

Wayfaring into heritage

Introduction

The term wayfaring was introduced in the 16th century as "traveling or journeying by road". Therefore a wayfarer is "a person who travels by road, especially on foot".

In 1960, the urban planner Kevin A. Lynch coined the term way-finding in his influential book 'Image of the City'. He defined it as "a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment". His work was based on the concept of spatial orientation and its prerequisite, cognitive maps. The former relates to ways in which a person's ability determines his/her location in a setting and the latter refers to an overall mental image or representation of the physical space and its layout.

In the early 70s an important conceptual shift occurred. Cognitivists argued that one has to understand the underlying processes in order to interpret how people find their way. Therefore, the relevant concept was no longer based on spatial orientation alone, but on the processes that incorporate perception, cognition and decision-making. This new concept gave birth to the term wayfinding. This idea reflected a different approach to study people's movement and their relationship to the physical space. Cognitivists presented it as a spatial problem-solving method that linked three interconnected processes. The first one, decision-making is the development of a plan of action. The second, decision executing, transforms this plan into appropriate behaviors and actions. And finally, information processing is responsible for the information basis of the two decision-related processes.

In 1984, the environmental psychologist Romedi Passini in his book Wayfinding in Architecture, extended the concept of wayfaring by relating it to architecture and signage.

Wayfaring as travel

Wayfaring is a mode of travel across swathes of landscape when perception of the traveller becomes drawn out from place to place along the line of the route. This brings about varying possibilities as to how place is interpreted or considered. Through such prolonged engagement with the landscape, knowledge is forged because the movement is a way of knowing through engagement with both its spatial, temporal, and embodied dimensions. Sight, sound, smell and touch are part of the experience. Perception and interpretation of the landscape is made in a process of ambulatory encounters. Through such an embodied approach and encounters, alternate perspectives are gained. These may challenge the established heritage discourse through an affective relationship with the multiple sensibilities located in the landscape. Places along the route where there is a distinctive feature or where the traveller rested or met up with residents or other travellers, become caught up in new stories.

The perspective of a wayfarer is forged through the transformative process of moving through a meshwork of successive unfolding, where landscape is not just an embodied and phenomenological experience, but also one where past, present and futures may temporally co-exist as reflexive imagination and spectral haunting. This practice embraces the different and alternative conceptualisations of nature, along with elements that are contingent, heterogeneous, decentred, fleeting, and unable to be represented. A wayfarer is therefore a ghost in a landscape populated by ghosts, occupying the same space momentarily as they did and feeling their fleeting presence. This presence may be imagined, seen in the physical landscape such as monuments and paths, or even as a tangible feeling of manifestation.

Wayfaring also expresses a belonging to a landscape. It is a statement of being a part of the environment, of occupying the ancient ecological niche of being nomadic. It is an activity that might be viewed as having both a biological and cultural function - the infusion of the two being the experience. This embodied approach of walking over the land's surface is an accumulation of traditions as to how land is approached, how meanings are derived from it, and brings the experience of the journey for its own sake to the fore. Walking, landscape and narrative - all are conflated to the point where they are indivisible from one another. They are conjoined elements that reflect each other and are held together by the practice of making lines. For many, to stray off the path is to be entering a forbidden and forbidding place. Without a route to follow a panic creeps in - the path must be found again since to be off it is to be lost. Wayfarers "... are subtly frightened of being lost, metaphorically, no less than literally, on paths leading into the unknown imaginative depths of the countryside.. The introduction of 'access land' has not led to multitudes of walkers wandering over it - in the main they continue to cling to the paths most of which in Britain are ancient rights of way..

Traveling on foot

A footpath is a mark on the land that reflects the culture that made it, and the culture that continues to use it. It can become a memory embodied and inscribed physically into the land. A path is a prior interpretation of the best way to traverse a landscape, and to follow a route is to accept an interpretation, or to stalk your predecessors on it as scholars, trackers and pilgrims do. To walk the same way is to reiterate something deep; to move through the same space the same way is a means of becoming the same person, thinking the same thoughts and adding to them. Therefore, following a path is to follow a line made by ghosts, an aspect of spectral geographies that is concerned with the haunting of place and memory by previous inhabitants. As such to walk along a path is a link not only to past histories but also past methods, patterns, strategies and techniques of engaging with the landscape for survival or pleasure.

The line of a path may feasibly be traced back to prehistory or even before that when it was a migration route for wild animals. Its origins might be from Iron Age track or Roman military roads, a drove route, a holloway, a corpse way, an enclosure road, a short peasant's path out to the fields from village or hamlet, or a longer route frequented by medieval pilgrims and traders.

These past existences impinge into the present. They are clues imprinted into the physical environment that contain echoes of a past landscape, possibly very different to what now exists and yet maintain a continuity of presence. It is memory stamped into the ground for the present to recall. Paths and trails are routes to remembrance just as they are routes to knowledge. Taking a new footpath is to expand this stock of ghostly memories. It is the task of an interpreter to discover and deliver this stock to the paths of future travellers.

Every place has a history and the task of interpreters is to bring the past alive and make the present more enjoyable and the future more meaningful. She presents a complete theme or thesis and presents the information to illustrate heritage concepts which transcend race and creed. It also provides information to reveal deeper meaning and truth by telling a story that informs, entertains, and enlightens. This is done with examples of writing and art expressing the beauty of things that used to be commonplace. The purpose is to enrich the mind by inspiring and provoking people to broaden their horizons beyond the particular. To achieve this goal the story should instill in people the ability, and the desire, to sense the beauty in their surroundings—to provide spiritual uplift and to encourage the preservation of valued features of the countryside..Passion is the essential ingredient for powerful and effective interpretation; passion for a living resource and for those people who come to be inspired by it.

