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A heritage trail bio-adaptation of Rebecca Paston's letters: presence and process in conversation with Renaissance imitatio

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Abstract

This case study examines how Rebecca Paston's life, hidden in archives for four centuries, was adapted for a heritage trail around the Paston manor lands in Oxnead, Norfolk (UK). Understanding adaptation as a process-driven interpretation that engages with form, ideology, and context has been examined in various media over the last two decades. This study builds on that trajectory by investigating a relatively underexplored form, heritage trail walking. The trail form offers opportunities and challenges in bio-adaptation, focusing on negotiating between past and present through movement: walking and talking are interdependent, embodied praxis. In this context, heritage trail storytelling does not present a static historical script of a life, but re-performs it through a living, co-performed process, unfolding in real-time encounters with body, text, and place. Rebecca Paston's life offers a compelling subject within this framework, as it enables a nuanced conversation to emerge between modern adaptation critiques on fidelity, creativity, and intertextuality, and the historical particularities of adaptation during Rebecca's time, notably the Renaissance practice of imitatio. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of how historical adaptation strategies inform and challenge contemporary theories of reinterpretation and cultural engagement, fostering an interplay between historical particularity and modern interpretive innovation.

Keywords: Rebecca Paston; participatory performance; 17th-century letters; heritage trail; creative health; imitatio; Paston Footprint

The Paston Footprints Oxnead Heritage Trail adapts seventeenth-century letters written by, to, and about Rebecca Paston, a member of the Stuart generation of the Paston Letters family.[1] (A pictorial overview of the 2.5-mile trail with transmedia resources can be viewed at pastonfootprints.co.uk.) Performing archival letters in the locations where they were written or received transforms biography into a site-responsive, collaborative, live experience. Drawing on Diana Taylor's concept of the repertoire as a living archive that challenges static understandings of biography, memory, and heritage (pp. 1-52), the trail's form activates historical presence through movement, multimodal and embodied storytelling.

This approach resonates with recent debates in adaptation studies that have shifted beyond fidelity discourses. In particular, it aligns with Julie Sanders' emphasis on appropriation as an interpretive intervention, especially when adaptation involves marginalized or silenced voices (2015). In adapting Rebecca's forgotten life in this manner, the heritage trail experience becomes a responsive act of memory-making, shaped by the terrain, the walkers, and the ongoing dialogue between past and present.

The *Paston Footprints* National Heritage Lottery project that created the trail using this adaptation paradigm is a collaboration between the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia (UK) with Collisions Theatre Company, the Paston Heritage Society, Norfolk County Council Environmental Team, and the Norfolk Public Record Office. Established in 2018 to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the first letter, the project's mission continues to inspire and empower storytelling through the Paston letters, lives, and landmarks. The Collisions Theatre group performs a recital of the *Paston Footprints: Oxnead Heritage Walk* (2021) audio drama studied in this article, scripted by Holly Maples (2021), which can be heard at: https://www.pastonfootprints.co.uk/oxneadheritagewalk.

Walking as embodied hermeneutics

When examining the transformative potential of the heritage trail in reinterpreting the seventeenth-century epistolary genre, movement serves as a methodological tool to emphasize embodiment and cross-temporal dialogue. Yet, letters are traditionally private, reflective and rooted in lived temporality, a clear juxtaposition to the performative, participatory, and communal dynamics of trail walking. The proposition is that mobilizing through movement prioritizes process over product and presence over representation.

In combining this proposition with historical analysis, it becomes apparent that there are enduring conceptual parallels with the discourses in the Paston letters. The most frequent adjective used to describe walking in the Paston letters is 'wende' (to go, pass, walk) from the London dialect (of the scribes). Many Pastons are not explicitly recorded as walking but as moving 'abouten'. The focus is on the process and journeying. By contrast, while letters also 'move', they are described as being 'delyvred', variously by foot or horse, where the focus is on the action. Letters and movement are interwoven practices. This study underscores the importance of embracing action as fluid and relational, whether through walk or word, expanding adaptation theories to include transition and ongoing engagement, resisting fixation and static scripts. Through this dialogic approach, historical and contemporary discourses mutually inform and enrich one another.

Rather than presenting history through static, textual forms such as letters, printed books, or plaques, a heritage trail transforms history into presence using physical locations, mapped routes, and performative acts to re-narrate the past through the geography in which it occurred. Although fluidity in interpretation may be central to this adaptation method, heritage trails paradoxically present biography as a fragmented experience. Physical stops (or stations) on a trail are manifested through various modalities, such as signage, QR codes, voiceovers, reconstructed buildings, or settings (as seen on the Oxnead Paston trail overview and resource site at pastonfootprints.co.uk). This spatial dispersion disrupts the idea of a unified subject or narrative, suggesting that thematic experiences

(such as the Worawa Dreaming Trail in Australia, the Bordeaux Wine trails in France, or revival of a pilgrimage route), or a collection of life stories, may be better subject matter than that of a singular life. After all, we cannot tell a cradle-to-grave biography of Rebecca Paston, as the route is shaped by site-specific visual stops where landmarks do not necessarily align with the life chronology or existing manuscript story clusters of the life story.[2]

Moreover, walkers have agency in how they experience the life story: while we may hope they follow the numbered route, they can start the trail at a different point (if, for example, they wish to shorten the route due to time-deprivation or stamina levels, they may extend the experience through exploratory walking off the route, or might just stumble upon the trail and join mid-way). We have received feedback from some who have followed the entire route in reverse. For the bio-adaptation trail, therefore, connection with the character becomes the narrative principle rather than chronology, where getting to know the character of Rebecca and the rhythms of the Paston family take precedence over the dates and sequence of her life. The dating of life events and buildings occurs, as it serves as a minor narrative device to help people orient themselves, but is not a structuring principle of the narrative.

Also disruptive is the uncurated, real-world landscape semantics (on this trail, these include steep inclines slowing the pace and diverting attention from imaginative to physical tasks, World War Two defences, and an anachronistic railway line co-existing with Paston Hall, with its architectural modifications from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century). This visual stage provokes encounters between past and present, history and infrastructure. As the tour guide is dramatized as Rebecca walking with you, how to navigate anachronisms requires either censoring (eliminating on the grounds of not relevant to the particular life story but their visual presence confronts the silence), or temporal conflation and some poetic licence in how the character can converse, as when Rebecca tells us: 'the village of Buxton … although it is far beyond my day, it is the home and burial site of the famous author Anna Sewell, who wrote Black Beauty'.

