



My Memory Palace* March 24, 2016

One begins with a real place --
 Grandmother's house full of knickknacks,
 a beloved bedroom hideaway,
 the special corner of a favorite coffee shop,
 the hidden stacks of Bizzell Library,
 Heidelberg's Bahnhof,
 my lofty terrace overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea --
 a place so real that you can float above it,
 twisting and turning from top to bottom,
 every angle familiar,
 placing objects in perfect settings,
 framed by memories,
 flooded in sounds and smells and tastes.
 A place so real that you do not need it.

Keep it anyway.
 For ever, for ever after.

Decide how you will travel through your memory palace.
 If you want to remember in a special order,
 define a route you can follow over and over,
 'til it becomes unconsciously there.

Move through your palace,
 marking locations to store your memories --
 landmarks, crossroads, shadows, colors,
 sizes, smells, symbols.

Fill your palace with images that can store your truths for the years
 when time will eat away thoughts that fill the mind now --
 the yellow kitten that spits and scratches holds that first heartbreak,
 the scratchy record player warns of Death's close seductive song,
 the soft gray angora granny square quilt can be the mother lost,
 the snap of a Waterman fountain pen can save every poem,
 the smell of a honeycrisp apple sings of survival and joy,
 the taste of Brunello will kiss a lover's lips forever.

For ever ever after.

*Apologies to Matteo Ricci and Jonathan D. Spence (*The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*).