

Sir Banister Fletcher: pillar to post-colonial readings

John McKean

University of Brighton, Brighton, UK

Looking at world architecture in a post-colonial light, what is the possibility for a 'world history of architecture'? This question is approached through thoughts on east-west plunderings in architectural history and in the strange double image of world history portrayed in Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture*, which (in all but the earliest and very latest editions) divided the world into 'The Historical Styles' and 'The Non-historical Styles'.

Resonating throughout this text, which began as a paper to a conference on 'Globalisation and Representation',¹ is the knowledge that the author has been commissioned to undertake a completely new text for the next edition of Banister Fletcher, for which work started in November, 2005. Pointers to how that project might proceed include its becoming a dual work, aware of the unspoken space between:

— a narrative with stress on points of cultural intersection and articulation of hybridity (after Homi Bhabha) rather than on the 'constituent' as opposed to 'transitory' facts of architectural history (after Siegfried Giedion), and:

— an archive of illustrated places, itself a social construct but one which recognises the role of viewer/reader in its [re]construction—for images are there to be plundered and misread, which is always their fate in the hands of creative designers.

1

The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss history happened overseas; so they dodo don't know what it means.

(The drunken stammerings of Mr Whisky Sisodia in *The Satanic Verses*.²)

Not long ago, I was approached and asked to edit the twenty first edition of the 'magisterial'³ tome, Sir Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture*. Following a scoping study, I proposed a complete rewriting of the text and reshaping of the book. This was enthusiastically accepted by the trustees and publisher⁴, and work began in late 2005. This essay grows out of my thoughts about the

possibility for the development of a genuinely global history from that peculiarly British institution.

Before looking back at the Banister Fletcher edifice from the early twenty first century, the tonality of my approach is set by starting close to home. How does one address the objects of history? How does meaning accrue to them and migrate? These are not issues which have always resonated through the clean, dry pages of Banister Fletcher's twenty editions. Take the nearest freestanding building, across the road from the Grand Parade site in Brighton where I work: The Royal Pavilion.

What actually *is* it? If we look to its inhabitation to define that, we see people standing around, quietly remonstrating with visitors who might touch things or pointing out to them where there is a lavatory, or maybe even listing facts and figures about it: naming rooms, its client, the number of cooking pots or chandeliers. We see other people slowly shuffling along its dark hall or through its bow-fronted enfilade; never quite stopping, gawking.

What actually *was* it? Defined, then, by its initial inhabitation, we see them cleaning and maintaining vast arrays of silver, crockery and glassware; others inviting friends round for a party; some peeling potatoes and emptying bedpans; others sitting for hours getting stuffed and drunk in a banquet of obscene proportions.

So, first, architecture is a medium for the framing of behaviours. It tells us about the active, instrumental relationship between built form and culture. 'Architecture enquires: how can a certain purpose become space, through which forms, which materials?' to quote Adorno; who continues '[a]rchitectonic imagination is, according to this conception of it, the ability to articulate space purposefully. It permits purpose to become space. It constructs forms according to purposes.'⁵

But if architecture is, first, a response to requirements, second, and more commonly, it is the emblematic creation of imagery which represents, which touches the imagination. Architecture is always both instrument—prohibiting some behaviours, offering locations for others—and emblem—representing, indeed embodying, its distinctive social system and set of cultural values. It responds to—but should outreach—needs, its multitude of

forms makes up the city, and its surface shaping and patterning offers memorable *visual* tales.

So what do I see here, when I look across the road? First, it reminds me that the notion of the exotic is always conditional on qualified ignorance. The 'style' of the pavilion was called 'hindoo' which, roughly, in fact means seventeenth century Moghul. Its shapes lifted, as we might lift words which we may not quite understand but use simply for their unusual sounds. And thus, forms emblematic of Muslim piety and sobriety become in the transposition, images of the licentious philanderings of the then Prince of Wales.

We see what we want to see, using stereotypes as our first preconception until battered into other shapes by closer observation or subsequent experience. The Royal Pavilion may appear to be, as my son sees it, the largest Indian take-away in town. Watching the swirling migrations of emblematic meanings, I note that the two such establishments which I most frequent, each under a mile away, are called the Raj Pavilion and the Taj Mahal. Particular and allusive names, while their emblems in each case are very similar indeed to that of the City of Brighton and Hove—the exotic silhouette of The Pavilion's domes.

Chasing this flavour a little further, the first Indian restaurant in Britain, the Hindostanee Coffee House, was opened in London in 1810 by the fascinating Indian, Deen Mahomed. When he was declared bankrupt, Mahomed moved to Brighton, where the Pavilion was already making oriental exotica fashionable, and in 1814 he opened his bath and shampooing (meaning massage rather than hair wash) house at the foot of the Steyne

just metres from The Pavilion, and was soon appointed bath and shampooing surgeon to the Prince Regent (later George IV) and then to William IV.

The Royal Pavilion itself, however, inside its well-known skin, is far more derived from the Chinese than the Indian. Orientalism is a melange of preconception and myth leading to an imaginary creation, the 'oriental world'. Yet here, somehow the image of 'India' is, as it were, a flypaper strong enough to have attracted both the use of the Pavilion as a hospital for Indian soldiers, and then the little gateway which stands just outside, a post-war present from the colonial Indian government, its neatly cut stonework looking as unlike the acid-yellow fairytale of the Pavilion as Lutyens is unlike Delhi. Early in the First World War, the King, George V, proposed the Pavilion as 'ideal' for a hospital for Indians, and so Brighton council patriotically offered it for that purpose. Once that war was over, the Lutyensesque stone gateway, serious and immensely correct,⁶ actually replaced an entrance more in keeping with the Indian restaurant image.

How did the wounded Indians feel on their metal beds in the exotic Chinoiserie of its interiors? Are there, anyway, other cultural meanings in the Chinese details: the dragon, the serpent, the flowers and butterflies? Or was there—for these light-hearted looters of the images from the East—a supreme indifference, and with their fakery and artificiality where the appearance is all, there is no space for subtlety, no corner not busily embellished, every decoration decorated? How had all this come to Brighton?

