UCL PRESS

Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Architecture and Fire

Book Subtitle: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Conservation

Book Author(s): Stamatis Zografos

Published by: UCL Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvb6v6jq.6

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

UCL Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Architecture and Fire*

JSTOR

This content downloaded from 58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

1
Introduction

> We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load, which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition.
>
> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)

> We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.
>
> Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1989)

On 12 May 2018, the East London film centre Close-Up organised a screening of film triptychs by Louis Benassi called *After '68: There Are Three Ways to Resist but the Enemy Is One*. One of the triptychs was *Black Umbrella* (2011), a 16mm film installation depicting the burning of the Crystal Palace in 1934, the flying-bomb raids in central and East London in the 1940s, and the fire at the Houses of Parliament in 1958. All three films are made with discarded archive material that was discovered accidentally in a disused fire station in London. The triptych was screened in a horizontal arrangement; (fig. 1.1) a fourth film was superimposed on it, showing a woman walking through a city (fig. 1.2) holding a black umbrella.[1]

Benassi's superimposition of this iconic image of a person carrying a black umbrella is inspired by a common modernist experimental iconography, such as Magritte's surrealist paintings of people with hats and umbrellas or Francis Bacon's paintings produced between 1945 and 1946. Benassi comments on his work:

> The umbrella acts as a portable architectural dome or roof providing shelter from the rain or sun, however in the context of the triptych the object is shielding 'our' young woman from the explosive, life threatening splinters produced by the flying bomb, the flying bomb, which incidentally could be seen as a metaphor for the heartless architects of displacement.[2]

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Figure 1.1 Stills from Louis Benassi's film triptych *Black Umbrella*. © Louis Benassi.

Figure 1.2 Still from the superimposed film in *Black Umbrella*. © Louis Benassi.

Black Umbrella touches on themes central to this book, including the role of archives in the preservation of memory and the destruction of buildings by fire. It also signals the breadth of contemporary discourse on the concept of the archive, which is one of the principal contexts for this book.

This is a book about architectural conservation. Today conservation receives unprecedented attention as a direct reflection of a more general interest in memory that has been apparent during the last few decades. During this period, we have witnessed an increasing desire for the perpetuation of memories from the past, a desire that applies to every aspect of our culture. There is widespread investment in the construction of new museums and the restoration or extension of existing ones, in the

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

erection of new memorials, in building new libraries and conducting genealogical and biographical research, in the organisation of commemorative events and the revival of nearly extinct traditions, in the exploration of dark and difficult periods of repressed history that are now being brought to the surface, and so on. This desire to perpetuate memories does not manifest itself only on a collective level but also on an individual one. Regardless of age, origin or social group, it is a common practice for people to record and preserve personal moments on a daily basis. This is possible through the use of digital and analogue recording technologies, such as cameras, DVDs, CDs and films, as well as through the Internet and social media. In general, we are experiencing a period during which remembering has obtained an immense significance whereas forgetting is rarely considered an option.

Reflecting on this obsession with memory, Frances A. Yates, a notable scholar on memory issues, has expressed that 'we moderns have no memory at all'.[3] One needs only to consider that nowadays, remembering is a responsibility assigned almost exclusively to computers, which, as modern mnemonic tools, record, save and retrieve data and thus replace human memory. Commenting on this apparent replacement, cognitive scientists claim that computer memory is virtually the same as human, the only difference being that the former does not fail. Before their invention, the work of computers was done by humans. Therefore, as the media theorist Warren Sack explains, 'computer memory seems to be a good model of human memory because computer memory was modelled on human memory!'[4] Nevertheless, compared to the human process of remembering, the function of computers comprises only part of the human process as 'human memory has become self–externalised: projected outside the rememberer himself or herself and into non–human machines.'[5] The general attitude today favours remembering over the possibility of forgetting.

