the castle assembled. It is unsettling and this, in turn, shapes our emotional and affective responses to the building (Edensor, 2013). Our eyes have to constantly adapt to the changing light: one minute we are picking our way along in the gloom, the next we are temporarily dazzled from a shaft of bright light that comes through a window or arrow slit.

Exploring a ruin can be a physically demanding activity and nowhere is this more apparent than when climbing a tower. This can involve quite serious physical exertion: we soon become out of breath, our knees ache, our hearts pound, and we become acutely conscious that we're not as young as we used to be. Spiral staircases can be difficult to climb due to the need to stay on the widest part of the steps and it can be awkward and uncomfortable to pass other visitors who are coming down. They also leave us giddy and disorientated and we quickly lose all sense of direction. When we arrive at the top there is the sensation of accomplishment that we described earlier but this also mingles with a range of other bodily experience: our eyes adjusting to the sudden brightness, breathlessness from the ascent, and the wind in our faces. As castle enthusiasts we usually make sure that we explore every tower so that this experience is repeated a number of times (although each tower is slightly different from the last). To miss something would be a travesty of castle visiting.

The physical fabric of ruins also adds another dimension to the visit: apprehension. Controlled danger has already been mentioned in connection with a sublime aesthetic, but there are real dangers that need to be assessed and avoided, particularly in unmanaged sites. Surfaces underfoot are rough and uneven and the material is frequently weathered and friable. Corridors and stairs can be slippery, even in fine weather. Stones may be missing, or the edges of steps may be so eroded that it is easy to trip and fall. All this can make visiting a ruin a risky, even dangerous experience (particularly in the most dimly-lit

parts of the building). On our visits we have both been acutely aware that we could fall and seriously injure ourselves. This sets the mind racing. How long would it be until somebody finds me? Would anybody find me? We might lie there in a pool of blood until closing time. We can illustrate this with a recent experience (recorded by Duncan soon after the visit):

One tower sticks in my mind: there was some sort of ‘climb these stairs at your own risk’ sign at the bottom. I decided to climb them anyway. The steps were seriously uneven, slippery, bordering on treacherous. It had rained the previous day so that the steps were also damp. There was a hand rope to hold on to (on the right hand side) but I wasn’t convinced that it would hold me if I slipped. I picked my way to the top, conscious that if I fell and injured myself then at best that would ruin my holiday...and at worse...who knows? But I got to the top and was rewarded by having the tower to myself. I was at the highest point of the building, commanding great views over everybody else in the courtyard below. Nobody else disturbed me; nobody else was courageous or foolhardy enough to make it this far. I felt elated and supreme – I had conquered this building. But getting down was even harder. It seemed to take twice as long because I was twice as careful. The rope was now on my left hand side where my grip was less strong. I picked my way down, one step at a time, bringing both feet onto a step and ensuring that I was stable before tentatively moving down to the next step. My heart was pounding, my mouth was dry and adrenaline was coursing through my veins. In some way I had a very heightened sense of my own existence. But when I got to the bottom I knew it had been worth it.

FIG 8.5 SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE

Figure 8.5: Dangerous Places, Monolithos, Rhodes

For Steve, the danger is also tempered with the excitement and atmosphere to be found in fragmentary ruins in isolated places. The castles of Siana and Monolithos on the island of Rhodes (see Figure 8.5), and La Estrella Castle in Malaga Province, Spain, have each combined the excitement of discovery and exploration with a sense of solitude that seems to weigh in the air:

At La Estrella I stumbled over rubble and broken stones that seemed to materialise my own uncertainties about being there. I felt an immense solitude. Should I be there at all? At Sania I was with two colleagues who went off exploring while I felt rooted to the spot, unsettled by the sheer drops all around, disturbed rather than awed by the view over the surrounding countryside. I lost sight of my colleagues and felt giddy, sharing the moment with an inquisitive mountain goat. Monolithos was exciting; a jagged castle perched precipitously on a small table of rock. But Estrella was an enchanted place, perched on its windswept grassy crag, heavy with atmosphere, as if something clung to it and then to me. I knew it was a Moorish fortress reconquered in 1326 and the sense of that abandonment seems never to have escaped it. I felt its emptiness; a fragment of what once had been and an atmosphere that seemed to link the stones and the wind with a presence of some kind, the presence of absence.

