Negotiating the spirit of place: towards a performative authenticity of historic buildings

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ABSTRACT: This chapter explores the utility of an existentialist understanding of authenticity for the historic built environment. Historic building conservation and adaptation has long been synonymous with objective authenticity, which is falling increasingly out of step with both the contemporary understanding of heritage as an intangible social process, and the redefinition of building conservation as the management of change. Drawing on the existentialist idea of authenticity as a dynamic process of intra- and inter-personal negotiations, this theoretical contribution works towards a revised framework that suggests focus should be placed on how built heritage practitioners can perform authentically, rather than measure authenticity. The concept of 'performative authenticity' for historic buildings – underpinned by 'participation', 'locus' and 'action' – is outlined as an approach that can foster a more relevant and applicable concept of authenticity for contemporary building conservation and adaptation practices.

1 INTRODUCTION

Within the overlapping spheres of building conservation and architectural heritage, authenticity is a central concept in both academia (Jokilehto, 2009, p. 126) and practice (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 79). A formalised version of the term was first brought into a heritage context by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) via their *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (the Venice Charter) (ICOMOS, 1964). Interestingly, ICOMOS itself was founded to promote the ethos of the charter through professional expertise (Waterton, 2010, p. 41). This included the conceptualization of authenticity as a universal characteristic that heritage experts could use to quantify the value of historic building fabric (Silverman, 2015, p. 73; Silverman & Fairchild Ruggles, 2007, p. 4). Following the Venice Charter, practical and methodological guidance for built heritage professionals has been primarily magnetised towards material problems of authenticity as the principal point of departure. Consequently, historic building authenticity in the West is primarily conceptualised as a measurable and objective value (Gao & Jones, 2020, p. 2; Labadi, 2010, p. 79; Lenzerini, 2011, p. 113) – qualities which characterise 'objective authenticity' (see Cohen, 2007, p. 76; Rickly-Boyd, 2012, p. 272; Su, 2018, p. 933). The UK is a prime example of this understanding, with the lineage of ideas that stem from the Venice Charter being transmitted through the ICOMOS *Guidelines for Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites* (ICOMOS, 1993, p. 1) and into prominent UK building conservation training routes (see AABC, 2019; IHBC, 2008; RIBA, 2014).

This point of departure has set in motion two key concepts in relation to the authenticity of historic buildings: 1) the fetishization of material aging, or 'patina' (Gao & Jones, 2020, p. 9; D. A. Scott, 2016, p. 11; Walter, 2020, p. 212); and 2) the marginalisation of replication/ copying as a deceptive activity (Goulding, 1998, p. 838; F. Scott, 2008, p. 62). These two concepts, alongside an objective understanding of authenticity, create what Scott (2008, p. 180) refers to as the 'triplet of ordinates' which sustain the scientific treatment of historic buildings. Resulting from these ordinates, manmade changes to historic buildings are conventionally made visually legible (Earl, 2003, p. 108; Gao & Jones, 2020, p. 9; D. A. Scott, 2016, p. 11; Stubbs & Makaš, 2011, p. 59), meaning authenticity is employed as much as an aesthetic attribute as it is a philosophical underpinning. Earl (2003, p. 108) describes this as the habit of 'super-honesty', which responds to the risk of individuals feeling cheated by the building if its history is misinterpreted. The professional act of building conservation is therefore at its core a somewhat burdensome 'truth-enforcement operation' (Cobb, 2014, p. 7; Muñoz Viñas, 2005, p. 91). This is troublesome because it relies upon answers to more complex philosophical problems concerning the nature of truth, its relationship to the self and society, and of course, whose truth it refers to. Fundamental questions such as these both inspire and guide the overarching deconstructivist logic of this contribution.

As will be discussed, authenticity within building conservation and architectural heritage has generally remained limited to this dominant objective definition, despite there being various credible and complimentary advances on authenticity in other fields over the last century. It is perhaps no surprise then that Orbaşli (2017, p. 157) believes '…established conservation principles and the tools that support them are woefully ill-equipped to respond to rapidly shifting attitudes…'. Of particular interest to this research are the ideas on authenticity within the field of existential philosophy (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 300), including the comparatively recent advancements evident within tourism studies (itself a child of European existential philosophical thought (Su, 2018, p. 923)). More specifically, existentialist thinking supports the notion of authenticity as a dynamic activity of self-making, which is reconciled within tourism studies by integrating self, society and objects through *negotiated* experiences between individuals, things and places.

This chapter is interested in how the evolving understanding of existentialist authenticity is applicable to the equally evolving Western conceptualization of heritage from physical sites (tangible) to social practices (intangible), which correspondingly works towards the idea of heritage being a dynamic process that responds to its ever-changing cultural context (Fairchild Ruggles & Silverman, 2009, p. 11; Lenzerini, 2011, p. 101). How might the commonalities between existentialist authenticity and intangible heritage advance the conversation surrounding historic building authenticity, and what it means to champion truth, honesty and originality

within contemporary building conservation practice? Undeniably, critical questions such as these are becoming increasingly important to ask when considering the growing trend in heritage studies and practices towards the immaterial (see Djabarouti, 2020b; Harrison, 2013, p. 86) – a heritage domain that Buckley (2019, p. 62) explicitly suggests '…might usefully lead to an expanded set of conservation outcomes'. This implies it may also lead to a significant shift in how the authenticity of historic buildings is conceptualised within a contemporary conservation context.

To bring these ideas within the walls of building conservation, this chapter suggests the concept of *genius loci* (or *spirit of place*) is the most logical theoretical terrain to accommodate these shifting understandings of authenticity and heritage. Spirit of place is a dynamic, existentialist concept that focuses on the 'essence' of place (Shirazi, 2014, p. 43). In architecture, its application seeks to understand how built form can support this (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 87; Shirazi, 2014, p. 42), by focussing on both tangible and intangible qualities of places (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 6; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 88; Shirazi, 2014, p. 43). Spirit of place can also be applied more specifically to the historic built environment in terms of how the contextual relationship between people and history is represented through the layering of changes to historic sites (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 87; Shirazi, 2014, p. 3).

Whilst these ideas may serve to establish new ways of thinking about how architecture can be designed to support negotiation with historic places, as well as how urban design may be enriched through a focus on the user experience of cities, this chapter is keen to focus more specifically on how the relational quality between the building, self, and society, may afford new potentialities for developing a more applicable concept of authenticity for contemporary building conservation practice. It does this by firstly contextualising the prevailing understanding of authenticity within the remit of building conservation, including why it is understood as an objective quality. Following this, the idea of conservation as the management of change is employed as a way to reconceptualise historic building authenticity from an existentialist perspective, with particular attention placed on the *negotiations* between people and buildings. The chapter then turns its focus to spirit of place and how it may contribute towards a more dynamic conception of historic building authenticity by supporting the idea that authenticity can be produced. Lastly, a revised 'triplet of ordinates' is proposed as a framework for transcending the scientific treatment of old buildings, in order to work towards a more performative interpretation of historic building authenticity.

2 AUTHENTIC OBJECTS AND LIVING THINGS

Authenticity refers to oneself, authorship and authority (Cobb, 2014, p. 1; Jokilehto, 2009, p. 125; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 80; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 300), yet some of its earliest applications were related to the authentication of objects (Rajagopalan, 2012, p. 308). In building conservation and architecture, authenticity has since become a central theme (Brown & Maudlin, 2012, p. 347; Rajagopalan, 2012, p. 308), with conventional understandings being compatible with the characteristics of 'objective authenticity' – a term that is comprehensively defined within tourism studies (see Chhabra, 2012, p. 499; Cohen, 2007, p. 76; Rickly-Boyd, 2012, p. 272). Objective authenticity suggests a building has an innate genuineness that can be determined through professional expertise (Rickly-Boyd, 2012, p. 272; Wilks & Kelly, 2008, p. 131). For historic buildings, this places a heavy emphasis on the documentary value of materials (Jokilehto, 2018, p. 29; Jones & Yarrow, 2013, p. 6), as well as the original architectural design concept (Orbaşli, 2008, p. 51). Of particular interest in this regard is the universality that this has given to historic building authenticity – both in terms of its meaning and quantification (Waterton, 2010, p. 39; Waterton & Smith, 2010, p. 12). For example, consider the UNESCO 'test of authenticity' and its list of established parameters to gauge how authentic a place is (Jokilehto, 2006, p. 7; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 79).

   Associated with this understanding of historic building authenticity is the concept of 'character', which Yarrow (2018, p. 332) describes as '…one of a complex of interlinked concepts, including "authenticity", "integrity" and "honesty"'. This use of anthropomorphism specifically within building conservation practice is a widespread and commonplace approach that goes some way towards justifying an objective conceptualization of authenticity. Historic buildings are often anthropomorphised in order to give them individual 'agency', 'character', and 'social lives' (Jones, 2009, p. 140; Walter, 2020, p. 30; Yarrow, 2018, p. 332, 2019, p. 14). This is especially prominent in architecture and building conservation literature, which promotes the life of a building as fundamental towards the understanding of its value and significance. For example, key texts speak of living buildings (Insall, 2008); the lives of buildings (Hollis, 2009); the voices of buildings (Littlefield & Lewis, 2007); how buildings learn (Brand, 1995); and so on. The notion of the building as a living entity is thus framed by the belief that heritage practitioners can perceive life, character and temperament from old buildings. By inference, this implies it is possible to address anything about the building that is life*less*, or 'out of character' (Yarrow, 2018, p. 341, 2019, p. 14). Part of this process is to impose a certain ethic on to the building – or moral social code – which represents the collective virtues and standards of a particular society/ culture (Di Betta, 2014, p. 87). In doing so, it becomes possible to attribute objective values to historic buildings by judging them against a set

of shared social codes (Yarrow, 2019, p. 4). This is why Smith (2006, p. 91) refers to anthropomorphism as a process of 'legitimization' that the conservation sector uses to support traits of universality and inherent value.

It is also important to highlight that unlike new architecture, building conservation has a necessary preoccupation with decay prevention (DeSilvey, 2006, p. 326; Feilden, 2003, p. 3), which creates a poetic parallel between the death of people and the decay of buildings (DeSilvey, 2017, p. 158; Glendinning, 2013, p. 17). The existential worries about life that ever-aging societies carry with them are consequently imposed upon (and embodied by) the historic building stock (Kobialka, 2014, pp. 358–359; Winter, 2013, p. 535). For existentialists, these worries are what can stimulate the necessary actions to inspire authenticity of the self (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 313). However, as existentialist authenticity is concerned with the relationship between self and action on the journey towards 'self-making' (Cobb, 2014, p. 7), it is a subjective concept that cannot be measured and therefore problematises the notion of historic buildings being embodiments of social codes. As Golomb (1995, p. 145) explains:

> Suppose we assume that authenticity can be implemented in society. This endows it with objective import. But this objective meaning undermines its standing as an individual pathos rather than a universal ethic.

This reflects the broader friction that exists within existentialist thinking between the subjective notion of the self and the notion of a social existence of the self within society. Tourism studies reconciles this conflict by relating individual activities to broader concepts of identity and value (Su, 2018, p. 922). Accordingly, individuals who place themselves within a touristic scenario do so '…with the purpose to investigate upon their true selves' (Di Betta, 2014, p. 88). This understanding is not distracted by debates concerning whether the built environment is 'real', as it focuses more on whether the individual is being true or real to themselves by partaking in the experience in the first place (Su, 2018, p. 923). Developing this further, a recent study by Su (2018) attempts to better conceptualise the subjectivities of intangible heritage by discussing the performance of authenticity by individual heritage practitioners within host communities (Su, 2018, p. 934). This acknowledgment of self and society within existentialist authenticity stems from an earlier study by Wang (1999) who established intra-personal (individual) and inter-personal (social) dimensions of existentialist authenticity. Steiner and Reisinger (2006, p. 308) have since advanced this concept by connecting it to the Heideggerian notion that individuals can encourage each other to seek out a more authentic existence. When applying this concept to the built heritage practitioner and the personified historic building, practitioners are perhaps able to feel more authentic in themselves and their practice (intra-personal) by establishing an active relationship with the building (inter-personal). This relationship is driven by a desire to seek out a more authentic existence for the

building, which must be achieved by altering its physical fabric to satisfy contemporary social codes that are imposed upon it.

3 AUTHENTIC CHANGE AND NEGOTIATED AUTHENTICITY

Despite evolving understandings of heritage and authenticity over the past century, building conservation has engaged very little with alternative theoretical underpinnings. This has not only resulted in a fixed conception of historic building authenticity, but also in a fairly static scope of conservation processes (Buckley, 2019, p. 62). Seeking to challenge this, the contemporary conservation theory of Salvador Muñoz Viñas states objective authenticity is a fictitious concept that wrongly implies a preferred (and therefore static) condition is a more authentic one:

> The belief that the preferred condition of an object is its authentic condition, that some change performed upon a real object can actually make it more real, is an important flaw in classical theories of conservation.
>
> (Muñoz Viñas, 2005, pp. 95–97)

This is a critical perspective that has gained increasing momentum over the past decade, with authentic change becoming an increasingly popular sentiment that is gradually overshadowing the idea of fixing a building at a particular moment in time. Walter's (2020) 'Narrative Theory' of conservation is one such theoretical example that demonstrates the utility of this perspective for built heritage practice. Other theoretical developments that also align with this idea of authenticity work towards the reconceptualization of heritage buildings as dynamic – whether as cultural events (DeSilvey, 2017, p. 29); moving entities (Latour & Yaneva, 2008); or ever-changing material and social hybrids (Djabarouti, 2020a). Even the formal definition of conservation within built heritage guidance is now defined as '…the process of managing change' (Historic England, 2008, p. 22).

The move towards conservation being primarily associated with change reflects one of the most relevant concepts that underpins existentialist authenticity, which is the idea that authenticity is a fluid and dynamic quality. An individual cannot be always authentic; nor can there be a static concept of an authentic self that one can gradually aspire towards (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 302; Su, 2018, p. 923). As Detmer (2008, p. 141) explains from the perspective of Jean-Paul Sartre:

> …our inescapable freedom carries with it the consequence that we never arrive, can never rest, can never coincide with ourselves. We cannot stop exercising our freedom. So our values must also always be dynamic, never static. . . The value lies in the doing, and not in the arriving at a permanent stopping point.

Authenticity for the existentialists is thus not a static 'value' that can be attributed to historic buildings; rather, it is the ongoing process of conveying values in some way (Su, 2018, p. 924), which means historic building authenticity must also evolve in direct correlation with societal change. This quality further implies that there exists an imperative to learn more about oneself through the ongoing experience of life ('the doing'). In relation to built heritage, Gao and Jones (2020, p. 14) refer to this as the 'experience of authenticity', and describe it as '…the unfolding relations between people and "old things" over time'. For them, authenticity of self and objects are brought together through contemporary negotiations of authenticity (Gao & Jones, 2020). Hence the term *negotiated authenticity*, which refers to the relationship(s) between the material (tangible) and immaterial (intangible) (Jones, 2010, p. 195; Su, 2018, p. 920). Negotiated authenticity places an enhanced focus on secular societal rituals and performances as methods to actively seek out authenticity (Rickly-Boyd, 2012, p. 272), making it not only a subjective quality of self-making, but also an inherently creative activity involving various people, stakeholders, places and values (García-Almeida, 2019, p. 411; Jones, 2010, p. 195). Note the similarity here between negotiated authenticity and Wang's (1999) aforementioned intra- and inter-personal existentialist dimensions, both of which work towards reconciling the existentialist friction between self and society.

4   NEGOTIATING THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

Within the polarities of heritage (tangible/ intangible; objective/ subjective; society/ self), there is a common sentiment that intangible heritage is the antithesis to built heritage. Yet immaterial manifestations of culture are not completely alien within building conservation and architecture, with the notion of *genius loci* (or *spirit of place*) being closely related to the concept of authenticity (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 90). It is Christian Norberg-Schulz (1966, 1979) who made a significant contribution towards its use within the subject of architecture in the twentieth century (Otero-Pailos, 2012, p. 145; K. Smith, 2012, p. 362). Situated under the theoretical umbrella of architectural phenomenology, Norberg-Schulz based his architectural understanding of spirit of place on the Heideggerian concept of existentialist phenomenology (Seamon, 1993, p. 3; Shirazi, 2014, p. 5):

> Genius loci is a Roman concept. According to ancient Roman belief every "independent" being has its genius, its guardian spirit. This spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence. . . The genius thus denotes what a thing is, or what it "wants to be". . . It suffices to point out that ancient man experienced his environment as consisting of definite characters. In particular he recognized that **it is of great existential importance to come to terms with the genius of the locality where his life takes place**.
>
> (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 18)
> (bold added)

At its simplest, architectural phenomenology asserts that historic buildings are best interpreted through interaction and direct contact between people and buildings (Otero-Pailos, 2012, p. 139). To achieve this, Norberg-Schulz focuses primarily on the perception of architecture, which is split into the present, dynamic qualities of the phenomenon, and the lasting, static qualities of the object (see Norberg-Schulz, 1966, p. 28). Spirit of place therefore maintains a focus on the intangible, experiential and unique qualities of a building or place – thus amalgamating intangible phenomena with the very corporeal monumentality of buildings (Kamel-Ahmed, 2015, p. 70; K. Smith, 2012, p. 362; Turner & Tomer, 2013, p. 192). Furthermore, it emphasises the mutability of all phenomena by rendering it a product of perception, and thus liable to constant change, in line with our own personal outlooks (Norberg-Schulz, 1966, p. 31).

Whilst various critics of architectural phenomenology describe it as illogical and lacking substance (Otero-Pailos, 2012, p. 139; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 88; K. Smith, 2012, p. 363), these criticisms are often delivered from the perspective of its utility within the architectural design process, rather than its ability to develop a more nuanced understanding of historic building authenticity. For the most robust heritage document on spirit of place, we must return to ICOMOS, who produced the *Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place* (ICOMOS, 2008). This is the first attempt to both formalise and quantify the term for a broader heritage audience. In contrast to Norberg-Schulz, the declaration more simplistically defines spirit of place as:

> …the tangible (buildings, sites, landscapes, routes, objects) and the intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colors, odors, etc.), that is to say the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place.
>
> (ICOMOS, 2008, p. 2)

There are some clear overlaps across the concepts of negotiated authenticity and spirit of place, such as their construction by various stakeholders; their dynamic ever-changing qualities; and their reliance on participation/ communication (see ICOMOS, 2008, pp. 2–4). This is no coincidence, with negotiated authenticity maintaining an existentialist slant due to its position at the interface between materialist and constructivist ideology (Chhabra, 2012, p. 499); and spirit of place being rooted in Heideggerian existentialism (Otero-Pailos, 2012, p. 145). Accordingly, both work on the existentialist premise that it is possible to produce authenticity in some way – whether that be through personal ever-changing perceptual and psychological interpretations of the built environment, or social interactions/ experiences that individuals (re)negotiate in particular places with specific buildings. This key principle overcomes three familiar dualisms that sustain prevailing views on historic building authenticity:

1. It addresses the all-too-familiar tangible-intangible heritage binary, by placing emphasis on the interactivity of heritage domains, rather than their division.

2. It tackles the existentialist friction between self and society by focussing on the performances that embed the individual within a social process.

3. It blurs the threshold between social and material phenomena by de-centralising people and objects, and focusing instead on the constructed relationships that binds them together.

Overcoming these dualisms means there is no fixed target of historic building authenticity to aim for; nor is there a definitive architectural form or design that can best represent authenticity. Conversely, it is something that is made in the present, through various interactions and negotiations, which emerge from the application of contextualised social and moral codes. There can therefore be no 'test of authenticity' – at least not in the way that UNESCO puts it. Instead, it is perhaps better to focus on achieving an honest performance of authenticity, which requires an understanding of how practitioners can best do heritage, in their quest towards both intra- and inter-personal dimensions of existentialist authenticity. Part of this recalibration will require practitioners to focus on understanding how authentic experiences can be supported, rather than quantified. This reflects the need for significantly more emphasis on 'participation' and 'consultation' within building conservation practices to support a shift '…from the conservation of truth to the conservation of meanings in contemporary conservation' (Orbaşli, 2017, p. 163).

5 TOWARDS A PERFORMATIVE AUTHENTICITY

Based on the understanding of authenticity as a constructed or produced concept, historic building authenticity is not something that is protected by conservation and adaptation processes; rather, it *is* these very processes that (re)produce it in the first place (also see Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019, p. 92). Scott's (2008, p. 180) aforementioned triplet of ordinates for the scientific treatment of buildings can correspondingly be revised to work towards a **performative authenticity** of historic buildings, which re-frames the building as a representation of an ongoing social process. This alternative framework is underpinned by the proposed ordinates of *participation*, *locus* and *action*:

- **Participation** refers to the value in 'the doing' for both 'self' and 'society'. It captures the idea of performance being both an intra-personal professional act, as well as an inter-

personal social activity. This acknowledges that authenticity is not something that is extracted from collections of physical heritage, but is a constantly shifting collection of social and moral codes that can be actively imposed on buildings through community engagement processes.

- **Locus** refers to a deeper and more subjective experience of place. It goes beyond the usual association with 'setting' to encompass both subjective and present experiences of buildings, together with the continuity of their unique physical qualities. Authenticity as a rich and deep understanding of context (social and physical) – rather than an objective and generalised test – facilitates the use of specific social perspectives as a means to understand how best to *practice* building conservation, and thus how best to act authentically within these practices.

- **Action** refers to the need to exercise freedom to perform authentically. For practitioners, it is the act of conserving and adapting buildings that exercises freedom through creative acts – processes which are represented by physical changes to buildings. To work towards an authentic historic building means to exercise personal and social freedom through change. This relates to the individual practitioner not only as author of their own actions, but also as representative of contextualised social codes that must arise from sustained participatory practices. Methods for engaging with historic materials should therefore arise from constantly re-evaluated practices, rather than from a preoccupation with dogmatic conservation principles.

Utilisation of these ordinates in practice could take many forms, although there are clear methodological examples of how they may manifest within the *performance* of building conservation. For example, they could foster learning and engagement at historic buildings/ sites through localised events such as walking tours (Douglas, Ellis, & Lacanienta, 2018, p. 32; Markwell, Stevenson, & Rowe, 2004, p. 460); or support community governance through activities such as cultural mapping (Longley & Duxbury, 2016, p. 1). Their application could also encourage more creative participatory acts through recreational performances and art activities (DeSilvey, 2017, p. 170; Jones, 2017, p. 25). Thus, the notion of performance as proposed here (the term that encompasses all three ordinates) goes beyond a reference to the practice of building conservation by the practitioner alone, and into a new arena of methods that professionals can utilise as stimulus to support decision making for alternations to the physical fabric of historic buildings. This increased focus on the user experience of place could also form the basis for meaningful modifications at an urban scale, with the de-emphasis on material

change placing greater emphasis on the dynamics of urban space. Certainly, the key to all these examples is their ability to continually re-evaluate built heritage across time as societal needs develop – the ongoing production of authenticity.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In attempting to outline a contemporary understanding of historic building authenticity, this chapter has relied heavily upon an existentialist outlook as a means to develop a revised framework for built heritage practitioners to perform authentically, rather than to measure authenticity. Indeed, part of existentialist thinking is to challenge dominant viewpoints and question existing ways of doing and thinking (Golomb, 1995, p. 1), which has been the fundamental purpose of this contribution. By outlining the prevailing understanding and use of a typically Western conception of objective historic building authenticity, the aim has been to highlight the disparities between current building conservation practices and the broader shift towards intangible (immaterial, dynamic and localised) conceptions of heritage. By moving beyond anthropomorphised and material-centred themes and towards the revised ordinates of participation, locus and action, building conservation can instead focus on the dynamics *between* materials and meanings, which can foster greater negotiation between people and history at building, site, and urban scales. Of course, this will always result in a focus on the physical fabric at some point in the process – after all, those who are tasked with altering historic buildings must indeed, alter them. Yet this chapter suggests these alterations should no longer form the point of departure in themselves; nor should they determine or be bound by outmoded ideas of authenticity. Instead, they should arise from a very conscious and genuine performance, which may support a deeper understanding of truth, on the quest towards a more relevant concept of authenticity for contemporary building conservation practices.

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS