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APPROPRIATION OF ARCHITECTURAL RUINS IN BRITAIN DURING THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

Rumiko Handa

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rhanda1@unl.edu

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IASTE
390 Wurster Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-1839
Tel: (510) 642-6801
Fax: (510) 643-5571
E-mail: iaste@berkeley.edu
Or visit our web page at http://arch.ced.berkeley.edu/research/iaste
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This paper will examine the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British fascination toward architectural ruins. Distanced from the political and religious implications of the building's original purpose or the cause of destruction, decayed and fragmented ruins motivated imaginative contemplations on the lost past – the glory of men who kept the buildings alive and the fragility of human existence against the powers of time and nature. Examinations of why and how ruins were given new meaning will contribute to discussions on the epistemology of tradition, which is showing the signs of the lost past in many parts of the contemporary world.

INTRODUCTION

Each year all over the world, from Acropolis to Jerusalem, from Angkor Wat to Machu Picchu, tourists flock around ruins. They are fascinated by the lives of the people who are long gone, displaced for political, cultural, or unknown reasons. Ruins entice the visitors' imaginations because of the physical and metaphysical incompleteness – missing roofs, decayed stones, or lost way of living, which once kept the buildings alive. While some ruins of historical significance are set for preservation by lawful designations, some buildings are turned into hotels and other tourist facilities. New buildings are also constructed mimicking the form but with newly available materials and technology. These constructions often have little to do with the original purpose or meaning, arguably corrupting the significance of the building they refer to. Studies of various cases with their specific sets of issues will address the questions concerning the appropriation of the lost past. No longer reflecting the ways of life and construction, traditions in many parts of the world are showing the signs of the lost past. Examinations of why and how ruins are given new life will therefore contribute to the discussions on the epistemology of tradition.

This paper will examine the fascination toward architectural ruins as it appeared in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, drawing from selected literary authors, including William Wordsworth (1770-1850), George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), Walter Scott (1771-1832), Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), and Henry James (1843-1916). The nature of literary imagination and that of architectural ruins that prompted such imagination will be examined, in order to articulate the type of values that motivated the authors. Theirs was a new type of fascination. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the people had come to distance themselves from the aesthetic, political or religious implications of the original construction or the cause of destruction, especially when the buildings had been broken and defunct for some time. They began to admire the ruins for their age value, in Alois Reigl's terms, clear in their decayed stones and growing vines. They were drawn to engage their imaginations on the past glory of men who went before them and the fragility of human existence in comparison to the powers of time and nature. What is the most important in
relation to the contemporary discussions on the epistemology of tradition is, I will argue, not the fact that the ruins held the viewer’s admiration despite its insufficiencies and inconsequential additives but the fact that the ruins motivated imaginative contemplations because of these qualities.

EIGHTEENTH- AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY FASCINATION OF ARCHITECTURAL RUINS

The fascination toward architectural ruins became a major cultural phenomenon in the middle of the eighteenth century, with a higher degree of enthusiasm, and involving a wider range of the population. Ruined buildings were the results of political actions at least two centuries earlier. When Henry VIII had dissolved monasteries in 1536-40, only a handful was promoted to cathedrals. Some were downgraded to parish churches. The majority became a source of the king’s cash revenue. Woodcarvings, lead tiles, and timbers were stripped from the building. The land was sold to private individuals, who moved stones to a nearby construction, or built houses, schools, and factories around the remains. Castles had become obsolete by the early fourteenth century, after the advent of gunpowder in the early thirteenth century made them defenseless. Those that were still remaining usable were slighted after the English Civil War of 1642-52, when Oliver Cromwell and the Parliamentarians exercised the deliberate “slighting” policy in order to demonstrate the destruction of the monarchy and to keep the buildings from being used further by the oppositions.

Many artists and antiquaries roamed the country, and published their accounts on ruins in books and periodicals. The Gentleman’s Magazine, for example, England’s first and popular monthly periodical on general topics founded in 1731 by Edward Cave (1691-1754), gave the educated public an easy access to the reports on ruinous buildings and their histories. William Gilpin (1724-1804), schoolmaster and one of the most influential English travelers of the eighteenth century, originated the notion of picturesque in A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham at Stow [sic.] in 1748, nine years before Edmund Burke’s A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (first published in 1757). Picturesque for Gilpin meant ”like a painting” of Claude Lorrain or Gaspard Poussin. John Britton, a self-taught antiquary, began in 1800 topographical surveys of the entire country, which would take him the next twenty years resulting in twenty-seven volumes, including Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain.

