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## Videogame Tourism: Spawning the Digital into the Physical Realm in the British Isles

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VIDEOGAME TOURISM: SPAWNING THE DIGITAL INTO THE PHYSICAL REALM IN

THE BRITISH ISLES

by

Heather R. Brinkman

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Anthropology

at

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## ABSTRACT

# VIDEOGAME TOURISM: SPAWNING THE DIGITAL INTO THE PHYSICAL REALM IN THE BRITISH ISLES

by

Heather R. Brinkman

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2020  
Under the Supervision of Professors W. Warner Wood and Thomas M. Malaby

Video game tourism is in its infancy but growing in popularity. This dissertation is an anthropological study of gamers' attempts to interact with the physical environments in Scotland that influenced the virtual landscapes to which they have an emotional connection. Seven of the locations I identified as potential field sites provided some form of ethnographic material. I traveled with gamers to these seven sites. While at these sites, I observed and interviewed people that I met as well as did participant observations with those I went with. This project was able to demonstrate that gamers and tourists alike attempt to reach toward an unencumbered self but this process is fraught with obligations and is typically unattainable. Whether those obligations or encumbrances are created before or during their travels, there is always an underlying sense of connectivity that makes a complete break from the sociocultural world impossible.

Nostalgia is the driving force behind reenactments of precious memories so it is no wonder that gamers who feel a strong connection to their virtual worlds would attempt to recreate those memories through interactions with the physical landscape that shape their virtual worlds. This dissertation demonstrates that while setting out to reenact specific nostalgic moments is one of the motivations for gaming tourists, they have a cyclical relationship with nostalgia. Once they return from their physical journeys to the virtual environment, they are hit

with another form of nostalgic reenactment. Gaming tourism is a new phenomenon that allows for gamers to give in to their nostalgic sentiments and recursively represent their identities as gamers in a more public fashion through recreating scenes from the game within the physical landscape.

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To  
My amazing children,  
husband, and parents

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures .....	vi
List of Appendices .....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Chapter 1: Loading Page: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Tangibility of the Virtual.....	21
Chapter 3: Stifling the Urge to Geek Out .....	62
Chapter 4: Reintegration .....	95
Chapter 5: Reaching for the Heavens: Legend, Myths, and Evocative Landscapes .....	125
Chapter 6: Side Quests! Puzzle Game: Juxta Positioning of the Physical Sites .....	161
Chapter 7: TKO: Impact of Tourism on the Locals .....	185
Chapter 8: Virtually Touring .....	212
Chapter 9: Endgame: Where It All Comes Together.....	233
Bibliography.....	244
Appendices .....	261
Curriculum Vitae .....	283

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Fingal's Cave on the Isle of Staffa which is nicknamed the "Minecraft Cave" .....	7
Figure 2.1: Instant messages between myself and Gwen concerning the trip.....	21
Figure 2.2: Screenshot of the map of the Timeless Isles from World of Warcraft.....	34
Figure 2.3: Screenshot of the noncombat pet awarded to players who have killed Garnia and received this rare drop .....	39
Figure 2.4: A screenshot of the achievement earned once a player has killed all of the elite monsters on the Timeless Isles, which includes Garnia .....	39
Figure 3.1: Abandoned building on road leading to the FallOut Bunker.....	69
Figure 3.2: Cole's attempt to parkour at St. Conan's Kirk.....	72
Figure 3.3: Gwen attempting to recreate a scene from Uncharted 4.....	80
Figure 3.4: Tourist ignoring sign in Dunnottar Castle.....	84
Figure 3.5: The above photo was taken from Alnwick Castle's website (alnwickcastle.com).....	85
Figure 3.6: A photo from Skara Brae on Orkney.....	88
Figure 3.7: A screenshot from the original The Bard's Tale of Skara Brae.....	88
Figure 4.1: This is an example of one of my participant's social media posts.....	106
Figure 4.2: This is an example of the positive reactions to one of my participant's social media posts .....	106
Figure 4.3: This is a screenshot showing positive responses to one of my participant's social media posts.....	106
Figure 5.1: Glencoe and the descent of the heavens.....	126
Figure 5.2: The Fairy Glen on the Isle of Skye .....	128
Figure 5.3: The Fairy Glen on the Isle of Skye .....	129
Figure 5.4: Screenshot from Playstation's VR game Perfect .....	145
Figure 5.5: Photo of Brian Fargo at Skara Brae from Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-Playing Games 2e .....	148
Figure 6.1: Map of Alnwick Castle: The four areas that are divided into different activities are circled with different colors to make them more apparent .....	155
Figure 6.2: Two wizards attempt to demonstrate how to fly a broom at Alnwick Castle .....	158
Figure 6.3: The sign outside the physical location of Dunnottar Castle .....	163
Figure 6.4: The map of Call of Duty: Ghosts .....	163
Figure 6.5: Alnwick Castle Harry Potter Broomstick Training Area .....	170
Figure 6.6: Cairns made by tourists on beach at Skara Brae .....	177
Figure 6.7: First sign into Skara Brae village .....	182
Figure 6.8: The first of the timeline pavers taking the tourists back in time .....	182
Figure 7.1: Rolling hills on the northern portion of the Isle of Skye .....	192
Figure 8.1: The I Hotel in Taiwan is a state-of-the-art gaming hotel .....	220
Figure 8.2: Screenshot from Dear Esther. It shows a majestic version of a pier that is not on the physical island .....	227
Figure 8.3: Midmar's recumbent stones and kirk .....	229



## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: The History of Alnwick Castle .....	261
Appendix B: The History of Harry Potter and the resulting videogame(s) .....	264
Appendix C: Skara Brae.....	267
Appendix D: The Bard's Tale .....	270
Appendix E: The History of St. Conan's Kirk .....	272
Appendix F: Explanation of <i>Uncharted 4</i> .....	274
Appendix G: The History of Scotland's <i>FallOut</i> Shelter .....	275
Appendix H: <i>FallOut</i> Videogame Background .....	277
Appendix I: Assassin's Creed .....	279
Appendix J: Dunnottar Castle .....	280
Appendix K: Call of Duty .....	281
Appendix L: Dear Esther .....	282

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## Chapter One:

### Loading Page: Introduction

*As the nondescript caravan of characters make their way across the bottom of the screen that signals the loading of the game, I tap my fingers with a bit of impatience as the loading seems to be taking forever. After two minutes, my character pops onto the screen with a slight bounce in the enchanted forest of Astellia. She is a small elven character dressed in purple and black witch's garb. She is a short character, only coming up to the shoulder of the nearby NPC (non-player character) with her green hair in pigtails and pointed elven features. I quickly prepare my character by casting the magical protection spells, bringing out her guardian (astellia), and mounting her enormous brown and white shih tzu looking dog.*

*We gallop down the grassy path, dodging the living overgrown flowers and bear/troll hybrid monsters that populate the area. The trees form a canopy overhead with streams of light poling through sporadically. The dimly lit area adds to the need to rush to my destination. However, this is ground that I have covered many times before and I know the exact path to take in order to keep well enough away from the aggressive mobs (monsters) to make it through quickly and without grabbing aggro (agrrro is when you come within a predetermined, through the programing, radius of a monster that has been programed to attack any player's character that comes within that area). After 500 yards, I turn sharply left and then quickly dodge right to avoid the pathing giant grasshopper/praying mantis creature that screeches as it sees me. "Damn," I mutter softly as the bug is now trailing me, "I aggroed it". I have my mount go an extra 100 yards before I notice the bug scuttling back into its pathing position. Up the hill*

*on the right-hand side, hidden behind the huge tree and deep within the tall grass so that you can only see the point of his hat is the character I was looking for, Heath. He is the quest keeper for the area. I smile as I accept the daily quests he has to offer today, and the real gaming starts.*

One of the new and growing reasons to travel is to visit locations that have been used as the backdrops to video games. This phenomenon was first called “consoliday” in January 2016 (VisitScotland 2016) by the Scottish tourism council as a way of explaining the fact that people were going on holiday solely to gain a closer connection with their beloved console games. Scotland’s landscape is the inspiration and source for over 41 video game sites, including Scotland’s own *FallOut* shelter located in Troywood, Scotland; Skara Brae on the Isle of Orkney, the backdrop to the cult classic *The Bard’s Tale*; and the infamous *Minecraft* cave, based upon Fingal’s Cave on the Isle of Staffa. With these and other examples, Scotland boasts a plethora of opportunities for tourists to get up close and personal with the landscape upon which their favorite video games are based. To better understand why gamers are making these pilgrimages to physical spaces that video games are based upon, we need a deeper exploration of this phenomenon. The program, consoliday, is sponsored by the Scottish government’s tourism organization, VisitScotland. This organization is charged with ensuring that one of Scotland’s most lucrative economic initiatives runs smoothly by consulting on tourism endeavors, lobbying for laws, and serving as a go between for the tourism industry and parliament. According to *Daily Business’s* Terry Murden (2015) the addition of this tourism program has helped increase Scotland’s visitors by 7 percent, making this a significant investment.

While this new phenomenon is intriguing in its own right, it is also important to understand the reason why research should be conducted on this new type of tourism. The budding phenomenon, like any other type of tourism, gives the researcher the ability to look at both how the population of tourists sees the location they are visiting and how the local

population portrays itself to those tourists (the “host and guest” relationship that has been the core focus of much tourism research, especially among anthropologists (Smith 1989, Bruner 2001, Carsten 2007, Desmond 2001, Urry 1992, et. al.). In general, this research has found that tourists are seeking to confirm their own cultural identity through the act of tourism. Desmond describes this phenomenon as follows: “the simultaneous emphasis on and experience of difference helps the tourist define him- or herself as part of a different collectivity from that on display” (1999:265). The virtual component of the tourism industry is in its infancy and the gaming holidays that Scotland boasts are also a new way to look at the act of recursive representation within gaming communities (an important area of research on gaming). The dual focus of this study allows for new insight into how gaming communities are creating and recreating their identities by bringing those identities out of the digital world and into the physical realm. One of the more interesting points of this is that the gamers will not have the electronic medium to hide behind when their identities are being recreated. Virtual worlds potentially give nonconformists a way in which they can develop personal identities in an environment that is supposed to be safe, where they can explore the possibilities of who they really are. The hope is that, without the constraints of both the society that they are from and their physical body, an individual can create multiple aspects of themselves through which to explore and create an identity. Turkle (1995) compares going online to stepping through the looking glass, as we are able to re-construct our identities and play with what identity means.

Through the process of observing gamers and locals within and around the “physical space” of the vistas of the British Isles used as backdrops for the digital environments within different games I have gained a better understanding of the way that the different types of

gamers reenact their virtual identities, if there is a difference between their virtual identity and the reenacted virtual identity, as well as the way that the non-gamers they encounter impact said identities. These important new insights provide us with a better understanding of what the different gaming communities are, as well as how they see themselves through the lens of their sojourns to the “real world” locations of the games they love to play. People are increasingly flocking toward online communities to create, maintain, and explore their identities and new relationships. The different virtual cultures are also being commercialized for consumption by the general public. These two facts make it important to try to understand who these people are and what it is that has made them such an intriguing group as to be commodified within the general population. And, in turn, why they travel to these locations.

### **Reviewing the Coding: The methodology**

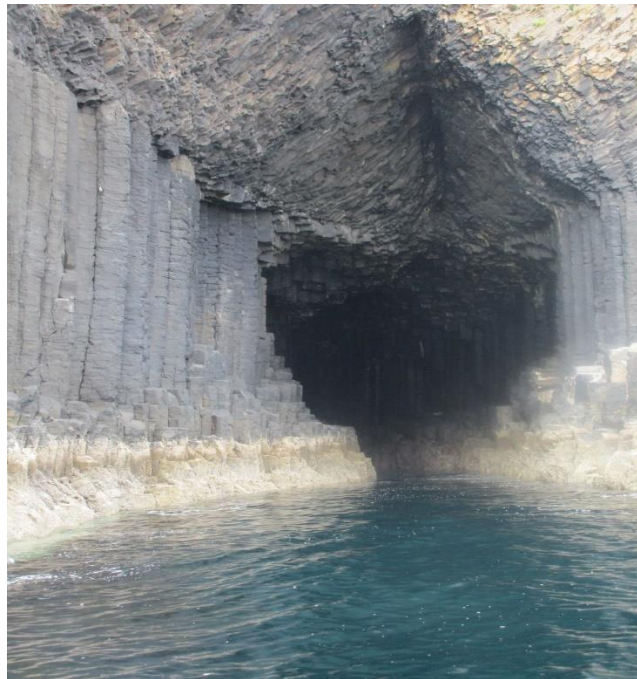
My main focus for this dissertation is on Scotland, as it was not my intention to do any work within England. It was only by serendipity that I did a portion of my field work at Alnwick Castle in northern England. After months of researching the history of the different games, sites, and Scotland itself, May 8, 2018 finally came around and I left for Scotland. My first two days in Scotland were supposed to be spent at the Forth Bridge, the location for the videogame *Grand Theft Auto* (GTA, for more information regarding the locations and/or games, please reference the appendix for a short history/explanation). However, they were spent in a hotel room with food poisoning. From May 10<sup>th</sup> until May 31<sup>st</sup>, I was based out of the community of Melrose which is an hour almost directly to the south of Edinburgh and 30 minutes from the border of Scotland. Again, a setback occurred on my first day in Melrose. I had planned on spending much



of my time at Smailholm Tower, a five-minute drive from my rental. However, I was told by the main attendant of the museum that most of the people who visited the tower were elderly and he had no knowledge of the connection to the videogame *Ben Jordan: Paranormal Investigator*. While nothing seemed to be going my way, I remembered that the mobile *Harry Potter* game, *Hogwarts Mystery* (for more information regarding Harry Potter, please refer to Appendix C.) had been released for the iPhone only days earlier, April 25<sup>th</sup>. The castle that boasts of being the *Harry Potter* castle, Alnwick Castle, was only an hour and a half away. While I had only planned on visiting on my scheduled day off, it became the base for my research between May 12<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> (I did go back to the Smailholm Tower on two other occasions and stayed for several hours but did not have any luck meeting any people who had knowledge of the videogame). My time at Alnwick included talking to several of the actors who were involved with the broomstick training lessons, working out permission to do research at the castle, and for the last five days talking to some of the tourists. I also made plans to go back and revisit Alnwick Castle with the intention of both doing my research and volunteering as a broom stick flying training assistant from July 18 through the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The next location proved even more helpful as I based myself in Kinlochleven which is minutes from Glencoe, from June 1<sup>st</sup> until the 8<sup>th</sup>. I chose this location because of its relative distance to Aonach Eagach Ridge, which is the landscape for *World of Warcraft's* Storm Peaks, St. Conan's Kirk for *Uncharted 4*, and Fingal's Cave, which is known as the Minecraft cave because of the blocky stones that make up the cave (see Figure 1.1). This is the location of many of my "ethnographic moments" with my travel companions Gwen and Cole, who were integral to my understanding of the videogame tourism phenomenon. Gwen has been a friend

of mine for the past 10 years. We met in an anthropology class on folklore as undergraduate students at Longwood University. She is short, with long thick brown hair, and always has a smile on her face. Cole is Gwen's fiancé, a somewhat tall Englishman, with long brown hair. I was only able to visit Fingal's Cave once and while I was able to talk to only one couple that knew anything about Minecraft, they had no clue about the cave's association with the game. Both time and lack of monetary resources prohibited me from making the journey more than once. Most of my time was spent going to Aonach Eagach Ridge and St. Conan's Kirk after Gwen and Cole left on June 4<sup>th</sup>.



*Figure 1.1 Fingal's Cave on the Isle of Staffa which is nicknamed the "Minecraft cave". (Photo by the author)*

From the Glencoe area, I moved to Glasgow for the Play Expo Glasgow gaming convention on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of June. This was a relatively futile undertaking as far as identifying participants in my study was concerned as most of the people were playing

videogames and did not want to be bothered. I did, however, have a very interesting interaction with a gentleman going to my hotel room which I will describe in Chapter 8.

From June 11<sup>th</sup> until July 1<sup>st</sup>, I spent my time traveling between Anstruther and the Troywood bunker. Located close to St. Andrews in The Kingdom of Fife, the bunker has been called Scotland's *FallOut* bunker (Packwood 2015), referencing the videogame series of the same name (see Appendix H). This was a very fruitful location as I was able to talk to 12 people about the connection between the game and the site itself as well as become friends with one of the workers at the bunker who gave me a great deal of insider information regarding the running of the bunker and the owner's disdain for the connection to the videogame.

The next location where I conducted research was Stonehaven, which is the home of Dunnottar Castle. This is one of the landscapes that is used for the "map" known as Stonehaven in *Call of Duty: Ghost* (in the game *Call of Duty*, maps are different versions of the game that keep with the theme of the expansion that the player is currently playing, they are known as "maps" as they are different geographical arenas). It is also the castle that was used in the creation of the Disney movie and videogame *Brave*. This location was interesting although I was only able to get to the castle once due to injuring my knee on the way to Dunnottar Castle and because United States President Donald Trump visited Scotland during this period resulting in a travel warning for Americans. I did however meet several of my study participants during this time and was able to gain a lot of useful information. By participants, I am referring to those individuals who agreed to be a part of my study by signing a waiver and discussing videogame tourism in some form with me. In reaction to the US Embassy in London emailing every citizen who was in the United Kingdom at the time of President Trump's visit to "keep a low profile and

monitor local media for updates” (U.S. Embassy Alert 2018), I decided to become a tourist for a portion of the time I was in Stonehaven. I decided to attempt to gain an in-game achievement in *Assassin’s Creed* out of game and locate all of the stones. The narrative of *Assassin’s Creed* involves the fight to save humanity from losing their free will to the Knights Templar (see Appendix I). This activity also led to more avenues of inquiry and knowledge as I was able to explore the area, talk with more locals than I had originally planned, and connect with a few other tourists who had the same idea, if not the same reasons as I did for finding the stone circles. It was during this time that I caught myself attempting to position my photographs in such a way that they were idyllic and did not include the reminders of the modern era, which I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 8.

I spent the next two weeks in Loch Ness. Unfortunately, this line of inquiry was not helpful as none of the people that I talked to seemed to have any knowledge of the connection between the Loch and two videogames, *Tomb Raider III* or *The Cameron Files: The Secret of Loch Ness* (I have not included descriptions of these games and the location in the appendices because no major data was gleaned from these sites).

The second to last location was the Isle of Skye. I was there from August 6<sup>th</sup> until the 12<sup>th</sup>. I was supposed to also go to the isle of St. Kilda. However, heavy storms started on the first day of my arrival on the Isle of Skye and destroyed the boat that I was scheduled to go to the St. Kilda on. As St. Kilda is an UNESCO world heritage site and visitation to the island is highly regulated, that was the last boat with authorization to make the journey for the season. I ended up spending my time talking with locals, which would become the basis of Chapter Seven.

For the final component of my field research, I made my way to the island of Orkney. The first day on the island was a disappointment. I was only a few hours late and missed seeing travel guru Rick Steves as he was visiting Skara Brae to shoot an episode of his television series on the day of my arrival. The disappointments seemed to snowball from there as I was rebuffed at each of my attempts to talk to the other tourists and the employees refused to talk about the connection between *The Bard's Tale* and the famous Neolithic site. My time came to an abrupt end two days later when the Air B&B host went, to put it as the Scottish would, "a wee bit mad." The night before I fled the island, he became extremely drunk and admitted to lying to me about everything we had talked about the day before. He started yelling that his life was unfair, and nothing was going right. I quickly excused myself to go to my room and locked the door. He raged for a few more hours and then seemed to fall asleep. In the morning, I went down to get some Breakfast and was just sitting down with a bowl of cereal when there was a knock at the door. It was the police. They took my host away after talking about the fact that he had assaulted a patron at one of the local pubs. As the Island of Orkney is extremely small, I decided that was enough for me and I quickly packed my bags, rescheduled my ferry trip and hotels for the next two weeks, and fled the island before noon.

In total, I was in Scotland for three months, almost the entire length of the summer tourism season. With the help of modern technology, I was able to reconnect with some of my study participants after I left the island to do follow up interviews and get more information from them through gaming together, talking on the phone, through FaceTime, Skype, and Facebook. I visited nine different locations around Scotland and one in England (Alnwick Castle). While this does not seem like a lot of time, on average, most tourists do not seem to

stay at a location for more than a few days at a time. I never ran into the same tourist twice in my three months in the United Kingdom. Tourism is a fleeting activity and therefore regulated by seasonal availability (which also makes talking with tourists a difficult undertaking unless you can follow up with them post-trip as I did).

### **Player Stats: The people involved**

In total, 36 people signed my IRB wavers to be a part of the study. Of those, 21 were encountered at Alnwick Castle. Two of the Alnwick Castle study participants came back for follow up interviews and one played *Call of Duty* with me after he had gone to Dunnottar Castle after our meeting. Six of my participants were locals who lived on the Isle of Skye full time. Two more (Gwen and Cole) were friends who I had known before going into the field and traveled to the *Uncharted* and *World of Warcraft* sites with me. The Troywood Bunker provided three signed participants. The last two participants were from Dunnottar Castle. In addition to these participants, I was able to talk to one of the programmers for the *Dear Esther* videogame as well as the reporter who called Troywood “Scotland’s *FallOut* Shelter”. An interesting side note is that all of my participants were Caucasian.

As a cultural anthropologist, a lot of my work was gleaned through participant observation—visiting sites with other tourists. This means that I observed far more people than I was able to interview or talk to formally. A few of my ethnographic vignettes come from this type of research. All observations that led to any type of noted work or insight of any sort were carried out in public places where privacy is not anticipated. An IRB was not required as I did not directly interact with any member of the public other than as a tourist myself. For each site

that I visited, I had received permission from the landowners/caretakers before starting my study.

### **A Glimpse Beneath the World: Information Regarding the Theoretical Stance Taken**

The theoretical framework for this project has three separate threads that are woven together as a way of understanding this new phenomenon, videogame tourism. Those three greater theoretical literatures are placemaking, authenticity within the touristic landscape, and gamer identity. As this new type of tourism brings a new twist to two established branches of anthropological research, the combination of gaming theories with the touristic theories of placemaking and authenticity are imperative to interpreting what is at the heart of videogame tourism.

A sense of history, connection to the land and belonging has been a part of identity creation within most cultures. This is especially true in the case of the Scottish people (Carsten 2007; Gupta and Ferguson 1992), where meaning and a sense of pride is written on the landscape through the way places are named, used, and/or discussed. Not only is meaning placed upon the land that a culture is associated with, but it is also a way through which others can attempt to understand the local culture as well as the landscape in which culture is performed (Palmer 1999; Gray 2000). This adds another layer of meaning making upon the land as it is not only a way of recursively representing one's self and one's culture but it is also an expression (or assertion) to others of that identity. In order to connect meaning making of a landscape with that of virtual worlds, I will use de Certeau's distinction between place and space (1984:117), where space is where meaning making occurs. This additional distinction

between place and space allows for us to transfer the term space onto virtual worlds as it does not require the tangibility that place does. Thus, the meaning making that occurs in a virtual format is just as valid and allows for the landscape to hold both cultural context as well as nostalgic memory.

Identity for gamers, as well as for the local populations, is an integral part of this study. As Malaby (2007) theorizes, games, and play are inherently social and performative. How a gamer interacts with the virtual environment effects opportunities for meaning making or placemaking both within and on the digital landscape. This helps to reify said gamer's identity as they are performing social norms as a way of expressing their intention to be known as a member of the community. This can be seen through the use of both Cooley's 2019 bodiliness theory as well as Boellstorff's (2008, 2011) embodiment theory. Both of these theories, while different, are interested in the interactions between the gamer and the virtual landscape to the point of identity creation and maintenance. Thus, the importance of social interactions for creating a nostalgic link to the landscape.

The performative interactions between a gamer and a digital world generate a place of social interaction in which meaningful connections and culture are created. It is this connection between the actions and the environment that allows for the possible interest in the reenactments of the nostalgic actions. It is the social meaning making as well as the identity that is recursively represented and/or reified through the acts of tourism and gaming that bring these two areas of research cultural anthropology into line for this study. The gamers have both a physical and an emotional connection to the virtual landscape and this study explores the



nuances and limitations of how those connections are transferred over to the physical landscape through the act of touring them.

The landscape (and tourist sites more generally) is important to the creation of an authentic experience for tourists. MacCannell through the use of Goffman's (1975) staging theory, states that there are six levels of staging that a good tourism site uses in order to give the tourists the level of authenticity that they are looking for. This is important as each type of tourist is looking for a slightly different level of authenticity from the site. The experience can be as complex as attempting to live as a local for an amount of time to as simple as a very surface and performative version of the local culture. It is up to both the tourist and the site to negotiate the level of authenticity both experience. The addition of offering guided tours expresses how the site and its history is portrayed to the public. This can have major ramifications if it is too heavily skewed to one side or the other of the equation. This authentic experience is also impacted by the fact that the sites are, at least to some degree, selling the cultural norms of the local population (Salazar 2009). What Salazar means by this is that there is a portion of the native population's culture that is being put on display, which can cause a sense of exposure and animosity directed towards the tourists by the locals. However, this is easily balanced and authenticity is possible if the site works with the local population and there is an understanding as to what portion of their culture will be put on display and what will be held back in order to keep the community's culture alive and intact. This is further complicated by the fact that the authenticity that the videogame tourist is interested in achieving is based upon the virtual landscape (something MacCannell did not consider) and the ability to interact with the physical landscape. In other words, the virtual landscape, for the videogame tourist, is

a kind of “benchmark” they use to measure the level of authenticity they are able to obtain from their visit.

### **The Narrative of each Level: Explanation of What is to Come**

The following chapters will jump from the physical to the virtual realms in the same cyclical fashion that my participants (and I) do. This is done in order to give the reader a greater understanding of the feeling that the gamer experiences as well as how I came to these experiences. It will also explain the incorporation, or lack thereof, of the videogame “narrative” into the tourist sites that I focused on. By narrative, I mean both the interpretation of the known (and sometimes unknown) information regarding the virtual site in question and how they are framed or staged for presentation to the tourists (reference Macleod et al. 2012;, Azaryahu and Foote 2008;, Butler 2008;, Sheng and Chen 2013 et al.) as well as the storyline that helps to facilitate the connections to the virtual environments for the players. The game’s storyline acts as a version of a tourist location’s tour guide. Museums and historical locations such as those I focus on create “structured experiences unfolding in space and time, ..., to generate meaningful ... highly effective and affective museum spaces” which in turn function “as a mechanism for the creation of engaging and meaningful interpretive environments” (Macleod et. al. 2012: xix). The thought is that museums and tourist locations are a way of disseminating the interpreted meaning behind the physical environment to the public.

In Chapter Two: “Tangibility of the Virtual”, I explore what drives a person to want to connect in a physical way with a virtual environment. In this chapter, we first look at the connections people have with their online avatars as a way of understanding why this

connection is there in the first place. We do this by looking at Lambek (2013) and Boellstorff's (2008 and 2011) theories on bodiliness and embodiment. Then we turn to theories of placemaking, including Gupta and Ferguson (1992), de Certeau (1984) and finally Appadurai (1995). We then turn to Malaby's 2007 theory on the intensity of play. Once we have established the reasons for why and how there is a strong emotional connection between the people and their virtual environments, we turn to look at theories surrounding pilgrimages as a way to try to understand how and why people are flocking to these locations. Finally, this chapter introduces the idea of the unencumbered versus the encumbered self. This theory is one that is threaded throughout this dissertation as a way of connecting the virtual and the physical realms with a greater intensity.

In Chapter Three, the gamers themselves are the focus (Chapter Three: "Live Action Video Gaming: The Gamers and their interactions"). With the sites dating from 500BCE to as recent as the 1600s, it is not hard to believe that there are pop culture references that would bring people flocking to them. Video games have a special place within the hearts of a growing number of people but still have a stigma attached to them. Most of the tourists that I talked to were reluctant, at least to an extent, to publicly acknowledge that their interest in the site came as a result of the connection it has with their favorite video games. We explore this phenomenon with the help of Butler (2008). Within this chapter we investigate the reasons why people are making this type of pilgrimage, based upon pilgrimage studies by Badone (2004) and Roseman (2004), to these iconic locations, their experiences and reactions to being at these sites, including a look at why their interactions are as constrained and limited as they have been up to this point. We then compare this type of tourism to that of other media-based tourism to

try to understand the unique position of video game tourists. This is a heavily ethnographic chapter while also focusing on how analyzing how their identity is being shaped by the narratives that are being exposed through different mediascapes.

Chapter Four, (“Reintegration”), looks at the aftermath of the touristic gaming experience. This chapter dissects the effect that videogame tourism has had on the participants. We revisit their experiences in order to assess any differences that can be seen in their identity creation activities as well as the connections to the video games and/or avatars that are used within the games themselves. We explore how the sense of connection to the physical as well as the digital landscape has increased. The possible positive and negative reception of their pilgrimages by both the gamers themselves as well as those that they share their experiences with and how their gaming styles have changed since coming back from interacting with the physical version of their beloved digital worlds is also be explored.

The next chapter, (Chapter Five: “Reaching for the Heavens: Legends, Myths, and Evocative Landscapes”), focuses on the mythology surrounding the Scottish landscape. In a country where it is not unusual to have ruins that are over 400 years old in your backyard, or to find a Pictish carving while doing yard work, it is no wonder that there is a strong connection to the old ways. As Geertz wrote, “There is no such thing as human nature independent of culture” (1973:49). This side of the Scottish culture incorporates the myths and legends that the landscape invoked in people of old. As Urry’s 1992 book theorizes, landscape is inherently made by social and cultural construction.

Within this chapter, we examine three of the myths that are the most widely studied and have become a standard representation of Scotland. Through these myths, the socially

constructed nature of the social connections between the Scottish people and the earth become apparent (what sometimes may lead to “Tartanism” or “Tartanry,” as described in Chapter Five). From there, we will attempt to connect history and mythos to the sense of place that is evident throughout the Scottish countryside. In order to do this, we will look at Palmer’s 1999 study of landscape and meaning, Douglas’ 1977 suggestion that the landscape and atmosphere play a role in the outlook of the Scottish people, and Gray’s 2000 ethnographic work involving Scottish herders. These theories will allow us to understand to what degree landscape and lore have an effect on the “invented” (in the Hobsbawmian sense) cultural traditions of the people of Scotland.

In Chapter Six: “The Puzzle Game Side Quest: Comparison of the sites and their management/interaction ability”, I look at how, if at all, the tourism sites incorporate the videogame narrative. The sites themselves can be broken into three separate groups with respect to their promotion and incorporation, or lack thereof, of the video game narrative: incorporation, ambivalence, and complete denial. Each of these classifications of levels of acceptance can be equated to the difference in the quest for authenticity that is being projected onto the site. While most of the sites at least officially fall into the category of ambivalence, it is not felt to the same extent in each of these sites, nor is it something that the employees are taking lying down. The trend, however, is for at least some level of incorporation or at least an acknowledgement of the layered meanings attached to the sites of the sites. In this chapter we start by looking at the different ways that the sites are currently dealing with the addition of the video game narrative through the theory of Lacy and Douglas (2002) which looks at how sites can have multiple narratives layered upon them, and any push back against

the established norm by using MacCannell's (1999) sacralization theory. Then we try to uncover the possible reasons why there has been a level of backlash at each of the sites against this infringing additional narrative with the help of Salazar's (2009) theory of repackaging culture to sell to tourists. Finally, the possible ramifications of the incorporation that is being called for by both the national tourist association as well as the videogame fans is discussed. We look at ethnographic examples that help to explain the reasons given and the realities of how and why these sites vary so radically in their acceptance of videogamers' interest in them.

In Chapter Seven: "TKO: Impact of tourism on the locals", we switch gears and focus on how the local populations are affected by tourism. Tourism has both positive and negative connotations within the anthropological community, as both Walsh (2012) and Wood (2008) explain. With a wide range of scholars arguing on both sides of this debate, we will look at how tourism is affecting the local population of Scotland by attempting to look at both the negative and positive ramifications of video game tourism at these locations. By looking at the economic, cultural, physical, as well as the emotional impacts on them we can gain a greater insight into the balancing act that the local population must play in order to have a normal life in the face of video game tourism. We also look at how the native population's identity is being reinvented in order to make tourism more appealing. As Saragoza (2001) explains, these changes, when accepted by the local populations, affect the way that the government distributes funds and what effects this has on the population.

Chapter Eight: "Virtually Touring", returns us to the virtual realm as we look at videogame tourism in the digital form. There are an increasing number of gamers that turn to being a tourist within their favorite games rather than going outside into the physical realms.

Briefly, we look at the different types of virtual tourism and how similar they are to the more traditional physical form of tourism. We then look at how this trend of staying in one's home and yet being a tourist works and if it changes the sense of tourism and identity that is expressed through the more standard forms of tourism.

Finally, we come to Chapter 9: "The Credits: Conclutory Report", which is the final chapter of this "epic tale" of videogame tourism. It focuses on the results of this study and how the (mostly) Scottish landscape lends itself to being both a physically inspiring force as well as a digital sanctuary that coalesces into a nostalgia creating environment. The recursivity of identity creation that the reenactment of these nostalgic occurrences allows is the basis of the idea that this type of tourism is in fact a pilgrimage and life altering event. We also look at the aftermath of the pilgrimage as a way of understanding the difference between this type of media-based tourism and how it differs from other forms such as television and movie-based tourism.

In order to streamline this ethnographic work and not interrupt the flow of my own narrative, I have added appendices where I briefly orient the reader to tourism sites and video games instead of giving detailed descriptions of each of the sites and video games that are being discussed in the text itself. In order to get a better understanding of the video games that are being discussed it is important to note that most videogames have some sort of narrator included in them as a way of helping to explain the story or narrative. This either takes the form of a traditional narrator or non-player characters, also known as "NPCs", within the story arc helping to further the story. Each of the games that I will be discussing has a robust narrative that the player must weave their way through in order to complete the game and I have emphasized what these are in the appendices.

## Chapter 2:

### Tangibility of the Virtual

*When Gwen heard that I would both be in the United Kingdom and that my research would be on video game tourism, she jumped at the chance to be a part of the action. We started talking about the specifics almost immediately. We finally decided on sticking with the landscapes for Uncharted 4 – St. Conan’s Kirk – and World of Warcraft’s Storm Peaks – Aonach Eagach Ridge. Gwen was a huge Nathan Drake fan and her long-term boyfriend, Cole, had played World of Warcraft during the expansion that included Storm Peaks (See Figure 2.1 for a small portion of our conversation).*

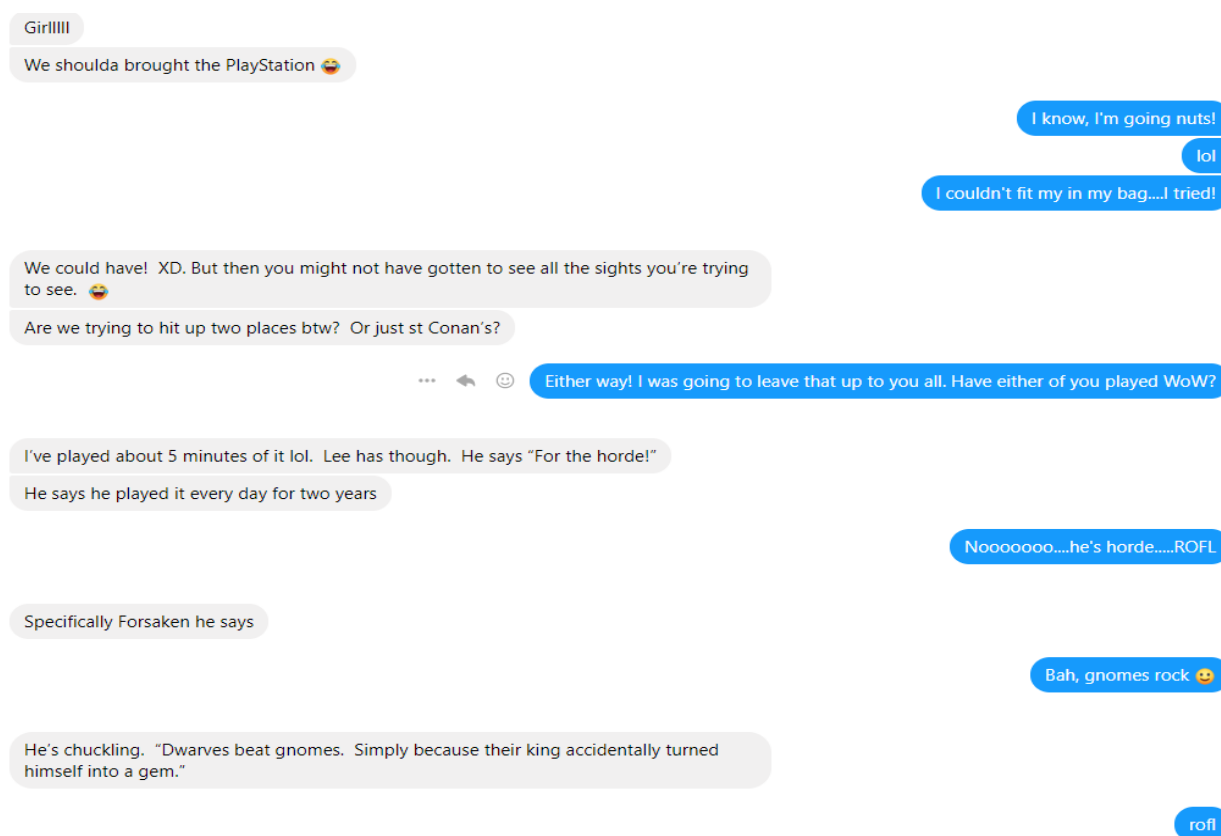


Figure 2.1: Instant messages between myself and Gwen concerning the trip.



*When we met up at their bed and Breakfast, Gwen and I hugged and started chatting away like we hadn't been talking for the past few months on a regular basis. When there was a quick Break in the conversation, she finally introduced me to Cole. He is an average height, slender Englishman in his late 20's, and he was wearing jeans, trainers, and a Punisher shirt (referencing the Marvel character of the same name, it featured his symbol, a stylized skull). When he noticed my World of Warcraft (WoW) shirt, we immediately exchanged the jabs that are typical between WoW's alliance and horde players... He said that he had worn the Punisher shirt as a representation of the Forsaken (a character type he played in WoW).*

*Gwen said that they had both been playing Uncharted right before coming and that she had done some research on the two locations we had chosen. We started chatting about the history of St. Conan's. Gwen informed us that St Conan's Kirk is nestled by the shores of Loch Awe in the town of Argyll, just 40 minutes west of Oban. Walter Campbell built the original kirk in 1886 for his mother, as she found the drive from the family home to the nearest parish in Dalmally unbearable. The current version of the church was completed in 1930. This grand piece of architecture is a hodgepodge of different styles and eras, with its creator's imagination fueling the construction. The building of this kirk coincided with the railroad's arrival in the area. Until the late 1800s, this was an uninhabited wilderness. With access to more populated areas, via the new train, and a religious center, its population quickly grew.*

*St. Conan was an Irish priest who came to Scotland. He is the patron saint of Lorne, and local legend has it that he lived close to where the kirk now stands. He is said to have faced off with the devil for the fate of the souls within his parish and caught the devil attempting to cheat. The proverbial expression, "Na, na, fair play, paw for paw," is attributed to St. Conan.*

*This realization that St. Conan was linked to gaming made the connection between the game and the kirk more intriguing.*

*After our brief history lesson, we decided that would be our first stop. Since we planned to leave for the Mountains of Storm Peaks the next day, our total focus became Nathan Drake and his adventures within this portion of Scotland. We recounted parts of the storyline and game play along the way to visit the kirk. Talking over each other from time to time and interjecting when we believed it was necessary, we went through the whole portion of the game that takes place within Scotland's borders before arriving at the kirk. A high-stakes, treasure-hunting, and parkour extravaganza, the Uncharted series is an action-adventure video game series with a kick. The main character is Nathan Drake, who is a treasure hunter akin to Lara Croft or Indiana Jones. We deliberated about one moment in the game, when one must slide, jump onto a rope, and then jump onto another part of the ruins, assessing its difficulty level, finally deciding that that was most likely the hardest part of that chapter within the game and that the puzzles were easy, at least within the chapter we were discussing. As Gwen started talking about the next chapters, Cole and I admitted to not finishing the whole of the game. Gwen rebuffed us for having only finished a bit past the Scotland portion of the game. Luckily by this point in our trip we had made it to the kirk's carpark, and we were able to distract Gwen enough that the topic was forgotten, and our adventure began.*

*One of the first things we noticed upon entering was that the kirk had a chapel dedicated to Robert the Bruce, boasting a wood-and-alabaster, life-sized effigy of him and one of his bones from Dunfermline Abbey. Because of this, the kirk's reputation grew over time, and became a destination for many. While the town is not huge, it does make for a nice stop between Oban*

*and Loch Lomond. As Cole is a history enthusiast, he made a beeline for the chapel while Gwen and I went to find different locations around the kirk that we recognized from the game.*

## Introduction

What drives a person to want to connect with a virtual environment in such a way that they desire an encounter with a reasonable analog of it offline? Is it an interest in engaging, in the rich “bandwidth” of analog experience, something that is otherwise intangible? Or is it the possibility of being able to perform in a public way the passion with which gamers connect with their video games and avatars? If the engagement of one’s first experience with a compelling game is a charged experience, associated with the release of endorphins and captured attention, then the pursuit of the opportunity to experience in a different, possibly even richer, mode such scenarios is a form of nostalgia. The video game tourists I studied expressed, and demonstrated in their actions, an interest not only in reexperiencing these game moments and environments, but also in upping the ante, if you will. By experiencing the nostalgic reality in a different mode, other senses are given the ability to participate in the experience and cement it in the mind’s eye.

In order to explore these questions, I must lay some important intellectual groundwork. One potential land mine is the relative contrast between what is often characterized as “online” experience and that which is “offline.” More precisely for the game tourists I worked with, we might say this concerns the status of their more highly digitally mediated experience as compared with their experiences that are less so. For the purpose of this study, I will not be using the terms real and virtual, as this language has connotations of full separation that are difficult to shake (and as I demonstrate, are inappropriate). I will, instead, lean on the potentially less misleading contrast of the physical and the virtual, still understood as falling on a spectrum, with neither ever departing the scene. I will use the term “virtual” as a shorthand

to refer to the mode through which people interact with digital games and environments. Similarly, and again as a shorthand, I will use the term “physical” to refer to the mode of experience that video games tourists encounter when they visit the sites I explore throughout this work. While I acknowledge the overwhelming and problematic connotations that the term “physical” has, my hope is that it can be used as a way to signal that the physics, interfaces, and environments of the offline terrestrial experience are notably distinct from those of digital games. After all, online games are also a type of “physical” interaction, and the tourists are not without virtual interactions while visiting sites, through their smartphones and other technology. Having established this working distinction, I will now take up, in the discussion that follows, three major topics that together inform my treatments of the ethnographic material. These are digital embodiment/bodiliness, placemaking, and playfulness.

To better understand the types of connections that players have with the games, I will begin by drawing on research regarding the emotional importance of the avatar. The avatar is the digitally graphical representation of the player and the means through which they are able to interact with the digital environment. Boellstorff's (2008) work in *Second Life* provides us with the tools to understand how and why players form attachments to these virtual versions of themselves. We will also look at Turkle's (1995) reasoning for why these avatars are created in the first place and what role they play outside of the digital environment in the lives of the players.

Once the connection that the players have to their digital avatar has been established, we will look at how the environment plays a role in the meaning-making of the player's nostalgic remembrance of the games by looking at some of the research on placemaking by

Gupta and Ferguson (1992), de Certeau (2011), and Appadurai (1995). The ability to connect with one's avatar is rooted within the idea of placemaking as a way that meaning is formed. After establishing the link between belonging and placemaking, we will look at how this attachment to place is similar to that of the physical world.

