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IRINA POPESCU
NATALIYA SUREVA
KRISTINA TANIS

Editor: Andreea Eșanu

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New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania
www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro

Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10

FERDINAND DE JONG

NEC International Fellow

Affiliation: Free University Berlin
Email: ferdinanddejongadam@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-9499-2546

Biographical note

Ferdinand de Jong is an anthropologist (PhD, University of Amsterdam). He has conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Senegal and the United Kingdom. Ferdinand de Jong has published widely on masquerading, the colonial archive, cultural heritage and decolonization. His latest monograph is: *Decolonizing Heritage: Time to Repair in Senegal* (Cambridge University Press, 2022). In 2023, he co-edited (with José Mapril): *The Future of Religious Heritage: Entangled Temporalities of the Sacred and the Secular* (Routledge, 2023).

RECONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN A POST-SECULAR AGE (WORKING PAPER)*

Ferdinand de Jong

Abstract

The theory of modernity posited that societies would secularize in the process of modernization. As we witness new forms of religiosity as well as heritagization of established religions, this secularization thesis has recently been questioned. But how should the heritagization of religion be understood in a post-secular context? This paper examines the initiative of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership to conserve and interpret the ruins of the Abbey in Bury St Edmunds (UK). In this instance of heritagization, re-assembling different materials, ideas and affects into religious heritage, processes of "sacralization", "aestheticization", and

* Research for this paper has been conducted among the members of the Heritage Partnership in the town of Bury St Edmunds between 2016 and 2023. I would like to thank the members of the Partnership profoundly for their trust, time, and the interviews they have granted me. This research was part of the project "The Heritagization of Religion and the Sacralization of Heritage in Contemporary Europe" (HERILIGION) (2016-2020), funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA). Sadly, HERILIGION's project leader Professor Oscar Salemink passed away tragically in 2023. Oscar was a wonderful colleague. Acknowledging the very fruitful collaboration in the HERILIGION group, I would like to thank all colleagues for their collaboration and friendship. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the New Europe College Seminar, 11 October 2023. I thank all participants to the seminar for their insightful criticisms and helpful suggestions. The material presented in this paper is original, although the introduction draws on my "Introduction: Temporalities of Renewal in Religious Heritage", published in F. de Jong & J. Mapril (Eds), (2023), The Future of Religious Heritage: Entangled Temporalities of the Sacred and the Secular (Routledge). The section "The Legend of St Edmund" (pp. 4-6, infra) is reproduced from my chapter "Traces of the Sacred: Loss, Hope, and Potentiality in Religious Heritage in England" in the same volume. Comments on earlier drafts of this paper were gratefully received from Richard Summers and Roger Hetherington from the Heritage Partnership, whose constructive criticism helped to improve this paper significantly.

"reconstruction" happen alongside each other. In providing new interpretation of the ruins, stakeholders debated different ideas on the significance of the ruins and their history. Examining how stakeholders framed the materiality of the site differently, the paper demonstrates that the interpretation of the ruins is to this day determined by *affects* that have their origins in the Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Keywords: Religious heritage, heritagization, post-secular, secularization, sacralization, aestheticization, reconstruction, 3D, materiality, affect, Heritage Partnership, Bury St Edmunds.

1. Introduction

In the standard narrative on modernity as it was told until the end of the twentieth century, sociologists identified the increasing secularization of society as one of the defining aspects of modernization. The sociologist Max Weber famously identified secularization as the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world. Informing assessments about the future of religion (Cannell, 2010), the secularization thesis predicted the decline of religion. However, in the latter decades of the twentieth century it became increasingly clear, especially in the United States, that society was not secularizing, at least not as expected. Likewise, the exponential explosion of religious nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe raised questions about the consensus that Europe constitutes the exceptional case of secularization in the world (Casanova, 2009, 2020; Tateo, 2022). We must acknowledge that European societies are secularizing, but not quite in the way the early theorists of modernity anticipated. Since the 1990s, the secularization thesis has been revisited by Talal Asad (2003), Charles Taylor (2007), Saba Mahmood (2009), and many others. In his important contribution to this debate, Talal Asad (2003) argues that secularism is not the mere absence of religion, but the framing of religion within a particular European genealogy. This has led to the acknowledgement that secularism should be understood as a contingent formation.

In this context, we can also observe an increasing interest in religious heritage, not only by members of established religious communities, but also by lay people who increasingly identify with their declared religious heritage. Public discourses in which citizens identify with national religious heritage in ways that are compatible with liberal democracy are increasingly frequent (Wohlrab-Sahr & Burchardt 2012). As Van den Hemel

et al. (2022, p. 7) argue, "the return of nationalism brought along a fiery debate about the importance of the religious past for defining present-day culture." Simultaneously, religious communities have become increasingly aware of the fact that they are the keepers of a national heritage that is valued. In this context heritage initiatives contribute to the prosperity of the church, which capitalizes on the possibilities that heritagization offers. In this respect, Isnart and Cerezales (2020) have emphasized the correspondences between secular and religious heritage-making in what they call a "heritage complex" in which heritage and religion constitute an assemblage. In the discussion about this assemblage, we have suggested that heritage-making tacks between secular and sacred temporalities, entangling secular heritage discourse in acts of religious renewal (De Jong & Mapril, 2023).

This paper addresses the entanglement of religion and heritage in a particular context in which secular and religious actors collaborate in an effort to protect the remains of a Benedictine abbey in Bury St Edmunds, a market town in the East of England. In the preservation of this religious heritage, the different discourses that determine the meanings of this religious heritage interpret the stone and mortar of the ruins in different ways. In this context in which these monastic remains are interpreted as religious heritage, the materiality of the ruins matters. As we will see, the members of the local community who belong to different churches hold different views on the conservation of the material remains of the Benedictine Abbey. In my research on the conservation and interpretation of the ruins, the question how the material remains of the Abbey should be interpreted as religious heritage is a complex matter. To address this matter, we need a theory that can accommodate the multiple relations between humans, objects, and affects that are generated in their interactions. Actor-Network-Theory (2007) affords multiple ways of thinking about objects and subjects as they constitute, what Bruno Latour calls "assemblages". Actor-Network-Theory allows us to think the transformation of ruins into religious heritage as a "religious heritage assemblage" (Burchardt 2020: 159; cf. Burchardt & Yasemin, 2024).

