

Ruin and Reconstruction: Understanding the Constructed Past

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Résumé de l'article

Le patrimoine bâti témoigne du temps qui passe. Une fois abandonné, il tombe en décrépitude rapidement. À partir de ce moment, afin de permettre à l'histoire de survivre, deux options s'opposent et s'exposent : mettre en scène ses ruines ou reconstruire à l'identique. En comparant ces deux figures de cas à partir d'exemples britanniques, Catherine Woltz note les divergences de perceptions sensibles propres à chacune et étudie les différentes stratégies d'interprétation qui en découlent.

Article 4

Catherine Woltz

Ruin and Reconstruction: Understanding the Constructed Past

All this happened, more or less.

-Kurt Vonnegut

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Le patrimoine bâti témoigne du temps qui passe. Une fois abandonné, il tombe en décrépitude rapidement. À partir de ce moment, afin de permettre à l'histoire de survivre, deux options s'opposent et s'exposent : mettre en scène ses ruines ou reconstruire à l'identique. En comparant ces deux figures de cas à partir d'exemples britanniques, Catherine Woltz note les divergences de perceptions sensibles propres à chacune et étudie les différentes stratégies d'interprétation qui en découlent.

1

PRENTICE, Richard. "Heritage: A Key Sector in the 'New' Tourism." *Heritage, Museums and Galleries*. In: CORSANE, Gerard (ed.). London, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 243-256, at p. 245.

2

For examples, see Ironbridge Gorge, George Washington's Home, Timbertown Heritage Theme Park, and the Fortress of Louisbourg, respectively.

The constructed remains of human history give us a large-scale opportunity to understand how our ancestors lived, worked, worshipped, and spent their leisure time. When these sites are not continually inhabited they become a time capsule which is incredibly vulnerable. Some sites disappear entirely, leaving behind only their archaeological record, while some crumble, slowly but spectacularly, into ruins, casting a haunting shadow of those who came before us. When a site of the constructed past has fallen into ruin or decay, how can it be interpreted as a site of significant cultural heritage? And how do we reclaim it for interpretation if it has disappeared altogether?

As interpreters, we must explore and compare the different ways in which ruin and reconstruction help us understand the constructed past, examining affective powers at play in the site and discussing how those powers inform interpretive schemes and educational programming. In our understanding of the constructed past, we may glimpse as through a dark glass the lives of our ancestors and how they interacted with their environment. Two case studies are examined to better understand the processes by which both ruins and reconstructions are made available to the public: Fountains Abbey, a ruined Cistercian monastery in Yorkshire, England, and Castell Henllys, a reconstructed Iron Age settlement in Pembrokeshire, Wales. These two sites are examples of good practices in heritage site interpretation and have the advantage of having been visited by the author.

We begin by identifying the features that distinguish ruin from reconstruction and by considering what makes these sites different. Categorization of the two is quite different. Richard Prentice would generally label ruins either socio-cultural or religious attractions, in his categories of "new tourism,"¹ since the most common ruins are castles and churches, but reconstructed sites might find themselves under nearly any of his typologies; transportation attractions, attractions associated with historic persons, theme parks, or military attractions.² When we consider ruins, an image is easily called to mind; ancient sites, crumbling in structure, nature creeping up the shell of their walls. Reconstruction, however, is a slightly more ephemeral concept. The reason for this is that reconstruction can in fact mean a number of different things and occurs both on sites where there

is *in situ* archaeological record and sites based on archaeological findings which are built away from the location of said findings. Reconstructions for the sake of fashion are not new, as evidenced by the presence of architectural follies, particularly popular on the great country estates of Georgian and Victorian Britain. These reconstructions, however, do not base themselves in extant physical record, which is what distinguishes today's reconstructions.

It is intriguing to note that any ruin has the potential to become a reconstruction. Most ruins must undergo some work in order to make them safely available to the public, so why not go the whole way, and restore them to all their former glory? It is a philosophical question that must be answered within the restoring organization and must involve an identification of what that organization hopes to communicate to visitors. While both ruin and reconstruction have much in common when it comes to historical significance, there are striking differences in the way that we understand and draw meaning from them.

Affect

How and why do we respond to sites of the constructed past? This may seem to be an easy answer: the constructed present is all around us and we are therefore connected to the past by understanding our ancestors' ways of sheltering themselves. It would be reductive, however, to say that this is the only reason that visitors feel drawn to the structures of times past. It is the affective power of these sites that reels us in, their ability to elicit an emotional reaction within the visitor. This reaction encourages "audience participation in the process of meaning making,"³ and provides alternate entry points for visitors to engage with a constructed heritage site. Emotional affect is tied up with sensory perception. Much of the response drawn from visitors has to do not only with their visual engagement, but also with what they hear, touch, and smell. In terms of the two site-types this paper is examining, the results of the affective powers present are polar opposites. One might think of the results of affect as being on a continuum, with light-hearted emotions at one end and the darker (though not necessarily negative) emotions at the other.

3

GREGORY, Kate and Andrea WITCOMB. "Beyond Nostalgia: The Role of Affect in Generating Historical Understanding at Heritage Sites." In. KNELL, Simon J., Susanne MACLEOD, and Sheila WATSON (eds.). *Museum Revolutions*. London; New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 263-275, at p. 265.

4

SETTIS, Salvatore. "Forward." In. KOSTMAN, Lynne (ed.). *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*. Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 1997, p. VII-IX, at p. VII.

5

ROTH, Michael S. "Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed." In. KOSTMAN, *Irresistible Decay...*, *op. cit.*, p. 1-24, at p. 2.

There is a certain sadness about any ruin, a sense of the passage of time. Visitors are able to identify with ruins because ruins require the visitor to consider an uncomfortable aspect of the human condition. The greatest message that an ancient, crumbling site can convey is the transience of human effort; all peoples and civilizations eventually fade, leaving only their imprint upon the lands they once inhabited. The physical records that are left behind represent "simultaneously an absence and a presence, they show [...] an intersection of the visible and the invisible."⁴ The persistence of ruins is hopeful, for humanity hopes to persist, and yet they give us a reason to grieve for what is eternally lost. This evocation produces a response that requires an engagement of imagination, as we ask ourselves what might have once stood upon these ruined stones and, equally important, why it might have been put there.

The affective visual power of a site in ruin inspires melancholy feelings, from the lower end of the spectrum. Michael S. Roth tells us that ruins can be imagined as the decay of the human body; as our structures decay, so too shall we. To illustrate this idea, Roth uses a 1542 drawing by Charles Estienne showing a deceased man against a ruined building, indicating that the body, too, is a ruin to be explored. This illustration's original purpose was an anatomical study, but can also be taken as a metaphor for how we view the mortality of the body in relation to the mortality of human effort. As visitors explore ruins to discover their architectural "skeleton," so too may we explore the ruins of physical bodies to learn how they function. The body decomposes and returns to earth, just as natural processes reclaim those structures which are left behind, a process of "reintegration with the natural world."⁵ However, ruins remain hopeful, despite the mournful emotions they are capable of eliciting and, despite the almost funerary nature of ruins, we are free to imagine that once our souls are departed like their long-ago occupants, our efforts may live on in some form. That they may be altered by time is inevitable, but by leaving behind an impression, we make a part of ourselves immortal.

The emotions produced by a site in ruin are only one function of affect. Emotions must be informed by, and supportive of, the tactile experience of a site as it affects historical understanding. Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb consider sites such as

these “possible worlds which work through affective corporal and imaginative engagement to develop historical understanding.”⁶ We interact bodily with ruins, the interaction provokes an imaginative and emotive response and it helps us understand the purpose of such sites. Identification with something “other” is important for affective power to assist in meaning making; we connect with ruins through our attempts to imagine the mind-state of their builders and understand the part of them that is imprinted upon the site. In doing so, we may be able to identify similarities of motivation between ourselves and these “others” in a shared desire to leave a tangible imprint upon our respective spaces. Materiality is the key to this potential power—physical space has the capacity to be infinitely more provocative than writings on the subject, for we are able to insert ourselves in the setting, to imagine our feet treading the paths of the builders, our fingers may brush the stones and think of the mason’s hammer and chisel or the resident whose fires once warmed the walls. This allows us to imagine the site before it was ruined; we reconstruct with our mind’s eye. Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb note how interpretive materials can serve this imaginative purpose, but they point out that such materials are only “a series of clues,”⁷ and the real meaning of the site lies in what we see, touch, hear, and imagine. It is our interaction with the sites that creates meaning, rather than just what we learn about them.