Atmospheres are also active in the intersections of affect and emotion and, as Anderson (2009) so clearly puts it, atmosphere unsettles the distinction between the two, and does not fit neatly into either:

[Atmospheres] mix together narrative and signifying elements and non-narrative and asignifying elements. And they are impersonal in that they belong to collective situations and yet can be felt as intensely personal. On this account atmospheres are spatially discharged affective qualities that are autonomous from the bodies that they emerge from, enable and perish with (2009 p.79).

Through (and in) atmospheres, ineffable affective sensations mingle with feelings that are expressible to produce a 'mix' as Anderson (2009) put it in his description of atmosphere, or a blurring of affect and emotion as Edensor (2012) put it in his. However, atmospheres do not exist in a vacuum: they are frequently anticipated, subject to their consistencies and recurrences, and shaped by prior experiences (Edensor 2012). This, in turn, points to the kind of cultural antecedents expressed in the castle as an historically formed assemblage.

The Castle Imagined

In conclusion, we might think about the ways in which the castle assembled and the castle experienced combine expressively and cognitively. For this we have invoked the idea of imagination. The imagination is an essential (if frequently overlooked) aspect of the tourism experience (Hennig, 2002; Salazar and Graburn, 2014; Lean et al., 2014) and tourists can flit between the real and imagined world with practiced ease (Robinson, 2012).

Visiting a castle can stimulate and trigger a wide range of imaginative processes such as dreamwork, reverie and mind-voyaging (cf. Rojek, 1997). These ‘inner’ mental processes can, in turn, induce their own emotional responses (Picard, 2012) and embodied sensations. The moment of engagement is therefore a dialogue between what the visitor experiences during the material encounter with a castle and what they bring with them as the cultural assemblage discussed earlier. The imaginative reworking of what we already know (or think we know) about castles is thus central to this dialogue (see Figure 8.6).

INSERT FIGURE 8.6 SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE

Figure 8.6: The castle imagined, a moment of reverie at Warkworth (UK)

Some ruins stimulate us to engage in imaginative time travel and imagine ourselves being there at some point in the past. We might imagine (just for a moment) that we are in a Tudor Court, or of being part of the audience for a medieval jousting display. But we do not need interpretation. We bring our own assemblage, formed from previous experience or the last ‘historical’/fantasy/horror movie we watched, or the last History Channel documentary, or a life time of similar accretions; and we combine them *in situ* with our embodied and emotional responses. What we take away from this exists in the imaginative realm of the half-remembered, reconstituted as meaning when returned to at some future date, perhaps even a subsequent castle visit.

This is perhaps the most important aspect of castles as places of affect and emotion, because the imagination becomes the melting pot of experience and assemblage.

Sometimes the assemblage is employed interpretively in order to enhance the affective and emotional affordances of the space. Can we imagine *what it was really like*? And can this

imaginative reconstruction, provoked by the interplay of assemblage and interpretation with direct experience *in situ*, produce its own affects and emotions? For David Crouch (2010, 2012, 2015), the experience of heritage and its meanings are constituted and reconstituted in such moments of engagement, and following Crouch we expect to find the castle imagined and re-imagined in such moments and in what follows, as memory supersedes experience.

This chapter has been an exploration of the feelings prompted by the experience of a particular heritage object, the ruined medieval castle. We do not pretend to have arrived, through this exploration, at a theory of heritage affect or an emotional geography of heritage. But we are clear, having examined the castle assembled as a cultural artefact and the castle experienced through our own life-long engagement with them, that there are some important conclusions that might be drawn that are of interest in wider debates in *affecting* heritage. We conclude, for example, that in the more-than-representational experience of castle visiting the representational is an assemblage that contains not only discursive and narrative elements but echoes of embodied engagement, affective registers and emotional expression. The aesthetic of the sublime, gothic sentiment and emergence of the modern tourist are all implicated in this. The assemblage, in turn, is constituted and reconstituted in moments of encounter and engagement, and in those moments we experience atmosphere as an autonomous force, even though it forms in the coalescence of pre-personal affect and our own subjective emotional registers. These feelings come to rest on the way home, they settle in layers drawn from many sources, brought together in a dream, a memory, a moment, and in the castle imagined.

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