Ruins became tourist destinations. Informed by the ground work of the antiquaries, literary authors traveled to ruins, working up their historical imagination, and producing poems, travel essays, and novels. William Wordsworth revisited Tintern Abbey after reading Gilpin’s account on the ruins, and wrote “Lines Written a
Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” in 1790s. Architects were hired to design fake ruins as a part of estates’ landscape, like at Painshill Park in Surrey, or built themselves a ruin, as Sir John Soane did in Pitshanger Manor, his own country home in Ealing.

**ROMANTICISM AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fascination toward ruins is often characterized as romantic. Romanticism is often seen as a rejection of Classicism and Neoclassicism, which promoted order and balance in works of literature, painting, music, or architecture. It is also considered a reaction against the Enlightenment's rationalism and materialism. Romanticism emphasized “the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.” Romanticism's attitudes include:

- a deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature; a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect; a turning in upon the self and a heightened preoccupation with the genius, the hero, and the exceptional figure in general, and a focus on his passions and inner struggles; a new view of the artist as a supremely individual creator, whose creative spirit is more important than strict adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures; an emphasis upon imagination as a gateway to transcendent experience and spiritual truth; an obsessive interest in folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era; and a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even the satanic.

The description goes on till we come to agree with the art historian Stephen Bann in his conclusion that Romanticism is a complex cultural phenomenon that “defies the effort to reduce it to a set of few guiding principles.” In addition, categorizing the enthusiasm into Romanticism will not explain the involvements of authors such as Henry James, who is usually associated to Realism rather than Romanticism.

Bann offered an observation instead of an intimate relationship between Romanticism and the new historical consciousness, stating: “one of the most potent causes, and one of the most widespread effects, of Romanticism was a remarkable enhancement of the consciousness of history.” The deep and widespread interests in architectural ruins can be considered a part of this historical consciousness. Visual images contributed to entice the audience to history. Boydell Shakespeare Gallery was opened by John Boydell (1719/20-1804), engraver, in 1789 in London’s Pall Mall, creating a great interests and market for history paintings. Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre (1787-1851)’s diorama, which opened in Paris in 1822, was a popular entertainment in England till 1880.
SHIFT OF EMPHASIS: FROM THE OBJECT TO THE SUBJECT'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE OBJECT

It needs to be noted that prior to this time there had been interests in the past in general and architectural ruins in particular. The shift that occurred in the middle of the eighteenth century is often explained by the notions of sublime and picturesque, both of which are terms as elusive as Romanticism. A quick comparison of appreciations before and after eighteenth century will allow us to characterize the new admiration.

The shift of emphasis is clear in the responses to Stonehenge, prehistoric megaliths on Salisbury Plain whose site development goes as far back as 8000 B.C. In early seventeenth century when the court architect Inigo Jones (1573-1652) was summoned by King James I (reigned 1603-1625) to the nearby Wilton House, his task was to explain the building as it belonged to its original culture, that is, who built it, how, and why. Jones saw Stonehenge as a Roman temple, and assigned the classical architectural principles of geometry and order. This erroneous interpretation was a result of the assumption that the great monument had been a product of a great civilization, and the greatest of all that had existed in Britain, to Jones, had been Roman. Jones' appreciation of Stonehenge was based on his admiration of the culture that built the monument and of the building in its original and perfect state — the complete circles, squares, and equilateral triangles which Jones "found" in the megalith. Stonehenge was valued despite its ruinous state of decay and fragmentation, not because of it.

To compare, for Edmund Burke (1729/30?-1797), Anglo-Irish statesman and author of the eighteenth century who attempted to define the relationships between human emotions and the nature of objects that triggered them, the loss of origin made the megaliths venerable:

The great stones, it has been supposed, were originally monuments of illustrious men, or the memorials of considerable actions; or they were landmarks for deciding the bounds of fixed property. In time, the memory of the persons or facts, which these stones were erected to perpetuate, wore away; but the reverence which custom, and probably certain periodical ceremonies, had preserved for those places, was not so soon obliterated. The monuments themselves then came to be venerated, and not the less, because the reason for venerating them was no longer known.

For Henry James, too, the veneration of the megalith comes not from the harmony and proportion found in the built object, but rather, from the fact that the past is unknown:

It stands as lonely in history as it does on the great plain, ... symbolize the ebb of the long
centuries which have left it so portentously unexplained. ... rough-hewn giants ... their
fallen companions; ... unspoken memories, ... immensely vague and immensely deep. ... contrast between the world's duration and the feeble span of individual experience ... the
life of man has rather a thin surface.9

To be precise, the newly arisen appreciation was not about the works in themselves but about their impact on
the viewer's experience.10 The central question of "Why and how does this object move me?" is thus not to
what extent the sublime is located in the object, but in what way the experience of the sublime affects the
perceiving subject. The emphasis had shifted from the physical properties of the objects to the viewer's
participation.

Ian Ousby, scholar on English literature, succinctly characterized the shift of interests by asking the question,
"In the phrase 'Gothic ruin' does emphasis fall on the adjective or the noun?":

Do people want to admire a Gothic abbey as best they can, even though it survives only in a
damaged state? Or do they seek to admire the ruin it has become, with all the accidental
features time has added to it?11

Earlier, the Gothic style of these buildings was at least puzzling and even offensive to the eyes trained in the
orderly proportions of Classicism and for the reason that the style carried the Catholic connotation. Just as
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was puzzled at first about his emotional reactions to the
unfinished Cologne Cathedral and later came to accept the aesthetic qualities that defied the norms and
principles of Classicism in which he had been trained, in this time period the people was more and more
becoming aware of and interested in their emotional reactions, and accepting them as they are.12

The emphasis on the ruin's nature to motivate the viewers' imagination can also be seen in the drawings of
ruins that were produced in the same time period. Most often, as John Britton's drawing of Conisbrough
Castle shows, a picture includes contemporary visitors in the foreground, positioned some distance away
from the ruins themselves. These viewers are usually leisurely observers occupying themselves in no particular
activities, sitting on the ground or standing in a reposing position. The viewers in front of the picture are then
drawn to associate themselves with the visitors within, relating themselves to the free imaginative activities
the latter must be engaged in (fig. 1).

In the following sections, I will discuss the ruins' physical attributes and the viewers' cultural conditions which
promoted such imagination.
AGE VALUE: NATURAL (INTRINSIC) SIGNIFICATION

One of the most significant nature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ interests in ruins is what Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905) called “the age value” of the object, that is, the value based first and foremost on the signs of age which the object carries by way of natural, or intrinsic representation.13 To compare with his “historical value,” “age value” does not rely on the significance of its original purpose or context, nor does it require such knowledge from the viewer. Riegl tentatively considered age value to be a twentieth-century phenomenon, drawing a clear distinction from the seventeenth-century attitude toward ruins; however, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fascination toward ruins should also be considered, for the reason discussed above, to be carrying age value.

What is important about Riegl's observation is that age-value is natural or intrinsic signification, meaning it does not require specific knowledge of the past. Age-value therefore is accessible disregard of the viewer’s education or taste. Those features that suggest the age — including missing parts of the buildings, decayed stones, and growing vegetations — are results of both natural and artificial destruction.

For Gilpin ivies and mosses are necessary part of ruins (fig. 2). His book titled Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, &c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770, was an influential guidebook. It was initially published in 1782, and was to go through five editions before 1800. In the description of Tintern Abbey in the book, Gilpin depicted the qualities of the ruin which clearly referred to Riegl's age value:

Ivy, in masses uncommonly large, has taken possession of many parts of the wall, and gives a happy contrast to the grey-coloured stone, of which the building is composed. Nor is this undecorated. Mosses of various hues, with lichens, maindenhair, penn-leaf, and other humble plants, overspread the surface; or hang from every point, and crevice. Some of them were in flower, others only in leaf, but, all together, they give those full-blown tints, which add the richest finishing to a ruin.14

Tintern Abbey, founded in the twelfth century as the second Cistercian monastery in Britain, is situated on the River Wye in Monmouthshire, Wales. When this monastery was dissolved in 1536, its valuable items were sent to the king’s treasury, and the building was granted to the then lord of Chepstow, Henry Somerset, 2nd Earl of Worcester. Lead from the roof was sold, and the decay of the shell of the buildings began. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ruins were inhabited by workers in the local wire works.15

For Henry James, it is both the remains of the building — columns, portals, and windows — and weeds and
wildflowers which grew on them that make up the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey:

Such of the ruined columns and portals and windows as still remain are of admirable design and finish. ... dainty weeds and wild flowers ... the thousand flowers which grow among English ruins deserve a chapter to themselves.16

DISTANCES IN SPACE, TIME, AND HUMAN VALUES

Another important nature of architectural ruins is the distance from the viewer. Together with their age value there is a sense of distance between the viewer and the ruins. But this distance is not so much about the distance in space as of the time between the past and the present as well as of the political or religious beliefs. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the people had come to distance themselves from the aesthetic or religious implications, especially when the buildings had been broken and defunct for some time. Ruins mark a clear displacement, loss, changes, of the human beliefs and values.

This distance is a key ingredient in the appreciation of ruins, for the viewer does not feel required to subscribe to the belief systems of the original structure or of the cause of destruction, in order to appreciate the ruin. To compare, those buildings that had been in operation continuously, and because of this, were not in a ruinous state, did not present themselves as the objects of fascination in the way the ruins did.

According to Ousby:

Eighteenth-century tourists had already chosen, on the whole, to prefer ruins to intact buildings like cathedrals or parish churches partly because time and decay had created irregularities the builders had not intended.17

Wordsworth’s “Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a picture of Peele Castle, in a storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont,” was written in 1806 in relation to the loss of his brother at the sea. Wordsworth had visited the area in 1794, visiting his sister Dorothy in Rampside, who was staying with their cousin. The poem also carried the tone that whatever governed the original building and the society is long gone. Here are the beginning lines:

So once it would have been ... 'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.18

And further on, the castle's old solidity is contrasted to the nature that now attacks the building:

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Baronet (1753-1827), the National Gallery's founder and benefactor, was an amateur painter, who became generous friend and patron to Wordsworth, Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Samuel Coleridge, and John Constable. The Beaumonts household's visitors included Uvedale Price, who had a great influence on Beaumont's taste, awakening his interest in the picturesque movement. Beaumont lent out the farm of the estate in Leicestershire to Wordsworth in the winter of 1806.

Piel Castle is located on a small island off the shore of the Furness Peninsula, ideal location for the protection of Barrow-in-Furness harbor, Cambria. It began in the thirteenth century as a wooden tower used to store goods by the monks of Furness Abbey, a rich Cistercian monastery across the water. The abbey was active in trading through Piel Harbor, and the building was fortified after the Scottish invasion during the fourteenth century. It was dismantled in early fifteenth century, and by the sixteenth century was a ruin.

TIME/NATURE OVER MEN: VENERATION

The literary authors are often drawn to architectural ruins to contemplate on the past glory of men who once kept the building alive and the fragility of men over the power of time and nature. The incompleteness of the ruins not only reminded the viewer of the perfect and pristine state of the original building, but also, and more importantly, demonstrated the infinity of time and the power of nature, which inevitably governs all mortals and their creations. The ruins then were ultimately a clear reminder of the man's position in the universe.

Looking at Cologne Cathedral, although it was not a ruin but an unfinished building, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was struck with the humbling contemplation on the man's insufficiency.

A significant ruin has a venerable quality, and we sense and actually see in it the conflict between a noble
work of man, and time that with silent force spares nothing. Here, on the other hand, we are confronted with an edifice which is unfinished and prodigious, and precisely its incompleteness reminds us of man’s insufficiency when he attempts the colossal.19

The effect of the passage of time was, for these authors, not a desire to reconstruct the past but the sense of reverence and veneration.

Sir Walter Scott has the following explanation of the attraction of the ruin of Kenilworth Castle in his historical fiction, Kenilworth.20

We cannot but add, that of this lordly palace, where princes feasted and heroes fought, now in the bloody earnest of storm and siege, and now in the games of chivalry, where beauty dealt the prize which valour won, all is now desolate. The bed of the lake is but a rushy swamp; and the massive ruins of the castle only serve to show what their splendour once was, and to impress on the musing visitor the transitory value of human possessions, and the happiness of those who enjoy a humble lot in virtuous contentment.

Kenilworth Castle is located in Warwickshire. A fortification has existed on the site from Saxon times, but the current ruin is of Norman origin, dating back to the twelfth century, and later in the same century became a possession of Henry II. During the reign of Henry III the castle was transformed into one of the strongest in the Midlands. In the mid-fourteenth century, the then owner of the castle John of Gaunt began the castle’s conversion from a pure fortress into something more livable. Queen Elizabeth I gave the castle to her favorite Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester in 1563. Elizabeth visited Dudley at Kenilworth Castle several times, the last of which was in 1575. Sir Walter Scott’s 1821 novel describes the royal visit. The castle returned to the Crown on Dudley's death. At the time of English Civil War, the castle was looted by Parliamentarian troops and slighted soon afterwards, in 1656.

HISTORICAL IMAGINATION AND THE IDEAL SOCIETY

Having a great interest in the past, but lacking precise knowledge, and sensing a clear distance, many literary authors engaged their historical imagination. In his seminal book titled Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe, Hayden White submitted an understanding of history as a story, or an interpretation of the past.
The historical documents we gather, the way we organize them as cause and effect, or parallel phenomena, etc., and the way we describe and explain these documents, are all influenced by the agent of history as the interpreter. Therefore historical imagination is a right combination of the terms in the sense that history is a product of imagination.

The viewer has a certain degree of freedom to fill in what is missing with his/her own imagination.

When a material form the past in front of the agent is a ruin of some sort, the agent has a very particular temptation. While what is missing may not necessarily be clear, the fact that it is missing something is clear.21

Prompted to fill what is missing from the architectural ruins, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary authors worked up their historical imagination. Authors were not always supplied with the historical information, nor was historical accuracy a great concern to them. The lack of historical information did not keep the authors from writing.

In the summer of 1816, Lord George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and his soon-to-be-wife Mary Godwin (1797-1851) sailed around Lake Geneva (Leman). They stopped at the Chateau of Chillon, and visited the dungeon where the sixteenth-century political prisoner François de Bonnivard (1496-1570) spent some years. Byron composed “A Sonnet on Chillon” and after learning more about the history wrote a much longer poem, “The Prisoner of Chillon”. Both pieces are free interpretation of the past, making Bonnivard a hero in a religious persecution. In Byron’s poem, Bonivard’s imprisonment turns to a tragedy, giving Byron an opportunity to contrast the physical imprisonment and the spiritual liberty.

“Sonnet on Chillon.”:

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind:
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art,
For there thy habitation is the heart –
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consign’d –
To fetters, and the damp vault’s dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom’s fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar – for ‘twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard! – May none those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

Byron’s following statement gives us a clue as to what kind of imagination is at work on history:

When this poem was composed, I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard, or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues. With some account of his life I have been furnished, by the kindness of a citizen of that republic, which is still proud of the memory of a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom:22

Here, “the best age of ancient freedom” does not necessarily refer to the actual sixteenth century, but it is the age in Byron’s imagination. Historical imagination born out of ruins produces historical fiction. The accuracy in reconstruction was not the goal, but they are not a complete fantasy in the sense that there are certain historical foundations.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), in his Ivanhoe, supplied a long description of Conisbrough (Coningsburgh) Castle:

There are few more beautiful or striking scenes in England, than are presented by the vicinity of this ancient Saxon fortress. The soft and gentle river Don sweeps through an amphitheatre, in which cultivation is richly blended with woodland, and on a mount, ascending from the river, well defended by walls and ditches, rises this ancient edifice, which, as its Saxon name implies, was, previous to the Conquest, a royal residence of the kings of England. The outer walls have probably been added by the Normans, but the inner keep bears token of very great antiquity. It is situated on a mount at one angle of the inner court, and forms a complete circle of perhaps twenty-five feet in diameter. The wall is of immense thickness, and is propped or defended by six huge external buttresses which project from the circle, and rise up against the sides of the tower as if to strengthen or to support it. These massive buttresses are solid when they arise from the foundation, and a good way higher up; but are hollowed out towards the top, and terminate in a sort of turrets communicating with the interior of the keep itself. The distant appearance of this huge building, with these singular accompaniments, is as interesting to the lovers of the picturesque, as the interior of the castle is to the eager antiquary, whose imagination it carries back to the days of the heptarchy. A barrow, in the vicinity of the castle, is pointed out as the tomb of the memorable Hengist; and various monuments, of great antiquity and curiosity, are shown in the neighbouring churchyard:23

He later, in 1830, added a note to supply more historical account. And yet, the castle was Norman, built by a
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And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
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grounds from the Messengers. He removed field walls, got rid of agricultural use, made a canal to the River Skell in the grounds, and built a new carriage drive. He also demolished some parts and repaired other parts of the structure, and leveled the rubble remaining from earlier demolition. Aislabie opened the grounds to the visitors, controlling them carefully. His treatments of the ruins, especially cleaning the walls and laying lawns around the building, were criticized by Gilpin who considered the intervention of new human activities into abandoned building offensive and preferred naturally overgrown ruins.25d

