

The Tribune Tower: *Spolia* as Despoliation¹

Annabel J. Wharton

Spolia is now an art historical term for the recycling of architectural fragments. It has lost its classical reference to the predatory confiscation and display of plunder necessary to the public spectacle of power. The ancients never forgot the blood that was essential to the aura of booty. Now, however, there are no denuded corpses. The dead are just buildings. This essay offers an example of a modern structure that despoils the past without anybody noticing. The Tribune Tower, a charming high-rise that contributes to the filigree of the Chicago skyline, appears utterly innocent. Only a careful observer recognizes the sacrifice made by other buildings for its construction of a corporate image.

Despoiling History

In 1922, the Chicago Tribune Corporation held an international competition to secure the design “for a structure distinctive and imposing – the most beautiful office building in the world”. “The World’s Greatest Newspaper”, the newspaper itself claimed, “had helped materially in the building of a world-city (Chicago) in a new world; it would give to that city the ultimate in civic expression – the world’s most beautiful office building.” Implicit in the competition program is the assumption – remarkable for the 1920s – that an office building might offer the consummate symbol of civic order. The

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corporation was already displacing the state as the site of urban power and municipal pride; a building was the agent by which the new status of the corporation was reified.

Over 260 submissions were made to the competition, representing the work of the world's principal practicing architects. Entries ranged from the bizarre to the visionary. As required by the competition program, all of the submissions were technologically current, steel-frame high-rises. The modern body of the building was, however, in most of the entries, draped in historical garb – Egyptian, Classical, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance. A few curiously literal submissions offered an ancient building or ancient building part as a modern structure (an Egyptian column, a Roman triumphal arch). More entrants proposed history on a pedestal. Famous buildings from the past (the Parthenon, Hagia Sophia, Westminster Abbey's Chapterhouse) were set on top of immensely high bases, themselves adorned with historically appropriate, but structurally irrelevant architectural motives (fluted pilasters, marble grills, flying buttresses). A few notable submissions presented structures that acknowledged the modernity of their own moment. The Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen offered a handsome proto-Deco skyscraper. Walter Gropius and Hannes Meyer from the Bauhaus in Germany presented a building that fully realized the form-follows-function aesthetic invented locally by Louis Sullivan and his fellow architects of the Chicago School; it prefigured the glass and steel monoliths of the 1950s and 1960s. The *Chicago Tribune* published the submissions in 1923 in a lavish folio edition (Fig. 9.1). Most of the entrants were published again, in a small paperback, by Rizzoli in 1980 (Fig. 9.2). First prize in the competition and the commission for the new corporate headquarters was awarded to the neo-Gothic proposal of the New York firm of Hood and Howells.

The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition has canonical status. It is consistently included in the syllabi of college courses on American architectural history. The competition's status was reasserted in 1980 by Rizzoli's publication. This two-volume work not only reproduced the old entries for the Tribune Tower Competition, but also whimsical new ones, offered by the world's most prominent postmodern architects for a tongue-in-cheek revival of the Tribune Tower Competition. The competition's canonical status is, in part, explained by its perfect embodiment of an architectural anxiety that all buildings elicit: what was constructed exhausts the space, resources, and energy for the alternative that might have been. What could Chicago have had instead of what it got – a delicate Gothic gesture to the past? The corporation missed an opportunity to make a radically innovative intervention in the urban landscape, choosing instead to represent itself in the remarkably conservative and symbolically ambiguous form of a cathedral-skyscraper.

Another, more self-conscious reason for the competition's historiographic prominence is the compelling summary it presents of a particular phase in

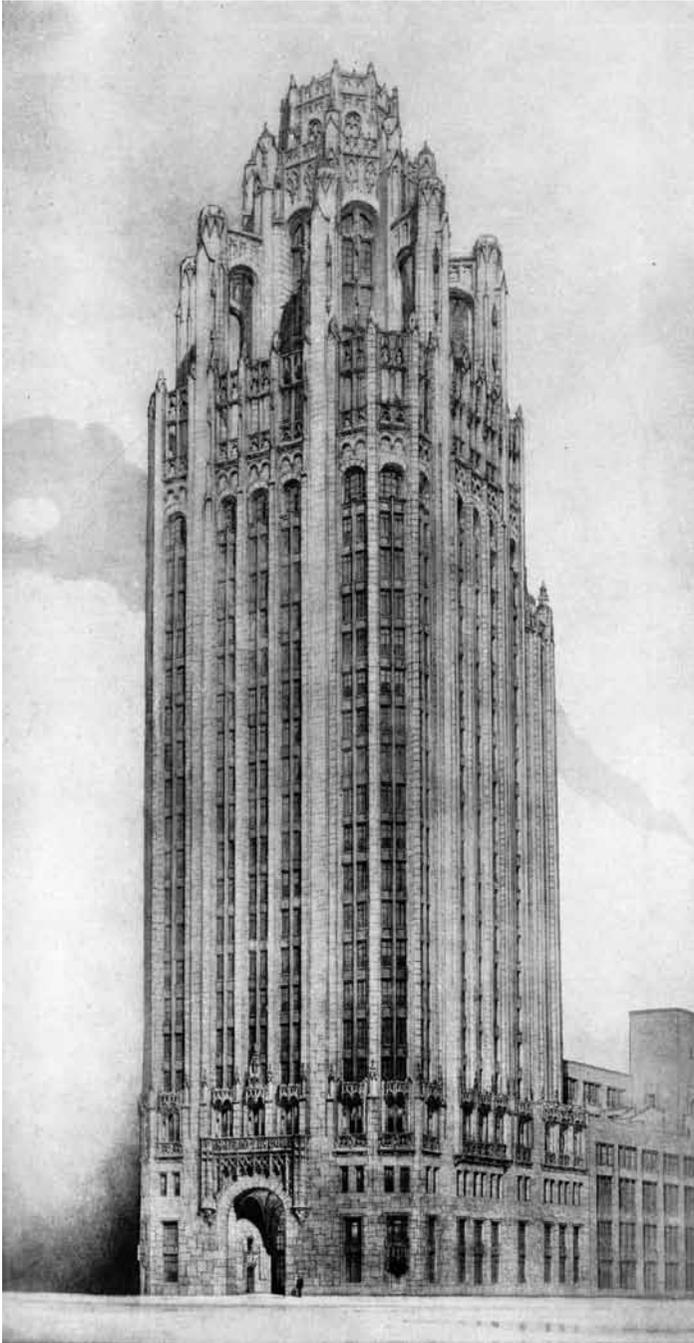


Fig. 9.1 Chicago Tribune Tower Competition, 1922, the winning submission by Hood and Howells

J. D. LELAND & COMPANY
Boston, Mass.



Plate Number 125

I. N. PHELPS STOKES
New York City



Plate Number 126

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Fig. 9.2 Chicago Tribune Tower Competition, 1922, Classical and Byzantine submissions.

American architecture: Eclecticism. Eclecticism names the United States' architectural predilection from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries for dressing buildings in any one of a wide variety of historical styles (Classical, Gothic, and Renaissance primarily, but also Romanesque, Byzantine, Islamic, and others). In office high-rises and in homes, if not in churches and synagogues, Eclecticism is characterized by a disconnect between the figure of a building and its anatomy. The historically derived form of an eclectic structure is distorted by the industrial technologies (steel, glass, concrete, elevators, electricity) in which it is realized and by the new functions (commercial, industrial, civic) it must perform.

Eclectic architects or their patrons characteristically selected a particular historical style because of its symbolic connotations. The Oxford/Cambridge connection is regularly cited as the grounds for rendering elite private universities (Princeton, Chicago, Yale, Duke) in Collegiate Gothic. The gravitas and rationality of the Classical were named in its selection by their boards

for museums, banks and government structures. Of course, the meaning of style is flexible. Early Christian spiritual purity explained the choice of Byzantine form for the Catholic Cathedral of Westminster; Byzantium was used as a model for theater design because of its orientalist eroticism. Patrons apparently assumed that a structure was imbued with the spiritual or moral values associated with its prototype, but those associations were commonly popular and loose. The panorama offered by the eclectic variety of buildings in American cities at the turn of the century was titillating not only visually, in its variety, but also ideologically in its totalization of history.

The excess of promise offered by the architectural plurality of the past perhaps explains the silence of the Tribune Tower Competition program on the subject of style. It specified only that the building had to be "beautiful". Correspondingly, the designers of the winning entry, Hood and Howells, exclusively ascribed a formal significance to their choice of Gothic, despite the style's spiritual, chivalric, and northern European connotations. The firm's statement was included in the publication of the competition:

Our desire has not been so much in an archaeological expression of any particular style as to express in the exterior the essentially American problem of skyscraper construction, with its continued vertical lines and its inserted horizontals. It is only carrying forward to a final expression what many of us architects have tried already under more or less hampering conditions in various cities. We have wished to make this landmark a study of a beautiful and rigorous form, not of an extraordinary form. (*Chicago Tribune*, "The International Competition for a New Administration Building for the Chicago Tribune")

The apparent randomness of the selection of the building's historical referent as well as the unstated understanding of style as fashionable apparel is vividly revealed in the discrepancy between the modern concrete and steel body of the high-rise and its Gothic cladding. In 1923, Louis Sullivan, the famous architect and mentor of Frank Lloyd Wright, aptly characterized the relation between the structure of the Tribune Tower and its historical costume. The Gothic crown with its non-structural flying buttresses necessitated the pseudo-piers of the lower region:

If the monster on the top with its great long legs reaching far below to the ground could be gently pried loose, the real building would reveal itself as a rather amiable and delicate affair with a certain grace of fancy.²

The structural features of medieval Gothic become, in the modern Tribune Tower, ornament.

The Tribune Tower misrepresents Gothic architectonics; it also erodes the meaning of the Gothic. The Gothic was the iconic architectural product of

2 Sullivan, "Chicago Tribune Competition", pp. 156–7.

Catholic Europe from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, an era that was deeply spiritual, however profanely people acted. In the Middle Ages, usurers – that is, *anyone* who gained wealth from money – were doomed to an eternity in Hell. The Tribune Tower was built for a community that was fundamentally profane, however spiritually some members behaved, and in an age in which monopolists were revered. The corporate appropriation of the Gothic desecrates its spirituality. It sucks meaning from great tithe barns, Tudor cottages, cathedrals. The Tribune Tower, it could be argued, despoils history.

Accusing the Tribune Tower of pillaging the past and leaving it more impoverished than it was before is, of course, hyperbole. Overstatement of the corporate headquarters' historical violence does, however, serve some purpose. Eclecticism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consistently deployed historical forms conscientiously; serious architects studied and understood the structures of the past and appreciated the craft of their details. They produced beautiful drawings of the buildings that they promised and rendered them solidly in stone as well as steel and concrete. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we find ourselves in another moment of architectural eclecticism. But now the application of past motifs relentlessly reveals contemporary designers' pathetic ignorance or wanton misuse of their models. Stone, even as a ¾-inch facing, is rarely used. Dryvit – basically stucco over Styrofoam – is the building material of choice.

The charge of cruelty to the history of architecture made against the Tribune Tower may be summarily dismissed. Absconding with the image of a building from the deep past doesn't even contravene cultural property rights in most countries. However, a second allegation of misappropriation might be prosecuted. The Tribune Tower assaults historical buildings, abducting not their form but their substance.

Despoiling Buildings

At street level, the north, south and west façades of the Tribune Tower are studded with nearly one hundred and fifty pieces of other places (Figs. 9.3 and 9.4). Bricks, stones, marble and metal slices, all of readily transportable dimensions, are embedded in the Tribune Tower's lower exterior walls. Some of these fragments have been there from the building's founding. Others have been added over the years. A shard from the World Trade Towers and a tile from the Sydney Opera House are the most recent additions, introduced in 2002 and 2006 respectively. All of these pieces are physically nondescript. They have no intrinsic exchange value and, with perhaps a few exceptions, they make no aesthetic claims. Only their accompanying inscriptions save them from utter anonymity. The site of origin of each fragment is engraved in the wall beside it in ceremonial uncials. How do these bits of buildings



Fig. 9.3 Chicago, Tribune Tower, street view of the façade

and topographies, brought to Chicago from all fifty states and from many countries around the world, work? Certainly all of these chunks function indexically; that is, each scrap serves as a sign of the entirety of its originating locus. A small bit of stone, identified by its label as the Great Pyramid of Gaza (*sic!*), evokes a mighty structure. But the force of such evocations varies.



Fig. 9.4 Chicago Tribune Tower, section of the façade with fragments of the House (sic) of Parliament, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the pyramid at Giza (sic inscription in the process of correction) and two pieces from temples in Cambodia

At first sight, the fragments seem to work as souvenirs. A souvenir is a portable object that is kept by its procurer as a repository of the personal memories of the site from which it came. Like a tourist's photograph, when put on display, the souvenir also acts as proof to others of its possessor's experience of the alien or exotic. Souvenirs take a variety of forms: figured tee-shirts, coffee-mugs, head-scarves, miniatures. Souvenirs also include physical pieces of a place. Sometimes such fragments are remade to be functional or decorative as well as memorable (wood from the hull of the HMS *Victory* involved in the Battle of Trafalgar made into an ashtray; shells from Shell City, Delaware, made into coasters). At other times they remain as they were found. That most remarkable of early American tourists, Mark Twain, describes several instances of such collection in *Innocents Abroad*. One such incident occurred in Turkey:

After gathering up fragments of sculptured marbles and breaking ornaments from the interior work of the mosques [in Ephesus]; and after bringing them, at a cost of infinite trouble and fatigue, five miles on mule-back to the railway depot, a government officer compelled all who had such things to disgorge! He had an order from Constantinople to look out for our party, and see that we carried nothing off. It was a wise, a just, and a well-deserved rebuke, but it created a sensation. I never resist a temptation to plunder a stranger's premises without feeling insufferably vain about it.³

The collection of pieces of particularly venerated places is certainly ancient. A box of carefully labeled bits of the Holy Land was found, for example, locked for centuries in the Holy of Holies in Rome when it was opened in 1908. The Protestant traveler's indiscriminate pilfering of sites as a means of personally possessing them seems, however, peculiarly modern.

Published discussions of the Tribune Tower fragments assert that the collection originated in the same way as the potential assemblages of Twain's fellow travelers. Colonel McCormick, a member of Chicago's conservative social elite and later one of the *Chicago Tribune's* two editors and a major shareholder, was a correspondent in battle-devastated Europe during World War I. During visits to Ypres and Arras, he selected pieces from the debris of the cathedral and the city hall respectively as souvenirs. These, so the story goes, became the kernel of the Tribune Tower collection.

The collection of fragments for the tower was occasionally expanded by the *Tribune's* friends. Many of these unsolicited objects were politely returned to those who offered them. Stones from Petra donated by a colleague and business associate were accepted. In a letter to McCormick written in 1930, Dr. Henry D. Lloyd, a friend of McCormick's and a stockholder in the *Chicago Tribune*, described in Twain-like terms the acquisition of his contribution:

3 Twain, "Innocents Abroad", p. 248.

My dear Bert: Having the Tribune fairly constantly in mind for its exceeding goodness to all its stockholders, when I was in Petra last March it occurred to me that it was conceivable you might like a stone from Petra to set in the front wall of the Tribune Tower. In as much as I had my own boat in Beirut, and was traveling by automobile, the problem of transportation was simplified. These stones are now in Boson awaiting your pleasure in the matter. One is the half of a small sandstone boulder which I found in what they call the High Place. This High Place was formerly used as a place of worship and is interesting because of the fact that to make an obelisk they chiseled away the whole top of the rock rather than build an obelisk on the top. The significance of this red sandstone boulder I do not know. Then from the man who ran the camp I got what I imagine is the capital of a small column. This is a yellowish-gray sandstone. Again I do not know from what particular locality or building in Petra this piece came. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "Arabia")

Most of the bits on exhibition, however, were acquired not through gifting but on order. McCormick delegated the task of gathering pieces of the sites and buildings that he selected or approved to his correspondents. In 1923, for example, McCormick wrote succinctly to Charles Daily, the *Tribune's* Far East Correspondent: "I suppose you can get us a variety of interesting stones from Chinese monuments for our new Tribune Tower, to be placed in the entrance hall." Six months later, Daily reported some success in the completion of his complex task:

I enclose a letter and memorandum from the Foreign Office, the latter also in Chinese, certifying to the genuineness of the tiles and the circular carved stone. These date from the early part of the fifteenth century, and are from the Winter Palace in the Forbidden City erected on the removal of the capital to Peking in 1421. The carved guardian angel is from the ruins of a temple in Honan province, and the gift to me of General J. W. N. Munthe, who will write me a letter as soon as the date is definitely established. It is the opinion of some experts that this stone was carved in the sixth or seventh century, but others are of the belief that it was in the first century of the Christian era ... It was no easy task to obtain these specimens and the Foreign Office aided me in co-operating with the Ceremonies Department of the Imperial Household, with which ordinarily no intercourse is held now that the Manchu dynasty is overthrown. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "China")

The Chinese government apparently acceded to Colonel McCormick's desires. As a letter written in 1934 by another *Tribune* correspondent, John S. Steele, indicates, other agencies did not acquiesce so willingly:

I am shipping one of these stone cannon balls to you. I don't know whether it would be wise to label it as coming from Pevensey Castle [the cannon ball in the wall of the Tribune Tower is, indeed, fully labeled]. The Office of Works refused to let us have one on the grounds that they were part of an ancient monument. But we acquired it by the process which, I believe, was known in the war as "winning". Anyhow it should arrive in Chicago within the next couple of weeks. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "England")

McCormick's control of collecting continued through the 1940s and 1950s, though his directives were funneled through the *Tribune's* Building Manager, Keith B. Capron. Capron records the process:

On March 16, 1946, I received a memo from the Colonel starting out, 'In picking the stones from the different states, let's try to get stones that have some other interesting value ...' I interpreted that as an assignment to get stones representing each state, and we have been working on them ever since. First we compiled lists of interesting, historic, or unique stones for each state from which the Colonel made his choice. Then we wrote to newspaper editors, government park bureaus, care-takers, historians, etc., to get stones. We now have all but three, and fresh hopes for final action on them ... In addition to state stones, we have 13 stones from World War II battlefields which Mr. Maloney [James Loy ("Pat") Maloney, Managing Editor] apparently requested [under McCormick's direction] from our foreign correspondents. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "General")

Some recipients of a *Tribune* request for a fragment were certainly puzzled. Dr. Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs of the American Pilgrims' Museum in Leiden remembers reading the perplexed interdepartmental exchanges at the Regionaal Archief Leiden concerning the *Tribune's* solicitation of a piece of the home site occupied by the Pilgrims before they sailed to America on the Mayflower. He recalls that the solution was to send a brick of approximately the correct date from the city's archaeological warehouse.⁴ But there were surprisingly few rebuffs to the *Tribune's* solicitations. Only one is found in the *Tribune's* file drawer of correspondence on the fragments. J. D. Hartford, editor of the *Portsmouth* (New Hampshire) *Herald*, responded to Capron's request in 1946 for a piece of Fort William and Mary at New Castle:

Frankly, I am not over enthusiastic about such operations as we all realize that if such a practice became general there would be nothing left of any of the old historical landmarks throughout the country. If you would settle for some fine white beach sand from any one of our nationally known bathing beaches, to use as a part of some of your concrete mix, we would be glad to accommodate you. We do not, however, feel like aiding anyone in dismantling our historical landmarks. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "New Hampshire")

Capron then turned to the State of New Hampshire Forestry and Recreation Commission to get what he wanted. A fragment from Fort William and Mary is now embedded in the Illinois Street façade of the Tribune Tower.

The pieces of the landmarks of Arras and Ypres salvaged by Colonel McCormick himself are not displayed on the walls of the Tribune Tower. Objects that might have represented McCormick's own memories were apparently never included in the exhibition. A piece of a place gathered

⁴ Unfortunately, André van Noort, Archivist of the Regionaal Archief Leiden, has been unable to locate those documents (e-mail exchange with Dr. Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs).

under order, stolen, or sent as a gift is not saturated with the sentiments and consciousness of their possessor. The incrustations on the walls of the Tribune Tower look like souvenirs but do not act like souvenirs.

If the shards on view at the Tribune Tower are not conventional souvenirs, perhaps they can be productively thought of as relics. Relics are portable pieces of the holy which are so filled with the spiritual aura of their sacred source that they perform in their place: healing the sick, punishing the evil, even raising the dead. Relics are most often associated with holy bodies, martyrs, and ascetics who in different ways gave up their bodies for the sake of the divine. But relics may also be taken from things that were suffused with the divine through direct contact, like the Cross of the Crucifixion or the House of the Virgin. Numerous sites associated with the sacred are represented on the walls of the Tribune Tower, including the Parthenon, Rouen Cathedral, St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, Westminster Abbey, the Mormon Temple, the cave of the Sibyl in Cumae, Saint Sophia, the Mosque of Suleiman, and the Shrine of Hibiya Daijingu in Tokyo. Embedded in the Tribune Tower, however, these fragments of sacred sites attract no particular attention, perhaps because they are not satisfactorily framed. Relics tend to work better when they are elaborately embellished. A relic in an impressive reliquary displayed within a venerable church, like the skull of Saint James on the high altar of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, tends to perform more miracles than a particle of the True Cross sold on eBay.

One of the fragments of the holy at the Tribune Tower is elaborately enframed. Chips from the ceiling of the Cave of Nativity in Bethlehem are inset in a gilded star on the interior of the entrance wall. The acquisition of this relic is described in a letter from L.S. Chakales, Chief of Bureau to Keith B. Capron, Tribune Tower Building Manager, May 8, 1950:

The fragments I gave to Colonel McCormick are from the actual Cave of the Nativity. They were scraped from the ceiling of the cave by the Archbishop of the Orthodox church, which is situated directly above the cave and through which every denomination must pass to reach the shrine. Under no circumstances can the archbishop be identified publicly as the source. However it could be stated they came from a person who had access to the cave. Their authenticity can be guaranteed and proven by the archbishop and the mayor of Bethlehem, but the archbishop naturally would be reluctant to make it public. However the mayor, Issa Bandak, I am sure would confirm them. We were his guests in his home which is situated in a convent which is a part of the church of the Nativity for Christmas, 1949, when the fragments were given to us. In fact, it was his influence that brought about the archbishop's unusual action. We went down the morning after and saw the white spot in the roof of the cave. In addition, we also got four tiny pieces of mosaic that were scraped away. We attached great importance to the fragments. It must be recalled the cave has been there for 2,000 years and it remains virtually intact. In that time souvenir hunters should have leveled the area for miles around, but miraculously it remained intact. I would like to emphasize

these fragments came from the cave in which Christ was actually born and not from the immediate vicinity. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "Bethlehem")

Chakale's story is remarkably similar to early Christian narratives of the acquisition of relics by minions of rich and powerful believers. Throughout the Middle Ages, the clandestine acquisition of relics was always more legitimate than buying them. But despite being displayed in an elaborate reliquary-like setting and despite being acquired in a relic-like way, the dust from the Cave of the Nativity attracts no pilgrims and performs no miracles. The particles of the Cave look like relics, but, like the other fragments associated with religious sites in the walls of the Tribune Tower, they do not act like relics.

If the shards displayed on the Tribune Tower do not function individually and overtly as souvenirs or relics, do they operate collectively and covertly as ideology? Juxtaposed are fragments from places famous and obscure (the Arc de Triomphe and ruins at Birecik, Turkey), ancient and modern (the Great Wall of China and the Berlin Wall), pastoral and violent (Reims Cathedral and the Battlefield of Trenton), real and imaginary (Taj Mahal and Hamlet's Castle). Although no order is apparent in the fragments' arrangement or, for that matter, in the choice of sites represented, nevertheless, as with all randomness that is closely enough watched, patterns emerge. Perhaps this display acts to naturalize the political, economic, and cultural pretensions of their exhibitor.

Certainly the Tribune Tower Competition program explicitly declared that the building would function iconically as "the most beautiful office building in the world". It also implied that the Tribune Tower, emblematic of the organization that it housed, was the epitome of civic virtue. Such a claim suggests that the Tribune Tower contributes to national prestige as well as local status. Indeed, indices of nationalism are particularly prominent in its collection of fragments. Two of the conventional monuments associated with American independence are included: Philadelphia's Independence Hall and the White House. Colonel McCormick's intervention in acquiring pieces of the White House is documented in a memo of May 19, 1950 from Capron to *Chicago Tribune* correspondent Walter Trohan, in the Washington Bureau:

On May 14th there was an Associated Press story in the Tribune mentioning White House souvenirs. The Colonel sent the clipping to me requesting that I "get a good one". Would it be an imposition for me to ask your assistance in securing "a good one"?" (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "Washington, D.C.")

After considerable difficulty, a fragment was procured.

National identity is further buttressed with pieces from destination landscapes (Mount McKinley, the Badlands of South Dakota, Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, the Petrified Forest in California). If the display includes natural wonders only from the United States, the bit of moon rock on exhibition may

be regarded as the promise of a future American colony. Famous citizens are celebrated along with citizens not-so-famous, but important in one way or another to the *Tribune* (Lincoln's home and his first tomb, Colonel McCormick's family home, the birthplace of Elijah Lovejoy, newspaper man and anti-slavery martyr). But perhaps the most numerous references to American greatness are of a noticeably belligerent nature. Sites of American military triumph or inspirational defeat are particularly prominent (the Alamo, Custer's last stand, Pearl Harbor, Bunker Hill, Omaha Beach, Fort Sumter, Corregidor, the World Trade Towers).

More subtle are the references both to white superiority and to white benevolence. There is, for example, a small but revealing collection of places where European men encountered acquirable territory in America (Port Louisa on the Mississippi where white men first met Iowa; Fort Clatsop, Oregon, associated with the Lewis and Clark expedition; Helena, where De Soto entered Arkansas, and Tawasa, Alabama, where De Soto sojourned; Santa Maria Island in the Azores where Columbus landed; the lost colony on Roanoke Island, North Carolina; site of the Rune Stone in Kensington, Minnesota, providing evidence of early Scandinavian presence). Included also are sites associated with white solicitude for blacks (John Brown's cabin in Kansas and his fort at Harper's Ferry). In the same vein, an anti-Confederate bias is discernible. Some southern states are, indeed, represented by references to subjugation (site of the Battle of New Orleans) or ignominy (Confederate Prison, Andersonville, Georgia). Is the exhibition of fragments of sites associated with American moral and military ascendancy from John Brown's cabin to Omaha Beach meant to assure us that the *Tribune* constitutes the continuation of that trajectory?

The territorial reach of the Tribune Tower fragments is not limited to sites of national interest. Prominent are pieces of prestigious foreign buildings. Perhaps they are intended to reify the assumption that the Tribune Tower surpassed the historical structures from which they came. Are the cultural accomplishments represented by the Taj Mahal in India, the Colosseum of Rome and Suleiman's Mosque in Istanbul subordinated to the achievement of the *Tribune* and its skyscraper? Are the buildings of the past and the institutions that they embody – the Palace of the Forbidden City in Peking, the House [*sic!*] of Parliament in London, the Arch of Triumph in Paris, Luxembourg Palace, the medieval portal of Charlemagne at Aachen, the Citadel in Jerusalem – displaced by the Tribune Tower and the perfect democracy of which purportedly the *Tribune* is the voice?

For an architectural historian who investigates the Tribune Tower, its display of fragments might well reflect on the political concerns and pretensions of the hard-core Republican Colonel McCormick. But any suggestion that those interests were somehow realized in their exhibition would be perverse. The collection is hardly a persuasive affirmation of state

sovereignty or isolationism. If any specific political messages were encoded in the fragments embedded in the façade of the building, they remain undecipherable. Whatever McCormick's irrecoverable intentions might have been, the pieces of other places found on the façade of the Tribune Tower have little political effect. As ideology, the Tribune Tower collection miscarries.

An innocent viewer of the Tribune Tower collection does not see a political agenda, but she may well grasp the newspaper's pretense to national and international compass. An amorphous invocation of *reach* may well be understood by the broader audience. Like a cabinet of curiosities, the Tribune Tower façade impresses by the remarkable array of things that it presents. But in its impressive pastiche of places, the fragments are reduced to mere curiosities. A curiosity is a thing that appeals only because of its oddity. It is a simple diversion. Its fascination lies largely in its context as part of a collection. The fragments thus function as a supplement to the exaggerated meaning claimed for the building itself. The exhibition unconsciously compensates for a deficiency and thereby identifies a lack. Like the Gothic form of the structure, its façade fragments suggest a peculiarly American concern with a dislocated past; they archive the contradictions of a nostalgia for a missing history and the pride in the brief American enterprise as the evolutionary fulfillment of all earlier ones.

The Tower's fragments do not act like souvenirs, relics, or ideological spoor. In fact, they hardly act at all. Of the thirty or so Chicagoans whom I have questioned about the Tribune Tower, only one had ever looked at it carefully, four knew about the fragments, and the rest were familiar with the building but ignorant of its incrustations. The scraps of old buildings and distant sites embedded in the building are largely ignored. Hard as they might try, the Tribune Tower fragments are continually frustrated in their attempt to capture the observer's interest. There is simply too much competition from the urban theater of which they are a small part. On the rare occasions when they are noticed, in their guise as a collection of curiosities, they do function in some ways as *spolia*. Of course, they cannot be *spolia* in the full Classical sense of the term, since they offer no proof of the ruination of their original settings. Many of the most familiar sites included in the display are, after all, still intact: Westminster Abbey, the White House, Reims Cathedral. The apparent wholeness of these originals belies the authenticity of their separated parts. The fragments may even appear fictive; any claim of physical supersession which they might make appears ridiculous. But for the careful observer, they might act like Classical *spolia* at least in the implicit reference to the destructive plunder central to the pre-modern spectacle of military might. The pieces certainly attest to the power of their possessor to appropriate them in the first place. To those who attend to the mélange of fragments from meaningful sites, the display certainly suggests something of the *Tribune's* past confiscatory power. Now the corporation is in bankruptcy.

Despoiling Bodies

The *Tribune's* pieces of other places, leveraged from the quiet integrity of their origins to the noisy disintegration of their display, have been depleted in the service of exhibition. It is not just the fragments themselves that lose coherence with their excision. In the case of physical structures, the removal of any part necessarily depletes the whole from which it comes. To make more sense of the plight of the originating source perhaps it should be treated more as a body and less as an inert object.

Buildings, like humans, are the product of their generation and their location. Unlike commodities or texts, buildings, like humans, are unique and impossible to duplicate. Buildings are inevitably formed by both a place and a history. They are brought into existence, they have a youth, a maturity, a senility, a death. Buildings are not fixed things; they change, they grow, they get sick, they die, or, more commonly, they are murdered. The acts of buildings might even be compared with the acts of their human counterparts: those acts are similarly overdetermined – that is, fraught with more conditions in their social circumstances or personal histories than are necessary to account for them. It does not seem absurd, therefore, to imagine that buildings might even be valued as agents. Agency presumes some kind of intervention or effect. Who would deny that a building modifies the behaviors of its users? A further assumption, based on the habits of philosophical and theological discourse, is often made that agency also necessarily involves *consciousness* (either human or divine). It would follow that as a building patently has no consciousness, it cannot be an agent. But the assumption that agency requires consciousness is erroneous. Although buildings do not act consciously, neither do humans, much of the time. The acts of human agents, though persons may be assumed to have consciousness, are often demonstrably *not* the result of rational reflection, but rather the conditioned or mechanical response to physical, social, or personal circumstances (freezing temperatures, conformity, addiction, and the like). And humans are commonly held legally or morally responsible for acts taken without a consciousness of their consequences (as when a driver falls asleep at the wheel of his moving vehicle).

By analogy, buildings would not require consciousness to be held responsible for their acts. Here, standing in law complements the claim for buildings as agents. Things were, after all, held culpable for the injuries they inflicted on humans until the abolition of the law of deodand in 1846.⁵ More recently, the courts have recognized that an agent may be exempted from any requirement of consciousness when acting on behalf of a principal. Corporations – for which a claim for consciousness seems extremely peculiar – are commonly accorded the status of agents. Indeed, philosophers have gone

5 Pietz, "Death of the Deodand".

so far as to debate the claim that corporations are moral persons. Perhaps there is a public advantage to holding a corporation responsible for its effects; yet recognizing the corporation as a moral agent seems somehow obscene, perhaps because of the suspicion that if corporations did have intentions, they would be unrelentingly venal. In any case, no claim is made here for buildings as moral persons. But if corporations are considered actors independent of their CEOs, vice presidents and shareholders, certainly buildings might be treated as agents. After all, most buildings are more socially responsible than many corporations.

Juridically less successful, but apparently more ethical, are efforts to extend legal standing to the things closest in their responsiveness to human beings, that is, animals and machines. A particularly persuasive legal argument has also been made to extend standing to natural things.⁶ Many of the same arguments can be made for buildings. Like some rivers or trees, some buildings have authoritative public bodies prepared to review actions inconsistent with their well-being. Like some rivers or trees, some buildings have a legally recognized worth independent of their use value. Rivers and trees do not have – but it has been argued that they should have – executors empowered to institute legal actions at their behest on the model of executors who act on behalf of minor or comatose persons. Such rights might equally be claimed on behalf of buildings. Understanding buildings as bodies is less difficult if buildings are considered agents or if buildings have legal standing.

What are the rewards for considering a building as a body? If a building behaves like a body, it also demands to be engaged as a surviving witness of various pasts. Once it is recognized that a building has a life, architectural historians may be less likely to focus their scholarly attention exclusively on a structure's origins and more likely to treat its full biography. It may well be argued that, as is the case with humans, buildings only reveal their youth once their old age is taken into account. Acknowledging the building as a body may also allow us to understand more fully our anger at it when it treats us badly. Finally, and most relevant to the work at hand, a building treated as a body explains our empathy with its abuse and destruction.

The *spolia* of the Tribune Tower reinforce a sense of the distinctive embodiedness of architecture. They help us resist the bad intellectual habit of textualizing buildings. Texts cannot meaningfully suffer from despoliation in the same ways as material culture. A quotation may be a fragment of a text, but its excision leaves its source intact. Indeed, this kind of appropriation privileges the site of its origin rather than demolishing it. Certainly, a plagiarist robs a text, but the damage to the originating site is obscured, not, as with *spolia*, celebrated. Conversely, treating a building as a body also provides leverage for rethinking architectural *spolia*. The fragments of the

6 Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?*.

Tribune Tower suggest how *spolia* might be put to use as conspicuous signs of coercive authority, even as they themselves fail to contribute effectively to the corporation's status. These pieces of other places fail to impress their contemporary American viewers with the might of the building that displays them; they succeed only in amusing the few who notice them. They certainly do not shock their witnesses as evidence of violence perpetrated on other architectural bodies; in this, they provide further evidence of how immune contemporary audiences are to the shock of implicit destruction. Considered as body parts, the fragments embedded in the skin of the Tribune Tower retain something of their gritty materiality. They were not grafted to the Tower's membrane as necessary transplants; they contribute nothing to the recipient's health. In contrast, the body from which a slice was excised is depleted by its loss. Each fragment implies a successful physical assault on its source. As parts cut from one body and displayed on another to enhance its status, these fragments revive some of the dead, pre-modern implications of *spolia*.

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