Traditionally, walking in heritage trails is viewed as a mode of reception rather than a creative act. This is when the purpose of trails is understood to be educational or commemorative. While immersive techniques, such as augmented reality, audio guides, and reenactments, enhance engagement, the purpose centres on knowledge transmission and place-based memory through authorized heritage discourse rather than dramatic storytelling (Waterton and Smith, pp. 4-20). This, however, overlooks the fact that while the aim is for participants to be guided through a discursively framed landscape, walking-based spectatorship disrupts passivity. This requires more investigation, as the audience's path, rhythm, and sensory experiences introduce multiplicity to the narrative, inviting polyvocality and personal resonance (Heddon and Turner, pp. 224-36). Walking functions not merely as a means of transit, but as an active hermeneutic process: a mode of meaning-making shaped by environmental contingencies, audience agency, and dramaturgical design. A walking-centred paradigm for bio-adaptation transforms historical life narratives into performative, site-responsive forms.

Observations of walkers on the Paston Footprints trail revealed that while walking, they often provided commentary during the performance, with thoughts, observations and questions about the surrounding environment. Examples from the uncurated stage

include cows mooing on this Oxnead walk, prompting environmental co-authorship to an ad hoc soundscape layer. Similarly, walkers speculated on historical continuities, such as whether the paths were as muddy in Paston times and questioned what footwear would have been worn. Walkers also added layers of meaning, sharing their knowledge with others, sometimes about settings such as the buildings or about other Paston characters. Who they share with changes, as unlike a performance where the audience is seated, walkers adjust pace and mix with various people throughout the performance. Such extempore additions to the storytelling are significant in bio-adaptation, as they diminish authoritative 'great man' (or women) narratives in favour of polyvocal histories, incorporating diverse audience perspectives and affective responses (L. Smith, discusses how performative aspects challenge such narratives through diverse perspectives in pp. 85-114, 162-192, and 276-286). No one performance is ever the same.

Akin to time-shifting television, with trail walking some walkers select to skip parts by taking route shortcuts, or choose to pause at places in addition to the formal stops on the trail. This produces fragmented and nonlinear engagements with the narrative. Walking, as much as storytelling, becomes an interpretive act, where the terrain, weather, and physical movement rhythm become a performative act in how the life story is experienced. Walking becomes an act of embodied hermeneutics, where meaning is negotiated through physical engagement and spatial disruptions.

In addition, when dramatic storytelling comes into play, a more post-structuralist promenade theatre effect occurs where meaning becomes unstable and dependent on context. In the Oxnead trail, this is amplified as Rebecca Paston is the omniscient trail guide, but in the conversational letter style, as if she is speaking to a trusted family member, providing prompts for response. This relational mode aligns with narrative psychology in which self and story are co-produced through context and interaction (Bruner, p. 334).

Sanders contends that 'adaptation frequently signals a relationship with a prior text that is both deliberate and announced' (26). The relationship maker in the Paston trail is the Norfolk landscape: the meandering River Bure, the railway line, and mutable topographies, which function as an adaptive collaborator. The trail's 'material dramaturgy', its circular routes, adherence to public rights of way, and practical constraints such as physical access, demonstrate Sanders' claim that 'adaptations are inevitably inflected by the cultural and historical conditions of their making' (23), but also shift focus from the text to lived experience. The creative act of reinterpretation takes place through bodies moving in space, merging historical fragments and environmental stimuli. Such walking practices echo Michel de Certeau's notion of walking as 'a space of enunciation' that inscribes meaning onto place (98) and Rebecca Solnit's framing of pedestrianism as 'a mode of making the world as well as of being in it' (4). This embodied aspect extends Sanders' intertextual framework into bio-adaptation: a dramaturgy where history is not merely observed but enacted, and where adaptation emerges in the moment of bodily encounter with landscape, no matter how episodic or fragmented.

What the disrupted, uncurated heritage narrative trail offers is the potential to intersect with life writing practices, particularly those that foreground imaginative, experimental, and speculative storytelling. Such practices challenge the traditional chronologies of heritage storytelling, aligning with theoretical frameworks from memory studies, narrative psychology, and experimental autobiography, which question the dominance of linear

temporality and embrace fragmentation, multiplicity, and imaginative re-appropriation (Smith & Watson, 2010). While the Oxnead audio narration begins with pointing out the Roman ruins, within seconds, chronology is interrupted by the excitement of Rebecca's husband as he interrupts Rebecca talking to us to tell her: 'My dear heart, sorry to interrupt, but the King intends me personal thanks and great promises I hear.' This results in Rebecca reflecting on King Charles II's exile during the English Civil War, which caused her husband to flee abroad to escape Oliver Cromwell. She goes on to explain how that was the start of their financial difficulties. Then we return to the present of Robert's emotions, as she says in delight: 'However, the bad days are behind us, and now there is much cause for celebration for the King, no less, is honouring us with a visit to Oxnead! Fragmentation of the timeline is captured as a family recollection and anticipation for the future, playing the macro dynamics of the cultural and political precariousness on the micro level of family life.

In Rebecca's bio-adaptation, her life story exemplifies how layered storytelling emerges by placing her story in multiple communities: conversations with others, familial relationships, news received from afar, and recollections of relatives long gone. The poetic license inherent in fabricating or imagining voices—those that can speak across generations or address contemporary concerns—functions as a method of creating histories that are layered and reinterpreted (Hutcheon, 2006). The reliance on archival fragments, such as personal letters, further underlines the genre's propensity for nonlinear storytelling. As the survival of correspondence often depends on selective curation, where frequently only one side of the conversation is preserved, it creates a poetic mosaic of partial voices and silences that invites experimental autobiography and fragmentary narrative models (Brockmeier studies the fragmentary model for autobiographical time, pp. 55-58). This aligns with the episodic, disrupted routes of heritage trails, emphasizing adaptation as a dynamic act of reimagining fragmented memories and speculative dialogues that deepen understanding of the past.

The walking trail is 'palimpsestuous', providing layered understandings, as Hutcheon captures in her adaptation metaphor for intertextual complexities of cultural dialogues and overlapping inscriptions that revise meaning (2006, pp. 6–7). Walking in these layered sites with traces of past lives reactivates them and they linger in gestures, architecture, and intersect with the present life of the walker, especially with the decentralizing narration effects of digital interactions, such as apps, gamification, and social media, each interaction creating new layers and revisions.[3] However, the heritage trail adaptation model requires attention to how adaptations also signify rupture, disruption, and contradictory forces that shape practices, whether that be uncurated land and soundscapes, fragmented narrations, or route logistics.