2

There is of course much theoretical writing about how we make sense of new sensory experiences. How we proceed from the known to the unknown is perhaps most straightforwardly what Gombrich called 'schema and correction', from the perception-psychology idea of a constant interaction between preconception and its testing with actual experience, the latter amending the preconception which is then tested anew by the next experience. Thus each new schema frames and makes sense of the next newly presented data, as we proceed from known to unknown.⁷

The eighteenth century topographic drawings in India were 'accurate' observations by the Daniells and others, but, as Levi-Strauss taught a generation ago, it is impossible to study any society in a 'value-free' manner, to see them as 'pure and untouched by outside influences'⁸ for we inevitably see them as we want to see them—indeed even the notion of *seeing* is likely to be our own and not shared with them. Our very language forms our conceptualisation: the Japanese sense of space—*Mā*—is an active notion related to the space between two warriors, and indeed contains a temporal element (I understand that the Japanese structure of thought is a language of verbs rather than of nouns). The Tzutujil Maya of Guatamala have no word for 'door', but a complex understanding of 'threshold': 'Doorways were for letting things in or letting them out, not for keeping things in or keeping things out like doors did.'⁹

Back simply to the level of visual recognition, Gombrich, discussing this issue, showed how Wolgemut, in his Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493,

when illustrating a number of world cities—from Ferrara and Milan to Damascus—in fact simply substituted different captions for images which retained the one single pictorial formula.¹⁰ Few viewers, of course, could verify images against reality, but this use of a stereotype as starting point is typical. In Wolgemut's case, it stands for all cities. But actually they all have a certain resemblance to his own Nuremberg, for the one *labelled* Nuremberg has been shown¹¹ to have clearly recognisable buildings.

My colleague Christopher Pierce has shown that a whale, in a sixteenth century engraving from the Dutch East Indies, is depicted with an ear in place of its side fin; this misreading came from an earlier engraving of a famous occasion when a whale was beached in the Netherlands and was quite outside any of the observers' previous experience.¹² To start making interpretations of new sensory experience, we battle with stereotypes against the reality out there, but without that extra effort needed to see fin not ear, 'whale' is depicted thus, and so a century later, as emblematic of the exotic East Indies, it appears thus again.

To go back, for a moment, to the Hindu, the source of Brighton Pavilion's odd transplants. The east in early modern Europe was based on supernatural fictions about India from Pliny and Solinus; Marco Polo (published 1298) subdued this mediaeval *imago mundi*, but not for long. The 'Eastern' monsters with many limbs or heads actually came from Greek mythology but also from anomalies beginning to be recounted in obstetric literature. So Indian gods became equivalent to monsters, in earlier times seen as harmless, but by the nineteenth century, as malvolent. We see a Kozhikode (or Calicut) temple

carving portrayed as a European devil in Varthema's *Itinerario* of South India in 1515;¹³ we see images built bizarrely from the great rock-cut image of Siva on the island of Elephanta, showing three heads, blurred with a sixteenth-century story of Ganeša, the elephant-headed god.¹⁴

Even later, once that sixth century Elephanta head is being shown more 'accurately', the meaning of these sculptures eluded the Europeans although the form and craftsman's skill pleased them. The western invaders couldn't understand the 'art', yet they were universally impressed by the 'architecture'. Architecture, less loaded with cultural connotations and anyway with other purposes behind its production, is more easily come to terms with. But here too, formal admiration was linked to workmanship and decoration—separate from its meaning (we might say iconography), isolated from its context. Basically, while the Europeans saw irrational monsters and horrific demons, they also saw them decorating elegant, grand temples whose symmetry and ordered form proved their classical origins. Qualities which offered the occidental critic some relief, one presumes, since colonialism's ultimate desire is, in the words of Homi Bhabha, 'for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.'

3

Today, our archaeology of the Eastern mind is so much advanced from our Victorian fathers, and our sexual sensibilities so much released by our Freudian analyses, that we strive to understand. And this effort really to understand the message of an important building from a culture different to our

own in time or location, in space or in historic period, calls for great effort and insight in its deciphering.

In London in the 1990s, we can build a new Hindu temple. The vast Sri Swaminarayan mandir in Brentfield Road, London, built without ferrous metal (based on an ancient Vedic rule) but to last one thousand years, opened in 1995. It is said that realistic facsimiles are stereotypical depictions that lead to caricature; they seem crude and full of certainty. They lack any admission of hybridity, and that really means of life, smudging, blurring, bleeding out into the wider world. Is this temple in Neasden, an inner London suburb, perfect? Is its political correctness not deadly?

A few years ago, travelling in Tamil Nadu, I had the unforgettable experience of sharing in the ritual of a famous temple which involved the transfiguration of the great ethereal (otherwise invisible) sacred lingam. Deep within this important pilgrimage complex, we—surely the only Europeans and non-Hindus within miles—entered the central colonnaded pyramid, deeper and deeper through extraordinary crowds and activities, colours and smells until at the centre, far from daylight, four of us filling a tiny cube illuminated by flickering oil lamps, in the soaking humid heat of the black, red and golden space, with the brahman's constant chanting, were daubed with crimson spots on our brows, ritually sprinkled with liquid; and in the air of sweat and blood and oil and swaying and chant, the miraculous lingam was realised out of thick air before us. It was extraordinary.

Yes, we must distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols of architecture across

diverse cultural experiences, and the social specificity of each work as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. Certainly. (And anyway there are vast differences between the South India I experienced and the North Indian origins of Neasden's temple.) But I was also left with a feeling of invasiveness, of intrusion, even of violation. Although I was not taking any bits of architecture away in my pocket, I was taking; I had somehow kept some plundering from that place within myself, in my memory.

Today's colonisers are indeed the affluent world tourists, of whom a subgroup is sucking up the architectural heritage. And the 'taking' of photographs is simply the least of their plunder. Tourism is a powerful cultural solvent; it takes customs and beliefs that are locally rooted and distinctive, puts them into the global blending machine and turns them into the liquefied gunk to which a mass market has been primed to respond. And yes, we recycle the world's Great Buildings into virtually 'identical' picture postcards, or the successive glossy pages of another heavy book. As tourism, 'one consequence is the phenomenon known as "staged authenticity", in which a cultural tradition, once celebrated for its own sake and out of a belief in its intrinsic value, turns into a tourist spectacle and thus, insidiously, into a performance.'¹⁵ If architecture is no longer the articulating space for a purpose, as Adorno said, then the buildings have become reified, become things as in a tourist's museum rather than in life; whether in their presence, in their snaps, in their library.

In Thailand, where many local government staff are now told to dress up in national costume at

the office, the people are reasonably shameless about this, inventing new 'cultural' festivals and plagiarising foreign ones—the northern (Buddhist) city of Chuiang Mail has taken to celebrating the (Christian) festival of Mardi Gras.

Helena Norberg-Hodge¹⁶ talks of tourists awing and intimidating indigenous peoples and ultimately undermining their value systems, giving an impression of constant leisure, special powers and 'inexhaustible wealth'.¹⁷ Tourism follows the explorer, but to discover stereotypical experiences *already presented* as exotic.¹⁸ But in a world where increasingly all is presented as spectacle, we can ask, with Ackbar Abbas in his fine essay on Hong Kong,¹⁹ 'Is Hong Kong really no more than the world's largest Chinatown?' What *is* authentic in the collection of images?

Well, the responsible tourist follows Georges Perec's invaluable advice. His text 'On Tourism' reads: 'Rather than visit London, stay at home, in the chimney corner, and read the irreplaceable information supplied by Baedeker (1907 edition).'²⁰ (Words, we note, not pictures.)

Some of the important Hindu sites I visited in India were, in their innermost sanctums, explicitly forbidden to non-Hindus, and this prohibition was almost a relief. Just as only true Muslims may see the Ka'ba. Richard Burton, buccaneering Orientalist *par excellence*, visited Makkah in the mid nineteenth century; risking death if found out. With all his daring and excitement and thrill, I wonder what Makkah could he actually experience, beyond adding a notch on his belt of cultural conquests? When living in Damascus, Burton was 'collecting'—taking—real fragments of traditional Arab

architecture, for his friend the English painter Frederick Leighton, for *his* architect George Aitchison to build into Leighton's house in Kensington. The exotic looting, generations on from our Royal Pavilion, is now of authentic fragments: while these trophies may remain charming, and misunderstood, in London, they might seriously anger a pious Muslim. It is upsetting enough to realise that real pieces of a mosque and a Muslim tomb were plundered to be collaged here;²¹ but there is a real shock for an Arabic reader on visiting Leighton House to see the sacred texts actually jumbled.²² They *decorate* Leighton's walls rather than add meaning to the occupation of his space. *Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim* (in the name of Allah, the most compassionate and most merciful), is ignorantly mixed with *A'autho Billah min Alshaytan Alrajem*. Calligraphy seen simply as beautiful pattern, unbroken tiles being the criterion of their reuse, they are misreadings, collaged in the wrong order.

Of course in our after-modern architecture we lift and collage and quote without care. But once-live symbols can quickly become as sad as the two great imperial lions that used to guard the entrance of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Saved when the building was redeveloped, now—under Foster and Partners' most impressive HSBC tower with no 'entrance', where the ground floor is open to the streets on both sides—they sit like harmless pussycats not knowing which way to look.

And so full circle to Brighton. But The Royal Pavilion didn't invent these forays into cultural conquest, pillage and carelessness of significance. Just as an ordinary Brit on the street may never consider the fact that our largest chain of gambling dens for

the down-at-heel or elderly consist of bingo halls named Mecca, and as such surely offensive to the sensibilities of Islam.

We may look at Andrea Palladio in the sixteenth century, fascinated with the exotic antiquity of Rome whose traces he not only lovingly touches and measures, but whose temple fronts he lifts, and plants onto the front of his own country houses for northern gentleman-farmer clients. An outrageously novel idea but not one really considered blasphemous, as the Roman religious customs had died out over a millennium earlier. There were no aboriginal Romans left to reclaim their ancestral bones, or their sacred forms.

The importance of mistaken readings—and it is not so much hybridity as simply the magpie's intoxication with glitter—accounts, after all, for the Buck Rogers' sense in today's Shanghai as for the Regency's Royal Pavilion. Culture is kept alive by real people making things anew, and that means by *misappropriating*. It is not just awareness of the danger in believing you can entirely understand; it is that there is no space for political correctness in art or design. Absorbing and adapting, in the search for hybridised and syncretic art, is what designers and artists do as a matter of course. Thus, rather than a fear of creeping homogeneity, we see complexity retained within the increasingly globalised world by such creative misreadings. We cannot avoid our own skins, our own frames built by our genes, our families and our culture. For surely, as postmodernism said, there is no such thing as the 'correct' story.

Issues behind writing a world history of architecture lie underneath all these previous remarks.

4

'When we take up a work of history', said E. H. Carr, 'our first concern should not be with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it.'²³ So now I reach Banister Fletcher, whose *A History of Architecture* is described to this day as 'monumental', 'canonical' and having 'played a formative role in the history education of generations of architects in English-speaking institutions.'²⁴

Fletcher, elder son of an architect also named Banister Fletcher, was born in 1866. His father succeeded Robert Kerr as professor of architecture and building construction at King's College, London, in 1890, when his two sons were in their twenties; and shortly he managed to get them both taken on, joining him as lecturers.²⁵ Then, aged thirty, Banister junior was jointly responsible with his father for *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur* (1896). Banister senior, as J. Mordaunt Crook remarked, 'was hardly a profound thinker' who didn't 'venture beyond accumulation into the realm of explanation.'²⁶ However his history book had begun, in Crook's words, 'not as an encyclopaedia but as a thesis.'²⁷ Its comparative method set out to show the influence on each phase of architecture of its context—geographical, climatic, religious, social and political—and to trace their stylistic evolution. The development of true style had dissolved at the Renaissance; but (as their 1896 edition concluded) 'a style or manner of architecture is being slowly worked out, which may ... resist all revivals and fashions, and become the free expression of our own civilisation, and the outward symbol of our 19th century progression.'²⁸

The son, Banister Flight Fletcher, to give his full name, was a minor architect—his only building worth a glance is the Gillette factory by the Great West Road in Osterley (1936). But he had had a good start in life and, following his father, made himself a name in the law of building, becoming a barrister and arbitrator, for which he was knighted in 1919.

He doesn't sound a very pleasant character, and even his eulogy in the Dictionary of National Biography describes him as 'an autocrat and patronising even to his peers', adding that 'he expected much of his staff and scenes were common.' He was probably the first person to think of himself as an architectural historian,²⁹ yet he failed in one central ambition: his repeated attempts to emulate his father by becoming a professor. He married a widow at 48, and on her death married another widow at 67. Being childless, he left much of his property and money to the RIBA library—with the stipulation that it be renamed the 'Sir Banister Fletcher Library'.

In 1921, over twenty years after his father's death Fletcher produced a complete revision of the history book. This, the sixth edition, was entirely rewritten with his wife (his father's name was now dropped), and it had a new set of plates by George G. Woodward and others. The text now played down the viewpoint which had been seen to conclude the first edition; concentrating 'on supplying an epitomised history of world architecture', to use Crook's words, 'Fletcher turned a useful handbook into a veritable student's bible.' This text and illustrations survived with only minor repair and additions through ten further editions into the

1950s, the sixteenth being produced by Fletcher shortly before his death in 1953.

5

I first met the book when a benevolent friend of my father gave me a late printing of that last Fletcher edition in the 1960s, on my starting architecture school. I don't remember ever opening it. It had barely a word on the twentieth century; there was nothing at all on Europe since the renaissance, although it had a chapter on modern architecture in the USA—and one on England. For twentieth century Britain it praised Sir R. Blomfield, Sir J. Simpson, Sir H. Baker, Sir G. G. Scott and Sir R. Lorimer.

After all the sirs who were barely remembered even then, the text continues immediately: 'Space does not permit reference to many architects, including Le Corbusier, Frank [sic] Gropius and Eric Mendelsohn.' The next sentence reads: 'The First World War (A.D.1914–19) influenced every aspect of human life, and the Second World War (A.D.1939–45) will assuredly still further affect the well-being of the community.' Not a book to be read for its profundity of thought, therefore, nor for a sharp grasp of contemporary currents. The clear sense, to put it politely, was simply that—as Francis Fukuyama later said less succinctly than *1066 And All That*—America had won and history had come to a .

The end-papers of the book offer an extraordinary glimpse into its contents. Repeated as a 'wallpaper' pattern, there are four rows of six 'styles' each exemplified with a cartouche, of which the 'Modern English' example is the early Victorian Houses of

Parliament. This, in the 1960s. (The only other history of architecture I'd seen by then was a cartoon one called *Pillar to Post*, whose endpapers, perhaps to mock Fletcher, similarly showed a 'world history'—this time in English costume through the ages.³⁰)

Fletcher's teleological goal, architecturally speaking, was a complacent late-Victorian historicism, underpinned by a deeply national strain. The Whig interpretation of history has been epitomised by *The Economist* in 1848—just when Europeans were taking up arms and the Chartists were ruffling English feathers—writing of the past as 'that series of stepping stones to the exalted position that we now hold.' The Saxons had been supplanted by the more organised Normans, the Tudors got rid of the barons, the Glorious Revolution sealed a fabulous compromise between the aristocracy and the middle classes, we beat the French, we founded an Empire, we industrialised, we ruled the world... and in 1896 nothing was disabusing the Banisters Fletcher, father and particularly his young son, of that. Seventy years later, my copy of the book showed that optimism replaced by a nostalgic body-armour, but yet the images and text were still hardly altered from the post-Great War rewriting.

Still, in this 1960s' edition, those strange images of the key styles of architecture, in their cartouches over the endpapers, are then taken up within the book and placed in a Darwinian hierarchy of wondrous naivety, as lanterns hanging on 'The Tree of Architecture'. This image is the book's frontispiece, and opposite it is the quotation: 'All good architecture is the expression of national life and character. RUSKIN'

The tree is hung with the names of European 'styles' of architecture leading from Greek via

Roman and Romanesque directly to Modern. This last epitomised in the US skyscraper known as the flat-iron building, flanked by tiny almost indistinguishable images of 'revivals' and some strange-looking 'gothic buds'. Below, are hung the western European renaissance images, while below them, the strongest pair of branches hold the western European Gothic. Weak side shoots from Roman are the Saracenic and Byzantine dead ends. And down nearest to the base, are the non-historical, evolutionary dead-ends of Egypt and Assyria; even lower are Peru, China and Japan and, as lowest of all side shoots, are seen Mexico and India.

As a new graduate at the end of the 1960s, I found myself in Sri Lanka running the Colombo school of architecture's history courses. The key text underpinning the curriculum was Banister Fletcher's *History*. And I was actually living amongst Fletcher's definition of the 'other', those lower branches of his tree, which he treated as exotic dead-ends. Students, I was finding in Colombo 35 years ago, were therefore reading their *own* traditions as exotic.³¹ The hegemony of Banister Fletcher in that architecture school is exactly paralleled by studies of how the English language and the concepts it signified in imperial culture were carried to colonised sites through general education, with the attribution of exoticism—as applied to those places and peoples—usually unchanged. Thus schoolchildren in the Caribbean or North Queensland could regard their own vegetation as 'exotic' rather than trees like oak or yew that were 'naturalised' for them as domestic by the English texts.³²

Within months I had removed Banister Fletcher and—as a fresh modernist—replaced it both in

architecture and in ideas. For ideas, I discussed symbolic and cultural functions of architecture, alongside the instrumental ones. For architecture, as well as visiting historic temples in the countryside—refined instruments of a long tradition of cultural performance, and rich in emblematic meanings beyond being merely decorative and charming—I eulogised the aesthetics of fine instruments, getting students to measure the wonderful traditional bullock carts and catamaran fishing boats. I saw the Banister Fletcher text as an anachronistic colonial gaze: offered from the presumed security of the superior—imperial—position, but in a world which I had presumed long vanished.³³

The colonial discourse erases prior constructions; and even the current edition of Banister Fletcher offers American and Chinese histories only from a European perspective (although old China is mentioned 1065 pages earlier) and Korea doesn't exist at all until annexed by Japan in 1910.³⁴

But today it is still the Anglo-centricity that is its most remarkable trait.³⁵ Fletcher's own legacy is generally responsible for that: the bias is clear in the 1830–1900 chapter, where, even in the 1996 edition, the last dozen examples of buildings are described as in Dorset, Northumberland, Brussels, Brussels, Devon, Norfolk, Zakopane, Berkshire, Northumberland, Surrey, Vienna and Łódź. But with Modernism, since he excluded it entirely, Fletcher is blameless. In the current edition there remain, for the twentieth century up to 1939, nearly twice as many English examples illustrated as of the rest of Europe together; and for architecture since 1945 Britain has almost identical space to all the rest of Europe.

The current Banister Fletcher text shows colonial buildings in Canada, Australia, India and China simply because they are *there*; if in Oxford they would scarcely deserve a mention, being assumed provincial and naïve. While the opposite flow might have produced the Brighton Pavilion as a trophy from expeditions east, it would certainly never consider, for example, the western migration and transformation of the bungalow from Bengal.

Yet Banister Fletcher's book had, in fact, been the first survey of architecture to include regions outside 'the West'. Fischer von Erlach, in the eighteenth century, had fancifully accurate images of the Muslim and Chinese 'East'—alongside the seven wonders of the ancient world and Solomon's temple.³⁶ James Fergusson's *A History of the Modern Styles of Architecture* (1862) covers what he scorns as 'the Imitative Styles', stretching eventually round the world from sixteenth century Europe. He is, for example, scathing of gothic and renaissance 'styles' in Calcutta and Lucknow respectively.³⁷ But it was the Fletchers, in their fourth edition of 1901, who formally introduced 'The Non-Historical Styles'. Thus is affirmed the classic colonial position of 'Others' as being 'non-historical'—not just outside history and civilisation, but genetically predetermined to inferiority. Fletcher's non-historical styles included the whole span of Indian, Chinese and Muslim civilisations, as well as the Japanese and Central American ones.

Paradoxically, however, although non-historical, they now had an essential place. As Sir Banister says in my (1954) edition, 'A history of world architecture would be incomplete if we did not pass in review not only those allied and progressive styles

which we designated as Historical, but also those other styles—Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Central American and Saracenic—which remained detached from Western Art and exercised little direct influence on it, and which we therefore term Non-Historical.'

In the following edition, after Fletcher's death and already into the post-colonial later twentieth century, the two parts were renamed: 'Ancient Architecture and the Western Succession' and 'Architecture in the East'. Finally, embarrassed at even that division, the nineteenth edition (John Musgrove's of 1987) divided the whole into seven parts including 'The architecture of Pre-Colonial Cultures outside Europe' and 'The Architecture of Colonial and Post-Colonial Cultures outside Europe'.

History, of course, is written by the victors. But there was something intriguing here: for alongside Fletcher's teleology—his tree with the assumed superiority of the western line, by the nineteenth century global and 'homogenising' and with its unspoken claim to universal values—this 'History of Architecture' contains 'Non-Historical Architecture' (even if the latter is treated quite briefly). How does Fletcher strangely give value to these other traditions and disqualify them at the same time?

These non-historical styles can scarcely be as interesting from an architect's point of view as those of Europe, which have progressed by the successive solution of construction problems resolutely met and overcome; for in the East decorative schemes seem generally to have outweighed all other considerations, and in this would appear to lie the main essential differences between Historical and Non-Historical Architecture.³⁸

It is exactly the sensibility of much earlier colonials and their problems with assessing Indian sculpture which I mentioned at the start. And this is how Fletcher ends the introduction to 'Non-Historical Styles'. It is called 'Part II' in my edition, though it is in fact an 80-page supplement in a book of nearly 1000 pages.

Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoglu has chased further the liminal space between Fletcher's 'Historical' and 'Non-Historical' architectural discourses, in a fascinating 1998 essay in *Assemblage*.³⁹ She takes Derrida's notion of the supplement—something which adds and substitutes, something outside and alien to the original entity—to suggest how Fletcher's construction, by adding this part on, makes it better (more complete) yet at the same time worse (less pure).

Fletcher is not just, obviously, superimposing the Historical/Non-historical architecture division on a West/East one, but in that quotation he is counterposing 'structural solutions' (Western, good) with 'decorative schemes' (Eastern, bad). Yet then, despite his disdain for the Eastern 'striving after excess', he is at the same time fascinated by its decorative richness. This leads Nalbantoglu to muse on the 'tension between the desire for pleasure and the demand to control for self-preservation'⁴⁰ linking with the colonial double burden of curiosity and control.

It was beyond me as a student in the 1960s to deconstruct Fletcher's formation of 'the Other'. And only much later did I share the suggestive sense we might construct of its possible entwined attraction and repulsion; the fascination with the forbidden Other whose seductiveness risks

dissolving Fletcher's whole conceptual structure of the march of architecture.

6

Who was the book for? Its original subtitle, *for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur* immediately made its dual constituency clear. A first aim was to help designers ransack the storehouse of history; a second to offer a basic canon of historical style for the cultivated amateur. For the former, David Watkin declared that generations of architecture students 'have evidently found [it] so helpful.'⁴¹ More interestingly, I learn from Google that today it 'is the standard reference used by architects at Walt Disney Imagineering.'⁴² Among the latter, we see the actor Donald Sinden, on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs*, taking it as his one chosen book; while the Prince of Wales, I am reliably told, keeps it by his bed.

So, trying to honour these twin constituencies—to string some sense for the educated amateur and to offer a quarry for the student—and at the same time acknowledging the fruitfulness of those grey, liminal areas where its different discourses dangerously bleed into each other, I begin to imagine a possible future for Banister Fletcher. In a form which remembers the old Fletcher formula, with that uneasy division into Parts I and II and their difficult in-between space, the new edition will, I propose, have two equally important parts: the one, the non-Anglo-centric narrative, acknowledging all the difficulties with any 'grand narrative' today; the other, the vast storehouse of examples, beautifully, and if possibly comparatively,⁴³ shown.

I conclude with a few images to indicate a position.

The first is related to viewpoint. In Sanjay Subrahmanyam's article 'When the world discovered Portugal'⁴⁴ there is the anecdote of when Vasco da Gama had his first formal audience with the Samudri Raja of Kozhikode in May, 1498. His gifts for the ruler were laughed at outright in this thriving port, rich in Indian Ocean trade. He was told 'this was not a thing to offer a king' and that 'the poorest merchant from Makkah or any other part of India gave more.' We all know the stories world wide of local people welcoming the bizarrely outfitted European explorers, leading them to local landmarks, rivers and sources of food and survival; before the travellers went back with their maps and stories announcing *their* discoveries—as if such places had not existed.

In the well-known portrayal of Shah Jahan receiving Europeans, we see a strikingly beautiful image from around 1650, one of power and subterfuge: the Europeans are in an inferior position, outside the inner court, while they are portrayed in a three-quarters view rather than in the more prestigious profile. This miniature painting is in our Royal Collection, because the album in which it is contained—showing the life of the great Mughal emperor—was given by the Nawab of Oudh to George III in 1797. Did our good George say 'oh what jolly pictures' with as much awareness as his descendant, two Georges further down, in suggesting that the Brighton Pavilion would be awfully nice for making the Indian war wounded feel at home?

If we think of how Mughal and Arabic ideas influenced European architecture, to take one little example, in the construction of renaissance domes,

it just never seems to get into the standard western tales. It's not just that the most beautiful eighteenth century London church happens to be built (in the early nineteenth century) in Madras, but what is going on in all these blurrings; what, after all, is it that is 'almost the same but not quite' here?

This leads me to the second issue, related to focus. It is, as Homi Bhabha stated, in the interstices that we negotiate our definitions. It is there that meanings and identities contain and can bring out traces of other meanings and identities. So the purity of homogeneous cultures and traditions is less fertile than their edges.⁴⁵ To Bhabha the goal is to: 'conceptualise an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. To that end we should remember that it is the "inter"—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.'⁴⁶

Sensitivity to this approach seems far more resonant than the position of Siegfried Giedion, the great historian for my teachers, who was concerned with separating what he called the 'constituent' from what he called the 'transitory' facts in architectural history, inevitably extolling the former set of values to the exclusion of the latter. This may have led to Giedion's neglect of Schinkel or Mackintosh, for example, but I am more concerned with moments of cultural hybridity than simply with transitional figures, interesting and revealing though these often are of the forces around them.

Thirdly, and quietly to reinforce the viewpoint, the terrain must be mapped with care—for the literal map, of course, is a good metaphor for any plan

of action. The notion of cartography is one culture's way of seeing. Defined by who controlled the maps—who names or renames places, whose is the viewpoint—this decides what is 'centre' and what 'periphery'. An unexpected map, however, may jolt us to test the preconceptions and presumptions in our heads as we read. Not using anachronistic maps, particularly in liminal areas, becomes of real importance.

Take one little example: the Aegean rim—the world around Troy, the centre of the origin of the western literary canon, the epics of Homer. Centuries later, the Ionian coastline was a key region of what we now call Classical Greece—whence the 'Ionic order' was taken west, to Attica and beyond. Almost two millennia later, this whole area once more shared 300 years of intense culture, now within the Ottoman empire. But today the divisions fuelled by the early nineteenth century invention of modern Greece and that, a hundred years later, of modern Turkey, run deep. In each culture's architecture schools even today, for example, native historic architecture is key to the history curriculum. In Turkey they tend to focus on the Ottoman ('Turkish') period, aiming to incorporate Seljuk and Ottoman architecture into the Western canon—from which Banister Fletcher, but actually almost all European/US writers until Spiro Kostof,⁴⁷ had excluded them—alongside the Renaissance, Mannerism or Baroque. In Greece meanwhile, they excise the Ottoman and focus not on those recent centuries but on the ancient ('Greek') civilisation of this area.⁴⁸

Any map is an ideological, even a mythological, reification of space. Spivak wrote of the nineteenth

century British soldier walking across the Indian countryside as being 'actually engaged in consolidating the self of Europe' by obliging the native to experience his own ground as imperial space.⁴⁹ The colonial discourse does erase prior constructions and in cartography they have a fine instrument for just this: it is, to their eyes, 'empty' land to receive their inscriptions. But there is another side to her, Spivak's, story. The Brihadeshvara temple at Thanjavur (from 1010 CE), the masterpiece of Chola architecture, has the tallest temple tower in the subcontinent. So the British surveyors grabbed it to use as a trigonometrical point for their survey of all they were conquering. However, the local men, made to carry the heavy brass and glass measuring instruments up to the top dropped them and they broke. Before the English surveyors reappeared to begin their work, the instruments had been recovered and quietly and invisibly mended. Of course the local Indians knew what they were, and probably how to use them. They simply had no interest in making that kind of map.

7

Of course every narrative is a construction, is itself a thread of conjunctions and omissions. Of course linearity is but one route; but of the interwoven threads, each line drawn, however circuitously, builds a new fabric together.

Obviously we have come a long way from declaring the historian's task to be, in von Humbolt's words of 1821 'to present what actually happened', or in Ranke's of 1830 'simply to show how it really was.' Of course in one sense all readings, all 'histories' are provisional. As Barthes famously put it,

'at the level of discourse, objectivity—or the absence of any clues to the narrator—turns out to be a particular form of fiction, where the historian tries to give the impression that the referent is speaking for itself.'⁵⁰

We live at times of great movement, of flowing vistas which Arjun Appadurai pictures as five swirling 'scapes'—the ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, mediascape and ideoscape;⁵¹ and perhaps this is exactly why my narrative thrust will be to go with the flow, to follow the lines of influence and development. I would argue that while such 'scapes' are far more prominent now than in earlier times, they are what have always defined the flows and links and movements, through their disjunctions. And while today we feel the tensions between homogenisation and heterogenisation on a global ground from which no-one can escape, parallel tensions have been felt before, in more limited ways, when people or money or knowledge or images infiltrated between different cultures.

It is far too crude for fashionable critics to dismiss narrative as descriptive rather than analytical, for analysis must underlie the choice of material in any considered narrative. Conversely, with my proposed second part, the album of images, it is reading too much to see it as a powerful narrative.

Iain Borden and David Dunster in their critique of Banister Fletcher note that 'the concentration on factual documentation and the search for comprehensiveness tend to close off the discussion of the meanings.'⁵² No, it simply leaves it out; and Fletcher's store of images (mainly formalised drawings) and precise captions is my model for the second part. While any collection of illustrated places is inevitably

a careful construct, a social artefact itself, it must try to let the contents float free of their moorings. This is less history than archive, and should be clearly useful, not as propaganda but as mnemonic; as copybook or even as scraps to be torn, thrown and collaged—as Fischer von Erlach's Vienna Karlskirche or Koolhaas' Rotterdam Kunsthal.

Perhaps 'the ceremonial ratification of authentic attractions as objects of ultimate value', to quote MacCannell's image of tourism,⁵³ is unavoidable; but perhaps not. Even if 'the World Trade Centre is the most monumental figure of Western urban development' (as Michel de Certeau asserts in 'Walking in the City'—and since he wrote that, it has become the global image of the US as a wounded lion), does that guarantee its inclusion in this trove?

The archive really does recognise that a history involves three parties—the writer, the narrative and the viewer (or reader). Dana Arnold concludes her introduction to *Reading Architectural History* with the standard post-modern mantra: 'The facts can be released from the restraints of positivist, teleological interpretative systems and be seen as fluid entities with a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations.'⁵⁴ Well, while my narrative might try to limit that promiscuity, my album of mugshots offers precisely that opportunity. This second part of the new Banister Fletcher will remain as imagery, to be plundered and misread—as creative people always will. In 1882, as Homi Bhabha has quoted, Ernst Raban considered 'historical error . . . a crucial factor in the building of nations.'⁵⁵ It is equally crucial in the nation of buildings.

So Part Two, in the proposed new edition, is the world of images, where meaning migrates so

easily, once unhooked from the moorings tying it together in Part One. The creative misuses, misunderstandings, misreadings are as important as ever, although designers are not usually these days looking to a history more than a couple of decades back to emulate.

It is all very well for scholars to explain and embed the diverse and exotic cultures of the East, or West, to remind us that 'architectonic imagination is, according to this conception of it, the ability to articulate space purposefully. It constructs forms according to purposes'⁵⁶—but an architect has to steal, has to use creative memory, has to interrupt and thus distort.

The starting points of architectural design today, while not overtly historical, remain as profoundly superficial as ever: the student copies the forms, say, of Peter Eisenman; Eisenman derives the form for a hospital from the imaged pattern of a cardiac rhythm. Hopefully my narrative will find a way to contextualise the latter, and my archive of images offer material for the former. Combinatorial logic, as Alex Tzonis states,⁵⁷ is one of the central ways that architectural creativity works. New design ideas are born out of the recombination of precedents; precedents brought together in unprecedented ways, and, I would stress, often thanks to inattentive readings. Such plundering is an intellectually respectable exercise. It is how ideas grow—and it is what will help increase hybridised diversity in the creative products of an apparently increasingly homogenised world.

And maybe it was what Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture*, a century ago, was all about.

Notes and references

1. This essay is enlarged from a paper given to the international conference *Globalisation and Representation*, University of Brighton, UK, 11th to 13th March, 2005.
2. Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London, Viking, 1988), p. 343.
3. Iain Borden and David Dunster, *Architecture and the Sites of History* (Oxford, 1995), p.1.
4. Adrian Forty, Irena Murray and Neil Warnock-Smith respectively.
5. Theodor Adorno, 'Functionalism', trs., J. Newman and J. Smith, *Oppositions 17* (Summer, 1979), pp. 30–41.
6. Designed by the father of the urban theorist Jacqueline Tyrwhitt.
7. Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London, Phaidon, 1960, and New York, Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 189, quotes C. F. Ayer, the psychologist: 'The trained drawer acquires a mass of schemata by which he can produce a schema of an animal, a flower or a house quickly upon paper. This serves as a support for the representation of his memory images, and he gradually modifies the schema until it corresponds to that which he would express.'
8. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964).
9. Martin Prechtel, *Secrets of the Talking Jaguar: Unmasking the Mysterious world of the Living Maya* (USA, Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1999).
10. Ernst Gombrich, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
11. G. Strauss, *Nuremberg in the 16th Century* (New York, 1966), pp. 10–11. (I take this reference, and surrounding discussion, from Partha Mitter's fascinating *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977).
12. This earlier example is noted by Simon Schama in *The Embarrassment of Riches* (University of California Press, 1992).
13. Ludovico di Varthema *Itinerario* (of South India), 1503–8, first illustrated edition (Augsburg, 1515); reproduced in Mitter, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
14. Cartari's 'images', with Pignoria's additions, reproduced in Mitter, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
15. This is from an article torn from *The New Statesman*, c.2003, its author and date unfortunately lost.
16. Helena Norberg-Hodge, *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh* (revised edition) (London, Rider, 2000).
17. Ladakh, or 'Little Tibet', is a beautiful desert land up in the Western Himalayas. It is a place of few resources and an extreme climate. Yet for more than one thousand years, it has been home to a thriving culture. Traditions of frugality and co-operation, coupled with an intimate and location-specific knowledge of the environment, enabled the Ladakhis not only to survive, but to prosper. Everyone had enough to eat; families and communities were strong; the status of women was high. Then came 'development'. Now in the modern sector one finds pollution and divisiveness, inflation and unemployment, intolerance and greed. Centuries of ecological balance and social harmony are under threat from the pressures of Western consumerism.
18. Was this me in India? Although, of course, the middle-class alibi is to consider oneself as traveller, the others as tourists.
19. Ackbar Abbas, 'Building on Disappearance', in *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 1977).
20. Georges Perec, 'The Town', in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (Penguin, 1997, 1999), p. 64.
21. Letters from Burton to Leighton, 22nd March, 1871 and 13th July, 1876. I am most grateful for all this information to Faredah Al'Murahhem, PhD candidate at the University of Brighton.
22. Faredah Al'Murahhem, in her paper 'An Arab Woman Within the Arab Hall', ASTENE (Association for the

- study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East), Manchester Conference, 14th–18th July, 2005 (Proceedings forthcoming), is the first person, as far as I am aware, to make this point.
23. E. H. Carr, *What is History* (Penguin, 1961), p. 22.
 24. Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoglu, 'Towards Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*', *Assemblage*, 35 (1998), pp.6–17, p.7.
 25. See J. Mordaunt Crook, 'Architecture and History', *Architectural History*, Vol. 27 (1984), p. 566.
 26. *Ibid.*
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 567.
 28. Banister Fletcher and Banister F. Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur, Being a Comparative View of the Historical Styles from the Earliest Period* (1896), pp. 4, 293.
 29. Crook, *op. cit.*
 30. My copy is Osbert Lancaster, *Here of All Places: The pocket lamp of Architecture incorporating Pillar to Post . . .* (London, John Murray, 1960).
 31. There is of course the issue that Modernism appeared to treat *all* traditions as exotic dead-ends, and so the colonial thrust in this picture is subtly intertwined with that of the iconoclastic Modern.
 32. See Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 95.
 33. It wasn't long before I was thrown out for ruffling traditionalist feathers in the hierarchy.
 34. Dan Cruickshank, ed., Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*, twentieth edition (Oxford, 1996), p. 1166.
 35. In the renaissance, Italy rules supreme with Austria, Germany and Central Europe seen as simply derivative (pp. 979–985, etc.), yet England is treated with great enthusiasm (pp. 1011–2, etc.) with loads of rather every-day English examples illustrated (eg, pp. 822–4).
 36. Joh. Bernh. Fischer von Erlach, *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architectur* (1721; Leipzig, 1725, 2nd ed.).
 37. James Fergusson, *A History of the Modern Styles of Architecture* (London, John Murray, 1862), pp. 414–5 and 417–9 respectively, while the crescendo of his spleen climaxes wonderfully on p. 422.
 38. Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*, sixteenth edition, p. 888.
 39. Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoglu, *op. cit.*, *Assemblage*, 35, pp.6–17.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
 41. David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History* (London, The Architectural Press, 1980), p. 87. A comment which makes me think he has not had any contact with an architecture student during the previous half century.
 42. Actually J. C. Palmes' eighteenth edition of 1975.
 43. The Fletcher notion of 'The Comparative Method', only dropped from the title in the most recent editions, is not discussed here.
 44. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'When the world discovered Portugal', *V&A Magazine* (Autumn, 2004), p. 34.
 45. Always fascinated by the margins, I long ago tried writing an MA thesis about the extremely impure, peripheral 'classical' architecture of the Nabataeans (at Petra, Jordan), but gave up for lack of material, settling on the nineteenth century figure of Alexander Thomson as an equally impure, peripheral 'classical' architect, instead.
 46. Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
 47. Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985), allowed a spirit which, two decades later, reached a glorious peak in Gülru Necipoglu's *The Age of Sinan* (London, Reaktion, 2005).
 48. See Gülüm Baydar, 'Teaching Architectural History in Turkey and Greece', *JSAH*, 62: 1 (March, 2003), p. 84.

49. G. Spivak, 'The Rani of Simur', in Francis Barker *et al.*, eds, *Europe and its others, vol. 1* (Colchester, University of Essex Press, 1985).
50. Roland Barthes, 'Le discours de l'histoire', in *Structuralism a Reader* (London, Cape, 1970), pp.149–54. I can at least say I've been aware of this issue for some time: see my 1971 *University of Essex, A Case Study* (special issue of *The Architects' Journal*, September, 1972), and the following discussion.
51. Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjunction and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture, Nationalism: Globalisation and Modernity* (London, Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 295–310.
52. Borden and Dunster, *op.cit.*, p.1.
53. D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, Schocken, 1976), p. 14.
54. Dana Arnold, *Reading Architectural History* (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 13.
55. E. Raban, 'What is a Nation?', lecture at the Sorbonne, 11th March, 1882, reprinted in Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London, Routledge, 1990), p. 11.
56. Adorno, *op. cit.* (as note 5).
57. A. Tzonis, *Creative Design* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT, n.d.), quoted in Liane Lefavre, *Leon Battista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 1997), p. 46.