The French historian Pierre Nora attributes this contemporary tendency towards the perpetuation of memories to the *acceleration of history*, which has brought about the complete collapse of real memory and its subsequent equation with history. In his extensive work on national French memory called *Realms of Memory*, Nora explains how real memory has gone through many stages of degradation.[6] Most crucial is the eradication of peasant culture, which once operated as a repository of collective memory. Peasant culture transmitted this collective memory, which for Nora is real memory, through the ritualistic, repetitive practice of quotidian activities.[7] Contrasting memory and history, he writes:

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

> Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting … History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation to the eternal past … Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.[8]

As a consequence of the acceleration of history, Nora remarks that the present is no longer the link between the past and the future. Traditionally memories of the past were critically selected and organised in anticipation of the future, which gave a meaningful sense of duty in the present. Nowadays, however, the lack of vision for the future urges a frantic investment in the preservation of every memory possible from the past, which Nora calls *the duty to remember* (*devoir de mémoire*).[9] Nora adds that this upsurge in memory is also caused by the democratisation of history, as minority groups, following decolonisation, can now reaffirm their identity by uncovering and establishing their own past.[10]

A different view suggests that this tendency to record every single memory from the past reflects a prominent feature of globalisation, namely change, which comes to question, and often erode, traditionally established socioeconomic and cultural structures. According to the British sociologist Anthony Giddens, globalisation is a dialectical process and is 'defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'.[11] For the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, globalisation is associated with the period of post-modernisation, during which 'we are witnessing not the end but the beginning of modernity – that is, of a modernity beyond its classical industrial design',[12] and this is what he calls *reflexive modernisation*. An unavoidable consequence of this late modernity is risk, which in previous eras was essentially personal, but now manifests itself on a global scale. For instance, in the current time we are imminently threatened by ecological risks, such as environmental pollution, which affect every form of life on the planet. This is because risks have a boomerang effect, which assures that even the source that generates them will be equally harmed. Risks cannot be restricted either within nations or among the poor, for as Beck points out, 'poverty is hierarchic, smog is democratic'.[13] In this sense, risks are both local and global; thus the risk society we live in is a *world risk society*. Due to their scale and magnitude in the era of globalisation, risks are not easily controllable and calculable. The risk society, for both Giddens

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

and Beck, has a salient characteristic, which is its preparedness to deal with problems and hazards occurring as a result of reflexive modernisation. As Beck claims, 'risks have something to do with anticipation, with destruction that has not yet happened but is threatening … risks signify a future which is to be prevented'.[14] Thus in current risk societies, the past no longer determines the present but it is the future, or rather, the potential threats to the future, that determine the present actions of the risk society. This anticipation of an uncertain future and the fear of potential irreversible destruction bring about an increasing, sometimes even frenzied reaction, which, although it can probably not help alleviate problems associated with globalisation,[15] explains why there is an increasing investment in the perpetuation of memories from the past and present.[16]

The heritage studies scholar Rodney Harrison equally identifies an exponential increase in the investment in memory, which manifests itself with the stockpiling of material traces from the past to the extent that 'almost everything can be perceived to be "heritage."'[17] He calls this phenomenon the *heritagisation of society* and warns that this overwhelming tendency to accumulate memory can bring about the reverse, unwelcome result, where all heritage becomes worthless.[18]

The *duty to remember* manifests itself so frequently and so intensely that nearly every aspect of the world must be archived. The potential creation of an all-encompassing archive is reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges's imaginary concept of 'The Aleph'. In this short story, Borges approaches a corner of his friend's cellar and, looking up in darkness, he observes an Aleph. This Aleph, the diameter of which is no wider than an inch, is 'one of the points in space that contains all points … [It is] the place where, without admixture or confusion, all the places of the world, seen from every angle coexist'.[19] Staring at the Aleph for a few moments, Borges witnesses 'the inconceivable universe',[20] which he finds impossible to describe. This universe appeared before his eyes in a simultaneous occurrence and so a description of it can never be complete, for language develops in a successive order.[21] Having experienced the Aleph, he realises that life is pointless because everything looks familiar. But later, he confirms that 'fortunately, after a few unsleeping nights, forgetfulness began to work in me again'.[22] Borges's approach to memory favours a balanced analogy between remembering and forgetting, which in essence contradicts the archival obsession of our times.