RUINS NOW

In 1972 UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization established World Cultural and Natural Heritage.26 Its sites, originally 12, have grown to 851 including 660 cultural and 25 mixed designations in 141 countries. The purpose of World Heritage is to encourage the identification, protection, and preservation of the heritage. The significant characteristics of World Heritage is to recognize the artifact from the past as “heritage,” that is, something that directly benefits the present and the future, being the sources of life and inspiration, the points of reference, and the identity. It is also significant that World Heritage recognizes their sites as something belonging to the world, and considers it a responsibility of the international community to protect them regardless of the territory and without prejudice to national sovereignty or ownership. It is also to be noted that World Heritage believes that it is possible to achieve appropriate and equitable balance between conservation, sustainability and development.27 World Heritage considers that tourism, properly managed, is a benefit to the long-term preservation of the heritage, by raising public awareness and building public pride, training local populations and promoting local products, and using tourism-generated funds to supplement conservation and protection costs.28

In England, Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, also known as English Heritage, is the government’s statutory advisor on the historic environment, established by the National Heritage Act of 1983, and manages over four hundred historic properties. It is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and reports to the Parliament through the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Three quarters of its funding comes from the government, and one quarter from revenues from the properties (admissions, memberships, property rental, etc.). Its mission is to conserve and enhance the historic environment, broaden public access to the heritage, and increase people’s understanding of the past. The National Heritage, another organization that manages historic properties, is a charity organization and is independent of the government. The National Trust has a much longer history than its governmental counterpart, having been established in 1895 by three philanthropists, Octavia Hill, Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, and Sir Robert Hunter. It now manages over three hundred historic buildings.
At Tintern Abbey, after the responsibility was passed onto the Office of Works, major structural repairs and partial reconstructions were undertaken, which included the removal of the ivy. It still remains one of the most spectacular ruins in the country. In 1984 Cadw (Welsh National Heritage) took over responsibility for the site. Piel Castle and Kenilworth Castle are managed by the English Heritage. Conisbrough Castle is maintained by a trust set by collaboration between the English Heritage and the local government. It is considered one of South Yorkshire's primary tourist attractions, and sees in excess of 30,000 visitors per year. In the mid-1990s the keep was restored and a wooden roof and two floors were rebuilt. Fountains Abbey, one of the largest and best preserved Cistercian monasteries in England, is owned by the National Trust and maintained by English Heritage. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

CONCLUSION

For some literary authors of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, architectural ruins worked as a catalyst to imaginative experiences of reverence. Deep respect was felt toward an individual or a group of people of close or remote relations who had actively engaged the building in their livelihood. The difference, if any, of the particular political or religious positions of the individual or the people who had driven their lives was little concern to the authors because of the distance of centuries that separated them. The authors felt empathy because they were able, through their imagination, to associate themselves closely with the lives of those who went before them. They felt the sense of belonging toward the lost lives in relation to the power of nature and time, which they knew would eventually overtake their own lives.

In the twenty-first century, we clearly have a different set of conditions, especially with accurate historical information available to us. But some of the values that enticed the authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are still intact with the ruins. With accurate historical information, each site and managing organization emphasize on the visitor education and participation. We have learned to embrace cultural diversity as long as the building is distanced far away from our daily lives, while the newly ruined buildings by terrorist attacks have totally different meaning to us. With contemporary constructions with the expected life span much shorter than those we see in the tourist sites, we are awed by the wills and techniques that allow such constructions in the past. While Nationalism meant the sense of belongings to the nineteenth-century Britons, we take it with a great deal of unease, as a possible cause of destructions.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Such organizations include the United Nations' World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage), and, for England, English Heritage and National Trust.


7. The building was designed by George Dance the Younger, and the first set of engravings based on the paintings was issued in 1791.


16. James, *English Hours*.

17. Ousby: 122.


FIGURES

Figure 2. William Gilpin, “Tintern Abbey.” Source: Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty; made in the summer of the year 1770* (London: Printed for R. Blamire, sold by B. Law and R. Faulder, 1782).
Figure 3. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, “Contrasted Residences of the Poor.” Source: Pugin, *Contrasts; or, a parallel between the noble edifices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and similar buildings of the present day. Shewing the present decay of taste. Accompanied by appropriate text* (London: printed for the author and published by him, 1836).