Monastic ruins constitute an aspect of the materiality of religion (Morgan, 2010, 2020; Houtman & Meyer, 2012) and have religious meaning for many of the members of the local community. But in Bury St Edmunds, the meanings of the ruins are transformed as these ruins are interpreted as "religious heritage". Indeed, the differences in interpretation and conceptualization of the ruins *as* religious heritage, constitute a

source of tension in the community of care-takers. The process reveals that different stakeholders have different *affects* for the ruins. Affects are here defined as the emotions generated by the materiality of the ruins; the feelings people have towards the ruins that reflect their religious positions and spiritual orientations (cf. Oliphant 2021; 2022). How the materiality of the ruins generates different affects in the process of heritagization, constitutes the subject of this paper. [1]

The stones and mortar of the ruins generate affects that predispose orientations of the townspeople toward the ruins. Affects mobilize clergy, civil servants, town planners, archaeologists, gardeners, environmental activists, heritage professionals and volunteers to deploy their energies and capacities in productive collaborations that realize material and spiritual futures. Materials, knowledges, and affects are thus re-assembled to produce potentiality and vitality in the ruined remains of a medieval abbey. Such material vitality inspires the conservation of remains, the production of scientific reports, and unleashes spiritual energies that mobilize secular and religious seekers to make pilgrimages to these monastic remains. Examining the relation between materiality and affect will enable us to think about the transformative potential of monastic ruins in a secular age. But as we will see, the meanings and affects that the material remains have for different stakeholders, differ considerably.

2. The Legend of St Edmund

The mortal remains of St Edmund that were venerated as relics by countless pilgrims in the Middle Ages have been lost since the Reformation. Recently, a rumour ran that St Edmund's remains lie buried under the tarmac of a tennis court in the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund (De Jong, 2023). This was the latest development in an ongoing quest for the body of St Edmund (Young, 2014). The rumour increased local and national interest in the work of the Heritage Partnership, founded in 2016 to restore and reinterpret the legacy of St Edmund, contributing to the "heritagization" of the ruins of the Abbey. In this process of "heritagization" various stakeholders reclaim a Pre-Reformation legacy and transform the ruins into a religious heritage. To understand how the material remains of a Benedictine Abbey that was destroyed in the sixteenth century, can be reclaimed in the present, requires a historical analysis. This analysis invites us to rethink the materiality of ruins and their spiritual affects as a religious heritage.

The legend of St Edmund revolves around his martyrdom in battle with Viking invaders. Born in 841 AD Edmund succeeded to the throne of East Anglia in 856. A Christian from birth, Edmund fought against the pagan Viking invaders ("the Great Heathen Army') until 869 AD, when his forces were defeated, and Edmund was captured by the Vikings. They ordered him to renounce his faith and share power with the pagan Vikings, but he refused, demanding that they convert to Christianity instead. A 10th century account of the saint's life, the *Passio Sancti Eadmundii* by Abbo of Fleury, provides the following story of Edmund's fate. The Vikings bound Edmund to a tree and shot him with arrows until he resembled a hedgehog, beheaded him, and to prevent a Christian burial, threw his head in the undergrowth. Edmund's followers roamed the forests to retrieve the head of the king and suddenly heard his voice call, "here, here, here!". There, they found the head lying between the paws of a wolf, who protected it against other wild animals. The wolf allowed Edmund's followers to take the head home. Once reunited with the body, the *Passio* relates that head and body miraculously joined. Soon after, Edmund was considered a saint and his "incorrupt body" became a focus of veneration and pilgrimage.

Written more than a century after the event by Abbo of Fleury (2018) in 985–987 AD, the *Passio* was a hagiography that anticipated Edmund's resurrection (Pinner, 2015). The legend narrates that Edmund's body was initially kept near the place of his martyrdom and subsequently taken to the town of Beodricsworth, renamed Bury St Edmunds in his honour, where it was held in a wooden church. In a further twist to this history, the Vikings who had killed Edmund converted to Christianity and came to venerate him. The Viking King Canute, who ruled over England in the early eleventh century, sought to repair the damages his forebears had inflicted on the East Anglian population and minted coins to commemorate the saint. Propagating the cult of St Edmund, he replaced the secular priests who cared for the saint's body with Benedictine monks who built the Romanesque abbey church that became a major medieval pilgrimage site focused on Edmund's "incorrupt" body – until the English King Henry VIII dissolved the Abbey in 1539. Henry's Commissioners sold off the valuable ashlar stone (Gransden, 2015). Ever since the destruction of the Abbey, the mortal remains of St Edmund have been lost. Hence, the Suppression of the Monasteries and the Reformation produced an enduring mystery about the saint's whereabouts (Young, 2018). In 2012, a rumour circulated that the remains of St Edmund lie buried under some derelict tennis courts in the ruins of the former Benedictine abbey, renewing local and

national interest in the town's religious heritage. Although the religious legacy of St Edmund has been eroded by the Reformation and progressive secularization, the renewed interest in St Edmund's human remains might instead be understood as a renewed sacralization of a religious heritage.

Today, Bury St Edmunds is a market town that encloses the ruins of the Benedictine abbey. Its population remembers the abbey as a place of historic significance, but it has not forgotten its exploitation of the townspeople by the wealthy abbots and their monks. In 2016, a Heritage Partnership was set up to improve the conservation and interpretation of the legacy of St Edmund and the Abbey ruins. Its plans included the possibility of a non-invasive archaeological investigation of the Abbey ruins. That the results of such research might raise the profile of this English market town and enhance its attractiveness as a tourist destination was never far from anyone's mind. Tourism could possibly help to highlight the religious significance of the Abbey ruins and the ancient saint – as in the cult of St Padua in Lisbon (Isnart, 2020); and it is hoped that conservation and interpretation will stimulate sacred and secular pilgrimages to the site. In keeping with Historic England guidelines, the Heritage Partnership commissioned a Heritage Assessment and a Conservation Plan, which have identified the histories, archaeologies, and potential futures of the monuments of the ruined Abbey. The reports of these studies have attributed the heritage assets diverse heritage values, mostly secular, but some also spiritual (De Jong, 2022b).

What we witness, then, is the progressive "heritagization" of the historically profaned ruins into religious heritage. The Heritage Partnership was established to improve the interpretation and conservation of the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund. It is a partnership of various title holders of the monuments and other buildings within the precinct of the Abbey grounds, including the local Cathedral, the local Council, the local St Mary's Church and English Heritage. Given the disparate ownership of the heritage assets of the former Abbey, the primary reason to set up the Heritage Partnership was to create a shared set of common objectives. Beyond these title holders, stakeholders that care for the natural environment of the local rivers and the Abbey Gardens, are members of the Partnership too, as part of creating an inclusive association. There are plans to set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which will establish the Heritage Partnership as a legal entity and assist it in raising funds for future improvements to the whole Abbey area. The Heritage Partnership cultivated a strong working relationship with English Heritage that holds

statutory guardianship over the monuments of the Abbey. This resulted in collaboration on the design and installation of a series of heritage interpretation panels around the Abbey ruins as part of the Abbey 1000 Millennium Celebrations in 2022 (which were postponed from 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic).

This paper looks at some of the tensions that arose in the process of conceptualizing the Heritage Partnership's Overarching Plan. The tensions that this paper explores relate to affects that have their roots in the Reformation but are not expressed in day-to day conversations between the inhabitants of the town. In their muted existence, these tensions arose unexpectedly during the development of the Overarching Plan. One could argue that these historical antinomies, which lie buried in Bury's religious substrate, came to the surface in the work of the Heritage Partnership. I had not anticipated to work on this aspect when I was first given permission to research the work of the Heritage Partnership; they are the result of unanticipated developments in my work. Nonetheless, these developments speak directly to the question that informed my initial project proposal: How is religious heritage re-enchanted in a post-secular context? This paper signals a difference in how stakeholders relate to the ruins and the feelings they have for them. The divergence I describe is important for how one conceptualizes the making of religious heritage. It is an interesting analytical problem which, I like to add, does not distract the partners from their commitment to collaborate in this matter. The divergence of experience I outline here arose from the relatively late involvement of one of the partners. The Heritage Partnership responded positively by promptly debating the issues that were raised and revising the draft Overarching Plan accordingly.

3. New Interpretation Panels and a Digital 3D Model of the Abbey

The Heritage Partnership approached English Heritage in 2020 to develop working relationships in preparation for the Abbey 1000 Millennium Celebrations and to plan practical improvements of the Abbey of St Edmund area. English Heritage professionals and Heritage Partnership volunteers started working intensively to plan new heritage interpretation for the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund. Interpretation panels had stood in the Abbey ruins since the 1970s but they required replacement because

their legibility had eroded, and because the information they provided was no longer considered adequate. English Heritage identified the provision of new heritage interpretation as a priority for the site.

Within the Heritage Partnership the dominant discourse focused on how the heritage interpretation of the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund could be improved. The Conservation Plan had suggested what information should be made available to the public. As the Heritage Partnership was preparing for the Millennium Celebrations of the foundation of the Abbey in 1020, English Heritage committed to providing new heritage interpretation panels for the Abbey ruins. A team of heritage interpretation specialists began working full-time on research, interpretation, and visualization of the history of the Abbey. This team collaborated with the Heritage Interpretation Working Group of the Heritage Partnership through regular online meetings to discuss the design and installation of the new heritage interpretation panels. This built on the standard English Heritage format for heritage interpretation panels for the historic monuments in its care.

Conversations between the Heritage Partnership and English Heritage therefore focused on defined issues within a broader set of established conventions. For instance, one of the subjects of discussion concerned the colour scheme of the new interpretation panels that English Heritage would install in the Abbey ruins. The proposal to use "Cathedral purple" was rejected in favour of "English Heritage blue". Of course, such aesthetic choices matter a great deal in presenting, branding and marketing the heritage assets of the Abbey ruins to the public. The packaging of the heritage interpretation was matched with equal concern about issues of historical interpretation especially when these were controversial.

In the conversations and meetings of the Heritage Partnership on the improved interpretation of the Abbey ruins, the prevailing idea was that there are "many gaps in our knowledge". Among the ideas that circulated about how the public could be suitably informed about the history of the Abbey, was the possibility of a 3D digital reconstruction. Archaeologists in the Heritage Partnership agreed that heritage interpretation would benefit from a 3D digital model that could be made available for visitors to use and explore. English Heritage had already committed to spend £30,000 on the heritage interpretation panels and offered to provide a 3D digital model to assist with the interpretation. The Heritage Partnership offered to match this funding with £10,000 for additional panels. The Heritage Partnership obtained its financial contribution with funding from the Bury

St Edmunds Town Council, one of the constituent partners of the Heritage Partnership.

By the end of 2021, English Heritage had advanced its work on the heritage interpretation of the Abbey and the development of the 3D digital model so much that it was able to share its advances with the public in Bury St Edmunds. Its Senior Properties Historian had spent much time on the project and had become intrigued by questions around the historical architecture of the Abbey. Digital reconstruction of historic buildings and monuments is a significant part of the heritage conservation and heritage interpretation that English Heritage uses to produce a faithful interpretation of a heritage site. The Senior Properties Historian, the Graphics Manager, and the Heritage Interpreter, who were all members of the English Heritage Curatorial Department, presented their work in a series of three presentations in Bury St Edmunds. The first of these presentations was given in The Guildhall, one of the medieval buildings in Bury St Edmunds that had had significant civic functions throughout its history and, after a recent restoration project, had re-opened for public functions. It provided a fitting backdrop to the presentation.

The meeting was organized by the Heritage Partnership, which had invited all its members, as well as the Cathedral Dean who was asked to chair the proceedings. The event was well advertized and, given that Covid-19 restrictions had just been lifted, the meeting was also presented as a social event to celebrate the newly acquired freedom to meet face-to-face without restrictions. The programme was entirely dedicated to the presentation by English Heritage. Expectations were high, as the long period of gestation during Covid was now culminating in a presentation in which one could finally learn about English Heritage's work. During the event, the Senior Properties Historian who had conducted most of the research, gave a Powerpoint presentation. The visuals included historical sketches of the ruins, photographs of the archaeological remains, and contemporary photographs as well as the 3D digital reconstructions by English Heritage. The presentation included visual representations of comparable churches, mostly Norman, notably Norwich Cathedral, with which Bury St Edmunds had entertained a historical rivalry about the size, significance and splendour of their Cathedral churches. The visual material supported a narrative in which English Heritage presented architectural stonework and other archaeological remains as evidence for the reconstructed historical architecture of the Abbey. The lecture culminated in the presentation of a fifteenth-century graphical reconstruction of the

Abbey, of which we were given several views which had been generated by a computer-generated 3D-model.