A similar approach to memory is shared by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In his essay *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, published in 1874, Nietzsche writes:

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

> Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from day to day, [are] fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure .... A human being may well ask [such an animal]: 'Why do you not speak to me of your happiness but only stand and gaze at me?' The animal would like to answer, and say: 'The reason is that I always forget what I was going to say' – but then he forgot this answer too, and stayed silent: so that the human being was left wondering. But he also wonders about himself, that he is not able to learn to forget and that he always hangs onto past things. No matter how far or how fast he runs, this chain runs with him. It is something amazing: the moment, in one sudden motion there, in one sudden motion gone, before nothing, afterwards nothing, nevertheless comes back again as a ghost and disturbs the tranquillity of each later moment. A leaf is continuously released from the roll of time, falls out, flutters away – and suddenly flutters back again into the man's lap. For the man says, 'I remember', and envies the beast, which immediately forgets and sees each moment really perish, sink back in cloud and night, and vanish forever.[23]

In this essay, Nietzsche suggests that a cow lives in happiness because it does not remember. And precisely because of this forgetfulness, there is no chance it can confirm its happiness, as it cannot recall its previous state. Therefore on the one hand happiness is achieved through an absence of memory, and on the other it is taken away in the same instance. Through this example Nietzsche's intention is to emphasise the liberating power of what he calls 'active forgetfulness',[24] which is a possibility only for humans and not for other animals. The grand theme of his book is the abandonment of certain aspects of the past, as the latter returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment. His suggestion is a critical discourse on the past, which intends to keep only the knowledge and experiences that are beneficial for current and future life whereas all unnecessary and disadvantageous elements should be left behind. Thus, active forgetting is selective remembering. Both Borges and Nietzsche share a closely related approach to memory. Both of them perceive memory's counter-manifestation of forgetting to be liberating, and Nietzsche makes an additional point, which highlights a potential glitch inherent in our contemporary archiving culture. This is the fact that the *duty to remember* must be selective, or at least not totally inclusive, for '[w]hen an archive has to collect everything ... it will succumb to

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

entropy and chaos … . In such cases the system begins to swing back and forth so violently that it finally collapses.'[25]

Although this book challenges our obsession with the preservation of past memories quite broadly, its focus is more specific. It deals with architectural conservation. Conservation research is a common presence in most Western nations' cultural agendas, receiving considerable governmental attention and funding, ongoing professional engagement and widespread public support. In England, Historic England is 'the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment'.[26] In 2016 they published their *Three Year Corporate Plan 2016–19* in which they outline their evolving mission, their vision and ambition for conservation research, the resources they have available and how their progress will be assessed.[27] Other conservation research initiatives are supported by the Framework Programmes that have been funded by the European Union since the last decade of the twentieth century. The most famous promote pan-European collaborations, which in the past focused on architecture, but today their range is more inclusive and diverse.[28]

When the historical significance or value of a building is established, it is commonly designated as listed, which means that specific qualities and aspects of its past must be conserved and/or restored. On this occasion, conservation practice aims to prolong a building's current condition while restoration practice reinstates earlier stages of the building's life. In the last two decades, the scope and significance of architectural conservation have expanded broadly for various reasons. Previously it was only monuments from the eighteenth century that were preserved, but today it is nearly every built structure from that century.[29] Architectural conservation is no longer restricted to the preservation of individual buildings but can also include entire neighbourhoods, villages or even whole cities, such as the case of Venice and its lagoon.[30] In the United Kingdom, the establishment of conservation areas is a relatively frequent phenomenon. The first conservation area was designated in 1967 and currently there are more than 8000 designations.[31]

Another recent addition to the conservation agenda is the protection of cultural landscapes,[32] like the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, or the protection of historical fakes like Dresden's city centre, restored after its major destruction during World War II.[33] Conservation also deals with structures that are not only disused but have also been left to deteriorate to such an extent that they are beyond recognition. The artist, architect and preservationist Jorge Otero-Pailos, commenting on the conservation of one such structure, a waterfront pier in Manhattan, writes that:

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

when an object fails to satisfy the traditional categories of historical significance yet there is still public pressure to preserve it, preservationists are forced to confront that which they habitually repress: meaninglessness .... Preservation provides the illusion that those buildings, which are condemned to the horror of disappearing, are beautiful in their act of disappearance.[34]

