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## The Fairy Stories project:

### Towards a history of Architecture as a time based medium

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**Introduction:** *The Architect's dream*

*The History of Architecture: a timeless vision*

Once Upon a Time an Architect had a dream (*see fig. 1*). The curtain of his bourgeois parlour was rent, and he found himself reclining on the capital of a colossal Doric column, overlooking a great port.

On a nearby hill a Gothic Cathedral cast its shadow in a dark wood. On the other side of the water two terraces were bathed in golden light. The upper was an arcade in the Roman manner, upon which floated a Corinthian *tholos* of Vesta. The lower, a colonnade in the Grecian manner, was introduced by an Ionic Temple, and terminated by a severe example of the Greek Doric. In the distance, the hypostyle hall and the pylons of Ancient Egyptian Luxor cast a shadow over their classical descendants. Behind them all, veiled in haze and a wisp of cloud, the Great Pyramid closed the prospect.



**Figure 1.** Cole, Thomas *The Architect's Dream* 1840, Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio



In the Architect's Dream all times, all places, all cultures, were present in a monumental Day of Rapture. Everything was made new. Neither weather, nor war, nor wandering taste had scarred the scene. A perspective in time had become a perspective in space, as the past receded in an orderly fashion, style by style, from the parlour curtain of the present all the way back to the historical horizon of the Great Pyramid. The Dark Ages partially obscured classical splendour, Roman magnificence was built on the foundation of Grecian reason. The glory that was Greece lay in the shadow of the Ur-Architecture of Egypt. The array of buildings formed an Architectural canon of the individuated *kunstvollen* of genius or *zeitgeist*, each example dispensing inspiration, advice and warning to the Architect from the golden treasury of the past.

This was the Dream of the Architect; and he called it the History of Architecture.

The Theory of Architecture: perfection and the defiance of time

Adolf Loos (Loos, 1977) observed that Architecture originates not, as one might expect, in the dwelling, but in the monument. The houses of our Ancestors, which were contingent responses to their ever-shifting needs, have perished. Their tombs and temples, which were intended for the eternity of Death and the Gods, remain. Every work of Architecture is infected with the monumental desire for eternity. Every work of Architecture, from the plaster cornice in every living room to the marbled lobby in every skyscraper, is haunted by memories of ancient sepulchres and savage shrines.

The very discourse of Architecture is a discourse on perfection –a word which means, in Latin, 'finished'. The Roman theorist Vitruvius (Vitruvius 2001) claimed that Architecture was perfect when it held form, function, and construction in delicate balance. A millennium and a half later Leone Battista Alberti (Alberti 1987) wrote that the beautiful is that to which nothing may be added, and from which nothing may be taken away. Le Corbusier (le Corbusier 1987, p.133) described Modern Architecture as 'the problem of fixing standards, in order to face the problem of Perfection'. In the discourse of Architecture, all buildings, in order to remain beautiful, must not change. In the discourse of Architecture, all buildings, in order to remain beautiful, must aspire to the condition of monumentality, of Death.

The Dream of the Architect is a timeless vision of what Architecture was (History), and also of what it should be (Theory). Architecture asserts its value by defying time. Fixity and purity represent in form the intentions of the Architect. 'In a perfect world' he muses 'my *Design intentions* will be translated directly into reality. No builders will misinterpret my drawings, no clients cross my judgement, no committee dilute my ideas, no weathering cause my structures to decay. I am omnipotent'

This was the Dream of the Architect, and he called it the Theory of Architecture.

Awakening from the Architect's Dream: the paradox of Architecture



Imagine if our Architect woke up from his dream. The gigantic column upon which he sat would be one of those of the temple of Augustus, buried in the alleys and tenements of modern Barcelona. The Gothic Cathedral would be the sprawl of Wells or Gloucester, infested with chantry chapels, classical tombs, and Victorian restoration. The Grecian colonnade and its marble temples would be the Acropolis, broken up, ground into lime dust, or anatomised in distant museums. The Roman arcade would be the terraces of Palestrina, buried under the tangle of a hill town, only brought to light by a World War II bomb. The port would be Bangkok, where traffic stands in gridlock on streets that a century ago were great canals. Only the Pyramid would remain, monumentally useless, marooned in suburban desert sands. The Architect's dream of fixity and purity would have been utterly destroyed.

In short, the Dream of the Architect would have become a metropolis, stinking of fish and sewage, roaring with traffic and music, hot with the steam pouring out of kitchens and pavements. In this city, the icons of Architecture would not be displayed in a neat row, but would be built on top of another. The crypts of the Gothic cathedral would entomb the classical temple beneath. The stolen carvings of those temples would form the altarpiece, inset with savage medieval saints and dragons. The Grecian colonnade would have become the cisterns of Istanbul, vast swampy forests of columns in under the city. The pristine vision of Architectural order would have become New York, Marseilles, Cairo, Mumbai, London. In short, the city would have lived, and its buildings would have survived.

Because Architecture strives for eternity, buildings endure; and because they endure, the World changes around them. Because the World changes, buildings change. Vitruvius' balance between form, function and construction is upset when the form of a building is altered; or when its function becomes obsolete; or when the technology that constructed it falls into disuse. Alberti's perfect beauty is compromised by all the necessary additions and subtractions that every building must undergo in order to survive. Le Corbusier's standards of perfection may be fixed in the present, but are impossible to define over the centuries for which buildings endure. The Harmony of Architecture is necessarily disrupted by the very fact that buildings endure.

This is to suggest that the Theory and History of Architecture is a very curious thing indeed. Buildings, of their nature change; and change is of their essence. Architecture aspires not to. The Theory and History of Architecture is a hopeless attempt to bind a time-based medium in a monumental straitjacket.

The Dream of the Architect was a paradoxical Dream, nothing more.

Attempts to loosen the straitjacket

#### The Great Conservation Debate

Time and change make their appearance in Architectural Theory along with the rise of a modern historical consciousness in the early Modern era.

The nineteenth century debate was polarised. Restorationists believed that



To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or to rebuild it; it is reinstate it to a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any given time. (Viollet le Duc *Dictionnaire Raisonné VIII* Jokilehto 1999: 151)

For Conservationists, led by John Ruskin and William Morris, authenticity lay in the fact of a building's survival, weathered and worn, in whatever form, from one age of culture to another. They argued that the connection between old buildings and the societies that had originally made them was so important that it would be sacrilegious to interfere with it -or the ancient structure- in any way other than the most minimal and unobtrusive repair. Conservation is a radical strategy, and as such is rarely actually practised, since it permits no alteration to what it finds. While this may be appropriate for the ruin or the obsolete shrine, it is an impossible strategy for the vast majority of old buildings, which remain in use.

A third position permits the alteration and extension of the Historic Building.

Architectural monuments from the past ... contribute as essential documents to explain and illustrate all the facets of the history of various peoples throughout the ages, they should, therefore, be scrupulously and religiously respected as documents in which any alteration, however slight, *if it appears to part of the original* [my italics] could be misleading... (Boito *Risoluzione del III Congresso degli ingegneri e architetti Roma 1883* Jokilehto 1999 p.201)

This position allows for interventions to be made to old buildings, provided that they are clearly distinguished from the original. We see the influence of this thinking in the multicoloured stone of restored ruins (in which new stone is always coloured differently to existing stone). We also see it in the work of Carlo Scarpa and his followers, who have modernised historic buildings by adding a layer of explicitly new Architecture to the ancient fabric (Murphy 1990).

Each of these approaches is fraught with danger. Restorationists destroy what is there in order to 'reveal' –in fact create- the intentions of the original designer, which becomes their fetish. History is frozen at the moment of the conception of the building –it is still-born. Conservationists freeze History in the present: the building's life is suspended in coma. This is the result of their fetishisation of the link –seen as sacred and irreproducible- between the intentions of the designer and the building. The fetishisation of the multiple intentions of the designers of the Historic Building leads philological restorers to deny it any unity. Each part is separated from the other to aid legibility. History is made discontinuous and the building is eviscerated

It is the insistence on the unity between designer and building, author and text that falsifies the very process to which the care of old buildings is wedded: that of History itself. The great conservation debate is still taking place in the shadow of the Dream of Architect. The question is still about how to awake from it.

An old story: Architecture and Theatre



Once upon a time, in the Renaissance, all the World was a Stage. Architecture was conceived as the scenery of for that stage. Serlio's Tragic, Comic and Satiric scenes are not just designs for the theatre, but prototypes for the Baroque city, with its piazzas, facades, and its grandiose public rituals (Rowe 1978).

Like Architecture, Drama exists between permanence and ephemera. On the one hand Drama is a static object - the script- that symbolises and communicates the intention of the playwright. On the other, it is the opposite –a transitory, unrepeatable experience, for performer and audience alike, which takes place in time, usually again and again, over, perhaps, many centuries. With every repetition, the performance is altered, while the script remains constant.

To extend the old architecture:drama analogy, it may be useful to our purposes to consider the nature of script and performance in Architecture. What is the Architectural 'script'? When does Architecture go 'live'?

Firstly buildings 'go live' when they are built. To extend the analogy, the drawings and specifications used in construction may be viewed as the script, the buildings itself the performance.

But plays are rarely performed only once; and the process of construction does not come to an end when the builders hand over a building to the client. At that point begins the slow process of alteration, change, desecration, call it what you will, that is the strange life of buildings.

We might regard the city of great monuments in the Dream of the Architect as a script. It is fixed, pristine, and inviolate. We might regard the city of the Architect's Awakening as one performance of that score. It is real and tangible, and, because the city will always change again, it is ephemeral. There will be other performances. It is also predicated on the 'script' of the buildings from which it originated –the catacombs of Istanbul or the tenements of Barcelona are interpretations of the ancient arcades and temples upon which they are built.

In this way, every alteration of every building, every change of use, or face lift, or repair, is in some sense a 'performance' of the original design, just as every drama is the performance of a written script.

As the script, Architecture stands as still as in the Dream of the Architect; but as performances, buildings keep on playing; and that is how we experience them.

#### An old story: Architecture and Music

Once Upon a Time, Architecture was frozen Music. Goethe (1823) claimed that Architecture consists of complex structures brought into being in three-dimensional Space, while Music consists of complex structures brought into being over Time. Goethe was writing around the same time as the Dream of the Architect was painted –and his statement shares many of the painter's assumptions. Architecture will be fixed. It is about irreducible, abstract aesthetic values.



There is another layer to the analogy. Music is a series of patterns traced over time. Perhaps the changes made to a building *over time* trace their own melodic structure. Perhaps the overlay of contributions to an ancient structure constructs its own harmony. Perhaps the intervals of construction, consolidation, and alteration establish their own rhythms over centuries. There is the gradual dissolution of building into ruin or air; the crescendo of continuous addition and extension; the staccato bursts of repeated pillage, or the smooth tolling of ritual reconstruction; the modulations of translation in style or language; the return to the home key signature of restoration or consolidation.

Perhaps the Music of Architecture is not frozen, just imperceptibly slow.

The Fairy Stories Project: a proposal for a History of Architecture

Perhaps Architecture may be brought out of the seductive curse of timelessness without sacrificing its claims to beauty and harmony. To acknowledge Architecture as a time-based medium is to trace its harmonies and melodies over centuries; to love ruins, and labyrinths, and timeworn shrines; to hear the Music of Architecture play, rather than to read it upon a page; to live without regret that the world has changed (Woodward 2001)

All of which, of course, would call for a very different History of Architecture, (and perhaps a very different Architecture) to that dreamt of by the Architect. This is the genesis of the Fairy Stories project.

#### Narrative Structures

If the purpose of the Fairy Stories Project is to trace the melodies, rhythms and harmonies of Architecture over a long time, it will be necessary to follow several venerable buildings from their birth in the mind of the designer until the present. A series of recent popular histories of Architecture –Mary Beard’s *Parthenon* (Beard, 2004) and Charles Freeman’s *The Horses of St Mark’s* (Freeman 2004) have taken this approach, for instance, rather than following the traditional historical pattern of a catalogue of works of design.

Every mark or crack on an old wall has a story to tell; scrape away any layer of paint and it will reveal another room hidden beneath the surface; read the plan of most old buildings and it is likely to conceal, encoded, the plan of another older building beneath it. The Fairy Stories Project will be a series of analyses of existing structures as we see them today. Old buildings are narrative structures that tell their own stories.

Those stories are as full of incident as any other. They are narratives of transformation –of ruination, vandalism, appropriation, imitation, preservation, construction. These transformations have their own narrative structure, which unfolds in time, that is to say the structure of their own ‘plot’.

For example, the Santa Casa of Loreto is a building that has been copied hundred of times throughout the Roman Catholic world, from the tenth to the twentieth centuries. Its history could be told as a ‘shaggy dog story’ with a repeated chorus as ritualised and repetitive as the building phenomenon itself (Loreto). On the other hand the provocations of twentieth century Berlin, from Mies van der Rohe’s glass towers of the twenties, to Albert Speer’s Germania, to the Wall, were bold political statements about the future. The story of



Berlin is therefore written as a series of manifestoes for the future, now rendered obsolete by the arrival of that future. (Ladd 1998)

#### History and Histories

Once Upon a Time there was no such thing as History. Instead there were a multitude of histories, whose chief purpose was not the record of timeless fact, but the performance of narrative –at bedtime, around the fire in the Great Hall, in the theatre (Darnton 1985). With each performance, the history was preserved and altered at the same time, just as parents are preserved and altered in their offspring. In their endless retelling, histories changed, from Ritual to Myth to Folk Tale to Fairy Stories. New characters and subplots appeared and disappeared and emphases changed. The terrifying Wolf became a comic puppet in the Christmas pantomime; Cinderella's fur slipper turned to glass in translation; the Hero became a God; and God became a cartoon character.

Histories –old stories- are in this respect, are like old buildings. They are handed down, slightly altered, from generation to generation. The narrative structures of folk tale and building mirror one another. Thus folk tales, rather than more formal traditional Historical forms supply the narrative structure for the Fairy Stories Project -hence its name.

One might imagine that a world recorded and narrated in such a way would be a world of chaotic, jumbled memories, or of amnesia; but however much they bred and multiplied, there is something about the structure of histories that always remained the same, and guaranteed them a certain curious rigour. It may be an urban myth that there are only seven base stories; but it is true that traditional stories can be, and have been, subjected to analysis and classification on the basis of their simple, underlying structures (Darnton 1985).

There is always a Once Upon a Time –before time, in the dark forest or the tower, in the labyrinth, where the curse has been cast and time is stopped in its tracks, or things are good, and the seeds of tragedy are but dormant.

Then there is always the interval of narrative time, of the history itself. This is the year and a day, the day and the night, the fourscore years and ten. And in those crucial intervals of time, Marduk and Tiamat; or Snow White and the Seven Dwarves; or Theseus and the Minotaur; or Jack and his Beanstalk enact their stories, and are changed by them. And there are always wicked queens, monsters, and perilous journeys. There are always magic beans, helpful dwarves, gnomish oracles. And there are always heroes and heroines who were destined to overcome, or to be undone by, the former with the aid of the latter. The raw material of histories is structured time –its passage through the hero, the hero's passage through it.

And then there is always the Ever After of weddings, sunsets, or sadder, wiser, men, which is after time, and outside the history.



It is in the Once upon a Time that Architecture was frozen music; was Loos' tomb; was the thing to which nothing could be added, and nothing taken away. It is in the Ever After that the Architect experienced his Dream of History, in which everything had fallen into place, and there was nothing more to be done. In between is the location of the Fairy Stories Project.

Speak to anyone and you will hear a multitude of folk tales about buildings: from London Bridge is Falling Down to the tale of the thousands of cats buried alive in the walls of Versailles. (Darnton 1985). All these stories are histories, not because they can, or cannot be verified, but because they have been picked up orally, as rumour or gossip, and they are passed on in the same way. In the Fairy Stories Project, the provenance of each story –be it in a drunken pub conversation or in a learned tome, is recorded.

All folk tales are rooted in tradition. Indeed, they are traditions; and all of the stories in the Fairy Stories Project may be ones you have heard before. They form a litany that take us in the traditional sequence from Antiquity to the Present Day, via the Dark Ages, the High Middle Ages, and Modernity There are no unknown characters, only recurrent figures, like the Gods in Myth, or the woodcutter and wolf in old German tales. All of the heroes, heroines, and victims of these stories exist, and can be visited.

The Fairy Stories Project develops this traditional structure in a new direction. In other times and (still) in other places the past is not as fetishised as it is in post modern Europe. Old buildings have been vandalised, stolen, appropriated, copied, mated with other ones, translated, simulated, and anticipated long before anyone ever thought of conserving them (Jokilehto 1999 p. 1-13). This means that periods such as the 'Dark' Ages, during which many antique buildings were converted for re-use, take on a greater importance in the Fairy Stories Project than they might in a traditional architectural history. Conversely, architectural movements that were wedded to perfection and ideality, from High Renaissance to High Modernism, figure less prominently than they usually might.

Like old buildings, folk tales have been told again and again. They are therefore obscure in origin and intention. These retellings will make no attempt to illuminate on their mysteries, but only to relate them. Far be it from this narrator to explain away the angelic transportations, divine retributions, or glaring factual inconsistencies that litter these tales. The Fairy Stories Project is just that –a dreamlike narrative.

The Waking Dream of the Architect

### **Conclusions and proposals**

Traditional History and Theory have colluded to freeze Architecture in a discourse about timelessness and perfection. However, the real life of buildings is anything but timeless and perfect. The Fairy Stories project is an attempt to reconcile these two modes, and to promote a time-based, incomplete theory of Architecture by writing a History of the same. In The Fairy Stories Project the mysteries of time and change are embodied in a narrative structure as fluid as its subject.



The orthodox History of Architecture has always acted as a treasury of canonic examples of design for the practitioner. The Fairy Stories Project is similarly designed to present the practitioner with a treasury of examples, but this time these examples are not icons, but stories.

Practitioners act. Stories are the record of action. When the practitioner sees a building (s)he want to know how it got there. As we shall see, in real life, how it got there is rarely, if ever, a simple story of the manifestation of the omnipotent will of the Architect. Building is, all too often, an act of destruction, manipulation, or addition performed another, pre-existing building.

This is increasingly true in Architecture as it is practiced in Europe. The massive growth of the heritage industry, ever stricter conservation guidelines, and a desire to respond to potential environmental catastrophe lead contemporary architects to advocate more and more often the re-use, rather than the destruction of old buildings. They are still feeling their way. As such, a series of stories about the refurbishment of buildings is necessarily useful, illustrating the many different approaches that might be taken, dispensing warning and inspiration alike.

Lastly, and most importantly, stories are accessible in a way that facts or arguments are not. When we want to explain complex ideas to children, we use stories. The cosmogonies and cosmologies of all societies are shared in myth –if they are not, they become the exclusive domain of the scientific specialist. Practitioners are not theorists, and they do not speak the same language. The Fairy Stories Project is an approach to theory that is designed for practice.

What follows is a synopsis of the Fairy Stories Project, in which a narrative structure and some content is outlined. The author hopes that you will enjoy it, but believe it? That depends, dear reader, on whether you believe in Fairy Stories.

*Prologue*

*Antiquity*

*What happens in the end*

*First Tale: ruination*

*(Told at work)*

*The Casts of the Parthenon*

*In which a virgin dissolves into thin air, but is preserved.*

*Second Tale: atrophy*

*(Saw in a painting)*

*The water festivals of the Piazza Navona*

*In which a city suffers a sea change*

The first book contains two tales about the Ancient World, or at least, what happened to it.



Antiquity is a world that is simultaneously lost and found. It is lost, since we know it directly only from fragments and myths. It is found, since we know it intimately in the daily habits, personal, social, and political which are its legacy.

The first tale is about the chief monument of ancient Greece, the Parthenon in Athens, and the second tale is about the chief monument of ancient Rome: the city of Rome itself.

Rather than describing the monuments as they were at the moment of their conception (impossible in the second instance), it describes their contrasting fates in the early modern era. These two opening tales about Antiquity explore modern assumptions about the fate, and therefore the nature of Architecture in general.

The Parthenon is a building that is perfect because it is perfectly designed, and must therefore inevitably fall into ruin thereafter. Beautiful ruins are, after all, one of the most visible legacies of the Ancient world. (Beard 2004)

Rome is about a city of buildings that, rather than dissolving into ruination, seed the ground for future development. Ruins may be the visible legacies of Greece and Rome, but cities and habits are the tangible gifts the Ancients gave us.

These tales also hint at a more abstract dialectic in Architecture. On the one hand, the building may be seen as the emanation of the mind of the designer, imposed upon a context. On the other, the building is an emanation of context, which dictates the actions of the designer. (Rowe 1987)

Book Two

The Dark Ages

Three Myths

*Third tale: desecration*

*(Was told at dinner)*

The Temple of Venus and Rome

In which saints do battle with a magician

*Fourth Tale: theft*

*(Read in a tour guide)*

The Quadriga of St Mark

In which a Prince steals four horses and an empire

Fifth Tale: appropriation

*(Noticed, on visiting the building)*

*Hagia Sophia*

In which a Sultan casts a spell, and moves the centre of the World



The first book of tales is about the monuments of the Ancient World. It is an elegy to their loss, and a testament to their continued presence. The next book contains three myths from the Dark Ages, the time that joins and divides us from Antiquity.

The Dark Ages are dark because they brought the day of Classical Antiquity to an end. The Dark Ages are dark because we know so little about them, compared to ages before and since. The Dark Ages are dark because they have been characterised as superstitious, and barbaric.

Dark or not, the Dark Ages form our only link with Classical Antiquity. What its mysterious inhabitants chose to preserve (and what to destroy) of their own inheritance has determined ours, centuries later. The barbarians of the Dark Ages are the inscrutable and capricious curators of a museum whose meaning we shall never fully understand.

The next three myths are, like the age from which they came, dark in origin, and dark in meaning. They are tales of a world destroyed. But they are also tales of worlds created and curated. Like their age, they are myths of metamorphosis.

The first myth describes the Christian desecration and exorcism of the Temple of Venus and Roma, in Rome itself. The second myth is about the four bronze horses that are now in San Marco, Venice, which were stolen from the Hippodrome in Constantinople. The third concerns the conversion of Hagia Sophia, mother church of Byzantium, to Mecca, as the Great Mosque of the Ottoman Empire.

All three stories are myths about theft. What is stolen, in each case, is a relic of the disintegrating Classical world. Their value lies in the legitimacy and power embodied in mastery over them (Freeman 2004). But as they are stolen, piece by piece, that legitimacy and power become something quite unexpected.

What we have inherited from these acts of subterfuge are a series of hybrid buildings: buildings built on top of one another in Rome, collaged from the parts of other buildings, as in Venice, or subtly overlaid, as in Istanbul (unknown 1992).

In these stories buildings are not merely designed. They do not merely survive or disappear. They are infected with parasites, are dismembered and resurrected, are mated with one another, are locked in their own internal struggles, are bewitched, and are brought to life.

*Book Three*

The Middles Ages

Three Rituals

*Sixth tale: repetition*

*(Learned as a child, in church)*

The Santa Casa

In which angels build houses in dreams



Seventh Tale: **Chinese** whispers

*(Noticed, on visiting the building)*

Gloucester Cathedral

In which a body infects a building

*Eighth Tale: heredity*

*(Discussed in a pub)*

*Alhambra*

*In which two descendants of the same palace meet*

The myths in Book Two described three monstrous children of the Dark Ages. The three rituals in Book Three continue the theme of the compelling power resident in buildings into the High Middle Ages.

The source of mythic power and ubiquity lies in the means of its transmission. The myth is the tale that is not just told, but is retold again and again. It might be told in words, it might be enacted, it might be built but repetition and ritual is the key to its magic (Calasso 1995).

In this book, there are three rituals. In this book buildings do not confer power or legitimacy on those who grasp them. Instead they give their gifts to those who make them, copy them, and remake them, and in remaking them re-enact the rituals that sustain myth.

The first ritual comes from many times and from many places: it is the miracle by which the Holy House of the Virgin Mary is reproduced. The second ritual is the patient carving of the craftsmen of Gloucester Cathedral, whose repetition over centuries takes on a mutant life of its own. The third ritual is that by which two palaces meet by chance in the Alhambra in Granada, and trace themselves back to a common ancestor: the Roman house.

Ritual, unlike the acts of vandalism and possession in Book Two is spoken, sung, and enacted; and as ritual, construction becomes a linguistic operation. Gloucester's idiosyncratic code takes on, after a century or two, the quality of a dialect, if not a language. The two descendants of the Roman House have grown so far apart they can no longer understand one another.

If the tale of the Holy House is about copying, the tale of the craftsmen of Gloucester is about the impossibility of the perfect copy. It is about the games of Chinese whispers that are inevitably played when buildings try to copy one another. In this way, eventually, one language becomes another, and eventually, one building requires a translator to address another.

These rituals are, as the myths were, the agents by which particular buildings were transformed. They are also about how architecture itself changes over time; about how Architecture evolves its own languages; and about how these languages return to haunt their descendants.



*Book Four*

*Modernity*

*Three Histories*

*Ninth tale: translation*

*(Read in a biography)*

*Tempio Malatestiano*

*In which a scholar translates a building*

*Tenth tale: simulation*

*(Noticed, on visiting the building)*

*Sans Souci*

*In which nothing, and everything, happens*

*Eleventh Tale: preservation*

*(Was told by the heroine of the tale)*

*The Berlin walls*

*In which History comes to an end*

Buildings change –they undergo mythical metamorphoses, or they are sustained by the ritual of remaking. At the heart of ritual lies the practice of meditation, and in meditation, ritual considers itself –it becomes critical. When it is critical, when it reflects upon the stories it is telling (Schon 1983), when it evaluates them or probes them for hidden patterns, when it considers the form of its own telling, the retelling of Old Tales becomes History.

These three histories are about buildings that have undergone transformations, and that are myths that have been retold. But in these histories the buildings are meditations on the very process of their own transformation: they have become Histories about themselves.

In one History, the Historical division between the present and the past is articulated. The Renaissance scholar Alberti uses his philological skills to transport a building from one historical period to another, by recasting a medieval church as classical temple and tomb for a latter day Augustus (Grafton 2001).

In the second tale, a Prince simulates the world of tumultuous events –of History- in a place where there is none. This is the History of Sans Souci, the garden without care, built by the Kings of Prussia in the eighteenth century (Pundt 1973).

In the third, the process of History is brought to an end, and the artefacts it has left behind are conserved restored, or disposed of. Icons of the future become remnants of the past (Ladd 1998). The fate of the icons of Berlin is to become a series of exhibits, in various states of deliberate disintegration, in which a story is told about a modernity that seems increasingly quaint and remote.



History originally meant, simply, 'story'; and in all cases, for all its reflectivity and objectivity, for its critique and theory, the modern concept of History is as chimerical and elusive, as obscure and paradoxical as its mythic ancestor. Time's arrow does not fly smoothly along its straight course, not even in History.

These histories are therefore more capricious than they might, at first, appear. In them, buildings are like a mad professor's time machines –always about to stop time in its tracks, always failing, with a loud bang and a puff of smoke.

Book One Again

The present

*What happens in the end*

*Twelfth Tale: Heritage*

*(read in a book)*

Venice and the Venetian of Vegas

In which History comes to an end

*Thirteenth Tale: News*

*(Saw on the news)*

*The Rock of Jerusalem*

*In which nothing has changed*

Buildings change. They are transformed into monsters by Olympian rapes. They evolve under the influence of incanted ritual. They meditate upon their own mutability.

The world has changed. There were Empires and they passed away. Their stones were vandalised, stolen, converted, copied, miscopied translated, fictionalised, catalogued, predicted.

The first two stories in this book were about the simultaneous absence and presence of our point of origin, the Antique World. These two stories are about the simultaneous absence and presence of the present.

Both stories are set at the fringes of the western world –one to the West, and the other to the East. One is entirely new, and the other as old as old can be.

In the pleasure palaces of Las Vegas, History has most definitely come to an end. The Europe that has provided the theatre of Myth, Ritual and History throughout this volume is packaged into a heritage experience (Moore 2000). However, before we ridicule the kitsch confectionary of the Vegas Venetian, let us observe the 'real' Venice, which, like most European cities, is doing its best to imitate the value-free hedonist heritage theme park of the desert city.

In the Eastern story History is the tool of war. The excavations by both Palestinians and Israeli archaeologists on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem are purportedly academic in purpose, but are driven by the desire to establish ideological possession over a critical site (Goldhill 2006).



Where History is not finished, where ideological conflict still rages, walls and floors, painted decorations and vaults are still bitterly disputed, and buildings are still transformed by rapes of Olympian aggression, rituals of adoration or blasphemy, histories as contrived and ephemeral as the purposes they serve.

And where History is not finished, nothing has changed. We survey the ruins of Empire and the shrines of our foes, and we start building.

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