It is, though, in these disruptions that opportunities emerge. Phil Smith's work on mythogeography critically reveals how layered heritage walking deliberately subverts linear historiography by embracing fragmentation, multiplicity, and user-authored narratives. This approach challenges conventional, static notions of heritage as an authoritative record, instead positioning adaptation as a form of intertextual engagement, as an act of creative re-contextualization and interpretive appropriation, as Hutcheon describes (20).

The Oxnead Heritage Trail exemplifies this perspective by salvaging a biographical landscape that actively evokes presence; it prioritizes embodied interactions where bodies

experience place and journey in a way that resists reductive storytelling. Episodic storytelling, far from merely informing, stimulates the imagination and emotional engagement, fostering interpretive connections that are fluid rather than prescriptive. Rather than relying solely on static representations of history through installed interpretations at the various stops on the route that transform (and arguably interrupt) the landscape, the self-guided option of a downloadable audio drama as the tour guide (or hosted walks with reenactors) supports the ephemeral presence of layered heritage walking. As Peggy Phelan argues, 'performance honours the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterwards' (148). Feedback from one walker on the Oxnead trail captures this sense:

> each bit we stopped at just kept adding to the story, made me feel like an adventurer going through unknown lands even though I've walked here so many times. No-one else walking round here knows all that. I've got the insider knowledge now!' (Male walker, in his 20s, 2024).

Furthermore, the trail's multimodal interaction methods promote immersion, encouraging participants to negotiate, fragment, and reassemble narratives in ways that reflect the layered, complex, and often contradictory nature of personal and collective histories. Through this lens, the Oxnead Heritage Trail can be understood not simply as a method of storytelling, but as a conscious act of salvaging and reshaping landscape and memory: an embodied, interpretive act that opposes static representations in favour of dynamic, co-authored meaning.

Adapting absences in the archives

The trail palimpsest has as its source material archives as well as the landscape. The Paston archive is the earliest and most extensive extant family letter collection written in the English language. It offers a rich, emotionally charged view into the domestic, legal, and political life of a Norfolk family from 1418 to 1736. With over a thousand medieval letters (1418–1509), today primarily housed in the British Library, the collection is globally renowned for giving voice to people, especially women and household figures, who are often marginalized or forgotten in dominant historical narratives from this period. These letters are more than just written artefacts; they are fragments of lived experience, expressions of resilience and vulnerability during family disputes, love affairs, and sibling rivalry, in the face of sieges of their home, the dreaded plague, political unrest, amid times of service and duty and religious dissent, all set against the lawlessness of the Wars of the Roses and the English Civil War. In terms of performance and adaptation, the Paston letters become a fertile ground for what Rebecca Schneider calls 'reenactment': not as a nostalgic retrieval, but as a politics of remaining (see esoecially pp. 35-60). This model is a performative, embodied engagement with the past in the present.

The Pastons may be a famous medieval family, but they did not stop writing at the end of the fifteenth century; another thousand documents extend the archive through to the start of the eighteenth century (now held in the Norfolk Record Office and British Library), after which the Paston line came to an end.[4] There is a difference in the epistolary form of these later letters compared to their medieval counterparts: they are less reports of actual dialogues, use less elaborate boilerplate flourishes in their openings and endings, and have less dependence on scribes. What they do share is behaviours of

information-seeking, communicating news, and giving advice, filled with family dynamics, and responses to specific issues. Nevertheless, the lives of the Tudor and Stuart Pastons have received little critical attention, let alone public awareness. The trail walking is a journey into the unknown.

One reason for such neglect, though, could be the absences. The built heritage (a manor home, church, tombs, gateways) and natural heritage central to the story (river, fields and fauna) may remain visible in the landscape, but their stories are relatively unknown. Rebecca Paston's material trace in the biographical landscape is a wall mounted coffin plate, which survives in Oxnead's St Michael's Church. (The burial chapel of Rebecca and Robert has long since collapsed.)[5] Nonetheless, no public awareness of her specific life was promoted at the site until Paston Footprints installed interpretation displays in 2021.[6]

Arguably, the greatest challenge in the bio-adaptation is that only two of Rebecca's letters survive (one partial, one full, in barely legible script and spelt phonetically), signed 'thy most afexsinat wif, R Paston'.[7] The rest of her letters are absent from the archives, but clearly there had been many, given that hundreds of her husband's replies have survived. Sanders would see this as an opportunity: 'adaptation can act as a form of cultural and historical recuperation, allowing suppressed or marginal voices from history to speak anew' (168). How, then, can the silence in the archives be adapted to create a soundtrack for Rebecca's life story? Such a question points to a crucial evolution in adaptation theory: shifting from a focus on what is adapted to an exploration of how adaptation functions as a public, experiential, and participatory mode of historical storytelling.

The forgotten life in focus for this trail, which is performed in a free-to-download audio drama podcast, is that of Rebecca Paston (née Clayton). Rebecca (1635–1694), a London girl from a wealthy merchant family, had an arranged marriage at the age of fifteen to Robert Paston. This uprooted her from her family at a young age, forcing her to endure the brisk air of Norfolk (the contrast to London is something she often complained about, as testified to in Robert's letters). She broke the social barriers of the day to become the first Countess of Yarmouth. A formidable lady, she was generally disliked by many of her contemporaries. After all, she was a woman who spoke her mind. One (male) observer of her time remarked about her and her husband: 'the gentry of his party equally mislike his little love of business and his lady's too much meddling in it' (Charles II, p. 62). Fortunately, her husband, Sir Robert Paston (1631-1680), adored her. As a member of the House of Commons, Sir Robert was in London during parliament sessions and often travelled extensively in France, which meant he was frequently apart from Rebecca. Consequently, they exchanged numerous letters, which, in 1678, he describes as:

> a perticular pleasure of my life when I am absent from your conversation … I gasp after your letters every day and am now longing for tomorrow morning againe, for since my eyes are deprived of the happiness of seeing you, your conversation by penn is the pleasantest thing in the world to mee (Robert to Rebecca, p. 343).[8]

In this brief synopsis, I have used two main discourses: one is decolonizing through giving voice to a marginalized woman, and the other is emotional, providing an intimate insight into the love letters of a married couple. While the content is derived from the sources, both of these interpretive discourses are part of modern parlance. A forgotten

life and absences in the archives present a strategic historical ambiguity that can influence how historical narratives are crafted and presented. By using narratives that are intentionally recognisable to modern audiences (recovering marginalized women's voices and emotional family connections), heritage trails can interpret past events in a way that fosters personal connection with visitors. This approach encourages deeper engagement, prompting visitors to participate in the shared shaping of cultural heritage (Cappelen and Pedersen, 2020). The Paston Footprints website, on its homepage, offers different narratives via various page navigation routes that lead to the same trail, enabling the fostering of a personal connection. This is suitable for history lovers, explorer families, those seeking creative experiences, and those engaging in Creative Health outcomes.

Silence, though, can speak louder than words. How a text of Rebecca's silent life is animated for the walk is rooted in the etymology of the word 'text' from Medieval Latin, which means to weave.[9] As seen by delving into her husband's letter above, her story can be woven from the letters of other family members. These include her children (she had ten, of whom four boys and three girls survived), as well as replies from her husband and in-laws, along with threads of the story in land records, leases, and wills.[10] These letters are dialogical traces of a life once lived. As Adam Smyth argues (in his study of early modern financial accounts and mercantile discourses of credit, debt, obligation, trust and account), many kinds of texts are 'loosely related to an idea of self-accounting', including among them letters, conversion narratives, annotated family Bibles and legal documents (2010, p. 1).

One word of caution is needed, though: just because it is an archive, do not believe everything you read (appropriating our contemporary parlance, be wary of fake news). For instance, Robert and Rebecca's marriage settlement is highly suspect. Only a copy survives in abstracts of titles drawn up in the eighteenth century. It has the wrong date, and probably the wrong dowry. This is due to their eldest son, who was involved in various dubious financial manoeuvres aimed at protecting Rebecca's jointure lands and probably also concealing encumbrances on other parts of the estate. This is a story in itself.

As one side of Rebecca's conversations exists in the archives, these voices are presented as verbatim drama in the audio trail podcast. Content is taken from the letters of her husband Robert, daughter Margaret, friend Lady Bedingfeld, and fellow natural philosopher and chemical alchemist, Thomas Henshaw. Metadrama of this weaving process occurs at a couple of points, as letters are shared as part of the performance. Imagining the scene of Lady Bedingfeld handing Rebecca her daughter's illicit love letter, Rebecca's fond reminiscences of Robert's letters to the King, or the reading out of the Paston curse, invokes how the letter is a different medium. As the epistolary form is rarely part of media ecology today, it draws attention to the fact that the performance is a conversation with texts from a previous era. Although translated into modern English, some of the stylistic terms of address and petition are preserved, and there is a close resemblance to the seventeenth-century syntax. This technique imitates the properties and mechanisms of the dominant fictional narrative structure of the eighteenth century, the letter-novel as a memoir. The result is to convey aural impressions of hearing historical voices. This is an example of what Frans Weiser observes: 'historiographic metafiction openly celebrates its subjective and contingent status by drawing attention to its own construction' (2019, p. 108).

These elements are to be subtly contrasted with Rebecca's reconstructed voice. The weaving directly informs the life events as described in the available archives, but the emotional register is a creative interpretation (as in Hutcheon's remodelling of 'imagination', 2006). Thus, Rebecca's reconstructed spoken words in the audio drama are differentiated through a more direct, dialogic voice with the audience and through many speech acts. For instance, she declares the arrival of her husband, commands us to keep our ears and eyes open for the cyclists, protests we offer forgiveness for her disruptive daughter Margaret, and forlornly petitions for our prayers due to her substantial financial debts. Rebecca speaks to us, while the other characters in this story speak to Rebecca. The illocutionary force of the speech acts reveals the subjectivity of adaptation, as Rebecca both empowers and silences the subject in the performance. This results in a mix of the traditional heritage narrative lifted from the archives (duplication), blended with a newly created experience of the archives through the reconstruction of voice (reformation), reorientating Rebbeca's missing voice in the archives towards action, power and affect in the performance. As Weiser notes, 'unlike the 'fidelity' to documentary sources of traditional realism, self-reflexive literature purposefully distorts the historical record' through intertextuality (2009).

The two aural styles of performances serve as a means of revealing both the presence and loss within the archives. Schneider's reenactment adaptation model endorses not recovering the past but engaging with its remnants, embracing fragmentation, speculation, and bodily presence as ways of adapting the archival trace into contemporary meaning. The voices within the performance mobilize what Schneider terms 'temporal drag' (the way history lingers and insists, sometimes awkwardly, on returning). The emotional textures and absences of the Paston story become sites of embodied inquiry, shifting the Paston archive from a static documentary record into a living repertoire.

This means we can reframe the sense of challenge as an opportunity, in the weaving together of different voices, events, and places, so central to historical script-writing, with all its repertoire of gaps and silences. This allows us to translate the concept of 'curated decay' (a term coined by Caitlin DeSilvey, 2017, to describe the impact of centuries of weathering degradation on material culture) to the heritage storytelling itself. It is not just Rebecca's letters that are no longer extant; the manor home in the biographical landscape also has gaps, in the form of revisions by renovations over the ages.[11]

The story emerging is that it is not just museum artefacts or outdoor heritage buildings that demand rebuilding, but the heritage story itself. The heritage experience becomes less about displaying or reenacting tangible physical footprints of the past and more about the cultural process of interacting with the heritage in what the social geographer Doreen Massey describes as the 'story-so-far' (2005, p. 9). In this scheme, walking this heritage trail yields more than just information about or empathy with Rebecca's life, as it is also metafictional: how the immersive life story is reconstructed becomes a story-so-far of how Rebecca's story empowers us to traverse stories of changing buildings and the serendipitous journey of archive survival. This is how to be dialogic between past and present lives: the life story in this trail is as much a part of the walker's journey through the archive repertoire as it is that of Rebecca's life. As Schneider argues, historical reenactment is not simply about reproducing the past, but is an active, affective practice of performing, one that blurs the boundary between archive and repertoire, materiality and embodiment,

and to that I add presence and loss, as well as the historical subject and the live participant (walker).

Marketing-centred interaction with history for different audiences

The participant-observer on a heritage trail is a co-author. Each walker is different, as is each walk, and therefore each interaction with Rebecca Paston's life story is an affective adaptation. Marketing, through experiential or character-based campaigns, often adapts archival materials into live, affective experiences, thereby arguably functioning as a form of commercial repertoire. However, where Schneider's reenactment foregrounds rupture, absence, and the politics of remains, character-driven marketing more often leans towards coherence, resolution, and emotional accessibility. The two share methods, but diverge in their intentions: one seeks critical reflection, while the other often seeks persuasion or affiliation, but both co-exist in trail creation.

Affiliation is performed in the Oxnead trail, with Rebecca Paston associating her concerns with yours as your tour guide in the audio drama. This marks an insistence on affective character-driven storytelling. This adaptation model was informed from the outset by the Wolff Olins global consultancy branding model, which consists of three P's: brand 'P'urpose (why you exist), the 'P'roposition (what you offer to your various audiences and stakeholders), and 'P'ersonality (who you are as a brand).