Defending the broadly inclusive range of contemporary conservation, the American conservationist James Marston Fitch stresses the necessity of preserving the prototype for the benefit of future generations.[35] Maintaining authenticity is imperative because, as the conservationist John H. Stubbs claims, 'there is no substitute for direct observation of the real thing, which represents the shortest distance in time and space that an object [or a place] and a viewer can have'.[36] The integrity of prototypes is commonly threatened by various processes that take place in urban environments. Apart from the obvious impact of time and nature on buildings, architecture depends highly on the human factor too. Stubbs identifies the following three categories as threats to architecture by humans: 'ancillary effects of modern life (pollution, economic, religious, social or life-style changes); wilful calculations (vandalism, war or terrorism-related destruction); and oversights (ignorance, neglect, profligate use of natural resources or insensitive or inadequate work)'.[37] Of all these threats, the consequences of modernisation on the urban environment are the hardest to mitigate. The sudden demand for housing seen in cities early in the twenty-first century – a period termed by the urbanist Anthony M. Tung 'the century of destruction'[38] – and the obliterating impact of the modern movement on the historic environment have dramatically altered the face of most cities.[39] Inevitably, then, the role of architectural conservation has become increasingly vital and the discipline has won unprecedented popularity.

The political dimensions of conservation are also partly responsible for its rise. As the political theorist Hannah Arendt claimed, 'the reality and reliability of the human world rests primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced, and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors'.[40] Simply put, according to Arendt, our memories and our sense of being depend directly on the safeguarding of our built environment. Conversely, and this has repeatedly been accomplished throughout history with deliberate intent, the destruction of the built environment brings about enforced forgetting and disorientation.[41] It is in this sense that the protection of the urban environment through conservation

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

strategies can in fact be used as a tool for memory manipulation, which is what gives conservation a strong political character.

The contemporary interest in conservation is commonly expressed through professional and academic debates worldwide. In a lecture entitled *Preservation/Destruction: OMA – Cronocaos* that was given on 28 March 2011 at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, Ippolito Pestellini and James Westcott of Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) presented their views regarding the present and future of architectural conservation. In their 'Preservation' exhibition, at the 12th International Venice Architecture Biennale in 2010, the OMA expressed, for the first time, their interest in the past, conservation and history. The projects they showcased addressed two contemporary conflicting tendencies that on the one hand deal with the ambition to preserve progressively larger territories on the planet and, on the other, the desire to obscure any traces of post-war architecture relating to the social project.[42] In the second room of the exhibition, they highlighted the destructive effect conservation has on the linear evolution of time. The overall objective of the OMA's exhibition was to 'document our period of acute CRONOCAOS'.[43] Expanding on this concept, Koolhaas defines *cronocaos* as the contemporary experience of time in urban environments. In his manifesto 'Junkspace', he argues that contemporary cities simultaneously stage the new and the old, the permanent and the temporary. Parts of these cities 'undergo an Alzheimer's-like deterioration as others are upgraded,'[44] and this is a defining aspect of Junkspace. The inhabitants, trapped in these environments, in Junkspace, can no longer distinguish the future, present and past from each other, as they have all merged, creating 'a short circuit in our concept of chronology'.[45]

The OMA exhibition comprises an exemplary illustration of the contemporary interest in conservation and at the same time highlights a rather paradoxical phenomenon. This is the fact that conservation often consents to the eradication of buildings from the post-war period, thus exposing one of its weaknesses, which is precisely its failure to have a fixed agenda or policy for every building.[46] The reasons why post-war architecture often falls outside regimes of conservation are multiple and complex. They span from a lack of advanced technical experience and knowledge in repairing or replacing materials, many of which are modern and often experimental, to insufficient political agreement and public sympathy.[47] In addition to these practical concerns, the conservation of post-war architecture finds many theoretical opponents. As the British architectural writer Owen Hatherley reminds us, the mission of the modern movement was to detach from history, to 'erase the traces',[48] therefore, 'if we want to

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

preserve what remains of Modernism, then we are necessarily conspiring with the very people that have always opposed it: the heritage industries that have so much of Europe in their grip'.[49] As a reaction to the obstacles that the conservation of post-war architecture faces, various international, national and even local organisations have been founded. Characteristic examples are the international work of Do.Co.Mo.Mo. (Documentation and Conservation of Modern Movement) with numerous offices around the globe, the national operation of the C20 (Twentieth Century Society) based in London, or local initiatives like the Hackney Society based in the borough of Hackney in London.

To date, the failure of architectural conservation to establish a fixed, common policy can also be attributed to other parameters, which are equally difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. Current conservation practice is based on what is exceptional and unique. This, however, ignores the significance, or perhaps simply the duty, of preserving something for its mediocrity and ordinariness. Approaching conservation from a global perspective, due to the demands of a globalising culture, exposes further difficulties in finding a common agenda. The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, for instance, which outlines the internationally approved policy regarding the protection of architectural heritage, is based on Western attitudes, neglecting the fact that some cultures understand permanence and what should be permanent differently.[50] Lastly, there is the evolution of conservation practice: whereas once it dealt with buildings from the distant past, today it also includes buildings from recent years. The 1973 Sydney Opera House in Australia is the youngest building to have made the World Heritage List, in 2007. Similarly, the extension of Museum Liaunig in Neuhaus, Austria, by Querkraft Architekten (fig. 1.3) that opened to the public in 2008 was declared a national monument only five years later, in 2013.

Reflecting on the increasing conservation remit that includes recent buildings, Rem Koolhaas comments: 'From retrospective, preservation will soon become prospective, forced to take decisions for which it is entirely unprepared.'[51] The inspiration for this book therefore is not only the current scale and significance attached to contemporary architectural conservation but also the lack of a consistent policy that accompanies it.

On a philosophical level, architectural conservation faces another major difficulty, as it finds itself opposed to the linear evolution of time. Both conservation and restoration processes manipulate the impact of time on buildings. The former freezes time whereas the latter reverses it so that buildings return to how they looked in past times. These

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Figure 1.3 The extension of Museum Liaunig in Neuhaus, Austria, by Querkraft Architekten was declared a national monument in 2013, only five years after it was built. © Querkraft Architekten – Lisa Rastl.

processes can be likened to the philosopher Jeremy Bentham's concept of 'auto-icons'. In one of his last essays, Bentham suggests that after death people's bodies should be preserved with chemicals and displayed in public buildings so that 'every man would be his own monument'.[52] If the concept of the auto-icon is extended beyond the human body to include buildings then conservation and restoration practice can be perceived as having a similar function, which is to protect buildings from maturity and decay so that they become permanent exhibits of their fleeting, temporary selves. This *cronocaos*, the disturbance to the linear evolution of time, raises questions and dilemmas in regard to the criteria behind what is conserved, restored or simply destroyed. In general, architectural conservation faces problems and contradictions that are tricky to deal with and potentially difficult to overcome. The key objective of this book is therefore to explore these issues by revisiting and reassessing long-established key conservation principles, and by developing an alternative theoretical framework that throws light on the current *duty to remember* architecture.

This book approaches architectural conservation through archival theory, a theory broadly used in the emerging academic field of Memory

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Studies. This field recognises and promotes the fact that memory, including archives, is studied amongst a number of disciplines. Memory is no longer a subject of enquiry merely for philosophy, psychoanalysis, history and literature, but also for other disciplines such as law, architecture, politics, sociology and anthropology. Memory Studies is essentially a multidisciplinary field, yet more recently academics have started to pursue a more interdisciplinary approach.[53] In this book the concept of memory is approached in an interdisciplinary way with the aspiration to succeed at what the American theorist Marjorie Garber has declared is our task: 'to re-imagine the boundaries of what we have come to believe are disciplines and to have the courage to re-think them'.[54] Architectural conservation is accordingly explored through the fields of architectural history and theory, archival theory, classical mythology, philosophy and psychoanalysis.

It is fair to argue that architectural conservation, and architecture in general, has already been associated with the concept of the archive.[55] Commenting on the architecture of a city, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur describes how it 'brings together in the same space different ages, offering to our gaze a sedimented history of tastes and cultural forms. The city gives itself as both to be seen and to be read.'[56] In an archive, records are similarly to be seen and to be read; one may draw parallels between the architecture of the city and the archive.[57] A novelty of this book lies in the fact that it does not restrict itself to noting this association but rather makes an active use of archival theory to explore architectural conservation, which agrees with the philosopher Jacques Derrida's ambition for 'a project of a general archiviology … [of] a general and interdisciplinary science of the archive'.[58]

This study of architecture's archival capacity focuses on a single aspect, which is how buildings remember the element of fire. The appropriation of this element lies in the fact that fire is considered by a number of architectural historians to be at the beginning of architectural creation. Yet it is also one of architecture's biggest threats. Fire is arguably present from the birth and until the death of architecture. Hence a parallel thematic thread runs through this book, which, as the title openly suggests, explores the relationship between architecture and fire.