In any effort to understand gamers' experience, the term "play" can be problematic, and the impact of the games themselves can be tricky to articulate. Separating these terms conceptually, I take up the first by building from Csikszentmihalyi and Bennett's expression that, "play is action generating action" and is "grounded in the concept of possibility" (1971: 45). The duo goes on to explain that a good game is one that can bring a player to a "state of merged awareness and action"; that is, "playfulness" (1971:46). Similarly, I consider the cultural form of the game and its relationship to the disposition of playfulness, charting how both terms can help us to understand what is at stake for those who find great significance in the games they play.

After exploring how significance is generated, we will look at some theories about the motivations underlying pilgrimage as a means of gaining insight into why gamers would want to travel to distant lands in order to have the physical connection with the virtual environment. While not exactly religious in nature, the social impact of these games is driving people to spend thousands of dollars for the chance to physically touch the inspirational landscapes they have visited virtually so many times. There is a ritualistic format to this type of tourism that we will explore through the lens of pilgrimage theory. Although I did not ask my participants if they were currently practicing members of any religious tradition, the would be an interesting addition.

Lastly, we will look at what it takes for most gamers to get ready for this type of tourism and how it differs from other kinds of tourism (e.g. beach tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, etc.) by going through a detailed exchange between myself and one of my gamer participants on how they got ready for the trip and what they did leading up to walking from the carpark to their destination. This will allow us to look at the differences and connect video game tourism with pilgrimage as well as to show the deep emotional bond and longing that the gamers inscribe on these environments.

### **The Bodiliness of the Virtual Avatar**

*I nudge my character, Nathan Drake, up to the edge of the crumbling roof top and peer over the edge, mentally mapping the next two moves I will have to make him accomplish in order to get to my destination. I take in a deep breath and hold it. One jump, two jump, perfection I think. I have Drake throw the rope on his belt so that it loops over the beam six feet in front of me. It coils around, and I push the forward button. He swings, once, twice. "Okay," I say in a barely audible voice, "angling to the right at 60 degrees, no that will have me hit the edge, and I will bounce off the cliff. Thirty-five degrees will be perfect and allow for me to shift his angle about two seconds after landing so that I glide around the curve." With my plan readied, I start the maneuvers as planned, but my finger slips off of the forward button while the other still pushes the button which will make him jump. I feel my stomach fall as I watch my character fall to his death. I shake it off and start again, this time completing the jump with my rear end rising above the chair cushion a good six inches. "Now for the turn," I mutter. As I guide Drake into the turn, I am only slightly aware that my right-side ribs are starting to hurt as I am forcing them*

*into the arm of the chair. I ignore the pain and lean a little deeper and then I am at the last major jump of this obstacle. I jump to my feet as Drake grasps the edge of the ledge by his fingertips. Now on my feet, I let out a “whoop” and then instruct Drake to pull himself onto the ledge. I pump my arms and let out another “whoop” of accomplishment before looking at the red mark on my side that tomorrow will be a bruise.*

The above account is an example of a normal experience of bodiliness for a gamer (for the purpose of this dissertation, I am using the term normal or normativity as defined by Frega in his article: “The Normative Structure of Ordinary” (2015) or to put it another way, the process through which most actions in a given situation are performed). The physical connection of the human body to that of the character is something that many gamers feel each time they pick up a controller or sit down in front of the computer in order to play a game. This physical sensation can be best understood by looking at the difference between the concepts of embodiment and bodiliness. Both of these terms, while intrinsically linked, have distinctly different connotations. Embodiment is the layering of one’s persona onto another object, in the case of gaming it is layered onto the avatar. An example of this would be the popular movie Avatar released in 2009. Within this movie, humans control huge blue aliens that have been given some of their physical characteristics and humans are able to experience the world through the use of alien bodies. With embodiment, there is a clear differential between the human and the object through which they are attempting to map or layer their being onto, or as Cooley explains,

embodiment within the environment of a digital game could be said to occur in two overlapping fields. On the one hand, there are the bodily compartments of the player while playing the game. By this, I refer to the position of the hands



while holding a game controller, or a keyboard and mouse; it also includes the manner in which one positions oneself in front of the display, where a television or a computer monitor.... Beyond the bodily comportment of the player, there is the embodied aspect of the game avatar itself – the player’s representative within the digital world of the game. Embodiment here is influenced according to the perspective of the player within the game ... embodiment is further experienced in terms of bodily comportments of the avatar itself. In many games it is possible to jump or crouch, walk or run, pick up and manipulate objects within the game (Cooley 2019:46-47).

Taking an example from Boellstorff’s work regarding embodiment, most people have a single embodiment or avatar to which they are associated, and which reflects their "actual-world ideals of beauty and status" (2011: 506). This is the character they typically use as their main character, and it is chosen based on their subjectivity in the matter, or the way they would like to see themselves in terms of their community. They can choose which race, they find the most attractive and then change the hair, clothing, and facial features of the avatar. The race in this context depends heavily on the type of game that is being played. It can refer to the human avatar’s skin color or a mythical creature. Avatars are made for a variety of reasons, as Boellstorff explains through his three examples: Avatar the movie, CyFishy’s interview, and that of Eshi Otawara (2011:507-9). Within these examples we see the clear distinction between embodiment and bodiliness. This is due to the layering of the player’s physical and emotional self onto the avatar as opposed to the concept of bodiliness which is a connection between the two that incorporates the recursive social markers that allow a player to represent themselves within the digital environment.

Elsewhere Boellstorff discusses the idea that when talking to another person in a virtual world it is the physical proximity of the avatars, or, as he puts it, the "presupposed virtual embodiment" (2008:153), that makes it an intimate interaction. So why is it that this physical

location of the avatar is so important? Boellstorff's research concludes that people feel a connection to their avatars to such a degree that they tend to put their own physical traits and/or wants into them, making them feel as if they are really the avatar, even if they are able to distance themselves from this extension of themselves through the alteration of other traits. The connection that people feel for their avatars shows a strong level of emotion that is poured into the virtual world through their avatar and the bonds that are formed with others through the interactions with their avatars. Because the avatars are an extension of the person at the keyboard, what happens to the avatar affects the emotional state of the person. A deep connection exists between the online community and the people that interact within them. Bodiliness, on the other hand, while it does involve some mapping of the human gamer's persona, signals the body as constitutive of a social identity. While embodiment would be concrete experience through the body, bodiliness is about the social creation and representation of that identity, or as Cooley theorizes,

Bodiliness ...[is] a key ingredient in the social construction of identity ... [T]he way players' avatars portray identity to other players has a significant influence on the social environment within a game like WoW (Cooley 2019:55).

Cooley's example of the transgender woman who first attempted the transformation of gender identity through a virtual avatar is instructive on this issue. Through role-playing this alternative gender identity, she was able to envision her life as a female and decided to go through the process of gender reassignment (Ibid:62). The difference between the two examples, the blue alien and the transgender female, expresses the difference in how embodiment and bodiliness are degrees of connectivity from a gamer's physical to virtual body. Both can be performed

simultaneously and give a sense of belonging as well as connectivity to the virtual environments.

This still leaves unanswered the question: why do people turn to digital worlds? In order to better understand the reasoning behind this turn away from the “meat world” (or the physical world, a term that was coined in William Gibson’s 1981 book *Neuromancer* and is used by gamers who classify themselves as being either a member of generation X or a fan of cyberpunk) it is most productive to look at Falk-Moore’s ‘situational adjustment’ theory. Falk-Moore (1975:51) states, “Ideology may be regarded as a product of what we have called the regularizing processes. Yet its instance-by-instance use permits the kind of reinterpretation, redefinition, and manipulation that is associated with processes of situational adjustment”. The ability to be able to perform and manipulate not only one’s identity but surroundings in such a way as to be outside of the normative ideology of the meat world has been a huge draw for many of the people who flock to virtual worlds. When people enter a virtual world, they are at least to an extent residing within a world that is a constant arena for the use of situational adjustments which allow for a deeper sense of individuality and connectedness to one’s avatar. The embodiment and connections that players are able to create and maintain are a driving force behind the creation of these communities. It only makes sense that, if given the chance to connect with their beloved digital world in another way, they would do so.

### **Placemaking**

Traditionally, anthropologists have tended to think of ethnographic work as being done in a remote location surrounded by people who are nothing like themselves. Such ethnographic

work is situated within the physical boundaries of the community being studied. There were perceived to be, at least until the 1980s, very clearly defined physical borders to ethnographic work. That is to say, the ability to go beyond what has been presented as the defined area that a group of people is inhabiting was not possible. This was because “cultures [are] based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy ‘naturally’ discontinuous spaces” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:6). With the advent of diasporic communities, mass migration, and the Internet, those boundaries have long ago come crashing down. According to Gupta and Ferguson, the creation of colonial capitalism is the reason for the change in connection to locality and why many people tend to move from their places of birth and have come to have connections to a wider if not entirely global social and cultural space/spaces (Ibid:8). This movement results in a “profound sense of a loss of territorial roots, of an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of places, and of ferment in anthropological theory” (Ibid:9). Gupta and Ferguson state, “The fiction that such boundaries enclose cultures and regulate cultural exchange can no longer be sustained” (Ibid:19). As previously discussed, traditional fieldwork had been conceived as entailing going to a location in order to study “the other.” With this type of field research, there is the understanding that you are physically traveling to another location (the “field”) and that, over the course of your time at that location, you could draw a map of the physical locality of the people who inhabit the cultural landscape you are visiting. While an actual map might not be involved because of the researcher’s interaction with the physical space, it would be possible to do produce one. With most online communities, one can draw a map, like the one shown below (Figure 2.2), of the current physical space that is being portrayed within the confines of the community, but it is

not a physical space. What these scholars and the introduction of digital communities have shown is that there is little need for this type of work to be done as globalization has removed the physical boundaries that were once thought to have encompassed a sociocultural group of people. The thought that “local” spaces contained “the others” that were the subjects of study.



Figure 2. 2: Screenshot of the map of the Timeless Isles from World of Warcraft. (Screenshot by author)

I will explore, later within this chapter, how people create and maintain meaningful connections within their virtual worlds, but that still leaves one question unanswered: How is a virtual space a place? There are only 1's and 0's that make up these locations, and they are not physically located within any tangible location, so how exactly does that make it a possible area for anthropologists to study?

These questions are but a few that still plague digital anthropology. One of the most convincing arguments that I have come across revolves around the use of the word “place.” In order to do that we turn to de Certeau and Appadurai. Let us start with de Certeau and move to

Appadurai as it is Appadurai's theories that have fewer darkened edges that need to be navigated through in order to overlay his theory of placemaking onto the virtual landscape.

In de Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he provides definitions of both place and space. He defines place as "an instantaneous configuration of positions" (1984:117) and space as being "composed of intersections of mobile elements" (Ibid). He sums up his definition by stating that, "In short, space is a practiced place" (Ibid). So, what exactly does all of this mean? He is saying that the difference between place and space is that place is where meaning making occurs. For example, one would not say that a chapel is a space of worship, but, rather, one would say that it is a place of worship or a space in which worship happens. This slight differentiation between the words being used to describe a location is the difference between meaning making that is taking place and just a space that is without meaning or social context. Put another way, a physical location that has not been culturally inscribed with meaning would be referred to as a space while any location that has sociocultural meaning should be referred to as being a place. In terms of gaming and/or tourism places, this indicates that meaning must be created and experienced within these two distinct locations in order for it to be considered a place. One could walk through a beautiful church with a guide explaining the nuances of the building without having any connection or even interest in the building and thus would come to think of the location as being a space but not a place. When a player has an emotional tie to a certain location, it is typically because they have experienced at least one, if not multiple, meaningful events within that location.

Appadurai builds on the work done earlier by de Certeau but views locality as being "primarily relational and contextual rather than scalar or spatial" (1995:204). With this said, he

does change the terms from space and place to that of “neighborhoods” or localities as he believes this term has a more inclusive feel for what place is meant to be. His idea draws heavily from Durkheim as well, in that a locality is something that is continually achieved through the actions of the people and requires ceremonies in order to strengthen the social bonds through which it is achieved. Rituals as a kind of social practice are important as they have a “highly specific way of localizing duration and extension, of giving these categories names and properties, values and meanings, symptoms and legibility” (Ibid:206). By this he means that it is through doing the rituals that people are able to give meaning to location and themselves by giving voice to their ideologies and, in turn, naming themselves and their environment as constitutive in practice.

Appadurai (Ibid) goes on to explore what this means for the concept of “local knowledge”, stating, “Local knowledge is what it is, not principally by contrast with other knowledges – which (from some non-local point of view” the observer might regard as less localized – but by virtue of its local teleology and ethos.” This means that, like ritual, local knowledge is how the environment is understood and/or characterized as being. The meaning within a location belongs to the locals and the importance that is placed upon it is up to them as a method of connecting to each other and their environment. It is the “local subjects [that are] possessed of the knowledge to reproduce locality” (Appadurai Ibid:207). Through the reproduction of the knowledge that a group of people have they are able to continue to produce locality or placemaking.

An example of this, from my own work within *WoW*, would be the red lake just to the right of Ordon Sanctuary within the Timeless Isles (see Figure 2.2 above). This location is home

to Garnia, a water spirit who spawns randomly within this lake. Now for those who are long-time players or are at least in the know, this has special meaning. The slaying of this monster is good for two achievements and a companion pet, the Ruby Droplet. Since it is one of the few monsters in the area that does not spawn at given times, it is one of the hardest to get of the “achievements” (Achievements are explained in the next paragraph). In addition to the monster having a random spawn rate, the drop rate of the pet (a *WoW* pet, in this instance refers to a small being that follows the player around when it is summoned, it can be anything from a red droplet of water to a dancing tree), is extremely low, so it takes killing this monster many times over in order to get both achievements and the pet. There is one other part about getting to the location that is tricky and only those with inside knowledge (at least until it was released on a forum) could reach this red lake. In order to get up to the lake you have to take an albatross, which, in and of itself, is a bit tricky as you have to hit it without dramatically damaging it at just the right time and then mount it while it is still moving. Then you have to stay on the albatross until you are at the lake, which is a long flight, and start attacking the bird on which you are flying at just the right time so that when it dies you are able to land in the lake and not on the ground. If you do not time the landing right, you will die and must do it again until you get the timing down right. Now with all that knowledge to get to the place, you need to know how to kill the monster, which, while it is not hard, does take the ability to interrupt the spells that this monster casts. Knowledge of this monster and location, in and of itself, is an example of local knowledge producing locality as there is meaning and information that needs to be discovered in order to obtain both the pet and the achievement (and for those two activities to come to have meaning as well).



Now let us quickly look at the achievement system as an example of local knowledge and the production of locality. The achievement system was started with the release of the expansion Wrath of the Lich King on October 14, 2008. This allowed players a way through which they could show off their knowledge and abilities by completing tasks and receiving an achievement tag that can be shown as a way of proving that the player does in fact have knowledge of the place that is being discussed. An example of this is killing Garnia and obtaining the Ruby Droplet. This example not only allows a player to show off the achievement but also gives them a noncombat pet that is a representation of said accomplishment. (Reference figures below.) Those who have been playing for a longer amount of time have more achievement points and, therefore, are able to show off their knowledge of the world by Coleing their achievements within chat channels when they are called out on their knowledge. This is similar to the tally marks on a spear staff or an awl representing the abilities and knowledge gained in order to prove one’s achievements.



*Figure 2.3: Screenshot of the noncombat pet awarded to players who have killed Garnia and received this rare drop. (Screenshot by author.)*



Figure 2.4: A screenshot of the achievement earned once a player has killed all of the elite monsters on the Timeless Isles, which includes Garnia. (Screenshot by author)

With the above example from my own work, it is easy to see how a place is given meaning and how local knowledge links the people to each other and their environment. As Appadurai states, “The transformation of spaces into places requires a conscious moment, which may subsequently be remembered as relatively routine” (Ibid:209). This is seen in the way that achievements are gained, prized, and displayed by the more avid *World of Warcraft* players. It is through this and other examples of “work” as a kind of gaming practice that the idea of locality or placemaking as constituted in practice by the community members of *WoW* is best understood. If these activities were to stop and the reproduction of the knowledge were to cease, this community would no longer exist as a place constituted in practice.

One tangential, but still very important, point to consider is what Appadurai says is the “production of locality in the societies” (Ibid:205) that anthropologists have historically studied and not the location itself. Although the physical location has been the focal point on which many anthropologists have gotten hung up as a defining feature of their study, Appadurai would argue that it is the producing of the locationality and not the location itself that is

important. Just because you cannot physically touch the space or objects within the virtual world does not make them less important or less socially constructed. The fact that identity and socially constructing ideologies and actions are happening make this location just as important a place as any far-off land whose people have traditionally been conceived of as the “other”. Those within the digital environment have the same feeling of belonging and connection to their virtual environments, as we will see in the Chapter five discussion on the Highlanders and the rough terrain of the Scottish Highlands.

### **Intensity of play and games**

For many generations within Western culture, play has been associated with children. For adults to actively involve themselves with an act of play has been seen as taboo since it is not considered a productive use of time (Malaby 2007:100). In this section we will look at a quick history of how play has been handled as a concept within anthropology.

When, approximately fifty years ago, anthropologists began looking deeply into the issue of play and attempted to assess its usefulness as a focus for cross-cultural research, they found that it fell short in many ways. David Lancy (1980), Stephen Miller (1973), Mihalyi Csikzentmihalyi (with H. Stith Bennett 1971) each, in their own way, found themselves rejecting the predominant approach to play, one that was founded on its status as an activity (and, often implicitly, its opposition to work). Indeed, playfulness, in their and others’ treatments of it, presents itself as a disposition, and therefore as a more reliable concept. For example, in the 1970s the relationship of play to work arose for Lancy (1980) during his time with the Kpelle of Liberia in Western Africa. The Kpelle refused to define “play” and work as separate things. They

would, when pressed to do so, define the type of work by degree of hard and light work, but that is as distinct as they were willing to go in distinguishing between work and play.

For these scholars, the merged state of awareness and action that we can gloss as “playfulness” is a liminal space through which meaning is made and in which can arise distinct ways of learning to engage the world in all of its possibility. It encompasses what Stephen Miller (1973) memorably describes as “galumphing,” the sometimes-awkward casting about (literally or metaphorically) that social actors do as when they are playing with new affordances and circumstances. Thomas Malaby summarizes anthropology’s insights in this area and suggests the following for our work going forward: playfulness is “an attitude characterized by a readiness to improvise in the face of an ever-changing world that admits of no transcendently ordered account” (2009:206).

If this is playfulness, then how are we to understand games? As Malaby explains, the term game in most scholarly treatments has been strongly associated with three characteristics: pleasurable, safe, and separable from everyday life (2007:96). These assumptions began to be broken down by anthropology in the late 1960s, alongside the work done on play noted above. Claude Lévi-Strauss famously put games on a par with the preeminent and revered cultural form for anthropologists, ritual, in *The Savage Mind* (1966:32-33). Even more famous is Geertz’s (1972) treatment of the Balinese cockfight (titled: “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”). Geertz demonstrates that cockfights have more to do with social positioning and reaffirming alliances than they do with the winner of the fight. Men will only bet on the cocks that they have a political and/or familial connection to rather than the one they believe will win even if it means knowingly losing money. While fun and exciting,

the fight between the two rivals and not the birds themselves is in the center of the ring. Who will triumph and who will walk away with a loss of status, chicken (their foe's "cock"), and money has more to do with the political positioning and reinforcing of the relative status of the men who own the cocks. Geertz's essay makes plain that games are arenas of great meaning and high cultural stakes, suggesting that we must always see them as firmly connected, rather than separate, from other arenas of social action.

Malaby's (2007) study of gambling in Greece throws yet another wrench into the conventional Western treatments of games as a subcategory of play, and therefore as safe, pleasurable, and separate from the rest of experience. This is because there are real stakes involved in the gambling that takes place in Greece. One of the stories that Malaby uses to exemplify this is that when a patriarch dies or is close to death, the sons will cast lots in order to see who will inherit the land. "It may be that some would not be prone to classify these as games, precisely because they fly in the face of our Western preconceptions about games as safe, separable, and pleasurable. But there is no formal difference between them and the gambling that they resemble" (Ibid: 98). The fact that games do not necessarily fall within the original static lines that have defined gaming for a long time rattles the cages of the box within which academia long understood games. The example of casting lots shows that games can and often do have outcomes that are neither safe nor separate from everyday life. While the outcome of such an episode of gaming may be pleasurable for the winner, it is not likely that the losers will have had much, if any, fun in the gaming, and then losing, of their future financial stability.

This brings us to Malaby's definition of a game as "semibounded and socially legitimate domain of contrived contingency that generates interpretable outcomes" (Ibid:106). Within this definition, a game will involve and create "culturally shared meanings" (Ibid). The idea of culturally shared meaning brings the game into contact with everyday life. This allows for and extends the idea that Geertz put forward that there is, at least to some extent, the reinforcement, and possibly the redefinition, of cultural normativity within many games and types of play. Malaby's theory allows for a flow and growth within the game itself that Geertz's theory does not. As Malaby states, "Games are grounded in (and constituted by) human practice and are therefore always in the process of becoming" (Ibid:103). It is because of this ability to grow and the fact that it is humanly contrived, that a normative habitus (see my discussion below for a further explanation of Bourdieu's theory of habitus in relation to gaming) can be created. This allows for the players to have a sense of what is and what is not considered a normative behavior within the confines of the game, leading to a sense of belonging.

While Malaby's theory of play is extensive in its detail and important to my research, I believe that identity creation as has been described by Butler (1992) and Desmond (1999) is a more productive theoretical framing of these processes and practices in relation to my discussion of playfulness. Returning to Malaby's example of gambling as a form of play is useful to my rationale for this addition to his theoretical framework. No matter what position you take within a gambling arena, a character or persona is adopted, in the Goffmanian sense, as is true of all social action. This can be as simple as becoming the aggressive player or as complicated as becoming the strategic competitor. One could become the guru of whatever game is being played. Either way, the players are taking on roles or positions through which they will play that

game. One could call it a mask, in the Goffmanian sense, or as many gamers do, a character.

The players can, and normally do, take on roles that are foreign to their normal personas, or the forensic dimension of a person as Lambek (2013) suggests, since during the game they tend to feel it is more acceptable to play with their persona or identity.

Malaby's concept of playfulness, "readiness to improvise", is necessary to understanding the ability that gamers have within a good game to be able to improvise and thus create the persona they wish to attribute to the avatar. This allows for the ability of fluid movement between the two dimensions of personhood and simultaneously refining the recursivity of the overarching persona of the individual. A number of anthropologists and other scholars have given us insight into the relationship between games and game-like environments, on the one hand, and the intense engagement and significances these can produce in their players, on the other. The work of T.L. Taylor and Julian Dibbell revealed the permeability of the online experience, the depth of connection that a player can have not only with their avatar but with other players as well, and the idea of the construction of personhood within the digital realm. Dibbell characterizes the nature of the connections that are made within the virtual world by stating, "what happens inside a MUD-made world is neither exactly real nor exactly make-believe, but nonetheless profoundly, compellingly, and emotionally true" (1998:17).

One of the examples that Dibbell recounts as an example of the truth is when he is forced to reimagine his digital home. He comes to the realization that it is the ability to shape and then reshape the space within the virtual communities that both pulls people to it and yet,

at the same time, provides a disconnect. He very eloquently expresses this notion when he states,

They constituted neither an escape from historical existence nor simply an electronic extension of it, but rather a constantly disputed borderland between the two – between history and its simulation, between fate and fiction, between the irrevocable twists and turns of life and the endlessly revisable possibilities of play (Ibid:62).

The residents are creating their homes within huge structures and tiny drops of seawater alike, placing their marks onto the landscape of this ever-growing virtual world. While adding their own mark, the residents of this community are performing meaning making activities that change the space of the virtual world squarely into the category of being a place.

Taylor's 2006 work tackles the intensity of the relationships that can, and often times do, become cultivated during virtual play sessions. Taylor (2006) provides an example from when she attended a convention for players. While she does not know the people that are there beforehand, she does become close with a few of those that she meets while at the convention and is able to continue that relationship online afterward. For these scholars, intense engagement in these games is co-constituted with the formation of identity and the social construction of an avatar. Taylor states, "Avatars do not appear in the game world simply as blank objects that allow users to construct independent meaning systems on them. They present themselves as complex symbolic referents that then circulate in a broader social economy" (Ibid:117-118). The creation of an avatar is done through a combination of the player's physical world enculturation and later once a player has been incorporated into the sociality and cultural normativity of the virtual world. These scholars, along with Malaby's work, demonstrate the intensity of the play that takes place within these worlds as well as the



relationships that are constituted in play and how creating and playing with personhood through the use of the gamer's avatar is culturally situated.

While identity is often seen as being a personal phenomenon, it is a socially constructed and reinforced idea. Butler (1993) argues that no identity exists behind the acts, but it is the acts that create the identity. Butler's theorization of identity lends itself to the study of play since there is at least an element of performance taking place within any type of game as players take on the different role or characters they wish to personify. She theorizes that identity is created and recreated in two cyclical processes: performances and performative actions. A performance is how the identity is acted out, while the performative action is the process through which identity comes into existence. Identities are scripted, rehearsed, and then performed like a play. When trying to understand why people attempt to perform specific roles, it is important to understand that the "subject [of that role] is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness" (Ibid:182). Thus, they are performing the role based upon a culturally constructed norm—roles that are prefigured. As has been stated before, identity is intrinsically linked to society and is a social construction and this prefiguration is one of the ways that is the case.

Butler states, "one comes to 'exist' by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other" (Ibid:5). To put it more simply, one has to look outward at another in order to understand one's place within a group as one moves through that society. Identity is the recursive representation of one's position, actions, and available movements within any group that is constantly being adapted to different spheres of habitus (as discussed below) as it

changes through the movement of the individual. To put it more simplistically, this is a process that is always happening as identity is renegotiated depending upon what social group the person is currently in. The movements, or masks as Goffman calls them, depend heavily on what the community that the person is interacting with finds acceptable.

To look at this movement another way, consider Bourdieu's habitus. Within this theory, there is the social habitus, or normative behavior, which is culturally and socially accepted. These behaviors are what individuals check their own actions against in order to continue to be considered within the group. The checks and balances come when the heterodoxy clashes with the habitus, challenging normative behavior. However, the orthodoxy typically is able to make short work of this intrusion and restore things to the status quo. This system, while normative in Western society, for the most part does not allow individuals to dramatically play with and alter their social standing or identity except within fairly limited ranges. Games are one of the acceptable venues through which one is able to push against the socially constructed habitus and venture out more widely to find out what is behind one's mask.

Each different type of game has its own level of recursivity or the ability for the persona/avatar to continually reassert their/its social presence. However, it is always there, as the players must negotiate their movements within the society that they have chosen to interact with. This means that there is at least a small portion of the game that is liminal in regard to social standing and characteristics. To reiterate, identity is not something that one should think of as static, rather, it is constantly moving and reforming how one wants/is perceived to move through a given group through normative behaviors. In this vein, people are constantly recursively representing themselves or, to phrase it another way, they are involved

in the art of becoming/creating an identity which is a never-ending cycle. Games allow for the space, place, and time through which one can negotiate this ever-changing and yet ever-constrained possibility of what it means to be a part of a group of people. Malaby's theory touches on this as it is meant to be about the process of the game and thus harkens to the activity of recursive representation. Recursive representation is the process through which one performs their identity creation and therefore is on a parallel trajectory with the play that is being performed. In short and to summarize, both identity formation and play are processes through which social interactions both take place as well as are created.

While I am aware that the function of play is not only based upon the idea of identity creation, I do believe that for my study it is vital to pull apart this particular aspect of play and examine it independently from its other functional aspects because identity is at the heart of my study. (For more information about the other functions of play and gaming please see the work of Malaby (2013, 2010, 2009, and 2006), Malone (2009), Taylor (2018, 2012, 2006, and 2003), Dibble (1998), Boellstorff (2020,2019, 2017, and 2008), et al.) However, it is because games are a space that is semi-bounded that there is the ability for people to step into the liminal and take an opportunity that would otherwise not be available to them in their daily lives. It is through being able to create and work with one's persona and the way through which this is performed, that identity becomes an important factor in the definition of play. As I have shown in this discussion, identity is intrinsically linked to the social as there is no way for people to define their own identities without being able to look toward another and say, "I am not them, because I am x, y, and z." (Reference my quote from Butler on page 44). Anything that is social has normative behaviors and play is no exception. Not every social situation has to be a

memory making experience but does come with socially prescribed rules and roles. A good example of this is eating soup. The fact that an American eats soup with a spoon is a given and something that is not thought of, that is until they are given a fork with which to eat their soup. The introduction of abnormal behaviors into what is considered routine and obvious is one of the ways through which people tend to recognize their social normative actions and practices. This is a dynamic that is often overlooked as a culturally normative behavior in that we are constantly recursively representing ourselves within our daily lives, but with a twist. The twist comes when the ability is offered to step outside of our daily social normativity and play with our positionality in a society. To conclude this discussion, the ability to create and recreate one's persona and the performance of said persona within the semi-bounded arena of play, along with the fact that every interaction between two or more humans involves some form of social normativity, supports the notion that identity is an intrinsic part of play as with any of form of social interaction.

Play and games are an important, yet often times overlooked, part of any culture. They are that which enables us to connect to our fellow humans in ways that would not socially be possible in other situations and thus are one of the sociocultural spaces through which such identity work is able to take place. It allows us to seek and find a community in which we can recursively represent our position within that society and therefore have a sense of belonging. While this is only one of the many functions of play and games, I believe it is an important feature that deserves to be separated from the other functions that both games and play serve to be explored in its own right, as I have done within this chapter. At the same time, it is not just all 'fun and games' as life or death may be at stake.

## To Seek that which is Greater: Gaming Tourism as Pilgrimage

The idea of a pilgrimage is one normally associated with trials and religious purpose. Today, that definition has changed and expanded to include any form of community and identity confirming travel. There are still a few aspects that shape this definition such as the “ritual nature of the journey ... [with regards to the] totality of the event” (Winkelman and Dubisch 2005: xv) and the focus is now on the “inner feelings and motivation rather than through external institutionalized forms” (Ibid: xvii). The reasons for embarking on a pilgrimage today are many, from spiritual journeys to connecting with a fandom or video game to anarchical cultural revolutionism as is found during a Burning Man festival. Each type of pilgrimage has at least two things in common according to Winkelman and Dubisch (2005): pilgrims are searching for community and to reaffirm their identity both within and outside that community.

As religious affiliation and devotion wane, there is a shift towards the secular. This movement toward a more secular basis for society is also due, at least in part, to the fact that “humanity experiences an increasing splintering of intimate social groups and anomie” (Ibid:viii). This shift away from traditionally organized social groups brings new and different cultural movements and groupings into the equation as a legitimate alternative to the idea of religious association being one of the only ways through which groups come together. As stated previously within this chapter, identity is a social phenomenon that can only be acquired by looking towards the other in order to say what one is not, which leads to the need for social groups that are able to bond together over their similarities and reinforce their collective identity against the perception of who others are.

A good example of this is a family of gamers that I came into contact with at Alnwick Castle. The mother and father were both wearing gaming and Harry Potter apparel, both had many tattoos and multiple piercings. The son was around 12 years of age and wearing a variety of different geek themed gear. After their flying lessons were over, they came up to me, and the father said, "We didn't even know we were doing this videogame tourism thing, but that is exactly what we are doing!" We went on to talk about the different games and what sites they were wanting to see on this leg of their trip. As they were from the Lowlands of Scotland, they had only a few stops planned and all of them were related to Harry Potter. One of the things that they did say, as a slightly offhanded comment, was that they loved the fact that they were able to connect with *some* of the other Harry Potter fans. The implication was that they saw themselves to be slightly outside of the normal Harry Potter fandom since they thought they did not look like the other fans. The interesting point of this was that while they were dressed in a similar fashion as the rest of the adults attending the flying lessons, they were not included because of their tattoos and piercings, or at least did not feel included. As someone who is also tattooed and pierced, they were able to find a connection with me as both a gamer and a body modification person. As is the case with my tattoos, the most prominent ones this family had were "geeky" in nature, representing scenes or characters from video games or fanfictions such as Harry Potter. The excitement at being able to connect with me and talk about the games as well as the Harry Potter fandom was intriguing. Any one of the 30 other people standing around the courtyard would have been more than happy to talk about Harry Potter with them, but they felt excluded from this group based upon their physical differences. I assert the fact that the other visitors within the courtyard would have been willing to talk to the family as they had no

compulsion about speaking with me and I had as many, if not more, visible tattoos and piercing than the couple. As we wrapped up the conversation and exchanged contact information, the son proudly stated that he was playing the Harry Potter videogame on his phone just a few minutes before the flying lesson had started and would be playing during lunch, reinforcing the gaming connection that we shared.

While pilgrimages are no longer necessarily religious in nature, the quest for spirituality and a connection to something higher than one's self is still a very intrinsic draw for those seeking a pilgrimage (Winkelman and Dubisch 2005; Sugawa 2015). The fact also remains that, "the line between secular and religious may be difficult to draw, as ritual itself is a creative process, and one that both reflects and constitutes new spiritual meanings and experiences" (Winkelman and Dubisch 2005: xvi). This idea allows for the insertion of different types of spirituality and ritualistic experiences within the confines of what it means to be on a pilgrimage. A great example of this new type of tourism can be found in Japan, which has seen a surge in the number of pilgrimages, mainly made by females, which has been termed *rekijo*. *Rekijo* tourism is based upon a historical fiction fandom such as that of *Sengoku BASARA* which is a video game, manga, movie, and book series. These tourists/pilgrims make their journeys in order to strengthen the "relationships/connections between fictional characters, readers and actual historical figures ... multi-layered relationships between these three actors" (Sugawa 2015: 44). One of the biggest draws, according to Sugawa-Shimada's research is that of the supernatural portions of these multimedia fandoms. This typically comes in the form of superhuman powers, folk religious beliefs, and healing. This connection can also be made with the gaming locations that were included in this study as each of them included an element of

the folk beliefs of the British Isles such as elves, trolls, magic, and superhuman powers that are used to fight for a cause.

It is my assertion that the connectivity that one has with an online self, and the community in regard to this type of journey can be placed within the new definition of pilgrimage. This is especially true for games that are a part of a multimedia conglomerate such as the Harry Potter games and *The Bard's Tale*. As I have shown, the connection that the players have with their avatars is powerful and can be considered an extension of themselves or embodiment. The search for and/or the manipulation of identity is a pivotal part of play that lends itself nicely to the idea of searching for both community and identity within the confines of a pilgrimage. In addition to this, is the connection to a folk religious belief system that both the Japanese pilgrimages as well as those in the British Isles seek (reference Chapter six for the connection between the folk religious belief system and the British Isles). This is an area of study that I believe deserves more research as the signs point toward the fact that there is a dissatisfaction with both the virtual as well as the physical worlds as a way of becoming unencumbered. Because of the lack of achieving a sense of unburdening, the data points to the fact that it is the cause of the recursive nature of the impulse for gamers to set out on a pilgrimage. It seems that they are attempting to piece together a complete experience by combining the virtual and physical worlds together. As previously stated, more research would need to be conducted to verify if these findings are indeed correct.



## Getting ready for traveling

There was a marked difference between the level of preparation that “regular tourists” and “gamer tourists” put in before their tickets were purchased. Regular tourists do tend to do at least some research as far as the sites they are planning on visiting goes, but I found that gamers tend to be a bit more emotionally invested and so do more research before heading off to finally visit the sites. After my time with Gwen and Cole, the notion of how much time was put into the research on the location before the trip became glaringly obvious. Gwen and Cole discussed their extensive research with me as to how and where they looked for the locations. This emphasis on preparation was reinforced thoroughly through my conversation with Jared and his interest in visiting some of the sites from *Call of Duty* that he had started to research. (We will learn more about Jared and his exploits in Chapter Four). There was a noticeable difference between the responses in regard to the amount of time researching the perspective location on the part of the gamers versus what I will call “normal” tourists or non-gamer tourists. According to my respondents, the gamers tended to spend twice as much time researching prior to going on their vacations. The run of the mill tourist will at least do an internet search for the most interesting places to visit, buy a guidebook, or go to a travel agency that will set their itinerary. When talking with some of people at the Fairy Pools on the Isle of Skye, they said all said that they were not gamers and did not spend more than an hour looking up information about their trip to Skye. Most of their searches were based on finding the cheapest prices. The gamer tourists tend to do a bit more research as they want to be prepared for their physical interactions with a site that they have come to think of as a home away from home. In this vein, they will attempt to find out as much information about the site as they can

based on the folklore surrounding it, including the geographical landscape and more mundane things like learning the best time to visit, the pricing, and transportation information. Just trying to figure out what locations the developers used to base the video game landscape on can be a chore. Jared and his group had started the process of looking into the historical sites that were shown within the *CoD* world and had said that they had already spent a few hours, he was not sure exactly how long, and had come up with a few sites to visit but nothing definite before I mentioned the connection between the game and Dunnottar Castle. To my knowledge there is no one tour group that is currently covering game landscape tours and everyone that is going on this type of vacation is doing their own research on the subject and organizing the tour's itinerary themselves. I have come to this conclusion after both my own personal research into the topic as well as asking my respondents if they were aware of any such tours taking place. This is something that can, and often does in my own experience, take hours of toiling through the information regarding the different landscapes of one's favorite video game. It also means going back into the game and becoming a tourist within the video game itself as finding the exact spots that you can line up with the photographs of the physical landscapes is all but impossible without such tactics (more on this activity in Chapter Eight).

I talked to one gamer who has been working, along with a group of friends, over the past year to put together a group trip to different locations found within their favorite game, Call of Duty (CoD). When I mentioned that one of the addons of the Ghost expansion was in Scotland only a few hours north of our current location, he wanted more information. These tourists ended up going, with a group of friends, to Stonehaven's Dunnottar Castle. He told me that they all got together and went through the map called Stonehaven a few days before their

planned trip. They took screenshots of different locations and uploaded them to their phones. I will save the rest of this group's adventures for a later chapter but needless to say, the amount of time that they had put into this group trip before I had even told them about the map in their own backyard was extensive. My mention of the Stonehaven map led to the group doing their own research and confirming that I was correct, then they had to decide how and when to go, and before they went decide how they wanted to approach the visit. Once they had decided all of that, they spent hours playing the game and interacting with the map before they went on their trip. The takeaway is that on average, the normal tourists that I talked to spend about 3 hours researching the trips that they would be taking, not taking into account those that were there for heritage reasons. The gamers could not quantify the amount of time that they put into researching their trip. Some put little to no effort into the trip as the games they were interested are a part of a huge franchise and a few minutes on google gave them a whole slew of information. The gamers who were looking for specific locations that were recreated within their digital world of games that were less publicly supported ended up taking a bit longer.

### **The Unencumbered Versus The Encumbered Self: Gaming and Tourism as Untethered Escape?**

Obligations and responsibilities are an accepted part of being an adult within most societies.

The morality that they imply can be a heavy and tiresome burden. Michael J. Sandel explained this need to conform to this morality in his 2018 interview,

We may be claimed by certain moral ties that can't be accounted for as duties we owe human beings. As such, or as obligations, we're chosen through an act of consent.... Moral bond worthy of admiration. Certain moral claims/ties that make a difference that should rein the balance in moral action, even apart from choice, duties we owe human

beings as such. This moral obligation is the encumbered self (Ibid 0:10 – 24 and 1:32 – 1:40).

The obligations are formed by our human connections and membership within a community. Belonging to a group begets a moral obligation to that group to act in a certain fashion and to be both able and willing to stand up for the ideals that have been placed upon one by that membership. Encumbered selves are aware of what their reactions and general day-to-day actions represent, that of the community they either claim or are claimed by. On the other hand, to reject that obligation or “the idea of the self that says we are free and independent selves that are capable of choosing our own ends, unbound by prior moral ties” (Ibid:0:42 – 0:48) is to be in an unencumbered state. To be untethered by the claim thrust upon you by membership in a certain group allows for a greater freedom of action and reaction.

An example that Sandel uses to explain the encumbered self is the story of Jackie Robinson, who was expressly told of the amount of abuse he would receive if he decided to take the contract to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers as the first black major league baseball player in American history. Jackie took on the mantle despite the knowledge of the degradation that he would face because he felt an obligation to his race to stand up for the injustices, he knew African Americans like him were facing. While not everyone faces such an extreme example of a heavy and overwhelming burden, the responsibility of membership is a strain on each person who chooses to be claimed, or, in some cases, is forced to be claimed, by a group.

It would then stand to reason that, at least for a time, many people would want to find a way to escape this moral obligation but not necessarily give up the membership in the group(s) that one belongs to. While there are countless ways to achieve this personal freedom, two activities stand out in allowing for a partial unburdening of these moral obligations through a

sense of anonymity: gaming and tourism. Both gaming and tourism involve going outside one's bound community and observing another way of being. The anonymity of being an unknown and, therefore, unencumbered entity allows for a re-creation, or casting aside of, the moral obligations that restrain actions. Gamers and tourists alike are able to re-create themselves in such a fashion that they are no longer, for example, just a middle management worker who sings in their church choir, coaches their children's baseball teams, and helps to promote their ancestral heritage through teaching German at a local community center. They can become someone who does not have any such responsibilities or any need to conform to the ideals set out by those previous ties. Rather, they can be untethered to act as they please.

An example of this within gaming can be seen by a person who chooses to play an orc warrior (orcs are mythological creatures that are inhumanly large, typically green, with hooves, horns protruding from their jaws and are regarded as aggressive beings that serve a nefarious cause). That person is able to take on the persona of a huge, aggressive, green monster that lusts for blood or perhaps just indulges themselves in actions they would otherwise be stifled from pursuing. In this fashion, they have found a way to become their unencumbered self. This is a simplistic explanation of what is going on because it does not take into account the messiness that is present in such an attempt. For example, while the gamer above has been able to shed responsibilities that they have within their daily life through entering the game, they take on new ones such as the encumbrance of becoming a monstrous self, and the new social norms required by the virtual community of their avatar, just to name two. Throughout the upcoming chapters, we will look at how the participants are, or at least are attempting to, transition between their encumbered and unencumbered selves. This transformation, however,

is typically hindered by unexpected encumbrances such as the need to be a representative of their country as they become guests in a foreign land. The unencumbered self can also be seen when one becomes a tourist. The shedding of one's identity begins as they step foot into a different landscape, one that allows them to be unfettered from day-to-day encumbrances. In the course of my fieldwork, I started to notice people doing things that they most likely would not do if they were in their usual environment or in an area where they are known, including disregarding norms and/or rules could have lasting consequences. An example of this is a man I saw who ignored the signs regarding climbing on the ancient ruins of Dunnottar Castle. Another example is the group of Americans I met at a Highland Game in Fife who attempted to fit into the local culture and tossed their own away for the length of the vacation. This group of two couples from Texas attempted to talk like the locals of the area, attempted to use both the accent as well as phrasing of the Scottish locals. The men had donned kilts and sporrans for the occasion and the women plaid skirts. It was, unfortunately for them, glaringly obvious that they were in fact not locals as their Southern drawl came through their fake Scottish accents and their loud responses to the events did not correlate with their attempted identity. Nor did their tartans match those of their partners. While it is possible that they were all from different clans, one of the women told me that only one of the members of her little group was even a little Scottish, around 10 percent she thought. They, however, had a blast and after watching a few events together they went on their merry way.

## Conclusion: The Credits

While there are a variety of functions and reasons for why and how people connect to different video games to the extent that they do, identity creation is one of the main functions that easily and neatly traverses the gaming and tourism realms. Social, political, ethical, gender, learning, children, war, physical activity, culture building and reification are just a few of the alternative kinds of social and cultural work that play helps to facilitate. This study is not particularly interested in the role of gender within gaming society, or any other number of functions, but with how identity is constructed and recursively represented within this population. That is to say, there is a cross over between how one's identity is recursively represented within a video game and travel and it is that transition, or the lack thereof, between the virtual and physical landscapes that are connected to the video game that I am interested in exploring.

Bodiliness, embodiment, as well as the idea of the encumbered and unencumbered self all coalesce to aid our understanding of the connection that gamers have with their video games that allow for a sense of placemaking within that video game as well as at tourism sites. Placemaking activities allow a person to connect specific cultural activities to a parcel of land, "real" or not, which in turns allows for a sense of nostalgia. This in turn results in the desire to explore those beloved landscapes (virtual or not) again in the hopes of recreating those memories and moving back and forth between the virtual and meat realms.

In the following chapters, we will look at how and whether some of the gamers turned tourists are able to recreate their memories within the physical landscape on which the virtual worlds are based. Through using the understanding of the level of connectivity that the gamers

have to the virtual environments we will be able to analyze the performative recursive representational activities in which the participants in this study engage.



### Chapter 3:

#### Stifling the Urge to Geek Out

*We make our way down the stairs at the back of the kirk as we theorize about the importance the church played in the creation of the Scottish chapter within the latest Nathan Drake saga. We stop for a few minutes and look at the beautiful buttresses that support the back of the church. Gwen and I both remember the portion in the game where you had to slide around these structures in order to get to the other side of the church. "They are the exact same as in the game!" I gush, "It's like they just took a photo and put it into the game without changing a thing about them." We took a few photos.*

*When we are done looking at the outside of the kirk, Gwen reminds us that there should be a cemetery here as well. We look around for a few minutes and then Cole suggests we ask one of the people inside. Gwen and I both say that he is more than welcome to do so, as he is the most social of the three of us. After a minute or two, he returns grinning with directions to the closest cemetery. We find the cemetery and small church that sits at its center. The place is well tended and looks as if it is in continual use, but we are lucky to have the place to ourselves today. We relax knowing we can be ourselves without other people casting the disparaging looks at us that we had come to know too well. The car park is massive, but we find a way to get the car all the way up to the church itself by opening a heavy iron gate. We enter the church yard via the smaller gate to its left that leads straight into the graveyard. The graves date from the 1800s until recent times. We quickly spot a few Celtic crosses adorning the tops of a few of the graves with skull and crossbones above the epithet, but much to our dismay, none are*

*exactly as we were hoping, as either the swords are not facing the right way or the skull is not the same as the one you must find to start the Scottish portion of the hunt within the game.*

*As we start to leave, we quite literally stumble upon an amazing find. Covered by moss and overgrown by weeds was what looked to be the remains of a tomb. Time has taken its toll and the roof is gone, but we step down and most of the walls are still intact. We enter to find a crumbling tombstone at the rear. It seems to be acting as a door -- and there is something behind it! Gwen tries to move it, but it is too heavy, so she gingerly reaches behind it, but comes back empty handed. We spend a few minutes pondering over what exactly this edifice could have been and why it has been left to deteriorate in an otherwise well-tended graveyard.*

*Eventually, we make our way toward the exit when Cole stops and looks at an urn at the top of a grave. He flashes a wicked grin and reaches for it. He tries to turn the urn, saying, "This might just open that thing we just found." We all chuckle but we hold our breaths at the possibility. It does not move, and we all sigh in disappointment.*

## Stifling the Urge to Geek Out: Othering

Watch any movie or TV show from the 1980s onward and you will find an example of the classic nerd who plays videogames and is socially awkward. They are typically depicted as outcasts who are picked on and used as the butt of many jokes. A classic example is Steven Urkel from TV's "Family Matters", which ran from 1989 until 1998 (IMDb 2020). Urkel was a classic example of a nerd. He wore thick glasses, suspenders, dressed like he was a grandparent, and held himself in a very unsure and unsteady way. Urkel was used as the butt of many jokes, as his social skills were lacking. His intelligence was extraordinary which allowed him to understand on a rational level, but not on a social level, what was going on around him. During the course of the show, many times Urkel used science in order to bring out his "cool gene," turning himself into Stefan Urquelle, his cooler alter ego. This change in appearance and sociability showed the viewers that there is the possibility for this nerd, at least, to change into a Prince Charming, yet there was something different with him at a genetic level. This portrayal would come to be an iconic example for a generation raised on this television program of their inability to overcome their defined role and/or be socially accepted.

With Urkel as a reference point, I will now turn to the theory of othering. Othering can be defined as the separation between oneself and the other to an extent that the other is deemed as lesser or intrinsically different from a group or person. As Jean-François Staszak puts it, "Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ('Us,' 'the Self') constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them', 'Other') by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and, thus, a motive for potential discrimination" (2008:2). Or, in the hegemonic discourse theories of Ernesto Laclau, Judith

Butler, and others, the *other* constitutes that which is outside the in-group, or that which cannot be incorporated within the in-group and, as such, maintains the boundary between “in” and “out,” “us” and “them.” In other words, through othering, the person or group being othered is looked at as distinct from, and inferior to, the in-group and can be used to separate the “in-group” from the “undesirables” while also redefining the identity of the group doing the othering. Individuals’ identities are intricately Coleed to the social groups with which they interact, as the self can only be constructed in conjunction with the gaze toward the other. However, my claims of nerds being outsiders is limited to those people that I had interactions with as well as my own personal experience. This sweeping claim does not hold true for the entirety of the gaming community nor does it hold true for the general population. There are some scholars who believe that nerds are indeed considered to outliers, such as Grandy, who describes marginalized categories like ‘nerd’ (2018:269). Zhang explains in his systematic 2010 study on Asian students and stereotypical ideas about nerds, “the nerds who lack social and communication skills” (2010:32) and concludes that the Asians who are labeled as such tend to have fewer friends and feel more isolated than any other group.

Gamers, whether computer or tabletop, can be seen as the other since the number of people openly admitting to playing games has remained, according to my research, relatively low (Brinkman 2012; Ewald 2013; Myers 2010; Turkle 1995). While the popular crowd went to parties, had significant others, were typically attractive, and had a social life, most people thrown into the gamer category did not dress or look in ways that most found attractive. The standard of dress for most gamers is neither cutting edge nor fashionable. For this reason, many people who either actually are or are perceived to be the other will try to hide or deny

inclusion in the group that is being othered. As an example, I was talking to one of my participants at a busy store he managed. His wife and other customers were nearby, so he did not admit that he played games. He claimed that he had given up gaming when he grew up. Later that day, when I talked to him outside the confines of the store and out of earshot of anyone else, he confided that he was a secret gamer, playing when no one else was around. He said this was to be our secret. His son had a PlayStation 4 and some really awesome games, but he said he did not believe that letting anyone know that he still played these games was a good idea. They lived in a small community and the people over age 30 who did openly admit to playing video games were looked down upon. He admitted that getting the system for his son was a cover and an easy way for him to be able to game in private.

With the above discussion regarding the treatment of gamers that I came across during my fieldwork, I will turn to the stories of the gamers and their encounters with both the other tourists as well as the sites themselves. I will explore how they interact with the physical environments and how that differs from their interactions with the virtual versions of the landscape. Then I will turn to compare how the gaming tourists compare to “normal tourists”. To round out the chapter, I will look at the precedent set by other types of media-based tourism and how they compare to videogame-based tourism.

### **The Gamer’s Tale**

As described in Chapter Two, the authentic encounter that gamers are seeking is different than that of a normal tourist. The fact that the experience is stunted in some regards by the denial of the added narrative, hinders, at least in some respects, the ability of the gamer to fully

experience the site in a fashion that is authentic for them. (Each of the narratives can be found within the Appendices.) The questions that I wish to tackle in this portion of the chapter are: What experience is it exactly that the gaming tourists are/were looking for? Does their experience at the site fulfill their expectations?

The general consensus among my participants is that they were not completely sure what to expect from their experience at the sites. They expressed a certain amount of hope that they would be able to relive a few of the different encounters within the games -- in other words, they are coming to the site encumbered by their in-game experiences. As one of my participants, Jeremy, put it regarding his visit to the Secret Bunker that has been called Scotland's *FallOut* shelter, "The desolate feeling walking up to the bunker gave me goose flesh. I was excited to be able to go down into the bunker as the mile up to the bunker was chillingly reminiscent of the game. I had high hopes for recreating some of my searches of different bunkers within *FallOut 4*." Jeremy is a rather tall, around 6 feet tall, young man in his mid to late 20s. He has shoulder length sandy blonde hair, porcelain white skin, and is wearing a slightly large graphic T-shirt with a gaming motif, tight fitting blue jeans, and a worn set of trainers. He stands with his hands shoved deep into his pockets with his head down a bit more than necessary to look down at me and it seems that he is staring at the floor instead of my face as he talks. His shoulders are scrunched forward, and his feet are moving randomly so as to show a bit of nervousness but not enough to make his body move. The one mile stretch that leads to the bunker is surrounded by abandoned shacks and fields. The narrative that surrounds the bunker is of the secrecy and fear that the British government had regarding the possibility

of nuclear fallout. The narrative of the games is the incarnation of this fear (see Appendices G and H for more information).

Jeremy explains that in the morning one can enjoy a nearly solitary walk down one lane that turns off for the bunker. The wind is constantly ripping through the overgrown fields and for the first part of the journey, a few buildings look like they had at one point been used by the military, but they now stand empty, weathered by time and wind. This landscape lends itself to the trademark post-apocalyptic feel of the *FallOut* franchise. For this particular participant, the mile leading up to the bunker gave him great hope that he would be able to have some sort of interactions based upon his game play. He was sadly disappointed by the inability to interact with anything inside the bunker.

Most of the interactions that shadowed what he experienced within the *FallOut* series took place outside of the bunker in the abandoned areas leading up to the main property as he explored, possibly not one hundred percent legally, the ruins of the buildings and talked about the different ways that this was reminiscent of the game. He took the time to search for something useful within one of the buildings just as he would have done within the game and he had hoped to be able to do something similar within the bunker itself (see Figure 3.1).



*Figure 3. 1: Abandoned building on road leading to the FallOut Bunker.*

Jeremy recounted an experience in the ruins that I was not privy to. He said that he had come to the bunker with a few of his friends and after going through the bunker the first time, they were left feeling as if they did not get to “experience a real *FallOut* type experience.” So, they, like many other visitors, decided to explore the ruins of the buildings that lined the road up to the bunker itself as they had been so excited seeing the eerie almost apocalyptic scenery coming up the road. Their disappointment in the bunker itself spurred their expedition into the ruined buildings. According to Jeremy, the group parked about halfway down the road right by the bend in the road so that no one could see the car from either direction. The group then traversed the overgrown landscape to the first building on their left. The shell of the building did not produce much but a few stifled laughs and they continued to the bigger building a hundred yards farther down. This building was a bit more to their liking as it had not deteriorated as thoroughly as the other. They entered the building through one of the holes in the northern wall and carefully picked their way around the lower level. According to Jeremy’s



description of the building, it looked as if there had been people staying there at some point in the recent past as there were bottles and trash strewn around the floor. He found a soda bottle and pulled the tab off of it (which he brandishes from his right pocket as he talks) and got out of there. "Because you know, we all wanted something, so I took currency," (in the *FallOut* series, bottle caps are used as a form of money) Jeremy stated with a bit of pride in both his voice as well as his demeanor. The group had not experienced the apocalyptically charged encounter that they were expecting so they created the experience for themselves. Jeremy did go back by himself to the bunker, where I met him, in order to see if after their first experience there was something he had missed. He admitted that he liked the bunker as a historical museum, but that it could have been so much better if they had incorporated at least a bit of the game into a portion of the museum or even allowed for some form of interaction with the museum.

Jeremy's disappointment in his time at the bunker is an excellent example of how the gamers come to the site with the encumbrance of their in-game experiences. The expectation (or encumbrance) with which many of the gamers visit the sites that are the inspiration for their favorite video games is that they will be able to, at least in some fashion, recreate the nostalgic remembrance that connects them emotionally to the site. The anticipation of reliving that encounter and being able to shed, at least for a few moments, the encumbrances that weigh them down is thwarted by their nostalgia induced encumbrances. Thus, the disappointment in not being able to lift that weight off of ones shoulders and freely interact with the site leaves the participants with a feeling of having an incomplete experience there.

Many gamers were taunted and teased growing up since they did not fit in, and, for that reason, they tend to be a bit more sensitive to the possibility of negative attention being aimed

in their direction. As the short description of my time with Gwen and Cole below shows, a natural reaction to being caught in a “geek out” moment is to shut down that portion of one’s self.

*As we round the corner of the wing and step into the nave toward the altar, we are shocked at the rose window above us. Both of us exclaim that it is the exact one that was in the game. We quickly quiet ourselves, as we have been joined by a few other tourists who give us a look that seems to say that we just need to grow up. We are in a place of worship. The loose and free feeling has vanished both because of the location and the inclusion of other people. I notice that Gwen’s shoulders are raised, and her mouth is clenched as if she is attempting to hold back our reason for being in the kirk but at the same time attempting to enjoy the experience of being able to physically interact with the same location that we both loved within the game. We meet back up with Cole and wander out to the rear church yard, Gwen physically relaxed once we were out of the sight of the other tourists.*

This type of reaction is normal from what I witnessed, at least with those older than 25.

Although the younger gamers did not seem to be as affected by the disapproving looks, they did tend to stop or at least lessen the performance of their gamer identity. As was stated earlier, the level of connection that the gamers have to the site is a form of encumbrance as they come to the sites with preconceived notions regarding how they should look and what they should be able to do within the given space.

Aside from our time in Alnwick Castle, where interaction with the site was encouraged, my study participants said that the inability to interact with the various sites, such as Skara Brae and Dunnottar Castle, in a fashion that at least simulated the experiences within the game that they were attempting to recreate lessened the travel experience. The level of authenticity (or encumbrance) that they were able to achieve was not the same as it would be for a normal tourist and they felt the experience was lacking in richness. When Gwen, Cole, and I first arrived at St. Conan’s Kirk, we knew that attempting to parkour would be almost impossible. The

narrative of St. Conan's Kirk is one of good versus evil being played out and a son's love for his mother personified through the creation of this place of worship (see Appendix E). However, Cole did successfully climb partial stairs (as there was no a sign stating that it was not allowed, reference Figure 3.2 below) and so was able to attempt to interact with the site. When not being observed, we did interact, at least to a degree, with the site and so had meaningful and authentic experiences intermittently. The possible disapproval represents yet another form of encumbrance that constrains the notion of freely moving throughout the site as it is both reminiscent of past experience (reference the above conversation on othering) as well as the fear of being barred from any form of interaction with the site.



*Figure 3. 2: Cole's attempt to parkour at St. Conan's Kirk.*

## Making the Journey

I will relay three stories that serve as examples of the scope of the experiences at the different sites: Gwen and Cole's, the G family's, and Morgan's. Gwen and Cole's story comes from our adventures in and around St. Conan's Kirk and the *Uncharted* series. The narrative of this parkour puzzle game is one of high speed and high-stake treasure hunting adventure (see Appendix F). The G family's and Morgan's stories both come from the *Harry Potter* world as seen within Alnwick Castle. Within the narrative of the Harry Potter series, the hero, Harry Potter, attempts to fight for justice and equality for those who are marginalized within the wizarding world while at the same time setting the wizarding world free from the tyranny of the evil Lord Voldemort (see Appendix B). While known mainly for being the Harry Potter Castle, Alnwick castle is also the hub of Northumberland's economic, political, and social life (See Appendix A). These three stories have many similarities but equally many differences in the types of interactions that were available to the participants, their experiences, and the level of authenticity they felt they were able to achieve. Within this section I will compare and contrast the different narratives that the three groups came away with, starting with the similarities.

Each of the groups stated that they felt a closeness to or strong affiliation with the characters and landscapes within the game that they had planned at least part of their trip around. "The scenery is just amazing," Cole commented when asked what he thought about the graphical landscapes within the Nathan Drake series, "they pick some of the most beautiful areas and enhance them." Spending hundreds of hours within the franchises' created world,

they knew the ins and outs of the different landscapes they were going to physically encounter. The vignette in the beginning of Chapter 3 is a good example of the level of devotion that the gamers have toward the game, as well as the intimacy that they feel with the landscapes. Gwen's chastising of Cole's (and my) failure to complete *Uncharted 4*, even though we both got through the portions dealing with the trip we would undertake, put Gwen at an advantage. She was setting herself up as the expert in regard to the amount of time and knowledge she had invested in the franchise and thus the landscape we are about to encounter. With only hindsight to acknowledge the fact, we deferred to her regarding any confusion or disagreement with the storyline or landscape. This is despite the fact that we have each completed that portion of the game and had therefore spent approximately the same amount of time on that particular landscape. This jockeying for position as the guru of the game was seen in each of the two groups even though none of them had previously visited the physical landscape that they were talking about. It also adds another layer of encumbrance onto the gamers as their social standing is based upon their ability to recall their experiences within the game itself and apply that remembrance onto the physical landscapes for the others in their party.

The hope of being able to reenact and thus fulfill the sense of nostalgia that each had toward their original and/or most memorable experiences within the given video games, was shared to a very large extent. Each of the respondent groups talked fervently both before and after the trip to the physical site about their experiences within the game. There was much talk about how the landscapes were similar and different. Those who visited Alnwick Castle were amazed that the designers of the video games created an almost exact replica of the castle. A few of my study participants showed me side by sides of scenes in the game site and the sites

within the castle itself, showing that there is a deep sense of satisfaction when the encumbrances from the two realms align properly. The fact that the game's flying training field was the exact location that the castle's inhabitants used for their version of flying training did not escape the notice of any of the participants from this site. This gave their visit a sense of authenticity that was hard to match at any of the other sites described below.

The *Uncharted* series was a bit different in that, while it was obvious that the creators used the landscape as a starting point for the portion of the video games that takes place within Scotland, they used their creative liberty. The game starts at a graveyard, which, as in the physical world, is set a distance away from the church. Unlike the game, the graveyard is the property of another, smaller church. In the game, the ruins of the church, which is clearly still standing with only a small amount of wear to show in the physical world, overlooks the sea. In the physical world, the church overlooks a beautiful loch and is about 15 miles from the sea itself. The other major difference that we noted was that the hill upon which the game's church stood was a mile down the road, visible from the Kirk. Cole, from his normal and yet very theoretically minded perspective, declared "That is one of the amazing things about video game creation. It allows for the creators to take the most beautiful parts from the real world, combine them, and then create something new and magical." The three of us -- Cole, Gwen, and I -- talked for a while about the additions that game creators are able to put into their games, while still staying true to the feelings that are elicited by the locations they chose to use for their games' landscapes. This gave a different, but no less authentic, bent to our visit. The ability to have the virtual world as a conglomeration of several different physical sites allows the participants to be able to step back from their encumbrances, at least to an extent, and

view these settings in a different frame of mind than they would have previously. This is in part because they have to put some degree of the same type of imagination and self into their experience as they do virtually in order for the settings to come together as their encumbrances dictate, they must.

The last notable similarity between the two completely different types of authentic experiences that were observed is that two of the three groupings were very much concerned about how they would be perceived by those observing them interacting with the physical sites in a fashion reminiscent of the videogame. Morgan did not have the same amount of anticipation or even care about how she would be observed by others. She, unlike the other two groups, dressed up in cosplay in order to help her visit feel more authentic.

When I first met Morgan, she was wearing a replica of a traditional Ravenclaw student robe, with black shiny shoes and a sweater vest, necktie, and scarf all seen on any of the nondescript Ravenclaw students within both the games and movies. She had a replica Nimbus 2000 in one hand and a wand that she had had made specifically for her in the other hand. Her backpack was also Harry Potter themed. To say that Morgan stood out from the rest of the visitors at the castle is a bit of an understatement. Most fans of the series had at least one or two items on their person that declared their loyalty to the fandom, but Morgan went all out. She had no hesitation in trying to recreate a specific photo of herself flying around the training area while raising her wand. As we parted ways, she nimbly scampered off with her broom between her legs and her wand raised toward the site of the whomping willow, her boyfriend trailing behind her a few yards shaking his head with mirth.

The G family, on the other hand, did not go nearly as far in their outward expression of their fandom. Mrs. G, Lori, was a rather small lady, slender with blonde hair that rested on her shoulders. She wore a Slytherin T-shirt, a pair of blue jeans and a pair of combat boots. She had multiple facial piercings and one of her arms had a sleeve of tattoos while the other sported a few more. The family's Harry Potter backpack was slung across one shoulder when I first met her. She had her legs just a bit more than shoulder width apart, leaning heavily on one leg and her arms folded in front of her when we first started talking. Mr. G, Jon, was a burly man who was maybe 5 foot 9, with broad shoulders and curly blonde hair that reached his ears. He looked like, at least at one point, he had been a weightlifter as his arms and chest were not quite as taut as they might once have been but were still massive. He sported a T-shirt with the Hogwarts crest plastered over it, a pair of cargo shorts, and an older pair of converse trainers. He had tattoos all up and down both arms and on the exposed skin of his legs. While he did not have both his ears gouged as far as piercings were concerned, he did have a tattoo of a gryphon on the right side of his neck. He stood with his hands loosely at his side and was gesturing with his hands as he spoke. Their daughter was around the age of 12 and had on a Gryffindor T-shirt, jeans that were ripped at the knees, and a pair of red converse trainers. She was shy and had her nose buried in her phone for most of the conversation. While they each participated in the flying lessons, they did so with laughter mixed with a bit of reservation. They each attempted to recreate a photo in the same fashion as Morgan, but they said they did so with the knowledge that there were others around who might be looking at them. They cautiously looked around, making sure no one was close enough to get hit by their attempts, before jumping with their feet tucked to their rears and a broomstick between their legs. They laughed and joked about



how many times it took to get the photos right. They attempted to recreate the scene, but as a re-creation, unlike Morgan who was attempting to recreate the experience as a participant within the world itself. The G family's experience was more similar to that of Gwen and Cole's than to Morgan's, even though they were at the same location.

The differences among the three reactions centers on the varying degrees of ability to let go of one's encumbrances and not be weighed down by the possibility of the othering that may or may not occur. Morgan was able to completely let go and just have fun while pretending that she was a student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. This was not the case for either the G family or Gwen and Cole. Their experiences were less hands on and more commentary in nature. When not physically in sight of other tourists or locals, both groups admitted to attempting to recreate different scenes from the game. A great example of this is Cole's parkour attempt during our visit to St. Conan's Kirk (described above). The G family took advantage of the fact that most of the other tourists were eating lunch and therefore the Outer Bailey was almost empty in order to take some photos of themselves both flying and casting spells.

The inability of these two different groups to be able to interact with the sites or perform recursively representational actions because of the encumbrance of the possible reactions of those around was palpable. While the gaming tourists have the ability to compare themselves to other tourists and the local population, there is a sense of unresolved encumbrance, or lack of the ability to become unencumbered, that is echoed by each of the different types of gaming tourists. This is at least partially due to the fact that gamers do not have the ability, whether real or imagined, to fully express themselves and engage in a fashion

that allows them to fully perform their identity and thus have the reaffirmation that is found in many of the tourists. As Desmond puts it in her discussion of tourism in Hawaii, “a literal enactment of what is metaphorically a broader merging between past and present, here and there, “them” and “us”. These shows stage the “them,” the specificity of difference” (1999:xv).

The need to mediate their experiences and obfuscate the reasons that they were visiting the particular sites shaped their experiences in a way that resulted in a secretive and, thus, more personal interaction with the sites. The best example of this is when Cole, Gwen, and I were in the courtyard at St. Conan’s Kirk and were alone. During this time, we were able to interact with the site in a quiet, but different, manner than the original intentions had been. There was a pedestal in the center of the courtyard (Figure 3.3), about which Gwen and I theorized as to its purpose based upon the *Uncharted 4* narrative (see Appendix F). We decided that the pedestal would have been used in the game as the pillar on which a scale was placed from which the players had to choose only one of the coins, instead of taking a handful or all of the coins, in order to open a door or they would be dropped into a pit and die. The other option was that one of the statues might have needed to be turned in order to open a secret room. While we were figuring out the purpose of this pedestal, we paused our actions with the arrival of other tourists as we did not wish for our adventure to be public knowledge. We pretended to be interested in the carvings on the pedestal until they made their way from the courtyard and into the church proper. We then resumed our exploits.



*Figure 3. 3: Gwen attempting to recreate a scene from Uncharted 4.*

The redirection of performative actions that have been articulated can be explained by applying Bourdieu's theory of "doxa" onto the behaviors described above. Doxa is the combination of those actions and thought processes that we take for granted as being natural or simply put, the location of encumbrance. In this instance, it is that, when one enters a historical site, certain behaviors are expected, such as: being respectful, showing -- or at least feigning -- interest in the historical significance of the place, and being reserved in their actions and the amount of noise that they made. The video game narrative that is placed over the historical narrative thus lends these spaces to another type of interaction. Doxic outlook on what is normative can be seen as the heterodoxy portion of this theory as it lends legitimacy to actions that are on the fringe of the doxic norms and/or completely steps outside of the bubble that encases the doxic norms. This is evidenced when my participants attempt to climb parts of

the site no longer “meant” to be climbed, when they emit gasps of recognition when confronted with a particular structure, when they relate stories about their experiences within the game, or when they attempt to act out a particular portion of the video game. As if to answer this, they take the action of stepping over this ephemeral line into that of heterodox actions, whereas orthodoxy is there to rein in the unnatural actions or perceived misalignment of encumbrances that are taking place. This takes the form of disapproving looks from other tourists, as well as the head shake with arms crossed, or the tsking and not-so-subtle whispers that were directed at them when unorthodox actions were observed by others. As with almost every situation, orthodoxy brought my study participants, at least for the most part, back into the doxic fold of normality, at least when in the presence of outsiders. While there was the occasional outlier, for the most part, the need to accede to the normative society’s expectations, even by those who stated emphatically that they did not care, won out in the end. However, once the possible push back toward the middle of the doxic bubble was removed from the equation, the heterodox behaviors tended to ensue. The presence of gamer gear did not make a difference in the level of compliance when faced with orthodox behaviors. In some cases, it caused the participants to attempt to cover their offending articles of clothing by crossing their arms tightly or placing their hands over the symbols that would call them out as being in line with heterodox actions. An example of the tug for doxic normality occurred when I was touring the ruins of St. Andrew’s church and graveyard in St. Andrews. One of the families that was also out exploring had a special needs adult with them. The man looked to be in his late 20s, was well dressed in a polo shirt, jeans, and new trainers, but held his hands out before him repeatedly touching his thumbs to each of his other fingers in what

seemed to be a random order. This man, that I will call Jason, was thrilled at the beauty of an archway and went screeching up to it, stopping inches from the crumbling marble. He started talking loudly about the artwork and calling for his family to hurry so they could view this marvelous piece of work. As I smiled, noting that my own special needs child would have done something similar, I looked around to see that more than half of the twenty other people that were in that portion of the graveyard were pointing and/or whispering and looking at the young man with scowls on their faces. One woman spoke to her friend in a slightly raised whisper, “They should not have brought him here. People like that don’t belong here and it is not like they can really appreciate the significance anyway.” She looked around for confirmation from the rest of the tourists, but luckily only her friend seemed to be in complete agreement with her. Jason was not affected by this display. He did not appear to notice what was going on around him as 100% of his attention was focused on the archway. His mother’s shoulder drooped a bit and his father’s seemed to tighten, but they went on with the rest of their day, expressing their interest in Jason’s find.

Slightly juxtaposed to this “deviant behavior” is the fact that the gaming tourists were more inclined to follow the written rules than the regular tourists and perform orthodoxic behaviors when witnessing the general public’s refusal to do so. A good example of this is seen in the photo below which was taken at Dunnottar Castle. Dunnottar has a bloody history that is fraught with violence, war, and the need to rebuild (see Appendix J). From the time you enter this location, and many others like it, you are told not to climb on the ruins as it is dangerous, not only to yourself but to the structure itself. Handouts and posted signs throughout the locations explicitly stated that you should not climb on the ruins (Figure 3.4) However, this

older gentleman was not alone in his eagerness to capture the perfect photo. While he did not speak one of the languages that I knew, he was able to express that it did not matter that there was a sign. He was with a tour group but had gone off on his own in order to take some photos that he wanted. His thwarting of the rules was met with a dismissive hand gesture of raising his forearm and lowering it with a flare of his hand. He ignored my attempts to talk to him and after a few moments, I gave up. The regular tourists seemed like sheep -- once one ignored the warnings, many more followed suit with at least a half dozen others following this gentleman's lead within the next 30 minutes, each giving a dismissive gesture and then ignoring me as I attempted to talk to them about their interactions with the site. The gaming tourists, on the other hand, while pantomiming the act of disregard, did not follow suit. Instead they tended to be the ones to minimally publicly express dissatisfaction, if not confront the offenders directly.

The difference between the two types of tourists in their interactions with the site is a perfect example of the unencumbered/encumbered self. While those whom I have termed normal tourists were not bothered by the fact that they were thwarting the rules that were established, they show a type of disregard or lack of responsibility. They have shed the social bonds that require that they conform as they have no personal stake in the site. There is nothing that connects them to the area that they are visiting. The gaming tourists, on the other hand, have come to the site with the social responsibilities not only of how this site represents a portion of their normal daily life but also that of the online community to which they belong . They have a sense of reverence for the site that the normal tourists do not. This is based upon

the obligation that they feel towards the gaming community and what the site represents to the other gamers.



*Figure 3. 4: Tourist ignoring sign in Dunnottar Castle. (Photo by author)*

While both Morgan and the G family were able to experience a level of connectedness and understanding that Cole and Gwen did not, the level of interactions was very different. Alnwick Castle thrives on its connection with the Harry Potter franchise. The advertising is based upon the fact that parts of the movies were filmed within their castle walls (Figure 3.5).



*Figure 3. 5: The above photos are from Alnwick Castle's website (alnwickcastle.com).*

The magical feeling of being a part of the Hogwarts experience is thick in the air. This means that seeing someone with a wand, dressed from head to toe in Harry Potter regalia, or pretending to be a wizard, is not an unusual sight. Most of the younger visitors display some form of outward expression of their fandom, ranging from T-shirts like the G family to a few who go all out like Morgan did. Upon reaching the entrance of Alnwick, most of the Harry Potter fans stop in the walkway and start chattering wildly as this is the entrance that Harry, Ron, and Hermione used when going to Hagrid's hut (an important scene in one of the movies). There is almost always someone attempting to take a photo in which they are included, be it someone else taking the shot or a selfie, at this location. Excitement is plastered over the faces of each of the Harry Potter fans as they show their tickets to the employees standing on either side of the entrance.

The problem comes in when we add the fact that most adults believe that play is childish, as per my discussion of play not being a productive use of time as well, cf. Malaby (2007 and 2009), Geertz (1958), Myers (2010), Turkle (1995), among other treatments of these aspects the social reception of play. This sentiment was echoed by almost all of the adults that I



interviewed, in one form or fashion during my time in the field. Alnwick was no different. The adults felt as if they were doing something that was neither appropriate nor dignified, whether or not they were having a good time doing it. While participating in the flying lessons, most adults wore a gleeful smile on their faces bigger than that of the children, but they would try to lessen their expression of enjoying play by giggling, not taking it seriously, or pretending that they were not thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Alnwick Castle was an exception to the rules of nerdy interactions. The location not only acknowledged the narrative of the Harry Potter world but included activities that were designed to allow for an extra layer of authenticity for their visitors. None of the other sites had embraced the video game narratives in such an explicit way. Gwen and Cole observed this when talking to one of the employees of St. Conan's Kirk who was not interested in the video game connection in the slightest. They were told that they were more than welcome to look around but that the person had no knowledge of the connection. This limited their ability to interact with the site as they were not invited to interact with or perform any identity creation activities such as recreating a scene from the videogame that they have associated with the site. They said they felt as if they were viewed with mild suspicion and disregard.

Each of the stories presented here provides a different perspective on what visiting these types of sites is like for tourists. The importance that the gamers put on the level of interaction that they were both allowed as well as encouraged (or discouraged) to engage in shows that most gamers have an active imagination and will try to make the most out of the situations in which they find themselves. At the same time, they are unlikely to have the types of interactions and experiences that they hope for as their desire to project the video game

narrative onto the site is not shared by the majority of tourists. The video game narratives are subverted within most of the sites, and questions regarding the videogames tend to be sidelined. Until the idea of play as something that is only for the unproductive or for children changes, I am not sure that video game tourism will allow for the recursivity that tourists look for when traveling to different places or the authenticity of an experience based upon a video game.

### **Books, Video Games, and Movies: When Fanboy/Girling is Taken Offline**

Media-related tourism shows the potential of creating the memorable experiences that tourists seek. However, going into a site encumbered by false expectations that the site will be exactly as it is portrayed within the books, movies, and/or videogames only to find they are not being met can lead to a letdown. This happens mainly because the fictitious landscape is not echoed in the visited landscape, such visitors are unable to interact with the site as they had hoped, or the setting is too contrived. An example of this would be the difference between the videogame version of Skara Brae and the physical location on Orkney. The narrative of Skara Brae is that it is one of the oldest examples of a Neolithic village whose history and purpose is thought to be of a religious nature (see Appendix C). The original version of *The Bard's Tale* has the city as being alive and thriving with a tavern in the center. The contrasting narrative of the videogame is a D&D inspired game in which the hero, a bard, learns how to control his powers. The hero is tasked with using said powers to fight foes and protect the village of Skara Brae from the creatures that threaten the village's way of life (see Appendix D). The city is created mostly out of thin horizontal stones that are square or rectangular, most likely because that

was easier than creating a circular building without mortar or metal tools, and is very nondescript for the most part. There are areas within the virtual city that are grassy and have farm animals freely roaming around them such as sheep, cows, and chickens. The physical location on Orkney, however, consists of the fragile ruins of a civilization long since gone. This landscape is the crumbling remains of a small groups of houses that seem to be interconnected. Their remains give little information regarding their purpose and/or the lifestyles of their inhabitants (Figures 3.6 and 3.7).



*Figure 3.6 (left) is a photo from Skara Brae on Orkney and 3.7 (right) is a screenshot from the original The Bard's Tale of Skara Brae.*

Media have a way of making the fictitious feel and seem real. The creative process is made possible by textual description in a book or the visual representations found in movies, TV shows, or video games. The emotional connections that people have to the places they have traveled gives credence to the reality of the setting. While the landscape might not be physically “true” in the sense that it does not exist except in the realm of fantasy and imagination, it is culturally true for the fanbase that surrounds it. As O’Connor and Kim state, “The authenticity of a film or a TV series inherently deals with fictional places which influence viewers into believing the story is real, or of reminiscing sentimentally of an idealized past

representation aimed at consumerism” (2013:20). Thus, the connectivity to the site is as real for the gamers as it is for any other interested party.

A perfect example of the level of authenticity that fans crave can be seen in the Harry Potter fandom. Most of the members of this fandom grew up reading the books, watching the movies, and/or playing the video games that are associated with the wizarding world. There are many fictive possible locations that claim to have the answer to their desires. For many involved with the Harry Potter fandom that means that Hogwarts should be a place where they can go and be physically present. Instead, they are often times disappointed in the reality that different portions of the movies were shot in locations all across the United Kingdom. That is to say, while Alnwick Castle boasts quite a few of the scenes from the movies, it is not in fact, Hogwarts. When talking to one of the Wizards who facilitated the broom stick flying lessons, the idea of making Alnwick into a castle more like that of Hogwarts came up. However, we lamented the fact that moving staircases and talking portraits of long dead inhabitants would have been all but impossible to include. The idea of being able to interact with the whole of Hogwarts itself and not just select portions of the magical castle was a notion that I heard after the completion of the broomstick training lessons from the older participants more often than not. Therefore, this encumbrance of knowing a different layout of an area is widespread among those that visit such sites hoping for a specific type of experience.

The other option that is available to them comes in the form of Universal Studio’s Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Orlando Florida. The beautifully recreated version of Hogsmeade, the wizarding village that is just outside of Hogwarts school, boasts an authentic wizarding experience. However, as Larson (2013) reports, the experience is diminished by

commodification as each attempt at recreating a scene within this park is followed immediately by the visitors being ushered into a gift shop so that they can take home a piece of Harry Potter. This is a capitalistic encumbrance placed upon the site by the meat would that is incongruent with the world(s) of Harry Potter. The immediate uncovering of the authentic experience by the commodification aspect of Universal Studios is just one example of how the encumbered expectations that have been fortified by the different levels of portrayal at these destinations result in consumer dissatisfaction.

The authenticity of the experience for Harry Potter fans comes not only from the recreation of the physical environment but also from the ability to reenact specific scenes. From Alnwick's broom-flying lessons to Universal's recreation of Oliver's Wands Shop where each witch or wizard is fitted with their wand, the recreating of one's experience is what is talked about after the trip is over. Or to put it in a different way, the congruence between the realms is examined closely. Universal Studios has recreated Oliver's Wands exactly the way it appears in the *Harry Potter* movies with a counter front and center when you walk through the door, walls lined with small boxes that each contain a different type of wand and behind the counter rows of shelves with even more boxes of wands to choose from. This kind of manufactured authenticity is not unusual as "a number of studies have established the significant role that re-enacting actions or scenes from film or TV series has in creating authentic, memorable and meaningful media-related tourism experiences" (O'Connor and Kim 2013:21).

Those who engage in video game tourism echoed the feelings of dissatisfaction and yet yearning that is seen within the other types of media-related tourism. Most of the media-

related tourism sites have not incorporated activities that allow for the level of interaction that tourists crave. This is not unreasonable as they want to hold to their own sense of identity which is separate from that of how the media has portrayed their home and people. That, however, is a story for Chapter Seven.

There is an interesting correlation between the idea of play within both gaming as well as tourism. Each has been subject to othering and negatively classified. Tourism is viewed this way in the sense that it is not an authentic experience but represents a shallow look at another culture (see Bruner 2001; Burns 2004; Cornelissen 2005, among others). This interconnection between the two groups is not apparent to the normal tourists themselves, as we have seen previously in this chapter. The disparity between the way that the two types of tourists are treated makes for an interesting look into othering and entitlement.

## **Conclusion**

Whether it is the lack of the ability for one to parkour or even attempt to parkour like their character does within the video game, the limitations that the physical world places upon those who wish to recreate the experiences they hold dear leaves them with a palpable sense of the weight of avatar-based encumbrance. While almost all of my participants were able to interact with the sites they visited to a certain extent, there were two factors that limited their ability to have their encumbrance of the game's narrative reinforced by the physical realm thus creating an authentic experience. The first factor was their fear of othering. The second factor was restrictions at the sites, in most cases, that did not allow them to interact with the place in ways that were in keeping with the videogame narrative. These two factors did not deter my

participants from having an authentic experience, just a different type of experience from what they had originally planned. They all claimed to enjoy their experiences and to have creating memories that would last them a lifetime. These two factors also show that the gaming tourists had a sense of an encumbered self and therefore came to the site with a sense of being influenced by their community ties, nostalgia-induced expectations, and normative behavior patterns.

The othering factor created a sense of not being able to represent themselves for fear of being told to leave or having to deal with negative interactions with the other tourists or even the locals. A perfect example of this is when I was coming back from the gaming convention in Glasgow, Play Expo Glasgow June 9, 2018. I entered the hotel where I was staying and was waiting for the elevator to go back to my room. My hands were across my chest as I was attempting to fish my room key out of my purse while holding onto my loot/swag from the convention. As I stepped into the elevator, a man entered as well. He asked me how my day was and then told me that he had a great day watching all of the weirdos that were at the mall. (The location of the convention.) He proceeded to tell me that they just all looked so weird and watching them made him feel good about himself. By that time, the doors opened to my floor, and I had found my room key. I lowered my hands showing my t-shirt that read "my gaming time is for your safety." I looked at him and said, yes, I know that type of person and walked out of the elevator. As I looked back at him, I noticed that his face was a nice shade of red, and he was looking a bit remorseful for his characterization of gamers. The reaction of this gentleman is not an unusual experience.

The fear of othering plays into that of the second factor -- the inability to interact with the site based upon the narrative of the video game. The fact that the sites did not allow for, nor did they endorse, the types of interactions that the video game tourists were looking for was in part due to the social stigma that comes along with the stereotype that people who play video games are nerds. The fact that the gamers and non-gamers do not share the same encumbrances creates friction between the two groups. This level of discord between the groups might be part of the reason why the video game narratives have not been included, for the most part, in the narrative that the tourists are being told about the sites and thus eliminates the possibility of public displays of the types of scene recreations from the videogames that the gamers were hoping for. An example of this can be found in Chapter 7. How this is dealt with and worked around can be seen in the way the teens at Dunnottar Castle attempted to find different hiding spots that they had used within the *Call of Duty* map based upon the castle. The boys did not want to physically go and attempt to recreate the scenes that they were talking about, instead they verbally recreated the scene, limiting their experience.

As I have explored in this chapter, the experience that the gamers were attempting to have by traveling to these sites was mediated by the fact that almost all of the sites refused to allow the narrative of the video game to be placed upon the attraction. Because of this, the gamers had to attempt to accommodate both the locals and the non-gamer tourists while finding a way to honor the encumbrances that they had brought with them from their virtual experiences. While there is a sense of being othered by the gamers, there is a yearning for a deeper connection and more authentic experience from those tourists that are traveling based upon notions related to media. This is, in at least some cases, the same type of yearning for



authenticity that normal tourists express. From my time in the field, I have come to the conclusion that while the gamers are used to being othered, they tend to try to attempt to be unnoticed in their actions as they try to mitigate the level of negativity that is being expressed in their direction.

## Chapter 4:

### Reintegration

*I logged into the private “Call of Duty” server that Jared had created for us to meet in. Immediately upon rezing (or spawning/logging) into the map, I pulled my sniper rifle out in anticipation of being ambushed. To my astonishment, Jared calmly asked where I had rezed, quickly moved his avatar to my location, and did not kill mine. He did, however, have his assault rifle at the ready in case I had any notion of attempting to pick him off as he came within range. We put our weapons away, agreeing that we would just take in the landscape and talk about our journeys to Dunnottar for at least the first 30 minutes or so. After that, it was fair game.*

*Jared quickly led the way to the first stop, one of the buildings that I recognized as the servants’ quarters. Jared walked his avatar around the first remnants of a room and sighed. After a moment’s hesitation, he said, “so this is where we got a bit outta hand during our trip” and laughed. He went on to explain that his friends had decided that the ruins of the servants’ quarters made great sharpshooter vantage points. Each in turn had settled on their own spot that they thought was the best. He took me to each of these locations and said that they had started arguing about whose choice made more sense. He laughed and admitted that this was the reason he became a bit randy at the castle. (Randy in the sense of the Scottish meaning of the word: being rude and/or aggressive.) He reminisced that they never did come to a consensus on whose vantage point was the best.*

*As we moved on to the tower, Jared was a bit quiet and I asked him what he was thinking. He said he was just thinking about how to explain what happened in the keep. I*

*became a little nervous to hear what they did, hoping that they did not get in too much trouble or do anything overly stupid. Upon entering the keep, he sat his avatar in one of the built-in window seats and I took the seat across from him. He pulled out his assault rifle and pointed it out the window. The sound of a gun going off rang through my headphones and he gave a soft chuckle.*

*Jared: We each took a spot within the tower and pretended to pick off the other tourists.*

*Me: How did that go over?*

*Jared: Well, most of them had no clue what we were doing as we were not being too overt about our actions, but well.... (he paused for about a minute before continuing) One lady did hear us and was not happy in the slightest. She stomped off and got a worker. After several more minutes, we were told that we had to stop doing "whatever it is you are doing" (he crooned the last bit in a higher pitched voice as to indicate that he was mimicking the worker's attitude to their antics.) So, you know, one of the guys pretended to shoot her from behind. The worker of course had no clue, but it made us all Break into gut wrenching laughter. We were given a warning and left the tower.*

*Me: What did you all do next?*

*Jared: We went to look at the edges.*

*He started off toward the edge of the castle grounds without another word and I followed. As we approached the closest edge of the castle's high grounds, on the other side of the tower he continued the story.*

*Jared: We all thought it was cool that in here we could see over the edge but that in the real world, they have railings up. (he sighed again) They really did an amazing job capturing the landscape, didn't they?*

*Me: Yes, it is almost perfect. The added modern elements that differ between the game and the real castle are a bit interesting, but overall, this is the castle.*

Going back to the reality of the “real world” can be difficult for some. The inability to fully reintegrate back into the society that you have been removed from during the journey is the reason why a pilgrimage is considered ritualistic. The separation at the beginning of the journey, the liminal period of the journey itself, and then the harsh attempt at reintegration that can leave one not quite feeling as if they fit back into the society they left, having come back changed. This is the process which a pilgrim goes through. The relatively new sense of connection to both the games themselves as well as to the gaming community made many of my participants experience the same feeling of both not completely being able to slide back into their old lives as gamers as well as being slightly changed by the experience. In this chapter, I will examine the responses that I have received from the few study participants, seven in all, that did follow-up interviews with me. While only half of my participants agreed to do follow-up interviews and/or meet with me in game, a good portion of them never found the time to do so.

The questions that I had posed to the participants were founded on their reentry into gaming and their normal lives. I wanted to explore how, if at all, their game play differed after the return from pilgrimage and what the reactions to their experiences were from others. On the whole, the feedback that the study participants received was positive. In addition to their positive responses, my study participants stated emphatically that their gaming styles had changed at least somewhat after they got back home. What, if anything, do these changes and acceptance mean for the gaming community as a whole? This chapter attempts to answer that question.

## A Different Strategy

A gamer's style of playing tends to remain relatively static as they settle into roles within their given community. "Once a healer, always a healer", Jaden stated numerous times when talking about our gaming styles before his pilgrimage. However, after visiting Dunnottar Castle (see Appendix J for the castle's narrative), Jaden admitted that he had started to play more first-person shooter games where being a healer was not an option. While Jaden's transformation is an outlier of the magnitude of difference that my participants reported, it is a remarkable change in both content choice, community, and play style. Thus, his experience is an important one to unravel.

Jaden is an avid roleplaying gamer (RPG) with his favorites being MMORPGs (massively multiplayer role-playing game or MMO for short) such as *WoW*. He enthusiastically shared his gaming experience with me when we first met. Jaden brightened at the fact that we both had been carved into the role of healer while at the same time lamenting the fact that there was no way out of the role, no matter how much damage one could do or absorb. "Good healers are hard to find, so if you don't want to spend the rest of your time healing, don't start," Jaden laughed as we commiserated about our gaming fates. There was a level of pride in his voice at his responsibilities as a healer. He assured me that while he moaned about being constantly thrust into the role of healer, he was in fact, proud of the fact that he was trusted and wanted in that role. (The role of a healer in the gaming world is to allow the party to progress and mitigate, or at least replenish, the effects of taking damage by a monster that the party encounters.)

While Jaden had stated when we first met that first-person shooters were something that he did with his group of friends but were not his “go to game”, the fact that his friend group had been planning this type of trip excited him. The group went to Dunnottar after I left Scotland and he got in contact with me to talk about his experience about a month after the fact. Jaden and his friends had taken their first of what they hoped would be many trips to different locations that had been the inspiration for different landscapes within the *Call of Duty* series. The narrative surrounding the *Call of Duty* series is discussed in Appendix J.

Explaining the group dynamics for me so that I could understand a bit more about how and why a RPG player would want to go to a location that was part of a first person shooter game was Jaden’s first real goal when he got back in touch. The group consisted of five men, including himself, each in their mid to late 30s. The group had known each other since primary school and while they did not all live in the same area anymore, they kept in constant contact through games such as *CoD*. All but one in his cohort had children and were happily married. They rationalized that these trips would be their chance to escape their responsibilities for at least a few nights and reconnect to some extent.

When I had first met Jaden, he talked about his plans to try and find all of the locations that were used within the *CoD* series and that he and his friend group wanted to visit each of them. As described above, after I mentioned that the Stonehaven map in the Ghost expansion was only a few hours from most of them, they decided to take the trip to Dunnottar Castle. Jaden stated that he could not believe the similarities between the landscape of the game and that of the castle grounds themselves. Almost everything was perfect he reported, with only a few exceptions such as the addition of broken-down cars and a shack that were not within the

archeological site but were in the game. He also commented that the railing that surrounded the castle grounds, keeping people from falling several hundred feet to the rocky ocean shore below, were not in the game itself. This, he rationalized was because within the game you could attempt to run off the ledge, but the interface would not allow you to throw yourself over the edge, the game's version of having the railing up.

According to both Jared's accounts and his photographic evidence, the group started off casually finding the different locations within the game where they remembered something "awesome" happening. Jared said that it only took around 30 minutes before they started to get a bit rowdy with their reenactments of events. While they were retelling their accomplishments and/or failures they refused to use the physical structures as anything other than a reference point. Jared made a point of telling me that they refused to climb up on the site as they did not want to destroy the location. However, they did point and gesture. In total, the group spent close to four hours up at the site itself, exploring and reenacting "epic kill scenes" while causing a small amount of trouble.

After the group made their way down from the hill on which the castle is strategically situated, they went to one of the local pubs. There, according to Jared is where they started doing comparisons and reliving the experience of their time within the castle grounds both in and outside of the game. After several drinks, the group went back to their hotel where one of them had their gaming console and loaded up the Stonehaven map. They created their own server so that they did not have to worry about playing with outsiders and could explore the map at their leisure. They were able to both find and identify each of the locations that they had reenacted scenes from at the archeological site. This connection, Jared admitted, gave him



gooseflesh as it really sank in that he had been at the site that his avatar was now exploring in person. This level of connectedness is what he contributes to his increased interest in this type of game. When asked if he believed that the same might hold true for any other type of game that he was able to visit the inspiring landscape for, he said that he was not sure and that it helped having his friends there as sharing the experience was a big part of it. He did not believe that he could get the whole group to go to a site that was based upon one of his role-playing games, but he did not think he would be the same.

Most of my study participants did not have the same level of response to their play styles as Jared did, but each of them did say that their play style altered at least slightly. They noticed spending more time appreciating the landscape and areas they would have quickly bypassed before. Participants found that they had become encumbered by their experience at the physical sites when they returned to the virtual world as their actions and responses to the landscape changed. Gwen said that when she went back to replay the portion of the game that the landscape we visited was based on, she spent more time in the locations that she had visited, attempting to pick out different spots that were similar to what she remembered seeing at the physical location. This particular study participant admitted that her first time through the game she had not given the graveyard much thought but after visiting a very similar graveyard that was possibly the inspiration for the one within the game itself, she took the time to look around within the game that she never would have before. When asked if she did anything different when playing the Nathan Drake game after our visit to the sites, Gwen stated,

Yeah, I went to different places than I would have before. And I spent WAY more time in the graveyard (which in-game is mostly just used as a shooting arena/place you go through casually) – but I stayed there and actually tried to look at the plaques to see if there were any I remembered, or any shapes that were repeated (there were some!)

This kind of response was typical of all of my respondents as they each had at least one example that they could recall of going back through the games and spending a bit more time at the locations that we had visited physically with their avatars. Jared and his friends are another great example of going back through the game and spending more time than they had before on finding specific locations within the game that they had physically been to. When asked to explain this more intense version of gaming, Jared laughed, “Dude, I really never paid that much attention to the landscape when I played. I was always too focused on killing members of the opposing team. It’s been a bit over a year now, and I will admit that I have not only gone back with the guys, but I do tend to give the amazing graphics a bit more of a look than I use to.” The additional time and appreciation of the landscape is one of the more noticeable play style changes that these participants have noticed of themselves. Jason, one of Jared’s friends, told me, “I’ve always noticed that the graphics are awesome, but now, I give it a few more minutes to appreciate it and if I’m really into it, I wonder where it is from.” The experience of visiting, at least, one of the sites that was the inspiration for the virtual landscapes that had become an important part of the recursive representation for these participants added an encumbrance to their experience. They were now not only playing through the game with the hope of allowing themselves to become unencumbered by their daily lives but as a way of being able to revisit what had become a nostalgia-creating

experience. Their play is in turn, encumbered and informed by their exploits in the physical world.

### **Sharing is Caring**

As with most adventures today, all of my participants shared their experience with others through social media (Figure 4.1). The reactions that they received varied depending on the audience that interacted with their stories and/or photos. The reactions ranged from not understanding and the virtual versions of eyerolling to envy. Those that shared their experiences by posting their photos and anecdotes with their general social media list such as on their Facebook newsfeed were more likely to get comments on the more negative side, while people who tailored their posts towards those who were more likely to comment in a positive fashion received the feedback they expected. There were many different techniques that the participants described for tailoring their posts toward receiving positive feedback. One strategy was only allowing certain individuals, those that they believed were less likely to be judgmental or negative towards their experience, to see their posts. Another strategy was to preface the posts with disclaimers using phrases such as “silliness ahead.” While there are exceptions to every generalization, in this instance the responses seem to fall within these bounds with the only negative reactions being from people who were not gamers or did not understand the need to physically interact with a video game’s landscape. Positive, or at least nonnegative responses, tended to either be noncommittal or responses such as are seen in Figure 4.2 and figure 4.3.

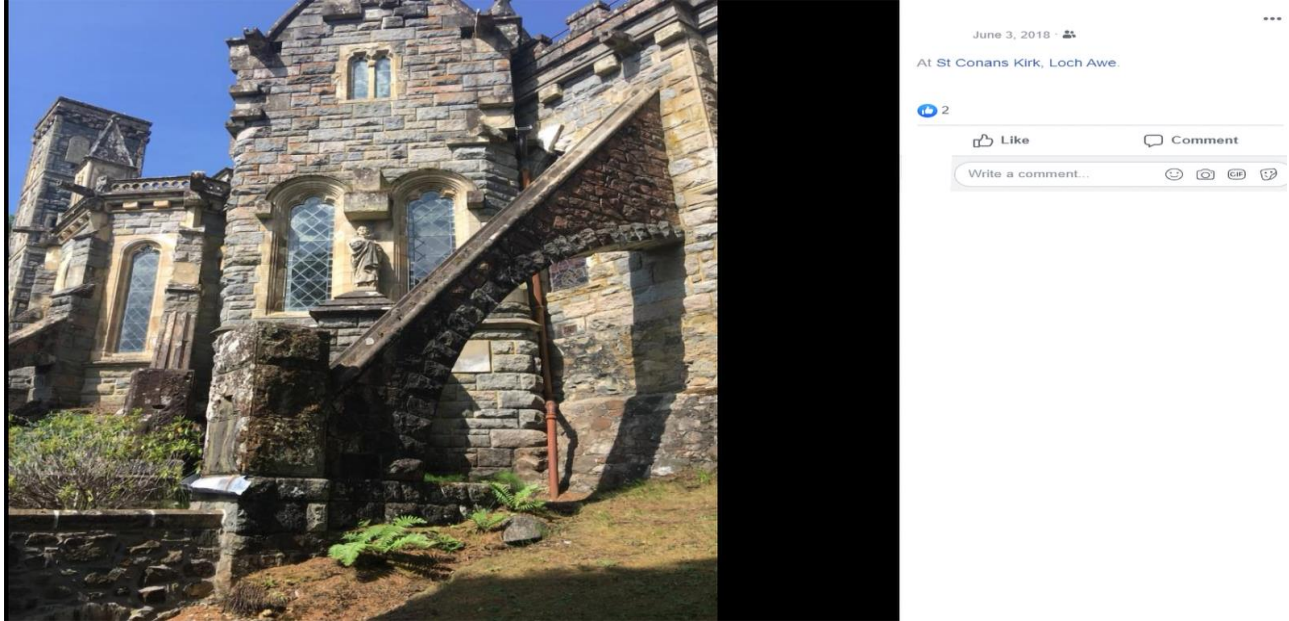


Figure 4. 1 An example of one of my participants' social media posts.

One of my respondents said that she had only posted her experience to Facebook and only received one inquiry but did follow her explanation with a positive response. She said that while most of her friends list did not comment on her photos, the majority of responses to her posts were from people who were gamers themselves.

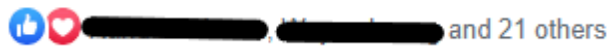


Figure 4.2 This is an example of the positive reactions to one of my participants social media posts.

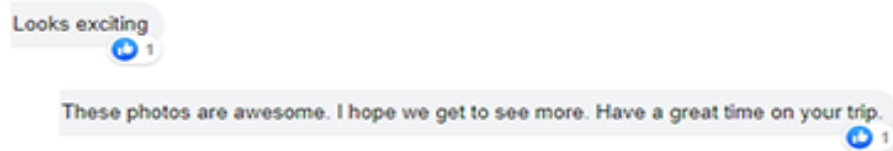


Figure 4.3 This is a screenshot showing positive responses to one of my participant's social media posts.

Another of my study participants, Jenny, a woman in her late 20s with long brown hair, a slight build, wearing a T-shirt identifying her wizarding house as Hufflepuff when we spoke, stated that she had a few older family members that did not understand why she played

videogames in the first place, so was expecting the slightly negative responses that she received. Her photos were received with a bit more scrutiny than those of the previous participant. She said that even though she tried to explain why she went and how much she enjoyed video games the person did not understand. “She just wouldn’t let up with the idea that I was wasting my time and money. I ended up having to make it so that she couldn’t see my posts as she was calling my mom and giving her a hard time about my responses to her as well,” she told me with a great amount of exasperation. Both her mannerisms and intonation indicate that this is not the first time a conversation on this topic has gone negatively between herself and her elderly relative. The non-gamers did not understand and/or appreciate the encumbrances incurred by being a gamer.

On the whole, my participants reported positive responses to their social media posts regarding their journey. Some received messages of envy and excitement while others just thought it was “kinda neat” as one of my participants reported. This might suggest that there is a level of acceptance for the gaming community that was not previously seen in other generations as it is becoming more mainstream. The only ones who were reported to respond in anyway negatively were either older baby boomers (58 and older) or those from the silent generation (75 and older). Their negative response was due to their lack of understanding as they had not experienced the video games or at least the connections created within said video games and so cannot identify with the encumbrances shouldered by the gamers.

## Reminiscent of Past Conquests

As most of my interactions with my study participants in the follow up interview phase of my research took place online or over the phone, with only two being facetime, I was unable to see the facial expressions of most of the participants while talking about what they remembered.

While this does slightly hamper the process of getting the whole of what someone is attempting to say, or not say, about the current topic, there are a few subtle things that people will do when communicating through a digital medium. These include but are not limited to things such as a longer than normal pause before attempting to answer a question, the use of emojis, using all capital letters, writing in spurts such as four or five words at a time before sending so as to not keep the person on the receiving end waiting, and the use of slang.

Emotional tone and emphasis can be transmitted with some amount of accuracy if one is communicating over instant messaging devices. When I was unsure about the emotional impact of an answer, I would follow up with questions such as “was that a good thing” or “how’d that go over” in order to attempt to elicit a response from the participant regarding the emotions related to the topic of conversation.

Every one of my participants reported a positive emotional response to their travels.

While many admitted to a reservation about participating in the physical aspect of their journey, once they began, they enjoyed themselves. Gwen wrote me saying,

I was nervous at first, but not once we got into it. I was mostly nervous about doing something that was ‘wrong’ or ‘improper’ in that place (but I’m quite shy about that stuff normally). There weren’t too many people around, so that may have had something to do with it as well – I’m not sure how I would have felt if there had been a whole bunch of people around. I was quite excited about the whole thing – it was like solving an in-game puzzle in real life (IRL). We got to try

to find the clues to where stuff was – what we recognized, etc, and then put it together. It was really fun!

The idea that their time at the tourist site was akin to solving a puzzle within the game itself is a way to inform the experience of visiting the virtual realm physically. The possibility of being criticized or even ejected from the location for behaving in a way that was seen as improper was a common thread among the participants. Each of my participants that admitted to having these initial fears and five of the seven also admitted that they have social anxiety during any “normal” interactions within the social sphere of the physical world. When talking about this subject with one of my participants, Cortana, she stated, “I mean, look at me, it’s not like I even look ‘normal’ let alone act normal. People stare and say things. I’m different. I wouldn’t change a thing about myself, but I know I’m different.” Cortana is in her mid-twenties, roughly 5 foot 6 inches tall, wafer thin, her hair is bleached white with blue highlights and closely cropped, and she was wearing a black shirt that hangs off of one shoulder, dark jeans, and a pair of Doc Martins upon our first meeting. As Cortana takes a small sip from her red wine, she leans back in her seat and sighs. She looks around the small pub that she had chosen for us to meet at and crosses her left leg over her right, lifting her large Doc Martin boot with a bit of a flourish.

Female gamers have historically not been taken seriously and/or pushed out of what Bonnie Nardi termed “the boy’s clubhouse” in her ethnographic work with *WoW* (2010:152). Then there was the infamous Gamergate where a war was raged on a forum known as 4chan, which is a part of what is called the “clear net” close to but not quite a part of the dark web or a portion of the internet that is not readily available to the average internet user but is a place where those who are in the know tend to congregate. This is a portion of the internet where you can find anything from recipes and tips on exercise programs to QAnon conspiracy

theories. The Gamergate war was waged against female programmers and got fiercely out of control with death threats and personal information being leaked. For more information regarding Gamergate see Albert (2014), Futrelle (2014), Hall (2014), Sarkeesian (2015 et al.). For this reason, as well as her own experience, Cortana said that she felt as if being a female gamer was more of a curse than anything. "I've been harassed to the point where I don't want to play a coop (multiplayer) game anymore. As soon as they find out I'm female, it's all over. I'm just different, you know, I like things that aren't considered feminine, such as gaming, and just don't fit in." Cortana takes a long swig of her wine, almost draining it and changes the subject to history, one of her loves, signaling that portion of the conversation is over. The gendered expectations imposed by the physical world are echoed within the virtual world, giving the female gamer an encumbrance that male gamers do not encounter.

Another example of my participants holding back on their interactions with the sites comes from Paul, a short and slightly plump man in his mid-40s, who during our trip to The Secret Bunker wore jeans, hiking boots, and his favorite *Legends of Zelda* (a popular video game) T-shirt. While I was busy attempting to find useful items such as a torch in order to be prepared for exploring the rest of the *FallOut* universe, Paul hesitated in joining me in preparatory activities. A reminder that the narrative of the games is to survive the world that is left behind after the smoke clears from the nuclear devastation (see Appendix H). (A disclaimer on my actions: I did not physically touch any of the objects within the bunker, only pretended to do so.) Paul laughed softly at my antics but refused to join in stating, "Dude, there are cameras everywhere and someone's going to think we really are taking shit and we are going to be searched and then booted. Let's just not."



While the majority of my participants were cautious about interacting with the sites at first, each of them said that they started to relax after a time, especially when the number of tourists and/or staff was low and were able to enjoy themselves. Being able to interact physically with their virtual worlds allowed for a greater sense of connectedness and reinforced their passion for the game than they had before visiting the site. This seemed to be the case even when the landscape did not completely line up with that of the videogame as the quote from Gwen above shows. Most of my study participants found that the differences allowed them to use their imagination and saw these changes as a puzzle to be solved, such as how the developers might have gone about deciding which portions of the landscape to put together or how to change them in order to create a seamless and interactive game map. Cole was the first to point this out when he commented on the imaginations that had to be put into play in order to turn these different locations into one breath taking portion of video game landscape as seen by his quote in Chapter 3. Morgan explained this to me when talking about the different locations and how the movie and video games were filmed all over the United Kingdom: “They had to put the best versions of what it was that they were trying to portray and no one location would do. This place is amazing,” she said as she threw both her hands out, gesturing to Alnwick Castle (see Appendix A for the narrative) as a whole, “But I have yet to see a good place in which to place Hagrid’s hut, for example. It would have been awesome if they had been able to do it all in one location, but I’ll go to each of the sites and pretend that the in between is a cut scene.” Morgan was one of my more eccentric participants, but she was able to turn her disappointment of not being able to just visit a single location in order to experience the whole

of the Harry Potter world (see Appendix B for the narrative) into an enjoyable experience that did not require the same level of encumbrance that is seen in my other participants.

While there was, for a few of my study participants, at least at the beginning of the visit to the site, a bit of disappointment at the inconsistencies, those who were able to do the follow up interviews, at least, professed that they did not begrudge the differences but saw them as a challenge. By returning to the games and playing through the areas that they were able to physically interact with, the gamers' reactions were softened to an extent. Taylor, a participant from Alnwick Castle explained this challenge very eloquently,

This is exactly like in the videogame and movie, but what is connected to this portion is not the rest of Hogwarts (she laughed) but I know that if I go around the corner, the halls I will walk through will be the same ones the actors walked through in parts of the movie. However, the transitional areas are completely different. I wonder where they filmed those portions!

This is a different attitude than what is reported by those that study film-based tourism as I will expand upon in greater detail in the next chapter.

### **Replaying the Game: Possibility of Doing another Vacation Based upon a Video Game**

About half of my study participants said that they had enjoyed their vacation and would be planning to do another trip to another site related to a videogame. As the following response demonstrates:

Me: Would you be willing to go back and revisit the sites? (Why or why not)

Gwen: Absolutely! We almost went actually, when we went back to Scotland with some gamer friends of mine. The only reason we didn't is that we were on quite a strict time schedule.

This is consistent with the response that I received from those that did the follow up interviews. Only two of the latter group said they would not be going on another vacation such as the one they had just taken. When asked why, one said because of the amount of money that it would take to get her family to the location that she would want to visit. The other replied that he did not think that his family would be up for doing another vacation based only upon his interests. Two more responded that they would love to but that it was very unlikely that they would as they do not tend to travel that much. Of those who said that they were hoping to go on another holiday, a few were already working on plans to be able to travel to other locations or bring friends to the location that they had just visited. This included Jaden and his group of friends who are planning on attempting to visit each of the different landscapes that were used within their favorite CoD expansion, like the real life Nuketown in Nevada or Chernobyl. Jaden cheerily replied to my question regarding another vacation, “Hell yeah! We are already planning a few different vacations based upon CoD! The first one was so fucking cool, I can’t wait to replay this experience.” The fact that Jaden used the term replay in reference to the physical site is a further example of how his visitation to the tourist location was oriented and thus encumbered by his gaming experience.

### **Reentering the Game: Exploring the sSte Virtually**

Most of the videogames that I explored physically with my study participants were one person games that did not have the ability to interact with other humans and as such, I only had limited access to playing alongside the gamers. I did, however, have their secondhand reports of what it was like to go back and play the game again after being at the physical site. The *Harry*

*Potter* videogame, on the other hand, is a mobile game that was made for the smart phone and some of my study participants had their games on them at the time of my original interviews with them. While one had a lag time of returning home and one had the luxury of having their game on hand, both types of participants gleefully expressed their amazement in being able to physically interact with the site.

Those who were willing and able to tell me about their experience playing the videogames after returning home, left little doubt that they felt a sense of connection to the game that was deeper than before they had visited the physical location. To get a better appreciation of the connection that a person can have with a place we need to turn to Appadurai's theory of locality. According to Appadurai, the meaning of locality has changed as imagination has taken on greater importance within social life (2005:55). This lends support to the idea that the imagined realities found in video games can change the landscape, both the physical and the virtual, according to the personal narrative that the video game tourist assigns to it. The once pristine kirk can be turned into a glorious ruin set not on the side of a loch, but on the nearby hill, overlooking the ocean with the cemetery who's beautifully haunting Celtic crosses adorn the landscape and that hides a mysterious tomb, not the nine-mile drive but a meager climb along a cliff's edge, a few well-placed jumps and swings, and a slide away. The game developers take the scenic views that have inspired their virtual creations and change the placement of different landmarks to suit their needs. By making these changes, they are requiring the gamers to take the journey as the developers envision the landscape set instead of the visual reality. As Appadurai states,

“These landscapes thus are the building blocks of what I would like to call imagined worlds, that is the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe. An important fact of the world we live in today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined worlds (and not just in imagined communities) and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them” (Ibid:33).

Cole and I talked about this a few times during our excursions. At one point, standing on the back steps of the kirk, overlooking the serene surface of the loch, Cole turned to me and said,

You know, I can really see how the programmers were inspired by this place, but also how much imagination goes into creating a good game. You can see the pillars, general structure of the kirk within the game, but they thought it was too calm here, so they moved it up to that big hill over there, but that wasn't enough. They then decided to put it overlooking the ocean and it worked. I mean, this place just inspires you to use your imagination and that's what they did.

Cole's realization is a perfect example of Appadurai's theory of imagination shaping the idea of locality as that is exactly what has happened within the gaming community and thus the gaming tourists need to use a bit more imagination than other types of tourists in order to see what was reflected from the physical landscape and into the games themselves. The additional layer of work that is required by the touristic gamers is due to the inconsistencies that they are experiencing which can be placed solely at the feet of the game developers. While intriguing and innovative, the virtual landscape's discontinuity, while being aligned so closely with the physical landscape, adds an additional responsibility or encumbrance in order for the gamers to be able to fully enjoy their experience.

This is not always the case, as with Alnwick Castle and the fealty to the physical site that is portrayed within the game. This was demonstrated when one of the staff members, dressed

in her wizarding garb, showed me a screen shot from the game and held it up at the exact point in the castle where the image was taken. She also says that she has a side-by-side copy of photos of the screen shot and the location on her Instagram and she was thrilled when she noticed the similarities and how remarkably close the creators got the castle in the game to the actual castle. However, a decent dose of imagination is required to turn the castle into a magical school for witches and wizards. Only about half of the tourists that I was able to observe at Alnwick visited the castle for its connection to the wizarding world. Some of the items, such as the Whomping Willow (a living tree in the movies just outside of Hogwarts that protects the entrance to a secret hideout), are no longer on the grounds of Alnwick, but the location is a stop along the “Alnwick in Films” tour. Guests are asked to imagine that these places are there, while answering trivia questions about the filming of the Harry Potter movies.

In fact, the ability for a tourist to find meaning in their visit to the castle hinges not upon the castle’s history but the meaning that they are able to socially construct around the castle itself. As Appadurai explains the difference between an heirloom and junk, “the successful semiotic management of the social context” is what differentiates the two and gives value to the heirloom (Ibid:76). What this means is that it is “the capability of certain things to evoke nostalgic encumbrance” whether real or imagined, that gives the thing, or in this instance, place, meaning (Ibid). Heirlooms and socially constructed relevance also come into play with the feeling of nostalgia as there is always a sense of loss associated with such items or experiences, among which is the inability to go back in time. This feeling is at least partly associated with the need for the visit to the location, to get back the feeling of connection that

the tourists had with the characters upon their first meeting, whether through a book, movie, and/or video game.

The running theme of “This is so wicked, I was right there, I mean physically right in that spot”, as Kirk wrote in his reply to me about his first time going back and replaying the *CoD* map that was inspired by Dunnottar Castle, was expressed by every one of the respondents. Jaden told me, “It was so cool. I mean going back into the game after being there. It was hard to focus on anything other than the fact that I was physically right there.” The sense of being right in the very location where your character is now virtually standing gave the gamers a feeling of nostalgia similar to what they felt when they were physically at the site and attempting to recreate their interactions with the games. This type of cyclical experiencing of nostalgia is something that should be researched further. One way to do this would be to explore it as a kind of cyclical encumbrance that moves from the virtual to the physical realm and back again, similar to what is seen in a feedback loop. By cyclical experiencing of nostalgia, I mean that they are not only reenacting a one-off nostalgic memory but when they are replaying the game after visiting the physical site, they are reenacting a memory of reenacting a memory. It is easy to see that this type of indulging in nostalgic memories and feelings creates a stronger bond between the gamer and the game itself by looking at the above quotes. It would be interesting to have a study that compared the level of connection and types of nostalgic memories between those gamers that participated in videogame tourism versus those that had not as a means of thinking in a more nuanced way about how encumbrance works cyclically between the virtual and physical realms. Would they become even heavier gamers? How would they be perceived

within the gaming community? Would it effect their play styles? These are only a few questions that could be explored through further study.

Turning to the *Harry Potter* handheld game, the players were able to hold up their smartphones and make a real time side-by-side comparison between the physical landscape and the landscape of the game. While this also gave most of my respondents a sense of nostalgia, I would argue that it was different than the other experiences as they were able to make the comparisons in real time. The nostalgia that was created during the interaction with both the physical landscape and the game itself concurrently, did not allow for any time lapse and therefore the type of nostalgia seemed to be different. The ability to simultaneously have both of these forms of interaction allowed them to both process and interact with the physical and virtual sites simultaneously. As there was no time delay between the two like the other gamers had, the process was quicker and thus had a quicker but, in some ways, lesser impact. Some of the respondents said that it was a bit “creepy” or “weird” that they were interacting with the site virtually and physically simultaneously. Once they made the connections, they had a hint of awe that I also saw with the other respondents, but it seemed to fade more quickly, and they moved on to other topics with greater speed. Morgan and her interactions with the game and the physical landscape are a good example. When she noticed the connection between the physical site and the game, she jumped up and down squealing with glee. Morgan showed me the flying field within the game and pointed to the exact physical duplicate spot that we were standing next to. She looked at me and said, “I’m here, I mean, I’m here in the game and in real life. This is so cool.” Does the lack of weighed encumbrances present itself in the absence of the other realm? While the data that this study was able to collect point to the



affirmative, more research would need to be done in order to give a firm answer to this question.

### **Expressions from the NPCs: The Locals Thoughts on the Game and Interactions with their Land**

While most of the locals that I talked to about the videogames either had no interest in the connection or did not know there was a connection, those on the Isle of Skye had more to say about the introduction of the game *Dear Esther*. As the game is one that has gained national recognition to the extent that on November 3, 2017, there was a live showing of the game, music and narration performed at Glasgow's Tramway (Gordon 2017) with 10 more performances planned around Scotland. Almost every one of the locals that I spoke with on Skye knew about the game and many had at least attempted to play it. While none of them were able to tell me to what degree the game had brought in more tourists, they all agreed that there was an increase since the game's release in 2012 and they were anticipating the 2018 tourist season to be even higher because of the rerelease of the game in 2017 and the national attention that it had received. One of the things that offset most of the fears that were expressed about the added number of tourists was the fact that only a select number of tourists are allowed to visit St. Kilda each year, and the weather that year had caused the cancelation of a number of the scheduled trips to the island, including mine.

One of the women that I spoke with about the game as we took shelter in a tourist shop while the rain beat down on Skye admitted that she had visited both islands-- Kilda as well as the one in the game. She said that she had visited the island around 20 years ago, when she

was a child with her family. When she found out about the game, she was intrigued and sat down to play the weekend after she found out about it. Although she did not remember exactly when she played the game, she said that it did give her gooseflesh to see the island from the perspective of a videogame. According to this study participant, the gamers did an amazing job of recreating the island and giving it an eerie feel that she, at least, did not remember getting from her time on the island but she did note that it was an important addition for the game itself. She went on to tell me that she loved the fact that St. Kilda was getting more attention, even though it was an UNESCO world heritage site, she believed that more funding needed to go to preserving the remnants of it and was hopeful that the added publicity would benefit the island. When the subject of added tourism to Skye came up, she said that she hoped that most of the tourists would be smart enough to attempt to make arrangements before heading to Skye in the attempt to reach St. Kilda and therefore there wouldn't be as much of an influx as others had expected. She did say this with a knowing smile and slight laugh indicating that she knew there would be a few dozen tourists showing up with the idea of just hopping on a boat and going over to St. Kilda without having made plans prior to their arrival.

The conversations I had with the locals on the Isle of Skye were filled with pride, trepidation, and hope. While each of my informants was proud of the fact that their Isle was one of the few starting points for the tours to St. Kilda and therefore, they were getting more recognition, they also worried about the impact that more tourists would have on both Skye and St. Kilda. There was still a gleam of hope that this newly rekindled fame for their neighboring island would be a positive affair.

## The Final Sigh Before the End

As with any positive media based touristic experience (as explored in Chapter 6 and "The Story of Irish Tourism and the Positive Effects of Tourism"), my respondents were able to connect to both the virtual and physical worlds in such a way as to capture a sense of the ethereal nature of the video game while at the same time holding on to that memory for later recall. I believe before going further with this discussion it is important to delve a bit deeper into the notion of the ethereality of videogames. When I first read that there was a physical example of Stormpeaks in Scotland, the first thing that came to mind was raiding in Uldar. (Raiding consists of multiple gamers teaming up in order to kill monsters that they would not otherwise be able to take on. These raids often give greater rewards as they are more difficult.) One of my favorite *WoW* memories comes from that raid. My group had been raiding together for about five years by then and were great friends, on and offline. The experience that stands out the most and that we tried to recreate was during the Ignis the Furnace Master raid boss fight. For a bit of background, our raiding group had three healers: me, Riverwinds (River), and Lamar. River and I had a habit of trying to get the other one killed so we could be at the top of the healing charts. (Most games, such as *WoW*, have programs that one can add onto their game in order to track the amount of healing or damage that all of the players within the group are doing, thus being at the top of a healing chart refers to the fact that one has done the most healing within that group.) I was playing a gnome priest at the time as my main character and had this amazing spell called "leap of faith" which would pull the targeted character into the priest's location. During this fight, I decided to bubble (make myself invulnerable to a certain amount of damage), run over to the lava pits on either side of the boss, and when River's health

was really low pull him into the middle of the lava pit while yelling “River, die in a fire!” As he died and we finished off the boss everyone was laughing so hard that it became a thing to tell each other to “die in a fire”. We tried many times to successfully recreate that one brilliant moment, without success. Years later, we still talk about that night and how funny it was. The fact that it was a onetime event that could never be repeated in the exact same moment as it was because of the different levels in gear, the knowledge of the experience, and pure dumb luck demonstrate the ephemerality of the experience.

Although nostalgic attempts were made to reenact this experience, they were unsuccessful which shows the fleetingness of the present. It is my belief that because of the fact that the sites that the participants, or in this case, myself, would be visiting are static, caught in a particular time period, the overlap of the video game’s narrative will give me the feeling of being back in the moment when I was able to successfully thwart River. This is mainly due to the fact that the sites are used to impersonate the experience that is being longed for and not index it as they are not a reference point but the ability to replay (even differently) the experience. I plan to show others this interaction between myself and the site in a series of photos that will be shared through social media to the guild but tagged with River’s real name. (A guild, in the context of gaming, is a group of people who have decided to pool their resources and work together in order to succeed in the game.)

Video games are inherently ephemeral, as my example shows. While you can go back and replay a video game or encounter, it will never be the same as the first time you completed it. Both the player and the character are ever changing as skills and gear are increased. Because of the ephemerality, the fantasy, and performative actions that are involved with a video game,

it lends a greater and more potent need to reconnect with it than a normally experienced memory, thus the need to visit these sites.

This is an example of how nostalgia manifests itself through positive experiences that are locked away for further recollection at a later date. Each of the respondents who contacted me after their trip expressed a sense of gratitude for the chance to make the connection between their physical and virtual experiences with the landscape. While a few admitted that they were slightly put off by the inconsistencies between the two landscapes, for the most part they were able to get behind these inconveniences and try to figure out how and why the programmers made the changes that they did. This level of acceptance is not seen with other media-based tourism (as described in Chapter 8). A comparative study between the different types of media-based tourism might reveal some interesting insights into the desired outcomes and interactions that tourist, more generally, are expecting.

When answering my question of “what was your favorite part about being a video game tourist”, Gwen’s response reflects what I most commonly heard:

I loved the fact that we got to ‘play’ in the real-life space associated with the game – but I also loved the fact that we got to see the places that we had played in come to life in reality. I think these two are kinda interconnected for me - they worked together in order to create a really unique experience of a place that I otherwise may have only seen through a historical or archaeological or religious lens.

The notion of being able to look at a physical landscape and see the different layers of narratives that it has to offer is one of the more intriguing aspects of visiting a site with the intention of interacting with it based upon an experience that was not the builders’ original intent. This seemed to give most of my respondents both a sense of nervous anticipation as to

their reception both before and after their trip as well as some extra excitement. Their additional enthusiasm can be explained by the possibility of being caught doing something that is not completely acceptable. The urge to recreate a nostalgic moment allowed these tourists to overcome their reservations as their experiences, both within the game and the physical landscape, fed off of each other and drove them forward.

### **End Game: Conclusionary Report**

Nostalgia is a powerful force that has the ability to push one out of their comfort zone. For my participants that meant overcoming a sense of nervousness and interacting with a historical site in a nontraditional manner. Being able to reenact the scenes that held meaning to these participants helped to solidify their connections to the games. It was also a powerful memory making opportunity and therefore the social reification of their identities. While most of my participants refrained from overtly interacting physically with the sites, they did visualize and talk about the ways in which their avatars had interacted with the landscape within the games. Thus, their experience at the sites was informed by and/or encumbered by their avatar.

Each of the participants took a sense of connection and stronger sense of who they were as a person from their tourism. This notion brings us back to Chapter 2's discussion of pilgrimage and the encumbered self as seen by the need to be connected to something greater than oneself. As my participants have shown, their connection to the game and the greater community of gamers was strengthened by their exploits. The multifaceted interactions, between the physical landscape, the videogame landscape, and the 'community of gamers, helped in their search for both identity as well as community.

The gamers experiences in the physical landscapes were fraught with encumbrances that shaped those experiences, denying them the unencumbered experience that most tourists and gamers are searching for. Their ties to the site, the orthodoxic reactions of others, and the asynchronicity of the physical and virtual landscapes proved to be a large burden or encumbrance. Feeling a sense of ownership over the landscape as it was the basis for a world in which they had emotional ties, put them in the position of not wanting to exploit or disturb the environment. Adding the possibility of being socially sanctioned by either disapproving glares or removal from the site as well as the fact that the whole of the virtual site was not encapsulated within one site for the most part brought another layer of encumbrance that was not seen with the normal tourists. However, some of my participants were able to rationalize these encumbrances by turning them into a game. Upon returning to the virtual landscapes, most of my participants saw the encumbrances in yet another light, one that reinforced their experiences and connection to the landscape.

## Chapter 5:

### Reaching for the Heavens: Legends, Myths, and Evocative Landscapes

*On the drive to Glencoe from Edinburgh, everything became clear. As the grassy plains gave way to mountains and the highlands, the beauty took my breath away. Before starting off on that drive, I had checked the weather and knew I was racing an oncoming June storm. At about the halfway point, the clouds started to descend and become dark and fierce. Then something clicked for me. I pulled over to consider it. The landscape itself reinforced the notion of the supernatural. As I watched the clouds start to cover the tops of the mountains and work their way down, I imagined myself standing at the peak and being consumed by the clouds along with the mountain. I was jarred out of my revelry by the remembrance of something I had read during my study of Scottish lore and mythos. The people had believed that the gods were in the heavens, literally. So, it stands to reason that these clouds consuming and merging with the mountains may have been believed to be the gods coming down to commune with their creation. The light bulb flashed so brightly that I dove into my car to both get the photos and write this insight down.*





*Figure 5.1: Glencoe and the descent of the heavens. (photo by author)*

*Crossing the bridge to Skye was amazing, almost heart stopping in the beauty that one encounters. Scotland in general is gorgeous but Skye puts the rest of the country to shame. Shortly after crossing the bridge I came to the small village of Kyleakin and decided to stop in order to allow myself the chance to take in the majestic beauty. As I ventured out of my tiny blue car, I stretched my arms and legs and left the car park of the small grocery shop that helped to support this tiny hamlet. I walked around for a bit, noticing the sharp smell of a storm on the air and went to find a way to take in the isle. After a short hike, I came to a sandy spot along the side of the water and shimmied down to explore the area. I looked out over the turquoise sea that was starting to lap with white foam at the edge of the sandy strip, toward the black mountains that ran across the landscape. Just above the mountains loomed pillows of white and gray clouds that were slowly starting to descend and looked as if they would eventually consume the mountains before me. Reluctantly, I started heading back to the car park, knowing that if I did not, I would have to try and find the bed and Breakfast where I had*

*reserved a room in the middle of the oncoming rain. After this first initial glimpse of the isle that is legendary for its magical nature, I could not wait to make the perilous journey to the island of St. Hilda. It is the basis for the video game Dear Esther (Appendix L provides an overall summary of the game), which explores the mystery behind the island and the abandoned ruins left from its ancient and more recent inhabitants. The latest of those who had made the island their home left its shore some 88 years ago, unable to sustain themselves on this harsh island as it is 40 miles from civilization and in the middle of the ocean.*

*Two days before I was to set sail for this eerily abandoned isle, there was a huge storm. When it started, I had been down by the beach and noticed the wind picking up. By the time I left the beach and retreated to my Bed and Breakfast, my glasses looked like someone had taken sandpaper to them and my vision was impaired. I was not going to let a little thing like scratched glasses get me down though! Then the email came in. The only ship with access to the isle this late in the season was out of commission. The storm had put a hole in the hull, and they would not be able to make the journey again this year. While I was disappointed, part of the premise behind the video game was how dangerous it was to even journey out to St. Hilda, let alone attempt to build a life there. So, while I was disheartened, I was still on Skye, and there were places to go and people to talk to.*

*Once the weather cleared enough for me to venture out, I took the advice of the owner of the place I was staying and set out to explore the fairy pools and glens. There is scant written history of the Fairy Glen. What is known is that, according to census reports, the name of the area changed in 1904 from the Dens to the Fairy Glen ([isleofskye.com](http://isleofskye.com)). The association of fairies with this land may have started around the time of the name change in 1904. It is also possible*

*that the association with fairies was superimposed onto the Fairy Glen from the legacy of nearby Eathie Burn which was long associated with the “wee folk” as fairies are known among locals. What is known, however, is that Scottish people have a history of belief in fairies, which I will detail later in this chapter. The history surrounding the Glen is one of mystery, but the lore of the fairies and how they live near or under trees, oddly shaped mounds, and by the water’s edge all fall in line with this area’s topographical features. Here there were many people trekking up and down the trail and the spiraling mounds that are breathtakingly beautiful (Figure 5.2).*



*Figure 5.2: Fairy Glen on the Isle of Skye (photo by author)*

*Eventually I made my way past all of the beautiful mounds and around a small pond to the glen on the other side of a steep and rugged hill. Along with a group of hikers I had inserted myself into, I stopped in amazement. “Now that is what I call magical,” one of the women exhaled. I could not help but agree with her. We explored the beauty that was below us, talking about how magical the area was and how we could imagine the fairies waiting around the*

*corner for us to lose sight of the children or insert themselves into our party. This, this was the connection I had been waiting for. While the angle of the photograph in Figure 5.3 below creates the illusion that the “rocks” are the size of one’s hand, in reality, they are small boulders not easily hefted by even a muscular young man.*



*Figure 5.3: The Fairy Glen on the Isle of Skye (photo by author)*

*As we finished our exploration of this magnificent area, we started talking about my research and why I was on the isle. The woman’s partner exclaimed, “After today, I can completely understand why and how the people would still believe in magical beings like fairies and translate that to different forms of communication, like a video game.” That was it, I thought, that was the connection! It would not be until nearly a year later, sitting in my backyard, yearning to return, that I would put it all together. The connection between Scotland’s landscape and video games was epitomized by the fairy glen. The magical connection between fairies and the land that my fellow explorers had expressed on that isle was strong and real.*

*People used this new form of communicating their stories and beliefs – gaming -- by sharing their experiences, history, and traditions through the creation and incorporation of the landscape itself into their video games.*

Throughout this chapter, I will explore several areas including the myths, lore, and superstitions found throughout Scotland. I will also look at the current scholarly work written about the connection as well as my own experiences with the modern inhabitants of Scotland and why they still hold fast, even if they do not want to admit it, to some of the old ways. I firmly admit to the fact that part of the interest in Scotland is my familial ties to the land. Since this is the case, I will include one of the more superstitious stories from my Scottish heritage. As I will explore throughout this chapter, landscape allows for a physical representation of the social and emotional connection within any culture that allows for a sense of belonging. It is that connection that allows for placemaking rather than it being just an empty space. Once a layer of meaning has been blanketed over a physical space, it has a character of its own within that society, making it a part of the cultural experience.

### **The Lore and Mythos**

From fairies and kelpies to witchcraft and the “strange visitor”, Scotland’s mythos is rich with stories of nonhuman entities making trouble for the locals because of something they forgot to do, or even perhaps did on purpose, that offended the earth. Most of the stories that Americans know about fairies and the like are kindhearted and light. These are not the versions in the Scottish canon. Fairies are evil creatures that steal children and beautiful women and, if one is lucky, put a hellraiser or changeling in their place. A hellraiser or changeling is a fairy that has changed their physical appearance to look like a human. The only way to tell if a loved one has been replaced is by their unseemly actions, such as creating mischief or discontent. If one is unlucky, their loved one will just vanish without a trace.

According to Miller and Douglas (Miller 1851; Douglas 1977), among others, these tales are holdovers from the old religion. These stories were originally meant as an explanation for the dreary weather, the unyielding terrain, the instances of bad luck, and many other maladies that happened to the people. These scholars believe that the reason the myths have such a strong grip on the Scottish people is because of the harsh conditions of the landscape and climate described above, and even though they are grim, they are a source of hope that things can and will turn around for the better. If they just do x, y, and z, that is. There are always creatures that live within the land or water of the area that the humans have claimed to be in control of. The offerings and/or observances required for a positive outcome changes to suit the needs of current population residing within the location.

Fairies and brownies are two of the most common examples of the mischievous creatures that are thought to plague Scotland, so it is important to understand their roles within the mythos as put forward by Miller (1851), Douglas (1977), and Bennett (2012). Fairies are said to be creatures that want nothing more than to live on the earth as humans do. Unfortunately, this is not a possibility as they must live within the fairy realm, unless they can find a replacement for their spot in their realm. They are believed to steal unbaptized babies out of their cribs if the infant is not being watched over, which they replace with one of their own. This human-looking fairy baby will do nothing but cry and throw fits, and that is how one is able to tell that one's child has been, in fact, switched with the child of a fairy. In order for the parents to reclaim their child, they have to go to an area within the forest that is known to be an in-between place (in-between the fairy realm and that of humans) and leave the imposter there for the night. They must keep watch, for the moment that their child is put in the

imposter's place, they must scoop them up and carry them off or their child will be switched again and never have a chance at returning. While this is one of the most common explanations of how fairies interact with humans, it is by no means the only one.

The capture of a fair maiden or beautiful mother is another very common fairy myth (Douglas 1977:100). The woman is taken against her will by the fairies either to have or care for the fairy children. She must serve the fairies for at least one year. If, within that time, a suitor and/or husband is able to win her back, she may be freed from servitude. The women are normally said to be seen within the time period that they are in captivity a few times and are able to tell their lovers what it will take to win them their freedom.

Brownies, on the other hand, are creatures that have lived on the human's land long before humans came into being. They can either be helpful and do chores around the farm, such as milking the cows, cleaning the stalls, or planting, or they can be vengeful creatures that wreak havoc on the family and cause them to lose everything. The difference between these two extremes is determined on the basis of whether the tenants have paid tribute to the brownies or not and given ample appreciation and respect to their host, the brownie. The acts of retribution start out small, with freshly gathered milk turning sour or fresh bread going stale right out of the oven. These are said to be reminders for the humans to do what is required of them. If the humans do not listen, the brownie grows angrier and the instances of "bad luck" grow worse. This continues until the brownie can be sated and/or the humans die.

Scotland also has a famous supernatural creature that only lives within its lochs and waterways in the kelpies. These are shapeshifting water spirits that prey on humans. It is said that they will lure people into the water by changing into a majestic black horse and have them



either ride on their backs or somehow end up affixing themselves to the horse and being dragged into the water. The kelpie will then devour the human and throw the entrails onto the shore as the only trace of their victim. The only way to identify a kelpie and thus, possibly escape such a fate, is to notice its hooves, because the kelpie's hooves are backwards when compared to a real horse.

These three types of stories are among the more prevalent within the Scottish mythos. Each of them displays, as Douglas suggests, the pessimistic nature for which the Scots are known (1977: xvi). They are, however, not where the superstition ends. I do, however, recognize this issue of Tartanism. Pittock reminds us of Hobsbawm and Ranger theory of the invented tradition of Scottish culture (Brown 2010:32). This theory maintains that the “the idea of a factitious tartan identity is an imposition by the Romantic period on the authentic national culture of Scotland” (Pittock 2010:33). While in Scotland, I had the chance to find out a bit about my own family, the MacKenzies of Redcastle. Between old stories that have been passed down through the generations within my family, a bit of research (The Newsroom 2017, MacLeod 2007, and MacKenzie Kettle 2015) and talking with a few locals, I was able to put together an ominous story regarding my own ancestral lands. The castle that was my family's home for over 600 years is now in the hands of another clan and in ruins. The reason for this comes down to superstition and lore. It is said that in the 1700's, there was a drought in the Inverness area, which is the seat of the MacKenzies of Redcastle holdings. This drought lasted for years and caused many deaths from famine. The clan chief put out word that anyone who was able to end the drought should come and do so, and they would be paid handsomely. Many tried, but only one strange-looking sorcerer had the answer: a sacrifice in the way of the

old religion. After some consideration, the chief and his council decided to go ahead and comply. They sacrificed a man of another clan, and still the rains did not come. A month after the sacrifice was made, the heavens finally opened up and the rain fell for weeks. The fields were fertile, and clan MacKenzie was saved. The family of the man who was sacrificed never forgot. When, after the battle of Culloden, the more prestigious members of the MacKenzie clan were forced to flee to America or face death at the hands of the British, this new family came in and took over the lands. They hold the lands to this day. This is a legend that is still believed and used to explain why the MacKenzie family can never again return to their ancestral land. They conspired with a magical creature and used witchcraft to try to turn their luck.

Another example is seen in Letcher's (2001) study about fairies and eco-protestors; he argues that there are two different types of connections protestors have with the land they are attempting to protect and the fairies they believe inhabit the area. The first type of people that are involved in this type of anti-authority action are those who worship the fairies. These are typically people who believe that they have been visited by fairies, such as in the myth above. Their purpose in stopping construction is to save the habitats of those who have called them to do so. Then there are those who believe that the fairies, while mythological creatures, play a very important role within British culture. This group believes that to disrupt the natural habitats that have been attributed to these creatures would, in fact, result in the destruction of British culture. This has become part of a subculture within the British Isles, one that attempts to pay tribute to either the mythos of the Isle or to the fairies themselves. Each reinforces the beliefs and rationales of the other (Lecture 2001:147).

The mythos of an area, then, contains not only the stories of how people used to understand different phenomena but also the traditions, hopes, and fears of the people who retell the stories. The connection that the people feel to such mythological explanations, even if they do not want to admit it, shapes the way they look at their landscape, whether that is by protesting construction of a new road, allowing a castle to fall into ruin, or simply not stepping in a ring of flowers. It is a locus for the encumbrances that can be observed by the way in which the Scottish people interact with their landscape.

### **The Connection to the Land**

The idea that the physical landscape is socially constructed is one that has been accepted by scholars for many years now. As Palmer theorizes, a landscape, like any other cultural image, can be read by those who visit a location as a cultural phenomenon. As an example, the English castle is a reflection both of the original occupant's culture as well as the present society that maintains and cares for the site (1999: 319). While the theory that the landscape is socially constructed has had many iterations, its main theme centers on the idea that how people interact with the land around them determines the way the land is perceived. This perception reinforces the belief that the ideas surrounding the land are innate (Appadurai 1995; Deriu 2003; Palmer 1999; Urry 1992). An example of this is the importance of a street. Let us say that a teenage boy lives on Elm Street and right across from his home lives a girl. They have lived across from each other their whole lives, but it is not until he has feelings for her that he notices the distance and the street that separates them. The street goes from being a mundane physical feature that is a part of his everyday life (or perhaps a place where he and his friends

played ball) to a physical barrier that separates him from the love of his life, thus giving a new life to and interpretation of the street. The boy will see this barrier as something to be conquered, and it gains significance in a different way because of this.

Humans have various ways of changing the significance, meaning, and even physicality of the landscape around them. Legends and myths transform the way that humanity views certain aspects of Mother Earth. We start to anthropomorphize the world around us, such as naming the land Mother Earth. It is how a glen deep within a mountain range that has a hollowed-out tree becomes woven into legends about fairies. In European societies and among people of European descent, many will admit that the wilderness is slightly spooky, if for no other reason than it leaves one exposed to the elements, nature, and typically without the comfort and protection of other humans (Douglas 1977). However, when you weave in stories of fairies who capture a person and whisk her away to another dimension, never to be seen again by loved ones, it adds yet another layer of fear and dread to the landscape. Suddenly, the light hitting a tree just right turns into the glimpse of fairy wings, and the rustling of the leaves is turned into the murmuring of the wee folk. The secluded glen transforms from being something slightly disconcerting to something to be avoided and socially constructed as dangerous. As Douglas suggests, "This powerful imagination is apt to be gloomily affected, and at times distempered, by the natural features of the country, the conditions of life there, and the broodings of the national mind" (Douglas 1977: xxiv). For the most part, the physical landscape of the Isles of Scotland is one that is harsh and uninviting to cultivation and human habitation. Created from volcanic rock, the land is filled with sheer cliffs that plummet to a rocky coastline some 100 meters below, hilly and/or mountainous regions, and soil that is not

deep enough to sustain intensive farming for long periods of time. These geological features leave little desirable and fertile plots of livable land. It is this harsh reality that has shaped the way that the Scots interact with others as well as the land itself-- a bit wearily and with a fierce determination.

As mentioned above, there are many examples of studies that have focused on how the landscape is socially constructed, but I will focus on the work of three scholars whose work provides insight into the connectedness between the Scottish people and their land. The first is Basu (2007) who looks at the pilgrimages that Scottish descendants make back to the Scottish isles as a way of feeling a sense of connectedness that they do not feel in the country of their birth. According to Basu, most of the people who make the pilgrimage to Scotland equate their family history with the plight of indigenous populations even when the evidence does not support this conclusion. They are willing to gloss over any colonialist stories that would thwart this narrative in an attempt to connect to a land they feel will allow them a sense of belonging without the problematic baggage of being a member of a non-native population. This is due at least partly to feelings that, "family history is a great help to orientate oneself in the world. I am the product of my ancestors. Knowing them helps me understand myself" (Ibid:157). This knowledge of one's ancestors is where the connectedness to the land comes into play. The ability to walk a mile in one's ancestor's footsteps, literally, connects the pilgrims physically to the land. They map their family's history onto the land, and the stories become part of the land itself (as well as of them).

John Gray (2000) is another scholar who has examined the socially constructed nature of the land in Scotland through his study of the shepherds on the border lands. Gray explains

that the reiving (and old English term for raiding) of the clans on each other's land and the wars between Scotland and England affected the socioeconomic basis of the area. These two forms of violence shaped the practice of farming and herding, both historically and socially. It also led to the perceived personality traits that exist in the present because of the violent actions of the past. An example of this is the fiery nature of the Scottish people. Gray believes that there is an iatrical link between the people and the land that can be seen in their relationship to their sheep. The sheep are the primary livelihood of the people in this rural area, and, because of this, they focus a lot of their time on them. The sheep are used as a metaphor for the connection to the land itself. While the shepherds spend a lot of time making sure that their herds are not injured or sick, they tend to stay at a distance unless something is wrong, or it is breeding, shearing, or butchering season. This standoffish persona, combined with the harshness but complete dependence on the land, is seen in the relationship between the shepherds and their sheep (Ibid: 123).

One of the more contemporary ways of framing the land as having certain kinds of meaning is through photography. Lenman's (2003) study shows how photographs taken by the tourist industry or those that are attempting to sell the photographs are staged in a way that erases the modern and unwanted aspects of the scenes that are to be photographed in order to get the picturesque qualities that they are looking for and to romanticize the location. However, these areas, such as Skara Brae, tend to be cluttered with tourists and their debris so they are not the picturesque locations that the brochures and photographs attempt to portray. As Lenman puts it, the goal is to "eliminate social and environmental eyesores, perspiring tourists and other unpoetic realities" (Ibid: 104).

What does this mean for the locations as far as the tourists and locals are concerned? Lenman's work demonstrates how photographers are attempting to depict what the areas would ideally look like as well as to create a portrait that the host community would like tourists to see. While this romanticizes the location for those wishing to visit the area, it can also lead to an overwhelming disappointment when the tourists finally arrive at the target location. As a consequence, the locals, at least to some degree, tend to try to make the landscape conform to the standards portrayed in such photographs, thereby changing (or purifying) the landscape and cleansing it of its undesirable features. One finds that they attempt during tourist season to shelter the tourists from the unwelcome sights of the urban work world—as well as of other tourists. As has been widely demonstrated (MaCannell 1976; Smith 1977; Huizinga 1950; Graburn 1983; Salazar and Graburn 2016; Crouch 2004 et. al.), many tourists come to such locations to escape their daily lives and any reminders that will Break the trance of the experience they are looking for are undesirable.

I noticed myself attempting to do just that when I tried to photograph the areas that I was visiting. I would wait for the tourists to step aside so that they would be clear of the area I wanted to photograph. One glaring example where I caught myself attempting to “take modernity out of the photo” was at a church which was also the site of one of the stone circles that the British Isles is so famous for. I was squatting down to get the power line out of the photo when what I was attempting to do (the erasure of modernity) suddenly occurred to me. I was doing what I had scoffed at and trying to elide the way things really are. Photographs already abstract the locations from time and the natural changes that they are subject to, but to intentionally leave out part of the location that did not appeal to me was skewing the

location and would impact the way that I remembered it as well. While my realization and understanding of my actions is not a typical touristic experience, the changing of the photographed site in order to have things the way that one would want it to be is.

Lenman explains how normal and natural this is through his study of Taunt's photographs of the Thames. He writes that Taunt had been able to take away some of the sensory information that comes along with being on the banks of the Thames, such as the stench of the sewage being dumped straight into the river or the visible socioeconomic problems that were rampant during the early twentieth century, when the photographs were taken. Lenman explains,

There was no sign, either, of other conflicts of interest being fought out along the Thames: between municipalities, industrialists, water companies, 'riparian' landowners and the growing numbers of town dwellers coming to fish, boat, ramble and generally disport themselves (Ibid: 98).

These three studies demonstrate that the physical landscape of Scotland is etched by the cultural actions and stories of the people who inhabit the islands. Combined with the rich history of story/myth telling incorporating the landscape as a character, it helps to define the Scottish people themselves. The Scottish people have to put so much time and energy into the land in order to get even enough to sustain themselves, that they treasure what they have that much more, and so tend tell stories to explain their failures and successes. These stories tie the people even closer to the land—and in particular ways.

When chatting with some of the locals, I asked what the connection between the people and the land was. The answers ranged from its historical significance to ancestors to pride. I received an answer to my question on the side of the road, in front of a pasture of sheep at a



small food truck selling lamb burgers. The stand was run by an older gentleman in his late 60s with pure grey hair, green eyes, and skin weathered by the elements. He wore a flannel shirt rolled up to the elbows and an older pair of jeans and referred to himself as a shepherd. “Scottish are hearty stock. There are not many that can say they squeezed a living out of land such as this. My family did and still does to this day,” he replied to my query. “We sell a portion of our meat to Johnny up there,” he continued pointing to the roadside stand up above us, “Our families have been linked for generations, and we haven’t seen a reason to break that now. Plus, his lamb burgers are amazing.”

So, what does all of this change have to do with the connectedness of the people to the landscape? In short, the answer is that their sociocultural experiences are interpreted in relation to a particular social construction of the landscape and vice versa in a cyclical and ongoing way giving meaning to the land and its people as a way of helping the same people form an attachment to the place, they call home. Scotland has the added bonus of having a very rich history that is steeped in myth and legend, giving the landscape a purpose other than just as a geographic space to use and live on. The addition of the wee folk and other supernatural beings that a normal person cannot see gives the people an added layer of reverence for the land as, while they might not admit it, there is always the chance that there is at least some truth in the stories of their ancestors. There might just be a fairy around the corner waiting for them to look away from their path for just a second. That split second of distraction is all that is needed for one of the wee folks to take their revenge and cause a person to stumble and fall to the ground.

## The Beauty of the Digital Landscape

Landscape is an integral part of any videogame; it is the backdrop that not only adds to the storyline but also allows for the character to have a home. While this dissertation will dedicate Chapter 8 to looking at the meaning making that happens between the landscape and gamers, it is important to understand at least the basics of why the landscape is important. There are websites dedicated to describing which games one should go and just explore as well as games that are meant to replicate the touristic experience as well as games that are meant to replicate the tourist's experience such as *Go Vacation*, *Vacation Simulator*, and *Oculus Quest Gameplay*. With the addition of 3D gaming, these immersive experiences are hard to distinguish from physically being in the location. Such games are also quickly gaining in popularity.

The websites that focus on tourism within videogames span from gaming bloggers such as The Dragon's Tea Party to that of tourism sites such as TourRadar and Destination Tips. The idea behind the business websites seems to be to get gamers to become invested in the different gaming sites and then possibly want to make the travel themselves. Destination Tips has a brief 90-word summary of each of the eight games that they review, and a screen shot that shows just how beautiful the game is. After explaining how beautiful the game is, the website very helpfully gives the visitor a link, at least for a few of the games, to a tour that they can take that will echo the experience that the gamers have within the game. Peter Simons, the author of the Destination Tips article explains,

Have console, will travel. If you love exploring big cities, foreign lands and exotic locales, but don't have the time or budget for a real trip, you can go the virtual

route. Through various video games, today's armchair traveler can escape to an on-screen destination and get some sense of what it's like to actually go there. (2015)

A good example of this is their number four choice, S.T.A.L.K.E.R: Shadow of Chernobyl. They explain that this game is set in the wake of a second nuclear explosion dealing with Chernobyl and that the creators based the landscape on the town of Pripyat. Then they quickly add that "if you really want to explore this abandoned region of Ukraine, there are Chernobyl tours there today" (Simon 2015) with the text "Chernobyl tours" connected by a hyperlink to Chernobyl-tours.com.

Blogs such as The Dragon's Tea Party use the idea of in game tourism as a way to review the games that they believe other gamers would like to explore. This blog gives a mirthful explanation of the games with examples mirroring what you would see in a travel guide. Those visitors that leave comments on the post do so in a manner that echoes the author's idea that the games are a substitute for physically traveling. You see in these posts the embodiment that was discussed in Chapter 2 as they talk about the activities as being something that the player and not the character will experience. The blog is written using a first-person narrative, allowing the player to feel as if they are the ones performing the actions talked about. The following quote provides an example pulled from The Dragon's Tea Party 2019 blog illustrating this point:

You wanted some sky diving, scuba diving, beach time and a lavish hotel? We'll do you one better. A truly back to nature experience: hike across the island, see lots of rare and exotic animals, hunt and kill them to make a range of bags and clothing. Become a local hero showing the natives how it's done as you liberate their homes from scary pirates (no previous fighting experience necessary). Fancy a souvenir? How about a tattoo documenting your adventures and

achievements throughout your time on the island? Perfect for the adventurous adult seeking escape and excitement.



Figure 5.4 Screenshot from Playstation's VR game Perfect

### Why Do They Do the Things They Do?: A Brief Conversation with a Programmer

*I straighten my shoulders as I ready myself for the task ahead: attempting to talk to one of the programmers. I am uncertain of my reception as I have had zero luck thus far getting any response from the company as a whole. It is a tall building with a lot of windows and is more modern than any of the other buildings in the vicinity. I take a deep Breath and as I slowly let it out, I clamp my arm with the notebook to my chest and reach for the right side of the double doors leading into the building. Upon entering, I am given "the stink eye" by the receptionist which causes me to look down and check to make sure I am in fact wearing clothing and this is not just a bad dream. I am fine, dressed in brown muslin pants and a T-shirt that says, "my gaming time is for YOUR safety". As I approach her desk, she asks if I have an appointment.*

*With only a slight stutter, I say no and explain why I am here. She says she will see if anyone will*

*see me and tells me to take a seat. After 30 minutes, she has not gotten back to me so I ask if there is a restroom I can use. She directs me down the hall with a roll of her eyes.*

*Quickly, I head down the hall and attempt to peer into a few of the windows as I pass, hoping to spot a programmer but not be noticed at the same time. As I near the bathroom, I hear music coming from one of the offices 15 feet down the corridor. As I place my hand on the bathroom door, I quickly look both ways to see if anyone is coming and seeing the hallway clear, I hustle toward the door. I stop as it is cracked a fraction of an inch. The name on the person residing inside is on the left side of the door but they do not have a title and the name means nothing to me.*

Programmers in general, seem to be just as ethereal as the video games they produce. Only one of the smaller gaming companies, The Chinese Room, responded to my requests to speak with them. From what I have been able to ascertain through both my efforts as well as talking to colleagues, reading forums such as reddit, and attempting to find interviews with programmers regarding their reasons for choosing the backdrops for their games that they did, is that they are few and far between. I was only able to find two people willing to let me interview them about anything relevant to my research questions regarding the use of physical landscapes as backdrops for videogames—the creators of *The Bard's Tale*. According to these two study participants, the mysterious and alluring sparseness of Scotland captured the exact feel they were attempting to recreate within their programs. Both admit that their game is only loosely based upon the physical landscape and that it served as more of an inspiration than trying to recreate said locations exactly.

Dan, one of the programmers from The Chinese Room put it simply in his email and yet very eloquently,

I also wanted to find a way to limit the playspace in a way that didn't require walls as such, so an island was a natural site for it.

Once we started playing with the assets and the notion of an island, the idea of looking at a remote scottish island came pretty naturally to be honest. I started doing some geographical research for inspiration, and came across Boreray. [One of the smaller islands that makes up St. Kilda.] Reading up on the history of the island turned up the whole 'white lines' thing, and that pretty much was it 😊.

We never visited – it's incredibly hard to get to – so we pulled quite a lot of images and maps off the internet. I should say it's VERY loosely based on Boreray and in no way an accurate representation of the actual island, but there are parts of the geography that are recognisable I think, or drawn more from images. But it was fairly loose.

As a Scottish company, using the landscape that was familiar to them allowed for an easier time interpreting and minimally allowing for a more authentic feel for their created landscape. They were able to program the typically high winds, the flora and fauna that surrounds them constantly, along with the isolated feeling that some of the more remote locations within Scotland naturally have.

In a similar fashion, Brian Fargo, one of the original creators of *The Bard's Tale*, has stated in many different interviews that his inspiration for the game's landscape is based upon Skara Brae. In Yin-Poole's 2015 article regarding the launching of a Kickstarter fund that Fargo created in order to start the final game in the series they write, "The folklore behind The Bard's Tale 4 is inspired by the Orkney Islands in Skara Brae in Scotland, and the soundtrack and lyrics take cues from Scottish culture" (2015). Fargo even included a photo of himself standing in

front of the Neolithic ruins of the physical version of Skara Brae for a promotion (Figure 5.5) involving the upcoming game.

While the game is loosely based on Skara Brae, it has an alternative history that is a spin-off of what is currently known about the archaeological site. In the game, Fargo uses Scottish culture, folklore and landscapes in order to give the players an authentic feel for this alternative version of what Skara Brae could have been like if they followed his version of the historical events.



*Figure 5.5 Photo of Brian Fargo at Skara Brae from Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-Playing Games 2e.*

While I had little explanation from the programmers as to their current methods of creating their landscapes was concerned, I did get to talk with a Ranger for the Inner Hebrides Islands as well as one of the managers of Dunnottar Castle. Both of these ladies had some insight as to what had been done as far as their sites were concerned. The Ranger, Emily, told me that she had heard that there was a group from the Glasgow School of art that was working with the Inner Hebrides archeological team to do a laser scan of the island for a 3D walk through of the islands. The manager of Dunnottar Castle, Jo-Anna, said that she was not aware

of the link to any video games other than that of Disney's *Brave*. She said that they team had come up to the castle and did multiple sketches of the different locations within the castle.

## Summary

The myths, legends, the landscape itself, and connection that the Scottish people have to the land all play an important part in the creation of the society and culture of the Highlanders. It is this combination of influencing forces that makes the Scottish landscape the perfect background to inspire so many video games.

Scottish myths and legends are also one of the forces that have influenced perceptions of the landscape. These are important as they place a particular social layer upon the landscape and add to the mystery, as well as giving a meaning to the land that the Scottish quite literally live with and in. The rugged hills, abundance of lochs, and little level and fertile land, have contributed to people searching for reasons for their struggles and have, in turn, lead to them finding answers in the myths and legends they have created and tell to themselves and others. While originally used as a way to understand physical phenomena, these stories have been passed down through the generations and became intertwined in the way that the Scottish people both interact with, as well as see, the land. Most of the myths and legends both reflect and help to perpetuate the supposedly pessimistic and wary nature of the Scots, as they have been understood by them to be warnings to respect the earth as well as a reminder of the dangers it possessed (Douglas 1977). From fairies that steal away babies and beautiful lasses, to brownies that must be appeased, to water kelpies that warn against going to the loch by



oneself, all such interpretations of the landscape and the forces and beings that inhabit it have, in turn, shaped the way the Scots perceived the land they are living on.

Such sentiments tie into the strong bond that the Scottish people have with their land. They are both afraid of the dangers as well as proud of the fact that their families have been able to survive in such harsh conditions for millennia. There is something to be said for being able to stick one's toes into the same soil as one's distant ancestors. It is the land and the stories that connect a people to their past. The knowledge of "this is where I came from" and "this is why we do x, y, and/or z" is important to understanding most of humanity. It puts actions, physical characteristics, and familial personality traits into perspective. This is seen in the great droves of people who travel to Scotland generations after their ancestors were forced to leave the island (myself included).

From the mythical feelings and richness of colors Scotland is steeped in legends and myths that are ripe for storytelling. The stories of the need and desire to survive through physical obstacles and come out the other side with a sense of accomplishment is the stuff of video games. While there are thousands of other sites around the world that lend themselves as a backdrop for a profoundly evocative videogame in both narrative and landscape, few have the same deep seated, intrinsic, and mythically rich history as the vistas of Scotland and Northern England. So why Scotland? Its mythos and terrain combine to set this magical country up as the basis of so many great video games.

## Chapter 6:

### Side Quests! Puzzle Game: Juxta Positioning of the Physical Sites

Understanding the inspiration behind the beautiful vistas that gamers visit on a regular basis has become a more common thread among many gaming communities, (such as reddit), as the gaming technology has advanced to the point where the coders are able to create an environment that is realistic and not just boxy representations typical of games in the past. The need to know what is behind the environments that have been a safe haven or place in which gamers feel free to be themselves, has led to speculation by some within the gaming community about similarities between different famous sites and possible travel to those locations. While for the gamers this is another way to connect with the environment in which they have come to feel so comfortable, it does not always evoke the same enthusiasm in those who run the historical/physical sites. In this chapter, we look at the different ways in which the sites have handled the addition of the story within the video game (what I have been calling the videogame narrative) at the physical sites themselves. We then turn to look at Salazar's (2009) theory of repackaging culture as a commodity. Within this chapter, I show how layering of the sites' narratives (historical, the story in the video game, etc.) affects not only the sites themselves and the visitors, but the stories the locals attach to the site (a "local narrative") and the resulting sense of authenticity of the experience of the tourists who visit. Throughout these different explorations of how, why, and what is happening at these locations, the running thread of forced acceptance and cultural appropriation will be apparent. While I acknowledge the problematic possibilities that some scholars might have with my not addressing these

issues, I believe that is a subject in of itself that should be addressed separately as my research did not focus on those issues nor do I feel as if my addressing it will impact my study.

A few months before I was to set off on my journey to Scotland, I emailed each of the sites that I planned on going to giving them dates and times I would be at their sites. They each responded in a different manner. Some responded with positive excitement at my confirmation regarding my intent to complete a portion of my study at their site and some did not respond at all. For each site the interactions that I had in email form were to be predictive of the type of welcome that I received upon my arrival.

### **The Spin Off: Incorporation of the Gaming Narrative**

There is one site that stands out beyond the rest as to the ability to incorporate the narrative of the video game more effectively than the other sites. While the video games themselves, are not the highlight of the tourists' experiences, the portions of the game that involve Harry Potter are front and center when visiting Alnwick Castle (see Appendices A and B for summaries of the videogame and touristic narratives). It is possible that the reason for this is the fact that the Harry Potter fan base is just so big and intense that the tourists I talked to had played the games because as one tourist put it, "well, why not, it is the chance to pretend to be Harry Potter." The castle is the place where the movies were filmed and thus has seized on the popularity of the franchise in order to make money. So, if Harry Potter fans, or an awkward anthropologist, want to talk about the video games, the workers are more than happy to oblige them.

Alnwick Castle is unique in the fact that it has, at least, attempted to include multiple different narratives as a way to capture the attention of people from many different backgrounds. It has not focused on a single narrative but has given at least a corner to each of the very popular franchises that have filmed there. Harry Potter stands out as the shining star in that there are tours dedicated to just the fandom, activities from broomstick flying lessons to interactive magic shows, and showings of the Harry Potter movies. These activities are advertised as being available for fans of any age to participate in both through the official Alnwick website ([alnwickcastle.com](http://alnwickcastle.com)) as well as the workers. I was given the honor of spending some time as a broomstick flying instructor trainee. Alnwick castle's narrative is that it is the hub of Northumberland's economic, political, and social life while at the same time holding the title of being the "Harry Potter Castle" (see Appendix A). During this time, I was allowed, and encouraged, to interact with the visitors and have them answer a few questions for me. I was given the job of helping the actors who played Wizarding professors by taking or handing out tickets, grabbing brooms, holding props, and generally helping the visitors and actors as needed. This experience allowed me to explore how the employees viewed the castle, its visitors, the Harry Potter franchise, and the local community. It also gave me another perspective through which to interact with the visitors as a (non-paid) semi-employee instead of just a researcher and tourist myself. The fact that I was able to have this type of interaction with the blessing of the management shows the castle staff's level of commitment to enhancing the visitors' experience (reference Chapter Two).

The most interesting thing about visiting Alnwick Castle was that the multiple narratives, so one can experience the castle in different ways depending on their interests. From historical

information, to Harry Potter fandom, to Downton Abbey, to the gardens, the castle and its inhabitants try to make it so that there is something for everyone (Baxter and Shrimpton 2004). Downton Abbey was a popular television series set at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This show is a drama that focuses on the conflict that is brought to the aristocrats of its time as modernity starts to take hold and they see their way of life vanishing (IMDb 2020). At any given time, you can see a history buff with historical pins holding an old book beside a person dressed as a wizard. Each of these people are so immersed in their own experience that they barely notice the other. This changes the experience and allows for multiple different experiences to be performed simultaneously. If one was so inclined, one could go back and experience each of the different narratives during different visits and get a completely different experience while never going to a different portion of the castle. There are tours that allow for the narrative to be spun in ways that cater to the different interests which help to shape the experience.

One of the days that I was at the castle, the courtyard, or bailey, was divided into four different portions. This separation was done easily as there is a concrete walkway that physically separates two of the different parcels of grassy land from each other and walls that can be used to eyeball the other cross sections (Figure 6.1) On the northern most parcel they had broom stick flying lessons being held every 30 minutes. On the southern quadrant there was a group of younger children dressed in historical reenactment garb either as English warriors or Scottish invaders. The eastern quadrant held a medieval performer doing fire tricks, string work, comedy, and general entertainment. The western quadrant was left empty for people to sit and watch the 3 different activities that were happening in the other quadrants. During this time there were several guided tours that walked around each of these events as

well. None of these activities interacted with the others or seemed to take away from the experiences that were being had by any of the participants. This was in part due to the wonderful acting of the staff who easily kept the attention of those participating in their events. The actors performed roles ranging from witches and wizards to knights and ladies from the Middle Ages to servants from the early 1600s. These performances are not done on a stage but at all times when the actors are in costume and in the presence of guests.

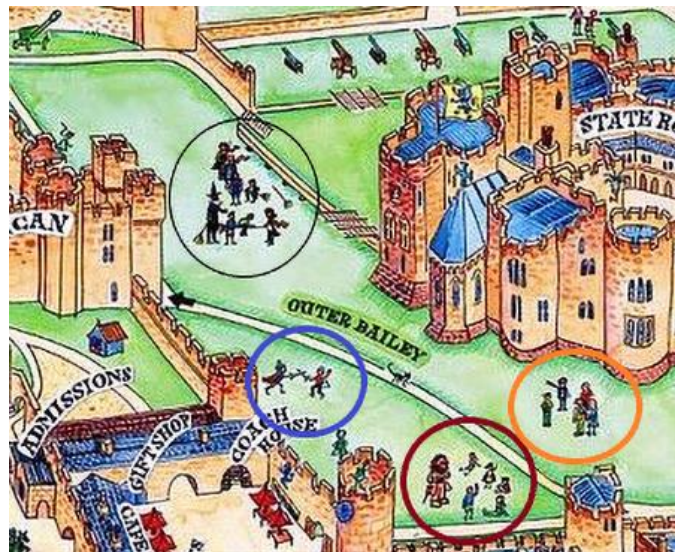


Figure 6.1 Map of Alnwick Castle: The four areas that are divided in order for different activities to occur simultaneously are circled with different colors in order for them to be more apparent. (Map from Alnwick Castle)

*Learning to fly a broomstick is perhaps the most visibly entertaining activity and attracts a significant number of participants daily. With the crimson and gold admission ticket in hand, the visitors line up, ready to learn how to fly a broomstick. One of the wizards and I lean on the broomstick cart chatting, waiting for the signal to start checking tickets and getting the lessons started. The wizard in question is a young man maybe 24 years old and roughly 5'11" tall, stick thin, and dressed in a black wizard's cloak and traditional black pointed hat. The point extends a*

*good foot and a half above his head straight up, with a gold and red Gryffindor scarf to accent his look. The worn brown leather boots and trousers that you can barely see poking out beneath his robe clash starkly with the rest of the outfit. He chuckles as we start to get into character. He straightens himself into a regal stance and thickens his accent as he starts to move off toward the line of excited Harry Potter fans. He walks down the row, commenting on the different houses that people are proudly displaying on their person. He gives high-fives to those in the same House as his own, and makes disparaging remarks such as “what a pity” with a shake of his head to those who belong to other Houses. His counterpart is an older man in his mid to late 50s who is dressed in a gray wizard’s hat that has an over-sized white feather sticking out of the dark gray band on the base of the hat. His black wizard’s robe is open, and he is wearing a white peasant shirt with gray slacks and black shiny shoes. He is using a green scarf as a belt.*

*They decide it is time and the younger wizard bellows a welcome and has the line follow him as he skips onto the flying field and turns their line toward the back wall. He introduces himself as William Wallace Windom, yes WWW just like the internet, and then bows to his counterpart who introduces himself as Henry Sneed Wizard Supreme. (Their names and House affiliation change from class to class and day to day.) He then points to me and crooks his finger, introducing me as “just the assistant” who should have brought his broom with her as she was coming out that way anyway. The crowd laughs and I slink back to grab the indicated broom. I pass the broom discretely to WWW and he starts his rehearsed part of dividing this line into two by having them count off by twos. When one of the participants is not paying attention and breaks the flow of the counting off, he loudly announces that we have someone who is unable to count to two and says, “You are two, say it with me. I am two, good now keep going.”*

*He then says that they need to separate the lines in order for the fliers not to run into one another so those that are number two, following his lead, will take five Hagrid size steps forward. He leaps forward a good meter with each step, bellowing the count out. He then looks at the uneven line and ushers the number ones back to their places.*

*“The first thing that needs to happen in order for a person to fly”, WWW says, “is they need a broom. However, there is a special way in which one receives a broom.” He quickly swivels his head and looks at his counterpart, “Professor Sneed, would you like to demonstrate for our noobs?”*

*Professor Sneed nods and steps in between the two lines. “Assume the position,” WWW yells. Professor Sneed hikes up his robes and plants his feet shoulder width apart with a greatly exaggerated step, then bends at the knees to make it look like he is sitting in an invisible chair and thrusts out his hands in front of him. “Very nice form,” WWW comments. “Now, as you all have witnessed, there is an art to the receiving of your broom. Everyone assume the position!” The visitors giggle as they all attempt to copy the stance that has been demonstrated to them. WWW checks to make sure that everyone is in the proper position, complimenting or correcting based upon the attention to form that each of the guests are showing. One of the adults is only giving about half effort and WWW, walks up to him and says, “You will not be able to receive your broom like that, arms out properly!” as he demonstrates beside the gentleman.*

*“Good, good, now Professor Sneed, we are ready to continue to the next step”. Professor Sneed starts to wiggle his fingers. “Very good, this is your broomstick receiving position,” WWW states. “Now, when I say the mystical magical words, you will grab your broom.” WWW scans the group to make sure everyone is paying attention and plants himself in front of Professor*



*Sneed, "Ready?" he asks. Professor Sneed nods his head and continues to wiggle his fingers while maintaining the proper stance. "GRAB IT NOW," WWW bellows and tosses the broom between Professors Sneed's outstretched hands. Professor Sneed grabs the broom and straightens himself and then takes a bow. The visitors are chuckling madly, and WWW turns sharply, "Assume the broom stick receiving position," he bellows. He nods in my direction as I have gathered an arm load of brooms and hand a few to each of the wizards and go back for more. The wizards slowly work their way down the lines allowing each visitor in turn to have the experience of receiving their first broom. When WWW gets to the adult who was not putting in an effort earlier, he turns to me, smirks and I run back to grab a small broom of about a meter in length (as compared with the nearly 3-meter-long brooms that most of the other visitors have received). WWW, nods and says thank you, then turns to the man who is beet red and asks him if he is ready? The man nods and grabs his tiny broom while the people that are in his group laugh loudly.*



*Figure 6.2 Two wizards attempt to demonstrate how to fly a broom at Alnwick Castle. (Photo by author)*

*The wizards then demonstrate how to mount the broom, which is just as hysterical as the receiving of the brooms as they “jump” onto the broom by lifting one leg and place the broom with a flourish between their legs. They then have the visitors decide on their own sound for their brooms as “we wouldn’t want a broomstick flying accident on their first try.”(reference Figure 6.2) They then allow the visitors to attempt to fly their brooms, bouncing with a flourish and making their broomstick flying noises. They lead them in a series of different activities ending with the “test” which is comprised of a version of the stop-and-start game of red light, green light. Professor Sneed stands at the starting point and demonstrates the different broom positions and states the required skills that they represent. If the broom is facing down towards his feet it means that they must stop and freeze in place, if not they will be sent to the back and have to start over.*

*Sneed raises his broom and most of the visitors launch off the wall at Breakneck speed just for Professor Sneed to lower the broom five seconds later. Four of the fliers are sent back as they do not stop in time. Professor Sneed laughs and starts to make the broom hop in the air, the fliers hop their brooms toward him, and he quickly changes it to a swishing motion and the fliers switch to galloping. He puts the broom down, indicating that the fliers should stop and most of them do. WWW goes through the crowded yard, looking at each of the fliers. He puts his face in one of the fliers faces and makes a strange face and the flier starts to laugh. “You moved, back with you!” WWW declares triumphantly. Professor Sneed starts again and they are able to send a few more fliers back to start over before allowing each of the participants to complete the task.*

*The wizards then gather everyone into a circle and declare that they have some good news and some bad news. Professor Sneed asks if the group wants to hear the good news or bad news first. The group says bad news and Professor Sneed sniffles, "That is the end of your broomstick flying training. Yes, I know, let it out. It is okay to cry." He wails dramatically in demonstration. WWW says, "the good news is that you all pass with flying colors," he then raises his hands and signals for them to cheer, "and as you return home to your schools and offices, you will tell your friends that you learned how to fly a broom at Alnwick castle. They won't believe you, so we will show you how to take photographic evidence." I won't spoil the surprise by recounting how this is accomplished, I will say only that the wizards and I spend the next ten minutes or so helping the visitors to take the photos all the while the wizards were also posing with those that asked for photos. People are milling about, attempting to take their photos and talking with excitement in their voices. As people are finishing up, they say that there is one last thing, and they describe my study and direct people to come talk to me. After a few minutes, we return the brooms to the cart that have been left strewn about the yard and ready for the next class of fliers.*

### **Pausing the Game Play: The Appearance of Ambivalence at a New Narrative**

St. Conan's Kirk's employees denied any knowledge of the connection between the game and their location. However, that might be partly because most of the visitors and employees that I observed during my time there were over the age of 50 and therefore less likely to play video games. The narrative of St. Conan's Kirk is one of good versus evil being played out and a son's

love for his mother personified through the creation of this place of worship. (Reference Appendix E)

An old church on the edge of a body of water far from the main population lends itself to being turned into a ruin with buried treasure underneath it. While the Kirk is well kept up, the current state suggests that it is older than the two centuries that it claims to be. This is partially due to the fact that the upkeep has not always been enough to keep it fully functioning. There is a portion of the kirk that is sectioned off and is not in use. There are also the remnants of stairs that lead to a doorway just to the right of the main entrance that echo this notion of long forgotten stories. While liberties were taken with the location of the kirk (such as in the game the kirk is on a hill overlooking the sea) in the physical realm the hill is about a half mile away and it is nestled by a beautiful loch. The fit is perfect between the game's landscape and that of the physical world.

The group I went to St. Conan's Kirk with was a small one, consisting of only three people including myself, Gwen and Cole, introduced in Chapter One. There was a huge difference between the way that the group I was with interacted with the environment of the Kirk and that of the Alnwick Castle interactions between visitors and the site as described above. We were much less obvious about our interests in the kirk than the Harry Potter fans were at Alnwick. We did talk to one of the workers while we were there as they did not answer any of my emails that I had sent prior to our planned trip to the Kirk. I had attempted around ten times to contact the Kirk using the email address that they provide on their website. Each email included an explanation of my study and asked for more information on both the Kirk as well as if they were aware of the connection to the videogame. I marked the last two emails in

such a way that I was able to see that they had received them but never got a response. While the person working at the Kirk found it interesting, she dismissed it since she saw the kirk as a “working church,” as such they were not interested in having more tourists and so would not even think about incorporating or having a mention of the game. She did invite us to explore to our hearts were content. This reaction did stifle our interaction as well as the interactions of some of my contacts that went without me to the kirk but wrote me about their experience.

Everyone reported that they found the experience thrilling but at the same time were concerned to physically interact with the site for fear of being asked to leave. While this did not stop them from interacting with the site in a physical way such as climbing on the side of the entry way, it did limit the experience and they felt as if it they had to pretend to just be looking at certain parts of the kirk when others were present instead of interacting with the site in the manner that they had intended based upon their experiences of parkour within the game. I did have one participant tell me that the ambivalence of the staff to the gaming narrative added to their experience as Nathan Drake would not have been forward with any of the locals in regard to his intentions with the site. So, whether it stifled the experience or added to it, the site’s employees and caregivers’ refusal to incorporate the gaming narrative changed the way that my contacts interacted with the site. One has to wonder what type of things could be added to the experience if the kirk were to add the gaming narrative to the site. While they do not have to have anything as dangerous as a parkour course, something that allowed gamers to interject their gaming experience onto the site in a more tangible way would completely change the experiences they are currently able to have.

## End of the Storyline: Denial of the Video Game Narrative

While the majority of the sites that I visited accepted and encouraged my questions and eliciting participants for my study, there were two sites that were not as welcoming. Both of these sites responded negatively to my initial questions regarding the knowledge of the connection between video games and their sites. I had more luck with the second round of contacts with Dunnottar Castle than I did at Skara Brae. However, at least while I was in Scotland, both places ignored the connection. We will start with their response to this possible addition to the narratives surrounding the site by talking about Dunnottar and then turn towards Skara Brae's staff's response.

As with the other sites, it is important to understand the history of Dunnottar Castle itself to understand why the site refuses to incorporate the video game narrative. The history of Dunnottar Castle as I recount it is based upon the travel guides and official tourism site of the Castle itself (Dunnottar Castle 2016) see Appendix J.

The first contact between myself and the manager of Dunnottar Castle was almost hostile. I was told that they already had enough people doing studies for that summer, even though I wanted to do my study the following summer, and that they did not have any connection to the video game, period. This, in spite of the fact that *Call of Duty: Ghosts* has a battlefield, also known as a map, specifically called Stonehaven, the town in which the Castle is located. The videogame's map is designed very similarly to that of the physical map of the castle, with signs explaining what each building used to be used for. This connection was something that the manager was not interested in hearing about and I was told that I could come, but that I would not receive the information I was after.



Figure 6.3 and 6.4: Above are side by side maps of Dunnottar Castle. The one on the left is from the sign outside of the physical location and the one of the right is from the game, Call of Duty: Ghosts. The white spots within the game's map indicate pathing. (photos by author)

The courtesy email that I sent out prior to leaving for Scotland to each of the sites within my study, was returned with a questioning response from the new manager of Dunnottar Castle. She had taken over management of Dunnottar in the few months between my conversation with the previous manager giving me permission to conduct research on the site and the courtesy email confirming my intent to conduct research at the site. The new manager was not told about any research going on within the castle grounds that summer and had not heard of the connection between the video game and the site. Once I explained things to her, she said that she would send out my questions to her employees and get back to me with their responses and that I was welcome to come and talk to some of her visitors. The new manager did tell me that they had birthday parties that were Disney Princess themed as the site was used in the creation of Disney's *Brave* movie. (*Brave* is a cartoon movie that involves a fiery redheaded Scottish princess, Merida, who is determined not to be boxed into a role she does not fit into. Merida performs gendered feats of bravery such as being an excellent marksman with a bow. She is anything but the typically Disney princess.) I did not hear back from the

manager, even after Yin-Poole's 2015 article regarding the launching of a Kickstarter fund that Fargo y ticket and reinjuring my knee on the ascent to the castle, I wandered around looking for employees. The three I was able to track down had no clue what I was talking about. So much for that line of questioning. I did find a few younger tourists that were talking about the game and trying to find hiding places that would be good to use as a sniper but as they were teenagers unaccompanied by their parents/guardians, I was unable to include them as participants in the study. I did however, observe their interactions with the site as the castle is considered a public location and therefore while I could not elicit responses or information from the younger tourists, I could watch as we all occupied the same location within the grounds. I was also able to observe how the gamers reacted toward and interacted with the site as opposed to that of a non-gamer tourist. I am assuming by the chatter, demeanor and interaction with the site that the tourists I have categorized as normal, were not in fact gamers. A few of them did state that they did not play video games, but the majority of them I have categorized based on observation. The difference in reverence shown for the sites was staggering. The gamers did not climb on portions of the structures that had signs saying not to climb on them, even if they would have been able to get a better "vantage point" for their game reenactment while the non-gamer tourists climbed away to get that perfect photo. Reference Chapter Two for more information on normal tourist behavior.

Skara Brae was my final and most anticipated site. Skara Brae's narrative is that it is one of the oldest examples of a Neolithic village whose history and purpose is thought to be of a religious nature (see Appendix C). The game that it is connected to Skara Brae is called *The Bard's Tale*. While based upon the otherworldly feeling of Skara Brae, the video game is a D&D



inspired game in which the hero, a bard, learns how to control his powers. The hero is tasked with using said powers to fight foes and protecting the village of Skara Brae from the creatures that threaten the village's way of life (see Appendix D). This game was one of the first that I played when I was a child. When I had first started researching the link between these video games and the physical site of Skara Brae, I was shut down at most turns. Even though there was an interview with the original creator of the game, the site refused to entertain the notion that there was a connection. A glaring example of this is that on the bottom of Skara Brae's Wikipedia site—where you can attempt to edit it, there was a line stating, "PLEASE DO NOT ADD IRRELEVANT TRIVIA ABOUT COMPUTER GAMES" (Wikipedia 2018). As the new version of *The Bard's Tale* has been released, the site has come to terms with the fact that their site is in fact linked to a few videogames. They have not incorporated these narratives into the site's grand narrative, but it is a start. At my writing of this dissertation, the "decree" to not add irrelevant trivia about computer games is still under the editing tab for "In popular culture", although the website does now have the link to *The Bard's Tale*, even if they do refer to it as a "highly fictionalized version of Skara Brae" (Wikipedia 2018). They are completely right in the statement that it is highly fictionalized, but it is a videogame, and any representation of a site will be used with the videogame creator's artistic license, as seen with *The Uncharted* series' use of St. Conan's Kirk. This is a normal and well accepted practice within the gaming community.

I was reluctantly given the okay to do my research at the physical site, but never received any further communication I have attempted to contact them several times since my time on Orkney but to no avail. When I was at the physical site itself, I was discouraged on

many occasions by the employees from asking questions regarding this link between the physical site and the videogame. They said they were happy to talk about the history but had no knowledge of the videogame connection. It was a world heritage site and that was it. I tried several times to talk to visitors and only once got a response of confirmation of the connection with the site that was not interrupted by an employee. Maybe I should have taken the hint, but I DID get permission to be there and I was not going to let anything stand in my way. After several hours and a lot of disappointment, I ended my research for the day. There was no possible way to interact with the site as a gamer or recreate any of the nostalgic remembrances from the game itself as there were paths that lead around the buildings' remains but the buildings themselves were roped off to the public. Unfortunately, fate or something like it stepped in and I ended my time in Scotland very shortly after my initial attempt at research within Skara Brae, making any other attempts at collecting data there impossible.

### **The Question of Authenticity: How narratives shape the interactions that tourists have at the different sites**

When looking at the different levels of an authentic experience that a site can offer, it is imperative that one turn to Dean MacCannell's (1973) writing and his staging theory. MacCannell takes Goffman's 1959 front/backstage theory and adds to it so that it does not just consider the social workings of a group but also allows this theory to be placed over the top of tourist locations in order to better understand what they are doing and why. Goffman's work is where we should begin this discussion as it the original idea from which MacCannell's theory of front and backstage at tourism sites is formed. Goffman argued that all social interactions are

equivalent to that of a play, where there is the staged front area that is presented to the public and the back area where all of the interactions that are not to be made public but are essential to the running of the staging area take place. The presentation of the front staging area is always oriented to the recipient audience and the social norms that they come with, while the backstage is where the bickering and hegemonic and/or doxic ideologies take shape.

MacCannell expands on these ideas to include four other stages of backstage. These stages include the “front backstage” (stage 2) which can be likened to visiting a historic location and the guide pointing out the garbage can behind the wall of ivy or the telephone cable slightly sticking out of the wall. In this “stage” the tourists are allowed to have a sense that they are in fact having an authentic experience as they are seeing the inner workings while still being shielded from the majority of the backstage. This area was never intended to be the backstage, only allow for the tourists to think that they were glimpsing something that was not in fact meant to be there. Then there is the “backstage”, or third stage, which few visitors get to see, such as the “backstage” on a news station. It is still not the innermost portion of the site’s workings nor is it free from staging. It is typically decorated in a deliberate fashion so that it does not give away anything that the site’s inhabitants/employees do not wish for the public to see. At the same time, it allows for the tourists to feel as if they are stepping into the way of life that they are visiting. The fourth stage is an even greater look towards the backstage but still staged to a degree. This staging is done with the idea of being barer than that of the last stage but still cleaned and organized in a way that will not embarrass or give a full picture of what a day in the life of the locals would look like, but the tourists get the feeling that they have successfully penetrated what it means to be a part of a given group. Normally this layer is

reserved for those people who are given special privileges such as celebrities or other important personages that may get the “VIP tour.” Lastly, there is the true backstage. This is where the mess, hustle, and bustle take place within a tourist site. It is where actors are half in period clothing and half in modern clothing, talking on their cellphones while attempting to fix a period artifact. This is where arguments, normal speech, eating, drinking, and swearing will and do take place. This area with its chaos and disorderly environment is hidden deeply from the tourists and special visitors alike. Acceptance into this portion of the site is reserved for those that are employed and/or own the location itself.

Before we apply this theory to see how the different sites that I have described earlier in this chapter construct their version of authenticity and how that effects the tourists’ experiences, I have a few points from MacCannell’s theory of staging that I believe must be addressed. These points were briefly touched upon within his book *The Tourist* (1999), but I believe should be pivotal portions of the theory. I want to expand upon these points before going any further with the theory of staging as I believe that keeping them in the background while talking about staging will help as a way of completely understanding the different types of authenticity that tourists are able to achieve and want. The first of the three points to consider is that anything and everything CAN be a tourist attraction, whether this is a portion of the site that has been cordoned off from the tourists or a small patch of grass that catches the eye of a child. At the same time, what catches the eye of the tourist is not always what has been scripted as part of the narrative that the site has decided to tell. Does this take away from the commercialized site? Does it add anything? Or is it just another side narrative framing of the meaning of the site? These are important questions to consider.

Next, the fact that no matter how well put together and straight forward a site is, there is always a gap between what the guide or “curator” of the site is attempting to communicate and what the visitors will interpret the meaning to be. The third, and final point, is that tourist sites can become powerful and no longer just business-like attractions once the “object that is honored and shared by (tourists, employees, and locals alike) is never fully possessed” (MacCannell 1999:203). The main point is that it can never be fully possessed in order to have the power and wonder that make sites powerful enough to survive and thrive. It is my belief that each of the points mentioned above change and affect the way that the site is perceived, the way that future possibilities are embraced and/or denied, as well as the way the tourists’ experiences are affected by these changes. All of this needs to be kept in mind as we delve into MacCannell’s staging theory.



Figure 6.5 Alnwick Castle Harry Potter Broomstick Training Area. (Photo taken by author)

Returning to Alnwick Castle, this attraction has each of the staging areas/levels that are outlined by MacCannell (1999). For the purposes of this chapter, I will stick with the levels/areas that are important from the Harry Potter videogame perspective. The front staging area is where guests are greeted by people in a red shirt with the house crest and their name on the breast pocket and shown into the castle gates. There they find all manner of different costumed performers that will show them complementing aspects of the Castle's rich history and social impact on the surrounding community. The visitors are invited, with boards/signs that show the different times at which events will be held, to become a tourist and choose the path they wish to take for this visit. The first of the five levels of backstaging are the areas that tourists come into contact with during a guided tour. The guides will stop along the path in several locations to inform the tourists of little-known movie making trivia, such as the fact that close to the entrance to the castle proper, within the inner bailey, is the site that once held the Whomping Willow from all of the videogames based upon Harry Potter's third year at Hogwarts. The guests are asked to guess how many cars were used in making the scene where Harry and Ron drive a car into the tree (16.5 cars were used, by the way). Then there is the second stage in this quest for authenticity known as the front backstage (the second of five levels of backstaging), an area that is staged in a fashion to allow the visitors to believe that they are coming into contact with the site in a way that allows them to see behind the scenes in some fashion. This can be seen in Alnwick when the visitors are offered the ability to take part in broomstick flying lessons or dress up in wizarding robes, giving them access to a deeper level of authenticity and enhancing their experience. This stage of authenticity is available to almost

anyone who would like the chance to participate but is limited in the number of people that are able to complete the training sessions and a ticket must be acquired beforehand.

The next division (the third level of backstaging) of the backstage authenticity experience for Alnwick is that of the costume staging area. This area was off limits to guests and while its existence is not heavily guarded against guests knowing of and perhaps stumbling into it by mistake, there is a level of stealth surrounding its location. I was, however, allowed to glimpse one of these locations. It is a door off to the side that does not seem to lead to anything important or special. It is clean, if a bit chaotic with costumes and props not too neat or messy but a happy medium of “in use” or with a “lived in” look to them. A glimpse into this area is a highly sought after and prized experience. A few of the younger guests asked the wizards if they could come with them when they were putting up the brooms. The answer was always “no”, but that they should come back for the next lesson and the professors would be happy to help demonstrate how to properly fly a broomstick again. The guests know about the area and are allowed to see the entrance when the actors are going in and out of it but shouldn't enter.

The fourth level of backstaging within the castle in regard to the Harry Potter franchise would be the tunnels and/or dungeon. These are off limits except to those with special privileges such as employees and celebrities or other kinds of VIPs. While these are areas that I am certain the Potterheads, as the fans are called, would love to be able to see as Harry is known to wander around all areas of the castle, they are only selectively marked in the map of the grounds. The final level of backstaging would be the true backstage areas. These are not something that I can comment on within Alnwick Castle as I was not privy to them personally. I

do, however, know of their existence as I have been employed at a few tourist locations and know that there is always an area for the performers to really unwind and relax in between shows (such as an employee lounge or dining area). I am not sure as to the connection to the Harry Potter franchise and if historical/cultural guides use the same spaces as they were areas that I was not allowed to access.

For most people, access to the first two areas is enough for them to feel that they have indeed experienced Alnwick Castle to its fullest. As with all locations, the mere thought of being able to experience the castle in a fashion that is staged to be taken at face value as an authentic experience. They are allowed to interact with the site in many different and unique ways, with only safety concerns and the Lord and Lady's private accommodations being the obstacles, that they are aware of, that separate them from any portion of experiencing the full castle. Those that are not satisfied by that level of insight into the location's connection with the Harry Potter franchise can gain access, if sufficiently connected, to the actors' staging location where wizarding props are housed. This allows most of the rest of the guests to feel as if they are special and their experience is more authentic than that of the average tourist.

The next two stages are only for those who work at the site or those that have been allowed special privileges granting access these locations. They are people of either great standing or who have an academic interest. Their ability to see "behind the scenes" allows them a greater sense of authenticity. These are the tourists that participate in what MacCannell describes as having "a pronounced dislike, bordering on hatred, for other tourists, .... In a, *they are the tourists, I am not* equation" (1999:107). While it is true that most people are not allowed to gain entry into these locations, even the Lord and Lady, who reside within the castle



for most of the year, are tourists to some extent. An example of this would be during the shooting of the Christmas specials for Downton Abbey, the dining room was closed off for several days as the scene was set and the filming took place (Baxter and Shrimpton 2004). During filming and readying the space for filming, the Lord and Lady were unable to enter their own dining room, thus, allowing the public, but not the Lord and Lady, to glimpse different areas of the castle. This also allowed the owners to gain a greater insight into the way the castle is viewed by the masses.

Next, we will compare the authenticity of the experience one is able to obtain at Skara Brae as it significantly contrasts with that of Alnwick Castle. As far as I am aware, there are only three different staging areas at Skara Brae. The first is the front stage; this portion, like that of Alnwick Castle, is set so that the tourists know that they are tourists. There are markers denotating the directions that they should go, people dressed in uniforms everywhere, and plaques that explain the significance of the artifacts and sites. It is, for all intents and purposes, a typical tourist site. There are set boundaries that the tourist is not allowed to cross.

The first type of backstage that is seen with both MacCannell's theory and exemplified in Alnwick is minuscule at Skara Brae. There is a recreation of one of the homes that has been made of plaster that visitors can walk through and touch. This is however, the only area that has a real hands-on portion other than the museum. The site itself is off limits to almost all tourists. The second, and slightly more elusive, backstage area is for those of a higher status. Rick Steves, a famous travel guide writer and T.V. host mentioned previously, was at Skara Brae only hours before I arrived and had the place to himself. However, Steves was still only allowed access to portions of the site. This is something that I have been told is available to select

people who are able to go inside one of the less well-preserved houses that is on the site. This does give an extra layer of authenticity as it is exclusive in nature, and only done during certain times of the day and, obviously, for certain people.

The next stage level would be that of the true behind the scenes area, which is off limits with the exception of employees and the owners. This is not an area that I have any knowledge of other than that I know it does exist. I can only speculate that it would look similar to portions of the site that have been sectioned off for employees and storage of materials needed to run the location and the exclusion of tourists. The true behind the scenes backstage, like the Lord and Lady's chambers at Alnwick, is off-limits to all but the owners of the site and those people they permit into the area as their personal guests. This would be the partially excavated site of Skara Brae proper. The passages that have been described for the tourists to imagine and information about what lies beneath the visible surface of the site is not readily available and photographs of the site itself are limited, in part, due to the physical fragility of the site as well as that fact that it is a World Heritage site and regulations must be followed and such "spaces" would be accessible to archaeologists and their crews under specific and regulated research conditions.

So, the question remains, how does this affect the visitors experience at Skara Brae? There is no way that the visitor is able to interact with the site as there is at Alnwick Castle. The site is a World Heritage Site and in danger of being lost to the sea and time as it is, so interactions with the site are limited. One can view and even possibly think out loud about possible interactions with the site, but that is the extent to which the average tourist would be able to authentically experience the site with any narrative framing of its meaning other than

the one that is present to them through the employees, informational signs, and books written about it (as summarized in Appendix C).

Let us return to the three points that I made earlier about MacCannell's theory. The first was that anything can be a tourist site, not just things that are demarcated as a tourist location. This is the most evident at Skara Brae. The site is nestled next to the ocean with only a few meters of beach standing between the water and the ruins. For a good five meters of that beach way, there are rocks that have been piled one upon the other in an interesting fashion by the tourists themselves (Figure 6.6). This phenomenon is known as a "cairn." Cairns are normally associated with shrines that entomb an important figure or figures that have passed and are seen all over the United Kingdom. It seems to be done in a way that says, we will interact with this site in some form or fashion. Thus, it allows for an unintended form of engagement creating different levels of authenticity that the tourist is able to experience as they have found a way to interact with the site. The cairn building is normally accompanied by a photo session where the builders take photos of their work as well as the length of the beach to show that they have taken part in something special. This is not something that the site either condones or endorses to my knowledge. It does, however, add to the experience as the tourists are allowed the interaction with the site that is otherwise kept from them.



*Figure 6.6 Cairns made by tourists on beach at Skara Brae. (Photo by author)*

The second point was that of the gap that created by the visitors between the intended narrative that the guide or the persons who are involved in curating the experience are attempting to impart and what they perceive to be important to the meaning of the site. This is a sticking point, as far as I am concerned, as it allows for the introduction of another narrative. Gamers of all ages know the story behind *The Bard's Tale's* version of Skara Brae. They come to this location with that notion on the forefront of how their experience is going to play out. This alters the experience vastly. When walking through the first portion of Skara Brae, which is a museum giving the visitors the history as they currently know it about the site, the gamer comes to the location with an entirely different history that they know about the location (as summarized in Appendix C). The small museum that tourists must traverse before heading to the site itself snakes around the inside of the main building just off to the side of the gift shop. The walls are lined with artifacts such as the gaming dice mentioned previously and jewelry (among other artifacts) that have been recovered from the site itself. There are a few newer

looking exhibits that include interactions for children that are placed randomly throughout the museum. It only takes about 30 minutes to complete the walk through the museum, stopping at each of the exhibits and reading the summary regarding their findings and/or hypothetical uses. The history that the gamers come to the site knowing is based upon the fantasy realm created by the designers. They compare and contrast the two different sets of information while traveling through this museum. "The museum was completely boring and not at all what I was hoping. I know that the game and the place have two different histories, but it felt like it was created for kids," a young man of about 25 who was just slightly taller than I am and was a bit on the heavier side. He had short cut brown hair and was wearing a Star Wars T-shirt, brown khaki pants and a pair of trainers. He stood with his hands crossed over his chest and bounced ever so slightly on his heels as we talked. "I wanted something that I could really turn into something that would have been used in the game. I mean the dice were pretty awesome and I could see them being used in the tavern, (reference appendix ??) but most of the stuff," he shrugs his shoulders. It is a completely different way of looking at the information, which is presented in a way to be taken at face value, than the curatorial team likely intended for the information to be processed.

The last but most important point that I believe should be investigated more thoroughly is that of how sites become powerful. The idea that an object is not fully possessed as suggest by MacCannell is one that is not possible to fathom at Skara Brae. However, the Percy family had opened Alnwick Castle so that it was a place for all of the people living in the area to enjoy and understand (Baxter and Shrimpton 2004). Times, entry, and interactions are highly regulated. While this is an UNESCO site, it is also one that is there to make money and serve as

a tourist destination. While I believe that it is a very important site and wish that more research would be carried out on this portion of the isle, it is not something that the public can truly say that they are a part of. This changes how the authenticity of the site is framed for visitors as well as the experience of the tourists tremendously.

### **Is resistance futile?**

Understanding that no matter what those in charge of a site try hard to impart and get tourists to look at, the tourists are in fact human and their attention and comprehension of the messages on signs, etc. and narrative framing will always have the slant of the tourists' own culture and framing of the meaning of the site they bring with them. With that in mind, we turn to look at the repackaging of culture as a means to sell the portions of the locals' culture that they are willing to part with and the layered narrative framing that these and other factors bring with it. While the information regarding the level of acceptance of hosts towards the tourists is sparse, there have been a few studies that focus on this topic. Sharply describes this sentiment as follows: "Most studies are concerned with residents' attitudes towards what may be referred to as tourism development, and the benefits/disbenefits that arise from it" (2013:38). Salazar (2009) talks about the fact that each population has to decide which of their cultural norms will bring tourists to their location and at the same time what portion they are willing to share and/or put out for scrutiny by the tourists. This will change the narrative that the tourists have access to, giving their experience another layer-- a layer that the locals hold close to and one that, to a degree at least, the tourists are allowed to see. We know from Chapter 2 that history and cultural beliefs do not always go hand and hand, so that adds yet another layer to

the site's story. There are many different things that influence the way that the sites are seen and marketed to tourists. Within this section we will look at the theories of Salazar in order to gain a level of understanding of how these different narratives work together.

Salazar's theory is based upon the assertion that as each tourist is different in what they believe and know based on their life experiences and what it is they are wanting to get out of their visit to a site. It is for that reason that there are a wide variety of touristic experiences available for purchase. As Salazar explains, "The actual experience that tourists have is authentic for them and will impact on the self in a number of different ways" (2004: 85). With what it is that the tourists want in mind, the locals and the tourism industry have to decide what the aforementioned desires mean and how, and if that will at all change the local population's expression of their cultural normativity based on the flow of their interactions with the tourists. This also depends on the similarities and differences between the two opposing groups. If the similarities outweigh the differences, the locals are more likely to receive the tourists with a bit more understanding and patience (Salazar 2004;, Kneafsey 2007;, Thyne et al. 2006 Sharply 2013). The idea that similarities help in the acceptance of others is echoed in Thyne et al.'s research, "the residents showed less acceptance/tolerance of tourists more physically/culturally different to themselves, seemingly confirming the theory behind social distance. This finding suggests that people are more comfortable with the familiar" (2006:211). However, the differences can become disastrous if they are too different. This impacts the level of authenticity or what level of behind the stage that the tourists are permitted to interact with.

With the tourists' socioeconomic background at the forefront of the equation for the tourism industry, the details of the tourists' travels are heavily, if not completely regulated, by

outside influences. From travel bans that tell tourists where it is safe to go (such as was the case for me during President Trump's visit to Scotland during the period of my field research), to the time, location, and types of sites that they are anticipating to visit are all regulated by these cultural brokers and institutions. This is true whether the tourist is aware of it or not. Therefore, their experience is, at least in part if not completely dictated and managed in important ways by different agencies. It is important to note that this is not always done with the local populations' input or approval. A very good example of this can be seen at Skara Brae and the conversation about staging. Skara Brae is marketed as being one of the oldest known inhabited locations, if not the oldest, in the British Isles. As a world heritage site, the only focus of the site is its history. While that does include how the site was found and what happened to the site in the intervening years, the stones that line the path from the visitor center and museum to the site itself (Figures 6.7 and 6.8) provide a chilling reminder that the marketing of this site does not leave room for a narrative framing of its meaning that differs from the one being presented. The tourist is reminded every few yards of what it is they should look at and what they should be thinking about. When talking to both locals and tourists alike, I found those that were wanting to have an emotional connection to the site and were unable to do so because of the site's regulations, ended up interacting with the site based upon the narrative in a different fashion than had been set out by the site's management, whether that was through the video game series of *The Bard's Tale*, a Dungeons and Dragons game that they had based on the site, or one of the many book series that has an alternative history for the site. An example of an alternative history of Skara Brae comes from the *Bard's Tale* videogames. Within



this realm, the land is full of magic and magical creatures are real. It is a thriving modern town that has been a place, until recently, that the different species could interact peacefully.



*Figure 6.7 First sign into Skara Brae village.*



*Figure 6.8 Is the first of the timeline pavers taking the tourists back in time.*

While the tourist industry attempts to sell portions of the local population and allows for the locals to hide away certain aspects of their lives, Salazar believes that in general, tourists do not have an interest in really connecting with the local point of view. He cites his research with tourism through NGOs as his proof. Within his ethnographic work on this type of tourism,

he found that the tourists traveling to this type of location were benefiting from a charity's work through the ability "essentially in 'seeing' the other" (2004:102) and not the personal change and growth that is hoped for by this type of tourism. Instead of gaining a greater understanding of the sociocultural backgrounds of the people and places that the tourists were attempting to help, they instead othered and gained disdain for the local traditions and populations as a whole. So, does that mean that the narratives that are placed upon the sites and/or the hiding of portions of the local normativity is not needed? I believe this would make an interesting study sometime in the future as my research did not attempt to pursue such questions.

The one thing that I can say with some certainty is that there is a balance that must be kept in mind in order for tourism to be a positive force for each of the different and sometime competing sides (or "stakeholders") that have an interest in the future of the sites. The ability to both provide what the tourists seek, thereby attracting them to the site, as well as what is financially and politically advantageous for the government and local population is essential. The local population needs to be able to have input into the narrative framing of the meaning of the sites that are being told so they have a level of acceptance that allows for the tourists to embrace the local culture and not have a level of disdain and/or remoteness avoiding animosity between the two cultural groups (the "hosts and guests"). Most of the locals that I interacted with around the sites I've focused my research on seemed to feel that the narrative framing of the sites were forced upon them and the resulting negative impact on them and their sense of connection to the site did not always outweigh the financial benefits of having the tourists around. A conversation that I overheard at a petrol station illustrates this sentiment, "Are you

ready for all of the bloody tourists? They are so annoying and just screw things up.” The cashier had forgotten that I was there, but after I popped my head around the corner to listen to this conversation, she said “You know I do not mean you, right? You’re not *really* a tourist, you’re a MacKenzie after all.” This sentiment of the negative influence of the tourist industry was in part due to a drunk driving incident that happened only days before where an intoxicated tourist killed a member of the local community. It is also due to the fact that the tourist industry has set up the isle of Skye as a mythical place with fairies, dinosaurs, and ancient magical influences that still exist. While it brings in a huge number of tourists, it does not leave the tourists with the sense that they should respect the land or its inhabitants in the same way as I had talked about the English not respecting the Highlanders in the last chapter. There is an air of the sentiment that the tourists are far superior to the backwards and simple locals that believe in the supernatural.

## Chapter 7: TKO:

### Impact of tourism on the locals

*At 8:30 in the morning, I set off for the day's destination: Dunnottar Castle. When I am about a mile from my location, I spot the castle at a distance. Even from this far away, I am amazed by its size. The Dunnottar is located at the top of a steep hill overlooking the ocean. As I pull into the car park at the base of the trail leading up to the castle, I notice the daunting trek ahead of me. It is only about half a mile from the base of the trail to the castle and the path makes a U shape with a descent of roughly 50 meters and then a quick ascent back upward another 50 meters. The castle itself sprawls over 3.5 acres of land, making it a formidable presence on the landscape and this exertion will be a good workout from beginning to end.*

*I have to stop several times as I make my ascent up toward the castle, but do not care about getting passed up by other visitors in the slightest. I set goals of fifty feet and look only at that spot until I finally make it up to the entrance of the castle. After paying for my ticket and the guidebook, I start to look around and notice just how close both of the video games got to the actual location. Call of Duty (CoD) being the more realistic and closer the castle's current condition than Brave's version, but either way, I can see exactly where the teams got their inspiration.*

*To the right of the entrance point is what is called the "lion's den" which is the location where the constable would have lived and kept some of the prisoners. This is also the first area beyond the entrance gates so portions of it have been modified for the insertion of firearms. I am pleasantly surprised that some of the signs that I mused over in the CoD were actually on*

*the walls. Each building has a small green sign with white writing telling the visitors what it was once used for. For some reason I find this extremely amusing and quickly snap a few photos of the signs. Then I meander off in search of one particular viewpoint that I was overwhelmed with in the game. As I am wandering around, I notice that some of the buildings, have a larger and more elaborate sign affixed to them as well as providing a more detailed explanation which often includes the date of construction and who commissioned it.*

*I start looking around at the different vantage points that could be used for sniping locations (I am NOT a fan of shooter games, but I figure since I am studying this location I might as well have some fun with it). As I lean against a half erect wall, I notice a few preteen and teenage boys running around pretending to shoot one another. I look around to see if I can spot which adults they belong to, but to my disappointment, there do not seem to be any in the vicinity. Out of both parental concern and curiosity, I covertly follow them for a few minutes. Feigning interest in the servants' quarters, I take a few photos of the buildings, making sure to not include the youngsters. While they are intent on assassinating each other, I am not sure if they are attempting to recreate scenes from a CoD game or just playing around. It soon becomes apparent that they do know there is a connection, but as they are underage, I cannot include them in my study as more than a passing reference.*

*I finally make it to the vantage point that had captivated my attention when last I played CoD. The vista is just as beautiful, if not so serene because the boys are being a bit loud as well as the fact that I had explored the map with no other players as a way to try to look at the scenery, so the space was my own within the game, as I remember from the game. As I stand with the crumbling ruins at my back and look out over the sheer cliff face to the sea below, I am*

suddenly filled with a fit of giggles as I notice the railing a few yards ahead of me that was NOT in the game itself. "That would have been really funny if they HAD included the metal railing in the game," I mutter to myself. However, I know that while they did include things like abandoned trucks, a railing would not have made for a great addition to the landscape as it blocks some of the view of the cliff face itself. I stand there for a few minutes with the wind whipping at me, close my eyes and attempt to block out the boys by imagining that it is the sound of warfare within the game. I breathe in the scent of salt, grass, and sea and then turn back toward the buildings to continue my exploration of this majestic location. Sometimes, however, you just really need to refocus and let your senses be in charge.

I find an amazing spot located within the keep. As I gaze upward, I notice that this must have been several stories tall in its heyday as there are windows set deep within the walls every ten feet going up with cute little window seats nestled into the wall beside them and square holes that lead me to believe they must have held wooden beams to hold the floor up at one point. I work my way into the window seat on the lowest level and look out the window and sit there for just a second. If I scooch back just far enough, I cannot be detected from the entrance, but can keep an eye on it. I also have the vantage point of having the window to my left so I can see anyone coming along the outside of the building. This, I think to myself, would be a great spot for sniping. I nestle into my spot and get comfortable. I watch for a few minutes as tourists come and go past my spot, each time mentally noting when a shot could be taken and take it with my camera instead of attempting to reenact a shooter game, as I am sure that would get me in a lot of trouble.

*After a few minutes and getting a few nasty looks, I decide it is time to move on. I go and find some of the workers at the site and start asking my questions. Most of the employees are interested in the fact that there is a connection between both CoD and Brave and the castle, but only know about the Brave connection. I am told that about a week before I came, a young girl had her fifth birthday party at the castle, and it was princess themed. The little girl had dressed up like Merida and was a huge fan. Her parents had mentioned both the movie and the game as reasons why they had chosen this spot for their daughter's party. While in the movie and the game, the castle is intact and being used, it is easy to imagine the ruins as the beautifully rendered version that Disney portrays.*

*After exhausting my contacts at the site and talking to a few other tourists, most of whom had no clue about the connection, but were excited to hear about it, I leave my business card with a few people and start making my way back toward my car. My hope is that I get an email from at least one or two of the people that I meet today. It occurs to me that being as this is one of the most popular sites, next to Edinburgh Castle itself, in Scotland, they really do not need the connection of the game to bring people to their site. In the six hours that I spent at the site, I must have seen a few hundred people exploring the ruins of this once important and majestic castle.*

Tourism has both positive and negative affects upon local communities. In this chapter, I will look at how tourism is affecting the local population of Scotland by attempting to look at both the negative and positive ramifications of videogame tourism at these sites, using the Isle of Skye as the exemplary site. By examining the economic, cultural, physical, as well as emotional impacts on the people at these locations we can gain a greater insight into the balancing act that the local population must play in order to have a normal life in the wake of video game tourism. We will then turn to the study of tourism in a broader sense to understand the root of the new phenomenon of videogame tourism. Once we have a greater understanding of the basis of tourism and its many layers, we will also investigate how the native population's identity is being reinvented in order to make tourism more appealing. Saragoza explains that these changes, when accepted by the local populations, affect the way that the government distributes funds and, in turn what effects this has on the population (Saragoza 2001:91).

Tourism has the ability to provide a much-needed boost to the economy in communities that have been struggling. In many respects it is viewed as a lifeline for the local communities as it in brings people who are more than willing to spend their money on the goods and services that the local populations offer. This phenomenon can and does play out in various ways. Eco tourism is one of the most prolific examples of how this additional funding stream can change the local population's way of life. Andrew Walsh's (2012) book *Made in Madagascar* is a great example of this as it shows the benefits along with the negative effects that tourism has had on the local population of Madagascar. In this section of the chapter, I will recount Walsh's findings, comparing them with those of my own on the Isle of Skye. I will look at different aspects of tourism such as the economic impact, cultural, emotional, and the government's



actions in order to maintain the island's natural state. I will also look at an example of positive tourism within a similar population, Ireland as a way of showing that not all tourism has a negative impact. With the beauty of the island bringing people to its shores for generations, the addition of publicity through movies (The BFG in 2016, Snow White and the Huntsman in 2012, Transformers: Last Knight in 2017 and many more—see Ang 2017 for an overview), video games (such as *Dear Esther* in 2017 and *Isle of Skye* in 2018 (Value Corporation 2020), and more media using its landscape, this is an important issue to look at.

### **The Economics of Tourism**

The Isle of Skye (Skye) is known as one of the most beautiful of the isles that surround Great Britain (see Figure 7.1). It has many different locations over its 639 square miles that are of interest to visitors. From the Fairy Hills to the dinosaur tracks and with St. Hilda's only a few hours' boat ride from its shore, Skye is one of the most visited spots in Scotland (VisitScotland 2018). Skye has increased its population to the point that it is able to sustain a local college (the University of the Highlands and Islands) as well as several high-end shops (such as an art gallery) and restaurants. The people on the island itself benefit financially from this boost to their economy. They are the owners of the local businesses that range from petrol stations to restaurants and Bed and Breakfast. Most peddle traditional goods as a way to make a decent living. The problem is that their sources of income dry up in the off-season, which is September through May (Murray 2015), so whatever they are able to bring in must sustain them throughout the whole of the year. Unlike the people in a place such as Madagascar as described by Walsh, this does not mean that they are living in what many in Western cultures would

consider poverty but does explain their move from more traditional ways of life and the dependent relationship that they have with the tourism industry. Ms. Mackenzie is one such resident of Skye. She is in her mid to late 30s, leanly built, with long black hair, green eyes and tends to wear clothing from the 1960s that give her an artistic vibe. She is an owner/operator of one of the local art galleries on Skye. As Ms. MacKenzie told me,

Tourism has made it so that I can buy the house of my dreams. It's on the northernmost point of the island and has a beautiful view. We moved our sheep there but have not yet been able to move in as the traffic is too bad and getting to and from the house would be a nightmare. We are thinking about moving the sheep as well since we have lost a few already this year. It's not like we are dependent on the sheep or anything for our living, but we really donna wanna lose that connection, ya kin.

Ms. MacKenzie's statement echoes a lot of the responses that I received from locals with regard to the impact of tourism on their lives. While the tourism has allowed for a higher standard of living, for most of the residents of this small island it has meant a Break from the traditional ways of life. Only of few of the residents are able to hold onto part of that heritage through owning sheep and cattle. As I talked to Ms. MacKenzie it seemed that the sheep were, at least in part, a metaphor for the local community on the island. When left to their own devices, they would lead a peaceful but simple, life, growing fat and happy. However, while they are part of the pull for tourists to come to the island, they are in danger of being overrun by the same people who have allowed for the attainment of the finer things. Although this additional income has been helpful for many of my study participants who were not in the upper echelon of social standings, (such as the family that ran one of the gas stations) they did tell me that their funds were scarce toward the end of the off season and that they were having to allocate

more resources toward fixing and replacing things that the tourists either destroyed or took as souvenirs.

Madagascar's native population, like that of the people of Skye, has been altered by the tourism industry. Foreigners are responsible for the native populations' inability to plan for the future while participating in the sapphire trade that dominates the economy. The native population witnesses low work to leisure time ratio of the tourists and the conservationists and hope by participating in the activities of the gem market that they will be able to improve their lifestyle. The income that they receive from their toils mining for sapphires is nowhere near enough to allow for them to achieve the lifestyle that they see the interlopers/tourists enjoying and that they are attempting to mimic (Walsh 2012:30-31) as I will explain in a moment.



*Figure 7.1 Rolling hills on the northern portion of the Isle of Skye.*

In response to this lack of movement within the social and economic standing of the local population, they have come up with a way to be able, at least for the moment, live the same type of lifestyle they had hoped to gain. They do this by using the money that they earn

mining as soon as they are able to on items such as alcohol, limos, and expensive quarters for the night in an attempt to parade their newly found wealth to their friends. They have dubbed the money that they receive from the mining to be “hot money” (Ibid:30). Hot money is not something to hold onto nor is it something that will help them in the future. This money is too hot to hold on to, so they use it as a way of consoling themselves to their situation and living, at least for the moment, as they wish. This drastic and extravagant lifestyle reflects the precarious nature of their dangerous occupation as miners. Mining is not only unsafe, but it is also a very unsustainable occupation. The miners risk their lives each time they go into the caves in search of emeralds. From sheer cliffs to shifting rocks, most miners come out of the cave with a minimum of a few scratches and bruises every day (Ibid:25). They are being daring, putting their lives at risk in order to gain the prestige that is common among the Madagascanian youth but at the same time, wanting the riches that it will afford them as well. For the indigenous population of Madagascar, men are expected to be brave and perform daring acts in order to gather prestige in order to be considered a man. They are willing to put their lives on the line in order to obtain the status of being daring as well as the cash it affords but as they do not see a future with this precarious life choice, they do not plan for the future. The risks they take are echoed both in their work and leisure time.

### **The Cultural Impact of Tourism: St. Kilda and Madagascar**

St. Kilda is a remote and inhospitable archipelago island. It is in the western most grouping of islands within the Outer Hebrides, 78.3 miles from Dunvegan’s port. This island has been settled on and off for around 4,000 years according to archeological records as reported by Fleming

(2005). The biggest island that is included in this group of islands is only 3.3 square miles in size and most of the coastline of this island is sharp vertical cliff faces that make them prime real estate for birds, but not for human habitation. The island's habitation has been almost continuous according to the archeological record with the first written record of the island produced by an Icelandic cleric in 1202 CE (Ibid:63). With the archeological records showing that the island had plentiful resources but a cruel climate for most of its history, it is not until it became easier to reach the island that the quality of the inhabitants' lives diminished. Such a pattern would seem to be the exact opposite of what one would expect, however, as I will show, the inhabitants went from being able to eke out a reasonable life to almost complete eradication within less than a century following the introduction of modern ways of life, which brought with it a sharp decline in the population. The people of St. Kilda went from farming, catching birds, raising sheep and cattle to trying to sell their homespun products as a way to get cast iron pots. The first major hit to the island's human population happened in 1727 when tourists from the mainland started traveling to the island. The arrival of these tourists brought not only new goods but also cholera, the flu, and other illnesses that ravaged the population bringing its numbers down from 180 to just 88 souls by 1758 (Quine 2017:7).

In 1829 Reverend Neil Mackenzie became the first outside resident on St. Kilda (Steel 1975:96). With his arrival came a change in the way of life that would, in less than 100 years, witness the removal of the people of St. Kilda to the mainland. The Reverend made quick work of attempting to change the lives of the native population. From housing to religious beliefs to standard practices of living, the inclusion of this man of God changed every aspect of everyday life for the people of St. Kilda. After the Reverend's mansion was erected and a church was

built, they set to quickly changing the living arrangements that had protected the local population and their animals for centuries. In 1834, 30 new “blackhouses” (the term blackhouses comes from the fact that their roofs were black as well as the fact that they did not typically have electricity installed) were built. However, these blackhouses were considered to be appalling living conditions as one side was for the cattle and the other for the human inhabitants during the winter months, so another attempt was made to suitably house the St. Kildians. In 1862 16 zinc-roofed cottages were built among the blackhouses. The population continued to decline due to a sizable proportion of the population, 36 members, leaving for a new life in Australia in 1851, further reducing the number of inhabitants on the island to under 100.

According to Steel (1975) the missionaries, and other well-meaning individuals, who attended to the island’s population were attempting to improve the St. Kildians’ way of life by building more modern facilities, bringing with them different products from the main island of Scotland such as sweets, education, and to convert them to Christianity. But as these changes were introduced, life on the island started to take a drastic change for the worse. The local population’s priorities changed and with it their way of life. No longer were they attempting to provide for themselves to survive the brutal winter. They turned their attention toward attempting to gain physical possessions and worshipping of the Christian god over hunting the local birds and farming. As a result of not preparing adequately for the winter, many of the old and young members of the island died during those long and harsh winters. In 1930, the islands’ population had dwindled to only 36 and evacuation of the inhabitants became necessary. (Steel 1975)

Once removed from the island, the people of St. Kilda became a burden on the United Kingdom. Their old way of life and the freedom they had known of living without the restraints of money made it difficult for the men to remain employed. The concept of having to earn a living and not rely on the earth made the livelihood of each of the families tenuous. They were often without food and coal for heating their homes as they were unable to fully conform to the new ways of life that they had been thrust into. The people that lived near them did not understand their ways and thought that they were lazy and taking advantage of the opportunity that had been presented to them. For this reason, they were not always treated with the utmost respect nor with the kindness that their situation demanded.

Madagascar's native population has a similar history as Walsh lays out in his book about ecotourism and the sapphire business. Walsh explains that the addition of the sapphire and tourism industries eroded the once vibrant and rich cultural heritage of the Malagasy people as they were thrust into a society more focused on living in the present in order to gain the paper money that the conservationists and tourists have placed a great deal of importance on.

Conservationists, ... often operate with a selective, and thus, incomplete vision of the lives and traditions of the "local people" with whom they seek to ally themselves, celebrating certain aspects of indigenous culture that appears to fall in line with the goals of conservation, while ignoring or even disparaging others that may work against these goals (Walsh 2012:12).

This altered state of existence which relies on gem mining and stripping the earth of natural resources does not stop with the destruction of naturally formed wonders for the profit of the jewelry industry but also extends to the social life of the population. The once vast social network of the miners crumbled as living in the moment does not include the need to participate in gift exchanges nor does it include the need for others to be available in case of

unanticipated negative circumstances, as nothing is being anticipated in the first place. This Break down of social networks among the native population echoes the choice to live in the moment and not to live a traditional lifestyle but to attempt to adopt the extravagant and yet fleeting lifestyle that they had come to admire (Ibid:30-37).

The turn away from tradition and nature and towards that of a foreign way of life can provide us with insight into how we are perceived. In Madagascar, Walsh finds wasteful, self-serving, and carelessness are the values that are being echoed by the native population who are striving to mimic the way of life that is being presented to them as a preferable alternative to their traditions (Ibid).

These stories are echoed in many of the different ecotourism sites that are still being visited today as the local populations come into contact with a population of travelers that is considered wealthier and more modern (Stlidis et al. 2007; Steel 1975; Quine 2017; in addition to Walsh 2012). When the local populations are shown the difference and ease with which the tourists are able to live their lives, changes occur that both positively and negatively affect the local population. Whatever the overall outcome is, be it longer life expectancies or more hygienic lifestyles, the one certainty is that the traditional ways of life are abandoned. The other powerful and yet often overlooked problem that such local populations face is that once they have been taken off the land in order to preserve their lives and frequently the landscape as well, they are forgotten about. They start off as a popular “cause” that is spotlighted on different media channels and donations are forthcoming to help support them. After the novelty of their existence has worn off and an attempt at sluffing off their traditional ways of life in order to assimilate it to the new population has been completed, they are more of a



nuisance than a cause to be championed and are thrown back into obscurity to fend for themselves in a world that is foreign and hostile to them (Walsh 2012). While it is not always the case that the native population is abandoned after being lead to modernize, it has been the case that several different cultures that were considered more primitive and attempted assimilation were abandoned to their fates once they no longer held to their traditional way of life. For populations that make their homes on remote islands, the pull from historical cultural activities and the growing reliance on foreign goods tends to become a crippling change as Stylidis et al.'s (2007) research on island tourism indicates.

Most islands are not large enough to create a sustainable tourism industry based on several different factors. The first and most important factor that Stylidis and his colleagues' reference is an island's capacity to deal with the natural waste that is produced by an increased population. As the native populations typically are not able to keep up with the infrastructural demands, financially and physically, of the increase to the population that tourism brings with it, the water, electrical, and waste production due to the increased population takes a toll on the island itself. The need for housing and buildings that will accommodate the tourists' needs and wants requires that the native population clear land in order to construct such structures. Then there is the loss of native culture. As the population has to spend more time within the tourism industry, they have less time to devote to culturally based activities such as fishing, crafting, and reproduction of cultural ways (Ibid).

## The Story of Irish Tourism and the Positive Effect of Tourism

Ireland has seen a drastic increase in tourism with the number of visitors doubling between 1990 and 1996 from 2.5 to 5 million people (Kneafsey 1998) and more than doubling that number in 2018 to 11.2 million overseas tourists (Tourism Ireland 2019). Tourism has become an extremely important part of the economy with tourists spending € 5.9 billion in 2018 (Tourism Ireland 2019). With the drastic increase in the number of people visiting Ireland, there has been some controversy over how to deal with this influx. However, there have been a number of success stories among the various villages that have seen a dramatic increase in the number of visitors.

The positive changes that have accompanied an increase in revenue can be seen in the change in lifestyles of the native population. Kneafsey's (2007) study of the rural village of Foxford shows the increase in socioeconomic and environmental concerns within a once impoverished location. The village had historically been known as a fishing and farming community that had a high unemployment rate and low standard of living. However, when the tourism boom started to take off in the early 1990s, the town saw a drastic increase in the number of visitors as locals emphasized the notion of a simplistic and laidback lifestyle surrounded by a majestic and untouched landscape. This return to a simpler and more friendly environment is one of the major advertising ploys that the tourism industry was, and is still, using in Ireland.

Foxford has taken the increase in temporary population in stride, incorporating most of the tourists into the daily routines of the village. They created terms for the tourists that transform their interlopers into members of their society. The term 'visitor' or 'angler' is used

for the biggest group of tourists as they return to the village every summer most to fish. This group is an important and constant part of the population as they tend to spend their money locally and most of them have been coming for years. The personal interactions with the population of Foxford has ingratiated this group to the village and friendships have evolved. The second group are called 'exiles' and are those people who grew up and/or are related to members of the permanent population of Foxford. These visitors tend to "blend in with the local lifestyles and habits, staying in relatives' homes, socializing with family and friends in local bars" (Ibid:117). The 'independent travelers' make up the smallest group of visitors and while Kneafsey does not give much in the way of information regarding this group, they tend to blend in and are seen as a transient, yet at the same time, permanent portion of the summer population that has little effect on the landscape and village population. The last, and most controversial group is that of the 'coach tours', those arriving by bus. While these tourists have "relatively little direct impact" (Ibid), they do have a large economic impact. These tourists are typically unloaded at and encouraged to stay within the confines of the visitor center. This structure has everything that the tourists want and/or need for the few hours that they are in the village, from restaurants and shops to information on the local community and mill. Occasionally, a few tourists will make their way out of the center and into the village, but typically they are only in the village for a few hours.

The village has become more conscious of the effects of tourism on the landscape and have started to attempt to curtail the negative impacts on the environment. They have created walking trails to attempt to keep visitors on a path so that the majority of the landscape is

untouched. The village has also added signs to heavily trafficked areas, asking that visitors refrain from littering and/or destroying the local flora and fauna.

While the majority of the village's permanent residence have seen a positive change in their socioeconomic positions, some of the local business owners feel that the addition of the visitor center has taken away possible revenue and therefore are not in favor of the coach tours. The economic competition has given way to social strife among the population. Most of the business owners feel that they have been "excluded in an economic and social sense" (Ibid:121). However, the Foxford Resources, a group of business owners and politically powerful locals who are responsible for the visitors center, have a chairperson who has chalked this controversy up to being nothing more than "small town mentality" (Ibid:120) and believes that it is the most significant hurdle that the community has to overcome. The chairperson believes that such people do not understand the impact of the tourism and pay attention to what is happening at the visitor center, and so are mainly uniformed. Overall, the village of Foxford is a shining example of the positive impacts that tourism is having on Ireland both socially and economically. This small town in Ireland is an ideal in the sense that the local population is not hindered to the same extent that we see in Skye or Madagascar. It seems as if this is the outcome that was, at least at the beginning of the incorporation of tourism into these locations, hoped for.

### **The Physical Impacts of Tourism**

As I have stated previously, tourism takes a physical toll on the local landscape that is being explored. The simple impact of human activity on fragile ruins can have a devastating effect on

the landscape. Skara Brae is a great example of this as the ruins of this ancient settlement are visited by thousands of individuals each month. The paths have become worn down and the edges of the excavated sites have become fragile. There are signs that warn visitors to be careful and stay away from the edges of the site not only for their safety but to attempt to keep the integrity of the site sound as well.

The very act of tourism is harmful without the added problems of tourists having little to no respect for the local population and landscape. This was evident throughout my travels in Scotland but the area where tourists had the most impact was at the fairy pools. The “leisurely” stroll up to the base of the black mountains was filled with boulders that had been overturned as deep gouges dotted the sides of the path upward. According to local authorities, there is no telling when these rocks were originally placed into the configuration that they were before the tourists started moving them around (see Figure 5.3, from page 124). Some of the boulders took considerable effort to move as they were as tall as I am, and although I am just shy of five feet tall, that is still a big rock. Most of these rocks also had a girth wider than my arm span. This means that their movement was intentional. I was able to witness the movement of one of the boulders as a few early teens were attempting to move a stone of considerable size on a dare. These youths were bored with the view and were apparently looking for something else to do. Their parents did not seem to mind as they were distracted and were able to explore in peace without the nagging their children that had been taking place only a few moments earlier. One of locals that I talked to about this phenomenon said that while they do not know the reasons why their ancestors had placed the rocks in the fashion that they had, they knew

that it was done for a reason. They went on to explain how this lack of respect saddened them to the point that they no longer visited the fairy pools.

Nestled behind beautiful spiral cut hills lies a valley that has gained the attention of the tourists visiting the Isle of Skye. These tourists have started taking rocks from along their journey to this glen in order to create fairy circles and tiny cairn houses for said fairies. The altered landscape has been dotted by these majestic sites, caused by the removal of stones to create the, while very beautiful, fairy “entrapments” and homes. As Campsie’s project (2019: Pg #) highlights, “Concerns over a lack of respect for Skye’s Breathtaking landscape have also been raised with reports of stones being taken from old walls in Fairy Glen and used to build social-media friendly rock stacks and formations”. This has changed the very landscape of areas such as the Fairy Glen and Fairy Pools that these tourists have come to, if nothing else, tick off their bucket list of natural wonders that they have seen as recorded with “selfie” photos for their friends on social media. While they can now say that they left their mark on a beautiful site that the site has been marred by their visit doesn’t seem to occur to them.

In addition to the changing of the landscape by relocating rocks, there is the problem of rock removal. More than once, I saw a tourist pick up a rock and deftly shove it into one of their pockets, some of them with more subtlety than others. Photographs are not always enough for some of the tourists as they want to take home a part of the landscape that they find so intriguing. When confronted with their indiscretion, they responded, more often than not, something along the lines of “one little stone will not harm anything.” While the removal of one stone does make a difference as an individual act, if the 650,000 tourists traveling to Skye each

took a stone or two during their visit, the number of stones removed could be more than a million a year—a very large impact indeed.

These four different examples of how the enchanting landscapes of the Scottish Isles have been negatively affected by the tourists each represent a lack of respect for the people and the environment that is being visited. Each example shows how the physical landscape is being altered at an alarming rate in order to satisfy some deep need to own a piece of these majestic locations.

### **Emotional impact**

Not only have the locals of any given tourist hotspot been forced to craft their cultural identities, at least publicly and during the tourist season, to fit a more attractive version that will bring in more tourists, but they also have to deal with other dangers. According to a study carried out by The Moffat Centre Tourism Consultancy at Glasgow Caledonian University, 30 percent of Skye's native population believe that reckless driving is the major problem that the tourists have caused (Campsie 2019). These two emotionally charged topics are ones that all of my participants felt were important to the isle's future (and that I experienced as my interaction in the petrol station described above attests).

I have written previously in this chapter about the need to craft a culture that will attract people to a given location. In the aforementioned section regarding the way through which the native population of Madagascar have been treated by conservationists, this group has selectively chosen which portions of the native Madagascar's culture they would praise. They will push out of view or work to suppress any Malagasy traditions that might be viewed as

unfavorable and restrict such activities to either off season times or minimally to times when and where tourists are not likely to see such things going on. The best example of this comes from ethnographic research carried out at another island, Haitian Vodun rituals and how these are performed for tourists (Goldberg 1983). There are three different levels of this performative action that tourists are allowed to witness, each staged and not 100 percent authentic although they allow for different levels of authenticity to be achieved by the tourists themselves. The first is the showy version of a possession ritual. These are done in auditoriums and with other performances of the native culture, such as dances. There is little pretense to the fact that these events are strategically planned. However, they allow for those that only want to briefly come in contact with the local traditions to experience at least a glimpse of the action. These performances typically do not include blood or alcohol in any great quantity, if at all. Then there are the street performers who will carry out public rituals while asking for donations from onlookers. This appears to be a more authentic experience as it is not as glamorous or combined with any other form of cultural exchange like the first experience. The street performers include more of the traditionally symbolic portions of the rituals, such as sacrificing a chicken and the consumption and blessings with alcohol of the chosen *loa*. (The term *loa* refers to a God like entity that is worshiped by the Vodun practitioners.) The last, and arguably the most authentic form, would be the private side of the street ritual carried out for only a handful of paying customers. These tend to have bloodletting and alcohol in greater quantities than the former case, but it is rare that the performer actually achieves the state of possession.

Like the Haitian Vodun ritual performers, the natives of Skye give the tourists only what they are willing and able to handle of their cultural beliefs and traditions. The best example of



this is the belief in fairies. Most of the locals on Skye admitted to telling anyone who asked that they did not believe in fairies in the slightest. When pushed, a few said they would brush off the comments and respond with vague answers about tales people tell children. A few of the people I spoke to did say that while they are not sure if fairies do indeed exist, they were not about to chance their fate by doing something to cross a fairy such as moving the stones at sites such as the Fairy Pools—an indication that such beliefs still animate the lives of locals.

There is also the fact that so many locals have all been pulled into the tourism business as a way of life. As Curley, a local on Skye states, “To an extent, you almost lose your sense of community, because everybody is a business owner in Skye, because so many people are putting their spare room on Airbnb and stuff like that,” (Diver 2019). The lack of privacy combined with the need to be professional, even in one’s own home, curtails the possibilities for social gatherings. In order to sustain the commercialized way of life, most of the people who have lived on Skye for generations have had to push their social and cultural traditions to the side and become business minded 24/7. This leaves little room for letting one’s hair down and competing in a hammer throw or a traditional dance competition.

Turning to the slightly darker side of the emotional impact on the local populations are the dangers that are faced because of the lack of respect visitors have for their destination. As stated earlier, reckless driving is a problem that has many of the Isle of Skye’s residents on edge. This was very apparent during my weeklong stay on the Isle. For most of the sojourn, a storm was ragging across the sea and the small landmass. (This was the cause of my inability to get over to the Isle of St. Kilda as the storm destroyed the boat that I was supposed to take.)

This storm in combination with the fact that the British drive on the left side of the road (the opposite for most of the countries that the tourists hail from) was the cause of a few tragedies.

The first tragedy was that at least five sheep were killed by reckless drivers during the week that I was on the Isle. I should explain that on the Isle of Skye, like many places in Scotland, livestock are tagged and then allowed to roam until it is time for breeding, slaughter, and/or shearing. As there are not many places that the sheep are likely to go and very few predators that would be able to harm an animal of their size, this is an easy way to allow the livestock to graze and tend to themselves throughout most of the year. It is not unusual to see ewe on the side of the road, in the road or down on a beach. It is easy to get used to having both the smell and the company of sheep as a constant while there. I bore witness to the aftermath of two of these losses and was told about another three by some of the locals. This is not just the loss of prized animals for show, it is part of the livelihood of the people on the Isle and how they make it through the off season. While the dead animals were just left to the side of the small, one car roads, the loss of income was felt by the owners. One of the people I talked to said that at least two of the dead sheep were from her family's flock.

A more tragic incident that happened while I was on Skye was that a local was killed in an automobile accident by a tourist. According to some of the locals, the tourist was driving too fast and on the wrong side of the road, at night, in the storm. It was a head on collision and the local was killed instantly. I do not know what happened to the tourist as that was not what concerned the locals that I talked to about this event and I did not see it reported in an English newspaper. I have not attempted to search the internet for more information regarding this horrible catastrophe as the reactions of my respondents was more than sufficient to answer

any of the questions that I had about how it impacted the population. This incident sent shockwaves throughout the island. There was a visible difference in their friendliness towards tourists, and with good reason. I heard more people speaking Gaelic after this happened as well. Another reaction was that the incident that I recounted earlier in Chapter 4 about the local petrol station happened the morning after the incident.

Suffice it to say, one of the more negative ramifications of tourism is the emotionally charged losses it may cause, such as the ones described here. The islanders are not only losing their way of life because of the large number of travelers (nearly all of whom are foreigners) but also their life and livelihood. The lack of respect for the local population and the landscape is adversely affecting the people who rely on the island year-round.

### **Government Actions**

The Isle of Skye is a treasured portion of Scotland's history. One of the more famous folk songs is the Skye Boat song. This traditional song describes the escape of Bonnie Prince Charlie after he was defeated at Culloden in 1746 to the Isle of Skye while paying tribute to the many Scottish lives that were lost during and after the battle (Jacobites.net 2017). The following is a particularly moving passage focused on the Scottish-backed king's near-death experience:

Many's the lad, fought in that day  
Well the claymore did wield;  
When the night came, silently lay  
Dead on Culloden's field.

Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep,  
Ocean's a royal bed.  
Rocked in the deep, Flora will keep  
Watch by your weary head.

The importance of the Scottish-backed king escaping what would have meant certain death by hiding on the island shows the importance that is placed on Skye. While not every Scot was a Jacobite, for those who were, the king's safety was of the utmost importance.

While the beauty of Skye has enthralled people for generations, the additional publicity of the landscape being used in movies and video games has increased the island's appeal as a tourist destination. As we have seen, tourism comes with many problems. With the landscape and culture of the island at risk, the Highland Council, the governing body for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (for more information visit <https://www.highland.gov.uk/>), has enlisted the help of a study to be done by Glasgow Caledonian University. The results of this study are scheduled to be released at a public event sometime in early 2020 (Diver 2019). What changes need to be made and if those changes are even possible are eagerly anticipated.

In the meantime, the Highland Council, with the aid of VisitScotland (Scotland's national tourist board), have created a campaign urging visitors of Skye to slow down and really connect with Skye. The typical visitor spends a day on the island, hitting the five major tourist attractions: Old Man of Storr, Fair Glen, The Fairy Pools, Quiraing, and Neist Point, and then leaves with a great selfie. This causes its own set of problems as most of the roads are one lane with little to no parking available to visitors. The hope is that tourists will not be in such a hurry to get their perfect social media photograph and thus will not take away from or destroy as much of the island as has been the case up to this point. There is a fine line, however, in that the council is having to balance the safety of the landscape and the cultural needs of the population with the desire to see tourism grow and expand.

## Conclusion

The island's beauty has made it the second most visited location in Scotland. With over a half of a million tourists spending upwards of £145 million annually (Highland Council 2018) on the Isle of Skye alone, the toll on both the local populations' identity and cultural expression as well as the landscape itself has been significant. The balancing act of attempting to placate tourists while still luring them onto the shores of Scotland while at the same time protecting the people and landscape that are the biggest draws in the first place is going to be a difficult balancing act. Just how industrialized and visible does Scotland want to get? How much are they willing to sacrifice for a pound? If industrialization destroys too much of the landscape will the tourists still want to visit? What amount of construction is enough to help maintain the tourism industry while at the same time preserving the landscape? These questions are ones that will be answered over time and will be interesting to follow. It would be disheartening to think of visiting the Fairy Pools in the morning only to see streetlights and a pathed road right alongside of them. There is something about having to cross a rushing stream and pick your way up to the foot of the black mountains in order to see the wonders that await you at the top. The way the light splinters off of the pools in a rainbow of colors at just time right time of morning is something that would be gone completely if construction was allowed to happen around the Fairy Pools.

Tourism on the Isle of Skye has been a double-edged sword as it has brought a different lifestyle and added incomes for the local population, but it has also brought with it, destruction and chaos (and death). There is a balancing act that the Isle must play between being an open and beautiful place to explore and keeping itself from being devastated by the draw of its

openness and beauty. The local population has been affected both physically and emotionally as their space is being shared by outsiders.

## Chapter 8:

### Virtually Touring

*I close my eyes briefly as I hit the enter button to start up the game Dear Esther. It has been a while since I last logged into a video game and it is a comforting feeling as I slip into complete focus on the game. My noise-canceling headphones snug against my ears ensure that the only sound that I hear is that of the other-worldly orchestra music of the game as it loads me in. One hand on the mouse and one hovering above the w, s, a, d keys, I grin and start moving my character around.*

*I quickly notice that it is a familiar scene of one of the smaller Hebridian Isles. The wind rips through the waist-high heather, its sound eclipsed only by that of the waves crashing against the volcanic rock from which this tiny island is made. I can almost smell the salt air as I straddle between focusing on the game and my memories of being on the islands. The island is just how I remembered it the last time I logged out. The beautifully rendered landscape is haunted by the feeling of desolation and loneliness. The isolated feeling that I would have normally found peaceful and relaxing makes me nervous and jumpy. While I know that no fighting is possible in this story-driven game, I still expect something to jump out at me or to come across some ungodly scene.*

*I start down the path that leads around the edge of the island. As the wind gusts, my character's descent slows down. I bend my neck slightly as I physically attempt to help my character battle against the wind. As I make it down to the shore's edge, I smile to myself, deciding that I will not follow the path the creators have intended, rather, I will go exploring. I find a path along the rocks that allows me to access an area that I had not previously known*

*existed. My character makes the journey of maybe 100 yards weaving through the rocks with the same amount of difficulty that I myself would have, which is to say I have to make several attempts because I fall a few times. Once across the rocks, I push my character, trying to force him over the rocks that hinder me from going any farther. But to no avail. I walk around, exploring each possible crevasse, trying my luck. Finally, I stop and just scan the surroundings. The beauty hits me anew. I take screenshots from different angles of the moon reflecting on the water's surface.*

*I wander farther in the direction that the music takes me. The narrator tells another few lines of the character's story and his loss, "Why do we hold onto the rock, because it is the only thing keeping us from slipping, slipping into the oblivion." The chilling sense of loneliness and despair washes over me. I wonder if that is what the people of the island felt before they were taken to the mainland, or possibly even when they were on the island full time. The thoughts bring me back to the present, and I continue onward on a mission, now, of exploring every possible angle in the same fashion I would if I were there in person.*



Videogame tourism takes many different forms. The main focus of my research has been on physically visiting the landscapes that served to influence the way that the programmers decided to create their game. There are, however, two other types of video game tourism that I believe are worth exploring briefly. The first is that of being a tourist within the video game itself. This is done only in an “open world” format, or games that allow the player to decide how and where they want to go within the parameters of the programming, games such as *Dear Esther*. The other type is when a gamer travels to a specific place, perhaps on vacation, in order to play a video game for the entire trip. Both of these types of videogame tourism merit their own studies. While it is beyond the scope of this study to give these versions enough time or space, in this chapter I will bring them to the forefront to compare and contrast them to the physical tourism version that is the focus of this study.

### **Exploration of the Digital**

Gamers have been exploring their digital environments at least since the 1970s in the form of labyrinths and mazes (Baraniuk 2019). In my experience attempting to reach the limits of what the programmers had created and then trying to go even further and “break” the game is something that many hardcore gamers have admitted to at least once during their tenure gaming. This is typically done in an attempt to find something else to do or a new place to explore. Advances in programming have created beautiful environments that reflect and, in some cases, surpass the physical landscapes available to humans in the physical world, creating perfect environments for gamers to readily explore. This is even more apparent with such

additions to games as the achievement system within *WoW*. This gives players titles, pets, and mounts for exploring and completing all of the challenges that an area has to offer.

Whether it is based on “farming” (collecting ingredients and/or killing a mob (computer-controlled NPC) type over and over in order to get them to drop an item of worth) a particular area, flying around for achievements, or just simply wanting to explore the beauty that a game has to offer, gamers love being in the virtual worlds that become a second home for them (Boellstorff 2008;, Dibbell 1998;, Ewald 2013;, Nardi 2010;, Rabinow 2008;, Rheingold 1994;, Turkle 1995, and others). It can be a matter of comfort or a way of being with friends that lends this behavior weight for gamers. One habit that I noticed within many guilds during my time in *WoW* for my Master’s thesis and dissertation work was that they would have contests in order to build their guild bank that were based upon the players being online at a given time and farming for certain items. This was when the members would fly around on their mounts, looking for items and talking to friends either through a program such as Ventrilo (a verbal communication platform) or just within the guild chat box. While this might not a first glance seem like a form of tourism, the guild members not only were getting familiar with and exploring different areas, but also having social interactions at the same time. The area might be a new one for the players or it might be their old stomping grounds. Either way, the possibility is always there to find new and unexplored features of the landscapes and to do so with friends. As one of my study participants, Glenda told me,

*going back into an old game and just wondering around is like going home after being gone for a long time. Just having your character walk down a familiar path can be cathartic. Honestly, even with over 100 hours spent within my game, I can still find new and exciting spots that I didn’t notice before or I see it in a different light.*

She went on to talk about the fact that she has logged into the same game for countless hours just exploring the villages in order to try to find hidden spots and Easter eggs (hidden pop culture references). It is my experience and assertion that many gamers seem to have the desire to explore to the very limits the worlds that they have become so very comfortable in.

The achievement system that *WoW* implemented with the release of the Wrath of the Lich King expansion in 2008 gives validation to those players who had, in fact, explored the very edges of the game's maps (Messner 2018). Each area of the expansive world that the players had available to explore was given a certain priority point that the player had to find in order to "open" or reveal that map point and have that point marked off an achievement base. The players that completed these seemingly menial tasks were rewarded for time they dedicated to the game by being given points and rewards, such as in-game mounts that could only be acquired through completing these achievements. The ability to link said achievements into a chat window in order to prove that you did, in fact, have the achievement as well as the date when it was achieved was another type of prestige for the players to brandish. While these achievements might not seem "brag worthy", they are a way for the player to verify that they have spent a certain amount of time within the game and have achieved a certain level of expertise.

Players can use this achievement system as proof of their knowledge to resolve arguments with other players. For instance, if an opponent argues that your directions for how to complete a quest are wrong, you can simply link to the achievement showing that all of the quests in the area are complete to show that your knowledge is founded on fact and personal experience. In short, the achievement system within *WoW* came about as a way of giving

credence to a senior gamer's insight as well as rewarding them for being an invested member of the community. Their achievements act as an encumbrance, anchoring them securely within the community and placing the expectations of tutelage of those that come after them squarely on their shoulders whether or not they decide to accept this mantle.

Referring back to my participant Glenda's experience described previously, with video game tourism, when we switched to talking about the *FallOut* franchise, she told me that she loved exploring that game as well. Glenda said that while the game's environment was eerie and often gave her goosebumps, the rendering was beautifully crafted. She related that she almost felt as if she were within the game during her walk up to the physical fallout shelter where we met, especially when she did the walk in total solitude on a quiet morning. The dilapidated buildings and empty fields, and isolation along the mile-long trek from the main road to the farmhouse's fallout shelter, added to the post-apocalyptic feeling of the game. After her first walk to the physical shelter, she said she felt compelled to go back through the game to re-experience the sensations that the physical walk had brought back, just to make sure that she had remembered it correctly. These sensations can be seen as an encumbrance as they reference a particular set of ideas and expectations surrounding the event.

Like many of the other types of tourism, in-game tourism is based upon a sense of nostalgia and the need to recapture the ethereal nature of the experiences within a game. However, as with any other type of tourism that is based upon previous knowledge of a site or activities that happened there, whether fact or fiction, it is not always possible to recapture those memories and hopes. This can lead to a sense of unfulfilled longing as well as resentment toward the experience. Lukinbeal and Fletchall explain this:

a place filmed is not bound by absolute location, and when tourists seek out the place filmed in its absolute location, they are often confronted with the paradox of two places sharing one location: the everyday functional place and the filmic place. This disrupts the tourist pleasure when the sights/sites of the cinematic/televisual scene are visited in the hope of extending these transient encounters and affective engagements. (2013:226)

They go on to explain that the emotional connections that media-based tourists have to the location create a need for the site to evoke the same emotions that the film, book, or game did by recreating the world that they had envisioned. In other words, the encumbrances that result from the emotional ties to the locations inform the way that the tourists imagine the site to be and expect to be able to interact with the site. When these expectations or encumbrances are not met, they are often disappointed by their experience. The amount of time that the individual spends interacting with these worlds strengthens the emotional bonds and helps cement imagined place-making. Lukinbeal and Fletchall (Ref) focus on the example of Orange County, California, and the multiple television shows that have been filmed in this area. The viewers of these television shows have spent years watching their favorite character interact with this ideal version of California. The fans have a firm and fixed image that they hold onto of what this area is supposed to look like since they have “visited” it many times through television shows. The ability to recreate a nostalgic memory is hindered by the fact that the media version of the physical environment is not recreated within the physical environments that are being experienced on tours to the same locations. The staged elements that allow for a sense of completeness or being able to be unencumbered by the restrictions of expectation have been removed as everyday life goes on or the imagined landscape was only based upon the physical location and not a fully accurate depiction. In another case, there is a disconnect between what the tourists expect and the reality of the location. To put it another way, their

encumbered expectations of these places are not always met and the tourist is unable to fully enjoy their experience as their encumbrance does not align with the reality with which they are presented.

### **Playcation, there is nothing like a little binge gaming**

Whether it is taking vacation time in order to play a newly released and highly anticipated game, edition or just cloistering oneself off in order to block out the world, many people over the years have spent vacation time within video games (Xu et al., 2013a, 2013b, Sever et al., 2015, and Dubois and Gibbs 2017). While some prefer the cheaper staycations, others like to travel to different locations that will give them the freedom from the interruptions inherent in daily life. Either way, these people are hoping to spend their time within a game as a way of vacationing or at least getting away from their daily lives (Turkle 1995;, Dibble 1998;, Ewald 2013;, Rheingold 1994 et al.). One could say that this is yet another type of video game tourism, especially in the case of those who travel to another location to do nothing but game. There are several different ways this type of tourism takes place. I will briefly try to describe a few of the versions of this kind of gamer tourism that people mentioned to me more than five times online and/or in person.

Hotels all over the world have caught on to this need for gamers to spend time deep within their games and have made their rooms compatible with this type of vacation. Typically, these hotels have a snack bar from which visitors can charge items to their rooms, room service, and even grocery-buying services. This allows the gamer to focus on the game and leave most of their biological needs to someone else. Most importantly, they also have gaming

consoles within the rooms, high speed internet access on demand, state-of-the-art headsets, and the ability for the gamers to rent games. Some of them have gone as far as to have the entire hotel themed for gaming (Figure 8.1).



*Figure 8.1 The I Hotel in Taiwan is a state-of-the-art gaming hotel.*

While amazing, the high-tech gaming hotels are an extravagance that is not in most gamers' budget. An alternative can still work nicely-- most hotels have high speed internet access and the ability to plug in a gaming console, or at the very least a desk that can be used to set up a laptop in order to game. Even on a shoe-string budget, gamers can rent an inexpensive hotel room and have pizza delivered while gaming full time on their personal gaming device. The point of this type of vacation is to be able to concentrate solely on gaming, either in hopes of competing, practicing for a competition, exploring a new expansion, or just to get away and do what the gamer loves-- game.

The staycation is another way of being able to participate in this type of tourism. While a person will remain in their home, they are not focused on anything other than the game and

are able to explore the game without having to do normal day-to-day activities, such as work or clean. According to my research on several forums such as reddit, Straight Dope Boards, Resetera, among others, the staycation seems to be the most popular and widely used version of gamer tourism. There is no pressure to go out and explore beyond one's gaming console this way, though, as mentioned earlier, day-to-day interruptions can interfere with the total experience.

So, what exactly is it that one does during this type of vacation? The goal is typically to be able to devote a given amount of time to enjoying gaming without distraction. The addition of forums as a way through which to gather qualitative data has expanded greatly in the past few decades (Reference Holtz et al. 2012;, Im and Chee 2012;, Giles 2016;, Salzmann-Erikson 2012, etc.) Martin Salzmann-Erikson's (2012), Peter Weslowski's (2014), and Im and Chee's (2006) publications provide outstanding explanations of the methodology required to ethically use online forums for qualitative data gathering. With the combination of methods and requirements in mind and in the attempt to try and get a better understanding of exactly how often this occurs, I started by typing "vacation time to play video games" into the Google search bar. The first five pages of responses were all dedicated to this topic. When I added on the tag reddit, starting on the 5<sup>th</sup> page of results, a number of different topics started to become included. While Google was my jumping off platform for this portion of my research, I delved into as many public discussion boards as possible, asking questions about their own experiences as well as requesting more resources. I used the snowball method in order to gain as much information as I could in my brief exploration of this topic. I noticed that the responses on reddit tended to respond more positively to this idea as well as being more recent. There were



a few websites that had archived their discussion boards, such as giantbomb.com, that had older posts with the last post occurring around nine years previous to my search. These discussion boards had more negative posts on them, with naysayers commenting that the people who were asking the question or responding positively to the idea of using one's vacation time to play video games were childish. The reddit posts tended to be newer and more on the positive side of the argument. Two of the comments by reddit members explained the reasons why gamers tend to use their days off in order to play games. Surg3on wrote, "oh hell ya. gotta stay sane" (reddit 2016) and Warskull posted, "It is your vacation time, the whole point is to use it however you want" (reddit 2015).

As someone who has been involved in a raiding guild, I have both seen this happen among my guild members and been a part of this type of gaming. When a new expansion was released for *WoW*, this was something discussed beforehand by the officers and members of the raiding party. It was always assumed by members of my guild that those who were first-line raiders would take some time off in order to advance or "level" their characters to the new maximum level and start gathering gear in order for the raiding to continue on schedule. Measure, one of my guild members, expressed this with the upcoming expansion due to come out in October of 2020 with his statement to the general guild chat, "So, who exactly is going to be able to power level through the launch of the newest xpac? We need to start planning and scheduling our raiding." The question was more, who would we need to replace, which is exactly what he typed not a moment after asking for the information within the officer chat. Since the release of *WoW* in 2004, all but two of the 12 officers have been playing together in some fashion or another. Only five of the officers are currently considered among the core

raiding group due to real life responsibilities. With each of the new expansions, Measure and I commiserate, “we have seen the core of our raiding group change by at least 1 to 2 people on average but as many as 6 new players had to be incorporated at one point”. There were typically a couple of people who did not have the ability to do this or change their schedules around so that by the end of the first weekend after the release of the expansion they would not have a character ready to start advancing through the endgame content. These people were typically replaced in their starting-raid positions until they were able to catch up with the rest of the raid, or until the raid had the time and ability to go back and help them gather the gear needed to become contributing members of the raid again. The number of people needed for a raid changed with each expansion that was released and so the number of people that had to be replaced also changed. During my tenure within a *WoW* guild the number of players needed for this type of endgame content ranged from 40 all the way down to 10.

The raiding guild typically spent these playcations teaming up so that they could “grind” (do a particular thing such as killing a certain type of monster over and over again) out the levels together or level through questing (to complete a series of quests that further the game’s storyline) together. With a guild ranging from over 100 people to as small as 30, the different levels of need and availability varied heavily. When I was in a raiding guild, most of the members (which varied on the guild but was normally around three-fourths of the guild in number) would spend up to 12 hours straight playing, nap, and then go back to leveling again. They would do this until they had leveled their characters completely. On average, most of my guild members were able to raise their characters the extra 10 levels that the expansion added within three days. Since the guild members tended to try to do this leveling together, they used

different voice-chatting programs, such as Ventrilo, in order to talk, joke, and encourage each other to get through the more frustrating portions of this process.

It is easy to read this account and ask oneself why someone would want to do something like that. The bonding and camaraderie, the encumbrance that is established between the guild members during those long gaming sessions translated into lifelong friendships that did not just stay online but moved into the physical world as well. These experiences of gaming for 12-plus hours at a time, striving to complete a goal, also left long-lasting memories that were brought up in conversation during the raiding itself. One of my participants and guild members, Dahlia a stay at home mother of five in her mid-thirties, told me,

I am so grateful for my *WoW* family [talking about our guild] as I don't know if I would be this social without them. I mean, when the kids are at school or down for their naps, I just log on and bam, my support system is up and running and I can complain about the kids or whatever and you all just get it! Ken [her husband] and I are so grateful for you all!

The above emotional tie to the community for my participant Dahlia goes to the heart of the encumbrances that can and are experienced by gamers to the other players within the game. After talking to many of my study participants, I believe that my understanding of the public bulletin board is correct. I would estimate, based upon these two lines of inquiry, that around 90 percent of gamers have taken vacation time off mostly by scheduling the time in advance. Those who did not have the advantage of having vacation time to spend changed their work schedules so that they would be available to play. While I cannot say that this statistic spans the width and breadth of gamers as a whole, I believe that for those who consider themselves to be

active and passionate gamers this observation will hold up to scrutiny. However, I also believe that more research needs to be done to confirm this.

### **The Connecting Tunnel: Why these different kinds of gamer tourism are worth exploring**

While digital videogame tourism does not include travel or the physical realm, it does do a fair number of things that are similar to physical tourism. This type of tourism does allow for memories to be made, a nostalgic feeling to take place, souvenirs or photos to be taken, and for a sense of achievement. There are also travel guides available to help gamers select the game that's right for them, and the ability to verify one's identity based upon what they see as being different and/or similar to themselves. These travel guides are online versions set to resemble or in some cases, are a part of, a travel site but more often tend to be a blog that has related their top choices for gaming based on the beauty of the landscape within the game. Memories created are ephemeral in nature; there is no way to revisit or recreate that experience exactly. In these ways, digital or virtual tourism is very similar to physical tourism. The main difference is that one involves a character (an avatar) who acts as a mediator between the physical world and the player through a sense of embodiment while physical tourism does not.

As we have already explored in the previous chapters, encumbrances of nostalgia mixed with the longing to recreate the memories is true of anyone who wants to revisit a location. It is the pervasive reason for those attempting to perform media-based tourism actions. Combining the ephemeral properties of both a digital environment and its incorporeality with memories that hold the same features, creates a strong and meaningful urge to recreate the experience because of the nostalgia that is induced. While there is a sequential aspect to these types of

gaming, one does not necessarily lead to the other. Most gamers will not attempt to complete a physical tourism experience because of many different factors. According to 15 of my study participants, money, time, and the necessity of interaction with other humans are the main factors that hold gamers back from attempting to explore the physical versions of the landscapes they know and love. This means that the digital format is an alternative way out into the world for most. They are able to experience the beauty of the landscape and have the sense of wonder, along with the memories that they are making.

The second similarity that I found is the ability to take souvenirs home to share with others. Within a game, there are different items that can be picked up and squirreled away for show later. The “look what I just got” excitement associated with finding a rare weapon or creature within a game is little different from that of finding a beautiful rock or piece of jewelry in the physical world. Both require the observer to go to a specific location in order to be shown the item. There is typically not the expectation that the item will be given to the observer, so the materiality of the item does not matter as it is only expected to be “shown”.

The other way that this can be expressed is through photographs. Screenshots are like photographs that the game itself and/or the gaming platform have devised as a way of making an image of the current screen so that the gamer is able to share and save for future access the exact moment in time within the game. Screenshots show exactly what it is the player is seeing at any given moment. Like photographs, the exact angle and what is captured can and often is distorted to appropriate the exact nostalgic feeling the player wishes to illicit in the future (see for example Figure 8.3). This may mean the elimination of other players, certain items, or portions of a location that are not indicative of the ideological view of the location and moment

that the player is attempting to capture. No matter how these photos are taken, they can be shared with others through social media, by means of a physical photo album, or with others on a hard drive. Most of the photographs that are taken today by tourists in the physical world are on digital cameras, so the difference between the two types of photographic/image making experiences is minimal. Each of these types of tourists attempts to create the most appealing version of the landscape they find themselves enthralled with as Lenman's study showed that they would, "sometimes manipulate[d](sic) the negative to add or suppress detail" (2003:94).



*Figure 8.2 The above screenshot is from Dear Esther. It shows a majestic version of a pier that is not on the physical island.*

I found myself doing something very similar when taking photos. As I discussed earlier in this dissertation, while at the sites I visited I would position myself in such a fashion that there would be a lack of tourists and/or to take modernity out of the shot. It was not until about halfway through my study that I realized I was being a tourist myself. I attempting to find all of the stone circles as is one of the achievements that a person can earn in Assassin's Creed Origins (a videogame that I did not introduce into my research, but that I personally found

interesting). It was at Midmar Kirk that it dawned on me what I was doing. The stone circle is located within the grounds of an active church with overhead power lines running from the church to the power pole on the street. The main recumbent stone and flanking stones are extremely close to the church itself. When I was attempting to get the best photos of the stone circles, I kept attempting to get the perfect angle so that none of the gravestones, electrical wires, or the church would be seen in my photo. Lenman states, that Taunt, the main photographer that she studied, consciously “eliminate[d] social and environmental eyesores, perspiring tourists and other unpoetic realities” (2003:104). This was in fact exactly what I found myself doing. As I have a fairly good digital camera, I was able to look at the photos in real time and kept doing so, deleting the photo, and then trying again. About ten minutes into my photo session, I stopped and noticed what I was doing and switched gears to incorporate the signs of modernity and other tourists (Figure 8.3). The saying that a photograph is worth a thousand words is fitting as photographs not only capture the landscape but also the imagination and the emotional state of the photographer. How they decide to portray the landscape depends on their intentions for that photograph and the anticipated audience. One does not have to include any of the sensory information such as the smell of sewage or the heat of the day that has soaked those in the vicinity of the photograph that is being taken. This exclusion of other sensory information along with a perfectly positioned photographer, allow for a pristine and abstracted version of the landscape to be captured (Lenman 2003). The same holds in the videogame setting as the programmers only add what they feel will help to portray the aesthetics that they are attempting to capture. (Some photographers will attempt to do exactly the opposite, however, and intentionally expose the underbelly of a scene.)



*Figure 8.3 Midmar's recumbent stones and kirk.*

Upon returning home, and more often nowadays during the process itself, people are sharing their adventures with a sense of accomplishment (Munar and Jacobsen 2014). For the digital tourists, this normally also comes with an achievement within the game that allows for their successes to be broadcast to other gamers. While photographic proof and check-in statuses are typically enough for the physical tourist to be believed, the digital tourist has the added benefit of the “achievement.” Achievements are easier than photographic proof to link to other gamers, and it does not take more than a few seconds away from game play to link to another gamer who might be halfway around the world. Most physical tourists share their success stories with those who are close to them physically as well as those who are able to follow them on social media (Munar and Jacobsen 2014). This is not usually the case for gamers. While there are live-streaming events and channels dedicated to watching other people play their video games, this is not standard practice.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, even virtual tourism has travel agencies and tourism blogs springing up around it. To make an informed decision about whether or not a



gamer wants to put the time and money into an adventure, they can go to one of these virtual travel blogs, travel agencies, or even the live-streaming events in order to preview and get reviews of the type of things that they will be seeing in a particular game (something we might conceive as being somewhat akin to watching a Rick Steves travel television program). Physical travel agencies have joined this trend, with some adding the video games that have become popular based on their landscapes and beauty as a means of attracting customers to go and play the game and then see the real thing.

Identity reaffirmation is the last thing that I will briefly cover that serves to hold a strong similarity to the digital/virtual and physical tourism actions. It does not matter if a character or a person is interacting with the surroundings for identity creation to become a part of an action that is being taken. What matters is that there is something that the person is interacting with, there will be a sense of “is this me that I am looking at.” Whether that interaction is taking place between a character and a fictitious troll or between a person and an American, the person who is the outsider to the situation has the ability to either connect with, or see the differences between, themselves and the “people” they are interacting with. It may seem absurd to compare the similarities between oneself and a troll, but it is the characteristics that are being emphasized that are being compared. A person who is five feet tall or shorter, such as myself, will have no trouble expressing the physical differences between themselves and the troll. The same is true for the living conditions, culturally assigned characteristics, and motivations that are expressed through the videogame’s story and visual effects. This is the exact same thing that is taking place, as we discussed in Chapter 4, with the physical tourists and the locals in the

communities that they visit. The only major differences are the physicality and the amount of imagination that one must employ.

In short, these two different types of videogame tourism offer very similar rewards to the gamer. They both supply the gamer with a chance at memory making, nostalgia creating, souvenir collecting, and identity reinforcement. The major difference is that virtual tourism is done as a mediated experience using technology whereas physical tourism is not.

### **Gamers Just Wanna Game: How these experiences add to the story I am telling**

While the different types of videogame tourism that I have described in this chapter have little to do with the physical tourism industry, they do give a glimpse into the ways that gamers attempt to experience the worlds that they spend so much time in. There is a deep sense of connection to these virtual landscapes, and the fact that they are willing to spend so much time and energy exploring these environments points to the reasons why they would want to visit the physical versions. In each of the different types of media-induced tourism that I have studied, those that resolved to make the leap to the physical worlds had revisited their favorite locations either by rereading, replaying, and/or re-watching their ethereal fantasy realm multiple times. Many gamers are at least considered to be partially socially awkward (as described in Chapter 3), and according to my study this results in different types of tourism that do not include physical contact with other humans. Within this chapter I have highlighted the different types of virtual tourism in the hopes of comparing them with physical tourism.

The non-traditional form of these types of tourism demonstrate show the sliding scale that the encumbered self can be attached to as far as tourism is concerned. Unlike physical

tourism, the social ties that the tourist has to single player games within the game itself is nonexistent as while in game they are not beholden to any social standards that would have a permanent impact. This allows for the unencumbering of the self for a time as the gamer is able to immerse themselves within a realm in which their only interactions will be with a computer program. This unencumbering is further added to when a playcation is added into the equation as the gamer has purposely put their daily responsibilities in a state of limbo for the duration of their time off. When adding the layer of an MMORPG into the equation, the encumbered self starts to show itself again as the gamers are once again beholden to a community, even if it is a digital community. However, this community does not hold the same level of social responsibility as that of the physical world as it is hampered by the ephemeral properties of the digital world. The playcation, while able to eliminate one or more kind of encumbrance from the gamers, only has so much reach.

## Chapter 9:

### Endgame: Where It All Comes Together

Scotland's majestic landscape combined with a rich history of both folkloric traditions and rebellious spirit lends itself to the playfulness required for a fantastic videogame backdrop. Throughout this study we have looked at how videogame tourism has impacted the Scottish landscape, the differences in the way the sites approach this new type of tourism, the recursive nature of the nostalgic interactions with both the physical and digital environments, and the ways the encumbrances of gamers move back and forth between the digital world of video games and tourism sites in the United Kingdom, while we have also seen areas that need further research. Throughout this last, concluding chapter, I will bring together all of these different topics in a way that allows the reader to understand the importance and ramifications of videogame tourism as well as how further research in various areas will add to our knowledge of tourism and gaming studies.

The addition of the videogame narratives as described in this dissertation onto the layered meanings of touristic sites has, and most likely will continue to be, an uphill battle. Most sites choose to ignore the connections between the videogame and their landscape as it does not fit into the narrative storyline that they have beautifully constructed, whether that be a historical, prehistoric, or a more modern cultural and social twist that they have been able to cobble together. Most of the push back comes from the fact that the videogame creators did not take the historical, or even the site's, version of the established narrative framing devices employed at these sites into consideration when designing the game. Instead, the programmers

tended to loosely base their storyline on the site and its past. In effect, the sites are mainly backdrops or props for the game designers – the actual location, historic or archaeological content and connection are literally irrelevant, as in the case of Skara Brae. Sometimes, the connection to the landscape is so thin, it takes a bit of imagination in order to be able to make the leap to see how the programmers were able to be inspired by the location. A great example of this is *Uncharted 4* and St. Conan's kirk. As explored in Chapters 2 and 6, the programmers took major liberties with the site in order to have it fit into the storyline of the videogame. The physical church is located on the banks of a loch and does not have a cemetery that is connected to it. In the videogame, the church has been moved onto a hill with a sheer cliff face overlooking the ocean and the graveyard holds an important clue that must be unlocked in order for the game to progress. Keeping this example in mind, it is understandable that people who do not play videogames would have a hard time accepting the connections between the two vastly different but yet intrinsically linked virtual and physical landscapes.

### **Gamer for Life: Recursive Representation**

The negative pushback from the sites' curators and caretakers notwithstanding, the gamers were able to interact with the sites, to different degrees, in such a way that their actions were recursively representative of their gaming identity. By recreating nostalgic memories that were first created within the videogames in the physical landscapes as they were visited, the gamers publicly expressed and reconstructed their connection to the gaming community. At the same time, they were able to create new memories that they could, and mostly did, attempt to recreate within the game upon their return to the virtual world. This was true even if they did

not perform said actions in the view of other tourists and/or locals as they were able to express and memorialize their actions through photography. Those photographs were then shared through social media, confirming their recursive representation.

The more accepting and accommodating the sites were to the videogame connection, the deeper the feeling of connection to the videogame and the easier it was for the gamers to let loose and create connections to the physical site. The same correlation was seen between acceptance and the gamers' abilities to not worry about the possibility of being treated negatively at the site. The ability to perform identity-creating actions without the fear of being persecuted seemed to allow for an emotional and identity defining impact on the gaming tourists I have focused on in this study.

### **Live Action Videogaming: The “overlaying” of the videogame narrative onto the physical landscape**

Almost all videogames have a narrative or storyline that the player walks through during the course of the game. This narrative sets the tone for the gaming as well as helps to add a layer of meaning onto the game's landscape, turning space into place as Gupta and Ferguson theorized (1992). Once one is able to accept the fact that space is created within landscapes and in virtual environments, it is easier to accept that identity creation and therefore connectivity to both landscape and the society that it nurtures may take place in both physical landscapes and virtual landscapes, especially when the latter are derived from the former.

It is a small leap from accepting these connections between virtual space and identity creation to recognizing the connection between the physical landscape that inspired the

creation of the virtual version and back again to identity formation. However, the fact remains that play, while becoming more mainstream, is still considered the purview of children with attendant stigma for adults. Thus, it is not something that a site (that is framed as a serious historic/prehistoric attraction) wants to be associated with, as we saw in Chapter 3. For this reason, the fact that the majority of the sites were dismissive when told that a video game was based upon their landscape is understandable. The possibility of being labeled a place for and of interest to adults behaving like children for frivolous reasons instead of a place of importance to be respected because of its serious historical import makes it difficult for the curators and caretakers of sites to consider incorporating the gaming narratives into their representations of the places they are charged with interpreting and protecting.

The virtual world is an arena in which situational adjustments are continuously occurring that allow for a deeper sense of individuality and connectedness to one's avatar. The embodiment, bodilessness, and connections that players are able to create and maintain within this type of environment are a constant driving force behind the creation of gaming communities. That being the case, it only makes sense that if given the chance to connect with their beloved digital world in another way, such as through travel to the physical sites that inspired the digital, they would do so.

### **Media Tourism 2.0: A New form of Media-based Tourism**

Media-based tourism is not a new phenomenon. Research on the topic began in the 1980s with Cohen's (1986) study on the effects of British film tourism, as described in Connell (2012:1012). Since that time, many studies have shown the effects of nostalgic tourism based upon beloved

films (as explored in Chapter Two). While the photographs and cinematic versions of the landscape seldom represent more than an idyllic version of the space that is being traveled to, they can and do leave the tourists with a sense of disappointment and even resentment. This negativity can be directed towards the site, the original media which inspired the trip, or a combination of the two, as Lukinbeal and Fletchall (2013) point out (as discussed in Chapter Eight). This does not seem, based on my research, to be completely true when it comes to videogame tourism. I believe that this is because the gamers are able to create the ability to play, even while being disappointed by the discrepancies between the two landscapes. The idea is that because of the immersion of play in the gamers' daily lives, they are better prepared to accept and figure out how the connections were made by the developers. As Cole, one of my study participants, explained to me, the discrepancies were "like a puzzle within a really good RPG" (Role Playing Game) to be solved by them at the site.

The ability to find the positive and make connections that are sometimes very deeply hidden between the two landscapes allows the experience of gamers at the site to evoke the same emotions and sense of play that they created within the virtual world. From what I have been able to glean from my research, gamer tourists tend to have a more positive experience than what is reported in the literature focused on other types of media-based tourism. They are also able to create new memories that they attempt to recreate within the virtual world. Thus, they come away from their experience with a sense of nostalgia that mirrors the original feelings that enticed them to visit the physical landscape in the first place.



### **Encoded: The encumbered self of the gamer tourist**

As we have seen throughout the previous chapters, the gamer comes to tourism with a different angle or set of encumbrances than that of most tourists. While they have the need to become unencumbered and thus seek out activities that would seemingly take away a level of responsibility, they are unable to completely disregard their ties to the gaming communities or, depending on the situation, the binding of the physical realm's burdens. This inability to fully separate themselves from the duties that membership in their virtual social group demands is in part due to the idea of pilgrimage as the actions that are being performed are identity reaffirming and not completely about relaxation and entertainment. They also bring with them their virtual encumbrances of how the physical landscape should look as well as how they should be able to interact with it and each other. Their interactions with the virtual landscapes and each other influence their ability, or inability as the case may be, to accept the limitations placed upon their experiences within the confines of the physical environment. This set of preconceived notions, or encumbrances, direct the involvement that the gamer is able to have with the physical site (and, it bears noting, each other). In turn, when the gamer returns from their exploits in the physical version of their virtual homes, they are confronted with another set of encumbrances that impacts their ability to slide unchanged back into their previous positionality within the gaming realm. They must carve out a new niche in which to situate themselves, one that allows for the encumbrances of their previous gaming experiences as well as their encounter with the physical versions of them (and their fellow travelers). It would be interesting to see if the cycle would continue with another trip to the physical realm, but that is a subject for future research.

## Version Beta: More Research Needed

While I believe that this study is a good starting point, it has brought up many questions and other points that need to be further investigated. There are three particular areas that I believe deserve more attention: cyclical nostalgia of videogame tourism, videogame tourism as a pilgrimage, and tourism within the virtual world. The latter arena of research has started but is still in its infancy. To my knowledge, the other two areas of tourism have not yet been studied.

It will be interesting to see if this type of tourism, where the tourist does not in fact leave their home or interact with the physical environment, elicits the same nostalgic emotional response that were identified within this study. It will be important to make sure that the gamer is attempting to recreate and explore without attempting to interact with the storyline, or truly play the video game. On the other hand, those that are taking time off work in order to play the videogame of their choice would not be put under the same types of restrictions since their whole point is to interact with the game (to play it) to the fullest extent possible. As far as the playcation phenomenon is concerned, I believe it would be difficult to gain access to this type of gamer as the point of this kind of “vacation” is seclusion. Study participants would have to agree to having a Web cam on them or be otherwise unobtrusively monitored for the duration and for access to the game as they are playing it.

Regarding the cyclical nature of videogame tourism, while I did notice the phenomenon, I did not structure my study in such a fashion as to be able to expand upon this issue in any depth. I do believe I have done more than to stumble upon an important emergent subject of study as I have outlined a systematic approach to interpreting this new type of both play and tourism. By “cyclical nature” I mean that the encumbrances that the gamer gains through

interacting in the virtual realms transfer over to the physical realm that then shape the experience that can be had by the gamers. Subsequently when the gamer returns to the game, they add a new layer of expectation or encumbrances onto their experience within the virtual realm. It would be interesting to start said study with the idea that the physical tourism experience would be cyclical, and the gamers would attempt to recreate their adventures within the virtual environments afterwards. While I did ask as part of this research if the participants planned on returning to the virtual landscape, I did not set out to look at this aspect nor was I able to interact with a reasonable number of the participants within the game in order to give me a fuller understanding of how they might go about doing this. With that said, I will hope to take up this line of research in the near future. Although this phenomenon is not restricted to gaming as one can never return to the recreated memory and therefore will always be disappointed when attempt to recreate such events.

### **The End: Final Conclusions**

Videogame tourism is a budding phenomenon with many different components through which to view the different ways that people are able to recursively represent themselves through the physical actions and practices of tourism. It also allows for a better understanding of how the local population regards the tourists, other tourists view the gamers, and how the gaming tourists view themselves. Within the context of this study, I have noted that play is still considered to be, generally, only something that is in the purview of children and therefore not something to be taken seriously. As this is still the case, it is no wonder that the gaming tourists tended to feel the need to hide their true intentions while visiting the sites as well as the

caretakers' tendencies to ignore the connection to the game in the first place—that is with the exception Alnwick Castle as it was a profitable connection.

As my work was done during the summer of 2018, some things have more recently change as far as the acceptance of this new interpretive framing (or narrative/storyline) of the tourism sites is concerned. Skara Brae, for example, and as evident on its Wikipedia entry, has begun to acknowledge the connection the site has to at least three different video games. While, those responsible have not added anything to the physical site regarding the video games, the video game connections are acknowledged through links on the Wikipedia page.

My research was done early on in the immergence of this phenomenon and it is because the pioneering nature of my work that I believe, it is at least partially, responsible for the level of resistance, that I received toward my study. The sites were, and possibly are to some degree, having trouble changing to accommodate these new interests of their visitors. In other words, the caretakers/curators of these sites are having trouble “fitting” this new way of interacting with the physical site with the interpretive framing devices (or narratives) for the physical tourist locations themselves that they are more accustomed to using. Some of those working at the sites seemingly had no idea what was going on or that there was a connection between the digital and physical landscapes when I visited them. This was likely because I was the first one that had ventured into this line of inquiry and asked such questions of them. This also would account to the unappreciative responses my tourist participants received as well to their own inquiries regarding the connections between the tourist sites and video games.

In order to gain a better look at this connection, I have divided each of the sites into one of three separate groups with respect to their promotion and/or incorporation, or lack

thereof, of the videogame's narrative. The level of acceptance of this additional narrative equates to a difference in the quest for authenticity that is being projected onto the site by the story that is being told. While most sites fall into the ambivalent category, there is a struggle that is being waged over the addition to the possibility of adding the videogame's narrative to the different sites. This is in part due to the government wanting another way through which they can encourage tourism as well as the tourists and some employees demand for this addition. It will be interesting to watch and study this new form of tourism as it develops. In this vein, some of the sites have begun, like Skara Brae, to incorporate, at least marginally, the videogame narrative since my departure from the British Isles. I believe that this phenomenon is only at its infancy and will flourish, given a chance to do so.

A more concise summary of my overall findings include:

- That the ability to recursively represent one's ideal persona was both provided with new opportunities when gamers travel while also facing obstacles.
- That play (including video gaming is still considered to be in the purview of children.
- That gamer tourists felt the need to restrain their impulsivity to recreate nostalgic memories based on their gaming experience while traveling to the physical locations of the games as tourists.
- That Scotland's landscape (and "invented" interpretations of it) did help to inspire the interactions between the gamers and the physical landscapes they visited.
- That the inspiration of the landscapes was not enough to illicit many public displays of recursive representation for a variety of reasons such as the attitudes of those responsible for caring for the sites (as discussed directly above).

Relatedly we saw in the ethnographic material I presented in this dissertation that gamers did not feel as comfortable in expressing themselves within the physical landscapes as they would have within the virtual world. This is in part due to the aforementioned attitudes of site caretakers as well as the fact that gamers have been a fringe group for decades that have suffered from othering for most of that time as explored in Chapter 3. I believe that gamer

tourists in general are therefore more likely to restrain their impulsivity to recreate the nostalgic memories that brought them to the site in the first place than other kinds of travelers would be. While the addition of the Scottish landscape did, I believe, help to inspire said interactions as it is steeped in myth and legend, as described primarily in Chapter 2, that was not enough to illicit a more public display, in most cases, of the gamers' emergent identities.

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## Appendix A: The History of Alnwick Castle

The original and historical narrative of Alnwick Castle bears no resemblance to something out of a Harry Potter book. The first mention of Alnwick castle within England's land and battle records is from 1138, which describes the castle as being "most heavily fortified" (Baxter and Shrimpton 2004) when it was gifted by King Henry I to Eustace Fitz-John, the son-in-law of Yves de Vescy, a prominent 11<sup>th</sup> century noble. The dates, names involved with the castle, and layout indicate that it was, at least originally, a Norman style castle. However, according to Baxter and Shrimpton (2004) it is believed that the castle was created in 1096 by Yves de Vescy. The early history of the castles vary as most accounts are monkish and cannot be authenticated (Baxter and Shrimpton 2004:33).

According to the official Alnwick Castle history and guidebook, Henry Percy, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Percy, acquired the castle in 1309 and was the first to turn it into not only a fortress but a family home as well. Except for approximately 100 years when it was unoccupied, this has been the Percy family home for over 700 years and remains so to this day. The Percy family has helped to bring prosperity and a thriving commerce to the Northumberland province. The family has also helped shape scientific and agricultural advancements in the area while representing an altruistic form of stability and governance in the region. For almost a millennium, this castle has been the central point for commerce, used as a military post, as well as the locus of law and order within the Northumberland providence. Only 30 miles south of the river Tweed which separates England and Scotland, during the first half of its life Alnwick was a fortress used to help fight off the hostile Scots. Renowned for the association with Shakespeare's Harry 'HotSpur' Percy, this castle was known for producing great leaders. The



castle went through many changes architecturally during the first five centuries as it went from being used mainly as a military post to being the seat of the province.

It was not until 1950, that the castle was opened up to the public. With multiple museums, famous pieces of artwork (including *Ecce Homo* by Titian), beautifully designed crown moldings, and a library to rival the royal family's personal library, Alnwick Castle is an enchanting home that has been used as the set for many different television shows such as *Downton Abbey* (2014 and 2015) and movies such as *Mary Queen of Scots* (1971) as well as the Harry Potter movie series (2001 – 2002). It boasts over 800,000 visitors a year, is one of the most popular tourist attractions in northern England, and is the second largest inhabited castle in England, just after Windsor Castle itself. In addition to these achievements, during the middle of the 19th century Lady Elizabeth Seymour began to cultivate an amazing garden on the grounds. It is currently being used as a research and community engagement garden with a section dedicated to the study of poisonous species ranging from the mandrake to different varieties of nightshade.

Alnwick Castle is unique in the fact that it has, at least, attempted to include multiple different narrative framings of its historical and cultural import as a way to capture the attention of people from many different backgrounds. It has not focused on a single historical narrative but has given at least a corner to each of the very popular franchises that have filmed there. Harry Potter stands out as the shining star in that there are tours dedicated to specifically to the fandom of the Harry Potter franchise, activities from broomstick flying lessons to interactive magic shows, and the screenings of the Harry Potter movies. These activities are advertised as being available for fans of any age to participate in both through the official

Alnwick website (alnwickcastle.com) as well as the workers. In summary, Alnwick castle is known as the hub of Northumberland's economic, political, and social life while at the same time holding the title of being the "Harry Potter Castle".

## Appendix B: The History of Harry Potter and the resulting Video Games

A total of sixteen Harry Potter video games have been released for console, computer, and/or handheld gaming systems (Fandom 2018) and more than ten for smart phones (Elizaveta 2019). (This does not include the games that are built into the webpages that are dedicated to the Harry Potter world.) Each of the video games is based upon the Harry Potter book series written by J.K. Rowling, beginning with the first book, which was released on June 26, 1997. The Harry Potter series became an international phenomenon in the late 1990s (Grandy and Romano 2018). The books are based upon Harry Potter, a young orphan who finds out that he is a wizard and after being treated harshly by his aunt and uncle subsequently finds out that he is very famous within the wizarding world. He is invited to study wizarding at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry where he meets Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley who, along with an array of other characters, fight against the evils of the nefarious Lord Voldemort who is bent on destroying all but those wizards who are of “pure” wizarding blood.

The majority of the games are specifically based around one of the books and/or movies in the series. With only a few exceptions, the games are puzzle based with players learning spells, potions, information, and the history associated with the Wizarding World within Hogwarts in order to complete the tasks laid out throughout the course of the game. While some of the earlier games allow the players to play as Harry himself, most of the newer ones sort the players into the different “Houses”. There are four founders of Hogwarts: Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff, and Salazar Slytherin. Each of the founders was known for a certain personality trait such as honor or intelligence. In honor of these founders, the school was broken up into Houses in which each of the students is placed based

upon their personalities so that they spend their time at Hogwarts with like-minded witches and wizards. This allows for customization of the avatar. In the new games, the players are invited to become a witch and/or wizard and given the ability to make decisions that will affect how the game is played. This game play is based solely on the canon surrounding the Wizarding World and not on the books themselves.

A prime example of this newer type of game, *Harry Potter: Hogwarts Mystery* (Petite 2018), was released on April 25, 2018, only days before I left for field research in the United Kingdom. Players are allowed to create their avatar by selecting the gender, appearance, and house of their choice. The game takes place years before the Harry Potter series started and includes voice-overs from a variety of different actors associated with the game, including Maggie Smith as Professor McGonagall (Petite 2018). Players get to experience different classes that are taught at Hogwarts such as potions, flying, and transfiguration. In between classes, players make friends and/or foes with the NPCs and are given the option to perform different tasks in order to gain different rewards. Each choice that the player makes has ramifications for how the game will be played going forward and what options are open to the player in the future. This game is a combination of many of the earlier games and allows for a deeper look into the Wizarding World. Most of the games, while sticking very closely to the storyline of the books, do not have an ending so to speak as they are continued on through new games or are continuously being updated with new content. Those games that do end, such as the chapter specific games, end when the player reaches the end of the storyline of that chapter. To summarize, the Harry Potter games are based upon the J.K. Rowling's wizarding world of witches and wizard. Within the narrative of this series, the hero, Harry Potter, attempts to fight

for justice and equality for those who are marginalized within the wizarding world while at the same time setting the wizarding world free from the tyranny of the evil Lord Voldemort.

## Appendix C: Skara Brae

Nestled below the surface lie the remains of one of the best-preserved prehistoric villages in northern Europe, the UNESCO world heritage site of Skara Brae. Skara Brae has been excavated many times. The first recorded excavation was commissioned by Will Watts, the owner of the land. George Petrie did the excavation work from 1850 until 1868 (Stewart and Dawkins 1913). The most extensive and well published archeological excavation was done by Gordon Childe from 1927-1930. It was Childe's work that resulted in the version of Skara Brae that is seen today (Childe 1928 and 1930). The work has continued over the decades changing hands numerous times. According to the official guide on Skara Brae (Clarke 2014), after a major storm in 1850, partial remains of this village were revealed when the top layer of soil was washed away. Archaeological evidence has shown that this village was occupied, on and off, between 3360-3160 BCE and 2600-2500 BCE. Although occupation of this area is believed to have happened earlier, the structures date from roughly 2900 BCE and only archeological features and a few artifacts are available that hint at earlier settlements (Ibid:31).

The village consists of multiple layers of houses and shows that the area was transformed several times due to the needs of the occupants. The earlier houses were above ground and archaeological evidence indicates that there were between 10 and 12 houses with the possibility of more that have been destroyed with no traces left behind. The number of houses indicates that the village could have consisted of around 70 individuals. The later occupancy was built on top of the earlier settlement but was built primarily below ground. Only nine houses and a workshop have been excavated. Each of these houses is connected to the others by underground tunnels.

The nine houses are all very similar with respect to size, placement, artifacts, and features. Their passageways were only 1 m high by 50 cm wide (Ibid: 9), they were constructed close to the ground and were small as a way to retain heat since the island of Orkney is known for rough weather and high winds. Another unique feature of this settlement is that it is believed to have contained the earliest known version of indoor plumbing in Britain as a cell, or portion of the one room house, is connected to drains that ran under the houses (Ibid).

During the Neolithic era in Britain between 3200 BCE and 2200 BCE individual farmsteads were the norm, however, Orkney seemed to have been an initial attempt at the creation of a village. There is no indication, as of yet, as to why this is. It is thought that elites from the religious and/or secular community lived in Skara Brae. The evidence pointing to the social standing of the occupants includes the wealth of raw materials and artifacts recovered, including a pair of dice which could have been used for fortune telling and/or gambling (Ibid:33).

While this village was also a farming community, it was not plants that were the source of trade goods and sustenance, but the raising of sheep, cows, and pigs. There is evidence from the pollen collected from pottery that they took advantage of the abundant wild plants for medicine and nutrition. However, livestock seems to have been the main focus. Surprisingly for people living on an island, there is not much in the way of fishing artifacts, showing that while they took advantage of stranded marine animals and occasionally fished, such activities were not part of their day-to-day lives (Ibid:37).

While there are more questions than definitive answers to the history that Skara Brae hides, it is believed that this was an important village. Not only is it important to today's

understanding of the history of the British Isles, but also during the Neolithic era. “Neolithic Orkney seems to have participated in a widespread network covering? the most powerful and important regions (within Europe)” (Ibid:55). In short, Skara Brae is one of the oldest examples of a Neolithic village whose history and purpose is thought to be of a religious nature.



## Appendix D: The Bard's Tale

The Bard's Tale is a fantasy roleplaying game based on the Dungeons and Dragons tabletop game. While this video game was originally released in 1985, it has had multiple sequels, a rerelease launched in August of 2018, and in June 2017, was adapted to a virtual reality platform (MobyGames 2020). It has been hailed as one of the best video games of all time by *Computer Gaming World* in 1996 (Computer Gaming World 1996:76). Both the original game and the virtual reality version, known as The Mage's Tale, derive their locations from the Scottish site of Skara Brae. While the lore behind the game is nothing like the lore that is promoted by the location itself, the creator, Michael Cranford, has stated that the game is based on the location—which is why Cranford did not change the name within the game but left it as Skara Brae.

The players start the game in the tavern of Skara Brae where they are greeted by drunken singing townfolk. The rowdy tavern is dark and yet inviting. Soon after entering and being serenaded by the townfolks, the barmaid comes around the bar and asks for someone to kill the larger than life rat that has taken up residence in the basement and is stopping her from getting a new cask. While the town's menfolk shrink away from this task, the hero sets himself on his first task. The tavern then becomes a hub for the hero to replenish his strength throughout the rest of the game.

The premise of the original game is that a bard (a type of character that uses performance such as singing, playing of a musical instrument, and/or storytelling to craft spells) is tasked with a series of jobs through which to learn more about the magic he possesses as well as the chance to make a bit of money. The player is able to decide if the Bard will be nice

or mean to those people and creatures that he encounters, and the decisions will be remembered when later interactions occur. The original game it was designed so that there was only one choice for the player's avatar, a male bard. In the newer version of the game, however, the player is able to choose their avatar's gender and the role that they will play. With the avatar chosen, the player embarks on a journey of puzzle solving and, turn based, combat in the hopes of learning about the magic that they have been gifted. This is known colloquially as an RPG (role-playing videogame). Even within the 2018 version, the "song of a bard" is necessary in order to help reveal and overcome some of the puzzles that are obligatory for the player to solve. The bard's song is imbued with the magic that the Bard possesses and like any magic user from the old folk tales or Tolkien-style worlds, their song is their way of releasing the magic. In the newer version, they also have the task of helping to save the nonhumans (elves and other mythical creatures) from a tyrannical group who have declared that they will destroy any nonhumans. With newer graphics and the addition of the female as a possible lead, this game has come into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While based upon the otherworldly feeling of Skara Brae, the video game is a D&D inspired game in which the hero, a bard, learns how to control his powers. The hero is tasked with using said powers to fight foes and protecting the village of Skara Brae from the creatures that threaten the village's way of life.

## Appendix E: The History of St. Conan's Kirk

St Conan's Kirk is nestled by Loch Awe in the town of Argyll, just 40 minutes west of Oban. According to the Kirk's website (stconanskirk.com) and Scotland's Tourism Department's website (visitscotland.com) Walter Campbell build the original kirk, that was later expanded upon in 1886 for his mother as she found the drive from the family home to the nearest parish in Dalmailly unbearable. The current incarnation of the church was completed in 1930. This grand piece of architecture is a hodgepodge of different styles and eras, with its creator's imagination fueling the construction with every arch and window a tribute to yet another building. The Kirk's history that explains the architectural nuances that were pivotal in the connections between the game *Uncharted IV* and the beautiful, yet eclectic church.

St. Conan was an Irish priest who was brought to Scotland as a tutor for two of the King of Scotland's sons. He is the patron saint of Lorne and the local legend has it that he lived close to where the kirk now stands. He is said to have faced off with the devil for the fate of the souls within his parish. The priest and the devil decided to divide the people into three categories, the good, the bad and the middling. The good's souls would be handed over to the priest, the bad's souls to the devil, and the middling would be spilt evenly. The priest caught the devil attempting to cheat when they started to draw in turn for the souls of those divided into the middling category. The proverbial expression, "Na, na, fair play, paw for paw", is attributed to St. Conan (Royal Historical and Archeological Association 2016).

According to the Kirk's website (stconanskirk.com), the building of this kirk coincided with the building of a railroad. Up until the late 1800s, this was a wilderness that was not occupied by humans. With the train providing a reliable source of transportation and the

building of a religious center, the population in this area quickly grew. With the addition of Bruce Chapel which boasts a wood and alabaster life-sized effigy of Robert the Bruce and one of his bones from Dunfermline Abbey, the kirk's reputation grew and became a destination not to be missed. While the town is not huge, it does make for a nice stop between Oban and Loch Lomond. St. Conan's Kirk is a beautifully eclectic church that was and still is to an extent, the center of the village of Dalamally's way of life. The landscape lent itself easily to being transformed into being a part of *The Uncharted* series. In summary, the narrative of St. Conan's Kirk is one of good versus evil being played out and a son's love for his mother personified through the creation of this place of worship.

## Appendix F: Explanation of Uncharted 4

A high stakes, treasure hunting, and parkour extravaganza, the Uncharted series is an action-adventure video game series with a kick. The main character of this series is Nathan Drake, who is a treasure hunter akin to Lara Croft or Indiana Jones. Not necessarily good or bad, Drake is all about trying to find historically significant and monetarily advantageous treasures. He has a habit of getting himself into sticky situations, joking and/or complaining (or both at the same time) about the situation and that he must then find a way out of in order to obtain his goal.

This game takes the avatar around the world to locations ranging from the ruins of a Scottish cathedral to the busy streets of Nepal. In every location, there is a puzzle that the player must solve in order to find the next clue in the hunt for the treasure. To get to most of the puzzles Drake's amazing parkour skills come into play as he jumps from window ledge to window ledge, then swings himself onto the roof of a building and balances across the roof to jump off ledges and climb buildings. Each puzzle that the player encounters is different, from figuring out how to move properly along a treacherous path in order to safely make it to the next clue or matching symbols within a certain time limit based upon earlier clues. He must do all of this while competing with other treasure hunters in a race to get there first. This means he must fight, either hand to hand or with a weapon, when the need arises, or steer a ship through gun fire to safety. He is often betrayed by his comrades and stranded in desolate areas, but somehow manages to always get his treasure. The parkour puzzle game is a high speed and high-stakes treasure hunting adventure game.

## Appendix G: The History of Scotland's *FallOut* Shelter

As you turn off B940 onto a one lane road, the dilapidated farmhouses lining the narrow road bring an eerie sense of the possibility that a nuclear war has in fact taken place. The stillness and lack of upkeep would lead one to believe that they are in a forgotten spot in the world. To combat this forlornness, there are modern signs pointing the visitors toward Troywood.

According to Scotland's Secret Bunker's website ([secretbunker.co.uk](http://secretbunker.co.uk)) in 1951, Scotland's government finished the building of a secret base located six miles south of St. Andrews in Fife. One hundred feet under an inconspicuous farmhouse lies this massive two story and roughly 24,000 square feet of military wonder. This city underground was built to house 300 people and be a link to other secret bunkers like it around Great Britain in case of a nuclear attack.

Although it was not decommissioned until 1992, it has been refurbished and added on to multiple times but always with the idea of keeping Scotland's government up and running no matter what would befall the country. In the 1970's it was refurbished for the last time (Scotland's Secret Bunker 2020).

Many locals claim to have knowledge of the bunker prior to its decommissioning and declassification in 1992 (Scotland's Secret Bunker 2020). One resident of St. Andrews stated that she and her father had been allowed access to the bunker prior to the 1992 unveiling of this marvel. However, the government still denies this. Either way, in 1994, it was opened to the public to give them a glimpse into this dark history of fear and anticipation. Set up like a museum, Troywood houses artifacts of its past in a state of perpetual readiness. The visitors are treated to the sounds of hushed chattering as well as visuals that resemble that of Pompeii in

the fact that there is a surreal feeling that the person manning the desk just went on Break and will be back any second.

Guests are able to purchase the use of an audio tour guide but also have the option of stopping at multiple different computer terminals through which to gain even more insight into the daily workings of this hidden military city. There are only a few rooms that are not reminiscent of this begone era, a station to play dress up and take some candid photos, a room dedicated to Scotland's war against nuclear warfare, and the mess hall which now acts as the museum's café. Other than these brief moments, the visitors are transported back to the Cold War with all of its paranoia and propaganda on display. The narrative that surrounds the bunker focuses on the secrecy and fear that the British government had regarding the possibility of nuclear fallout.

## Appendix H: *FallOut* Videogame Background

The *FallOut* video game series is a post-apocalyptic role-playing videogame. The game is based upon an alternative history of the United States starting after World War II in which a technology based social system has emerged in the wake of nuclear devastation. There are nuclear powered cars and monstrous robots combined with some technology, such as televisions and computers, stuck in the 1950's. This is a spin-off of the steampunk genre known as atompunk.

The devastated remains of the United States are known, within the game, as the Wastelands. While there are those that survived within Vaults, underground and self-contained bomb shelters set to house 1,000 people, there are more that were unable to gain access to these shelters and have been mutated into what the game calls "ghouls." Ghouls are often discriminated against by those who have held onto their humanity and in return typically have a great hatred toward the humans they come in contact with. Those that were able to seek shelter within the Vaults were not completely spared as they were subjected to sociological experiments ranging from extended animation, to being a community of clones, and so on. The Vaults, while filled with their own perils, are a safe haven in which the hero is able to sleep soundly, if allowed entry, and stock up on needed supplies.

In addition to the social experiments, ghouls, and robots, the hero must navigate the treacherous nature of divided factions and irritated animals. There are numerous factions fighting for control over the wasteland, each with their own agenda. The hero must choose to align with or against each of these factions as they interact with them. The choices that are made have an impact on future choices and actions that the hero will be able to make and will



be made against the hero. The animals, altered by the radiation, have become shadows of their former selves. Some have become monstrous and deadly, while others have remained friendly towards humans. The hero must battle through creatures such as a giant mole or sloth in order to complete different tasks that will allow the hero to gain favor with the different factions and/or Vault inhabitants. The main goal of the game is to survive and flourish with no real ending point. To recap, the *FallOut* games are a series that is based within an alternate apocalyptic version of the real world. The narrative of the games is to survive the world that is left behind after the smoke clears from the nuclear devastation.

## Appendix I: Assassin's Creed

*Assassin's Creed* was released in 2007 by Ubisoft and has since had 18 different titles released under the *Assassin's Creed* name as well as inspired a number of novels, comics, and a movie (Edge Staff 2012). The game has sold 10 million copies (Ibid.) proving its allure with gamers. The game is an action-adventure series that requires a great deal of stealth and parkour skills from the avatar(s). Each of the different games has a different protagonist as the era in which the game is situated changes with the edition. The main storyline that runs through all of these games is the conflict between the Knights Templar and the Order of Assassins. While the Order of Assassins represent freedom, the Knights Templar represent order. The Assassins are tasked with stopping the Templars from possessing and then using Pieces of Eden. These ancient artifacts would allow the Templars to control people's freewill.

Each of the games' protagonists are born into the Order of Assassins. They are able to relive past memories of those that have come before them by using a device called an Animus. The Animus also enhances the assassins' genetic abilities such as jumping farther than normal humans and see with exacting precision from a great distance.

In the *Assassin's Creed Origins* edition, there is an achievement that is optional but allows for the player to view cut scenes that further the storyline. This achievement involves finding all 12 of the stone circles within the game and completing a challenge in which the player must align a pattern of stars in order to unlock it. In short, the narrative of *Assassin's Creed* involves the fight to save humanity from losing their free will to the Nights of the Templar.

## Appendix J: Dunnottar Castle

The history of Dunnottar Castle as I recount it is based upon the travel guides and official tourism site of the Castle itself (Dunnottar Castle 2016). The castle's story is one of fighting and rebuilding that dates back to the third century. During this time, just to the north of the castle itself, there was a Pictish fort. The reason for its location and/or much other information on the site has been lost to time. [Has it been archaeologically investigated?] The castle itself started as a place of worship and a building was erected by Saint Ninian during the fourth century. It is not until 1297 that the castle was repurposed for nonreligious use when it was captured by William Wallace and the English garrison that had sought refuge within the church as it was burnt to the ground with the soldiers still inside. It took almost another 100 years for the site to become a family home. Sir William Keith built the keep which currently stands and is the central location within the castle. The castle would see centuries of use and be visited by multiple monarchs until it was sold and left to ruin after the battle of Culloden in 1746. It was not until 1925 that the castle was purchased by the Pearson family and saved from ruin and opened to the public as a way of helping to fund its restoration (Ibid). Dunnottar has a bloody history that is fraught with violence, war, and the need to rebuild.

## Appendix K: Call of Duty

Released in 2003, *Call of Duty* started as a World War II era game and has since spanned time including future wars, modern day wars, and the Cold War. This is a first-person shooter game that has both a single and multi-player mode. It is one of the most popular console games and according to *Good House Keeping's* Alesandra Dublin it ranks number one in her list of the 20 most popular video games of 2020 guide.

Many of the locations used within this virtual environment are based on physical world landscapes. With the latest edition, *Warzone*, having all of its maps reflect physical landscapes (Cooney 2020). *Call of Duty: Ghosts* boasts that most of its maps, including Stoneheaven, as being inspired by physical landscapes. The Stoneheaven map is almost a perfect match to Dunnottar Castle which resides in Stonehaven, Scotland.

## Appendix L: Dear Esther

*Dear Esther* is an explorative, story based, and immersive videogame. The game takes place on one of the abandoned islands within the Hebridean Islands. As the gamer successfully reaches each way point, they are rewarded with another portion of the story in the hopes of piecing together what tragedy besieged this once flourishing island as well as the narrator's wife. The gamer quickly finds out that the narrator is a travel writer who, along with his wife, came to the island in search of a reclusive hermit who was supposed to know the secrets of the island. While the narrator's sanity is increasingly in question, he leads the gamer through the secrets that they discovered as to the origins of a tragic past of isolation and loss.

Created in 2007 by *The Chineseroom*, it received six awards in 2012 and two in 2013 for its originality (Sumo Digital 2018). The game was originally produced as a graduation requirement for Dan Pinchbeck's doctorate degree. The funding for the game came from the university's Arts and Humanities Research Council (Oxford 2020). Pinchbeck, along with a team of programmers, decided to start a "discussion about the nature of narrative in videogames" (Ibid). It was remastered in 2012.

Curriculum Vitae  
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**Education**

2015 - 2020: PhD, Cultural Anthropology, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee GPA 3.735  
2012 - 2015: M.A., Cultural Anthropology, North Dakota State University GPA 3.679  
2009 - 2012: B.S., Anthropology, Longwood University, Overall GPA: 3.25, Degree GPA: 3.65  
2006 - 2007: A.A., Patisserie, Orland Culinary Academy, GPA: 3.65

**Research and Teaching Interests**

Digital Anthropology| Gaming Subculture| Recursive Representation | Virtual Embodiment |  
Othering| The Marginalized| Globalization| Tourism | Locations: United States, The British Isles,  
Scotland

**Awards, Honors, Assistantships**

Fall 2015 – Spring 2017: Graduate Assistantship, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee  
Fall 2015 – Spring 2017: Chancellor’s Award  
2015-2017: American Indian Student Services award for academic achievement  
Fall 2012 – Fall 2014: Graduate Assistantship, North Dakota State University  
2010 – 2012: Virginia Education Grant, Longwood University  
2012: Lambda Alpha, Anthropological Honors Society, Longwood University  
Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Spring 2013: Dean’s List

**Teaching Experience**

2020 – present Adjunct Faculty, College of Lake County, Cultural Anthropology  
2020 - present Adjunct Faculty, The College of DuPage, Introduction to Anthropology, Cultural  
Anthropology, People and Cultures of the World.  
2020 (Fall and Spring) Teaching Assistant and Instructor for Anatomy and Physiology Lab  
Sections, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, BioSci 203: Anatomy and Physiology II (Dr.  
Ann Raddant)  
2019 - 2020 ESL Teacher, VIPKid  
2019 - 2020 Teaching Assistant and Instructor for Anatomy and Physiology Lab Sections,  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, BioSci 203: Anatomy and Physiology II (Dr. Ann  
Raddant)  
2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 (Fall term) Teaching Assistant and Instructor for Anatomy and  
Physiology Lab Sections, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, BioSci 202: Anatomy and  
Physiology I (Rosemary Stelzer)  
2016 (Fall and Spring) Teaching Assistant and Instructor for Discussion Sections, University of  
Wisconsin – Milwaukee, ANTH 102: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (Prof. Wood and  
Applbaum)  
2016 (Spring) Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, ANTH 461:  
Anthropological Theory (Prof. Bornstien)

2015 (Fall) Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, ANTH 281: Dead Men Do Tell Tales (Prof. Anapol)

2013 (Spring) Teaching Assistant, North Dakota State University, ANTH 441: Death and Dying (Prof. Sather-Wagstaff)

### **Invited Public and Course Lectures**

2012 “Historical Archaeological work at Nomini Hall” Guest Lecture for ANTH 690, Prof. Samuels at North Dakota State University *Historical Anthropology*

2012 Guest Lecture for *Religion in Fargo, ND* for opening of North Dakota State University’s Digital History Website at Plains Art Museum (<http://fargohistory.com>)

### **Academic and Community Service**

2019-2020 Senior Cultural Anthropology Editor for *Field Notes: A Journal of Collegiate Anthropology* #11, Milwaukee, WI 2020

2017 Speech given at the Anthropological Student Union’s Annual Colloquium: *The Shifting of Identities: Cyberbullying within World of Warcraft’s Looking for Raid*

2017 Chair for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Anthropological Student Union’s Annual Colloquium

2016 Speech given at the American Anthropological Association’s Annual meeting: *The Shifting of Identities: Cyberbullying within World of Warcraft’s Looking for Raid*

2016-2017 Vice President of the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee’s Anthropological Student Union

2015 Speech given at University of Milwaukee-Wisconsin’s Colloquium: *Virtual Worlds: Placemaking within the 1’s and 0’s*

2015 Speech given at Central States Anthropological Society Conference: *GamerGate: Identity in Peril*

2015 Creation and Acceptance of Panel for Central States Anthropological Society Conference: *GamerGate: A Digital Phenomenon*

2015-2017 Peer Reviewer for University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee’s “Field Notes”

2011 Soccer Coach, Prince Edward County Soccer League

2010 Publication for *The Community* course review: on website for Fall 2010, in course book for 2011 school year, and used as a flier from 2011 to 2015

### **Research Experience and Field Work**

2018 Dissertation Field Work, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Videogame Tourism in Scotland; Prof. Thomas Malaby and Prof. Bill Wood

2014 Field Representative, United States Census Bureau

2014 - 2015 Thesis, North Dakota State University; *Otherring in World of Warcraft’s Looking for Raid Function*; Prof. Avery-Natale

2013 Research Assistant, North Dakota State University; created and maintained museum displays for the agricultural department; Prof. Sather-Wagstaff

2012 Research Assistant, North Dakota State University; Prof. Sather-Wagstaff

2012 Senior Research Thesis, Longwood University; *Religious Change*; Prof. Dalton

2011 Cultural Field Experience, *Sustainability: Peoples of the Northern Neck of Virginia*; Understand the creation of geographical location from indigenous population to the present through historical narratives and interviews, Longwood University.

2011 Laboratory Experience, *Archaeological Laboratory Methods* course; identify, preserve, categorize, and storage of artifacts from the previous year's archaeological dig; Longwood University

2011 Archaeological Field Work, survey and dig at Nomini Hall, Virginia

2011 Ethnographic Field Work, creation of a mini ethnography *Anthropological Methods* course; *The Celebration of Female Power: An ethnography of horseback riding*; Prof. Dalton, Longwood University

2010 Cultural Field Work, *Introduction to Anthropology* summer course, traveling through Prince Edward County to research the disparages through the town's history to present, Prof. Jordan, Longwood University

### **Selected Graduate Classes**

Anthropological Theory| Qualitative Methods| Voodoo| African Diaspora| Readings in Digital Anthropology| Global Cultural Heritage| Digital History

### **Languages**

German – reading and writing – intermediate

Spanish – reading and writing – intermediate

French – reading and writing – beginning

### **Professional Memberships/Affiliations**

2012 – present American Anthropological Association

2012 – present Lambda Alpha

2015 – present Anthropology Student Union at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

2015 – present Central States Anthropological Society