A path is an extension of walking, the places set aside for walking are monuments to that pursuit, and walking is a mode of making the world, as well as being in it. Thus, the walking body can be traced in the places it has made; paths, parks, and pavements are traces of the acting out of imagination and desire... Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world.

Such is their importance of how the world is understood, that many indigenous cultures still regard paths as being fundamental to their existence, their culture and even having a deeper spiritual significance. There is evidence that in prehistory and up until relatively recently, paths in Britain were symbolic for their spiritual associations, where in walking them particular sacred qualities are conferred upon the walker such as the following of mazes or cursus monuments. The path becomes symbolic of the practice of walking, and has some resonance with paths that exist as an expression of creativity. As an example, the artist Richard Long is intimately concerned with the experience of walking and the making and following of paths where the agents of the marks of movement are absent. His work reflects the practice of walking and its constituent elements of sensations felt by the body, the impacts it makes on the landscape, and the serendipity of things stumbled upon, heard and sighted.

Paths as place

Paths not only serve to link places together, they are integral to the constitution of places and indivisible from them. As Ingold suggests, "there can be no places without paths, along which people arrive and depart; and no paths without places, that constitute their destinations and

points of departure. Paths arise out of the movement between places, and impose a pattern of habitual behaviour on people.

Movement is embodied, on the side of people, in their "muscular consciousness", and on the side of the landscape, in its network of paths and tracks. In this network is sedimented the activity of an entire community, over many generations. It is the ancient taskscape made visible.

Taskscape is defined by Ingold as the mutual and interlocking ensemble of tasks that constitute acts of dwelling. From this perspective, paths may be considered as thresholds of dwelling where walking is a complex performance of achievements, relational to spatial and temporal settings, that may only be appreciated in the emergence or unfolding of its practice. Paths, therefore, may be considered as being places since, as Ingold suggests: "To be a place, every somewhere must lie on one or several paths of movement to and from places elsewhere. Life is lived... along paths, not just in places, and paths are lines of a sort.

Ingold proposes that human beings generate lines wherever they go, and that the world is inhabited by people and consists not of things but of lines. He draws together the processes of walking, weaving, observing, storytelling, singing, drawing and writing that he conceives as being interwoven and interconnected; as all having a close relationship with each other because all proceed along lines. He also makes a distinction between a route and a trail. A route is for points of destination, like a dotted line they are point to point connectors, and as such exist as a function of transport. They differ from a trail, which he describes as being made by the wayfarer, because trails are gestural and traced out in passing.

"Drawing freehand, I take my line for a walk. Likewise the wayfarer, in his perambulations, lays a trail on the ground in the form of footprints, paths and tracks... Like the line that goes out for a walk, the path of the wayfarer wends hither and thither, and may even pause here and there before moving on. But it has no beginning or end. While on the trail the wayfarer is always somewhere, yet every 'somewhere' is on the way to somewhere else. The inhabited world is a reticulate meshwork of such trails, which is continually being woven as life goes along them."

Paths as culture

Cultural routes are lines for the passage of wayfarers that are extra special in that the people who use them are following past flows of culture embodied in trade or spirituality. They have resulted historically from both peaceful and hostile encounters, today they present a number of shared dimensions that transcend their original functions, offering a multilateral, more complete, and more accurate vision of history, as well as an exceptional setting for a culture of peace. As a heritage category, 'cultural routes' are the fruit of the cultural dynamics generated through the historic ways of communication, deliberately created or used by mankind for the accomplishment of a specific and well defined purpose. Therefore, cultural routes reveal the heritage content of a concrete phenomenon of human mobility and exchange that once pursued a specific and peculiar purpose. They include not only the physical ways of communication that

facilitated their flow, but the cultural properties and values, both material and immaterial, that are uniquely associated with their specific purpose and historic functionality.

Paths as storytellers

The wayfarer is analogous to the path, and the path to the written line. Both are comparable to the telling of a story or the writing of a narrative; they all exist as lines that weave and make shape of lived life. Walking and writing, wayfaring and the telling of stories; they are all intimately related to each other, each using the other as metaphor and simile to describe their forms and functions.

In both wayfaring and storytelling "it is the movement from place to place - or from topic to topic - that knowledge is integrated... the storyteller proceeds from topic to topic, or the traveller from place to place... knowledge is integrated along a path of movement". The narrative form and walking, therefore, have a distinct affinity with each other in that they both impart knowledge through the line of their movement, whether across a landscape or across a page, and bring place into existence by the telling of stories and by linking one place with another. This is what is behind the special relationship between tale and travel, and, perhaps, the reason why narrative writing, as travelers tales, is so closely bound up with walking. To write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route. To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as guide... The songlines of Australia's aboriginal peoples are the most famous examples conflating landscape and narrative. The songlines are tools of navigation across the deep desert, while the landscape is a mnemonic device for remembering stories: in other words, the story is a map, the landscape a narrative.

Therefore, a path might also be considered as an expression of what understanding is, being made by an individual walking a particular route, a conceptual line of passage across the landscape. As such, it might be envisioned as much as an imagined place or concept in the landscape as it is a physical feature. Through the passage of an individual wayfarer on their own route they make their own unique path, and this path becomes a metaphor for their journey between places and through life. The path is a repository of prior knowledge that is retrieved by the body and the imagination.

This paper is a development of the thesis, 'Wayfaring: making lines in a landscape' by Alan Hockley (2011)

http://eprints.bucks.ac.uk/635/1/Wayfaring_1.pdf