This book is split into seven chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter starts with an analysis of the concept of the archive. The predominant focus is on Jacques Derrida's psychoanalytic understanding, which has brought about a renewed interest in the study of archives and a radical revaluation of their concept.[59] The second part of this chapter reflects on the fact that architecture is remembered both

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

individually and collectively. Through Henri Bergson's and Maurice Halbwachs' theories of memory it is argued that individual memory on one hand and collective memory on the other can be perceived as operating with the same logic; thus the distinction between the two types of memory can be eliminated. Effectively any reference to memory in architecture essentially implies both types.

Chapter 3 elaborates on fire. It reveals one of its intrinsic qualities, which is its ambivalent nature, which in turn informs the philosophical and methodological approach of this book. I employ the philosophy of the French scientific philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who is known for his extensive work on memory and his psychoanalysis of fire. Yet fire's conflicting nature of temporality dictates the simultaneous employment of an opposing philosophy, and thus I deploy the work of one of Bachelard's main theoretical opponents, Henri Bergson. Accordingly, the contradicting notions of *life and death* and *eternal return* that fire is famously associated with[60] determine the use of the two opposing philosophies: Bachelard's fragmented time and Bergson's temporal continuity. The theoretical conflict inherent in fire also reflects Bachelard's model of knowledge production. This model supports the notion that *knowledge advances dialectically through opposition with existing knowledge*, which is adopted as a methodological tool to investigate the relationship between architecture and memory. Following this methodology, a retrospective account of fire's manifestation in mythology, old rituals, festivals and science demonstrates how the obscure and often confused knowledge that we hold of the element is justified through an archival association.

Chapter 4 discusses architectural conservation. Drawing on archival theory, listed buildings are associated with the function of archives, on the grounds that they both firmly preserve memories from the past. Accordingly, the moment of designation signifies the official archivisation of architecture. Focusing on the English Heritage protection system through Bachelard's and Bergson's theories of time and memory, I argue that archives can be considered as sites of forgetting. As listed buildings function as archives, they can also be considered sites of forgetting: thus the core objective of conservation, which is the perpetuation of memory, collapses.

As the role of conservation appears partially redundant, the following two chapters take a step back and re-evaluate the relationship between architecture and fire. Chapter 5 looks into how architecture evolves by absorbing and accommodating fire on its grounds. Spanning from the flames of the ancient hearth to contemporary architecture, architectural evolution is approached through two perspectives: one examines the way architecture adapts itself to accommodate fire based on the thermal

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

comfort it provides, whereas the other considers fire solely as energy, exploring its expansion in architectural space in energetic terms.

Chapter 6 focuses on a critical moment of architectural evolution, which is the destruction of buildings by fire. It considers the imminent threat imposed by the element and provides a detailed account of how buildings and cities are prepared, or at least should be in principle, to combat potential fire catastrophes. The preparedness to deal with fire incidents is illustrated with a reference to the tragic disaster at Grenfell Tower in London in 2017. Both chapters 5 and 6 share a common objective, which is to assign archival properties to architecture. Both chapters conclude that architecture always carries with it either a reduced or a complete memory of its entire past, making the practice of conservation fundamentally redundant.

In conclusion, the association of architecture with the concept of the archive is approached through Derrida's psychoanalytic interpretation, according to which archives and thus also architecture are approached through the Freudian theory of the drives. This approach suggests that the practice of architectural conservation is an expression of the life drive and a simultaneous repression of the death drive, which leads to a proposal to allow *controlled destruction* to be an integral part of the conservation agenda.

