Daedalus, according to Greek legend was the first architect. To understand Daedalus from the perspective of youth in the 21st century, a useful comparison would be Leonardo Da Vinci. Like Daedalus, Da Vinci invented all manner of things - flying machines, fortifications, ships etc... Daedalus was tasked to create a shell for his lustful Queen in the shape of cow so she could copulate with a Bull that was given to her. She was under a spell and was filled with lust for this Bull.

‘Pasiphæ gave birth to the monster Minotaur – Half man, Half Bull – and was also the mother of Ariadne and Phaedra. She was the daughter of the sun god Helios and the wife of Minos king of Crete. Poseidon had given a wonderfully beautiful bull to Minos with the expectation that Minos would sacrifice it to him. This bull indeed certified that Minos was the rightful king of Crete. Rather than sacrifice the bull to Poseidon, Minos kept it for himself. To punish him Poseidon had made Pasiphæ, the wife of Minos; fall madly in love with the bull. With the aid of Daedalus Pasiphæ let herself become impregnated by the bull. Daedalus made a hollow wooden cow for her to get inside, so she could mate with the bull. The resulting offspring which she bore was a monster called the Minotaur.’

The Minotaur was held in another creation of Daedalus, the Labyrinth of Crete. Daedalus built the labyrinth but did not understand it spatially – he had to build wings of wax for himself and his son, Icarus so that they could take flight out of the labyrinth. Icarus, you would recall, flew high and too near the sun, his wings melted and he fell to his death. Daedalus’ flight out of the Cretan labyrinth exposes his lack of spatial comprehension of what he had made.

Theseus, whom Ariadne – half sister to the Minotaur – was in love with, was one of the youths offered as sacrifice to the Minotaur. Theseus, brave youth, instead slayed the Minotaur but could not escape the Labyrinth. It was Ariadne, who rescued Theseus by unravelling a ball of thread, allowing her to trace her route through the labyrinth, which in reverse meant a flight out of the Cretan trap.
Ariadne understood the spatial complexity of the Labyrinth through an aide mémoire. The trace of movement is not necessarily physical – we recall morphological ensembles, colours and fragments and reconstruct our ‘ball of thread’ as we walk through the city, or for that matter as we walk through our domestic spaces of dwelling. Recall if you will, a reminiscence of a childhood haunt – your kindergarten, your primary school, or your long lost relative’s house, which you visited as a child. A revisit to these places years later is remarkably curious. We recall for example, the pattern in the tree bark, which we played next to. We recall markings we made as children on walls. We recall patterns in the floor tiles we traced as children. We recall kinaesthetically textures, surfaces, and markings of material. In these cases of prolonged revisititation, we are still able to recall such minutiae of detail. What do we suppress latently in a daily revisit?

Are there memories stored to be recalled only years later or do these visual experiences translate into a certain palette that seems to be common in the adult recollection of childhood spaces? What are possible sequences of ‘memoiré’ of textural fragments in a labyrinth? Often, in a revisit, the memory of scale seems to change. A revisit to a city you visited years ago usually seems somewhat smaller for some reason. This happens when we visit childhood haunts for sure, but the reduction of scale in an adult experience in rather curious. Has memory no sense of scale? Also, the sense of ‘tone’ seems to change in a revisit. Memory softens, hardens and colours but the core of the remembered remains intact. We re-construct as we re-’member’, and often memory is prejudiced.

The metaphor of RAM and ROM to human memory is somewhat farcical in that respect. Paul Reed Smith, maker of fine connoisseur musical instruments, spoke about consulting Ted MaCarty, an elder statesman of musical instrument manufacturing about his designs and process in the 1950s, as ‘downloading the hard drive of his memory’. Memory is never innocent, and the memory of place is significantly, never innocent.

Consider Leningrad/Petrograd/St Petersburg: After 70 odd years, Leningrad changed its name back to St Petersburg, after the fall of the Soviet Union. How many people alive can actually recall a day in their life when their fair city was St Petersburg? The avoidance of Petrograd, the Russian name of ‘Peter’s City’ before the celebration of Lenin, was avoided for its
associated contamination as the original Soviet choice. The return to a Teutonic root version, romanticised and very un-Russian, St Petersburg reveals to us the process of emotional prejudice. Absence gives rise to fondness and softens the memory, scorn gives rise to the hardening of the heart. In this case, a cultural collective memory can be more powerful in a meaningful and symbolic way than any actual personal memory.

The sense of architectural memory has been discussed in Frances Yates book ”the Art of Memory”, recalling the memory theatres of Matteo Ricci and so forth. As a memory ‘machine’ an architectural construction reveals and conceals, unfolding events, temporally cycling different events in the creation of various typologies of space. A domestic space for example, has a domestic rhythm, and repeats in domestic time. A commercial space repeats in commercial time – commerce opens for business and the space is active, and shuts at the end of business day – rendering the space inactive. On weekends commercial spaces normally sleep. Festive spaces recur periodically, usually annually. A space becomes Christmassy only once a year.

The nature of rhythm in space is also lodged in the memoiré of movement. Our architectural movements, viz. experience of spatiality and temporality, are in their very existence always conditioned. Space is not the same and spatiality, and time is not the same as temporality. The conditions of space – i.e. its spatiality contributes to the memoiré. The argument follows for time and temporality in correlation. The topographical system of a labyrinth is at once temporal and spatial. But this is not the spatiality of a traditional city – which has a centre and fringe and so on. In a traditional city (regardless of Western or Eastern origin) sacred and profane are understood and differentiated. A cemetery or Necropolis does not exist in the market square for example. The labyrinth offers a model of the modern metropolis – there is no differentiation of space but there is differentiation of time. Hence, the temporality and the spatiality of a place, viz. a located space – is vital for understanding a labyrinth. The conditions of that space – i.e. its temporality and its spatiality – are what differentiates it and allows for registration in the memory of our architectural experiences.

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