The reconstruction was based on information derived from the various forms of archaeological and visual evidence. In his exposition, the Senior Properties Historian focused on the evidence that had informed his decisions on how the Abbey must have looked. When prompted, he provided the chances of likelihood of the accuracy of his estimates. His knowledge of the architecture of the building was superb and his expositions of how he had arrived at the 3D reconstruction were convincing. Everyone rejoiced in the formidable achievement of his work. The Cathedral Dean asked him if the 3D digital model could be made available online to attract visitors to the Abbey ruins. The Historian's cautious answer mentioned financial constraints. Over lunch, prints of the reconstruction of the Abbey were on view. Everyone enjoyed meeting face-to-face.

What passed as a social event in the busy lives of the many professionals and volunteers who had spent a considerable amount of their time working on the conservation and interpretation of the Abbey ruins, seemed to me a most remarkable event in the civic life of Bury St Edmunds. What was perhaps the most striking aspect of the Historian's Powerpoint presentation, was the framing of his lecture on the Abbey's architecture. Starting his presentation, he said that the destruction of the Abbey of St Edmund was a "crime scene" comparable to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas at the hands of El Qaeda, or the destruction of the temple complex at Palmyra at the hands of ISIS. This was a surprising statement. By making these comparisons, he explicitly compared the actions of what was then the ruler of England, King Henry VIII, and his chief secretary, Thomas Cromwell, to Islamist terrorists.

I found it remarkable that English Heritage's representative made these comments. Perhaps they were uttered to catch the audience's attention. But with his stance, the Historian positioned himself in the current political and religious landscape, not just in relation to Islamist iconoclasm in the Middle East, but also in relation to the political landscape of contemporary Britain in which Islamic terrorist acts have had notable impact. Nobody objected – perhaps because of the sensibility of the subject. The audience listened attentively. During the Q&A, one of the members of the Heritage Partnership asked the English Heritage Historian whether the destruction of the Abbey had happened with the active collaboration of the townspeople, which he confirmed. This then solicited a remark from a representative of the Guildhall, the host of the event, and the historical heir to the coalition

of townspeople who had opposed the Abbey and had taken part in its destruction. Even though the conversation was polite and good humoured, the stance taken by the Historian was thus identified as a partisan stance by those who could claim to be some of the heirs of the destruction of the Abbey. It is remarkable that English Heritage, known for seeking safe ground and avoiding provocation, seemed to do just that. After his somewhat technical presentation, the Historian concluded triumphantly, by stating, with vigour: "Bury's Abbey shall be reconstructed!" Although nobody imagined a real reconstruction of the building, the 3D digital reconstruction was thus presented in a way that placed the Dissolution of the Monasteries – and the destruction of the Abbey – in a particularly partisan light. Indeed, a certain nostalgia for the grandeur of the Abbey seemed present in the Historian's reconstruction efforts in which a comparison with other places easily amounts to rivalry, especially when it comes to the Cathedral of Norwich. But the nostalgia for the magnificence of the Romanesque church shone through most explicitly in the ironic, but emphatically uttered last phrase of the presentation: "Bury St Edmunds' Abbey will rise again!"

During his presentation, the Historian presented the project of the reconstruction of the Abbey as a regular project. This confirms English Heritage policy that interpretation of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings requires carefully researched digital and graphic reconstruction. But on this occasion, English Heritage made it clear that it had gone beyond the call of duty; the project of reconstructing the Abbey was unprecedented in terms of the resources it had made available. Given the near-total destruction of the Abbey in the sixteenth century and the limited information available about its original plan and architecture, the reconstruction had required considerable time and effort. The Architectural Historian had had to provide the Graphics Manager with sufficient information for the ambitious 3D graphic reconstruction. The Heritage Partnership acknowledged this extraordinary commitment. The leader of the Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides and a professional archaeologist himself complimented the Historian, stating that his important work on the Abbey Ruins constituted "a mile stone" in the research on the Abbey. Likewise, the Cathedral Dean expressed his thanks. English Heritage replied that the partial digital and graphic reconstruction generated so far would be sufficient for the interpretation panels to be installed in the Abbey ruins in June 2022. The Heritage Partnership website then published a press release, from which I quote the following excerpt:

> Work began on digitally reconstructing the Abbey in early 2021 with the entire site surveyed; a large collection of stonework from the Abbey – which is held in English Heritage's stores and at Moyse's Hall Museum – was also analysed. This information, combined with meticulous research, enabled the team at English Heritage to create the initial detailed sketches of the lost Abbey which were then developed into a 3D digital model of the Abbey complex, with a final layer of historical detail added to create the finished artwork visitors can see today. The reconstruction is one of the largest and most complex reconstruction[s] that English Heritage has completed of one of its sites.[2]

That this reconstruction is one the largest and most complex reconstructions that English Heritage has ever done, was a source of pride in Bury St Edmunds. The next two paragraphs give the wider context in which the presentation of the reconstruction should be situated:

> With over 1 million visitors in 2020, the Abbey Gardens and Ruins is one of the most visited free to enter attractions outside of London. However, while the remains of the Abbey are extensive, they do little justice to what was once one of the largest and grandest monasteries in England. Named after the martyred King Edmund the Abbey was a place of pilgrimage, and around 1066 was ranked fourth among English abbeys in wealth and political importance. This importance was ultimately its downfall and, during the dissolution of the monasteries, Henry VIII had the Abbey demolished to demonstrate his power and control.
>
> But now thirteen new panels bring the fascinating history of the Abbey to life and highlight the story of the martyred King Edmund who was buried in the Abbey church, aiding visitors' understanding of the site's historic importance. Striking new artwork which digitally reconstructs and re-imagines the Abbey in its heyday depicts the size and grandeur of the site, helping those walking among the ruins interpret the site's remains, and see it as it would have been at various points in the last millennium. Finally, a [physical] model of the site, pre-Reformation, has been refurbished and restored by the original model-maker Nigel Purdy.

Placed strategically in the Abbey Gardens in relation to the remains of the Abbey are placed 13 panels, each of which is designed according to a standard plan and design. Many panels include a visual representation of (part of) the Abbey. Ingeniously, on each of the panels the visual representation of the Abbey corresponds to the perspective

from the placement of the panels in the Abbey ruins. On the basis of the ruined remains and the visual representations offered by the panels, an imaginative visitor should be able to visualise in their mind's eye the Abbey in its heyday.

The new scheme was greatly enjoyed by visitors to the Picnic in the Park on 16 July 2022, when the scheme had just been installed. The English Heritage press release recorded the following responses of the officials who had been involved in the project:

> [The] Property Development Director English Heritage said "Bury St. Edmunds Abbey is a hugely important historical site, and of a scale and grandeur which, until now, was difficult to envisage. Now, thanks to these detailed digital reconstructions, visitors can truly understand how spectacular the Abbey once was. It has been wonderful to work in partnership with the local community and local groups to deliver this project, and as one of our most popular free to enter sites, we can't wait to welcome more visitors to reimagine the site as it stood for hundreds of years".

English Heritage sees the digital reconstruction as a huge achievement and hopes it will contribute to envisaging the "scale and grandeur" of the historical site. The Chair of the Heritage Partnership is cited as confirming this effect on the visitors:

> [The] Chairman of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, said: "The positive reaction to the new interpretation panels from members of the public was obvious as soon as they had been installed. English Heritage have done a fantastic job with the new panels and the Heritage Partnership is delighted to have collaborated with our English Heritage colleagues. We hope with the new interpretation everyone can benefit from the amazing heritage of the Abbey".

Whilst the Chairman thanked English Heritage in the name of the Heritage Partnership, local councillors and council officers thanked English Heritage for enhancing the attractiveness of the Abbey site to visitors:

> [The] Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture at West Suffolk Council, said: "The Abbey Gardens is a very beautiful and popular place enjoyed every year by thousands of people from our local communities and tourists visiting the area. But the gardens are just one part of a site that was once an

> Abbey of national and international significance. So in this year in which we celebrate 1,000 years since the Abbey of St Edmund was founded, it is great to see this project which will help widen people's understanding of how it once looked and how various areas were once used".
>
> [The] Brand and Marketing Manager of Bury St Edmunds and Beyond – the town's tourism brand, said: "This is such a fantastic addition to our most visited visitor attraction in Bury St Edmunds. It will massively enhance visitor's experience of the ruins by showing them what the Abbey would have looked like at each of the locations within the ruins. It's a brilliant addition to such an important site".

These quotations serve to demonstrate that the work by English Heritage on the heritage interpretation infrastructure of the site was very much appreciated by representatives of the Heritage Partnership and various official organisations in Bury St Edmunds. That the interpretation helps one imagine the grandeur of the former Abbey church is celebrated by all. For those in favour of an imaginary reconstruction of the town's monastic heritage, the new heritage interpretation panels were a wonderful success.

4. Contested Heritage

The planning of the heritage interpretation panels and the design of a 3D digital reconstruction model were progressing at the same time as the Heritage Partnership was dealing with some differences of opinion between some of its key partners. Firstly, there were some disagreements about proposed priorities for a major funding application to be submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). An early draft proposed that priority should be given to the establishment of a Visitor Centre in the Anselm Building, a disused building owned by the Cathedral, that had long since been intended for this purpose. The majority of the proposed funding was earmarked for the construction of this Visitor Centre but some members of the Heritage Partnership argued that a larger share of the proposed funding should be allocated to other improvements to heritage conservation and heritage interpretation elsewhere in the wider Abbey area. Secondly, the then Vicar of St Mary's Church, whose participation in the Heritage Partnership had previously been intermittent, raised an unexpected question about some of the assumptions on which the Heritage Partnership had been working although it later emerged that this was

a personal view which was not shared by some other members of his congregation. These challenges were unrelated, but they show how far the opinions within the Heritage Partnership diverged. As a member of the Heritage Partnership said, to explain the divergence: "The Heritage Partnership is a broad church" recognising that similar partnerships with such a diverse membership often have to balance a wide range of views and focus on finding an agreed consensus on which they can all proceed.

St Mary's Church is one of two parish churches in the Abbey precinct that was built on this site *before* the construction of the Abbey Church. St Mary's claims to be the first parish church of Bury St Edmunds. Turning into a protestant church (i.*e.* "low church") during the Reformation, St Mary's claims to represent the "primitive" Christian religion. St James, later re-dedicated to St Edmund and St James, was the second parish church of Bury St Edmunds. Its status was elevated to become the Cathedral of the new Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich in 1914 and was then re-named St Edmundsbury Cathedral. While the Cathedral may thus claim to be the more important church in terms of its ranking in church hierarchy, St Mary's remains the older "civic" church. Moreover, St Mary's is the church in which Mary Tudor, Queen of France, now lies buried. The Cathedral leans towards the other end of the theological spectrum in the Anglican Church and could be characterized as "high church". The historical legacy of the Reformation, a trauma according to some which resulted in different liturgies, explains the complex relationship between the Cathedral and St Mary's. Although the relationship between St Mary's church and the Cathedral is collaborative and ecumenical, it sits in a historical antagonism that is rarely verbalized but nonetheless persistent under the surface.

When the Heritage Partnership was set up, St Mary's Church was temporarily without a serving Vicar. It meant that it did not to have anyone who could attend the regular meetings of the Heritage Partnership. When a new Vicar arrived at St Mary's, the Heritage Partnership had already established its overall strategic priorities for heritage conservation and heritage interpretation in its draft Overarching Plan. It came as a surprise when, in 2021, the new Vicar of St Mary's outlined his concerns with what he described as the "contested narrative" about the medieval rivalries between the Abbey and the town.

The Vicar of St Mary's had thus far never attended a meeting of the Heritage Partnership but was welcomed and given the opportunity to articulate his views on the Heritage Partnership's work in an online

meeting in 2021. Around that time, the Heritage Partnership was running a successful series of online lectures and it so happened that Professor Mark Bailey of the University of East Anglia, an established historian of medieval economics, had just delivered a lecture on the exploitative politics of the Abbey that had resulted in several popular uprisings against the Abbey.

The Vicar of St Mary's picked up on this lecture to point out that the story which the Overarching Plan had proposed did not sufficiently acknowledge the contested history of the Abbey and the town. He unreservedly sided with those who had brought down the Abbey:

> There is a really fantastic opportunity to do something different because this is contested heritage and that's an important phrase in 2021 because this is contested heritage and was in the 1530s and the 1540s but it was frankly probably in 1021. We've got a fantastic opportunity to hold contested stories in a healthy dissenting, diverse way. Let's not have a meta-narrative top-down centrist approach that tells us who we are.

The Vicar of St Mary's rejected the narrative proposed by the Overarching Plan that presented the Abbey's legacy in unambiguous terms as a loss. He openly called for an acknowledgement of dissenting views on the legacy of the Abbey which he considered to be a contested heritage. This view had never been articulated before at the meetings of the Heritage Partnership. One dedicated member of the Heritage Partnership, a local historian, had now and then said that the historical legacy of the Abbey was nothing to celebrate – emphasizing the antagonistic relations between the townspeople and the Abbey – but he had never made this a subject for discussion. As the author of ten popular local history books, the historian is a very well-known and much-liked figure around the town. He owed his role in the Heritage Partnership to being the Chair of the Bury St. Edmunds Society. The Bury Society is "open to everyone who cares about Bury St Edmunds' past, present and future" (website) and constitutes the most important civic society in Bury St Edmunds. Genuinely interested in the history of the Abbey, this local historian was always in favour of the conservation and the heritagization of the Abbey ruins. As a born and bred local, proud of local history, he just did not see any reason why its history should not be celebrated.

With the Vicar of St Mary's, though, things were different. Hailing from the industrial North, he had an affinity for the church that declared itself as belonging to the "evangelical tradition of the Church of England". As

a "civic church" situated in the former precinct of the Abbey, St Mary's prides itself on being "the people's church". The Vicar claimed a genealogy for St Mary's that positioned this evangelical church in opposition to the Cathedral that, having adopted St Edmund as its patron saint, had positioned itself as heir to the Abbey. He suggested that the Cathedral could be characterized as "high church" while St Mary's is unmistakably "low church". As "low church", St Mary's places itself in the genealogy of the Reformation and thus, in favour of the Dissolution of the Monasteries imposed by King Henry VIII. This antagonism was clear in the Vicar's intervention. At the Core Group meeting in July 2021, the Vicar tabled a document that presented his dissenting view.[3] Circulated well ahead of the meeting, this document clearly presented his views on the work of the Heritage Partnership.

The document was a real pamphlet opposing the letter and the spirit of the current orientation of the Heritage Partnership. The Vicar of St Mary's seriously criticized the Heritage Partnership's draft Overarching Plan and framed his concerns in different registers. The first register in which to convey his critique was by stating that he did not accept the Heritage Partnership's narrative:

> Stories matter. The Core Group is right to realize that an overarching story will shape interpretations, stir emotions and help people to engage. But it's essential that the right story is told. It must be a truthful story.

The Vicar felt that the story told by the Overarching Plan was not a truthful story. A story that is framed to attract funding, he felt, is likely to meet scepticism. Moreover, given the "wicked" aspects of the history of the Abbey:

> I cannot support the story as it is currently offered, nor put the name of St Mary's Church to publications which endorse it.

The Vicar went on to explain the various reasons why he could not support the draft Overarching Plan. The first reason, he said, is that the Abbey no longer exists. In his mind, by using the present tense, the Overarching Plan presented the Abbey as if it still existed. In his mind, this was a misrepresentation. After all, the Abbey was destroyed in 1539 and all that remained today are its ruins. He said that at St Mary's, to this day the congregation is thankful for the destruction of the Abbey:

> Let us acknowledge, whatever we feel about the Abbey and the way that it held the Christian faith in its life, that its sheer absence from the town is its most salient and relevant feature. Its destruction was more thorough than many other similar sites in East Anglia, and across the country, presumably in proportion to its local unpopularity.

Creating a historical analogy between the original position of Protestants in 1539 and the convictions of St Mary's current congregation, the Vicar rejected the way in which the Overarching Plan remembered the relationship between Abbey and town:

> But the Overarching Plan seems to very much want to declare the Abbey to have been a success. It finds a bizarrely coy way of acknowledging that "the relationships between the Abbey and the town have been crucial and somewhat turbulent." What an understatement! Why are we so shy about the deep and prolonged conflict and the awful tyranny and bloodshed that arose because of the misrule of the abbots and their allies?

Recalling the exploitative relationship that the Abbey's monks entertained with the inhabitants of the town, and calling St Mary's as the people's church, the Vicar identified himself in opposing the way the Abbey's monks behaved toward the town's population:

> As a Christian, I am appalled at the way that the Abbey greedily exploited the most vulnerable people for its own gain and glorification. As a Christian minister, I am deeply ashamed.

Therefore, any attempt to revive the Abbey or to reconstruct its legacy should be avoided:

> Please, let us not rebuild the Abbey, neither in words or stone!

The document went on to denounce the story the Heritage Partnership told about the Abbey as if it were uncontested and also warned against telling these stories with the aim of fundraising. The Vicar also made a clear distinction between the ways in which St Edmundsbury Cathedral and St Mary's Church relate to the Abbey and suggested that the Cathedral may well wish to embrace its legacy, but St Mary's would not. It is telling that

these reasons are not just historical, they are about the present spirituality of the site:

> The Overarching Plan develops its theme of "Inspiration" as follows, "The Abbey has a special spirit of place and has been sacred since the dawn of history". This does not inspire me; it is simply glib.

The Vicar's reading of the Overarching Plan did not just object to the way it interpreted the Abbey's history, but to its very presentation of the site's spirituality. The Vicar offered an assessment of the Overarching Plan's interpretation of the Abbey's history and the rationale for its heritagization, concluding that none of it seemed to tally well with the theology and mission embraced in St Mary's Church. There was no misunderstanding in the Heritage Partnership meeting over the Vicar's principled stance. Even though this intervention was the most serious contestation of the Partnership's work to date, the discussion that followed was respectful and it was agreed that the draft Overarching Plan should be amended accordingly.

After the Vicar had articulated his concerns, asking the Heritage Partnership to pause its work, the Heritage Partnership recognized the Vicar's intervention. The Overarching Plan was promptly amended and some of the panels that were unveiled in June 2022 mentioned the antagonism between the Abbey and the townspeople including the several revolts and their suppression by the Abbey. By then, the Vicar had moved away from St Mary's due to personal circumstances unrelated to his work. At the time, some people said that his uncompromising stance on the legacy of the Abbey did not fully represent the views of the St Mary's congregation. Indeed, after his intervention St Mary's continued to attend the meetings of the Heritage Partnership in a spirit of positive collaboration.

Nevertheless, the intervention in the work of the Heritage Partnership by the Vicar of St Mary's as a principled Protestant demonstrated how the legacy of the Reformation continues to inspire very different affects for the material remains of the Abbey, even today, when it comes to the conservation and interpretation of religious heritage. Today, the legacy of the Reformation is still present in the feelings people have for the Abbey's remains, their conservation and their interpretation.

5. Abiding Wisdom

Between the multiple public events organized during the Abbey 1000 Millennium Celebrations of the foundation of the Benedictine Abbey in Bury St Edmunds, the weekend dedicated to the legacy of St Benedict stood out as the most spiritual celebration and the one most faithful to the reason of commemoration. It was in 1020, the brochure stated, that:

> King Cnut ordered the building of a round, stone church to house the body of St Edmund. Cnut brought 13 Benedictine monks from St Benet's at Hulme in Norfolk and seven from Ely. This was the beginning of the Abbey of Saint Edmund, 1000 years ago. (Abiding Wisdom, 14-15 May 2022)

A handsome booklet offered a full programme of events organized by St Edmundsbury Cathedral including lectures, workshops and conversations at which participants explored "what the Spirit of God is saying to us through the Rule of St Benedict today." The programme enabled St Edmundsbury Cathedral to claim the legacy of the Abbey and thus forge a continuity across the Reformation. The Dean's welcome included the words:

> Here at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, we are inspired by our Benedictine heritage in our worship, work and hospitality. Our recently published Master Plan includes the aim of establishing a new monastic community based here at the Cathedral. Your presence and contribution to Abiding Wisdom will help us discern what a new community might be.
>
> And by being here together this weekend, we draw the wider community's attention to the Benedictine heritage of this town as part of the millennium of the Abbey, our Abbey 1000 celebrations. In doing so we encourage our brothers and sisters to discover Benedictine wisdom for living well.

The event was attended by a variety of people who, in one way of another, appeared to see themselves as heirs to St Benedict's Rule. There were quite a few monks as well as several clergymen and women who did not live in monastic communities. Apart from the public events that attracted many lay people, all other events were attended almost exclusively by Christians with an explicit interest in the legacy of St Benedict and the benefits of his Rule for living today. After the formal welcome by the Dean, in the Cathedral, the guests were taken out on a

walk around the Abbey Gardens, visiting the ruins on a "heritage tour". This tour included a stop at the Holocaust memorial near the Abbey Gate where a tour guide informed participants of the most atrocious event in the history of the Abbey. In the twelfth century, the Jewish population of Bury feared and fled the mob that was chasing them; they called at the Abbey Gate and asked for asylum. Abbot Samson, whose monastery was heavily indebted to some of the Jewish inhabitants of the town, refused to open the Abbey Gate, allowing a pogrom to happen there. With this sobering tale, the participants of the Abiding Wisdom weekend were given some food for thought – and a critical perspective on the Benedictine legacy of the Abbey.

On Saturday, keynote speakers such as Jutta Brueck and Rowan Williams (by Zoom) shared their wisdom of St Benedict's Rule. There were also some interactive sessions. I attended a workshop organized by the members of the Community of St Anselm, founded on the principles of St Benedict, St Ignatius and St Francis, comprising over 150 young adults around the globe. Five young adults who had spent a year in retreat at Lambeth Palace spoke of their personal experiences to a large audience of people on average 30 years older. It was moving to see the young Benedictines reflect on their past retreat and the secular lives that they had subsequently adopted. It certainly gave a sense of what a life regimented by St Benedict's Rule might look like in the twenty-first century when few believers are willing to commit themselves to a life in celibacy.

Apart from the workshops and lectures dedicated to structured learning, other events allowed for "fellowship" amongst the Benedictines gathered here. There was lunch, dinner, mass, Sung Eucharist, and an opportunity to visit an exhibition in the Abbey Scriptorium: "Secrets of the Abbey: History Returns", an exhibition of 12th century manuscripts from Pembroke College, Cambridge. The weekend ended with Vespers and a Procession to the ruins of the Abbey Crypt. This event had been widely publicized and was attended by many townspeople. After the beautiful Vespers in the Cathedral, everyone followed the clergy and choir and processed out of the church onto the street. We walked the short distance to the Abbey Gate and entered the Abbey Gardens to process to the Crypt in the Abbey ruins. There, everyone gathered solemnly, listening to the Cathedral choir. Most clergy were dressed in their vestments and lay people too had dressed for the occasion. In the Crypt, the St Edmundsbury Cathedral Dean, the Anglican bishop and the Roman Catholic bishop, addressed us in an ecumenical service. Gathered at the ruined Crypt, which gave the event

a ring of holiness, the Dean uttered a claim he had made once before and addressed the entire congregation in his booming voice: "Today we reclaim this sacred space."

The Heritage Partnership has taken up the care of the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund. This partnership of religious and secular, civic and community partners, was meant to conserve and interpret the heritage of the ruins. That such an enterprise might eventually result in conflicting interpretations of the ruins was perhaps to be expected. The Heritage Partnership was very much aware of the variety of opinions amongst its members - it was set up to help find common cause in place of the previous lack of coordination between the various partners and landowners across the whole Abbey of St Edmund. Yet, this re-appropriation of a pre-Reformation legacy was probably not expected by some of the partners whose primary interests were cultural, archaeological, historical and generally, secular. Few of them would have expected this to result in a full religious reclamation of the Abbey Crypt. Remarkably, led by representatives of both the Catholic and the Anglican Church, the celebration in the Crypt should be conceived as a joint reclamation of St Edmund in which the traumatic legacy of the Reformation was sutured. On this occasion, the Churches separated by the Reformation overcame their historical divide in an ecumenical reclamation of the pre-Reformation legacy of St Edmund. The process of "heritagisation" of the religious remains eventually enabled religious institutions to reclaim the ruins as religious heritage. During the Vespers the process of secularisation was reversed, resulting in the re-sacralisation of the ruins. What might look like a ruined site bereft of spiritual significance, was on this occasion, re-enchanted. In fact, through the celebration of Vespers in the ruined Crypt, the process of heritagisation was sacralised.

6. Discussion

In mid-nineteenth century England, the conservation movement of parish churches was pivotal to the development of a heritage movement in England (Miele, 1995; Swenson, 2013: 59). It may even have had an impact across Europe, given that conservation movements around Europe were in conversation and in competition with each other (Swenson 2013). The conservation movement in the Church of England found a ready audience for the idea of restoration among the members of the Oxford

Movement, an intellectual movement focussed on the restoration of the Catholic liturgy in the Anglican Church, a movement that also embraced a return to Gothic architecture. It is useful to remind ourselves that since the nineteenth century, the "high church" in the Church of England has had an interest in the conservation of church buildings that the Anglican "low church", more interested in the Word and willing to break with "popish" liturgy and showy architecture, rejected as "Catholic". This genealogy explains why the interest of English Heritage to "reconstruct" the Abbey church in a 3D digital model resonated well with the congregation of St Edmundsbury Cathedral. The more Reformist members of St Mary's Church, in contrast, took no interest in the reconstruction of the Abbey church in a 3D model.

As we have seen above, the work of reconstruction can be subject to disputes of various kinds. In the nineteenth century, a conflict of interest arose over the question of whether the conservation of churches was a religious or an aesthetic concern. This conflict, which resulted in debates on the responsibilities of care for religious heritage in a secular context, reverberates today in Bury St Edmunds. English Heritage's Historian used a new technology for the historical reconstruction of the Abbey Church. But his enthusiasm for the monastic architecture was not so much inspired by religious piety, he exalted the design of late Romanesque, early Norman cathedrals as on a par with cathedrals of European stature. To reconstruct this building in 3D digital form was part of his reconstructive impulse to celebrate the building as an *architectural* and *aesthetic* achievement. His reconstruction served to convey its magnificence to its publics who have great difficulty imagining the building that once was. The reconstruction of the building on interpretation panels served the instruction of visitors as a pedagogic device.

This is not quite how the Vicar of St Mary's saw the reconstruction of the building in 3D digital and graphic formats at the time. To him, the Abbey of St Edmund was an oppressive institution that exploited the townspeople and abused people's superstitions to serve the greed of the abbot and the monks. To him, King Henry VIII and his chief secretary, Thomas Cromwell, justly suppressed the monastery. The heritage initiatives to improve the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund served at best as an opportunity to recognize the site as "contested heritage". To him, the initiatives presented an opportunity to confront the problematic past of the Abbey. While his views helped create a context for reflection on the historical institution of the Abbey, his term of office was too short to result in further dialogue

on the issue. If the Historian went about his tasks in a hands-on manner reconstructing the monastic heritage in 3D digital and graphic formats, the Vicar rejected the concept of reconstruction as a matter of principle. His rejection of reconstruction as a method of heritage interpretation conveyed his embrace of another paradigm of heritage conservation and interpretation, one not aimed at reconstruction but at reform.

Finally, the Cathedral Dean's interventions presented yet another take on reconstruction: he presents the ambition to turn St Edmundsbury Cathedral into a prospering enterprise. Conscious of the financial challenges that Cathedrals face in our secular age with shrinking numbers of churchgoers, his interest in the heritage project of the Abbey of St Edmund was partly financial. He suggested that the 3D digital reconstruction of the Abbey should enable online visitors to have a "fly-through" experience of the Abbey Church. This, he believed, could enhance the experience of the digital model and increase visitor numbers to the Cathedral. In his entrepreneurial vision, the reconstruction of the Abbey was an instrument to promote the Abbey and the Cathedral as tourist destinations. Interestingly, his ecumenical reclamations of the ruined crypt seemed to serve a policy in which the distinction between a religious reclamation of the pre-Reformation site and its promotion as a tourist destination seemed to blur. Indeed, in his and the Heritage Partnership's view, religion, spirituality, and commercial interests are not at odds, but go together. This leads us to some final reflections on the segregation and entanglement of the sacred and the secular in religious heritage.

7. Conclusion

In nineteenth-century France, Germany and Britain, the question arose whether churches were to be considered a national heritage and to what extent the state had a responsibility in legislating the preservation of churches (Swenson, 2013). The question was whether churches were a responsibility of care for the (secular) state. These questions do not seem to arise for the Heritage Partnership in which distinctions between the secular and the spiritual do not cause conflict. Yet among Bury's religious congregations affects for the ruins and their conservation clearly diverge. As this divergence demonstrates, the heritagisation of the ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund is subject to different religious positions. Members of different congregations have different feelings about the ruins of the

Abbey; in addition, there are other, un-churched spiritualities and affects for the ruins. What once was a church of formidable dimensions that imposed one canonical experience, is now a ruin that affords diverse affects for its conservation. In their important work, Meyer and Van de Port (2018), Meyer (2010), and Meyer & De Witte (2013) demonstrate that "aesthetics of persuasion" authenticate cultural heritage. But as our case demonstrates, such aesthetics are not necessarily shared. Affects for ruins, it is often forgotten, can be very diverse.

In this context, in which the ruins are framed in different registers, one may ask how the Cathedral Dean's reclamation of the Abbey ruins should be understood. Is it part of a spiritual mission to re-sacralise the ruined crypt? Clearly, the interpretation offered by English Heritage is not construed to sacralise the heritage of the Abbey, but to celebrate it as an architectural legacy. The reconstruction of the church in heritage interpretation mainly relies on an aestheticisation that is secular in register. In that sense, one may argue that the Heritage Partnership pursues the heritagisation of the ruins in an aesthetic register, while the Cathedral pursues its "re-sacralisation" in a religious register. Depending on the framing, the Abbey ruins are either the remains of great architecture or the remains of an inspiring monastic church. Given the spiritual connotations of the latter register, religious traces remain ambient in a post-secular public sphere (cf. Engelke 2012).

While the Heritage Partnership and English Heritage pursue an "aestheticisation" of this heritage, the Cathedral "sacralises" the ruins, resulting in separate, yet mutually supportive registers of "heritagisation" of the Abbey of St Edmund. In contrast to the intersection of "religion" and "heritagization" in other English Cathedrals (Coleman, 2023), we observe that discourses seem to be strategically segregated rather than entangled in their "reclamation" of this religious heritage. Such separation of secular and religious discourses serves the purpose of the restoration and interpretation of religious heritage in a post-secular context in which religious affects are still at work. The restoration of Pre-Reformation religious heritage strains the repair and reconciliation of these age-old religious differences. Nonetheless, in the Heritage Partnership, the careful respect for members' private affects for the Abbey ruins enables an effective collaboration between all its partners.

Endnotes

1 In recent decades, the interdisciplinary field known as New Materialism has opened an inquiry into the connection between materiality and affect and has probed ways of assessing how materiality produces affects that predispose subjects towards objects (Bennett, 2010; Massumi, 2015). In a parallel development, Critical Heritage Studies have increasingly engaged with the notion of affect to examine how heritage affects visitors (Smith & Campbell 2015; Crouch, 2015; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton, & Watson, 2017; Smith, 2020). The critical apparatus thus developed should assist me in gauging how the transformation of monastic ruins into religious heritage generates diverse, sometimes conflicting affects.

2 '13 New Interpretation Panels and a Model for The Abbey', Home page of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, published 25th July 2022: https://www.abbeyofstedmund.org.uk/news/new-interpretation-panels-for-the-abbey/ Accessed 04/05/2025.

3 "Abbey Heritage Partnership - Response to the revised Overarching Plan" (6 July 2021).

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