Notes

1. The woman holding the black umbrella is Lilly Jacobs, who is also the assistant editor of the film. The score of *Black Umbrella* was arranged by Hector Castells-Matutano.
2. '1 February 2011: Abandoned Archives and Forgotten Histories Remembered', Close-Up website, accessed 23 August 2018, https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/film_programmes/2011/abandoned–archives–and–forgotten–histories–remembered/.
3. Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 20.
4. Warren Sack, 'Memory' in *Software Studies: A Lexicon,* ed. Matthew Fuller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 186.
5. Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, second edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 2.
6. Nora proposes that France was probably the first country to experience this obsessive *memorialism*, and he traces its emergence to the mid-1970s. He explains that there are three fundamental occurrences that led to the upsurge in memory during that period. These are 'the after–effects of the economic crisis, the fallout from the post-de Gaulle era, and the exhaustion of the revolutionary idea'. Pierre Nora, 'Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory', *Eurozine*, 2002, accessed 19 April 2018, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002–04–19–nora–en.html.
7. Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', translated by Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, 26 (1989), 8.
8. Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 8–9.
9. Nora, 'Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory'.
10. In 'Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory', Nora explains that there are three types of decolonisation that have taken place in contemporary society and which have led minority

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

groups to claim their identity. First is an international decolonisation that deals with minority groups that were once colonially oppressed, second is a domestic decolonisation that deals with sexual, religious and social minority groups, and third is an ideological decolonisation that deals with minority groups from ex-totalitarian regimes, which are now free to reunite and revive old, lost, previously banned or destroyed memories and traditions.

11. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 64.
12. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992), 10.
13. Beck, *Risk Society*, 36.
14. Beck, *Risk Society*, 33.
15. Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 10.
16. M. Shanks and C. Witmore, 'Memory Practices and the Archaeological Imagination in Risk Society: Design and Long Term Community' in *Unquiet Pasts: Risk Society, Lived Cultural Heritage, Re–Designing Reflexivity,* ed. Stephanie Koerner and Ian Russell (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).
17. Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013), 3.
18. Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches,* 166–7.
19. Jorge Luis Borges, *The Aleph: Including the Prose Fictions from the Maker* (London: Penguin, 2000), 126–7.
20. Borges, *The Aleph*, 131.
21. Borges, *The Aleph*, 129.
22. Borges, *The Aleph*, 131.
23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life in Untimely Meditations*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 60–1, quoted in Casey, *Remembering*, 1.
24. *Active forgetfulness* refers to the individual level. Regarding forgetfulness on a bigger scale, in a society for instance, Nietzsche approaches the problem of memory and forgetting through the issue of morality in his second essay *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which carries the subtitle *'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience' and the Like*. His reflections do not analyse directly the obvious side of this subject, the virtues, but rather deal with the dark side of morality, namely guilt and sin. Before his engagement with the problem of guilt (*Schuld*), he concentrates on the relationship developed between humans in relation to their debts (*Schulden*). In a remarkable fashion, he grasps a notion of functional memory residing in the relationship between a debtor and a creditor. Specifically, the creditor's pure interest is to remember the bargain he has offered. Only if he is too generous or soft-hearted can he forget what he is owed. On the other hand, the debtor could easily forget the amount he owes, but the danger of not finding a future creditor or losing his creditworthiness obliges him to remember the promise he has given to repay his debt. In this way, debts are items that are constantly remembered. A similar sense of guilt is entailed within actions of sin. Guilt is an item to be remembered in the mind of the offender and it can only be forgotten after it has been legally established. For Nietzsche, this is the *willed forgetting* that takes place in society alongside *enforced remembering*, both of which want to persuade citizens to abide and conform to laws. See Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life in Untimely Meditations*, 60–1, quoted in Casey, *Remembering*, 2–3.
25. Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art From Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), xiii.
26. 'We', Historic England website, accessed 23 August 2018, https://historicengland.org.uk/.
27. Historic England, 'Three Year Corporate Plan 2016–19', May 2016. Accessed 6 February 2019. https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/he-corp-plan-2016–19/three-year-corp-plan-2016–19.pdf/.
28. Peter Brimblecombe and Carlota M. Gross, 'Scientific Research into Architectural Conservation' in *Architectural Conservation: Issues and Developments*, ed. Vincent Shacklock (Shaftesbury: Donhead, 2006), 128.
29. 'Listed Buildings', Historic England website, accessed 23 August 2018, https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what–is–designation/listed–buildings/.
30. 'Venice and its Lagoon', UNESCO website, accessed 23 August 2018, http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/394.
31. 'Conservation Areas', Historic England website, accessed 23 August 2018, https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what–is–designation/local/conservation–areas/.