The brand purpose of Paston Footprints is to bring the Paston personalities to life, and the proposition is to redefine how audiences interact with history. To achieve this goal, hearing Rebecca's unsilenced voice makes people care about her story by sharing it in conversations with first-person narration. We walk with Rebecca in the drama as she tries to manage family life, deal with the politics of the English Civil War, traverse the lands of her home that she is so desperate to prevent falling into a financial 'whirlepoole of misadventures' (24 February, 1679), and when you accompany her in her mourning for her husband's loss, with a funeral card physically in your hand as you walk through the graveyard (the real, functional graveyard of the Pastons' Church, no imaginary stage) to arrive at his actual tomb in the Church where his funeral service took place.

As two audience members stated:

> I feel genuinely moved. The silence and the singing in the mass was haunting. I've just taken part in a funeral service, and I didn't expect to be so involved. (Female walker, in her 50s, in 2022).

> As the actress walked past me [Rebecca Paston], I just wanted to squeeze her arm to show support, yet before that, I'd thought she was a bit arrogant and bossy. But sharing the funeral, it makes me genuinely feel for Rebecca as a widow. (Female walker, in her 30s, in 2022).

The immersive storytelling ensures you do not watch and hear *about* this life; rather, you literally and emotionally walk *with* Rebecca Paston. While the historical reenactor serves as the audio tour guide, opening up conversations about her past life through your current trail walking experiences, unlike staged reenactments with costumed performers, heritage walking situates the body as both the site and medium of historical performance. The act of walking through the charged terrain of the Pastons' cemetery and around William Paston's actual tomb during the funeral reenactment becomes a gestural reenactment,

recalling past movements, retracing erased or memorialized routes, and situating the walker in a temporally layered space. This scene in the trail becomes a 'haunted' archive, where bodily presence does not claim authenticity but invokes what Schneider calls 'the performative force of the return.' (Schneider 98). The return of Robert's funeral 'remains' as an embodied practices, with all the gestures, postures, and ways of moving, that transmit affect and memory through bodies rather than solely through texts or objects.

This rethinking of bio-adaptation as ephemeral presence during Robert Paston's funeral and Rebecca's grieving process, rather than representation, correlates with Deirdre Lynch's work on life-writing and affective cultures. Lynch builds the argument throughout her work *Loving Literature: A Cultural History*, that bio-adaptation is not a scientific record of life, but a negotiated, emotional, and culturally situated practice (2015). The Oxnead heritage trail, by staging encounters with reconstructed landscapes, soundscapes, epistolary fragments, and performative storytelling, reanimates this affective dimension of biography. It invites walkers not simply to know the Pastons, but to feel their presence.

At the same time, Schneider complicates any celebratory framing of embodied presence. She warns against uncritical assumptions that reenactment guarantees historical insight or ethical engagement. Bio-adaptation, then, must acknowledge the risk of reproducing hegemonic narratives under the guise of immersive authenticity. In asking how bio-adaptive practices can remain critically self-aware, we are returned to consideration of the generative marketing strategies that are in play from the outset.

This requires a study of how marketing becomes part of the adaptive dramaturgy itself, as advocated by Guerric De Bona (who is influenced by MacFarlane, James Naremore, and Stan). De Bona illustrates in his book on film adaptations of British and American novels, that a focus on marketing strategies shifts attention from questions of 'fidelity' and 'faithfulness' to how, from the outset, issues of industrial choices, audience-centred, and contextually embedded practice reframes the adaptation process as a cultural negotiation, responsive to its reception context and platform circulation (2010, 1990). In this methodology, biography becomes audience-responsive, shaped less by linear life cycles and more by the expectations and participation of diverse publics. The biographical subject is thus fragmented and redistributed, not only across media platforms but across walking bodies and interpretive communities.

Entwined with tourism, heritage, and performance communities, the Paston Footprints Oxnead trail marketing is not an afterthought but a generative strategy, curating an adaptive environment in which users engage Rebecca's story not only through audio drama but via a larger ecology of transmedia encounters. For the heritage lovers (what the UK's National Trust term the Roots and Respect audience segment), the audio drama is supplemented with interpretation boards along the routes, featuring QR codes for deeper exploration and follow-up research activities after the walk, and phone app options to explore the Paston story in even greater detail via digitized seventeenth-century letters or to view the digital archaeology reconstruction of Oxnead Hall.[12] This enhances the visual stage for the audio drama. The landmarks also help to promote the tourism benefits and heightened historical relevance of Norfolk and its respective villages/buildings to local, national, and global audiences.

Various perspectives and an interactive view of the digital reconstruction are accessible online.[13] Of the 10,112 views to date of Oxnead Hall, the longest dwell times are on the

Figure 1. Reconstruction of Oxnead Hall by James Mindham.

models with artistic renderings (such as Fig. 1). These are the models that detail plants and traces of human life over the clinical reconstructions. This response implies a desire for embodied historical presence, where empathy, sensory engagement, and imaginative space matter as much as facts. Such models further enhance the paratextual visual field around the audio drama, enriching the bio-adaptive encounter.

For the experiential tourism industry, the marketing strategy targeting the Aspirational Experience Seeker audience segment encouraged walkers to create their own interpretations of the Paston story by posting photographs, reading letters aloud, and sharing reflections about locations on digital platforms. As phrases from the audio drama circulate on digital platforms, audiences become not just consumers but co-creators of the biographical narrative, echoing Henry Jenkins' idea of convergence culture, where the boundaries between production and reception blur (2014, p. 267). Indeed, the reuse and reinterpretation of Paston letter excerpts on social media resemble a fan-fiction model, allowing diverse publics to engage actively in the storytelling process and 'write back' to history. In this sense, adaptation becomes a democratic form of biohistorical storytelling, giving life to archival fragments through walking performances, photography, and digital reenactments.

Those heritage lovers participating, though, had the economic resources to develop costumes and the literacy skills to research historical characters and period costume features for such photographs (as in Fig. 2).

DeBona highlights the need to be aware of the commercial legibility and emotional clarity of those audiences who are doing the adapting. This approach co-authored itself, with the crowd-sourced photographic paratexts created by the traditional heritage demographic focusing more on Robert than Rebecca Paston, due to his existing letters and their motivational link to reconstructing the past through documentary evidence. In contrast,

Figure 2. Robert Paston's words to Rebecca, social media paratext by community member, Rob Knee.

Schneider's emphasis on repetition with variation, on the performative presence of the unresolved, the missing, and the spectral, was the emotional connection that attracted the 18-25-year-old performing arts audience, where more imaginings of Paston women, including YouTube performances, were created as part of the dialogic paratext marketing strategy. This highlights that the agency of marketing for walkers shapes not only the performance but also the open-ended performative responses by the participants.

Regarding the socio-cultural contexts of marketing dramaturgy, the key factor in play is how to adapt a story about a high-society player during our Cost-of-Living crisis. This is where the dialogic approach to past and present, which is perhaps the hallmark of this bio-adaptation, surfaces again. It responds to the Paston Footprints' proposition of a personal connection to the Paston story as crafted through their legends, letters, and landmarks (no matter the social class differences between protagonist and audience. (One qualification, their eldest son William married the King's natural daughter Charlotte Boyle, and not many of us can relate to such a marriage match.) This reinforces the need to position story selection in relation to the 'legends' proposition, in how to market bio-adaptation by enacting gripping tales of human nature and family life that provide points of connection for the targeted audiences. Being alert of this dialogic need, the stories we highlighted include Rebecca's fear of increasing debt (her father-in-law William Paston, a royalist, had borrowed and then gifted £10,000 to Charles II when he was in

exile) and instead of good budgeting, having a propensity to overspend on major house renovations and decorating, which has resonances for those today with financial management difficulties. Her husband's lifelong attempts at a get-rich-quick scheme (to seek the red elixir to turn base metals into gold), the fear of losing social favour and being cancelled, and managing a large family estate are all narratives that could be from a life today. A battle with ill health (Robert had gout, depression and obesity, one child died of smallpox, and another three passed before coming of age) and eventually death contribute to the stories of this seventeenth-century elite that still resonate with contemporary audiences. As Goncharvaro insists, by structuring the audience's interpretation, marketing shapes the processes and intended output of adaptation from the start.

Another way, aside from hearing echoes, to articulate this need for a dialogic, performance-based storytelling between past and present is to ask: how do we walk in the rhetorical and affective footprints of the Pastons? DeBona observes that contemporary adaptation often operates through emotionally resonant, character-based storytelling that prioritizes affective engagement and brand coherence (2010). However, when this approach is brought into dialogue with the Renaissance concept of *imitatio* (not mere replication, but creative, interpretive transformation of exemplary models), it offers a more complex, processual view of adaptation. Walking in the footprints becomes a proposition not to mimic, but to engage in a dialogic, performative negotiation with their lived experience. In this sense, I propose that adaptation becomes a participatory mode of embodied historiography, one that blends affective marketing strategies with the adaptive inventiveness of *imitatio* to generate new emotional and interpretive access to intangible heritage, a form of narrative walking with, rather than walking behind, the historical past. This leads us to the key adaptation principle that shapes the plot and discourse of the Oxnead Heritage Trail: Renaissance *imitatio*.

Renaissance *imitatio* as adaptive practice

Sanders highlights that adaptation is less a derivative act than a generative one, working through intertextual bricolage rather than mere replication, 'far removed from the unimaginative act of imitation, copying or repetition' (2015, 24). This prompts us to reach for *imitatio* rather than imitation. Renaissance *imitatio* is a dynamic process in which an author establishes their own artistic style (*ingenium*) through the stylistic imitation of the rhetorical craft (*ars*) of their predecessors, typically classical authors.[14] One particular figure, Erasmus (1466-1536, a Dutch humanist, Catholic priest, and theologian, educationalist, satirist, and philosopher, articulates well the Renaissance of classical practices as expounded by Aristotle. He focuses on how imitation, in terms of possible mimesis of others' emotions, might enable a reader to understand their agency in interpretation better (see Leushuis, 2017, pp. 90-101 in particular for a discussion). Drama and music, in particular, are seen to imitate emotion in action, not just words. This conception of imitation as active re-creation resonates with challenges to fidelity-based models of adaptation. Thus, the opportunity to use the heritage story in this imitative style is not limited to creative reshaping to add on the narratives of resonance of today, and the imitation is not just fashioned in the form of verbatim drama craft. The *imitatio* is through the essence of translating emotions historically situated in Early Modern acts, the emotions of anxiety, hope, joy, love and grief, that Rebecca's life story unfolds: *ars* to acts.

The emotional connections with the story are also created with the background musical sound effects in this audio drama.[15] This speaks to Kamilla Elliott's book-length critique of priviledging of visual and linguistic equivalence in adaptation discourse, advocating for a synaesthetic, embodied model in which adaptation is a multimodal, interpretive act (Elliott, 2020). For instance, in the Rebecca Paston performance, the staccato repetitions of sounds mark emotions of fear, the lively allegro expressions occur during moments of celebration and joy, as when the King comes to visit Oxnead Hall, while a full string rendition marks the climax of the narrative: a similar cascade of emotion as in how Rebecca is affected by events but executed with our modern sound foleys.[16] There was an option to play the music seen in the Paston Treasure painting to recreate a more 'authentic' soundscape from Rebecca's time; however, the modern media technique of sound effects to map the emotional journey has more of the mimesis *imitatio* impact.[17] These acts in the audio drama of Rebecca's life align with the Renaissance understanding of *imitatio* as something more than representation, insisting on the adaptor's agency: the Renaissance imitator and modern adaptor alike work through sensory, embodied, critical transformation.

There is also *imitatio* in the expressive acts in the performance. This idea of *imitatio* demands closer scrutiny. In his letter to Boccaccio, Petrarch writes that:

> An imitator must take care to write something similar yet not identical to the original, and that similarity must not be like the image to its original in painting where the greater the similarity the greater the praise for the artist, but rather like that of a son to his father … seeing the son's face, we are reminded of the father's, although if it came to measurement, the features would be all different, but there is something subtle that creates this effect … Thus we may appropriate another's ideas as well as his coloring but we must abstain from his actual words; for, with the former, resemblance remains hidden, and with the latter it is glaring, the former creates poets, the second apes […] we must write as the bees make honey [*mellificant*], not gathering flowers but turning them into honeycombs, thereby blending them into a oneness that is unlike them all, and better [*melius*]. (*Familiares* XXIII, p.19.)

The idea of 'similar but not identical', of a skilled painter imitating in order to create a style (*ingenium*) as evidenced in the stylistic skills (the *ars*) of the masterpiece, underpins the script-writing process of Rebecca Paston's life. There needs to be a similarity in style to the letters; the outcome needs to be a recognisable part of the same lineage or family. For instance, when Rebecca recounts her husband's fruitless but earnest attempts to make gold, we chose to have her talk about the alchemical experiments and Royal Philosophical Society but to interpret for listeners, making the link with our parlance, as 'the search for the Philosopher's Stone' (with the *Harry Potter* connotations): while registers may differ, the narrative outcome is recognisable as part of the same tradition.

The question is, to what extent is this past and present dialogue sustainable across so many years, genres, audiences, and purposes? After all, the purpose of a heritage trail is to highlight and arrange edited snatches of a life. It is never intended as a route through lived experience. By contrast, the seventeenth-century letters are about daily family life experiences, business negotiations, and political networking.[18] There is an inevitable reconfiguration due to the different reception processes between these two media, not least in the letter form being transactional and its intention to be an ephemeral

communication. So often, all we have are vague references to the content of previous letters or conversations that no longer exist, which obscure the points referenced, resulting in a lack of sustained narrative, such as 'that item we discussed' or 'what you spoke about last time'. Meanwhile, the heritage trail performance needs Rebecca Paston to give directions, anachronistic technology prompts for when to pause the recording, and references to the digital reconstructions of Oxnead Hall. Likewise, adapting family letters, which involve a private, personal exchange, into a heritage trail that requires a public, communal act means that different contexts and stylistic differences across the genres and centuries need attention.

This brings us to Petrarch's emphasis on 'creating' rather than 'aping'. How do we interpret creative adaptation in this context? As the literary critic Thomas Karshan observes, 'to ape is not to imitate, and imitation is, therefore, a mistranslation of *imitatio*, which to its more sophisticated champions and practitioners always meant a far subtler and tentative thing than we might imagine when we speak of imitation' (Karshan, n.d.).[19] Is using acts like inviting listeners to role-play a step too far in the creativity side of the imitation? When Margaret, Rebecca's daughter, directly addresses the listeners:

> Psst… Let my mother go ahead a bit, I want to ask you an important favour. Pray you, deliver this letter to Henry Rumbold, an ensign to Tangier. He is my own dear heart, and my family at Oxnead will surely apply all possible vigilance and care so that we should not come together. … But, do keep this a secret from my mother, I pray you.

This participatory invite imitates the narrative of Margaret, who went on not to marry Harry Rumbold but another the family disapproved of, a Venetian diplomat (causing the parents another £4,000 debt in a dowry), but responding and taking the 'letter' to the next trail stop means injecting our modern Western sensibilities sympathizing with a woman's right to choose their own partner. This is not, though, usurpation of the original narrative. Not if we pay heed to Petrarch's expression of 'blending'. The blend in the audio drama is when we also hear Rebecca's prophetic anxieties embedded in the letters, concerning how surviving the ravages of swaying political allegiances to remain in favour at court during the Civil War is so necessary to avoid financial destitution. The English Civil War is macro history; this is a micro illustration of how that anxiety permeates due to the need to secure pecuniary and political advantage for the family line. While there may be mimesis in the emotions for our socio-cultural contexts today, this remains an *imitatio* of the letters' narrative.

Unsilencing marginalized or hidden voices to enable more people to identify with heritage, to have the satisfaction of being the first to 'discover' local history, of confidence building in developing new creative and archival skills, and isolation reduction in working with new members in the local community, has been evidenced as intangible well-being benefits of participatory community heritage activities (Power and Smyth, 160–67). As well as *arts* becoming *acts*, the reverse is true. The well-being *act* of community participation in Rebecca Paston's bio-adaptation becomes an *art* of creativity. For the last decade, creativity in the heritage industry has become much more central in heritage storytelling, with the commissioning of creative practitioners to develop events at museums and heritage sites, with immersive performances such as theatrical reenactments and participatory practice, digital and live-action storytelling, which have been evidenced as

allowing spectators to create an 'intimate traffic between their contemporary experience and that of previous epochs and persons' (Auslander, 2025, p. 161). Such creativity is also becoming more notable in outdoor heritage spaces due to the emerging Creative Health agenda in recent years. (In 2022, both Historic England and the UK Heritage Alliance published new ten-year harnessing outdoor heritage for health strategies.) Petrarch's imitative process of emotional narratives blends with today's Creative Health agenda, which emphasizes both mental and physical action, resulting in a need to return to a methodological focus on walking as praxis.[20]

The rationale for embedding participatory performance on a walking trail is that heritage landscapes afford sensory opportunities to connect through stories of lives lived. With the Pastons' collecting habits so central as typified in the Paston Treasure painting of over 200 *objets d'arts* (collected by Robert's father on his World Tour in 1638-39), that is woven into this walk's narrative, an invitation is extended to create the same kind of collage of the walk experience and/or objects of one's own life for a photo to share online.[21] As visual spectacle is so significant in this life (one only has to think of the decorations and refurbishment of the home undertaken during Rebecca's generation, vividly described not only in letters but also inventories), this desire to focus on the visual is encouraged through creative writing haiku exercises, therapeutic photography activities, and for younger ages, an 'Explorer Hunt' mindfulness orientation game on the trail, as in Fig. 3.[22] This participation process is not a mimicry of Rebecca's actions but an adaptation of the engagement of (metaphorically) walking in the senses in such actions.

Conclusion: heritage trail walking as a bio-adaptation model

Heritage trail storytelling can thus be understood as a bio-adaptation paradigm in which life narratives are revitalized through performative, site-responsive encounters that integrate movement, spatial dramaturgy, and embodiment. As Elliott argues, adaptation studies must expand to include embodied modes that go beyond textual fidelity and embrace the sensorial and performative dimensions of audience experience (2013). The Rebecca Paston trail exemplifies this shift: rather than presenting biography as static commemoration, the terrain itself functions as a sensorial archive, animated by walkers' physical presence and interpretive actions.

This adaptation model benefits from being informed by the Renaissance concept of *imitatio*. The heritage trail does not simply recount the Pastons' family biography as documentary fact; instead, it transforms fragments of archival life-writing into dialogue-driven and speculative encounters. Rebecca Paston's audio narration, for instance, adopts an intimate epistolary mode, inviting audiences to walk alongside her as she reconfigures her life story through modern sensibilities. This approach to *imitatio* allows for interpretive freedom, where biography is neither a nostalgic reproduction nor pure fiction, but a dynamic negotiation between historical precedent and contemporary context: past and present are in a dialogic relationship.

Such an approach also addresses critiques of presence and immersion in heritage performance. As Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan have shown in their critiques of heritage cinema and cultural nostalgia, adaptations are never ideologically neutral (see their 2013 book study). I suggest similar risks emerge in heritage bio-adaptation trails marketed through the wellness agenda. The dangers of ludic play, or creative health

Figure 3. Oxnead mindfulness prompts.

paradigms that import activities where the heritage story is no longer the well-being tool, or the idea of a universal aesthetics of walking, are the risks in the Oxnead trail marketed for popular markets. There is a danger of returning to how walking-as-praxis first emerged, in George Trevelyan's Romantic historiography in the early twentieth century, which idealized walking as access to a timeless rural authenticity, glossing over issues of power, exclusion, and coloniality (1928). This was motivated by a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, which aimed to decelerate and experience emotions in order not to be disembodied. This applauding of well-being and immersive connection with place has resurfaced in the last decade with the rise of the Creative Health agenda in the heritage sector.

One of the Paston Footprints' invitations for walkers to participate in mindfulness with the natural countryside contributes to this health agenda, in the form of an 'Explorer Hunt' card, tasking walkers to pay attention to the visual landscape.

There is a risk that, by presenting the Explorer Hunt as a game, or Haiku creative writing exercises, or photography activities as forms of attentive dwelling or ludic learning, the landscape becomes a brand asset appropriated for well-being purposes, while the heritage story becomes disconnected or absent in the present. *Imitatio* may not be performed in any guise.

In contrast, a bio-adaptation-as-*imitatio* model reframes walking as a form of critical rather than merely consumptive presence: walkers are encouraged to question the gaps and absences in the historical record as much as to experience its sensory immediacy. This is where character-driven audio drama plays a primary role, emphasizing bio-adaptation: not insistence on historical authenticity but transformation that embeds a dialogic past and present practice. The desire to centralize connections with the heritage

story through affective, aural and visual sensory connection restores the life of Rebecca Paston as both presence and process, demonstrating how walking-as-praxis does not need to be about silencing 'our harsh and lovely and sometimes difficult land with civilized words' as in Trevelyan's model (Jamie, 2008, p. 26). Instead, it becomes a process of questioning how to storify lives lived in past biographical landscapes.

Contemporary autobiographical and adaptation theorists (Smith and Watson, 2010; Hutcheon, 2006) advocate for multiplicity, process, and co-creation in life writing. These are the values mirrored in Renaissance imitatio's focus on dialogic transformation. Walking as embodied hermeneutics activates this approach: movement, weather, and environmental factors disrupt linear narratives, generating biographical meaning through physical engagement rather than passive reception. Heritage trail bio-adaptation provides a flexible framework for engaging with a life story in ways that reanimate and co-create stories in real-time on actual pathways. The result is the experience of Rebecca's unsilenced voice not as strict fidelity or mere invention but as ongoing reinterpretation, with each footstep taken.

Notes

[1]The Paston Letters are the earliest and largest surviving collection of family letters in the world. Rebecca married Robert Paston, a seventh-generation direct descendant of one of the most well-known medieval Pastons, John Paston III, who was the recipient of the first-ever Valentine's letter written in English.

[2]The Oxnead route was planned and mapped by Rob Knee, and the trail audited and waymarked by Norfolk County Council Environmental Team.

[3]Marrying historical narratives with contemporary technological experiences is explored by Wang et al., 2024, pp. 73-89.

[4]Not as many sixteenth-century archives exist, with about 80 letters and several land leases, inventories and wills. There are two major seventeenth-century letter collections: those of Robert Paston (mainly, but not exclusively, to his wife) and those of Lady Katherine Knyvett Paston (1578–1629), who was the stepmother of Robert. Lady Katherine's letters were printed in a 1940 edition by the Norfolk Record Society but is now out of print. The Paston Footprints project has digitized this edition. To date, there exists no dedicated critical studies published on Rebecca Paston.

[5]The majestic tomb in the Church is of Katherine Paston, Rebecca's mother-in-law

[6]Oxnead, in Broadland, where the Pastons had their principal manor home from 1597 to 1732, is today a hamlet. The manor home is now a private property that functions as a wedding venue and occasionally holds open-day heritage events.

[7]Reading and writing were separate skills at this time, but it appears that Rebecca had both. Rebecca to Robert, March 1669 and 29th April 1669.

[8]All references to the letters are from Jean Agnew, 2012. This edition is digitized at: https://www.thisispaston.co.uk/index.php

[9]The first-ever prose biography, written by the archivist Jean Agnew, is published at: https://www.paston-footprints.co.uk/rebeccapaston

[10]The Paston Footprints project has digitized the letters (with a search function) as open access at: https://www.thisispaston.co.uk/letter.html

[11]How the story of the Paston manor home has been reconstructed as seen in Renaissance times can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gobMsmwqtqM

[12]Practical necessity again determines the modes of delivering the story. A QR option caters for those encountering the heritage trail on their travels. However, in rural Norfolk, the Wi-fi signal often fails, so the phone app option helps walkers to follow up on the story afterwards or, for those who visit with the intention to engage, to download offline material in advance.

[13]The interactive digital reconstruction and mapping of the various stages in its development can be seen at https://www.thisispaston.co.uk/oxnead01.html
[14]For a detailed study of the Renaissance Imitatio practice in literature, see Burrow, 2019.
[15]There has not been much research into the adaptation of literary texts into music, with the exception of musicals. New scholarship in this area has just emerged with Bentley and Peacock's publication (2025). There has been no research, as yet, into the epistolary genre.
[16]Perhaps the best study of how music imitates human expression and, therefore, is mimetic in its action is the earliest one, Augustine's De Musica, composed AD 388-91.
[17]The music is the script in front of the young girl (the girl likely being Margaret, Rebecca's daughter) in the vanitas painting, The Paston Treasure painting, which is on permanent exhibition in The Norwich Castle Musem and can be seen online at https://www.museumscollections.norfolk.gov.uk/article/30255/The-Paston-Treasure Much research in recent years has advanced our understanding of the painter, processes involved in the painting and the Pastons themselves as a result (see the collected essays recently edited by Moore et al., 2018).
[18]Due to their content, Rebecca and Robert devised their own changing encryption code to protect their affairs and their discussions of members of the Royal Court from prying eyes. Given our current concerns about data security, this is an area where we can foster the dialogue we are next considering.
[19]For a detailed study of the non-dualistic individuality and imitation relationship in Petrarch's theory and practice, see Westra 2000, pp. 281-92.
[20]See Kidd, 2018, pp. 197-208, for a study of creating emotional connections with heritage.
[2125] The objets d'art includes jewellery and precious stones, classical antiquities (such as small sculptures and coins), musical instruments, Oriental and Asian porcelain, jade, textiles, scientific instruments, and domestic objects.
[22]See the Oxnead route, wellbeing activities, and family-friendly pages for these creative experiences at https://www.pastonfootprints.co.uk/Note, online search engine optimization influences how we present these adaptations, as our modern sensibilities sought to describe the family-friendly as child-friendly, as not all young people have family units. However, there was an 80% higher search return for family-friendly. How bio-adaptations are being presented according to online algorithms would be an interesting field of future research.

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