The majestic ruins of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire once housed the most powerful monastery in England. It was founded in 1132 by monks who had left York’s St. Mary’s Abbey to seek out greater adherence to monastic rules and faithful life. The site itself represents an interactive space in a number of ways, and is home to several aids to imagination. The audioguide tour is an excellent example of imagination enhancement through affect, as it creates two characters and builds an entire scenario by which the visitor is guided through the site. The characters, a senior choir monk and a young novice, walk the site as it would have been in its early days, while the voiceover of a narrator draws comparisons between what these characters saw and what survives today. In the background, chants can be heard, echoing through the ancient nave while the visitors observe the monks’ interaction at a distance.⁸ The listener is invited to imagine what the monks’ lives might have been like, using aural cues to evoke smell, taste,

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GREGORY and WITCOMB, “Beyond Nostalgia: The Role of Affect...,” *op. cit.*, p. 265.

7

Id., p. 272.

8

Fountains Abbey. *Abbey Adult Audio Guide*. Flexi Audio, 2006. <<http://www.fountainsabbey.org.uk/html/visiting/audio-guide-download/>>.

9

The open-air museum at St. Fagan's contains a variety of buildings which encapsulate Wales's past, including Celtic roundhouses, a post office and a manor house, among a number of others. These structures originated elsewhere, but were reconstructed on the site for the purposes of tourism. (Observed by author, January 2006.)

10

ASCHER, Robert. "Experimental Archaeology." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1961, p. 793-816, at p. 799.

and touch. In the sawmill, another aid to imagination awaits in video form. A character who was once in the employ of the Abbey speaks about his daily life in the wealthy and powerful Cistercian community. After watching this presentation, visitors can turn and see the place where the very person who inspired this interpretive video etched his initials into a door. It almost seems that they have met him and touched his hand; they are able to consider and even understand his life and his desire to leave an imprint on the structure that meant so much to him. Aids such as these bring the site to life, despite the fact that it has been ruined since the time of Henry VIII.

The nature of reconstructed sites is vastly different from sites in ruin and it follows that the affect of the sites is different as well. A reconstructed heritage site is usually one that is based on archaeological record, either on the site of the record itself or nearby in a similar landscape. Because archaeological evidence can be invisible to the untrained eye, reconstructions may appear to spring out of once vacant spaces. While many sites are reconstructed to promote the tourism industry, such as the reconstructions at the Museum of Welsh Life in St. Fagan's,⁹ a growing number are being developed to provide a large-scale type of study called experimental archaeology. According to Robert Ascher, experimental archaeology uses reconstructed sites to "generate and test hypotheses, based on archaeological source material."¹⁰ Once a site is created, it takes on an appearance of being whole, and even populated. This stimulates a different set of feelings than those produced by a site in ruin. Coming more from the upper end of affective emotions, reconstructed sites tend to have an almost cheerful presence, part of which is derived from the fact that they are inhabited by interpreters (a topic to be further discussed in the next section).

Reconstructions engage a different mechanism of imagination than ruins, and much of that imagination must come from the creator. While the site in its finished state may appear complete and alive to the visitor, archaeologists are constantly at work testing and refining new ideas about how ancient peoples lived. This is of great benefit to the academic community, as many of these places, such as Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire or West Stow Anglo-Saxon village, are recreating sites which have left little or no written record. Through experimental archaeology, we may

not only imagine how our ancestors lived, but actually test different ideas.¹¹ The hypotheses built and tested at reconstructed sites tend to take on the appearance of a living history village, as is the case at Castell Henllys, which recreates an Iron Age Celtic fort and residential community in West Wales. The affective power of these living sites exists at a different part of the continuum from ruins. While ruins tend to affect us at the lower end of the spectrum, with such emotions as distress and anxiety, reconstructions tend to settle at the upper end, utilizing enjoyment and surprise. We use affect at reconstructions to stretch our imaginations in a different direction—rather than rebuilding a site in our mind's eye, we need only imagine inhabiting it. Sensory affect plays a major role in this journey.¹² Smells, sights, and sounds that suggest a living populace, these things make our physical interaction with a space more realistic and lend a transportative quality to the site.

Castell Henllys began as a seemingly empty plot of land, but what was not visible to most was the presence, below the ground, of a vast store of archaeological information. When Hugh Foster arrived on the site in 1980, all possibilities were buried. He originally intended to turn the site into a historically-themed amusement park, but was denied planning permission. Foster decided instead to recreate an Iron Age village, unique in that the reconstructions would take place directly on top of the archaeological record. While Foster acted mostly within the confines of what could be proven through finds at the site, he exercised a measure of artistic license in those domains where there was no evidence to give direction. Foster became an inhabitant and interpreter at the site and organized events following the Celtic calendar, where he freely translated ancient ideas into modern terms.¹³ In the early days of Castell Henllys, Foster was the source of imaginative touches that provided emotional, sensory, and tactile affect to the site. He created structures that could be entered into and objects that could be handled; his site features activities ranging from cooking to weaponry. The visitors' senses are stimulated in ways that help them draw great meaning from the site.

Interpretation

Affect only has so much power to move visitors and interpretation, at these sites; it gathers up the affective powers in operation, and

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HORSLER, Val. *Living the Past*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003, p. 24-25.

12

GREGORY and WITCOMB, "Beyond Nostalgia: The Role of Affect....," *op. cit.*, p. 264-265.

13

MYTUM, Harold. "Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort." In. JAMESON, John H. (ed.). *The Reconstructed Past: Reconstructions in the Public Interpretation of Archaeology and History*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2003 [1st ed.], p. 91-102, at p. 92-93.



Fountains Abbey.
Photo: Catherine Woltz



Reconstructed celtic roundhouse
in the style of Castell Henllys
(St Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life).
Photo: Catherine Woltz

14

KOKE, Judy. *Class Lecture: Interpretation and Meaning Making*. Toronto (ON): University of Toronto, March 18th, 2010.

15

MACKINTOSH, Barry. "National Park Service Reconstruction Policy and Practice." In: JAMESON, *The Reconstructed Past...*, *op. cit.*, p. 65-76, at p. 66.

16

PRENTICE, "Heritage: A Key Sector..." *op. cit.*, p. 243.

makes use of them to help visitors connect to the site on a more conscious level. The goal of interpretation is to expose the history of a site in a way that gives it relevance and meaning to visitors and so methods of interpretation must allow visitors to interact with the site in a meaningful way.¹⁴ While similarities can be seen in results of interpretation, sites in ruin and sites of reconstruction require different methods.

The author has observed that ruined sites rarely use living history methods of interpretation such as costumed interpretation, opting instead for offering formal tours. This is perhaps due to the nature of the structures; it is difficult to give a ruin a lived-in feel as there are no floors or working hearths. Interpretation works better through the medium of virtual populations, such as the audioguide characters mentioned in an earlier section. Fountains Abbey's virtual sawmill worker is an excellent example of new media at work. Loosely based on a historical character, he tells visitors how the sawmill worked and what it was like to spend one's days in it, doing so without any of the invasive practices associated with living history, which might put the site at risk. He offers a history lesson in the politics of the site and the social structure of the businesses connected to the Abbey, and it is easy for visitors to find meaning in comparing his life to their own. The video of which he is a part also examines other characters from the Abbey's past, a vehicle that allows for interpretation of the site in many time periods. Tackling multiple stages of historical development is a challenge faced by most socio-cultural heritage sites, as there is some temptation to interpret only the most obvious time period and discount earlier and later features of a site, whatever their historical significance.¹⁵ Fountains Abbey's relationship to the much more complete Studley Royal estate (the two are part of the same larger site) is beneficial to the interpretation of history as a changing force.

The use of new media is gaining prominence at sites in ruin, especially as these sites become more and more important in the "new tourism" industry.¹⁶ The interpretive capabilities of audio and video systems greatly enhance the information already provided by tour guides and didactic panels. Audio tours can add an element of control to a visitor's experience as well as give an outlet to the numerous facts and stories that tour guides cannot

fit into a tour. At Fountains Abbey, and many sites in ruin, the audioguide follows a set route, but this is not necessarily typical. A number of sites, such as Stonehenge, allow for visitor-led audioguides. These audioguides have a menu system by which visitors may enter a number attached to a given location or object and be given specific information on that object. Thus, visitors define the order of narrative, allowing them to create their own itinerary based on their priorities.¹⁷ There is, however, a powerful argument in favour of Fountains Abbey's set path style of audioguide. Routes mean that interpretive planners can create a guide which tells a story or offers a chronology, unfolding as the visitor progresses. Since the visitor will be in predictable locations within the site, the audioguide can provide very location-specific interpretation.

Children's audioguides are becoming more common at sites in ruin, and usually follow a slightly different structure than their adult counterparts. Following Freeman Tilden's sixth principle of interpretation,¹⁸ the children's audioguide at Fountains Abbey departs from the formal narrative of the adults' guide and enters into a game of pretend, making children time-travelers and advising them to seek out minute details, look for wildlife, and imagine the lives of the people connected to the Abbey. Essentially they are encouraged to interact as much as possible with the affective properties of the site. The children's guide consists of multiple voices: principally a narrator, who acts as the child's adventure guide, and a senior monk, who addresses the child directly. The listener thus becomes an active participant, rather than a passive observer.¹⁹ Parents and children still follow the same path with their audioguides, allowing for family interaction, but their attention is engaged in different ways.

Visitors' centres provide a more sheltered opportunity for interpretation and a chance to explore the site beyond just existing ruins. Fountains Abbey built a large new visitor complex in the 1990s, with refreshment and washroom facilities. However, the new visitors' centre has had some issues surrounding the fact that it seems dedicated to shopping and dining and "lacks any dedicated interpretation space at present."²⁰ Souvenir shopping is not a new thing—as Richard Prentice notes, holiday souvenirs were greatly popular in the Victorian period²¹ and the practice

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BATH, Brian. "The use of New Technology in the Interpretation of Historic Landscapes." *Heritage Interpretation*. In: HEMS, Alison and Marion BLOCKLEY. Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 163-172, at p. 165.

18

The sixth principle states "Interpretation addressed to children [...] should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach." (TILDEN, Freeman. *Interpreting our Heritage*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967 [2nd ed.], p. 12.)

19

Fountains Abbey. *Abbey Children's Audio Guide*. Flexi Audio, 2006. <<http://www.fountainsabbey.org.uk/html/visiting/audio-guide-download/>>.

20

GOLDSMITH, Tessa. *Heritage Site Development*. (Email to author, October 27, 2009.)

21

PRENTICE, "Heritage: A Key Sector..." *op. cit.*, p. 246.

22

BISHOP, Morris. *The Middle Ages*. New York: American Heritage, 2001 [3rd ed.], p. 12.

23

KILLEBREW, Ann E. "Reflections on a Reconstruction of the Ancient Qasrin Synagogue and Village." In: JAMESON, *The Reconstructed Past...*, *op. cit.*, p. 127-147, at p. 135-136.

24

MACKINTOSH, "National Park Service Reconstruction...", *op. cit.*, p. 67.

25

MYTUM, "Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort," *op. cit.*, p. 97.

certainly goes back as far as medieval pilgrimages and "holy souvenir collecting"²² —but shops such as the one in the Fountains Abbey Visitors' Centre carry a truly vast array of products associated with the site itself as well as the National Trust, which manages the site. While these shops provide an excellent fundraising opportunity, the products sold are often only peripherally associated with the site and represent a trend in commercialization at heritage sites. A similar centre at Castell Henllys focuses much more on providing expanded interpretive space.

Interpretation at reconstructed sites tends to be nearer to the living history style than what is in place at ruins. Since the goal of these sites is to present a whole structure, they benefit from first- and third-person interpretations. Affect is of huge importance once again, in a very tactile way. Human populations within a site must have objects with which to interact. While authentic objects that have been discovered during archaeological exploration have a place, it is generally within a controlled visitors' centre, where they can be cared for safely. On the site itself, reproductions are a much wiser choice, both for the safety of the original objects and because those objects would rarely be in a condition that would make them useful.²³ Pots, fireplaces, textiles, and animal hides make an Iron Age dwelling look lived in, as if the owner has only stepped away and will return at any moment with the spoils of the day's hunting over his shoulder.

Castell Henllys, like many sites, has in the past been subject to what Albert H. Good referred to as "the curse of most historical restorations [...] the almost irresistible urge to guild the lily,"²⁴ especially under the direction of Hugh Foster. However, since management of the site was taken over by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park service after Foster's death in 1991, the site has made a shift from Foster's somewhat romanticized (and perhaps a bit overly creative) attraction to a highly accurate depiction of what is currently known about Iron Age Wales. Interpretation received this same rigorous application of standards in terms of both accuracy and relevancy. The new management of the site identified as their main interpretive goal a fostering of Welsh national identity through "providing strong images of an indigenous 'pristine' Celtic community."²⁵ By addressing a need within the community, relevant interpretation could be an extremely potent part of

meaning-making as a facet of identity formation. It should be noted that when sites are under the administration of a political body, such as a local council or a corporate unit, there is an increased possibility for them to feel pressure to send a message appropriate to the sponsoring body's goals—for example, emphasizing a particular period of time that may encourage a nationalist agenda. While this is apparent in the interpretive practices at Castell Henllys, it is not necessarily damaging to the site; interpretation focusing on the pre-English Welsh identity comes naturally to the site and is likely to be beneficial to the community at large.

26

Id., p. 99.

Education

Education in heritage sites is not dissimilar to interpretation, in that its goals include encouraging personal connections to the site and visitor-focused meaning making, but there is necessarily a more concrete learning goal in place, either in terms of curriculum of local schools or as a site of tertiary and lifelong education opportunities that might not be available in more formal learning centres. Essentially, educational programming acts as a contact zone between site-based knowledge and the learning process of local institutions. Generally, educational programming in heritage sites is disseminated through field trips, which are an excellent way of communicating concepts in historical education. Field trips allow students to temporarily shed the sterile classroom routine and immerse themselves in the affective power of a site that encapsulates the concepts they are studying.

The nature of interpretation at Castell Henllys as a function of Welsh cultural development places it in a powerful position as an educational centre. Like many heritage sites, it places great emphasis on education as a core principle, and targets school children as well as lifelong learning with its educational programming. Education for these groups focuses on Key Stages in the National Curriculum for Wales and experimental archaeology in a field school setting, respectively. Educational programming is available in both English and Welsh, and focuses on something not available outside of Wales: the period before England became a dominant hegemonic power in the region.²⁶ Most educational

27
Ibid.

28
"Castell Henllys Field School." 2008.
<<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/arch/castellhenllys/web/>> (accessed November 27, 2009).

29
The Duke of Edinburgh award is a charity process which encourages activity and community involvement in young people. More information can be found at <www.dofe.org>.

30
MYTUM, "Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort," *op. cit.*, p. 98.

31
National Trust Learning. "The OCA: A Day in the Life of a Monk." The National Trust. 2009. <www.nationaltrust.org/main/w-fasr-qca_links_monks_day_ks2>.

32
TILDEN, *Interpreting our Heritage*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

programming is undertaken by first- and third-person interpreters and places an emphasis on "role playing and empathy."²⁷

For more mature students, Castell Henllys hosts the Archaeological Field School affiliated with the University of York. The course is open to students regardless of education level and provides basic archaeological training as well as more advanced concepts and techniques. Course information notes that it is an excellent addition to university applications²⁸ and can act as an achievement for the Duke of Edinburgh award.²⁹ Since students pay a tuition rate, administrative costs to the site are low. The field school is not limited to the Iron Age scope of interpretation present in the current reconstructions but also concerns itself with later periods of habitation at the site, including the medieval and Tudor periods. Experimental archaeology remains a strong force at the site today, learning from and going beyond what is discovered by full-time archaeological staff. In some cases, the experiments do not have extensive basis in fact, such as the granary,³⁰ which explored possible uses of smaller-than-normal postholes, but rather than being incongruous, these experiments contribute to what is learned at the site in terms of working hypotheses. While they do not constitute fact, they exemplify things that were possible, given the resources and technological capabilities of the ancient Celtic people of the Pembrokeshire coast. They also add to the affect of the site, increasing the number of explorable, tactile spaces.

Fountains Abbey approaches its educational programming from a somewhat holistic standpoint. The site is used to enhance education in a large number of subjects, while Castell Henllys is much more focused on a small subset of school curriculum. The Abbey's educational tours are experiential in nature, and take the form of structured walks and organized group tasks as well as independent activities that build map-reading skills and encourage exploration of the site. Immersive field trips offer structured sessions in which students "investigate the medieval way of life through visual evidence, questioning, discussion and role play."³¹ Again Freeman Tilden's principles are echoed, as well as Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb's theory of meaning being produced through tactile interaction with a site. Programming is completely student-centred and attempts to appeal to all types of learners while working to present "a whole, rather than a part."³²

Fountains Abbey also provides less formal learning opportunities through its family programming, an important educational tool for keeping students engaged over time. One may enjoy theatre events and storytelling, family days during school breaks, and dinner events such as Traditional Christmas Evenings, which include meals and carol singing, as well as other live entertainment.³³ In general, events are limited to the Abbey itself and thus confined to showcasing the medieval period, but the surrounding grounds of the Studley Royal estate with their sprawling Georgian gardens also occasionally host events that are able to expand beyond the medieval scope.

Conclusion

Over the course of this paper, we have explored the different strategies that sites of ruin and reconstruction employ to make use of affective power. We have seen that affect translates into meaningful and relevant interpretation and interpretation in turn informs educational programming. From this examination we can see that while similarities are present in these two types of sites in terms of providing meaningful, relevant, and accurate visitor experiences, the routes taken to this shared goal are very different. While both sites allow for emotional engagement through affect, the feelings evoked are at different levels of the emotional continuum. Ruins make us feel melancholy. We sense the passage of time and the fragility of our efforts. Reconstructions, however, are a more joyous structure, full of life and activity. This informs interpretive practices, restraining ruins to arm's-length interpretation and requiring a more participatory scheme in the living history style at reconstructed sites. This in turn will affect educational programming. Interpreting sites of constructed heritage goes far beyond simple questions of time period and social history, but must take into account issues of affect, authenticity, technology, and even politics. When all these aspects come together, sites of constructed heritage can give us an exceptional understanding of the lives of those whose feet trod the same paths we now walk and give us a window into what they thought, how they acted, and what it meant to them to interact with their structures.

33

Fountains Abbey. "What's on at Fountains Abbey." The National Trust. November 2009. <<http://www.fountainsabbey.org.uk/html/whats-on/>>.

Résumé

Traduit par :
Philippe
Lagrange

Ruines et reconstruction :
Différentes manières de comprendre
l'évolution des civilisations



Reconstructed celtic roundhouse
in the style of Castell Henllys
(St Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life).

Photo: Catherine Woltz

Les ruines laissées par l'homme nous permettent d'étudier et de comprendre d'un point de vue macroscopique, comment nos ancêtres ont vécu, travaillé et vénéré. Lorsque ces sites ne sont plus habités de façon permanente, ils se transforment en un microcosme figé dans le temps qui s'avère incroyablement vulnérable. Dès lors, comment est-il encore possible de percevoir, d'interpréter et d'apprécier un bâtiment ou ensemble de ruines en tant que site patrimonial et culturel? Comment en faire l'interprétation si celui-ci a complètement disparu? Cet article souhaite explorer et comparer différentes approches qui contribuent à la compréhension des phénomènes de transformation, d'évolution et de disparition d'un site. Même si au niveau historique, certains lieux composés exclusivement de ruines révèlent maintes similitudes avec les sites qui ont été reconstruits, les différences demeurent marquantes, que ce soit dans la façon de les interpréter ou d'en extraire du sens. Deux cas ont été retenus pour cette analyse, le monastère anglais en ruines Fountains Abbey, et Castell Henllys, un lieu reconstruit qui date de l'âge de fer, à Welch.

Une revue des stratégies interprétatives s'inspirant des travaux de Kate Gregory et d'Andrea Witcomb, tout comme ceux de Brian Bath et de Richard Prentice, amène l'auteure à explorer différents aspects de l'interprétation. Les méthodes d'examen des stratégies mises en oeuvre sur les sites en ruines ont été inspirées des travaux de Michael S. Roth et de Salvatore

Settis, et l'étude des sites reconstruits a quant à elle, profité des résultats des recherches d'Harold Mytum, Ann E. Killebrew et Barry Mackintosh. L'auteure vise à élargir ces discours en s'appuyant sur ses expériences personnelles vécues sur des sites analogues à ceux retenus par ces chercheurs. Elle s'intéresse également au fonctionnement de ces organisations à l'interne et aux stratégies de gestion des visiteurs dont elles font usage. À partir de points de vue affectif, émotionnel, interprétatif et éducatif, elle examine Fountains Abbey et Castell Henllys tout en tenant compte de leur importance historique et de leur qualité de lieux de développement inter et intra personnel. Si la compréhension des mécanismes de l'interprétation des sites culturels patrimoniaux faite par les professionnels du monde muséal peut mieux orienter les visiteurs à retirer le maximum de leurs visites, pour l'auteure, ce travail passe par une plus grande appréhension des réactions affectives devant générer une adaptation des méthodes d'interprétation et des programmes éducatifs. Ces derniers, sont à son avis, la clé à une compréhension plus profonde de l'influence des constructions du passé sur nos modes de vie contemporains.