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

32. According to Article 1 of the 1992 World Heritage Convention, a cultural landscape reflects the 'combined works of nature and of man … They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.' 'Cultural Landscapes – UNESCO', UNESCO website, accessed 8 February 2018, http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/#1.
33. In June 2009, UNESCO deleted Dresden from the World Heritage List on the grounds that 'a four-lane bridge [was built] in the heart of the cultural landscape which meant that the property failed to keep its "outstanding universal value as inscribed".' 'Dresden is Deleted from UNESCOS's World Heritage List', UNESCO website, accessed 8 February 2018, http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/522.
34. Jorge Otero-Pailos, 'Editorial: Chance Architecture', *Future Anterior* 3: 2 (Winter 2006), v.
35. James Marston Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), x.
36. John H. Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation. Parameters, Theory and Evolution of an Ethos* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009), 54.
37. Stubbs, *Time Honored*, 98.
38. Anthony M. Tung, *Preserving the World's Great Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis* (New York: Clarkson-Potter, 2001).
39. Stubbs, *Time Honored*, 99.
40. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 95–6.
41. Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 8.
42. Rem Koolhaas, 'Cronocaos', *Log*, 21 (Winter 2011), 119.
43. Koolhaas, 'Cronocaos', 119.
44. Rem Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', *October* 100 (Spring 2002), 180.
45. 'The Cronocaos Exhibit at the New Museum: Rem Koolhaas Says Make no Little Plans', *UrbDeZine*, 2012, accessed 18 August 2018, https://urbdezine.com/2011/08/10/the–cronocaos–exhibit–at–the–new–museum/.
46. The lack of a consistent conservation policy applies also to postmodernist architecture, which is surprising as postmodernism itself echoes the past.
47. Susan Macdonald, Kyle C. Normandin and Bob Kindred, *Conservation of Modern Architecture* (Shaftesbury: Donhead, 2007), 1–2.
48. Owen Hatherley, *Militant Modernism* (Winchester; Washington, DC: O Books, 2008), 3.
49. Hatherley, *Militant Modernism*, 5.
50. Seung-Jin Chung, 'East Asian Values in Historic Conservation', *Journal of Architectural Conservation: The International Journal for Historic Buildings, Monuments and Places*, 11: 1 (March 2005), 55–6.
51. Koolhaas, 'Cronocaos', 122.
52. Jeremy Bentham, *Auto-Icon; or, Farther Uses of the Dead to the Living: A Fragment* (London, 1842), 3–4.
53. H. L. Roediger and J. V. Wertsch, 'Creating a New Discipline of Memory Studies', *Memory Studies* 1:1 (January 2008), 9.
54. Marjorie Garber quoted in Marlene Manoff, 'Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines', *Libraries and the Academy* 4:1 (2004), 96.
55. Mark Wigley, 'Unleashing the Archive', *Future Anterior* 2:2 (Winter 2005), 12.
56. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 151.
57. Commenting on the parallelism between buildings and archives, Kent Kleinman in *Archiving/Architecture* develops an alternative argument by distinguishing two modes of architectural existence: the built artefact and the representations of it, i.e. the drawings, models, and visualisations produced by the architect. For Kleinman, the representations of architecture comprise the true and original architectural archive, as they reflect the pure aspirations of the creator. On the other hand, because the built artefact is subject to changes caused by weather, ageing, inhabitation, and so on, it faces issues of originality and authorship and thus it cannot be perceived as solid and complete as the representation of it. Moreover, based on Roland Barthes's *The Death of the Author*, Kleinman draws parallels

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

between a building and a document, saying that the former is ‘a record every bit as open to, and in need of, interpretation as is a document housed in an archive’. Kent Kleinman, ‘Archiving/Architecture’, *Archival Science* 1 (2001), 324.

58. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 34.
59. Jennie Hill, ed., *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader* (London: Facet, 2010), 8–9.
60. Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, translated by Alan C. M. Ross with preface by Northrop Frye (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 7.

This content downloaded from
58.97.216.184 on Wed, 04 Sep 2024 01:47:58 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms